



**Universiteit
Leiden**

An Anthology and History of Dutch Political Eloquence

Applicants

Supervisor Name	Discipline
(prof.dr) Henk te Velde	(Dutch) History
(prof.dr) Jaap de Jong	Journalism and New Media (Rhetoric)

Project description

For a couple of years now, we have been teaching an MA class about the history of Dutch political eloquence. In fact, two separate classes have joined forces, Retorisch Vuurwerk (MA class for language students) and Political Eloquence (MA class for historians). The interdisciplinary analyses in this class will help us to write a history of Dutch political eloquence since the late 18th century (Te Velde) and publish a reasoned anthology of great speeches (De Jong), to be published in 2020. We would like to involve the research trainees in our project. Their research would consist of (1) analysing historically and rhetorically a speech or a series of speeches in a particular period of Dutch history (the trainees will have the liberty to choose), (2) take stock of the results of the previous classes, (3) make a systematic review of literature about Dutch political eloquence (and, to a lesser extent, of studies by analysts of historical political rhetoric in general). We would like to ask them to present their first results of (1) in the Leidse Werkgroep Retorica, and their final results at an international conference of Rhetoric in Society Europe (see below). Their paper – which, if at all possible – should result in a peer reviewed article, should not only contain solid historical and rhetorical research, but also provide a specimen of interdisciplinary collaboration. Moreover, (2) and (3) should lead to a small exhibit of (20th century Dutch) speeches, with sound and images and explanation, in the framework of the Taalmuseum. The preparation for the exhibit should also help to define a possible ‘canon’ of Dutch political eloquence, that would result in the anthology. In this way, the students may profit from the expertise we have been building up and we profit from their input and ideas.

Research Trainee Profile

Our ideal candidates would be MA or ResMA students who are already well prepared because they have followed our combined MA class (or other comparable classes), one historian and one student with a language/rhetorical background. They need to be able to work together closely and form a team, which we would supervise on a weekly basis. They should be well versed in the study

of Dutch political rhetoric and/or the history of Dutch political culture, and – with our assistance – be capable of putting their findings into a framework of international literature.

Collaboration

We firmly believe that interdisciplinary research – in particular a combination of rhetorical and historical analysis – is crucial for understanding the meaning and role of political speech. This is certainly the case in the Netherlands, where the value of political eloquence has often been downplayed. Just a few examples of interesting rhetorical effects: (a) the famous radio speech by Colijn (1936) encouraging his audience to sleep peacefully – according to literature about crisis management he did what he had to do (comforting) but the speech has become the basis of his devastating postwar image, (b) the literally ‘moving’ Gerbrandy’s Radio Oranje speech on the eve of 5 September 1944, which led to the mass illusion the day after that liberation was near, (c) the strangely effective 1963 broadcasted speech by bishop Bekkers about preservatives (strange because it was rhetorically a very poor speech, but historically understandable), (d) the influential yet as performance quite inconspicuous speech by feminist Joke Kool-Smit in 1979 (Annie Romein-Verschoor prize), (e) going viral of the ‘shedding of ideological feathers’ phrase (Wim Kok) which was not at all what the speech writers intended, but they did not realize the power of a gripping metaphor.

Because we have seen how difficult it can be for students to really cooperate with their peers from other disciplines, but also what beautiful results you can get out of it (brilliant joined papers), and because we have discovered the pitfalls of interdisciplinarity but also its benefits, we feel that we should take the cooperation to the next level, by putting two trainees together and working with them closely. This will reinforce the developing interdisciplinary exchange within the informal Leiden Humanities Werkgroep Retorica, and within the new minor Rhetoric, and underline that Leiden has developed into a centre of research of rhetoric, ancient and modern.

Deliverables

- Joined presentation of first results of the research in the interdisciplinary Leidse Werkgroep Retorica of the Faculty of Humanities
- Joined paper with the final results presented at the Rhetoric Society of Europe bi-annual conference in Pavia, September 11-13, 2019 (<http://eusorhet.eu/>), which should be the basis for an article in a peer reviewed journal
- Presentation of a small historical ‘canon’ of 20th century Dutch political speeches at the Leiden Taalmuseum, consisting of recordings of speeches put into a relevant rhetorical and historical context (<https://taalmuseum.nl/>), and based on a systematic review of literature

Planning

- (I) February-April: literature review, taking stock of previous results of the classes, and selection of case study for research
- (II) May-June: (continued) research for the presentation in the Leiden Werkgroep Retorica (i.e. first draft of final paper)
- (III) July-August: preparation of exhibit (on the basis of I), writing of final draft paper (on the basis of II)

Student Application

- No need to apply in English, applications in Dutch are welcome
- Resume with particular attention for relevant past experience (preferably in interdisciplinary rhetoric/history classes) and transcript of grades
- Motivation Letter
- First ideas about research that the applicants would like to conduct
- Joined applications by students with a background in language and history are possible
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