

Terminology: Rhetorical Analysis

Term	Definition (denotation)
Accommodation	Rhetorical tactic in which the rhetor pretends to agree with the target audience. Often found at the beginning of an argument (see Rogerian argument).
Ad baculum (Latin: "to the stick")	Argument based upon the appeal to force or threats in order to bring about the acceptance of a conclusion. Not really an argument at all
Ad hominem argument (Latin: "to the person")	An attack on a person's character rather than on that person's ideas.
Ad misericordium argument (Latin: "to misery")	Argument appealing to the pity of the target audience. Think: UNICEF commercials, Christian Children's Fund, etc.
Ad populum argument (Latin: "to the people")	Argument appealing to the masses, or to what is considered "popular"
Allusion	A hint: something stated indirectly
Argument from anecdote	When rhetors tell a story to support a thesis. See also deductive argument
Argument from association	Argument along the lines of the saying, "birds of a feather flock together"
Argument from authority	Class of arguments based on asserted, inherent "clout": i.e. Harvard education, Ph.D., President of the United States
Argument from statistics	Argument which plays heavily upon the authority of statistics (the interpretation of which can, of course, be misrepresented)
Assertion	An unsupported claim: i.e. "You stink"
Author/rhetor	He/she/they who present(s) an argument
Authorizing tropes	Sub-arguments from authority: history, nature, science, logic, religion, morality, statistics, etc.
Begging the question	When truth of the conclusion is assumed by the premises. For example, "Do you still beat your wife?" begs the question that you ever beat your wife <i>in the first place</i> . A very sneaky trick. Try to answer a begged question without sounding like an idiot!
Buzz word	Word used to "butter up" a particular audience
Covert thesis	Very hidden, usually very controversial argument...too controversial to just spring on the target audience. Usually only discovered via mental gymnastics
Deductive argument	Deductive arguments assert that the conclusion follows necessarily from the truth of the premises. For example: All men are mortal. Joe is a man. Therefore Joe is mortal. If the first two statements are true, then the conclusion must be true.
Demonization	An extreme form of an <i>ad hominem</i> argument, in which a person or idea is represented as inherently or diabolically evil
Diction	Level of speech
Either/or	An argument in which a limited number of options (usually two) is given, while in reality there are more options. Also called a "black or white" argument.
Exaggeration/hyperbole	The use of exaggerated terms for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect
Existential import	The idea that if a word/phrase/idea is repeated enough, people will begin to believe it.
Ethos (Greek: character)	When rhetors try to come across as "nice." Often bundled with accommodation
Fact	Does not exist for the purposes of this course.
Hot button	Term meant to provoke anger in a particular audience
Implied thesis	More controversial argument, usually buried "between the lines" of a more overt argument
Inductive argument	Method of reasoning by which a rhetor collects a number of instances and forms a generalization that is meant to apply to all instances.

Irony	Use of words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning (ex. "Yeah, right").
Loaded diction	Using words with multiple meanings/connotations to support an argument. Usually negatively or positively loaded
Metaphor	an implied comparison between two unlike things that actually have something in common
Naming	Similar to diction: how rhetors describe things. The names they use tell you how they feel.
Overt thesis	Surface argument. Usually less controversial than the implied or covert thesis.
Persona	Verbal "mask" worn by the rhetor, in order to appear a certain way to the target audience
Rhetoric	The art of persuasion
Rhetorical analysis	Breaking down a piece of writing in order to uncover its overall argumentative strategy
Rogerial argument	An accommodating argument in which the rhetor begins by exploring the common ground he/she shares with the target audience, and waits to overtly disagree until well into the argument
Slippery slope argument	A series of causal arguments that lead to a final, highly-exaggerated conclusion, meant to scare: e.g. "If you keep playing with matches, you will burn down the entire city"
Synecdoche	Using a part to represent a whole (ex. "We call him "the brain") or a whole to represent a part (ex. "Today the White House issued a report...").
Target audience/intended readers	Group or groups identified by the rhetor as more likely to "buy" a certain type of argument/thesis
Thesis	What the rhetor wants the target audience to believe. Usually complex
Truth claim	Assertion that something possesses inherent "truth with a capital T"