History of Rhetoric II: Medieval and Renaissance

English 5351 offers a survey of rhetorical theory and practice in the European West from roughly 400 to 1600, a period that is notable for both continuities with and revisions of ancient Greek and Roman traditions. Much of our work will be concerned with revisions: how medieval and early modern writers conceived of the field of rhetoric, and how in their theory and practice they sought to shape it to conform to changing political, religious, social, and academic needs. In addition to examining key figures (Augustine, Erasmus, Ramus, Sidney, Bacon) and genres (preaching, letter writing, dialogue), we will consider a range of topics: the nature and purpose of imitation, the relation between rhetoric and other fields (notably poetry, theology, and philosophy), the textualization of rhetoric, changing definitions of literacy, the relation between rhetoric and gender.

Assignments will include a heavy dose of reading in primary and secondary texts (all in translation), frequent two-page response papers, a 1500-word book review, a prospectus and annotated bibliography, and a 5000-word seminar research paper.

Required Texts

Recommended Texts
Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, 2d ed. (New York: St. Martin’s 2000)
Schedule
August 30  Introduction: The History and Histories of Rhetoric; Roman Rhetorical Theory and Practice (many texts are available online via Penelope at the University of Chicago and other sites); Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*

September 6  No Class: Labor Day


December 6  Class Presentations

**Requirements**

Short essays (600 words apiece): best four—20%
Book review (1500 words)—20%
Prospectus and annotated bibliography—10%
Final essays (5000 words total)—50%
Attendance
You may miss one class for any reason with impunity—no questions asked and no explanations expected. If you have three to five absences, however, I will reduce your final average by one letter grade, and after the fifth absence you cannot ordinarily pass the course. Please note that, after a second absence, I will make accommodations for absences due to serious emergencies, but only if you provide an explanation (phone or email is fine) within 48 hours of the class missed.

Class time is a precious commodity, so please be punctual. You may be marked absent if you are more than five minutes late to class.

Drop Policy
If for some reason you cannot continue attending class, be sure to drop the course, since faculty members can no longer purge students from the official roll. After February 3, the census date this term, students have to fill out a drop form and receive a grade of “W”; after November 5, it is no longer possible to drop the course.

Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty—which includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarizing, taking an examination for another person—is perhaps the most serious offense to the ideals of the University and of higher education more generally. I will investigate all suspected cases and will refer all persons I believe to be involved in academic dishonesty to the proper University authorities for further investigation and, if necessary, discipline.

Students with Disabilities
The University is committed to accommodating students with disabilities, and so am I. For general information, visit the Office for Students with Disabilities, located on the lower level of the University Center, or call 817-272-3364 (TDD 817-272-3323). If you require accommodation based on a disability for this class, I would like to meet with you in the privacy of my office sometime during the first two weeks of the semester to make you that you are properly accommodated.