

**'Using at least two media texts of your own choosing related to at least two rhetorics from the course, identify and discuss the use of rhetoric in your texts in relation to the issues discussed in the course, employing and commenting on a rhetorical approach to make sense of the relationship between communication, politics and governing.'**

Contrary to popular belief, rhetoric is a powerful tool for persuasion and communication. When used effectively, rhetoric has the ability to sway communities and restore faith in a leader or cause. Unfortunately, rhetoric is commonly used to describe empty and disingenuous language used by politicians. Examples of this include Scott Morrison's Climate Summit Speech, where the Saturday Paper described how his "shift in rhetoric" sparked false excitement in the media. The Prime Minister's speech did not contain an emissions target, yet he used rhetoric to create a sense that Australia was going to commit more strongly to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The information included in Morrison's speech was later proved to be misleading, undermining his speech and use of rhetoric. As a point of contrast, Julia Gillard's "Misogyny Speech", is recognised for the use of language and representation of the feminist cause. In her speech, Gillard used rhetoric to assert herself as strong leader and Prime Minister of Australia. In Foucault's theory of power, he does not describe power as something to acquire, but rather as "something exercised within interactions." A leader's ability to persuade a community can often be seen in their use of rhetoric within these interactions.

According to Miller and Rose (2008, p94), society can be "governed through our allegiance to particular communities of morality or identity". On October 2012, former Prime Minister Julia Gillard pointed her finger at then Opposition Leader, Tony Abbott, and declared, "I will not be lectured about sexism and misogyny by this man." The fifteen minute speech occurred in the House of Representatives and has been recognised as a broader call to the community to recognise the discrimination faced by women in positions of power. The speech has over 3.5 million views on YouTube, making it a powerful and widespread message. Julia Gillard used rhetoric of a community to appeal to not only Australian women in politics, but people across the world who recognise the underrepresentation of women in politics. "Rhetoric of community" refers the use of specific language to target groups who identify and share values with each other. Miller and Rose (2008, p84-113) highlight that there is an inherent paradox within communities. Labelled communities such as "feminists" and "Labour voters" are seen as pre-existing, yet they require ongoing work for individuals to be mobilised as members of these communities. For example, Julia

Gillard's speech worked for members of the feminist community to "mobilise them toward some ends" (Miller & Rose, 2008, p151). The speech reaffirms their importance as a community in society as it highlights gender inequality, reason why the community was first established. Communities are not seclusive, and they often overlap as individuals identify as a member of a number of groups. For example, it can be assumed that Julia Gillard used rhetoric to appeal to the feminist community, in addition to women in general. This is an incorrect assumption because Gillard's speech did not appeal to all women, and not all women identify as part of the feminist community. This lack of social cohesion lead to what Miller and Rose (2008, p88) describe as "the death of the social" and thus the "birth of communities". This movement stemmed from the realisation that society is more complex than an "existential sphere of human sociality (Miller & Rose, 2008, p87). Society is the result of how humans thought and acted on their "collective experiences within a limited geographical and temporal field" (Miller & Rose, 2008, p87). Not all women have thought or acted similarly on their "collective experience", and therefore identify as part of different communities. Whilst Julia Gillard was Prime Minister of Australia, her rhetoric did not appeal to all communities within Australia. This was arguably her intention, as she challenged Tony Abbott and the communities who do not support her belief that she and other women in Parliament have experienced sexism. The support Gillard received following her speech reasserted her position as not only the first female Prime Minister of Australia, but also as a successful Prime Minister in her own right.

There is a "...widespread Enlightenment assumption that rhetoric is a special, and slightly underhand, use (or abuse) of language." (Leith & Myerson, 1989, p2). Politicians who use wordy, extravagant language have created these negative connotations around the term "rhetoric". Rhetoric is now commonly seen as a tool for elitist mystification, as opposed to a tool for persuasion and effective communication. In April this year, Prime Minister Scott Morrison addressed the Global Climate Action Summit without introducing a more ambitious emissions target. The PM used the rhetoric of nation in phrases such as "Australia has a strong track record of..." and "We have met and exceeded..." to encourage Australian listeners to feel a sense of connection to his speech. Rhetoric of nation uses familiar and inclusive language to target a sense of connection to "our" country. This sense of connection stems from nationalism, a type of imagined community. Imagined communities are essential to understanding nationalism. In our limited community bound by international borders, we consider ourselves

connected to people we have never met. Anderson (1991, p26) compares the “idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time” to the idea of a “nation which is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history”. This sense of simultaneity in time helps to form a cohesive sense of national community, as we are all together in this particular time in history. Scott Morrison uses rhetoric of a nation to tie into rhetoric of future. His rhetoric was essentially “an exhortation to the public to keep the faith” (Quirk, p.134, 2008). However, Scott Morrison said in his speech, “For Australia, it is not a question of if or even by when for net zero , but importantly how.” This statement juxtaposes the outlook of the Government with the scientific community and younger generation, who consider the speed of emissions reduction to be critical. Scott Morrison is adhering to the general public’s definition of rhetoric; disingenuous language designed to mislead an audience. The Saturday Paper describes how Scott Morrison’s “shift in rhetoric” (par 3) sparked excitement in the Australian media that “Australia was set to ramp up its climate ambitions” (par 3) despite no new emissions target being introduced. This use of language reflects on Scott Morrison’s communication as a leader, and also to the extent in which media and communication are embedded in governing.

Rhetorics (plural) are not reserved for the capital P of politics. They can be understood as a “process” (Leith & Myerson, 1989, pxii) and as a “perpetual dialogue” (Leith & Myerson, 1989, p3). It is important to note this is in the context of the Cultural Model of Communication, where communication is seen as the constant work of negotiating between individual apprehension and shared social codes and contexts. The alternate model of communication, the Transmission Model, does not take social context into account. According to Leith and Myerson (1989, p1-6), rhetoric is derived from three principles: address, argument and play. For example, Julia Gillard delivered her speech in the House of Representatives, and her arguments were carefully constructed for that social context. She frequently addresses the “Leader of Opposition” Tony Abbott, who is sitting across from her, and chooses to “remind the Leader of Opposition” of certain instances where he has allegedly made sexist and misogynistic comments. She also addresses “this Parliament” directly in order to involve her audience. However, audience can be an elastic term, and the speech was not necessarily intended for 3.5 million viewers (on YouTube). This large audience is likely to interpret the speech differently, which is beyond the conscious control of Julia Gillard. The “Misogyny Speech” is an example of “rhetoric is not representational... but is performative”

(Dearman, 2018, p22). Julia Gillard's delivery of speech was authentic and inspiring, as indicated by its international popularity. This can be juxtaposed to Scott Morrison's Climate Summit Action Speech, where due to audio issues, the first half of the speech was muted. Whilst audio issues were not at the fault of the Prime Minister, they did affect the delivery of his speech. The Prime Minister did not attempt to use rhetoric to engender new states of affairs, capacities or relations. In fact, it was a demonstration of his power as Prime Minister when he restated Australia's previous climate policy, despite the number of Australians who had deemed this target insufficient. Whilst "communication may not be enough to relieve the racial tension in our society or, for that matter, end a war" (Grossberg, & Wartella, 2006, p17), communication remains a critical part of our governing system. This implies media and communication are embedded in governing (not separate to governing). According to Foucault (1994, p254), the rationality of power is characterised through tactics. Tactics such as the use of formulated and styled arguments to achieve a desired outcome from a particular audience are invaluable in good governance. Understanding government, therefore, necessarily entails attention to governing rhetorics.

Effective communication is not simply the transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver. It is the use of persuasion and argument to achieve a desired social outcome, which can be defined as "rhetoric". Rhetoric is tailored towards particular audiences in the context of specific occasions. Julia Gillard used rhetoric when she spoke fearlessly to the former Opposition Leader sitting across from her, igniting audience participation from the House of Representatives. With the use of rhetoric, Scott Morrison was able to spark false hope that Australia was intending to commit more strongly to reducing emissions. Rhetoric is ultimately an exercise of power through communication. In turn, media and communication are embedded in governing, not a separate tool used for the transmission of information.

**Word Count: 1620**

## Reference List

- Miller, P & Rose, N 2008, "The Death of the Social? Re-figuring the Territory of Government", in *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life*. Cambridge, UK, Polity Press, pp. 84-113.
- Dearman, P, Greenfield C & Williams, P 2018, *Media and the Government of Populations: Communication, Technology and Power*, United Kingdom, Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 21-22
- Grossberg, L, Wartella, E, Whitney, DC & Wise, JM 2006, 'Two Models of Communication', in *MediaMaking: Mass Media in a Popular Culture*, 2nd edn, Sage, Thousand Oaks, pp.17-28
- Anderson, B 1991, 'Introduction' and 'Cultural Roots', in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, pp. 5-7, 22-28, 33-36.
- Leith, D & Myerson, G 1989, *The Power of Address: Explorations in Rhetoric*, London, Routledge, pp. xii-xv (excerpts), 1-6, 79-88, 151-154, 177-179.
- Foucault, M 1994, 'Omnes et Singulatum: Towards a Criticism of Political Reason', in S. M. McMurrin ed., *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values: Volume 2*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.253-254.
- Carey, JW & Quirk, JJ 2009, 'The History of the Future', in Carey, JW *Communication As Culture, Revised Edition: Essays On Media And Society*, Routledge, EBSCOhost eBook Collection, pp. 133-154.
- 2021, 'Morrison Off Target on Climate', *The Saturday Paper*, viewed 31 May 2021, <<https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/politics/2021/04/24/morrison-target-climate/161918640011521?cb=1622632040> >
- O'Malley, N & Folley, M 2021, 'Scott Morrison's speech to the Leaders Summit on Climate (annotated)', *Sydney Morning Herald*, viewed 20 May 2021, <<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/scott-morrison-s-speech-to-the-leaders-summit-on-climate-annotated-20210423-p57lvu.html>>

Gillard, J 2012, *'The Misogyny Speech'*, JG, viewed 20 May 2021, <<https://www.juliagillard.com.au/the-misogyny-speech/>>

ABC News 2012, *Julia Gillard's 'Misogyny Speech' in full (2012)*, YouTube, 9 October, ABC News, Australia, viewed 20 May 2021, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihd7ofrwQX0>>