

Rhetorical Strategies of 2024 Presidential Hopefuls

Jim A. Kuypers*

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Volume 13, issue 1 of *The Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric* has its genesis in a Southern States Communication Association's vice-president spotlight panel co-sponsored by the Political Communication Division. The originating idea was to begin with America's present political divide, one in which a nation is currently almost evenly divided between the two main political parties, and with many voters now living in increasingly separate "worlds." From this point of embarkation, panelists were to consider the left and right instances of hyper-partisan mass media, and a reinforcing social media, that seems increasingly to escalate political tensions about issues, images, and personalities to such a point that it is difficult to predict which individuals will be able to connect effectively with voters. We formed this panel to explore the potential future of prominent United States politicians, specifically within the context of their potential for running for the presidential nomination of their respective parties. Panelists evaluated the stances of the potential candidates on multiple issues facing the nation, as well as their rhetorical tactics and strategies that could be used to connect with potential voters. The idea was to present this in a well-argued yet conversational, non-partisan manner, one in which all participants could feel welcome to share observations. That conversational, even fun, tone was kept for these essays that expand upon the preliminary comments. Participants were initially asked to assign a percentage of chance that their politician would declare his or her candidacy, and those initial percentages are maintained and explained for this special issue. The futures and presidential prospects of the following five politicians are covered here: former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, former governor and UN Ambassador Nikki Haley, U.S. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Governor Ron DeSantis, and Vice President Kamala Harris.

* Jim A. Kuypers (Ph.D. Louisiana State University) is professor of communication in the School of Communication at Virginia Tech. He is the author, editor, or co-author of 17 books, including *Purpose, Practice, and Pedagogy in Rhetorical Criticism* (winner of the Everett Lee Hunt Award for Outstanding Scholarship) and *Partisan Journalism: A History of Media Bias in the United States* (a Choice Outstanding Academic Title for 2014). He is a former co-editor for the *American Communication Journal*. He is the recipient of the American Communication Association's Outstanding Contribution to Communication Scholarship Award, the Southern States Communication Association's Early Career Research award, and Dartmouth College's Distinguished Lecturer Award. His research interests include political communication, meta-criticism, Burkeian dramatism, and framing analysis.