

Call for Papers:

Interdisciplinary Conference

The rhetoric of breaking the rules: achieving success against the norms

This call for papers is aimed in particular at young researchers in the humanities.

International conference, funded by the German Research Foundation

2-4 July 2026 (Thursday-Saturday), KU Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany

Languages: English and German

Organisers: Verena Schulz (Eichstätt) and Nicola Hömke (Rostock)

Deadline for abstracts:

250-300 words, short biography (not more than half a page)

Presentations are 30 minutes, followed by 15 minutes of discussion.

The results of the conference will be published in an interdisciplinary volume.

Please send your title, abstract, contact details and a short biography to both organisers

before 1 September 2025: Verena.Schulz@ku.de and Nicola.Hoemke@uni-rostock.de

You can expect a response in the course of November 2025.

Organisation/costs:

The conference is organised by the interdisciplinary DFG network 'The rhetoric of breaking the rules', which includes researchers from Classical Philology, General Rhetoric, Journalism, Ancient History, Law and Philosophy. There will be lectures by network members and lectures that complement their topics, especially by young academics to whom this call is addressed.

Travel and hotel costs will be covered.

Topic of the conference:

Ancient rhetoric has left us one of the greatest sets of rules of antiquity. Countless rules regulate in detail how a speech should be invented, structured, formulated, memorised and delivered. Modern speech guides are also full of recommendations for successful rhetoric. Researchers have analysed critically the relationship between this wealth of theory and the actual practice of speaking. Both ancient and modern orators know very well that it is precisely the non-adherence to the rule, the exploration of licences, that can lead to rhetorical success. This is where our conference comes in: it explores rule-breaking in its process, its rhetorical realisation and its ethical, aesthetic and legal implications - in different eras and from the perspective of different disciplines.

Various types of rules are analysed in combination with different rhetorical texts. In addition to the technical rules of rhetoric itself, social expectations, ethical norms, traditional behaviour and personal recommendations also play important roles in rhetoric. The rhetorical texts in which they are mentioned, described or implicitly negotiated include textbooks, court speeches, specialised legal literature, political speeches, eulogies and declamations. The question of the rhetoric of rule-breaking also finds its contemporary continuation in modern parliamentary speeches, philosophical treatises and journalistic contributions.

Possible topics include:

- What makes rule-breaking in rhetoric successful?
- What distinguishes successful, creative rule-breaking from unsuccessful, offensive rule-breaking?
- What effects and aesthetics characterise rule-breaking?
- What are the social implications of breaking the rules?
- What moral implications accompany rule-breaking?
- What place does rule-breaking have in rhetorical theory and practice?
- To what extent does the experience of rule-breaking change the further development of rhetorical theory?
- How can rule-breaking be categorised in the system of disciplines?

- To what extent and in what ways is the breaking of rules (made) visible? What is their intended effect? How are the expectations of the audience taken into account?
- How is rule-breaking realised in different text genres? What (genre-specific) effects are achieved by breaking the rules? Which ethical, aesthetic or social norms are thematised and negotiated?

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For further information, please contact Verena.Schulz@ku.de and Nicola.Hoemke@uni-rostock.de or our website: <https://www.ku.de/slf/klassische-philologie/team/professur-fuer-klassische-philologie-und-wirkungsgeschichte-der-antike/prof-dr-verena-schulz/rhetorik-des-regelbruchs>.