

Key Terms in Low-Stakes Assignments

1. Olivia Hendricks (Emory University)

Week 1: Key Terms

Reading Due:

- Harvey "A Brief Guide to the Elements of the Academic Essay"
- Excerpts from Yancey et al Writing Across Contexts Chapter 2 "The Role of Curricular Design in Fostering Transfer of Knowledge and Practice in Composition: A Synthetic Review"
- Class screening of "Alive Inside: A Story of Music & Memory"

Writing Due:

Rhetorical analysis of "Alive Inside": Complete/Incomplete, not graded: Write a 500 word essay describing how at least three of the rhetorical terms we are learning are at play in the documentary we watched. For our uses, let's agree that the purpose of this documentary is to persuade viewers of the need to support efforts to provide the elderly with technology for music. You might think about, for example: how do the documentary-makers use evidence? Who does their audience seem to be? What is the voice or tone of the film?

Week 2: Audience

Reading Due:

- Chapter 2 "Reading and Writing Rhetorically" in *Insider's Guide (IG)*
- Shostakovich Symphony excerpts (listen)
- Class screening of "The War Symphonies: Shostakovic Against Stalin"

Writing Due:

"Rhetorical analysis" of Shostakovich—for a third grader: Similar to last week, you will be showing you understand at least three of our key rhetorical terms by using them to explain how a writer (in this case, a composer) attempts to effectively communicate a message (in this case through music.) Using just the information from the documentary we watched (no need for further research—use this to help think about music as rhetorical), explain to a third grader how Shostakovich attempted to communicate a message to the Soviet masses who came to hear his pieces. Consider your audience! Make this clear, straightforward, and keep your vocabulary basic. This should be 400-500 words.

Key Terms in High-Stakes Assignments

1. Madison Elkins (Emory University)

Rhetorical Analysis: The first two weeks of this class will focus on several key terms about writing and written works, culminating in a rough draft of a rhetorical analysis on a multimodal work. This is a 3.5-5 page paper that will

1. Identify and analyze a work's intended **rhetorical context/situation, genre, and audience.**
2. Identify the **discourse community** (or communities) the work is in conversation with, the features of this community, and the work's interaction with this discourse community (or communities).
3. Argue for the success or failure of work's claim in the format of a **critical analysis**, taking into account its rhetorical characteristics as outlined in 1 and 2.
4. Employ **evidence** from the work to support your **controlling idea or thesis**. You may choose from one of the thesis templates we discuss in class or create your own.
5. Demonstrate logical, coherent, effective **arrangement** (organization).

2. Douglas Downs (Montana State University)

Rhetorical Analysis of a Writing Experience: Think back: What's the most memorable piece of writing you've ever done? Now: what was the situation? And how did that situation help shape the writing? In this 4-5 page rhetorical analysis of a memorable writing experience, your task as a writer is to reflect on how that particular writing experience was a result of the particular situation it was related to, how the situation helped determine what you wrote, and why.

Assignment Rationale

Writers are always responding to the situations they're writing in, from, and for, more or less consciously. One of the tasks of this course is to give you a beginning understanding of rhetoric as a theory of communication and to explore its implications. One of those implications is that even when you're not aware of it, you're responding to rhetorical situations. The purpose of this assignment is to show you how you've already been doing that, and to spur your thinking about what possibilities writing holds if you do it more consciously.

Assignment Description and Instructions

Your rhetorical analysis will be based on some significant piece of writing or writing experience that you've had in the last several years. That writing could have been for school, work, family, or your personal life. It could have been completely private (like a journaling experience) or all-the-way public, like a blog or other online post. It could have been a single short document, like a poem or song lyrics, or it could have been an extended project or experience that involved multiple pieces of writing. The key requirement here is that it has to have been a memorable or important enough experience that you can clearly remember *the circumstances surrounding the writing*.

Once you know what experience and writing you want to focus on, you need to *reflect on and analyze that experience and writing from a rhetorical perspective*. What's that mean? Based on the principles Grant-Davie demonstrates as well as our workshops in class, you'll learn what particular *questions to ask* of the experience you had and the circumstances surrounding it. They will be questions like these:

- Why did you *need to write* to begin with? Since it's easier not to write than it is to write, for most people, there had to be some reason or purpose behind your writing, some problem to be solved or addressed. What was that?
- Where did that need *come from*? What gave rise to it? This is a *historical* question: to understand the circumstances that demanded writing, you need to know what led to those circumstances.
- What *constraints* did you face as a writer? What were the *givens* in your situation-the aspects of it you could not change that controlled what you could do with your writing?
- Who was meant to *read and use your writing* and *what did you mean them to do with it*? How was your writing supposed to do something for, to, or with the readers you imagined it for?

The answers to all of these questions, and others, will help you talk about *why* this piece of writing took the shape that it did. In order to make your analysis most meaningful and clear both to you and to other readers, it will need to include at least the following features:

- Some *description of the writing* or experience itself. Ideally, you might include an electronic copy of the writing you're talking about, if one is still available, but in many cases that may not be possible. Whether you can do that or not, take whatever space is necessary in your analysis to describe as clearly as possible what this writing and experience were.
- An extended discussion of the questions above in order to *describe and analyze the rhetorical situation* in which the writing or experience occurred.
- A *conclusion including implications* of your reflection: what do you learn from this? What principles can you draw to help you in future writing situations?

3. Kathleen Yancey, Liane Robertson, Kara Taczak (Florida State University)

Major Assignment 1: Source-Based Article on Genre, Audience, and Rhetorical Situation

Potential Sources for Study

- Lloyd Bitzer, "Rhetorical Situation"
- Kathleen Blake Yancey, "On Reflection"
- Billy Collins, "Commencement Address at Choate-Rosemary Hall"
- Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter From Birmingham Jail"
- Nora Ephron, "A Few Words About Breasts"
- Gloria Anzaldua, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue"
- Al Gore, Jr. (w/ William Clinton) , "White House Climate Change Action Plan"
- The *McGraw-Hill Handbook*, 3rd Edition, Chapter 1 (Writing Today), Chapter 2 (Understanding Assignments), Chapter 3 (Planning and Shaping) , and Chapter 7 (Reading, Thinking, Writing)

For this assignment, you will write a 6-8 page source-based article, in which you will go beyond summarizing to analyze and make connections between the concepts of genre, audience, and rhetorical situation, and begin to develop a theory of writing. You will choose four of the assigned sources (which represent a variety of genres) listed above, from which you will incorporate evidence to support your ideas about these key concepts and reflect on a possible theory of writing.

You must first define the key terms audience, genre, and rhetorical situation and investigate their relationships within the context of all sources in order to determine the connections between them. You will closely analyze the sources you choose to write about in your article, looking at how each writer uses genre, handles the rhetorical situation, and reaches an audience. As you develop your article you will incorporate both the rhetorical strategies we will explore in class and your understanding of audience, genre, and rhetorical situation.

At the same time you are developing your article, you will also create a 2-3 page reflection piece in which you begin to develop your theory of writing, considering concepts of genre, audience, and rhetorical situation and how they connect.

4. Dave Fisher (Emory University--Adaptation of Yancey, Robertson, Taczak)

Argument of Definition: Effective Writing

Due Dates

Draft: XX (Bring two printed copies to class.)

Revision: XX (Post on your website with reflection.)

Length

750 words, minimum, not including works-cited page.

Format

Use MLA format including in-text parenthetical citations. Note that this format requires you to develop a title.

Audience

A group of 20 high-school students visiting Emory who are curious about what it means to write in college and beyond. These students have written traditional literary analysis essays in their high-school English classes. They have also written personal narratives. Only two or three of the students in this group want to be English majors or creative writing majors.

You may address these students directly, if you choose (i.e., referring to them as "you").

Description

Write an argument in which you define and give examples of effective writing using (and making connections among) the concepts of genre, audience, rhetorical context/situation. This argument will serve as the basis for a formal presentation you will make to the group visiting high-school students described above. (You will not develop the presentation as part of this assignment.)

For this argument of definition, you will use background sources (to help you define terms) and methods sources (to help you understand how to structure an argument of definition). These background and methods sources include our readings from the *Insider's Guide* and articles or chapters by Bazerman, Park, and Lunsford and Ruskiewicz about genre, audience, and arguments of definition.

Use two of the following three sources as exhibits to support your claim(s) about effective writing. In other words, you will closely analyze the exhibit sources you choose to write about in your definition, examining how each writer uses genre, handles the rhetorical situation, and reaches an audience.

- McCarthy, L. P. (1987). A Stranger in Strange Lands: A College Student Writing across the Curriculum. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 21(3), 233–265.
- Breaks, S. (2012). *Suli Breaks – Why I Hate School But Love Education [Official Spoken Word Video]*. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_ZmM7zPLyI and <http://genius.com/4531268>

- Warner, J. (2015, December 15). I Cannot Prepare Students to Write Their (History, Philosophy, Sociology, Poly Sci., etc...) Papers | Inside Higher Ed. Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/just-visiting/i-cannot-prepare-students-write-their-history-philosophy-sociology-poly-sci-etc>

Remember, your goal is not to simply summarize these exhibit text(s), but to use parts of them as evidence for claims you make about writing.

Assessment Rubric

Criteria	Comments	Points
Writer makes definitional claim about effective writing. This claim facilitates coherence by suggesting direction argument will take (perhaps by suggesting approach to exhibit texts).		/5
Rhetorical terms (e.g., audience, genre, and rhetorical situation/context) defined adequately (perhaps using background sources).		/5
Examples from exhibit texts used in support of claims. Sources introduced appropriately and incorporated smoothly.		/5
Paragraphs are unified and cohesive (i.e., employ topic sentences—we also called these hyper-themes—and given/new information flow).		/5
Writer follows MLA style conventions.		/5
Text is readable with little to distract at the sentence level.		/5
		/30