**English 250** Fall 2018

**Assignment 2 (A2) : Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Text** (600+ words)

**Due: 2/8**

**What is this assignment?**

You will write a 600-word minimum rhetorical analysis of a visual. Your rhetorical analysis should show how the visual fulfills (or doesn’t fulfill) its purpose for a particular audience. (Who is the intended audience?) **That is, how effective is the visual for its intended audience?** Does it accomplish what it sets out to accomplish? (What *does* it set out to accomplish?) The visual might accomplish or fail to accomplish its purpose (likely somewhere in between) through how its words, visuals, structure, and ideas connect with each other and with the intended audience. Note that sometimes a visual may *mostly accomplish* or *somewhat accomplish* its purpose—this is not a binary (yes or no) assignment and you should be sure to clearly state *to what degree* the visual accomplishes its purpose in your thesis. The audience you will be writing to is an educated person who has seen the visual you are analyzing, though you will also include the image (properly cited) in your paper and describe it briefly.

In sum, this assignment asks you to answer the following of a visual:

* What does this visual want from its audience?
  + Who is the audience?
* How does the visual try to accomplish its goals?
  + What are those goals?
* How well are the strategies this visual employs to obtain its goals working?
  + To what degree is this visual successful/effective? Does it mostly accomplish its goals? Somewhat accomplish? How well does it reach/convince its intended audience?

Please include a cover page for your paper, which includes your name, your section, and the title of your essay. Your paper should have an interesting title (meaning, not “Assignment 2,” “A2 Paper,” or the title of the image you chose to analyze).

Your paper will include at least one citation (the visual you select) and may include more citations if you cite outside sources—that is, if not all of the information or ideas in the paper are your own. The citations should be on a separate page at the end titled “Works Cited.”

After you complete the paper, on a page after the Works Cited page, please include a brief reflection describing what it was like to analyze a visual (2+ paragraphs). How did you go about this project? What were your initial impressions of the visual, and did those impressions change as you analyzed deeper? (This portion of the assignment will not be graded but is required as part of the completed assignment.)

For this assignment and all assignments, you will follow the guidelines laid out by the “Basic Dos and Don’ts” of academic writing document (found on Moodle). You should read through the assignment sheet and the rubric thoroughly before beginning this assignment. Feel free to ask questions before or after class, during office hours, or via email. As noted in the syllabus, your instructor will read papers during office hours but will never read papers via email.

Once you complete this paper, you will also give a brief presentation on your analysis.

**What is the purpose of this assignment?**

The purpose of this assignment is to help you learn to rhetorically analyze visual communication. This kind of writing requires you to think critically about visual texts and to clearly articulate your analysis to an audience, both of which are skills you will use in many ways in the future.

In addition, this assignment can help us to better understand the use and effects of various kinds of visual texts. For webpages, the visual appeal and navigational ease of the website often determine how long we visit. And sometimes the professional appearance and whizzy interactivity of a website can cloud our judgment about the persuasion that is occurring or the credibility of the information we are receiving. Just as an essay may try to persuade us toward a certain viewpoint, a website also provides facts and uses persuasive techniques. In addition, there are so many ads and PSAs in our daily environment that we seldom pay attention to them; or, at least, we don’t pay conscious attention. Many visuals are successful because they are designed to work below the level of our conscious awareness, and this is precisely why visual rhetorical analysis is important.

**How do I get started on this assignment?**

*Planning*: First, select a visual from the choices given to you. Review the visual carefully; what do you notice about it? Consider the rhetorical choices the designer uses to carry out their goals (e.g., related to substance, organization, and/or style) and the following as you take notes on your selected visual:

* use of visuals within the artifact (people, places, colors, font, objects, etc.)
* use of a logo and/or brand name
* content, layout, graphics, color, and interactivity of the visual
* usability of the visual (e.g., do you know where to look first, do you know where to look next, and so on)
* substance of text
* tone of the visual (e.g., font color, size, and style; word choice; how the word choice and font design interact)
* types of appeals meant to persuade the viewer (i.e., ethos, pathos, logos)
* adherence to guidelines for good visual design discussed in the *Student Guide*
* overall impact

As you look over your visual, be sure to note its context (the visual’s history and how this connects to the intended readers’ expectations), purpose (the designer’s goals for the intended audience), and audience (who the designer is targeting and the relationship the author establishes with that audience). What relationships do you note between the text’s context, purpose, and audience and its rhetorical strategies? Answering this question can help you develop your thesis statement.

*Drafting*: Use the notes you developed in the planning stage to draft your rhetorical analysis. Be sure to include a description of the text’s context, purpose, and audience and a thesis statement that covers the entire paper.

In addition, consider the visual design of *your* paper. Consider using headings to break up your main points and definitely include a picture or image of your selected visual in the body of your paper (with words wrapped around it and with a caption below it).

*Revising*: As you revise, consider *your* audience and purpose. Revise to ensure that you are better fulfilling the assignment. Check that you have a thesis that covers the entire paper, that you include the visual’s context, purpose, and audience, that you are focusing on how the visual you are analyzing fulfills its goals for its particular audience, and that your conclusion effectively wraps up your discussion.

**How will this assignment be evaluated?**

At a minimum, your paper needs to satisfy these criteria. However, the grade is based not just on whether a feature is present or not, but on *how well* it has been integrated into your paper. The visual analysis should

1. Orient the reader to the purpose of the rhetorical analysis
2. Establish the context of the visual you are analyzing
3. Present a clear, well-supported thesis
4. Incorporate well-developed substance

* Focus on two or three rhetorical choices used to carry out the designer’s goals (e.g., related to substance, organization, and/or style)

1. Analyze rather than summarize the visual (again, assume your reader has already seen the visual text)
2. Support your claims with evidence from the visual
3. Use audience-oriented organization (not writer-oriented organization)
4. Write focused paragraphs
5. Transition smoothly from one point to another with transitions and topic sentences
6. Use appropriate style
7. Use varied sentence structures and word choices
8. Avoid errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling
9. Look professional
10. Properly format the analysis in MLA style.
11. For any textual elements, accurately paraphrase the author's important ideas without using the author’s phrasing

**What if I need more help?**

In addition to peer response, feel free to talk to me during my office hours and/or schedule an appointment at the Writing and Media Center (<http://www.wmc.dso.iastate.edu/>).