

# An Overview of Rhetoric

My first problem lies of course in the very word "rhetoric." - Wayne Booth

## What is Rhetoric?

- **For some people rhetoric is synonymous with empty talk, or even deception**
  - "that's mere rhetoric"
  - "that's just empty rhetoric"
- Term of derision and widely studied discipline, employed as an insult and recommended to students as a practical subject of study.

## What is Rhetoric? Where do you see it playing out in your life?

- **Art of persuasion in an abstract form**
- **Persuade of speaking**
  - **Coach is trying to persuade characters/motivate them**
  - **Logic / pathos**
  - **He knows how to articulate his speaking**

## Early Rhetoric

- The earliest and most influential discussions of rhetoric occurs in Plato's dialogue *Gorgias*
  - ***Gorgias* - a work written in the opening decades of the fourth century BCE when rhetoric was popular in Athens**
  - Plato takes a dim view of rhetoric
- Socrates argues that the type of rhetoric being taught in Athens was simply a means by which "naturally clever" people and "flatter" their unsuspecting listeners into agreeing with them and doing their bidding.
- Plato condemns rhetoric as "foul" and "ugly"
- In 1690 John Locke had an advanced view of rhetoric that was likely influenced by Plato
  - Locke acknowledges that on aspect of Rhetoric "order and clearness" is useful
    - Artificial and figurative language is deceptive.
- Friedrich Nietzsche - 19th century German philosopher who made a serious study of rhetoric
  - **"we call an author, a book, or a style. Rhetorical when we observe a conscious application of artistic means of speaking; it always implies a gentle reproof"**
  - The artistic means which are already founded in language
    - Language itself possesses an irreducible artistic quality?