

Project 2 Rhetorical Analysis of a Multimodal Text



Overview: For this project, you'll write a (more academic) rhetorical genre analysis essay that explores and analyzes a multimodal text. What do I mean by a multimodal text? A text, broadly interpreted, can be anything used to communicate meaning. A stop sign, for instance, could be understood as a text. But I would like you to choose a *multimodal* text - this means that it should utilize more than one mode (think video, audio, image, written language, sound, etc.) to communicate meaning. There are various multimodal texts you can choose from: advertisements, websites, film, television, social media, photography, music, news articles, and visual art are all multimodal texts. You will first analyze and evaluate the effectiveness a selected genre, focusing on (1) target audiences of the genre, (2) primary purposes of the genre, (3) rhetorical appeals employed in the genre, and (4) any relevant components and

strategies that help core messages successfully be delivered to the target audience.

Understanding Rhetoric Analysis

Rhetorical analysis sounds complicated but, at its most basic, it just means we are trying to understand how a text communicates meaning and accomplishes a particular purpose. Your essay should consider the multimodal text's rhetorical situation or set of circumstances in which an author creates a text. When you consider the text's rhetorical situation, you might analyze

- the **audience** an author wants to reach
- the **purpose** an author has for communicating to that audience
- the **context** in which an author wants to communicate
- the **writing** and **multimodal design choices** an author makes in a text that draw on that audience, purpose, and context

Beyond analyzing the rhetorical situation, your rhetorical analysis should also consider the visual and/or multimodal aspects of your chosen text. For this part of your essay, you might choose to focus on one or more of the following concepts:

- **emphasis**, what is foregrounded, or at the center of the text. what do you notice first
- **contrast**, how do differences in the text make one element stand out from another?
- **color**, how does the author use certain colors or color schemes to invoke emotion in the text?
- **organization**, how are the different elements of the text structured or organized? how does this structure add or detract to the effectiveness of the text?

Finally, you may also choose to apply a concept related to the rhetorical appeals (as discussed in our reading by Laura Carol Bolin, “Backpacks vs. Briefcases”).

- **ethos**, an appeal to the audience’s sense of credibility
- **pathos**, appeal to the audience’s emotions
- **logos**, an appeal to the audience’s sense of logic
- **kairos**, an appeal to the audience’s sense of timing

Important note: your task IS NOT to apply all of these concepts and terms but rather to choose those that are most relevant to your text, and to the point you want to make about that text.

Creating a Thesis and Using Evidence

This essay asks you to move from description and summary into interpretation and analysis. Your thesis should express your main idea about what you think of the multimodal text, based on your analysis of the details you’ve noticed while studying it.

There can be many different interpretations of a meaning behind your chosen multimodal text, so your goal here is to explain what that text means to you as an observer and to demonstrate your idea to the reader by backing it up with evidence (your specific observations of the photo).

Here are some questions you can ask yourself while you are thinking about where to start, for example:

What does this multimodal text represent?

What is its purpose, or what does the author hope to accomplish?

How effective is the text in accomplishing that purpose?

Does the text use rhetorical appeals to communicate its message or accomplish a purpose?

How does it make me feel?

Who does the text assume its readers (or audience) to be?

What sorts of assumptions does the text/author make about the identities of their audience?

What unspoken—implicit—ideas does the multimodal text seem to be voicing?

What are some details of this text that make it unique?

Remember, *it’s not enough to simply list details about a multimodal text: you need a central idea (your thesis) regarding the meaning that you bring forward for your audience to better understand a particular multimodal, to enjoy its richness or to appreciate your critique of it, if you decide to critique it.*

Specifications: Your essay should be 3 to 4 pages in length (min 1200 words, up to 1500 words). State your thesis clearly in a succinct statement at the beginning of your essay. Make sure that you connect each body paragraph to the central idea (the thesis) of your paper. Keep in mind that this is a more traditional academic essay and should be structured and organized with a clear thesis, supporting evidence, and conclusion.

Think about the audience of your essay, your peers and instructor. Different people notice different things when they look at visual art, so you need to be specific to try and *help your reader look closely at the multimodal text to be able to see the same things that you notice.*

Formatting: The document you submit should be double-spaced using 12-point Times New Roman and one-inch margins. Use MLA or APA format, and remember to include a “Work Cited” for MLA or References for APA list for this essay. See Purdue Owl MLA and APA pages for information on citing an image, or other multimodal texts which appears on a website towards the bottom of the page:

[MLA - http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/08/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/08/)

[APA - https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html)

Reflective Cover Letter

You are also required to submit a **reflective cover letter** where you talk about your overall experience with this assignment, some challenges you had to overcome, your overall thoughts about this genre of writing (300 words). Please format this **letter according to its genre** with the opening “Dear D,” and end it by “Sincerely, Your Name”. Some questions to help you think about cover letter:

- What choices did you make when composing your rhetorical analysis? You might discuss your paper’s focus, organization, tone, grammar, etc. What effect do you hope your choices will have on the reader?
- Finally, I want you to reflect on one thing you learned from this project that will help you in the future, either as you write for this class, for other classes, or in your career.

Draft, Peer Review, Revision, Individual Conference

A separate element of this assignment involves the on-time completion of a rough draft of your essay, participation in the peer review, submitting a revised analysis, as well as individual conference with your professor.

Evaluation

In evaluating your paper, I will look for strong topic sentences which link your body paragraphs back to your thesis, coherent paragraphs, clear organization, and sufficient evidence and explanations for your main points.

Remember small but important details like giving your essay a title. Be sure to give the title of the multimodal text and the author in your introduction paragraph.

You can use some strategies to make your essay multimodal, but this is not a requirement and will not improve your grade. You can use audio, add visuals, make your essay colorful, or record your essay, however, please provide a transcript because the written part has to be assessed.

Evaluation Criteria

- Essay demonstrates engagement with informative and evaluative styles of writing.
- Essay uses rhetorical concepts and terms (for example, ethos, pathos, logos, audience, purpose, situation) to analyze a multimodal text
- Essay works within the genre and is organized around a controlling idea or theme. That is, your essay should try to come to a central realization or point by the end of the essay
- Essay is well-organized and contains transitions and topic sentences to help guide the reader
- Essay demonstrates evidence of a multi-draft writing process
- Essay meets length requirements (900-1200 words) and is carefully proofread
- Essay includes a thoughtful and creative title that emphasizes its controlling idea or theme.
- Essays may incorporate footage, images (photos, scans of books, papers, report cards, etc.), voiceover, music, videos
- Sources should be properly cited in-text as well as in Works Cited or References page