



Course Proposal

Civically Engaged Rhetoric in the Age of Generative AI

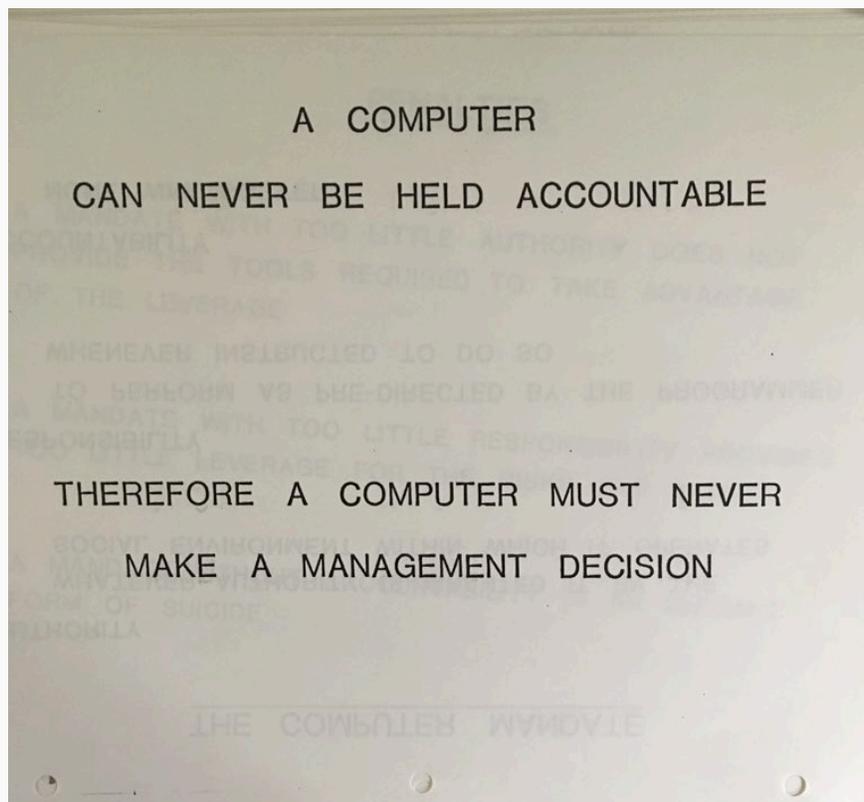
Prepared By:
Vee Kennedy

Background

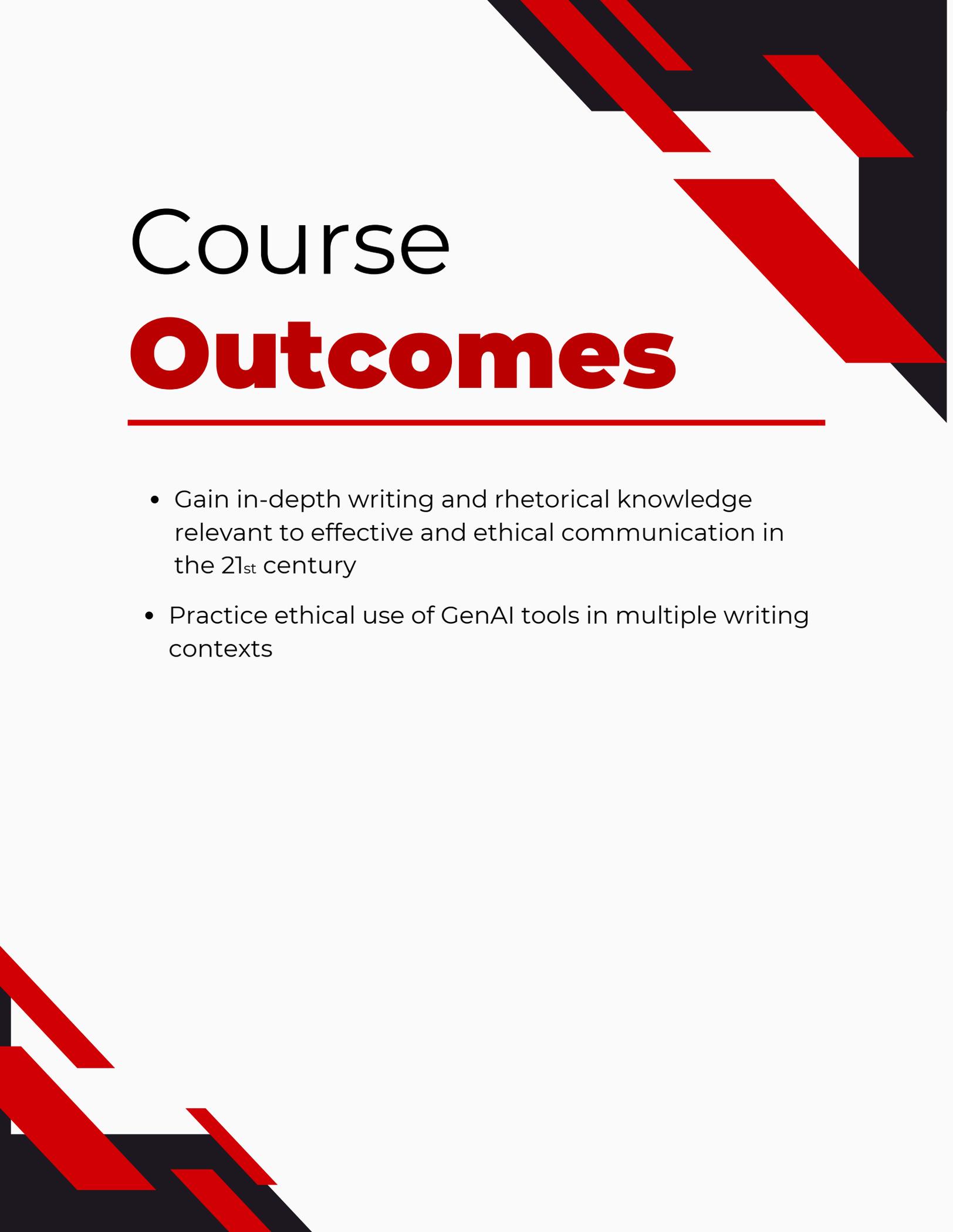
As we often tell our students, the creation of rhetoric in Ancient Greece coincided with the creation of Democracy as an institution. The two therefore can be argued to have worked in tandem since the dawn of the western tradition. What does it mean to teach civically engaged rhetoric in the age of generative artificial intelligence? The course design includes both formative and summative assessments created for and in response to generative artificial intelligence tools. In conjunction with readings from Palczewski et al's 2022 *Rhetoric in Civic Life* as well as Brendt & Muse 2004's *Composing a Civic Life*, students are invited to respond to contemporary calls for how civic engagement can be used to engage with AI in a manner that exemplifies the CCCC's call for community engagement that is "anti-racist, anticolonialist, and anti-abelist" and RSA's call on *Rhetorics for All* when evidence from practitioners in our field and across the digital humanities, including Siebers et al 2025, suggest that AI "amplifies bias and harm, increases surveillance of the already disenfranchised, and exacerbates systemic racism (Benjamin, 2019; Eubanks, 2018)."

Institutional Context

This course was designed as an upper-level course within The Department of Writing and Rhetoric at the University of Central Florida. The Department of Writing and Rhetoric includes both a BA and MA program, as well as minor programs and certificates. The University of Central Florida services a diverse population of students with an undergraduate enrollment of over 69,000. Upper-level courses from the Department that offer similar content include ENC 3331: Rhetoric and Civic Engagement and ENC 4353: Writing for Social Change.



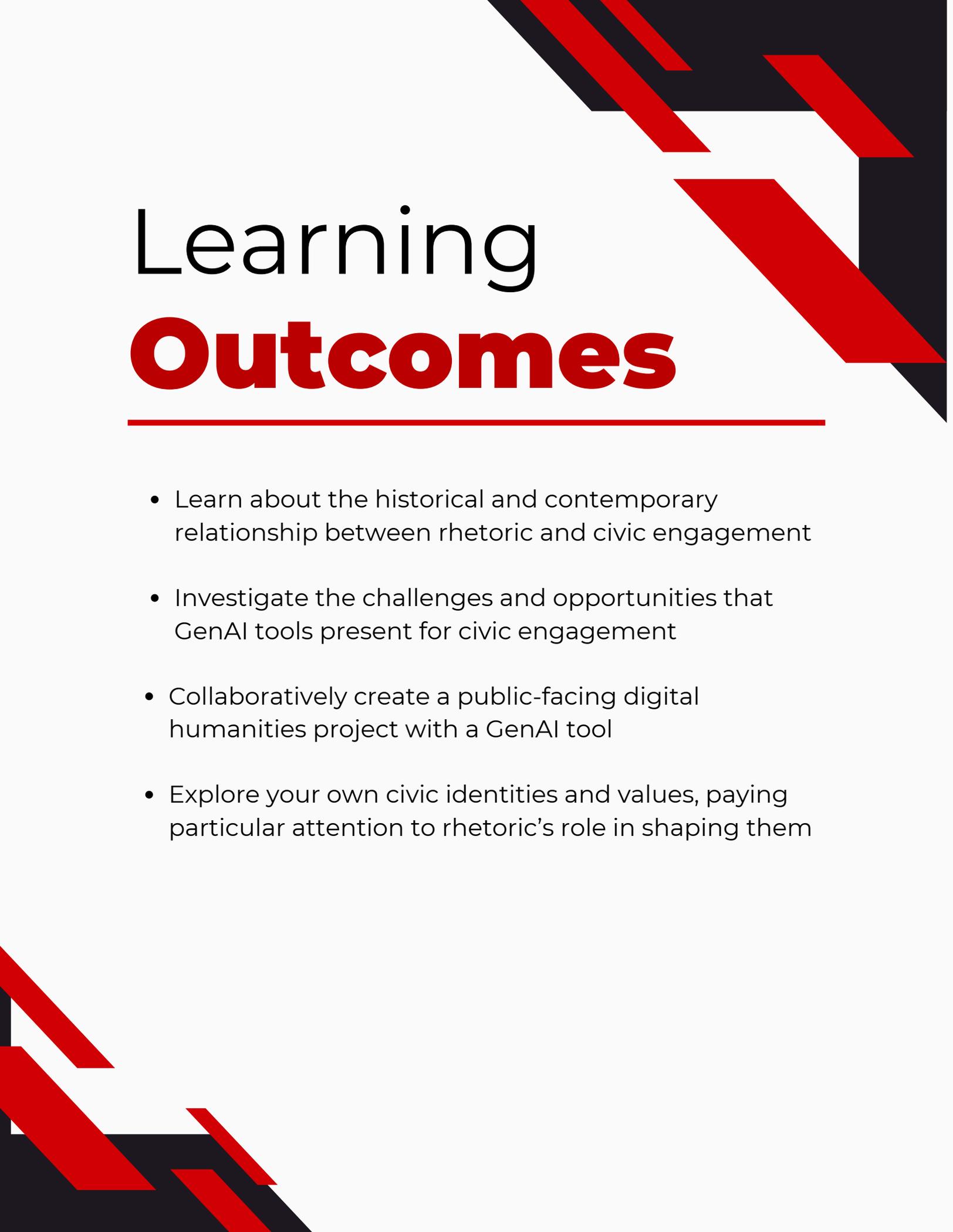
IBM Training Manual, 1979



Course

Outcomes

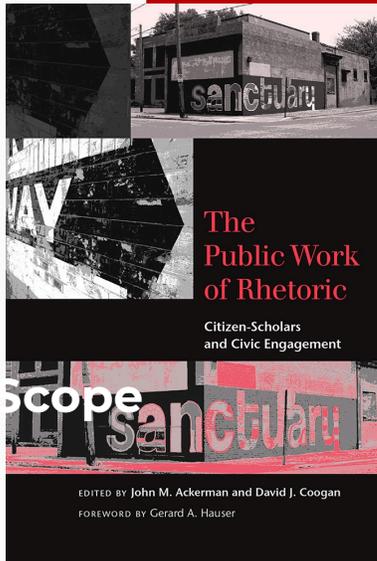
- Gain in-depth writing and rhetorical knowledge relevant to effective and ethical communication in the 21st century
- Practice ethical use of GenAI tools in multiple writing contexts



Learning **Outcomes**

- Learn about the historical and contemporary relationship between rhetoric and civic engagement
- Investigate the challenges and opportunities that GenAI tools present for civic engagement
- Collaboratively create a public-facing digital humanities project with a GenAI tool
- Explore your own civic identities and values, paying particular attention to rhetoric's role in shaping them

Materials and Texts



The Public Work of Rhetoric
Citizen-Scholars and Civic Engagement
edited by John M. Ackerman and David J. Coogan
foreword by Gerard A. Hauser

Paperback

978-1-61117-303-1

Ebook

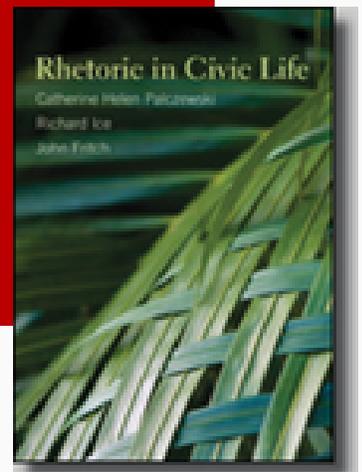
978-1-61117-304-8

Rhetoric in Civic Life

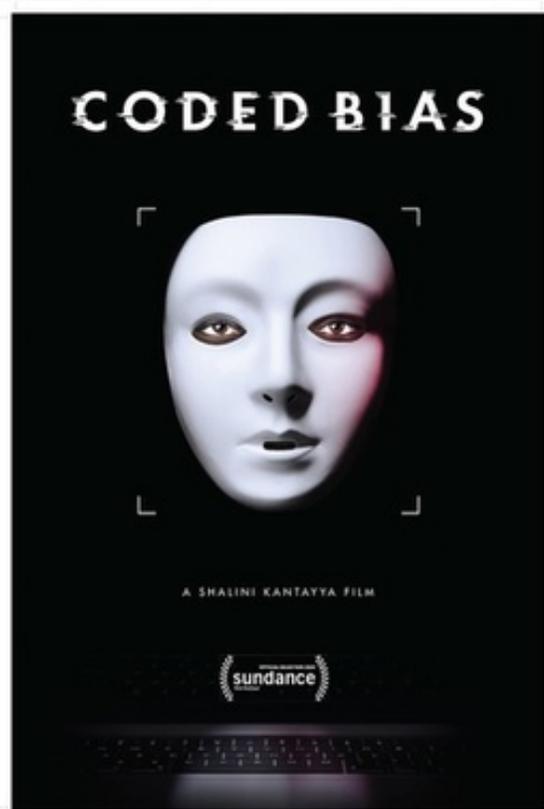
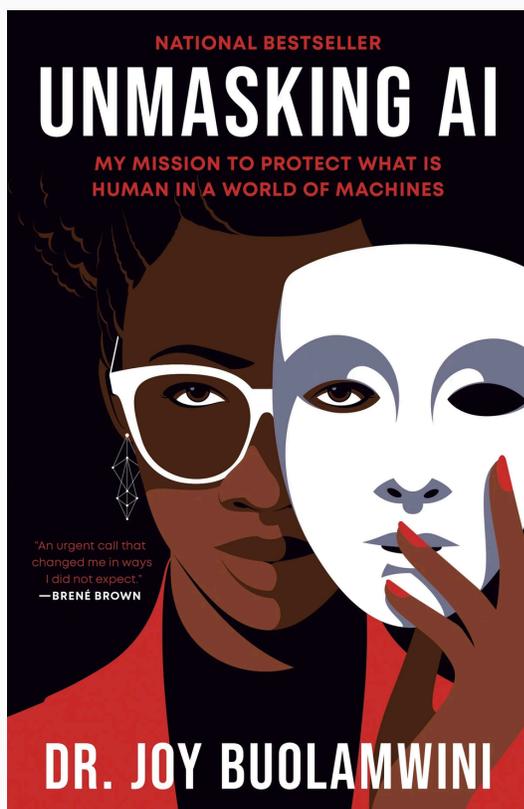
Authors

Palczewski, Ice, Fritch

9781891136283



Materials **and Texts**



With additional excerpts provided in .PDF

Projects

Weekly Journal

Weekly informal check-ins on course readings and small-scale LLM experiments, responding to specific prompts

Annotated Bibliography and Literature Review

A traditional piece of academic writing on a local civically engaged topic of choice

Public Audience Research Deliverable

A multimodal project that synthesizes the work of the civic engagement project for a public audience



Weekly Journal

Weekly Formative Activities

Throughout the semester, students will be asked to engage with weekly reading/viewing response-style prompts and exercises using or not using GenerativeAI tools. As formative assessments, these contributions will be graded on completion and thoroughness of response. I recommend approximately 400-500 words written in response for each week, with at least one citation from a course reading to provide evidence-based claims.

Journal Prompt #1

Using the image-creating Large Language Model of your choice, such as AdobeFirefly or DALLE-3 through ChatGPT, or Microsoft CoPilot, prompt the model to depict a person doing Civic Engagement activities for you. You will have to create a login for the LLM of your choice if you have not already. Save the image or images you that you coproduce with the large language model, as you will need them for this activity. Then, respond to the questions below.

- 1) First, share a direct quote of the prompt that you used and the LLM that you used.
- 2) Embed the image and describe what you see. Remember that while large language models do not "think" on their own, the data they are trained with provides likely outcomes based on the training in the data. For example, what does civic engagement look like? What "activities" has the LLM's training data suggested are civic engagement? What does the person (or people) wear?
- 3) What kind of assumptions can you make about the training data for the model based on what the LLM produced? Think back to the follow up questions in question #2 and critically engage with what the large language model created and what this tells us.

Additional Topics

Vee wants to work with:

AI Policing (Eubanks; Noble; Benjamin)

Journal Prompt #1

Example Response

1) The prompt I used was “Generate an image of a person doing civic engagement.” I used Microsoft CoPilot to produce this image on 9/11/2025.

2) The generated image shows a picture of a young woman of color wearing a denim jacket appearing to register an older white man to vote. You can tell that the young woman is the person doing the civic engagement activity because she is wearing a “volunteer” nametag, which seems to indicate that the LLM’s training suggests that volunteering is a Civic Engagement activity. Everyone is dressed informally, which I construe to mean an informal community setting.



Annotated Bibliography with Literature Review

An AI- Assisted Research Project

An annotated bibliography is a research tool that scholars use to organize and keep track of the sources that they have collected. This genre includes a list of citations for the sources collected, each followed by a brief "annotation" that summarizes the source and justifies the relevancy of it. I am also encouraging you to use the GenAI tool of your choice to assist you in reading and summarizing your secondary sources.

Please note that the use of AI for this assignment is going to be carefully monitored and you should be cautious about using these methods outside of this assignment's context.

Annotated Bibliography with Literature Review

Assignment Details

Your Annotated Bibliography with Literature Review must include:

1. **CARS Model Literature Review:** Begin your annotated bibliography with a carefully crafted literature review written in academic writing (typically 3-4 double-spaced pages) that announces your scholarly conversation and explains the current conversation happening between your secondary sources. Using your sources during this unit and annotated below, you will need to synthesize all six of your secondary sources to show what past scholars have studied and argued. You must follow the steps of the CARs Model as described on the rubric and credit ChatGPT or any other AI software whenever you use it.

Annotated Bibliography with Literature Review

Assignment Details

2. Annotations:

Six individual annotations (350-500 words each) for each of the secondary sources you selected. These annotations must include a proper APA or MLA citation for the article followed by two paragraphs:

- a. The first paragraph must summarize the main points or findings from the secondary source. You should rely heavily on paraphrasing and summary with minimal or no quoting. You are encouraged to use AI like ChatGPT in order to machine read your secondary sources, but you must state when you have included any summary or paraphrase written by AI. You must also actually read or skim the secondary source to ensure that the summary the AI provided for you is accurate and correct.
- b. The second paragraph must be written by you alone and must discuss why you selected this source for your project. You can talk about its relevancy to other sources in your annotated bibliography or its relation to your own line of inquiry, as long as you are justifying its inclusion. Here you may also discuss any AI reading process you may have used in creating the first paragraph of your annotation. If you used AI, did it provide a decent summary? Was the summary missing anything important?

Weekly Schedule

Add a little bit of body text

This schedule may change ...

Date	Course Content
Week One	Introduction to Civic Engagement
Week Two	Coogan & Ackerman, <i>The Space to Work in Public Life</i>
Week Three	Position Statements from the Ancients, CCCCs and RSA
Week Four	<i>Coded Bias</i> & Buolamwini
Week Five	
Week Six	

Weekly Schedule

Add a little bit of body text

This schedule may change ...

Date	Course Content
Week Seven	
Week Eight	
Week Nine	
Week Ten	
Week Eleven	
Week Twelve	

Weekly Schedule

Add a little bit of body text

This schedule may change ...

Date	Course Content
Week Thirteen	
Week Fourteen	
Week Fifteen	
Week Sixteen	