

# *Writing Spaces*

## Assignments & Activities Archive

### Cultural Analysis Podcast

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# Cultural Analysis Podcast

Jackie Mohan

## Overview

In this major assignment, students conduct a rhetorical analysis of one text (an advertisement, speech, essay, article, book, film, album or song, social media post, etc.) of their choice from within the last ten years. “Text” here is defined as an instance of communication, with a speaker, audience, and message. Students choose a text that they believe is culturally representative of and relevant to America today.

Students present their analysis in the medium of a podcast with an accompanying transcript, both to match podcasting conventions and for accessibility. In their podcast, students introduce themselves and name their podcasts then explain which text they chose to analyze and why, including context and background information, with special care to what the audience needs to know in order to understand their analysis. They explain why they chose the text, then break down the rhetorical triangle of speaker, audience, and message in great detail, ultimately relating back to the text’s sociocultural context and how it reflects the surrounding world in which they live, exploring ideologies, values, privilege, and power in our society. Completing this project as a podcast, in which students become podcast hosts with their own target audiences, helps them additionally grapple with their own rhetorical situation, as well as opening up discussions of how to adjust their communication for an audio-only medium, including considerations of tone, organization, and the necessity of describing visuals and emphasizing connections clearly.

Students utilize conventions of the rhetorical analysis genre and podcasts, as well as consider how they can transfer and use the skills and genre conventions from previous assignments, such as narrative or descriptive.

## Time Commitment

4 weeks

## Materials

Students will need a way to record an audio file and a way to create their transcript. The Otter app does both simultaneously, or students can use technologies of their choice.

## Assignment Process

- Students will first be introduced to rhetorical situation and practice analysis on a variety of different texts.
- Next, students are introduced to the conventions of both analysis writing and podcasting, and they will get comfortable listening to and analyzing podcasts from an audience perspective in order to inform their own positions as podcasters later on.
- Then, we visit the basics of argumentative structure and organization and discuss the importance of conveying organization clearly in audio mediums vs. written compositions. Students also practice with their intended podcasting technology.
- Finally, students begin the writing process with a variety of prewriting activities, leading into composing their first rough draft in the format of their choice (notes, script, or audio). Students then work on peer review and revision in small groups for one week before submitting final drafts.

## Learning Outcomes

Students engaging in this assignment will:

- Learn the conventions of writing in the rhetorical analysis genre and apply rhetorical knowledge and analytical skills, including addressing how a speaker uses rhetoric, how rhetoric affects an audience, and the effectiveness of that communication
- Practice composing in a new medium, podcasting, including how this requires a different approach in tone, organization, and appealing to audience
- Evaluate how a text fits into a wider sociocultural context (specifically, American culture) and assess those implications, focusing on how to convey those conclusions clearly to their own determined target audience

### Learning Accommodations

- For all podcast examples, captions or a transcript should be provided.
- Students may choose their own technologies for this assignment, but I recommend choosing one to demonstrate in class, alongside providing written instructions and a video tutorial for asynchronous reference.

### Further Reading

- Carroll, Laura Bolin. "Backpacks vs. Briefcases: Steps Toward Rhetorical Analysis." *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, volume 1, edited by Charley Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky, Parlor Press, 2010, 45-58.
- Ryan, Kathleen J. "Constructing Scholarly Ethos in the Writing Classroom." *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, volume 3, edited by Dana Driscoll, Mary Stewart, and Matt Vetter, 2020, 128-146.
- Thomas, Patrick. "Writers Must Develop a Strong, Original Voice." *Bad Ideas About Writing*, edited by Cheryl E. Ball

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and Drew M. Loewe, WVU Libraries, 2017, 126-130.