

## Unit 1: Rhetorical Analysis

What makes for strong communication? What makes a text or image clear and effective in conveying its message? What makes a text or image confusing or unclear in expressing its purpose?

For Unit 1, we will visit the Gardner-Webb archives, and each find 1-2 archival materials that interest us. This could be a page from an old GWU yearbook, an image from past university records, a song from one of the songbook collections, or something else entirely! Find something that interests you, that makes you curious, angry, joyful, or in some other way calls to something you care about or find intriguing!

You will then digitize those 1-2 found materials and apply your *analytical skills* to the one of them you find most intriguing. In analyzing your selected material, you should consider how it communicates effectively, or not, and will then compose a “rhetorical analysis” essay explaining your perspective.

In your rhetorical analysis, you will discuss what the material you selected is conveying (what is its purpose, topic, and angle), how it is constructed to have its intended effects (for instance, how does it use logos, ethos, or pathos), as well as whether you believe those rhetorical choices make it **effective or successful** in communicating its overall claim or argument (or not). Whereas, for a traditional, literary analysis you might focus on making an argument about what a text is saying, here your goal is to take your view of what the text is communicating one step further and make an argument about **how** the material/text expresses that point effectively. Does it use visual rhetoric? What rhetorical appeals or devices does the material use? How do those choices help the material convey its overall point? How do those choices help further the text’s purpose? Etc.

*NOTE: You are not being asked to write about whether or not you agree with the material you selected. Your focus is on **analyzing** and then **explaining** how the text you found gets its meaning. Think of this as an exercise in noting effective and compelling communication strategies and argumentative choices that you can then adapt for and use in your own work!*

A rhetorical analysis typically uses some version of the following structure:<sup>1</sup>

- An **introduction** that includes enough information to set the stage for your reader, identifies the subject of your analysis, and clearly states what you will be arguing (i.e., a **thesis statement**<sup>2</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the second edition of *Writing Today*.

<sup>2</sup> A **clear thesis** will state the argument you want to make about how your selected chapter communicates effectively and will provide your reader with a mini-map of what is to come. For example (AND THIS IS MADE UP): “Recurring mentions

### YOUR OBJECTIVES:

- ANALYZE ANOTHER PERSON’S COMPOSITION AND DETERMINE HOW AN AUTHOR MAKES THEIR MAIN POINT OR ARGUMENT;
- SHOW THAT YOU CAN IDENTIFY THE RHETORICAL CHOICES BEING MADE BY ANOTHER COMPOSER;
- CONSTRUCT A CLEAR, LOGICAL STRUCTURE FOR YOUR WRITING;
- PROVIDE (SPECIFIC) EVIDENCE (FROM THE TEXT) TO SUPPORT YOUR ANALYSIS; AND
- EXPLAIN WHY A TEXT IS PERSUASIVE OR EFFECTIVE IN MAKING AN ARGUMENT (OR NOT).

- An **analysis** of your archival find's use of rhetorical concepts, including how un/successful you think the argument would be to and for the intended or target audience. Your essay might discuss rhetorical concepts such as: the three rhetorical appeals (logos, ethos, and pathos), use of visual rhetoric (contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity, color, etc.), the author's use of genre expectations, and/or their use of the elements of the text's rhetorical situation.
  - In each body paragraph, make sure to include or describe an **example of the rhetorical choice** you are discussing **as well as an analysis that explains why and how you believe that rhetorical choice makes the author's piece effective in communicating its argument/topic to its audience, or not.**
- A **conclusion** that restates your main points and draws broader conclusions about the argument of the piece and *how* it communicates (in)effectively with its target audience (i.e., is it persuasive, compelling, or effective? Why? How?).

**Suggestion:** *pick no more than 3 rhetorical concepts and examine them in-depth, analyzing specific evidence from the text to SHOW rather than TELL your reader what you mean. Try to avoid discussing a large number of concepts superficially. It is highly recommended that you analyze only **one** rhetorical choice per paragraph.*

**Note:** Your name should be clearly visible on your essay, the essay does not need to have a specific number of paragraphs, but should be **800-1000** words, double-spaced, standard font, with 1-inch margins.

### Ungrading Reflection

Each major assignment should be submitted with a short reflection. This is your chance to “show your work.” In your reflection, you should, **at a minimum**, discuss the following:

- Where do you see the assignment requirements or “checked boxes” in your submission? (For example, where and how do you analyze specific evidence or discuss rhetorical appeals or devices?)
- What resources did you use or consult in drafting, revising, and polishing your assignment? (For instance, did you visit the writing lab; look up information in your textbook, on the Purdue OWL, or in the “Suggestions for Leveling Up Your Writing”; take advantage of peer or instructor feedback; take notes during your instructor conference; or something else?)
- What goals do you want to set for your next assignment? (Make sure to keep your goals specific and actionable; for instance: “I want to work on expanding and developing my analyses of evidence.” In addition, it is recommended that you set no more than 3 goals, to avoid becoming overwhelmed.)

### Process Deadlines:

Rough Draft	Have a draft ready <b>by class time, September 8<sup>th</sup></b> (for Peer Review)
Peer Review	<b>September 8<sup>th</sup></b>
Instructor Conferences	<b>September 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> (more information on Bb)</b>
Final Draft (Target)	Upload a PDF to Blackboard by <b>8am (Eastern), September 18<sup>th</sup></b>

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of pudding in the ending scenes of *The Odyssey*, along with the frequent use of gelatin-focused diction, together work to communicate Homer's point that Penelope's suitors are wobbly like Jell-O.”