What is Rhetoric and Why do We Use it?

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Rhetoric refers to the study and uses of written, spoken and visual language. It investigates how language is used to organize and maintain social groups, construct meanings and identities, coordinate behavior, mediate power, produce change, and create knowledge. Rhetoricians often assume that language is constitutive (we shape and are shaped by language), dialogic (it exists in the shared territory between self and other), closely connected to thought (mental activity as "inner speech") and integrated with social, cultural and economic practices. Rhetoric began 2500 years ago as the study of the forms of communication and argument essential to public, political and legal life in Ancient Greece. It has since evolved a rich and diverse body of research, texts, and pedagogies. In its long and vigorous history rhetoric has enjoyed many definitions, accommodated differing purposes, and varied widely in what it included. And yet, for most of its history it has maintained its fundamental character as a discipline for training students 1) to perceive how language is at work orally and in writing, and 2) to become proficient in applying the resources of language in their own speaking and writing. Discerning how language is working in others' or one's own writing and speaking, one must (artificially) divide form and content, what is being said and how this is said. Because rhetoric examines so attentively the how of language, the methods and means of communication, it has sometimes been discounted as something only concerned with style or appearances, and not with the quality or content of communication. The aim of current article is to examine the scope, importance and its effect briefly.