This is a seminar in rhetorical criticism—the description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment of persuasive discourse. There are several goals that I hope to accomplish this semester.

First, I want you to understand the historical development of rhetorical criticism within the discipline of communication studies. This includes how rhetorical criticism came into being, how it matured and changed over the decades, and the various ways in which it is practiced today.

Second, I want you to understand and assimilate the various critical vocabularies by which modern rhetorical criticism is practiced. This means not only recognizing the terms, but being able to employ them in critical analysis as well.

Third, I want you to be able to understand the assumptions upon which each critical approach is predicated and be able to tease from those assumptions the major critical questions inherent in each perspective.

Fourth, I want you to learn what the major works are—both theoretical and applied—in the field of rhetorical criticism and be able to identify the authors that go with those works.

Last, but most important of all, I want you to learn to write good rhetorical criticism. You can be the most “theoretically informed” person in the world, but if you can’t put that theory into action, it doesn’t do much good. Toward this end, we will write two drafts of a major critical analysis (20-30 pages), complete a career review of one of the “25 Leading Critics” in the field of communication studies (5-10 pages), and write a 5-10 page paper in which you synthesize the major critical works on one of the dominate approaches to rhetorical criticism—neo-classical/neo-Aristotelian, mythic/narrative, metaphoric/archetypal, philosophical, psychological, generic, dramatistic, feminist, ideological, iconographic, textual/close reading, symptomatic/model, historical, structuralist, etc.

Historically, the study of rhetoric has been intimately connected to statesmanship, law, and governance. It deals with real issues, about real people, in the real world. Rhetoric can also operate in the realm of the fictive (see Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction), but for most of this course we will be interested in the role of rhetoric in socio-political matters. To that end, I have organized the course around topics that are particularly salient at the present moment—politics, law, religion/morality, popular culture, race, gender, war, sexual orientation, environment, nuclearism, and campaigns and social movements. We will read the best that has been written from a rhetorical-critical perspective on each of these topics.
Required Texts:


Course Requirements:

1. Extensive required reading as a basis for classroom discussion and subsequent critical endeavors. Please read each week’s assignment before coming to class.
2. One major piece of rhetorical criticism, 20-30 pages (not including notes). Two drafts.
3. A career-to-date analysis of a “Top 25” rhetorical critic (5-10 pages). Please provide an outline of your oral report to each class member.
4. A 5-10 page summary of one approach to rhetorical analysis derived from close examination and analysis of critical articles utilizing that approach. I want you to synthesize the major elements of the approach—the critical theory—from the critical practice, and report what the major elements of that approach are.

Course Evaluation:

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Major Critical Analysis—Draft #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major Critical Analysis—Draft #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral and Written Report on Top 25 Critic</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summary of Critical Theory/Approach</td>
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There is substantial reading in this course and I expect everyone to read each week’s assignment before class meets. There are 7 articles or chapters to read for each week. Some of these are in your books; others you will need to look up on line (for *QJS, CM, CSMC, JC, JCR*, or *WJC* go to “Electronic Resources” and under the letter “C” look for “Communication and Mass Media Complete”—for *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* look under “P” for “Project Muse”). Virtually everything we will read this semester can be found either in your textbooks or online. Please print out the entire texts of each week’s readings and bring them to class. We will be discussing each of them in detail.

I strongly recommend that you read one article each day rather than waiting until Tuesday night to try to read for Wednesday’s class. These articles are the substance of the profession. Treat them with dignity and respect. Read them slowly and carefully.
SYLLABUS

Week 1 (January 10): Introduction to course
Read: Lucaites, pp. 1-18 and Medhurst, pp. xi-xliii

Week 2 (January 17) Modern Rhetorical Criticism from Wichelns to Black (1925-1965)
Donald C. Bryant, “Some Problems of Scope and Method in Rhetorical Scholarship,” in Medhurst, pp. 33-38.
Ernest J. Wragge, “Public Address: A Study in Social and Intellectual History,” in Medhurst, pp. 53-60.
Wayland Maxfield Parrish, “The Study of Speeches,” in Medhurst, pp. 61-76.
Marie Hochmuth, “The Criticism of Rhetoric,” in Medhurst, pp. 77-98.

Week 3 (January 24): Modern Rhetorical Criticism from Black to the Present
Stephen E. Lucas, “The Schism in Rhetorical Scholarship,” in Medhurst, pp. 139-162.
Week 4 (January 31): Rhetorical Criticism and American Politics

**Read:**

Week 5 (February 7): Rhetorical Criticism and Law

**Read:**


Week 6 (February 14):

**Rhetorical Criticism, Religion, and Public Morality**

**Read:**

Week 7 (February 21):

**Rhetorical Criticism and Popular Culture**

**Read:**

Peter Ehrenhaus, “Why We Fought: Memory in Spielberg’s *Saving Private Ryan,*” in Burgchardt, pp. 584-599.


**Week 8 (February 28): Rhetorical Criticism and Race**


Week 9 (March 7)  
Rhetorical Criticism and Gender  

SPRING BREAK

Week 10 (March 21):  
Rhetorical Criticism and War  


Week 11 (March 28):

Oral Reports on “Top 25” Critics—Recent Work of Martin J. Medhurst

**Read:**


Week 12 (April 4):

**Rhetorical Criticism and Sexual Orientation**


Week 13 (April 11):

**Rhetorical Criticism and the Environment**


**Week 14 (April 18): Rhetorical Criticism and Nuclearism**


**Week 15 (April 25): Rhetorical Criticism, Campaigns, and Social Movements**

