

Rhetorical Pedagogy

Primary Suppositions

- the ability to speak and write effectively is not dependent on inborn talent, but rather is a product of learned theory, and repetitive practice.
- A formalized set of tasks performed in repetition will lead to growth in communicative facility.
- Communication always takes place in a cultural context.
- Observation and analysis are necessary skills for effective communication.

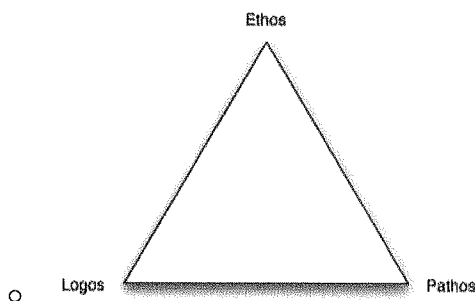
Major Scholars

Sophists – The sophists were a group of teachers of philosophy and rhetoric In Ancient Greece. (4th and 5th century BCE)

- The term sophism originated from Greek *sophistēs*, meaning "wise-ist", one who "does" wisdom, one who makes a business out of wisdom (*sophós* means "wise man")(Wiki).
- (In the modern definition, a sophism is a confusing or illogical argument used for deceiving someone.)
 - believed that human knowledge is both limited and plastic, and that writing should always approach truth as a contingent phenomenon. (Covino, 2000)

Aristotle – a Greek philosopher, a student of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great.

- **The Rhetorical Triangle** – a concept put forth by Aristotle that outlines the trinity of persuasive appeals. It is characterized by; Ethos (ethical appeals), Pathos (emotional appeals), and Logos (logical appeals)



- *Ethos* – How a writer presents themselves
- *Pathos* - How a writer taps into an audience's emotions
- *Logos* - How well the writer uses their own argument and evidence

Petrus Ramus - (1515 – August 26, 1572), French humanist, logician, and educational reformer. Wrote : *Arguments in Rhetoric Against Quintilian* (1549)

- Challenged the longstanding identification of rhetoric with 5 canons (invention, Arrangement, Style, Memory, Delivery)

- Believed only Style and delivery to be proper to rhetoric

Kenneth Duva Burke - (May 5, 1897 – November 19, 1993) was a major American literary theorist and philosopher. Burke's primary interests were in rhetoric and aesthetics.

- Defines rhetoric as “the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols.
- Form is : “the arousal and fulfillment of desires”
 - Developed a Pentad: - set of relationships that inform all symbolic action.
 - Act, Agent, Scene, Agency, Purpose
 - Rhetorical Invention (according to Burke)
 - The process of exploiting the dialogical relationship among ideas, attitudes, and beliefs.

Herbert Marshall McLuhan, - (July 21, 1911 – December 31, 1980) known for coining the expressions "the medium is the message"... His assertions reinforced the notion of context as an important factor in successful communication.

- Wrote the influential book; Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, 1964
 - “The form of a medium embeds itself in the message, creating a symbiotic relationship by which the medium influences how the message is perceived, creating subtle change over time.” (McLuhan ,1964)
 - “Different media invite different degrees of participation on the part of a person who chooses to consume a medium.” (McLuhan ,1964)

Example Assignment (see appendix)

This sample assignment is reflective of rhetorical pedagogy in that it reflects the elements of the rhetorical triangle. First, it requires the student to consider his/her audience and their context relevant to the larger cultural environment reflecting Aristotle’s “Pathos”. Second, it asks the student to present to their views by constructing an argument, reflecting “Ethos”. And lastly, reflecting “Logos” the assignment asks the student to support their argument with references and a well constructed logical argument.

(the hypothetical class has been reading and discussing the role of aesthetics in art and culture)

Example classroom assignment

Rhetoric and the Subjectivity of Aesthetics:

Persuasion in Dialogue - tools for communicating in a post-modern world

Audience Description Due: Oct. 15th , Paper Due: Oct 22nd , 2008

50 points

The notion of what constitutes beauty has been the source of great debate since the time of Plato. Take a moment to think about what the term “beauty” means to you. Can you define it? Describe it? Can you think of an exception to it?

For your assignment: Consider the following quote by British writer Walter Pater and follow the directions below:

- *Beauty, like all other qualities presented to human experience, is relative; and the definition of it becomes unmeaning and useless in proportion to its abstractness. To define beauty not in the most abstract, but in the most concrete terms possible, not to find a universal formula for it, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of aesthetics.- Walter Pater*

1.) Identify a target audience and write a few sentences describing your chosen audience. (Due:10/15)

- *Is it this class? A letter to the editor of a beauty magazine? A academic journal?*
- *Consider for example: How old is your audience? What significant political/ethical issues surround your audience? What is the level of education your audience possesses?*

2.) Identify and comment on 2 quotes from relevant scholars. (use correct MLA citation)

- *If you are targeting a popular contemporary audience, look for scholars who comment on such contexts (i.e art critics, newspaper reporters). If considering an academic journal, look for scholars who regularly contribute to such publications (i.e. published scholars in a pertaining field – i.e. Journal of Art and Aesthetics).*

3.) Think about what YOU agree/disagree with about these 2 quotes.

4.) in 3-4 pages, construct a persuasive argument that first defines your stance on Walter Pater’s quote, and then supports your assertion.

- *Do you agree or disagree with him? Why? What do you think he means when he states that the “definition of (beauty) becomes unmeaning and useless”? Do you think that aesthetics are as relative as he says? How does one come to agree on what is beautiful and what is not, and why?*

Grading:

15pts. Clear thesis statement (your stance on Aesthetics as it pertains to the Pater’s quote)

10pts. Clear communication of your assertion

10pts. Interpretation of chosen quotes, logical integration of them into your argument.

10pts. Correct MLA citation, spelling and grammar

5pts. Description of audience