

*Ron & Jane Graham Centre for the Study of Communication*  
College of Engineering, University of Saskatchewan

**RCM 401: ORAL RHETORIC – THEORY AND PRACTICE**  
Unofficial Course Outline

Professor: TBA

Office:

E-mail:

Phone:

Office Hours:

Appointments on request

*Graham Centre Web Site: <[www.engr.usask.ca/dept/techcomm/](http://www.engr.usask.ca/dept/techcomm/)>*

### **OBJECTIVES**

- To gain greater mastery and understanding of the theory and practice of rhetorical communication.
- To gain deeper understanding of and greater experience in message construction, argument, and audience analysis and adaptation.
- To gain deeper understanding of and greater experience in effective oral delivery.
- To develop polish and professionalism in oral delivery.
- To develop skill in analysis and evaluation of oral rhetoric.

### **DESCRIPTION**

This is, before all else, a course in rhetoric, and as such it will promote, and demand, mastery of the skills of message construction, argument, and analysis. The course focuses upon application of the fundamentals of rhetoric to oral presentations. While the course has a strong performance aspect, *it is not primarily a course in performance*; thus delivery, while important, will not be our main emphasis. Thus, in addition to developing skills in delivery, the course will concentrate on applying theoretical understanding in four other areas: understanding and adapting to audience; using rhetorical strategies to develop a well-structured, engaging, and convincing message; accommodating to situational constraints; and establishing speaker credibility through effective ethos, logos, and pathos appeals.

### **HOURS PER WEEK**

3

### **METHODS AND REQUIREMENTS**

The course is equally divided between oral assignments (including speeches and analysis) and written analysis (including a speech journal, a formal essay analysis, and a final written examination). Since developing understanding and skill in public speaking depends on practice, much of the class time will be devoted to presenting and analysing speeches. You will prepare three well-researched presentations, each 5 minutes long, and will select one of the three to recast for your final oral assignment. As well, will be expected to provide a critical and supportive audience for your classmates' speeches; everyone is expected to participate in this process of observation and analysis that follows the speeches. As well, you will be required to keep extensive written records of the speeches you hear as a foundation for writing a formal analytical paper and final examination.

**REQUIREMENTS**

Persuasive speech #1 .....	10%
Persuasive speech #2 .....	10%
Persuasive speech #3 .....	10%
Final speech .....	20%
Essay analysis .....	15%
Speech journal .....	10%
Final exam .....	<u>25%</u>
TOTAL .....	100%

**EXTENSION POLICY**

Late written assignments will be deducted 10% for each day they are overdue. I do not normally allow extensions except in extreme circumstances, and never unless you have made arrangements with me prior to the due date. If you are having a problem with your assignment, please see me before the work is due. As well, depending on the size of the class, our time may be very tight, so no adjustments to the schedule for each round will be allowed once you have signed up. Quite simply, your speech date represents an absolute commitment: you must present your speeches on the dates you sign up for. If you miss your scheduled speech you will forfeit the grades for that assignment.

**GRADING SCALE:**

A+ 95-100	B+ 80-84	C+ 68-71	D+ 58-59
A 90-94	B 76-79	C 65-67	D 55-57
A- 85-89	B- 72-75	C- 60-64	D- 50-54

**ATTENDANCE**

Part of your responsibility in this course will be to provide an audience for your classmates who are speaking. Attendance is therefore mandatory. I have arranged the schedule to allow some free days for each student; however, you **MUST** attend those days which are required of you. I will be tracking attendance and input, so please do your classmates the service of providing them an audience. **Points will be deducted from your final grade at a rate of 10% per day for unexcused absences. THERE WILL BE NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS REQUIREMENT.** Please do both of us a favour and attend all required class meetings.

**USEFUL BACKGROUND**

The normal prerequisite for RCM401 is RCM300; RCM400 (Rhetoric) would be especially helpful. As our emphasis will be on the *rhetorical* nature of public speaking, you will need to be comfortable with basic concepts of rhetorical discourse as a pragmatic and situated art. At a minimum, you should be familiar with the concepts of ethos, logos, and pathos (the Aristotelian modes of appeal), Bitzer's concept of the rhetorical situation and Booth's rhetorical stance. If your memory of these concepts is not

clear, please be sure to review them thoroughly as soon as you can (and as often as needed). If you did not take RCM300, your instructor can provide you with copies of these readings.

### **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

*This course has a zero-tolerance policy for cheating. What this means is that all work submitted for this course – both written and oral – must be the result exclusively of your own effort.* A confirmed plagiarism will result in an immediate "0" for the assignment and your case will be pursued to the full extent of university policy. The policy allows for additional severe penalties, including a grade of "0" in the course, a permanent note on your transcript – even expulsion from the university. If you do not understand what plagiarism is, you should acquaint yourself with the university's policy and definition, contained in your calendar (under Student Rights, Discipline, and Appeals) and on-line at [http://www.usask.ca/university\\_secretary/dishonesty.shtml](http://www.usask.ca/university_secretary/dishonesty.shtml)> If you are feeling overwhelmed by an assignment and are not sure what is expected of you, don't resort to this approach. PLEASE come to see me. I will be happy to help you with any part of the course that is troubling you.

### **TEXTS**

MacLennan, *Public Speaking: Theory and Practice*

*Course Workbook for GE 401* Assignments and additional reading material are contained in this packet, available from me.

### **COURSE TOPICS/MAJOR READINGS/ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES**

A week-by-week outline will be distributed in class, along with the official course outline.