**AMERICAN ELOQUENCE**

**Communication 4360/6360**

**Course Description:** This course surveys the history of American public address from its origin in the seventeenth century to the present. Since the subject is vast and our time is limited to only a single semester, the course can hardly be comprehensive and offers only a selection of texts and issues for study within a chronological pattern. The selection of materials is not based on any single criterion but reflects a number of different considerations, including: rhetorical excellence, influence, representation of a rhetorical style, or significance in respect to a specific issue or controversy.

**TEXTBOOK**: Ronald E. Reid and James F. Klumpp, eds. *American Rhetorical Discourse*, 3rd ed. The book is available at the campus book store. One of the greatest virtues of this book is the introduction provided for each text that it reprints. Please be sure to read these introductions carefully.

For some of the assigned texts not available in the Reid and Klumpp anthology, we can use the website americanrhetoric.com. I will provide copies of other texts that are available in neither of these sources.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

This central purpose of this course is to study the history (origins and development) of American public address by expanding our factual knowledge of important speakers, speeches and other rhetorical artifacts in American history and developing an understanding and appreciation of American rhetorical discourse. For our purposes *rhetorical* is defined as “persuasive.”

Our basic course materials are primary documents: the speeches and other types of public discourse delivered and published throughout American history and the reactions to that discourse which may be found in newspapers, magazines, government documents, or private letters and diaries. As we learn what issues were significant, we will also identify the various “rhetorical exigencies” which prompted these speakers to give voice to their concerns, the unique rhetorical problems rhetors confronted, changes over time, and reasons for success or failure.

**SEMESTER THEME:** Rhetoric and Religion

Because religious beliefs are central to individual values and identity, and because “organized religion” or “the church” has, throughout history, been instrumental in shaping society, in bringing about or preventing social change, in motivating humans to act, appeals to religious beliefs and debates about religious beliefs are foundational to understanding American rhetorical discourse.

For example, American currency displays the motto “In God We Trust;” The pledge of allegiance asserts that we are “one nation, under God.” But, these were not phrases developed by the founders of the nation--they were adopted in the 1950’s in the aftermath of WW II and fears of communism. In Tennessee, the debate over evolution, which continues today, was forged in our national and state history as the famous Scopes trial and just last year the Tennessee state legislature attempted to make the Bible the official book of the state. Current debates about the definition of marriage, are directly linked to fundamental religious beliefs. We will be considering all of this from the beginning, as we start our journey of discovery by reading the 17th-century texts of Puritan sermons. At the same time, we will begin each class period with your observations of where and how religious discourse is entering public debate in our current lives, in debates ABOUT religion, in rhetoric USING religious appeals, and in the verbal and oral STYLE of discourse. We will consider why this is happening, whether it is effective, with whom and whether or not it has happened before.

I hope, after completing this course, you will agree with me that the study of history is enhanced by studying rhetorical history, because it directs our attention to the words of participants, all who wrote and spoke whether winners or losers. I believe studying history through historical, rhetorical documents provides a first-person perspective that is both interesting and helps to build a more accurate and objective understanding of history. We are able to enter the past through the words of living people. In addition, I hope you will understand, as we progress through the semester, that there are consistent elements to rhetorical appeals that transcend specific time and place. We need to study history to figure out what is truly different, and what is the same. Finally, with this understanding, we should become more effective practitioners of public persuasion, as well as more analytical and insightful receivers of persuasive messages.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION:**

Course e-Journal - 50 points

Attendance and participation - 35 points

Two in-class tests; partial open-book - 50 points each

20 points - timed, objective-type question quiz

30 points - open-book, open-note essay question(s)

Final essay exam - 75 points total

Preliminary statement of question - 25 points

Answer written during final exam period - 1 page of notes allowed - 50 points

Total points available = 260

**ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS:**

Graduate students are expected to complete all of the course assignments as explained in the syllabus and course materials. In addition, each graduate student will be assigned responsibility for organizing and leading class discussion for one class period during the semester, as well as **mentoring undergraduate students and providing leadership within your small groups.**

**COURSE e-JOURNAL - 50 points**

The journal is an opportunity for you to reflect on course reading, your observations of contemporary rhetoric and the semester theme, rhetoric and religion. Write your thoughts in a word document, and come to class prepared to share your thoughts orally within your small group. You should have at least one entry of about 250 words, or one double-spaced page, for each week of class. If you meet the minimum requirement and turn in your journal on time you will receive a minimum of 40 points (3.0/B). Quality and frequency of responses will add to those points. If you quote directly from another source, be sure to use quotation marks and note the source of all references whether direct quotation or paraphrase using MLA format.

**READING AND CLASS PARTICIPATION - 35 points**

All reading assignments are due on the day they are cited on the schedule. Because our text is an anthology of speeches, you will need to approach your reading assignments with that in mind. I suggest that you begin by reading the introductions to each section and the introductions to speeches in each section carefully, skimming the speeches the first time through.

For each class period I have identified two or three speeches that we will discuss in class in some depth and detail. After your initial read-through, go back and read carefully each of the speeches selected for discussion. Make notes on the following points:

1. What is the nature of the text itself (a transcript, a later

publication, notes, etc); and how authentic is it?

(2) Who is the speaker? (Name, qualifications)

(3) Who is/are the receiver(s)?

(4) What is the context (rhetorical situation), INCLUDING THE

ARGUMENTS BEING RAISED IN OPPOSITION?

(5) What is the purpose of the discourse? (Try to locate or

paraphrase the thesis statement)

(6)What are the main points and overall organizational pattern?

(7) What are the main arguments advanced?

(8) What types of evidence are used to make claims?

(9) How does the speaker establish her ethos/credibility?

(10) What sorts of emotional appeals are present?

(11) Does the speaker use language, images, or have a linguistic

style that is noteworthy in some way?

If you attend every class session and contribute regularly to class discussion you will receive 35 points - 4.0/A. Every absence will lead to a reduction in points. More than two absences will double the penalty.

**ATTENDANCE AND MAKE-UP POLICY**:

1. You are expected to attend all class sessions. Any absence will count against you.
2. If you are unable to attend class on the day an assignment is due, you will receive a "0" for the assignment. If you are caught in an emergency you may be given the opportunity to make up the missed assignment at the instructor's convenience PROVIDED YOU: (1) notify me before class that you cannot attend and explain why; AND (2) you provide written documentation upon your return to class.
3. **Late arrival:** I expect all students to be in the classroom and ready for class to start at 2:20 p.m., the time we are scheduled to begin. Two late arrivals will equal one absence. Consistent late arrivals will not be tolerated.

**IN-CLASS TESTS - 50 POINTS EACH**

Each semester test will have two parts. You will have 20 minutes to complete part 1, worth 20 points. This is a closed book quiz asking you to identify key terms, speakers/writers and events. You will have 60 minutes to complete part 2, worth 30 points. It will be an open book/open note test comprised of one or two essay questions.

**FINAL ESSAY EXAM - 75 POINTS**

This assignment also has two parts. The first part asks you to write your own question to answer during the final exam period. Based on what we have studied and discussed over the course of the semester, you will develop a question that addresses a topic and/or issue of significance and interest to you. The question should be clearly focused and directly related to our course material. Each student will not only write a question, including explanation and justification, but also present the question and reasons for the question orally to the rest of the class. I and fellow students will offer feedback to help each of you focus and clarify your questions. This part of the exam is worth 25 points.

During the final exam period, you will answer your question in some depth and detail. Each student may bring one page of notes to the exam to assist in writing the answer. The final answer is worth 50 points.

**ORIGINALITY:** According to The University of Memphis Student Handbook, your assignments must reflect your own effort. In situations where external sources are used, you must acknowledge your sources and add your own analysis. Otherwise, it is plagiarism. If you plagiarize or cheat, the minimum penalty is an F on the assignment; other penalties could include an F for the course and/or suspension. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** Any student who anticipates physical or academic barriers based on the impact of a disability is encouraged to speak with me privately. Students with disabilities should also contact Disability Resources for Students (DRS) at 110 Wilder Tower, 901-678-2880. DRS coordinates access and accommodations for students with disabilities.

**TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE FOR OPENING WEEKS OF CLASS**

**Week Assignment**

1:8/24 Orientation to course content and assignments;

Overview of rhetoric, social change and social/political movements;

Begin journals

1:8/26 Read: RK, Introduction (pp. 1-21)

2:8/31 Puritan Preaching and the American Mission

Read: Whitfield (pp. 54-64), Edwards (pp. 65-78)

2:9/2

3:9/7 NO CLASS – LABOR DAY

3:9/9 Founding a Nation: Rhetoric of the American Revolution and

Constitutional Ratification

Read:

4:9/14

4:9/16

5:9/21 Rhetoric of Religion and Reform

5:9/23

6:9/28

6:9/30 Rhetoric of Sectionalism and Civil War

7:10/5

7:10/7

8:10/12 NO CLASS - FALL BREAK

8:10/14 Test #1

Journals due for first evaluation in course dropbox- minimum of 8 entries

9:10/19 Rhetoric of Reconstruction and Regional Reconciliation

9:10/21 Turn of the century change and protest

10:10/26

10:10/28

11:11/2 Rhetoric of World Wars in America

11:11/4

12:11/9 Post World War America and the Civil Rights Movement

12:11/11

13:11/16

13:11/18 Cycles of protest to the present day

14:11/23 Test #2

14:11/25 NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING BREAK

15:11/30 Final Exam Question Presentations

All written statements and justifications of question due in dropbox today.

15:12/2 Final Exam Question Presentations

Journals due for final evaluation in course dropbox - minimum of 7 new

entries

12/9 FINAL EXAM - 1:00-3:00 p.m.