

Visual Rhetorical Analysis

Deadlines:

Wednesday September 17: Outline and rough draft due for conferences

Wednesday, September 24: Complete draft due for peer review

Monday, September 29: Final draft due

Length: Minimum 1000 words

Value: 15% of final grade

Purpose: The goal of this assignment is to practice your ability to analyze—to break down and examine—the rhetorical techniques of two advertisements and present your analysis in a clear, specific closed-form essay.

Assignment: Choose two advertisements (print or video) that attempt to sell the same product to two different audiences and write a thesis-driven essay that both describes the ads in detail and analyzes the rhetorical strategies they're using to sell their products to their audiences. For example, you might choose a car ad aimed at men and one aimed at women; a food ad aimed at teens and one aimed at parents; a clothing ad from *The Miami Herald* and one from *Cosmopolitan*. You might also consider ads that target audiences who speak different languages or belong to different cultures or races. Remember that your analysis should be organized around a thesis that makes a clear, specific claim about these ads. Perhaps you will explore why one ad relies on ethos while another relies mainly on pathos to sell similar products to different audiences. Or perhaps you can make a claim about what you think these ads say about the audiences or cultures they're trying to persuade. Make sure you have chosen ads you feel are complex, with many of the rhetorical elements we've discussed in class and in the readings, such as appeals to logos (logic), ethos (credibility), and pathos (emotions/values). What is each ad trying to get its audience to think and feel? Why?

Audience: Your audience should be your classmates and your professor, but you should assume that your readers have not seen the ads you're analyzing. With that in mind, your ad descriptions must be clear and vivid so that your readers can really understand the ads and the claims you're making about them. Don't be afraid to make strong, arguable claims about the ads, but remember to support those claims with evidence and logical thought. Don't just assume that your audience will know what you mean. Explain yourself.

To help form an arguable, interesting thesis, ask problematic questions about...

- purpose and audience: Who is the intended audience for each ad? How do you know? What values does each audience hold? What might the context of the ad (where it appears) tell you about the audience?
- use of type, layout, color, and image: What effects might these elements have on the ad's audience? What's the relationship between the images and the text?
- the appeal to logos, the logic of the ad: Does the ad make sense? Does it have to?
- the appeal to ethos and the credibility of the advertiser: Does the ad seem professional? Is it relatable? Is there a celebrity endorsement that might add credibility, for example?
- the appeal to pathos: Does the ad try to evoke certain emotions or reinforce certain values? Why?

- the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the ad: Is it persuasive? Why or why not?
- the advertiser's cultural perspectives: How does each ad reflect the culture or society that produced it? Does the ad include any popular culture references?
- the angle of vision: Is there anything conspicuously absent from the ad? Why?

When evaluating your essay, I will consider the following:

- Does the essay's introduction attempt to hook the reader and set up the analysis?
- Does the essay contain a clear, specific and arguable thesis?
- Does the thesis address the rhetorical strategies of the ads (intended meanings of images/text and possible effects on the target audience?)
- Are both ads described clearly and thoroughly?
- Does the essay supply detailed analysis that logically supports the thesis?
- Is the essay clearly and logically organized?
- Does the essay show evidence of thorough proofreading and editing?