Abstract

It appears at first glance as though truth is no longer relevant in a post-2016 presidential election. Indeed, many indicators suggest that the candidates, the political system, and society itself are becoming less trustworthy and more tolerant of lies. Most notably, the occurrence of Oxford Dictionary's word of the year, "post-truth", may signal the new perception of truth in today's society. The purpose of this thesis is delineate the historical basis of truth and politics to allude to the formation of post-truth as a concept. In addition, post-truth rhetoric will be compared and contrasted to classic Aristotelian rhetoric. Using the three components of rhetoric, pathos, ethos, and logos, this thesis will discover how the ultimate goal of rhetoric has changed using the perspective of classical and modern political theorists. Lastly, the theoretical concepts will be used to analyze the 2016 presidential election. The rhetorical methods of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump will be compared in regards to how effectively they used pathos, ethos, and logos, and their ability to apply post-truth rhetoric on social media.

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