

Instructor, Lynda Davis  
ENG 20803.035  
Composition II  
Paper 1; Due Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>

## Rhetorical Case Study: Political Arguments in Three Genres



From your readings in our text and our classroom discussions, you should understand what argument is and can be, and that arguments exist in many genres. More than just two people debating or battling it out for a win, it can also be much more subtle and can be used in non-confrontational, non-controversial ways. Depending on the genre, arguments can have a direct, explicit thesis (like many campaign

speeches) or a more implicit focus (such as an ironic cartoon). In this paper you should build upon what you learned in Composition I and use your growing skills in rhetorical analysis: understanding audience, rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos), the rhetorical situation, and persuasive strategies—whether textual or visual. Personal experience and observation plays a significant role—hence your ability to use the first person.

In this assignment, you will now have the chance to select a recent controversial/ political issue debated in either the recent presidential elections, or by the new Obama administration, or recent news media. After selecting a topic, you will identify a number of primary texts that present arguments about the issue in three different genres (i.e., speeches, commercials, radio ads, bumper stickers, brochures, cartoons/comics, websites, billboards, late-night comedy skits, etc.). You will be required to:

- to identify the different stakeholders participating in the event
- write a synopsis of all sides of the argument (synthesis)
- analyze documents that support each stakeholder's position
- determine what positions are being taken
- determine what kinds of arguments are being made for each position
- determine who is representing the various positions
- contextualize an event for unfamiliar readers (optional depending on the topic)

In doing this, you will NOT take a position; rather, you will want to shed light on why the issue is controversial/political and rhetorically analyze the strategies and the evidence being offered in support of each position without ascribing value to the arguments.

Your paper should be at least 8 pages in length and typed using either Times New Roman or Ariel with a 12 point font. All papers should conform to MLA guidelines, which require 1 inch margins, double-spacing, and proper page numeration. For supporting evidence you should have five sources. Sources should consist of both primary and secondary, with at least one scholarly source from the library (explained more in class).

Note: Most importantly, you can rely on me for guidance. If confused, please come to my office hours early on so that we can get you on the right track.

#### **Important Dates**

- ✓ Tuesday, January 27<sup>th</sup>—decide paper topic
- ✓ Thursday, January 29<sup>th</sup>—bring five sources to class
- ✓ Tuesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>—Annotated Bibliography due in class (dropbox if absent)
- ✓ Tuesday, February 10<sup>th</sup>— draft for peer review brought to class for workshopping (with cover memo). Bring 3 printed copies to class—two for your group members and one for me. Again, this draft will count in your portfolio—a full six pages equals a draft; anything less and will not be considered a draft and you will not be permitted to participate in the peer review.
- ✓ Sunday, February 15<sup>th</sup>—Final paper due in dropbox with cover memo

#### **What is a primary source?**

1. Original documents generated by the parties involved in the event.
2. Letters
3. Contemporary newspaper accounts
4. Photographs
5. Oral histories
6. Memoirs/Autobiographies
7. Political cartoons
8. Letters to the editor and opinion pieces



#### **What is a secondary source?**

1. Usually scholarly books or articles written about an event or aspects of a past event, using primary sources.
2. They interpret original documents.
3. Give you your background information about the topic you want to research.

To start researching your topic you can first read a secondary source to find out where the primary sources are located. After you have selected your event, found your

primary and secondary sources, you will be asked to rhetorically analyze your primary sources.

### Writing the Introduction

1. You can use the knowledge from some secondary sources to inform your audience (your classmates and me—unless you decide to write your paper for a different audience) of the historical context of your event. Furthermore, you might use the introduction to synthesize public views of your subject.
2. Inform your audience about the different sides to the debate and who (what group of people) belonged to each side.
3. After the introduction, I expect you to individually take each and every primary source (4-5) and critically/rhetorically analyze the arguments (and by arguments I mean both the visual and textual arguments).

## Annotated Bibliography Assignment

Before each major project is due, you will need to submit to me an annotated bibliography of all your sources (5-source minimal). An annotated bibliography consists of an alphabetical list of resources. Each source includes:

- Standard MLA citation
  - Author, title, publishers, etc (consult a MLA handbook or website)
- A paragraph describing the sources and its relevance to your paper's subject
  - Describe the main points of the source
  - Reliability and/or credentials of the author(s)
  - Who is the intended audience of the article/source
  - Evaluate the usefulness of the source for your intended project
  - Does the source adequately argue his or her case?

Example of annotated source:

Clayborough, Arthur. *The Grotesque in English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1965.

Clayborough attempts to establish a connection between grotesque art and the “two contrasting sides of human nature; the practical, rational side, and the sense of the eternal.” His purpose is to shed light on the work of various eighteenth-century writers such as Swift, Coleridge, and Dickens (“Preface”). The author devotes a large portion of his text to defining the word “grotesque” and also devotes an entire section to Jonathan

Swift. While Clayborough pulls in analyses of both Rabelais and Dostoevsky, his text was written before Mikhail Bakhtin's theories arrived on American soil.

All the rules of MLA apply to this assignment. You should have 1" margins, Ariel or Times New Roman with 12 pt. font, pagination header (top right, ½ " from top), and double-spaced. As a general rule of thumb, each page should consist of two sources. In the end, your annotated bibliography should be at least two and a half pages.

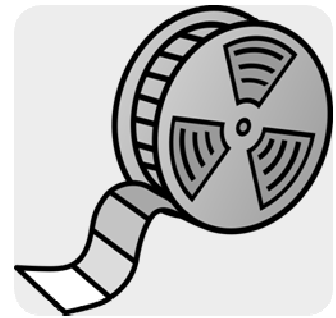
Important Dates:

Bring five sources to class on January 29<sup>th</sup>

Final version of bibliography due February 3<sup>rd</sup>

## Propaganda Film Argument Paper

Now that you have analyzed the arguments of others—both verbally and visually, you are ready to make your own argument. For this essay, you will rhetorically analyze and argue the ideological bias of a film (feature film or documentary) you consider to be propaganda, but the filmmakers attempt to pass off as either “entertainment” or “documentary” in order to disguise its ideological bent. By a propaganda film, I mean a film that is organized and constructed in a way so as to spread a particular *ideological* doctrine with true or false information or opinions in order to bring about social/political change and reform. Remember, Silverman and Rader suggest that we “read” propaganda films as “constructed text[s]” that can “alter beliefs, shape behavior, and manipulate factual detail to make a more persuasive text” (380). Furthermore, Louis Giannetti, *Understanding Movies*, argues that “ideology is usually defined as a body of ideas reflecting the social needs and aspirations of an individual, group, class, or culture” (412).



As you analyze your film, remember that you are not writing a review. By “review,” I mean like those seen in our popular media. In other words, I do not want to read a “thumbs up, thumbs down” argument that ultimately requires no research or analysis. While these types of reviews can be useful and even entertaining pieces of prose, they generally don't qualify as “academic writing.”

In his chapter “**How Can We Write Effectively about Documentary?**,” Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, explains to readers that documentaries represent “the historical world by shaping its photographic record of some aspect of the world from a *distinct perspective or point of view*” (168). In your paper, you need to isolate that point of view in your chosen film. Research is encouraged, and for the purposes of this paper, minimally required (please see source requirements under “Annotated Bibliography” below). In preparing to write your paper, you will need to view your film

several times and become immersed in the viewing experiences. Nichols recommends that you ask yourselves questions about what it is you're seeing and how this viewing becomes more central. I have adapted a list of questions he recommends to help you compose your analyses.

- Why does the author(s) begin the way he/she does?
- What does this set up for the rest of the film?
- Why does he/she end as he/she does?
- What kind of relationship exists between the director, the camera, and the subject?
- How are scenes edited? or joined together?
- What does the narrative structure of the film revolve around?
- How does the director represent people?
- How does he characterize them or convey a sense of their individuality?
- What life-philosophy or ideology do you see surfacing in the film? How does the director use both visual and verbal techniques to rhetorically persuade viewers to his/her point of view?

Note-taking is invaluable, yet some people find it distracting on the first viewing, so you may want to take your notes on the second viewing. Therefore, when watching your film, you are to locate a particular ideological bias in a film and note all the various techniques the director uses in order to promote that ideological bias:

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| ▪ plot             | ▪ costuming                                  |
| ▪ characterization | ▪ cinematography (high/low angle shots, etc) |
| ▪ point of view    | ▪ music                                      |
| ▪ symbolism        | ▪ editing                                    |
| ▪ setting          | ▪ real versus created footage                |
| ▪ tone             | ▪ sense of reality                           |
| ▪ theme            | ▪ comedy                                     |
| ▪ lighting         |  |
| ▪ set design       |  |

Also, I want you to consider the term *auteur* (a French term) when thinking of the author. *Auteur* theory surfaced in the Fifties and Sixties and emphasized the director as the film's artist/author. However, I would argue that "*auteur*" could mean "author" as a whole collective—the editor, the cinematographer, the actors, etc., as each contributor to the film brings in his or her own unique interpretation of the text/film. To help you articulate your arguments and also to understand the *auteur's* intent behind his/her/their technique, please use the "film terms" website posted in our web bibliography.

Important Dates
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <u>Thursday, February 26<sup>th</sup></u> —decide paper topic and bring five sources to class on Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>.</li> <li>✓ <u>Thursday, March 5<sup>th</sup></u> —Class canceled for work day (I will be out of town that day)</li> <li>✓ <u>Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup></u> —Annotated Bibliography due in eCollege by midnight</li> </ul> |
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- ✓ Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup>—Draft due (at least 6 pages) in class for workshopping. Bring 3 printed copies to class—two for your group members and one for me. This draft and the reviews are required for your portfolio.
- ✓ March 16<sup>th</sup>—March 22<sup>nd</sup>—Spring Break
- ✓ Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>—Paper due in eCollege dropbox by midnight. Portfolio due in class. Portfolio should contain all drafts and peer reviews. Failure to turn in portfolio could result in a lower grade.

### Annotated Bibliography

Your annotated bibliography should have the film you are analyzing as your *primary source*. In addition to your film, you should have at **least three to four more sources**. You can use books on film theory as well as reputable websites such as the *Internet Movie Database* and the websites listed in our webliography. Additionally, you may look at movie reviews; however, you will **need at least one scholarly article** that either discusses your film or analyzes some aspect that contributes to the overall argument of your paper. As soon as you decide your film topic, begin searching for your scholarly article. Many times students discover too late that they cannot find anything in the library about their topic. If you cannot find a scholarly article, you will need to discuss this problem with me either in class or in a conference period, but please do not put this off till the last minute.

### What is a scholarly article?

The following explanation detailing the differences between scholarly articles and popular articles comes from the Wittenberg University website (<http://www6.wittenberg.edu/lib/research/schol-pop.php>).

Note: Most importantly, you can rely on me for guidance. If confused, please come to my office hours early on so that we can get you on the right track.

## Scholarly vs. Popular Articles

### WHAT IS A SCHOLARLY JOURNAL?

A scholarly journal contains articles and letters written by scholars to report results of research and other scholarly activities. For most academic papers, scholarly articles are excellent and preferred sources for supporting your arguments.

### WHAT ARE SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF A SCHOLARLY JOURNAL?

- Scholarly journals are usually published or sponsored by a professional society or association.
- There may be a list of reviewers on the first few pages. This type of journal is known as a "juried", "refereed", or "peer reviewed" journal. In such journals, all articles are reviewed by experts before publication so the journals tend to be considered among the best in their fields.

### Some Differences between Scholarly and Popular publications:

	SCHOLARLY JOURNAL	POPULAR MAGAZINE
<b>Audience</b>	Professionals, Professors, Graduate Students	Lay People, folks without a college degree in the subject
<b>Indexing</b>	Indexed in Wilson Indexes, or in subject-specific indexes like Biological Abstracts, Historical Abstracts, Art Index, etc. May be	Indexed in general-purpose indexes like Readers' Guide or ProQuest/Periodical Abstracts.

	included in ProQuest/Periodical Abstracts.	
<b>Language</b>	Field-specific language/jargon, requires reader to be in touch with other research in the field.	Written in everyday language accessible to any generally knowledgeable reader.

## WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ARTICLE IN A SCHOLARLY JOURNAL?

Some Differences between the articles in Scholarly and Popular publications:

	SCHOLARLY ARTICLES	POPULAR ARTICLES
<b>Author</b>	Author's credentials in the field are established (e.g., institutional affiliation, maybe degrees, etc.)	Authors may not have special qualifications for writing article; credentials are not given
<b>Bibliography</b>	Yes.	Probably not.
<b>Research</b>	Usually based on original research or new applications of others' research.	The author is usually a reporter; he or she will have done research for the article, but not "original" research the actual lab work, math, or theoretical analysis.

### Don'ts

- Do not write a movie review—I don't want surface issues argued in your paper—go deep!
- Do not pick a movie just because you like it; pick a movie that contains some aspect that will make for an interesting paper.
- Do not write on gut feelings—make sure you are able to articulate your arguments in a manner that makes sense.
- Do not write a paper that fails to cite your sources. In other words, don't fill up a bibliography with sources you do not intend to use. **Cite each source at least one.**

### Do's

- Do decide your film topic early. We spent too long on the first paper and need to get going on this one.
- Do use your scholarly sources. They can be rich in information. Read the articles thoroughly, annotating in the margins and marking key pages you find useful.
- Do try to locate the transcript of your film on the net—this will prove to be a huge help in writing your paper.
- If the film has a director's cut, do watch it. Oftentimes the directors themselves reveal their biases.
- Do make an argument in your thesis statement.
- Do take advantage of the writing center for brainstorming and peer reviewing.
- Do remember that I am always there should you need to talk about your paper or anything else regarding the class.