

REVISED ESSAY # 2: RHETORICAL GENRE ANALYSIS

1. Situation (Recurrent problem + rhetor's purpose + societal limitations + rhetorical situation)

- a. a. What is the rhetorical situation?
 - i. What is the occasion(s) that calls forth this genre?
 - ii. Who is the audience for such a genre?
 - iii. What are the issues dealt with by this genre?
 - iv. What are the needs and expectations created by the occasion?
 - v. What elements are needed (e.g., family photographs require a camera, a family, etc.)

2. Strategic Constraints felt by rhetor and/or audience

- a. **Content.** Explain the audience's expectations about substantive (content) elements for this genre
- b. Audience's needs and expectations for this genre
- c. What are appropriate topics to deal with in this genre?
- d. What types of language and levels of diction are appropriate?
- e. What form(s) is appropriate?
- f. What types of things count as evidence in this genre?
- g. What types of allusions, references, are appropriate?
- h. How extensive and deep is the coverage of the topic expected to be?
- i. What things are not expected or are not acceptable in this genre?
- j. **Style.** Explain the audience's expectations about the substantive (style) elements of this genre
 - i. What formality and complexity of language are expected and appropriate?
 - ii. What attitude and tone of rhetor are expected and appropriate?
 - iii. What kind of style is expected and appropriate?
 - iv. Are figurative language and symbols expected and appropriate?
 - v. What things not expected or are inappropriate in this genre?
- k. Analyze the rhetor's way of dealing with those expectations
 - i. What seem to be the rhetor's purpose(s) for creating this artifact?
 - ii. Do those purposes conflict with any of the audience's expectations?
 - iii. Taking the above into consideration, what are the defining characteristics of this genre?
 - iv. Does the artifact(s) contain all the defining characteristics of the genre?
 - v. Does the artifact(s) violate any of the defining characteristics of the genre?
 - vi. Are there any specific circumstances or purposes that demand adaptation of the genre?

Length: 1250-2500 words (please single space).

Two Options—for both options you will need a pro article

Option #1: Select a written text (a speech, an essay, an editorial, a poem, etc.—but not song lyrics) or any static visual artifact (e.g., movie posters, photographs, buildings, paintings—but not videos or movies) which is clearly part of an existing genre but which you think is a particularly good (or not so good) example of the genre; perhaps it “violates” or stretches the genre in some way. Find a professional rhetorical article that discusses that genre.

Other articles might be found at Google Scholar or ask a reference librarian for advice in Hayden Library (14S-100).

Paraphrase, summarize and/or quote the pro article to establish the parameters of the genre (and use Foss and criteria I provide below which the pro article may or may not use), then thoroughly analyze your artifact, showing where it fits into the genre, where it pushes the boundaries of that genre, etc.

Option #2: Select a written text (a speech, an essay, an editorial, a poem, etc.—but not song lyrics) or any static visual artifact (e.g., movie posters, photographs, buildings, paintings—but no videos or movies) which is clearly part of a genre/subgenre. In this case, though, you can't find any pro article on your specific genre, so you will use a pro article that discusses genre in general or a related genre (e.g., if you are analyzing horror movie posters, you would use an article on visual rhetoric; if you were analyzing a satiric article, you'd use an article on satire).

Find 3 examples of what you suspect is the genre (e.g., 3 posters of horror movies, 3 political concession speeches). "Create" the genre/subgenre using Campbell & Jamison or Ware & Linkugel as models. (You can also use Varallo, but only in concert with one of the two pro articles).

- Using those models, you establish the characteristics of the genre (using Foss' criteria and criteria that I provide below).
- Then select a 4th artifact that you think fits into the genre but which you think also "violates" or stretches the genre in some way and do a thorough genre analysis of that 4th artifact.

For either Option, do all the following:

1. Name and define the genre using the pro article and/or the categories in Outline of Genre Analysis at the end of this assignment.
2. Then use all that info to deeply analyze one artifact that seems to belong to that genre. Be sure to call attention not only to the elements that show the artifact belongs to that genre but also to the elements that make your artifact unique (i.e., it is not a mere cookie-cutter example).
3. Evaluate the artifact both in terms of
 - a. how well it fits into that genre
 - b. and also in terms of how persuasive & effective a piece of rhetoric it is to the IMPLIED AUDIENCE. You will no doubt use other rhetorical lenses in addition to genre
 - c. An artifact doesn't have to break the conventions of the genre to be good, but simply conforming to all the conventions doesn't make it good either

Pedagogical Purposes:

- To gain experience using the methods and tools of in-depth rhetorical analysis
- To gain insight into the usefulness of a knowledge of genre
- To deepen your ability to use the terminology and concepts of rhetorical analysis
- To practice writing to an audience less informed about the method/tools than you are

Audience: Some of your readers (students and profs at various universities) are not members of this class, nor have they taken rhetoric. Additional implications of your audience for your rhetorical approach:

- You will need to explicitly name AND explain criteria and rhetorical terms (e.g., barriers, advantages, common ground, rhetorical situation)
- Always assume that some of your audience members are skeptical about your thesis/claims before we read your essay.

Your Purpose: Your essay's purpose is to teach us (your readers) something new about rhetoric, about the genre and about the artifact you have chosen.

Your Process for Writing this Essay:

1. Develop a Research Question (or a Purpose) for your essay. Your thesis will be the answer to that question or purpose. Often you develop the Research Question after you have done the analysis and seen what you discovered.
2. Any effective analysis essay deals with an **explicit** Research Question/Purpose whose answer is worth knowing, whose answer is not obvious to a one-time reader/viewer of the artifact, and which inspires you to have something worthwhile to say about rhetoric and the rhetor's ideas and choice of genre.

Your Structure—always think in terms of sections, even if you don't have headings

1. **Introduction** should provide a brief context, frame the issue(s) at stake, state your Research Question explicitly as a question, provide any other kairos you think necessary (the Research Question will provide some kairos).
2. **Genre and Methods**
 - a. Here you explain the value of doing genre analysis—why insights do we derive from genre about, e.g., society, a type of rhetorical situation (Devitt and others should be quoted)
 - b. Name and describe the genre/subgenre you are exploring
 - i. if an established genre, quote, summarize and paraphrase your pro source
 - ii. if your own subgenre, name the 3 artifacts you used to create the subgenre, explain fully the characteristics of your genre are (situation, strategic constraints, generic constraints—in this case, based on the larger genre—e.g., visual rhetoric in general
 - c. Define the concepts and terms you will use (and give them in the order in which you will discuss them).
3. **Your Artifact:** Here you describe/summarize your artifact.
 - a. If a visual artifact, describe it in enough detail so your readers can envision it [for your Mandatory Revision, include the visual or its URL]
 - b. if written artifact, summarize it (purpose, major claims, implied audience, types of evidence—and use those terms explicitly)
4. **Body.** You should think of your essay's Body as having sections (feel free to use headings if you think they will help your readers). These sections might be the answers to the following questions (obviously not “yes” and “no” answers, and the headings with not be actual questions). Some of the following may not apply to specific genres.
 - a. Does your artifact deal with the same or similar **recurrent problem or rhetorical situation** as other artifacts in this genre?
 - b. In what ways is (or is not) the rhetor's **purpose(s)** congruent with the typical purposes found in this genre? Does it differ in any way?
 - c. How does this artifact respect and follow the **societal limitations and reader expectations** of the genre?
 - d. In what ways does this artifact's form conform to the perceived **strategic limitations** of the genre?
 - e. In what ways does this artifact's **content and tone** conform to the perceived strategic limitations of the genre?
 - f. In what ways does this artifact's **style** conform to the perceived strategic limitations of the genre?
 - g. What, if any, are the **unique elements** of your artifact?

5. **Conclusion** should draw the results of the analysis together into an integrated interpretation and give your readers an understanding of the deeper significance and implications of your claim (e.g., give them a new insight into the uses of rhetoric and genre). What insights into society etc. has your genre analysis of your artifact given us? Your Conclusion should also answer
 - a. What is your evaluation of the artifact
 - i. As a representative of this genre?
 - ii. As a piece of persuasive rhetoric?
6. **Works Cited**—List all the texts you cite or reference in your essay. Use MLA
7. **Workshop Acknowledgement**—Name each small group workshop member, specify the advice each gave and whether or not it was useful.
8. **WCC Acknowledgement**—Name the lecturer you worked with, specific the advice he/she gave you, and whether it was useful. If you didn't consult the WCC, write N/A

Workshop Acknowledgment:

I worked with X and Y. X recommended that I reorder the point about the audience in introduction, delete or clarify some references to the speech, and add definitions of key rhetorical terms. I implemented all of these suggestions. I did not implement X's suggestion to add more detail to the sub-point on repetition and parallel structure.

Y reminded me about avoiding the repetition of 'Obama' at start of each paragraph, and to add Kairos. He also suggested that I reorder the introduction and clarify my use of the terms 'liberal' and 'Democrat'. Y's advice included tying each point back to the thesis, deleting references that are not properly explained and used, working on the flow of the conclusion, reordering the ethos paragraphs to make essay flow better, and improving the transition between the first block quote and the subsequent paragraph. I implemented all of these suggestions. I did not implement Y's suggestion to make the first block quote and preceding paragraph seem less repetitive.

WCC Acknowledgement:

I consulted the WCC twice for this essay. The first time, I worked with Rebecca when I had a partially written draft, and I used basically all of Rebecca's advice. Rebecca advised me to shift my thesis away from references to the future (Obama was running his own campaign over Kerry's) to the one more supported by the text (Obama was working to strengthen the Democratic Party more so than he was helping Kerry get elected). With this new claim, Rebecca also advised me on how to restructure the essay, so as to tie the analysis that I had into my major claim. In terms of more minor suggestions, Rebecca recommended that I use block quotes for certain passages, and showed me how Obama converted his story into the American Dream. In addition, Rebecca reminded me that at that time, Obama was a newcomer and still had not established any ethos, and that the references to Lincoln and the *Declaration of Independence* were examples of sagacity.

9. **Academic style** (relatively formal language, mostly complete sentences).
 - a. It's fine to use first-person plural (we/us/our) referring to modern audiences and to use 1st person singular (I, my, me) when referring to your own reactions
 - b. Use active verbs whenever possible
 - c. Use professional terms of rhetorical criticism. Almost every article we've read defines some terms (e.g., Campbell & Jamieson do great job of explaining epideictic; and they do a super job of explaining what high style accomplishes)
 - d. Avoid definitions from *Wikipedia* and dictionaries and most encyclopedias (it is okay to use *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* and *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*—both of which are authoritative professional sources)

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

21W.747 Rhetoric
Spring 2015

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.