

6. Project: Rhetorical and Ethical Analysis of a Controversy

Due: 19th class, 4/25 (T)—bring 4 copies to class

Mandatory Revision Due: 20th class, 4/27 (R) -- EMAIL me a copy before class

Optional Revision Last Possible Date: 5/16 (R)

Length: 2000-3750 words, ~8-15 pages

Overview: Write an analysis of 3-5 articles that deal with a controversy. This Project is NOT an argument about the controversy. It is an analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the authors' use of ethics, rhetoric, and assumptions. Only in your section "My Position" should we learn your position on the controversy and a brief explanation of your reasons for believing so. Explicitly use the terminology and concepts from the "Ethics Tool Chest" and the "Rhetoric Tool Chest." Quote Crowley where appropriate. You should include quotations from each article and your explanation of their relevance to your points.

Directions:

1. Identify a controversial issue that has been written about in various sophisticated sources. The issue must have an ethical component as well as a rhetorical component.
 - a. The controversy might be a past or present controversy.
 - b. The controversy might come from a profession (e.g., doctor, lawyer, chemist, civil engineer).
 - c. The controversy might be one that has simply caught your interest.
2. Locate 3-5 articles in sophisticated sources (e.g., journals, books, authoritative web sites). These articles must argue different positions on the controversy. Don't take the first 3 articles you find.
 - a. You need to evaluate the articles in terms of their covering a large range of techniques, ethical appeals, positions on the controversy, etc. In other words, part of the assignment is your selecting fruitful sources.
 - b. Use the services of the reference librarians in the Haydn Library (14S-100)
3. Select a controversy about which you can understand both sides.
4. With most topics, one of the things you will need to discuss (and include as an appendix) is the Code of Ethics or Code of Conduct for members of whatever profession would be faced with that issue.
5. Use the terminology and concepts from the "Ethics Tool Chest" and the "Rhetoric Tool Chest."
6. Suggested Topics: Here are some possible topics, but feel free to create your own:
 - a. Select an issue from your future career (medicine, chemistry, engineering, law, etc.)
 - b. You may select a real issue (e.g., Dr. Kevorkian, a law suit against a company or industry such as the tobacco industry, a case against a particular engineer or scientist)
 - c. The Internet has useful sites for ethical issues confronting most major professions and explaining their Codes of Ethics or Codes of Conduct.
7. Or you might select a current or past controversy that interests you. For instance,
 - a. The rhetoric and arguments about invading Iraq before the war happened (a past controversy)
 - b. The rhetoric and arguments about pulling out of Iraq (current controversy)
 - c. The rhetoric and arguments surrounding any governmental plan or action (e.g.,

curtailing civil rights for safety, privatizing social security, the Patriot Act)

d. The rhetoric surrounding racial or class bias (current or past)—e.g., read articles written in the 1850s supporting and attacking slavery, or articles about affirmative action

8. Several Internet sites discuss or link to ethical controversies. One good place to start is <http://www.ethicsweb.ca/resources/>

9. The more focused your topic is, the better able you will be to find sophisticated sources

a. Sophisticated sources include journals and books written for specialists (e.g., Biomedical Ethics) and those written for well-informed lay readers--e.g., Harpers, Atlantic Monthly, New Yorker, The Nation (liberal), The National Review (conservative), Scientific American, Nature. Articles and editorials or columns from such sources would be good choices.

b. Avoid less sophisticated sources such as Time, Newsweek, US News and World Report.

Organization: Your Essay should be organized this way (with these headings and subheadings):

1. Introduction—State your research question

1.1. It should be phrased like this: “What assumptions (explicit and implicit), ethical principles, appeals, rhetorical strategies and devices have been used in the debate about Q?”

1.2. Establish kairos and forecast

2. Background

2.1. An explanation (1-4 paragraphs) of the controversy including but not limited to:

2.1.1. What is the situation? What action(s) or principle is being considered or contested?

2.1.2. For whom is the situation a problem?

2.1.3. What exactly is the controversy

2.1.4. What’s at stake? (e.g., the survival of a company, the expansion of democracy, the future of humankind, a client’s success)

2.1.5. What positions have been taken?

2.1.6. In general, who are the supporters and attackers of the position? Who wins and who loses if Q were done? If X were done?

2.1.7. In what ways is this a question of using unethical means to achieve what is to perceived to be an ethical and desirable end?

2.1.8. Other issues particular to this issue?

2.2. Analysis of “Title of 1st Article”

2.2.1. Summary of 1st Article’s main points, its purpose, its implied audience, the rhetorical situation, the types of evidence used

2.2.2. 1st Article’s assumptions

2.2.2.1. Explicit Assumptions—with examples and your explanations

2.2.2.2. Implicit Assumptions—with examples and your explanations

2.2.2.3. Effectiveness of Author’s use of assumptions

2.2.2.3.1. Your speculation on their effect on the implied audience

2.2.2.3.2. Your explanation of their effectiveness on you as a reader

2.2.3. 1st Article’s Use of Ethical Principles and Concepts

2.2.3.1. Implications of Author’s using these particular principles and concepts

2.2.3.2. Ethical principles and concepts that could have been applied by the author but

- which weren't (and your speculation about why they were not invoked)
- 2.2.3.3. Effectiveness of Author's use of ethical principles and concepts
 - 2.2.3.3.1. your speculation on their effect on the implied audience
 - 2.2.3.3.2. your explanation of their effectiveness on you as a reader
- 2.2.4. 1st Article's Rhetorical Strategies and Devices
 - 2.2.4.1. 1st Strategy or Device with examples and explanations
 - 2.2.4.2. 2nd Strategy or Device with examples and explanations
 - 2.2.4.2.1. etc.
 - 2.2.4.2.2. Overall effectiveness of the Strategies and Devices
 - 2.2.4.2.2.1. My speculation of the effectiveness on the implied audience (based on your description of the 1st Article's implied audience)
 - 2.2.4.2.2.2. My explanation of the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of the Strategies on me as reader
 - 2.2.4.2.2.3. etc.
- 2.3. "Title of 2nd Article"
 - 2.3.1. etc.
- 2.4. What I Learned from the Analysis
 - 2.4.1. About Rhetoric
 - 2.4.2. About Ethics
- 2.5. My Position on the Controversy
 - 2.5.1. My position on the controversy
 - 2.5.2. The ethical and practical reasons why I support my position
- 2.6. Conclusions
 - 2.6.1. About the ultimate effectiveness of the articles you have analyzed
 - 2.6.2. About the value (or lack thereof) of close rhetorical and ethical analysis of texts

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