

## Essay # 3 A Persuasive Essay, Open Topic

### Reader-Ready Revision, Due SES #13

- Bring 4 copies for Workshop

### Mandatory Revision, Due SES #14

- This version includes, Postwrite and Acknowledgments
- EMAIL me a copy

### Optional Revision, Due SES #22

- EMAIL me a copy - no late essays accepted or graded
- Must have at least 250 additional words in **boldface** type (obviously **boldface all new words**)
- You must have consulted the Writing Center about this Optional Revision
- Must have a new Postwrite with 2 headings (“What I Changed” and “What I Learned About Rhetoric by Revising This Essay”)
- Must have a new Writing Center Acknowledgement

**Length:** 1250-1500 total words (5-6 double-spaced pages) -- it's okay if the essay exceeds 1500 words so long as the extra words convey new ideas or information (as opposed to be the result of a wordy style)

**Your Task:** **Write a persuasive essay.** It might be: an analysis of a speech; an analysis of a text; a genre analysis; an argument on some controversy that is appropriate to members of 21W.747 (giving both sides); an argument with a text; a satire; a Platonic dialogue —the only requirements are:

1. it must be persuasive
2. it must demonstrate your command of ethos, pathos, logos, style, and at least an implicit knowledge of ethics
3. it must demonstrate your rhetorical ability (after all, this is your last chance to showcase what you have learned)
4. it must be directed at us (members of this class and me), your audience
  - a. any needs or values etc. that you appeal to have to be those that you believe your classmates and I have
  - b. you must establish kairos (why should we members of this 21W.747 class care about this topic at this particular time)

**Your Audience:** Members of the class and me. As always, assume that some of us are initially skeptical about your thesis and major points.

**Goal:** To demonstrate your understanding of rhetoric and ethics by using the rhetorical appeals and techniques (ethos, pathos, logos, style) that we've encountered to convince your readers that your ideas are valid.

## Analysis of a Speech or Text

**Task:** Find a text that is worth close rhetorical analysis—if in doubt, check with me about it ahead of time. Our web site has several suitable texts that have not been assigned for class.

- You might analyze one
  - e.g., Obama’s speech
- or bounce compare and contrast the arguments of two
  - democratic style—Aune, Beadsley, Ivie, Merciera, and O’Gorman have different visions
  - the rhetorical situation—Bitzer, Consigny, and Vatz disagree
  - If you select a text assigned for this class, you must go significantly beyond what we said in class in order to score higher than a “C”—if in doubt about what was said in class, select a text not assigned for class.

**Details:** Write a coherent, thoughtful, and thorough analysis either

- of **1 (one)** unit of analysis taken from the Rhetoric Tool Chest (ethos, logos, pathos, figurative language, etc.).
- **OR** of one significant passage in the text
- Your essay should follow the directions and headings that were given for Essay #1, the CRA.

## Genre Analysis

**Task:**

1. Select (or create) a **genre** (e.g., sonnets, horror movies, superhero comics, sitcoms, Cubist paintings, Facebook pages, Art Deco buildings). Select 3-5 examples of the genre to write about. Your essay must use Foss’s concepts (situational requirements, stylistic and substantive characteristics) and use the format she recommends.
  - a. If it is pre-existing genre, use our library’s Vera-Multi-Search: Articles to locate an article that you can quote for a definition of the genre and its characteristics
  - b. If you are creating a genre (might be more difficult to do than you think), define this particular genre, identifying the major similarities and characteristics that justify its being called a “genre”
    - i. if you are creating your own genre (or can’t find a satisfactory pre-existing definition), use the criteria that we have seen in class as a way of defining and explaining your genre
  - c. Once the genre has been defined, use analysis to explore the major elements that make one of the texts you’ve chosen individual (unique).
    - i. For example, after visiting Great Britain, Our-Friend returns and tells us there is a genre called “English castles.” To define the genre, Our-Friend explains in depth what the characteristics of “English castles” are (e.g., moats, towers and battlements, made of stone, big, built for defense). Then we ask, “Okay, so once you’ve seen one example of this genre *English castles*, why bother to go see any other examples? Aren’t they all the same?” Our-Friend answers by analyzing Warwick Castle.
  - d. As always, **more about less** is the goal when it comes to differentiating the individual text from the genre).
  - e. Here’s an example (for sake of illustration, let’s say you are looking at **blogs** as a genre):

- i. think of a genre that is close to (similar to) blogs (e.g., personal essays, or journals, or diaries, or letters to the editor, or newspaper opinion columnists—those are the ones that come to my mind, but you might think of others)
- ii. pick the one that seems closest to blogs (or perhaps, to the subgenre of blogs that you are investigating)
- iii. Ask yourself, “What makes a blog different from x” (for the sake of illustration, I’ll say “What makes blogs different from personal essays)?
- iv. Then you would say something like “Although personal essays and blogs share characteristics A, B and C, blogs differ from personal essays because they have characteristics F and W.” That would do it.
- v. Having established the genre of blogs, then focus on one blog and show how it both fulfills the criteria of “blog” and also transcends the genre in some way
- vi. As far as citation is concerned, treat blogs the way MLA treats blogs (here’s an example):

Miller, Carolyn R. and Dawn Shepherd. Blogging as Social Action: A Genre Analysis of the Weblog.” *Into the Blogosphere*. [http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogosphere/blogging\\_as\\_social\\_action.html](http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogosphere/blogging_as_social_action.html). Web. 1 May 2009.

- Where 1 May 2009 is the date I accessed it. Some blogs have a post date (which, if this blog had one, would go right after *Into the Blogosphere*).

2. Follow the structure used by Sharon M. Varallo in her essay on family photographs (at the end of Foss’ essay on Genre). Use headings (Varallo’s headings are fine, but you might create different headings, depending on the genre).
3. Here are some possible genres:
  - a. 3-5 different people’s pages from Facebook or from MySpace (to make it a believable genre, those 3-5 people should have some significant criteria in common—e.g., age, occupation)
  - b. any kind of website genre (e.g., 3-5 writing center websites, university websites, MIT department websites, celebrity websites)
  - c. 3-5 texts for a genre of a type of visuals—e.g., photographs, paintings, buildings
  - d. 3-5 texts for a genre of speeches, or of graphic novels, or of movies, or music, or poems (e.g., sonnets, or poems about love, poems about war)
  - e. One of the genres we’ve examined (commencement addresses, satire, presidential inaugurals)—use what we developed in class to set the context
  - f. whatever genre interests you
  - g. Assume that some members of your audience are not familiar with the genre, so you need to define it clearly and fully.

**Task-specific Goals:**

- To use what you have learned this semester to write a rhetorically sophisticated essay
- To describe a genre (either a genre that is already acknowledged as existing or creating your own)
- To prove that a particular text both belongs to that genre but also is an individual within that genre

## Argument on a Controversy

**Your Task:** Write a **coherent persuasive essay** on a controversial topic that is appropriate for us (the members of 21W.747)—i.e., you need to establish believable kairos for us; if you cannot, select another topic. It must **explicitly** use ethical concepts as well as appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos to make a case that your position is valid. A **controversy** is anything about which knowledgeable, intelligent people of goodwill can disagree. An argument gives the best points of the opposition (and either refutes or concedes them) as well as building a case for your position.

**Topics:** Two topics are prohibited—stem cell research and cloning.

## Argument with a Text

**Your Task:** Select an essay whose position you disagree with. Write an argument against that text's position, answering that text's major points and building a case of your own.

### A Satire

**Details:** Satire and humor can be very persuasive—or they can bomb out big time. For these two forms, consult with me about your topic.

### Platonic Dialogue

**Details:** This form can be a cool way to make an argument. For it work effectively for us, though, **both speakers should have good points** (unlike “The Allegory of the Cave” which is somewhat unusual in Plato’s canon in that Glaucon is more an admiring listener rather than an adversary). Think of this approach as giving the pro arguments to speaker A and the con arguments to speaker B and then having them speak.

## Some Other Approach

**Task:** If you have some other approach you'd like to take, come see me and we'll discuss it.

## Requirements for all Essays

**Meaningful titles** (at least in an academic setting and in this class) have a colon and a subtitle. For example,

- King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”: A Critical Rhetorical Analysis
- Walking Away from Omelas: The Rhetoric of Happiness

**A Postwrite** (100-250 words) is required for each Mandatory Revision and for each Optional Revision. It is your opportunity as a rhetor to explain to me what rhetorical approaches, strategies, and techniques you incorporated into your essay in order to make it persuasive. It is the way you demonstrate a conscious understanding of the art of rhetoric and to explain your conception of your audience’s beginning attitudes towards your topic, your thesis, and yourself as rhetor. It must use these boldfaced headings:

- **My Thesis**
  - Copy and paste your thesis statement here
- **My Audience**
  - Before they read your essay, what were your audience’s probable attitudes towards your topic and your thesis? What makes you think so?

- Before they read your essay, what was their attitude toward you as rhetor? You need to be specific here—you need to seriously consider the role(s) you have played in class discussions, workshops, etc. Which of your beliefs have you actively expressed? How “visible” have you been so far in class? Will you need to “repair” your ethos or simply build on it?
- Specifically explain how you dealt with their attitudes in your essay.
- **How I used Ethos (Aristotle)**
  - What ethos were you trying to project?
  - Give a specific list of things you did to enhance your ethos
  - e.g., how did you establish your sagacity (wisdom, expertise), goodwill (having concern for audience’s survival and growth needs), character (moral excellence, credibility, justice, self-control, common sense, etc.)?
- **How I used Pathos**
  - What specific emotions were you trying to invoke in your audience?
  - A la Aristotle--What specific emotions did you try to stir or change—anger into calm, or calm into anger, revenge into mercy or mercy into revenge, etc.?
  - Give a specific list of things you did to appeal to your audience’s emotions
- **How I used Logos**
  - List specific places where you used logos
  - What types of evidence did you use?
- **How I used Style**
  - List specific stylistic things that you did

**Workshop Acknowledgements:** (this section is included only in the Mandatory Revision). Here you tell me explicitly who gave what good advice, who didn’t give good advice, etc. Here is a brief sample:

- Student X advised me to use more quotations to prove my points. blah blah
- Student Y pointed out that...etc.
- Student W didn’t really give any useful advice

**Writing Center Acknowledgements** (this section is included only in the Mandatory Revision). If you didn’t consult with the Center, simply say “Did not consult” under this heading. If you did consult with the Center, tell me explicitly who you worked with in the Center and what advice she/he gave. Here is a brief example:

- Amanda asked me questions that helped me see some other implications of the rhetor’s use of..., particularly x and y . She also....
- Although I asked Eric to help with my organization, all he focused on was grammar, so he wasn’t really much help.

Note: for both Workshop and Writing Center Acknowledgements, it is important to say who was not helpful as well as saying who was helpful.

**Documentation Format:**

- Quotations should be introduced and then commented upon. For each quotation or reference to a text, use MLA in-text citations
  - According to Doe, “blah blah” (34).
  - Supporting this idea is “blah blah” (Doe 34).
- At the end of your essay, you need a **Works Cited**: here you list the texts you used in your essay; and list the sources alphabetically by author’s last name.

So the 1<sup>st</sup> page of your all versions of your essay (RRR and Mandatory Revision and Optional Revision) should look like this:

**Your Name + email address**

**Date**

**A Meaningful Title: A Meaningful Subtitle**

Then *skip 2 lines* and start your essay.

After the last sentence of your essay, skip 3 lines and then give Works Cited, etc. Here is what the **last page** of the Mandatory Revision looks like this:

Last sentences of your essay Blah blah.

**Works Cited**

Blah blah

**Workshop Acknowledgement:** blah blah

**Writing Center Acknowledgement:** blah blah

**Postwrite:** blah blah

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