

Rhetorical Analysis Assignment

Assignment's Purpose: This assignment offers practice engaging many of the course's key concepts. It ensures you have learned to discern the rhetorical strategies authors, artists, politicians, and advertisers (among others) use to persuade or otherwise move their audience.

Assignment:

Step 1: Please find (or make!) a piece of art, a persuasive text, a short video, a song, an advertisement, or some other artifact with a message or persuasive plea. Bonus points if it's an artifact that resonates with you personally—something that moved you the first time you encountered it or that expresses a message important to you. Whatever this artifact is, it should possess rhetorical sophistication. The creator's strategy should be indirect and nuanced enough to require careful analysis and explanation. There's no point in explaining the obvious. The artifact should use *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos*, or a combination of the latter two. Please email me a pdf of your chosen artifact by 10 pm the day before you are expected to present: nwalker@gradcenter.cuny.edu.

Step 2: Next, write an analysis or prepare a presentation that explains the creator's strategy (if you are the creator, you will be explaining your strategy!). Introduce your artifact, its message, the context in which it appears, and the many subtle ways it conveys that message using *pathos* and *ethos*. Ask yourself who the creator's audience is and explain how you can tell. How does the author support their message, and why does their message matter (i.e. what are its broader implications)? If it's a visual artifact, dissect the creator's choices around color, shapes, the text they include (or don't), the placements and juxtapositions of certain elements, etc. If it's a text-based artifact, examine how the author establishes their credibility (*ethos*) and how they use word choice, tone, and style to appeal to the emotions of their target audience (*pathos*). What atmosphere or mood do their words evoke, and how does the feelings they create enhance their messaging?

Step 3: Give an informal presentation of around 5 minutes. If the thought of public speaking makes you excessively uncomfortable, you don't have to stand up in front of the whole class. You may present your analysis from your chair, so long as you speak loudly enough that your peers can hear you. If even that level of public speaking gives you hives, please write up your analysis in a two-three page paper that I will read aloud for you.