Assignment #4: Rhetorical Analysis

In this assignment, you are asked to apply what you have learned about rhetoric to a piece of discourse written by someone else. This exercise will sharpen your critical reading ability and enhance your knowledge of the ways that others use rhetoric.

Choose an editorial or an opinion piece—one you find rhetorically interesting—from a newspaper or magazine, on the Internet, or in one of your textbooks. It could be a position you agree with expressed eloquently; it could be one with which you disagree, but argued with notable strategy. You may, in the alternative, choose a speech that speaks to you rhetorically. Regardless, the author of the work you study should take a position on the issue under discussion. Before proceeding, you must have your text approved by the instructor (me).

The audience for this assignment is your classmates and your instructor. You should not assume that your audience is familiar with the work you have chosen to analyze. Nor should you assume they know anything about the issue that the author raises. So, part of your task will be to briefly review the contents of the work and to suggest why your audience should be interested in the issue and the author’s treatment of it. Simply reviewing the text, however, is not sufficient. In an analysis, you must explain the author’s treatment of the issue at hand. Help your readers see how the argument works.

**Invention:**

By answering the following questions, you will generate material to use in composing your rhetorical analysis. You will likely find that many parts of the text you're analyzing will reveal more than one aspect of its rhetoric. Please use these questions for your argument proposal.

1. **What is the rhetorical situation?** That is, who is the rhetor’s audience? What issue is at stake? For what time and place was the work composed? How did the location and time affect the rhetor’s use of ethos, pathos, and logos? In what ways does the rhetor respond to and/or show awareness of the rhetorical situation?

2. **What is the rhetor’s ethos?** Does the rhetor possess situated ethos in the community for which he or she wrote (you may wish to do some independent research on the author)? What evidence in the text establishes the rhetor as someone who has done his or her homework? What evidence establishes his or her good character and good will? Given the rhetorical situation, how successful is the rhetor in establishing and applying ethos? Consider two kinds of evidence: overt statements and the attitudes implied through tone and style.

3. **Does the rhetor use pathetic appeals?** What values does the rhetor appeal to? What emotions do the appeals trigger? Are the appeals implemented effectively and ethically?
Has the rhetor taken care to avoid using any particular pathetic appeals? Remember that pathos is frequently communicated through descriptive details and the feelings embodied in style and tone.

4. **What claim or proposition does the rhetor advance?** Does this claim address a question of fact? Of definition? Of quality? Of policy? What kinds of logical arguments are employed in support of the claim? Does the rhetor use specific examples to support the argument? How do data and authority contribute to the support? Does the rhetor assume common ground with the audience’s knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs? Might relying on said assumptions have induced the rhetor to omit any logical arguments that might work in a different rhetorical situation?

5. **Can you determine the rhetor's ideological leanings?** Does he or she rely upon any shared values with the audience? If so, what are they? Has he or she left any important assumptions unexamined as far as this issue is concerned?

6. **How is the text arranged?** What are its parts? What is their relation to one another? Is that relationship coherent? How does that structural rhetoric work to develop a response as the reader moves through the parts? Given the rhetorical situation, what effect does arrangement have on the overall argument?

7. **What is the role of style and tone?** Why has the rhetor chosen this particular method of expression? Does it have a good beat? Is it easy to dance to? A style creates a tone—a sense of attitude (ethos) or feeling (pathos), or even a general “atmosphere”—by means of choices made at the level of diction, structure, rhythm, and figures of speech. It can also help to establish associations and subtle links between ideas (logos), or to control the specific sequences, relationships, and emphases through which the rhetor’s actual sentences unfold (structure). Stylistic rhetoric is micro-rhetoric. In analyzing micro-rhetoric, we want to see not only what particular choices a rhetor has made, but also (more importantly), what those choices do to shape the reader’s response.

**Composition:**

Your analysis should help readers understand why you find this text rhetorically interesting. Your invention process will give you much material to consider and select from. You may organize the analysis around one or more of the rhetorical features you have examined. For example, you may want to show how the style and tone work to create pathos appeals, or how the pathos and the logos intertwine, or how the logos depends on ethos to succeed. These are only a few examples. Whatever claims you make about how the text works, always remember to ground them in the rhetorical situation—who is being addressed, when, where, and why.

In general, you must present the claims of your analysis, provide whatever supplementary information about the issue may be necessary for your readers to understand those claims, and marshal the evidence that supports your analysis and its conclusions. The text itself is primary evidence for this analysis; in showing how language affects audiences, you will find that specific text references and quotation are essential.
Remember, your goal is not to see how many times you can use the words “ethos” and “pathos” and “logos” in a single essay. In fact, you need not use these words at all. Your goal should be to demonstrate an understanding of how these appeals function—along with other rhetorical devices—in the context of the argument you’re analyzing.

**Collaboration:**
For this assignment, you will work with a partner through the invention stage. You will then continue your partnership through the composition and revision stages. Each collaborative team must obtain my approval for the text they intend to analyze. Each collaborative team must then meet with me to discuss the text and their analysis strategy. Each team member has an ownership stake in the team’s final product. Thus, each team member will receive the same grade for the team’s paper (barring extraordinary circumstances).

Please save your document as a .doc, .docx, or .pdf file. Use the following protocol to name your file:

`yourteamname-RA`

**Suggested length: As long as it needs to be** (typically 6-8 pages)
- First draft due: 19 April 2019
- Second draft due: 22 April 2019
- Final draft due: 26 April 2019