

"[The President of the United States] is also the political leader of the nation, or has it in his choice to be. The nation as a whole has chosen him, and is conscious that it has no other political spokesman. His is the only national voice in affairs. Let him once win the admiration and confidence of the country, and no other single force can withstand him, no combination of forces will easily overpower him."

—Woodrow Wilson, *Constitutional Government in the United States*, 1908



RHE 370: PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC

SPRING 2021

MWF 1:10-2:00PM
FAC 206

Course Description

The president of the United States has become, by many estimates, the most powerful person in the world. This course considers how such power in contemporary mediated society is connected to the president's use of rhetoric. Specifically, students will explore how contemporary presidents use rhetoric to govern, with particular attention to the relationship between presidents and the American people. The course material will include presidential rhetoric but also theoretical and rhetorical criticism essays that explore the operations of that rhetoric. This course focuses on the discourse of elected presidents who speak in an official capacity, not on election campaigns or fictional portrayals of U.S. presidents. Students should expect this to be a seminar course, meaning that our class sessions will be largely student-driven discussion from assigned material. By taking this course, students will further develop crucial skills and cultivate a more nuanced understanding of the operations of U.S. presidential rhetoric.

Course Objectives

- 1. RHETORIC AS A LIBERAL ART:** RHE 370 will help you to make connections between the rhetoric and politics of U.S. presidents and interpret the nature and character of presidential rhetoric in your daily life.
- 2. WRITTEN & ORAL EXPRESSION:** RHE 370 enhances your oral and written communication skills through papers, presentations, and class discussion.
- 3. RHETORIC AND DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES:** RHE 370 focuses on the rhetorical features of the president's role in a representative democracy.
- 4. CRITICAL THINKING:** RHE 370 enhances your analytical reasoning and your understanding of rhetorical forms and functions.

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- 5. INTELLECTUAL INQUIRY:** RHE 370 contributes to information literacy with its research requirements.
- 6. RHETORICAL METHODS:** RHE 370 provides theoretical and critical tools for analyzing public discourse and writing critical essays about U.S. presidential rhetoric.
- 7. ENGAGING DIFFERENCE HUMANELY:** RHE 370 encourages you to consider the president's relationship to citizens from various cultural backgrounds and groups.

Required Materials

Assigned readings are available on the RHE 370 Canvas site. You should budget ≈\$30 (600 pages, single-sided) for printing.



How to Succeed:

The following tips are designed to help you succeed in class



- **READ UP:**

- Complete the assigned readings each day
- Dig into the research about your chosen project topic



- **THINK UP:**

- Reflect on rather than just quickly skimming the course material
- Consider how new content relates to and builds on prior content



- **SHOW UP:**

- Come to class ready to think and learn
- Stop by office hours and engage feedback on assignments



- **SPEAK UP:**

- Be ready to share ideas and, if called on, answer questions
- Engage your classmates' ideas and ask questions of each other



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Course Assignments (500 points)

Attendance & Scholarly Conduct (75 pts., 15%):

Participation and scholarly conduct are crucial to the course objectives. This will be a seminar style course, in which we discuss the assigned material and work toward applying it to contemporary examples of presidential rhetoric. I hope and expect that all of us demonstrate intellectual curiosity and a desire to learn from one another. To facilitate this environment, it is your responsibility to attend class and get involved. I will assign daily participation grades between 1 and 10, following the rubric outlined on the "Discussion Expectations" page of Canvas. Please also refer to the section titled "Approaching Class Discussion" on page 6. Be advised that more than 5 absences will result in a letter grade deduction from your final grade and more than 10 absences *may result in failure of the course*. If you will miss class for Dean's excuses, it is your responsibility to talk to me as soon as you know so we can make arrangements. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to communicate with me (preferably in advance) about make-up work.

Please **do not** come to class if you experience any CDC-described symptoms for COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath, diarrhea, and/or the loss of taste or smell). You should contact Health Services immediately and then inform your professors and coach(es). Students are expected to follow the Gentlemen's Rule and following the above is an important part of this so we can all make and keep our campus safe and healthy. This is a crucial way that WAF!

Reading Responses (75 pts., 15%): To assist your preparation for class, you will post responses to the assigned reading through Canvas. On days a classmate is leading discussion, these will be posted publicly to the discussion board. To make this as useful as possible, you must submit responses through Canvas **by 11am the day of class**. Late submissions will receive a zero but you will get three drops across the semester.

Discussion Leading (60 pts., 12%): You will be assigned one class meeting dedicated to a scholarly article (chosen in consultation with me) related to your research project. You will generate a lesson plan in advance and then will facilitate the discussion that day in class.

Rhetorical Analysis (230 pts., 46%):

You will complete an extended rhetorical analysis about presidential rhetoric.

Topic Proposal (20 pts., 4%): This 1-2 page proposal will explain and justify the rhetorical artifact/text you have chosen for the project.

Annotated Bibliography (20 pts., 4%): This bibliography will cite research relevant to your topic and guide your literature review section.

Context & Method Paper (40 pts., 8%): This 4-5 page paper will review the context of your artifact and the method/theories you will use to analyze it.

Draft & Final Essay (125 pts., 25%): This 15-20 page paper will be a formal critical analysis of presidential rhetoric, including an introduction, literature review, description of context, analysis, conclusion/implications, and bibliography..

Peer Review (25 pts., 5%): You will provide constructive feedback about one of your classmates' papers to help him improve the essay draft.

Exam (60 pts., 12%): One exam will test your understanding of presidential rhetoric theories. We will discuss format and content coverage in class.

COURSE GRADING SCALE

Grade	Points	Percent	Grade	Points	Percent
A	465-500	93%-100%	C+	385-399	77%-79.9%
A-	450-464	90%-92.9%	C	365-384	73%-76.9%
B+	435-449	87%-89.9%	C-	350-364	70%-72.9%
B	415-434	83%-86.9%	D	300-349	60%-69.9%
B-	400-414	80%-82.9%	F	<300	<60%



Course Schedule

Readings, assignments, and due dates are subject to change. You should complete assignments for class on the date they are listed.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic & Assignment</u>
M, 1/25	Course Introduction -Read The Constitution of the United States of America, Article II, pp. 6-8
<u>Unit One: Theoretical Foundations</u>	
W, 1/27	Studying Presidential Rhetoric -Read Windt, "Presidential Rhetoric"
F, 1/29	The Rhetorical Presidency -Read Ceasar et al., "The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency"
M, 2/1	Connecting the Dots -Read Medhurst, "A Tale of Two Constructs"
W, 2/3	Revising the Rhetorical Presidency -Read Laracey, "Talking Without Speaking, and Other Curiosities" ; Tulis, "On the Forms of Rhetorical Leadership" ; Lucas, "Present at the Founding"
F, 2/5	What Does Presidential Rhetoric "Do"? The Accusation -Read Edwards, "Presidential Rhetoric: What Difference Does It Make?"
M, 2/8	What Does Presidential Rhetoric "Do"? The Defense -Read Zarefsky, "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition"
T, 2/9	DUE: Topic Proposal by 5pm
W, 2/10	Is the Rhetorical Presidency Dead? pt. 1 -Read Scacco & Coe, "The Ubiquitous President"
F, 2/12	Is the Rhetorical Presidency Dead? pt. 2 -Read Merceica, "Ignoring the President"
<u>Unit Two: Analyzing Presidential Rhetoric</u>	
M, 2/15 (Zoom)	Using Library Databases
W, 2/17	Emphasizing the Text, pt. I -Read Truman, "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine," March 12, 1947; Ivie, "Fire, Flood, and Red Fever"
F, 2/19	Emphasizing the Text, pt. II -Read Stelzner, "'War Message,' December 8, 1941"
M, 2/22 (Zoom)	Emphasizing the Text, pt. III -Read Gerald Ford, "Remarks on Taking the Oath of Office," August 9, 1974. DUE: Annotated Bibliography by 9pm

Course Policies

Creating an Inclusive Classroom: I am committed to your success in the class and to fostering an inclusive space. Come talk to me if you're having trouble with the readings, wrestling with how to take notes, or want to generally discuss how to maximize your learning. If there are circumstances that affect your class performance—be they personal, health, other—please let me know as soon as possible so that we can collaboratively discuss how to proceed.

Students with disabilities (apparent or invisible) are invited to confidentially discuss their situation with the disability coordinator, Heather Thrush, Director of Student Engagement and Success. If a student wishes to receive an academic accommodation, he must have documentation on file with Ms. Thrush (Center Hall 112A, x6347, thrushh@wabash.edu).

Course Assignments & Readings:

- *Class meetings will be designed to discuss, not review, readings.*
- Late written assignment is penalized 5% per 24-hours it is late (max. 50%)
- Late policy not apply to Reading Responses, which receive a zero if late

Written Assignment Guidelines:

- Typed, double-spaced, 11- or 12-pt font
- Must be submitted to Canvas, not email, in .doc or .rtf format
- Be sure to proofread written work before submitting

Course Policies

Assignment Feedback:

- In general, I will provide detailed written feedback in response to the papers you write in this class.
- Use these comments to prompt your continued reflection on and engagement with the material
- Identify concrete steps to improve on future assignments.
- You should see me if any of my feedback is confusing or unclear.

Emergency Procedures:

- **FIRE:** Proceed down one floor to nearest exit and cross Grant St. Join me and your classmates to make sure everyone got out of the building.
- **TORNADO:** Proceed down two floors to the basement and shelter in the basement hallway.

Academic Honesty: The

Gentleman's Rule should guide your academic honesty in this course. This means:

- All work you produce is your own original work, not "borrowed" from someone or somewhere else, recycled from other courses, or completed with others (unless unmistakably permitted)
- All written and oral work drawing upon other sources must **explicitly** reference those sources using MLA, APA, or Chicago style format

At my discretion, cases of misconduct may be reported to the Dean of Students and/or result in failing the assignment or course.

W, 2/24	Emphasizing the Form/Genre, pt. I -Read Campbell & Jamieson, <i>Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words</i> , pp. 1-21; Clinton, "Address to the Nation on Testimony Before the Independent Counsel's Grand Jury," August 17, 1998; Gronbeck, "Underestimating Generic Expectations"
F, 2/26	Emphasizing the Form/Genre, pt. II -Read John F. Kennedy, "Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Soviet Arms Buildup in Cuba," October 22, 1962; Richard M. Nixon, "Address to the Nation on the Situation in Southeast Asia," April 30, 1970; Windt, "The Presidency and Speeches on International Crises"
M, 3/1 (Zoom)	Emphasizing the Form/Genre, pt. III -Read Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation on the Explosion of the Space Shuttle <i>Challenger</i> ," January 28, 1986; George W. Bush, "Address to the Nation on the Loss of Space Shuttle <i>Columbia</i> ," February 1, 2003. DUE: Discussion Leading Article Proposal by 9pm
W, 3/3	Emphasizing the Rhetor, pt. I -Read Jimmy Carter, "Energy and National Goals," July 15, 1979; Hahn, "Flailing the Profligate"
F, 3/5	Emphasizing the Rhetor, pt. II -Read Image C311-7-WH64, LBJ Presidential Library, May 4, 1964 ; German, "Visual Images and Presidential Leadership: A Case Study of LBJ and His Beagles"
M, 3/8 (Zoom)	Emphasizing the Rhetor, pt. III -Read Donald J. Trump, "Remarks at the National Scout Jamboree in Glen Jean, West Virginia," July 24, 2017; Donald J. Trump, "Remarks on Infrastructure and an Exchange With Reporters in New York City," August 15, 2017; Stuckey, "The Power of the Presidency to Hurt"
W, 3/10	Exam <u>Unit Three: Cases and Contexts of Presidential Rhetoric</u>
F, 3/12	Nixon's Vietnam Speech—A Critical Case Study, pt. I -Read Richard M. Nixon, "Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam," November 3, 1969; Newman, "Under the Veneer" ; Stelzner, "The Quest Story and Nixon's November 3, 1969 Address"
M, 3/15	Nixon's Vietnam Speech—A Critical Case Study, pt. II -Read Campbell, "An Exercise in the Rhetoric of Mythical America"; Hill, "Conventional Wisdom—Traditional Form—The President's Message of November 3, 1969"
W, 3/17 (Zoom)	Nixon's Vietnam Speech—A Critical Case Study, pt. III -Read Drury, "Case Study: President Richard Nixon and the Silent Majority" -Bring outline/draft of Context and Method paper
Th, 3/18	DUE: Context and Method Paper by 9pm
F, 3/19	Student Discussion Leading -Read TBA

Course Policies

Writing Center: The Wabash Writing Center (located on the second floor of the Lilly Library) is able to help with all facets of paper writing (from outlining and drafting to researching and proofreading). Go here <https://www.wabash.edu/ace/writing>, select the button labeled "Click HERE to make an appointment," and register in the scheduling system.

Social Distancing:

- We will socially distance per CDC, the state of Indiana, and Wabash College guidelines.
- Seating will be spread out and you will **maintain the same seat throughout the semester**.
- The college may use seating charts for contact tracing purposes

Quarantine & Isolation: If you cannot attend class due to quarantine or isolation but the rest of the class is meeting in-person, please contact me as soon as possible to make arrangements. In cases where you are healthy or asymptomatic, you will join class through Zoom and participate in class as you would normally (we will use the owl camera technology in FAC 206). If you are out of class for a week or more, I may give you an alternative assignment.

M, 3/22	Student Discussion Leading -Read TBA
W, 3/24	Student Discussion Leading -Read TBA
F, 3/26	Student Discussion Leading -Read TBA
M, 3/29	Student Discussion Leading -Read TBA
W, 3/31	Student Discussion Leading -Read TBA
F, 4/2	No Class: Reading Day
M, 4/5	Student Discussion Leading -Read TBA
W, 4/7	Student Discussion Leading -Read TBA
F, 4/9	Student Discussion Leading -Read TBA
M, 4/12	Student Discussion Leading -Read TBA *DUE: ESSAY DRAFT BY 9pm
W, 4/14	Student Discussion Leading -Read TBA
F, 4/16	No Class: Celebration of Student Research
M, 4/19	Student Discussion Leading -Read TBA
W, 4/21	Peer Review *DUE: PEER REVIEW
F, 4/23	Student Discussion Leading -Read TBA
M, 4/26	Student Discussion Leading -Read TBA
W, 4/28	Student Discussion Leading -Read TBA
F, 4/30	Student Discussion Leading -Read TBA
M, 5/3	Course Review
Th, 5/6	DUE: FINAL ESSAY BY 4:30pm

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- Ceaser, James W., Glen Thurow, Jeffrey Tulis, and Joseph Bessette. "The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 11 (1981): 158-71.
- Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs. "An Exercise in the Rhetoric of Mythical America." In *Reading Rhetorical Texts: An Introduction to Criticism*. Edited by James Andrews, Michael C. Leff, and Robert Terrill. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.
- Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
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- Gronbeck, Bruce E. "Underestimating Generic Expectations: Clinton's Apologies of August 17, 1998." *American Communication Journal* 2 (February 1999).
- Hahn, Dan. "Flailing the Profligate: Carter's Energy Sermon of 1979." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 10 (1980): 583-87.
- Hill, Forbes. "Conventional Wisdom—Traditional Form—The President's Message of November 3, 1969." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 58 (1972): 373-86.

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- Laracey, Mel. "Talking Without Speaking, and Other Curiosities." In *Before the Rhetorical Presidency*. Edited by Martin J. Medhurst. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008.
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- Merceica, Jennifer R. "Ignoring the President." In *Columns to Characters: The Presidency and the Press Enter the Digital Age*. Edited by Stephanie A. Martin. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2017.
- Newman, Richard. "Under the Veneer: Nixon's Vietnam Speech of November 3, 1969." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56 (1970): 168-78.
- Scacco, Joshua M., & Kevin Coe. "The Ubiquitous President: Toward a New Paradigm for Studying Presidential Communication." *International Journal of Communication* 10 (2016): 2014-37.
- Stelzner, Hermann. "The Quest Story and Nixon's November 3, 1969 Address." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 57 (1971): 163-72.
- Stelzner, Hermann G. "'War Message,' December 8, 1941: An Approach to Language." *Speech Monographs* 33 (1966): 419-37.

Stuckey, Mary E. ““The Power of the Presidency to Hurt: The Indecorous Rhetoric of Donald J. Trump and the Rhetorical Norms of Democracy.”” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 50 (2020): 366-91.

Tulis, Jeffrey K. “On the Forms of Rhetorical Leadership.” In *Before the Rhetorical Presidency*. Edited by Martin J. Medhurst. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008.

U.S. Constitution, Art. II.

Windt, Theodore Otto. “The Presidency and Speeches on International Crises: Repeating the Rhetorical Past.” *Speaker and Gavel* 11 (1973): 6-14.

Windt, Theodore. “Presidential Rhetoric: Definition of a Field of Study.” *Central States Speech Journal* 35 (1984): 24-34.

Zarefsky, David. “Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34 (2004): 607-619.