

An Overview of Rhetorical Pedagogy

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The relevance of rhetoric and the history of rhetoric emerged strongly in the 1960's for two reasons: for legitimating the field of composition by grounding it in the history of rhetoric, and as a reaction against self-expressive writing that was seen as a limiting discourse. James Kinneavy states in his *A Theory of Discourse* that the rhetorical tradition is rich and should be explored. Kinneavy presents the "communication triangle" which situates the act of language as relationships between the encoder (writer), the decoder (audience), and a reality (context). In this sense it goes beyond self-expression and defines writing as contextual and situational; it is the job of the rhetorician to study the history of rhetoric and understand its application in varied situations.

If we delve into the history of rhetoric, we see that it was fundamentally the use of words to persuade, for the most part in oratory. For Plato, this was seen as dangerous and artificial. The Socratic critique of the sophists can be read as a critique of rhetoric as a tool for persuasion, but not with seeking of truth in mind or as impetus. We receive our word 'sophism' from this pejorative definition of rhetoric as a false argument meant to deceive. For Plato, this rhetoric collapses in a relativism that impedes the attainment of the ideal truth. As example, one can look to Socrates' critique of Protagoras in the dialogue bearing the same name.

The positive reading of rhetoric is found in Aristotle. Rhetoric is no longer a dangerous practice but is a constructive form of communication, concerned more with natural phenomena and situation than idealized forms of truth. This can be shown in its influence on the beginnings of hermeneutics. As Gadamer tells us, Aristotelian rhetoric guided Luther and his student Melanchthon in interpreting the bible for themselves. This bypassing of clerical authority was the impetus for Protestantism, and rhetorical principles played a large role in the interpretation of Scripture. Aristotle was interested in systematizing and grounding the tools of communicative persuasion. Examples of these are the modes of persuasion that pertained to artistic invention (artistic in the broad sense of a craft and ability): rational appeal (logos), emotional appeal (pathos), and ethical appeal (ethos). Rational appeal persuaded through understanding, both deductively and inductively. The emotional appeal lent persuasion through psychology. This was the less favored by Aristotle than the other two modes of persuasion, but he understood, nonetheless that emotional appeal, however irrational in human affairs, will be a form of persuasion that falls under the rubric of rhetoric. Finally, the ethical appeal persuaded through the credibility of the speaker; if the speaker is deemed intelligent and trustworthy, this will play a major role in persuading an audience. These three modes fall under the notion of *inventio*, or the aspect of rhetoric that is concerned with finding the proper ways of finding the argument. *Inventio* is the first of five aspects of rhetoric as a whole. The others are *dispositio*, the ordering of the material, *elocutio*, the style,

memoria, the memorization of a text, and *pronuntiatio*, the delivery. All five of these aspects of rhetoric must be effective for persuasiveness. When combined into such a persuasive whole, these aspects of rhetoric would fall under one of three kinds of discourse: The deliberative or political oratory, the forensic or legal oratory, or the epideictic or demonstrative oratory.

As can easily be seen from this brief description of classical rhetoric, there is a great emphasis on ordering, systematizing, and describing function and form. It is clear that Kinneavy's "communication triangle" is of the same sort as it tries to detail the proper function and form of the three relationships that enact communication: the writer, the audience and the context. It is Aristotelian rhetoric applied to composition, and it is from here where we can return to the modern and contemporary reception of classical rhetoric.

Along with Kinneavy, one of the more important thinkers during the 1960's return to rhetoric was Edward P.J. Corbett. In his work, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, Corbett addresses the issue of the contemporary relevance of rhetoric. Though he takes his cue from classical works such as Xenophon, Homer, Stevenson, Jefferson, Burke, etc., he wishes to stress that rhetoric is an inescapable component of contemporary life, whether or not one is aware of it. The rhetoric of advertising is an example he gives as a contemporary form of persuasiveness, along with that of the politician and that of the lawyer. Rhetoric, Corbett claims, shows us how to hone our skills of persuasion in any context. This notion of rhetoric goes hand in hand with Kinneavy's account of the rhetorician's role of understanding its varied situations. Corbett's chapters, as predicted, betray a strong Aristotelian feel. The headings are broken down into the following: Discovery of Arguments (recall *inventio*), Arrangement of Material (recall *dispositio*), and Style (recall *elocutio*). To underscore Aristotle's influence even more, the three modes of persuasion, appeal to reason, the ethical appeal, and the emotional appeal, are all represented in the Discovery of Arguments section. It is clear that Corbett finds these notions valuable and applicable to contemporary processes of composition.

Fundamentally, Corbett sees rhetoric as a positive approach to writing: As an active gathering, ordering, and expressing of material in a persuasive manner. Its function is to provide the student of composition with principles, procedures, and criteria that if used wisely, will reap persuasive results. The key concepts involved (other than the ones already mentioned above in detailing classical rhetoric) are many: allegory, alliteration, antithesis, chiasmus, euphemism, hyperbole, irony, syllogism, oxymoron, invective, and simile. These are only a small selection of the more common and familiar terms involved. From looking at Corbett's book, as well as much of the literature of rhetorical pedagogy, it is clear what its application would be like in the classroom. There is a great emphasis on the classics in literature, from Homer to Cervantes to Dostoyevsky to Faulkner. Passages are analyzed to uncover the rhetorical principles and techniques that comprise it. From this we see rhetorical pedagogy as didactically two-fold: the teaching of rhetorical principles, which will give the student the tools of rhetoric for their

own work, and the contextualization of those principles in great works, which show their application by masters. In this way, the student gains knowledge not only of the tools of rhetoric but how they have been applicable in certain contexts, and from this, how they can be applied to their own compositions.

Corbett may be one of the more salient figures in the New Rhetoric movement of the 1960's, but there are others to mention that have furthered or modified the modern reception of rhetoric. In 1963 (two years before Corbett's influential book), Braddock in his *Research in Written Composition* argued that compositional rhetoric should fall under the methodology of the social sciences, with a claim to inductive validity. Later, the scholar Janet Emig would more fully develop this claim in her *Composing Process of Twelfth Graders* (1971). This connection to the social sciences is akin to cognitive psychology and has been a strong strain in the Developments of New Rhetoric since the 1960's. Young, Becker, and Pike in *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change* (1970) was just such an instance of introducing concepts from cognitive psychology to composition. A more historically critical stance towards the Western traditional rhetoric also developed. The scholars associated with this move include: Sharon Crowley in *The Methodical memory*, Kathleen Welch in *The Contemporary Reception of Classical Rhetoric*, Frank D'Angelo, Richard Enos and James Berlin. All these thinkers are interested in pointing out the inadequacies of traditional rhetoric and want to replace or fix the situation with a reworking of rhetoric. From this new standpoint of rhetoric, we see the introduction and influences of analytic philosophy, structuralism, literary criticism, feminist theory, developments in psychology, and political and social thought, all seeking to develop a workable and valid New Rhetoric into the end of the 20th century.

Pedagogical Approach Report
Annotated Bibliography

- Brooks, Cleanth, and Robert Penn Warren. *Modern Rhetoric*
United States of America: Harcourt Brace & Company, Inc. 1958
A textbook that uses and describes rhetorical concepts, especially contained in works of classic literature. After each chapter, there are questions concerning the rhetorical principles in the cited works of literature, along with prompts for the student to use those principles in their own compositions.
- Connors, Robert J., Lisa S. Ede, and Andrea A. Lunsford, eds. *Essays on Classical Rhetoric and Modern Discourse*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois Press, 1984.
A companion of essays by major scholars dealing with the effects of classical rhetoric on current issues of discourse; there is a great emphasis on Aristotelian rhetoric and Platonic dialogue throughout.
- Corbett, Edward P.J. Corbett. *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*
New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.
A textbook that utilizes classical rhetorical principles; there is a great emphasis on the uncovering of rhetorical tools in classic texts of literature, philosophy, political and social thought; the book can be seen as an application of Aristotelian rhetoric to composition.
- Enos, Theresa, ed. *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*.
New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996.
A comprehensive reference for rhetorical pedagogy; a source for key terms and scholars, along with thinkers outside of composition studies who nevertheless have contributed to the developments of rhetoric, especially, philosophers and critical theorists.
- Gadamer, Hand-Georg. *Gadamer in Conversation*
New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001
A collection of interviews of Gadamer; includes topics on aesthetics, practical philosophy, phenomenology, the Greek tradition, and hermeneutics and its history.

Jasinski, James. *Sourcebook on Rhetoric*

London/New Delhi: Sage Publications, Inc., 2001

Strictly a dictionary/encyclopedia of contemporary rhetorical terms and concepts; no emphasis on scholars associated with contemporary rhetoric, just the issues, concepts and terms at hand.

Tate, Gary, Amy Ripiper, and Kurt Schick. *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies.*

New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

A general overview and introduction to composition pedagogies; gives major themes and scholars for each pedagogy, along with helpful bibliographies concerning each approach.

Winterowd, W. Ross. *Composition/Rhetoric; A Synthesis*

Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986

A textbook that shows rhetorical principles at work in examples of poetry and literature; great emphasis on the applicability of these principles to composition; examples in this work seem to be more concise than other textbooks.