

## Political Science 2026/282: Rhetoric and Political Thought

Winter 2018

Thursdays 10-12, TC 24

Prof. T. Shanks  
Political Science Department  
torrey.shanks@utoronto.ca

Office Hours:  
Sidney Smith 3118  
Thursdays 1-2:30

This course will explore the relationship between politics, rhetoric, and philosophy. Where rhetoric is integral for democratic practice, it has often been viewed with suspicion in the history of political thought. What is the quarrel between rhetoric and philosophy on the nature of politics? Why is rhetoric seen by some as powerful, even dangerous? How have political thinkers used rhetoric for their own purposes? Is there a productive relationship between rhetoric and politics, and democracy in particular? Readings will focus on primary texts from ancient and modern thinkers of politics, law, and rhetoric.

### Required Texts

J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Harvard University Press)  
Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Hackett)  
Plato, *The Apology and Related Dialogues* (Broadview)  
Plato, *Gorgias*, tr. Donald J. Zeyl (Hackett)  
Plato, *Phaedrus*, tr. Alexander Nehamas (Hackett)

### Course Requirements

This course will run as a research seminar. All students will complete a final paper and actively participate *every week* by listening and contributing to class discussion. You will submit three response papers that raise questions for class discussion on weeks (sign up in advance).

Consider carefully if you will have the time and background to complete this course. It is assumed that students will be familiar with the major texts of the history of political thought, such as Plato and the social contract tradition. To be prepared for class discussion, you will need to read all assigned texts very carefully, take notes, and select passages for discussion. Arrive in class on time and prepared to comment, raise questions and respond to other students.

### Response Papers – 20%

Three 1-2 page papers (approximately 500 words) on the week's assigned reading. Raise questions for class discussion that are relevant to the major themes of the course. Due on Wednesdays at 5:00 pm by email to torrey.shanks@utoronto.ca.

### Participation – 20%

### Final Paper – 45%; Proposal – 10%; Presentation – 5%

Graduates: 15-20 page paper; Undergraduates: 12 page paper  
Proposal: approximately 3 pages, including references  
Deadlines: Proposal (approx.. 3 pages): March 8; Paper: April 5

## Schedule of Readings, Topics, and Assignments

January 4                      Rhetoric, Democracy, Philosophy: A Difficult Relationship

Recommended:

- Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics" *Between Past and Future*
- Tom Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (University of Chicago)
- Benedetto Fontana, Cary J. Nederman, and Gary Remer, eds., *Talking Democracy* (Pennsylvania State University)
- George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language"

### I.        Rhetoric and Political Philosophy: Ancient Quarrels

January 11

- Plato, *Gorgias*
- Plato, *Republic* (selections)

Recommended:

- Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen*
- George T. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton)
- Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens* (Princeton)
- Josiah Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens* (Princeton)

January 18

- Plato, *Phaedrus*
- Plato, *Apology*

Recommended:

- Peter Euben, ed., *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy* (Cornell)
- S. Sara Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements* (Princeton)

January 25

- Cicero, *On the Orator* (selections): <http://go.utlib.ca/cat/10602924>
- Aristotle, *Rhetoric* (selections) \*\*

Recommended:

- Joy Connolly, *The State of Speech* (Princeton)
- Daniel Kapust, *Republicanism, Rhetoric, and Roman Political Thought* (Cambridge)
- Neal Wood, *Cicero's Social and Political Thought* (University of California)

## II. Rhetoric and the Modern State

February 1

- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (selections)

Recommended:

- David Johnson, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan* (Princeton)
- Victoria Kahn, *Wayward Contracts: The Crisis of Political Obligation, 1640-1674* (Princeton)
- James Martel, *Subverting Leviathan: Reading Thomas Hobbes as a Radical Democrat* (Columbia)
- Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge)

February 8

- John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (selections)
- John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, chs. 1, 7-8, 14, 19 \*\*

Recommended:

- Doulgas Casson, *Liberating Judgment: Fanatics, Skeptics, and John Locke's Politics of Probability* (Princeton)
- Hannah Dawson, *Locke, Language, and Early-Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge)
- Kirstie McClure, "Cato's retreat: fabula, historia, and the question of constitutionalism in Mr Locke's anonymous Essay on Government." In *Reading, Society, and Politics in Early Modern England*, Kevin M. Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, eds. (Cambridge): 317-350.
- Torrey Shanks, *Authority Figures: Rhetoric and Experience in John Locke's Political Thought* (Penn State University Press, 2014)
- Brian Vickers and Nancy S. Struever, *Rhetoric and the Pursuit of Truth: Language Change in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Papers read at a Clark Library Seminar, 8 March 1980 (UCLA: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1985)
- William Walker, *Locke, Literary Criticism and Philosophy* (Cambridge)

Feb15

- Giambattista Vico, *Selected Writings* (selections) \*\*
- Ernesto Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy* \*\*

Recommended:

- David L. Marshall, *Vico and the Transformation of Early Modern Rhetoric* (Cambridge University Press, 2010)
- Ernesto Grassi, "The Priority of Common Sense and Imagination: Vico's Philosophical Relevance Today." *Social Research* 43 (1976)

Mar 1

- Jean Jacques Rousseau, *On the Origin of Languages*, chs. 1-12 , 20\*\*
- *The Social Contract*, I. 6-8, II. 1-4 \*\*
- *Discourse on Inequality*, Part 1 especially \*\*
- *The Declaration of the Rights of Man* (1789) \*\*
- *The Declaration of Independence* (1776) \*\*
- Olympe de Gouges, *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman* (1791) \*\*
- Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence* (selections) \*\*

Recommended:

- Rousseau, *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*
- Arash Abizadeh, "Banishing the Particular: Rousseau on Rhetoric, *Patrie*, and the Passions," *Political Theory* 29 (2001)
- Danielle Allen, *Our Declaration* (Liveright)
- Christopher Kelly, "To Persuade with Convincing: The Melodious Language of Rousseau's Legislator," *American Journal of Political Science* 31 (1987)
- Jean Starobinski, "Eloquence and Liberty," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38 (1977)
- Elizabeth Wingrove, *Rousseau's Republican Romance* (Princeton)

### III. The Afterlives of Rhetoric

Mar 8 J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*  
**Proposals due**

Mar 15 Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context" \*\*  
Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in an Extra-moral Sense" (1873) \*\*

Recommended:

- Paul de Man, "Epistemology of Metaphor," *Critical Inquiry*
- Jacques Derrida, "Declarations of Independence," *New Political Science* 7, 1 (1986): 7-15
- Terry Eagleton, "A Small History of Rhetoric," *Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism*
- Bonnie Honig, "Declarations of Independence: Arendt and Derrida on the Problem of Founding a Republic," *APSR* 85, 1 (1991): 97-113

Mar 22 Presentations

**Either:**

- Mary Beard, *Women and Power*; **OR**
- Bryan Garsten, *Saving Persuasion*, Introduction; **AND**
- Nancy Struever, *Rhetoric, Modality, Modernity*, ch. 1

Mar 29 Presentations

**April 5: Paper due by email**

## **Course Policies**

**Blackboard:** Blackboard will be used for course announcements, readings and other materials. Check it at least once a week for new information or announcements.

### **Accessibility:**

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodation or have any accessibility concerns, visit <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as> as soon as possible.

### **Academic Integrity and Turnitin.com**

Any case of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Dean of Academic Integrity. Penalties for plagiarism usually range from failure on the assignment to failure in the course and repeat offenses can lead to expulsion. More information about plagiarism can be found at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>.

“Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.”

### **Disruptive Behavior**

No student may engage in conduct that disrupts or impedes the ability of the instructors to teach and/or students to learn. This includes, but is not limited to making loud or distracting noise, visually distracting students or instructors, repeatedly leaving and entering the classroom, persisting in speaking without being recognized, or resorting to physical threats or personal insults.

### **Late or Missed Assignments**

Late response papers will not be accepted. There will be no opportunity to reschedule presentations. Late final papers will be penalized 5% for every day (24 hours) after the deadline they are received; no papers will be accepted more than one week late. If there are extenuating circumstances backed up by documented evidence, speak with me as soon as possible.