ENC 1102

Rhetorical Analysis Essay Rubric

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Introduction:

* Opens with a few sentences that introduce the topic or issue to be discussed, providing context for the argument/analysis and engaging the reader (the “Hook”). For a Rhetorical Analysis essay this should comprise a brief summary of the analyzed article’s central claim(s), perhaps focusing on those aspects of the article which you will be analyzing in your essay.
* Proceeds from general to specific (Inverse Pyramid).
* Concludes in a strong, focused thesis statement (Claim + Reason) that makes a supportable claim, identifies and proposes a solution to a problem, takes a stance on a debatable issue, or offers an interpretation/analysis of a text that will be argued in the essay: (Sample argumentative thesis: “Because the polygraph has not been proven reliable even under controlled conditions, its use by private employers should be banned.”/ Sample Rhetorical Analysis Thesis: “While in his essay “Don’t Blame the Eater” Men’s Health writer David Zinczenko makes a valid point about the role fast food has played in the rise of childhood obesity rates, his argument fails in that it proceeds on a misleading appeal to pathos and is based in several overgeneralizations, as well as overlooks other significant factors such as genetic disorders and the sedentary nature of our technology-driven culture leading to childhood obesity in today’s day and age.” Or “In David Freedman’s essay “Are Genetically Modified Foods Evil,” the author establishes a solid ethos by presenting a fair-minded and well-qualified, unbiased, and fact-based presentation of both sides of the issue of the safety of GM crops; however, his concluding proposal on how to end the dilemma of assuring GM crops’ safety lacks logic (logos) and feasibility, and is unsupported by substantial evidence.”
* While it is perfectly acceptable to view an author’s argument as insubstantial, your judgement of the text and its success or failure to fulfill its purpose must be based in specific, well-cited examples, solid explanation and reasoning, and a careful reading of the text, always handling the author’s viewpoints fairly and with respect in order to show yourself as a fair-minded and trustworthy critic.
* Remember: Whether you agree or disagree with an author’s argument does not matter in writing a rhetorical analysis essay, but it is rather your job as a fair-minded and unbiased reader and critic to perform a *close reading* of a particular aspect of the text to analyze and prove how the components of a text work (or fail to work) in persuading its intended audience of its purpose and the article’s effectiveness (or lack of effectiveness) in achieving its aim (i.e. is the argument valid or not and why). In so doing, be sure to keep in mind all the elements of rhetoric discussed in class and in the readings, i.e.: The Three Rhetorical Appeals: (Ethos, Pathos, Logos) Context, Audience, Purpose, Bias, Language Usage and Style, etc.

Body Paragraphs:

* A topic sentence (a one sentence summary of the paragraph’s main points – alerts the reader to what the remainder of the paragraph will be about) that points back to the thesis as well as toward what is to come in the rest of the paragraph. In a rhetorical analysis/argumentative essay, the topic sentence is usually a secondary claim focusing on one particular aspect of your thesis/argument or the analyzed text. (May be implied)
* *Well integrated* quotations and *specific* examples that support your topic sentence (*Evidence*).
  + Sentences and examples in your body paragraph must support your topic sentence. Sentences that do not support your topic sentence disrupt the *unity* and *coherency* of your paragraph and should be removed or relocated.
  + Body Paragraphs must be well developed and contain sufficient, relevant, concrete, and *specific* examples and reasons to adequately support your topic sentence/stance (claim). In a rhetorical analysis essay your support will generally be taken directly from the analyzed text in the form of quotes and paraphrases that you will then go on to closely interpret and analyze (*close reading*). Moreover, when quoting directly from a textual source, be sure to correctly introduce your examples using appropriate signal phrases (i.e. As John Smith, Harvard University Professor of Food Science, notes in his essay “Obesity and Youth Today”….) as well as cite your source using correct MLA format.
  + Avoid vague examples and “fuzzy,” imprecise, overgeneralized wording (For instance, words such as “good,” “well done,” etc.) in favor of specific, direct reasoning and explanation (i.e. Why is the support “good”? What makes the author’s statements and examples “relevant”? How, *specifically*, do they back up your or the author’s claim, and hence help to persuade (or not persuade) the audience).
* Your interpretation of the examples (*Reasoning*).
* Explains the significance of your examples and how they support your topic sentence and stance/thesis: the thinking process you use to connect the evidence to your claims. (What is their significance to your claim/topic sentence? How do the examples support your argument/stance?)
* Offers your interpretation of your support and explains its relevance to your claim.
* Makes effective use of transitions to link ideas within and between paragraphs (i.e. *coherency*) (See *The Little Seagulls Handbook* pages 26-27 for a list of common transition words), permitting ideas to build off one another in a logical and coherent fashion.
* Makes logical connections between sentences and ideas
* Demonstrates flow and coherency in language usage, as well as an insight into the specific conventions of the genre of academic writing (Including proper grammar, formal tone and diction, smooth and adequate transitions between ideas, etc.)
* Body paragraphs should be unified, coherent, and well developed.
* In a rhetorical analysis essay your support/reasoning must adequately and specifically explain why an author’s argument works to persuade or not persuade its intended audience, using well-reasoned evidence in the form of support taken directly from the text.

Conclusion:

* Restates thesis and main points of essay (though without repeating the exact wording)
* Ties together all the main points of essay and relates them to the essay’s topic
* Does not introduce any new points or examples (support) not previously discussed in body of essay
* Relates your thesis to the overall theme of the text and makes a link outward to a larger issue, discussing its implications or significance to society as a whole
* Offers a recommendation for a course of action or a prediction for the future
* In a rhetorical analysis essay your conclusion will typically restate your thesis and end by explaining what your analysis reveals about the analyzed text.