

Rhetorical Analysis - Website

Due Thursday, October 6 :: hard copy due in class

assignment:

In this unit we've continued to read and discuss the concept of rhetoric, delving into the layers of effective persuasion and communication. In particular, we have looked at the way to argue regarding causes and to argue deductively. In the *Sourcebook* text, we've added to our analysis repertoire by considering the canons of rhetoric, modes of proof, audience, text, and the effects of a rhetorical practice. We also have read and discussed the very important concepts of discourse and the public sphere. In this assignment, these concepts will be particularly relevant. Aristotle taught us that rhetoric consists, in a particular circumstance for a particular audience, of discovering the appropriate means of communication. That principle allows us to analyze texts from a rhetorical perspective, dissecting how the various rhetorical elements of the text work to achieve the author's purpose with the intended audience.

The object of this assignment is to enable you to write a well-constructed rhetorical analysis of a single website. The basis for your evaluation will be to analyze the use of rhetoric and argument (persuasion) through the site. Your essay should argue the rhetorical effectiveness (or the success or failure) of the website on its intended audience. This means part of your analysis involves determining the intended audience.

Process:

- Write an interest-grabbing introduction in which you identify the author, purpose, and intended audience for the website you chose to analyze. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, so you must convince me of your analysis through careful attention to detail and sound (solid) evidence supporting your points. You may have to do some research to find out about the author and the website purpose and/or agenda.
- Include a specific, well-constructed, thoughtful thesis statement in your introduction asserting the success or failure (your position) of the website based on the rhetorical elements that we have studied.
- In the body of your essay, identify and evaluate how the website is persuasive (or not) based on the elements of rhetoric we have discussed so far (including those in unit 1). This means you're looking at *how* the website makes its arguments, not whether or not you like it or agree with it. Each of your examples supporting your assertions should be explained in sufficient detail to convince me of your analysis. Remember that you are basing this on the *intended* audience, not necessary on how YOU perceive the website.
- Be attentive to color choice, how a webpage fills the browser window, how your attention is directed around the page, what typefaces & sizes are used, how you find your way among the different pages of a site, any use of sound or animation or video—anything and everything that sticks out to you as welcoming you or pushing you away.
- In your conclusion, consider any implications of the success or failure of the website you chose. Does the website fool people? Is it ethical? Does it fail to raise important issues? Does it raise important issues that get buried in the visual presentation of the website? Etc.

The biggest mistake that students make with this essay is to summarize rather than analyze the website. Be sure to explain *why* the site is effective or not and fully explain all examples that support your thesis.

Details:

- 3 full pages, typed, double-spaced, with 1" margins and 12 pt. font such as Calibri or Times New Roman.
- Must use (refer to, make connections with, and cite as appropriate) the readings we have done so far this semester. You may include additional resources, but it is not required.
- Be sure to apply the concepts from *A Rulebook for Arguments* in constructing your analysis.
- Worth 150 points
- Due as a stapled hard copy in class on Thursday, October 6th.

Grading criteria:

- The website being analyzed is complex enough to merit critical analysis.
- Your analysis makes an argument – offers a clear claim with supporting reasons – about how the chosen website uses rhetorical strategies to achieve its purposes.
- Your analysis starts with a clear statement of its argument.
- Your analysis has a structure (logos) that is easy to follow: readers can easily see why the writer has moved from one paragraph to the next.
- Your analysis sums up your arguments in your conclusion.
- The analysis gives readers sufficient explanation or description of the website being analyzed so that readers can understand the analysis.
- Your analysis offers sufficient support (through quotations of the website being analyzed and other strategies) for your main claim.
- The writing at the sentence level is clear and easy to follow with minimal grammatical errors.
- The writing is of the length asked by the assignment (3 pages).
- The writing develops an authoritative and thoughtful ethos for the writer.