

Essay # 2—Erasmus Argument

Reader-Ready Revision, Due SES #13

- EMAIL me a copy
- Bring 4 copies for Workshop

Mandatory Revision, Due SES #14

- This version includes, Postwrite, Workshop Acknowledgments, and, if appropriate, Writing Center Acknowledgements
- EMAIL me a copy

Optional Revision, Due SES #19

- EMAIL me a copy - no late essays accepted or graded
- Must have at least 250 additional words in **boldface** type
- You must have consulted the Writing Center about this Optional Revision
- Must have a new Postwrite with 2 headings (“What I Changed” and “What I Learned About Rhetoric by Revising This Essay”)
- Must have a new Writing Center Acknowledgement

Length: 1250-1500 total words (5-6 double-spaced pages)-- it's okay if the essay exceeds 1500 words so long as the extra words convey new ideas or information (as opposed to be the result of a wordy style)

Goals:

- To see both sides of a controversy
- To accommodate your audience throughout
- To take a position and to build an ethical and logical case for it while attacking the opponents' position
- To engage with the opponents' position (imagine how opponents would respond to your points and then give your counter-argument)
- To use rhetorical strategies and techniques to accommodate and to persuade a mixed audience that your position is more valid than the opposition's
- To use your knowledge of your audience's core beliefs and attitudes to shape an effective argument
- To connect this specific issue with the larger, ever-present question in our lives: “Do the ends justify the means?”
 - In other words, if the end (goal) is good (morally, practically), then we are justified in using immoral, unethical, or illegal strategies or actions (“the means”) to achieve that worthy goal.

What I'm looking for in your essay:

- The above goals fulfilled
- Audience accommodated in Intro and throughout essay
- Effective style and arrangement
- Effective use of ethical concepts
- Effective use of rhetorical strategies and techniques

Read the scenario below:

Scenario adapted from Erasmus

We live on a small island which is its own country (MIT-Land). For many years our country has been suffering under the burden of a tyrant—his taxes, his cruelty, his unpredictability, his unreasonable decisions to drag our country into wars with our far-off neighboring island countries, his unreasonable decisions to punish individuals for minor or even imaginary infractions. He became tyrant when his father died (who was also a cruel tyrant). He is ruler-for-life and has a powerful group of mercenaries who enforce his rules. Because these mercenaries are “guns-for-hire” rather than “true believers in the tyrant’s vision of the world,” once he is dead the mercenaries will probably see themselves as unemployed rather than as followers who must get revenge. But we can’t be sure of that.

Unable to stand it anymore, all the people of the island decided to offer a monetary reward for the murder of a tyrant. Every member of the community has contributed his/her own money in equal proportion (10% of his/her income) in order to create the reward fund. A few nights after the reward was been offered, Noctis breaks into the tyrant’s home. But the tyrant is away. Only the tyrant’s 10-year-old son is at home. Noctis kills the tyrant’s son and then leaves. The next morning, the tyrant returns to find his beloved son dead. Distraught with grief, the tyrant then commits suicide. Two days later, Noctis comes forward to claim the reward. There is no question that he is indeed the man who broke into the tyrant’s house and killed the boy.

In the ensuing days, there is a dispute over giving the reward to Noctis; some community members say that he has earned the reward, and others say he has not rightfully earned it.

All of us in this section of 21W.747 are citizens of the MIT-Land, and we have all contributed money to the reward fund. Because the nation’s citizens see us as having particularly keen insight into things (hey, you are in Rhetoric!), our whole section has been elected as a special tribunal to decide the issue. Our committee is called the 21W.747 Committee. It is left up to us consider all sides of the issue and then to vote whether or not Noctis is given the reward. If we in this room can reach a consensus (not a simple majority), then the nation will do whatever we recommend. If we can’t reach a consensus, then the nation might slip into civil war over the issue. Some of us believe that Noctis deserves the reward; others believe that he doesn’t, and some of us are undecided. In other words, we are a mixed audience. Your task is to convince **all** the other members of this Rhetoric class that your position is the one that should be adopted unanimously by the 21W.747 Committee.

The process that the 21W.747 committee has decided on is this: each member will write an essay examining all sides of the issue, building a case for whichever action he/she believes is ethically and practically correct and showing why the other position is less ethical and practical. Once all the essays have been read by all members of the committee, we will vote.

Your Task: Write an **essay** in which you argue either that (1) Noctis should be given the reward or that (2) Noctis should not be given the reward.

- To be effective, you must accommodate the opinions, ideas, and points of those who disagree with you
- To be effective, you must also anticipate and answer the arguments that will be made by those who disagree with you.
- Also, since all your readers have been exposed to the Ethics Tool Chest, you must make explicit use of ethical concepts (i.e., name them, define them briefly, and show how they apply)—showing where various ethical elements and theories clash and then explaining why X should be given precedence over Y is one of the things your readers will be expecting you to do

- And you must use whatever rhetorical appeals seem most likely to work with an audience made up of us.
- If it helps you to conceive of this assignment as a written speech, that is okay—but it is a “closet speech” (i.e., one meant to be read, not heard).

Audience: Members of this class and me. We are who we are in real life (our attitudes, interests, etc.)—only now we are also citizens of MIT-Land. We are a mixed audience.

Requirements for all Essays

Meaningful titles (at least in an academic setting and in this class) have a colon and a subtitle. For example,

- King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”: A Critical Rhetorical Analysis
- Walking Away from Omelas: The Rhetoric of Happiness

A Postwrite (100-250 words) is required for each Mandatory Revision and for each Optional Revision. It is your opportunity as a rhetor to explain to me what rhetorical approaches, strategies, and techniques you incorporated into your essay in order to make it persuasive. It is the way you demonstrate a conscious understanding of the art of rhetoric and to explain your conception of your audience’s beginning attitudes towards your topic, your thesis, and yourself as rhetor. It must use these boldfaced headings:

- **My Thesis**
 - Copy and paste your thesis statement here
- **My Audience**
 - Before they read your essay, what were your audience’s probable attitudes towards your topic and your thesis? What makes you think so?
 - Before they read your essay, what was their attitude toward you as rhetor? You need to be specific here—you need to seriously consider the role(s) you have played in class discussions, workshops, etc. Which of your beliefs have you actively expressed? How “visible” have you been so far in class? Will you need to “repair” your ethos or simply build on it?
 - Specifically explain how you dealt with their attitudes in your essay.
- **How I used Ethos (Aristotle)**
 - What ethos were you trying to project?
 - Give a specific list of things you did to enhance your ethos
 - e.g., how did you establish your sagacity (wisdom, expertise), goodwill (having concern for audience’s survival and growth needs), character (moral excellence, credibility, justice, self-control, common sense, etc.)?
- **How I used Pathos**
 - What specific emotions were you trying to invoke in your audience?
 - A la Aristotle--What specific emotions did you try to stir or change—anger into calm, or calm into anger, revenge into mercy or mercy into revenge, etc.?
 - Give a specific list of things you did to appeal to your audience’s emotions
- **How I used Logos**
 - List specific places where you used logos
 - What types of evidence did you use?
- **How I used Style**
 - List specific stylistic things that you did

Workshop Acknowledgements: (this section is included only in the Mandatory Revision). Here you tell me explicitly who gave what good advice, who didn't give good advice, etc. Here is a brief sample:

- Student X advised me to use more quotations to prove my points. blah blah
- Student Y pointed out that...etc.
- Student W didn't really give any useful advice

Writing Center Acknowledgements (this section is included only in the Mandatory Revision). If you didn't consult with the Center, simply say "Did not consult" under this heading. If you did consult with the Center, tell me explicitly who you worked with in the Center and what advice she/he gave. Here is a brief example:

- Amanda asked me questions that helped me see some other implications of the rhetor's use of..., particularly x and y . She also....
- Although I asked Eric to help with my organization, all he focused on was grammar, so he wasn't really much help.

Note: for both Workshop and Writing Center Acknowledgements, it is important to say who was not helpful as well as saying who was helpful.

Documentation Format:

- Quotations should be introduced and then commented upon. For each quotation or reference to a text, use MLA in-text citations
 - According to Doe, "blah blah" (34).
 - Supporting this idea is "blah blah" (Doe 34).
- At the end of your essay, you need a **Works Cited**: here you list the texts you used in your essay; and list the sources alphabetically by author's last name.

So the 1st page of your all your versions of your essay (RRR and Mandatory Revision and Optional Revision) should look like this:

Your Name + email address

<p>Date</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A Meaningful Title: A Meaningful Subtitle</p> <p>Then <i>skip 2 lines</i> and start your essay.</p>
--

After the last sentence of your essay, skip 3 lines and then give Works Cited, etc. Here is what he **last page** of the Mandatory Revision looks like this:

<p>Last sentences of your essay Blah blah.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Works Cited</p> <p>Blah blah</p>

Workshop Acknowledgement: blah blah

Writing Center Acknowledgement: blah blah

Postwrite: blah blah

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

21W.747-1 Rhetoric
Spring 2010

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.