

Classicists, Newsstands, and Classrooms: Rhetoric and the Postmodern Student

For decades, Corbett, D'Angelo, Horner, and Crowley have guided the teaching of classical rhetoric for the modern student. Our students, however, live in the postmodern 21st century and are now becoming “the citizen writers of our country, the citizen writers of our world, and the writers of our future” (Yancey, 2009). Classical rhetoric is timeless, yet its disciplines and genres constantly evolve through ever-changing modes, mediums, and rhetorical situations. As writing teachers we must anticipate, analyze, adapt, and apply changing rhetoric into our curricula.

Textual analysis of current trade magazines becomes an effective method of identifying traditional and evolving rhetoric, discourse communities, and genres in real-world applications. Carter (2007) suggests that by analyzing what a discipline “does,” it helps us to understand both how that discipline “knows” and how it “writes.” Trade magazines, then, demonstrate what a discipline “does.”

Once we recognize what a discipline “does,” we writing teachers can guide our students into incorporating those elements and genres into their own practice, preparing them for 21st century writing.

This presentation examines professional trade discourse through the paired lenses of classical and modern rhetoricians to apply argument principles in evolving contemporary rhetoric and writing practice.

Teaching Quintilian and Stephen Toulmin Argument Principles through *Harvard Business Review*. Quintilian’s *Institutes of Oratory* discussion of argument arrangement represents classical models which Stephen Toulmin reforms into modern models in *The Uses of Argument*. Both models, however evolving, are evident in current scholarship (Walton and Reed, 2005; van Eemeren and Brootendorst, 2004) and issues of *Harvard Business Review*.

Teaching Cicero and Kenneth Burke Organization Principles through *The National Review* and *The Nation*. Cicero’s *De Inventione* provides the significant five canons of oratory (*inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, and pronuntiatio*) while Kenneth Burke’s dramatic pentad in *A Grammar of Motives* (act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose) helps analyze rhetorical situations. Elements of these principles are evident in current scholarship (Fulkerson, 2005; Portolano and Evans, 2005) and in the opposing political writings found in *The National Review* and *The Nation*.

Teaching Aristotle and Mikhail Bakhtin Social Context Principles through *Builder* and *Residential Design & Build*. Aristotle’s comprehensive teachings on *ethos* and *pathos* in *Rhetoric* prepare modern writers for Mikhail Bakhtin’s examination of social context in writing in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Elements of these principles are evident in current scholarship (Pracejus, Olsen, and O’Guinn, 2006; Fischer, 2007) and in issues of *Builder* and *Residential Design and Build*.

Teaching Christine de Pizan and Virginia Woolf Female Audience Principles through *Esquire and Men's Health*. DePizan in *The Book of the City of Ladies* instructs both the medieval and contemporary woman how to fit into all social ranks while Virginia Woolf's direct address to women in *A Room of One's Own* continue to influence the role of audience in current scholarship (Wilson, 2008; Linder 2007) and in issues of *Esquire* and *Men's Health*.