

American Society for the History of Rhetoric

Call for Papers

Thinking Through Rhetoric:

A Symposium on Rhetoric, Cognition, and Culture

Thursday, 20 November 2008

San Diego, California

Human cognition and human culture, in their rich diversity and stunning complexity, are now the focus points for scholars representing a broad range of disciplines from neuroscience and evolutionary biology to rhetoric and literary studies. The fall 2007 issue of *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, included a translation of Dan Sperber's 1975 essay, "Rudiments of Cognitive Rhetoric." Prof. Sperber is a French cognitive scientist and linguist. Historically, various cultural and/or scholarly conceptions of cognition – how the human minds come to know and understand – have had profound influence on rhetorical theory, the teaching of rhetoric, and rhetorical practice. Indeed, every practical or pedagogical rhetorical program has relied upon implicit or explicit notions of cognition, or what might be called "cultures of cognition." Furthermore, the ups and downs of the art of rhetoric's fortune have been more than once tied to theories of cognition, as in the oft-cited disrepute into which rhetoric fell in the Enlightenment due in part to Cartesian theories of cognition. Rhetoric's history, therefore, is closely related to the history of conceptions of cognition, and conceptions of cognition are closely related to culture. Today, both the science of cognition and the study of rhetoric represent dynamic intellectual fields, each with rich histories. This symposium considers these histories, as well as the present state of studies in these areas and their overlap.

Keynote Speaker: Thomas Habinek, University of Southern California

Thomas Habinek has been Professor of Classics at the University of Southern California, since 1992, and is currently in his seventh year as Chair of the department. His areas of interest include Latin literature, Roman cultural history, and ancient rhetoric and oratory. Two new books appeared in 2005: [The World of Roman Song: From Ritualized Speech to Social Order](#) (Johns Hopkins University Press) and [Ancient Rhetoric and Oratory](#), part of Blackwell Publishers' new series of introductions to the ancient world. Other recent publications include the article on "Slavery and Class" in the [Blackwell Companion to Latin Literature](#), ed. S.J.

Harrison; an essay entitled "Satire as Aristocratic Play" in the [Cambridge Companion to Roman Satire](#), ed. K. Freudenburg; [The Politics of Latin Literature](#) (Princeton 1998; paperback 2001); and [The Roman Cultural Revolution](#), co-edited with Alessandro Schiesaro (Cambridge 1997; paperback 2001). He is an editor of the journal [Classical Antiquity](#) and editor of the book series [Classics and Contemporary Thought](#), published by the University of California Press.

Conference Submissions:

Although proposals of all work in the history of rhetoric will be considered, preference will be given to submissions that address topics consistent with the conference theme, including, but not limited to, such questions as:

How might scholars of rhetoric both learn from the work of scholars in scientific and social scientific disciplines, and how might rhetoric in turn contribute to our understandings of cognition and culture?

How do histories of cognition and histories of rhetoric inform, illuminate, or challenge each other?

What are the limits of "cognition" with respect to rhetoric, and likewise what are the limits of "rhetoric" with respect to cognition?

More specific questions addressed at the symposium might include:

How might our current theories and/or histories of rhetoric need to be reformulated to address the insights of sciences of mind?

How might rhetorical pedagogy learn from, challenge, and/or compliment ostensibly "scientific" theories of pedagogy?

What new approaches to the history of rhetoric might be opened by focusing on conceptions and cultures of cognition?

Panel proposals will be considered, but individual submissions are encouraged. Individual proposals should consist of a title and an abstract of no more than 500 words without identifying features in the body of the text. Panel descriptions should include a description of the panel's theme and descriptions of each presentation (not to exceed 750 words). A detachable cover sheet with author(s), title, and contact information should be included. Papers from rhetoric, classics, languages and literatures, cultural studies, history, philosophy,

and all related disciplines are encouraged, as are submissions from scholars who are not members of ASHR. Proposals should be submitted as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word format to [David Timmerman](#). The deadline for papers and proposals is Friday, August 1, 2008. Acceptance decisions will be made by September 1. Additional information on the pre-conference will be posted at the ASHR website www.ashr.org at that time.

NB: Pre-registration for this event is required.