

**Multimodal and Collaborative Writing
Center for Teaching and Learning Final Report
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Rhetoric can serve as a productive tool through which to enhance observations students make as they write and research, effectively coaching them to ask not only what the text says, but also what it does, or how it functions. As a CTL Fellow, I have developed an instructional pattern to help students learn to read and write about sources through the critical lens of rhetorical analysis. To aid students in this process of discovery and learning, they must move through the following five phases:

1. Introduction to Rhetorical Analysis via class discussion and reading a series of articles on the subject culminating in a reflective essay
2. Practice rhetorically analyzing an object related to their research area and present their research to the class via an oral report
3. Apply rhetorical analysis to an event, object, person, or concept and write an individual research paper about how the sources function to shape what we know and how we know it
4. Apply rhetorical analysis to an event, object, person, or concept and re-present the same traditional research paper in a new/mixed genre where the medium is part of the argument
5. Write a reflective essay about what is gained and what is lost by repackaging research from a traditional research paper to a new/mixed genre

The first unit asks students to write a short reflective essay exploring their intellectual history of academic research and academic research writing. It also asks them to consider what they understand rhetoric to be after lectures and reading sources on the subject. The second unit asks students to position sources informing a particular topic they choose and orally report their findings. Not only do students investigate what sources say, but how the information and even the presentation of information contribute to the way each source persuades and informs readers. The third unit asks students to write a rhetorical analysis and present their findings in the form of a traditional research paper. The fourth unit asks students to essentially create an artistic project heavily influenced by research. They are to visually represent the rhetoric involved in the argument or arguments connected to their research topic. Because previous units have taught students to change their mindset from reporting on sources to rhetorically analyzing them, students are better prepared to write academic research papers that showcase a more original analysis of how sources shape what we know and how we know it. The final unit asks students to write an analytical essay that rhetorically analyzes what they learned about research, writing, and rhetoric. It also invites each student to critically reflect on what is gained or lost by the medium through which research is reported. They examine all course materials and communications, and then make a claim about the values informing the kind of writing and research presented to them in the course.

I believe the work students are given (within the parameters of my pedagogical approach) is rewarding to both students and teachers because it pushes us all to “explore the practices that people engage in to produce texts as well as the ways that writing practices gain their meanings and functions as dynamic elements of specific cultural settings” (Bazerman and Prior, *What Writing Does and How It Does It*).

As a CTL Fellow, I redesigned an existing course (RHET 103 Writing Outside of the Classroom) in order to support students in discovering what writing does, or how it functions. I decided to foreground an academic research and writing class in rhetoric and rhetorical analysis. To keep pace with advancing technology, provide new-found motivation for student-writers, and empower student-writers, I believe teaching writing must move beyond traditional alphabetic texts to include analyzing and interpreting how writing and images construct different perspectives and arguments. Multimodal writing occurs both inside and outside of classrooms and especially in employment settings. My redesign incorporates scholarly rationale from sources such as:

"Helping Students Use Textual Sources Persuasively" by Margaret Kantz (College English 52:1, January 1990, pp. 74-91)

"Building a Mystery: Alternative Research Writing and Academic Act of Seeking" by Robert Davis and Mark Shadle (CCC 51:3, February 2000, pp. 417-446)

"Rhetorical Analysis: Understanding How Texts Persuade Readers." *What Writing Does and How It Does It: An Introduction to Analyzing Texts and Textual Practices*, by Charles Bazerman and Paul A. Prior.

"The Multiple Media of Texts: How Onscreen and Paper Texts Incorporate Words, Images, and Other Media." *What Writing Does and How It Does It: An Introduction to Analyzing Texts and Textual Practices*, by Charles Bazerman and Paul A. Prior

I believe asking “Why?” should be part of every research writing course. My project can be applied to many courses at Trinity. In fact, every course should be the site where students learn to read and write, to research and revise with attention to writing as a social and productive practice. The instructional pattern I have developed can help students learn to read and write about sources through the critical lens of rhetorical analysis. I also believe the approach will spark interest in students and that they will feel appropriately challenged and rewarded for their efforts.

Many students come to the classroom expecting a routine of dull, clichéd and unimportant activities related to writing and research. I believe that in foregrounding rhetoric in writing/research courses students can still be challenged and inspired to learn to read and write in ways that can hold cultural, academic and personal capital. For me, teaching writing in any course offers an opportunity to nurture creativity and stimulate scholarship.