



Rhetorical Aspects of Discourses in Present-Day Society

By Lotte Dam, Lise-Lotte Holmgreen and Jeanne Strunck

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Since antiquity, the notion of rhetoric has been associated with Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian. Their theories are central to the understanding that, on the one hand, rhetoric can be used for persuading and convincing an audience, and on the other, for becoming an eloquent speaker. Based on this understanding, the study of rhetoric was for many years regarded by scholars as a meaningless enterprise as it was perceived as a study of linguistic ornamentation. However, in the beginning of the twentieth century, scholars regained an interest in the study of rhetoric in recognition of rhetorical skills being important for communication in modern society. Like speakers in public life, e.g. politicians, who had always acknowledged the role of rhetoric, all sorts of communicators, mediators and scholars became interested in rhetoric as a practical tool for building up texts meant for the public sphere as well as an analytical tool for the critique of public argumentation. This led to the development of new theories from New Rhetoric over Rhetorical Criticism to theories of genre and discourse, reflecting the view that rhetoric must be understood and used against the social and cultural framework in which it is embedded. The contributions of this book reflect this multi-faceted approach to rhetoric, discourse and genre through their focus upon and analysis of different institutionalised discourses. Thus, within the three sections of political, journalistic and organisational discourse, the articles discuss various discourse types and their rhetorical features, contributing to the understanding of rhetoric and discourse having significant influence on human action and interaction in society.

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Editorial Review

Review

This wide-ranging book offers new insights into crucial aspects of the public sphere—politics, journalism and the corporate world. A deeply rooted European tradition, the study of rhetoric, has re-appeared in the contemporary world, a world in which the public display of persuasive language seems to be the very essence of our self-understanding. Using up-to-date approaches to discourse analysis, the contributors to this volume deploy rhetorical analysis in a way that illuminates the nature of the rhetorical maelstrom that engulfs us in today's societies, and has been doing so at an accelerating pace for the last half century. This is an important volume indeed for anybody who is trying to make sense of the rising flood of daily discourse. --
Paul Chilton Lancaster University

About the Author

Lotte Dam, Lise-Lotte Holmgreen and Jeanne Strunck are all Associate Professors of linguistics, discourse and (intercultural) communication in the Department of Language and Culture at Aalborg University, Denmark. In 2006, they organised the first conference on Rhetoric in Society, from which the contributions in this book emerged.

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