

Use: You draft your essay, synthesizing the information you learned from sources with your own ideas and insights. As you write, you discover more questions that you need to answer, especially about the relationship between contemporary environmental concerns and zombie literature/film.

Access: You do a more targeted search using Academic Search Premier and find two or three more articles that address these questions. You also schedule an appointment with your teacher for your Environmental Issues class to find out whether she can help you answer your newly discovered questions. You use this new information to strengthen your essay.

Understand: You've now written a researched essay that you're proud of, and you also have a deeper understanding of zombies that will make you even better appreciate the next episode of *The Walking Dead*!"

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



1. When you are curious about something, what sources do you turn to for information? What are some benefits/disadvantages of these sources?
2. After reading this chapter, how would you define "information literacy"?
3. How comfortable do you feel searching for information: For personal purposes? For academic research purposes? What's different about searching for personal or academic research purposes?
4. Can you recall a moment when you were NOT able to find information you needed? Describe. Where did you turn for help?
5. Can you recall a moment when you were very successful finding information? Describe. What made your search successful?
6. How do you know when you have found the information you need? How do you decide what information to trust?

Chapter 4

Rhetoric and Rhetorical Analysis—Words (and More) at Work

In this chapter, you'll read about rhetoric. Not the empty kind of inflated or misleading language that we sometimes associate with politicians, but both the practice and study of how people communicate in order to achieve their specific purposes. After all, rhetoric puts the "R" in PWR, so it's important to understand what it is and how it works.

What Is Rhetoric?

People tend to use the word rhetoric pejoratively. It is often preceded by adjectives like *empty* or *hollow*. If someone other than a classmate or your instructor in this class makes a comment about your rhetoric, chances are he or she is not giving you a compliment. Politicians use the word *rhetoric* a lot. When they criticize their opponents' speeches, they almost inevitably use the word *rhetoric* to describe what they consider shallow, insincere, or manipulative language. For example, during the 2012 presidential campaign, the Obama campaign criticized Mitt Romney's views on foreign policy, noting, "This is somebody who leads with chest-pounding rhetoric." Similarly, Republican Vice Presidential candidate Paul Ryan told members of the conservative Heritage Foundation, "The president has opted for divisive rhetoric and the broken politics of the past." The assumption in both of these cases is that rhetoric is something misleading, irrelevant, and disconnected from reality.

But is rhetoric always such a bad thing? Should this course be re-titled First-Year Writing and Insincere Manipulation? Or can we use rhetoric to mean something else, something more practical and worthwhile? In the academic world and in everyday life, the answer is a resounding yes.

So what is rhetoric? Rhetoric is the art of persuasion. In this sense, it has a rich history that dates back to the ancient Greeks. For Aristotle, rhetoric involved identifying and using “the available means of persuasion” in a given situation. In his day, rhetoric referred to speeches, not written texts. Today, even when we have more means of persuasion available to us—including written texts and various forms of technology—we can still think of rhetoric as the art of persuasion.

But what does “the art of persuasion” mean? Basically it means that if you want to persuade people to change their views or take

“Rhetoric is the art, practice, and study of human communication.”

— Andrea Lunsford

action, you need to adjust your language to suit the occasion. Whether you’re writing an academic essay or an e-mail, a cover letter or a love letter, the choices you make about language will depend on your rhetorical situation—your purpose, audience, and context. Every rhetorical situation is unique, so you can’t rely on simple formulas. You can, however, pay attention to the rhetorical conventions of particular genres. These conventions are ways of composing—sometimes called moves or gestures—that audiences have come to expect in certain circumstances. Usually it’s wise to follow these conventions. If you don’t, your audience may consider you naïve and dismiss your argument. If you were to write an academic essay using the conventions of a love letter—informal language, personal anecdotes, and a very personal tone, for example—you would probably not have much luck persuading your instructor or wider audience of your argument. And if you were to write a love letter using a distant, objective tone with works cited full of scholarly sources, your significant other would probably think you were strange. The art of persuasion, therefore, demands that you respond to each rhetorical situation differently. Every time you speak or write, the degree to which you are successful depends on your attendance to the rhetorical situation, that is, the extent to which you account for purpose, audience, and context.

Purpose

Whether you’re writing a grocery list or an annotated bibliography, you always have a purpose. Often writers have more than one purpose. Consider, for example, the website Best Food Nation (www.bestfoodnation.com). Created in 2006 (and since gone dark) by a group of associations including the American Meat Institute and the Cattlemen’s Beef Board, the website summarized its purpose on the homepage:

inform
convince
move to action (reform)
explore subject/
alternative arguments

BestFoodNation.com offers the facts about the U.S. food supply, which is among the safest, most affordable and most abundant food supplies in the world. The food and hospitality industries have joined together to tell our story; the positive impact made by each participant along the chain, to separate fact from fiction, and to set the record straight about Best Food Nation.

Here we see multiple purposes—to provide “facts,” “to tell our story,” and “to set the record straight.” These purposes overlap, creating a fairly complex picture of what the website is trying to accomplish. On the one hand, a central purpose seems to be to defend the American food industry from criticism and misrepresentation. On the other hand, the site seeks to present the industry in a positive light without sounding defensive. The website’s tagline makes clear its emphasis on the positive: “A Celebration of Our Safe, Abundant, Affordable Food System.” Of course, some visitors to the site may find this approach reassuring and persuasive, while others may find it dubious and unconvincing. This leads us to another key element of any rhetorical situation—audience.

Audience

To whom are you writing? This question lies at the heart of rhetoric, and the answer is not always straightforward. To understand an audience, you often need to consider factors such as age, gender, race, class, political affiliation, and educational level. The best writers adjust their writing according to an audience. Often writing assignments come with specific guidelines regarding audience, as your writing instructor may have you adapt your rhetoric for a range of possible audiences. If you’re writing a letter to the editor of the *CU Independent*, your audience is other University of Colorado students, staff, and faculty. If you’re composing a report on the social psychology experiment you’ve conducted, your audience is the psychology scholarly community. For both of these examples, you’ll make different style choices through word choice, tone, sentence structure, and sentence length, as well as different substantive choices through the arguments, examples, and supporting evidence you choose.

“[Rhetoric] is concerned primarily with a creative process that includes all of the choices a writer makes from his earliest tentative explorations of a problem . . . through choices in arrangement and strategy for a particular audience, to the final editing of a final draft.”

— Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike

If your PWR instructor doesn't specify an audience for a particular writing assignment, this is a great question to ask!

Among composition scholars, there's controversy about where in the writing process (brainstorming? researching? drafting? revising?) considerations of audience should be introduced. Most scholars agree that thinking about the audience should start early in the writing

process. However, composition scholar Peter Elbow argues that some student writers are so focused on a potentially judgmental audience (such as an intimidating instructor!) that they shut down. As a solution, particularly in the early stages of writing, Elbow advocates freewriting—writing nonstop whatever comes to mind about the subject at hand, free of judgmental filters from oneself or others. Freewriting or fastwriting are useful tools—many students don't realize how productive and generative they can be—but considering your audience is best introduced as early as possible into the writing process.

Digital Media allows for sophisticated ways to interact with an audience. For example, the Blue Marbles Project created by Wallace J. Nichols, a marine biologist, asks visitors to the site to give away blue marbles as signs of gratitude (www.wallacejnichols.org/130/blue-marbles.html). The goal is to have a blue marble pass through every hand on earth! Nichols contends that the project, with its message of gratitude for our “beautiful, fragile, planet” will make participants in the game more aware of, and supportive of, conservation efforts. While environmentalism can often be a divisive issue, the website's design attempts to undermine partisanship. Dozens of portraits greet visitors to the site, showing people from all over the world, of all different ages, holding up their tokens of gratitude. Nichols explains that he debated using a more elaborate website—with maps tracking GPS-equipped marbles—but opted instead to create a forum for participants to share their stories. Rhetorically, Nichols does not cater his message to a specific audience, but invites us to join an ever-expanding audience—a community of participants—by playing the game.

Context

Every act of persuasion has a context. That is, it exists within a particular set of social, cultural, historical, and political circumstances, not in a vacuum. These circumstances inform an argument and influence its reception. For the Best Food Nation site, one of the main elements of context, alluded to in the site's

very title, is investigative journalist Eric Schlosser's best-selling book *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the American Meal*, the paperback version of which came out in 2005. In his book, Schlosser criticizes the fast-food industry for failing to protect consumers from dangers such as E. coli. “Again and again,” he writes, “efforts to prevent the sale of tainted ground beef have been thwarted by meat industry lobbyists and their allies in Congress. The federal government has the legal authority to recall a defective toaster oven or stuffed animal—but still lacks the power to recall tons of contaminated, potentially lethal meat” (Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* 9). *Fast Food Nation* was not the only popular critique of fast food and the U.S. food industry that serves as context for Best Food Nation's rhetoric. Morgan Spurlock's critically and commercially successful 2004 documentary, *Supersize Me!*, chronicled his thirty-day McDonald's-only diet. Given this specific cultural and historical landscape, or context, the creators of the Best Food Nation website presumably felt the need to take action, to assuage public fears and to reassure consumers.

The medium of writing represents of significant part of the rhetorical context. We discussed how the Blue Marbles Project uses the internet to reach a global audience, but chose to keep the actual web interface as simple as possible. In contrast, The Johnny Cash Project (www.thejohnnycashproject.com) uses a complex interface only available through digital media. However, it does so for the same purpose—to engage the audience in active participation. Johnny Cash was a legendary country singer and cultural icon. Shortly after his death, his record label released the song “Ain't No Grave” and collaborated with digital designers to allow Cash's fans to create the video. They released images for the video on line at a much slower frame rate than usual. Fans from around the world animated the gaps with their own images of what the song (and Cash's life and music) evoked for them. Everyone who contributed to the animation was able to post a reflection on Cash in tribute to his memory. The resulting video is remarkable for its effectiveness. Even if we didn't know the way it was created, it would stand on its own as a haunting, elegiac visual companion to the song. But understanding the context of the video (the website engaged a worldwide audience in the creative process) allows us to see this as a genuinely amazing feat of both technology and rhetoric.

Whatever you think of the sites' visual appeal, purposes, and contexts, they also use what ancient rhetoricians like Aristotle called rhetorical appeals.

Rhetorical Appeals

Ethos

Ethos refers to the credibility and character of the writer. Although it is called the ethical appeal, ethos doesn't refer to ethics per se. Rather, it has to do with how credible the writer appears to be in the eyes (or ears) of the audience. Ethos often depends on the writer's relationship to the topic—does the writer have academic or professional expertise that relates to the topic? Does he have personal experience with the topic? Is she somehow involved in an organization that researches the topic? Is he being paid to espouse a particular viewpoint on the topic? A key question to ask when you are considering ethos is, "What do I know about the person or group that produced this text and how does this affect the way I view it?"

For an academic essay, your ethos as the writer often depends greatly on the credibility of your sources. If your evidence consists of random blog posts and personal websites that you found by conducting a simple Google search, readers will probably not find your argument as persuasive as they would if you cited scholarly sources written by acknowledged experts.

Above, we discussed the Blue Marbles Project and its attempt to create space for a remarkably broad audience (literally everyone on Earth). Of course, some visitors might be skeptical of the project, finding it too sentimental or gimmicky. Nichols attempts to preempt such reactions by evoking the authority of science: "Born one day in 2009, the wildly popular, absurdly simple, neuroscience-based initiative of marine biologist Dr. Wallace J. Nichols, has shared blue marbles around the world with millions of people." What might seem like a sentimental gimmick is in fact based on neuroscience and started by a biologist, lending rational credibility to the game. But it doesn't stop there. The website complements the photos of participants with a list of the many professions and famous individuals who have participated in the game: "Rock stars, presidents, kids, scientists, artists, explorers, eco-celebrities, teachers, business leaders...even the Dalai Lama and the Pope have received blue marbles and gotten their Blue Mind on!" The site relies on the authority of science and an already-established group of participants to strengthen its ethos.

Careless mistakes can wreck an otherwise solid ethos. When you apply for a job, for example, make sure that your cover letter is flawless, because busy employers will often toss your application if they find so much as a typo or a misspelled name. The same is

true, more or less, with academic writing. Even if poor grammar doesn't interfere with your instructor's ability to comprehend your writing, it still hurts your ethos and therefore the overall strength of your argument. To some readers, the misused semicolon in the quotation from www.bestfoodnation.com would be enough to make them suspect incompetence and dismiss the site altogether ("The food and hospitality industries have joined together to tell our story; the positive impact made by each participant along the chain, to separate fact from fiction, and to set the record straight about Best Food Nation"). Such visitors might think, "If I can't even trust these people to use punctuation correctly, how can I trust what they have to say?"

Other visitors might balk at the site's inclusion of a press release by the American Council on Science and Health, a prestigious- and independent-sounding organization that, according to Source Watch (www.sourcewatch.org), "has taken a strong public position against the dangers of tobacco" but that "takes a generally apologetic stance regarding virtually every other health and environmental hazard produced by modern industry, accepting corporate funding from Coca-Cola, Kellogg, General Mills, Pepsico, and the American Beverage Association, among others."

Three Rhetorical Appeals

Ethos: appeal to character

Pathos: appeal to emotions

Logos: appeal to reason

Pathos

Pathos is the author's appeal to an audience's emotions, beliefs, or values. Known as the emotional appeal, pathos can include anything from a moving personal narrative, to a particular poetic rhythm, to the invocation of a deeply held cultural value. If you were to write an essay arguing in favor of increased funding for stem-cell research, you could appeal to readers' emotions by focusing on specific examples of children, respected celebrities, or even your own loved ones who are affected by diseases that scientists hope stem-cell research may one day cure.

When we think of pathos in texts that involve more than written language, we might think of a person's sympathetic tone of voice, the use of humor, a piece of sentimental music, or a powerful image that holds us under its spell. Both the Blue Marbles Project and The Johnny Cash Project evoke pathos in very straightforward ways. Nichols explicitly asserts the importance of gratitude in motivating people to become engaged in environmental conservation. The Johnny Cash Project provides an outlet for Cash's fans to express grief and admiration.

As it turns out, Best Food Nation used several of these elements in appealing to visitors' emotions. For example, it included a collection of multimedia profiles of people involved in the food industry—people whom the site referred to as "Friendly Faces." Short videos featured of likeable ranchers, farmers, and other workers talking about their kids, their "agricultural heritage," and their commitment to food safety, animal welfare, and nutrition. These narratives about family values and family farms help viewers identify with and sympathize with these individuals.

Rhetorically, this emphasis on individuals and their families not only appeals to viewers' emotions but also serves to divert attention from systematic critiques of U.S. food production. The website's use of pathos seems like an attempt to humanize the food industry in the eyes of an increasingly skeptical public, to shift the focus from corporations to individuals. Taken as a whole, the video profiles seem to say, "You may have read or heard some bad things about the food industry, but we *are* the food industry." The implication is that if you criticize the industry, you criticize the people behind the industry—a highly questionable assumption. As Schlosser commented in a speech at Princeton University in 2006, "It's not like there are half a dozen bad guys, and if we deal with them everything's going to be all right." Referring to the head of McDonald's Corporate Social Responsibility, Schlosser remarked, "He may be a *really* nice guy. He may be a really nice guy, but it's not about him. It's about a system that rewards cheapness, efficiency and speed that has a very narrow measure of what's efficient and that allows companies like his to impose their business costs on the rest of us" (Schlosser, "Moving Beyond"). Whether you consider the website's emotional appeals endearing or cunning, there is no doubt that they are rhetorically powerful.

Logos

Logos, also called the logical appeal, refers to the use of logic and reasoning in order to persuade. If you write an essay arguing that television is not the mind-numbing waste of time that critics dismiss it as, you would need to explain your reasoning. *New Yorker* writer Malcolm Gladwell does this well in a review of Stephen Johnson's book *Everything Bad Is Good for You*. To make the point that TV has become more intellectually demanding over the years, Gladwell writes:

A typical episode of "Starsky and Hutch," in the nineteen-seventies, followed an essentially linear path: two characters, engaged in a single story line, moving

toward a decisive conclusion. To watch an episode of "Dallas" today is to be stunned by its glacial pace—by the arduous attempts to establish social relationships, by the excruciating simplicity of the plotline, by how obvious it was. A single episode of "The Sopranos," by contrast, might follow five narrative threads, involving a dozen characters who weave in and out of the plot. Modern television also requires the viewer to do a lot of what Johnson calls "filling in," as in a "Seinfeld" episode that subtly parodies the Kennedy assassination conspiracists, or a typical "Simpsons" episode, which may contain numerous allusions to politics or cinema or pop culture. The extraordinary amount of money now being made in the television aftermarket—DVD sales and syndication—means that the creators of television shows now have an incentive to make programming that can sustain two or three or four viewings.

Notice that the reasoning in this quotation doesn't rely on statistics. Sometimes people assume that only "hard facts" will persuade an audience, but logos need not include numbers to be rhetorically successful.

However, particularly in academic writing, "the facts" are often invoked as a form of logical persuasion. (It's helpful to remember that facts and statistics can be presented in a number of different ways—which may result in very different interpretations.) An appeal to logos might also include offering a persuasive definition of a particular word or phrase, making a comparison, or using a "cause and effect" approach to explaining the topic. Logos was Aristotle's favorite rhetorical appeal, and he studied its effects through both inductive and deductive reasoning. These are just a few strategies for appealing to an audience through logic.

Overlapping Appeals and Rhetorical Strategies

Ethos, pathos, and logos often overlap in different combinations. Both The Blue Marbles Project and The Johnny Cash Project rely on pathos and ethos, and they overlap fairly clearly. The Blue Marbles Project evokes gratitude and relies on the ethos of scientists to argue for the significance of the game. And it does so to inspire people to become informed, to seek out the logos. Nichols goes so far as to claim that emotions and scientific knowledge should go hand-in-hand. He complained in a tweet, "Young scientists are told to leave their emotions at the door. As older scientists, we're letting them in."

The connection of logos to ethos and pathos plays a less polemical role in The Johnny Cash Project. But we can look at the project itself as a kind of evidence: The global reach of Cash's music attests to his life. The video itself, created by fans, confirms the spiritual undertones of the song's lyrics about living after death. "There ain't no grave that can hold my body down." The project makes this true by allowing a community of fans to keep Cash's spirit alive.

Don't be surprised, then, if your instructor discourages you from structuring a rhetorical analysis essay by devoting one section to each appeal, giving the false impression that each exists independently. Rather, consider how ethos, pathos, and logos work together to create a successful (or unsuccessful) rhetorical strategy. Similarly, if you're writing an argumentative essay, you may find it more helpful to think about rhetorical strategies rather than appeals. Specific strategies, after all, will inevitably include rhetorical appeals, often in skillful combination.

Getting Started on Rhetorical Analysis: Why?

So if we have a general understanding of what rhetoric is, then how do we analyze it? And, perhaps more importantly, why analyze rhetoric? One answer to this question might be that we are surrounded by rhetoric every day—advertisements, news media, blogs, works of art, textbooks—all of these are examples of rhetoric. Scholar Sonja Foss asserted that rhetoric "is the process by which our reality or our world comes into being" (6). This seems like a large claim—does rhetoric really shape reality? While there may be a variety of answers to this question, it seems clear that we are—at the very least—influenced daily by rhetoric (and we also use rhetoric to influence others). In fact, rhetorician Kenneth Burke famously suggested that our very nature as rhetorical beings makes us human. Burke defined rhetoric as "a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" (43). Because everyone is both influenced by and influences others through rhetoric, when we talk about rhetoric, then, we are talking about a form of power.

Rhetorical analysis is one way to better understand how power functions in our society. To some degree, people think, feel, believe, and act based on the persuasive power of rhetoric, so when we ask questions about rhetoric, we learn more about why certain laws are passed (or not passed), why certain attitudes are popular, why particular products sell better—in other words, we learn more about how the world works.

We can also use rhetorical analysis to closely examine a particular text (or texts) for the specific ways that rhetoric is at work. For example, we might examine a commercial for the ways that it relies on humor as an emotional appeal to persuade us to purchase the product. We might analyze President Obama's speech to Congress to ask questions about audience—is his primary audience the members of Congress or the American public watching on TV? Or we might read a series of blog entries to examine how people argue in a technologically-mediated environment.

The word *rhetor* refers to the person or group that produces the text—whether it's someone giving a public speech, a grassroots organization that produces a website to advocate for a cause, a writer producing an essay, or a person composing a Twitter update.

But, you might think, *this is a writing class—how does rhetorical analysis help me as a writer?* If you think about it, you're already a skilled user of rhetoric. When you communicate with different people (such as a professor, your mother, or a friend), you make adjustments to things like the specific vocabulary and tone that you use. Rhetorical analysis allows you as a writer—whether in an academic, civic, professional or social setting—to more deliberately and

effectively choose the appropriate language and other symbols (for example, images, sound, or design) that will help you communicate with your audiences. Whether it's a lab report or a job application email, improving your knowledge of and skill with rhetoric gives you a better chance of successfully reaching your audiences.

How to Rhetorically Analyze. . . Anything

You can rhetorically analyze texts, objects, events, or practices. Going about rhetorical analysis is similar to any other form of analysis—it starts with questions. There are many questions that you might ask, including:

- ◆ *Who is speaking?* Or writing or sculpting, etc.? Is the text produced by a single rhetor or a group? What's the rhetor's relationship to the topic—is she a credentialed expert? Someone with personal experience? An interested observer? Is he representing a particular social or political viewpoint?
- ◆ *To whom is the rhetor speaking?* Who's the audience? Is there more than one? What's the relationship between the rhetor and the audience?
- ◆ *When did the text appear?* It's important to remember that the rhetorical significance of texts can change over time. For

example, Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" is interpreted differently now than when he originally gave the speech in 1863.

- ◆ *Where did the text appear?* Was it published in a newspaper, spraypainted on a building, designed as a website, spoken to a large crowd, aired during the Super Bowl, texted to a friend?
- ◆ *What does the text say?* Yes, as in most analyses, there is some summary involved in rhetorical analysis. It's important to understand the major ideas—the content—of a text.
- ◆ *Why was the text produced?* While we can't read a rhetor's mind, we can look at the text and the context for evidence of the rhetor's purposes.
- ◆ *How is rhetoric at work in the details of the text?* How did the rhetor choose specific rhetorical strategies to appeal to the audiences in specific ways? Which appeals—pathos, logos, and ethos—are used and how? This can include everything from strategies such as the types of evidence that are used, to document design, certain "hotbutton" words or phrases, or the use of symbols other than language—images, color, etc.
- ◆ *With what consequences?* In other words, what are the effects of this rhetoric? Asking this question also raises the question of ethics—are there ways that rhetoric is being used ethically and/or unethically?

In this class, your instructor may define the word *text* as any example of rhetoric—not only books and articles, but films, websites, speeches, and works of art, just to name a few. A text, then, is an act of communication designed to convey meaning(s) through rhetorical symbols (words, images, sounds, color, etc.).

While this list of questions will help you look at rhetoric in action, it's important to understand that a sophisticated rhetorical analysis will also look at the relationships among these elements—for example, how does understanding who the audience is also help you understand the appeals and strategies that are used? And how does the relationship between audience and appeals affect ethical considerations?

For examples of rhetorical analyses written by students, see Chapter 7.

If you're thinking that this seems like a lot to do, you're right. Because you can rarely talk about all the elements of rhetoric in a particular text, it's up to you

to choose which elements are the most significant, interesting, or powerful for your purposes. But wherever you choose to focus, at the end of the day, your rhetorical analysis should help you explore how language and other symbols exercise power in our culture.

Fallacies of Argument

Fallacies of argument are strategies that people use (knowingly and unknowingly) to persuade. Fallacies may mislead, distract, misrepresent, or make dubious connections between ideas. They weaken an argument by weakening credibility—when they are detected. Identifying a fallacy doesn't always mean that the argument is false, but it does mean that the conclusions aren't necessarily guaranteed by the premises.

As with most systems of categorization, the boundaries between these types of fallacies are fuzzy—a particular fallacy may appear to be both an *ad hominem* and a straw man fallacy, for example—so labeling a particular fallacy with a specific name is perhaps less important than developing an overall awareness that not all arguments are equal. When you are doing rhetorical analysis, it's helpful to think carefully about the ways that rhetoric may lead an audience down a path of flawed reasoning. You may find yourself agreeing with an argument, but disagreeing with the way that rhetoric is used to make that argument because of fallacious reasoning.

One key question to ask when you are thinking about fallacies involves the relationship between effectiveness and ethics: Is it unethical to use fallacies, even when they are effective?

The following are some frequently used fallacies:

- ◆ **Ad hominem** – attacks someone's character to distract from the issue being debated. For example: "You can't believe what Candidate A says about economic policy because she cheated on her taxes two years ago."
- ◆ **Ad ignoratium** – assumes that something is true because it hasn't currently been proven false. For example: "God exists because it hasn't been proven that God does not exist."
- ◆ **Appeal to antiquity/tradition or novelty/modernity** – two sides of the same coin: appeals to antiquity or tradition assume that older ideas are better merely because they are older, while appeals to novelty or modernity assume that new ideas are better merely because they are new. For example:

“This is the way we’ve always done it; therefore, it’s the right way to do it” or “This is the latest development; therefore, it’s obviously better.”

- ◆ **Appeal to authority** – argues that an idea is true either because someone famous endorses it or because an expert endorses it. (Often, we must rely on the opinion of experts, but experts can make mistakes.) For example: ads that use celebrities to promote a product. The underlying message is “because Taylor Lautner wears this brand of jeans, you should too.”
- ◆ **Appeal to force or fear** – attempts to persuade by threats or fear—in other words, scare tactics. For example: “If you don’t do your homework, you’ll be very sorry.”
- ◆ **Bandwagon or ad populum** – argues that—because a sizable number of people do or believe something—it must be acceptable. For example: “Everybody’s doing it.” Sometimes statistics are used to support this kind of fallacy: “Our product is number one in sales; therefore, it’s the best.”
- ◆ **Begging the question** – uses as one of the premises a restatement of the conclusion. For example: “Naturally growing plants should not be restricted; therefore, marijuana should be legalized.”
- ◆ **Equivocation** – depends on the ambiguity or double meaning of a key word or phrase. For example: “Mr. A has been accused of sexual harassment; however, he shouldn’t be punished because he didn’t do anything sexual. He only made comments about her appearance.” The meaning of the word “sexual” is unclear here.
- ◆ **Euphemism** – substitutes a more palatable term for a word or phrase that evokes strong negative emotions. For example: calling the death of innocent bystanders *collateral damage*.
- ◆ **False analogy** – attempts to persuade by making a comparison between two different objects. For example: “GMOs should be banned; look at the negative effects of pesticides.” (Of course all analogies compare two different objects, so it’s up to the analyst to determine whether the comparison is valid or not.)
- ◆ **False dichotomy** – argues that there are only two options. For example: “Abortion is either wrong or right—there’s no middle ground”—or “You’re either with us or against us.”

- ◆ **Guilt by association** – attacks an individual or group based on an association with another individual or group. For example: “Osama bin Laden is a terrorist and a Muslim; therefore, most Muslims must be terrorists.”
- ◆ **Hasty or sweeping generalization** – a hasty generalization makes conclusions based on incomplete evidence, while a sweeping generalization applies one rule to all objects in a class. For example: “Based on a survey of students who attended the pro-legalization rally, students on campus overwhelmingly support legalization of marijuana” or “All Christians are. . .” or “Women always. . .”
- ◆ **Non sequitor** – uses premises that do not support the conclusion. For example: “You support gun control? Well, you also support marijuana legalization, so you’re obviously wrong about gun control.”
- ◆ **Poisoning the well** – uses emotionally-laden rhetoric to stir negative feelings in the audience. For example, “anti-abortionists are heartless fanatics.”
- ◆ **Post hoc, ergo propter hoc** – confuses correlation for causation. For example: “Since President Obama took office, the economy has become a disaster—therefore the financial crisis is his fault.”
- ◆ **Red herring** – suggests an irrelevant premise to divert attention from the central issue. For example, “No, we shouldn’t continue to bail out failing businesses—there’s too much going on in Afghanistan.”
- ◆ **Slippery slope** – exaggerates the future consequences of a situation or action. For example: “If we don’t stop the emission of greenhouse gasses, eventually all life on planet Earth will be destroyed.”
- ◆ **Straw Man** – deliberately mischaracterizes the opposition’s argument to make it appear weak or misguided. For example: “Proponents of physician-assisted suicide just want to get rid of the weak and the sick.”

Rhetoric and Ethics

There’s an old saying: “With great power comes great responsibility.” If rhetoric is a form of power, then thinking about its relationship to ethics is important—both when you’re analyzing someone else’s rhetoric, as well as when you’re producing rhetoric. While people

For other resources on rhetoric and fallacies, see the list of online writing and research resources on the PWR website at <http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/resources.html>. Click on "Writing and Research Links."

have various ideas about ethics, there are some concepts that seem to be common in discussions about rhetoric and ethics. Honesty, use of sound evidence, avoidance of manipulation (and fallacies)—these are some common commitments towards ethical rhetoric. (Even so, there is wide disagreement about how to define the

terms in a discussion of ethical rhetoric. For example, is there a difference between *persuasion* and *propaganda*?) Or even more trickily, is it ethical to use scare tactics and lies to manipulate an audience into doing good? And who gets to decide what is "good"?

What's your definition of *ethical rhetoric*? As a reader, you will need to decide how to define the ethical use of rhetoric, and then evaluate texts based on your definition. As a writer, you will need to make choices about your own use of rhetoric—will you follow your definition of what's ethical and what's not?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. If we define rhetoric like Kenneth Burke does, as using symbols to induce cooperation, can you think of any human interaction that is not rhetorical? The last time you changed your mind about something, was it because you were influenced by rhetoric or something else? Think of a specific example of a time you changed your mind about a belief, social or political issue or idea, and describe how and why you changed your mind.
2. At the beginning of this chapter, the book defines rhetoric as "the art of persuasion." However, there are many different definitions of the word "rhetoric." Look up five different definitions of this term. (Be sure to also write down your sources for these definitions.) In what ways are some of the definitions you find similar? Different? Based on all of these definitions, what's your definition of rhetoric?
3. What are some reasons that it's important to be able to accurately and effectively analyze the rhetoric in a text? Describe two or three situations (either inside or outside the classroom) where rhetorical analysis might be useful for you.

4. Think back to a piece of writing you've composed in the last year or so. Of the appeals presented (ethos, pathos, logos), is there a particular appeal you used more than others? How could your writing be improved by paying more attention to audience, purpose, and context?
5. The end of this chapter suggests that rhetoric is linked to ethics. When writing instructors create rubrics for evaluating student work, should they consider ethics, along with the more common criteria of style and arguments? How might you define "ethical rhetoric" and can you think of a specific example (a speech, a book, a song, an ad, etc.) of ethical rhetoric?

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