

## WRT 105 Rhetorical Cultural Analysis

**Instructor:** Dr. Jessica Corey  
**Length:** 5-6 pages  
**Percentage of Grade:** 20%  
**Draft Due Date:**  
**Final Due Date:**

### **Purpose**

The Rhetorical Cultural Analysis is designed to help you build awareness of the products of the surrounding culture and to analyze them critically. Cultural texts include any artifacts (artwork, statues, buildings, ads, music, film, television, books, stories, etc.) that hold meaning because they gain and convey their significance in our culture. Because cultural texts comprise part of our everyday lives, they frequently appear value-free, neutral, or apolitical. Embedded within them, however, reside subtle messages and values that influence the attitudes of their audience. To investigate the positions, underlying assumptions, values, interests, and ideologies presented within it, I would like you to “read” a cultural text and write about it. This assignment addresses the following course objectives:

- 1) Writing as Rhetorical Action (Students will gain knowledge of rhetorical principles and practice addressing different audiences and situations.)
- 2) Writing as Academic Practice (Students will build their familiarity with values, strategies, and conventions related to a range of academic contexts and disciplinary conversations.)

### **Audience**

You should think of your audience for this assignment as fellow students. These students may not have knowledge of the same beliefs and ideas of which you have knowledge. But, as members of a common university, they may be aware of, and affected by, the cultural texts you discuss. You will need to make a clear and well-supported argument for your interpretation and understanding of the cultural text and the ideologies involved in it. Be sure to consider how your audience might respond to your argument, and use that to identify and respond to possible **counterarguments**.

### **Assignment**

For this assignment, you will write a 5-6-page analysis in response to one of the following:

#1: Choose 2 advertisements that center on a **common theme** of your choice (i.e. beauty products, beverages, vacation destinations, online dating sites, etc.). Conduct an analysis of each ad. What do you notice in common between them? What differs? How does each ad define its audience and how do you know? How do the ads make their arguments (ethos, pathos, logos, Kairos)? What ideologies and beliefs underlie them? Do they share these same ideologies or are there important differences? Which ad most successfully convinces the audience of its claims? Why? Of course, this involves examining visual elements as part of your conclusions; consider color, typeface, layout, etc.  
**\*\*You will need to include the ads with your paper when you submit it for grading.**

#2: A student's social media profile and content represents the person he/she/they has chosen others to see—sometimes consciously, sometimes subconsciously. Like an autobiography, these spaces never quite represent the author's absolute "true" self, but rather a representation that he/she/they wishes others to see for a variety of reasons. Write an analysis of one of your own social media pages that explores the person you construct and why you have chosen to construct yourself in that fashion. Who is your intended audience? How will your profile/page present you to that audience? What argument do you make about yourself? Look for patterns in your posts or photographs. As you analyze, think about what is *not* contained in your page. What have you specifically chosen to exclude? How does your page appeal to ethos, pathos, logos, Kairos? **Think about how this visual argument creates you as a cultural text.** (Note: Many students struggle with their first attempt at writing on this option, as it requires you to move far beyond surface level statements about the fact that you don't post pictures of yourself partying because your grandma or a future employer may see them.) **\*\*You will want to incorporate into your paper specific textual references or screenshots of your social media profile.**

#3: Choose some element of Syracuse culture to analyze. Some possibilities include: brochures for prospective students, the campus tour on the SU website, fliers posted on campus, statues, buildings, and/or monuments on campus, etc. Explain how this item serves as a cultural text for the university. What argument does this item make, and how does it make this argument (ethos, pathos, logos, Kairos)? Consider the ideology of Syracuse culture that your chosen "text" reinforces or subverts. What specific elements of the text clue you in to the ideology? Describe how the various visual elements of the text (color, typeface, layout, physical placement, etc.) work to influence the audience. Finally, evaluate the success or failure of the text on conveying this ideology. **\*\*You will need to submit a copy/picture of the item, flier, brochure, etc. that you choose.**

#### **Evaluation Criteria**

- \*Appropriate and complete response to one of the above options
- \*Inclusion of a clear thesis statement/argument developed throughout the essay
- \*Demonstrated understanding of rhetorical concepts discussed thus far (elements of the rhetorical triangle, ethos, pathos, logos, Kairos, discourse, Discourse)
- \*Evidence of critical thinking and reflection
- \*Awareness of your specified audience
- \*Presentation of error-free texts (including spelling, grammar, and punctuation)
- \*Use of a creative title that represents your essay