Rhetoricon Symposium: Figures & Constructions; Constructions & Figures

Thursday, May 28, 2026

4:30 – 6:30	DC 1301	Registration, Reception; rhetoricon demos; posters

Friday, May 29, 2026

8:30 – 9:30	DC 1301	Coffee, pastries, fruit; registration
9:30 – 9:50	DC 1301	Welcome – Issues and Interests – Randy (possibly Chrysanne)
10:00 – 10:30	DC 1302	Jeanne Fahnestock Persuasive parallelism in form, sound, and strategic repetition
10:30 – 10:50	DC 1302	Discussion
11:00 – 11:50	DC 1302	Kyle Gerber We construct language as language constructs us: $V^{A}NP^{B}NP^{B}V^{A}$ constructions Ritika Puri, Rency Luan, Keru Chen Said the Master: Antimetabolic variations in *The Analects*
12:00 – 1:00	DC 1301	Lunch
1:00 – 1:30	DC 1302	Laura A. Michaelis Marked contrast: A construction that performs antithesis through prosody, conceptual blending and ironic pretense
1:30 – 1:50	DC 1302	Discussion
2:00 – 2:50	DC 1302	Ramona Kühn Aligned in form, divided in meaning: Computational identification and interpretation of antithesis Kavi Duvvoori Figuring out whether large language models can construct linguistic constructions and rhetorical figures
3:00 – 3:30	DC 1301	Coffee break
3:30 – 4:00	DC 1302	Adele Goldberg Constructions do it with style: Rhetorical effects of the *You-Know-What-I-Mean* construction
4:00 – 4:20	DC 1302	Discussion
4:30 - 6:00	DC 1302	Roundtable: Adele, (possibly Chyrsanne), Jeanne, Kavi, Keru, Kyle, Laura, Ramona, Randy, Ritika, Rency

Posters, DC 1301
attended on 28 May, on display throughout the 29th

Romina Hashemi, How to pay the cat tax: A constructionist approach to multimodal social media trends

Elisa He, GoFigure

Kamika McFarlane, When language still works: Rhetorical schemes in cognitive decline

Martin Pham, Alicia Bremer, Terry Stewart, Hyperdimensional computing and rhetorical figures

Vy Nguyễn, The Rhetoricon database administration portal

Adeshola Ogunsanya, The Rhetoricon public portal

Zoya Randhawa Not All, But Always: The role of figurative constructions in epitomizing arguments

Kayla Russell, Rhetorical figures in child and child-directed discourse: There are figures everywhere!

Maddy Saleem, Rhetoricon overview

Yetian Wang, The ploke ontology: A knowledge representation for rhetorical figures of perfect lexical repetition

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Keynotes	
Jeanne Fahnestock Persuasive parallelism in form, sound, and strategic repetition	Throughout its 2500-year history the rhetorical tradition has emphasized the many language moves that bracket, balance, or equalize segments of text, whether in syntax, sound, or the repetition that uses both. Salient devices like parison and isocolon were often grouped with other figures in key texts across the tradition and identified as "stylistic cappers" for certain argumentative moves. A staple of Latin instruction in early modern Europe, such devices were once common in a cultivated style in vernaculars. Now, with the exception of a few genres, they do their yoking work more subtly in paired expressions and series, and the newest challenge is how to prompt an LLM to produce a decent instance. Yet they remain effective content shapers for the generic human audience with new support from Predictive Coding Theory underwriting the insights of the ancient rhetoricians.
Adele Goldberg Constructions do it with style: Rhetorical effects of the You-Know-What-I Mean construction	Constructions can do much more than simply communicate information: The Phrase-as-Lemma (PAL) construction creates shared intimacy and humor. PALs position a phrase in a position typically reserved for a single word (e.g., a don't-mess-with-me driver, an "I can't believe this is my life" moment). I will argue that the unusual syntax is unusual for good reason. Because the phrase is treated as if it were a word, people interpret the phrase as having a word-like meaning: labeling a familiar, culturally shared type of situation. Since people recognize that the phrase is not actually a word, it suggests the situation is not often discussed. Talking about a situation that is familiar but not often discussed is the definition of 'observational humor.' Crowd-sourced judgments confirm that even common instances of the PAL construction, when compared with close paraphrases, systematically imply greater familiarity between speaker and listener and a dash of humor. (Based on Goldberg, A. E., & Shirtz, S. (2025). The English phrase-as-lemma construction: When a phrase masquerades as a word, people play along. *Language*, 101(2), 291-320.)
Laura A. Michaelis Marked contrast: A construction that performs antithesis through prosody, conceptual blending and ironic pretense	This paper offers a pragmatic account of antithesis as a *marked-contrast* construction whose rhetorical force arises from the systematic coupling of discourse-coherence relations with emergent structure through blending, scalar inference and dissociation through ironic pretense. I propose an expressivist model grounded in the pretense theory of irony: speakers briefly *stage* an alternative evaluative stance (as if endorsing it) in order to expose its inadequacy and pivot to a preferred construal. This staged stance is prosodically licensed by topic–comment articulation in the sense of Lambrecht and Michaelis (1998): one pole of the antithesis is packaged as a (provisional) topic, while the counterposed pole is delivered as a focal counterpoint. Conceptual blending models the resulting dual-space alignment, explaining how antithesis can simultaneously maintain two partially isomorphic worlds while prompting the hearer to compute their clash as an argument. The account suggests why antithesis remains difficult to detect automatically: its effects depend on the interaction of constructional form, prosodic packaging, conceptual mapping and ironic pretense, rather than on computation of coherence relations alone.

Papers	
Keru Chen, Rency Luan, and Ritika Puri Said the Master: Antimetabolic variations in *The Analects*	Chiastic figuration is among the most heavily investigated stylistic phenomena and *The Analects of Confucius* is among the best known, most beloved texts in the world. We examine antimetabole in The *Analects*, both in its original Classical Chinese version and in the most respected scholarly translation into English (Lau), to probe Jeanne Fahnestock's (2004) claims that figures robustly encode argumentative and therefore resist alteration under changes of mode, register, and genre. A useful rhetorical convention to represent this chiastic pattern is ABBA (Lanham, 1991). Of the many chiastic figures, we focus on antimetabole because it has a host of argumentative functions: reciprocality, anti-reciprocality, and mutual dependence (Harris & Di Marco, 2017; Harris, 2020; Harris, 2023).
Kavi Duvvoori Figuring out whether large language models can construct linguistic constructions and rhetorical figures	How well do Large Language Models (LLMs) and other algorithmic text processing systems model rhetorical figures and linguistic constructions? What could the answer tell us about the broader tendencies and limits of scaling oriented generative AI? Our pilot study explored how effectively LLMs processed and produced English linguistic constructions and rhetorical figures, testing LLMs on an authored sample of well-studied rhetorical schemes and grammatical constructions, analyzing statistically and qualitatively the generated outputs. Both Construction Grammar and the tradition of rhetorical figures treat supralexical groupings as semiotic units—that is, as specific form/meaning alliances. However, Construction Grammar is concerned with arbitrary alliances, while rhetorical figures involve neurocognitively motivated alliances. Theoretically motivated empirical studies like ours search for internal and structural analyses of the ways LLMs perform and fail rhetorically, to complement ontological, critical, and textual investigations of generative AI's communicative wake, pattern-biases, potentials, and blind spots.
Kyle Gerber We construct language as language constructs us: VANPBNPBVA constructions	This presentation explores a collection of antimetaboles in VANPBNPBVA constructions. Most work on the communicative function of antimetaboles has assumed an AxBBxA construction where As and Bs are both noun phrases, and where the antimetabole expresses a reciprocal relationship defined by x. Distinct from this is the conferred or transitive relationship afforded by VANPBNPBVA constructions, such as expressed in the iconic "forgive us … as we forgive …" structure in the Lord's Prayer. Attending to the affordances of this unique construction expands our understanding of how chiastic structures encode different forms of relational logic, and offers additional nuance to our understanding of how antimetaboles function.

Papers	
Ramona Kühn Aligned in form, divided in meaning: computational identification and interpretation of antithesis	Antithesis is a rhetorical figure that juxtaposes (often near-parallel) phrases that contain a pair of antonyms or contrasting concepts. This opposition can be polarizing when it creates a paradoxical effect by comparing a socially accepted concept with a rhetorically constructed counterpart. While the two concepts are presented as comparable, they usually have an underlying conceptual incompatibility. We present a computational investigation of political antitheses in German. Our experiments are based on a German populist dataset, which we extend with annotated antitheses originating from an English antimetabole dataset. We evaluate three approaches for the computational identification of antithesis: rule-based methods, model-based methods with a German pre-trained language model, and a large language model (LLM)-based approach. We discuss their suitability for different figures and rhetorical structures. Beyond figure identification, we present a computational interpretation of antithesis by analyzing sentiment polarity and semantic distance between antithetical phrase pairs. The semantic distance reveals insightful differences between the populist and the antimetabolic antitheses. In addition, we examine whether the positional arrangement of the antithetical phrases contributes to the perceived paradoxical effect. Overall, those insights help understanding the pragmatics of a text containing antithesis.

Posters	
Romina Hashemi How to pay the cat tax: a constructionist approach to multimodal social media trends	As of February 6, 2026, there are 64,500 TikTok videos posted using the trending audio, "I was born a cat, I identify as a cat, but according to my mum, I just a baby." The audio was first shared on May 5, 2022 by dog-owner and TikTok content creator @Rott_n_chugs in response to comments under an earlier shared audio, "I was born a dog, I identify as a dog, but according to my mum, I just a baby," posted on May 1, 2022 (used to create 352,100 videos). These TikTok audios create templates with fixed slots (corresponding to audio segments) for users to share images and videos of their pets online—a kind of multimodal form-meaning pairing. While recent work in Construction Grammar has expanded the definition of a construction to include multimodal form-meaning pairs (Dancygier & Vandelanotte, 2017, 2025; Zenner & Geeraerts, 2018; Fischer & Aarestrup, 2021; Vandelanotte, 2021; Pourebrahim, 2024), there is, however, no work yet on the role that audio clips play in shaping short-form content. As such, using a corpus of 50 cat videos, I will investigate the role trending TikTok audios play in defining the form and meaning of social media artefacts.
Elisa He GoFigure	A game for identifying, hunting, and annotating of rhetorical instances, GoFigure offers the internet an entertaining and edifying chance to contribute to the growing Rhetoricon database, with itsleaderboards, challenges, and the ability to purchase sunglasses for cartoon cat avatars. GoFigure prioritizes accessibility in order to draw in players with different levels of familiarity. With a user-friendly design and interface, GoFigure currently has implemented a series of tutorials tofamiliarize players with twelve common word- (ploke! anadiplosis!) and sound-based (rhyme! alliteration!) figures of speech. More figures will come in the future (antithesis! metaphor!). GoFigure fosters inter-player community with team formation, badges, and swag. GoFigure encourages friendly competition by assigning each account a personal "level," enticing players with coin rewards, and an in-game shop that allows them to customize their avatars and flex their rhetorical ability to their peers. Three GoFigure pilots in classrooms at the University of Waterloo have been completed, gaining student feedback that has helped fine-tune the game as well as confirm the game's value. Students find GoFigure both educational and engaging.

Posters	
Kamika McFarlane When language still works: rhetorical schemes in cognitive decline	Rhetorical figures give salience (recruit attention and impress memory), as well as produce aesthetic effects (induce a pleasurable emotional response) to language. They do so because of the way they cater to neurocognitive pattern biases. This work investigates the ways in which rhetorical schemes aid in the understanding, diagnosing, and coping with forms of dementia. Dementia is a neurodegenerative condition characterized by the progressive deterioration of memory and attentional capacities, notably affecting language use. However, individuals living with dementia tend to retain proverbs, clichés, slogans, and other 'prefabricated' units of language, many of which exhibit patterns that rhetoricians classify as figures (e.g., rhyme, alliteration, parallelism, and lexical repeitions), long after a patient loses the ability to form more conventional, abstract grammatical patterns. The pervasiveness of these figures raises the question, 'What does this say about the organization of the brain in cognitive decline?'
Adeshola Ogunsanya Rhetoricon public site	The Rhetoricon public site (still under development) represents our project, describes our methods and goals, provides the access to our database, and includes a research infrastructure of definitions, ontological graphs, and wiki articles. Through the public site, users can learn more about the project and dive deeper into the research that informs the study of rhetorical figures—including articles about neurocognitive affinities and the major themes of the project. The public site also provides users with a thorough look into every figure included in the database, providing definitions, etymology, synonyms and plesionyms, and how each figure is classified within the Rhetoricon's taxonomy. For users searching for concrete examples of how figures are used within language, the public site provides them with all the instances stored in the database. The site has the functionality to click through figure annotations, and filter by figure, or specific figure collocations.
Vy Nguyễn Rhetoricon admin site	The Rhetoricon Admin site is used by RAs to enter and annotate instances and gloss them where necessary, enter sources, create, define, and graph, figures, review and track one another's work and the GoFigure submissions,
Martin Pham Alicia Bremer Terry Stewart Randy Allen Harris Hyperdimensional computing and rhetorical figures	We present a structured natural language processing pipeline that combines linguistically grounded analysis with Vector Symbolic Architectures (VSA). Text is analyzed using Stanza and NLTK to extract morphological features, dependency and constituency structure, while Epitran provides phonemic transcriptions to preserve sublexical information. Sentence Transformers are used to generate contextual semantic embeddings at the phrase and sentence level. These heterogeneous linguistic outputs (phonological sequences, syntactic relations, and semantic representations) are encoded into high-dimensional vectors using VSA operations of binding, bundling, and permutation. The resulting hypervectors support compositionality, similarity-based retrieval, and robustness to noise, enabling unified representations of linguistic structure suitable for symbolic reasoning, memory.

Posters	
Zoya Randhawa Not All, But Always: The role of figurative constructions in epitomizing arguments	Recent work has demonstrated how rhetorical figures can be quite seamlessly adopted into construction grammar frameworks, bridging the gap between linguistics and rhetoric. This poster extends this line of inquiry by examining another heavily figured construction, NOT ALL N_{PL}^{A} BUT ALWAYS N_{SG}^{A} (OR THE NOT ALL, BUT ALWAYS construction). Examples of this construction include forms like "Not all men, but always a man," or "Not all rhetoricians, but always a rhetorician." Instances of this construction reveal a tightly constrained pairing of form and meaning, where the figurative properties (namely epiphora, antithesis, assonance, and procatalepsis) work together to epitomize a robust argument. The primary methodology for this project involves gathering a corpus of instances from X (formerly known as Twitter), both manually and through scraper tools. This is followed by an analysis of each instance, its context, and the argumentative work accomplished by the grammatical and figural pairing. Through this analysis, it becomes clear that the NOT ALL, BUT ALWAYS construction, despite its minimal form, is rhetorically powerful, underscoring the importance of rhetorical figures for understanding meaning in grammatical constructions
Kayla Russell Rhetorical figures in child and child-directed discourse: There are figures everywhere!	Rhetorical figures are pervasive in child discourse. Language development in children hinges upon social contexts, prominently including infant-directed speech, as well as music, nursery rhymes, storybooks, and experimentation with other children. These are governed by their social motivation, their curiosity, and general purpose neurocognitive affinities such as similarity, opposition, repetition, grouping. The purpose of this paper is to reveal the pervasiveness of rhetorical figures in this context. Our primary methodology includes manual and computational figure detection and rhetorical analysis of the CHILDES corpus. Among the more consistent figures our research has discovered are epiphora, epanaphora, modified repetition, and alliteration.
Yetian Wang The ploke ontology: A knowledge representation for rhetorical figures of perfect lexical repetition	Rhetorical figures, such as rhyme and metaphor, affect human discourse by providing essential semantic and pragmatic information that generate a set of attentional effects such as salience, aesthetic pleasure, and memorability, that enhance the receiver's attention. Ploke is one kind of rhetorical figure, that of perfect lexical repetition, which is a word or phrase that repeats with the same form and meaning in a passage. For example, the famous Dumas quote: "all for one, one for all" consists of multiple rhetorical figures including subclasses of ploke such as antimetabole (reverse repetition of "all" and "one") and mesodiplosis (clause-medial repetition of "for"), all of which contribute to a symmetrical structure that in turn generate attentional effect such as increasing the quote's salience, aesthetic pleasure, and memorability. Rhetorical figures, including plokes, are largely ignored in natural language processing (NLP) and artificial intelligence (AI). This project develops a knowledge representation model of the general concept of Ploke in the form of an ontology that represents the classification of Ploke, the forms of plokes, and the neurocognitive affinities that affect attention. This ontology will help AIs to understand and generate plokes.

Biographies	
Alicia Bremer	Alicia Bremer entered the University of Waterloo's Cheriton School of Computer Science with a prestigious Schulich Leader Scholarship and a focus on finding ways that code can help the world. She has taken up two research positions along the way, one with Jeff Orchard's Neurocognitive Computing Lab and one with The Rhetoricon group, where she applied Vector Symbolic Algebra to Figure modelling, inaugurating the project, along with internships at Meta and Waabi.
Keru (柯汝) Chen	Keru (柯汝) Chen is a Masters Candidate in Chinese Classics at Soochow University. Keru's research focuses on figurative language in Pre-Qin Chinese philosophical texts, dedicating special attention to metaphors. Keru's work has been showcased at the Annual Conference of Jiangsu Provincial Association for Foreign Languages. Her favourite rhetorical figure is metaphor.
Kavi Duvvoori	Kavi Duvvoori is a PhD candidate in English, at the University of Waterloo, with an MFA from the University of California, Santa Cruz and previous study in mathematics and literary arts. Their research on computational rhetoric explores how algorithms mediate communication: incorporating linguistics, research/creation, and feminist, queer, and ecological media studies. They are an editor for Taper magazine, and have shared computational writing in various publications and venues. They admire and appreciate the geese.studies like ours search for internal and structural analyses of the ways LLMs perform and fail rhetorically, to complement ontological, critical, and textual investigations of generative AI's communicative wake, pattern-biases, potentials, and blind spots.
Jeanne Fahnestock	Jeanne Fahnestock is a scholar of rhetoric, science, stylistics, and argumentation. She is Professor Emeritus at the University of Maryland, with a distinguished career featuring many accolades at university, state, and disciplinary level. Her books include *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Persuasion* (with Randy Allen Harris), *The Dialectical Questions*, an English translation and introduction to Philip Melanchthon's *Erotemata Dialectices*, *Rhetorical Style: The Uses of Language in Persuasion*, *Rhetorical Figures in Science*, and *A Rhetoric of Argument* (three editions, with Marie Secor). Her current project is the textbook *Effective Style: Writing in the Age of AI*.
Kyle Gerber	Kyle Gerber studies and teaches rhetoric as as a special lecturer at the University of Waterloo's English Department. Combining his academic work and his role as a pastor in a local congregation, his doctoral dissertation explored rhetorical dimensions of forgiveness in an Anabaptist context, including attention to figural logic in expressions of forgiveness; he's recovered enough from that experience to be extending that work on figures further into the field of chiasmus studies and giving his former grammar teachers a reason to say "I told you so."

Biographies	
Adele Goldberg	Adele Goldberg is a linguist by training and a psychologist by choice. Her research focuses on the constructionist approach to language, which views language as a product of both form and function. Dr. Goldberg studies statistical and functional factors in an effort to explain our creative but constrained use of language in typical and atypical populations, and in child and adult learners. A graduate of Goldberg the University of Pennsylvania (B.A. in Mathematics and Philosophy) and the University of California at Berkeley (PhD in linguistics), Dr. Goldberg has been a professor of psychology and linguistics at Princeton University since 2004. She is the author of *Constructions: A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure* (1995), *Constructions at Work: The Nature of Generalization in Language* (2006), and *Explain Me This: Creativity, Competition, and the Partial Productivity of Constructions* (2019).
Romina Hashemi	RominaHashemi is a master's student in linguistics at Simon Fraser University, holds a BA in English and a BMath in statistics from the University of Waterloo. She dabbles in construction grammar, rhetoric, and online discourse, research that earned her a SSHRC master's scholarship for her research on slogan constructions. While at Waterloo, she had the opportunity to be a research assistant with The Rhetoricon Database Project, where she co-wrote a paper on rhetorical figures in the AB Before BA construction with Queenie (Huini) Chen and Randy Allen Harris. In her free time, Romina enjoys baking and taking pictures of birds.
Elisa He	Elisa He is an award-winning first-year undergraduate arts student at the University of Waterloo ("Outstanding Course Performance in English 101C, *Rhetoric and Literature*"). After getting indoctrinated by GoFigure, she now works as a Research Assistant for the Rhetoricon. In her free time, she tries her best to complete her Goodreads reading challenge, and she gets excited whenever anadiplosis is used or mentioned (it's her favourite figure). She hates homoioptoton, and annotates them last.
Rency Luan	Rency Luan is a PhD Candidate in English with a BA (Hons. English, Rhetoric) from the University of Waterloo and MA (Rhetoric) from Carnegie Mellon University. Rency's research examines the intersection between mental health, immigration, and race to explore how mental health discourse is circulated linguistically, culturally, and globally. Rency's affiliation with the Rhetoricon project began in 2024, and she is continually mesmerized by the opportunistic encounters of rhetorical figures that crop up in the wild. Her favourite rhetorical figure is epizeuxis, and her favourite Care Bear is Cheer Bear.

Biographies	
Kamika McFarlane	Kamika McFarlane is a third-year Honours Public Health student at the University of Waterloo. She hopes to attain a minor in Philosophy as she works to deepen her competencies in social determinants of health, public health ethics, and knowledge translation. She actively pursues community-facing co-op opportunities that have fostered her love for large, family-esque teams and a passion for people-centered advocacy. Outside of her studies, she enjoys watching films and experimenting in the kitchen. Her favourite rhetorical figure is anadiplosis.
Vy Nguyễn	Vy is a fourth-year University of Waterloo Honours Arts (BA) Psychology student in the Research-Intensive Specialization with the Lab for Infant Development and Language. She is interested in how speakers' accents influence listeners' social attributions, and how these perceptions shape real-world outcomes across different contexts. Vy enjoys cooking, thrifting, and photography.
Laura A. Michaelis	Laura A. Michaelis is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Colorado Boulder, where she is also a Faculty Fellow in the Institute of Cognitive Science and a Faculty Affiliate of CU Boulder's new SPIKE Center for Sustainability Education. She received her PhD in Linguistics from the University of California, Berkeley, under the direction of Charles J. Fillmore. A cognitive-functional syntactician and semanticist, her work focuses on syntactic innovation and construction-based approaches to grammar. She is one of the developers of Sign-Based Construction Grammar and, with Jongbok Kim, co-authored the textbook *Syntactic Constructions of English* (Cambridge University Press, 2020). She is a founding editor of the interdisciplinary journal *Language and Cognition* (Cambridge University Press). Her research has appeared in *Language*, *Studies in Language*, *Journal of Linguistics*, *Linguistics & Philosophy*, *Journal of Semantics*, *Cognition*, and *Cognitive Linguistics*. Her academic recognitions includes election as a Fellow of the Linguistic Society of America (2022), the Boulder Faculty Assembly Excellence in Research Award (2022), and the CU Boulder Graduate School Outstanding Faculty Mentor Award (2022). In 2025, she served as Charles J. Fillmore Professor at the LSA Linguistic Institute at the University of Oregon. Her current work examines syntactic cues to stance in climate-change discourse.
Ramona Kühn	Ramona Kühn is a researcher in natural language processing and artificial intelligence and is currently completing her PhD at the University of Passau under the supervision of Jelena Mitrović. In her research, she focuses on computational rhetoric, particularly on computational methods for rhetorical figures, such as formalization, annotation, detection, identification, and interpretation. She developed the German GRhOOT ontology of rhetorical figures and implemented multiple computational approaches for the detection of antithesis in German. Ramona also holds a Master's degree in Computer Science from the University of Passau.

Biographies	
Adeshola Ogunsanya	Adeshola Ogunsanya is an undergraduate student at the University of Waterloo, majoring in Sociology and Business. She first joined the Rhetoricon as a Research Assistant in 2022 and has been part of the team ever since. She has served as an Administrative Officer and Project Manager for the Rhetoricon, receiving two NSERC USRA grants. During her free time, she can be found volunteering, reading, listening to music, and watching tennis. Her favourite rhetorical figures are hypophora, epanalepsis, and lexical repetition figures in general.
Martin Pham	Martin Pham is a graduate student interested in biologically plausible computational models of cognition and parallel computing. He is working towards an integrative framework that accounts for clinical behaviour and neuroscientific explainability without conceding mathematical rigour.
Ritika Puri	Ritika Puri is a University of Waterloo alum and holds a Master of Arts degree and a Bachelor of Arts degree in the field of English Rhetoric. She completed her thesis in the area of invisibilized illnesses. Ritika has been part of the Rhetoricon project in various roles for 5 years, and her favourite rhetorical figure is epizeuxis.
Zoya Randhawa	Zoya Randhawa is an MA student studying Rhetoric and Communication Design at the University of Waterloo. She holds a BA in English Rhetoric, Media, and Professional Communication with a Cognitive Science Minor. She has worked as a Research Assistant for the Rhetoricon project since 2024 and is currently the Research Lead for the project. Outside of her work with the Rhetoricon, her research focuses on the intersection between AI companions, the rhetoric of interactivity, and misogyny. Her favourite rhetorical figure is antanaclasis.
Kayla Russell	Kayla Russell is pursuing her Bachelor's degree as an Honours Art student at the University of Waterloo, specializing in Communications, English Language and Literature, Black Studies, and Health Humanities. She has always loved to read and write. That has been one of the most fulfilling things that has filled up her cup in this life. She views language as a constellation of convention, creation and imagination. Beyond her passion for literature, she loves film, fashion and a good meal.
Muhadditha Saleem	Muhadditha (Maddy) Saleem is an undergraduate student majoring in Computational Mathematics and minoring in Technical Writing. She has experience with online content development and quality assurance across many different industries such as manufacturing, non-profit charities, education, and academia. Muhadditha first joined the Rhetoricon Project as a lead content writer in fall of 2025, and she has remained loyal to the cause ever since. In her free time, she enjoys reading baffling mystery or sci-fi novels, playing video games, and baking up some tasty treats. She is, with Adeshola Ogunsanya, legendary for the fresh ice cream they made in the snow of 2026's the first major blizzard.

Biographies	
Terry Stewart	Dr. Terry Stewart (B.A.Sc. in Systems Design Engineering, University of Waterloo; M.Phil., Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence, University of Sussex; Ph.D., Cognitive Science, Carleton University) is an Associate Research Officer for National Research Council Canada, and Lead developer of the Nengo neural simulator.
Yetian Wang	Yetian Wang completed his Ph.D. at the University of Waterloo in 2025, under the supervision of Prof. Dan Berry, Prof. Grant Weddell, and Prof. Randy Harris. His research focuses on a knowledge representation model for ploke, rhetorical figure of perfect lexical repetition. The Ploke Ontology he developed is able to infer and explain the neurocognitive aspect carried by each instance of perfect lexical repetition. He also conducted an empirical study that studies the effect of plokes in requirements elicitation, an important process in Requirements Engineering which relies on methods such as interviews or conversation analysis. Yetian obtained his M.A.Sc. degree in Mechanical and Industrial Engineering from the University of Toronto and his B.A.Sc. in Systems Design Engineering from the University of Waterloo.