

Textual Analysis Class Plan

Learning Goals:

- Students will develop proficiency in discerning key elements within texts and employing analytical reading strategies
- Students will leverage the rhetorical triangle framework and other textual analysis tools to enhance comprehension and critical interpretation of different text objects
- Students will reflect on how they use different language and make rhetorical choices in their own lives based on situation, platform, and audience

Overview:

We make choices every day when we communicate with others – a polite “Hello, how are you?” in passing an acquaintance in the hallway, a quick text to a friend, an email to a professor, a clever caption on Instagram for your followers, a witty pickup line on Hinge to a potential match, the list goes on and on. We have been learning about textual analysis and the tools that we can use to understand why writers make the choices they do and what effect these choices have. Beyond our typical readings and writing assignments, it’s important that we remember that these analytical skills aid us in daily life. Today, we’ll reflect on some of the ways in which we encounter the need for textual analysis outside of the classroom and practice using the rhetorical triangle on different types of sources. We will talk about the importance of audience, form, custom, etc. These are all things in which we might already know a lot about; we just need to unlock the language in which to discuss them critically.

In-Class Activity

- Introduce the rhetorical triangle:
 - Author: What moves or strategies does the author employ to accomplish the text’s purpose?
 - Purpose: What purpose(s) does the author seek to accomplish through the text?
 - Audience: How does the author craft the text in order to address a specific audience?
 - Genre: What are the formal conventions of the text?
- Discuss with students:
 - What are the different kinds of writing/communicating you do regularly?
 - Think outside of the box here: texting, keeping a diary, commenting on YouTube videos, creating Tiktok or Instagram content, etc.
 - What kind of choices do you make when writing via these different platforms?
 - If they need some prodding, a great example is texting friends versus texting their parents. Another would be writing an Instagram feed caption versus writing an Instagram story caption.
- Do examples together as a class
 - Pull up different forms of social media – I typically do a Tweet, an Instagram post, a blog post, a newspaper excerpt, and a stand-up comedy clip from

YouTube (for the YouTube clip, sometimes it's helpful to also look at the comment section).

- For each example, have students go through the rhetorical triangle. I typically start with genre conventions because students tend to know a lot about what the convention are for online platforms, especially Instagram.
- Can we see the different choices the writers were making? What purposes are being fulfilled? What are the specific audiences?

Writing Assignment (Either in-class or stand-alone)

Reflect on your own writing/communication practices. How do you use language based on audience or situation? Are these choices that you make consciously or subconsciously? How do these choices effect you as a communicator and your audience? Use the different aspects of the rhetorical triangle as you reflect on your own writing, as well as utilizing very specific examples.

Test your theory out. Take the same idea that you wrote about in your reflection and try to convey the same information in 4 different ways: a tweet, a text to a friend, and an Instagram caption. How did your thinking change when writing? How did the language itself change?