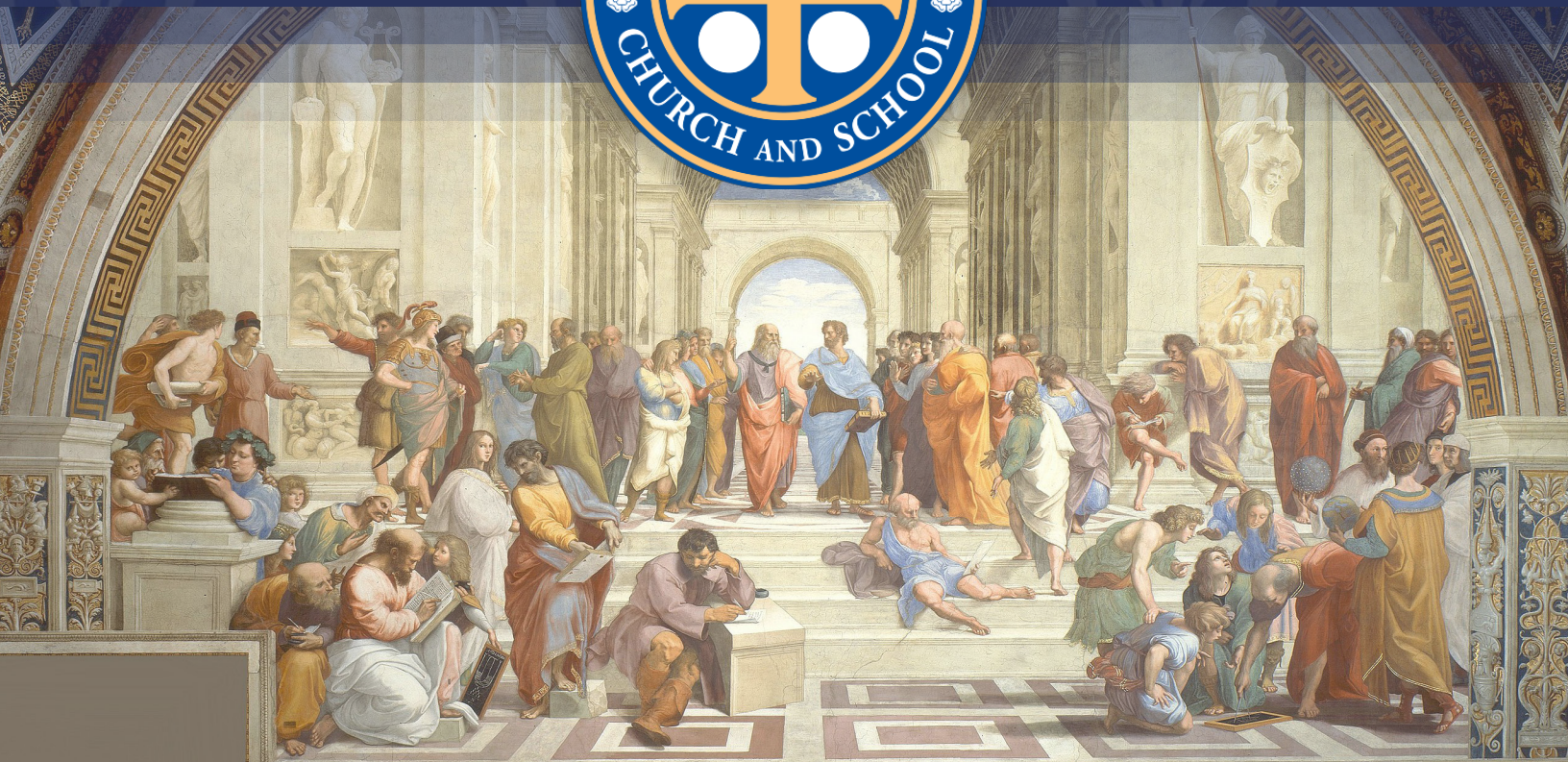
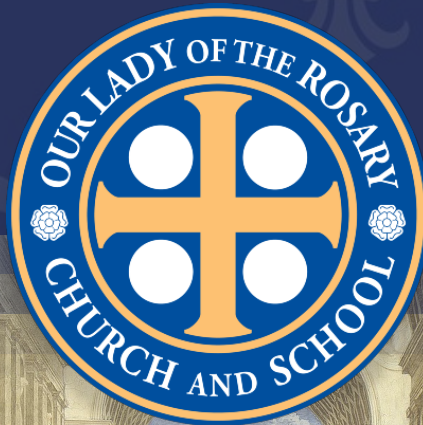




Rhetoric Curriculum

Grade 11



Course Overview

Course Description

This course introduces the classical art of rhetoric through two guiding questions: What is persuasion? and How should one speak to move both mind and heart? Beginning with Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, students explore how ethos, pathos, and logos form the soul of persuasive discourse, rooted not in manipulation, but in truth and character. Classical examples and exercises illuminate the power of language to shape thought and civic life. From the orations of Demosthenes and Cicero to modern speeches that stirred nations, students examine the enduring relationship between speech and the common good. The course concludes with a challenge: to become not merely eloquent, but virtuous speakers—men and women who persuade with wisdom, integrity, and love of the true.

Why We Teach It...

We teach rhetoric because speech shapes souls and societies. To speak well is not merely to persuade, but to participate in the pursuit of truth and the building of the common good. In the classical tradition, rhetoric is a moral art—one that calls for wisdom, self-mastery, and a deep respect for one's audience. As future citizens, leaders, and disciples, our students must be trained to resist manipulation, recognize faulty reasoning, and respond with clarity, charity, and conviction. Rhetoric forms not only skilled communicators, but whole persons capable of leading with integrity in word and deed.

Course Objectives









By the end of this course, students will be able to:



Trace the development of rhetorical theory from classical antiquity to the modern era, emphasizing its civic and moral dimensions.



Course Objectives | Continued...

-  Compare sophistic and philosophical approaches to persuasion, highlighting the tension between manipulation and truth-seeking.
-  Interpret primary texts from Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, and notable modern rhetoricians with clarity, insight, and historical awareness.
-  Analyze speeches and arguments using the rhetorical appeals—ethos, pathos, and logos—with attention to purpose, audience, and form.
-  Distinguish between classical and contemporary views of rhetoric, particularly in relation to truth, virtue, and the role of the speaker.
-  Apply principles of classical rhetoric to written and oral compositions that aim to inform, persuade, and inspire.
-  Defend thoughtful positions on civic, ethical, or cultural issues through structured argument and public speaking.
-  Evaluate the ethical responsibilities of the rhetorician in shaping public discourse and moral imagination.
-  Cultivate the habits of wise speech by practicing attentiveness, charity, intellectual discipline, and a love of the true and the good.

Source Material

The Gorgias, Plato

Rhetoric, Aristotle

How to Read a Book, Mortimer J. Adler

Classical Rhetoric, Memoria Press (excerpts)



Key Concepts

<i>Rhetoric</i>	<i>Virtue</i>	<i>Classification of actions</i>
<i>Political</i>	<i>Justice</i>	<i>Witnesses</i>
<i>Ceremonial</i>	<i>Courage</i>	<i>Contrast</i>
<i>Forensic</i>	<i>Temperanc</i>	<i>Law</i>
<i>Art (habit)</i>	<i>Prudence</i>	<i>Universal law</i>
<i>The Good</i>	<i>Noble</i>	<i>Particular law</i>
<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Praise</i>	<i>Ethos</i>
<i>Subject</i>	<i>Blame</i>	<i>Pathos</i>
<i>Audience</i>	<i>Encomium</i>	<i>Logos</i>
<i>Truth</i>	<i>Wrongdoing</i>	<i>Enthymeme</i>

On Writing

All written work in this course integrates Our Lady's Writing Curriculum, a program rooted in the tradition of the classical oration and the progymnasmata—the ancient exercises that trained students in the art of eloquence, clarity, and persuasion. Students will be guided through structured stages of composition, learning to narrate, describe, argue, and exhort with both precision and grace.

Writing is not treated as a mere skill, but as a moral and intellectual discipline—a means of pursuing truth and communicating it rightly. In keeping with the classical model, students will imitate excellent forms, internalize timeless principles, and ultimately express their own judgments with charity, courage, and rhetorical power.



Assessments

Summative: 45%

- Expository Essays
- Semester Recitations
- Lesson Quizzes
- Close Imitation Project

Formative: 35%

- Seminars/Debates
- Recitations
- Essay Process
- Close Imitation Project

Conscientiousness 20%

- Homework
- Classwork
- Participation



Scope & Sequence

Unit 1	The Divisions of Rhetoric: The Good	9 Weeks
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Week 1-7	Overview: Gorgias; Political This course begins with a reading of Plato's Gorgias and Aristotle's rhetoric, equiring into the nature of rhetoric as the art of persuasion toward the truth. Here we focus on the elements and divisions of rhetoric Key Terms Rhetoric, Political, Ceremonial, Forensic, art (habit), the Good, speaker, subject, audience Great Question(s) What is rhetoric? What is difference between art & science? How do we persuade others to do good and avoid evil? Sources: <i>Rhetoric, Aristotle; Gorgias, Plato; How to Read a Book, Mortimer J. Adler</i>
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Unit 2 | The Division of Rhetoric: The Beautiful

9 Weeks

Week 8-14

Overview: Ceremonial

This unit is about persuasion in order to establish honor or dishonor.

Great Question(s)

What do we praise?

What do we blame?

What is the Good & Noble?

Key Terms

Virtue, Justice, Courage, Temperance, Prudence,
Good, Noble, Enconium

Sources: *Classical Rhetoric*, Memoria Press; *Rhetoric*, Aristotle; *How to Read a Book*, Mortimer J. Adler

Unit 3 | The Division of Rhetoric: The Just

9 Weeks

Week 15-21

Overview: Forensic

This unit is about persuasion in order to establish the Justice or Injustice of previous actions.

Great Question(s)

What do we accuse?

What do we defend?

Key Terms

Wrong doing, vice, classification of human actions,
witnesses, contracts, law, universal & particular law

Sources: *Classical Rhetoric*, Memoria Press; *Rhetoric*, Aristotle; *How to Read a Book*, Mortimer J. Adler



Unit 4 | The Modes of Rhetoric

9 Weeks

Week 21-28

Overview:

This unit is about appeals to ethos, pathos, logos.

Great Question(s)

What are the emotions?

What are the types of character?

How do we use example & enthymeme in arguments?

Key Terms

Pathos, ethos, logos, enthymeme, emotions (all types), character,

Sources: *Classical Rhetoric*, Memoria Press; *Rhetoric*, Aristotle; *How to Read a Book*, Mortimer J. Adler



Course Catechism

This section is structured as a series of questions and answers—intended to cultivate wisdom, virtue, and a love of tradition in the soul of the reader. Drawing from classical education, Christian orthodoxy, and the accumulated insights of Western civilization, this catechism aims to form not only the mind but the moral imagination.



Each question is crafted to provoke contemplation, and each answer is more than mere information—it is a small liturgy of truth, designed to be memorized, internalized, and lived. In the tradition of ancient catechisms, this section assumes that learning is not just for passing tests, but for becoming someone.

Section I | The Good & The Political

Q: What is rhetoric?

A: *Rhetoric is the art of persuading men toward the truth through reason, character, and speech.*

Q: Why must every man study rhetoric?

A: *Because every man speaks, and he must choose whether to speak for truth or for gain.*

Q: What is the purpose of rhetoric?

A: *The purpose of rhetoric is to move the soul toward the good through what is true and fitting.*

Q: What is the foundation of rhetoric?

A: *The foundation of rhetoric is the speaker, the subject, and the audience, rightly ordered.*

Q: Can rhetoric save a man?

A: *Rhetoric cannot save a man, but it can train his speech to serve what saves.*



Section I | Continued...

Q: Can rhetoric save a man?

A: Rhetoric cannot save a man, but it can train his speech to serve what saves.

Q: What are the three divisions of rhetoric?

A: Political, ceremonial, and forensic—each serving a different end in time.

Q: What is political rhetoric?

A: Political rhetoric seeks to persuade toward what is useful or harmful for the future of the city.

Q: What is the good?

A: The good is that which fulfills the purpose of a thing and leads to its proper end.

Q: What is an art or habit?

A: An art is a habit of right reason in making or doing, ordered toward excellence.

Q: Who is the audience of political rhetoric?

A: The citizen who must judge what is good for the common life of man.

Section II | The Beautiful & The Ceremonial

Q: What is ceremonial rhetoric?

A: Ceremonial rhetoric praises what is noble and blames what is base, that we might love what we ought.

Q: Why must men learn to praise and blame?

A: Because a man becomes what he honors, and he must learn to praise rightly to live rightly.

Q: What do we praise?

A: We praise what is virtuous, just, courageous, temperate, and praiseworthy.

Q: What do we blame?

A: We blame what is shameful, cowardly, vicious, and false.

Q: Can beauty be defended?

A: Beauty can be defended, but only by those who know it and love it.



Section II | Continued...

Q: What is virtue?

A: *Virtue is the strength of soul to choose the good even when it is hard.*

Q: What is temperance?

A: *Temperance is the moderation of desire, that love may be rightly ordered.*

Q: What is courage?

A: *Courage is the habit of enduring pain or fear for the sake of the good.*

Q: What is the noble?

A: *The noble is what is worthy of honor because it is excellent and selfless.*

Q: What is an encomium?

A: *An encomium is a speech of praise given to honor great virtue or noble deeds.*

Section III | The Just & The Forensic

Q: What is forensic rhetoric?

A: *Forensic rhetoric seeks justice by judging what has been done, whether good or evil.*

Q: Why must men learn to accuse and defend?

A: *Because truth demands defense, and evil must be named if good is to endure.*

Q: What do we accuse?

A: *We accuse what is unlawful, harmful, and unjust.*

Q: What do we defend?

A: *We defend what is innocent, lawful, and rightly done.*

Q: Can a man speak justly without loving justice?

A: *A man may speak the words of justice, but he cannot persuade without the heart of the just.*



Section III | Continued...

Q: What is wrongdoing?

A: *Wrongdoing is a choice against law and virtue, which brings harm to the soul and to others.*

Q: What is vice?

A: *Vice is the corruption of virtue through habit and will.*

Q: What is the purpose of law?

A: *Law exists to guide man toward the good and restrain him from evil.*

Q: What is a universal law?

A: *A universal law is written on the heart of man and known by reason and nature.*

Q: What is a particular law?

A: *A particular law is given by men to govern cities in time and place.*

Section IV | The Just & The Forensic

Q: What persuades a man?

A: *A man is persuaded by reason, by character, and by the movement of the heart.*

Q: What is ethos?

A: *Ethos is the moral character of the speaker, by which he earns the trust of his audience.*

Q: What is pathos?

A: *Pathos is the awakening of right emotion, so that men may desire what is good.*

Q: What is logos?

A: *Logos is the rational structure of speech, where truth is made clear through reason.*

Q: Can speech be powerful and wicked?

A: *Yes—but the power of speech is rightly used only in the service of truth.*



Q: What is an enthymeme?

A: *An enthymeme is a rhetorical syllogism, which persuades through probable reason.*

Q: What is an example?

A: *An example is a particular case that illustrates a general truth.*

Q: What are emotions?

A: *Emotions are movements of the soul that incline us toward or away from things.*

Q: What is character?

A: *Character is the form of the soul shaped by habit, choice, and belief.*

Q: Why must a speaker know his audience?

A: *Because persuasion requires not only truth, but also a heart that understands who listens.*



Week 1

Weekly Logos | The Power Speech

Students will enter into the study of rhetoric through Plato's *Gorgias*, exploring the central question: What is rhetoric, and is it just? By examining Socrates' dialogues with Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles, students will reflect on the power of speech to shape the soul and the city. They will encounter competing visions of rhetoric—one aimed at truth, the other at flattery—and begin to ask whether rhetoric is an art, a tool, or a form of deception. By week's end, students will articulate the distinction between true and false rhetoric, and the moral weight of persuasion.

What Are We Assessing? | The Facts

🏛️ Rhetoric is the art of persuasion.

🏛️ The soul is shaped by speech.

🏛️ Gorgias claims rhetoric is the highest power.

🏛️ Socrates distinguishes between true and false arts.

What Are We Assessing? | The Skills

🏛️ Trace and evaluate philosophical argument through dialogue.

🏛️ Practice Socratic questioning in oral discussion.

🏛️ Identify and articulate definitions (e.g., rhetoric, justice, flattery).

🏛️ Compare competing visions of the good.



What Are We Assessing? | The Truths

“It is not the spoken word that does the greatest harm, but the unexamined belief it leaves behind.”

These truths unify every element of the lesson:

True knowledge begins with humility, not confidence.

All understanding is built upon belief—faith precedes sight.

We explore not to master the world, but to become rightly ordered within it.

Assessments | Suggested Types

▣ Memorization: Students recite definition of rhetoric and truth/flattery distinction

▣ Short Essay: Is rhetoric a tool or an art? (1–2 pages, citing Gorgias)

▣ Socratic Seminar: “Is all persuasion manipulation?”

▣ Journal Prompt: Describe a time when someone’s words deeply shaped what you believed or did.



Pacing | By Week

<i>Day</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Homework</i>
Monday	Introduce the course; ask: What is rhetoric? Define art, persuasion	Read Gorgias, 447a–455a (Socrates & Gorgias)
Tuesday	Discuss Gorgias' definition of rhetoric. Begin comparing art vs flattery	<i>Define: art, rhetoric, persuasion, flattery (1–2 sentence definitions)</i>
Wednesday	Dialogue: Is rhetoric a true art? Examine Socrates' critique	Read Gorgias, 455a–466a (Socrates & Polus)
Thursday	Examine Socrates' concept of the soul and punishment as healing	Write: Is rhetoric morally neutral? 1–2 paragraph reflection
Friday	Seminar: Is it better to suffer injustice or to commit it?	None



Teacher Tips

Recite Foundational Distinctions

Treat “True Art vs. Flattery” as liturgical—assign lines to students for daily recitation to build rhetorical memory and moral clarity.

Ask Ethical Questions

Is it worse to suffer injustice or to commit it? Can persuasion be just if it is not true? What happens when speech becomes a tool for gain?

Link Power to Responsibility

Use Socrates’ image of rhetoric as a soul-shaping force to show that influence is never neutral—every word builds or breaks.

Highlight the Moral Weight of Speech

Remind students: rhetoric is not merely technique; it is an act of the will aimed at good or evil. Speech carries the weight of the speaker’s soul.

Model the Rhetorician’s Posture

Read aloud Socrates’ exchanges slowly, without commentary. Sit with the tension. Let students hear what it means to seek justice through dialogue.

Use Dialectical Questions

Lead discussion through challenge and contrast. Let students stumble over the difference between seeming good and being good.

Connect to the Spiritual Life

Reflect on how words become flesh—how the Incarnate Word shows us that truth and speech are never far apart.

Encourage Ethical Self-Examination

Assign journaling: When have I used speech to hide the truth? To impress? To manipulate? What do my words reveal about my loves?



Appendix




Close Imitation Project

Overview

In this capstone project, students will imitate the structure, rhetorical strategies, and style of a historically significant speech drawn from one of the three classical branches of rhetoric: Forensic, Deliberative, or Ceremonial. By studying the speech line-by-line and identifying its logical framework and elocutionary devices, students will internalize its form and reapply it to an unrelated, original topic.

They will then compose, memorize, and deliver their own speech in the same mode and structure, using imitation not as mimicry, but as a path toward rhetorical excellence.




The purpose of this assignment is the following:

-  To understand the logic and craft of classical rhetorical forms
-  To cultivate memory, style, and oral performance
-  To form moral judgment in the act of public persuasion

Steps of the Assignment

Select a Master Speech

Choose one of the following (or another pre-approved classical model):


-  **Ceremonial:** *Pericles' "Funeral Oration" or Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address"*
-  **Deliberative:** *Patrick Henry's "Give Me Liberty" or Churchill's "Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat"*
-  **Forensic:** *Socrates' Apology or Cicero's In Defense of Archias*




Close Imitation Project | Continued...


Analyze the Original

Annotate and diagram the original speech. Identify:

 *Structure (exordium, narration, confirmation, refutation, peroration)*

 *Appeals (ethos, pathos, logos)*

 *Elocutionary devices (parallelism, repetition, antithesis, rhetorical question, etc.)*

 *Moral vision: What does the speaker believe about man, virtue, justice?*

Receive Your Assigned Topic

Each student will be given a modern, unrelated prompt appropriate to their mode. For example:

Ceremonial: *Praise the act of composting*

Deliberative: *Argue in favor of instituting a school-wide afternoon nap*

Forensic: *Defend a fellow student falsely accused of stealing a pencil*

Compose Your Speech

Using the original speech as a model, craft your own 2–3 minute address. Mimic its structure and rhetorical devices. Replace its content while preserving its form.

Memorize and Deliver

Perform your speech before the class with attention to voice, posture, pace, emphasis, and rhetorical presence. Your performance should be persuasive, artful, and serious—even if the topic is humorous.