**Chapter Ten Introduction Video Transcript**

Under the commitments of modernity described in Chapter 9, reason was the answer to almost every challenging question. Reason freed humanity from superstitions and false belief, reason elevated new standards of morality, and reason fostered a more rational, free society. Last chapter, we looked at modernist rhetorical theorists like Chaim Perlman, Lucie Olbrecht-Tyteca, Jurgen Habermas, Lloyd Bitzer, and Walter Fisher, because these modernist thinkers assumed that reasoned deliberation and rational argument were vital for meeting these commitments and moving past the death and destruction of the first half of the 20th century. Now in chapter 10, as we move to postmodernism, we focus on postmodern rhetorical theory as a reaction to a lot of those modernist assumptions. Postmodernism expands the approach to knowledge, meaning, and power. Postmodernism urges a renewed focus on language, culture, and media. Postmodernism offers a fresh perspective on the way social structures affect everyday argument and human capacity for social change. It might be wise at the outset to be precise with what our definition of postmodernism is. So for our purposes, postmodernism in Europe and the United States took shape in the middle of the 20th century, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s.

And the operative term in postmodernism course would be the post, because it highlights kind of the reactionary aims that we learned about with modernism in chapter nine. So in chapter 10, we're going to look at postmodernist thinkers like Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida, because they challenged the foundations of modernist thought, they questioned reason and progress, and they rejected kind of big grand meta-narratives, especially traditional forms of religion and morality. Postmodernism's reactionary origins show why its expansive reach remains central to your own education. And we can see that you may not use the word postmodernism very much in your daily conversations, but to be sure, your life is affected by postmodernism's origins. We live in an age of postmodern alienation, fragmentation, instability, and decenteredness. So as evidence, you can consider kind of influential public thought leaders, people like Robert Putnam and David Brooks and Jonathan Haidt, who sell a lot of books and go on a lot of media outlets and point to declining levels of trust in social institutions and the declining levels of traditional sources of morality. For young people, especially for college-age students, you might think of postmodernist thinkers like Jia Tolentino, Ezra Klein, and even Taylor Swift, who draw on a postmodern vocabulary to describe a moment of erased history, of lost memory, and weakened foundations. Going forward then in Chapter 10, be thinking about how this expansive definition of postmodernism, a definition that definitely affects your life, can also lead rhetorical theorists to fresh opportunities to theorize everyday argument and social change.