

Call for papers
The logics of persuasion. Between anthropology and rhetoric

International Conference
University of Palermo, April 19 - 20, 2018
Polo Didattico, Building 12, Seminar room A and Multi-medial room A

Deadline for receiving abstracts: March 25, 2018

In this conference, we'll study the logics of persuasion according to anthropological and rhetorical perspectives, exchanging insights and viewpoints. Even though anthropology and rhetoric are historically defined in multiple ways, as a matter of fact they share a common presupposition opening a potentially rich dialogue between disciplines: an effort to reach individuals and groups through effective and persuasive messages. What is the particular value of these messages nowadays and how are they taken into account by rhetoric, anthropology and other social sciences? More specifically, in what ways do anthropology and other social sciences make use of rhetorical procedures in order to be more effective? Furthermore, how can rhetoric be conceived in an intercultural world? And what do we mean by effective rhetorical strategy? Finally, is it possible to do an anthropology of rhetoric and/or a rhetoric of anthropology? To this end, we propose four sections from which social scientists and rhetoricians can freely draw to exchange viewpoints and interrogations.

I. The power of words and/or images in ordinary and/or extraordinary contexts.

The power of words permeates cultures both in ordinary and extraordinary contexts. The study of the power of words in different contexts constitutes a priority for anthropology and rhetoric. For all scholars, it is a matter of making manifest and defining this power of words through specific analysis. In this section, it is possible to place research on classic and modern rhetoric, as well as on oral and written cultures in which words get a particular and effective power. In this section, there are questions concerning agency, contextualization of effective words, mixtures of persuasive iconic and linguistic signs. In what ways do words acquire agency? According to which modalities do words become effective in different contexts? What place do memory, gestures and different texts have in effective communications? Which combinations of images and words are more effective in daily life?

II. Uses of rhetoric in an intercultural world.

In this section are taken into account rhetorical strategies used to debate intercultural questions (colonialism, slavery, globalisation, rights, activism, natives claims, etc.). Many (political and media) debates and studies use rhetorical principles in order to face cultural and intercultural questions. Which rhetorical senses and communicative strategies can be tracked down in these debates and studies? In what ways do different rhetoric strategies converge (or diverge) to face particular topics? Are there well defined rules to support one's own perspective?

III. Rhetoric in ethnography.

This section concerns the study of the ways through which ethnographies present a culture by resorting to effective strategies. Necessarily, in order to be credible, ethnographies need a certain amount of effectiveness. Many anthropologists and sociologists, in their fieldwork, implicitly or explicitly resort to a "rhetorical function" in order to describe a culture. Furthermore, effectiveness and persuasiveness go hand in hand with a certain speech style. In what ways, more precisely, are these strategies and speech styles used? Where does their effectiveness come from? In what ways are insight and persuasion combined?

IV. Anthropological controversies.

A fertile field to explore in an interdisciplinary perspective concerns old and new controversies fought by rhetorical moves by anthropologists belonging to different theoretical currents (Mead/Freeman, Sahlins/Obeyesekere, Chagnon/Tierney, etc.). How are these anthropological controversies fought rhetorically? To what extent is it possible to resort to specific rhetorical strategies in these controversies? What is the place of a narrative choice for rhetorical goals?

In short, we provide an open list of possible topics:

- Rhetoric and pragmatics
- Rhetoric and intercultural debates
- Ethnography and rhetoric
- Management and resolution of controversies
- Narration and argumentation
- Rhetoric and existence
- Classical rhetoric and modern rhetoric
- Postmodernism and rhetoric
- Forms of manipulation
- Knowledge and persuasion
- Rules of persuasion
- Definitions of culture and rhetorical strategies
- Rhetoric and subjectivity
- Models of rhetoric communication

Scientific board:

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Practical information:

Deadline for submitting proposals: March 25, 2018
Proposal summary and title: 250-300 words
Duration of presentations: 20 minutes
Conference languages: Italian, French and English
Conference participation is free of charge
Travel costs, accommodation expenses and meals are covered by participants or their own institutions