

Why Should I Know Anything About Rhetoric?

David Metzger, Professor of English, Old Dominion University, [dmetzger@odu.edu](mailto:dmetzger@odu.edu)

### **What is Rhetoric?**

Aristotle: "Let rhetoric be [defined as] an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion" (*Rhetoric* 36)

Kenneth Burke: "[Rhetoric is] the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" (*Rhetoric of Motives* 43).

### **Two Rhetorical Methods: Aristotle and Bakhtin**

Aristotle (Appeals Analysis)

1. Identify the aim of the text: deliberative, forensic, or epideictic.
2. Identify the audience for the text.
3. Identify the appeals used in the text: ethos, pathos, logos.
4. Associate the appeals with specific arguments or statements.
4. Provisionally answer the question, "How do the appeals help the author to communicate what she/he wishes to communicate?"

Mikhail Bakhtin (Voice Analysis)

1. Select a Text (newspaper articles are suggested)
2. Identify the direct, indirect, and embedded voices
3. What are the characteristics of each voice (knowledgeable, emotional, distant, concerned, motherly, religious, bureaucratic)? On what authority do these voices speak? How do these voices relate to the "voice" of the reader?
4. Find patterns in the way the text uses the voices.
5. Answer the question "how does the pattern of voices" relate to the text's general purpose.

Resources:

Aristotle. *On Rhetoric*. Trans. George A. Kennedy. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *On Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Trans. Vern McGee. Austin: U of Texas P, 1987.

Burke, Kenneth. *Rhetoric of Motives*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1969.

Gardner, Howard. *Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing Our Own and Other People's Minds*. Boston: Harvard Business School P, 2004.

## Appeals Analysis Sample Texts

Sample 1: From R.J. Reynolds Website (Accessed January 12, 2002)

**Our Opinions & Philosophy:** Even though our society has determined cigarettes are legal products for adults, the manufacture, regulation and marketing of cigarettes has long been the subject of great controversy. So, for a company that makes and sells cigarettes, what is the best way for us to conduct our business? At R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company (RJRT), this is not a policy or academic debate. It is a question we have to ask ourselves and answer every day. R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company conducts its business by some simple but important guidelines that we believe are appropriate:

We produce a product that has significant and inherent health risks for a number of serious diseases, and may contribute to causing these diseases in some individuals.

There is and should continue to be universal awareness of those risks. We work to reduce the risks associated with smoking through comprehensive approaches to new product design. We do not encourage nonsmokers to start smoking. We do not want children to smoke, not only because it is illegal to sell cigarettes to minors in every state, but also because of the health risks and because children lack the maturity of judgment to assess the risks. *In addition, our company is committed to being a constructive participant in developing and implementing solutions to public issues involving cigarettes.* Inside this section: This section of our Web site provides our beliefs, operating philosophies and additional information on a wide range of tobacco issues:

[Our opinions on smoking and health issues](#), the philosophy by which we conduct our business, and information about RJRT's approach to product stewardship and risk-reduction efforts. This section includes information about addiction and quitting, and secondhand smoke. [Production information](#), including a summary of what "tar" and nicotine numbers mean, and an explanation and listings of cigarette ingredients. [The settlement of litigation with state Attorneys General](#), including the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA). The MSA profoundly changed the way cigarette manufacturers can market, advertise and promote their products — imposing total bans on many activities and placing severe new restrictions on many others. In addition to the provisions of the MSA, Reynolds Tobacco follows other guidelines regarding cigarette advertising and promotion. To learn more about RJRT's marketing philosophies and guidelines, [click here](#) to see RJRT's Marketing Philosophies or [click here](#) to view RJRT's Policy on Placing Print Advertising. [Youth non-smoking programs](#), including our position on youth smoking prevention and links to the RJRT's Right Decisions, Right Now youth non-smoking program Web site. [Tobacco taxes and payments](#), including state-specific tobacco-tax information and total tobacco tax and settlement payments. Contact information on your state and federal legislators is also available in this section. [Tobacco laws and regulation](#), including information on states' cigarette sales issues such as minimum age, self service, smuggling and gray market; fire-safety issues; and our position on federal regulation. [Smokers' rights information](#), including an overview of smokers' rights, MySmokersRights.com information and registration links, information on how to report issues in your area and how to contact legislators, and information on and airport smoking policies. [Tobacco litigation](#), which includes information on litigation issues and key cases, and a link to R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company's on-line litigation document archive. The documents Web site contains documents produced by R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company in litigation. [The state profiles](#) section includes information on each state's tobacco taxes, each state's settlement-payment income, how to contact state elected officials and information on state minimum-age purchase laws.

Voice Analysis  
Sample Texts:

**Sample 1:** The One-Two Punch (unidentified author, *Time*, September 3, 1965)

Standing at a lectern in the East Room of the White House, the President of the U.S. hefted his big fists and clenched them. “We’re like a man in the ring,” he said, assuming a pose and a phraseology he has been using a lot in private. “We’re using our right and our left constantly.” Out shot his right fist. That, he said, symbolized U.S. power. “I say to Secretary McNamara, `You be sure that our men have the morale and have the equipment and have the necessary means of seeing that we keep our commitments in Viet Nam.’” Then he poked his left fist forward. That, he said, represented U.S. diplomacy’s continuing effort “to get us away from the battlefield and back at the conference table.”

**Sample 2:** Ten years after the Vietnam War, U.S. Army General William Peers, comments on the political climate in 1965:

In mid-1965, the decision was made to send U.S. combat forces to South Vietnam. WE should have immediately committed sufficient ground, air, and naval forces so as to end the conflict in the shortest possible time. Such a commitment would have saved countless lives and injuries, avoided the no-win situation in which our forces became involved, and greatly reduced the inner conflict which so divided this nation.

But the U.S. did not do that. American leaders did not mobilize the armed forces, federalize the National Guard, or call reserve units to active service. War industries, the economy, and the population were not mobilized. Nor were funds provided for deploying sufficient combat forces to do the job quickly and get it over with. Instead, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara made the decision, with the approval of the president, to fight a war of gradualism, a piecemeal kind of war, employing an initial minimum force and adding to it bit by bit as the situation dictated. As a result, it became a Pentagon war, not a people’s war, and dragged on for eleven years, much to the disillusionment of the American people.

# **“Why Should I Know Anything About Rhetoric?”**



Professor James Joseph Duane

Regent Law School

January 10, 2006



# Two Great Resources

- **[www.americanrhetoric.com](http://www.americanrhetoric.com)**
  - Read and listen to hundreds of the greatest speeches of the past century.
- **[www.humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric/silva.htm](http://www.humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric/silva.htm)**
  - An outstanding discussion of the theoretical literature on the elements of rhetoric.



# 1. Before You Start

- Know your *audience*: their limits, expectations, assumptions, and interests.
- Know your *purpose*.



# What is his purpose?

- Edward Wilson, *Intelligent Evolution* (Nov Dec 2005)
- “It is surpassingly strange that half of Americans recently polled not only do not believe in evolution by natural selection but do not believe in evolution at all. Americans are certainly capable of belief, and with rocklike conviction if it originates in religious dogma... Yet biologists, particularly those statured by the peer review and publication of substantial personal research on the subject in leading journals of science, are unanimous in concluding that evolution is a fact... Many who accept the fact of evolution cannot, however, on religious grounds, accept the operation of blind chance and the absence of divine purpose implicit in natural selection. They support the alternative explanation of intelligent design. The reasoning they offer is not based on evidence but on the lack of it. The formulation of intelligent design is a default argument advanced in support of a non sequitur.”



# What is her purpose?

- Ann Coulter: *New Idea for Abortion Party: Aid the Enemy* (Nov. 2005)
- “Fed up with being endlessly told “the American people” have turned against the war in Iraq, Republicans asked the Democrats to show what they had in their hand and vote on a resolution to withdraw the troops. By a vote of 403-3, the House of Representatives wasn't willing to bet that “the American people” want to pull out of Iraq. (This vote also marked the first time in recent history that the Democrats did not respond to getting their butts kicked by demanding a recount.) What are we to make of the fact that — as we now know — the Democrats don't even want to withdraw troops from Iraq? Before the vote, Democrats could at least defend themselves from sedition by pleading stupidity. Now we know they don't believe what they are saying about the war. There is no plausible explanation for the Democrats' behavior other than that they long to see U.S. troops shot, humiliated, and driven from the field of battle. They fill the airwaves with treason, but when called to vote on withdrawing troops, disavow their own public statements. These people are not only traitors, they are gutless traitors.”





## 2. Establishing Rapport

- The most important ingredients of your perceived personal appearance:
  - 1. Honesty and sincerity.
  - 2. Knowledge.
  - 3. Objectivity and humility.



### 3. Talking about yourself

- Build empathy by identifying your common ground with the audience.
- Call them “us,” not “you.”
- Gentle and sincere self-deprecation, in moderation, can work wonders.
- But *never* talk about the shortcomings of your preparation, organization or time management!



## 4. Act gracious and open-minded

- Be a good listener.
- Give your opponents and their views ample credit and praise -- as long as you can do so without seeming insincere.
- Avoid name-calling, hyperbole, and stereotyping.
- Be like Abraham Lincoln: Concede as much as you possibly can, and do so *before* you start to disagree.



# Garrison Keillor

- “Yours is just about the best angry letter I've received in more than thirty years of doing the show, and I admire it. It maintains a high level of rage and contempt throughout, and you've got some of your facts straight -- you're absolutely right about my Pope Clement slip, one of those truly dumb moments that one recognizes about fifteen seconds too late to do anything about -- and it's very well written. But you don't know how to stop once you get started. Anger can do this to a person. You get in and you forget where the brakes are.”



# R. J. Reynolds, *Smokers' Rights*

- “Adults who choose to smoke make a personal decision that carries with it certain responsibilities and rights. Among other things, smokers have a responsibility to be respectful and courteous in the manner and places where they smoke – particularly when children are present – and the responsibility to properly dispose of cigarette butts and empty cigarette packages. Along with those responsibilities come certain rights that are associated with the use of any legal product. Consumers have the right to voice their opinion on the various proposals, both legislative and regulatory, that impact the use of cigarettes by adults. If you're not already registered to vote, that's the first step to take. If smokers get more involved, they can be successful in stopping unfair smoking bans and cigarette-tax hikes. Almost 46 million adult Americans choose to smoke, and a large number of them have become active in protecting their rights. Their actions are helping to protect the rights of smokers and, ultimately, others whose freedoms and choices may one day be threatened. Sometimes it's hard to believe that one voice can make a difference, but it can. Remember, some people will not be satisfied until smoking is illegal. If you want to make sure that doesn't happen, it's up to you to do your part to protect your rights as an adult smoker.”



## 5. Carefully consider your choice of words

- Use words that best convey your message.
- *Never* say “I was like...”
- For maximum emotional and persuasive impact, use *short* words and short sentences.
- Why use *long* words?
  - To calm and sedate the audience.
- Why use *technical* or foreign words?
  - There is almost never a good reason.



# R. J. Reynolds, *Core Values*

- Employees at every level across R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company (R.J. Reynolds) have had a chance to meet and talk about the company's core values. At R.J. Reynolds, we are:
- Principled – We do the right thing. We treat every person with respect, fairness and integrity, and we embrace diversity.
- Creative – We encourage new ideas to build our business. We encourage and reward innovative thinking and new, savvy ways of doing things.
- Dynamic – We translate ideas into action, with boldness and speed.
- Passionate – We believe in our values and strive to win. Our pride and our dedication to high performance drive us to deliver the best results.



# R. J. Reynolds, *Marketing Philosophies*

- R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company (R.J. Reynolds) believes that cigarette smokers are at significantly increased risk for a number of diseases and conditions, including lung cancer, cardiovascular disease (including heart disease) and chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (emphysema and chronic bronchitis). Our company's philosophy is to operate as if smoking is a cause of these diseases. As a result, R.J. Reynolds firmly believes that children should not smoke or be exposed to secondhand cigarette smoke or any other airborne irritant. .. R.J. Reynolds has also been at the forefront in developing and applying methods to assess the relative toxicity of cigarette smoke. This work, along with our expertise in tobacco and smoke chemistry, has aided us in our long-standing and ongoing efforts to develop cigarettes that may have the potential to reduce the risks associated with smoking. We have also pioneered a number of techniques to reduce overall tar and nicotine yields, and we have developed technologies to reduce specific compounds and classes of compounds in cigarette smoke.





# From the pen of a real professor!

- “In recent years, the metaphor of dialogue has become increasingly ubiquitous within constitutional theory - both in the United States and globally - as a way of describing the nature of interactions between courts and non-judicial actors in the area of constitutional decision-making, particularly in relation to the interpretation of rights. This Article provides a critical account of theories of constitutional dialogue in order to determine which of these theories hold the greatest normative promise. Theories of dialogue face two hurdles to normative success. First, they must accomplish their goal of resolving the democratic objection to judicial review. Second, and legitimacy aside, they must be able to provide an attractive normative vision of the role of judicial review in democratic constitutionalism. This Article maintains that while theories of constitutional dialogue do make important contributions to our understanding of judicial review, most fail to provide satisfying normative visions of dialogue on these dual levels of analysis. This Article concludes that the greatest potential for achieving a normatively satisfying understanding of constitutional dialogue emerges when the contributions of equilibrium and partnership theories of dialogue are synthesized.”

Rhetoric

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