



# **Vote and Voice: Women's Organizations and Political Literacy, 1915-1930 (Studies in Rhetorics and Feminisms)**

*Associate Professor Wendy B Sharer*

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Within the context of current interest in service learning and community-based rhetorical activism, Wendy B. Sharer explores the rhetorical and pedagogical practices through which two prominent post-suffrage organizations—the League of Women Voters and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom—challenged the conventions of male-dominated political discourse and trained women as powerful rhetors.

*Vote and Voice: Women’s Organizations and Political Literacy, 1915–1930* is the first book-length study to address the writing and speaking practices of members of women’s political organizations in the decade after the suffrage movement. During those years, women still did not have power within deliberative and administrative organs of politics, despite their recent enfranchisement. Because they were largely absent from diplomatic circles and political parties, post-suffrage women’s organizations developed widespread, cumulative rhetorical practices of public discourse to push for reform within traditional politics.

Situating the project within feminist rhetorical history, Sharer traces the origins of the League of Women Voters and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom in relation to the extensive networks that nineteenth-century women formed around political issues such as slavery, suffrage, temperance, and labor legislation. She then presents a detailed analysis of the rhetorical and pedagogical methods the organizations developed to empower their members as political reformers and to contest the rhetorical conventions of patriarchal political structures.

These methods included strategically positioning their arguments within diplomatic bureaucracies, planning study curricula and discussion clubs within women’s organizations and educational associations, and producing instructional texts. The volume also explores the motives and means by which reformers challenged the highly structured, male-dominated, two-party system through their advocacy of non-partisanship, their popular satires of partisan loyalty, and their critiques of partisan journalism.

Extending contemporary understandings of women’s political literacy in the post-suffrage era, *Vote and Voice* is historically significant as well as pedagogically beneficial for instructors who connect rhetorical education with public participation by integrating writing and speaking skills into a curriculum that aims to prepare educated students and active citizens. The volume is enhanced by seven illustrations.

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