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WRTG596/Lesson Plan

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Visual Rhetoric in WRTG120

Introduction

This lesson gave students the chance to practice the process of analyzing the function of rhetoric in visual artifacts. It was designed with previous scholarly work in mind (Carroll, Foss, and Lunsford), and it allowed students to think about persuasive elements in visual messages aside from the specific appeals learned in the previous project.

The activities in this lesson were designed to help students practice visual rhetorical analysis and supplement their practice with a theoretical framework. They had engaged in some precursory work analyzing visual messages but had not gone into depth about what moves to make when analyzing a visual message. This class involved a brief, introductory discussion, and two activities: first, they analyzed pictures of visual artifacts found around campus, and second, they broke into groups to summarize and paraphrase Andrea Lunsford's chapter, "Analyzing Arguments," in *Writing In Action*.

Timing & Context

This lesson took place in the third unit of the course. The project for this unit was designed to facilitate learning about the ways rhetoric functions in visual media. It called for a detailed visual analysis of an artifact found on campus, a transformation of that artifact to two other mediums (a letter and a visual design of an appropriate mode), and a rhetorical analysis of their transformations. Because this project focused heavily on analysis, it was important to have them practice analysis while engaging with supporting theoretical material.

I shared a Google Doc for the second activity with them fifteen minutes before class. I did this near to the start of class so that the notification email would be at the top of their inbox. This avoided taking time out of the activity for them to search for the notification email. We have worked with Google Docs in class before, and I sent them an email the previous day to let them know they will need their laptops, so they were fully prepared to participate in class.

Description

The class began with students numbering themselves off from one to three, and getting into groups based on number. Then, they discussed the physical location, details, the purpose

and audience, and the effectiveness of the artifact they found on campus for homework. I went around to each table for a few minutes, participating in each discussion briefly. I then asked them to share their thoughts after they were finished with the discussion.

After this, for the first activity, I displayed an image that I found on campus on the projection screen. I had them ask me relevant questions about the image, reminding them of the prompts for the previous discussion. They asked: (1) "Where did you find this image?" and (2) "When did you find this image?" After answering their questions, I asked them to describe the image in detail. They listed all the colors, symbols, pictures, text, fonts, and other details in the image, giving additional regard to aspects of the image designed to attract the attention of the audience. After they described as many of the image's details as they could identify, I asked them to identify any appeals that were evident in the image. In the image I selected (pictured below), they identified two appeals: ethos, and kairos. After each appeal was identified, I asked them to support their claim with evidence from the details of the image. This activity went extremely well. They learned how to identify ethos, pathos, logos, and kairos in the previous unit, so they were able to participate in this activity thoroughly.

For the second activity, I asked them to remain in their groups for the opening discussion and to open Google Docs on their laptops using the notification email in their inbox. I displayed [the Google Doc](#) on the screen from my laptop, and I asked each group to summarize or paraphrase a section of Lunsford's chapter, "Analyzing Arguments," from *Writing In Action*. For this, I gave a brief overview of the differences between summaries and paraphrases; doing this allowed me to introduce them to appropriate ways of engaging with source material, and to interact with theoretical material related to the analysis they have been engaging with so far. They wrote their summaries and paraphrases in the Google Doc, and after a sufficient amount of time had elapsed, I asked them to share what they had learned as a group. This activity also went well. The students stayed on task, and seemed to have an appropriate level of enthusiasm for the activity. I am glad I introduced these activities early, as I had to reiterate the practice of identifying rhetorical appeals many times throughout the unit.

Reflecting on this lesson, there were a few things I would do differently for next time. Firstly, I would choose more argumentative images for the first activity--the images I chose were persuasive, but they were more challenging to analyze without a clear argument or call to action. The purposes of each image were not immediately clear, and because of this, they were difficult to analyze in terms of purpose, audience, ethos, pathos, logos, and kairos. Secondly, I would have students read Lunsford's chapter in advance of class. This way, they would be able to spend more time summarizing and paraphrasing, and less time trying to comprehend the information presented in the text. Overall, the activities were a helpful, in-depth introduction on the process of visual analysis.

Scholarly Support

- Carroll, Laura Bolin. "Backpacks vs. Briefcases: Steps toward Rhetorical Analysis." *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, vol. 1, Parlor Press, 2010, pp. 45-58.
- Foss, Sonja K. "Framing the Study of Visual Rhetoric: Toward a Transformation of Rhetorical Theory." *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, edited by Charles A. Hill and Marguerite Helmers, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004, pp. 303-13, www.comphacker.org/pdfs/335/_Defining_Visual_Rhetorics.pdf. Accessed 6 Nov. 2016.
- Lunsford, Andrea. "Analyzing Arguments." *Writing In Action*, Bedford St. Martin's, 2014, pp.110-122.