ENC 1102

Critical Essay Prompt 1/Rhetorical Analysis

Professor Hollis

2/10/2017

Selecting one of the essays we have discussed so far in class (either “Are Engineered Foods Evil” or “It Ain’t Easy Being Bisexual on TV”), perform a rhetorical analysis of approximately 450-500 words (2 pages max/ doubled spaced/12 point font) in length. Your thesis should propose a claim addressing if the text succeeds or fails in its purpose as well as the reasoning for how/why the components (or some aspect) of the argument work to convince or not convince the audience of the author’s claim. (Remember: Thesis = Claim + Reason.) In performing your rhetorical analysis you do not have to focus on the entirety of the text but only perform a close reading examining a particular aspect(s) of the text and its (their) effectiveness in fulfilling the author’s purpose/convincing its intended audience. In the body of your essay you will go on to analyze how well the a key component(s) of the argument work to convince or move (or not convince or move) the essay’s audience, paying specific attention to the rhetorical devices and appeals discussed in class (ethos, logos, pathos; logical and appropriate use of credible/unbiased evidence and reasoning; as well as style, word choice, tone, etc.).

In performing your analysis, ask yourself specific questions, such as: What is the *purpose* of the argument? Who is its intended audience? What is the time and place in which it was written? (ie. The *context* of the argument). What claim is it making? What is its context – i.e. Does it serve a particular interest or does the author seem to have a hidden bias or agenda in making his argument? What appeals or techniques does the author use – ethos, logos, pathos – to support that claim? What is the genre of the argument (informational, definitional, proposal, evaluation, political writing, advertisement, etc.)? Who is making the argument, and what ethos does he create? How does the author establish credibility? If the author appeals to pathos, does he do so fairly? If the author appeals to logos, is his logic rational or is it based on faulty reasoning or overgeneralization? What authorities does the argument rely on and are they creditable? Is the argument rational and feasible? What facts, reasons, examples and evidence does the argument employ as support and are they effectively presented? Or does the author misrepresent his examples or take them out of context in order to fit his stance? How is the argument organized and arranged? How does the language, tone and style (humor, sarcasm, diction, formality, seriousness) of the argument work to convince or turn off its audience?

Perform a close reading of the text in question and use specific examples/quotations in your analysis to demonstrate how the language and rhetoric work to form a competent, coherent (or incompetent, invalid) argument. Your analysis should stay in the 3rd person and be structured effectively in adherence to the guidelines and conventions of scholarly writing as covered in the textbooks and discussed in class (formal diction, effective argument structure, grammatically correct, demonstrates flow and coherency in language usage, etc.). Your essay must be properly cited in MLA format (See relevant pages in *The Little Seagulls Handbook*) and include a one page works-cited as the last page of your paper. For a model of an effective rhetorical analysis see pages 106-111 in your *Everything’s an Argument* textbook or the sample argument handed out in class. 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 analyze and prove how a text works (or fails) to convince its audience and fulfill its purpose (i.e. is the author’s argument valid/effective and why or why not).