

# Using Rape Culture to Teach Rhetorical Analysis

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## Background

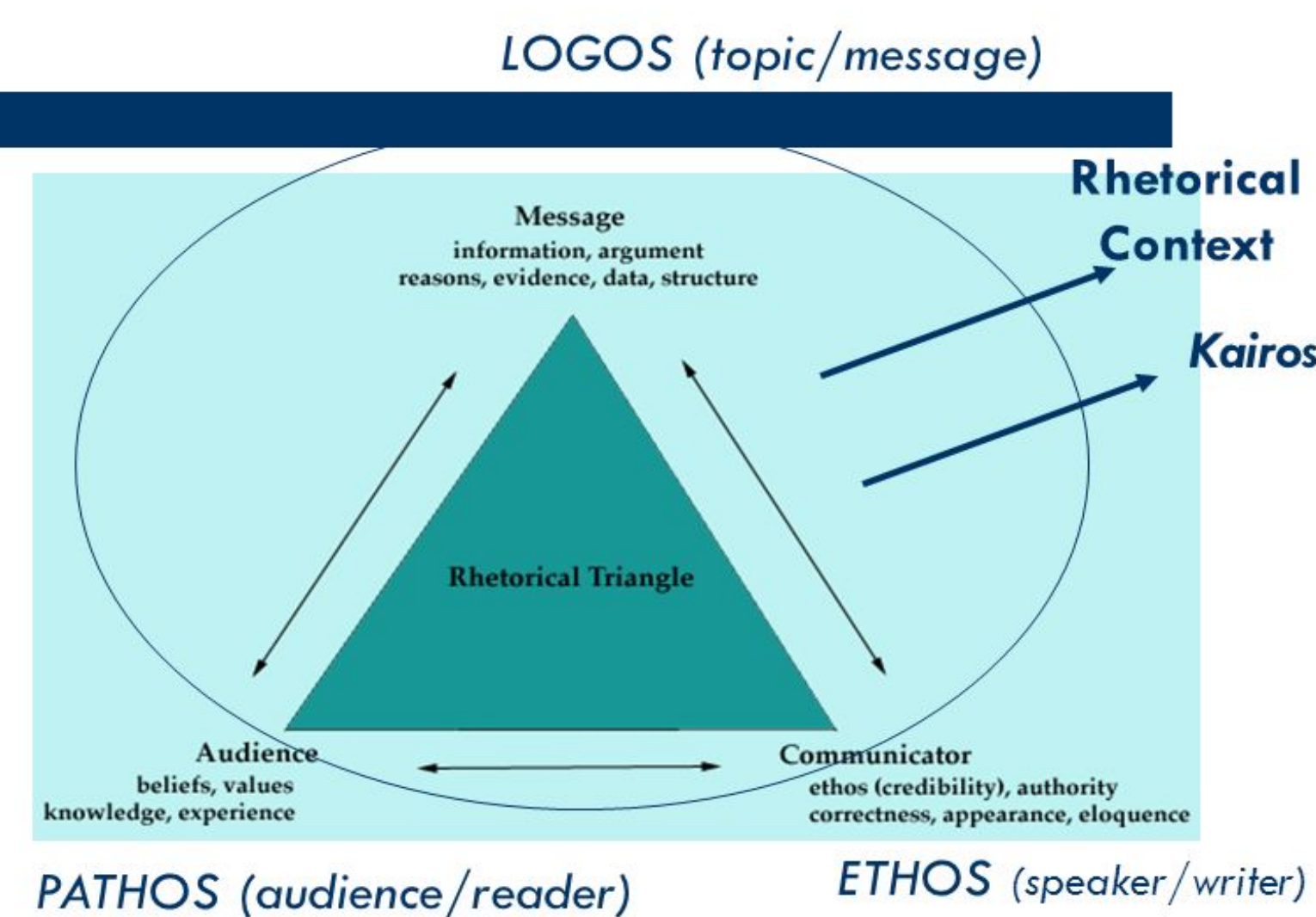
Since rhetorical analysis is the key to helping students understand why authors make the choices that they do when they are crafting a message to a particular audience, this is one of the most essential skill-sets to learn in 101 and sets them up for success in every subsequent paper (Bawarshi and Reiff; Miller; Soliday).

Unfortunately, it is also a skill-set that beginning composition students typically have difficulty mastering (Bawarshi and Reiff; Miller; Soliday).

This study considers student work on rhetorical analysis centering on the topic of Rape Culture to measure the understanding level that each student reached in regard to rhetorical analysis/crafting of the message.

A successful product will discuss the rhetorical strategies utilized by the author rather than focus on the student's personal opinion on the topic.

## ARISTOTLE'S RHETORICAL TRIANGLE



## Future Work...

- SPRING 2018:
- I have two sections of my own English 101 class participating in the study, as well as one control class.
- SUMMER 2018:
- Two colleagues, who also teach rhetorical analysis in their English 101 classes and who have consented to allow their students to be a part of the study, will evaluate the anonymous final portfolios of my 101 students who have consented to the study by using the common English department portfolio rubric.
- I will then compare the students' scores from my courses and the control courses.
- FALL 2019 & SPRING 2020
- I will send the entrance/exit survey to all of the students who gave consent to participate in the study and ask them to again answer the survey questions.
  - I will then compare how the answers to the questions have remained consistent or changed over time in order to gauge student retention of rhetorical analysis concepts.

## Research questions

- ❖ Does focusing on a taboo topic (rape culture) enable students to better see how writers utilize rhetorical strategies in order to effectively convey a message to the audience?
- ❖ How effectively can students divorce themselves from the topic in order to craft objective rhetorical analyses?

## Pre and post survey results

Survey Questions # of Entrance respondents: 15	What does it mean to rhetorically analyze a text?	What is ethos? How does it aid in the crafting of a message?	What is logos? How does it aid in the crafting of a message?	What is pathos? How does it aid in the crafting of a message?	What is Kairos? How does it aid in the crafting of a message?	What is rape culture?	How does focusing on a controversial topic, such as rape culture, affect the way that an author uses rhetorical appeals to craft a message?
Entrance Survey # of Entrance respondents: 15	E:2 M:0 F:12 NA:	E:3 M:4 F:8 NA:	E:4 M:6 F:5 NA:	E:6 M:2 F:7 NA:	E:6 M:2 F:7 NA:	E:5 M:2 F:8 NA:	E: 2 M:8 F:5 NA:
Exit Survey # of Exit respondents:15	E:10 M:3 F:2 NA:	E:8 M:6 F:1 NA:	E:6 M:9 F:0 NA:	E:9 M:6 F:0 NA:	E:9 M:6 F:0 NA:	E:7 M:7 F:1 NA:	E:9 M:5 F:1
Scoring Mechanism: (E) Exceeds expectations for understanding of concept (M) Meets expectations for understanding of concept (F) Fails to meet expectations for understanding of the concept (NA) Non-Applicable							
Final Portfolio # of Final Portfolio submissions: 12	E: 7 M: 1 F:3 NA:4						
For Portfolios: E = 87-100 M=73-86 F = 59-72	*Students must have a C or higher in order to pass English 101. A C is at least 73 points, according to UW Colleges Senate Policy.						

## Initial Observations from Fall 2017 Survey Results

- The results from the pre to the post survey affirm that a majority of the students demonstrated at least a proficient understanding of the concept after engaging in this unit. Only 2 of the students participating in the project failed to meet the benchmark for demonstrating an understanding of the concept of rhetorical analysis and how/why authors must carefully consider the usage of rhetorical devices when crafting a message about a controversial topic to an audience.
- At the beginning of the unit, the majority (12/15) did not know how to define rhetorical analysis and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> did not demonstrate proficiency explaining why and how rhetorical appeals are used effectively to convey a message about a controversial topic.
- By the end of the unit, every student demonstrated proficiency describing the concepts of logos, pathos and Kairos.

Students demonstrate a deeper understanding of rhetorical analysis and how it helps authors to craft an effective message:

"It allows the author to really dive into each device to make sure she/he can connect in every way with the broad audience that will come with a controversial topic. Making sure the author is not biased and credible while having the audience emotionally invested."

"It makes it easier to pick out the different rhetorical appeals because the author of a controversial topic needs to have all those in place in order to have a successful piece of writing."

"The topic affects how the author uses rhetorical devices because they have to intricately plan out each one to make sure that what is being said can NOT be taken any other way it is using the appropriate tone to impact the message."

## Methodology

I introduce the students to the concepts of rhetorical analysis and rhetorical devices (ethos, logos, pathos, Kairos, as well as tone and bias) during the first week of class.

I periodically revisit rhetorical analysis but focus more on thesis and organization during the first unit. Students take the Entrance Survey before the introduction of the rhetorical analysis unit.

During the rhetorical analysis unit, which is the second unit, students view and read a variety of pieces that speak to rape culture and together learn to analyze them by considering the use of the rhetorical devices of ethos, logos, pathos, Kairos, as well as tone and bias in order to gauge the effectiveness of the message.

Class analysis pieces:

- "The Rape Culture" – scholarly book chapter by Diane Herman (1984)
- "Barry" – comedic book chapter by Lena Dunham (2014)
- "Tea as Consent" – YouTube clip
- "Mishandling Rape" – *New York Times* editorial by Jed Rubenfeld
- "If You Can't Talk About Rape Without Blaming the Victims, Don't Talk About Rape" editorial response by Jessica Valenti
- "Our Rape Culture Problem Can't Be Solved By Colleges" *Huffington Post* blog by Soraya Chemaly
- "American Male" MTV Documentary
- Wisconsin Statues on Rape
- "Blurred Lines" song by Robin Thicke
- "Me and A Gun" song by Tori Amos
- "Baby, It's Cold Outside" song

Students then completed a rhetorical analysis essay on Michael Messner's "Playing Center: The Triad of Violence in Men's Sports" book chapter.

After students had turned in the paper, I had them complete the Exit Survey.

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