

Rhetorical Leadership

MPhil in POLIS 2022-23
Course Convenor: Prof. Dennis C. Grube

Seminar Times: Michaelmas Term, Mondays, 1:00pm-3:00pm
Room: S2

Start Date: Monday 10 October 2022

Course Overview:

What our political leaders say matters. Political rhetoric is sometimes derided in popular discourse as nothing more than 'empty words', but those words give shape to our perceptions of political reality. Words are powerful things. This course will examine the role played by political rhetoric in established democracies, and in particular the ways in which leaders use rhetoric to give shape to policy debates, to draw distinctions with political opponents, and to unify the nation during a crisis. The ability to communicate persuasively at multiple levels emerges as one of the central traits expected of modern leaders.

The course begins with an examination of what political rhetoric is and how it is intertwined with our understanding of politics. We then move to look at scholarship on democratic leadership and assess how leaders make use of rhetoric in strategic ways to circumvent political institutions, combat political opponents, and set out policy goals. The course finishes by examining the ways in which storytelling and the construction of narratives gives shape to political debates.

Course Organisation

The course will be taught as seven seminars of 1.5 to 2 hrs in length. The teaching format will be heavily driven by student participation in discussion. The course guide provides a list of core readings for each week. Students will be expected to have read all of the core readings and be prepared to discuss them with the group. Further readings are provided for information only and may be useful to students wanting to read more deeply on a specific topic in preparation for writing their essay. Short student presentations will feature in each seminar (apart from the first). Advice on the format of presentations will be provided in the first seminar.

Assessment

The course is assessed by a 3,000 word paper. Topics and submission arrangements will be supplied during the course.

Background Reading

The following list is provided for students who might wish to undertake some general reading ahead of the course. It is not compulsory and is provided for information only.

- Kane, J. and Patapan, H. (2012) *The Democratic Leader: How Democracy Defines, Empowers and Limits its Leaders*. Oxford University Press.
- Toye, R. (2013) *Rhetoric: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Atkins, J., Finlayson, A., Martin, J. and Turnbull, N. [eds] (2014) *Rhetoric in British Politics and Society*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rhodes, R.A.W. and 't Hart, P. (2014) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Leadership*. Oxford University Press.

Seminar 1: What is political rhetoric and what's it for?

Political rhetoric is all about the power of persuasion. But how is this done, and for what purposes? Scholars have been examining these questions for thousands of years. There is no easy answer, and what answers there are remain heavily contested. This seminar will look at the insights of Aristotle in particular, and see how his ideas continue to shape scholarship on rhetoric today.

Core Reading:

Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*. London: Harper Collins 2012. Book 1, Chapters 1-3.

Charteris Black, J. (2011) *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-27.

Rubinelli, S. (2018) 'Logos and Pathos in Aristotle's Rhetoric: A Journey into the Role of Emotions in Rational Persuasion in Rhetoric', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 286(4): 361-374.

Martin, J. (2013) *Politics and Rhetoric: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge, Ch. 1

Further Reading

Austin, J. (1962) *How to do Things with Words*. Harvard University Press.

Garsten, B. (2006) *Saving Persuasion: A Defence of Rhetoric and Judgement*. Harvard University Press.

Garver, E. (2017) 'Aristotle's Rhetoric in Theory and Practice', In MacDonald, M. J. (ed) *The Oxford Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*. Oxford University Press, pp. 133-142.

Seminar 2: Politics as Argument

If politics is a contest of ideas, how does that translate into the making of political arguments about those ideas? This seminar focusses on the work of contemporary scholars Alan Finlayson and James Martin and their use of a particular method of 'rhetorical political analysis'. What does this method reveal about the structure and nature of political debate?

Core Reading:

Finlayson, A. (2007) 'From Beliefs to Arguments: Interpretive Methodology and Rhetorical Political Analysis', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 9(4): 545-563.

Hatzisavvidou, S. (2022) 'Studying Political Disputes: A Rhetorical Perspective and a Case Study', *Politics* 42(2): 185-199.

Martin, J. (2015) 'Situating Speech: A Rhetorical Approach to Political Strategy', *Political Studies* 63(1): 25-42.

Further Reading

Price-Thomas, G. and Turnbull, N. (2018) 'Thickening Rhetorical Political Analysis with a Theory of Distance: Negotiating the Greek Episode of the Eurozone Crisis'. *Political Studies* 66(1): 209-225.

Walter, R. (2017) 'Rhetoric or Deliberation?: The Case for Rhetorical Political Analysis'. *Political Studies* 65(2): 300-315.

Seminar 3: Democratic Leadership

Democratic leadership seems like a contradiction in terms. In a democracy, surely it is the people who are sovereign, meaning that they can tell their leaders what to do. But popular discourse would suggest we also like and value strong leaders who decisively take the country forward without worrying too much about the naysayers. This seminar will discuss ways in which this tension between being a servant of the people and also their leader plays out through political speech. Just what do we expect of our leaders, and how much of that relies on their capacity to publicly frame their leadership through the words they choose? What is the difference between a transformational and a transactional leader, and how gendered are our preconceptions on how a 'strong' democratic leader should behave?

Core Reading:

Beerbohm, E. (2015) 'Is Democratic Leadership Possible?' *American Political Science Review* 109(4): 639-652.

Bennister, M., 't Hart, P. and Worthy, B. (2017) 'Understanding Political Leadership: The Leadership Capital Approach'. In Bennister, M., Worthy, B. and 't Hart, P. (eds) *The Leadership Capital Index: A New Perspective on Political Leadership*. Oxford University Press, pp. 1-26.

Lombard, E.J., Azpeitia, and Cheryan, S. (2021) 'Built on Uneven Ground: How Masculine Defaults Disadvantage Women in Political Leadership', *Psychological Inquiry* 32(2): 107-116.

Nye, J.S. (2014) 'Transformational and Transactional Presidents', *Leadership* 10(1): 118-124.

Further Reading

Elgie, R. (2015) *Studying Political Leadership: Foundations and Contending Accounts*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Kane, J. and Patapan, H. (2012) 'Leadership and Democratic Rhetoric', In *The Democratic Leader: How Democracy Defines, Empowers and Limits its Leaders*. Oxford University Press, pp. 71-91.

't Hart, P. and Tummers, L. (2019) *Understanding Public Leadership*. Red Globe Press.

Seminar 4: The Rhetorical Presidency

A renowned scholar of the US presidency, Richard Neustadt, famously concluded that the power of the presidency is limited to the 'power to persuade'. The structures of the US system of government - the institutionally built-in checks and balances - make it incredibly difficult for presidents to simply force through their agenda. If that's the case, how can president's exercise power? This seminar looks at how the president is able to utilise their rhetorical power to reach out over the heads of the other branches of government to connect directly with the American people.

Core Reading:

Tulis, J (2018 edn) *The Rhetorical Presidency*. Princeton University Press, pp. 3-23.

Stuckey, M.E. (2021) 'The Rhetoric of the Trump Administration'. *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 51(1): 125-150.

Campbell, K.K. and Jamieson, K.H. (2017) 'Rhetoric and Presidential Politics'. In MacDonald, M. J. (ed) *The Oxford Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*. Oxford University Press, pp. 637-648.

Further Reading

Heith, D.J. (2020) *The End of the Rhetorical Presidency? Presidential Leadership in the Trump Era*. London: Routledge.

Kernell, S. (2007 4th edn) *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*. Washington DC: CQ Press.

Medhurst, M.J. [ed] (2006) *The Rhetorical Presidency of George H.W. Bush*. Texas A&M University Press.

Prasch, A.M. (2021) 'The Rise of the Global Rhetorical Presidency'. *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 51(2): 327-356.

Seminar 5: Rhetorical Leadership in Action

Having introduced the idea that rhetorical leadership is a powerful tool for leaders, this session starts to examine how that tool can be used in different settings. Rhetoric allows leaders to frame and explain issues in ways that suit their political agenda. On topics as diverse as the economy, national identity and political ideology, leaders project an image of themselves, their governments and their countries to a wide variety of audiences.

Core Reading:

Angel, A. and López-Londoño, L.M. (2019) 'Delinking Rhetorics of Neoliberalism: An Analysis of South American Leftist Presidents' Speeches', *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 12(1): 43-62.

Becker, F. (2013) 'Remembering Nyerere: Political Rhetoric and Dissent in Contemporary Tanzania', *African Affairs* 112/447: 238-261.

Masters, A. and 't Hart, P. (2012) 'Prime Ministerial Rhetoric and Recession Politics: Meaning Making in Economic Crisis Management'. *Public Administration* 90(3): 759-780.

Further Reading

Grube, D.C. (2013) *Prime Ministers and Rhetorical Governance*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Strangio, P., 't Hart, P. and Walter, J. (2013) 'Prime Ministers and the Performance of Public Leadership'. In Strangio, P., 't Hart, P. and Walter, J. (eds.), *Understanding Prime-Ministerial Performance: Comparative Perspectives*. Oxford University Press, pp. 1 - 31

Seminar 6: Case Studies in Rhetorical Leadership

This seminar looks in depth at some specific examples of rhetorical leadership by individual leaders in Australia, Germany, and the UK. We also further assess whether gendered conceptions of leadership styles influence how the rhetoric of women leaders is judged.

Core Reading:

Mills, S. (2014) 'I Am Sorry': Prime Ministerial Apology as Transformational Leadership'. In Uhr, J. and Walter, R. eds, *Studies in Australian Political Rhetoric*. Canberra: ANU Press, pp. 19-31.

Sheeler, K.H. and Anderson, K.V. (2014) 'Gender, Rhetoric, and International Political Systems: Angela Merkel's Rhetorical Negotiation of Proportional Representation and Party Politics', *Communication Quarterly* 62(4): 474-495.

Atkins, J. and Gaffney, J. (2020) 'Narrative, Persona and Performance: The Case of Theresa May 2016-17'. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 22(2): 293-308.

Further Reading

Theye, K. and Melling, S. (2018) 'Total Losers and Bad Hombres: The Political Incorrectness and Perceived Authenticity of Donald J. Trump'. *Southern Communication Journal* 83(5): 322-337.

Marlow-Stevens, S. and Hayton, R. (2020) 'A Rhetorical Political Analysis of Theresa May's Statecraft on Brexit'. *Parliamentary Affairs*. Online First: doi:10.1093/pa/gsaa014.

Seminar 7: Rhetorical Storytelling

This final seminar draws together the threads of the course to examine the power of rhetoric as a tool for political storytelling. There has been increasing academic interest in the power of narratives in politics. Politicians all have a 'personal' story that they draw on when framing their lives for public consumption, but they also tell stories about the past, present, and future of their countries. How persuasive are such stories, and can political storytelling ever be a 'bad' thing?

Core Reading:

Fernandes, S. (2017) *Curated Stories: The Uses and Misuses of Storytelling*. Oxford University Press. Ch 1.

Polletta, F. and Callahan, J. (2017) 'Deep Stories, Nostalgia Narratives and Fake News: Storytelling in the Trump Era.' *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 5(3): 392-408.

Stone, D. (2012) *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, New York: W.W. Norton and Co., pp. 157-182.

Further Reading

Boswell, J. (2016) 'The Performance of Political Narratives: How Australia and Britain's "Fat Bombs" Fizzled Out'. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 18(3): 724-739.

Hajer, M.A. (2009) *Authoritative Governance: Policy Making in the Age of Mediatization*. Oxford University Press.

Sergeant, P. (2020) *The Art of Political Storytelling*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.