Rhetoric Syllabus 2020-2021

The Classical Academy High School

How does one live the good life? What is the purpose of human existence? How does one pursue Truth, Beauty, and Goodness? Hopefully your years at TCA have revolved around such questions (even if you didn’t know it at the time!), and senior year is now your chance to put a capstone on your TCA education as we seek the True, Good, and Beautiful in our shared classes and through our shared texts and discussions. At its root, your Rhetoric classes at TCA are about a search for Truth and how to convey it and counteract its opposites.

Rhetoric, though, can have many meanings, some negative, especially in our current society. So, what is Rhetoric? What do we mean by having a full year, required class in it? Rhetoric at root can simply mean “speech,” often with a negative connotation today. “That’s just Rhetoric.” “The politician is using empty Rhetoric.” However, Rhetoric is also the top level of the Trivium, a culmination of the Grammar and Logic level learning you have been working on since elementary school or before. It is the area in which you think more for yourself, put ideas together, and take all the tools you have been using to convey your own thoughts in a compelling manner. As such, Rhetoric in this positive sense is everywhere. It filters into other classes and shows the integrity or wholeness of what you have been learning; it is the Capstone to your senior year Capstone classes, for without Rhetoric one would find exhibiting exemplary citizenship difficult.

Quotes:

Socrates: “I know that I have no wisdom, small or great.”

Socrates: “The difficulty, my friends, is not in avoiding death, but in avoiding unrighteousness; for that runs faster than death.”

Socrates: “…to do injustice is more to be avoided than to suffer injustice, and that the reality and not the appearance of virtue is to be followed above all things, as well in public as in private life…”

Aristotle: “Since happiness is an activity of soul in accordance with perfect virtue, we must consider the nature of virtue; for perhaps we shall thus see better the nature of happiness.”

Our telos (purpose or goal) in this class is the same as for all your education, but perhaps more explicitly sought here: your *eudaimonia*, which is a fulfilled, joyful, fruitful, virtuous life. We will seek the Good, True, and Beautiful together, focusing on virtues such as justice, temperance, courage, and humility. We will focus on the major ideas present in all your senior classes, such as what does it mean to be human and how ought we live with others in society. We will ruminate on the Senior Capstone questions such as how does one live the good life and is knowledge its own end. We will read great works and think great thoughts.

This class, like all your senior Capstone classes, works best in an environment of *schole*. This Greek word means “leisure” and is the root of the English word “school.” Lest you think leisure means idleness, however (all from Josef Pieper *Leisure the Basis of Culture*):

“Leisure, it must be clearly understood, is a mental and spiritual attitude—it is not simply the result of external factors, it is not the inevitable result of spare time, a holiday, a weekend, or a vacation. It is, in the first place, an attitude of mind, a condition of the soul…”

“For leisure is a receptive attitude of mind, a contemplative attitude…”

“Leisure…is…the preserve of freedom, of education and culture, and of that undiminished humanity which views the world as a whole.”

This attitude of *schole* requires commitments from both teachers and students. We pledge to give you proper time to ponder, question, and ruminate on the ideas presented in this class; we ask that you put your time to good use, even (or especially!) when there may not be an assignment or grade immediately attached.

Finally, the texts we will read in here, especially the ancient Greek guys, are meant not only to give you food for thought but to hold up a mirror to ourselves and our culture. We don’t expect you to agree with all you read/hear/see, but as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle are foundational for our worldviews, we ask that you allow them to challenge you and your presumptions. Feel free to disagree, but have good reason to do so! The presumption will be that the Greek guys are more right than any of us, your teachers included. Or, as C.S. Lewis put in the mouth of Digory in *The Last Battle*: “It’s all in Plato, all in Plato: bless me, what do they teach them at these schools!”

*Texts & Materials:*

Class of 2021 Senior Reader: This should accompany you to all senior classes; it includes readings for Rhetoric and Civics and will be the basis for many discussions across most classes.

Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. New York: Penguin, 2006.

**Classroom Expectations/Requirements:**

* Come to class on time
* Come to class prepared to contribute, challenge and think. Readings and all assignments are your responsibility. Pay attention to due dates.
* Conflicts and “heads up” must be clear and in advance. If you miss class (illness, unavoidable conflicts, etc.), all work is due one day after you return.
* Assignments, tests, etc. are due in class on their due dates. The TCA Late Work Policy will be followed.
* ***Class discussion is rewarded, essential*** *and fun*. It **must be** respectful of others, polite, on topic and as insightful as possible. Be brave and take risks! Be ready not only to participate in, but also to lead, discussions.
* TCA policies on uniform, tardiness, cell phones, honor expectations and in-class expectations are to be followed. It is YOUR responsibility to know and abide by them.
* Listen to others, but don’t be afraid to disagree and debate. Just keep it **respectful** and **appropriate**.

**Breakdown of Grade**:

1) Exams/Tests/Quests/Quizzes/Tizzes

These will cover readings and class material, and may follow different formats

2) In-Class Assignments, homework

In-class assignments, freewrites, homework, small projects, and in-class presentations

3) Participation

Includes discussion participation, enthusiasm in group and other projects, and your general willingness to wrestle with material and ideas

4) Senior Defense

To culminate your K-12 experience this coming April, you will present a senior defense before an adult board of evaluators. More specific information will come later, and you’ll get plenty of practice before the time comes!

**Contact Info:**

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Mr. Reed e-mail reedj@asd20.org phone 484-0091

Mr. Kueck e-mail jkueck@asd20.org phone 484-0091

Please sign and date the statement below to let us know you’re clear on the above. We will check these.

“I have read and understand the course expectations and information above, and agree to follow them this year. I understand it is my obligation to contact Mr. Kueck, Mr. Los, or Mr. Reed to clear up any confusion as the year progresses.”

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_