**Chapter Seven Overview Video Transcript**

Chapter 7, Rhetoric in the Renaissance, focuses on the contributions of the Italian humanists. From the 14th to 17th century, enormous intellectual and social changes took place in Europe. Assumption institutions that had once been dominant for centuries were challenged, including the Christian worldview and the status of the Catholic Church. Johannes Gutenberg developed the printing press in the early 1450s, making possible the wide dissemination of printed material, and with that, new ideas. Global exploration revealed a larger world than Europe had ever known. Remember, 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue. Europe was split by wars as well as the 16th century Protestant Reformation. So during this period of cultural upheaval, the rhetorical tradition flourished.

Chapter seven starts off with exploring why. So for an answer, we look back at rhetoric in the Renaissance for the same reasons that we look at rhetoric today. So rhetoric flourished in the Renaissance for the same reasons rhetoric flourishes today. Recall from previous chapters how much power was concentrated in the church and its religious, educational, and organizational arms during the millennium that we just explored.

But during the Renaissance, the church lost its monopoly on power, knowledge, and truth. Now the church was still very powerful, of course. We might say that during the Renaissance, the first period in which that power was questioned to a large extent, and thus the church lost at least a little bit of its power and its influence.

So as you read chapter 7, notice how the scope and function of rhetoric in the Renaissance informs the scope and function of rhetoric today. Pay close attention, for instance, to how external forces prompting rhetoric to return to prominence in this moment resonate with the external forces shaping public argument today. So you might think about how political events or cultural shifts or technological changes, social turmoil, economic issues, that you might think of as external to rhetoric have an impact on how rhetoric is practiced, and for our situation, how rhetoric is theorized.

Here's why this is important. Humans are always reaching back to the past to make sense of the future. So we know what happened in the past, or at least we think we do. So we use perceptions of what happened in the past to inform this unknown and mysterious future. And in many ways, that's one of the values, one of the things that really we can extract from Chapter 7 on the Renaissance is to look back at the past and think about how it informs the use of practice and theory of rhetoric today.

So this renewed interest in rhetoric is vital for preparing us now to face the mysteries of our own day with knowledge, sophistication, and flexibility. Another way to put that is we want to be 21st century Renaissance people in the same ways that the term developed during the Renaissance.