

Reading Journal for General Introduction to Rhetoric (Bizzell and Herzberg)

This chapter is the introduction for a textbook that is going to cover the history of rhetoric. Despite it just being a chapter in a textbook, it does seem to have a thesis in its opening: even though you could give any number of definitions for rhetoric, the only way you can really define the subject is by tracing your way through its development through history. So I get the thesis, but I do notice that the authors hedge their bets on page 7: "Rhetoric has frequently been treated as if it were chiefly a succession of reformations of the classical system outlined above. *There is some justice to this view*" (emphasis my own). It does seem, at times, that we do not have to trace the history of rhetoric to define the subject. Instead, we could just look at how the Greeks and Romans built. My other main takeaway from this introductory chapter is two quotes that are a call to action for the study of rhetoric. First, we get a quote from Quintilian arguing "a good man speaking well" might save the state. Second, in the final sentence, Bizzell and Herzberg suggest rhetoric is "[built] on a long tradition that is now, more than ever, worthy of our close attention." To respond to these two quotes which I group together: this text was clearly written before the re-election of our current president. I think the evidence is in – a good man speaking well is not going to save us. We are cooked. That said, when you had asked on the first day what we wanted to focus on, I had responded that I think my answer would change by the end of the course, so my response was a survey of all the topics. I feel I am proven correct from this first reading. I think we should focus on rhetoric, having now been introduced to the subject. I feel like I might have similar reactions as we continue throughout the course.