Rhetorical Analysis Essay

Introduction
For this assignment we move from summarizing and responding to analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating. Your Rhetorical Analysis essay will focus on one of the essays we’ve read in class. In your essay, you will focus on how the essay is written, what you believe the author’s purpose is in writing in this way, and whether the essay is written effectively. You will not focus on whether you agree or disagree with the writer’s argument.

Essay Choices:

“A Reunion with Boredom,” by Charles Simic, p. 374
“Is Google Making Us Stupid?” By Andrew Carr, p. 91
“On Compassion,” by Barbara Lazear Ascher, p. 46
“The Boston Photographs,” by Nora Ephron, p. 152
“Feet in Smoke,” by John Jeremiah Sullivan, p. 399

How to Write Your Essay:

• In your introduction, give any broader context necessary for understanding your essay as well as the author’s name, the title, and a brief summary of the text. End the introduction with your thesis statement.

• Focus on just two or three rhetorical strategies so that you can develop your explanations of how they are used in the argument. Examples of rhetorical strategies are use of factual evidence, the writer’s tone, attention to opposing arguments, use of metaphor, attention to the audience’s values, etc. We will discuss rhetorical strategies in more detail.

• To illustrate the criteria you have chosen, use specific references (quotes and paraphrases) from the text. You will use the PIE structure for your body paragraphs and MLA format to integrate your quotations into the essay. We will learn and practice this in class as well.

• This essay should be roughly 2-3 pages (about 600-800 words).

• Create an original title that reflects the central idea of your essay.

Due Dates:
Thesis: The thesis should make an assertion about the effectiveness of the use of rhetorical strategies and an interpretation about the writer’s purpose. Focus on analyzing and evaluating the way the argument is written, not whether you agree with it. Bring a working thesis statement to class on Friday, April 29.

Outline: Your typed outline is due in class on Monday, May 2.

Peer Review: Bring three copies of your typed, double-spaced rough draft on Friday, May 6 for peer review and a revision activity. If you fail to participate in peer review, 10 points will be deducted from your final essay score. You must be here on time, with your essay printed and enough copies in order to participate in peer review. If you are late to peer review, you may not be able to participate and you will therefore lose points.
Final Draft: Revise your draft and bring the final draft to class on Tuesday, May 10 in your folder with the first draft, peer review comments, revision activity, evaluation sheet, outline, and tracker.

If you come in late on May 10, your essay will be late you will lose points. Five points will be deducted for each day an essay is late; no essays are accepted one week after the due date.

Some Details

Your essay must include these parts (chunks) in this order: introduction/summary, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation/conclusion. We will discuss all these things in class. Here are some ways you can think about them:

I. Introduction with Summary and Thesis – You already know how to do part of this! We will go over introductions and thesis statements in class.
   Example Thesis Statement: In Joe Smith’s “Education Should Be Free for Everyone,” he effectively uses pathos by including real-life examples and references to the values of his audience.

II. Analysis and Interpretation – When you analyze a piece of writing, you look at the different parts that make up the whole. You look at the writing decisions made by the writer and the rhetorical strategies used. You ask yourself wh- questions -- especially “how”: How is the text put together? How is it organized? What kinds of words are used? How does the author present herself? Who is the intended audience? Your essay must include one and might include two of the following aspects:

   1. A discussion of the ethos of a text: how does the author establish his/her credibility?
      Ethos strategies:
      Prove credibility by using reliable sources
      Presenting accurate account of opposing situation
      Connect with audience through things in common

   2. A discussion of the pathos of a text: how does the author connect with and move the readers?
      Pathos strategies:
      Charged, vivid, evocative language
      Figurative language (simile, metaphor, etc.)
      Awareness of opposing viewpoints
      Awareness of audience concerns
      Awareness of audience beliefs/assumptions/values

   3. A discussion of the logos of a text: how does the author use logic within the text?
      Logos strategies:
      Evidence
      Examples
      Organization
      If/then statements
      Logic
      Outside sources
III. Interpretation – To interpret an aspect of a text (like the ones listed above) is to tell your readers what, in your academic opinion, it means. When you are working at interpreting a text, you are working with its words, its ideas, and its meanings. For this, you ask yourself “Why?” Your essay must include one and might include two of the following:

1. a description of the main point (or thesis or argument) that you think the author is trying to make, how the strategies you chose support this point or thesis, and how readers can connect this to their own lives [use third person pronouns*]
2. a discussion of how the main idea contained in the text relate to your life [use first person pronouns*]
3. a discussion of how your understanding of the text changed after several readings [use first person pronouns*]

*NOTE:
Third person pronouns: subject = she/he  object = her/him
First person pronouns: subject = I  object = me

IV. Conclusion/Evaluation – In your conclusion, you will discuss whether or not the text you chose is a successful or unsuccessful piece of writing. Did the writer make strong choices regarding style? Do you like it? Why or why not? Your conclusion might include:

1. a discussion of whether or not the text is successful in fulfilling its purpose
2. a discussion of whether or not you liked this text (and why)

Getting Started

☐ Think about the essays we’ve read this quarter. Which ones did you like best? What about the essay made you like it or remember it? The answers to these questions may help you narrow down your choice to a few texts. Go back and read them again with this assignment in mind. Choose only one text to write about.

☐ Quote sparingly – and only quote when the writer says something better than you can in paraphrase. This paper doesn’t call for long quotes, but it’d be very difficult to write a strong paper without at least a few well-chosen quotes. PIE will help you set this up.

☐ Feel free to bring your own opinions and experiences to this paper, but remember that your main tasks here are to summarize, analyze, interpret, and evaluate the text. It’s very easy for your own feelings to take over and eclipse your analysis. Remember, you want to strive for unified paragraphs – stay on topic.

☐ There isn’t one “correct” analysis or interpretation of your chosen essay. You don’t have to say what you think I want to hear about an essay. What I am interested in is what you think and how you support your own interpretation with material from the text itself. (... and how you express yourself in writing, of course.)
Part A: To be filled out by the student. For full points, write detailed, complete responses.

1. Which appeal(s) of which text did you write about? Which strategies did you focus on? Why did you choose this text and these strategies?

2. What is the strongest part of your writing in the essay? Why do you think it’s strong?

3. In your opinion, what is the weakest part of your writing in the essay? Why do you think it’s weak?

4. What did you learn about close reading from writing this essay?

5. What did you learn about academic writing from writing this essay?
There is a clear main idea (thesis statement) that focuses the essay on one to two strategies of a specific text and makes a claim about their purpose. /5

The introduction should contain an accurate summary of the text and any necessary background information. /10

The essay should analyze 1-2 strategies within the text. /10

The essay should interpret the text and convey why this interpretation is important. /10

The essay should evaluate whether or not the text is successful. The conclusion should give readers a feeling of completion. /10

The essay follows the required outline. The sentences and paragraphs are organized in a logical manner, and the essay begins and ends effectively. /10

Body paragraphs attempt to utilize PIE. Paragraphs are unified and cohesive. /10

The sentence-level writing should be clear and without grammatical, mechanical, or spelling errors. Quotations are used sparingly and correctly. /30

Student participated fully in the peer review process, the self-evaluation process, and handed in a complete assignment (peer review draft and comments, outline, self-evaluation, tracker.) /5

Total = ____/100