Rhetorical Analysis Essay

Assignment Description: For this assignment, you’ll select a text related to gaming culture and write an essay of at least 1500 words in which you analyze the way in which that text utilizes deliberate rhetorical strategies to create an argument. Your essay needs to contain a persuasive thesis claim that it develops and supports through use of evidence from the text that you’re analyzing.

Due dates:
- Draft #1: Thursday, October 1 by class
- Draft #2: Sunday, October 4pm by 5pm (upload to Stanford Box Rhetorical Analysis folder)
- Revision: Sunday, October 11 by 5pm (upload to Stanford Box Rhetorical Analysis folder)

Essay Format: 1500+ words; 1.5 spacing; separate title page including name, title, and date; page numbers; in-text citations and works cited in MLA form (7th edition); 1” margins; visual evidence as appropriate with rhetorical captions. Works cited does not count toward page count.

Submission Guidelines:
DRAFT #1: Post to your “Rhetorical Analysis” Box folder and bring 3 print outs to class. (Due 10/1)
DRAFT #2: Post to your “Rhetorical Analysis” Box folder. Also submit: self-assessment rubric, pre-writing #1, & THREE questions for your reader (see below for more details). No print out needed. (Due 10/4)
REVISION: Post revision & reflection to your “Rhetorical Analysis” folder; printout also required. Also submit in colored folder: reflection; peer review; to-do list. See p. 4 for more details. (Due 10/11).

Grading: The Rhetorical Analysis is worth 20% of the overall class grade.

Assignment Goals

As the first installment in the PWR 1 assignment sequence, the Rhetorical Analysis essay helps you develop strategies that you can leverage both in your analysis of texts (for analytic or source-based essays) and also in your own approach to creating persuasive arguments. More specifically, this assignment has the following goals:

1. To have you put into practice the lessons about rhetorical analysis – both as a reader and as a writer – that we have discussed in class
2. To encourage you to experiment with different pre-writing techniques
3. To give you practice at source selection & evaluation
4. To help you develop strategies for crafting an effective thesis statement and selecting/employing relevant textual evidence to support your claims
5. To help you consider methods for writing engaging and effective introductions and conclusions
6. To have you consider questions of voice, audience and purpose

Questions? Email me at alfano@stanford.edu
ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

For this assignment, you’ll select a text related to gaming culture and write an essay of at least 1500 words in which you analyze the way in which that text utilizes deliberate rhetorical strategies to create an argument. Your essay needs to contain a persuasive thesis claim that it develops and supports through use of evidence from the text that you’re analyzing.

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS WALKTHROUGH

STEP 1: PRIMARY SOURCE SELECTION AND PRE-WRITING

STEP 1 to be completed by class on Tuesday, Sept. 29

As with any writing assignment, the work you do before you officially “start” your draft is essential to providing you with the foundation for a persuasive argument.

1. Over the weekend: review potential primary sources for your rhetorical analysis.
   Choose a text about gaming culture, such as
   - A videogame trailer
   - A videogame print ad (i.e. from Game Informer)
   - A video game box cover
   - A gaming website
   - A game review (i.e. from IGN.com or Gamespot)
   - An editorial cartoon about gaming

   A strong argument starts with smart text selection. Remember: don’t choose a text just because you like it; for this essay, we’ll need to identify the argument made by the text and analyze the rhetorical strategies used to make that argument, so choose a text that provides the basis for rich analysis.

   NOTE: A video game is not an appropriate text for this assignment. You want to analyze not choose footage excerpts; select a text that was constructed to have a defined beginning, middle, and end.

   For more advice on choosing a strong text, read my Fall 2012 blogpost, “Thinking about texts for rhetorical analysis” (http://rhetoricofgaming.wordpress.com/2012/09/28/thinking-about-texts-for-rhetorical-analysis/)

2. Email me over the weekend (Alfano@stanford.edu) about your text. Include a link or an image as an attachment (if possible) and explain why you have selected this text for your rhetorical analysis. If you are choosing between two possible primary texts, you can include links for both.

3. Complete your first pre-writing activity for this text before you come to class. For this assignment, you’ll complete two pre-writing activities, one of which you’ll do at home and one which you’ll do in class on Tuesday. These activities are designed to help you focus on different characteristics of the text so as to start developing your own claim about how the strategies the author used to construct his/her argument.

   For this first pre-writing activity, choose the pre-writing checklist (linked from our Rhetorical Analysis Assignment webpage at https://rhetoricofgaming.wordpress.com/assignments/rhetorical-analysis/) that most closely pertains to your primary text and answer at least SIX of the questions. You can do this on

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paper or electronically, but be sure to bring your free-writing to class on Tuesday, Sept 29 and to your conference.

➤STEP 2: WRITING YOUR FIRST DRAFT
STEP 2 to be completed by class on Thursday, Oct. 1

Having selected your primary text and completed some pre-writing on it to help focus your ideas, it's time to draft your essay.

1. Read examples. Before you start writing, read some examples of past Rhetorical Analysis essays to familiarize yourself with the genre; think rhetorically even as you look at these model essays. How are the authors themselves using rhetorical strategies in their PWR essays? Consider which strategies you might employ in your own essay. You can find examples linked from our Rhetorical Analysis Assignment webpage at https://rhetoricofgaming.wordpress.com/assignments/rhetorical-analysis/.

2. Draft your essay. Your first draft is due at class on Thursday, October 1. Write a persuasive analysis of your primary text with a strong thesis statement, considering not only WHAT that text is arguing but also HOW it is making that argument. Specifically, you need to develop a persuasive claim as to how the primary text is designed to make a particular argument in relation to its

- Rhetorical situation and/or
- Context and kairos, and/or
- Use of rhetorical appeals (such as pathos, logos, ethos, and doxa), and/or
- Use of one or more strategies of development such as narration, definition, comparison/contrast, division-classification, description, example.

The goal is not to talk about as many elements as possible but instead to focus on those elements that you feel most contribute to the creation of the text’s overall argument.

Be sure also to consider the different characteristics of the text’s medium – that is, analyzing a trailer (a moving, dynamic text with voice over, close-up, and splicing) is fundamentally different from analyzing a print ad (a static text that relies more on layout, relationship between word and image, etc.).

Refer to the Evaluation Criteria (below) as you write your draft to help you think about the elements that will make your own argument most persuasive.

3. Submit your materials. By class on Thursday, Oct. 1, you need to post your draft to your Rhetorical Analysis Box folder. Please also bring THREE PRINT OUTS of your draft to class on Wednesday for our draft workshop that we’ll hold in class that day.

➤STEP 3: REVISING YOUR DRAFT & WRITING DRAFT #2
STEP 3 to be completed by Sunday, Oct. 4 at 5pm

The first step in the revision process is one that involves workshopping, peer feedback, and focused work by you to perform both micro-revisions and macro-revisions of your essay.

Questions? Email me at alfano@stanford.edu
1. **Peer Review.** On Thursday, October 1, we’ll have a peer review session in class. The goal of peer review is to provide you with feedback from a real “audience” about the strengths of your argument and ways that you can continue to improve it.

2. **Revise your essay.** As you start to revise your essay, you should take into account the responses you received in class on Thursday in addition to your own evaluation of your work. Prioritize developing a strong thesis statement that is supported by evidence from the text. This is the draft that we will look at during our required Rhetorical Analysis comment.

3. **When your draft is completed, score it with our Self-Assessment Rubric.** Once you’ve finished drafting, print out or download our Self-Assessment Rubric from the Rhetorical Analysis Assignment webpage and score your draft. This step helps you think through ways that you want to continue to improve the essay as you continue your revision next week.

4. **Write 3 questions for your readers.** You can put this on your essay itself or on a separate memo. They should be questions you have about

5. **Submit your second draft to your Stanford Box by 5pm on Oct. 11.** Be sure to also upload your self-assessment rubric. Don’t replace your first draft; upload this work as a separate second draft.

**STEP 4: CONFERENCING WITH CHRISTINE AND REVISING AGAIN**

**STEP 4 to be completed by Sunday, Oct. 11 at 5pm**

1. **Conferencing.** Between when you turn in your second draft on October 4 and Friday, October 9, you will attend your first required PWR conference with me to discuss your writing. Sign up for a conference time that works with your schedule through the link on the upper right of our webpage. Come to conference prepared with THREE POINTS that you would like to discuss about your draft.

2. **Revise your essay.** Using the comments offered during conference and your own self-assessment of your work, revise your essay. Your revision should meet the format specifications on p. 1 of this document and should be at least 1500 words long.

As you revise, be sure that you move your essay beyond being a mechanical exercise in pointing out *pathos, logos,* and *ethos.* These concepts should inform your analysis, but you should produce an essay that sounds more sophisticated than just an exercise pointing to individual rhetorical strategies. Look to your thesis statement in particular to help guide your essay toward a more complex discussion of how rhetorical appeals and strategies of development function in your chosen text.

Keep in mind how you as a writer can best use rhetorical appeals and strategies yourself to produce your own persuasive argument.

3. **Write your reflective memo.** After you have finished your revision, write a memo in which you reflect on your overall experience in writing the essay and your own rhetorical choices. The memo can be informal in voice, but it nevertheless should be clear, detailed, well-organized, and approximately 300 words in length. It should include commentary on the changes you made during your revision. In addition, it should also touch on at least some of the following (it doesn’t need to address all of these items):

   • Your own use of rhetorical appeals and strategies of development
   • How an understanding of the rhetorical situation influenced your work
   • Structural decisions
   • Use of visual evidence in your essay
   • How contingencies of *kairos* or awareness of context influenced your writing

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• How peer review, conferencing, or a Hume appointment affected your revision decisions. This memo is not optional – you will be penalized if you do not turn it in (see evaluation criteria on p. 5).

4. Submit your materials. By Sunday, Oct. 11 at 5pm, you need to post your revision to your Rhetorical Analysis Box folder. In addition, at this time, you need to upload your reflective memo, any peer review materials you received, and your To-Do list from our conference. See the submission checklist on p. 6

**Evaluation Criteria**

This essay will be graded according to the guidelines set out by the Program in Writing and Rhetoric (see the PWR Policies document in the “Class Docs” tab on our website).

In particular, an exemplary rhetorical analysis would contain the following:

• A strong, sophisticated **thesis statement** and **argument** supported convincingly by evidence and that engages a larger “So What” or relevance

• A detailed, focused **analysis** of the rhetorical strategies and appeals at work within a text or texts, with a good balance between description and analysis

• Well-developed, cohesive **paragraphs**, with smooth **transitions** between paragraphs and ideas, and a deliberate and fluid overall organization and development

• A strong, engaging **introduction** that “hooks” the reader and accurately represents the topic, style, and direction of the paper and its argument

• Strategic and appropriate use of **rhetorical appeals** (*pathos*, *logos*, *ethos* & *kairos*), **developmental strategies** (definition, cause/effect, description, example, process, categorization, narration), and **visual rhetoric** (as evidence, not illustration) in your own work

• Clear and effective understanding and negotiation of the **rhetorical situation** and context/*kairos* of your own writing and also of the texts under consideration.

• A clear, engaging, appropriate and consistent **voice/style**, that relies on concrete, vivid language, varied sentence structure and appropriate word choice

• A strong **conclusion** that reemphasizes the central claim without relying exclusively on summary.

• Evident attention to *ethos* in the **design** of the paper and attention to **correctness** in grammar, punctuation and spelling

• Meticulous **citing of sources** in MLA format, including a works cited at the end that includes links to any online sources (including the primary text that you are analyzing) that you used.

The self-assessment rubric you used to score your draft (see the Rhetorical Analysis assignment page) provides an even more specific taxonomy of the elements of a powerful rhetorical analysis.

**Additional Notes**

**DRAFTS:** The draft for this essay is NOT optional. Students who do not turn in a complete draft of their rhetorical analysis will have their overall grade for the assignment reduced half a grade (from an A- to a B+/A-). In addition, if you turn in a draft late, I may not be able to provide you with feedback in time for you to use it for your revision.

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REFLECTIVE MEMO: The reflective memo is NOT optional. Essays missing their reflective memo will be marked down half a grade (from an A- to a B+/A-).

LATE ESSAYS: Late essays will be marked down half a grade for each day that they are late. I won’t accept essays or drafts that are more than 5 days late.

FURTHER RESOURCES

We will be conferencing to discuss this assignment and will be working on it in class. However, if you need additional help, you might consider the following:

• Schedule an appointment with a Writing Tutor at the Hume Center. Writing tutors can be indispensable at any stage of your project, from text selection, to brainstorming, to outlining or drafting, or even during revision. Make an appointment by visiting http://sututor.stanford.edu. You might decide to meet with a writing tutor at one of the late-night drop-in sessions at the residential dining halls. REMEMBER: You are required to schedule and attend at least one writing center appointment this quarter; see the “Assignments” tab for further details on this.

• Re-read Envision chapters 1&2. These chapters focus on strategies for writing & rhetorical analysis that are directly applicable to this assignment. There is an annotated student sample in Chapter 1.

• Look at sample rhetorical analysis essays and essay components. These are linked from the “Assignments” tab on our website, on the “Rhetorical Analysis” main page.

• E-mail me directly (alfano@stanford.edu) with specific questions about the assignment or to set up an additional meeting to talk about your draft.

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS FINAL SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

✓ Assignment sheet. Did you re-read the assignment sheet to make sure that you fulfilled all the requirements of the assignment completely and correctly? Did you re-check the grading criteria to match your work with the assessment measures?

✓ Title page. Do you have a separate title page that includes your name, a significant but catchy title, and the date? Optional: do you have a cover image on your title page to serve as a visual “epigraph” to set the tone for your paper?

✓ Page numbers. Do you have page numbers on each page? (It’s okay to omit page numbers on the title page and/or the first page)

✓ Correctness. Did you enhance your ethos by correcting all typos and punctuation, grammar, and usage mistakes? Did you italicize the titles of video games and video game series (and books,
magazines, journals, films, etc.)? Did you use quotation marks around the titles of individual trailers?

✓ **Design.** Did you polish the design/delivery of your document? (Again, this affects your ethos.)

✓ **Evidence.** Did you enclose any direct quotes in quotation marks and transcribe them verbatim from the source? Did you include appropriate citations in correct MLA parenthetical documentation form when needed in your essay?

✓ **Visual Evidence.** If you use visual evidence, did you place that evidence in rhetorically effective places to best support your written argument? Did you use them rhetorically, not decoratively? Did you include a figure # and a rhetorical caption for each piece of visual evidence?

✓ **Works Cited.** Did you include a works cited for any materials you cited in your text (in correct MLA form)? At the very least, you need to have included your primary text in your works cited. Please note for electronic sources: even though MLA doesn’t require a URL with works cited anymore, I do, so INCLUDE THE URLS FOR YOUR WORKS CITED if there are any (unless it’s a database URL). Please do not put your Works Cited on a new page – if it fits, feel free to include it at the bottom of the last page of your essay. If it runs onto a new page because of spacing, that’s okay – just save paper if possible. Remember: MLA dictates that citations in a Works Cited be listed in alphabetical order.

✓ **Image Sources.** If you used images as evidence, did you include source information for your images? This should be in a separate section called “Image Sources” under your Works Cited, that lists the images by Figure # and includes the URL from which you retrieved the image. If you took your own screen shot, but sure to note “Author’s Screenshot” as well as the URL.

✓ **Reflective Memo.** Did you write your reflective memo? Did you check the assignment sheet (above) to clarify what you need to cover in your reflective memo?

✓ **Stanford Box.** Did you upload your final version (including title page, works cited, and reflective memo) to your Rhetorical Analysis folder? Are all relevant digital materials (such as any electronic feedback you received from me or your peers) contained in your Rhetorical Analysis folder on Stanford Box?

✓ **Supplementary paper-only materials (anything that’s only in paper form to be turned in at Tuesday’s class).** Did you also turn the peer review materials that you received (if they are not electronic), your pre-writing (if you have not submitted them already or they are not electronic), and the copy of the draft with my comments (if you have it)? Did you also include a copy of the To-Do list you wrote at the end of our conference as well as the one you received from me?

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