

# Major Assignment #2: Rhetorical Analysis of a Persuasive Text

## Description:

Throughout Unit 1, we saw examples of Queens College students sharing their stories and experiences in order to persuade fellow students, college faculty and staff, college decision makers, policymakers, and the general public to act on problems that are personally impactful to them. Using these examples, you wrote about your experiences of a problem in a community that matters to you to try to persuade an audience to understand and act on it.

For Major Assignment #2: Rhetorical Analysis, you'll analyze **a persuasive text** (e.g. a text that is trying to get an audience to take some kind of action) that relates in some way to the problem that you described in Unit 1. This could be a news story, a PSA or advertisement, a video, a social media thread or campaign, or any other text that relates to your topic. You don't have to agree with the text in order to use it because the purpose is to analyze it and discuss how it's doing what it's doing rather than only to evaluate the content. However, the text should be long and substantial enough to write several pages: it's unlikely that you'll have enough to work with if you select a single tweet, for example, though it might be fine to select a Twitter thread.

If you can't find something that is related to your topic, or if you'd like to take a break from your topic, you could alternatively select from the texts below. The text you select does not have to relate to the problem you described in Major Assignment 1:

1. [Giving Tuesday 2022](#), a campaign to ask for donations to support students at Queens College
2. Materials from the Anti-Bullying Alliance, such as [this anti-bullying PSA video](#)
3. [An advertisement for the American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals](#)
4. [The National Alliance on Mental Illness campaign video](#), which advertises resources
5. [Summit Apartments Tour video](#), a video advertising the Queens College residence
6. [It's Time To Talk About It](#), a campaign through the National Eating Disorders Association
7. [Don't Do It](#), an advertisement from the 1980s discouraging graffiti in the MTA subway system
8. [MTA Mismanagement](#), an advertisement by the MTA workers union exposing the problems with MTA management of funding
9. [HIP HOP PSA: "We need real prices and transparency in healthcare."](#) an advertisement for the Power to the Patients campaign

Using what you've learned in this unit, you will write **a rhetorical analysis of the persuasive text that you chose**. Your analysis should determine who the audience is, the text's purpose (and its "call to action"), some information about the larger context in which the text is situated, the text's medium and circulation, and how the text uses rhetorical appeals to persuade the audience.

You need to use specific examples from the text to illustrate your claims. In addition to describing your evidence, you should also analyze and evaluate the text. So, don't just say what is happening: tell us why and how and what impact it has on the viewer or reader. The job is not only to describe what the text says or whether the text is effective, but how it actually works.

## Requirements

1. Meet full requirements on journal entries in Unit 2 by the final catch up day (November 2).
2. Attend all in-class sessions, or make up the sessions that you miss by completing all Exit Tickets. Complete exit tickets as soon as possible, and no later than November 16th.
3. Write a first draft that is at least 600 words long. You can (and should!) reuse writing from your journals and writing that we complete together in class.
4. Submit the first draft through the Assignment Submission Portal. Answer all questions on the form.
5. Annotate your first draft with at least 5-7 **specific** questions for me (so not "what should I fix?") using the comment feature on MS Word or Google Docs. We will practice this in class together.
6. Complete a peer review for another student.
7. Complete a one-on-one conference (Slack, Zoom, or in person) with me.
8. Write a second draft that incorporates the feedback that you receive and that is at least 1,200 words long.
9. Write a reflection memo describing the feedback that you received from me and from your peers, the changes that you made between your first and second draft (and why), and what you learned in this unit. This should be at least 300 words long.
10. Submit the second draft and reflection memo through the Assignment Submission Portal. It's OK if the reflection memo is in the same document as your essay: you do not need to submit two separate forms. Answer all questions on the form.

## Due Dates:

All due dates for this assignment are available on the syllabus. Please be reminded about the extension and late work policy for this class. **I cannot accept late work without a discussion**

**about renegotiating the deadline.**

## Guidelines / How To:

In this section, I provide some ideas for how to get started if you're feeling stuck. **If you are regularly attending classes, we will be working through these steps together as a group. The homework activities that you complete leading up to the first draft will also take you through these steps.**

These guidelines are just for students who want to review what we did in class when they're working independently, or for students who miss class and are trying to catch up.

- 1) Decide on the text that you're going to analyze, or choose one and run it by me. The text should be **persuasive** rather than **informative**. It should contain a call to action (so something that is more like the "We Belong in College" campaign and less like the Vox video about New York City guerilla gardening.). We will work on this in Journal #1: Choosing Your Persuasive Text
- 2) Using the tips and the questions from the guides that you completed in the previous unit on summarizing texts, deeply read (or closely watch) your text. In your own words, compose a brief summary of the text's **purpose** and **call to action**: what is it trying to get the audience to do? We will also work on this in Journal #1: Choosing Your Persuasive Text.
- 3) Do a little bit of research online. Is there anything relevant about the **historical, cultural, political, or social context** that informed the creation of this text? Who was the creator or the organization that made this text, and what are their goals? When was this text created? What was going on in the world, in the community where it was made, in the city, or in the nation that would have informed its creation and made its call to action more impactful? You'll start this in Journal #1, and really expand on this more in Journal #2: Mini Rhetorical Analysis.
- 4) Using the questions that you see in [Rhetorical Analysis: Part 1 and 2](#), make a similar chart for your own text. Be mindful of how you're separating the "descriptions" from the "analysis and evaluation." Make sure that you're answering the questions in *both*

columns. You'll start this in Journal #2: Mini Rhetorical Analysis.

- 5) Once you've done this prework, you are ready to draft. You want to come up with a **debatable** thesis statement that will allow you to **make an argument** about the text's purpose, audience, and context, and that shows how it uses rhetorical appeals to accomplish its purpose. But be careful: you want to make sure that you're making a **debatable** claim instead of just stating what is obviously true. Here's an example of the difference:

**Debatable claim:** In the following, I consider how the video's appeals to pathos, ethos, logos, and kairos effectively reach students while failing to account for multiple audiences. This means, ultimately, that the video falls short of accomplishing its purpose to call legislators and college decision makers to action.

**Non-debatable, obvious claim:** The video appeals to ethos to establish credibility, and it appeals to pathos to make a connection with the audience's emotions.

Your draft

## Checklist:

*As and after you write, ask yourself the following questions:*

- Did I choose to analyze a text from above or clear the text I am analyzing with Dr. Albracht first?
- Does this text relate to the problem that I wrote about in Unit 1, or if not, a relevant problem?
- Have I deeply read or watched and understood the text well enough to summarize it in my own words? Does my draft contain a brief summary?
- Have I sufficiently analyzed the elements of the rhetorical situation including audience, purpose, larger context in which the text is situated, the text's medium and circulation, and how the text uses rhetorical appeals?
- Do I have a thesis statement that makes a debatable claim rather than just stating an obvious fact?
- Do I have topic sentences at the beginning of some of my paragraphs that link my claims (smaller arguments) back to my thesis statement?
- Do I have clear, specific, debatable, and non-obvious claims?
- Are each of my claims supported directly by evidence from the text?

Am I correctly citing my evidence in my essay?

Have I sufficiently analyzed my evidence and showed why it's doing what I'm claiming that it does?

Would my audience disagree with me? If so, why? Am I acknowledging this?