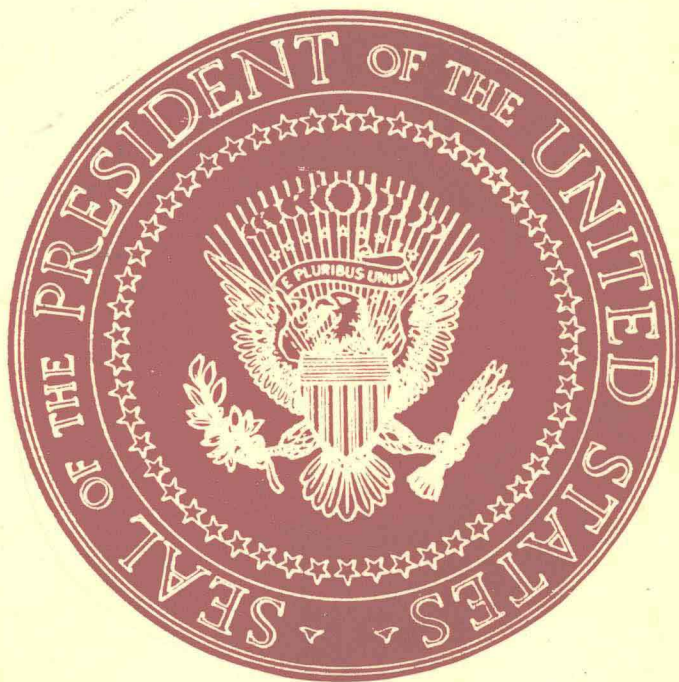


# ESSAYS IN PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC

Second Edition



Theodore Windt  
and  
Beth Ingold

# **Essays in Presidential Rhetoric**

## **Second Edition**

Edited by  
**Theodore Windt**  
and  
Beth Ingold



**KENDALL/HUNT PUBLISHING COMPANY**  
2460 Kerper Boulevard P.O. Box 539 Dubuque, Iowa 52004-0539

Copyright © 1983, 1987 by Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 86-83058

ISBN 0-8403-4241-1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

*FOR*

Harold F. Harding  
pioneer in studies of Presidential Rhetoric  
*and*

James D. Porto  
good companion and close friend

## ***Preface to the Second Edition***

We concluded the introduction to the first edition of *Essays in Presidential Rhetoric* by saying that we hoped the next edition could be expanded to include new studies in the discipline of presidential rhetoric. Happily, we are able to do so, even though our editing task was made more difficult by the sheer volume of excellent studies that have appeared during the past three years. In choosing which essays to include in this edition, we were again not concerned with essays about campaigning for the presidency, nor with studies whose principal purposes were to contribute additional scholarship to the field of rhetoric and communications or to the task of rhetorical criticism. Our concerns were to select essays that illuminate the role rhetoric plays in a presidential administration, the ways in which various Presidents have used rhetoric, comparative studies of rhetorical activities by contemporary Presidents, and especially studies of how the use of rhetoric has enhanced or diminished a President's ability to exercise his powers. We view rhetoric as one instrument of political power available to a President. We believe that power is the central dynamic of politics, and in this media age, we further believe that rhetoric is the central dynamic of presidential power.

The second edition is expanded from the twenty essays of the first edition to twenty-seven essays written by scholars in rhetoric, communications, and political science. We have replaced several essays in the original edition with newer essays on the same topic because these more recently published essays seem to address the themes of this book more directly. In several cases, we have included essays not previously published.

The volume is divided into eight parts. The introductory essay outlines the discipline of presidential rhetoric, summarizes the research done by rhetorical scholars from 1960 to the present, and proposes an agenda for future research in the rhetorical presidency.

The four essays that comprise the Overview section give perspective to the contemporary presidency. The authors of "The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency" chart the developments that have led to the prominence of rhetoric in recent administrations. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson

analyze the principal themes of inaugural addresses in an exceptionally perceptive scholarly exercise in generic criticism. Dan F. Hahn and J. Justin Gustainis provide a topology of strategies and tactics used by Presidents to defend against attacks on their policies. Theodore Windt describes how three Presidents have attacked the media. These historical and comparative studies should set the stage for the individual studies of Presidents that follow, from Kennedy to Reagan. The topics of these essays—ranging from the intensive study of single speeches to the study of rhetorical movements of Presidents to get legislation passed—and the methods for analysis and evaluation are as varied as the authors and their interests. These essays do not cover all the major rhetorical activities by recent Presidents, but we hope provide insight into many of those activities.

*Essays in Presidential Rhetoric* is intended not only as a collection of scholarly rhetorical criticism of presidential speeches, but also as a companion to the anthology, *Presidential Rhetoric: 1961 to the Present* (3rd edition, Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt, 1983). Most of the speeches by Presidents from Kennedy to Reagan that are referred to in this volume are anthologized in *Presidential Rhetoric*. Taken together, we believe the two books form the foundation for the disciplined study of contemporary presidential rhetoric.

Neither this edition nor the first edition of *Essays in Presidential Rhetoric* would have been possible without the scholars who provided the essays and without the generous cooperation of Dr. R. Gordon Hoxie, President of the Center for the Study of the Presidency and Editor of *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. The Center has become the leader in the study of the Presidency through its meetings, conferences, and publications. And Dr. Hoxie, as Editor of the *Quarterly*, has been especially sympathetic to studies in presidential rhetoric.

One final note. As we were completing the final editing of this volume, we learned of the death of Dr. Harold F. Harding, one of the two people to whom this collection is dedicated. Dr. Harding had long been concerned about the quality of presidential speeches and their effects on the American people. As editor of the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* in the late nineteen-forties, he inaugurated the practice of devoting a significant part of one issue of the *Journal* after an election to analysis of campaign speeches. In the nineteen-sixties, he pioneered in offering graduate courses in presidential campaign rhetoric at Ohio State University. Indeed, it was in one of those courses that the senior editor of this volume became interested in this subject. Later, Dr. Harding directed his doctoral dissertation, became his colleague at the University of Texas at El Paso, and remained his life-long friend. In the truest sense, he was a gentleman and a scholar. His death is both a professional and personal loss.

Theodore Windt  
Beth Ingold  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

# Acknowledgments

We wish to express our appreciation to the following officers of professional organizations for their permissions to reprint essays from the journals published by their respective organizations:

R. Gordon Hoxie, President of the Center for the Study of the Presidency publisher of *Presidential Studies Quarterly*.

William Work, Executive Secretary of the Speech Communication Association publisher of the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* and *Communication Monographs*.

John I. Sisco, former Executive Secretary of the Southern Speech Communication Association publisher of the *Southern Speech Communication Journal*.

Howard Dorgan, present Executive Secretary of the Southern Speech Communication Association publisher of the *Southern Speech Communication Journal*.

Caroline Drummond, Executive Secretary of the Eastern Communication Association publisher of *Communication Quarterly*.

Gary D. Keele, Executive Secretary of the Western Speech Communication Association publisher of the *Western Journal of Speech Communication*.

James F. Weaver, Executive Secretary of the Central States Speech Association publisher of the *Central States Speech Journal*.

Of course, our greatest appreciation is extended to the authors of these essays who granted approval to reprinting their work in this volume.

T. W.  
B. I.

# INTRODUCTION



# Presidential Rhetoric: Definition of a Discipline of Study<sup>1</sup>

Theodore Windt

*In the life of the human spirit, words are action, much more so than many of us realize who live in countries where freedom of expression is taken for granted. The leaders of totalitarian nations understand this very well. The proof is that words are precisely the action for which dissidents in those countries are being persecuted.*

President Jimmy Carter, 1977.

In modern times the word “rhetoric” has fallen into such ill-repute that it may seem disrespectful to use it in the same breath with the presidency. In his *Political Dictionary* William Safire wrote that rhetoric once “the study of persuasive presentation of argument” now has come to mean “bombast, high-flying oratory.”<sup>2</sup> When they think of “rhetorical,” some old enough to remember conjure up images of Senator Everett Dirksen who was known on occasion to use more ornamentation in his speeches than his subjects required. But the derogation of rhetoric has gone beyond the simple equating of rhetoric with excessive lyricism. People who present arguments with which we disagree are castigated for engaging in “mere” rhetoric, especially if we cannot come up with good arguments to counter theirs. Journalists and politicians frequently wish to draw metaphysical distinctions between *rhetoric* and *reality*, as if the former is false or misleading while the latter is true and accurate. Usually, however, rhetoric is treated as some kind of artificiality of argument or subterfuge intended to make the worse case appear the better. In his 1960 Acceptance Speech at the Democratic National Convention, John F. Kennedy attacked rhetoric no less than three times. He warned Democrats not “to be lulled by good intentions and high rhetoric.” He said he would not promise “more harsh rhetoric about the men in the Kremlin as a substitute for policy.” He stated he would run on the Democratic platform because “our ends will not be won by rhetoric.”<sup>3</sup> Given the repeated use of the word, rhetoric, in such derogatory ways, one who does not know better would probably agree with DeQuincey who once remarked that rhetoric has only two connotations: ostentatious ornament and fallacious argument.<sup>4</sup>

For the professional student of rhetoric, these charges are old hat. They have been around at least since Plato’s attacks on rhetoricians and their profession in his dialogues, the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*.<sup>5</sup> And in this the sixth year of the age of “The Great Communicator,” who has relied upon rhetoric

as a central means for governing, we can imagine that few are still disposed to dismiss rhetoric as hollow or empty. Nonetheless, it may be appropriate to begin this essay on presidential rhetoric by returning to Aristotle, who composed the most thorough treatise on the subject, as a means for rescuing the legitimate idea of rhetoric that Safire noted and for presenting a broader perspective from which to view presidential speech-making and rhetoric.

## 1. Rhetoric as Public Persuasion

The study of rhetoric is the study of *public persuasion on significant public issues*. Oratory is its most conspicuous form though most modern scholars as well as some ancients (Isocrates, in particular) include all forms of persuasive discourse—both written and spoken—within the province of rhetoric. Aristotle defined it as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, rhetoric deals with the construction of persuasive arguments, the arrangement of these arguments in the most effective way, and the presentation of them as forcefully as possible. But about what matters do we argue? What issues lend themselves inherently to persuasive discourse?

[R]hetoric . . . draws upon the regular materials of debate. The duty of rhetoric is to deal with such matters as we deliberate upon without the arts or systems [of exact knowledge] to guide us, in the hearing of persons who cannot take in at a glance a complicated argument [popular audiences], or follow a long chain of reasoning [philosophic or scientific arguments]. The subjects of our deliberation are such as seem to present us with alternative possibilities. . . .<sup>7</sup>

Two essential attributes of rhetoric come from this section: (1) rhetoric deals with issues in the realm of probability rather than issues about which we can be certain; and (2) rhetoric is concerned with public persuasion and therefore requires a knowledge of the audience to which the discourse is directed and an adaptation of ideas to that audience. By concentrating on political rhetoric, let us briefly explore these ideas.

Rhetoric deals with probabilities, with issues that “present us with alternative possibilities.” In political rhetoric Aristotle wrote that the politician is concerned with five persistent subjects: (1) ways and means; (2) war and peace; (3) national defense; (4) imports and exports; and (5) legislation.<sup>8</sup> These remain—more than twenty centuries later—the central topics about which politicians and the public deliberate. To be more specific, we may cite several contemporary issues of 1986 that fall into one or more of these categories. Should we spend more money for national defense at the expense of programs for the social good of the nation? Is a “nuclear freeze” the best and most practical way to lessen the chances of nuclear war between the United States

and the Soviet Union? Should we impose higher tariffs, or quotas on foreign-made steel to salvage our domestic steel industries? These are only a few of the many contemporary policy questions that admit of no certain answer, even among experts. Each is debatable. Each presents us with alternative possibilities. Each is a pertinent public issue that must be decided.

And how do we go about deciding? We argue the merits and demerits of each. A politician who has to vote on one of these issues will marshal the best evidence to support a position, develop the most persuasive arguments for it, and present them in the appropriate forum as forcefully as possible. Those who hold different positions will go through the same process. Eventually, a decision will be made and then approved or disapproved by the public. Of course, this description is simplified and to some degree, idealistic. There will be “tradeoffs,” behind-the-scenes bargaining, pressures brought to bear by interest groups that are effected by the decisions. Nonetheless, for whatever political reasons decisions are made, politicians will eventually have to meet the rhetorical requirements of persuading their constituencies to support them or—at the very least—justifying those decisions to constituencies.

## 2. The Modes of Persuasion

What then are the modes of persuasion from which politicians choose their arguments? Aristotle said there were essentially three: *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*, or appeals to reason, appeals based on the character or reputation or prestige of the persuader, and psychological or emotional appeals.

By *logos* Aristotle meant the construction of reasonable arguments to support a position or course of action. One cannot persuade others without giving reasons—be they valid or specious. People want reasons for what they believe and for what they do or are called upon to do. But the concept of *logos* should not be confused with formal logic in either its academic or philosophic senses, nor with a rigid system testing validity or invalidity of premises. Rhetorical reasoning is drawn from personal beliefs, the public's beliefs and values, laws, customs, inferences from evidence, and a host of other sources. In developing rhetorical reasoning, the political persuader has a two-fold purpose: (1) to develop the best arguments possible to support a position; and (2) to choose among such arguments those that will be most appealing to the constituencies the persuader seeks to influence and convince.

By *ethos* Aristotle meant the character, prestige, authority, and credibility of the speaker as another mode of persuasion. Somewhere Emerson wrote that *what you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you are saying*. In the persuasive process the audience always takes into account who is speaking. People

defer to those they recognize as authorities. They respect those who have character, even if they disagree with them. They believe those who have credibility with them. But *ethos* refers not only to the personal characteristics that cause people to trust others. In public life, the office one holds confers prestige, authority, and credibility upon one.<sup>9</sup> A politician's career may be marked by how effectively these conferred attributes are used or abused.

By *pathos* Aristotle apparently meant two things: the personal emotions that influence people to act or believe, and the psychology of different groups that may make up target constituencies (psychological differences attributed to age, sex, occupation, and so on). We would not be human if we did not take our emotions into account when deciding and acting, and speakers would be remiss were they not to do the same when trying to persuade an audience. We act out of needs and desires, hopes and fears, anger and compassion, self-interest and regard for the public interest. Emotions and reason are not antagonistic nor mutually exclusive of one another. We become agitated or passionate about one issue or another because we believe we have good reasons to do so. If speakers want constituencies to support legislation to end discrimination against one group of people, they will attempt to arouse anger over incidents of blatant prejudice and attempt to arouse compassion for those who suffer unjustly.

Aristotle also meant that one who would persuade others must understand the psychology of audiences or constituencies. As Donald C. Bryant aptly observed: rhetoric is the art of adjusting "ideas to people and people to ideas."<sup>10</sup> In this sense, rhetoric is an integral part of the democratic process. John Bunzel summarized the various interests a politician must balance:

a political leader must have the consent of a plurality of the voting public. He must convince enough people that his approximate solutions on a wide variety of issues are better or at least more acceptable than those of his opponent. To stay in office the politician must become the champion, articulator, and follower of enough specific issues involving the differences and divisions within society to insure his election or re-election. He must continually be able to create new coalitions of support when his former basis of power weakens. He must have a system of communications that will inform him of the constantly changing demands of his followers and at the same time let his supporters know his own position and action. He must commit himself to the norms, values, and traditions of the society he serves and play according to the rules of the political world he inhabits.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, political language and political rhetoric are:

always a function of the context from which [they issue], of the disparate needs and interests of the audience involved, of their respective modes of perception. The realistic study of political language and its meanings is necessarily in probing not only of dictionaries, nor of word counts, but of the diverse responses to particular modes of expression of audiences in disparate social settings.<sup>12</sup>

Political language—the essential currency of political rhetoric—has dual essences and purposes. It is expressive in the sense that politicians try to clarify (or, on occasion, obscure) their positions on issues constituencies are relatively interested in. It is impressive in the sense that politicians are always adjusting their language, their rhetoric to meet the “norms, values, and traditions” of those constituencies. A natural tension, thus, always exists between the expressive elements and the impressive elements. This linguistic and creative tension is the defining feature of democratic rhetoric and separates such speakers or persuaders from the demagogues and the doctrinaire ideologues. Demagogues are interested only in their audiences—usually in arousing their most base passions—with little concern for the validity or consistency of the ideas they are voicing. Their eyes are on the audience only. Doctrinaire ideologues pursue the purity of thought through purely expressive language—so convinced are they that their ideas are true and just—and care little to nothing about audiences. Political rhetoric in a democratic society serves the humanizing and practical functions of adjusting people to ideas, adjusting policies to politics. Thus, speakers or persuaders who would denounce rhetoric as “high,” “mere,” or “only” will do so only through skillfully constructed rhetorical arguments of their own and at their own risk.

But how does rhetoric fit into the essential functions of government—the exercise and distribution of power? And how specifically does persuasion relate to the office of the presidency?

### 3. Power and the Rhetorical Presidency

The central theme of this essay and this collection of essays was stated by Richard Neustadt: “Presidential *power* is the power to persuade.”<sup>13</sup> Power and persuasion are inextricably tied together in making the contemporary presidency function effectively. But different kinds of persuasion are necessary to use different kinds of power. What powers, then, constitute presidential power?

A President has three general areas or resources of power available to him. First, he has *constitutional* or *legal* power granted by the Constitution or conferred by law. Sections two and three of Article II of the Constitution outline the President’s responsibilities as chief executive, as Commander-in-Chief in wartime, and as chief administrative officer of the United States. Generally, these powers are called his powers to *command*. In our textbook version of the separation of powers among the three branches of government, we all too often believe that these powers reserved for the President require only that he command certain things within his constitutional province to happen, and they happen by virtue of these constitutional powers. However, that is not always the case. The Executive branch of government now is a huge bureaucracy, and

officials in charge of certain departments or agencies sometimes feel more responsibility to those departments or agencies than to the President.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the President sometimes has to persuade those officials privately that the course he has set for a department is indeed the course that the department should steer. The problem any modern President faces is the same problem confronted by the head of any large bureaucracy: how to make the bureaucracy function effectively?<sup>15</sup> Persuasion plays a not insignificant role in solving this problem.

Also, embedded in the President's constitutional powers is an inherent power: the power of *interpretation*. Laws and legal decisions are written in language and language can be ambiguous. For example, what exactly did the Supreme Court mean in *Brown vs. the Board of Education* when it said that desegregation should proceed "with all deliberate speed?" Some Presidents have sought to act *deliberately*, while others have chosen to act with *speed*. In the case of desegregation, the interpretation has varied from President to President. What is recognized by scholars of the presidency is that the executive has an enormous resource of power in the power of interpretation. Edward S. Corwin remarked: "Indeed, the very kernel of the power to interpret a statute preparatory to its enforcement is the power to determine whether a prosecution or other positive act shall be attempted under it."<sup>16</sup> However, when a President interprets a statute or section of the Constitution in a manner that Congress or interest groups perceive as inappropriate to the letter or intention of the law, that act of interpretation creates the possibility of a rhetorical situation in which a President may have to justify his interpretation *vis-a-vis* other interpretations; that is, he may have to persuade others that his interpretation is correct and appropriate. President Nixon sought to distinguish between *de jure* and *de facto* segregation in order to justify his opposition to busing as a means for desegregation. Or to use a better known case, President Nixon argued repeatedly that the constitutional principles of confidentiality and executive privilege prevented him from turning over the executive tape recordings concerning Watergate to the courts. Eventually, of course, the Supreme Court ruled that his interpretation did not have a constitutional standing in that case. But the important point is that the President's constitutional powers carry with them the power to interpret those powers, and for a President to act upon that interpretation requires that he persuade others that his interpretation is correct—a rhetorical task.

The *second* major area or resource of power available to a President lies in his role as *legislative leader* and *head of his party*. Each year, the President places before Congress his legislative agenda for the year in his State of the Union address. But the President cannot command Congress to enact his policies. Members of Congress must be persuaded. And a President's ability to persuade Congress to enact policies (especially domestic policies) rests on his

political and persuasive abilities to marshal majorities for different bills. The decline of the party system has diminished the President's ability to exercise control over his party in Congress, which is one reason why recent Presidents have taken their case to the people to get them to put pressure on their representatives and senators to enact presidential policies. Furthermore, when control of Congress is divided between the two parties, the President often is required by political necessity to appeal to the public for its support against the opposing party. Thus, presidential popularity and presidential public persuasion become essential ingredients in the exercise of political power.

The *third* and final resource of power is *public opinion*. Indeed, it is the power upon which all other powers rest, for persuasion is how public opinion is formed, changed, influenced, and molded. The discipline of presidential rhetoric is concerned with the study of presidential public persuasion as it affects the ability of a President to exercise the powers of the office. It is a study of "how Presidents gain, maintain, or lose public support."<sup>17</sup> The raw materials for this study are the speeches of a President, press conferences, messages to Congress; in sum, the public statements by a President. But such studies must also include an analysis and understanding of the target constituencies a President seeks to influence and why, his uses of television and the mass media, and an inquiry into a variety of other rhetorical weapons in his political arsenal that he uses to reach and persuade those in the public who either comprise his support or pose opposition to him. Furthermore, such studies must be placed in the over-all context of the policies and politics of the administration to determine how the uses of rhetoric have influenced or directed that administration. Scholars of presidential rhetoric, therefore, study the *context* of rhetorical events, the *rhetorical act* itself in all its manifestations (including the timing of a speech or press conference, the forum for the act, etc.), and the *effects* of the address or media meeting on policies, the administration, and its opponents. Presidential rhetoric, then, is only one of the powers available to the President, but in a democracy it may well be the fundamental power upon which all others rest.

#### 4. The Rise of Studies in Presidential Rhetoric

Twenty-five years ago, Richard Neustadt published *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership*, and its importance became quickly apparent. Scholars recognized that Neustadt offered a new approach to the study of presidential power quite different from the descriptive and institutional studies that had dominated political science in the past. "Presidential *power*," Neustadt remarked, "is the power to persuade." With this definition, he placed the locus of presidential power in the President-as-persuader instead of residing

solely in the formal, legal or political powers of the office. *Presidential Power* soon became a benchmark inquiry into the presidency and took its proper place along side Corwin's *The President: Office and Powers* and Rossiter's *The American Presidency* in the bookcase of classics on the subject.<sup>18</sup>

For rhetoricians, Neustadt's volume was a god-send. It began to locate the scholarly place of presidential rhetoric within the discipline of presidential studies. But Neustadt's perspective on persuasion was too narrowly drawn for rhetoricians. For the most part, Neustadt focused on inter-governmental persuasion and persuasion within the executive branch. Rhetoricians brought their own unique approaches to persuasion by asking: *How does a President persuade the public?* With this distinctively rhetorical perspective, rhetoricians insisted that public persuasion was an important and even essential part of any study of presidential performance and politics. And to that end, beginning in the early nineteen-seventies, rhetorical studies of the presidency began to appear, thus giving the materials for an academic foundation to the fledgling discipline of presidential rhetoric. Some were written by rhetoricians, others by historians, political scientists, and journalists. In 1979, the Speech Communication Association of America established a Task Force on Presidential Communication to examine presidential rhetoric as a means through which "a chief executive executes the powers of his office. . . ." <sup>19</sup> In 1980, Sidney Blumenthal published *The Permanent Campaign* in which he argued that persuasion is now central to governing; in fact, that campaign techniques are now merged with the methods of governing to run the presidency.<sup>20</sup> A year later, two major books—Larry J. Sabato's *The Rise of Political Consultants* and David Changell's *The New Kingmakers*—heralded the replacement of party politicians by political consultants who use modern communication technologies to transform traditional campaign politics.<sup>21</sup>

In 1981, *Presidential Studies Quarterly* published "The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency," in which the authors contended that the very nature of the presidency has undergone a significant transformation in function and execution from a constitutional, administrative office to an executive, rhetorical office. They attributed this change to three influences: (1) the modern doctrine of activist leadership among twentieth-century Presidents; (2) the advances in communication technologies, especially in the mass media; and (3) the modern presidential campaign.<sup>22</sup> The "rhetorical presidency" added another dimension to rhetorical studies beyond the analysis and criticism of presidential speeches and campaigns to the influence—both theoretical and practical—of rhetoric on the nature and conduct of the office itself. With all this writing about presidential uses of public persuasion, it is time to draw much of it together by summarizing the research that has already been done, and by setting the agenda for future research in this area of presidential power.



The remainder of this essay summarizes the scholarship in modern presidential rhetoric that has been conducted in journals of rhetoric and communication and then outlines what kinds of additional research needs to be done. The first section deals with a catalogue of the different kinds of research that has been published from 1960 to the present in the national and regional journals of speech and communications on the subject of contemporary presidential rhetoric.<sup>23</sup> This survey is limited to this period because it coincides with the explosion of scholarly work in other academic fields on the presidency, because it coincides with the rise of television which allows the President to go directly to the people more often, and because the “rhetorical presidency” developed and became dominant during this time. The second section asks: Where do we go from here? In it, I will outline some topics for students of presidential persuasion in answer to the following questions: What kind of research agenda is now needed? How might we go about doing this research?

In his essay, “Studying the Presidency: Where and How Do We Go From Here?” Norman C. Thomas listed six areas of inquiry into the presidency that warrant continued scholarly attention. One of these is directly germane to the subject of this work:

A third domain that has scarcely been investigated is that of the president’s relationships with public opinion, and how the latter informs and affects the former, and vice versa. John Mueller’s study of presidential popularity over time is the principal work in this area, but it relies on Gallup Poll data which does not probe the respondents’ reasons for their assessments of the president. In studying the chief executive in a democratic society, the dynamics of the interaction between that individual and the public should be a subject of primary concern.<sup>24</sup>

Since Professor Thomas did not examine scholarship by rhetoricians in his essay, his conclusions need amendment, and the remaining sections of this essay are intended to provide them. Nonetheless, his general thesis that presidential rhetoric, “a subject of primary concern,” has scarcely been investigated rigorously is generally compatible with the conclusions of this essay. At this time, there is no full-dress treatment of the nature and scope of presidential rhetoric. Indeed, presidential rhetoric remains a field in which some basic spadework has been done, but one in which much more plowing and planting is needed. What then can one say about the current status of research in presidential rhetoric?

## 5. Four Categories of Research

Contemporary studies in presidential rhetoric are primarily *critical* and fall into four categories: criticism of single presidential speeches, criticism of rhetorical movements, development and criticism of genres of presidential speeches, and miscellaneous articles on various ancillary topics.