



Essay #1: Rhetorical Analysis

Basic task: To evaluate the effectiveness of a written argument.

Purpose: To develop a strong understanding of the elements of effective argumentation.

Later in the course, you will write your own arguments about meaningful topics—but first, it will be valuable for you to analyze effective and ineffective elements of arguments and identify strategies for conveying strong arguments. This way, you will be informed about techniques and approaches before developing your own arguments.

For this assignment, then, you will choose a specific written argument to analyze. This written argument must be relatively *brief* (at least 200 words and no more than 2000 words), must be *recent* (created within the last ten years), and must contain a clear *author*, *audience*, and *argument*. Possibilities include a political speech, an editorial, a song, or an open letter.

After identifying a written text to analyze, you will analyze rhetorical elements to come to a conclusion about the effectiveness of the argument. Your essay should identify and assess the following:

- The rhetorical situation of the argument, including:
 - The author's purpose/argument
 - The author's audience
 - The context of the situation
- The writer's credibility (ethos)
- The ability of the writer to engage readers emotionally (pathos)
- The logic of the writer's ideas (logos)
- The author's use of additional rhetorical elements (voice, style, tone, organization/flow, diction, etc.) and whether the author's use of the elements helps or hinders the writer's attempt to persuade the audience of the argument
- The overall strength and effectiveness of the argument

To best fulfill *your* purpose, you should present your points in a focused essay of at least 900 words that contains a strong introduction and conclusion and a series of well-organized and well-developed body paragraphs. Also:

- Use examples and quotations from the argument you are analyzing to support your points
- Format citations appropriately (MLA style)

The due dates will arrive quickly, so the sooner you identify a written argument to analyze, the more time you will have to develop your essay.



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