

ESSAY 2: VISUAL ANALYSIS

DUE 3/21**20% OF FINAL GRADE****100 points possible**

Assignment Description

For this assignment, you will write a *visual rhetorical analysis*—a thesis-driven essay in which you describe and evaluate a visual text’s rhetorical strategies. As we discussed for Essay 1, rhetorical analysis is a way of understanding and interpreting texts by examining the components of their construction. This assignment is asking you to use this same framework to evaluate a *visual* text.

We live in a visually-dominant culture, and the images we are inundated with are rarely neutral. They often contain implicit arguments that connect to specific cultural contexts or ideologies. For this essay, **you can choose either a music video or an opening credit sequence for a TV show** as your object of analysis. Once you’ve picked a text, consider its rhetorical situation and how the different elements of the visual composition work together to try to make its audience do, think, or feel something. Make use of the terminology we discuss in class as you describe and evaluate: *line, color, value, form, texture, contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity*, etc. You’ll also need to consider how the audio/ sound works in connection with (or perhaps in contrast to) the imagery.

Your overall goal for this essay is to a) analyze this visual text in terms of its use of persuasion and B) to write persuasively about your interpretation. construct a thesis based on your interpretation of the work, using specific aspects of the text to support your conclusions.

As with any rhetorical analysis, you should identify and describe the rhetorical situation (genre, audience, purpose, and context). Be sure to look for the ways ethos, logos, and pathos are used in order to influence the viewer.

The Process

Begin by selecting a music video OR an opening title sequence from a TV show. A few caveats:

- FOR MUSIC VIDEOS: don’t use a musical scene from a film, a live performance, or a fanvid or lyric video—use an official artist video.
- FOR TV TITLE SEQUENCES: Don’t pick a show with just a title splash card (like *Supernatural*) and use the standard title sequence, not a special version from holiday episodes or other out of the ordinary title sequences.
- **Send your instructor an email to get approval for the video you are proposing to analyze before you begin work.**

Next, consider:

- The rhetorical situation of the work, including the author, audience, purpose, context, tone, genre, design, constraints, and exigence. What do you think the overall message is?
- The rhetorical strategies, or how the work is composed to produce a specific effect (use of words/ lyrics, color, shape, lighting, set design, contrasts, etc.). None of it is by accident!

- Evidence of the use of rhetorical appeals (ethos/pathos/logos) and the how the combination of images and music/ sound/ lyrics seek to engage the audience
- Consider how the lyrics influence the meaning and how they interact with the visual images. Do the visuals go along with the words? Do they contrast them? What's the connection? Why do you think the director/ artist chose the visual strategies they did?

After you've considered these aspects, think about how the appeals and strategies used in the video/ title sequence are connected to its rhetorical situation. Also ask yourself how the rhetorical strategies you've identified enable particular appeals.

Once you've done this, you'll be ready to compose a thesis that argues your interpretation (i.e. a particular way of viewing the work) based on the choices made in its construction. As you compose your essay, you'll also want to think about what the rhetorical moves made in this image say about the larger contexts and concerns surrounding it.

Helpful tactics to consider:

- Make a statement about the effectiveness and power of the images/ lyrics
- Support that statement with evidence from the video itself
- Consider other potential viewpoints and attitudes about the video—and then refute them

As with Essay 1, keep in mind that a successful rhetorical analysis does *not* offer an independent analysis or argument about the subject matter of a text; instead, it answers the following questions:

- ★ What rhetorical strategies does the author/ text use to persuade the audience?
- ★ Why does the author use these particular strategies?
- ★ To what effect?

Key Terms: *Analysis, Rhetorical Strategies, Rhetorical Context, Visual Rhetoric*



Rhetorical Audience and Context

As with Essay 1, your audience for this visual rhetorical analysis is your peer community of fellow UNA students. In your essay, assume that your audience is NOT familiar with the video you are analyzing—you'll need to provide some summary and context so that your reader can understand your analysis. Your goal is to describe and evaluate the visual text with the goal of informing your fellow students how this text employs rhetoric to make its point.

Requirements

- An approved video or title sequence to work with (email me your proposed video **before** you begin work on the project)
- A thesis that argues for a specific interpretation of the work based on detailed supporting examples from the piece itself
- A coherent organizational structure that supports your thesis
- A clear connection between your way of viewing this work and its context
- A strong sense of audience
- A citation for the video and any other works you consult in a works cited page
- Thorough proofreading and MLA 8th Ed. formatting
- Length: 4 pages (1000 words) PLUS Works Cited page
- 12-point Garamond, Times New Roman, or Calibri font
- FILE NAME: LastName_E2.docx (Microsoft Word file type)

Evaluative Criteria and Rubric:

This essay should demonstrate your ability to:

- Analyze the rhetorical situation and rhetorical strategies of a video text
- Write a thesis-driven paper, supported by evidence from the text
- Create clear, carefully edited writing that is largely free of proofreading errors and major errors of grammar, mechanics, and syntax

The following criteria will be used to evaluate the essay:

Criteria	Description	Points Possible
Analysis	The writer is able to identify and summarize the main idea of the text as well as identifying the rhetorical situation (author, purpose, audience, and context).	20
Rhetorical Strategy	The essay identifies the text's use of rhetorical appeals and how they are employed to create a certain effect.	20
Evidence	The essay cites specific evidence from the text to support its analysis.	20
Structure	The essay exhibits a clear, logical structure that includes a clear introduction, thesis statement, and conclusion.	20
Clarity/ Mechanics	The essay's clarity does not suffer due to excessive mechanical, grammatical, or spelling errors.	10
Format	The essay is the correct length and conforms to MLA format including a Works Cited page.	10