

***SPOCK WAS RIGHT: AN ARGUMENT FOR THE RETURN OF RHETORIC***  
***By Brett William Mauser***

From gun control to global warming it seems not only the country, but the world is split in two. Yet, no matter what side a person is on, it would seem that the problems could be fixed just so long as the ‘other person’ would see things rationally and logically. But where does one find the reason and logic to persuade the other person or to make their own decision? The answer to this question could very well be in the Communication Arts. A lack of understanding of logical and reason-based discussion has caused a split in popular opinion, and a return to the fundamentals of Rhetoric, could increase the rationale of those who utilize it.

As described by the National Communication Association White Paper (2007), Rhetoric and Rhetorical Theory is a study and focus on argument and the skill of using logic, reason and facts through symbols to influence others, in both the public and private arenas. Rhetoric itself dates back to Aristotle and his canons. The practice and study of Rhetoric has a nearly 2,500 year history that has captured the minds of great scholars in the past, but more recently has been misinterpreted and misunderstood in the public forum (16).

Craig and Carlone (1998) report how the study of Rhetoric, after splitting from English departments and falling under the discipline of Communications, has decreased in the number of both undergraduate and graduate degrees since the late 1960’s (74). They explain the decrease as a result of the restructuring of the colleges, though the study of Rhetoric has still continued to decrease. No official studies have been completed to show a correlation between the study of Rhetoric and the intelligence or unity of the country; however, a study in *Psychological Sciences* by Kuhn and Crowell (2011) showed an increase in reasoning skills when students were taught to argue verbally rather than on paper, which is in essence, Rhetoric.

Dan Kahan of Yale University (2103) has recently completed a study that may explain the lack of unity in political belief. His study has shown how political belief can override and interfere with a person's sense of logic, and even mathematical skills. His study shows people presented with two separate studies. When the studies were generic, participants were able to complete the mathematic statistical analysis properly. However, when presented with the same statistics regarding a political subject, such as gun control, they were unable to sway away from their pre-held political belief, both conservative and liberal.

A return to logic and reason could very well be necessary to the health and future of the country, if not the world. Rhetoric teaches the basic structuring and logic processing in order to be able to persuade others through the use of symbols, or speech. In order to prepare one's own argument for such a debate, the orator or debater must find the logic in their own argument. Teaching Rhetoric and this skill could teach people to look for the reason and logic in all arguments presented to them.