

Call for Papers

8th Rhetoric in Society Conference

Rhetoric as Strategic Thinking

Eberhard Karls University, 26–28 May 2021

Tübingen, Germany

Organized by the Rhetoric Society of Europe in collaboration with the
Institute for General Rhetoric and the Institute for Media Studies at Tübingen University

<http://ris8.org/>

We are very happy to announce that proposals are now invited for panels, papers, roundtables, and other forms of presentation to be delivered at *Rhetoric in Society 8*, which is the biannual conference organized by the Rhetoric Society of Europe. The conference is scheduled to take place from May 26th to 28th 2021 at Eberhard Karls University in Tübingen, Germany.

The incalculable nature of the COVID-19 pandemic obliges us to remain precautionous. As the safety of our conference participants is of highest concern, we ought to point out that in an event of the pandemic extending into the late spring of 2021, the conference will be postponed. However, we remain optimistic and encourage you to submit your papers and panels and are looking forward to welcoming you in Tübingen.

We invite proposals for:

- Papers or panels which speak directly to the conference theme (explained below);
- Papers or panels which address general issues related to the theory, analysis & practice of rhetoric in society;
- Other kinds of presentations such as roundtables, world cafés or debates.

Rhetoric as Strategic Thinking

With its focus on ‘strategy’ and ‘strategic thinking,’ the *Rhetoric in Society 8* conference discusses the ways we define rhetoric as a specific form of communication, argumentation, persuasion, or mediation. Strategic thinking as a complex cognitive activity involves the mental representation of a goal as well as an understanding of the ways and means to achieve this goal through communicative action. Rhetors are expected to imagine a number of possible scenarios before deciding on a specific strategy and even to adjust this strategy during a campaign or even during a single

speech. As Quintilian famously put it in his *Institutio oratoria* (II, 13, 2, transl. Butler): “If the whole of rhetoric could be thus embodied in one compact code, it would be an easy task of little compass: but most rules are liable to be altered by the nature of the case, circumstances time and place, and by hard necessity itself. Consequently, the all-important gift for an orator is a wise adaptability since he is called upon to meet the most varied emergencies.” The bellicose metaphor of the commander (*strategos*) is often used in ancient rhetorical theories to conceive of the orator’s ability to adjust a strategic plan to specific circumstances or specific audiences. Like the commander, Quintilian’s orator has to find answers “in the circumstances of the case.” (*Institutio oratoria*, II, 13, 5, transl. Butler)

The conference endeavors to discuss rhetoric as strategic thinking in order to both define and question a key characteristic of rhetorical communication. It does so by exploring different concepts from different disciplinary backgrounds, such as argumentation, strategic maneuvering, imagination and mental simulation, rhetorical agency, situational rhetoric, literature and linguistics, political theory, communication and media studies, organizational rhetoric/communication, public relations, philosophy of language and many more. We would also like to discuss the blurring boundaries between rhetoric and other forms of strategic communication such as manipulation, propaganda, or populism, to assess the strategies applied by human and non-human actors in scripted or artificial media environments, and to explore the conditions responsible for the success or failure of rhetorical strategies and tactics in societies that are increasingly coping with polarization, radicalization and deception.

General papers

We also invite proposals for papers and panels more generally concerned with the theory, practice or analysis of rhetoric. This may include, for example, historical scholarship, theoretical analysis and contemporary cultural or political critique; work grounded in political theory, philosophy, languages and linguistics, argumentation, literary studies, communication studies, composition, media studies, psychology, sociology, history, cultural studies and more. Papers might be comparative, national or international in focus, concerned with particular orators, ideologies or movements and focus on spoken, written or audio-visual communication.

Alternative presentations

We welcome proposals for forms of presentation other than panels and papers. This might include: roundtables addressing key rhetorical themes, works or phenomena; debates between contending positions; other, novel and effective ways of communicating research findings, claims and arguments.

How to submit a proposal

Please submit your paper proposals by September 30th 2020 to ris8@rhetorik.uni-tuebingen.de

We will inform you about our decision December 1st 2020.

Please do not submit more than two proposals. Panel proposals should not comprise more than four individual papers.

Individual Paper Proposals

All individual paper proposals must be written in English and submitted to the Committee with the following information:

- Title
- Author name
- Email address
- Affiliation
- Abstract (300 words maximum)

Session Proposals

Session Organizers should submit session proposals written in English to the Committee with the following information:

- Session title
- Session abstract of 300 words maximum
- List of participants including chair, presenters and discussants (if applicable), their email addresses, and the names of the institutions that they are associated with
- The related paper abstracts (300 words maximum/ paper)