Course Overview:
Is the purpose of rhetoric simply to convince people to accept a foregone conclusion, or is it to lay out the structure of an argument so that the argument can be critically evaluated by many people?

That’s the question that Socrates put before Gorgias the Sophist in Plato’s dialogue, *Gorgias*, around 380 BCE. In Socrates’ time, some people exploited rhetoric to serve their own ends, even if that meant deceiving large numbers of people. 2400 years later, in the Information Age, that problem hasn’t gone away. Rhetoric makes education and democracy possible. It can also undermine those two pillars of civilization.

In this class, we will trace the theories, uses, and pitfalls of rhetoric from Socrates’ time to our own. We will work with classical rhetoricians, such as Aristotle and Cicero, as well as modern scholars, such as Stephen Toulmin and Kenneth Burke. We will also read works by psychologists and behavioral economists that examine the ulterior uses of rhetoric and our susceptibility to deception. We’ll see that Socrates’ question is answerable. We can make rhetoric a tool for critically evaluating ideas about the world. The 2400-year-old problem is that doing so is very difficult in practice. As with any difficult activity, we can only get better with practice.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):
Students in this course will:

1. Demonstrate a historical understanding of the origins and modern interpretation of rhetorical theory.
2. Learn to identify cognitive biases that undermine logical arguments and lead ordinary people to reject factual, logical arguments and cling, instead, to misinformation.
3. Exercise rhetorical strategies for circumventing cognitive biases and persuading people to consider a conclusion without resorting to fallacies or misinformation.

Readings:
Readings can be found in PDF format on Blackboard in the “Course Readings” section.

- Plato. *Gorgias*.
- Cicero. *De Inventione* (excerpts)
- Quintillian. *Institutio Oratoria*, Book 3
- Toulmin, S. *The Uses of Argument* (excerpts)
• Burke, K. *A Rhetoric of Motives* (excerpts).
• Nietzsche, F. *On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense*.
• Frankfurt, H. *On Bullshit* (excerpts).
• Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. *Metaphors We Live By* (excerpts).

**Assignments:**

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>% of final grade</th>
<th>due date</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>In-class writing / quizzes:</strong></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>each class</td>
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<td>At the beginning of each class, you will be asked to answer one or more questions about the reading assigned for that class. There will occasionally be other forms of in-class writing, such as identifying rhetorical elements in a short text. These will count toward a daily grade. You may miss two of these without penalty in order to allow for the two absences allowed to all students (see Attendance section below).</td>
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<td><strong>Midterm and final exams:</strong></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>March 8 &amp; May 8</td>
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<td>There will be a midterm exam (March 8) and a final exam (May 8) that will test your comprehension of the readings and concepts discussed in the class. The final exam will only cover readings assigned after the midterm.</td>
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<td><strong>Rhetorical analysis (4-5 pages)</strong></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>February 22</td>
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<td>In this essay, you choose a piece of contemporary rhetoric (article, speech, debate, etc.) and analyze its rhetorical situation, appeals, warrants, fallacies, etc. with reference to one or more of the readings in rhetorical theory that we have covered in the class up to that time.</td>
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<td><strong>Report on a work of rhetorical theory (4-5 pages)</strong></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>March 29</td>
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<td>In this report, you will summarize a work of rhetorical theory NOT included in the class reading list and evaluate it in the context of the other works we have read in the class. See the list of possible texts below. If there is a work that you want to evaluate that is not in the list below, notify me about it before you begin the work to be sure that it fits the goals of the class.</td>
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<td><strong>Proposal for a rhetorical strategy (4-5 pages)</strong></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>May 8</td>
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<td>In this proposal essay, you will identify a problem in some contemporary piece of rhetoric or ongoing campaign. You will then design and advocate a new rhetorical strategy to overcome that problem. Your strategy should be based in the works of rhetorical theory which you will cite and integrate in your essay.</td>
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**Course Policies**

**Attendance and Participation:** Regular participation is as essential to mental development as it is to physical development. For this reason, attendance is mandatory, and excessive absences will result in a reduction in the final grade. To allow for unforeseen emergencies and contingencies, students will be allowed to miss two classes without penalty. For every absence after the second, the participation grade will be reduced by 5 points. If you have an excused absence, notify the instructor BEFORE the missed day. Excused absences must be accompanied by official documentation from the university,
doctor, etc. Students who leave class without prior authorization before the end will be counted as absent.

Disruption of class and conspicuous non-participation in class will result a **deduction 1% of final grade**. This includes **sleeping in class**, **disruptive conversations**, and **any use of electronic devices**. I will not stop the class to point out disruptive or disengaged behaviors, since this only magnifies the disruption, so monitor your own behavior.

**Classroom/professional behavior**: Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior (including but not limited to disrespecting other students, using electronic devices, sleeping in class, holding private conversations during class) may be instructed to leave the classroom and receive absence penalty described above (see Attendance section). This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

**Electronic Devices**: Electronic devices—phones, laptops, tablets, etc.—should remain put away during class. Use of an electronic device for any purpose during class will result in a deduction of 1% of the final grade. It is very conspicuous to the instructor and to your classmates when you check a text or play a game on a device, whether or not the screen is visible. Be sure to put all phones in sleep or airplane mode before class begins.

**Note-taking**: Take notes in a paper notebook. Repeated studies have demonstrated that the use of laptops for note-taking results in poorer comprehension of class material and greater distraction for the laptop user and for other students seated nearby. **Hand-written notes taken in a paper notebook may be used on quizzes and exams**. Books, computer-printed notes, and electronic devices may not be used on quizzes or exams.

**Late Work**: Class quizzes cannot be made up unless the absence is excused. Essays and other assignments that are posted on Blackboard are due at the beginning of class and cannot be submitted after that time. Assignments can only be made up in cases of emergencies and only with approval from the instructor.

**Academic Integrity/Plagiarism**: University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity, or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a grade of zero. All essays are electronically tested for plagiarism by SafeAssign.
**Dropping a Class:** I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. **Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course.** Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. **April 6, 2018** is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

**Grade Appeals:** As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, **Student Grade Appeals**, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, **Student Grade Appeals**. These documents are accessible online at: [http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf](http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, [http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html](http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html).

**Disabilities Accommodations:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

**Statement of Academic Continuity:** In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

**Academic Advising:** The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the
Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

**Reminder to English Majors:** As part of the English undergraduate capstone course (ENGL 4351), all English majors are required to submit a portfolio of writings in different discourse genres that they have completed for their college classes. To help you prepare for this assignment, you should keep a copy of all essays, research papers, literary analyses, creative and report writing, etc., so that you will have an ample selection from which to choose when the portfolio comes due.