Eloquence: The Beauty and Persuasion of Ancient Rhetoric from Cicero to Today

Time: M 7-8.50
Instructor: Christopher B. Krebs
Course Dates: Jan 22-Mar 19

It’s been a long time coming, but tonight, because of what we did on this day, in this election, at this defining moment, change has come to America.

Back in 2008, in his first campaign, President Barack Obama promised change; yet in formulating that promise he relied on rhetorical rules (like the climactic tricolon), which for more than 2000 years have remained unchanged. Across the ages another politician and orator, Marcus Tullius Cicero, can help us analyze and appreciate Obama’s rhetorical accomplishment.

Ancient Rome was a city of rhetoric. It bustled with talents, whose skills had been acquired, honed, and polished over many years, to ready them for the numerous oratorical performances at the courts, in the senate, or in front of a funerary congregation. Those who could not speak could hardly hope to obtain public office; “to be wordless and inarticulate was considered shameful” (Tacitus, Dialogus 38, 8). Rome’s great speakers acknowledged Cicero (106-43 BCE) as the greatest. He reigned royally, according to his contemporaries; and within a century after his death, his name came to signify not the man as much as eloquence itself. 2000 years later, Cicero still is eloquence personified.

Ancient rhetorical theory specifies three requirements for an effective speaker: talent (natura), teaching (doctrina), training (usus). To speak well can be learned. Cicero, hoping for his son to learn and follow in his footsteps, wrote for him a small introductory treatise “On the Classification of Rhetoric.” Just a few years earlier, an unknown author had produced the Rhetoric for Herennius. Both can serve as introductions even today.

This course aims to introduce participants to Cicero’s Rome and Roman rhetoric, and to practice his art of speaking well. We will read in excerpts Aristotle’s Rhetoric as well as Cicero’s treatise for his son and the Rhetoric for Herennius, analyze Ciceronian speeches as well as other ancient and modern ones along with some highly rhetorical texts (such as the Letter from Birmingham Jail). We will also watch a few oratorical performances to learn about the delivery. Whoever is willing will also be able to practice rhetoric (in part resuming ancient preliminary exercises, progymnasmata). Participants wishing to receive a letter grade will have to deliver a 9 minute speech in the final class.
For the first session, please read:

(1) ARISTOTLE, Rhetoric I, with PERNOT 218.1-220.5 (2) CICERO, Against Catiline (I): please take note of its structure and its arguments (3) EVERITT, c. 1. (4) Watch Obama’s acceptance speech in Chicago (2008): take notes on what you find noteworthy.1

Schedule (Letters (A) refer to the canons, numbers (1) to the parts of a speech)

1 M 01/22 Introduction: What is ‘Eloquence Personified’? What is rhetoric? (A) DISCOVERY of arguments (inventio, εἰσφήσις) I: Where To Go.

- A Few Examples: (1) King Aragorn’s Battle Speech at the Black Gate & Agricola’s battle speech at Mons Graupius. (2) (Shakespeare’s version of) Marc Antony’s Funerary Oration & President Obama’s acceptance speech. (3) Atticus Finch’s closing argument & Cicero’s defense of Marcus Caelius Rufus.
- Aristotles’ three kinds of speech: deliberative, forensic, and encomiastic. The five canons of Rhetoric. The four (+) parts of a speech.
- Classical rhetoric and Marcus Tullius Cicero.
- The rhetorical system. Where “to go” to find arguments: common topics, special topics. —— Rhetorical analysis of Cic. Cat. 1.

FOR NEXT WEEK: Please read: (1) ARISTOTLE, Rhetoric II with Pernot 220-7 and entry on Aristotle in the OXFORD CLASSICAL DICTIONARY (OCD). (2) PERICLES’ funerary oration in THUCYDIDES (with the entries on both in the OCD). (3) MADISON, The Federalist No. 102: please take note of the arguments, and mark whatever you find noteworthy (collect at least five memorabilia). (4) EVERITT, c. 2, 3: write a summary (not longer than a page [250 words]). (5) Please study the list of “places” (and fill it out). (6) Watch the opening of Clinton’s 2012 convention address.3

2 M 01/29 (A) DISCOVERY of arguments (inventio, εἰσφήσις) II: How To Use Them. (1) THE EXORDIUM, OR: What To Do With The First Part Of Your Speech

- The three modes of persuasive appeal: emotional, ethical, rational.
- Aids to discovery —— Syllogisms
- The arguments in Federalist No. 10 —— Analysis of Pericles’ and Clinton’s opening remarks with the help of Quintilian
- Most important points in the exordium.

FOR NEXT WEEK: Please finish Aristoteles’ Rhetoric and read SOCRATES, Apology (with particular attention to arguments and structure). (2) EVERITT, c. 4. (3) CLARKE, The Greek Background, in: Rhetoric at Rome. (4) Do a bit of research on the Roman rostra and Quintus Hortensius Hortalus OR the Roman Curia and

1 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jl15BaCAaQ0
2 http://www.constitution.org/fed/federal10.htm
3 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5knEXDtsrL4
Caius Julius Caesar: write no more than two pages (500 words) in which you present both the place and the person in a dramatic setting. (5) Please watch Obama’s speech on race: what is its structure?

3 M 02/05 (B) ARRANGEMENT of the material (dispositio, τάξις): HOW TO BUILD A SPEECH.

- The overall arrangement.
- The arrangement within: exordium, narratio, argumentatio, peroration
- Socrates’ Apology: arguments and structure
- Obama’s speech on race

FOR NEXT WEEK: Please read: (1) Sallust’s speeches by Caesar and Cato (please take note of their respective arguments) along with the entries on all three in the OCD. (2) Ps.-Sallust’s Letter to Caesar along with Dr. King’s Letter from Birmingham jail. (3) Everitt, c. 5. (4) Pernot, The Roman Way and Romanization, in: Rhetoric in Antiquity. (5) Study the LIST OF FIGURES OF SPEECH & THOUGHT, part I.

4 M 02/12 (2) THE STATEMENT of facts (narratio): LET’S GET THEM STRAIGHT, SHALL WE

- The narratio: en bloc or in between?
- Crisp and clear rather than longwinded.
- Sallust’s Speeches
- Letters by Ps.-Sallust and Dr. King

FOR NEXT WEEK: Please read: (1) Dr. King’s Letter from Birmingham jail again (How is it structured? What are its arguments? What stylistic devices are employed? Collect at least five). (2) Everitt, cc. 6, 7 (3) The genius of Jodie Foster’s Speech. (4) LIST OF FIGURES OF SPEECH & THOUGHT, part II. (5) Listen to and read: J. F. Kennedy’s inaugural address. (6) Read the two analyses in the New Yorker.

PRESIDENTS’ DAY

5 M 02/26 (C) STYLE (elocutio, λέξις): VIRTUOUS WRITING AND (?) SPEAKING and PROPER WORDS IN PROPER PLACES

- Cardinal virtues: correct, clear, concise, proper and purple.
- Analysis of Dr. King’s letter.
- Stylistic analysis of Kennedy’s address. Discussion of TNY analyses
- Some figures of thought.


5 http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html

6 http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html

7 http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/jfk-inaug.htm
Homework: Please read: (1) Cic. *On the Command of Cnaeus Pompeius* (which arguments does Cicero refute, which does he advance?). Compare the case for presidential powers.  
(2) Entry on Pompeius in the *OCD*. (3) Everitt, cc. 8, 9 (4) the excerpt on *argumentatio* (I). (5) Clarke, 53-84 (*Ciceronian Rhetoric and Oratory*). (6) Tacitus’ speeches by Seneca and Nero and the entries in the *OCD* on all three; take note of Nero’s refutation. (7) Pick one of Nero’s arguments and write Seneca’s retort. (8) Clarke, *Oratory under the Emperors*.

6 M 03/05  
(3) The Argumentatio(n): How To REFUTE (refutatio) AND How To Assert

- To Take and Tweak
- Analysis of “On the Command …”
- The Genius of Cicero?
- Seneca refuted
- To advance and assert.

FOR NEXT WEEK: Please read: (1) Zarefsky (sel.), (2) Everitt, cc. 10, 11 (3) watch and listen to: Clinton’s convention speech. (4) Write Nero’s confirmatio (three arguments, same style as his *refutatio*, with the help of TAC. Ann. 14). (5) Cic. First Philippic. (6) Please watch Atticus Finch’s speech.  
(7) What would you want to do at the end of a speech?

7 M 03/12  
(D) The Art of Acting and Articulation (actio)

(4) Peroratio(n): Let’s END THIS

- Clinton TALKING TO the teleprompter
- Cicero’s Philippic
- Three steps to perfection
- Strategies for the end of a speech
- Atticus Finch

FOR NEXT WEEK: (1) Marc Antony’s funerary speech (take note of the structure and organization and of any stylistic glister). (2) Please choose three favorite passages (around 150 words in length) in addition to one from Marc Antony’s speech, copy them, and mark with varying colors: syntactical structures, repetitions, antitheses, et al. Then choose two of the passages and rewrite them in your own words. Finally, rewrite the other two doing one better. (3) Please read Plato, *Gorgias*, and the entry in the *OCD* on both, Hochmuth, *The Criticism of Rhetoric*. Pernot: *The Heritage of Greco-Roman Rhetoric*. (4) Please read Cicero’s Introduction To Rhetoric. And watch Obama’s Acceptance speech (again): what do you see now?

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10 [http://www.megapathdsl.net/~sdutta/marcAntony.htm](http://www.megapathdsl.net/~sdutta/marcAntony.htm)
8 M 03/19

Rhetorical exercises: copying passages, imitating, aemulating.

Rhetoric against Rhetoric: “Great and famous oratory is a foster-child of license, … an associate of sedition …” (Tac. Dial.).

• Analysis of M. ANTONY’S speech.
• Favorite passages
• How to imitate a style
• Plato and various animosities to rhetoric
• Obama’s speech revisited.
• Speeches?

Bibliography:

1. Required:

2. Available online or on reserve:
Miller, R.F., In Words and Deeds. Battle Speeches in History.

Useful websites:
http://www.americanrhetoric.com/moviespeeches.htm
http://humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric/Silva.htm