

Core Principle: Rhetorics

Course-specific Principle

English 1105	Core Principle	English 1106
Rhetorical Knowledge	Rhetorics	Rhetorical Performance

- **ENGL1105 outcome:** You will have **practiced** using language consciously and identifying rhetorical qualities in composing situations.
- **ENGL1106 outcome:** You will have **enacted** rhetoric by consciously constructing persuasive texts tailored to matters of audience, purpose, context, and timing.

Rhetoric defined: 1) the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the use of figures of speech and other compositional techniques; 2) language designed to have a persuasive or impressive effect on its audience, but often regarded as lacking in sincerity or meaningful content.

While the word rhetoric--especially in our political climate today--typically is often used to describe language that is duplicitous, sneaky, or deceiving, rhetoric, for our purposes, is understood as the way that words work in the world. The goal of the rhetoric core principle in Virginia Tech's First-Year Writing program is to guide students to understand how their words, ideas, thoughts, and language affect the way they interact with the world and how the world interacts with them. Our program's textbook defines rhetoric as "a way of thinking about how we talk that takes into consideration the entire situation in which that talk takes place" (*Understanding Rhetoric* 38).

In our program, rhetoric is both a theory and an analytical tool that our students can use to understand the goal, purpose, and language of writing (either their own or someone else's). Via rhetorical analysis, one may explore the role of the reader, audience, medium, purpose, and message. Rhetorical appeals allow writers--student or otherwise--to explore the different ways in which they may appeal to their audiences. Our textbook focuses on three main appeals--ethos (credibility and aesthetics; backbone and gut), pathos (emotion; the heart), and logos (logic; the head)--and kairos (timeliness or the opportune moment).

Introductory Activity

Write for five minutes about rhetoric generally or specifically. Some guiding questions: How do you define rhetoric? How do you feel about rhetoric? What do you know about teaching rhetorical strategies? Do you have prior experience with the concept of rhetoric? Write about it. Be prepared to share what you have written.

Discussion Questions: Why Rhetoric?

- With rhetoric's negative connotations and popular usage, how do we get student buy-in? Is that necessary?
- Why is a foundation in rhetoric (as defined above) important for students?
- 1105 and 1106 share a core principle in rhetoric, but how do the more specific course outcomes differ?
- Rhetorical appeals play an important role in understanding the usefulness of rhetoric in the FYW course. What do we know about ethos, pathos, logos, and kairos?

Classroom Activities with Rhetoric

- Social Media Rhetorical Analysis- In groups, students choose someone who is prolific on social media (politician, celebrity, actor, musician, etc.). They choose two different social platforms that the person uses, describes the platform and its generic expectations. Then, they compare posts across the two platforms. The students present their findings and analysis via Google Slides.
- Rhetorical Analysis in class: can use any type of YouTube video to explore different appeals; use their own social media accounts to analyze the rhetoric they use everyday.
- Other Ideas?

Resources List

Berlin, James. "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class." 1988, reprinted in *The Norton Book of Composition Studies*, edited by Susan Miller. Norton, 2009, pp. 667-884.

Bitzer, Lloyd F. "The Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, vol. 1, 1968, pp. 1-14.

Cooper, Marilyn M. "The Ecology of Writing." *College English*, vol. 48, no. 4, 1986, pp. 364-375.

Ede, Lisa and Andrea Lunsford. "Audience Addressed/ Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy." 1984, reprinted in *Cross-Talk in Composition Theory: A Reader 3rd Edition*, edited by Villanueva, Victor and Kristin L. Arola, NCTE, 2011, pp. 77-95.

Vatz, Richard E. "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1973, pp. 54-161.