

AN INTRODUCTION TO RHETORIC

What is rhetoric?

- ◎ Greek philosopher Aristotle defined rhetoric as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.”
- ◎ At its best, rhetoric is a thoughtful, reflective activity leading to effective communication, including the rational exchange of opposing viewpoints.

When/How can rhetoric be used?

- To resolve conflicts without confrontation, to persuade readers or listeners to support your position, or to move others to take action
- To convince a friend to listen to certain music
- To explain why a particular horror movie is the most influential of all time
- To persuade your parents to buy you a car

Rhetoric is not just about speeches

- ⦿ Essays, political cartoons, photographs, and advertisements are designed to convince you of something
- ⦿ We call all of these TEXTS
- ⦿ Texts are meant to be more than “read”
- ⦿ Texts are meant to be investigated

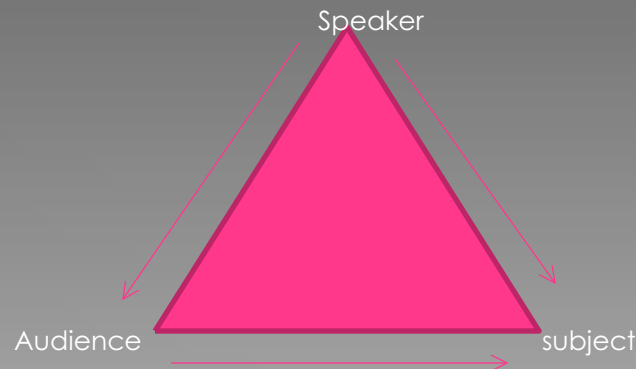
- ① We need to understand how rhetoric works so we can be wary of manipulation or deceit, while appreciating effective and civil communication

OCCASION, CONTEXT, AND PURPOSE

- Rhetoric is always situational
- Occasion-the time and place the text was written or spoken
- Context-the circumstances, atmosphere, attitudes, and events surrounding the text
- Purpose-the goal the speaker wants to achieve
- Activity-Lou Gehrig's speech

THE RHETORICAL TRIANGLE

- ⦿ The relationship among the speaker, audience, and subject
- ⦿ Some refer to it as the Aristotelian triangle because he used a triangle to illustrate how these elements are interrelated



SPEAKER, AUDIENCE, AND SUBJECT

- ⦿ Speaker-the person or group who creates the text
- ⦿ Audience-the listener, viewer, or reader of a text or performance
- ⦿ Subject-the topic, not the purpose or goal

SOAPS

- ⦿ SOAPS stands for Subject, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, and Speaker
- ⦿ Think of it as a checklist that helps you organize your ideas rhetorically
- ⦿ Activity: Using SOAPS, analyze the rhetorical situation in George W. Bush's 9/11 speech

Appeal to Ethos, Logos, and Pathos

Ethos

- ⦿ (Greek for “character”)
- ⦿ Demonstrates speaker is credible and trustworthy
- ⦿ Build ethos by explaining credentials or background or by emphasizing shared values
- ⦿ You are more likely to listen to someone who is qualified to speak on a subject or who shares your interests and concerns

Logos

- ⦿ Greek for “embodied thought”)
- ⦿ Appeals to reason by offering clear, rational ideas.
- ⦿ Means having a clear main idea and using specific details, examples, facts, statistics, or expert testimony to back it up
- ⦿ Evidence from expert sources and authorities, facts, and quantitative data can be very persuasive
- ⦿ One way to appeal to logos is to acknowledge a counterargument—that is, to anticipate objections or opposing views
- ⦿ You agree (concede) that an opposing argument may be true or reasonable, but then you deny (refute) the validity of all or part of the argument.
- ⦿ Combination of concession and refutation strengthens your argument

Pathos

- An appeal to emotions, values, desires, hopes, on the one hand, or fears and prejudices, on the other
- An argument appealing exclusively to the emotions is weak (propagandistic)
- Effective speakers/writers evoke emotions by using such tools as figurative language, personal anecdotes, and vivid images
- May also use words with strong connotations
- Using humor is another way to appeal to pathos