

Database Project - Explanation

The purpose of History of Rhetoric II, in part, is to explore how the discipline of rhetoric has changed since the Enlightenment until the present. As cultural norms and societal perceptions of certain groups changed, so too did the practice and understanding of rhetoric shift to align with the beliefs and values of the time. I took particular interest in women's relationship to rhetoric and how that changed over time. In my Elaboration Projects, I examined the development of women's rhetoric and how women's involvement in the discipline changed through the coursework we read throughout the semester. I wanted to summarize my findings but also present the information in a way that could be interpreted by the audience in unique ways. My goal was to avoid establishing set categories or in which to pigeonhole each female rhetorician; instead, I hoped to find similarities between them or understand their work in new ways after analyzing their work in this particular manner. To achieve this end, I decided to create "flashcards" of sorts.

The following information is included on each flashcard: 1) the woman's name; 2) years indicating either when she lived or what year the piece we read in class was published; 3) themes in her work; 4) a key quote summarizing her view; and 5) analysis of the quote in the form of past annotations by either myself or other students in class. The reader can choose to make a timeline with the flashcards and organize them chronologically, or the reader can focus on a particular theme and determine how the women and their rhetoric are related. This project applies Edbauer's theory of rhetorical ecologies, in that rhetoric does not have a "situation," or a specific, set place; instead, it consists of fluid connections. I was able to extricate new and exciting connections through the research and assembly of this database; in creating this project, I discovered parallels between the female rhetoricians we studied that I had previously not seen, so I hope that it will inspire my reader to draw new connections as well.