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Professor Speiser
English 28
ITV/Weekend College
Summer 2017

Essay #1:
Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Advertisement

Important details:

First draft and peer review: **30 points**

Final Draft: **50 points**

First Draft due: **June 24**

Second Draft due: **July 1**

Word count: **250-500 words (1-2 pages)**



We will complete this first essay of English 28 in three to four steps, with you having to bring in the first draft to class during Week 2. Then, after bringing in a copy of your first draft to class, we will look at each other's papers in a Week 2 peer review session. After peer review, you reflect on our own writing and, after that, hand in a final draft during Week 3. Here is the assignment:

+ Find a compelling and persuasive visual advertisement and analyze HOW it could influence and capture an audience rhetorically. Here, you will begin to use, what we call, your "rhetorical analysis" skills. More on what that means...

Visual advertisement?

- Find either a television (or online) commercial advertisement, or a print ad in a magazine or newspaper that particularly interests you. After reading the "Introduction," the first 2-3 chapters of *Everyone's an Author*, as well as the other readings and videos on rhetoric from Module 2, you will utilize the terminology and ideas from the readings to analyze what the advertisers were thinking when they aimed to persuade a specific audience about their project.
- How is the message working in terms of its utilization of specific visuals, colors, sound, words, music, composition and placement of product and people? What is it about these elements that makes the advertisement particularly intriguing?
- Rhetorically, how did the creators of the advertisement think of the text's **purpose, audience, context, and subject** as well as the relationship between all these elements?

Background on Rhetorical Analysis:

Every piece of writing, every painting, every movie, every article written, and every advertisement created is produced with a specific context (or contexts) in mind, and with the creator thinking of how he/she can reach and connect with a certain audience. An essential part of your higher education is to increase your awareness of the creator-audience relationship that exists in any form of writing, art, or "communication." And with this increased awareness, you will then broaden your

understanding of what the most effective forms of communication – writing, reading, and speaking – are, as well as know how and where you can most effectively insert yourself within our society’s various forms of interaction. This is sometimes considered ‘critical’ reading and writing.

That being said, critical reading and viewing are essential skills for not only being an informed and astute citizen, but also for all kinds of writing. *Analysis* is a more specific aim where those critical reading and viewing skills are applied to particular subjects. *Rhetorical analysis* is a kind of analysis that divides a whole (in this case, an advertisement) into parts to understand how an act of speaking or writing conveys meaning. And, essentially, the tools of rhetorical analysis are applied to understanding how other human creations make meaning.

Rhetoric:

Rhetoric does not technically mean “speech with no real ideas,” as the term is commonly used nowadays. Actually, as described in our textbook, and in Carroll’s “Backpacks vs. Briefcases,” rhetoric – according to Aristotle – is “the art of finding in any given case the available means of persuasion.” Sometimes, rhetoric is simply defined as “the art of persuasion” and it is concerned with producing effective pieces of communication. And, in identifying – and producing – effective pieces of communication we need to take into account the following elements:

- **Purpose** – what is the goal of the creator (rhetor) of the speech, written text, etc.?
- **Audience** – to whom is this piece of writing or speech aimed; what can you determine about the actual audience’s assumed values, attitudes, and beliefs? (How is the rhetoric trying to influence and shape those beliefs?)
- **Author/ Rhetor** – Is the author an expert or an outsider on the topic? Where is the creator culturally situated?
- **Larger Context** – What else has been said or written on the subject? Does the advertisement look like a similar one, or like something related to a competitor’s product?
- **Rhetorical Appeals** – How is the creator/ writer appealing to the audience? Is the advertisement, the message, persuasive based on the trustworthiness of the speaker (**ethos**), on logical reasoning and facts (**logos**), and/or the emotions and deepest held values of the audience (**pathos**)?
 - **Keep in mind that nearly all advertisements are heavily based on pathos, or appealing to consumers’ emotions.**

- Re-read pgs. 33- 36 in chapter 3 of the textbook, *Everyone’s An Author*, as a further guide. Also, look at the comments online of the Chrysler/ Eminem advertisement for more guidance and ideas, and I will try to attach some rhetorical analysis examples as soon as possible.

▲ The more you craftily and accurately incorporate **the terminology above of rhetorical analysis**, the higher the grade you will receive in this assignment.

Email me or message me (Etudes) with ANY questions you may have: speiser@lamission.edu



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