

Rhetorical Analysis

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Research Questions

- Pursue a research question meaningful to the student that still answers the “So What?” question. In other words, what about the research is meaningful or significant?

Wayne Booth's Definition of Rhetoric

- “Rhetoric is employed at every moment when one human being intends to produce, through the use of signs or symbols, some effect on another—by words, or facial expressions, or gestures, or any symbolic skill of any kind” (xi)

In short...

“In short, rhetoric will be seen as the entire range of resources that human beings share for producing effects on one another: effects ethical (including everything about character), practical (including political), emotional (including aesthetic), and intellectual (including every academic field). It is the entire range of “signs” for communicating . . .

effectively or sloppily, ethically or morally. At its worst, it is our most harmful miseducator—except for violence. But at its best—when we listen to the ‘other,’ then listen to ourselves and thus manage to respond in a way that produces genuine dialogue—it is our primary resource for *avoiding* violence and building community” (Booth xi-xii).

The main question for this assignment, perhaps?

- “How can we distinguish, in every human domain, the good from the bad forms of persuasion or discussion or communication?” (Booth xii).

What is a rhetorical analysis?

- A rhetorical analysis examines an artifact that attempts to convey information through symbols from one human being to another. A classic rhetorical approach is to examine the ethos (credibility), logos (logic), or pathos (emotion) of a document in terms of a target audience. For instance, does the Dixie State University website effectively invite a diverse student population to enroll? Does the children's book, title here, use color and typography in a way that is harmonious with the overall theme of the story?

What is the point?

- Consider the effectiveness of the design for a particular audience. What is the information meant to do? Does the information accomplish the task effectively? Why or why not? How could the information be conveyed more ethically or more effectively?

What should I analyze?

- You may examine any type of business-related document design that interests you. Consider analyzing websites for a particular type of business (or perhaps look at more than one medium).

Three Basic Elements

- Audience
- Purpose
- Context

Audience

- Who is going to use the document?
- What do they know about the subject of the document?
- What is their previous experience with documents similar to the one you are creating?

Purpose

- What do you want the document to accomplish?
 - Do you want them to think or act a certain way?
 - Do you want them to be able to perform a particular task?
 - Do you want to help them understand something?
 - Do you want to change their attitude about something?

Context

- What are the circumstances in which readers will encounter your document?
 - Will the document be used in a workshop or a boardroom?
 - Will the document be seen on the side of a passing bus or on a roadside billboard?
 - Will the document be seen online or in print?

Three Ways to Persuade

- Being “credible” or the appeal to ethos
- Being “logical” or the appeal to logos
- Being “sympathetic” or the appeal to pathos (our emotions)

Document Design and “Ethos”

- One way to establish credibility is through professional design strategies (using contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity well)
- Ethos MAY BE your sole focus, but it doesn't have to be.

Document Design and the Ethics of Pathos



The Rhetorical Appeals

ETHOS CHARACTER



Different readers require different kinds of *ethos*. Strong writers use voice and tone, as well as credentialed pieces of evidence to make themselves:

- Trustworthy
- Educated
- Reliable
- Credible
- Honest
- Fair



ARISTOTLE SAYS:

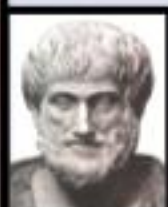
Character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion.

PATHOS EMOTION



Audiences don't respond well to overly emotional appeals. Strong writers invite readers to care about their subject matter by using diction, evidence, or claims that inspire emotions such as:

- Love
- Pity
- Justice
- Patriotism
- Hope
- Jealousy
- Anger
- Fear



ARISTOTLE SAYS:

Every action must be due to one or other of seven causes: chance, nature, compulsion, habit, reasoning, anger, or appetite.

LOGOS REASON



Strong writers build their argument on a foundation of logic using techniques such as:

- Case studies
- Cause-and-effect
- Authority
- Analogies
- Statistics
- Anecdote



ARISTOTLE SAYS:

The use of reason is more distinctive of a human being than the use of his limbs.

Back Up Your Interpretations through Research

- The document does not follow basic design principles very effectively. According to Robin Williams in *The Non-Designer's Design Book*, a well-known handbook outlining basic document design principles, the basic elements of design are alignment, contrast, proximity, and repetition (13). In the Kenmore handout, the alignment is mixed and off-putting, and contrast and proximity are only partially effective. The only principle used well is repetition.

Example Thesis

- The Kenmore document does not follow Williams' principles very effectively and could certainly be more well designed. Overall, however, the document is at least partially effective in increasing the credibility of the company due to the very presence of the document itself and the lack of need, in this instance, of a sophisticated design.