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The field of communication in the United States

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The field of communication in the United States

I offer my thanks to my colleague, Anna Bendrat, for asking me to offer comments on the field of communication in the United States, stressing its rhetorical roots.

The field of communication in the United States begins with rhetorical roots. Long before there was a National Communication Association, the initial mother organization was the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking. In Chicago, Illinois, in 1914, a group of public speaking teachers marched out of a National Council of Teachers of English conference, declaring their independence. This event marked the beginning of a professional field of study as colleagues walked out of the Palmer House in Chicago and into responsibility for the creation of an academic discipline. The birth of rhetoric as a contemporary academic field of study commences with these historic events of 1914; the actions of a small number of faculty committed to public speaking constituted the beginning foundation of what we now term the National Communication Association. Of course, rhetoric traces to the insights of the Greeks, particularly the work of Aristotle; however, the modern study of rhetoric began as a profession in this historical era with the events of the Chicago protest and walkout.

Since that moment, rhetoric as an area of study undergirds a large segment of communication inquiry in the United States. Currently, there are 19 journals noted by the Rhetoric Society of America devoted specifically to the study and research of rhetoric: *The African Yearbook of Rhetoric*, *Argumentation and Advocacy*, *College Composition and Communication*, *College English*, *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, *Enculturation: A Journal of Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture*, *JAC*, *Kairos*, *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, *Poroi*, *Pre/Text*, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *Rhétorique et Argumentation*, *RhetNet*, *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, *Rhetoric Review*, *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, *Rhetorica*, and *Written Communication*. The oldest journal to engage rhetoric is *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, published initially as *The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking* (1915). Another recent addition to the study of rhetoric is *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* (1968). In 1983, *Rhetorica* emerged as the quarterly journal for the International Society for the History of

Rhetoric, and in 1998, the first issue *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* emerged. In each case, the journals examine rhetoric from a wide conceptual base, inviting scholarship situated within a conception of rhetoric as a multidisciplinary intellectual activity.

There are multiple communication studies departments that include rhetoric in their title. For instance, the following universities stress rhetoric in their title: Duquesne University's Communication and Rhetorical Studies in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, University of Richmond's Rhetoric and Communication Studies in Richmond, Virginia, Syracuse University's Communication and Rhetorical Studies in Syracuse, New York, NC State University's Communication, Rhetoric and Digital Media in Raleigh, North Carolina, University of South Carolina's Speech Communication and Rhetoric in Columbia, South Carolina, Hofstra University's Department of Speech Communication, Rhetoric, and Performance Studies in Hempstead, New York, Colorado State University Pueblo's Communication and Rhetoric in Pueblo, Colorado, Drake University's Rhetoric and Communication Studies in Des Moines, Iowa, Illinois College's Communication and Rhetorical Studies in Champaign, Illinois, University of San Francisco's Rhetoric and Language in San Francisco, California, and St. John's University's Department of Rhetoric, Communication, and Theatre in Jamaica, New York.

One of the few PhD programs identified by the term rhetoric alone is at Duquesne University. This program gathered approval by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 2002. Currently, the program has 74 graduates, with 28 scholarly books now published by its graduates. Under the umbrella of rhetoric, the Duquesne University PhD program examines communication ethics, history of communication, and philosophy of communication as theoretical insights for engaging rhetoric in the marketplace via corporate communication and integrated marketing communication. The program's study and enactment is consistent with the work of Calvin O. Schrag¹, who explicated the organic connection between philosophy of communication and rhetoric. This orientation has a long history, beginning with the work of Carroll C. Arnold and Henry Johnstone Jr.,² with their emphasis on the interplay of philosophy and rhetoric. The journal, *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, originated in the Penn State College Communications Arts and Sciences department and its subsequent editors read as a who's who in the field of communication; Henry W. Johnstone, Jr., Gerard A. Hauser, Donald Phillip Verene,

1. Calvin O. Schrag is the George Ade Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Purdue University. Schrag is the co-founder of *Continental Philosophy Review*, an international philosophical journal. He has authored nine books, with his *Communicative Praxis and the Space of Subjectivity* being of important note to rhetoricians.

2. Carroll C. Arnold and Henry Johnstone Jr. co-founded the *Philosophy and Rhetoric* journal at Penn State, publishing its first issue in 1968. The journal and its founders continue to be of great import today, with the Carroll C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture given at NCA each year and Henry Johnstone Jr.'s work on the rhetorical wedge and the ad hominem fallacy still being discussed.

Marie J. Secor, Stephen H. Browne, Richard Doyle, Pierre Kerszberg, and Richard A. Lee Jr.

In the United States, the field of communication has national, regional, and state professional organizations. Within the National Communication Association, the Rhetorical and Communication Theory division is specifically devoted to the study of rhetoric. There are four regional divisions, the Eastern Communication Association, which is the oldest communication association in the United States, the Central States Communication Association, the Southern States Communication Association, and the Western States Communication Association. Within these regional groups, there are divisions uniquely devoted to rhetorical inquiry such as Rhetoric and Public Address, American Society for the History of Rhetoric, and Rhetorical Theory and Criticism.

The connection of rhetoric to philosophy has a thoughtful and distinguished tradition within the field of communication. Originally, the field's rhetorical presence pivoted on the study and practice of public speaking as indicated by the events of 1914. This emphasis continues with a division at NCA devoted to the basic course and the continuing publication of the journal, *The Speech Teacher*. The linkage of philosophy and rhetoric works in tandem with a historical commitment to public address and public speaking.

The history of rhetoric, the linkage between philosophy and rhetoric, the heritage of public speaking, and the historical examination of public address made the association, termed Rhetoric Society of America, an important theoretical and practical establishment in 1968. Rhetoric is present in all the regional, state, and national communication associations; however, the seminal location for the study, practice, and engagement of rhetorical history and implications is the Rhetoric Society of America. According to their constitution, "The purposes of the Society shall be to gather from all relevant fields of study, and to disseminate among its members, current knowledge of rhetoric, broadly construed; to identify new areas within the subject of rhetoric in which research is especially needed, and to stimulate such research; to encourage experimentation in the teaching of rhetoric; to facilitate professional cooperation among its members, to organize meetings at which members may exchange findings and ideas; and to sponsor the publication of such materials dealing with rhetoric". Their influence attracts a national and an international audience. Their creative work finds scholarly support in the National Communication Association and regional and state organizations devoted to the field of communication. In an era of increasing dispute about what is and should be considered the good that might gather the attention of people; the study of rhetoric continues to grow exponentially; it is a pragmatic answer and hope to this historical moment.