



## **POLI 4911: Politics and Rhetoric (Winter 2025)**

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### **Introduction:**

We are constantly bombarded with kinds of rhetoric. Whether in advertising, fundraising appeals, sports commentary, or from armchair “experts” on YouTube, it is difficult to escape exaggerated descriptions and questionable claims leading to dubious conclusions of all kinds. Nonetheless, we may associate rhetoric above all with the political realm. Political leaders and those vying for support are expected to pack their speeches with effective rhetoric. Indeed, some of the most famous political speeches of all time are chock full of phrases intended to rouse their target audiences. In this class, we will consider both famous (or infamous) and not as well-known uses of political rhetoric in order to determine and assess their meaning and efficacy. Rhetoric is a tool that can be used for good or bad purposes but might be considered a necessary element of democratic politics and effective political leadership. Therefore, we will also work at understanding the importance of rhetoric and what is involved in unlocking its power in the service of our most cherished purposes.

### **Required Text (other readings/viewing/listening links will be provided):**

Bartlett, Robert C. trans. (2019) *Aristotle’s Art of Rhetoric* University of Chicago Press

It may be purchased through the bookstore for \$28.50 and an ebook is available at VitalSource as well for \$21.99 or here (PDF or paper: approx. \$28.00, cloth: approx. \$60.00):

<https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/A/bo32427200.html>

## Class Methods and Requirements:

While I will occasionally offer a short lecture to introduce some assigned texts or themes, most of our class will consist of discussion of assigned readings/viewing/listening led by students. Each of you will have at least one opportunity to introduce questions for the whole class to consider based on one or more of the readings/viewing/listening. In addition, as the term progresses, you will be working toward an opportunity to present your own rhetorical skills in a short speech in one of the final classes.

**Seminar Participation:** 40%

**Midterm Assignment** (Speech Analysis): 20%

**Prepared Speech** (presentation and text): 40%

## Topics and Readings/Viewing/Listening

(I may be making additions/changes to this as we proceed)

**January 6<sup>th</sup>:** Introduction to the class and its requirements and to rhetoric and its political uses.

Discussion of resources and themes. No assigned reading.

**January 13<sup>th</sup>:** What is rhetoric and what is it for? Ancient and modern examples.

1. Aristotle ***Art of Rhetoric (AR)*** Book One, Chs. 1-9 (pp. 5-46 in Bartlett edition)

or here: <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.1.i.html>

2. Thucydides ***History of the Peloponnesian War***: Pericles' "Funeral Oration" (430 BCE):

<http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/education/thucydides.html>

3. Ronald Reagan "Space Shuttle Challenger Tragedy" Address (1986):

<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/ronaldreaganchallenger.htm>

4. Joe Biden: Address upon dropping out of the 2024 campaign for U.S. presidency (2024):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z96N57eV1EA&ab\\_channel=ABCNews](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z96N57eV1EA&ab_channel=ABCNews)

**January 20<sup>th</sup>:** Kinds of rhetoric

Aristotle **AR**: Book One, Chs. 10-15 (pp. 46-71 in Bartlett edition)

Thucydides **History of the Peloponnesian War**: Mytilenean debate (Cleon; Diodotus)

<http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/imperialism/readings/thucydides6.html>

Lou Gehrig: "Farewell Address"

<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/MovieSpeeches/moviespeechprideoftheyankees.html>

**Philadelphia**: opening statement at trial (Denzel Washington)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCz33bRYwP8&ab\\_channel=MelioraLegalCenter](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCz33bRYwP8&ab_channel=MelioraLegalCenter)

**January 27<sup>th</sup>:** Passion, Character, and Argument

Aristotle **AR**: Book Two, Chs. 1-17 (pp. 76-116 in Bartlett edition)

Shakespeare **Henry V** "St. Crispin's Day":

<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/MovieSpeeches/moviespeechhenryV.html>

Ukrainian President Zelenskyy: "Speech to U.S. Congress"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7gjwCe5T6M>

Harvard Commencement Address: Donovan Livingston

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGb8ZfZlIE&ab\\_channel=ABCNews](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGb8ZfZlIE&ab_channel=ABCNews)

**February 3<sup>rd</sup>:** Elements of Persuasion

Aristotle **AR**: Book Two, Chs. 18-26 (pp. 116-153 in Bartlett edition)

Barack Obama: "Father's Day Speech"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hj1hCDjwG6M>

**Armageddon**: "President's Speech"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zje91xTd6Lc>

**Signs** (miracles or coincidences?): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dDI7O48Or8>

\*\*\*February 10<sup>th</sup>: Midterm assignment (no other readings/viewing; no class meeting)\*\*\*

**February 24<sup>th</sup>: Diction**

Aristotle **AR**: Book Three, Chs. 1-12 (pp. 157-191 in Bartlett edition)

Martin Luther King (1967): "Your Life's Blueprint"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmtOGXreTOU>

*Scent of a Woman* "Out of Order" speech:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILvXyVUHqwQ>

Winston Churchill (1941): "Address to Canadian Parliament (some chicken; some neck)"

<https://www.nationalchurchillmuseum.org/some-chicken-some-neck.html>

**March 3<sup>rd</sup>: Arranging the Parts of a Speech**

Aristotle **AR**: Book Three, Chs. 13-19 (pp. 191-210 in Bartlett edition)

Martin Luther King (1963): "I Have a Dream"

<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihaveadream.htm>

and selections with video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vP4iY1TtS3s>

Abraham Lincoln: "Lyceum Address" (1838)

<https://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/lyceum.htm>

**March 10<sup>th</sup>: Particular Purposes**

Abraham Lincoln: "Temperance Address" (1842)

<https://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/temperance.htm>

Abraham Lincoln: "House Divided Speech" (1858)

<https://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/house.htm>

Barbara Jordan (1976): "Keynote Address to the Democratic National Convention"

<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barbarajordan1976dnc.html>

Agnes Macphail (1925; 1930): "On Women's Equality"

<https://greatcanadianspeeches.ca/2017/10/27/agnes-macphail-on-womens-equality-1925-1930/>

**March 17<sup>th</sup>:** On the Cusp of War (student speeches as well)

**Patton** (1970): "General Patton addresses the 3<sup>rd</sup> army"

<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/MovieSpeeches/moviespeechpatton3rdarmyaddress.html>

Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1941): "Pearl Harbour Address"

<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/fdrpearlharbor.htm>

Winston Churchill (1939): "A Hush Over Europe"

<https://www.nationalchurchillmuseum.org/a-hush-over-europe.html>

**Braveheart** (1995): William Wallace speech

<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/MovieSpeeches/specialengagements/moviespeechbraveheart.html>

Winston Churchill (1940): "We Shall Fight on the Beaches..."

<https://www.nationalchurchillmuseum.org/we-shall-fight-on-the-beaches.html>

with audio selections

**March 24<sup>th</sup>:** During and After War (student speeches as well)

Winston Churchill (1941): "Never Give In"

<https://www.nationalchurchillmuseum.org/never-give-in-never-never-never.html>

Abraham Lincoln (1963): "Gettysburg Address"

<https://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>

Abraham Lincoln (1965): "Second Inaugural Address"

<https://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/inaug2.htm>

Frederick Douglass (1876): "Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln"

<https://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/4402>

**March 31<sup>st</sup>:** Selected Canadian Speeches (student speeches as well)

Joseph Howe (1835): "On Freedom of the Press"

<https://greatcanadianspeeches.ca/2021/05/21/joseph-howe-on-press-freedom-1835/>

Louis Riel (1885): "Speech to the Jury"

<https://greatcanadianspeeches.ca/2019/11/16/louis-riel-speech-to-the-jury-1885/>

Joseph Gosnell (1998): "Nisga'a Treaty"

<https://greatcanadianspeeches.ca/2020/08/10/joseph-gosnell-1998-nisgaa-treaty/>

Stephen Harper (2008): "Residential Schools Apology"

<https://greatcanadianspeeches.ca/2021/02/05/stephen-harper-residential-schools-apology-2008/>

### **Academic Honesty:**

Academic honesty is expected of all Lakehead University students. It should go without saying that cheating, collusion, and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students are expected to make themselves fully familiar with Lakehead's policies in this area. Although all these policies will be enforced in full, it is worth emphasizing the following:

PLAGIARISM INVOLVES PRESENTING ANOTHER'S (including AI) WORK, IDEAS, THEORIES, OR INTERPRETATION AS ONE'S OWN.

To avoid plagiarism, always:

- 1) Put quotation marks around any words taken from sources.
- 2) Paraphrase material completely; do not simply rearrange words from a source or change them using a thesaurus, etc.
- 3) Whether it is being quoted or paraphrased in your work, always give accurate and complete citations for all material that comes from another source.
- 4) Avoid borrowing entire arguments or ideas from another writer. Your arguments should be original to you.