

July 1, 1985

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Dear John:

I am flattered to be asked to speak at your orientation program this year, and I am happy to be able to say that because I am completely free at the time you need me, I can come. I took your advice and made my plane reservations right away. You were right: because I can stay over on a Saturday night, I can get the round-trip fare for \$218.00. Here's my itinerary: I am coming in on Thursday, August 22, on American #213 at 10:37 a.m.; I am leaving on Sunday, August 25, at 7:07 a.m. (Can you get me to the church on time?) I thank you for offering to let me stay at your house, but I prefer to stay at a motel. I will need accommodations for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights.

If you need a title for my workshop session, you can use "How Did We Learn to Write Academic Discourse?" I'll be talking partly about my own writing process, but I will be dealing mainly with a matter that one of my graduate students brought to me attention recently. She said to me one day that every term, she writes 50-70 pages for the courses she takes, but she has never had even five minutes of instructions about how to do those papers. She made me advert to the fact that I never had five minutes of instruction when I was a graduate student. And she shamed me when it occurred to me that although I am a rhetorician, I don't recall that I ever gave five minutes of instructions to my graduate students for the papers I asked them to write. Isn't that shocking? And these are the people we are asking to teach our Freshman English classes. I think this topic will elicit a lot of response from your T.A.'s, even the new ones. My graduate student is doing a survey among graduate students now, and she is finding out that there is a lot of anxiety among graduate students about their writing.

For the main talk to the faculty, I am glad you like the topic of rhetoric as the art of flim-flam. There's no question that today, especially in the public media, the prevailing image of rhetoric is that it is the art of deception. How did it get that reputation? You can use this title: How Did Rhetoric Acquire the Reputation of Being the Art of Flim-Flam? There is some historical accounting for that reputation, and there are some subtle concessions that rhetoric can be used, and has been used, for nefarious purposes. But just as subtly, I intimate that rhetoric, in its grandest tradition, didn't start out to be a deceptive art. So there's something in the talk for the friends and the suspects of rhetoric.

It was great seeing you in San Jose, and I am once again in awe of the brilliance of your humorous piece on rhetoric. OSU has every reason to be immensely proud of you.

Cordially,
Edward P.J. Corbett
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