contemporary american political rhetoric:

the assignments

brian jackson \* brigham young university

english 614R \* spring 2016 \* mw 1-3:30 \* 4116 jfsb

reading summaries—10 total

*Genre:* informal answers to questions based on reading; reading notes; off-the-cuff analyses. You can either email them to me *before* class (I won’t accept them after—and I don’t want attachments) or write them up on 3 x 5 notecards (I’ll supply the cards).

*Rhetorical situation:* You’re the rhetor, I’m the audience. The purpose is to take advantage of a writing-to-learn moment. I want you to read critically, sometimes closely, sometimes swiftly. I want to see that you’re grappling (*agon*) with the texts, that you’re attentive to their main arguments, that you’ve considered the evidence they present, that you’ve asked important questions.

*Rhetorical strategies:* just answer the questions and you’ll be fine. But also think about how you can give me, the audience, a good experience reading your notes.

READING SUMMARY QUESTIONS

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| **DATE** | **ASSIGNMENT** | **READING SUMMARY Q’S** |
| **W, APR 27** | [Frum](http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/01/the-great-republican-revolt/419118/) and [Beinart](http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/01/why-america-is-moving-left/419112/) | No questions today |
| **M, MAY 2** | Marietta, *A Citizen’s Guide*  | 1: find two examples of political argument: one that represents conservative ideology and one liberal. Tell us which branch they represent (pp. 31 & 63). 2: How do (or might) political ideologies work as [rhetorical invention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inventio)? 3: If you were running a political campaign, how would you use chapter 10 to your candidate’s advantage?  |
| **W, MAY 4** | ALL: [Booth](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fYURhQ2tDU3R3d3hheU56REVHb0VrOFVFUVFj/view?usp=sharing), [Burke](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fUmtiM3ZfdDl5OXRrOGZmWHlLUVQ0VEhpTTVR/view?usp=sharing) (on identification), [Mouffe](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fRGcxaXloeEZSVGUtYmZ3dUtrZk5YWlJINXpj/view?usp=sharing)JIGSAW: [Engels](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fd0hnaWV1ZzhFcVE3em5yODZTeWt0TmY4N0Vj/view?usp=sharing), [Haidt](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fdGQ5M1djMkh0Z0E/view?usp=sharing), [Schmitt](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fWlBKcW8xWkpfV0RzUGVCT01ROWdfNW9ET0tR/view?usp=sharing) | 1 (for Booth, Burke, and Mouffe): summarize the main point of each reading in 1-2 sentences and ask one question of/for each2 (for jigsaw): What does your author assume about politics? What does that have to do with rhetoric? How has this arg. influenced your thinking about political rhetoric?  |
| **M, MAY 9** | [Habermas](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fLUhMRHBQUzlyMkE/view?usp=sharing) (start on p. 19 with “Civil Society . . .”) [Fraser](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fUWtxRWY5OS1XS1k/view?usp=sharing), [Hauser](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fS2VERFF3V1FLX1oxWjZtMFAwN1VQWDFDV0xj/view?usp=sharing) GIST READING: [Warner](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fUkJnM0pwSkhtVnc/view?usp=sharing), [Medhurst](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fT2JqdWhXN25WM00/view?usp=sharing), [Benkler](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fdDFjNlg2aDJmUFE/view?usp=sharing)  | Capture in writing two things from the main readings: (a) Habermas’s main argument about public spheres, and (b) How Fraser, Hauser, and Warner clarify, add to, challenge, or refract from Habermas  |
| **W, MAY 11** | ALL: [Jasinski](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fUEw2WGVISFp5WDg/view?usp=sharing)OPTIONAL: [Foss](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fakJfYk96VHVJZTEzUFVWdzRRWVJLSThPQzY4/view?usp=sharing) (read 209-220 carefully, then GIST read the examples)  JIGSAW: [pentadic](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fQ2phcko3OG54UVNoZ2p5Z2RDX05RRU1uY19F/view?usp=sharing), [metaphor](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fUndpWTBndlBkX3NpMkRvU2xFeU5ubVd4cUo0/view?usp=sharing), [fantasy theme](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fQzF2VFkxbzJMM3d1UWV6dmJneGhRYVZxSjRz/view?usp=sharing) | Jasinski kicks us off by answering four important questions about rhetorical criticism: * “What does a critic do (125-33)?”
* “What does a critic study (133-5)?”
* “How does a critic do her thing (135-9)?”
* “What is the purpose of criticism (139-41)?”

I want you to know the answer to these questions, but I want you to answer each of them by laying out two different possible positions, like this: “While some critics argue that the purpose of rhetorical criticism is X [and explain], others argue that the purpose is Y. The consequences of X are A, B, C . . . and the consequences of Y are D, E, F.” Essentially, I’m looking for 4 sentences under each question. After you’ve done that for each question, I’d like you to ask 2 questions of our readings today.  |
| **M, MAY 16** | ALL: [Zarefsky](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fN2YtVmFnRFpmdVk/view?usp=sharing), [H & M](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fMjhmOHNFc3dUUjA/view?usp=sharing)OPTIONAL: [Klein](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/03/19/the-unpersuaded-2)GIST: [Lim](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fYVgwblg1dE5vZ2s/view?usp=sharing), [Beasley](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fYXdQWkdWREdBUzA/view?usp=sharing) JIGSAW: Everyone pick a different inaugural address | Summarize 2 readings from today (try this structure: problem/issue, main argument, implications for rhetorical criticism). Then write *one paragraph* of rhetorical criticism using one principle from a source we read and apply it to a *specific* passage, term, or rhetorical strategy from the inaugural you selected.  |
| **W, MAY 18** | [Campbell & Jamieson](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fcHlqVHlaVjNDX1U/view?usp=sharing); Role play  | (no response due today) |
| **M, MAY 23** | [Asen](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fd0RtbjRzTE82SUk/view?usp=sharing), This American Life [#534](http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/534/a-not-so-simple-majority): “A Not-So-Simple Majority”GIST: [Asen](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fcXVOazduYTVRTVk/view?usp=sharing)  | In your summary of the 2 Asen articles, after “nutshelling” the main argument, (1) summarize 2 points of support Asen provides for the argument, and (2) try to categorize the kind of rhetorical criticism he’s doing using our terms from JasinskiAs a rhetorical critic, assess what you learned from the podcast by using at least one principle from Chapter 5 of Asen’s book *Democracy, Deliberation, and Education*  |
| **W, MAY 25** | *Rhetoric of Agitation and Control* (chapters 1-4 & 7): read all, but the social movement will lead the discussion on agitation (chptr 2), establishment on control (chptr 3) | First, summarize chapters 1-3 in only 1-2 sentences. Then paraphrase **one** sub-category of both agitation and control (e.g., “explain “terminology” for agitation and “suppression” for control). Finally, explain one significant difference between the rhetorical strategies of the civ rights movement and the WTO protests.  |
| **M, MAY 30 (HOLIDAY)** |  |  |
| **W, JUNE 1** | ALL: [Stewart](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fLW5pSENYNHFBZEk/view?usp=sharing) on tactics (WARNING: explicit language) ESTABLISHMENT: [Stewart](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fMm53X3RZbUVaeVE/view?usp=sharing) SOCIAL MOVEMENT: [Stewart](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fTV9ZRmhYM3c5ZlE/view?usp=sharing) ADDITIONAL RESOURCE: [Klandermans & Stekelenburg](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1k9r0BiOr9fVFVsaXZNcHc1V2c/view?usp=sharing) | **GROUP RESPONSE DUE BY THE END OF CLASS TODAY:** As a group, write a summary of the two chapters. Then write a *draft plan* for the artifacts you plan to create for our showdown, using key terms from the Stewart text.  |
| **M, JUNE 6** | Role play social movement |  |
| **W, JUNE 8** |  | Annotated bibliography due (worth two reading responses) |
| **M, JUNE 13 (LAST DAY)** |  |  |
| **W, JUNE 15 (FINAL)** |  |  |

critical performative ([here’s an example](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tiVEqeaHelJN8Gigq6tjT6Fy5ay2VBwkSApKYUlCxcI/edit?usp=sharing))

*Genre:* short (less than 500 words), informal script of rhetorical analysis of an artifact produced by one of the presidential candidates.

*Rhetorical situation:* it’s an election year, if you haven’t noticed. Everyone’s talking about it, *ad nauseum*. Often our conversations reflect *hidden* intellectualism—you can tease out even in your grandma’s sloppy gloss of the recent kerfuffle what we could call rhetorical theory. All this chatter is begging for refinement. That’s our job. We want to take a moment during each class to analyze campaigns from a critical perspective, a rhetorical perspective. We’ll each prepare a script to read/perform to/for the class. Your purpose is to delight, but also to refine—refine our attitudes and judgments about political communication.

*Rhetorical strategies:* 3 parts—artifact, analysis, method (see example [here](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tiVEqeaHelJN8Gigq6tjT6Fy5ay2VBwkSApKYUlCxcI/edit)); Light, engaging style; close reading: specific evidence/strategies from the artifact and analysis of that evidence.

Inaugural address role-play

*Genre:* an abbreviated inaugural address (between 600-800 words) and a reflection (800-1000 words)

*Rhetorical situation:* The inaugural is a distinct genre of presidential address. Through it, a newly-elected president recommits the nation to the covenants of Jehovah . . . or, in more secular terms, to the constitutionally-inspired political vision of the United States of America. Imagine you and a companion have been selected as Director and Deputy Director of White House Communications. Your task is to work together to craft a timely (*kairotic—*as of May 2016) and inspiring inaugural address—and then explain why you made the genre moves you did in a brief reflection. You must decide as a team who is going to do what and how. You should also decide on a presidential candidate—real or imagined—for which you’ll serve as chief rhetoricians.

*Rhetorical strategies:* We’ve discussed the constitutive role of rhetoric. Inaugurals constitute a people; the inaugurated president climbs the mountain to see the promised land. They are both conservative (they celebrate past traditions worth preserving) and liberal (they look to future actions that will usher in a more perfect union). They argue for a political philosophy, and they establish a presidential *ethos*.

As a team, you will review a handful of inaugurals for their structure, their tone, their rhetorical moves for your imitation. In your reflection, you will account for your rhetorical decisions by referring to at least **two inaugurals** and **two outside sources** (you can use Campbell and Jamieson as one source) as support. You’ll also explain why the rhetorical decisions you made are fitting (Gk. *prepon*) for the particular candidate you’ve chosen (or invented).

social movement role-play

*Genre:* It depends on the goals of your group—whether you’re establishment or the social movement. Each group will need to produce *five* artifacts—some due before our meeting on June 6, and some after. These artifacts can be press releases, op eds, slogans, songs, policy briefs, legislative language, speeches, ad campaigns, posters, social media campaigns, YouTube videos, podcasts, and other symbolic behavior. Each group must have at least two *alphabetic* artifacts that add up to about 1000 words of writing. The artifacts can be in any medium, in any style, but they must be “capturable”—in other words, if you give a speech, someone in the group should record it on a cell phone.

Each group will also need to compose a reflection critically analyzing the group’s artifacts, explaining, using specific language from our readings, why the artifacts were chosen and what *effects* (text, judgment, constitutive identity)were expected. The reflection should be around 500 words and should include at least *four* citations from Bowers et al or Stewart et al or Klandermans & Stekelenburg.

*Rhetorical situation:* In 2011, Republican Governor Scott Walker proposed “[Wisconsin Act 10](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Wisconsin_Act_10),” a piece of legislation eventually passed by the Wisconsin legislature to reverse a $3.6 billion budget deficit. The legislation targeted collective bargaining rights and other benefits of public sector employees, including teachers. The proposed bill led to [angry protests](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/17/us/17wisconsin.html?_r=0) at the Capitol in Madison. As James Cersonsky wrote in *Salon* in 2013, “The uprising reanimated the American labor movement and became the go-to image of domestic protest in the wake of the Great Recession—before Occupy Wall Street later that year.”

While the *kairos* for this social movement has shifted and transformed and near-diminished, we’re going to reanimate it. Our *establishment* students will play the role of Scott Walker and other Republican legislators. The *social movement* students will play the role of the public sector employees in all their varieties. Your goal is to engage in symbolic debate and confrontation, using the rhetorical tools of social movement theory (SMT) to create artifacts of struggle in an environment of contested power. Each group will seek to control the public agenda through “establishing political reality,” in the words of Zarefsky.

*Rhetorical strategies:* Depends on who you are and what you’re trying to accomplish. I’m leaving strategies (symbols, genres, style) up to you. But in your reflections you must convince me that your group has considered carefully our literature on SMT and have designed artifacts and strategies to suit your needs and audiences.

*How we’ll role play:* On June 1, the two groups will meet separately to discuss SMT and work on strategies for creating artifacts. 2-3 artifacts will be due *before class*, giving each side time to read the other side’s artifacts and respond to them when you meet. For sequence sake, we will pick up the story after Wisconsin Act 10 has been proposed but *before* it has been made a law by the Wisconsin Congress.

On June 6, we will role play the confrontation between the movement and the establishment. The social movement will go first, with speeches, op eds, and petitions (or the summary of them—see chapter 2 in Bowers for a possible sequence). The establishment will then respond with their own press releases or interviews with social movement leaders, or not (chapter 3). Each group will have *30 minutes total* to present its case. Each group will receive cards worth a certain amount of minutes: three for 5 minutes, three for 3, and three for 2. When a team plays a card, they control that time unless they ask a question of the other group. The other team waits till their opponent’s time runs out, and then it plays a time card. If a team wants an extension on their time, they can play *only* a 2-minute card. There will be a 30-minute break at a mutually-agreeable time, or Brian will decide. Each time a group presents, the group must be explicit about the audience it is addressing and in what medium, if such things aren’t obvious.

Each team will also draw *three* action cards that serve various functions (there are only six total action cards):

*ACE =* *steal control:* If the opposing team has played a 2- or 3-minute card, you can play your ace and interrupted them whenever you want and steal their time.

*KING = PR setback:* Play this card at the end of your turn and the other team will have a “PR problem” they’ll have to deal with when it’s their turn.

*QUEEN = challenge:* This card gives you permission to interrupt the other team *once* during their presentation to challenge them on a point of order, a fact, a claim, a statement, a strategy, whatever.

*JACK = time stretch:* This card will give you three additional minutes, to be played at any time when it is your turn.

We will spend the last 20-30 minutes of class working in groups again to write up the reflection and assemble the artifacts to turn in.

civic engagement: critical analysis of do-gooderism (due June 8—or whenever)

*Genre:* Critical reflection. When you complete your 5 hours of civic engagement, you’ll do two things: (1) write a rhetorical analysis explaining how the group you worked with uses symbolic action (aka *rhetoric*) to persuade and foster identification among citizens, and (2) write a reflection about what you learned about political rhetoric from the experience. I’m looking for around 800-1000 words for this one.

*Rhetorical situation:* The presidential election threatens to sap all our idealism and public decency. We grow fatalistic about the prospects of rhetorical agency; how can we change anything? This is our exigence. Since I do not intend in this class to crush the public spirit, I invite you to participate for 5 hours in a civic engagement project outside class. Join an established, already-existing organization like a volunteer association, a political campaign, a relief effort, an awareness campaign, a nonprofit organization, a community service project, a social media project, or some other organized, identified, purposeful group whose mission is to solve a public problem we share. (Ecclesiastical service in the Church won't count for this project.) You can act as a participant, jumping right into the work of the group, or you can ask to be an observer. The audience for this project is our CPR community.

The purpose of this project is two-fold (and here I’m borrowing language from “A Crucible Moment,” a study by the Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement for the Association of American Colleges and Universities):

* *Civic Action*: By doing this project, you’ll learn “the practice of working in a pluralistic society and world to improve the quality of people’s lives and the sustainability of the planet.” This work is inherently rhetorical.
* *Civic Inquiry*: You’ll use the tools of rhetorical criticism to explore “the civic dimensions and public consequences” of political action, “the impact of choices on different constituencies,” and the ongoing “civic intellectual debates” that constitute the rhetorical ecology of public life.

*Rhetorical strategies:* Informal, personal writing, but with a critical edge. You’ll analyze institutional rhetoric, looking closely at the way groups, organizations, communities, and other collectives use rhetoric. Half to ¾s of the project will be this analysis (and, as always, I’ll look for key terms from our class discussion and the literature on rhetoric) and the other part will be your reflection. I want you to explore how your understanding of political rhetoric was challenged, deepened, confirmed, or obliterated by having participated in civic engagement.

final project: conference paper

*Genre:* A scholarly conference paper (around 8 pages, as the double-spaced crow flies) written as a script to be performed. The sub-genre is rhetorical criticism of contemporary political discourse. Your artifact(s) should be a political text (in a broad sense—remember our definition of “political” from the beginning of class) from contemporary politics (i.e., from 1980). Your conference paper should include half a dozen sources that establish your credibility and lay out the current conversation in the field on either the artifact or your theory or both. Your criticism should demonstrate *close reading* of the text, avoiding (as we tell our 150 students) summary while attending to the “effects” of rhetoric we’ve discussed in class: *text* (in its rich specificity), *judgment*, and *constituted identity*.

*Rhetorical Situation:* Think of this paper as an *actual script* you would read at next year’s English symposium. (In fact, if you end up really liking what you did, you should consider forming a panel.) The *exigence*, as we’re imagining it here, is for a conference on contemporary political rhetoric for rhetoricians. The *audience* is made up of in-front-of-you people, intelligent and eager to hear something cool. They want to see you grappling with complex ideas, but they also want a lively delivery, with a clear organization sensitive to the needs of auditors. You, the *rhetor*, are standing in front of them and performing—your *purpose* is to instruct, provoke, and delight. Though we’re going as far back as Reagan, you must still establish some kind of *kairos*, whether through invoking current events or establishing the enduring salience of the past.

*Rhetorical Strategies:* I want you to use the general two-part global sequence for rhetorical criticism: theory, then criticism (i.e., close reading). I also want you to use the CARS method we’ve seen in some of our criticism: establish the centrality of the artifact or method or situation, present the problem (or question or gap or counter-claim), and then lay out your thesis and the organization of your paper.