

April 8: Teaching Demonstration

The Rhetorical Appeals and Rhetorical Situation

Objectives:

- Build Rhetorical Knowledge
Understand and demonstrate awareness of rhetorical situations, purposes, and audiences in diverse writing contexts.
- Practice Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing
Construct well-organized and coherent essays that present and support ideas effectively.

Reading:

- “6.4 Rhetorical Appeals: Logos, Pathos, and Ethos Defined” in *In Practice: A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing* from Ohio State University

Lesson Plan

Forecasting

- What are the Rhetorical Appeals?
- Tying Appeals to Audience
- Analyzing an Example: Clarke Admissions Brochure

What are the rhetorical appeals?

Some of what we find persuasive comes from the types of evidence, I hope, but I would also argue some of it comes from the rhetorical appeals you read about today.

- Come from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, his first treatise from 336 BCE
 - Aristotle defines a rhetorician as someone who is able to see what is persuasive and rhetoric as the ability to see what is possibly persuasive in every given case.
 - A rhetorician should have a complete grasp of the art of rhetoric and the method, meaning the available means of persuasion
 - Aristotle disagreed with previous ideas of rhetoric that focused on how to slander, distract, and get an emotional response from an audience. He instead focused on proof and rationality. His means of persuasion become these “proofs” that can be used in balance to avoid fallacies and instead persuade people using the pursuit of truth.
- Concept of *pisteis*, a Greek word meaning “Pledge of good faith, guarantee...means of persuasion, argument, proof”
 - Three means of persuasion based on the three elements of the communication process: (1) writer, (2) reader, (3) subject.
 - Sometimes in rhetoric classrooms we call Aristotle's rhetorical appeals the “**rhetorical triangle**” because they represent a balance of proofs that are operative for an effective rhetorician in any given situation.

Ask students to describe them and give an example from their experience.

- **Ethos (author): credibility and personal ethics**
 - In undergraduate writing, you may have limited ethos on your topic, so citations become a way to lean on the ethos of others.
 - Highly contextual. For example, I have ethos in a composition classroom because I have studies how to teach writing and research. However, I do NOT have ethos in a biology classroom because it isn't my area of expertise.
- **Pathos (audience): emotions and values**
 - Often we think of this as only emotion, but it can also come down to values. For example, it's an election year. When you watch presidential debates, most candidates will wear blue suits, red ties, and flag pins to associate themselves with values of patriotism.
- **Logos (issue): data, logic, and examples**
 - Think of this as externally validated information. Logos comes from outside the writer or the audience and introduces rationality to an argument.

Note how the appeals are all contextual and intersect. A statistics may seem like a logos appeal, but it can be worded in a way that also invokes pathos. And if it is from a credible source, it may also serve as ethos.

We tend to privilege logos and ethos in academic writing, but they aren't the only valuable appeal, and they certainly aren't the only way to get people to care about your problem. The other appeals can also help with this.

Rhetorical Appeals and Rhetorical Situation

The effect of the rhetorical appeals is tied to a previous concept we've talked about, rhetorical situation.

- Ask them to define **rhetorical situation** again

Certain appeals will work better for certain audiences and as a writer. Your job is to understand how your audience constrains what evidence will be effective for your audience. Additionally, some genres allow you to employ the rhetorical appeals more or less effectively

- Example: If you are sick and need to stay in bed for a day, you might choose to send an email to your professor about missing class, but a text message to your friend about rescheduling a plan to hang out. You might also use different tone and language in each message because of the different relationships you have with each audience.

Activity: Analyzing a Multimodal Text for Rhetorical Appeals

Let's put these ideas into practice using a text you all should have some familiarity with (especially as first year students)—The Clarke Admissions Brochure!

Admittedly, I'm using this partially to learn more about your campus and how you perceive it, this kind of brochure also serves an important rhetorical function and has a clearly defined rhetorical situation.

Distribute brochure (5 print copies and QR code)

Large Group

- Who is the audience for this document? How do we know?

Small Groups (3-4 students)

- Find an example of each rhetorical appeal in the brochure
- Look at the brochure as a whole. Which rhetorical appeal does this brochure lean on the most? Why?

Large Group

- Share responses on the board

Follow-Up Activity

In-Class Writing: Rhetorical Appeals for Proposal Essay

- Who is the audience for your proposal essay? Who has the power to make the change you plan to advocate for?
- List at least 3 examples of evidence you can use to persuade your audience to support your proposal.
- Label each of those examples as either ethos, pathos, or logos and explain how it functions as that rhetorical appeal.
- **Remember you do not need to use each appeal. Instead, you should focus on the ones that make the most sense for your topic.