**WRTG 121 – Visnaw**

**COME TO THE DARK SIDE**

**An Exercise in Rhetorical Appeals**

In this exercise, you will work with a partner to practice using a specific appeal. We’ll be using some of the Star Wars mythology for this exercise; your goal is to use a specific appeal to encourage someone to “join the Dark Side of the Force.” (See below for a little background, if you need it.) Come up with a short pitch for joining the Dark Side that takes no longer than 30-45 seconds when read aloud. You may wish to consult *Understanding Rhetoric* to remind you about appeals, and you are welcome to browse the web to gain more background on the Dark Side of the Force

Your appeal is: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Compose your pitch and be prepared to present it in class.

For the uninitiated in Star Wars universe, the Force is a metaphysical power that allows the user to tap into a number of abilities, such as telekinesis, mental manipulation (e.g., “These are not the droids you’re looking for”), sensing others, and reacting to surroundings even when blinded. The Force has an evil underbelly, however: the Dark Side. Practitioners of the Dark Side are evil folks who use the Force for gaining power and subjugating others. The first and second Star Wars film trilogies chronicle how Anakin Skywalker becomes corrupted by the Dark Side of the Force, becoming the villainous Darth Vader.

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Instruction notes

In preparation for this activity, I have students read *Understanding Rhetoric* 35-63. This reading introduces rhetorical appeals. “Finding The Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic?” by Rebecca Jones (*Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing* Volume 1, 2010) also has a section on appeals.

For a Fast-Write, I have students watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=li7Sofem5WA> (an anti-smoking PSA featuring R2-D2 and C-3PO from Star Wars). They then respond to the prompt: “What appeal(s) that you read about can you identify in this PSA? When/where do they occur?” We discuss their answers as a group; in the process, we define exactly what ethos, logos, and pathos are.

I then pass out the handout printed on the opposite side of this sheet, having already filled in the blank with one of the appeals. Students work in pairs to craft a pitch to “come to the dark side.” After about 20 minutes of composing, each pair presents their pitch to the class. Following the pitch, other students identify what appeal(s) are evident. This discussion is where teachable moments frequently happen, as the pitches often include more appeals than simply the assigned appeal for the exercise. Class discussion allows me to reiterate the differences between each appeal.

The only roadblock I’ve found when using this exercise is that Star Wars is not the universally recognized property that it was in the 1970s-80s-90s. Some students will need a little background to help understand the light/dark side of the Force concept. To help with this, I allow students to browse the web or watch short film clips that they find during the time that they are composing their pitches.