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Communication Studies Capstone--Prospectus

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Introduction

My overall topic is Christian right-wing influencers and their use of nonpartisan brand identities to encapsulate audiences. However in recent research, their method of communication tends to use constitutive rhetoric to push religious and political content. This creates a collective identity (Boyle 2026). In my project I will use rhetorical critique to expose how “Nick’s Right Podcast” presents themselves this way while using constitutive rhetoric to appeal to religion and politics.

“Nick’s Right Podcast” is a trans-platform brand that promotes their content on a variety of issues. The main sites of analysis will be on their YouTube content, specifically the commentary related to politics and religion. I will analyze their posts, merchandise, and videos. In this process I will be able to answer my question of, how “Nick’s Right Podcast” uses constitutive rhetoric to cultivate a following of collective reactivity? The content covers a wide range of commentary, but some of the main themes are Islamophobia, Christianity and conservatism. They use very harsh visuals and rhetoric to demonstrate these themes.

However, there content wasn’t always like this. The podcast started out as two friends debating different topics with the inclusion of different perspectives. They currently still

brand themselves this way in their podcast description, but the content itself has changed to primarily right-wing and conservative commentary. It would be interesting to explore why this change happened and if it has any correlation to the current political state of the U.S.

In order to contextualize my project I will look at research regarding the recent trends in Islamophobia and where they stem from. Through contextualization, I will be able to understand how information is communicated by “Nick’s Right Podcast” in order to evoke certain emotions and therefore reactions out of the audience. How does “Nick’s Right Podcast” videos address the viewers personally through dialogue in their live podcast and how do viewers of their YouTube videos engage with their content?

“Nick’s Right Podcast” is similar to the functionality of Ben Shepiros podcast. They both use more intimate settings to appeal to the viewer (Maurer and Nuernbergk). Both of them promote right-wing rhetoric on similar platforms. Therefore, they must produce similar results of combined digital activism associated with right-wing ideology (Gajjala et al.). This will help me bring into question, how self-branding is used to monetize their ideologies?

Aside from their YouTube channel, audiences interact with their content on Instagram, TikTok, and spotify. However, I chose to analyze their YouTube channel because it seems this is where their content is primarily distributed from.

Lit review

My topic comes from a variety of research done on constitutive rhetoric and rhetorical criticism, with regard to social media, political communication, and discourse. What I will be contributing to this conversation is how influencers like “Nick’s Right Podcast” are engaging with the viewers and potentially enabling them in collective activism.

Constitutive rhetoric

Constitutive rhetoric was once used to “revitalize the working-class identity” (Boyle 2026). This kind of rhetoric helped create a unified identity of reactivity. In other research, radio hosts were found to use social othering to contribute to a sense of loyalty among listeners (Chisnall 2025). I agree that constitutive rhetoric can be used in this way and I believe this can be represented in political and religious commentary. “Nick’s Right Podcast” calls into being a certain kind of viewer who is loyal to their beliefs. The rhetoric used in both of these instances were used to create a group of people brought together through religion and politics. However I will have to identify how they use social othering to achieve this.

Constitutive rhetoric plays a big role in my analysis, which is why Charland will be one of my main sources. Charland analyzes constitutive rhetoric as a method of unifying different groups of people into a combined belief. I believe this is the reason “Nick’s Right Podcast” is so effective in communicating their beliefs. Therefore I hope to use it to form my own claims about how “Nick’s Right Podcast” uses constitutive rhetoric in their content. This can be applied to the YouTube channel posts about christianity and

conservatism. Constitutive rhetoric also goes hand in hand with interpellation and identity.

Interpellation as stated by Althusser is the process of individuals being created as “ideological subjects.” Interpellation is pertinent to my project because it shows what role ideology plays in this process. That is, personal beliefs and values can be bestowed on another. However because interpolation is specific to individuals, I cannot directly use it to analyze the interpellation of a large group of people. Which is why I will be centralizing on constitutive rhetoric and use the idea of interpellation to identify the ideologies being created.

Identity then starts to play a role in these individuals, which is why I will also be including Burke. His theory on identification is based on how groups are then formed by shared symbols within individuals. I believe this method is useful in creating shared understanding of identity. I can analyze how “Nick’s Right Podcast” posts and advertising is used to represent their ideologies to their viewers. More specifically, their depictions and rhetoric of addressing islam and politics.

Research finds that most voters consider religious freedom in their voting for the 2020 presidential election. The voters who believe this, were found to also be in favor of christian nationalism even if it strayed from the constitution (Perry, Samuel L., et al. 2022). The research argues that while supporting christian nationalism, they are therefore contradicting their beliefs in religious freedom. I say this argument can be

supported in my analysis of “Nick’s Right Podcast” and how it addresses religion or communicates it to the viewer. I would also be able to claim whether they use this same contradiction in order to constitute the viewer.

Political Communication

Similar to this research relating to the use of politics, conservative candidates used the terms “we” vs “them” (boyle 2026). This resulted in the creation of identities that valued the exclusion of others. I believe this effect makes sense. This can also be applied to the use of political and religious rhetoric communicated on social media. One way right-wing influencers do this is by discrediting intellectual arguments mainly to to inspire hate with sexist and misogynistic rhetoric (Lawless and Cole 2021). I agree with this conclusion and therefore I plan on using it to support a claim of how “Nick’s Right Podcast” does this to interact with their viewers. I can apply the theories in both of these articles in my analysis of their video content and how it is covered. Mostly applying to each videos intros, description/title, and interactive call-ins by viewers.

Lawless, Rudick, and Golsan’s research analyzes Right-wing back lash towards U.S. academics being “too liberal.” The article argues that when conservative beliefs aren't implemented in academia, it becomes an issue of free speech. With regard to freedom of speech, conservatives say the educations system should include diverse ideologies. As highlighting it as unfair they disregard the overall validity of the ideologies (Lawless, Rudick, and Golsen). I believe this method can also be used to present conservatism as the minority and therefore pushes ideologies into issues regarding politics and religion.

Dowling et al. (2022) and Schulze (2020) sheds light on how journalism takes part in political discourse. Specifically, how right-wing creators on social media present themselves as a trusted news source against institutional control. I think this can be applied to “Nick’s Right Podcast” because it is an example of these political news sources. This could help me develop a claim about how “Nick’s Right Podcast” uses constitutive rhetoric to create a community that dislikes institutional control in relation to religion and political affiliation. Even if they are the majority.

It doesn’t help that some right-wing political figures use aggressive communication in their campaign making it easy for right-wing commentators to just restate while still communicating the same message. E. Castrellón et al. states “Donald Trump is not simply a presidential figure, but the embodiment of white supremacy,... racism,... xenophobia, Islamaphobia, homophobia, and more.” because of this marginalized groups were found to be in a constant state of distress. I say this is all communicated in a certain way using constitutive rhetoric not only by political figures but by political commentators as will. I will show how this works in “Nick’s Right Podcast.”

Digital Communities

Schrock's communicative affordances can be applied to how YouTube operates in it’s algorithm and monetization. The algorithm can works to bring groups of people together under the content that most appeals to them. This can be seen in the content titles and descriptions with the end goal of driving groups of people towards digital enclaves.

“Nick’s Right Podcast” does this by listing several links in their substack to private group chats and newsletters. This research highlights the process by which viewers are directed towards content like “Nick’s Right Podcast” with the end goal of exposing them to their exclusive options.

Some research also identifies how journalism and conservative activism is taken place in more intimate environments online in order to avoid professional journalism. The main way they do this is by subtly “pushing for more radicalized policy” (Maurer and Nuernbergk). Influencers like Ben Shapiro expose viewers to rhetoric that benefits their partisan interests. I agree with how they identify the functionality of more discreet right-wing enclaves. By analyzing “Nick’s Right Podcast” I can also prove how rhetoric creates communities and maintains them by labeling their content as commentary rather than activism.

Gajjala et al. “reveals a transplatform campaign supporting right-wing reactionary politics.” This research reveals how transplatform influencers contributed to digital activism through the type of content they produce and how they communicate it. For example, shaking their head in disappointment and rolling their eyes. Even informal body language like this contributes to emotional enticement. “If we are to understand how right wing news media can assert authority, it is only by examining their audience” (Juarez Miro). Depending on how a viewer resonates with representation like this, I will explore how it could result in a collective being developed in “Nick’s Right podcast.”

Methodology

My methodology will involve a rhetorical critique of the “Nick’s Right Podcast” YouTube channel. I will look at a number of content ranging from their videos, posts, and merchandise. I can then identify themes of constitutive rhetoric used. By identifying consistent themes relating to religion and politics, I can better analyze how their arguments are made to draw the viewer into a collective discourse.

By analyzing the videos featured on their YouTube channel I can make claims about how constitutive rhetoric is used in their discourse between each other. I will also analyze the audiences perception received in the comments and live call-ins. I can do this by using a similar methodology used in Boyle 2026, to identify how their religion and politics may be used to create social othering in their content.

I will also analyze the posts featured on their YouTube channel in order to make claims about the use of politics. Most of their content presented in their posts are commentary on politics and conservative beliefs. I can use the methodology implemented by Lawless & Cole, in order to make claims about Conservative rhetoric and how it contributes to right-wing ideology specifically inspiring hate.

Lastly, I will analyze their merch page, also featured on their YouTube channel. By identifying consistent themes in their depictions and visuals presented on their products. This will help me develop a claim about how “Nick’s Right Podcast” brands themselves

to the consumer. I can conclude by stating how they create a collective of supporters in their product descriptions, based on activism and reactivity towards opposing groups.

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