

# Rhetoric, Writing, and Public Discourse 175 : Persuasion, Propaganda, and Power

This course provides an introduction to the relationship between communication, power, and individual and communal identity. We are bombarded with hundreds of communicative messages every day, each of which aims at getting us to take some action, hold some belief, or think of ourselves in a certain way. This course will give students basic tools for critically reading these everyday communicative interactions. We will consider the basic elements of persuasion (speaker, text or argument, the context of a given message, and the ways that appeals to evidence and emotions shape how messages are received). We will consider the relationship between rhetoric and representation, asking how people use rhetoric to represent their own experiences and identities and how they are represented by others, whether to create social change or secure the status quo. We will consider how rhetoric and public discourse are shaped by contemporary communication technologies. Finally, we will consider some of the ethical and practical concerns involved in crafting persuasive messages and communicating with others, paying particular attention to how individuals engage with the above themes. Assignments will include several short critical papers and a presentation on a piece of contemporary public discourse or a critical concept. Open to first-years and sophomores only.

**Credits 4**