Rhetorical Analysis Guidelines

Format & Submission

Citation Style: MLA, APA, or CMS.
Length: 4-5 pages double-spaced, standard font.
Sources: One source approved by instructor.
Submission: Upload to Blackboard/Google Classroom Assignment Dropbox.

Due Dates

Friday Feb 9 for proposal.
Monday Feb 16 for Peer Review.
Friday Feb 25 to Instructor for Feedback.

Resources

● Purdue OWL
● Chapters on Research Writing from U Should B Writing
  http://bcray6.wixsite.com/ushouldbwriting
● Course Website (for brainstorming tips, rubric, and suggestions)

Purpose

For this paper, you'll choose one source and evaluate the writer or speaker's argument, as well as their effectiveness in addressing multiple audiences. You can choose to analyze any reputable piece of rhetoric--a TED Talk, an op-ed piece, or a presidential address. Your choice is subject to instructor approval. The ability to identify and analyze rhetorical appeals helps you become a more effective writer, but also a more critical thinker. It is important to learn the components of arguments, and evaluate their effectiveness according to the major forms of appeal. Also, you'll be developing your awareness of the relationship between writers, audiences, and purposes.

Requirements

Introduction: You should introduce the piece of rhetoric you intend to analyze and provide a brief account of its context and purpose. Also, your main argument or thesis will explain the extent to which you found the author to be persuasive to their target audience, what audiences they may have overlooked, what main forms of persuasion they use.

Main Body: Here, you'll identify the major claims and forms of evidence the author uses to convey their point, and you'll evaluate their effectiveness. Identify and explain their central purpose, and what audience they were addressing. You'll draw on the key concepts we've discussed--the rhetorical triangle, the appeals, and/or the rhetorical situation and Toulmin's Method. You don't need to use all of these different concepts, but use at least one framework to inform your analysis. Make sure to incorporate detailed paraphrase of claims you plan to analyze. You'll want to provide at least 3-4 quotations from the piece under analysis to support your evaluation.

Remember that you'll need to think about audience deeply. You're evaluating the author by how well they anticipate, address, and persuade different audiences. It's easy to think subjectively, relying on your own reactions and interpretations. The goal of rhetorical analysis is to move beyond your own initial opinions and think critically.

Conclusion: The conclusion should recap your evaluation of the author's argument and its major claims. Remind us of the piece's significance as a piece of rhetoric, and how this analysis has helped us understand the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments in question.

Works Cited Page: You must include a works cited page. Even though this paper has one source, you need to cite it appropriately on a separate page.

Tips & Suggestions
- Visit a range of different websites and watch/read a number of texts before making your final choice about what to analyze.
- Make sure you can tentatively identify a central argument, claims, and forms of appeal before you draft your paper. Some pieces aren't conducive to analysis.
- Watch or read your piece 3-4 times and make notes about the arguments the author makes.
- Make a list of the different stakeholders--people who might care about this piece, and how it affects them.

- Avoid generic claims like "this argument effects everyone." The goal of analysis is to pinpoint specific types of audience, and think about how well the author is addressing their potential needs, or anticipating their viewpoints.
- Make a rough outline of the argument and highlight which ones seem to use ethos, logos, or pathos.
- You don't need to cover every appeal in your analysis. Some texts may use much more pathos than logos. If so, discuss that in your analysis. If one form of appeal dominates, incorporate that observation into your analysis. Think about whether that helps or hurts their argument.
- Avoid simply praising the author. Your job is to analyze and evaluate their ability to persuade. No piece of rhetoric is perfect.