



**ILS 200**  
**CRITICAL THINKING & EXPRESSION:**  
**ARGUMENTS IN POLITICAL RHETORIC**



Spring 2020  
Tuesday, 2:25-3:15  
Psychology 113

**Instructor:** Michael Promisel  
**Office:** [Aldo's Cafe](#)  
**Course Credits:** 3.0, Option A

**Office Hours:** T 3:15 - 5:00PM  
**Email:** [promisel@wisc.edu](mailto:promisel@wisc.edu)  
**Format:** Lecture & Discussion

**TA's:** Tyler Chriscoe ([tylerchriscoe@gmail.com](mailto:tylerchriscoe@gmail.com)), Emily Cole ([eacole2@wisc.edu](mailto:eacole2@wisc.edu)), Claire Mason ([cemason2@wisc.edu](mailto:cemason2@wisc.edu))

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

What does it mean to think critically? In an 1894 report defending the freedom of professor Richard Ely to promote a Socialist agenda on campus, then-President of UW-Madison, Charles Kendall Adams, wrote: "Whatever may be the limitations which trammel inquiry elsewhere, we believe the great state University of Wisconsin should ever encourage that *continual and fearless sifting and winnowing* by which alone the truth can be found." This process of "sifting and winnowing" is a great metaphor for critical thought and has a distinguished tradition at UW-Madison. The aim of this course is to continue this tradition. In other words, we will learn what it means to "sift and winnow" and how to express the fruits of this process persuasively.

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\* Image: *Cicerone denuncia Catalina*, by Cesare Maccari (1888).

This course will achieve these goals by exploring the arguments of famous political speeches. We will observe critical thought and persuasion “in action” by reading, rehearsing, scrutinizing, and imitating some of the greatest speeches in our collective heritage. By engaging an array of speeches meant to inspire, provoke, contest, and transform their audiences, we will learn the principles of what constitutes an effective argument. In addition, we will practice drafting, delivering, and arguing speeches of our own creation and will examine the relationship between arguments that seek truth and arguments that seek to persuade. Finally, to pay homage to Alexander Meiklejohn, the founder of ILS and author of *Free Speech and Its Relation to Self-Government* (1947), we will examine threats to critical thinking, including limitations on free speech and the tyranny of majority opinion.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

- 1) To understand and practice critical thinking and expression
- 2) To introduce students to the skills and principles of effective argumentation
- 3) To equip students to critically engage political speeches and ideas
- 4) To carefully read primary sources and learn how historical and philosophical texts can inform contemporary questions

## REQUIRED TEXTS

- Topping, Ryan N.S., *The Elements of Rhetoric: How to Write and Speak Clearly & Persuasively*. (Angelico Press, 2016). ISBN: 978-1621381969
- Struck, William Jr. & White, E.B., *The Elements of Style, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*. (Pearson Education, 2000). ISBN: 978-0205309023.
- [www.AmericanRhetoric.com](http://www.AmericanRhetoric.com) (AR)

### Recommended (Not-Required) Texts

- Crider, Scott F., *The Office of Assertion: An Art of Rhetoric for the Academic Essay*. (ISI Books, 2005). ISBN: 978-1932236453.
- Roper, Gregory L., *The Writer's Workshop*. (ISI Books, 2007). ISBN: 978-1933859330

Students must purchase the editions of the required texts above. A text-based class will not succeed if we are not on the same page, literally and metaphorically. Students should bring the text under consideration to both lecture and discussion. All PDF's are posted under the “Files” tab on Canvas.

## CLASS EXPECTATIONS

Reading: Lecture and discussions will not summarize the content of the readings but seek to understand them more deeply through analysis and conversation. This will be most fruitful when students are prepared to analyze and engage with others in a meaningful way. Thus, this course is grounded in *careful reading* before each session.

Technology Policies: Computers and tablets are permitted in lecture **if, and only if**, you write me an email making 3 arguments for why using a computer or tablet is superior to taking hand-written notes. You must also acknowledge 2 counterpoints to your arguments. If you offer valid points, you will be permitted to use a computer or tablet during lecture. No cell phones may be used during class time. Infringements will result in reduced participation grades.

Instructor Meeting: Each student is **strongly encouraged** to meet with me at least once throughout the semester. During this meeting we will discuss course assignments, individual goals for the course, and how critical thinking applies to the interests of the student.

Assignments:

1. *Short Essays:* Students will write four short, single-space essays over the course of this class. More specific directions and requirements for each paper will be distributed a week before the assignment is due.
2. *Speeches:* Students will deliver four speeches throughout the semester:
  - a. *Elevator Pitch:* Each student will present 2 elevator pitches throughout the semester. An elevator pitch is a 1-2 minute speech delivered to grab someone’s attention about an issue, product, or idea.
  - b. *Recitation:* Each student must memorize 150-200 words of a speech and deliver it in front of discussion section.
  - c. *Debate:* Each discussion section will host one debate throughout the semester. This debate will be administered by the TA and cover a topical political issue.
3. *Reading Quizzes:* During 10 of the 14 lectures this semester, students will complete a reading comprehension quiz at the end of lecture. These quizzes are not meant to trick you, but to reward students who effectively complete the reading. Each quiz is worth 1% of the overall course grade.
4. *Final Essay:* An essay written in response to a prompt distributed two weeks before the conclusion of the semester. This essay is meant to showcase the skills of argumentation learned throughout the semester.

Late Work: Late work will be penalized for all assignments. A letter grade will be deducted from late work for each 24-hour period passed since the due date. If you must turn in an assignment late due to extenuating circumstances, please reach out to me or your teaching assistant at least 24 hours in advance of the due date.

McBurney Accommodations: Students with McBurney-verified accommodations must notify me and your teaching assistant during the **first two weeks** of the semester to arrange specific accommodations for assignments or exams.

Plagiarism: Instances of plagiarism will be investigated and reported to the Dean’s Office.

## GRADES

Participation -----	10%
Short Essays -----	2 x 5%, 2 x 10%
Speeches -----	2 x 5%, 2 x 10%
Reading Quizzes -----	10%
Final Essay -----	20%

## CLASS OVERVIEW

- Tuesday, 1/21      Introduction: The Importance of Critical Thinking  
**Read:** Hannah Arendt, *Thinking and Moral Considerations* (PDF)
- The Concepts of Critical Thought**
- Tuesday, 1/28      Logos: Logical vs. Persuasive Speech  
**Due:** *Position Statement*  
**Read:** Socrates, *Death Sentence Speech* (PDF)  
Antigone, *Final Speech before Imprisonment* (PDF)  
*The Elements of Rhetoric*: Introduction & Chapter I  
*The Elements of Style*: Elementary Rules 1 & 2, Misuse p. 39-40  
**Watch:** *Sir Thomas More's Final Speech* (AR)
- Tuesday, 2/4      Forming Logical Arguments: The Scholastic Dispute  
**Due:** *Elevator Pitch 1*  
**Read:** The Writers Workshop: Voices of Logic (PDF)  
*The Elements of Style*: Elementary Rule 3, Misuse p. 41-42  
**Watch:** *Atticus Finch delivers his Closing Argument at the Trial of Tom Robinson* (AR)
- Tuesday, 2/11      Pathos: The Importance of Rhetoric  
**Due** *Short Essay 1*  
**Read:** Pericles, *Funeral Oration* (PDF)  
*The Elements of Rhetoric*, Chapter II  
*The Elements of Style*: Elementary Rules 4 & 5, Misuse p. 43-44  
**Watch:** *Coach Herman Boone: Gettysburg Speech* (AR)
- Tuesday, 2/18      Ethos: The Character of Speech  
**Read:** Queen Elizabeth, *Inveighs against the Spanish Armada* (PDF)  
*The Elements of Rhetoric*, Chapter III  
*The Elements of Style*: Elementary Rules 6 & 7, Misuse p. 45-46  
**Watch:** *Marc Antony Addresses Roman Citizenry on the Death of Julius Caesar* (AR)  
*Ellis Boyd 'Red' Redding Addresses the Parole Board for the Final Time* (AR)
- Techniques of Public Speaking**
- Tuesday, 2/25      The Three Ends of Speech  
**Due:** *Short Essay 2*  
**Read:** Shakespeare's Henry V, *Saint Crispin's Day Speech* (PDF)  
*The Elements of Rhetoric*, Chapter IV  
*The Elements of Style*: Elementary Rules 8 & 9, Misuse p. 47-48  
**Watch:** *John Quincy Adams Addresses the Supreme Court of the United States of America* (AR)
- Tuesday, 3/3      The Structure of a Speech  
**Due:** *Elevator Pitch 2*  
**Read:** George Washington, *Farewell Address* (PDF)  
*The Elements of Rhetoric*, Chapter V  
*The Elements of Style*: Elementary Rules 10 & 11, Misuse p. 49-50  
**Watch:** Patrick Henry, *Give Me Liberty, or Give Me Death!* (YouTube)

- Tuesday, 3/10      The Garden of Eloquence  
**Due:** *Short Essay 3*  
**Read:** Jefferson Davis, *On the Withdrawal from the Union* (PDF)  
 Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address, Second Inaugural Address* (PDF)  
*The Elements of Rhetoric*, Chapter VI  
*The Elements of Style*: Principles of Composition 12 & 13, Misuse p. 51-52
- Tuesday, 3/24      Activism & Critical Thinking  
**Read:** Frederick Douglass, *The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro* (PDF)  
 Malcolm X, *The Ballot or the Bullet* (PDF)  
 Ella Baker, *Address at the Hattiesburg Freedom Day Rally* (VoicesofDemocracy.com)  
*The Elements of Style*: Principles of Composition 14 & 15, Misuse p. 53-54  
**Watch:** Martin Luther King Jr., *I Have a Dream* (YouTube)
- Tuesday, 3/31      Speaking from Outside  
**Due:** *Recitation*  
**Read:** Christine de Pizan, *Speech of Lady Reason* (PDF)  
 Lady Astor, *Speech on Women in Politics* (PDF)  
 Anna Howard Shaw, *The Fundamental Principle of a Republic* (AR)  
*The Elements of Rhetoric*, Chapter VII  
*The Elements of Style*: Principle of Composition 16, Misuse p. 55-56  
**Watch:** *Hidden Figures Bathroom Speech* (YouTube)
- Tuesday, 4/7      The Power of Narratives  
**Read:** Winston Churchill, "Blood, Sweat, and Tears," *Dunkirk*, "Their Finest Hour" (PDF)  
 King George VI, *Radio Address to the British Empire* (AR)  
*The Elements of Style*: Principles of Composition 17 & 18, Misuse p. 57-58  
**Watch:** *Winston Churchill's Speech in The Darkest Hour* (YouTube)
- Threats to Critical Thinking**
- Tuesday, 4/14      Cowardice & Tyranny of the Majority  
**Due:** *Short Essay 4*  
**Read:** Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (PDF)  
 Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Commencement Address* (PDF)  
*The Elements of Style*: Principles of Composition 19 & 20, Misuse p. 59-61
- Tuesday, 4/21      Formality & Freedom of Speech  
**Due:** *Debate Week*  
**Read:** Alexander Meiklejohn, *Free Speech and Its Relation to Self-Government* (PDF)  
*The Elements of Style*: Principles of Composition 21 & 22, Misuse p. 62-65  
**Watch:** Barack Obama, *Eulogy to John McCain* (YouTube)
- Tuesday, 4/28      Concluding Lecture & Student Speeches  
**Read:** Plato, *Allegory of the Cave* (PDF)
- FINAL EXAM      *Exact date TBA*