Rhetorical Awareness

Why do we practice rhetorical awareness?

Victor Villanueva explains that "Rhetoric is the conscious use of language" (*Bootstraps*, 76). To study rhetoric is a way to study people and how we communicate. Practicing awareness of rhetoric, or the way we communicate with each other, will help you to be more aware of how authors effectively (and sometimes *ineffectively*) communicate ideas with their audiences. It will also help you to be more aware of your own audience and make choices as a communicator that will help you to effectively communicate the ideas or arguments you want to in your work in this class and beyond.

Defining Rhetoric

- Rhetoric: The way that we communicate and persuade others
- Rhetorical Awareness: The study of how people communicate to specific audiences and make choices to achieve their purpose as communicators
- Basically, being rhetorically aware helps you to make effective choices when you are communicating to your audience. It helps you make choices with the form, language, evidence, etc. Anything you do to make your communication effective!

The Rhetorical Situation

Every time you communicate, consider your own ***rhetorical situation***:

- **You**, the author: Who *are* you? What is your background? What knowledge or experiences do you bring to your compositions? What is the context in which you are communicating? Why does your message matter for you?
- **Audience**: What do you know about your audience? What is the best way to communicate with them?
- **Text/Genre**: What type of text, or genre, are you using to communicate? What do you know about the genre? What conventions/rules do you need to follow in this type/genre in order to communicate effectively?
- **Purpose**: What impact do you want to have on your audience? What do you want them to think, feel, or do after engaging with your work?

As a reader, you can consider the author's rhetorical situation to better understand their choices.

Elements to consider when analyzing a rhetorical situation:

- Genre: What type of text is this?
- Author: Who created this text?
- Context: What prompted the author to create this text?
- Purpose: What is the author's goal? What impact do they want to have?
- Audience: Who is this text written for?

Rhetorical Appeals

You may have heard of types of rhetorical appeals, or *ways* that a writer tries to impact their audience:

- **Logos (logic)—**The use of reason in a text, including evidence, such as data, and analysis
- **Ethos (credibility)—**To make the audience trust the author's authority or character or experience
- **Pathos (emotion)—**To create an emotional response in the audience that enhances the argument

These appeals are very helpful for understanding the *rhetorical choices* that authors make.

Rhetorical Features/Choices

Rhetorical appeals include rhetorical choices, or features. Rhetorical features are *all* the different choices an author makes within a text to contribute to its meaning and effects on the audience. When communicating, people always make specific choices to impact their audience in particular ways. Here are some examples:

- Vocabulary, diction (word choice)
    - Includes: Choice of title
- Tone
    - Includes: tone of voice in videos
- Syntax (sentence structure)
- Repetition
- Imagery and description
    - Includes: Use of actual images, color, etc
- Similes and metaphors
- Point of view
- Types of evidence

- Organization/structure
    - Includes: Visual/spatial organization
- Codemixing, codemeshing (using multiple languages or dialects)
- Sound (in video/music, etc)