

**ENGL 6/7505 | History of Rhetoric: Ancient to Renaissance**

Professor: Dr. Eric Detweiler

Classroom: Murphy Center 100A | Class Time: 9:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m., TWR

Office: Peck Hall 376 (with possible change due to Peck summer closure)

Office Hours: 1 – 3 p.m., TWR

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**Course Description**

Call it an art, a theory, or a practice—rhetoric has been a central part of Western education and politics for at least 2500 years. In this course, we will trace rhetoric's shifting legacy from the sophists of ancient Greece to the writers and teachers of sixteenth-century Europe. Because so much in the history of rhetoric grows out of the Greek concept of *rhetorike*, we will spend a disproportionate amount of time in and around ancient Athens. We will also consider non-Western traditions and cultures that, though they may not have operated under the name of "rhetoric," can enrich our understanding of how persuasion and argumentation operated in various spots across the world prior to the 1600s.

**Course Objectives**

- Via primary and secondary texts, introduce students to the rich rhetorical traditions that operated through the Renaissance and continue to shape English studies and other disciplines today,
- prepare students to work and write with the academic conventions of contemporary rhetorical scholarship,
- help graduate students develop new strategies for incorporating rhetorical theories and concepts into their pedagogical and professional practices.

**Course Texts**

Conley, Thomas M. *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*. U of Chicago P, 1994.

Jarratt, Susan C. *Rereading the Sophists: Classical Rhetoric Refigured*. Southern Illinois UP, 1998.

Kennedy, George A. *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*. Society for Biblical Literature, 2003.

Kennerly, Michele, and Damien Smith Pfister. *Ancient Rhetorics and Digital Networks*. U of Alabama P, 2018.

Other readings available online and/or as PDFs. These will all be available either (a) in a Dropbox folder I will share with students enrolled in the course or (b) as links in the calendar at the end of this syllabus.

**Coursework**

- Discussion Posts (20%): Responses to course readings. Some kind of post is due by 8:45 the morning of most class meetings. I have created a Slack team for this course, and each required discussion post will have its own channel.
- One-Pagers (30%): Three one-page papers in which you summarize a work or rhetorician we've encountered in class, then use it to analyze an artifact you'll

choose during the first week of class. These papers must be single-spaced, no more than a single page, and use a font between 10-12 points. We will look at some examples during the first week of the course. Each one-pager may be revised and resubmitted up to two additional times after the initial submission. You will read these aloud in class on the day they're due (though I'm happy to have individual discussions if reading aloud is an untenable option for some reason).

- **Book Review (10%):** A review (1250-1750 words) of a book you'll select from a list I'll provide during the first week of the course. These will be due during the second-to-last week of class. You will give informal presentations on your books in class.
- **Collaborative *Progymnasmata* Sequence (10%):** As a class, develop a version of the *progymnasmata* sequence for contemporary writing classrooms. This will be due by the end of the last day of the course.
- **Final Project (30%):** A piece of rhetorical scholarship related to at least one of the periods and traditions covered in this course. For MA students, this piece should be roughly the length of a conference presentation (2750-3250 words). For PhD students, it should be the length of a short journal article (6000-7500 words). Because of the condensed nature of the course, this final project will not be due until 11:59 p.m. on Sun., July 22. In preparation for the final project, you will give a presentation on your intended project during the last week of the course.

### Grading Scale

A: 90-100	C+: 77-79	D: 63-66
B+: 87-89	C: 73-76	D-: 60-62
B: 83-86	C-: 70-72	F: 59 and under
B-: 80-82	D+: 67-69	

*Important note on grades:* Because of the condensed nature of summer classes and the learning curve that comes with the digital technologies I'll be asking you to learn/use in this course, I will give everyone an extension of at least a couple of weeks after the course officially wraps to complete/turn in their final projects. However, because of that extension, everyone should expect an incomplete ("I") as their initial course grade. I will update the grade to a complete one once final projects are turned in.

### Attendance

You are allowed to miss a maximum of two days of class. If you anticipate missing more for any reason, you are responsible for letting me know in advance, preferably via a face-to-face conversation during office hours. In rare cases, I am willing to make alternate arrangements involving additional coursework, but that is in no way guaranteed.

### Students with Disabilities

Middle Tennessee State University is committed to campus access in accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Any student interested in reasonable accommodations can consult the [Disability & Access Center \(DAC\) website](#) and/or contact the DAC for assistance at (615) 898-2783 or [dacemail@mtsu.edu](mailto:dacemail@mtsu.edu). If I can provide or assist with any accommodations related specifically to this course, let me know. I would be glad to help.

## Course Calendar

With the exception of the four assigned books, readings are available as PDFs or as open-access texts online. I have marked readings “(PDF)” or made them hyperlinks accordingly. I highly recommend checking out the [Perseus Digital Library](#) for many of the ancient Greco-Roman readings in this course. You should come to class prepared to discuss the readings on the day they’re listed on the calendar. If you have any questions about this schedule, let me know.

Week 1	
<b>5-Jun</b>	In class: Introduction to syllabus/class technologies, initial overview of rhetoric, and individual meetings about possible course artifacts.
<b>6-Jun</b>	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharon Crowley, “Let Me Get This Straight” (PDF)</li> <li>• Gerard Hauser, “Teaching Rhetoric: Or Why Rhetoric Isn’t Just Another Kind of Philosophy or Literary Criticism” (PDF)</li> <li>• Jeffrey Walker, “What a Difference a Definition Makes, or, William Dean Howells and the Sophist’s Shoes” (PDF)</li> <li>• Michele Kennerly and Damien Smith Pfister, Introduction to <i>Ancient Rhetorics and Digital Networks</i></li> <li>• Chapter 1 of <i>Ancient Rhetorics and Digital Networks</i></li> </ul>
<b>7-Jun</b>	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thomas M. Conley, Chapter 1 of <i>Rhetoric in The European Tradition</i></li> <li>• Protagoras, Fragments (PDF)</li> <li>• Chapters 2 &amp; 3 in <i>Ancient Rhetorics and Digital Networks</i></li> <li>• Susan C. Jarratt, Introduction to <i>Rereading the Sophists</i></li> </ul>
Week 2	
<b>12-Jun</b>	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapters 1 &amp; 2 of <i>Rereading the Sophists</i></li> <li>• Gorgias, Fragments (PDF)</li> <li>• Michelle Baliff, Introduction to <i>Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric</i></li> <li>• Debra Hawhee, “Kairotic Encounters” (PDF)</li> </ul>
<b>13-Jun</b>	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aspasia, Selections (PDF)</li> <li>• Antiphon, Fragments (PDF)</li> <li>• Chapters 3 &amp; 4 of <i>Rereading the Sophists</i></li> <li>• Lois Agnew et al., “Octalog III: The Politics of Historiography in 2010” (PDF)</li> </ul>
<b>14-Jun</b>	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plato, <a href="#">Gorgias</a></li> <li>• Isocrates, Selections (PDF)</li> <li>• Chapters 6 &amp; 7 of <i>Ancient Rhetorics and Digital Networks</i></li> </ul>
Week 3	
<b>19-Jun</b>	First One-Pager Due  Readings:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• George A. Kennedy, Introduction to Aristotle's <i>On Rhetoric</i> (PDF)</li> <li>• Aristotle, <a href="#">Rhetoric</a></li> <li>• Chapter 8 of <i>Ancient Rhetorics and Digital Networks</i></li> </ul>
<b>20-Jun</b>	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 2 of <i>Rhetoric in the European Tradition</i></li> <li>• Cicero, Selections (PDF)</li> <li>• Quintilian, Selections (PDF)</li> </ul>
<b>21-Jun</b>	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 3 of <i>Rhetoric in the European Tradition</i></li> <li>• Introduction and Aelius Theon from George A. Kennedy's <i>Progymnasmata</i></li> </ul>
<b>Week 4</b>	
<b>26-Jun</b>	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 4 of <i>Rhetoric in the European Tradition</i></li> <li>• Augustine, Selections (PDF)</li> <li>• Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Selections (PDF)</li> <li>• Christine de Pizan, Selections (PDF)</li> <li>• Marjorie Curry Woods, "Boys Will Be Women" (PDF)</li> </ul>
<b>27-Jun</b>	Second One-Pager Due  Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aphthonius the Sophist from Kennedy's <i>Progymnasmata</i></li> <li>• Chapter 10 from <i>Ancient Rhetorics and Digital Networks</i></li> </ul>
<b>28-Jun</b>	Book Reviews Due, Book Review Presentations  Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 5 of <i>Rhetoric of the European Tradition</i></li> <li>• Lynn Enterline, Selections from <i>Shakespeare's Schoolroom</i> (PDF)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 5</b>	
<b>3-Jul</b>	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peter Ramus, Selections (PDF)</li> <li>• Erasmus, Selections (PDF)</li> <li>• Margaret Fell, Selections (PDF)</li> </ul>
<b>4-Jul</b>	<b>No class – Fourth of July</b>
<b>5-Jul</b>	Third One-Pager Due Present & Workshop Drafts of Final Projects