

## The Rhetorical Analysis Essay

During this second phase of this course, we will learn about and practice various ways in which we might rhetorically analyze arguments. We will develop our critical reading and analytical practices by engaging, researching, examining, discussing, summarizing, and writing about various readings on our shared course topic of inquiry, “Politics of Language.”

For this 3-4-page essay, you will write a **rhetorical analysis essay** in which you examine **select** rhetorical features of **one** of the course texts we’ve read/watched together in Phase 1 and Phase 2: **Tan, Jordan, Saleem, or Lysicott**.

**WHAT.** The aim of your rhetorical analysis is to share with your intended audience *your interpretation of **the text’s important rhetorical features***. In other words, rather than focusing your attention on critiquing and evaluating the text, your task is to examine how the text is rhetorically designed in order to appeal to its intended audience. You will, of course, need to contextualize and summarize the text; however, you’ll **focus mostly on analyzing what the text is *doing*, and *why***.

**HOW.** You’ll **assert your interpretation** (thesis), and you’ll **support your points** using evidence in the form of examples and short quotations from the text. You are encouraged to **personalize** the delivery of your essay. Thus, you decide the order, tone, style, and language you’ll craft in order to best reach your audience. **You’re welcome to draw on your “native,” “home,” or “other” languages, literacies, and ways of being as you so choose.**

**“A” Option:** If pursuing an “A” in the course, your 5-6-page essay’s main focus and thesis will analyze two texts: one from the above list and another text you select from **a list provided by your instructor**. Your thesis will focus on an **important/interesting rhetorical features or strategies** that see being utilized (similarly or differently) across the two texts. The rest of this assignment prompt applies, especially the focus on what the texts are *doing* and *why*.

**Cover Letter:** Your Rhetorical Analysis Essay should be preceded by a Cover Letter when you submit the final version. Refer to the Cover Letter assignment sheet in our course materials.

Due dates:

- A 2-page draft of your RAE is due for peer review on **DAY, MONTH DATE.**
- A full draft of your RAE is due for peer review on **DAY, MONTH DATE.**
- The final draft of the RAE is due on **DAY, MONTH DATE.**



## Breakdown of Assignment Goals

**1. Audience.** You have five choices for what audience you'll tailor your rhetorical analysis to: 1) your classmates and instructor; 2) some of your friends or family; 3) readers who are experts of or are interested in rhetoric and argumentation; 4) a popular audience who may not be aware of rhetoric, its functions, and affordances; or 5) the author him- or herself (not for A option). Your purpose, argument, and evidence should be tailored to appeal to your audience. And, part of meeting any audience's expectations is to draft and edit your essay so that your content, style, tone, and sentences are carefully edited and appropriate for the audience.

**2. Thesis and progression of main points.** Aim to make your essay carefully narrowed, organized, and transitioned. Your thesis should be specific, highlighting just 1-2 rhetorical features that you either find central to the construction of the argument or particularly significant or interesting. The organization of your argument and analysis should be crafted in way that your ideas are delivered to your audience in a "digestible" fashion. Throughout the paper, please use "signposts," transitional phrases, and topic sentences to guide readers and let them know what is about to happen. For example, "In what follows, I will analyze..." or "Another feature from the text worth pointing out is..." "While I have been examining X, Y represents an alternative approach to..."

**3. Rhetorical Situation and Summary.** Introduce appropriate rhetorical information about the author, text (including the genre, publication, and year published), context (including the general topic and exigence), purpose, and audience. Focus your summary on the main argument and main support (reasons and evidence) utilized by the author, as well as the structure (organizational scheme) of the text (e.g., Why does the author present the elements of their argument in the order they do?).

**4. Rhetorical Analysis.** This is the main goal of the essay. Select appropriate rhetorical concepts/terms your analysis will focus on and then carefully select evidence (quotes and examples) you'll use from the text(s) to support your analysis. Your analysis should follow the "10 on 1" rule of thumb—that is, it is better to make ten observations or points about a single representative issue or example (10 on 1) than to make the same basic point about ten related issues or examples (1 on 10). Thus, be very choosy in selecting representative examples that demonstrate your ideas. It also means that you'll need to be extensive in your analysis of those select examples, providing appropriate description and interpretation to *show* your audience what you see.

**5. Exigence.** Comment on how, why, and for whom this text, and your rhetorical analysis of it, is significant. What difference might this text make to readers? What's at stake? For whom? Who might be implicated or affected? How might rhetorical analysis be important to readers? How might your specific interpretations be valuable? You may also discuss how this text or assignment affected you; about the significance

of this article in the context of our current social/political atmosphere; and/or about the rhetorical effectiveness of the text.

## Assessment Rubric for the Rhetorical Analysis Essay

### Assignment Criteria

**1. Anticipate the assumptions of and appropriately reach the intended audience.** How effectively does the rhetorical analysis tailor its argument, examples, and language to meet the expectations of the intended audience?

**2. Guide readers to understand the thesis and progression of main points.** How effectively is the essay narrowed, organized, and transitioned? How effective and specific is the thesis?

**3. Introduce the rhetorical situation and summarize the text.** How effectively are elements of the rhetorical situation introduced (i.e., information about the author, text, context/exigence, purpose, and audience)? How effective is the summary of the text's argument, evidence, and organization?

**4. Rhetorically analyze the text.** How effectively does the essay rhetorically analyze the text by applying 1-2 specific rhetorical concepts and adopting the 10 on 1 rule of thumb? How effectively is the analysis supported with evidence?

**5. Demonstrate Exigence.** How effectively does the essay answer the *So what? Who cares?* questions to demonstrate the exigence of rhetorical analysis and to make connections to larger implications?

**6. General Requirements.** Were all requirements for length and due date met?