

## WRTG 3030: Article or Video Rhetorical Analysis Assignment Spring 2021

**Analysis** examines. It appreciates. Analysis asks “why” and “how”—it goes beyond a surface-level understanding; it goes beyond summary and description (though it might need to incorporate some summary and description). Analysis is a process of interpretation, and it should be the basis of argument. It can be thought of as an investigation into *why* a situation, product, text, problem, etc. exists. For this assignment, you are investigating *why* the writer/director/creator/speaker created or approached their piece in the way they did. When analyzing rhetorically, we ask questions like this: what is the rhetor’s purpose or goal? Who is the rhetor’s audience? Why did the rhetor use a particular tone or approach? Why use a particular type of evidence? Was it persuasive or not? This paper is all about your opinions, and you may analyze *and* argue if you wish.

You may do your rhetorical analysis on these articles: Dr. Rahul Gupta, “Polio campaign of the 1950s is a sound model for what America needs for COVID-19”; Elizabeth Kolbert, “Unconventional Crude”; Dr. Peter Marks, “I’m the FDA point person on COVID-19 vaccines. We’ll make sure they’re safe and effective.”; or Randall Munroe’s xkcd web comic, “A Timeline of Earth’s Average Temperature.” OR you may do your rhetorical analysis on one of these videos: American Museum of Natural History’s “Bee Deaths Linked to Common Pesticides,” “Dr. Anthony Fauci on What It Will Take to Put Covid-19 Behind Us,” Dr. Katharine Hayhoe, “How do we know this climate change thing is even real?”, Pfizer’s “Science Will Win,” Prince Ea, “Dear Future Generations: Sorry,” Dr. Neil deGrasse Tyson, “Science in America” or Greta Thunberg’s speech at the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit.

**Note: please pick your article/video from the above list. You may write on the same video that you summarized.**

This semester we have been talking about how important it is that scientists/academics, engineers, computer programmers, and medical personal know how to communicate not just with their peers but with the general public. A number of the articles we’ve read and videos we’ve seen are written by a scientist or feature a scientist/doctor speaking. (Gupta, Marks, American Museum, Fauci, Hayhoe, Tyson) Given how important it is that professionals communicate well, how are these scientists and doctors doing as they speak to the public? What elements make the article/video particularly effective? Why are they effective? Are they ineffective—are they not persuasive?

We’ve also read articles or seen videos by professional writers/communicators. (Kolbert, Munroe, Pfizer, Prince Ea, and Thunberg) Are their efforts to speak to the public effective? Why? Why not? Based on their persuasive skills (their rhetorical skills), do they deserve their fame and fortune?

Whatever article or video you choose to write on, it can be a good idea to pick **one aspect** of the piece to analyze. So you might analyze **only** the article/video’s opening or conclusion; its tone, approach, or word choices; its use of emotional or logical appeals, its imagery, its music, its visuals, etc.

Before you start writing, think about the way each rhetor tries to persuade their audience that their argument is correct. And whatever you choose to discuss, make sure you focus your discussion on something doable—these articles and videos are far too dense with meaning and purpose and facts to analyze everything they do in 5-6 pages.)

**A path through this assignment:**

- 1) Ask this basic question: what does the article/video do? Establish what the piece argues—what’s the central claim or point (the takeaway message)? All of these articles and videos have a central argument and purpose. Then ask: does the argument hold up? Is it persuasive?
- 2) Rhetor = speaker, writer, director, editor, narrator, singer, etc. What evidence does the rhetor use to support his/her claims? Academic sources, general media sources, numbers, definitions, some other kind of proof? Is the evidence persuasive?
- 3) Consider the rhetorical situation. What contemporary issue is the rhetor speaking to? Who is the rhetor’s audience? What is the rhetor’s purpose? What rhetorical strategies does he/she use? Are those strategies effective?
- 4) Outlining is your friend.
- 5) Start writing! Don’t worry if it’s an imperfect first draft!

As you consider such questions, remember this: all of these articles/videos were put together by reputable people and were fact-checked. None of these pieces have big factual errors in them. So you can’t simply dismiss the argument or rhetor. But do you accept the method and arguments of your chosen rhetor and piece? Is it persuasive? Remember that though a particular approach might not be effective for you, it might be effective for the rhetor’s intended audience.

**Is research necessary for this paper?** No. This is not a research paper. The goal is for you to think through a scientific-technical-cultural issue and come up with a cogent analysis of the way the video speaks to that issue. So light research might be helpful, but for this assignment, common sense, curiosity, and sustained critical thought on a given issue is the goal.

**Suggested Length: 5-6 pages**

**Percentage of your overall grade (points): 20**

**Due dates: Thesis paragraphs—Friday, 2/19—due in class; post to Canvas and Google Docs.**

**Full drafts—Friday, 2/26—due in class; post to Canvas and Google Docs.**

**Final analysis due date—Monday, 3/15 at 11:59 pm; post to Canvas.**