

Introductory Writing: Comparative Rhetorical Analysis Guidelines, Criteria, and Expectations

Assignment:

Your assignment is to compare and contrast the rhetorical effectiveness of two texts of two different genres. These texts can be from the same discourse community or two different discourse communities. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate your awareness and understanding of rhetorical knowledge and how it functions within genres and texts. For this assignment, you will rely on the classical rhetorical appeals for your theoretical frame (see rhetorical appeals handout on logos, ethos, and pathos), as well as the other key concepts that we have discussed so far in class (audience, genre, discourse communities and conventions, exigence, etc.) Your paper should follow this criteria:

- Approximately 4-6 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font (standard one-inch margins).
- Essay features should adhere to English 101 rubric criteria (see handout), including MLA in-text citation.
- Draft due to BB on Friday 9/17 at noon.

Context/Purpose:

As we have discussed in class, a rhetorical analysis examines and explains how texts are constructed so as to evaluate their effectiveness for a given audience. This means that while your analysis will certainly discuss the ideas (content or topics) in the texts that you choose, your main concern is *how* the purpose and message of the text are presented and constructed to appeal to the targeted audience and the implications thereof. In constructing a rhetorical analysis, the writer (that's you!) identifies and critically analyzes the rhetorical strategies the author/writer uses in order to comment on the effectiveness and/or significance of the text. Consider both the context and the audience while developing your rhetorical analysis draft:

- Start with a brief discussion of the subject/topic that the two genres are focusing on. Include the title of each piece, the genre type, and the author (or authors) of each in the introduction.
- Identify the thesis/purpose, either implied or stated, in each genre. Your thesis is the synthesis of the two genres and should articulate to your audience your evaluation of the two texts.
- Who is the intended audience and how do they fit into a specific community of discourse? Considering this what may the audience know, want to know, and why? How might this information presented be used by its audience?
- What is the purpose of the information presented in the genres? (inform, persuade, entertain, etc.)

Style/Conclusion:

Your analysis should move beyond the mechanics of rhetorical analysis; the purpose of *your* analysis in *your* text (essay) should be guided by a particular “so what?” question. That is, your rhetorical analysis should reveal some kind of significance for your readers (what does your

rhetorical analysis reveal, for example, about the discourse community or communities that the texts are constructed in?). While reading and analyzing the works of others you will have to pay close attention to how they formulated their own writing using rhetorical appeals. The way you structure your analysis and transition will make your writing more credible and establish a purpose, however it will also help with your conclusion:

- How the information is shaped by the genre (s)? (Consider the limitations/freedoms of space, time, layout, audience, and so on.)
- How does the structure facilitate the purpose of the information in the genre(s)?
- How formal/informal is the language? What specialized vocabulary is being used?
- Which genre was more effective in conveying its message? Why?
- Offer a final comment on the impact of genres on discourse.

Rhetorical Issues: Ethos, Pathos and Logos:

Keep in mind that your analysis may find that some rhetorical strategies are used more heavily than others depending on the text and genre. Do not try to give equal weight to every strategy used in your analysis. Instead, choose a few key strategies to zoom in on your analysis (or one key passage that exemplifies a number of strategies). Also, keep in mind how these rhetorical strategies overlap in texts. For example, how might tone (pathos) assist—or detract from—an author’s credibility (ethos)? As noted above, some contextual issues to consider in your analysis include the writer’s purpose, the intended audience, and the genre or type of texts you are analyzing. Addressing all of these features in light of logos, ethos, and/or pathos strategies will assist in developing your overall analysis. Remember to look at ethos, pathos, and logos in weighs where you are observing the context, purpose, and the audience of what you are both reading and writing:

- How does each genre help to establish the information's credibility? Is it effective?
- How does each genre help to evoke an emotional response from the audience? Which emotions? Why?
- What types of evidence are used to support the claims of the information in the genres? Is it appropriate? Why or why not?

Grading:

As long as your draft is completed on time and in good faith, you will receive full credit for it. Drafts will be workshopped in class and commented on by me, so that each student receives constructive feedback for revising. Final drafts of selected work will be evaluated in portfolios at the end of the semester (portfolios worth 60% of final grade in English 101).