

## **Basic Questions for Rhetorical Analysis (adapted from Silva Rhetoricae and the Morphing Textbook)**

### **What is the rhetorical situation?**

- \* What occasion gives rise to the need or opportunity for persuasion?

### **Who is the author/speaker?**

- \* How does he or she establish ethos (personal credibility)?
- \* Does he/she come across as knowledgeable? fair?
- \* Does the speaker's reputation convey a certain authority?

### **What is his/her intention in speaking?**

- \* To attack or defend?
- \* To exhort or dissuade from certain action?
- \* To praise or blame?
- \* To teach, to delight, or to persuade?

### **Who makes up the audience?**

- \* Who is the intended audience?
- \* What values do the audience hold that the author or speaker appeals to?
- \* Who have been or might be secondary audiences?
- \* What beliefs does the author assume the audience shares with him or her? Where and how does the author make these assumptions explicit? Where does he/she imply them?

### **What is the content of the message?**

- \* Can you summarize the main idea?
- \* What are the principal lines of reasoning or kinds of arguments used?
- \* What topics of invention are employed?

### **What appeals does the author use?**

- \*Pathos: Appeal to Emotion  
Does the author use examples or language that is designed to stir up feelings of compassion, fear, anger, etc. in the audience? Consider whether this type of persuasion is fair and also whether it's effective.
- \*Logos: Appeal to Logic  
Does the author make use of facts and figures, the testimony of witnesses or experts, or some other logic-based argument?
- \*Ethos: Appeal to Ethics (Author's Credibility)  
Is the author someone who knows his or her stuff? Does she/he associate herself/himself in some way with other authorities on the subject? Does the author have some authority in her/his own right? How does the author turn that authority into an advantage?
- \*Mythos: Appeal to Tradition  
Is the author trying to convince you that "that's just the way we do it"? That violating tradition with new thinking or any departure in behavior is just not appropriate? Is that an effective strategy?

### **What is the form in which it is conveyed?**

- \* What is the structure of the communication; how is it arranged?
- \* What oral or literary genre is it following?
- \* What figures of speech (schemes and tropes) are used?
- \* What kind of style and tone is used and for what purpose?

### **How do form and content correspond?**

- \* Does the form complement the content?
- \* What effect could the form have, and does this aid or hinder the author's intention?

### **Does the message/speech/text succeed in fulfilling the author's or speaker's intentions?**

- \* For whom?
- \* Does the author/speaker effectively fit his/her message to the circumstances, times, and audience?
- \* Can you identify the responses of historical or contemporary audiences?