

SPEECH 214: RHETORIC OF PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS - Spring, 2009



Alfred C. Snider, Instructor Wed 3:35-6:05 PM – 200 Perkins

I. SCOPE OF THE COURSE

This course will attempt to focus on one area of public discourse (the Presidential election of 2008) for comprehensive rhetorical analysis. Students will learn about presidential campaigns and will also isolate a specific portion of this discourse for individual study. Students will also learn about theories or rhetoric, style, construction, strategies, and the criticism and evaluation of rhetoric as applied to the presidential campaign.

II. READINGS

A list of readings will be supplied. They will be disseminated to students based on procedures that are harmonious with current copyright regulations.

Most readings can be found on a password protected website.

<http://www.uvm.edu/~asnider/campreadings>

Videos and other materials will be at the class blog, which is

<http://spch214camprhet.blogspot.com/>

III. EDUCATIONAL METHOD

This class will utilize three primary educational methods.

1. A series of lectures given by the instructor. These will be reasonably brief and will highlight both material in the readings as well as new material.

2. The class will attempt to stage on-going discussions about class material. The lectures will often be punctuated with spots for class discussion to follow up on relevant ideas. Students are held responsible for contributing to these discussions.

3. Students will also be directly exposed to videotaped segments of the campaign for discussion and study.

Education is incorrectly seen as a process where the "teacher" imparts unquestioned "knowledge" to the docile and merely recipient "students." To be meaningful in an educational sense students and teachers must together pursue answers to questions which neither may have a full advanced understanding of. In our discussions it is essential that students engage in a process of critical analysis, questioning points made by the instructor as well as presenting alternative viewpoints. There are few, if any, absolute truths in this field, and student input is necessary for all of us to understand the "probable truths" which we may take away from this experience as useful knowledge. It is the duty of each person in this class to take part as a critical, active participant, and to learn about persuasion through direct experience and concerted inquiry.

IV. ASSIGNMENTS:

CLASS PARTICIPATION: Students are required and expected to take part in the seminar function of the class. This implies that students attend class, are familiar with the material assigned for that day, and volunteer opinions and perceptions about the content and process of class discussions. 25% of grade.

RESEARCH PAPERS: Students will pick one of the main characters in the campaign (Presidential or Vice Presidential candidates from the Democratic or Republican tickets, others by special request) to make the focus of their research papers. There will be three such papers.

Paper #1: Descriptive Criticism. 20%

Paper #2: Analytical Criticism. 20%

Paper #3: Final Criticism. 25%

Oral report on Paper #3. 10%

Students should be aware that the correct use of the English language in written work is assumed, expected, and required. Written work not meeting college-level writing standards will be returned without a grade.

Students should be aware that the academic honesty policy of UVM is in force.

V. EVALUATION

Students will be evaluated on the basis of earned points only. No extra credit work is available. Each assignment has a given point value (adding up to 100) of which students will be awarded portions. Final grades will be awarded on the basis of natural breaks in the distribution of scores.

VI. CONCLUSION

Please feel free to meet with me outside of class, either during my office hours or by appointment. I am often on campus, mostly in my office. This is a tentative class syllabus.

Alfred C. Snider "Tuna"

Professor

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