

# Rhetoric from a Classical Perspective

## I. Discovery/Invention

### A. Thesis (determining the rhetorical goal)

1. **Subject**(beginning of all discourse)—In almost all cases, subjects are imposed, either by teachers in school, by bosses in business, or by circumstances in organizations. It is nice if you can select a subject you personally find interesting, but in general do not expect to have choices. If you are given a choice, do not waste too much time trying to make sure you select the most exciting subject available. Writing a research paper is a labor-intensive process; don't waste valuable time.
2. **Narrowing**—Subject areas are too large to be handled in a research paper. You can't expect to write an essay on "The Civil War" with the kind of detail necessary for a college level essay or research paper (unless you want to write tens of thousands of pages—remember, many thick volumes have been written about day two of the Battle of Gettysburg alone). You must deal with some small aspect of your subject area. The tools below (question techniques, reference to a list, brainstorming/freewriting) may help you narrow your focus. Also review the "research paper helps" posted on the web site.

- a. **Questioning** techniques--Apply the questions to the subject area. The answers you get may suggest lines of argument that can be developed into a thesis statement.
  - i. **Journalists' questions:** Who, what, when, where, why, how. Ask these questions concerning your subject. Be methodical: write down both the questions and the answers. Then ask the same questions of the answers you get.
  - ii. **Status (or stasis) questions**
    - (a). Questions of fact. *an sit?* ("is it?"—questions of fact or conjecture). Generally we should take the approach that facts are not arguable. Occasionally however, we find it necessary to argue that what people assume to be factual is mere conjecture. Be careful, however, to have a strong argument. You bear the "burden of proof." That means whenever we make a claim, it is up to us to provide the evidence, not up to opposition to prove us wrong. This principle is embodied in our legal system under the term "habeas corpus." This principle requires those making a claim (such as a prosecuting attorney) to show that, in fact, a crime has been committed and that there is some evidence to suggest that the accused may have committed it. The term "habeas corpus" comes from Latin and simply asks "do you have the body?" meaning more or less, "can you show me that the assumed victim is really dead and not just missing?" The same principle goes far beyond murder cases and far beyond questions of law. With any subject, it is a good idea simply to go over all assumptions

carefully before proceeding. Occasionally you will find a point to argue rather quickly.

- (b). Questions of definition. *quid sit?* ("what is it?"—questions of definition)—Once facts are established and agreed upon, there is still a question of definition or interpretation. If a body is lying on the floor with a knife in it, we cannot immediately assume a murder. There may have been an accident (tripping while walking); there may have been a suicide. This question is obvious in law, but the same problem of applying the correct label or definition occurs in almost any area. Frequently this is a good approach for an argument. Elements involved in defining things are discussed under "definition" in the list of "common topics" below.
- (c). Questions of degree or quality. *quale sit?* ("what kind is it?"—questions of degree or quality)—Even when people agree upon a definition or label for something, often they disagree about the significance. For instance, once it is agreed that a killing has occurred (and not an accident or suicide), people can still argue about whether the killing was the result of negligence or malice, whether it was the result of a spur of the moment rage or of a premeditated plot. This question of degree is seen in the legal system in such labels as manslaughter, second-degree murder, first-degree murder, murder with special circumstances, etc. In addition to law, the question can obviously be applied to almost any area. It may be seen as a question of values.
- (d). Questions of **venue**. The question of "venue" (questions of forum or procedure for arguing this issue) was added by many rhetoricians—Although in legal cases arguments concerning venue are common, the question rarely applies in academic situations. That is, your instructor is not likely to accept in place of a research paper an argument that a research paper on this topic should not be written in this class, by you, at this level, etc. There may be occasions where this approach is appropriate, but you'd better make sure first. More likely will be an argument regarding the proper procedure for dealing with an issue.

b. Reference to lists

- i. **Common topics** (τοπoι). For millennia students were required to memorize a long list of commonly used rhetorical techniques (along with famous examples). These were used to suggest lines of argument. They are called "common" because they apply to almost any subject area (and possibly because they are commonly known). They seem to reflect something in the way the human mind operates.

(a). **Definition**—Traditionally the three-part, Aristotelian definition structure is used to define things and events (anything that might be expressed as a noun): 1st, the *species*, also called the *definiendum*, is named; 2nd, the species is placed in the larger class of things of which it is a member (its type or *genus*); 3rd, a list of features or qualities which distinguish it from all other members of the class is provided (its *differentiae*). For example, the following might be used to define the term "screwdriver": "A screwdriver [*species*] is a hand tool [*genus*] with a bladed metal shaft affixed to a handle, used for inserting and removing screws [*differentiae*]."

(1). **Genus**—Basically, here you are arguing that X is (or is not) a Y.

(2). **Division**—Analyses of whole entities into parts, of processes or sequences into steps or stages, and of large groups into smaller classes are all considered under this heading. Essays of this type require thorough knowledge of the subject at hand, and are, therefore, frequently assigned by teachers as methods of testing. Frequently these enumerative techniques are useful in making arguments. You can apply this topic to your subject by asking yourself how the subject can be broken down. What are the parts of the whole? What are the essential qualities? What are the characteristics?

(b). **Comparison**

(1). **Similarity**—The detection of similarities forms the basis for inductive arguments as well as for analogies. At its simplest level, induction is inference drawn from the similarity of a number of examples from the same general class. Analogy argues from similarities of things in different classes. Generally analogy is studied under the heading of "figures of speech," as a stylistic concern; however, it is also a very powerful tool of discovery, and not just in rhetoric. History is strewn with examples of scientists making discoveries by exploring analogical relationships as hypotheses.

(2). **Difference**—Drawing a distinction between what a thing or event really is and what it may appear to be is a commonly employed argumentative strategy. In Federalist Paper #10, James Madison made some important points by contrasting what he called a "pure democracy" with a "republic."

(3). **Degree**—While comparisons frequently involve clear distinctions (such as "my car has a compact disc player while yours does not"), frequently we deal with matters of "greater or lesser" (as in "your car gets 28 miles per gallon

while mine gets only 23 miles per gallon"). Underlying such distinctions, of course, is the issue of what is better (or worse), what is desirable (or undesirable), and even what is more likely (or less likely). Many times there are important cultural assumptions about what is normal, desirable, moral, etc., involved in such arguments, and an understanding of those assumptions is a significant part of building an argument about them.

(c). **Relationship**

- (1). **Cause-effect**—A great many arguments are built around either attempting to establish the cause of a particular thing (or event) or suggesting the results of a course of action. In science and philosophy questions of causation can become quite complex.
- (2). **Antecedent/consequence**—An important difference exists between an "effect" and a "consequence." The consequence flows from the antecedent but is not necessarily caused by it in a strictly logical or scientific sense. If a certain situation or circumstance (antecedent) exists, what will, or should, follow (consequence)? Consider the following: "If [or because] Xavier has violated the school's policy regarding plagiarism, he must be given a grade of zero for the assignment." Notice that there is an implied premise in this argument. It is assumed (but not directly stated) that the school's plagiarism policy calls for a grade of zero for plagiarized work. Such argumentative structures (that is, with implied or assumed premises) are called **enthymemes**.
- (3). **Contraries**—Here we deal with incompatible ideas. "If Julia's jacket is yellow, it cannot at the same time be blue." Here I am arguing that two things cannot be true at the same time. If I can prove one, I have automatically disproved the other. Notice, however, that the reverse is not true. If I disprove one, I have not automatically proven the other (the jacket may be red—meaning that it is neither yellow nor blue). Apply this topic to your subject by looking for incompatible ideas within it.
- (4). **Contradictions**—Contradictory statements and contrary statements are frequently confused, often resulting in a logical fallacy called "false dilemma." While the two statements "Julia's jacket is yellow" and "Julia's jacket is blue" are contrary (i.e., both statements cannot be true at the same time), they are not contradictory (because yellow and blue are not truly opposites). The logical "opposite" of yellow is "not yellow." Now consider this: "Julia's jacket is either yellow or it is not yellow." Now *one* of these

statements *must* be correct (providing that Julia has a jacket to begin with). The two ideas are not just incompatible, they are mutually exclusive: disproving one automatically proves the other. Not only can you apply the topic of contradiction to your subject (by looking for mutual exclusive ideas), but also you can frequently make an argument that the subject does not involve contradiction, but rather contraries.

(d). **Circumstances**

(1). **Possible/impossible**—Arguments often involve proposals. Proposals are basically arguments that some course of action is desirable (with, of course, corresponding counter arguments that it is not desirable). But often in proposing a course of action to an audience we face the question of persuading them that it is possible (and conversely we can argue that although a certain action is desirable, it is impossible). During a class discussion a young woman stated that a solution to the problem of rapidly spreading sexually transmitted diseases is quite simple: all sexual activity outside of marriage should be stopped. Another student agreed that her goal was laudable and her method correct, but compared her argument to the statement "One method of traveling from San Francisco to Singapore is to jump the Pacific Ocean." Clearly there was a difference of opinion regarding feasibility. Perhaps your subject involves questions of possibility or probability, or questions of specific procedures or preparations that would render something possible or impossible.

(2). **Past fact/future fact**—Obviously arguments attempting to establish past fact play a major role in court trials. Occasionally students write essays attempting to argue about what did or did not happen. Such arguments, in both courtrooms and classrooms, often must rely more on probability than proof. Probability can involve both "common sense" and complex statistical analysis. Perhaps there is something in your subject that suggests an argument about "what happened?"

(e). **Testimony**

(1). **Authority** (informed opinion)—Argument by appeal to authority is clearly very effective; it's a major part of the advertising industry. In courtrooms there are professional witnesses, experts who paid to testify on almost any subject: alcohol impairment, DNA analysis, toxicology, psychology--even gym shoes. Using expert testimony is a major tactic in most research papers. Students find supporting passages in books, periodical articles, and web

sites. They interview professors, policemen, and politicians. Sometimes they write letters to famous authorities, asking key questions. Occasionally they receive insightful answers. However, there are some problems that occur. The first is the false authority. Not everyone whose words appear in print really knows what he is talking about. In the print world, there is usually an editor who approves or disapproves of publication. Such approval does not always constitute endorsement; sometimes it indicates only that the editor thinks the work will sell enough copies to make a profit. An unreliable "authority" will not support your argument and may actually damage your credibility with your audience to the degree that everything else you claim become suspect. This problem is even worse with internet sources. Anyone with a computer can publish a web page, saying pretty much anything he wants. There is no intellectual consumer protection agency, meaning that there is an enormous amount of nonsense out there. The second problem involves conflicting authority. In courtroom trials each side of the case will present experts who often give the jury entirely different interpretations. Naturally you will select sources that support your own argument, but it is important not to ignore conflicting evidence. Doing so could undermine your entire argument. In fact, classical rhetoric has enshrined this principle under the heading of refutation. When confronted with conflicting authority, don't just throw up your hands in despair or declare that everyone has a right to an opinion and therefore we can't decide. It is often true that we have insufficient evidence to make a solid decision, but it is also true that many times a bit of digging will suggest an answer. Look for anything inconsistent. Check the logic, if necessary by laying out the claims, evidence, syllogisms, etc., and examining them carefully for contradictions. Try to determine if there are other sources of information that might support one and invalidate the other. Can you find out if the authorities in question have any known prejudices or special interests that might color what they say? Investigate further and find out which experts are respected by others working in that field. Try to determine the underlying but unstated assumptions. Occasionally you will find that authority can be used not only to support and argument, but to generate one. That is, you can argue about who or what should rightfully be regarded as an authority.

- (2). **Witness/testimonial**—Non-expert testimony can be vital. Witnesses can support many claims, particularly claims of past fact. There is a great deal of room between expert testimony that attempts to interpret or explain and non-expert testimony that presents witnesses' observations. In this area we find such testimonials as celebrity endorsements. When Tiger Woods endorses a brand of golf clubs, perhaps he speaks as an authority, but when he endorses a restaurant or an automobile, his testimony carries the same logical weight as any other witness. Clearly advertisers use this tactic, but we often see the same thing in other areas, as when a popular actor endorses a political candidate. Unless the actor has some expertise in politics or law (such a college degree), his endorsement is mere expression of personal preference of no more value than that of anyone else. Be careful that any witnesses you use as support are presented as what they truly are: expert interpreter or ordinary observer. Both kinds are valuable.
- (3). **Statistics**— One of the most common methods used by modern rhetoricians to support a claim is to provide statistics. Interestingly, heavy reliance on statistics is unique to modern argumentation, possibly because of modern developments in the science of probability and statistics—relatively unknown to the ancients. The ancients, instead, tended to place more emphasis upon deductive inferences drawn from established authority. Modern thinkers tend to place more emphasis upon pure induction. There are, of course, problems that can occur; sometimes arguments based upon pure induction fall prey to the "bandwagon" fallacy. Consider, for example, the following discussion, taken from *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* 3rd ed., by Edward P.J. Corbett (Oxford Univ. Press):
- . . . "Five million people last year bought Humbug Products." "Fifty-eight percent of the new homes bought last year were equipped with Leakproof Appliances." Sometimes this strategy is referred to as the "bandwagon technique." Everybody's doing it, so it must be good. Now, there is no denying that the preference for one product over another could be an indication that the preferred product is superior in quality to the other products. Most people have faith that superior quality, all other things being equal, will in the long run win out over the second-rate and the

meretricious. So statistics can be a useful and an effective topic in many discussions.

What we must guard against in the use of statistics is making unwarranted inferences. Statistics, if accurate and legitimately gathered, confirm a fact; but they do not always confirm an inference made from that fact. The fact that a book has been at the top of the best seller list for twelve months or more supports that fact that many people have bought this book, That fact, however, will not necessarily justify further assertions such as "This best-selling novel is the best novel published last year" or "You too will thrill to the drama of this runaway best-seller."

Remember, it is perfectly possible for "everybody" to be dead wrong. The fact that at one time a majority of people believed that the earth was flat did not make it so (except in some really weird solipsistic philosophies). Henry David Thoreau once wrote that ". . . Any man more right than his neighbors, constitutes a majority of one already." The term "more," however, reveals a common use of statistical arguments: to attempt establish the superiority of one thing over another. We can see this is use in the constant attempts of politicians to use statistics to further their cause or their candidacy. Polling has become a major industry. But statistics do more, as Corbett goes on to say:

But statistics can be used in arguments for purposes other deciding superiority. Statistics can be used, for instance, to settle contrary and contradictory assertions. Suppose that one party in a dispute maintains, "Most Americans own their own homes," and that the other party maintains, "Most Americans do not own their own homes." If the two disputants agree upon the meaning of own, these two statements are directly contradictory. As we say in the discussion to the topic of contradiction, one of these statements is true and the other is false. An obvious way to determine which assertion is true is to cite statistics: "The 1960 census reveals that (number) Americans or percent of citizens over twenty-one years of age have completely paid off the mortgage on the house in which they dwell."

Statistics can be used to support or discredit all kinds of assertion. The chief caution to be observed in regard to the use of this topic is that one should not accept statistics uncritically. Statistics are always liable to the challenge of questions like these



- What is the source of these statistics?
- Is this a qualified, unbiased source?
- How were these figures arrived at?
- Was the sampling a reliably representative survey?
- When were these figures gathered?
- Are these figures contradicted or superseded by figures from other sources?

Polls and surveys are playing an increasingly prominent role in modern life. The better polling agencies, by devising scientific formulas for extrapolating sample findings, have achieved an amazing record of accuracy. Electronic computing machines too have increased the reliability of the interpretations and predictions made from statistics. We should be aware, however, that polling techniques, especially those that depend for their findings on personal interviews with people, have certain built-in limitations. The wording of a question put to person in the street influences the response. Any time a question-begging word gets into a question, the response will be biased. The response to a question like "Do you favor the abolition of excessive taxes?" cannot be interpreted to mean that most people favor the abolition of taxes. Sometimes the juxtaposition of questions can bias the responses. If the question "Should subversive organizations be outlawed in America?" were followed by the question "Should the Communist Party be outlawed in America?" the response to the second question would undoubtedly be prejudiced by the first question.

Another weakness in the personal interview stems from two assumptions that pollsters make: (1) that people always know their own mind on questions put to them; (2) that people will give truthful answers to questions put to them. Do citizens in the street always know, at any given stage in a presidential campaign, which candidate they favor? If they are undecided or confused, they will sometimes give an answer, any answer, because they are ashamed to admit to the pollster that they do not really know which candidate they favor at the moment. When the question concerns a matter that is more complex, the likelihood increases that the interviewees do not know their own minds. Pollsters make provisions for the uncertain state of mind by permitting the interviewee to answer "Undecided," but sometimes a person is undecided even about whether he or she is undecided. As for the other assumption, for one reason or another, some people deliberately mislead the questioner, by not giving a

truthful answer. Recognizing this fact, pollsters include a discount-factor in their formulas for extrapolating the information they have gathered.

Basically, statistics (like any other rhetorical tool) can be used or abused. Proper use can be very persuasive; improper use destroys the arguer's "ethos" and makes an otherwise effective argument totally useless. We must be very careful with statistics, both as arguers and as listeners.

- (4). **Common knowledge (maxims)**—Aphorisms, maxims, pithy but commonly known quotations frequently distill popular wisdom. People who live in glass houses should not throw stones, a stitch in time saves nine, look before you leap—there are thousands of these. Clearly any one of them may suggest a direction of argument, a fact recognized by rhetoricians as far back as ancient Greece. Using a maxim can often have the effect of lending a tone of moral wisdom to your argument.
- (5). **Law**— Contracts, testaments, statutes, documents, etc., may all be used to support or refute claims. If you can find such support, use it. It is also true that too often people accept anything in writing as final authority. In courtrooms documents are frequently challenged with regard to authenticity, legality, etc. Questions of interpretation and application to specific instances are also frequently good sources of argument.
- (6). **Precedent** (example)—In law cases, precedent is an extremely common argument. The very word "precedent" has narrowed in meaning to become largely a technical term in law. Lawyers go into courtrooms armed with stacks of legal rulings made in previous cases.

In a broader sense, we use precedent in arguments whenever we bring a similar, previous situation to mind and suggest that the previous example has bearing on the current subject. A common (though not always successful) example might be the argument that the example of prohibition of alcohol in the 1920's should be used as a precedent for abolishing current laws regarding narcotics.

In another sense, any use of an example to support a point would fall under this topic. The use of examples may well be the most common and most successful means of supporting a point. It is almost impossible to succeed in an argument without specific examples.

- ii. **Rhetorical Modes**—Modern teachers of rhetoric and writers of textbooks have attempted to reduce the complexity of the "common topics" by reducing them to a shorter list of commonly employed rhetorical "strategies."

- (a). **Description**—Writers of all kinds use description as a powerful tool. We expect novelists, poets, and others involved in “creative writing” to use description. Often, however, a good description can support an argumentative claim.

Basically, description is the use of sensory details as “evidence.” Beginning writers tend to focus on sight, but hearing, taste, touch, and smell can be powerful tools of persuasion.

- (b). **Narration**—Often one good story can illustrate a point clearly. Good narration, of course, should include description, but it adds other considerations: point of view (who is telling the story), chronology (straight time order or use of flashbacks and other non-chronological techniques), and dialogue.

- (c). **Example**—Nothing clarifies a vague or abstract idea as well as a good specific example. Key to the use of examples is an understanding of the terms general and specific. Words can refer to general categories like “animal.” More specific would be “dog,” but an actual specific example would be the neighbor’s six-year-old Labrador retriever, Nickie.

In the same sense, statements can be more or less general and specific. A very general statement such as “Many American teenagers have poor eating habits” has both a general subject (American teenagers) and a general predicate (have poor eating habits). “Marcia Tanner has poor eating habits” would be more specific because it has a specific subject. “Marcia Tanner has pizza and Pepsi for breakfast at least four days a week” would be even more specific.

Examples in the form specific statements are used as “evidence” (non-technical means of persuasion) to support general claims. They have a very powerful persuasive effect and should be employed in virtually every persuasive discourse. Aristotle claimed that the two most effective tools of persuasion are the example and the enthymeme (an abbreviated form of the categorical syllogism). The example is a form of inductive reasoning while the enthymeme is a form of deductive reasoning.

Although it is important to understand that using examples is a form of “logos” (appeal to reason or logic), it is also important to understand that examples rarely *prove* anything decisively. There are only two instances when examples constitute absolute proof: First, if every possible example is examined (called “full induction”) and second, when a single opposing example is used to disprove a universal claim. For example, if your audience were convinced that all dogs have

four legs, a single example of a three-legged dog would prove them wrong.

Full induction is rarely possible, and in many cases even if it were possible, it would be impractical as a means of persuasion simply because of time restrictions. While the scientist, the philosopher, and the mathematician may have all of history to seek absolute truth, the rhetorician is concerned with solving an immediate practical problem. When the house is on fire, you can't spend a year analyzing and arguing about which is the quickest way out of the house; you have to decide rather quickly. Societies face similar problems that require practical solutions under less than ideal conditions, and because the very word "society" implies other people, we have to persuade others as quickly and efficiently as possible. Therefore, even though examples may not prove a point absolutely, because they are powerful persuaders, we must be ready to use them.

- (d). **Classification**—Ancient rhetoricians, thinking in terms of the "common topics," employed classification as a subcategory of "definition," and rightly so. Modern teachers of rhetoric tend to think of classification as a structural device, a means of dividing the body of an essay into parts. Students often reveal this thinking when they write essays with claims such as "A glance at almost any college classroom will reveal three kinds of students: the sleeping slackers, the socialite sliders, and the seriously studious." Again, classical rhetoricians would have seen this as the "division" subcategory of definition. Modern rhetoricians might prefer the term analysis instead of division (perhaps that is a distinction without a difference).
- (e). **Process/Sequence**—When the subject we are "dividing" or "analyzing" exists over time, we can use this mode. A process analysis is instructional, telling the audience how to do or how to make something. The process is divided into distinct steps. The goal is clarity; make everything crystal clear. In brief, the structure of a process essay is similar to that of a recipe. Give the purpose of the process. List any special tools or materials needed. Give an overview of all the steps. Then cover each step thoroughly. If there are any "branchings" (points where choices are made that may go in two or more directions), make them perfectly clear.
- (f). **Comparison**—Comparison seen as a rhetorical mode does not differ logically from comparison as a "common topic." Modern teachers of rhetoric do, however, put more stress on the structural aspects of comparison. They suggest two main methods of structuring comparison arguments: subject-by-subject or point-by-point. Given two subjects to compare

(such as two restaurants), we can present all the points of one restaurant (prices, atmosphere, service) and then present all the points of the other restaurant (prices, atmosphere, service). Or we can use the point-by-point method and cover prices (1<sup>st</sup> restaurant, 2<sup>nd</sup> restaurant), atmosphere (1<sup>st</sup> restaurant, 2<sup>nd</sup> restaurant), and service (1<sup>st</sup> restaurant, 2<sup>nd</sup> restaurant).

- (g). **Cause-effect**—causal analysis (the attempt to determine cause) is an important type of argument, especially in the sciences. This topic is covered in greater depth in another document dealing with logic.
  - (h). **Definition**—In addition to the points discussed under “definition” in the “common topics” section above, we should mention the distinction between denotation (explicit meaning) and connotation (associative implication or secondary meaning). As a rhetorical strategy, definition frequently requires a combination of other strategies: examples, narration, description, comparison. On occasion an arguer must stipulate a specific definition to be used in an argument when a term admits of various definitions. On rare occasions, writers find it necessary to coin new terms for complex or innovative ideas.
- c. **Brainstorming/Freewriting**—These are more contemporary methods of discovery. There are various techniques called brainstorming. A common one consists of “clustering,” free association of ideas written down and connected visually by lines and circles. Freewriting consists of writing down ideas as fast as possible, without stopping to consider logic, spelling, punctuation or anything else. Write for a specified time (nor more than six to ten minutes). Usually you will find that you have started down a path toward a topic. Both freewriting and brainstorming are discussed in another document dealing with the development of research papers.
3. **Stating the thesis**
- a. **Not a question**—Write a single, declarative statement, asserting or denying something about the subject. Write a complete, grammatically correct statement of the truth as you want the reader to see it. A thesis statement is not a question; it may well be, however, the answer to a question
  - b. **Not a statement of uncontestable fact**—It is pointless to argue that water is wet. No one is going to read an essay attempting to prove that the Union won the U.S. Civil War or that the Golden Gate Bridge was built across the mouth of San Francisco Bay.
  - c. **Not a declaration of personal taste**—You are entitled to personal preference, but attempting argue it is difficult. You wind up with nothing more than repetitions of your preference. You may believe that the poetry of Emily Dickinson is the most beautiful writing in the world,

but to an argument attempting to prove that is most likely to turn into an essay about you rather than about her poetry.

- B. **Means of persuasion.** The term used by Aristotle and other Greek rhetoricians here is *pistis* (plural *pisteis* [πιστεῖς]), a noun indicating “that which gives confidence.” You might think of *pisteis* as “persuaders.” They are the methods (means) by which arguers “appeal” to their audience, attempting to gain the confidence of their audience.
1. **Technical means**—“technical” is derived from the Greek noun “*techne*” [τεχνη], meaning art, skill, craft, or even cunning (in both its positive and negative sense). Technical means of persuasion are those methods that lie within the art or craft of rhetoric.
    - a. **Logos**—appeal to reason or logic [this means of persuasion is dealt with in greater depth in a separate document]
      - i. **Inductive**—the use of **specific** facts, examples, observations to establish **general** conclusions, either hypotheses or generalizations. In ordinary rhetoric, the use of example (rather than full induction) is the most common means.
      - ii. **Deductive**—the use of **general** laws and definitions to establish **specific** conclusions. In ordinary rhetoric this is usually done by enthymeme rather than full sylogism.
    - b. **Ethos**—appeal to character (the character of the arguer, a trust issue)
    - c. **Pathos**—appeal to emotion (the audience’s)
  2. **Non-technical means** [ατεχνη πιστεῖς]—these “means” of persuasion consist of those things that exist outside of the art of rhetoric. Under this heading we should include anything that might be called “evidence” (facts, records, artifacts, laws, contracts, treaties, witnesses, etc). Because such evidence comes from “reality” rather than the fruitful imagination of the rhetorician, it has a powerful persuasive effect. In law, science, philosophy, psychology—in all fields—evidence is a key element of argumentation. When a student writes a research paper, the bulk of the work is precisely in gathering and presenting this type of material.

The key to gathering evidence is, first of all, knowing what you are looking for. What argumentative points are you trying to make? Until you know that, you do not know what evidence you need. You have jumped in your car in search of an unknown destination. How will you know where to stop?

That is why you must develop a clear rhetorical goal (a thesis) and a general plan of approach (an outline of the argumentative points to be made).

Once you have done this, you will have a better idea of what you are looking for where to look for it. Common sources for student work are books, periodicals, surveys, encyclopedias, and the internet. Learning to do research is more complex than most people realize. There are some good

suggestions in most English handbooks. Your instructor can provide some suggestions. Of course, the reference librarian is the real expert.

- C. **Kinds** of persuasive discourse
1. **Political** (also called deliberative, hortatory, advisory)
    - a. Kinds—exhortation and dissuasion
    - b. Special topics—the expedient or inexpedient, the advantageous or disadvantageous
    - c. Time concern—the future
    - d. Subjects—wars, taxes, alliances, community or group projects, public policies, laws, etc.
  2. **Forensic** (also called legal, judicial, judgmental)
    - a. Kinds—accusation and defense
    - b. Special topics—justice and injustice
    - c. Time concern—usually the past (often attempting to establish past fact)
    - d. Subjects—crimes, legal actions, contracts, behaviors
  3. **Epidictic** (also called demonstrative, declamatory, ceremonial, panegyric)
    - a. Kinds—praise and blame
    - b. Special topics—honor and dishonor
    - c. Time concern—uncertain, often past/present relationships (as in Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address”—what should we do in light of what has happened)
    - d. Subjects—various: funeral oratory, encouragement in crisis, celebrations, performance evaluations, letters of recommendation, etc.

## II. Arrangement

- A. **Exordium** (introduction)
1. Inquisitive
  2. Paradoxical
  3. Corrective
  4. Preparatory
  5. Narrative
- B. **Narratio** (statement of the case)
- C. **Partitio** (or division—layout of the argumentative points)
- D. **Confirmatio** (the proof of the case—the body of the essay)
- E. **Refutatio** (anticipation and refutation, if possible, of opposing points)
1. By logos (emphasis on revealing fallacies)
  2. By ethos (emphasis on questioning the character or motives of the opposition)
  3. By pathos (emphasis on creating an alternate emotional reaction)
  4. By wit (emphasis on making the opposition seem ridiculous)
- F. **Peroratio** (conclusion)
1. Recapitulate (the most common function) restate in a summary way the facts and argumentative points
  2. Rouse the appropriate emotions in the audience

3. Inspire the audience with a favorable opinion of ourselves and an unfavorable opinion of opponents (without sacrificing ethos)

### III. **Style**

- A. **diction** (appropriate word choice and usage)
- B. **sentence effectiveness** (ancient rhetoricians considered this under the heading of "schemes," listed below. Most modern texts separate it from the subject of "figures of speech," reserving that designation for the "tropes")
  1. length—varied and appropriate
  2. kinds—loose and periodic; simple, compound, complex
  3. variety of patterns, including inverted word order
  4. euphony—sounds and rhythms
- C. **figures of speech**
  1. Schemes (stylistic variations in sentence structures such as parallelism, chiasmus, etc.)
  2. Tropes (metaphor, simile, parable, personification, etc)

IV. **Memory (mneme/memoria)**—part of classical rhetoric not associated with written discourse

V. **Delivery**—(*Hypokrisis*/*Pronuntiatio*)—part of classical rhetoric not associated with writing. Today this is usually associated with speech classes.