

Rhetoric

With Rob Goodman

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Social Media Handles



[Rob Goodman \(@GoodmanRob1\) / Twitter](#)

Associated Websites

- [Rob Goodman](#)
- [Rob Goodman - Faculty of Arts - Ryerson University](#)
- [Words on Fire](#)
- [Rob Goodman - Google Scholar](#)
- [Amazon.com: Rob Goodman: Books, Biography, Blog, Audiobooks, Kindle](#)

Profile

[Rob Goodman](#) is Assistant Professor of Politics and Public Administration at Ryerson University. He received his Ph.D. with distinction from Columbia University in 2018 and was previously a postdoctoral researcher at McGill University.

At Columbia, Rob worked as a Core Curriculum instructor and was a Heyman Center for the Humanities Fellow. Before beginning his doctoral studies, Rob worked as speechwriter for U.S. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and Senator Chris Dodd. He also studied at George Washington University (M.A., Public Policy) and Duke University (B.A., English).

Rob's academic work has been published in the *Journal of Politics* (2022), the *European Journal of Political Theory* (2021), the *Review of Politics* (2020), the *American Political Science Review* (2018), *Redescriptions* (2017), *History of Political Thought* (2016), the *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* (2014), and the *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* (2010). His paper "Edmund Burke and the Deliberative Sublime" was the co-winner of

the Review of Politics Award for best paper in normative political theory at the 2016 Midwest Political Science Association Conference.

Rob is the co-author of two books: *A Mind at Play*, a biography of Claude Shannon (Simon & Schuster, 2017), and *Rome's Last Citizen*, a book on Cato the Younger and the Roman Republic (Thomas Dunne, 2012). He has also written for *Slate*, *The Atlantic*, *Politico*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Aeon*, and *Nautilus*.

Recent Publication

[Words on Fire: Eloquence and Its Conditions](#)

Why is political rhetoric broken - and how can it be fixed? *Words on Fire* returns to the origins of rhetoric to recover the central place of eloquence in political thought.

Eloquence, for the orators of classical antiquity, emerged from rhetorical relationships that exposed both speaker and audience to risk. Through close readings of Cicero - and his predecessors, rivals, and successors - political theorist and former speechwriter Rob Goodman tracks the development of this ideal, in which speech is both spontaneous and stylized, and in which the pursuit of eloquence mitigates political inequalities. He goes on to trace the fierce disputes over Ciceronian speech in the modern world through the work of such figures as Burke, Macaulay, Tocqueville, and Schmitt, explaining how rhetorical risk-sharing has broken down. *Words on Fire* offers a powerful critique of today's political language - and shows how the struggle over the meaning of eloquence has shaped our world.

Rhetoric

Summary

[Principles](#) of training communicators. It may entail the study of principles and rules of composition formulated by critics of ancient times, and it can also involve the study of writing or speaking as a means of communication or persuasion. Classical rhetoric probably developed along with democracy in Syracuse (Sicily) in the 5th century BC, when dispossessed landowners argued claims before their fellow citizens. Shrewd speakers sought help from teachers of oratory, called *rhetors*. This use of language was of interest to philosophers such as [Plato](#) and [Aristotle](#) because the oratorical arguments called into question the relationships among language, truth, and morality. The Romans recognized separate aspects of the process of composing speeches, a compartmentalization that grew more pronounced with time. Renaissance scholars and poets studied rhetoric closely, and it was a central concern of humanism. In all times and places where rhetoric has been significant, listening and reading and speaking and writing have been the critical skills necessary for effective communication.

[Treatise of Rhetoric](#)

Aristotle stated that there are three types of persuasive speech:

1. **Forensic / judicial rhetoric** - looks at the justice or injustice of accusations and establishes evidence about the past. It's used mainly in a court of law.

2. **Epideictic / demonstrative rhetoric** - praises or blames and makes a declaration about the present situation. It's used in, for example, wedding and retirement speeches etc.
3. **Symbouleutikon / deliberative rhetoric** - tries to get the audience to take action by talking about a possible future. Politicians often use this approach and Martin Luther's "I have a dream" speech is a good example.

The Rhetorical Situation

Purpose

Consider what the purpose of the writing is. Are you writing to inform, evaluate, analyze, or convince?

Audience

When writing anything, consider who is being addressed. Audiences bring in their own perspectives, biases, experiences, and expectations, which can make writing for a particular audience very difficult.

Topic

What are you writing about? The topic may be self-selected or assigned, but writers should try and find an angle that they are motivated to write about. The topic should also be broad enough to fit the assignment's parameters and specific enough to go into detail.

Writer

Writers, just like their audience, are influenced by a number of things, like their age, location, perspective, bias, culture, experiences, and expectations. Writers may need to consider if the traits they are bringing in may have a positive or negative outcome. For example, even if someone is very passionate about stopping animal testing, to convince others, they may have to show restraint in expressing all of their personal views about people who test products on animals. If these are the people they must convince, no matter what the writer may personally feel, writers should avoid insulting or degrading their audience if they have a chance at motivating change.

Context

The context describes the circumstances surrounding the writing which include the time (when the text is written), location (where is the text placed), events surrounding the writing, and the culture.

The Five Canons of Rhetoric

The Five Canons of Rhetoric are tools for creating persuasive speeches:

1. **Invention** - the process of developing an argument. For this you need to pick effective content and sort through everything you could say and decide what should be included or excluded. There needs to be a balance between what the audience needs to hear and what you need to say.

2. **Arrangement** - once you have determined the content you must organise and order your speech to create the most impact, such as thinking about how long each section should be and what should follow on from one point etc.
3. **Style** - deciding how to present your chosen arguments, including thinking tactically about how your audience will respond to your word choices. Perhaps include visualisation or other techniques to evoke emotions. (See rhetorical devices and tools)
4. **Memory** - memorising your speech.
5. **Delivery** - this includes your projection, gestures, eye contact, pronunciation, tone and pace.

The Three Appeals

According to Aristotle, rhetoric rests on the three appeals: ethos, logos and pathos. They are modes of persuasion used to convince an audience.

1. **Ethos**: your credibility and character
2. **Pathos**: emotional bond with your listeners
3. **Logos**: logical and rational argument

Digital Rhetoric

[Digital rhetoric](#) is a way of informing, persuading, and inspiring action in an audience through digital media that is composed and distributed via multimedia platforms. Due to the increasingly mediated nature of our contemporary society, there are no longer clear distinctions between digital and non-digital environments. This has led to an expansion of the scope of digital rhetoric as there is a need to account for the increased fluidity with which humans interact with technology. Contrary to past conceptions, the definition of rhetoric can no longer be confined to simply the sending and receiving of messages to persuade or impart knowledge. While this represents a primarily ancient Western view of rhetoric, Arthur Smith of UCLA explains that the ancient rhetoric of many cultures, such as African rhetoric, existed independent of Western influence¹ Today, rhetoric encompasses all forms of discourse that serve any given purpose within specific contexts, while also simultaneously being shaped by those contexts.

Existing scholarship in the field suggests that rhetoric and digital rhetoric hold various meanings according to different scholars. Based on the individual values a scholar holds, digital rhetoric can be analyzed through many lenses that reflect different social movements.

Rhetoric in Social Movements

[Rhetoric](#) permits movements to “alter audience perceptions of the past, the present, and the future, to convince them that an intolerable situation exists and demands urgent action”

Rhetoric in Social Media

The [rhetoric](#) involved in appealing to others through sites such as Facebook cannot be analyzed in the same terms as rhetoric used in daily life and nonviolent argumentation. For instance, in order to catch a viewer's attention, a Facebook status must be short, to the point, and intensely interesting. Therefore, rhetoric on Facebook is not as elegant, detailed, or developed as the rhetoric utilized in a face-to-face setting. Nevertheless, rhetoric can still be utilized much more successfully than it currently is in the world of social media.

One of the rhetorical benefits of social media is the opportunity it provides to build one's own ethos. However, this does not mean simply bragging about one's accomplishments through egotistic statuses. Instead, ethos can be built effectively by creating unassuming yet complimentary profiles and statuses that focus on positive impacts on society. Too often, social media contributes to a negative image of its users because they do not monitor what material they post to the Internet.

Another element of rhetoric that can be taken advantage of through social media is pathos. For example, many charitable campaigns are started through Facebook using emotional persuasion to gather more support. These campaigns draw on personal experiences with the cause, sympathy, and empathy to influence Facebook users to join the campaign and spread awareness through status updates. However, these campaigns lose their credibility if an effective ethos has not been established.

While rhetoric is adapting constantly as communication methods evolve in modern society, it is often difficult to identify rhetoric within these new mediums of contact. Within social media, rhetoric is often underutilized or incorrectly utilized. If social media users learn to take advantage of rhetoric within sites such as Facebook, they will build their credibility through ethos and be able to create more of an impact. They will also gain the ability to use pathos to gather support for causes they believe in. Social media can be a platform upon which to develop an influential position in society, but only if rhetoric is utilized effectively.

Further Readings

- [Examples of Rhetoric Across Media and Their Types](#)