



Battle Exhortation: The Rhetoric of Combat Leadership (Studies in Rhetoric/Communication)

Keith Yellin

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This book provides a commanding study of the motivational speech of military leaders across the centuries. Yellin offers a groundbreaking examination of the symbolic strategies used in preparing troops for imminent combat in this interdisciplinary look at a mode of rhetorical discourse that has played a prominent role in military history, literature, and popular culture from antiquity to the present day. Yellin takes as his focus one of the most time-honored forms of motivational communication, the encouraging speech of a military commander, to evaluate the persuasive potential inherent in oral traditions of combat leadership. In illustrating his subject's long history, Yellin draws from the "Iliad", the Bible, Spartans, Julius Caesar, Spanish conquistadors, early American infantrymen, Teddy Roosevelt, General Tommy Franks, and others across the vast expanse of military endeavour. Yellin is also interested in how this mode of communication permeates popular culture, socializing audiences to its recognition and anticipation through delivery mechanisms as diverse as Shakespeare's "Henry V", George C. Scott's portrayal of General George S. Patton, and the conventions of coaching team sports. Studying of how military commanders articulate empowering battlefield oratory to convey ideals of strength and courage, Yellin assesses the importance of accounting for specific circumstances of a given war, the combat arm of the audience, the presence of non-military observers, and the personal experiences of the speaker.

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