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ME 830 Seminar in Evangelization: Applied Rhetorical Theory

George G. Hunter

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ME 830 Seminar in Evangelization: Applied Rhetorical Theory
Spring Semester, 2008
E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism
Asbury Theological Seminary
Instructor: George Hunter

I. Course Description

“Understanding ‘Rhetoric’ as the study of (very) effective discourse, oral and written, this seminar draws from primary and secondary sources to reflect from the entire twenty-five centuries of the struggle to understand and inform influential speaking and writing, with a view to informing emergent forms of the public communication of Christianity’s message.”

II. Course Objectives:

1. To raise consciousness regarding the strategy dimension of the Christian leader’s speaking and writing.
2. To root advanced students in rhetorical theory’s most important perspectives, theories, and lore.
3. To equip advanced students for analyzing and critiquing the discourse of other advocates of the past and present.
4. To advance the student’s capacity for effective public communication as a Christian advocate.
5. To advance the effectiveness of the student’s writing for academy, church, and pre-Christian populations.
6. To prepare advanced students to teach (and publish) Evangelization and Missiology (in part) from an informed rhetorical perspective.

III. Textbooks:

Seminar participants will work through and process parts of two formidable texts, and will reflect throughout the semester on one famous evangelistic sermon—Clarence McCartney’s “Come Before Winter” (class handout)

1. Bizzell, Patricia and Bruce Herzberg, ed’s. The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present, Second Edition (Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2001)

IV. Assignments and Seminar Participation:

1. Students are expected to
   a. To read the assignments for each session of the seminar—with the goal of learning the most essential perspectives, theories, and material. (In the historical sections of Bizzell and Corbett, for instance, the student is not responsible for all the details, but for the major figures, issues, themes, and trends.)
   b. To come with any written work assigned for the day—with a photocopy for each member of the seminar.
   c. To complete the study by presenting (by Monday May 19) to the instructor an original reflective paper which draws from a range of rhetorical theorists to inform the public communication of Christianity’s message to pre-Christian populations.
[The assigned reading for a week is sometimes less than demanding—to permit students time to read more widely in their interests. The instructor encourages student papers to draw from any wider reading, and to draw from McCartney’s sermon—as our common model for the semester.]

2. There will be no final exam; the final integrative term paper will demonstrate the student’s grasp and employment of the rhetorical perspective. A grade will be assigned to each of the six short papers given during the seminar. The instructor’s appraisal of the six short papers will count for approximately half of the student’s grade, with the final paper counting for the other half, with secondary weight given to seminar attendance, preparedness, and participation.

Seminar Schedule and Outline
(Subject to Modification)

February 13: Orientation to Evangelization, and to Rhetorical Theory for Rethinking Evangelization

1. Presentation: “Introduction to ‘Communication’ and ‘Rhetorical Communication’”
2. Video: Carroll Arnold, “Classical Rhetorical Theory”

February 20: “Invention:” Rhetorical Resources for Discovering “What to Say.”
For today, read Bizzel 1-16 and Corbett 15-26 for perspective.
For today, read Corbett 27-139 (especially 27-38 and 52-130) and Rachel Carson’s “The Obligation to Endure” with Corbett’s analysis (185-195).

1. Presentation: “Perspectives on the ‘Ethos’ Dimension in Rhetoric and Persuasion.”
2. Discussion of Readings; perspectives for understanding McCartney’s sermon.

February 27: “Disposition:” Rhetorical Perspectives for Organizing Your Message
For today, read Bizzel 19-41, 431-449, and 556-580 for perspective.
For today, read Corbett 256-292 and Martin Luther King’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” with Corbett’s analysis (301-319).

1. Presentation: “Genres of Rhetoric . . . Reconsidered”
2. Presentation: “Perspectives on the ‘Pathos’ Dimension in Persuasion”
3. Discussion of readings; perspectives for understanding McCartney’s sermon.

March 5: “Style: Strategies for Saying (or writing) It Effectively”—Part One.
For today, read Bizzel 791-813, 983-999, 1183-1205 for perspective.
For today, read Corbett 337-411 (especially 377-411) and Corbett’s analysis of Martin Luther King’s writing style in “Letter from a Birmingham Jail) 478-483.

1. Presentation: “Plato and the Sophists.”
2. Presentation: “Perspectives on Style.”
3. Discussion of readings; perspectives for understanding McCartney’s sermon.

March 19: Classical Rhetoric
For today, from Bizzel, read the Isocrates article 67-71, the Plato article 80-86, and (especially) the Aristotle article and excerpt 169-240.

1. Presentation: “The Role of Rhetoric in the Expansion of Ancient Celtic Christianity”
2. Continuing first seminar presentations

March 26: Medieval Rhetoric
For today, from Bizzel, read the Augustine article and excerpt 450-485

1. Presentation: “Perspectives on Rhetorical Analysis and Criticism.”
2. Second seminar member presentations: In a four to five page paper, drawing from Augustine, summarize and reflect upon what you perceive to be his most important perspectives and insights for the public communication of Christianity.

April 2: Renaissance Rhetoric
For today, from Bizzel, read the Erasmus article (581-596) and the excerpt from Book II of his Ecclesiastes 628-650 (especially chapters 1-3 and 6-8).

1. Presentation: “The Role of Narrative in Public Communication”
2. Third seminar member presentations: In a four to five page paper, drawing from Erasmus, summarize and reflect upon what you perceive to be his most important perspectives and insights for the public communication of Christianity.

April 9: Enlightenment Rhetoric:
For today, from Bizzel, read the Bacon article 736-739, and the Campbell article 898-901 and the excerpt from Campbell’s Philosophy of Rhetoric 902-946 (especially 902-906 and 923-946).

1. Presentation: “The Role of Humor in Public Communication”
2. Fourth seminar member presentations: In a four to five page paper, drawing from Campbell, summarize and reflect upon what you perceive to be his most important perspectives and insights for the public communication of Christianity.

April 16: Modern and Post-Modern Rhetoric—Part One
For today, from Bizzel, read the Burke article 1295-1297 and the excerpt from Burke’s Grammar of Motives 1298-1324 (especially 1298-1302 and 1322-1324, and Rhetoric of Motives 1324-1340 (especially 1324-27, 1334-36, and 1338-40), and Language as Symbolic Action 1340-1347

1. Presentation: Presentation: “How Effective Discourse ‘Constitutes’ (and “Reconstitutes” People’s Identity and New Realities”
2. Fifth seminar member presentations: In a four to five page paper, drawing from Burke, summarize and reflect upon what you perceive to be his most important perspectives and insights for the public communication of Christianity.

April 23: Instructor at Wheaton, no class.

April 30: Modern and Post-Modern Rhetoric—Part Two
For today, from Bizzel, read the Weaver article 1348-1350 and Weaver’s “Language is Sermonic” 1351-1360.

1. Presentation: On the Effective Delivery of Public Messages”
May 7: Sixth Seminar Member Presentations

**Sixth Seminar Member Presentations:** Drawing from your reading and reflection, present an eight to ten page paper analyzing (with any appropriate critique) Clarence McCartney’s celebrated sermon “Come Before Winter.”

May 14: **Seventh Seminar Member Presentations:** Final student integrative papers.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Bizzell, Corbett, and Sloan’s *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* each feature extensive bibliographies. We have (or soon should have) the following sources in Fisher Library. Many other sources are available at Asbury College, University of Kentucky, and by inter-library loan.


