# Classical Culture and Communication

## Prof. Nicola Montenz

### Module 1: From ancient rhetoric to today’s rhetorical forms

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course aims to provide students with general understanding of forms of communication in the ancient world (namely the Western rhetorical tradition) and, in comparison, in the modern world, with particular (but not exclusive) reference to the rhetoric of advertising, literature and paraliterature.

*Knowledge and understanding*

By the end of the course, students will be able to: identify the phases of ancient rhetoric in their diachronic development, with a particular focus on the aspect of *inventio* and *elocutio*; and distinguish between the logical and emotive aspects of argumentation; recognise the main examples of sophism/fallacy in ancient and contemporary communication

*Applying knowledge and understanding*

By the end of the course, students will be able to: recognise the various uses of rhetorical phrases in a discourse; recognise and evaluate arguments; recognise and evaluate a slogan; reflect on the uses of *elocutio* and evaluate its possible purposes; construct discourse using, according to context, the various types of argumentation learned on the course.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course aims to provide students with theoretical and practical points of reference regarding ancient rhetoric, illustrating its origins, diachronic development, subcategories and fields of application – with a focus on the structures and techniques of reasoning – aiming to create, at the same time, an awareness of both its development through time and its enduring features despite changing socio-cultural contexts.

***READING LIST***

Lecture notes (essential).

Learning material available from the lecturer’s webpage (essential).

Key text (compulsory reading)

MP. Ellero, *Retorica.* *Guida all’argomentazione e alle figure del discorso*, Carocci, Rome, 2017.

Recommended texts (non-compulsory)

G. Antonelli, *Volgare eloquenza*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 2017.

R. Barthes, *La retorica antica*, Bompiani, Milan (various reprints).

S. Calabrese, *Retorica e scienze neurocognitive,* Carocci, Rome, 2013.

S. Calabrese, *Il sistema dell’advertising,* Carocci, Rome, 2012.

S. Ghiazza-M. Napoli, *Le figure retoriche*, Zanichelli, Bologna, 2007.

F. D’Agostini, *Verità avvelenata*, Bollati Boringhieri, Turin, 2010.

H. Lausberg, *Elementi di retorica,* il Mulino, Bologna, 1969.

B. Mortara-Garavelli, *Manuale di retorica,* Bompiani, Milan, 1989.

L. Neri, *I campi della retorica,* Carocci, Rome, 2011.

C. Perelman-L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *Trattato dell’argomentazione,* Einaudi, Turin, 2013.

F. Piazza, *Linguaggio, persuasione e verità*, Carocci, Rome, 2004.

M. Rivoltella, *Argomentazione,* *parola, immagine*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan, 2013.

O. Reboul, *Introduzione alla retorica,* il Mulino, Bologna, 1996.

O. Reboul, *Lo slogan,* Armando, Rome, 1977.

Module 2:*Orality from yesterday to today: from Homer to the new media*

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

On the one hand, the course aims to offer students an overall analysis of ancient Greek epic poetry, clarifying its constitutive modalities, modes of diffusion, literary scope and direct and indirect cognitive effects, as well as its specifically artistic characteristics; on the other, the course aims to demonstrate the particular features of archaic thought and its verbalisation in the transition from the primary to the mixed orality phase, as well as the persistence of orality in the chirographic age.

The aim is for students to acquire a general understanding of ancient forms of communication (namely the persistence of “pre-chirographic” communicative practices in the modern and contemporary West) and, by way of contrast, of their modern counterparts, with particular but not exclusive reference to recent and not so recent developments in media communication and to literary and para-literary communication.

*Knowledge and understanding*

By the end of the course, students will be able to: relate the development and spread of ancient epic to the correct ancient Greek socio-economic, historical, cultural context; identify its compositional and structural features; view current examples of pre-chirographic communication modalities from the correct perspective, identifying continuity and mutation of archetypes; understand the meaning of the multiplicity of contemporary communication channels and their origins.

*Ability to apply knowledge and understanding*

By the end of the course, students will be able to: understand the scope and overall meaning of an epic poem, viewing it from the right communicative perspective; grasp its educational and propaganda aspects; grasp and decode its transferred messages; understand the differences between mentalities and oral and chirographic communicative phases; understand their innovative or conservative scope; understand the aspects of continuity or discontinuity in different eras.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course aims to offer students a comprehensive overview of the most typical features of ancient Greek epic, with particular reference to composition, production and publication, typical of what was originally a primary oral culture. There will be a focus on the typicality of key structures (formula, theme or typical scene etc.), in order to then analyse their persistence in literature and in subsequent forms of communication up to the 20th-century media and the internet. In this way, the course will, on the one hand, illustrate the complexity of the process by which the ancient epic *corpus* was formed; on the other hand, the course will demonstrate its place within an exclusively oral phase of Greek civilisation, before it was reworked and adapted to the parallel development of writing and logical thought. The course syllabus will be published on the lecturer’s webpage.

***READING LIST***

Lecture notes (essential).

Course material available on the lecturer's webpage (essential)

Adopted texts (mandatory)

S. Fornaro, *Percorsi epici*, Rome, Carocci, 2009 (first ed. 2003).

W. Ong, *Oralità e scrittura. Le tecnologie della parola*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2014 (first Italian ed. 1986).

Recommended reading (optional; details of other texts on Homer specifically will be provided in lectures)

A. Ercolani, *Omero. Introduzione allo studio dell’epica arcaica*, Rome, Carocci, 2016

A.B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1960.

M. McLuhan, *La galassia Gutenberg,* Armando, Rome, 1967.

W. Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1971.

L. Sbardella, *Oralità, da Omero ai mass media,* Carocci, Rome, 2006.

P. Zumthor, *La presenza della voce. Introduzione alla poesia orale*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2001 (first Italian edition 1984).

***TEACHING METHOD***

Frontal lectures and seminars in class, provided the health emergency has ended and in-person lectures are possible; audio-visual material.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Test comprising 15 closed-questions (50% of the final mark) designed to briefly evaluate basic knowledge, in-depth knowledge, ability to decode and interpret texts and logical thinking (each question is worth two points; wrong or missing answers will be awarded 0 points). The test may be taken in person or remotely.

An oral examination (50% of the final score) with, as a rule, at least *three questions* (worth 75% of the partial score), on three of the topics covered in lectures; of these, one will normally be on a general subject, designed to assess basic knowledge; one will be on a specific subject, to test specific knowledge, and one, finally, will be designed to assess associative, critical and interpretative capabilities. Additional questions may, of course, be asked during the oral exam to clarify possible uncertainties or probe issues of particular interest.

Students will be required to demonstrate particular precision and spontaneity in answering questions, focusing on the issues raised by the lecturer, and avoiding diverging and discussing irrelevant content (15% of the partial score). Ability to structure discourse of suitable magnitude and scope for a university examination, use of specific terminology and ability to maintain consistently high presentation standards will also be assessed (10% of the partial score). **There will be one final mark.**

Further details can be provided in lectures.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

N.B. Any students unable to follow the course must inform the lecturer in good time to arrange an alternative syllabus.

There are no prerequisites for attending the course. However, active participation in class will be highly appreciated. Furthermore, students should show a certain curiosity towards classical culture and the diachronic evolution of rhetoric. Finally, all students – especially those attending module 1 – should have good analytical and study skills.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG, or on the Faculty notice board.