

LAIS 498/598: Rhetoric, Energy, and Public Policy Fall 2011 Syllabus

It is the quality of learning, not the possession of a diploma, that will make all the difference—to individuals, to an economy dependent on innovation, and to the integrity of the democracy we create together.
--College Learning in the New Global Century,
Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2007 Report.

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Course Description

This course will examine the ways in which rhetoric shapes public policy debates that have broad social impact, particularly those debates surrounding energy. Unlike the common modern usage of the term rhetoric, *rhetoric* has long referred to the process of using symbols—such as numerical and alphabetical languages—to communicate and persuade. Students will study and evaluate some classical but mostly contemporary rhetorical theories, as well as apply them to energy-related case studies, such as sources within fossil and renewable energy. Students will also make a policy-shaping contribution to an ongoing public policy debate in fossil or renewable energy. To do so, students will need to better understand how contemporary rhetorical and public policy theory inform public policy debates, which can affect environmental, economic and/or socio-cultural aspects of energy use, transportation, and production locally, nationally and globally. Graduate students will complete all assignments and an extra rhetorical application and an energy policy case study.

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this course, students should be able to demonstrate

- 1) An understanding of contemporary rhetorical theories.
- 2) The ability to appropriately apply contemporary rhetorical theories to current energy-related cases.
- 3) An understanding of how contemporary rhetorical theories shape energy-related public policy debates.
- 4) The ability to communicate effectively, using rhetorical concepts strategically.

Required Course Texts:

- Foss, S.K., Foss, K.A., and Trapp, R. (2002). *Contemporary perspectives on rhetoric*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

Optional Course Texts:

- Stone, D. A. (1997). *Policy paradox: The art of political decision making*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.
- Nelson, V. (2011). *Introduction to renewable energy*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press/Taylor & Francis.
- Other readings available on Blackboard.

*Wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric.
And wherever there is 'meaning,' there is 'persuasion.'*
--Kenneth Burke, 1950, *A Grammar of Motives*

Schedule [subject to change and not all assignments are listed]

Day	Date	Reading Due	Assignment Due
T	08/23	None	
R	08/25	None	
T	08/30	<i>CPR</i> , pp. 1-18; Pinch, 1998; <i>CPR</i> , Toulmin, pp. 117-121; 129-136; 141-43	
R	09/01	Martin-Schramm, 2010, Ch. 2 & 3	
T	09/06	<i>CPR</i> , Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, pp. 81-109; In class: <i>Blind Spot</i>	
R	09/08	TBA; In class: <i>Blind Spot</i>	
T	09/13	<i>CPR</i> , Richards, pp.19-33; 38-49	Rhetorical Application
R	09/15	None	Rhetorical Application
T	09/20	<i>CPR</i> , Burke, pp. 187-197; 200-232; <i>Blue Print for a Secure Energy Future</i> , 2011, pp. 1-8, 15-18, 32-44 (skim other pages).	
R	09/22	None	Rhetorical Application Blog on Burke
T	09/27	<i>CPR</i> , Hooks, pp. 265-298; Corburn; 2005, <i>Introduction</i> (pp.1-24)	Rhetorical Application
R	09/29	Corburn, Ch.3 (read pp. 79-91; skim pp. 91-101; read 101-109.) [Nisbett, 2010; WWDACC Frames; Kansas Case]	
T	10/04	<i>CPR</i> , Rhetorician of Choice 1	Rhetorical Application
R	10/06	<i>CPR</i> , Rhetorician of Choice 2	Rhetorical Application

T	10/11	Stone, 1997, <i>Numbers</i> ; Bryce, 2011 Ch. 8 & 21.	
R	10/13	Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006; <i>Propaganda and Persuasion</i> . In Class: <i>The Atomic Café</i>	Energy Frames Paper
T	10/18	Fall Break —No Class	
R	10/20	Walton, 2008, Ch. 7, pp. 209-232;	
T	10/25	Foss, 2005, Ch. 9; Fischer, 2007 and Gottweis, 2007.	
R	10/27	Stone, 1997, <i>The Market and the Polis</i>	
T	11/01	Stone, 1997, <i>Symbols; Facts</i>	
R	11/03	Stone, 1997, <i>Conclusion</i>	
T	11/08	TBA (opinion letters/elected officials)	
R	11/10	None	
T	11/15	TBA	
R	11/17	TBA	Policy-Shaping Document, Short and Long Version
T	11/22	TBA	
R	11/24	Thanksgiving	
T	11/29	None	Presentations
R	12/01	TBA	Case Study or Portfolio Investigation; Presentations
T	12/06	None	Synthesis Paper Presentations
R	12/08	None	Presentations
Final	TBA		

Note: CPR is *Contemporary perspectives on rhetoric*.

LAIS 498 - Undergraduates

Assignments	Points
Rhetorical Investigation/Application Papers	250
Policy-Shaping Document, Short Version	250
Policy-Shaping Document, Long Version and Presentation (50)	300
Participation (including in-class Rhetorical Application or Theater)	200
TOTAL	1000

LAIS598-Graduate Students

Assignments	Points
Rhetorical Investigation/Application Papers	150
Policy-Shaping Document, Short Version	200
Policy-Shaping Document, Long Version	300
Participation (including in-class Rhetorical Application)	100
Case Study or Portfolio Investigation and Presentation (50)	250
TOTAL	1000

Assignments

More detailed information about each assignment is available on the course Blackboard site. The descriptions below are brief overviews.

Rhetorical Investigation/Application Papers

These short papers or blogs allow you to apply rhetorical theory to energy-related cases and to synthesize your learning in the course.

Point Values for Papers

Paper	498	598
Burke: Rhetorical Application Blog	50	50
Energy Frames Paper	75	50
Synthesis Paper	125	50
TOTAL	250	150

Descriptions of each paper or blog appear on Blackboard.

Policy-Shaping Document, Long and Short Version

Rhetorically informed citizens have additional tools with which to not just analyze or evaluate energy policies, but to go one step further: to shape such policies. In these papers, you will focus on a *specific, current energy policy debate*. These policy-shaping documents should be tailored to their respective intended audiences, which differ for the long and short versions.

Long Version. For the long version, your audience is your REPP classmates and your instructor. In this long version, you will include the text of your short version as well as an added feature: explicit reference to how you applied rhetorical theory in constructing your policy-shaping document.

Describe which rhetorical theorists' work you drew upon, and *how you applied their work* to your particular energy case and context. Also, mention *how our reading on public policy making processes influenced your thinking and rhetorical choices* on the short version.

Short Version. The short version will be sent to a targeted, relevant energy policy constituency. This could be a local, state, or federal politician (representative, senator, governor, president, etc.), a government agency such as the DOE, EPA, etc., or other body that *directly shapes energy policy*. Avoid organizations that indirectly shape energy policy, such as NGOs, think tanks, etc., with one exception: a state or

national media outlet (e.g., *Denver Post*, *New York Times*, etc.) is acceptable, since energy policy-shaping occurs via the mass media, and sometimes in powerful ways.

Generally, these policy-shaping documents are letters of no more than two pages—any longer and they risk not being read. Although rhetoric will not be explicitly mentioned, it should be applied as described in your long version, ethically and as accurately as possible. Send this letter from you as a citizen, not a student in REPP. Please see *the full description* of this assignment on Blackboard.

Note: For students enrolled in the undergraduate version of this course, the long version is worth 300 points: including the document (250) and a presentation (50).

Participation (including in-class Rhetorical Application or Theater)

Spread across the semester, each student will give one in-class, 5-7 minute rhetorical application presentation. Or, two or three students can perform a rhetorical theater that involves a character portrayal of two or three rhetoricians. Please see Blackboard for specifics. Out of your total participation grade, these rhetorical applications constitute 50 points.

The rest is devoted to the quality and quantity of your contributions to whole-class and small-group discussions. These contributions are pivotal to an engaging, lively class. In class, we will be learning from one another in many forms, including by collaboratively constructing a set of emerging salient questions. We will also collaboratively create civility guidelines. A positive class atmosphere is challenging, safe, and promotes critical thinking. Critical thinking is rooted in one's engagement with a problem, wherein inquiry is motivated by curiosity (e.g., Dewey, 1916; Meyers, 1986), involves "identifying and challenging assumptions" and "exploring alternative ways of thinking" (Brookfield, 1987), and is elicited via open-ended, ill-structured questions. Note that an Open Forum (with anonymous posts enabled) exists on Blackboard for student input at any time on how to improve the class.

Completing all of the requirements for each assignment and doing them well will result in a B grade. An A grade is reserved for performances that not only meet but *exceed* expectations by going beyond what is required.

To reiterate, what you take from this course is tightly intertwined with what you *contribute* to our in-class discussions. Since contributions to class discussion are not possible unless you are in class, student participation grades will fall by 25 points for each absence after the fourth. There are no distinctions between excused or unexcused absences—you can miss four classes for any reason, but if you miss a fifth, also for any reason, deductions begin. To be safe, do not put yourself in such a position, as unexpected events occur. Integral information is conveyed at the outset of class, so three tardies count as one absence. Pop quizzes over readings are always possible.

Since the instructor should not be asked to re-create or reiterate the entire class discussion for each student who is absent, please exchange contact info with 1-2 other students so you can contact them and get up to date if you are absent.

Work done in haste at the last minute is rarely top-quality work, so we need incentives to keep on track; late papers or assignments will not be accepted except in documented, extraordinary circumstances.

Case Study or Portfolio Investigation and Presentation (598 only)

This assignment is only for students enrolled for the graduate version of the course. Please select one of two options:

Historical Case Study. This case study needs to be situated in a specific time and place, and *show the interplay of rhetoric and energy policy*. Case studies should have one of three overarching purposes:

- 1) To deepen, prove, or disprove an existing theory, a documented hypothesis, or a documented common conception.
- 2) To raise awareness about and/or to suggest policies that will guide future solution-oriented actions regarding an important energy problem.
- 3) To describe and reveal an instance of positive deviance.

See the full description on Blackboard.

Energy Portfolio Investigation. This investigation is prompted by three important question sets:

- What should the US energy portfolio look like in 2030—and why?
- What should the US energy portfolio look like in 2050—and why?
- What energy source or sequence of energy sources should be most promoted in future energy policies?

Again, please see the full description on Blackboard.

This 250-point assignment features a presentation (50) and the document (200).

Teaching Philosophy

Here's a brief snapshot of what I believe about teaching and learning:

- 1) *People most support what they help to decide and create.* Top-down teaching tends to pull the plug of ownership and enthusiasm. Hence, students play an active, engaged role in creating the classroom climate, both through their contributions to discussion and by co-creating the guidelines for effective classroom discussions.
- 2) *The focus should be on not just learning, but also learners.* Over 20 years of teaching at the college level have taught me that we each learn differently. Thus, conveying *how you understand* the material and how that understanding evolves over time helps me see how you learn difficult course concepts. Also, we learn at different paces; those who learn concepts quickly can be frustrated as others take more time. If that describes you, consider contributing to discussion in ways that both crystallizes your own knowledge and helps fill knowledge gaps of classmates; note that such leadership roles will be expected of you in the workplace.
- 3) *The focus should remain on big ideas.* It is easy to magnify the size of trees, and forget we are in a forest. My experience in the classroom tells me students learn best by seeing larger landscapes, ones that stretch beyond what we may be learning that day. To focus our attention on major ideas, we will apply rhetorical theory to more concrete energy policy topics. Occasionally, we should be asking big-picture questions like, "So what? Why does any of this matter in the grand scheme of things?" When we focus on big ideas, learning is inquiry driven, rather than assignment driven.
- 4) *Learning should encourage life-long learners.* If a student completes my course with more knowledge and understanding but no curiosity to know more, no hunger to understand what lies beyond his or her current perspective, the course has failed. Students are not empty bank accounts into which instructors pour stocks of knowledge capital, hoping it earns interest. Rather, learning should whet the appetite, inspire the desire to know more.
- 5) *Instructors need to know when to talk less.* Since I am not an expert on energy or public policy, and I am not here to transmit knowledge or skills, my role is to serve as an experienced learner, facilitator and coach. Even when I have a clear vision of rhetorical theory and its potential applications, it would be a disservice to students to provide it. Doing so could rob students of the joy of discovering on their own a challenging concept and how to apply it. Besides, if I share my understanding of a rhetorical theory and application, it could foreclose alternative and productive ways of interpreting and applying the theories. That there are multiple interpretations of the theories does not mean *any* interpretation is valid; rather, it means that some interpretations are wide of the mark and that there is *a reasonable range* of interpretation that can be backed by viable evidence. To draw out that range, I need *to listen* to your contributions to class discussion.

Instructor Notes

- Generally, email will be replied to within 48 hours, excluding weekends.
- PowerPoint slides posted on Bb are sometimes complete, and sometimes incomplete, partial outlines of in-class presentations. In past years, I found complete slides decreased class attendance, which damaged classroom participation and decreased the quality of discussion and engagement. If you have a laptop with wireless access, download any slides at the outset of class and annotate them to fill in the missing information. Slides are generally posted just before class.
- Computer crashes happen (believe me, I know). Always back up your hard drives in two separate physical locations.
- If you have particular learning needs, please let me know.
- This class intentionally aligns with several goals of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), the largest accrediting body of engineering programs in the U.S. ABET requires that engineering programs demonstrate that engineering students attain certain outcomes that are connected to the overarching goals of this class, including:
 - (d) An ability to function on multidisciplinary teams
 - (f) An understanding of professional and ethical responsibility
 - (g) An ability to communicate effectively
 - (h) The broad education necessary to understand the impact of engineering solutions in a global, economic, environmental, and societal context
 - (I) A recognition of the need for, and an ability to engage in life-long learning
 - (j) A knowledge of contemporary issues

LAIS Writing Center

Plagiarism guidelines followed in this class are described at <http://www.is.mines.edu/studentactivities/campusrulesandregs.pdf> and in *The Brunton (CSM Student Handbook)*.

Located in 306 Stratton Hall, the LAIS Writing Center is here to help all members of the Mines community with writing projects at any stage of the writing process. You are welcome to bring in your scholarship letters, application letters, theses, dissertations, academic journal articles, resumes, cover letters, research papers, summaries, abstracts, and personal writing projects with which you would like help. For hours and to make an appointment, please visit the online scheduling system at: <http://mines.mywconline.com>. Questions can be directed to Shira Richman, Writing Center Director, at: srichman@mines.edu or 303-273-3484.

Bibliography of Course Readings

Berlinger, J. (Director). (2009). *Crude: The real price of oil*. [Documentary]. United States: Entendre Films.

Bryce, R. (2010). Wind and solar are "green." In R. Bryce, *Power hungry: The myths of "green" energy and the real fuels of the future* (pp. 83-93). New York: PublicAffairs.

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Foss, S. K. (2005). Theory of visual rhetoric. In *Handbook of visual communication: Theory, methods, and media*. S. K. Foss, K. Smith, S. Moriarty, G. Barbatsis, & K. Kenney (Eds.), (pp. 141-152). Mahwah, New Jersey; London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Gottweis, H. (2007). Rhetoric in policy making: Between logos, ethos, and pathos. In *Handbook of public policy analysis: Theory, politics, and methods*. F. Fischer, G.J. Miller, and M. S. Sidney, (Eds.), (pp. 223-236). Boca Raton, LA: CRC Press/Taylor and Francis.

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Jowett, G. S., & O'Donnell, V. (2006). Propaganda in action: four case studies. In *Propaganda and persuasion* (4th ed.). (pp. 288-355). Thousand Oaks; London: Sage Publications.

Jowett, G. S., & O'Donnell, V. (2006). How propaganda works in modern society. In *Propaganda and persuasion* (4th ed.). (pp. 357-367). Thousand Oaks; London: Sage Publications.

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Nisbet, M. C. (2010). Framing science: A new paradigm in public engagement. In *Communicating science: New agendas in communication*. (L. Kahlor, & P. Stout, Eds.) New York; London: Routledge.

Pinch, T. (1998). Cold fusion and the sociology of scientific knowledge. In T. Pinch, & J. Battalio (Eds.), *Essays in the study of scientific discourse: Methods, practice, and pedagogy* (pp. 73-87). Stamford, Connecticut; London: Ablex Publishing.

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White House. (2011). *Blue print for a secure energy future*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.