

Rhetoric in the Structure of American Politics

PLAP 4500 - 002, Spring, 2010
Instructor: Lynn Uzzell (leu9e@viginia.edu)
Wednesdays, 1:00-3:30
Gibson 242

Office Hours: Mon 1:00-2:00 in Gibson S154, Fri 10:00-11:00 in Alderman, or by appointment

This course explores the function and importance of rhetoric within American politics. It will consider the purpose of rhetoric in a republican form of government; how the structure of America's Constitution was meant to foster rhetoric and deliberation; and how technological developments – such as television and the internet – have changed the meaning or use of rhetoric in America. Students will also study how Aristotle classified and critiqued the various kinds of speeches, and that understanding will inform our examination of some of the most important political oratory in American history. The course will be conducted in a seminar setting, which will combine both a lecture and a discussion format.

Required Texts

On Rhetoric by Aristotle (translation by George A. Kennedy, Oxford University Press)
The Federalist Papers, Hamilton, Madison, Jay (Ed. By Charles Kesler)
Common Sense by Thomas Paine (Dover Thrift Edition)
Abraham Lincoln: Great Speeches (Dover Thrift Edition)
Franklin Delano Roosevelt: Great Speeches (Dover Thrift Edition)
Great Speeches by African Americans, (Dover Thrift Edition)
28 Great Inaugural Addresses, (Dover Thrift Edition)
The Declaration of Independence and Other Great Documents of American History (Dover)
Course Packet (C.P., which can be purchased at the Copy Shop on Elliewood Ave.)

Course Requirements

Mid-term (March 17, first hour of class) 15%
Final Exam (Monday, May 10, 9:00-12:00) 30%
Paper Outline (1-2 pages, due by Tuesday, March 2, at 6:00 pm) 5%
Paper, First Draft (7-8 pages, due by Tuesday, March 23, at 6:00 pm) 5%
Paper, Final Draft (10-12 pages, due by Tuesday, April 27, at 6:00 pm) 30%
Participation, including weekly submissions 15%

Term Paper Each student is required to write one paper over the course of the semester. It will be submitted in three stages and will culminate in the most rhetorically sophisticated piece of writing the student has yet composed. It will be appraised according to the logical, ethical, and emotional proofs that the student can marshal in support of an important issue regarding the relationship of rhetoric to American politics. The paper will total 40% of the student's grade.

Weekly submission: Each week, no later than 6:00 pm on **Monday**, students are required to email some thoughts in order to facilitate discussion for the following Wednesday's class. The submission should be no less than a page and no more than two pages, double-spaced. The student should consider one or more of the following: 1) lingering thoughts or questions about the previous class; 2) questions, comments, or reflections about the readings for the upcoming class; or 3) answers to one or more of the discussion questions for that week. Each student is required to send no fewer than 10 submissions over the course of the semester. No late submissions will be accepted. Failure to fulfill this requirement, as with any course requirement, will result in a failure for the course.

SECTION I: RHETORIC AND POLITICS, AN INTRODUCTION

Week 1, January 20: Reflection and Choice or Accident and Force?

- >>Aristotle's *Rhet.* I.1-2 (pp. 27-46)
- >>Aristotle's *Politics* – I. 1-2
- >>Aristotle's *Ethics* – I. 1-3
- >>Hobbes, *Leviathan* – selections from Part I, chapters IV and V
- >>Bryan Garsten, *Saving Persuasion*, Introduction } - (C.P., pp. 1-23)
- >>Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist* No. 1

1) Aristotle claims that it is speech that makes man distinct from the other animals. What is it about speech, in particular, that is so important?

2) How does Aristotle's view of ethics differ from that of Hobbes? How would each understanding affect the meaning or purpose of persuasive speech?

3) According to Garsten, what has changed in modern attitudes toward rhetoric? What accounts for these changes?

Week 2, January 27: The Rhetoric of Revolution: Impassioned Reasons

- >>Donald C. Bryant, "Rhetoric: Its Function and Scope"
- >>Samuel West, "On the Right To Rebel Against Governors," 1776
- >>Jonathan Boucher, "On Civil Liberty; Passive Obedience, and Nonresistance," 1775
- >>Paine's *Common Sense*, (Dover) pp. 1-6, 16-18, 33-34, 41-44, & 53-55
- >>Patrick Henry "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" (Dover, *Great Documents*)
- >>Edmund Burke, "Conciliation with America," 1775 } - (C.P., pp. 24-70)
- >>Declaration of Independence (Dover, *Great Documents*)

1) According to Bryant, what is the scope of rhetoric? Who uses it? Is flag-burning or tossing bags of tea overboard a form of rhetoric? Should such actions be considered rhetorical? What do rhetoric, advertising, and propaganda have in common? How do they differ?

2) Bryant admits that the province of rhetoric is mere probability (as opposed to scientific certainty). Why, then, does he nonetheless insist upon the importance, and even the necessity and dignity, of rhetoric?

3) Does rhetoric include a knowledge of the subject matter on which one is speaking or writing, or is it only the art of presenting well whatever one is presenting? What are the moral responsibilities of the rhetor before he or she speaks?

4) What is the general purpose of these revolutionary speeches? Were they meant to move people toward a specific *action*? To arouse a certain *feeling*? To change or reinforce the *beliefs* of the audience? Or some combination of the three?

5) What were some of the reasons given for Revolution? What were some of the reasons given for remaining under Britain's authority? On what points did the two sides agree, and where did they diverge?

SECTION II: LOGOS, ETHOS, AND THE MAKING OF THE U. S. CONSTITUTION

Week 3, February 3: The Logic of Persuasive Speech

- >>Aristotle, An Introduction to Dialectic from the *Topics* (Found in the back of the *Rhetoric*, pp. 263-66)
- >> “The Concept of the Enthymeme as Understood in the Modern Period,” (class handout)
- >>Aristotle’s *Rhet.* II.18-26 (pp. 156-92)
- >>Lloyd F. Bitzer, “Aristotle’s Enthymeme Revisited.” } - (C.P., pp. 72-82)
- >>*Federalist* No. 37

- 1) What is a syllogism? What is a “rhetorical syllogism,” or enthymeme? Why is the enthymeme necessary for rhetorical discourse?
- 2) The Greek word for speech, *logos*, is the same word for logic or a “rational account” (e.g., psychology is a rational account of the psyche, biology is a rational account of life, etc.) Given the centrality of the enthymeme and the paradigm to rhetorical discourse, explain why the two notions – logic and speech – might be so closely related for the Greeks.
- 3) Find examples of enthymemes and paradigms in any of the arguments we have read thus far.
- 4) Studying Aristotelian logic can leave one with the impression that knowledge and certitude are as easy as constructing valid syllogisms. What are some of the reasons Madison gives why knowledge in political matters is problematic, to say the least.

Week 4, February 10: Ethical and Logical Proofs For and Against the Constitution

- >>*Federalist* Nos. 2, 6, 14, 15, and 51
- >>“Centinel”: No. 1
- >>“Federalist Farmer,” No. 1
- >>“Federalist Farmer,” No. 5
- >>“Brutus,” No. 2
- >>Aristotle, *Rhet.*, II.1 (pp. 111-13)
- >>Joseph Ellis, *His Excellency, George Washington*, select pages
- >>George Washington, “Speech to the Officers of the Army,” March 14, 1783
- >>Washington and the Constitutional Convention, some contemporary observations
- >>Notes from the last day of the Constitutional Convention, Sept. 17, 1787
- >>Opposition from the MA Yeomen, January, 1788 } - (C.P., pp. 83-125)
- >>Consider Arms, Malichi Maynard, and Samuel Field, “Reasons for Dissent,” 16 April, 1788

- 1) We have discussed the enthymeme at some length. Locate at least two enthymemes each within the writings of the Federalists and the Antifederalists. Supply the missing premise(s). Also find at least one example of a paradigm.
- 2) Judging from the unspoken assumptions found in the arguments of the Federalists and the Antifederalists, were they seeking different ends? Or did they disagree only on the means for achieving their ends?
- 3) What were some of the objections to the new Constitution by the Antifederalists? Did the Federalists answer those objections satisfactorily?

4) What different pictures of human nature emerge from an examination of Hamilton (*Federalist* # 6) and “Centinel”? What about Madison (#51) and Brutus? How does Centinel differ from Madison (#14) on the question of innovation?

5) Did Washington deserve the deference which he received? Is the persuasive proof of *ethos* a kind of rational judgement or an abdication of rationality? Under what conditions might it be rational to defer to the rationality of another? Were the attacks against Washington’s character just? Were they persuasive?

SECTION III: STYLE & PATHOS IN THE LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATES

Week 5, February 17 – Style, and an Ancient and a Modern Approach to Pathos

Paper topics handed out Tuesday, February 16

- >>Aristotle’s *Rhet.* III.1, 2.1-10, 7.1-7, 13, 14.6-9, 17.5-8, & 19 (pp. 193-201, 210-11, 229-31, 233-35, 243, 248-50)
- >>Wayne C. Booth, “The Rhetorical Stance”
- >>Aristotle’s *Rhet.* II.1-3, 5.1-12, 8.1-3, & 9 (pp. 111-24, 128-30, 139, 141-44)
- >>Hobbes, *Leviathan*, selections from Part I, chapters XI, XIII, and XV } - (C.P., pp. 127-160)
- >>C.S. Lewis, “Men Without Chests” and “The Way” in *Abolition of Man*, pp. 7-33, and *skim* pp. 49-59

1) What, according to Booth, is the “rhetorical stance”? What is the cause of bad writing, and what is its cure?

2) How does word choice influence the meaning of a speech?

3) Lewis describes a shift that has occurred in the understanding of pathos – from one that recognized the objective legitimacy or morality of certain sentiments to one that views all sentiment as wholly subjective. What does this change mean for the legitimacy or morality of rhetorical speech? (I.e., what is ethical rhetoric if some feelings are proper and others are improper? What would ethical rhetoric be if all sentiment were entirely subjective and relative to the individual?)

4) According to Lewis, how did this shift in philosophical perspective take place? Did the authors of the “green book” offer scientific or philosophical arguments for their point of view or was their approach a rhetorical one?

Week 6, February 24 – North, South, and a Disjunction of Sympathies

- >>Richard Weaver, “Abraham Lincoln and the Argument from Definition,” from, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*
- >>John C. Calhoun, Introduction to his “Resolutions on the Slave Question,” 1847
- >>Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, chpt. 33, 1851-2
- >>Lincoln, Speech at Peoria, October 16, 1854
- >>Lincoln-Douglas debates, selections
- >>Alexander Stephens, “Cornerstone Speech,” 1861 } - (C.P., pp. 127-160)
- >>Lincoln, Gettysburg Address and Second Inaugural, (Dover, pp. 103-4, 106-8)

1) What is the “argument from definition,” according to Weaver? What world-view does this kind of argument entail?

2) *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was enormously popular and influential when it was published. What features of the book still seem effective (or affecting) today? What parts seem more cringeworthy? How

can we account for this difference in taste regarding *pathos*?

3) What are the different appeals made in the respective speeches of Lincoln and the Southerners? What values do each seek to reinforce and what sentiments do they seek to arouse in their audience?

4) Both Lincoln and Douglas appeal to liberty. How do their respective conceptions of liberty differ?

5) How does the style of Lincoln's later speeches differ from his earlier ones? To what degree does occasion or circumstances dictate the style of a speech?

SECTION IV: DELIBERATIVE RHETORIC, THE LEGISLATURE, AND THE PEOPLE

Week 7, March 3 – Deliberation and Prudence

Paper outlines are due Tuesday, March 2, at 6:00 P.M.

>>Aristotle's *Rhet.* I.3-8 (46-75)

>>Aristotle's *Eth.* Bk. VI., selections

>>Larry Arnhart, "The Deliberate Rhetoric of *The Federalist*"

>>Debates in the Constitutional Convention, selections pertaining to the legislature

(The debates may be *skimmed*) } - (C.P., pp. 213-271)

>>*Federalist* Nos. 10, 55, and 63

1) What is virtue according to Aristotle? What is prudence? What is the relationship between moral virtue and prudence. What is the relationship between prudence and deliberation?

2) Prudence presupposes both moral virtue as well as extensive and accurate knowledge of particular circumstances. Is it necessary to be prudent in order to be good at deliberative rhetoric? What are the consequences of being imprudent yet persuasive?

3) Why, according to Arnhart, should the arguments of Publius be considered deliberative rhetoric? In what ways was the constitutional structure of America meant to foster future deliberative rhetoric?

4) In what ways does public opinion limit the "available means of persuasion"? Why must it be a limitation? Why are Aristotle and Publius less pessimistic about this limitation than Plato?

5) How were the different features of a deliberative body meant to affect the quality of their deliberations? (E.g., the size of the deliberating body, the size of the district each representative represented, how its members were chosen, the length of their appointment, the economic class or degree of indebtedness of either the electors or the candidates, the degree of wisdom the body possesses, the degree of knowledge it possesses, or the virtue – or lack thereof – of its members.) On which of these questions did there seem to be greater consensus, and on which was there widespread disagreement?

6) From what was said about the character of the House and the Senate, what were the different qualities or virtues that each was intended to contribute to good legislation? What were the possible vices of each?

7) In *Federalist 10*, Madison gives two distinct reasons why the Lower House of the legislature will operate better in an extended sphere: 1) because of the multiplicity of interests; 2) because of the superior sort of legislator it will attract. Do these two pictures of the legislature harmonize into a single vision for deliberative rhetoric, or do they suggest different modes of discourse at different times?

8) How is the goal of deliberation incorporated into the American Constitution? How well does America embody that goal today?

Week 8, Spring Break: March 6-14

Week 9, March 17 – The Citizen-Statesman

Midterm, first hour of class

>>Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, (on the political activity of the Americans)

>>Elizabeth Cady Stanton Pleads for Women's Rights

>>Susan B. Anthony argues for Women's Rights

>>Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" 1851 (in Dover, *Great Speeches by A.A.*, pp. 11-12)

>>W.E.B. Du Bois, "To the Nations of the World," 1900 (Dover, pp. 85-87)

>>Martin Luther King, "I Have a Dream" (Dover, 111-14)

— "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," April 16, 1963

— "Where do we Go from Here?" Aug. 16, 1967

— "Been to the Mountain Top," April 3, 1968

>>Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet," 1964 (Dover, 115-31)

>>Faulkner's Nobel Address to Writers

>>Solzhenitsyn's Nobel lecture, introduction and conclusion, 1972

>>Barbara Streisand on the role of artists in society and politics, Feb. 3, 1995

>>Tom Wolf, "My Three Stooges"

} - (C.P., pp. 272-327)

1) What is the rhetorical role of the private citizen? What general purpose are they all trying to accomplish with their speeches (distinct from the specific issues they are tackling: equal rights for women and minorities, etc.)?

2) Who is the audience of the citizen-statesman? Is it other citizens who attend the speech? The legislature? The media outlets and their audiences? Some combination of these? And are some of these speakers using different arguments targeted at different audiences within the same speech?

3) In our republic – a representative democracy – the citizens are meant to have no direct involvement in the legislative process. How, if at all, does the citizen-statesman change the Constitutional framework of the regime? Does he contribute to those intentions? Subvert them?

4) What are some possible benefits to the active involvement of private citizens in the political process? What are some possible threats?

5) Do you detect different styles in the speeches and letter from Martin Luther King? What can account for these different styles? Is one more effective than the other, or is each suited for its own particular purpose?

6) What were the different political solutions advocated by Martin Luther King and Malcolm X for overcoming the problems experienced by African-Americans in America? Also, what is different about their rhetorical technique? In the way that each attempts to persuade? What accounts for these differences?

7) Do artists have a rhetorical role in society distinct from the average citizen? Is it a political role?

8) Is the artist's merit judged according to how well he captures and expresses what is universal and beautiful (as Faulkner and Solzhenitsyn suggest), or according to how well he embraces the particular and immediate (as Streisand and Wolf suggest)?

SECTION V: FORENSIC RHETORIC AND THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

Week 10, March 24 – the Deliberations of the Courtroom

First draft of paper due Tuesday, March 23 at 6:00 P.M.

>>Aristotle's *Rhet.* I.10-15 & III.16.4-10 (pp. 83-110, 239-41)

>>Richard Weaver, "Dialectic and Rhetoric at Dayton, Tennessee," from *The Ethics of Rhetoric*

>>Louis D. Brandeis, "The Living Law"

>>Antonin Scalia, "Constitutional Interpretation the Old Fashioned Way" } - (C.P., pp. 329-350)

1) How does forensic rhetoric differ from deliberative rhetoric?

2) Weaver's criticism of Bryant in the Scopes trial was that he relied too much on dialectic and too little on rhetoric in his arguments. What would a more "rhetorical" argument have looked like? Would there have been a way to make the argument in a way that would have had more rhetorical appeal yet remain squarely within judicial rhetoric? Or would such appeal necessarily have moved it in the direction of deliberative rhetoric?

3) How does Brandeis alter the role of the lawyer in America? Is he limited to judicial rhetoric, or does he engage in deliberative rhetoric as well?

4) What is Scalia's critique of the "living constitution"? What are some of the consequences of blurring the lines between the judicial branch and the legislative branch?

SECTION VI: EPIDEICTIC RHETORIC AND THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Week 11, March 31 – The President and His Audience(s)

>>Aristotle's *Rhet.* I.9 (pp. 75-83)

>>Selected Inaugural Addresses (Dover's *28 Great Inaugural Addresses*)

— Washington's First, pp. 1-4

— Madison's First, pp. 18-20

— Wilson's Second, pp. 61-64

— JFK's, pp. 93-96

- Reagan’s First, pp. 109-14
- >>Washington’s First Annual Address to Congress, Jan. 8, 1790
- >>Lincoln, Annual Address to Congress, Dec. 1, 1862 (Dover, *Lincoln*, pp. 78–79, 87-92, 96-97)
- >>Bill Clinton, State of the Union, January 25, 1994
- >>George W. Bush, State of the Union, January 29, 2002
- >>Washington’s Thanksgiving Day Proclamation
- >>Washington’s Farewell Address (Dover, *Great Documents*, pp. 47-60)
- >>Lincoln, “Proclamation of a National Fast-Day,” Aug. 12, 1861 (Dover, pp. 76-77)
 - Emancipation Proclamation (Dover, pp. 98-100)
 - Letter to Mrs. Bixby (Dover, pp. 105)
 - *Review* Gettysburg Address and Second Inaugural (Dover)
- >>FDR, “A Day that Will Live in Infamy,” December, 1941 (Dover, *FDR*, pp. 113–15)
- >>George W. Bush on terrorist attacks, September 11, 2001
- >>George W. Bush on Katrina, “Heck of a Job,” Sept. 2, 2005 } - (C.P., pp. 352-380)

- 1) How does epideictic speech differ from judicial or deliberative speech?
- 2) Of these inaugural addresses, which read more like epideictic speeches and which like deliberative speeches? What might account for these differences (e.g., the particular speaker, the intended audience, the occasion or circumstances, etc.?)
- 3) Likewise, what differences do you detect between the State of the Union speeches given by presidents over the years? What do they have in common? What might account for their differences and similarities?
- 4) The Constitution only prescribes three occasions when a president must speak: that he swear an oath to defend the Constitution, that he include a statement of objections on any bill that he vetoes, and that he give a State of the Union Address to Congress. What other occasions might the President be unofficially “required” to speak? What would be the likely result if he remained silent during a crisis?
- 5) Conversely, are there other occasions when a president would have been wise to hold his tongue? When, if ever, does presidential speech become excessive or inappropriate?
- 6) What can we make of the sheer absence of rhetorical appeals in Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation?
- 7) President Bush was widely criticized for his handling of the crisis after Hurricane Katrina, and for the speech he gave praising the head of FEMA. What, if anything, could the president have said to improve the situation?

SECTION VII: POLITICAL PARTIES: OF SOPHISTS AND STATESMEN

Week 12, April 7 – Partisanship or Demagoguery?

- >>Aristotle’s *Rhet.* II.12-17 (148-56) and *review* I.2.3-4 and III.1
- >>Plato’s *Gorgias*, selections
- >>Henry Clay calls for Compromise, 1849
- >>Lincoln, House Divided (Dover, pp. 24-32)
- >>William Lloyd Garrison, “The Constitution and the Union,” 1832
- >>Barry Goldwater at the Republican National Convention, July 16, 1964

- >>Edward Kennedy at the Democratic National Convention, 1980
 - >>Joseph McCarthy, “Enemies from Within,” February 9, 1950
 - >>Huey Long’s appeal to “Share our Wealth,” January, 1935
 - >>George Washington Plunkitt justifies “Honest Graft,” 1905
 - >>Adlai Stevenson, Concession speech, Nov. 5, 1952
- } - (C.P., pp. 382-436)

1) Where do we draw the line between statesmen and demagogues? Is it only a question of sanctioning the rhetoric of those with whom we happen to agree, or are there objective criteria for distinguishing between the two?

2) Most would agree that a rhetor is unethical if he is knowingly lying about the subject on which he speaks. What if he is merely in error? What responsibility does a speaker have to be correct about the matters on which he speaks?

3) The original Constitution carves out no place for parties (indeed, parties were always considered in a derogatory light). Is there today a legitimate place for parties? What is it? In what ways have parties – for good or ill – become a part of the structure of American politics?

4) Parties arise out of disagreements and are, by definition, divisive. On what questions should speakers call for harmony and compromise and on what questions should they hold firm to principle? Could the Civil War have been averted if there had been more Clays and Douglasses and fewer Garrisons and Lincolns? Are modern parties too divisive?

SECTION VIII: SPEAKING TO A FOREIGN AUDIENCE

Week 13, April 14 – Global Community or Curse of Babel?

- >>Review Aristotle’s *Rhet.* I.8 (72-75)
 - >>Jefferson, Letter to Henry Lee, May 8, 1825
 - >>Jefferson, Letter to Roger Weightman, June 24, 1826
 - >>Red Jacket responds to President Washington, March 31, 1792
 - >>Kennedy “Cuban Missile Crisis,” Oct. 22, 1962
 - >>Kennedy “American University Speech,” June 10, 1963
 - >>Kennedy, “Ich bin ein Berliner,” June 26, 1963
 - >>Kruschev’s “secret speech” on Stalin
 - >>Reagan, “Tear Down This Wall,” June 12, 1987
 - >>Solzhenitsyn addresses Harvard graduates, June 8, 1978
 - >>Reactions to Solzhenitsyn’s speech
 - >>Obama on American-Muslim relationships, June 4, 2009
 - >>Al Jazeera: reaction to Obama’s speech
 - >>Obama’s Town Hall Meeting in China, November 16, 2009
 - >>Reactions to Obama’s China speech
- } - (C.P., pp. 438-511)

1) When delivering a speech to a different culture, what elements of the speechmaking process remain the same? What is different? How can one avoid giving a speech that gets “lost in translation”?

2) Are there some messages that cannot bridge the cultural divide? Are there other values that are universal? How can one tell one from the other?

3) Solzhenitsyn is from the Eastern tradition, but in this speech he encourages the West to do a

better job at embracing its Western values. What is your own reaction to this speech? If it is positive: what is it about the speech that you find appealing? If it is negative, how could the speaker have addressed the audience more effectively?

4) What are the purposes of international rhetoric? What are the alternatives?

SECTION IX: MODERN RHETORIC: JOURNALISM & THE NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Week 14, April 21 – The Fourth Estate

- >> Benjamin Franklin, “Liberty of the Cudgel,” 1789
- >> Joseph J. Ellis on the Alien and Sedition controversy, from *Founding Brothers*
- >> Sedition Act and *Philadelphia Aurora*, “Advertisement Extraordinary!!!” July 14, 1798
- >> Tocqueville on the freedom of the Press
- >> Garrison’s *Liberator* (from Dover’s *Great Documents*, pp. 69-71)
- >> Theodore Roosevelt condemns the “Muckrakers,” April 14, 1906
- >> Clare Boothe Luce, Criticism of the American Press, April 21, 1960
- >> Newton Minow Lambasts the National Association of Broadcasters, May 9, 1961
- >> *New York Times*, “CBS Defends its Report on Bush Military Record,” 9/11/04
- >> *Washington Times*, “CBS Bomb Turns Blooper,” 9/11/04
- >> *New York Times*, “Rather Quitting as CBS Anchor in Abrupt Move,” 11/24/04
- >> *foxnews.com*, “Dan Rather to Step Down as CBS Anchor,” 11/24/04
- >> *The New York Times*, “CBS is Sued by Rather over Ouster,” 9/20/07
- >> *foxnews.com*, “Dan Rather Files \$70 Million Lawsuit,” 9/20/07
- >> *The Boston Globe*, “‘Truth and Duty,’ A Distorted Lense,” book review, 12/11/05
- >> *CNN.com*, “Dan Rather’s Lawsuit Against CBS Dismissed,” 9/29/09 } - (C.P., pp. 513-570)

1) Is bias in news coverage inevitable? Is it more or less of a problem than it appears to have been during the Founding? Is bias even a problem at all, so long as the press is free?

2) How does journalism help (or hinder) the citizens’ capacity to deliberate on important political questions?

3) The three pairs of news articles from 2004 and 2007 – three from the *New York Times*, one from the *Washington Times*, and two from *Fox News* – are covering the same three stories on the same three days. What differences do you detect in the ways that they cover each story? In what ways is news coverage – the selection, organizing, and presentation of facts – rhetorical?

4) What factual incongruities can you detect in the stories reporting the Dan Rather saga – both between the different news outlets covering the story on the same day and also when considering how the story evolves over the course of a few years?

5) How much responsibility should a journalist bear for the accuracy of his stories? If a high-placed official confides his opinions and conjectures, is that news? If a rumor is widespread, is that news? What degree of proof should be required before a suspicion becomes a fact?

6) The rise of the Internet, especially bloggers, has been credited/blamed for the death of traditional journalism; for journalists being too hasty with their stories in order to avoid getting “scooped” by their Internet rivals; and for holding traditional journalists to account for their stories. By and large, are bloggers good for journalism or not?

Week 15, April 28 – New Media

Final Paper Due Tuesday, April 27 at 6:00

- >>James Ceaser: “The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency”
- >>Neil Postman, “Reach Out and Elect Someone,” from *Amusing Ourselves to Death*
- >>FDR, First “Fireside Chat,” March 12, 1933 (Dover, *FDR*, pp. 34-38)
- >>FDR, “Fireside Chat” of Sept. 11, 1941 (Dover, pp. 105-112)
- >>“Highlights” of the U.S. Presidency and Television
- >>Richard Nixon, the “Checkers” speech, September 23, 1952
- >>The Kennedy-Nixon debates
- >>Bill Clinton, “I Did Not Have Sexual Relations with That Woman,” Jan. 26, 1998
- >>Bill Clinton admits having sexual relations with that woman, Aug. 17, 1998
- >>Bill Henderson touts the Lead Pencil Club, April, 1996
- >>William Safire Denounces the Telephone as the Subverter of Good English
- >>“Obama’s VP Choice Imminent,” August 10, 2008
- >>Michael Gerson, “Banish the Cyber-Bigots,” Sept. 25, 2009 } - (C.P., pp. 571-623)

1) According to Ceaser, et al, what does the rise of the rhetorical presidency mean? What are its causes? Should we celebrate or lament this development?

2) What is it about the new media – radio, TV, the Internet – that invites intimate personal disclosures before a wide audience? How does this development alter (for better or for worse) our ability to make sound political decisions?

3) The readings for this week primarily discuss the ways that new media result in the decline of public discourse. Are there any ways in which rhetoric is improved?

4) It has been argued that broadcast television used to homogenize public opinion and that cable TV and the Internet fragment it. Is there some truth to these statements? Which condition is preferable in the U.S.? Can the two tendencies balance each other out?

Monday, May 10, 9:00-12:00 – FINAL EXAM