

## Nicholas A. Thomas, PhD Rhetoric—Curriculum Vitae

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### Education

**Ph.D, Communication Arts and Sciences with a focus on Rhetoric, a doctoral minor in Philosophy**, and five courses of training in Ancient Greek from Pennsylvania State University.

- Dissertation was defended on August 21, 2008 (committee chaired by Dr. Rosa A. Eberly and also included Drs. Stephen H. Browne, Thomas W. Benson, and Christopher P. Long).

**M.A. in Communication Studies: Rhetoric** from California State University, Long Beach, 2004.

- Master's thesis was defended in Spring, 2004 (committee chaired by Dr. Craig R. Smith, and also included Drs. Karen Rasmussen and Matthew Taylor).

**B.A. in Rhetoric with minors in Politics and Gender Studies** from Whitman College, 2002.

- Earned Honor's with Rhetoric thesis, defended in Spring 2002 (committee chaired by Dr. Robert Withycombe, and also included Drs. Jim Hanson and Jeannine Uzzi).

### Speech & Debate Background

- Competed in all eight years of my eligibility: for Sunnyside High School in Sunnyside, WA and for Whitman College, Walla Walla, WA. I won over 200 awards over that time.
- Competed in Policy, Lincoln-Douglas, and Parliamentary debate; my primary individual events were Extemporaneous Speaking and Impromptu, but I tried almost every event once.
- Assistant Coach in Policy Debate, California State University, Long Beach, Fall 2002 through Spring 2004: conducted research, worked closely with other coaches on the development of debaters, and traveled to three to five tournaments per semester to coach teams in competition. CSULB won their first ever invitation to the NDT during my first year of coaching; they repeated that feat the next year.
- Lab Leader, Lecturer, and Head Coordinator in charge of Lincoln-Douglas Debate, Whitman National Debate Institute (WNDI), every August since 1999: led teaching duties that included, but have not been limited to, teaching and leading research efforts on National Forensics League topics, basic drilling on debate techniques, lectures on debate theory and useful philosophical positions for use in debate rounds, debriefing and discussion of practice debates, and organizing camp staff for their accompanying duties. Camp lasts three weeks, generally consisting of 14 hour days except on weekends (which are half days).

### Dissertation Description: The Joy of Rhetoric

What are the conditions for the possibility of suasion? And what are the conditions for the probability of suasion? I argue that rhetorical being is a nexus of dialectical relations between (1) ideality and materiality, and (2) tradition and (future or near future) situation. Aesthetics-as-making constitutes the rhetorical canon of invention, allowing rhetorical beings to hypothesize about

available means and also realize some of those means. Our making—dominated by the dialectics of ideality and materiality, and tradition and situation, combined with the short amount of time we are given to choose correct action when “thrown” into a situation—means that our most likely solvent for dealing with the appearance of the new (especially as “crisis”) is pedagogical habituation—practice in the material world with theoretical (idealist) aims, practice that also takes up learning from past situations so as to be prepared for the new as best as one can be prepared. The key to the practice of rhetoric, habit, is therefore the ontological meaning of rhetorical-being-in-the-(material and ideal, traditional and situational)-world. Habit is very useful, even impossible to live without, but carries the reductively totalizing dangers of what Foucault called disciplinary power, what Arendt called the banality of evil, and what Heidegger called the technological attitude that commodifies being as standing reserve. The foremost example of this reductive totalization is ethics or morality, dangerous not only for the reasons offered by Nietzsche’s critique, but especially because ethics is a private discipline that will sometimes refuse to respond to publicity criticism, meaning that ethics can make suasion impossible. Politics is a preferable and rhetorical alternative to ethics that tears apart reductive totalization by pulling its ideas through deliberation, public contestation, negotiation and compromise, and plurality. The possibilities of rhetoric, as in Arendt’s “space of appearances,” are called “politics.” The probabilities of rhetoric, in making appeals that would move one across ideality and materiality as well as tradition and future, are called “aesthetics.” These are the fields in which rhetoricians must practice if they are to habituate themselves.

## **Publications**

Thomas, Nicholas A. “Pedagogy and the Work of Michel Foucault.” Journal of Advanced Composition 28.1-2 (2008): 151-180.

### **Minor Publications**

Thomas, Nicholas A. Entries on “Hart, Gary” and “McCain, John, III.” Encyclopedia of Political Communication. SAGE Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA . 2007.

Thomas, Nicholas A. Entries for the Dictionary of Forensics. West Coast Publishing: Fountain Valley, CA. 2003.

## **Conference Presentations**

Thomas, Nicholas A. “Saving Ad Hominem.” National Communication Association Conference, Chicago, IL. 2007.

Thomas, Nicholas A. “The Joy of Rhetoric, Part I: The Totality of Ethics.” National Communication Association Conference, San Antonio, TX, 2006.

Thomas, Nicholas A. “An Ontology of Persuasion in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, *De Anima*, and *Rhetoric*.” National Communication Association Conference, San Antonio, TX, 2006.

Thomas, Nicholas A. “Hannah Arendt’s Theory of Evil and the Imperative of Rhetorical Criticism.” Eastern Communication Association Conference, Philadelphia, PA, 2006.

- Thomas, Nicholas A. "Condoleezza Rice, Black Conservatism, and the Dilemma of Black Authenticity." Eastern Communication Association Conference, Philadelphia, PA, 2006.
- Thomas, Nicholas A. "Pedagogy and the Work of Michel Foucault." National Communication Association Conference, Boston, MA, 2005.
- Thomas, Nicholas A. "The Toxic Genre: Campaign Accusations of Mental Malfunctioning and John McCain's 2000 Campaign." National Communication Association Conference, Boston, MA, 2005.
- Thomas, Nicholas A. "Richard M. Nixon the 'Pitiful Giant,' and the Role of Accidents in Rhetoric." National Communication Association Conference, Boston, MA, 2005.
- Thomas, Nicholas A. "An Arendtian Politics By Any Means Necessary." Discernment in Dark Times: A Conference on the Work and Influence of Hannah Arendt, State College, PA, 2005.
- Thomas, Nicholas A. "The Political Imprisonment of Andrea Yates: Agency Calculus and Discursive Determinism." Western States Communication Association Conference, Albuquerque, NM, 2004.
- Thomas, Nicholas A. "Performative Contradictions: The Bandwagons, Platonisms, and Invective of Performance in Policy Debate." Western States Communication Association Conference, Albuquerque, NM, 2004.
- Thomas, Nicholas A. "In the Timing: Foucaultian Archeology and Feminine Rhetoric." Whitman College Undergraduate Conference, Walla Walla, WA, 2001.
- Thomas, Nicholas A. "Discussion as Negotiation: A Rhetorical Model for Observing Core Discussion Effectiveness." Whitman College Undergraduate Conference, Walla Walla, WA, 2001.

## Significant Honors

- "Outstanding Graduate Student," CSULB Communication Studies Department, 2004.
- Organization for Research on Women and Communication's (ORWAC) Top Student Paper, "The Political Imprisonment of Andrea Yates: Agency Calculus and Discursive Determinism." Western States Communication Association Conference, Albuquerque, NM, 2004.

## Teaching Experience

- Graduate Assistant, Pennsylvania State University: taught three classes per year while pursuing Ph.D:

- CAS 100a: Public Speaking, Fall 2004 through Spring 2008 (three sections taught yearly). In 2008-2009, I will be teaching 5 sections of this course, 3 in the fall and 2 in the spring.
- CAS 375: Rhetoric & Controversy (taught one section, Fall 2007)
- Currently scheduled to teach CAS 214: Speechwriting for Spring 2009

Teaching Assistant, California State University, Long Beach: taught two labs and four full courses in Communication Studies while working towards an M.A.:

- Com 131: Argumentation (Labs), Fall 2002, Spring 2003.
- Com 130: Public Speaking, Fall 2003 (two sections taught), Spring 2004 (two taught).

Research Assistant, Center for First Amendment Studies, California State University, Long Beach, Fall 2003 to Spring 2004: Legal, political, and historical document retrieval as needed for continuing research at the Center, as an assistant to Craig R. Smith.

I am prepared to teach on any of the following subjects: Western classical rhetorical theory, Western medieval rhetorical theory, contemporary rhetorical theory, public speaking, freedom of speech, Burke, Foucault, Arendt, Heidegger, the rhetoric of evil and totalitarianism, Western political and ethical theories, feminist theories, controversy, and argument and debate. Most of these are topics I have either already completed considerable research on or have taught at debate camp (which might not sound like a lot, but the depth to which debaters put critical arguments to the test would certainly enable me to put together a syllabus and set of important questions on key texts effortlessly).

## **Professional Affiliations and Service**

- National Communication Association—Member.
- NCA's Rhetorical and Communication Theory Division—Nominating Committee Member, and paper and panel reviewer.
- NCA's Public Address Division—Paper and panel reviewer.
- NCA's Student Section (2005)—Paper and panel reviewer.

## **Credentials**

My confidential dossier, including letters of recommendation, transcripts, and any other relevant materials can be made available to you through Pennsylvania State University's Career Services Center. If you do not already have these materials, please contact me and I will get a copy of these materials to you as soon as possible.

## References

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