

Keynote Speakers

CSSR SCÉR 2016 Conference

Canadian Society for the Study of Rhetoric (CSSR)
Société Canadienne pour l'Étude de la Rhétorique (SCÉR)
University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada, May 31 – June 2, 2016

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Keynote Speakers

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Pierre Chiron



Dr. Pierre Chiron is a leading senior scholar in the area of Greek language, literature, politics, and rhetoric from ancient times to the present. He is currently focused on the conditions under which ancient rhetorical exercises could be updated and renovated to contribute to the formation of the citizen. He has served as President of the eighth section of the National Council of Universities (2011-2015) in France.

Thèmes de recherche : Grec ancien, rhétorique grecque ancienne, étude des rapports entre rhétorique et politique, rhétorique et philosophie, rhétorique et grammaire stylistique, rhétorique et enseignement depuis l'Antiquité.

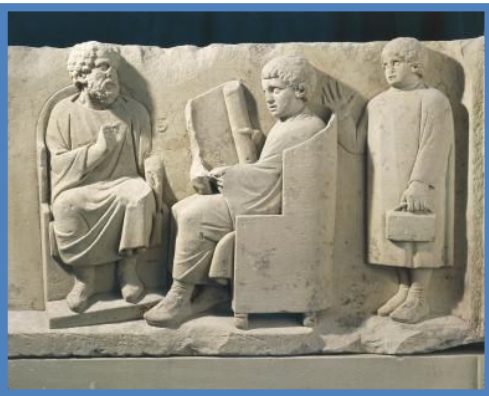
Responsabilité pédagogiques et scientifiques : Président de la 8e section du Conseil National des Universités (2011-2015) ; Membre du Council de l'International Society for the History of Rhetoric ; Vice-président de la Société Internationale de Bibliographie Classique.

- 2015: Argumentation et discours politique: Antiquité grecque et latine, Révolution française, monde contemporain (Res publica) [Argumentation and political discourse: ancient Greek and Latin, French Revolution, contemporary world], co-edited by S. Bonnafous, P. Chiron, D. Ducard, C. Lévy.
- 2014: Aristote, Rhétorique, traduction nouvelle, présentation, notes et index. [Aristotle, Rhetoric, new translation, presentation, notes and index], by P. Chiron, in

the series Aristotle Complete Works, edited by P. Pellegrin, Paris, Flammarion; originally published in Paris by GF Flammarion, 2007

- 2010: Les noms du style dans l'Antiquité gréco-latine [The names of style in Greco-Latin antiquity], P. Chiron and C. Lévy. Bibliothèque d'Études Classiques (Book 57). Leuven, Belgium: Peeters Publishers.
- 2010: “Les côla en rhétorique : respiration, sens, esthétique” [The Cola: Rhetoric breathing, sense, aesthetics], Revue de philologie, de littérature et d'histoire anciennes 84(1), 31-50, by P. Chiron. [Discusses the division of oral speech into sub-sequences; demonstrates it plays an important role in communicating meaning and persuasion in ancient rhetorical theory]

Presentation: “Les progymnasmata aujourd’hui,” by/par Pierre Chiron



Stone burial monument with relief representing a Roman school with teacher and pupils, c.180 AD. Trier, Rheinisches Landesmuseum. <http://www.archeo.it/mediagallery/fotogallery/1505>

C'est intentionnellement que nous présentons le dossier des progymnasmata antiques comme un dossier d'actualité : la recherche philologique et papyrologique a depuis quelques décennies considérablement amélioré notre connaissance des pratiques éducatives gréco-latines, et tout spécialement d'un cycle d'exercices préparatoires de rhétorique, en usage de l'époque hellénistique jusqu'à Byzance, appelé progymnasmata.

Pour ne citer qu'un exemple de ces progrès, le recours à une traduction arménienne ancienne a permis de reconstituer le texte original du traité d'Aélius Théon, où l'on peut découvrir, à côté de la série progressive déjà connue (fable, récit, chrie, maxime, contestation, confirmation, lieu commun, éloge, blâme, parallèle, éthopée, description, thèse et proposition de loi) une seconde série d'exercices dits « d'accompagnement ». Ces exercices (lecture, audition, paraphrase, réélaboration, contradiction) jettent un jour nouveau sur la conception d'ensemble de cette formation et forcent à réviser certains préjugés.

Les principes d'éducation mis en œuvre sont également mieux compris. On a identifié leur lien avec deux traditions opposées à l'origine, mais qui se sont progressivement fondues : la tradition de la Rhétorique d'Aristote d'une part, d'autre part l'héritage d'Isocrate et sa conception d'une éducation fondée sur le perfectionnement du logos, dans toute sa richesse linguistique, stylistique, esthétique, argumentative et finalement sociale et politique.

Au demeurant, les progymnasmata ne sont pas exclusivement antiques. Transmis dans l'Occident médiéval par une traduction latine, puis largement diffusés à la Renaissance, ils ont été en usage dans certains pays d'Europe jusqu'au xxe siècle. Bien plus, depuis une vingtaine d'années, on utilise à nouveau ces exercices dans le premier cycle des universités aux USA ou

en Suède. Des recherches sont en cours en Europe afin d'évaluer le potentiel cognitif et social de ce type de formation.

À cette reviviscence théorique et pratique concourt aussi le sentiment d'une crise connue dans de nombreux pays par l'enseignement des humanités. Les profondes et rapides mutations des pratiques culturelles des jeunes – baisse de la pratique de la lecture, expansion de l'oral et de l'« écrit court » –, imposent une refondation des enseignements « littéraires » au sens large, incluant les compétences sociales, intellectuelles et politiques véhiculées par la maîtrise du langage et de l'argumentation. Le paradigme de l'éducation antique, où l'oralité était prédominante, retrouve ainsi sa pertinence. À la crise culturelle s'ajoute une crise de la citoyenneté – à moins que ce ne soit la même chose. En France, les attentats de janvier 2015 ont accouché d'un constat : les jeunes adultes qui ont tué les journalistes de Charlie Hebdo étaient passés par le système éducatif d'État. Il est bon de rappeler à cet égard que si le premier exercice pratiqué dans la série des progymnasmata était la fable, le dernier était la proposition de loi, et visait à transmettre la hauteur de vue du législateur, soit la plus haute compétence du citoyen. Il peut donc être utile, aujourd'hui, de proposer une réflexion articulant le passé à l'avenir des progymnasmata.

English summary of abstract

The session will explain the historical and contemporary importance of a series of exercises in rhetorical education, known as the *progymnasmata*, which trained students through multiple genres such as fable, story, maxim, re-elaboration, and contradiction. Progymnasmata demonstrate how humanistic educational traditions transcend time and cultures. These rhetorical exercises were not only used in ancient, Medieval and Renaissance times, but are in use today in the USA, Sweden, and Europe.

The progymnasmata has both Aristotelian and Isocratean traditions, and the Isocratean mode gives more emphasis to stylistic, aesthetic, and argumentative skills as well as social and political purposes. While the most elementary exercise was the fable, the culminating exercise in the series was the legal proposition, or the attack or defense of a law, which engaged in legislative reasoning that enabled one to reach the apex of competence in citizenship.

The revival of the progymnasmata today is due to rising awareness of its great cognitive and social potential. The ancient tradition of rhetorical education may have the potential to strengthen civic education in the wake of acts such as the killing of the journalists of Charlie Hebdo, whose perpetrators passed through the French state education system.

How can systematic education in rhetoric build competencies of citizenship as well as the mastery of language and argument? What are we still learning about these rich, enduring traditions of humanistic education and how can we apply them today?

C. Jan Swearingen



Dr. Swearingen is Professor of English Emerita at Texas A&M University, and has served on the faculty in rhetoric at the University of Michigan, the University of Arizona, and The University of Texas at Arlington.

Her first book, *Rhetoric and Irony: Western Literacy and Western Lies*, was awarded Honourable Mention by the W. Ross Winterrowd Award for the 1991 best book in Rhetoric and Composition Theory by the Conference on College Composition and Communication.

She has held fellowships at the University of Cape Town Centre for Rhetoric Studies, the University of Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, and from the National Endowment for the Humanities for her study, “Rhetoric, Religion, and the Transformation of Liberty in Colonial Virginia 1740-1776.”

Her most recent work has focused on cross-cultural studies in rhetoric, particularly Chinese-Western rhetorics and rhetorical education past and present. Her forthcoming book, co-authored with Hui Wu, is a critical translation and commentary on Guiguizi, the “Master of Ghost Valley,” one of China’s earliest and little known teachers of rhetoric.

In 2009 Professor Swearingen was selected as a keynote speaker at the First International World Congress of Rhetoric in QuFu, China.

She served as President of the Rhetoric Society of America in 1998-2000, and continues to promote the study of non-Western rhetorics in RSA and several other professional organizations.

Presentation: “Ren Wen Baguwen: Understanding Chinese Rhetorical Pedagogy in Contemporary Contexts”



Peking University's West Gate, one of the symbols of the university campus. [“PekingUniversityPic6” by galaygobi - DSC_5647. CC BY 2.0 via Commons - <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PekingUniversityPic6.jpg#/media/File:PekingUniversityPic6.jpg>]

The “eight-legged essay” or *baguwen* became a staple of Chinese education, preparing students for the meritocratic civil service exam from the fifteenth century onwards. Regardless of class or ancestry, any young man who studied with industry and discipline could undertake the exam. The British so admired the system of a standardized written exam demonstrating knowledge of classical literature that they adapted it for use in selecting officers and administrators for posts throughout the British Empire (Ellman).

Until recently, the Chinese practice of composing essays and speeches structured by pairs of allusions and paraphrases has been poorly understood by Westerners, who beginning in the sixteenth century deemed Chinese rhetoric in rhetoric and speeches as effeminate, lacking in argumentation, overly flowery, full of poetic quotations, and without clear points and ideas (Ricci, Spence). Recent rhetorical scholarship has begun to re-read the baguwen as an important tradition in Chinese pedagogy and rhetorical practice. Like the classical Greek *progymnasmata*, the baguwen functioned as an exercise in improvisation, rapid selection of relevant styles, examples, and proofs, compression and amplification. In addition, the baguwen structure of four pairs of two allusions/paraphrases encouraged antithesis and presentation of alternate ideas before coming to a conclusion.

In addition to reviewing the history of the baguwen between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, and the reasons for its abandonment, my presentation will compare the eighteenth-century British encounter with the baguwen with present-day assessments. Several elements in Chinese rhetorical pedagogy and practice encourage us to rethink the adversarial backbone of Western rhetorical argumentation. While completely conversant with the practice of seeing pairs and doubles surrounding the discussion of a topic, Chinese “arguments” often weave the two sides together rather than picking a winner. While the baguwen is not the only example of Chinese rhetoric (Mao, You), it exemplifies two concepts central to Chinese culture and education. *Wen*, the word for language, also means “culture,” “writing,” “gentle,” “genteel,” and “literary.” *Ren*, the word for “human,” “human being,” also denotes “virtuous,” qualities that can only be imparted by wen. An uneducated person, according to this view, is not fully human. To write and to speak with gentility are lifelong tasks provisioned by education. Central to these activities are the rhetorical interactions through which individuals shape one another and their society.