

"[The President of the United States] is also the political leader of the nation, or has it in his choice to be. The nation as a whole has chosen him, and is conscious that it has no other political spokesman. His is the only national voice in affairs. Let him once win the admiration and confidence of the country, and no other single force can withstand him, no combination of forces will easily overpower him."

—Woodrow Wilson,
*Constitutional Government
in the United States*, 1908



RHE 370
SP 2025

MWF 11-11:50am
FAC 206

U.S. PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The U.S. president has become, by many estimates, the most powerful person in the world. This course considers how such power in contemporary mediated society is connected to the president's use of rhetoric. Specifically, students will explore how contemporary presidents use rhetoric to govern, with particular attention to the relationship between presidents and the American people. The course material will include presidential rhetoric but also theoretical and rhetorical criticism essays that explore the operations of that rhetoric. This course focuses on the discourse of elected presidents who speak in an official capacity, not on election campaigns or fictional portrayals of U.S. presidents. Students should expect this to be a seminar course, meaning that our class sessions will be largely student-driven discussion from assigned material. By taking this course, students will cultivate a more nuanced understanding of the operations of U.S. presidential rhetoric, culminating in a research project that analyzes a significant instance of presidential rhetoric.

IN THIS SYLLABUS

Required Materials	p. 2
Learning Outcomes	2
How to Succeed	2
Assignments & Grading	3
Approaching Discussion	4
Course Policies	4-5
An Inclusive Classroom	5
Course Schedule	6-8

Professor: Jeffrey P. M. Drury, PhD

Office Location: Fine Arts Center S204

Office Phone: 765-361-6296

Cell Phone: 765-267-3604 (text or call, 9am-9pm)

Email Address: druryj@wabash.edu

Office Hours: M, 1:30-3:30pm; T, 3-4pm; Th, 10-11am; by appt., or chance drop-in between 9am & 4pm. On Fridays, I may not be in the office after noon.

Appointments: <https://calendly.com/profdrury> or scan this QR code:



REQUIRED MATERIALS

Course readings and assignments are on the RHE 370 Canvas site. I recommend you print out course readings to annotate. You should budget ≈\$30 (600 pages, single-sided) for printing.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

RHE 370 addresses the following student learning outcomes that align with the Rhetoric Department Goals, the College's Mission, and the Language Studies distribution requirement:

- Students should be able to understand key concepts and theories concerning the nature and functions of U.S. presidential rhetoric in the 20th and 21st centuries.
 - Students should be able to use rhetorical methods and tools to analyze U.S. presidential rhetoric.
 - Students should be able to identify and explain the role of context as it influences their judgment of U.S. presidential rhetoric.
-

HOW TO SUCCEED

The following tips are designed to help you succeed in class



- **READ UP:**
 - Complete the assigned readings each day
 - Dig into the research about your chosen project topic



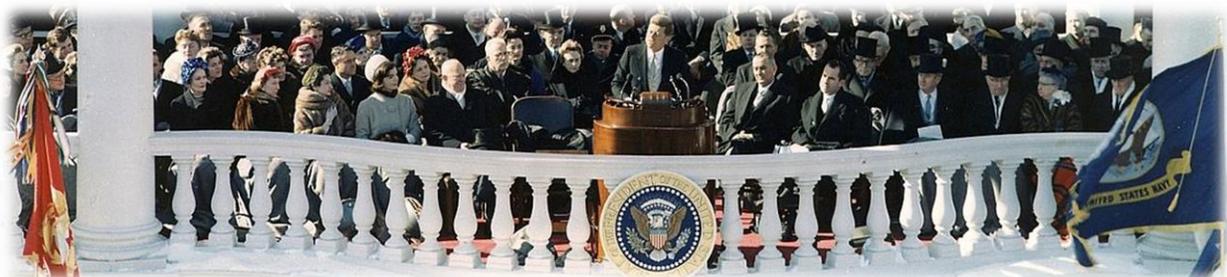
- **THINK UP:**
 - Reflect on rather than just quickly skimming the course material
 - Consider how new content relates to and builds on prior content



- **SHOW UP:**
 - Come to class ready to think and learn
 - Stop by office hours and engage feedback on assignments



- **SPEAK UP:**
 - Be ready to share ideas and, if called on, answer questions
 - Engage your classmates' ideas and ask questions of each other



President John F. Kennedy's Inauguration, Jan. 20, 1961

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Attendance & Scholarly Conduct (75 pts., 15%):

Participation and scholarly conduct are crucial to the course objectives. This will be a seminar style course, in which we discuss the assigned material and work toward applying it to contemporary examples of presidential rhetoric. I hope and expect that all of us demonstrate intellectual curiosity and a desire to learn from one another. To facilitate this environment, it is your responsibility to attend class and get involved. I will assign daily participation grades between 1 and 10, following the rubric outlined on the "Discussion Expectations" page of Canvas. Please also refer to the section titled "Approaching Class Discussion" on page 4. Be advised that more than 5 absences will result in a letter grade deduction from your final grade and more than 10 absences *may result in failure of the course*. If you will miss class for Dean's excuses, it is your responsibility to talk to me as soon as you know so we can make arrangements. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to communicate with me (preferably in advance) about make-up work.

Reading & 4th Hour Responses (75 pts., 15%): To assist your preparation for class, you will post responses to assigned readings and modules through Canvas. On days a classmate is leading discussion, reading responses will be posted publicly to the discussion board. To make this as useful as possible and ensure the discussion leader can review them in advance, you must submit responses through Canvas **by 10am the day of class**. Late submissions will receive a zero but you will get three drops across the semester.

Discussion Leading (60 pts., 12%): You will be assigned one class meeting dedicated to a scholarly article (chosen in consultation with me) related to your research project. You will generate a lesson plan in advance, facilitate the discussion that day in class, and write a follow-up reflection paper.

Rhetorical Analysis (240 pts., 48%): You will complete an extended rhetorical analysis about presidential rhetoric scaffolded through various assignments (additional guidance provided in class):

Topic Proposal (20 pts., 4%)

Annotated Bibliography (20 pts., 4%)

Context & Method Paper (45 pts., 9%)

Full Draft & Final Essay (125 pts., 25%)

Peer Reviews (30 pts., 6%)

Exam (50 pts., 10%): One exam will test your understanding of presidential rhetoric theories. We will discuss format and content coverage in class.



President Richard Nixon, Nov. 3, 1969

COURSE GRADING SCALE

Grade	Points	Percent	Grade	Points	Percent
A	465-500	93%-100%	C+	385-399	77%-79.9%
A-	450-464	90%-92.9%	C	365-384	73%-76.9%
B+	435-449	87%-89.9%	C-	350-364	70%-72.9%
B	415-434	83%-86.9%	D	300-349	60%-69.9%
B-	400-414	80%-82.9%	F	<300	<60%

APPROACHING CLASS DISCUSSION

Class discussion will address personal and political issues requiring you to set forth ideas that reflect your biases. In creating a productive environment, you should attempt the following personal measures:

- Carefully consider how your own position, values, beliefs, and upbringing might predispose you to assume certain things about the world and your fellow classmates.
- Avoid making statements that you believe are categorically “true.” All points are arguments requiring support more than just “feeling.”
- Treat your fellow classmates’ arguments as you would like them to treat yours: a valid and worthwhile consideration.
- Refrain from overly hostile or disrespectful comments seeking to shut down or “win” debates.

COURSE POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Course Meetings and Assignments

- *Class meetings will be designed to discuss, not review, readings.*
- Late written assignments are penalized 5% per 24-hours they are late (max. 50%) and may be returned with feedback later than assignments submitted on time.
- Late policy does not apply to Reading & 4th Hour Responses, which receive zero if late.

Written Assignment Guidelines

- Papers should be typed, double-spaced, using 11- or 12-pt font.
- Must be submitted to Canvas in .doc or .pdf format, not via email.
- Be sure to proofread written work before submitting.

Assignment Feedback

- I will provide detailed written feedback to class assignments that are designed to prompt continued reflection on and engagement with the material and to identify concrete steps to improve on future assignments.
- You should see me if any of my feedback is confusing or unclear.

Cell Phones, Laptops, and Tablets

Please treat class time as you would any other professional meeting. Cell phones need to be silenced and invisible during class; this means you should not use a phone to access course materials. Laptops and tablets may be used *only* to help you engage more fully with the class content and not as a means of “multitasking.”



President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Dec. 8, 1941

Emergency Procedures

- **FIRE:** Proceed down one floor to nearest exit and cross Grant Street. Join me and your classmates there to make sure everyone got out of the building.
- **TORNADO:** Proceed down two floors to the basement and shelter in place.

Academic Honesty

The Gentleman's Rule should guide your academic honesty in this course. This means:

- All work is your own original work, not “borrowed” from someone or somewhere else, recycled from other courses, or completed with others (unless unmistakably permitted)
- All work drawing upon other sources must **explicitly** reference those sources using MLA or Chicago Style format. ***This means that the use of generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT) on any assignment must be acknowledged in a works cited like any other form of external resource you consult. But keep in mind using these sources just cheats yourself out of the education that you're paying for at Wabash.***

At my discretion, cases of misconduct may be reported to the Dean of Students and/or result in failing the assignment or course. Refer to the [Academic Honesty Guide](#) (also available on the “Student Resources” tab of MyBash) for more information.

Writing Center

The Wabash Writing Center (located on the second floor of the Lilly Library) is able to help with all facets of paper writing (from outlining and drafting to researching and proofreading). Go [here](#) to schedule an appointment.

Academic Credit Policy

Rhetoric 370 complies with the [Wabash College Academic Credit Policy](#). Students are required to commit 12 hours per week to this course. It has, on average, four academic hours of direct instruction each week. In addition to regular class meetings, direct instruction occurs through presidential audio and videos (7 hr.), online training modules (2 hrs.), and guided work on the Rhetorical Analysis project (5 hrs.).

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

I am committed to your success in the class and to fostering an inclusive space. My door is open so please come talk to me if you're having trouble with the readings, wrestling with how to take notes, or want to generally discuss how to maximize your learning. If there are circumstances that affect your class performance—be they personal, health, or other—let me know as soon as possible so that we can collaboratively discuss how to proceed. Direct, open communication is often the only way that I know I need to be clearer about ideas or that you need help. In the end, communication will enhance our teaching and learning.

Students with disabilities (apparent or invisible) are invited to confidentially discuss their situation with Heather Thrush, Associate Dean for Student Engagement and Success. If a student wishes to receive an academic accommodation, he must have documentation on file with Dean Thrush (Center Hall 112A, x6347, thrushh@wabash.edu).

COURSE SCHEDULE

Dates and assignments are subject to change. Pay attention in class & check Canvas for updates. Complete assignments before class on the day they appear in this schedule.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic & Assignment</u>	<u>4th Hour Work</u>
M, 1/20	Course Introduction	Wk. 1 (1 hr.): Complete Inaugural Address Discussion Board
<u>Unit One: Theoretical Foundations</u>		
W, 1/22	Studying Presidential Rhetoric -Read Windt, "Presidential Rhetoric"	
F, 1/24	Understanding What Presidential Rhetoric "Does" -Read Zarefsky, "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition"	
M, 1/27	The Rhetorical Presidency -Read Ceasar et al., "The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency"	Wk. 2 (1 hr.): Complete Humanities Articles Module
W, 1/29	Connecting the Dots -Read Medhurst, "A Tale of Two Constructs"	
F, 1/31	Revising the Rhetorical Presidency -Read Laracey, "Talking Without Speaking, and Other Curiosities" ; Tulis, "On the Forms of Rhetorical Leadership" ; Lucas, "Present at the Founding"	
M, 2/3	Is the Rhetorical Presidency Dead? pt. 1 -Read Merceica, "Ignoring the President"	Wk. 3 (1 hr.): Read Rhetorical Analysis assign. description; complete Topic Proposal
T, 2/4	DUE: TOPIC PROPOSAL BY 11:59PM	
W, 2/5	Using Library Databases	
F, 2/7	Is the Rhetorical Presidency Dead? pt. 2 -Read Scacco & Coe, Chapter 1, The Ubiquitous Presidency	
<u>Unit Two: Analyzing Presidential Rhetoric</u>		
M, 2/10	Decoding Rhetorical Criticism Articles	Wk. 4 (2 hrs.): Complete Citing Sources Module; listen to speech by Truman; watch speech by FDR
W, 2/12	Emphasizing the Text, pt. I -Read Truman, "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine," March 12, 1947; Ivie, "Fire, Flood, and Red Fever"	
F, 2/14	Emphasizing the Text, pt. II -Read Stelzner, "'War Message,' December 8, 1941"	
M, 2/17	Emphasizing the Text, pt. III -Read Ford, "Remarks on Taking the Oath of Office," August 9, 1974 DUE: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY BY 11:59PM	Wk. 5 (1 hr.): Watch speeches by Ford, Clinton, JFK, and Nixon

- W, 2/19 Emphasizing the Form/Genre, pt. I
 -Read Campbell & Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words*, pp. 1-21; Clinton, "Address to the Nation on Testimony Before the Independent Counsel's Grand Jury," August 17, 1998; [Gronbeck, "Underestimating Generic Expectations"](#)
- F, 2/21 Emphasizing the Form/Genre, pt. II
 -Read Kennedy, "Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Soviet Arms Buildup in Cuba," October 22, 1962; Nixon, "Address to the Nation on the Situation in Southeast Asia," April 30, 1970; Windt, "The Presidency and Speeches on International Crises"
- M, 2/24 Emphasizing the Form/Genre, pt. III
 -Read Reagan, "Address to the Nation on the Explosion of the Space Shuttle *Challenger*," January 28, 1986; Bush, "Address to the Nation on the Loss of Space Shuttle *Columbia*," Feb. 1, 2003.
DUE: DISCUSSION LEADING ARTICLE PROPOSAL BY 11:59PM
- W, 2/26 Emphasizing the Rhetor, pt. I
 -Read Jimmy Carter, "Energy and National Goals," July 15, 1979; [Hahn, "Flailing the Profligate"](#)
- F, 2/28 Emphasizing the Rhetor, pt. II
 -Read [Image C311-7-WH64, LBJ Presidential Library, May 4, 1964](#); [German, "Visual Images and Presidential Leadership: A Case Study of LBJ and His Beagles"](#)
- M, 3/3 Emphasizing the Rhetor, pt. III
 -Read Trump, "Remarks at the National Scout Jamboree in Glen Jean, West Virginia," July 24, 2017; Trump, "Remarks on Infrastructure and an Exchange With Reporters in New York City," August 15, 2017; [Stuckey, "The Power of the Presidency to Hurt"](#)
 -Bring questions for exam review
- W, 3/5 **Exam**
- F, 3/7 Researching Context
- 3/10-14 **No Class – Spring Break**

Unit Three: Cases and Contexts of Presidential Rhetoric

- M, 3/17 Nixon's Vietnam Speech—A Critical Case Study, pt. I
 -Read Nixon, "Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam," November 3, 1969; [Newman, "Under the Veneer"](#); [Stelzner, "The Quest Story and Nixon's November 3, 1969 Address"](#)
- W, 3/19 Nixon's Vietnam Speech—A Critical Case Study, pt. II
 -Read Campbell, "An Exercise in the Rhetoric of Mythical America"; [Hill, "Conventional Wisdom—Traditional Form—The President's Message of November 3, 1969"](#)

Th, 3/20 **DUE: CONTEXT & METHOD PAPER BY 11:59PM**

F, 3/21 Nixon's Vietnam Speech—A Critical Case Study, pt. III
-Read Drury, "Case Study: President Richard Nixon and the Silent Majority"

M, 3/24 Student Discussion Leading
-Read TBA

BRIGANCE FORUM LECTURE, 12:10PM, BAXTER 101

W, 3/26 Student Discussion Leading
-Read TBA

F, 3/28 Student Discussion Leading
-Read TBA

M, 3/31 Student Discussion Leading
-Read TBA

W, 4/2 Student Discussion Leading
-Read TBA

F, 4/4 Troubleshooting Essay Challenges

M, 4/7 Student Discussion Leading
-Read TBA

W, 4/9 Student Discussion Leading
-Read TBA

F, 4/11 Student Discussion Leading
-Read TBA

M, 4/14 Student Discussion Leading
-Read TBA

W, 4/16 Essay Work Day & Conference with Dr. Drury

F, 4/18 Essay Work Day & Conference with Dr. Drury

DUE: ESSAY DRAFT BY 11:59PM

M, 4/21 Student Discussion Leading
-Read TBA

W, 4/23 Student Discussion Leading
-Read TBA

F, 4/25 Peer Review

DUE: PEER REVIEW BY 11AM

M, 4/28 Student Discussion Leading
-Read TBA

W, 4/30 Student Discussion Leading
-Read TBA

F, 5/2 Course Review

Tu, 5/6 DUE: FINAL ESSAY BY NOON

Wks. 10-15 (4-6 hrs.):

Presidential audio/video
TBA based on topics selected by students

RHE 370 Bibliography
(in Chicago Manual of Style format)

- Ceaser, James W., Glen Thurow, Jeffrey Tulis, and Joseph Bessette. "The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 11 (1981): 158-71.
- Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs. "An Exercise in the Rhetoric of Mythical America." In *Reading Rhetorical Texts: An Introduction to Criticism*. Edited by James Andrews, Michael C. Leff, and Robert Terrill. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.
- Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Drury, Jeffrey P. Mehlretter. *Speaking with the People's Voice*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2014.
- Edwards, George C. "Presidential Rhetoric: What Difference Does It Make?" In *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*. Edited by Martin J. Medhurst. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1996.
- German, Kathleen. "Visual Images and Presidential Leadership: A Case Study of LBJ and His Beagles." *Journal of the Communication, Speech & Theatre Association of North Dakota* 21 (2008): 21-31.
- Gronbeck, Bruce E. "Underestimating Generic Expectations: Clinton's Apologies of August 17, 1998." *American Communication Journal* 2 (February 1999).
- Hahn, Dan. "Flailing the Profligate: Carter's Energy Sermon of 1979." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 10 (1980): 583-87.
- Hill, Forbes. "Conventional Wisdom—Traditional Form—The President's Message of November 3, 1969." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 58 (1972): 373-86.
- Ivie, Robert L. "Fire, Flood, and Red Fever: Motivating Metaphors of Global Emergency in the Truman Doctrine Speech." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29 (1999): 570-91.

- Laracey, Mel. "Talking Without Speaking, and Other Curiosities." In *Before the Rhetorical Presidency*. Edited by Martin J. Medhurst. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008.
- Lucas, Stephen E. "Present at the Founding: The Rhetorical Presidency in Historical Perspective." In *Before the Rhetorical Presidency*. Edited by Martin J. Medhurst. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008.
- Medhurst, Martin J. "Introduction, a Tale of Two Constructs: The Rhetorical Presidency Versus Presidential Rhetoric." In *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*. Edited by Martin J. Medhurst. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1996.
- Merceica, Jennifer R. "Ignoring the President." In *Columns to Characters: The Presidency and the Press Enter the Digital Age*. Edited by Stephanie A. Martin. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2017.
- Newman, Richard. "Under the Veneer: Nixon's Vietnam Speech of November 3, 1969." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56 (1970): 168-78.
- Prasch, Allison M., & Mary E. Stuckey "'An Empire for Liberty': Reassessing US Presidential Foreign Policy Rhetoric." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 108 (2022): 357-81.
- Scacco, Joshua M., & Kevin Coe. *The Ubiquitous Presidency: Presidential Communication and Digital Democracy in Tumultuous Times*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Stelzner, Hermann. "The Quest Story and Nixon's November 3, 1969 Address." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 57 (1971): 163-72.
- Stelzner, Hermann G. "'War Message,' December 8, 1941: An Approach to Language." *Speech Monographs* 33 (1966): 419-37.
- Stuckey, Mary E. "'The Power of the Presidency to Hurt: The Indecorous Rhetoric of Donald J. Trump and the Rhetorical Norms of Democracy.'" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 50

(2020): 366-91.

Tulis, Jeffrey K. "On the Forms of Rhetorical Leadership." In *Before the Rhetorical Presidency*. Edited by Martin J. Medhurst. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008.

U.S. Constitution, Art. II.

Windt, Theodore Otto. "The Presidency and Speeches on International Crises: Repeating the Rhetorical Past." *Speaker and Gavel* 11 (1973): 6-14.

Windt, Theodore. "Presidential Rhetoric: Definition of a Field of Study." *Central States Speech Journal* 35 (1984): 24-34.

Zarefsky, David. "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34 (2004): 607-619.