

Textual Rhetorical Analysis

Deadlines:

Wednesday, October 15: Rough Draft for Conferences (500-750 words)

Wednesday, October 22: Peer Review Draft (1250-1500 words)

Monday, October 27: Final Draft (1500 words minimum)

Length: Minimum 1500 words

Value: 20% of final grade

GOAL: For your first major assignment in this course, you analyzed the rhetorical strategies of two different advertisements. For your second major project, you will analyze the rhetorical strategies of a single persuasive text. We'll read several argumentative or persuasive pieces together as a class, and in your paper you'll evaluate the rhetorical strategies of one you've picked to write about. The assignment will help you practice **reading with and against the grain**. One of the major goals of this course is learning how to read in a more critical way—as opposed to reading for information or to understand where the author is coming from—and this is the most difficult mode of reading to master. This assignment will also **reinforce the main rhetorical concepts that you learned from the visual analysis**. These concepts will be useful to you not only as a reader, but also as a writer trying to persuade your own readers.

ASSIGNMENT: Pick one of the following primary texts and analyze the rhetorical strategies the author uses to persuade his or her audience. Since every reader reads and interprets a text differently, your goal here is to give *your* readers your own unique analysis of one of the primary texts. After reading your rhetorical analysis, your readers should come away with a new and better understanding of how the primary text works.

Choices of primary texts to analyze:

- "How Language Transformed Humanity" by Mark Pagel
- "American 'multilingualism': A national tragedy" by Franklin Raff
- "'English Only' Laws Divide and Demean" by Warren J. Blumenfeld
- "The Right To Understand" by Sandra Fisher-Martins

Evaluating a text's rhetorical strategies **does NOT mean saying whether or not you agree with the author's position**. Instead, it means paying careful attention to what the text is trying to convince its audience of, who that audience is, what rhetorical strategies the author uses to persuade their audience, and whether or not you think the text is effective. To break the text down that way, you'll have to analyze **rhetorical concepts** such as purpose, audience, and genre; pathos, logos, and ethos; and angle of vision. You'll also have to **draw your evidence and examples from the text** and **summarize the piece you're writing about at the beginning of your paper**. You can't

expect to be taken seriously by your own audience if you can't show that you're presenting them with an accurate account of the piece you're analyzing.

GRADING CRITERIA:

- Does your thesis clearly address the text's rhetorical strategies? Is the thesis tense, arguable and surprising? Does it give the reader clues about what to look for in the body of your paper?
- Have you summarized the text under consideration so that your analysis is meaningful to your reader? Have you proven that you understand the text you're writing about?
- Have you considered the relevant rhetorical concepts? For example, have you taken into account purpose, audience, and genre, or have you demonstrated an understanding of how the piece makes its appeals to pathos, ethos, and logos?
- Do you use details of the text effectively as evidence? Have you explained what makes those details important to your argument?
- Is your essay clear and well organized? Is it unified and coherent? Have you cited sources correctly and proofread the piece? (Keep in mind that this essay should include a works cited page, even though the primary text will likely be the only source you'll cite.)

FORMAT: Drafts should be typed, double-spaced, and formatted according to MLA standards. The only source you'll need to consult is the essay you choose to write about, but make sure to cite it properly in the text and in a works cited page. (See *The Everyday Writer's* MLA section for a sample student essay with correct headings and citations.)