

SYLLABUS

CMM 656: SEMINAR IN PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

COURSE

TOPIC:	Rhetoric and Politics in American Life
SEMESTER:	Fall 2012
DATE/TIME:	Mondays - 4:00 PM to 6:20 PM
LOCATION:	Smith Hall 227

INSTRUCTOR

NAME:	Dennis Taylor
PHONE:	304.586.2930 (Office); 304. 541.0332 (Cell)
EMAIL:	dct@dctadvisors.com
OFFICE HOURS:	Mondays - 3:30 PM to 4:00 PM; 6:30 PM to 7:30 PM; Other times by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This semester the Seminar in Public Communication will be on the timely topic, Rhetoric and Politics in American Life. It will be a very general examination of how rhetoric plays a vital role in the world of politics, both historically and contemporaneously. It can be summarized by the phrase "All politics is rhetorical". While we will look at the current election, we will primarily focus on political controversies of the past to see what light they might shed on today.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students will develop an understanding of rhetorical principles.
2. Students will examine the application of rhetorical principles as they have been used in political situations.
3. Students will explore historical examples of political rhetoric to determine how specific conditions influenced the choices rhetors made.
4. Students will examine how rhetoric has been used in political campaigns through comparisons of different historical examples.
5. Students will examine how changing media have influenced rhetorical uses.
6. Students will examine different methods of criticism of the uses of rhetoric in political arenas.
7. Students will apply critical methodologies to the current uses of rhetoric in political settings.

HOW PRACTICED?

1. By reading about and discussing applicable rhetorical principles.
2. By reading about, observing, and discussing the uses of rhetoric in specific political situations.

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3. Through background readings and discussions of historical articles that give insight into particular rhetorical moments.
4. By reading, observing, and discussing selected speeches from various political campaigns, both historical and contemporaneous.
5. By examining and discussing media usage, both historical and contemporaneous.
6. By reading and discussing critical analyses available in both print and electronically.

HOW ASSESSED?

Attendance is required and expected. You may miss one class without providing an excuse or explanation to me. Otherwise, you are expected to attend class. If you do this, you will earn 50 points. For each unexcused absence, you will lose 10 points. (50 points)

Reading and participation are required and expected. You may tell me one time during the semester that you have not read the class assignment and are unprepared to participate in discussion without suffering any penalty. Otherwise, expect to be called on to demonstrate that you have read the assignment during every class. If you do this, you will earn 50 points. For each additional clear instance of lack of preparation, you will lose 10 points. (50 points)

Written assignments. Most of your grade will be determined based on the quality of your writing assignments. In preparing written assignments, please consider four things: First, I do not accept work late unless I approved the late submission in advance or a documentable emergency arose. Second, with the exception of abstracts, analyze more than you summarize. Third, edit and proofread assignments carefully. Fourth, I am unlikely to know if you use correct Chicago or MLA style in your papers, but I will notice if you are not consistent.

- ▶ Weekly assignments. You are required to complete at least 10 weekly assignments over the course of the semester. The assignments may take a variety of forms, including preparing answers to questions, summarizing a reading, or analyzing a political claim or argument. These assignments will be graded based on accuracy, completeness, and quality of analysis. If a student completes more than 10 weekly assignments, his or her top ten grades will be counted. DUE: At the beginning of each class. (10 assignments x 15 maximum points = 150 points)
- ▶ Abstracts. You are required to complete two two- to three-page abstracts of scholarly journal articles on a facet of rhetoric and politics. The first and longer part of the abstract should summarize the article; the second and shorter part of the abstract should analyze it briefly. These assignments will be graded based on accuracy, completeness, and quality of analysis. ABSTRACTS DUE: 8 October 2012 (2 abstracts x 25 points = 50 points)
- ▶ Book review. You are required to submit a book review for a book approved by the instructor. The book review, which generally should be 6 to 8 double-spaced pages, will be graded based on the extent to which it provides a thorough analysis of the author's argument. BOOK SELECTION DUE: 1 October 2012 or earlier. REVIEW DUE: 22 October 2012. (75 points)
- ▶ Term paper. All students are required to submit a term paper analyzing the success or failure of and/or ethical issues surrounding a specific historical or contemporaneous rhetorical/political event. The term paper, which generally should be 15 to 18 double-spaced pages, will be graded based on the extent to which it provides a thorough analysis of the event. TOPIC SUBMISSION DUE: 22 October 2012 or earlier. TERM PAPER DUE: 7 December 2012. (125 points)

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A	B	C	D	F
93% to 100%	85% to 92%	76% to 84%	68% to 75%	< 68%
463 to 500 points	423 to 462 points	378 to 422 points	337 to 378 points	< 337 points

TEXTS

Joseph S. Tuman. *Political Communication in American Campaigns*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, 2008.

Robert E. Denton, Jr. *The 2008 Presidential Campaign: A Communication Perspective*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., Lanham, Maryland, 2009.

Brian T. Kaylor. *Presidential Campaign Rhetoric in an Age of Confessional Politics*, Lexington Books, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., Lanham Maryland, 2011.

Thomas Paine. *Common Sense*. Edited and with an introduction by Isaac Kramnick. Penguin Classics, Penguin Books, New York, NY.

Other materials will be assigned as the course progresses.

OTHER MATTERS

Reading assignments for the next week's class will be made at the end of each class. If you miss a class, you will be able to find a copy of the reading assignment, along with any handouts you may need, in my mailbox in the Communication Studies Department office.

If you need to reach me, please feel free to call or email. I generally return calls and emails within 24 hours.

You are free to submit work product by handing it to me at the beginning of class or emailing it to me. If I do not acknowledge your email submission within 24 hours, it is your responsibility to follow up with me.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

DATE	TOPIC(S)	DUE
27 August	Course overview	
10 September	"Common Sense" Rhetoric and the American Revolution	Weekly assignment
17 September	Speech and debate in the Land of Lincoln	Weekly assignment
24 September	From "A Cross of Gold" to "The Ideal Republic"	Weekly assignment
1 October	Structure and setting: The campaign speech	Book review selection Weekly assignment

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DATE	TOPIC(S)	DUE
8 October	Style and substance: The campaign debate	Abstracts Weekly assignment
15 October	Frontrunners, longshots, and also-rans: Campaign "strategy"	Weekly assignment
22 October	Change and other things we can believe in: Campaign themes	Term paper topic Weekly assignment
29 October	"My politics is my religion, my religion is my politics." - Gandhi	Book review Weekly assignment
5 November	"The medium is the message." - McLuhan	Weekly assignment
12 November	Swiftboating: Lies, damned lies, and politicians	Weekly assignment
26 November	After the fall: Nixon, Clinton, and Akin	Weekly assignment
3 December	The battle of the sexes: Gender in modern politics	Weekly assignment
10 December	Power and powerlessness: Chicago 1968 and beyond	Weekly assignment
14 December		Term paper