



Rhetoric is an essential primary resource for research into the rhetoric tradition in the Renaissance. Rhetorical writing also reveals much about 15th-century perceptions of society and government. The unit is a valuable aid to research in the development of contemporary conceptions of politics, law, philosophy and religion.



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INCUNABULA: THE PRINTING
 REVOLUTION IN EUROPE, 1455-1500
 Units 22 & 23: *Rhetoric*

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Introduction and selection: Professor James Murphy (Emeritus Professor of Rhetoric, University of California, Davis)

15th-Century Rhetoric

"Who, What, To Whom you should speak: Why, How, When you should consider." Thus Albertanus de Brixia summed up the key points of rhetoric in his manual, "De arte loquendi et tacendi", written in 1245 and first printed about 1472.

Rhetoric, or the study of the techniques of discourse, was a subject that fascinated the Renaissance humanists. There was great interest in recovering the classical origins of rhetoric. Many ancient authors' works were printed in the 15th century; they brought fundamental aspects of the discipline, such as the Roman system of five "parts" of rhetoric, to a modern audience.

As well as preserving the past, however, contemporary writers developed the rhetorical tradition to suit their own preoccupations. Compendia, or summaries of the entire doctrine, became very popular, as did manuals of letter writing and treatises advising on the use of memory to aid discourse. There was also a revival of interest in styles of expression. Writers looked to the Roman tradition to provide a purer language for letters and speech than medieval Latin offered.

Highlights of *Rhetoric*

Students of rhetoric tracing the development of the discipline during this period have identified seven different types. The microfiche collection enables scholars to explore the full range of this intriguing subject. The authors and texts forming these two units include:

- Ancient Rhetoric: All of Cicero's rhetorical works, including his dialogue, "De Oratore" and editions of the pseudo-Ciceronian "Rhetorica ad Herennium"; Quintilian's "Institutio oratoria", in five different editions with contemporary commentary
- Compendia: The "Rhetoricorum libri V" of Georgius Trapezuntius, and works by Johann Koelhoff and Friedrich Riederer

- Preaching: this section includes the "Margarita eloquentiae" of Gullielmus Traversanus de Saona, the first rhetorical text to be printed in England and apparently the first to be used as a school "textbook"
- Epistolography: Nicolaus Perottus's "Rudimenta grammatices", which includes a section on letterwriting, plus many authors whose works have not yet been fully explored by scholars. There is great scope in this area for further research
- Memory: Jacobus Publicius's "Ars memorativa", including woodcuts to illustrate the use of images
- Style: many editions of Laurentius Valla's "Elegantiae linguae Latinae", and works on figures and tropes
- Other works: miscellaneous work of general interest, such as medieval rhetorical treatises and Albertus de Eyb's "Margarita poetica"

Of Related Interest

Researchers may also find it useful to explore the units on *Italian Humanism* and *Grammar*.

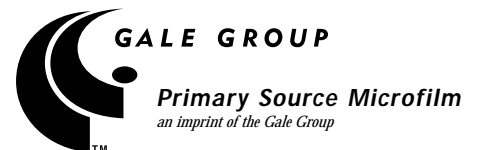
Unit 22: 266 fiche, 75 titles

Unit 23: 269 fiche, 94 titles

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