“I could stand in the middle of 5th Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose voters.”

*Analysis into Donald Trump’s rhetoric and how it helped him to become the president of the United States.*
Abstract

Rhetoric is an important art of discourse for any individual who wants to succeed as an orator, to have a political career or even to become a president. This thesis analyzes the choice of words and the rhetoric of Donald Trump, the current president of the United States. His rhetoric has received varied response as some look at it as a breath of fresh air from the traditional political rhetoric and others see it as an atrocious approach to the English language. The thesis delves, first, into what rhetoric is and into its history, focusing in particular on one of its most famous representative, Aristotle, and his modes of persuasion. Secondly, Trump’s language mechanism is explored and his most often used rhetorical devices, framing, grammar and syntax, as well as his utilization of the mentality of ‘us vs. them’ notion in his rhetoric. There follows an analytic comparison between Trump’s 2017 inauguration speech and Obama’s 2009 inauguration speech. Additionally, Trump’s populist approach to the English language is explored, demonstrating how his rhetoric affects his base and who his target base is. Lastly, the thesis looks into some data from studies that researched Trump’s articulacy compared to other presidential candidates and former presidents. Trump’s rhetoric has made him one of the most controversial presidents in history. Consequently, many feel that he is dividing the U.S. instead of uniting it as his rhetoric heavily relies on patriotism, isolationism, and anti-immigration.
# Table of Contents

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 4

2. Donald Trump and society ....................................................................................................................... 5

3. History of rhetoric .................................................................................................................................. 8

4. Aristotle’s ethos, pathos, logos and Cicero .............................................................................................. 9

5. Trump’s language mechanisms .............................................................................................................. 11
   5.1. Rhetorical devices .............................................................................................................................. 11
   5.1.1. Hyperbole ...................................................................................................................................... 11
   5.1.2. Repetition ...................................................................................................................................... 12
   5.1.3 Paralipsis ......................................................................................................................................... 13
   5.1.4 Rhetorical devices in his tweets ................................................................................................... 14
   5.2 Framing .............................................................................................................................................. 15
   5.3. Grammar and syntax ....................................................................................................................... 16
   5.4 Us vs. them ....................................................................................................................................... 17

6. Comparison of Obama’s and Trump’s inauguration speeches ................................................................. 18

7. Trump’s populism .................................................................................................................................... 21

8. Studies on Trump’s articulacy ............................................................................................................... 22

9. Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................ 23

References .................................................................................................................................................. 26
1. Introduction
Rhetoric is an important discourse to anyone that wants to become a good orator, and it is especially an important discourse to the president of the United States of America. The president must be able to persuade and inform his audience in particular circumstances with eloquence. Rhetoric is imperative to gain supporters when trying to be elected as president. It plays a big part in convincing voters on who they should elect as they should believe and have confidence in the words that the presidential nominees say. Many former presidents of the U.S. have drawn attention for their different utilization of the English language. Barack Obama is known for his showy articulacy and George W. Bush is known for the exact opposite, as a result of his malapropism. Whereas, Franklin D. Roosevelt’s influential rhetoric during the Great Depression and World War II is still commemorated today.

The goal of this thesis is to analyze the rhetoric of the 45th president of the U.S., Donald Trump. To discover what rhetorical devices he used predominantly in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. To realize where his articulacy compares to other candidates or former presidents and how his rhetoric gained him so many supporters all over the U.S., resulting in, to many people’s bewilderment and others amazement, Trump being ultimately elected as the president of the U.S. The quotes spoken by Donald Trump in this thesis all have a common source, The Little Book of Trumpisms (Millstein, 2016), unless otherwise is noted. To not take up too much space citing said quotes I will cite the letter “M” for Millstein and give the page number.

On June 16, 2015, Donald Trump announced, from his New York City Trump Tower, his candidacy for president of the U.S. At that time, he was mostly known as a business mogul. He was famous for owning real-estates and being the star of the reality TV show The Apprentice. He had spent a fair share of time criticizing then President Barack Obama for his performance as a commander-in-chief. In effect, Trump wanted to be in Obama’s position and become the nation’s leader of one of the most powerful countries in the world. His campaign for the presidency pressed mostly on issues such as immigration, Islamic terrorism, unemployment, Obamacare and National Security (Obiero, 2017, p. 4). His target group was mostly middle-and working class white Americans who started to flock to every one of his campaign rallies, often seen wearing Trump’s red signature cap with the slogan “Make America Great Again”. As the elections evolved Trump was eventually chosen to be the Republican nominee to rally against the
Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. Trump’s path to the presidency did not go as smoothly as he had presumably planned as accusations of sexual assaults surfaced from handful of women and the rise of alt-right movements marching in Trump’s name (Neiwert, 2017). During his campaign rallies he used his platform to for example, insult his Republican rivals, his Democratic rival Hillary Clinton, Mexicans, African-Americans, women, Muslims, handicapped people and all those who spoke against him. Although Trump’s choice of words offended various groups his choice of words simultaneously got him more voters.

2. Donald Trump and society
Donald Trump has been a topic of conversation ever since the 1970s once he took over his family business and renamed it The Trump Organization. Trump’s affiliation to political parties has varied as he identified himself as a Democrat until 1987 when he switched over to the Republican Party. Trump also identified himself as an Independent and joined the Reform party in the year 2000 to try to get nominated for the presidential election, which failed and he registered once again as a Republican (Donald Trump biography, n.d.). In an interview with the magazine Playboy in 1990 he stated that “If I ever ran for office, I’d do better as a Democrat than as a Republican- and that’s not because I’d be more liberal, because I’m conservative. But the working guy would elect me.” (M, p. 35) After Obama won the presidential election in 2008 and the rise of social media, especially in Trump’s case Twitter, he attracted much attention to himself and his tweets. His tweets mostly criticized then president Obama and the U.S. government. Trump is well-known for his public hatred of Obama when Obama was in office and he stills continues to berate him after he became president. When Obama was in office Trump claimed that he was not born in the United Sates and that he would have to show his birth certificate to prove it. Trump did not let this accusation fade away and kept on repeating it until people actually started to wonder if there was some truth to it. Because Trump repeated this accusation so often, Obama ended this argument once and for all and eventually released his birth certificate which proofed that he was a born in Honolulu, Hawaii in 1961, therefore a natural-born citizen of the United States (Gore, 2017).

The 45th president of the United States, Donald Trump, has received much attention because of his rhetoric and articulacy, or as some might say his inarticulacy. During his presidential
campaign he became known for using repeatedly the same rhetorical devices; repetition, hyperbole, framing and paralipsis. Perhaps because of his utilization of these rhetorical devices it helped him to become the president of the U.S. Trump reached out to those who felt like they were forgotten, those who wanted drastic changes done to their country, those who were angry at the current state of the country and where it was heading and those who felt that a non-politician would do the best for their interests. He reached out to these people with his persuasive rhetoric because he knew that they were angry and emotional as he “relies on potent language to connect with, and often stoke, the fears and grievances of Americans.” (Haberman & Healy, 2015)

Poudret (2016) points out that:

His rhetoric as an influential figure is perceived as a justification for Americans with those feelings to externally act upon them in acts such as hate speech, hate crimes and blatant anti-Muslim public opinion. (p. 5)

Additionally, Lakoff (2016) also shared a similar opinion to Poudret’s:

Donald Trump expresses out loud everything they feel — with force, aggression, anger, and no shame. All they have to do is support and vote for Trump and they don’t even have to express their ‘politically incorrect’ views, since he does it for them and his victories make those views respectable. He is their champion. He gives them a sense of self-respect, authority, and the possibility of power.

Trump promised his supporters that he would get rid of the corrupt by “draining the swamp”, that he would bring back American industry to their soil (Trump-O-Meter: Bring back manufacturing) as himself and the audience chant “America first”. He stated that he would deport illegal immigrants from Mexico and his audience would shout “build that wall” along with Trump repeatedly. His rhetoric has connotations with patriotism, isolationism and anti-immigration. A national exit poll data from the 2016 presidential election shows that Trump got 58% votes from white people, whereas only 8% black people voted for him. Americans living in a small city or in a rural area voted Trump over Hillary with 62%. Since dating back to the year 1980 the exit polls have never presented such a wide gap among college graduates and non-college graduates. Those without a college degree backed Trump by 52% against Hillary’s 44%, in contrast to college graduates who backed Hillary by 52% against Trump’s 43% (Tyson &
Maniam, 2016). With these statistics it is safe to say that Trump’s target audience since the beginning has been white, undereducated Americans who mostly live in rural areas. Trump embraced these people and laminated them as “the forgotten men and women of our country” (Full text: Donald Trump inauguration speech transcript, 2017) blaming everyone else for their problems, promising them that he would lower their taxes, repeal and replace Obamacare with a more affordable healthcare bill (H. Jackson, 2017) and that he would create millions of jobs as he declared himself to become “the greatest jobs president that God has ever created.” (M, p. 36) In addition, it has been implied that white, male and Christian voters were drawn to Trump because of “economic anxiety”. Although this may be true, a new study revealed that Trump voters did not vote for him because they were angry at the past, it was because they were scared of the future, they felt that they had to preserve the status quo (Chokshi, 2018). An opposition also arose against Trump during the presidential campaign and protests took place once it was clear that he had won the presidential election with people shouting and holding signs that said “Not my president.” (Healy & Peters, 2016) Republicans were divided when Trump got the Republican presidential nomination, and a resistance against Trump had already begun among the public. Protestors regularly showed up at his campaign rallies which were often met with a violent act from his supporters. Trump was accused of inciting violence at his campaign rallies against non-violent protestors. He even guaranteed that he would cover his supporters’ legal fees if they would beat up protestors, “Knock the crap out of him, would you? Seriously, OK, just knock the hell. I promise you I will pay for the legal fees, I promise, I promise.” (Jacobs, 2016) A Pew Research Center survey from 2017 covering 37 nations demonstrate that Trump’s presidency has had a major negative impact on how the rest of the world perceive the U.S. as Trump’s key policies such as, the border wall for Mexico and the Muslim-ban are widely unpopular. Only 22% of those who took the survey expressed their confidence in Trump to make the right decision when it comes to international affairs. In contrast, 64% during Obama’s final years declared their confident in him to make the right decisions for the U.S. (Fetterolf, Poushter, Stokes & Wike, 2017). There has always been a divide in the U.S. since the Civil War as prejudice has only gotten higher after Trump became president as around 77% of Americans see the country as “greatly divided when it comes to the most important values.” (Gershon, 2017) Many people have started to notice this and feel that Trump is a bad influence and want him out of office as others, devoted supporters wearing their red signature caps, still stand firmly behind
his back and defend him against anything negative that comes his way. Even though, many of Trump’s supporters are Christians who rely heavily on family values it does not seem to prevent them from supporting Trump despite his alleged affair with the porn star Stormy Daniels, which he paid her to stay quiet about, shortly after his wife gave birth to their youngest son. This is not the biggest scandal that Trump has been involved in since becoming the president as of now he is being investigated by the FBI because of suppose links between him and Russia during the 2016 presidential elections. At this stage of the investigation there are high probabilities that Trump will be prosecuted for obstruction of justice and possibly impeached (Samuelsohn, 2018).

3. History of rhetoric
The word rhetoric is derived from the Greek word *rhetor* which means ‘speaker, orator, teacher of rhetoric’ (Origin and meaning of rhetoric, n.d.). Dixon (1971) constructed that the working definition of rhetor is “a man skilled in speaking who addresses a public audience in order to make an impact upon it.” (p. 2) Hence, a president must become a good rhetor to gain supporters to vote for him. Rhetoric is often associated with public speakers and orators for the reason that speech is according to the philosopher Isocrates, “the foundation of human society, the means through which man expresses his wisdom, and without which wisdom is inarticulate and inert.” (as cited in Dixon, 1971, p. 9) San Diego State University defines rhetoric as:

> The study and uses of written, spoken and visual language. It investigates how language is used to organize and maintain social groups, construct meanings and identities, coordinate behavior, mediate power, produce change, and create knowledge. (What is rhetoric?, n.d.)

Dixon writes that it is defined by some to the extent of as “the art of speaking well, of using words to their best advantage.” (1971, p. 3) As for the history of rhetoric itself its origin traces back to fifth-century Greece, “as the study of the forms of communication and argument essential to public, political and legal life in Ancient Greece.” (What is rhetoric?, n.d.) For a long period of time rhetoric was primarily associated with the art of oratory (Corbett, 1990, p. 20). It has since evolved to be applied to letter-writing and eventually to written discourse as it has become a “rich and diverse body of research, texts, and pedagogies.” (What is rhetoric?, n.d.)
president’s rhetoric reflects his world view and value. The former U.S. president George W. Bush declared war on terrorist organizations after the 9/11 attack which was the beginning of the Iraq War, one of the most controversial wars fought by the U.S. One of Bush’s reasoning for invading Iraq was that he claimed that they possessed weapons of mass destruction. When no such weapons were found he employed frame shifting as he suggested to the people to view the war from another angle. He wanted them to view it instead as an opportunity to dispose of a tyrant, even if that had not been the initial reason for starting the war (Zarefsky, 2014, p. 613). Therefore, moving the framing from protecting the U.S. and other nations from weapons of mass destructing to the elimination of a tyrant:

Because of his prominent political position and his access to the means of communication, the president, by defining a situation, might be able to shape the context in which events or proposals are viewed by the public. (Zarefsky, 2014, p.229)

For this reason a president must possess a persuasive rhetoric to gain the trust of his audience, to be trusted to lead their nation in the right direction. The rhetorical style taken up by a president can make a difference in whether he will accomplish his political goals or not (Biria and Mohammadi, 2012).

4. Aristotle’s ethos, pathos, logos and Cicero
Aristotle wrote in his book Rhetoric (2015) on the mode of persuasion:

Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker [ethos]; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind [pathos]; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself [logos]. Persuasion is achieved by the speaker’s personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible. (p.6)

Essentially, ethos refers to ethical appeal, pathos to emotional appeal and logos to rational appeal. The discourse of persuasion was mainly associated with classical rhetoric. Its objective was to persuade or convince a person or a group of persons to act or think in a certain way
Some think of Donald Trump as a master of Aristotle’s pathos as he evokes emotions in his audience by rousing feelings of anger and insecurity (Goldhill, 2017; Bonaccini, 2015). He uses strong and short words that his audience can easily understand and relate to. One of Trump’s regular talking points during his campaign focused on anti-immigration, “his speeches are projecting an immigration situation which is undesirable, thus triggering an emotion state of fear, uncertainty and uneasiness.” (Bonaccini, 2015)

Trump’s speeches lack the aspect of ethos and logos as his claims are often proven to have no evidence to support it (Bonaccini, 2015). Whilst others state that Trump’s ethos shows through his speaking style which tends to be honest and outspoken as he “goes with his gut” (Goldhill, 2017). Albeit, when he “goes with his gut” his claims are often presented without any evidence or facts to support it, for example his now infamous statement during his presidential campaign about Mexicans who live in the U.S., “They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.” (M, p. 25) One of the modes of persuasion, logos, is about convincing your audience by use of reason or logic. Trump would have to present statistics and most importantly facts to support this argument (Ethos, pathos, and logos definition and examples, n.d.). Trump did not give such evidence in this case, thereupon failing to utilize Aristotle’s logos, however succeeds in the utilization of Aristotle’s pathos.

Furthermore, Trump is also known for channeling Cicero’s famous rhetorical device, paralipsis, also known as apophasis. Cicero, an influential philosopher, orator, politician and lawyer during the decline of the Roman Empire used this device to which its effect is “to call attention to something by specifically saying that you will not mention it” (Zimmer, n.d.). This will be discussed in more details in the next chapter.
5. Trump’s language mechanisms
Donald Trump has become known for his notorious approach to the English language. He is criticized for constantly using the same short and simple words in his sentences as his vocabulary is considered to be limited. He is known for exaggerating his points and repeating words over and over within the same speaking dialogue. By using couple of different rhetorical devices, Trump succeeds in evoking any kind of emotion from his audience and persuades them. Even though many say that Trump’s vocabulary is abysmal (Kennedy, 2017), his rhetoric still has great influence on his base.

5.1. Rhetorical devices
A rhetorical device is a resource of any language that helps the speaker to accomplish a specific goal. Often it has to do with persuasion, although it does not always have to be the case as it can also include techniques for producing beauty, spiritual significance and emotion (Rhetorical device: Definition and examples, n.d) Rhetorical devices often deviate from the ordinary manner of speaking (Corbett, 1990, p. 425). The rhetorical devices that will be considered in regard to Trump are hyperbole, repetition and paralipsis.

5.1.1. Hyperbole
Trump himself spoke of this rhetorical device:

I play to people’s fantasies. People may not always think big themselves, but they can still get very excited by those who do. That’s why a little hyperbole never hurts. People want to believe that something is the biggest and the greatest and the most spectacular.

(Trump & Schwartz, 1987, p. 58)

Trump is keen on using hyperbole when complementing himself to boast his own self-confidence. Most of the time his hyperboles turn out to be false statements, for instance, “So Ford is leaving, you see that their small car division, leaving. Thousands of jobs leaving Michigan, leaving Ohio, they're all leaving.” This statement has been proven false (National Public Radio, 2016). Trump also exaggerated about the number of people that attended his inauguration address. His Press Secretary said of the day that “this was the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration, period, both in person and around the globe.” (Qiu, 2017) This statement has also been proven false and Trump and his team accused of feeding false narrative about the size of the audience (Farley & Robertson, 2017). According to Corbett (1990)
hyperbole has become a part of everyday language that one has ceased to think of as simply as a rhetorical device. The utilization of hyperbole can be useful if used moderately and planned deliberately (p. 452).

5.1.2. Repetition
During his many campaign speeches he used the rhetorical device of repetition, repeatedly. His favorite words to repeat were *win, very, greatest* and *tremendous* to name a few. “We’re going to have so many victories, you will be bored of winning.” (M, p. 40)

If you don’t win you can’t get away with it. And I win, I win, I always win. In the end, I always win, whether it’s in golf whether it’s in tennis, whether it’s in life, I just always win. And I tell people that I win, because I do. (M, p. 101)

“I’m intelligent. Some people would say that I’m very, very, very intelligent.” (M, p. 81), “I will be the greatest job president that God has ever created.” (M, p. 36). And his infamous quote from when he announced his candidacy in 2015:

I would build a great wall, and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me, and I’ll build them very inexpensively. I will build a great, great wall on our southern border. And I’ll have Mexico pay for that wall. (M, p. 5)

This last quote contains both the rhetorical devices repetition as he mentions the word *wall* four times and a hyperbole. The hyperbole is apparent as he claims that nobody builds a wall better than him, asserting that he is arguable the best at building a wall and that he is going to make Mexico pay for the construction of said wall, without presenting a plan on how he is going to accomplish that hence, failing yet again fulfilling Aristotle’s logos. Trump arguably knows what his audience wants and by repeating the same word over and over their attention will be focused on that topic and they will presumably start to believe his words because of how often he repeats them. Let us consider this quote for example:

I’m the most successful person ever to run for the presidency, by far. Nobody’s ever been more successful than me. I’m the most successful person ever to run. Ross Perot isn’t successful like me. Romney- I have a Gucci store that’s worth more than Romney. (M, p. 51)
By repeating the word *successful* and claiming that he is more successful than anyone else repeatedly, the public will actually start to wonder if there is truth to it. Unfortunately for many people, if you repeat a lie often enough, it eventually becomes the truth.

### 5.1.3 Paralipsis

Additionally, there is his utilization of the rhetorical device *paralipsis* also known as *apophasis*, which is construed as “saying something by stating that you will not mention it” (Chrisomalis, n.d.). Paralipsis is a sub-categorization of the rhetorical device *irony*. Trump has many examples of this rhetorical device, for example, when he was criticizing his Republican opponents during the presidential elections he said:

> I think they’re weak, generally, you want to know the truth. But I won’t say that, because I don’t want to get myself, I don’t want to have any controversies. So I refuse to say that they’re weak generally, O.K.? Some of them are fine people. But they’re weak.
> (Haberman & Healy, 2015)

The use of paralipsis often results in the audience’s attention is focused on the thing that one claims he will not mention. The Roman philosopher Cicero is well-known for using this rhetorical device as he once so famously said, “I will not even mention the fact that you betrayed us in the Roman people by aiding Catiline.” (Zimmer, n.d.) Trump has used this rhetorical device considerably, most often to criticize those who he sees as his opponents. When talking about his presidential candidate rival Jeb Bush he said “I was going to say ‘dummy’ Bush; I won’t say it. I won’t say it.” (Bobic, 2016) When tweeting about the journalist Megyn Kelly who criticized him he said, “I refuse to call Megyn Kelly a bimbo, because that would not be politically correct.” (Bobic, 2016) This statement in itself is also a contradiction because he had previously stated that he does not like being politically correct, “It’s very time-consuming to be politically correct..It’s also very boring to be politically correct. Right? You wouldn’t be here if I was totally politically correct.” (M., p. 38) He also tried to draw attention to *The Daily Show* host Jon Stewart former Jewish name by tweeting “Unlike others, I never attacked dopey Jon Stewart for his phony last name. Would never do that!” (M., p. 70)

And then again on his fellow presidential candidate Jeb Bush he expressed:
Jeb said, ‘we were safe with my brother. We were safe.’ Well, the World Trade Center just fell down! Now, am I trying to blame him? I’m not blaming anybody. But the World Trade Center came down. So when he said, we were safe, that’s not safe. (M., p. 46)

It can be speculated from this statement that Trump is somehow trying to blame Jeb Bush for the devastation that was the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York City by utilizing paralipsis. Jeb claims that America was safe under his brother’s, George W. Bush, leadership and Trump points out that a cataclysmic terrorist attack happened anyway under his brother’s leadership. Trump even brings up the question himself if he is trying to blame Jeb Bush for what happened, which he denies. Nevertheless he then continues and claims that the World Trade Center collapsed, even though Jeb Bush said that the public were safe.

5.1.4 Rhetorical devices in his tweets

Donald Trump’s twitter is no exception from rhetorical devices as his tweets are packed with them in addition to paralipsis discussed previously:

Actually, throughout my life, my two greatest assets have been mental stability and being, like, really smart. Crooked Hillary Clinton also played these cards very hard and, as everyone knows, went down in flames. I went from VERY successful businessman, to top T.V. Star. (realDonaldTrump, 2018)

This tweet followed directly by another tweet, “...to President of the United States (on my first try). I think that would qualify as not smart, but genius....and a very stable genius at that!” (realDonaldTrump, 2018). In addition to these two tweets demonstrating his clear fondness of hyperbole and framing it also demonstrates that even his tweets are in more of a pedestrian rhetorical style rather than in a presidential one. The use of hyperbole is evident as he declares that Hillary Clinton “went down in flames”, even though she did not crash and burn, so to speak. She won the popular vote by a margin of 2.8 million votes in the presidential elections (Begley, 2016) as he also uses his favorite framing of Hillary Clinton as “Crooked Hillary” even though she was never proven to be “crooked”. He self-proclaims himself as a genius because he became the president of the United States on his first attempt, although he did attempt to do so back in the year 2000 with the Reform Party (Donald Trump biography, n.d.), and then again, Obama accomplished to become the president during his first try. His colloquial style is also obvious as
he adds the word *like* in the sentence “being, like, really smart”, thereupon making his tweet much more in a pedestrian rhetorical style, in the way that how one speaks rather than how one writes. Another example is this tweet, “The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive” (realDonaldTrump, 2012). In this tweet Trump disavows that global warming is real and accuses the Chinese for inventing the concept to beat the U.S. in manufacturing. He uses hyperbole, in this case a false statement, and frames the Chinese as frauds. Framing is also a language mechanism that Trump uses regularly which will be discussed in the subsequent section.

5.2 Framing
Throughout his campaign, Trump called Hillary “Crooked Hillary”. The word *crook* is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as ‘a very dishonest person, especially a criminal or a cheat’ (Crook, n.d). Trump framed her as a “crook” because of the infamous FBI research into her private email server, who eventually found nothing criminally to charge her for (Yuhas, Siddiqui, Jacobs, & Ackerman, 2016). Nonetheless, Trump keeps on to this day to frame her as “Crooked Hillary” and due to him repeating it so often during his campaign rallies, his supporters unconsciously started to believe it themselves (Lakoff, 2016) and chant “lock her up” for her so-called “crimes”. During the primaries he also gave Jeb Bush the nick-name “Low Energy Jeb” (Flegenheimer, 2018) and Ted Cruz received the nick-name “Lyin’ Ted” (Flegenheimer, 2018). Recently Trump has given the former FBI director, James Comey, a number of nicknames, “Leakin’ James Comey”, “Sanctimonious James Comey”, “Lying James Comey,” “Slippery James Comey”, mainly because of Comey’s newly published tell-all-book which has Trump agitated (Wigglesworth, 2018). Trump has also called him a “slimeball”. The word *slimeball* means ‘a repulsive or despicable person’ (Slimeball, n.d). His framing of the media, especially the cable news network CNN as “Clinton News Network” or “fake news” (Huppke, 2017) has resulted in people, especially Trump supporters, to distrust that very news channel and branding it as “fake news”. Trump’s framing on the media and fake news has caught on with almost every member of society in the U.S. as a survey conducted by Gallup found that around 40% of Republicans actually believe that negative news about a particular politician or political group is always fakes news (Gallup, 2018).
5.3. Grammar and syntax
When it comes to the English language, Trump is not well-known for his radiant skills of the English language. During his speeches, interviews, or social media exchange, red flags have been raised on his grammar and syntax failure. A research by Schumacher, E. and Eskenazi, M. (2016) points out that out of all the six presidential candidates during the 2016 elections; Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio and Jeb Bush, Trump’s grammar level is significantly lower than his fellow candidates, at a fifth-grade level. His speeches during the campaign rates at a seventh-grade level whilst Bernie Sanders’ speeches are a tenth-grade level. However, Trump varies the most when it comes to change in the structure of his speeches, whereas Rubio has the lowest level of variation.

On twitter he is also guilty of malapropism like the former president George W. Bush. Bush mixed his pronunciations of words often and a new term was coined called *Bushism* which has been defined by the *Oxford Living Dictionary* as ‘A verbal error made by and considered characteristic of former US president George W. Bush.’ (Bushism, n.d.) This following tweet, since discovered of its errors has been deleted, contains two malapropisms, “Looks to me like the Bernie people will fight. If not, there blood, sweat and tears was a waist of time. Kaine stands for opposite!” (realDonaldTrump, 2016). He writes “there” instead of *their* and “waist” instead of the correctly spelled *waste*. Another example of malapropism is a tweet he also deleted and then replaced with the correctly spelled word *unprecedented* as he wrote originally as “unpresidented”, “China steals United States Navy research drone in international waters -- rips it out of water and takes it to China in unpresidented act” (realDonaldTrump, 2016). Recently he tweeted about the Stormy Daniels payment and wrote “Money from the campaign, or campaign contributions, played no roll in this transaction.” (realDonaldTrump, 2018). In this case he writes the word *role* as “roll”, a clear homophone, however he has still not corrected this error. In a Fox News interview in 2016, Trump had this to say about The New York Times:

> No matter how good I do on something, they'll never write good. I mean, they don't write good. They have people over there, like Maggie Haberman, and others, they don't write good. They don't know how to write good. (Trump, 2016)

Here Trump’s grammar error is present. Instead of using the adverb *well* when referring to himself at the beginning he uses the adjective *good* and that they, the journalist, do not “write
good”, perhaps meaning that they do not “write good material”. In this tweet he noticeably uses the rhetorical device repetition by repeating the word *good* five times in order to emphasize the fact that their writing, in his opinion, is not up to par.

### 5.4 Us vs. them

Trump uses the collective pronoun *us* most often when he is referring either to himself and his supporters or the U.S. and uses *them* when referring to his opponents or other countries:

> Our country is in serious trouble. We don’t have victories anymore. We used to have victories, but we don’t have them. When was the last time anybody saw us beating, let’s say, China in a trade deal? They kill us. I beat China all the time. All the time. (M., p. 21)

Here he asserts that “we” as a country has not beat China in a trade deal as “they” are better than “us”. However he argues that he, himself, beats China in a trade deal all the time. He also uses these pronounces to unite his audience, “But the silent majority is back and we’re going to take the country back.” (Stephens, 2016) Therewith, he separates himself and his audience against those who are not on their side, “The rhetoric and language coming from Trump has begun to both define and normalise Othering.” (Powell, 2017) Othering is a term for treating an individual or a group of people with less respect. Those who do not fit the social norm are seen as not ‘one of us’.

> This is a threat to all the things we value. When Mexicans can be called ‘rapists and drug dealers’ in direct contradiction to the facts, it becomes a much easier step to call for their deportation, and for a literal wall to divide us. (Powell, 2017)

By opposing disparate groups of people, Trump was trying to emphasize on the difference between white working-class voters and everyone else. With this effort he was trying to gain and seal their loyalty to him. He blamed globalization for the fact that white working- and middle class voters were poor and unemployed which had been enforced by the Democrats like Hillary Clinton. Sociologist Michèle Lamont points out that Trump, “directed their anger outward and removed them from responsibility for their life circumstances” (Pazzanese, 2018) by blaming globalization and the people who pushed it such as, Hillary Clinton, Democrats and Liberals in their eyes. Therefore, Trump pushed the ‘us vs. them’ mentality onto his voters by “blaming the economic inequality and unemployment they’ve experienced on globalization, rather than on a
lack of education, training, or other factors.” (Pazzanese, 2018) Trump assured them that their deteriorating situation was not their own fault and that together they would fix this and “make America great again”.

Biria and Mohammadi (2012) refer to the notions of ‘us vs. them’ as “self” and “other” and assert that it is one of the essential strategic objective of a politician. A political speech is a mode of persuasion as its purpose is to gain the confidence of the audience of the political measure taken, to gain public support for any political actions taken in the future, and to win the campaign. Engel claims “that delegitimization as a rhetorical strategy can be employed to present those in the periphery or the others negatively.” (as cited in Biria and Mohammadi, 2012) Trump uses this method regularly to establish himself and his supporters as “self” and those who oppose him and does not fit his constituency, whether it being a single person or a group of person, as “others”. Ultimately, Trump’s intention is to be divisive, not inclusive.

6. Comparison of Obama’s and Trump’s inauguration speeches
The inaugural address or the inaugural speech is delivered every four years to the people by the newly elected president during his inauguration. The purpose of that speech is for the president to set forth on how he is going to lead the country from this point on. Most often in the speech delivered by the president he addresses the present state of the nation, how he proposes to solve those problems and what his goals are as a new commander-in-chief. Trump’s 2017 inaugural address has been described as “the bleakest to date” (KQED News, 2017). Trump also delivered the shortest inauguration speech so far, containing merely 1,433 words compared to Obama’s 2009 speech which contained 2,395 words (Peters, n.d.). Overall, their inauguration speeches were similarly constructed as both presidents touched on the corruption of political figures, the challenges that will come their way and that they will rebuild the U.S. and lead it to a better path. Both Trump and Obama spoke about the economy in a negative tone. The stark difference with their speeches is the context of the economic situation at the time their inauguration took place. Obama in January, 2009 took over office during the Great Recession, which was the longest recession in history dating from December 2007 to June 2009 since World War II (Rich, n.d.). The unemployment rate at the time that Obama delivered his inauguration speech was at 7.8%,
which dropped down to 4.7% at the end of his presidency. People without health insurance dropped down to 29.8 million from 49 million after Obama took office (B. Jackson, 2017). At the time that Trump took office the economy had mostly improved and was still growing in contrast to the same time that Obama took office. Trump’s dark description of the nation’s economy in his inauguration speech surprised many. Parts of Trump’s 2016 inauguration speech and Obama’s 2009 inauguration speech will be compared and contrasted where they touch on the same topic.

Trump when it came to the nation’s most pressing challenges:

Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities; rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation; an education system flush with cash, but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of knowledge; and the crime and gangs and drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential. This American carnage stops right here and stops right now. (Full text: Donald Trump inauguration speech transcript, 2017).

Trump’s utilization of dreary words to describe the country is striking. Most noticeable are the words, trapped, rusted-out, tombstones, robbed, and carnage. Additionally, it is interesting that he chooses to use the word carnage. The Cambridge Dictionary defines the word carnage as ‘the violent killing of large numbers of people, especially in war’ (Carnage, n.d.). Thus this is an example of hyperbole since there was no ‘violent killing of large numbers of people’ that took place.

Obama when it came to the nation’s most pressing challenges:

Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost, jobs shed, businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly, our schools fail too many – and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet. (Obama's inaugural address: The full text, 2009)
Obama uses the bleak words *weakened, failure, lost, shed, shuttered* and *threaten*. There is already a difference in their choice of words since Trump’s words are much more visionary than Obama’s. And to the previously pointed out fact that Obama took office during one of the worst financial collapse that unsettled the whole nation and the entire world. His overall speech acknowledged the many challenges the nation faced, but was centered on themes of optimism, reconstruction and global cooperation:

Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America. For everywhere we look, there is work to be done. The state of our economy calls for action, bold and swift. And we will act, not only to create new jobs, but to lay a new foundation for growth. We will build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together. We’ll restore science to its rightful place, and wield technology’s wonders to raise health care’s quality and lower its cost. We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories. And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age. All this we can do. All this we will do. (Obama's inaugural address: The full text, 2009)

In contrast to Trump’s reinforced themes of isolationism and nationalism:

From this day forward, a new vision will govern our land. From this moment on, it’s going to be America First. Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs, will be made to benefit American workers and American families. We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs. Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength. (Full text: Donald Trump inauguration speech transcript, 2017)

Trump, even though giving the audience his vision of a new and a better future still contains dreary words, such as *ravages, stealing* and *destroying*. Trump’s rhetoric focuses more on isolationism and nationalism as other countries propose as a threat and hinder the U.S. from prospering. On the other hand, Obama focuses dealing with the problems with optimism even during a time when all hope was lost due to the economy crashing.
7. Trump’s populism

Trump’s rhetoric can be seen as problematic and crude by some and on the other hand it can be seen as genuine and refreshing by others. Sociologist Michèle Lamont speculates that Trump’s choice of words, from the beginning of his candidacy, was deliberately aimed at people without college degrees, consisting mostly of working-class white people and those in low-paying jobs, “the very subset of voters who overwhelmingly turned out to put him in office” (Pazzanese, 2018). Trump has been associated with populism as he tried to appeal more to ‘the people’ rather than to an elite as he has stated before back in the 90s, “The rich people hate me and the workers love me.” (M., p. 90) As has been discussed previously in this thesis, Trump relies more on simple words than complicated ones. He speaks more with a so-called pedestrian rhetoric rather than with the conventional political rhetoric as Shafer points out that, “Trump’s rejection of ‘convoluted nuance’ and ‘politically correct norms,’ mark him as authentic in certain corners and advance his cred as a plainspoken guardian of the American way.” (2015) The historian Michael Kazin describes populism in his book *The Populist Persuasion* as:

A language whose speakers conceive of ordinary people as a noble assemblage not bounded narrowly by class; view their elite opponents as self-serving and undemocratic; and seek to mobilise the former against the latter. (as cited in Judis, 2016)

With this description of populism, it can be said that Trump projected himself like this to his base, the contradiction is that he does belong to the elite no matter how much he denies it. His campaign was mostly funded by members of the elite and his White House cabinet is mostly assembled by white, under qualified rich people who donated to his campaign (Peterson-Whithorn, 2017). Professor Hunston points out that, “All language use contributes to a persona – we continually reinvent ourselves as we write and speak – and Trump’s persona is, arguably, carefully crafted as the antithesis of the conventional politician.” (Hunston, n.d.) It can perhaps be said that Trump has been proven, since becoming president, to not being a populist at all. He only projected himself as one to his base, however since becoming president he has lowered taxes for corporation and the top one percent and opposed an increase in the minimum wage to name a few (Matthews, 2017). Most of his voters from all over the U.S., the white working- and middle class workers voted against their own prosperity as Shrum describes Trump as:
He is a demagogue who, under the cover of a contrived populism that traffics in resentment of “the other,” pursues a plutocratic course that betrays the very people he tricked into voting against themselves. (2017)

Shrum accuses Trump of appealing to popular desires of his base such as prejudice and anger rather than using rational argument to gain their support. That he uses populism as a facade as his real intention is to antagonize -“the other” and then appeal to the rich and powerful after he has collected the votes that he needs from those whom he tricked. A poll showed that as almost two-third of U.S. adults feel that Trump is dividing the country than unite it, a number that was true across race, gender, age, party lines and all parts of the nation (Santhanam, 2018).

8. Studies on Trump's articulacy
A handful of studies researching Trump’s articulacy have been conducted since he joined the 2016 presidential elections in 2015. The most favored research method is the Flesch-Kincaid grade-level, which many of his speeches have been analyzed with. Trump’s debate speech from August 6th, 2015 scored a 4th-grade reading level, the lowest of the six debaters. To compare, the highest score went to Ted Cruz, a 9th-grade reading level and the next-lowest grade to Trump was a 5th-grade reading level, scored by John Kasich (Shafer, 2015). Another research comparing the U.S. presidents’ vocabulary together, since Herbert Hoover, through the Flesch-Kincaid grade-level was conducted in 2018. Donald Trump scored the lowest of all the presidents, speaking at a mid-fourth grade level. The highest score is an 11th-grade level scored by Jimmy Carter and Herbert Hoover. Barack Obama came in third place at a high-9th grade level. Frischling’s (2018) statistical analysis found the following:

By every metric and methodology tested, Donald Trump’s vocabulary and grammatical structure is significantly more simple, and less diverse, than any President since Herbert Hoover, when measuring “off-script” words, that is, words far less likely to have been written in advance for the speaker.

Henceforth, the notion that Trump speaks with a pedestrian rhetorical style or like the ‘common man’ is heavily supported with these two studies that use the Flesch-Kincaid grade-level to
measure where he stands in contrast to both his fellow presidential candidates and former presidents. A theory has circulated that Trump dislikes very much reading (Graham, 2018). Michael Wolff in his book about Trump in *Fire and Fury* (2017) claims that Trump gets easily bored in the middle of a meeting with world readers and prefers oral communication over the written word. Furthermore, the National Security Council officials have revealed that during their briefings with Trump they try to keep his attention and focus by mentioning his name several times on the paper that he reads. By making his own name appear repeatedly keeps his attention and therefore he does not get bored and his attention is focused on the task at hand (Holland & Mason, 2017). At a recent tax cut event, Trump had prepared remarks on a piece of paper about the benefits of the newest Republican tax cuts, which he then tossed in the air and claimed that “This is boring. We have to tell it like it is.” (Going off script, Trump bashes Immigration at tax cut event, 2018) Trump then deviated from the original script and started to talk about immigrants and his unproven claim that millions of people in California voted illegally.

9. Conclusion
Donald Trump’s victory in the 2016 presidential election came as a shock to many. He was known as a famous businessman and a television personality who was very pretentious and ultimately a showman. Both the Democratic and the Republican Party discredited him once he announced his campaign and thought his ideas and policies were farcical. Trump turned to the working- and middle-class white voters and forged a tight bond between them and himself. His voters were drawn to his populist message on his key issues such as immigration, foreign affairs and trade deals. His incendiary rhetoric evoked emotion in them and persuaded them to vote for him considering that he promised to restore the U.S. to its former glory and that they would have victories once again. His dismissal of political correctness and speaking off script and from “his gut”, oftentimes saying offensive things towards various groups of people, was received with thunderous applaud from his voters. Trump and his base have been accused of racist connotation because of their agenda as a national exit poll showed that his voters were predominantly less educated white people. Trump’s campaign was met with a lot of adversity. Once he announced his candidacy he was seen by both the members of the Democratic Party and the Republican
Party as troublesome and once he won the election, it was met with protests where they chanted “not our president” through the streets of various cities across the U.S.

The goal of this thesis was to explore and analyze Donald Trump’s choice of rhetoric once he announced his presidential candidacy back in 2015. How his rhetoric deviates from the normal politician rhetoric and ultimately how his rhetoric helped him to become the president of the U.S. His connection to his base can be explained through Aristotle’s pathos as he appeals to his voters’ emotions. He uses short and vigorous words that his base can relate to as he emphasizes dangers that he knows his base is afraid of and claims that he will fix it and restore the country to its former glory. His language mechanisms such as the rhetorical devices known as hyperbole, repetition and paralipsis showcase that he uses regularly the same devices to address his politically incorrect opinions without losing the support of his base. In fact, his base love that he speaks “from the gut” and appreciate his hatred for political correctness as themselves are tired of traditional politicians. Trump also repeatedly uses framing to paint a negative picture of his opponents, for example “Crooked Hillary” and “fake news” and his base believe his words because of how often he repeats the same framing or the same fact over and over, although it might often just be a hyperbole or a lie. His grammar and syntax has raised red flags as his speeches during the campaign received the lowest grade of all the candidates and on Twitter he is keen to be guilty of malapropism. Trump’s rhetoric also puts himself and his base against those who do not fit his constituency by adopting the ‘us vs. them’ mentality by blaming “them” for their problems and inciting therefore prejudice against those who are not “us”. He brands himself as hated by the elitists and loved by the working man.

All things considered, it can be said that Donald Trump has deviated from the normal political rhetoric that is expected of a president and introduced something new and different. It can be argued if this change is considered positive or negative, although with the evidence presented in this thesis it can be seen that his rhetoric tends to evoke prejudice against minorities such as immigrants, Muslims and women to name a few. He is also guilty of exaggerating his statements to get his base to believe him and sometimes they are just flat out lies. Those who have felt neglected during the Obama administration took together and found a bound between themselves and Trump as his opinions and policies reflected their own. By gaining the trust and
support of mostly less educated white people with his rhetoric and unusual policies he became the 45th president of the United States of America.
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