

**LOCAL RHETORIC AND MESTIZA PUBLICS:
ALTERNATIVE VISIONS OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE**

Public deliberation is at the heart of the rhetorical tradition. But a modern controversy asks if public dialogue is really a live option in a media-saturated world of sound bites addressing “local” plural publics? Is the process of debate, deliberation and decision (in which the best argument wins) the ideal model? Or can people use public spaces to develop new, more inclusive positions? Can this process occur in “mestiza” or bordercrossing publics when diverse groups enter intercultural deliberation around racial, social or economic issues?

This course focuses on how people use local rhetorics to take literate social action. We will range from a feminist “rereading” of the sophists, to contemporary studies of ecorhetoric and web-based forums, to the rhetoric of social struggle in welfare offices, workplaces, grassroots womens’ groups, and a Pittsburgh community think tank. Each approach will give you tools for your own inquiry into a site of live local rhetoric.

Books

Hauser, G. (1999). Vernacular voices: The rhetoric of publics and public spheres. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press. (ISBN 1-57003-310-2)

Belenky, M. F., Bond, L. A., & Weinstock, J. S. (1997). A tradition that has no name: Nurturing the development of people, families, and communities. New York, NY: Basic Books. Paper ISBN 0-465-08681-0

Flower, L., Long, E., & Higgins, L. (2000). Learning to rival: A literate practice for intercultural inquiry. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers. ISBN 0-8058-3582-2

Jarratt, S. C. (1991). Rereading the Sophists: Classical rhetoric refigured. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. ISBN 0-8093-1616-1

Other Readings

Calhoun, C. (Ed.). (1992). Habermas and the public sphere. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Chambers, S. (1995). Discourse and democratic practices. In S. K. White (Eds.), The Cambridge companion to Habermas (pp. 233-259). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Cushman, E. (1996). Rhetorician as an agent of social change. College Composition and Communication, 47(1 (February)), 7-28.

- Cushman, E. (1999). Opinion: The Public Intellectual, Service Learning, and Activist Research. College English, 61(3 (January)), 328-336.
- Engeström, Y. (1993). Developmental studies of work as a testbench of activity theory: The case of primary care medical practice. In S. Chaiklin & J. Lave (Eds.), Understanding practice: Perspectives on activity and context (pp. 64-103). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Flower, L. (2003). Intercultural knowledge building: The literate action of a community think tank. In C. B. & D. Russell (Eds.), Writing selves/writing societies: Research from activity perspectives (pp. 239-279). Fort Collins, CO: WAC Clearinghouse & Mind, Culture, and Activity http://wac.colostate.edu/books/selves_societies/.
- Flower, L. (2003). Talking across difference: Intercultural rhetoric and the search for situated knowledge. College Composition and Communication, 55 (1, Sept). 38-68.
- Fraser, N. (1992). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. In C. Calhoun (Eds.), The Cambridge companion to Habermas (pp. 109-142). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- George, D. (2002). The word on the street: Public discourse in a culture of disconnect. Reflections: A Journal of writing, service learning and community literacy, II(2, Spring), 5-18.
- Habermas, J. (1989). The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society (Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Lyons, S. R. (2000). Rhetorical sovereignty: What do American Indians want from writing? , 51(3 (February)), 447-468.
- Powell, M. (2002). Rhetorics of survivance: How American Indians use writing. College Composition and Communication, 53(3, Feb), 396-434.
- Warner, M. (2002). Publics and Counterpublics. Quarterly Journal of Speech, 88(4, Nov), 413-425.
- Wells, S. (1996). Rogue cops and health care: What do we want from public writing? , 47(3 (October)), 325-341.

Excerpt from other works will be available in class packets.

August 28. Introduction

- The Public Sphere: Who, Where, How do you see it?
- Deliberative Discourse: What, Where, How do you do it?
- Sites of Local Rhetoric

Sept. 4. Normative and Descriptive Theories of the Public Sphere

What is at stake in this debate for the practice of local rhetoric?

Read about Habermas's vision of the public sphere, with attention to 3 key features

- Beginnings of the public sphere in letters and politics
- Ideal of communicative action (vs strategic action)

- Process of critical-rationality

Then look at the set of case studies. How do they fit the Habermas model? Do they suggest some possible rival hypotheses? (In *Vernacular Voices*, Hauser will raise 6 problems with that model.)

DUE: Use this case packet to make a prediction of what those problems might be (**before you read Hauser!**). Jot your ideas down as a brief discovery memo to yourself and bring it to class. **Discovery Memo #1**

Read in Normative Theory packet

Jürgen Habermas STPS. p 27-43.

Conceptualizes the bourgeois public sphere as “private people come together. . . . in a debate over the general rules governing relations” in an economic society in which the form of “political confrontation” (without historical precedent) was “people’s public use of their reason.” p.27

Craig Calhoun, H&PS, Introduction p 10-14.

The literary public sphere created a foundation for the later public sphere in politics by creating an institutional basis for deliberation in coffee house culture and journalism and by shaping 2 public ideas

- 1) the agency or the “private” person and
- 2) the significance of reason vs status as the basis for truth or judgment

Simone Chambers, D&DP, p 231-241

Publicity is a means of creating legitimacy
Communitive action must suspend strategic action

Read Case packet: Civil society and safe neighborhoods

Sir Richard Steele. “On Dueling” *Tatler* #25 June 7, 1709

Bruce Lindsey. “Run Brotha Run” *Street Life*. CLC Fall 1993

Mark Howard. “Maybe the Reason Why...” *Street Life*. CLC Fall 1993

Linda Flower, *Talking Across Difference* . CCC

Read Descriptive Theory

Hauser, *Vernacular Voices*. Introduction & Chap 2

Sept. 11?? Reading—and Re-reading—the Greek Example

Sophistic juxtaposition meets Bakhtinian dialogism

Read Hauser . *Vernacular Voices*. Chap. 1 and from Chap 4, p 103-110

What does public discourse contribute to a civil society (or does it??): a platform for gaining honor, or for reflective, interest-free deliberation, or...?
What is the process: where does it occur and how do you do it?

Jarratt, *Rereading the Sophists*. Intro, Chap 1 & 2.

What does Sophistic rhetoric do, as told by the (winning) Aristotelian tradition; as told by historiography?

What is the process: where does it occur and how do you do it?

Sept. 18 The Discourse of Civic Conversation

How exactly does this “conversation” operate? What makes it an act of deliberation?

Read Hauser. *Venacular Voices*. Chap. 3

Are we looking at a “public” or a process and activity of public discourse?

Read Michael Warner. *Publics and Counterpublics* QJS.

What you need is the social space for reflexive circulation.

Read as a Case Hauser. *Venacular Voices*. Chap. 8

Focus on achieving common meaning; weighing in, contextualized, activity
Warner sums up the circulation (see Greene QJS elaboration of circulation)

Sept. 25 Entering/Analyzing Local Rhetoric as Cultural Critics/ Educators/Public Intellectuals

What is our role as participants and researchers? How do your methods of analysis shape your observations?

Read Fraser. “Rethinking the Public Sphere”

Read Wells. “Rogue Cops”

Read Cushman. “Rhetorician as an Agent” and “Public Intellectuals.”

October 2 Entering/Analyzing a Social/Cultural/Cognitive Activity

Read Engestrom. “Developmental Studies of Work”

What happens if you take “activity” as your framework for and unit of analysis?

Look at the case study section for examples of competing discourses, shaping social structures, and the historical development of a social practice (as well as his methods of describing these features).

Read Flower. “Intercultural Knowledge Building” (on web)

What happens if you bring the individual into your analysis of deliberative rhetoric within a social activity? Where do the contradictions and conflicts lie?

Read about Process on www.cmu.edu/thinktank
[<http://www.cmu.edu/thinktank/process.html>]

DUE: Discovery Memo #2. What could you discover about your personal site of local rhetoric if you portrayed it as a social and cognitive activity?

October 9 Local Rhetoric as (Intercultural) Inquiry

How does the rhetoric of deliberation change when the valued process is inquiry (vs argumentation), the public is an intercultural body and the goal is a border-crossing, mestiza knowledge? And how do you elicit or teach such inquiry?

Read Flower, Long, Higgins. *Learning to Rival*. Preface & Chap 1 & 2

Read Belenky et al. *A Tradition*. Introduction & Chap 3

Read as a Case:

Learning to Rival, Chap 8, 9, 10

Working Partners www.cmu.edu/thinktank [Resources page]

October 16 The Rhetoric of Naming a Public Issue

Read Killingsworth & Palmer. *Ecospeak* Chap 1 & 2

Why (and how) does the language of a public discourse matter?

How would you describe the alternative rhetorical moves modeled by Leopold, Carson, Commoner?

How would you describe Killingsworth's method?

DUE: Portfolio of Reading Notes and Discovery Memos along with your mid-term evaluation memo

October 23 Project Preview

DUE: Come prepared to talk about your own thinking and to give a brief presentation on your developing inquiry project. Your written plan is due next week.

- How have you integrated the work of this semester for yourself? (Share some insights from your mid-term memo).
- What is your site of local action? What have you discovered about it so far using at least 2 different theoretical or analytical tools? How do you plan to extend your inquiry?

October 30 Competing Rhetorics in the Public Sphere

Read Killingsworth & Palmer. *Ecospeak* Chap 4, 5, 6, 7

- Thinking about the various models of deliberation we have read, how do the discourse practices and genres described here (e.g., news reporting, EIS, resistance, fiction) affect the deliberative process of their publics?
- What is the valued practice from Killingsworth's point of view?
- And what are the features of his method of analysis?

DUE: A Discovery Memo #3 (really a project proposal) that should include

1. A brief description of your site
2. A problem/purpose statement that motivates this research. What is the problem/issue/question you want to address by looking at this site? What do you hope to achieve by doing such an inquiry?
3. A research plan. How do you plan to study it? Here you need to spell out the methods you intend to use and how you will collect your data. END WITH a detailed schedule (with dates) for collecting and analyzing your data that will meet the course benchmarks.

Nov. 6 The Development of Public Voices

Read Belenky et al. The Tradition. Chap 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

Read George. "The Word on the Street"

- How do the discourse practices described here affect the deliberative practices of their publics?
- What is the valued practice and how does it compare to the alternatives we saw in Killingsworth?

Nov. 13 The Uses of Local Rhetoric

Read Lyons. "Rhetorical Sovereignty"

Read Powell. "Rhetorics of Survivance"

- How do the discourse practices described here affect the deliberative practices of their publics?
- What is the valued practice and how does it compare to the alternatives we have seen this semester.

Nov 20 Research Team Meeting

Use this session to raise problems and questions you are encountering in your inquiry. Frame your thinking as questions, rivals, and working alternatives that the rest of the class could respond to. Focus on a specific issue (we will hear your presentation next week). Use your question, if possible, to teach us something about doing this kind of inquiry.

DUE. Draft of your project paper

Nov. 27 Thanksgiving

Dec. 4 Final Presentations

This is the place to present what you have learned. Sketch your methods, but focus on findings, ideas, conclusions. Visuals can be helpful.

DUE: Portfolio of Reading Notes, Discovery Memos, and Final Evaluation

Dec 11 DUE: Final paper at 5:00 pm

Projects

1. A Portfolio of Reading Notes and Discovery Memos

Reading Notes

In place of a mid-term or final exam, I would like you to create a portfolio of Reading Notes on each assigned article or chapter that will be useful later in your academic work. Each 1-2 page note should try to address 3 issues in addition to your personal commentary and connections.

a. Key Points & Contributions to a Working Theory of Local Rhetoric. Based on the problem this author is addressing, what are the key points and the structure of his or her argument? Each text we read is making an implicit or explicit argument that certain features of public (and in some cases local) local deliberation are the significant (influential, defining, etc.) features we need to recognize (teach toward, study further etc.). And that they are so for some reason. Some texts contribute an ideal or normative model; others a close analysis of a given feature; others a portrait of rhetorical action in context.. How would this author elaborate the statement, "A significant feature we need to recognize is . . . because" You might try speaking as if you were the author.

b. Crosstalk. This discussion about the nature of local rhetoric raises a number of open questions--questions without a single "right" answer. As you read, do you see any points of implicit contradiction, conflict or explicit contention arising in this conversation among researchers, teachers, theorists, and students. What are the generative "good problems" and issues under negotiation? (Note: these can open doors to research.)

c. Method of Inquiry. Each of these authors models a distinctive type of inquiry with its own methodological tools, from grand normative model building, to personal narrative or from detailed discourse analysis, to social/cognitive process tracing. The question to ask is not, which type of analysis is best, but what are the strengths and limitations of each way of gaining insight (for what purpose).

Discovery Memos

From time to time I will ask you to conduct small observations of a constructive process. A "discovery memo" is a 1-2 page memo to the rest of the class which describes not what you did so much as what you learned by doing this. The idea is to articulate and share discoveries, insights, inferences. To be both persuasive and informative, be sure to include some concrete details, quotes, or transcription from the event you observed. Post these on the B-Board on the day they are due in class.

Evaluating Your Portfolio. At mid-term and end of term please give me your Portfolio of Notes and Memos along with a 3 page memo that addresses 3 questions. Give 90% of the space to question 3. (total of 20 points)

1. Completeness of the Portfolio. How many Notes here address all three questions? Are all Discovery Memos here?(5 points for complete portfolio)
2. Quality of My Analyses. Looking back over the portfolio, what are the strengths I see; where do I see growth; where do I want to improve? (5 points)
3. Connections. Looking back, trying to make some connections among the things I have read and done, how would I integrate what I am learning about deliberation as a local public process? (10 points--for connections created in this memo)

2. Inquiry Project

The goal of this project is to find a live site of local rhetoric that interests you, to use it to instantiate, interpret and test the theoretical accounts we will be reading, and to study it with multiple methods of inquiry. The list of Sites for Local Rhetoric offers a starter set of possibilities.

Your live site needs to meet some requirements. First, is there already a literature on it that will let you be in dialogue with other analysts, rhetoricians, educators? Second, do you have access to some form of this rhetoric *in action* (or to such good data that you will be able to study it as a social/cognitive activity).

Your project should develop over the course of the semester, as you bring different approaches to bear on this live site. By the end your project should incorporate

- Grounding in the rhetorical theory of the public sphere, which lets you enter the debate about critical-rational versus vernacular and what makes a valued discourse
- Rhetorical (textual) criticism / discourse analysis of the language or texts this site produces
- Activity analysis of the larger event
- Negotiation analysis of a writer within in such an activity
- Intercultural interpretation from culturally different perspectives that draws on situated knowledge and seeks out rival interpretations.

How you integrate what these interpretive tools show you and which becomes your primary focus is up to you. You might want to think of this project as leading to a “Guide to Local Rhetoric for Educators/Public Intellectuals” or as a building block in a more in-depth research project.

Grading

Assignments for the course will have the following weights. Class participation and presentations will determine all grades on the border and translate into a plus or minus added to middle range grades.

Discovery Memos: check, check plus, check minus 6 points

Portfolio: 20 points each

Draft of Final (on time): 6 points

Final Project: 35 points