

Banha University - Faculty of Arts  
English Department

MA Program

Literary Criticism  
Lecture 2

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PART II  
THE TRADITIONS OF  
RHETORIC

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# GREEK RHETORIC

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he word “rhetoric” derives from the Greek word *rhetor*, meaning “speaker,”

and originally referred to the art of public speaking. This art embraced a broad range of techniques whereby a speaker could compose and arrange the elements of a speech which would be persuasive through its intellectual, emotional, and dramatic appeal to an audience. Over the last two millennia, the scope and application of rhetoric have radically changed, and it has accumulated multifold significance through changing literary, intellectual, and social contexts

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# Greek rhetoric and its origins

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- Rhetoric is the art of persuasion and public speaking.
- ☒It originated in ancient Greece, in the 5th century.
- ☒It was essential in many fields such as, politics, philosophy, theology, education and literary criticism.
- ☒The early developers of rhetoric are: the sophists (teachers of rhetoric), Aristotle (Greek), Cato, Cicero and Quintilian (Roman).
- ☒Classical rhetoric had five established principles of rhetoric which are:
- ☒Invention: is the content of a speech which includes the argument at hand and the means of persuasion.
- ☒Arrangement: is arranging the speech into a given order as follows:
  1. Introduction: to interest the audience.
  2. Narration: to narrate a background of the speech.
  3. Proof: to mention logical argument and counter arguments.
  4. Conclusion: to appeal to the emotions of the audience.

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# Plato's Critique of Rhetoric

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- Style: is the manner in which the ideas are expressed in language. It consists of two elements: diction (word choice) and composition.
- ☐Memory: is the memorization of the speech for oral performance.
- ☐Delivery: is the control of voice, as well as of gestures.
- ☐There are three types of style which are grand, middle and plain.
- ☐Rhetoric was used in the courts, the legislature, political forums, philosophical reflection and debate.
- ☐The sophists were a disparate group who travelled from city to city making public displays to attract students who were then charged a fee for their education. Their central focus was on logos or what we might broadly refer to as discourse, its functions and powers. They defined parts of speech, analyzed poetry, parsed close synonyms, invented argumentation strategies and debated the nature of reality.
- ☐The most prominent sophists are Protagoras, Gorgias, Antiphon, Lysias and Isocrates.

# Plato`s critique of rhetoric

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- The sophists were accused of training people in “making the worse cause appear the better” by a clever use of language.
- ¶In his book “Gorgias”, Plato made a dialogue between Socrates as his spokesman and the famous rhetorician Gorgias. When Socrates asks, what is rhetoric? Gorgias answers, it is “ the ability to use the spoken word to persuade the jurors in the courts, the members of the council, the citizens attending the assembly, to win over any and every form of public meeting of the citizen body.”
- ¶He argues that the rhetoric is a part of flattery which is not an art, but an experience aimed at producing pleasure rather than what is good. He also claims that the rhetorician is a non-expert persuading other non-experts.
- ¶Callicles( Socrates` opponent) doubts that Socrates could defend himself in a court saying, “he`d end up dead” which actually became true.

# Aristotle and rhetoric

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- Aristotle wrote a treatise called “Arsrhetorica.”It focused on how rhetoric could be used to persuade using knowledge, rather than pure emotion.
- ☒In his treatise, he identified three key traits of a good arguer which are:
- ☒Pathos: an appeal to the emotions of the audience.
- ☒Ethos: a sense of credibility and moral competence.
- ☒Logos: a good logical structure.
- ☒According to Aristotle, a speech is composed of three elements, the speaker, the subject and the listener.
- ☒There are three genres of rhetoric:
- ☒Deliberative rhetoric: concerned with politics.
- ☒Forensic rhetoric: used in the law courts.
- ☒Display rhetoric: focuses on the present.
- Aristotle and rhetoric

# The Hellenistic period

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- Hellenistic period begins with the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. After the decline of Greek city-states and their independence, new rulers of Greece built empires and increased trade. There was a spread in Greek culture, customs and ideas. The world witnessed a vast expansion of commercial investment and large-scale production.
- ☐The term “ Hellenistic” means like the Hellenes or the Greeks.
- ☐The main tendencies of Hellenistic philosophy are cynicism, epicureanism, stoicism and skepticism.
- ☐Stoicism and epicureanism are characterized by withdrawal from society while cynicism is characterized by the return to nature and rejection of everything conventional or artificial.
- ☐The most significant Greek rhetorician of this time is Hermagoras.



## Roman rhetoric and rhetoricians

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- Hermagoras had a great influence on two of the major Roman texts of rhetoric, 'The rhetorica ad herennium' and Cicero's 'De inventione.' The rhetorica's author is anonymous. This work is about the five-part system (invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery) which was central to the Roman tradition of rhetoric.
- Early Roman rhetoric is divided into three forms; judicial, deliberative and epideictic.
- The most prominent Roman rhetoricians are Cicero and Quintilian.
- Cicero was a distinguished practitioner of rhetoric in the Roman senate and the law courts. He believed that rhetoric and philosophy are related.
- Like Cicero, Quintilian opposes Plato's separation of rhetoric and philosophy. He refuses the classical definition of rhetoric as the art of persuasion and prefers it to be the art of speaking well.