RHETORIC: a primer
brief notes on an old art

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DOING RHETORIC

→ DOING rhetoric, a definition:
There are many definitions for rhetoric (some of them are listed at the end of this document), but all of them position rhetoric in one way or another as an art or conceptual tool for composing and analyzing acts of communication. Classically rhetoric is considered the art of persuasion and is inextricably linked to the concept of democracy. In the ancient world, orators would have to present themselves before public bodies of citizens and elected administrators in order to deliver speeches pertaining to the legal, judicial, and ceremonial affairs of the polis. Indeed, the orator’s work was so important that entire schools were soon founded solely for the study of rhetoric. One of these teachers, the philosopher Aristotle, composed a scientific treatise devoted to the art rhetoric. This treatise, simply called the Rhetoric, is the oldest complete work of its kind, and today it is studied by students of rhetoric with just as much interest as it was by students in Aristotle’s day.

→ DOING rhetoric, a history:
Before Aristotle legitimated the study of rhetoric with his treatise, rhetoric was considered to be a kind of empty art that trafficked in cheap flattery and was often associated with the Sophists. One of them was named Gorgias and he introduced rhetoric to Athens around the year 427 BCE. The Sophists were traveling teachers of sorts who specialized in the study of human affairs. We could call them the first humanists. They were criticized by Presocratic philosophers as being false teachers, not only because the former questioned the latter’s intellectual pursuits (the Presocratics were interested in asking metaphysical questions about the nature of the universe) but also because the Sophists charged exorbitant fees for their services. One of the later critics of sophistry was Socrates’s student Plato. As Golden and Corbett explain, for Plato “rhetoric was a mere “knack,” a form of flattery, appealing to men’s passions and emotions rather than reason […] Plato’s strictures on rhetoric are the same objections that men of all ages have leveled against this seductive art. In the Phaedrus, however, Plato did admit that there could be such a thing as “true rhetoric,” but it would come about only if rhetoricians were to probe for truth in all matters, attempt to formulate essential definitions of particulars, and study man’s psychological dispositions so that they could adapt and arrange their arguments to suit the temper of an audience” (1-2). So for Plato rhetoric was helpful insofar as it aided in the study of metaphysical nature and allowed a rhetor to understand the nature of his audiences.

Aristotle recognized that rhetoric is a practical art because it operates within the realm of human action, thus he rejected Plato’s notion that rhetoric is mere sophistry. As Golden and Corbett explain, “Aristotle’s Rhetoric is realistic and unadorned; it takes man as he is, not as Plato wishes him to be” (2). In the Rhetoric Aristotle’s outlines three spheres of public action in which rhetoric is necessary. He called them the three species of rhetoric: the legal, judicial, and the ceremonial species. These will be explained later. But after Aristotle, the Roman tradition of rhetoric gets under way with works by such philosophers and statesmen as Cicero and Quintilian.

The Roman rhetoricians produced further systematic studies of rhetoric. What differentiated the Roman from the Greek traditions was that the Romans tended to emphasize the aesthetic qualities of rhetoric in addition to rhetoric’s relationship to virtue. It was Quintilian who famously said that the
ideal rhetor is “the good man speaking well.” This pithy maxim demonstrates how closely virtue and eloquence were related in the eyes of the Roman rhetoricians.

In the early middle ages there arose a new kind of discourse, the sermon, one that did not fit neatly into any of Aristotle’s three species of rhetoric. In his De Doctrina Christiana, Augustine “adapted Ciceronian rhetoric so that it could serve as a means of expounding the Scriptures for the laity and of inducting congregations to follow the straight and narrow path of virtue” (Golden and Corbett 5). Many medieval rhetoricians turned to the Roman tradition because they stressed the moral aspects just as much as the persuasive aspects of rhetoric.

In the late sixteenth century there were two “revolutions,” so to speak, in the study of rhetoric. First, the French scholar Peter Ramus sought to align rhetoric with logic. He said that invention and arrangement are part of logic since they mainly concern the use of reason, whereas the other three canons, especially style and delivery, deal more with imagination and thus should not be connected with logic. When Francis Bacon wrote in The Advancement of Learning that rhetoric is supposed “to apply and recommend the dictates of reason to imagination in order to excite the appetite and the will,” he was clearly towing the Ramistic line and separating the “logical” aspects of rhetoric from the aesthetic. In this way Bacon is able to set science in opposition to rhetoric, and thus he argues that matter (res) is more important than words (verba).

But focused attention on the “mere” words of rhetoric and its aesthetic qualities are what represent the second revolution in rhetorical theory after the sixteenth century. Here came the eloctionary movement in rhetoric which emphasized the importance of delivery and style. Also called the bellettristic movement, it “was based on the concept that rhetoric and related polite arts, poetry, drama, art, history, biography, philology, etc. should be joined under the broad heading of rhetoric and belles lettres. Since these disciplines share a common interest in taste, style, criticism, and sublimity, they seek to instruct the student to become an effective practitioner and judge in written and oral communication” (Golden and Corbett 8).

In the late eighteenth century rhetoric as a formal discipline started to change. On one front it became yoked with the discipline of composition, as Harvard’s curriculum during this period reflects. In addition, whereas since the middle ages rhetoric was studied alongside divinity, this too began to change with the advent of a new discipline called “homiletics,” the formal training of priests and pastors in public speaking. But in general, rhetoric as a discipline proper waned until it became a feature of English studies alongside the subfields of literature, writing, and linguistics. Rhetoric has also been tied to communication studies, but this is a rather new development when considered alongside rhetoric’s two-thousand year history. The directions that rhetorical studies has taken in the last century are certainly many, but perhaps Kenneth Burke, Chaim Perelman, George A. Kennedy, and James Kinneavy are the foremost “rhetoricians” to contribute to the revitalization that rhetorical studies enjoys today. Although to be fair, rhetoricians with vastly different interests have and continue to make important contributions in such fields ranging from cultural studies to psychology, history, anthropology and, of course, English and composition—just to name a few.
Most contemporary students of rhetoric are familiar with the rhetorical triangle, the heuristic concept that uses a triangle to depict how a text is related to its writer or speaker and the audience to whom it is addressed. Every text has both an audience and an author, thus the rhetorical triangle is helpful for reminding students to pay attention to these relationships when analyzing a text. But sometimes the “triangle” can oversimplify the concept of rhetorical analysis.

Rhetorician and philosopher Kenneth Burke, however, developed a heuristic pentad for analyzing acts of communication. As Roskelly and Jolliffe point out, “Burke’s pentad becomes most useful for both analysis of a situation and invention of one as you consider those elements in relationships. Burke makes clear that constructing these ratios can be playful. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers about them. Instead, they may be what he calls casuistries, little mental games a rhetorical analyst can play to examine a particular communicate act or piece of writing” (39). By identifying an “act,” or text, of some kind and then figuring out what kinds of conceptual relationships the act shares with the scene, agent, agency, and purpose of the act, then you are more or less doing rhetoric analysis.

**ARISTOTLE**

**Aristotle’s Rhetoric:**
(composed between 342-330 BCE)

- Crucial to the Rhetoric is the emphasis on **probability**. Infallibility, absolutism and certainty are not features of the art of rhetoric since there is no certainty in the realm of human interaction. Rhetoric is thus a matter of finding the available means of persuasion.

- Aristotle says there are 3 species, or kinds, of rhetoric:
  - Deliberative – political discourse; the weighing of pros and cons, the defense of a thesis, etc.
  - Judicial – forensic discourse; the discourse of the courtroom; assigning guilt or innocence, etc.
  - Epideictic – ceremonial discourse; discourse that either praises or blames

- Aristotle outline’s three rhetorical proofs, or appeals, that a rhetor can use for persuading and winning assent:
  - Logos – the appeal to the reason of the audience
  - Ethos – the appeal to the character of the speaker
  - Pathos – the appeal to the emotions of the audience

**Proof** – any statement put forward to persuade an audience to accept a proposition.
Pathos – the appeal to the emotions of the audience
Ethos – the appeal to character and personality, or to an image, so to speak, of a person—including the speaker.

THE APPEALS / LOGOS:

- The discovery process of logical arguments proceeds in two directions for Aristotle, through reasoning (syllogismos) and induction (epagoge). Reasoning, or deduction, comes from the Latin term meaning “to lead down,” and thus deductive reasoning involves the use of syllogisms. Induction is the opposite of deduction, therefore one begins with the particular and leads to the general. The example is the method Aristotle uses for inductive reasoning.

- The Example: a particular instance of something that is used to understand something more general.

- The Syllogism: if $a = b$ and $b = c$, then $a = c$. The syllogism is a deductive form of reasoning that involves combining a general, or major, premise with a particular, or minor, premise to form a conclusion. The genius of syllogistic reasoning is that a generalization is combined with particularity to reach conclusions.

- The Enthymeme: related to the syllogism. In dialectic and scientific reasoning, syllogisms are utilized. In rhetorical reasoning, enthymemes are utilized. Enthymeme comes from the Greek word thymos or “spirit,” something that is not material. The major premise in an enthymeme, unlike in the syllogism, is always based in rhetorical possibility and not scientific fact. Rhetors will draw on the common places of a community in order to identify their major premises. As Golden and Corbett explain, “…the rhetorical equivalent of the syllogism in logic is the enthymeme, whose essential difference from the syllogism is not so much that one of the premises is left unstated as that the deductive argument is based on premises that are only probably or usually true rather universally and infallibly true” (2-3).

Notice the difference between a syllogism and an enthymeme:
Syllogism – Major premise: All people are mortal; Minor premise: Socrates is mortal; Conclusion: Socrates is therefore mortal.
Enthymeme – Major premise: The penalties for littering need to be more strictly enforced; Minor premise: John was stopped by a police officer for littering; Conclusion: John should receive a ticket, instead of a warning, for littering.

The fact that all men are mortal cannot be debated, however the extent to which one should enforce litter laws can be debated. Each of the minor premises outlines a particular case.

Another example of an enthymeme, although this one is truncated:
Major premise: “Think Different” (Apple slogan)
Unstated minor premise: “Apple is different”
Unstated Conclusion: “Think Apple”

- Other rhetorical tools one can utilized in logical argument: Analogy, Similes and metaphors, Signs, Maxims.
How a maxim can be used as an enthymeme:
Major premise: A stitch in time saves nine.
Minor premise: There is a small crack in the windshield of Felix’s car.
Conclusion: Felix should have the crack fixed before it gets worse and he has to replace the entire windshield.

(examples come from Crowley and Hawhee)

PREMISES:
Aristotle outlines four logical methods for inventing arguments:
1. Demonstration – premises that fall under scientific/natural reasoning.
2. Dialectic – premises that are difficult to prove, but accepted by “wise” people.
3. Rhetoric – premises that relate to the realm of human action.
4. False/Contentious Reasoning – premises that only appear to be widely accepted.
All of these forms of logical reasoning begins with a premise, which is a statement laid down and assumed before an argument begins. Premises are then combined with other premises in order to form conclusions. According to Crowley and Hawhee, “the salient difference among scientific, dialectical, and rhetorical premises has nothing to do with some external criterion for truth. Rather, the difference among them depends upon the degree of belief awarded them by the people who are arguing about them” (160).

THE APPEALS / ETHOS:

- In rhetorical theory ethos is often conflated with “character,” but in our modern context character is usually linked with the idea of personality, which doesn’t completely represent the classical notion of ethos. Ethical appeals speak more to a community’s assessment of character value and the way in which an individual is positioned in relationship to others.

- Aristotle distinguished between two kinds of ethical proofs, invented and situated. When a speaker creates a kind of character for himself this is an invented ethos, and when a speaker draws from an existing reputation he already enjoys in a community, this is situated ethos. As Crowley and Hawhee point out, “this distinction parallels two primary senses of the term character in ancient Greek thought. The Greeks assumed that a good character could be constructed by the habitual practice of virtuous acts…But character also referred to the community’s assessment of a person’s habits, that is, to her reputation” (198).

- Golden and Corbett write, “Aristotle maintained that the ethical appeal could very well be the most significant of the appeals in the persuasive process, because if an audience did not trust or admire the speaker or writer, all of his logical and emotional appeals, however cogent they might be, would have little effect. Aristotle pointed out that the ethical appeal of a speaker or writer will be effective if in his discourse he creates an image of himself as being a man of good sense, good moral character, and good will towards his audience” (3-4)
Yet another way to think about ethos: Rhetorician Stephen Yarbrough says, “Ethos is best thought of interactionally—as a set of social relations we project upon a situation that determines how we interact with things. The specific topical relations our interactions produce, and the concepts, enthymemes, and beliefs we subsequently develop, are consequences of this projection. We are not our particular beliefs, desires, and emotions; rather, we have particular beliefs, desires, and emotions because of how we stand toward our world ethically” (170)

THE APPEALS / PATHOS:

- When rhetoricians speak of pathetic appeals they are referring to the arousal and expression of emotions.

- “A rhetor appeals to pathos by drawing on the emotions and interests of the audience so that they will be sympathetically inclined to accept and buy into his or her central ideas and arguments” (Roskelly and Jolliffe, 11)

- Book II in Aristotle’s Rhetoric is primarily dedicated to an analysis of the basic human emotions and a presentation of strategies for playing on those emotions. He defined emotions as “those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgments” (II ii 1377b-1378a).

- “Emotions should be distinguished from appetites, such as pleasure and pain. They must also be distinguished from values, such as justice and goodness. However, people do hold values with more or less intensity, and this intensity is where the rhetorical force of emotional appeals reside. People respond emotionally when they or those close to them are praised or threatened; rhetorically, they also respond emotionally when their values are reinforced or threatened” (Crowley and Hawhee 246-47).

- As Crowley and Hawhee summarize, “According to Aristotle, three criteria must be met if rhetors wish to understand how emotions are aroused or quelled. First, they must understand the state of mind of people who are angry, joyful, or indignant; second, they must know who can excite these emotions in people; third, they must understand the reasons for which people become emotional” (251)
THE TOOLS OF RHETORIC

THE Five Canons of Rhetoric

Inventio (invention) – the division of rhetoric that investigates the means through which proofs can be discovered. Or more generally, the art of discovering the arguments that a rhetorical situation makes available. The word invenire means “to find” or “to come upon.” Kairos, stasis theory, the commonplaces and the topics all relate to invention.

Dispositio (arrangement) – usually understood according to the parts of an oration: the Exordium or introduction, how the speaker orients and gains the attention of an audience; the Narratio or statement of the issue to be argued; the Confirmatio or proof, the main body of the discourse; the Confitutatio or refutation of an opposing argument; the Epilogue or conclusion, in which the speaker recapitulates his arguments, reinforces his ethical appeal, and perhaps makes a final pitch to the emotions.

Elocutio (style) – concerned with the actual expression or verbalization of an argument. One must decide what kind of diction to use, how decorous it should be, what kind of rhythm to use, and what figures of speech are beneficial to the rhetorical situation.

Memoria (memory) – In classical times, teachers often suggested mnemonic devices to help them memorize their speeches.

Pronuntiatio (delivery) – In the 18th century there arose a surge of interest in elocution, a term that combined issues of style with delivery.

Stasis THEORY

➢ Stasis theory provides rhetors with a systemic method of asking questions about rhetorical situations. It is used to help determine where disagreements begin, because locating the locus of disagreement is an important starting point for invention. Stasis theory provides rhetors with the tools for stating issues.

➢ Staseis is Greek for “questions” or “issues,” but the word “stasis” (Latin status or constitutio) is derived from a Greek words meaning to stand, “Thus a stasis can refer to the place where one rhetor takes a stand. Seen from the point of view of two disputants, however, the stasis marks the place where two opposing forces come together, where they rest or stand in agreement on what is at issue…” (Crowley and Hawhee 71-72). In other words, locating stasis refers to finding the place where two disputants can agree to disagree, and this is important since rhetoric traffics in the
realm of conflict. As Quintilian says, “Every question is based on assertion by one party and denial by another” (III vi 7).

➢ So the stasis point can be thought of as a resting place where there is agreement to disagree, but stasis is only temporary because the point is for a speaker or writer is to use argument to disrupt stasis in order to achieve persuasion. The modern term for stasis is “issue,” so defining the issue at hand is to locate the point where parties agree to disagree.

➢ Locating stasis is important because it gives rhetors the chance to identify what is at stake, which issue they need to defend, and thus they are better situated to identify the available means of persuasion. In short, stasis allows rhetors to determine the issues they should debate.

By working towards a point of stasis, the following advantages arise for rhetors:
- Clarifies their thinking about the point in dispute.
- Forces them to think about the assumptions and values shared by their audience.
- Establishes areas in which more research needs to be done.
- Suggests which proofs are crucial to the case.
- Perhaps even points the way towards more effective proofs and arrangement strategies (Crowley and Hawhee 72).

➢ The early Sophists believed that every argument had a contrary argument and they taught students to identify and argue both sides. The sophists believed that contradictions are what pervade rhetorical situations.

➢ Ancient rhetoricians divided questions into two categories: theoretical and practical. All questions will inform some sort of practical action, but the “why” behind the action is located in theory. Two examples from Cicero illustrate the difference between a theoretical and practical question:
  - Does law originate in nature or in some agreement and contact between people?
  - Should a philosopher take part in politics?

Both of these questions are important because they inform questions about human action. The latter begins in the realm of the practical but requires a theoretical explanation whereas the former begins in theory but needs to be explored through practical consequences. The word theory comes from the Greek theorein and means “to sit in the highest row of the arena” but can more generally mean “to observe from afar,” so theory allows rhetors to stand back, so to speak, and take stock of a question before proposing practical solutions. We are confronted with these two kinds of questions everyday:
  - Should John go out tonight with friends?
  - How beneficial is it for John to relax and fun when he has school work to complete?

This latter question is one that warrants debate. Whereas John might indeed have pressing work that needs to be completed, perhaps taking an evening off will give him a rest and make him all the more productive the following day. But what if it is in John’s nature to procrastinate? As you can see, these answers will help provide “theory” for debating the former question, but the trick is to
identify the best questions to ask, the ones whose answers prove to be the most persuasive.

- Classical rhetoricians also used the realm of generality to distinguish between practical and theoretical questions. A general question tended to be more theoretical, whereas specific issues located in particular rhetorical situation tend to be much more practical.
  
  For example:
  
  General question: *Are wars necessary and always justified?*
  
  Specific question: *Should the United States have invaded Iraq in 2003 even though military intelligence proved faulty?*
  
  The advantage of thinking about theoretical and practical questions in terms of generality is that it allows for a continuum of responses to arise as opposed to strict, binary oppositions. The specificity of questions can always be adjusted in order to identify the best available question to debate.

- By compering practical and theoretical questions within specific and general frames allows more rhetors to choose the appropriate avenues for debate from a multitude of questions.

  Crowley and Hawhee show us how this works by using a hypothetical question about whether a town should adopt a light ordinance in a town that holds a famous observatory. The issue is at hand is that astronomers wish to better view the night sky whereas the town’s merchants don’t wish to turn off their brightly lit billboards:

  - The practical question framed specifically:
    Should Ourtown adopt a dark-sky ordinance?
  
  - The practical question framed generally:
    Should cities value scientific knowledge over advertising revenues?
  
  - The specific question framed as theory:
    Should the city council of Ourtown give priority to astronomers or advertisers when it passes laws?
  
  - The specific question framed in practical terms:
    Will Ourtown profit more from a dark-sky ordinance or from advertising revenue?

  - The very specific, very practical questions:
    Will the astronomers have to close down their facility if the ordinance doesn’t pass? Can Ourtown afford to lose the prestige of the observatory? Does the revenue brought in by the billboards offset the loss of the observatory?

  (Crowley and Hawhee79)

- **Stating an issue** is the first step in locating stasis. The classical rhetoricians used four questions (*staseis*) to help them grasp the issue at hand.

  1. **CONJECTURE** – Does it exist? Did it happen?
  2. **DEFINITION** – What kind of thing or event is it?
  3. **QUALITY** – Was it right or wrong?
  4. **POLICY** – What should we do? (C+H 86)
  
  Crowley and Hawnee use a hypothetical episode involving theft for an example:

  If someone is accused of theft, the question of conjecture must first be raised [Did she do it or not?]. If everyone agrees she did, the stasis moves to the question of definition [Was it theft?];—maybe she was borrowing the item. If there is consensus that it was theft, the stasis moves into the realm of quality [Was it right or wrong]—she could
have stolen alcohol from the house of a friend who is an alcoholic, for example. If the quality is agreed upon, the stasis moves into policy [Should she be tried for the offence?] (86).

Cicero outlines a system of question similar to these: 1) Does the thing about which we are disputing exist? 2) If it exists, what is it? 3) What kind of thing is it? Cicero identifies these as first a question of reality, then a question of definition, and lastly a question of quality (On the Parts xvill).

The four above STASIS QUESTIONS can be elaborated into other sets of questions.

**CONJECTURE:** - Does the exist or is it true? - What is its origin? - What cause produced it? - What changes can be made to it?

**DEFINITION:** - What kind of thing or event is it? - To what larger class of things does it belong? - What are its parts? How are they relayed?

**QUALITY:** Simple questions of quality: - Is a thing good or bad, should it be sought or avoided, is it honorable or dishonorable, etc; Comparative Questions of quality: - Is it better or worse than something else, is it more or less desirable than alternatives, is more or less right than something else, etc.

**POLICY:** - Deliberative Questions: Should some action be taken? Given the situation, what actions are possible? Desirable? How would proposed actions affect the current state of affairs?, and the like; Forensic Questions: - Should some state of affairs be regulated? Which policies can be implemented? What are the merits of competing proposals?

**Using the staseis outlined above in order to state an issue and find stasis is very useful when it comes to sorting through the myriad of issues that most controversies involve.**
Kairos:

- The Greeks had two concepts of time: *chronos*, or linear, measurable time, and *kairos*, which means something like situational time—it is time that is advantageous or opportune.

- *Kairos* as a rhetorical concept is one that the Sophists used for illustrating the changing circumstances and contingent nature of rhetorical situations.

- As Crowley and Hawhee write, “In short, *kairos* is not about duration but rather about a certain kind of time. In Roman rhetoric, the Latin word *opportunitas* was used in a similar manner; its root, *port-*, means an opening... *Kairos* is thus a ‘window’ of time during which action is most advantageous” (45).

- Isocrates says that a rhetorician needs to “manage well the circumstances which they encounter day by day, and who possess a judgment which is accurate in meeting occasions as they arise and rarely misses the expedient course of action.”

- “A rhetoric that privileges *kairos* as a principle of invention cannot present a list of rules for finding arguments, but it can rather encourage a kind of ready stance, in which rhetors are not only attuned to the history of an issue (*chronos*) but are also aware of the more precise turns taken by arguments about it and when the arguments took these turns. One way to consider the *kairos* of an issue, then, is to explore the history of the issue; another is to pay careful attention to the arguments made by other parties about the issue, in order to cultivate a better understanding of why people are disagreeing at a particular time and in a particular place” (Crowley and Hawhee 48).

THE Topics

- The *topics* (or *topos*, meaning place) is the system most associated with classical rhetoric. They got this name because “topics” would be listed in papyrus rolls and students would have to locate the “place” on the rolls where each topic was located. Yarbrough says, “*Topoi* are not themselves arguments, not something, like enthymemes, that we may or may not choose to believe: they are what our beliefs are made of. Aristotle is clear that enthymemes are made from topoi” (40). Quintilian described the topics as hidden places where arguments reside, and as Crowley and Hawnee point out, he would have taught his students to use the topic much like how a hiker uses trail markers, to find their way through an issue using arguments (117-18).

- The topoi can be broken into two general categories: topics and commonplaces.
  
  **Topics** – refers to a specific procedure that generates arguments, like definition, division, or comparison.

  **Commonplaces** – statements that circulate within ideologies (Crowley and Hawhee 118). In our modern language, topics refer to already constructed bodies of knowledge, but for the ancients topics existed in the structures of language, and thus they were “common” in that anyone
who uses a language has access to its topics.

- Rhetoricians today will talk about the *sensus communis*, or the common sense that a community shares. Cultural theorists call this *ideology*, which refers to bodies of beliefs and doctrines that a community shares. We can look at American political rhetoric to identify examples of commonplaces. Think about how today’s politicians draw on the concepts of patriotism, terror, freedom, and democracy as arguments in their speeches. These concepts are some of American political rhetoric’s commonplaces because these ideas carry with them specific ideological characteristics. Of course, a concept like “freedom,” for example, is hardly simple or “plain” (notice how many politicians speak about it as if it is), so in a debate about freedom you can see how something like *stasis theory* (see below) is helpful for understanding what two debating parties mean by the commonplace of freedom.

- The *topics* represent a system for exploring subject matter to discover something to say about that subject. Lines of argument can be worked out in terms of:
  - **Definition** – what is the nature of the thing?
  - **Comparison** – what is it like, what is it unlike?
  - **Relationship** – what is the cause of this effect, or what are the effects of this cause?
  - **Authority** – for these arguments one draws on such supporting evidence as testimony, statistics, maxims, documents, laws, etc.

These were the so-called common topics, sources of arguments for virtually any subject.

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<th>MORE Common Topoi</th>
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<td>-Definition</td>
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<td>-Distinguishing Characteristics</td>
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**ARISTOTLE’S TOPICS**

- As Crowley and Hawhee write, “The topical system delineated in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* is tightly bound to the system of logical proofs that he erected in his treatises on logic, dialectic, and poetry as well as those on rhetoric and the topics. These treatises taken together reveal in great detail his assumptions about how language can be put to work as a heuristic, a method of finding proofs to use when debating an issue” (120).

- Aristotle probably didn’t invent the topics he outlines, but the genius of his work is on the classification system he developed for them. He says there are two kinds of topics, those that are suited for any argument, the *koina*, or *common topics*, and the *eide*, or *special topics*. The three *common topics* for Aristotle:
  1. **Conjecture** – whether a thing has or has not occurred or if it will (past/future fact)
  2. **Degree** – whether a thing is greater or lesser to another thing (greater/lesser)
3. **Possibility** – what is and is not possible
So according to Aristotle these common topics are useful
because they are not confined to any one class of things, that is, they can be used to discuss any
topic. You should notice the
categorical overlap here between the common topic and stasis theory.

- The **special topics** are numerous and deal with specific arts and sciences and relate to such
  fields as politics, ethics, and law. For example, in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle says the special topics
  for politics are “finances, war an peace, national defense, imports and exports, and the framing
  of laws.” Specific knowledge about all of these special topics is necessary to effectively utilize
  them in argument.

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**Style:**

“Style is a difficult concept to define, although most of us feel we know what it is.
Famous definitions of style, like Buffon’s ‘style is the man,’ Swift’s ‘proper words in
proper places,’ Newman’s ‘style is a thinking into language,’ and Blair’s ‘the peculiar
manner in which a man expresses his conceptions,’ are apt, but they are just general
enough to tease us out of thought and just general enough to give us a sense of style
without giving us a clear definition of it. None of the major rhetoricians attempted to
give a definition…” – (Corbett)

Classically, style was often broken into three categories: low, middle, and high.

**Quintilian’s take on the three kinds of style:**
1. **Low or Plain Style:** most appropriate for instructing
2. **Middle or Forcible Style:** most appropriate for moving
3. **High or Florid Style:** most appropriate for charming
Three important contemporary terms related to style:

**Diction** – word choice, which is viewed on scales of formality/informality, concreteness/abstraction, and denotative/connotative value.

**Tone** – the writer or speaker’s attitude towards subject matter.

**Voice** – the textual features, such as diction and sentence structure, that convey a writer’s or speaker’s persona

Schemes and Tropes:
As Roskelly and Jolliffe explain, a **scheme** “is any artful variation of the typical arrangement of words in a sentence,” whereas a **trope**, “is any artful variation from the typical or expected way a words or idea is expressed” (73).

**Scheme Examples:**

- **Alliteration** – repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning or in the middle of adjacent words.
- **Assonance** – repetition of vowel sounds in the stressed syllables of adjacent words.
- **Asyndeton** – an omission of conjunctions between related clauses.
- **Anadiplosis** – repetition of the last word of one clause at the beginning of the following clause.
- **Anaphora** – repetition of the same group of words at the beginning of successive clauses.
- **Climax** – repetition of words, phrases, or clauses in order of increasing number or importance.
- **Ellipsis** – any omission of words, the meaning of which is provided by the overall context of the passage.
- **Epistrophe** – repetition of the same group of words the end of successive clauses.
- **Hyperbaton** – words that naturally belong together are separated from each other for emphasis or effect
- **Parallelism** – when two or more passages follow a similar grammatical form., especially when their content fulfills a similar function.

**Tropes:**

- **Allegory** – when a metaphor is sustained throughout a long passage.
- **Catachresis** – word usage that flagrantly violates the norms of a language community.
- **Circumlocution** - where the meaning of a word or phrase is indirectly expressed through several or many words.
- **Onomatopoeia** – the sound of the words used are related to their meanings
- **Irony** – Words are meant to convey the opposite of their literal meanings.
- **Antonomasia** - A descriptive word or phrase is used to refer to a proper name.
- **Metaphor** – when one transfers of substitutes one word for another.
- **Metonymy** – An entity is referred to by one of its parts.
- **Periphrasis** – ? (R+J use the same definition as antonomasia)
- **Hyperbole** – exaggeration
- **Synecdoche** – a part of something is used to refer to the whole.
Figures of thought:

**Anticipation** – wherein a rhetor foresees and replies to possible objections and arguments -

**Apostrophe** – a figure wherein a rhetor addresses some absent person or thing

**Correction** – when a rhetor replaces a word or phrase he used earlier with a more precise one.

**Hesitation** – when a rhetor pretends to be unable to decide where to begin or end, or how exactly to express an idea.

**Oxymoron** – a statement that combines contradictory terms.

**Paradox** – a statement that seems self-contradictory but in some sense may be true.

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**HOW NOT TO ARGUE;**

**or, identifying fallacious arguments**

It is important to identify **logical fallacies** in arguments. Logical fallacies can be understood in terms of flawed reasoning, but fallacious arguments can assume any number of types. The following are the most common:

**Hasty generalization or oversimplification** – this type of reasoning relies on ill-informed assumptions that are based on insufficient evidence. Think stereotypes. In addition, often stalemated debate results because the parties involved have oversimplified the complex nuances of an issue. This is why statistical theory is important. Oversimplification can also be identified by the copious use of **either/or** arguments that overlook complexity.

**Post hoc ergo propter hoc** – Latin for “after this, therefore because of this.” These kinds of fallacies are based on false or insufficient cause and effect arguments. This kind of fallacious reasoning can be seen when a student doesn’t study for a test but does well, and then decides not to study for the next test.

**Non sequitur** – Latin for “It does not follow.” These fallacies are represented when no logical relationship exists between two or more ideas that are presented as being related. For example, if it has been determined that a rented house needs new, energy-efficient windows, but the landlord refused because he doesn’t think the tenants pay enough in rent. Even though both parts of the argument relate to housing costs, monthly rent should not determine the extent of normal housing upkeep.

**Ad hominem argument** – Latin for “to the person.” These arguments avoid an issue by focusing on irrelevant references to an individual supporting or opposing a particular argument. Obviously the rhetorical appeal of **ethos** is important here. In politics the **ad hominem** debate is manifest; destroy your opponent’s argument by attacking his/her character. Sometimes the **ad hominem** argument can and should be utilized. For example, if a candidate builds their political campaign around the issue of
restoring integrity to a particular office, but they themselves have a history of dishonorable behavior, then the ad hominem argument is relevant. However, to take a real example, when Barack Obama decided not to wear an American flag lapel pin during his campaign, the political right accused him of being “unpatriotic” even though he was running for president!

**Begging the Question** – This occurs when someone assumes the validity of an unproven premise. These kinds of fallacious arguments usually begin with statements like “Everybody knows…” or “History tells us…” An example of this can be seen in the following statement, “Because death penalty deters murderers, it should be a mandatory sentence for all convicted killers.” Unless it has been proven that the death penalty does indeed deter murder (and this has not been proven!), the example begs the question.

**Appeal to ignorance** – This is argument based on the assumption that something is true if it hasn’t been proven false. Example: The terrorists must be of Middle Eastern descent, because the officials haven’t said they aren’t.

As Stolarek and Juchartz write, “Sometimes it’s difficult to see where valid use of the topoi ends and fallacies begin. For example, at what point does presenting yourself or another person as a reliable supporter of an issue become argument to the person? At what point does the use of relevant case study become hasty generalization? How much proof is necessary to distinguish a valid cause-and-effect relationship from a post hoc fallacy?” (215-16)

**ROGERIAN RHETORIC:**

If the above methods outline fallacious arguments, we can think of Rogerian rhetoric as a more ethical way for arguing and debating, especially when it comes to issues that are highly contested. Developed by psychologist Carl Rogers, Rogerian rhetoric focuses on the idea of listening to and recapitulating your opponent’s arguments in order to create agreement and mediation in debate instead of “winners” and “losers.”

The following steps of Rogerian rhetoric are outlines by Hepsie Roskelly:

**OPENING:** with narration, background and introduction of position, paying attention to the difficulties of the position. Presenting issue as problem rather than right or wrong decision.

**FAIR STATEMENT of OPPOSING POSITION:** including places where opposition might work or be useful, demonstration of understanding of other perspectives.
STATEMENT of POSTION in OPPOSITION MAY BE VALID: finding contexts where opposition has some validity; showing limitations.

STATEMENT of WHERE YOUR POSITION IS VALID: may be more places; trying to get readers to look at the problem from new perspectives.

REASONS to MEDIATE or to CHALLENGE OPPOSING POSITION: Possible conclusions or actions that follow from mediating position. How readers would benefit by adopting elements at least of your position.

What is key in Rogerian rhetoric is that opponents take time to show that they understand each other’s arguments. This means stopping to sum up what the other has said before you yourself launch into your own argument. Furthermore, opponents are encouraged to consider—and articulate to each other—how, where, and to what extent each other’s arguments may be valid.

PEDAGOGY and RHETORIC:

The following are just a few simple pedagogical exercises that focus on using the tools of rhetorical analysis. First, however, is a brief summary of the Socratic Method. Most people assume the Socratic Method is simply pedagogy focused on asking questions (instead of straight lecturing, for example), however it’s not that simple, at least not in the way that Plato used it in the construction of his dialogues.

The Socratic Method:

The Socratic Elenchus – is simply a method for demonstrating that a set of propositions is inconsistent. As philosopher Donald Davidson writes, “The typical elenchus begins by Socrates asking a question, to which the interlocutor gives an answer. Socrates then elicits some further views from the interlocutor (not infrequently by putting them forward himself, and getting the interlocutor to agree), and proceeds to demonstrate that those further views entail the falsity of the original answer” (227)

– Important to note: both Socrates and his interlocutor AGREE with the second set of answers/views, and then they both agree that the first answer was wrong.

Imitation:

Classical rhetoricians often used imitation exercises to teach their students about effective communication. They would ask students to replicate speeches structurally, visually, thematically,
and stylistically. A great pedagogical exercise is to give students a generic text of some kind and ask them to rewrite the text using different subject matter. Afterwards ask students to explain their imitation using rhetorical concepts.

**Doxa:**
It’s important for rhetoricians to use facts, beliefs, and opinions in strategic ways when composing an argument. Give students some kind of text, maybe an editorial, and ask them to identify the facts from the opinions (they won’t always be black and white, especially in editorials), and then ask them to compose a list of beliefs they think are informing the writer or speaker’s argument.

**Analyzing Argument:**
Ask students to select an essay or article and identify the following: What is the central argument or proposition the writer posits? What are the key points he/she uses in support of this proposition? Does the writer mention opposing arguments? What evidence based in logic does the writer provide? Does he/she use an emotional appeals? How does the writer present him/herself? What assumptions does the writer make about the audience? How effective do you think is the argument as a whole?

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**DEFINING RHETORIC:**

As you can tell from the following quotations, rhetoric doesn’t have just one definition. From the manipulation of symbols, analysis of discourse, the politics of interpretation, to the organization of idea and everything in between, the study of rhetoric is, by grace of its focus on communication, not so much interdisciplinary as it is transdisciplinary because it cannot be wholly contained or fully defined by any one disciplinary approach.

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Rhetoric is “the art of effective communication. The study of rhetoric examines all the elements that are necessary to make communication persuasive to a reader or listener.”

- Elizabeth A. Stolarek and Larry R. Juchartz

Rhetoric is "the art of winning the soul by discourse."

- Plato

"Rhetoric is one great art comprised of five lesser arts: inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, and pronunciatio." Rhetoric is "speech designed to persuade."

- Cicero

Rhetoric is the application of reason to imagination "for the better moving of the will."

- Francis Bacon
[Rhetoric] is that art or talent by which discourse is adapted to its end. The four ends of discourse are to enlighten the understanding, please the imagination, move the passion, and influence the will.

- George Campbell

“[Rhetoric is] a body of rules derived from experience and observation, extending to all communication by language and designed to make it efficient. It does not ask whether a man is to be a speaker or writer, --a poet, philosopher, or debater; but simply,--is it his wish to be put in the right way of communicating his mind with power to others, by words spoken or written. If so, rhetoric undertakes to show him rules or principles which will help to make the expression of his thoughts effective.”

- Edward T. Channing, in his Lectures Read to the Seniors at Harvard College

“The most characteristic concern of rhetoric [is] the manipulation of men's beliefs for political ends....the basic function of rhetoric [is] the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents.”

- Kenneth Burke, in A Rhetoric of Motives.

“In short, rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action.”

- Lloyd Bitzer, in "The Rhetorical Situation"

“...rhetoric is the process of using language to organize experience and communicate it to others. It is also the study of how people use language to organize and communicate experience. The word denotes…both distinctive human activity and the "science" concerned with understanding that activity.”

- C. H. Knoblauch, in the essay "Modern Rhetorical Theory and Its Future Directions"

“Rhetoric…is to serve—so to speak—as a two handed technology. On the one hand, it comprehends how empirical events may be constituted and exchanged among participants (performers, witnesses), through and as discursive practices. On the other, it serves as a mode of metacritical practice, a methodology of analyzing and bringing to light interests, power places, and ideological sleights of hand that may function as the ‘ends’ of rhetorical ‘means.’ As such, in serving to bring together the parties to agreement, while at the same time functioning as the analytic light by which disputed and contradictory interest may be brought to view, rhetoric engages in both a binding and a rupturing. Rhetoric…is an ambivalent mediator.”

- Joseph Kelleher, in his essay in the collection Mourning Diana.
“Rhetoric is the art or the discipline that deals with the use of discourse, either spoken or written, to inform or persuade or motivate an audience, whether that audience is made up of one person or a group of persons. Broadly defined in that way, rhetoric would seem to comprehend every kind of verbal expression that people engage in”
- Edward P.J. Corbett

“Once rhetoric is conceived as ‘supplement,’ it becomes a formal, hence an empty discipline. It is without substance, without a secure set of referents, or to put it mundanely, it has no subject matter of its own…The very fact that rhetoric is without a domicile is seen as profoundly threatening to the integrity of substantive disciplines.”
- Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar

“Rhetoric is an instrumental use of language…. One person engages another person in an exchange of symbols to accomplish some goal. It is not communication for communication's sake. Rhetoric is communication that attempts to coordinate social action. For this reason, rhetorical communication is explicitly pragmatic. Its goal is to influence human choices on specific matters that require immediate attention.”
- Gerard A. Hauser, in Introduction to Rhetorical Theory

A rhetorician is someone who provides his fellows with useful precepts or directions for organizing and presenting his ideas or feeling to them. (20)
- James J. Murphy, in his essay “One Thousand Neglected Authors”

"Rhetoric is a form of reasoning about probabilities, based on assumptions people share as members of a community."
- Erika Lindemann

Rhetoric is the study of misunderstandings and their remedies.
- I.A. Richards

Rhetoric is “the political effectivity of trope and argument in culture”
- Steven Mailloux, in Rhetorical Power

[Rhetoric,] that powerful instrument of error and deceit.
- John Locke, in Essay Concerning Human Understanding

“The primordial function of rhetoric is to "make-known" meaning both to oneself and to others. Meaning is derived by a human being in and through the interpretive understanding of reality. Rhetoric is the process of making known that meaning. Is not rhetoric defined as pragmatic communication, more concerned with the contemporary audiences and specific questions than with universal audiences and general questions?”
- Michael Hyde and Craig Smith, in their essay “Hermeneutics and Rhetoric: A Seen but Unobserved Relationship”
“Rhetoric is primarily a verbal, situationally contingent, epistemic art that is both philosophical and practical and gives rise to potentially active texts.”
- William A. Covino and David Joliffe, in *Rhetoric: Concepts, Definitions, Boundaries*

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**REFERENCES AND WORKS CONSULTED:**


