



More than anything else, this course is a guided tour through the greatest book on communication ever written: Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. It is a guide or "companion" to this great book and as such its primary purpose is to get into the student's mind, in the simplest way possible, what Aristotle said. The classical trivium (grammar, logic and rhetoric), which is supposed to be the basis for classical models of education, is not just a sequence in which subjects should be placed according to the student's age or competence level, but it is also the order in which any subject should be learned. In other words, every subject has its own grammar—or internal structure; every subject has its own logic—its own internal rules or modes of knowing; and every subject has its own rhetoric—its own style or forms of expression. In this respect, this course is a *grammar* of rhetoric: it is an explanation of what rhetoric is, what it is composed of, and what makes it effective.

Before you can learn how to really use something, you have to know what it is. This course is a course on what rhetoric *is*.

The Nature of this Course

Cicero was the great practitioner of rhetoric, Quintilian its great teacher, and Aristotle its great theoretician. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is a book on the *theory* of communication rather than a manual on speaking or writing as Cicero tried to produce. It would be a mistake, however, to dismiss it as inferior to other books on communication that might be deemed more "practical," since theory will determine practice. As a theoretical book, one of its characteristics is the emphasis it places on *content* as opposed to *technique*—not just the content of the communication itself, but with the content of the character of the speaker and the audience. While many modern books on communication emphasize technique almost exclusively, Aristotle dwells, sometimes to a seemingly obsessive degree, on the details of certain kinds of content. When he is talking about character of the audience and how it is influenced by age, for example, he will list all the supposed traits of the elderly, all those of the young, and all those of the middle-aged. To the new reader, this kind of treatment will seem like an excessive devotion to detail having little to do with the technical skill needed to communicate. And, in fact, when I first began to teach out of the book, I skipped over much of this material. I later realized, however, that this was a grave mistake. Indeed, perhaps the greatest value of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is this very emphasis on content that is so lacking in today's textbooks on communication. He is concerned as much with the *what* of communication as with the *how* and seems to believe, indeed, that the *how* depends on the *what*.

While many moderns have doubts about whether truth exists at all, Aristotle believed that there were truths to be known and that rhetoric should consist largely in the

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Introduction

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study of these truths. Aristotle is concerned first of all with what rhetoric is, secondly with what kinds of speech there are, thirdly with what we would communicate in our speaking, fourthly with whom it is we presume to communicate, and only then—only after he has covered these things—does he discuss technique. In fact, Books I and II are concerned exclusively with this kind of content; only in the third and final book in his treatise on rhetoric does he discuss the structure and style of a speech.

It is with the nature of man, however, that Aristotle is concerned first and foremost. Even the forms of speech are wholly contingent on the nature of man, since it is only through a knowledge of this that the forms can be determined at all. For each of the three forms of speech he identifies—political, legal and ceremonial speech—there is a corresponding aspect of human nature from which it springs and to which it has a special appeal. Political speech, which has primarily to do with the Good, is grounded in and directed toward the human will; legal (or forensic) speech, which has primarily to do with the True, is concerned with the human intellect; and ceremonial speech, which has to do primarily with the Emotions (or man's affective side), has to do with what has traditionally been called the Beautiful. Aristotle spends a great deal of time dealing with these things as they relate to the speaker and his audience. These are the truths of the nature of man, and, in large part, Aristotle's analysis seems amazingly accurate. While do not go to the Greeks for truths about God, since they were largely ignorant of them, not being privy to the Revelation given to the Jews, many of their observations about man hold up quite well.

The modern mind is fascinated by technique. We would as soon study the mechanism of a thing as to know the nature of the thing whose mechanism we are studying. In this sense Aristotle is radically anti-modern, and his *Rhetoric* puts this characteristic on full display. When he discusses political oratory, we are treated to a brief analysis of the four forms of government; when he discusses forensic speech we are told that the speaker should be familiar with the seven reasons people do things; and when he discusses ceremonial oratory we get a list of the nine virtues.

This, then, is the first and most important characteristic of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*: *It is an unparalleled study of the nature of man*. It is a study of the nature of his intellect, his will, and his emotions. Only with a knowledge of these truths about ourselves, Aristotle would say, can we pretend to be able to communicate.

Now that we know what kind of course this *is*, we should note briefly what it is *not*. While this course should also be considered a continuation of the child's writing program, it is **certainly not** the beginning of it. Given that this course is for 10th-12th grade students, it is assumed that they already have mastered fundamental writing skills. This course will serve to hone those skills for purposes of persuasion. In order to do this, however, they must have skills to hone.

In this connection it should be pointed out that there were two traditions in classical rhetoric: the *handbook* tradition and what are called the *preliminary exercises* (the *progymnasmata*: Narrative, Description, Fable, Proverb, Anecdote, Refutation & Confirmation, Commonplace, Praising & Blaming, Comparison, Speech-in-Character, Thesis, and For and Against Laws). I have already been asked the question whether this book would include the preliminary exercises, a question to which the answer is a qualified 'No.' This course is squarely within the handbook tradition. Although there are few programs on the market that explicitly use the preliminary exercises of ancient times, many programs implicitly include some or even most of them. The completion of the preliminary exercises simply meant a rudimentary knowledge and experience with the various forms of communication—narrative, exposition and argumentation—in preparation for the more formal study of persuasive speech in rhetoric. Many of those principles



are utilized in the writing exercises in this book in order to allow for the continuation of that study. But a competently educated child should have some mastery of these by the 10th grade and will therefore be ready for this course. If he doesn't have them, it will take more than a single course to correct it.

In other words, this is not an introductory course on writing but a course to refine those writings skills the student should already possess for the specific purpose of persuasion.

There is most certainly a need for courses which precede this one in logical order. A course specifically implementing the preliminary exercises (the *progymnasmata*) would be a great asset to Christian parents and teachers in helping their children to read and write. This is one of the things Memoria Press would like to do in the future.

The Features of This Course

I recently attended a conference of classical educators at which one of the speakers, George Grant, mentioned that one of the needs among classical educators is material that is accessible. One of the things Memoria Press has sought to accomplish in all of its programs is ease of use, and we would like to think this program is a model of that. It is designed to be consumable and to lead the student every step of the way through a course on rhetoric over the course of a year. In doing this, there are several important features the teacher should note. See Seven Lesson Components, page ix, for a description of them.

Scope of This Course

This course covers the first two of the three elements of writing and oratory: the speaker and the audience. The third of the elements concerns the speech itself. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* covers all three of these elements, devoting a book (or *part*) to each. He does not deal with the third element, however, as completely as the first two, nor as well as some other ancient writers. For these reasons—and because of the more theoretical nature of Aristotle's book—this course covers only the first two of Aristotle's three books and will leave for later books the treatment of the arrangement of the speech itself.

We hope to complete several follow-up courses to this one that deal more with the style and structure of a speech. Quintilian and Cicero both deserve programs devoted to their texts. St. Augustine, too, who took the principles of all of these great men and applied them to the communication of Christian truth, deserves a book. Our hope is to produce a program covering the great works of each of these figures in an appropriate sequence that would follow Aristotle.

But first things first.

Martin Cothran
June, 2002

This is not an introductory course on writing but a course to refine those writing skills the student should already possess, for the specific purpose of persuasion.



The methodology of this course is based on the principle *optimus magister bonus liber*: the best teacher is a good book.

On the following page is a recommended bi-weekly assignment sheet. As it indicates, I recommend that 2 weeks be taken for each lesson to get the most out of it. That means, of course, that the course will extend to 32 weeks, or one school year. The course can be made into a semester course by dropping the Review Exercises and Weekly Research & Writing Assignments and concentrating only on the daily questions and, possibly, the Case Studies and weekly Reading Exercises. But, again, I recommend the bi-weekly approach.

The methodology of this course is based on the principle *optimus magister bonus liber*: the best teacher is a good book. It is therefore as self-directed as possible to minimize the time the home school parent must spend on instruction. Because the instructions are so explicit, there is no need for a Teacher Manual. The parent may choose to do the course along with the child or may simply use the recommended assignment sheet on the following page as a way to hold the student accountable. This can be accomplished by merely photocopying the page and having the student check the boxes when he completes a task. You will need sixteen copies of the following page if you wish to use it as a check-off sheet for a whole year.

How to Grade Lessons

I would recommend that the teacher consider each answer as a writing exercise. It should be graded not only on its accuracy by using the Teacher Manual but by ensuring that every short answer is a complete sentence and is grammatically correct. Questions requiring longer answers make good practice exercises for writing paragraphs. They should be graded as you would grade any other writing assignment in whatever writing program you have used up to this point. Note that the Teacher Manual will be less helpful on some of the questions, particularly writing exercises, since the questions are more general and the examples given in the text are just that: examples.



Model Bi-Weekly Assignment Sheet

(Reproducible)

MARK CHAPTER

Mark all sections of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* to be read for the Lesson according to the marking rules indicated in Appendix B (the Table of Contents will indicate the readings for each lesson)

EXERCISES FOR DAY 1

Answer all numbered questions

DAY 1

EXERCISES FOR DAY 2

Answer all numbered questions

DAY 2

EXERCISES FOR DAY 3

Answer all numbered questions

DAY 3

EXERCISES FOR DAY 4

Answer all numbered questions

DAY 4

OUTLINE CHAPTER

Outline all sections of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* to be read for the Lesson according to the outlining rules indicated in Appendix C

WEEKLY READING EXERCISES (*How to Read a Book*)

Answer all numbered questions

FIGURES OF SPEECH WORKSHEET (Appendix A)

Do Day 1 Exercises

WEEKLY RESEARCH & WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Begin Weekly Writing Assignment

DAY 5

WEEKLY LATIN REVIEW EXERCISES

Answer all questions

FIGURES OF SPEECH WORKSHEET (Appendix A)

Do Day 2 Exercises

WEEKLY RESEARCH & WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Continue Weekly Writing Assignment

DAY 6

WEEKLY LOGIC REVIEW EXERCISES

Answer all questions

FIGURES OF SPEECH WORKSHEET (Appendix A)

Do Day 3 Exercises

CASE STUDY EXERCISES (When applicable)

Read Weekly Case Study

WEEKLY RESEARCH & WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Continue Weekly Writing Assignment

DAY 7

CASE STUDY EXERCISES (When applicable)

Answer all questions

FIGURES OF SPEECH WORKSHEET (Appendix A)

Do Day 1 Exercises

WEEKLY RESEARCH & WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Finish Weekly Writing Assignment

DAY 8

Year-at-a-Glance Sheet



1st Quarter	Week 1	.....Lesson 1
	Week 2	.....Lesson 1
	Week 3	.....Lesson 2
	Week 4	.....Lesson 2
	Week 5	.....Lesson 3
	Week 6	.....Lesson 3
2nd Quarter		.....Case Study for Lessons 3-5
	Week 7	.....Lesson 4
	Week 8	.....Lesson 4
	Week 9	.....Lesson 5
	Week 10	.....Lesson 5
	Week 11	.....Lesson 6
	Week 12	.....Lesson 6
		.....Case Study for Lesson 6
	Week 13	.....Lesson 7
	Week 14	.....Lesson 7
		.....Case Study for Lesson 7
	Week 15	.....Lesson 8
	Week 16	.....Lesson 8
	3rd Quarter	Week 17	.....Lesson 9
Week 18		.....Lesson 9
Week 19		.....Lesson 10
Week 20		.....Lesson 10
		.....Case Study for Lessons 10-11
Week 21		.....Lesson 11
Week 22		.....Lesson 11
Week 23		.....Lesson 12
Week 24		.....Lesson 12
		.....Case Study for Lesson 12
4th Quarter	Week 25	.....Lesson 13
	Week 26	.....Lesson 13
		.....Case Study for Lessons 13-16
	Week 27	.....Lesson 14
	Week 28	.....Lesson 14
	Week 29	.....Lesson 15
	Week 30	.....Lesson 15
	Week 31	.....Lesson 16
	Week 32	.....Lesson 16
Week 33	.....Special Case Study	



- 1. Reading Comprehension Questions:** The main part of the course consists of reading comprehension questions to take the student through Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. They are designed to help the student glean as much from the text as possible.
- 2. Evaluative Writing Assignments:** These require that the student not only know what Aristotle says, but assess it on the basis of his own assumptions, which may not be the same as Aristotle's.
- 3. Weekly Research and Writing Assignments:** These are designed to apply the lessons the student has learned from Aristotle.
- 4. Reading Lessons:** These are made up of reading questions based on Mortimer Adler's *How to Read a Book*, which are designed to help the student to fully understand what, how and why Aristotle says what he says.
- 5. Figure of Speech Lessons:** These lessons cover sixty representative classical figures of speech. These figures are stylistic devices identified by the Greeks as forms of expression—different ways of saying something. Although this course does not address the issue of style (which Aristotle takes up in Book III), the figures should probably be studied over the whole course of the study of rhetoric—one reason being that there are so many of them. An example is given of each figure.
- 6. Logic and Latin Review Questions:** These are review questions (for those students who have taken Latin, traditional formal logic and traditional material logic) that are related to the readings. Although I would strongly recommend that students taking this course have completed at least my *Traditional Logic* course (Cothran, Martin, *Traditional Logic*, Books I & II, Louisville: Memoria Press, 2000-2001), it is not absolutely necessary and these exercises can be ignored by those students who have not take these courses. I should also point out that the course on Material Logic has not, as of the publication of the first edition of this book, been published. The review exercises have been included (along with all of the essential material needed to do them in Appendices D-G) so that when the book is published later students will have those exercises to help them.
- 7. Case Studies:** Finally, there are case study analyses that focus on four speeches which are classic examples of the three kinds of speeches discussed by Aristotle. The fourth speech is, as the Table of Contents indicates, a special case. Each case study is accompanied by questions that are relevant to the section of Aristotle just covered by the student. These are designed, once again, as models for the student to imitate in his own persuasive discourse.

- 1. Cothran, Martin, *Aristotle's Rhetoric: An Introduction to the Traditional Principles of Speech and Writing*.** Louisville: Memoria Press, 2002. This is the main text for the course.
- 2. Corbett, Edward P.J., intro., *The Rhetoric and Poetics of Aristotle*.** New York: Modern Library, 1954. This is a required text and is available from Memoria Press. It includes the Rhys Roberts translation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and is also available on the worldwide web at <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~honeyl/Rhetoric/index.html>.
- 3. Adler, Mortimer and Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book*,** New York: Simon & Schuster, 1940. This book is necessary to take advantage of the Reading Lessons and is available from Memoria Press.
- 4. Quinn, Arthur, *Figures of Speech: 60 Ways to Turn a Phrase*,** Salt Lake City: Gibbs M. Smith, Inc. (a Peregrine Smith Book), 1982. This book is not necessary for the Figures of Speech lessons, but is helpful. It is out of print but is worth trying to find used.

Seven Lesson Components

Required and Recommended Course Books