



HISTORY OF RHETORIC

ENC 6336 | FALL 2023 | M 3:30-6:15

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This course examines how major concepts, historical movements, and pivotal oeuvres in rhetorical studies have not only shaped the field, but continue to influence education, culture, politics, and more. Because rhetoric is a naturally interdisciplinary field—intersecting cultural criticism, writing studies, communication, public address, argumentation, persuasion, political science, philosophy, and law, among others—we will approach “history” as critical rhetoricians, building texts from fragments, rather than exclusively as historians of rhetoric. We begin the course in the present, tracing the concurrent histories of English and Communication departments in the U.S. university system. Then, we take a leap back into time, to examine the rhetorical concerns from antiquity that echo today. From there, we will discuss hemispheric and alternative rhetorics, which themselves are unearthed due to the influence of modern, postmodern, and postcolonial rhetoricians, whom we will also examine. Then, we will discuss various definitions and uses of “the archive,” in the works of contemporary scholars. Finally, we will finish the course by examining some of the current concerns of rhetoricians, particularly as they resemble rhetorical concerns of the past: humanity, community, democracy, violence, truth, and ethics.