

*Second Edition*

*The History and Theory of*  
**RHETORIC**  
— AN INTRODUCTION —

JAMES A. HERRICK

SECOND EDITION

# **The History and Theory of Rhetoric**

## **An Introduction**

**James A. Herrick**

*Hope College*

**Allyn and Bacon**

Boston ■ London ■ Toronto ■ Sydney ■ Tokyo ■ Singapore

**Series Editor:** *Karon Bowers*  
**Vice President, Editor in Chief:** *Karen Hanson*  
**Editorial Assistant:** *Jennifer Becker*  
**Executive Marketing Manager:** *Jackie Aaron*  
**Editorial Production Service:** *Chestnut Hill Enterprises, Inc.*  
**Manufacturing Buyer:** *Megan Cochran*  
**Cover Administrator:** *Jennifer Hart*  
**Electronic Composition:** *Omegatype Typography, Inc.*



Copyright © 2001, 1997 by Allyn & Bacon  
A Pearson Education Company  
160 Gould Street  
Needham Heights, MA 02494

All rights reserved. No part of the material protected by this copyright notice may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the copyright holder.

Internet: [www.abacon.com](http://www.abacon.com)

Between the time Website information is gathered and published, some sites may have closed. Also, the transcription of URLs can result in typographical errors. The publisher would appreciate notification where these occur so that they may be corrected in subsequent editions.

### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Herrick, James A.

The history of rhetoric : an introduction / James A. Herrick. — 2nd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-205-31455-4

1. Rhetoric—History. 2. Rhetoric. I. Title.

PN183 .H47 2000

808'.009—dc21

00-026660

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2      04 03 02 01 00

*For Janet*

# P R E F A C E

*The History and Theory of Rhetoric* provides students with an interesting and readable survey of the history of rhetoric and equips them with an accessible conceptual framework for evaluating and practicing persuasive writing and speaking. It introduces readers to many of the major theories of rhetoric advanced by some of the western world's greatest minds. Through encountering the rhetorical tradition, students are encouraged to develop their own rhetorical abilities and are equipped to understand the symbolic practices that mark our social and private lives.

In this second edition I have attempted to refine the presentation of a unifying and practical overview of the historical sweep of rhetorical theory that animated the first edition. My goals are to help students to understand what rhetoric is, to appreciate the important social functions it performs, and to recognize how theories of rhetoric help us to improve our understanding and practice of this essential art. In *The History and Theory of Rhetoric* I present the story of rhetoric in a manner that is historically accurate and intellectually stimulating.

The basic structure and coverage of the second edition have been maintained from the first edition, although revisions have been made to all chapters. Chapter 1 presents the defining characteristics and functions of rhetoric as themes that run throughout its history. These themes include rhetoric's relationship to power and knowledge, the art's role in building human societies, and rhetoric's relationship to conceptions of truth and ethics. Subsequent chapters return to these themes, making the point that rhetoric in different historical eras has always been marked by a fascinating set of unifying concerns that make it both a relevant and an intriguing topic of study for the contemporary student.

Chapters 2 through 8 trace rhetoric's historical progression from classical Greece through eighteenth-century Britain. Chapter 2 presents the Sophists as early teachers and practitioners of rhetoric. The Sophists' experiments in the power of language are explored, and the controversy they generated by their exotic claims and iconoclastic theories is set in its historical context. The Sophists, however, are also seen as thinkers who achieved considerable insight into rhetoric's nature and power. Chapter 2 also considers the important female rhetorician of the Greek classical period, Aspasia. Chapter 3 examines Plato's famous criticism of the sophistic approach to rhetoric in the dialogue *Gorgias*, as well as the philosopher's own suggestions about a true art of rhetoric in the dialogue *Phaedrus*.

Chapter 4 explores Aristotle's highly influential theory advanced in his *Rhetoric*. The chapter discusses the details of Aristotle's affirmative answer to Plato's question of whether rhetoric qualifies as a true art. The notions of the enthymeme, artistic proofs, and topics of argumentation are all reviewed. Chapter 5 completes the discussion of the classical period by considering Roman adaptations of greek rhetoric to a new social situation. Key components in the rhetorical theory of Cicero—including his famous canons of rhetoric as well as his concern for the preparation of

the orator/leader—are focal points in the chapter. The contributions of Quintilian and Longinus to rhetorical thought are also explored.

Chapter 6 considers the theories and uses of rhetoric that characterized the long period of Christian dominance in Europe from the fifth through the fourteenth centuries. St. Augustine's rapprochement between the "pagan" rhetoric of Greece and Rome, and the educational needs of the Christian church are discussed. The chapter also examines the rhetorical arts which developed in the later Middle Ages, including the arts of preaching, letter writing, and versification.

Renaissance rhetorical theory, particularly the contributions of the Italian Humanists, is the topic of Chapter 7. The period's intense interest in classical texts and languages, and the Renaissance's fascination with rhetoric generally, are seen as forces that produced an era of extraordinary influence for rhetoric in European education, and that led to remarkable insights on the part of rhetorical theorists. This chapter includes a discussion of women's contributions to Renaissance rhetorical practice.

Chapter 8 directs attention to Enlightenment theories of rhetoric. The chapter opens with a discussion of the intriguing theories of Giambattista Vico regarding the role of rhetoric in the evolution of human thought processes. The chapter then directs attention to Britain and the diverse impulses animating the elocutionary theories of Thomas Sheridan, the psychological rhetoric of George Campbell, the argument theory of Richard Whately, and the stylistic concerns of Hugh Blair.

The dramatic renewal of interest in rhetoric during the twentieth century is treated in Chapters 9, 10, and 11. I consider contemporary rhetorical theory under three headings because of the remarkable variety of voices and concerns that characterize the twentieth century's return to rhetoric. Chapter 9 considers Stephen Toulmin's *The Uses of Argument* and the theories of audience and argument that mark Chaim Perelman and Madame L. Olbrechts-Tyteca's *The New Rhetoric*. This chapter also considers the recent work of theorists and critics in the rhetoric of science, a movement that has brought traditional rhetorical concerns for strategic communication and audience adaptation to an arena not traditionally studied by rhetoricians.

Chapter 10 traces a different thread through twentieth-century rhetorical theory, one that runs from Kenneth Burke's dramatism through Wayne Booth's and Walter Fisher's narrative theories. Theorists in this chapter see rhetoric as shaped both by situations common to human experience and narrative structures inherent to the human mind. Other theorists discussed in this chapter include Mikhail Bakhtin, Ernest Bormann, and Lloyd Bitzer.

Finally, Chapter 11 treats those recent theories of rhetoric and discourse that explore the intersection of language, culture, and power. Michel Foucault's insights into the close connection between the uses of discourse and the distribution of power in a society are discussed, as is Jacques Derrida's critique of the instability of language itself. Richard Weaver's concern for rhetoric's potential to preserve cultural values over time is explored, as is the highly influential feminist criticism of this very phenomenon. Feminist rhetoricians are viewed as applying insights regarding

rhetoric and power to the tendency of the rhetorical tradition itself to exclude women from participation in social power structures. The feminist critics' call for a new rhetoric which avoids the older metaphors of confrontation and domination is also considered. The chapter also introduces George Kennedy's recent exploration of rhetorical traditions in non-Western cultures.

I have included several items in the text to make it a more useful and convenient educational tool. Each chapter includes a list of key terms, as well as questions for review and for discussion. Students should find the complete glossary of rhetorical terms useful for review. The bibliography can be of assistance to students who wish to do additional reading on a particular topic or theorist. An instructor's manual is also available which recommends additional assignments, exercises, and examination questions.

In this second edition I have incorporated recent insights from research into the history of rhetoric. I have also noted the tension between two competing views of rhetoric—the magical and the technical—in the chapters on the classical and renaissance periods. A particular goal of the second edition has been to represent some of the advances in our understanding of the roles women have played in the history of rhetorical theory. A greater effort has also been made in this new edition to accommodate critical reactions to several of the theorists covered. In addition, clearer connections from one historical period to another have been developed in a number of cases.

The centrality of symbolic activity to our social and private lives has driven the incessant human interest in symbols and their instrumental use. The written record of this interest constitutes the history of rhetoric. Our reliance upon rhetorical interaction for the development and maintenance of cooperative social arrangements makes the history and theory of rhetoric a crucial study for all thinking people today. Given the pluralistic nature of contemporary society and the resulting necessity of improving our means of finding working compromises through discourse, the study of rhetoric is perhaps more relevant today than it ever has been. It is my hope that this book conveys to readers the vitality of this essential art. I also hope to provide a sense of the intense intellectual electricity that crackles around the thinking of so many brilliant minds as they seek to understand for themselves, and to educate their own students about, the inherent power of artfully managed symbols.

James A. Herrick

## Acknowledgments

For their constructive criticism and other assistance in preparing the second edition of *The History and Theory of Rhetoric*, I want to thank the students in my rhetorical theory course at Hope College. Their comments and questions have been of great help in clarifying the treatment of a number of topics in the second edition. Thanks

also are due to several colleagues and former colleagues for help with the initial preparation of this book. I am particularly indebted to Albert Bell, Julie Brown, Kelley Osborne, and Rick Smith.

I appreciated the constructive and substantive criticism of our reviewers. My thanks to William E. Wiethoff of Indiana University, Larry A. Williamson of the University of San Diego, and John Murphy of the University of Georgia.

As always, my wife Janet and our children supported me without complaint during the long process of developing and revising this text. Their continued interest in this project has consistently provided much needed encouragement.



# CONTENTS

**Preface**      **xiii**

## **1**    **An Overview of Rhetoric**      **1**

**Rhetoric and Persuasion**      **3**

**Defining Rhetoric**      **5**

**Rhetorical Discourse**      **7**

    Rhetoric Is Planned      8

    Rhetoric Is Adapted to an Audience      8

    Rhetoric Reveals Human Motives      10

    Rhetoric Is Responsive      11

    Rhetoric Seeks Persuasion      12

**Social Functions of the Art of Rhetoric**      **15**

    Rhetoric Tests Ideas      16

    Rhetoric Assists Advocacy      17

    Rhetoric Distributes Power      18

    Rhetoric Discovers Facts      20

    Rhetoric Shapes Knowledge      21

    Rhetoric Builds Community      22

**Conclusion**      **23**

**Questions for Review**      **25**

**Questions for Discussion**      **26**

**Terms**      **28**

## **2**    **The Origins and Early History of Rhetoric**      **31**

**The Rise of Rhetoric in Ancient Greece**      **32**

**The Sophists**      **34**

    What the Sophists Taught      34

    Why the Sophists Were Controversial      36

**Three Influential Sophists**      **39**

    Gorgias      39

    Protagoras      42

    Isocrates      43

<b>Aspasia's Role in Athenian Rhetoric</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Questions for Review</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Questions for Discussion</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Terms</b>	<b>49</b>

### **3 Plato versus the Sophists: Rhetoric on Trial 53**

<b>Plato's <i>Gorgias</i>: Rhetoric on Trial</b>	<b>54</b>
The Debate with Gorgias: Rhetoric's Nature and Uses	54
Socrates versus Polus: Rhetoric as Power	56
Socrates versus Callicles: Bad Actor, Bad Act	60
The Outcome of the <i>Gorgias</i>	61
Is Plato Fair to Rhetoric and the Sophists?	62
<b>Rhetoric in Plato's <i>Phaedrus</i>: A True Art?</b>	<b>63</b>
Components of a <i>Technē</i> of Rhetoric	65
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Questions for Review</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Questions for Discussion</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Terms</b>	<b>69</b>

### **4 Aristotle on Rhetoric 72**

<b>Aristotle's Definitions of Rhetoric</b>	<b>73</b>
Rhetoric and Dialectic	74
Rhetoric as <i>Technē</i>	75
<b>Three Rhetorical Settings</b>	<b>78</b>
Deliberative Oratory	79
Epideictic Oratory	80
Forensic Oratory	81
<b>The Artistic Proofs</b>	<b>81</b>
Logos: The Logic of Sound Arguments	82
Pathos: The Psychology of Emotion	82
Ethos: The Sociology of Good Character	83

<b>The Topoi, or Lines of Argument</b>	<b>84</b>
Special Topics	85
Common Topics	85
Some Common Fallacies	86
<b>Aristotle on Style</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Questions for Review</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Questions for Discussion</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Terms</b>	<b>89</b>

## **5 Rhetoric at Rome 92**

<b>Roman Society and the Place of Rhetoric</b>	<b>93</b>
Rhetoric and Political Power	93
Rhetoric and Roman Education	94
<b>The Rhetorical Theory of Cicero</b>	<b>95</b>
<i>De Inventione</i>	96
The Canons of Rhetoric	97
Stasis and Topical Systems	98
Hermagoras and the Development of Topoi	100
<i>De Oratore</i>	101
The End of Cicero's Life	105
<b>Quintilian</b>	<b>106</b>
Rhetoric and the Good Citizen	107
Educating the Citizen–Orator	107
<b>Longinus: On the Sublime</b>	<b>109</b>
The Emotive Power of Language	110
<b>Rhetoric in the Later Roman Empire</b>	<b>112</b>
The Second Sophistic	112
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>Questions for Review</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>Questions for Discussion</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Terms</b>	<b>115</b>

<b>6</b>	<b>Rhetoric in Christian Europe</b>	<b>121</b>
	<b>Rhetoric, Tension, and Fragmentation</b>	<b>121</b>
	<b>Rhetoric and the Medieval Curriculum</b>	<b>123</b>
	<b>Rhetoric in the Early Middle Ages: Augustine, Capella, and Boethius</b>	<b>124</b>
	<b>St. Augustine</b>	<b>124</b>
	Augustine's Rhetorical Theory	125
	<i>De Doctrina Christiana</i>	127
	Augustine on Signs	128
	Augustine's Contribution to Rhetoric	128
	<b>Martianus Capella</b>	<b>129</b>
	<b>Boethius</b>	<b>130</b>
	<i>Differentiis Topicis</i>	130
	<b>Three Rhetorical Arts in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries</b>	<b>131</b>
	<b>The Art of Preaching</b>	<b>131</b>
	Themes, Sermons, and Moral Persuasion	132
	Ornaments	133
	<b>The Art of Letter Writing</b>	<b>133</b>
	The Parts of a Letter	135
	<b>The Art of Poetry</b>	<b>137</b>
	Geoffrey of Vinsauf	137
	Marie de France	139
	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>140</b>
	<b>Questions for Review</b>	<b>140</b>
	<b>Questions for Discussion</b>	<b>141</b>
	<b>Terms</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Rhetoric in the Renaissance</b>	<b>145</b>
	<b>Features of Renaissance Rhetoric</b>	<b>146</b>
	Classical and Medieval Sources	146
	Rhetoric and Renaissance Education	147
	<b>Lorenzo Valla: Retrieving the Rhetorical Tradition</b>	<b>149</b>

<b>Women and Renaissance Rhetoric</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Italian Humanism: A Catalyst for Rhetoric's Expansion</b>	<b>152</b>
<b>Rhetoric as Personal and Political Influence</b>	<b>153</b>
Rhetoric and the Emotions	154
<b>Humanism, Rhetoric, and the Study of Classical Texts</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>Petrarch and the Origins of Italian Humanism</b>	<b>156</b>
The Greatness That Was Rome	157
<b>Pico della Mirandola and the Magic of Language</b>	<b>158</b>
Bringing Order through Language	159
<b>Juan Luis Vives</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>Rhetoric and the <i>Vita Activa</i></b>	<b>160</b>
<b>The Turn toward Dialectic: Rhetoric and Its Critics</b>	<b>161</b>
Agricola	161
Peter Ramus	162
<b>Renaissance Rhetorics in Britain</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>Questions for Review</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>Questions for Discussion</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>Terms</b>	<b>166</b>

## **8 Enlightenment Rhetorics 170**

<b>Vico on Rhetoric and Human Thought</b>	<b>171</b>
The Rhetoric of the Imagination	172
Rhetoric and the Evolution of Human Thought	173
<b>British Rhetorics in the Eighteenth Century</b>	<b>175</b>
Rhetoric in British Education	175
<b>The Elocutionary Movement</b>	<b>176</b>
Thomas Sheridan	177
<b>The Belletristic Movement</b>	<b>178</b>
Lord Kames	179
Hugh Blair	180

**George Campbell and Scientific Rhetoric      182**

A Scientific Rhetoric	182
Rhetoric and Psychology	183
Two Types of Reasoning: Scientific and Moral	184
A Theory of Persuasion	184
Education in Eloquence	185

**Richard Whately’s Classical Rhetoric      186**

An Ecclesiastic Rhetoric	186
Whately on Argument	187
Presumption and Burden of Proof	188

**Conclusion      189**

**Questions for Review      190**

**Questions for Discussion      190**

**Terms      191**

**9 Contemporary Rhetoric I: Argument, Audience,  
and Science      195**

**Argumentation and Rational Discourse      196**

**Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca: A New Rhetoric      196**

The Centrality of Audience	197
The Universal Audience	199
The Audience of One	200
The Self as Audience	200
Presence	201

**Stephen Toulmin and the Uses of Argument      202**

Argument Fields	202
Field-Dependent and Field-Invariant Standards	203
Modal Qualifiers	203
Toulmin’s Famous Model	204

**Jurgen Habermas and the Conditions of Rational Discourse      205**

Communicative Action and the Rational Society	205
The Universality of the Rhetorical	206
Universal Pragmatics and the Communicative Competence	207
Critical Theory and the Critique of Ideology	207

**Argumentation and Scientific Inquiry      208**

Advocacy in the Sciences	210
--------------------------	-----

<b>Deirdre McCloskey and the Rhetoric of Economics</b>	<b>211</b>
<b>Clifford Geertz and Rhetoric in Anthropology</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>Michael Billig and the Rhetoric of Social Psychology</b>	<b>213</b>
Plays and Games without Arguments?	214
<b>John Campbell on the Rhetoric of Charles Darwin</b>	<b>214</b>
Natural Selection and the Religious Audience	215
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>217</b>
<b>Questions for Review</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>Questions for Discussion</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>Terms</b>	<b>219</b>

## **10 Contemporary Rhetoric II: The Rhetoric of Situation, Drama, and Narration 224**

<b>Rhetoric in Its Social Context: The Dramatic and Situational Views</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>Kenneth Burke and Rhetoric as Symbolic Action</b>	<b>225</b>
Rhetoric as "Symbolic Inducement"	225
Terministic Screens and Being Human	226
Burke's Pentad	227
Form	230
<b>Lloyd Bitzer and Rhetoric as Situational</b>	<b>232</b>
The Exigence	232
The Audience	232
Constraints	233
The Fitting Response	233
<b>Rhetoric as Narration</b>	<b>234</b>
<b>Mikhail Bakhtin and the Polyphonic Novel</b>	<b>234</b>
Discourse as Ideological and Social	235
Polyphonic Discourse: Hearing Many Voices	235
<b>Wayne Booth and the Rhetoric of Fiction</b>	<b>236</b>
<b>Ernest Bormann and the Rhetoric of Fantasy</b>	<b>237</b>
Symbolic Convergence	238
<b>Walter Fisher and Rhetoric as Narration</b>	<b>239</b>
The Narrative Paradigm	240
Practical Wisdom	241

<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>Questions for Review</b>	<b>242</b>
<b>Questions for Discussion</b>	<b>242</b>
<b>Terms</b>	<b>243</b>

## **11 Contemporary Rhetoric III: Discourse, Power, and Social Criticism 247**

<b>Michel Foucault: Discourse, Knowledge, and Power</b>	<b>248</b>
Power and Discourse	248
Escape	250
Archaeology of Knowledge: In Search of the Episteme	250
Excluded Discourse	252
Power and Institutions	253
<b>Jacques Derrida: Texts, Meanings, and Deconstruction</b>	<b>254</b>
Authors Out of Control	255
Deconstructing Texts	255
<b>Richard Weaver: Rhetoric and the Preservation of Culture</b>	<b>258</b>
Critique of Modernism	258
Critique of Scientism	259
Weaver on Education	259
A True Rhetoric	260
<b>★ Feminism and Rhetoric: Critique and Reform in Rhetoric</b>	<b>260</b>
The Need for a Woman's Voice	261
Reconceptualizing Rhetoric: Voice, Gender, Invitation	262
Constructing Gender Rhetorically	263
From Conquest to Invitation	263
<b>George Kennedy and Comparative Rhetoric</b>	<b>265</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>268</b>
<b>Questions for Review</b>	<b>268</b>
<b>Questions for Discussion</b>	<b>269</b>
<b>Terms</b>	<b>269</b>
<b>Index</b>	<b>296</b>



## CHAPTER

# 1

## An Overview of Rhetoric

*My first problem lies of course in the very word “rhetoric.”*

—Wayne Booth, *The Vocation of a Teacher*

This text explores the history, theories, and practices of rhetoric. But, as literary critic Wayne Booth suggests in the quotation above, the term *rhetoric* may pose some problems at the outset because of the various meanings it has acquired in our contemporary cultural setting. For example, for some people *rhetoric* is synonymous with “empty talk,” or even “deception.” We may hear clichés like “That’s mere rhetoric” or “That’s just empty rhetoric” used as an insult when directed at someone else’s comments on a subject. Meanwhile, rhetoric has become an important topic of study in recent years, and its significance to public discussion of important political, social, and even scientific issues has been widely recognized. Scholars and teachers have expressed great interest in the topic. Many colleges and universities are again offering courses in rhetoric after having banished the term from their curricula for years, and dozens of books are published every year with *rhetoric* in their titles. Clearly, *rhetoric* arouses mixed feelings—it is widely condemned and widely studied, employed as an insult and recommended to students as an important subject of study. What is going on here? Why all the confusion and ambiguity surrounding the term *rhetoric*?

The negative attitude toward rhetoric reflected in comments such as “That’s empty rhetoric” is not, as we shall see, of recent origin. In fact, one of the earliest and most influential discussions of rhetoric occurs in Plato’s dialogue *Gorgias*, a work written in the opening decades of the fourth century B.C. when rhetoric was popular in Athens. Plato, as his dialogue makes clear, takes a dim view of rhetoric, at least as practiced by some. The character Socrates, apparently representing Plato’s own perspective, argues that the type of rhetoric being taught in Athens was simply a means by which “naturally clever” people “flatter” their unsuspecting listeners into agreeing with them and doing their bidding. Plato condemns rhetoric as “foul” and “ugly.”<sup>1</sup> We will discuss his specific criticisms of rhetoric in Chapter 3.