chapter 1
Defining Rhetoric

Praxis in Action

Why Rhetoric Is Important in My Writing
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Here is a partial list of the things I needed to write today:

- An email to someone in my field asking her questions for a seminar paper I'm writing
- A lesson plan I intend to use for my students in this week's class
- An email to a family member
- Text messages to a friend in the hospital
- A reading response for a doctoral course I'm taking
- A grocery list for my boyfriend
- This short essay about rhetoric

All of these are rhetoric. Rhetoric is inescapable because we use it every time we use words to address an audience. Rhetoric gives us tools for deciding how to be successful in any given situation, and it acknowledges that words and languages were designed for people to communicate with each other. People think, we feel, we judge others. In each of these actions, we have logos, pathos, and ethos. Rhetoric is what makes us human.

In the list I provided, I have seven different scenarios with seven different audiences. In each one, I judge (sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously) how effectively to present myself and my message. This means no two pieces of writing will look or sound the same. We make rhetorical judgments based on to whom we are speaking and what we know about our audience, and these judgments affect the way we write each document.

Rhetoric is important because it helps us get work done in the world, and it helps us organize how we interact with the places and people around us. This is a field older than Aristotle but still as relevant as it has ever been. Without my careful use of rhetoric, my lesson plans would fall flat, my family member may be insulted, and my boyfriend might bring home Brussels sprouts instead of broccoli. I hate Brussels sprouts. We use rhetoric all the time, whether we know it or not. But knowing about rhetoric and knowing how to use it effectively and creatively makes us better at it. I couldn't get through my day without it.
What Is Rhetoric?
You have probably heard someone say of a politician's speech, "Oh, that's just rhetoric," meaning the politician's words are empty verbiage or hot air. The politician is attempting to sound impressive while saying nothing that has real meaning. Or perhaps the politician is making promises listeners believe he or she has no intention of keeping. The use of rhetoric in speeches—both bad speeches and good ones—is only the most visible use of rhetoric.

Rhetoric happens all around us, every day. Rhetoric is a persuasive language act—whether accomplished by speech, written texts, or images. It is the video footage of a demonstration on YouTube. It is the headlines on blog articles. It is the Declaration of Independence. Sam Leith explains,

> Rhetoric is language at play—language plus. It is what persuades and cajoles, inspires and bamboozles, thrills and misdirects. It causes criminals to be convicted, and then frees those criminals on appeal. It causes governments to rise and fall, best men to be ever after shunned by their friends' brides, and perfectly sensible adults to march with steady purpose toward machine guns [. . .]

It is made of ringing truths and vital declarations. It is a way in which our shared assumptions and understandings are applied to new situations, and the language of history is channeled, revitalized, and given fresh power in each successive age. ¹

Your parents and teachers have used rhetoric on you since you first understood the words "yes" and "no." And you've been using it right back to them, whenever you want to persuade them to let you do something that is contrary to their stance on a topic.

Rhetoric has been studied in an organized manner since the days of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The elites of both countries studied persuasive argument out of necessity. Their democratic systems of government required that citizens

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be able to argue persuasively in public, since there were no attorneys or professional politicians.

Today, rhetoric is still used in courts of law and political forums, but it is also studied in academia because it causes us to examine critically our own as well as others' ideas. Persuasive argument compels us to consider conflicting claims, to evaluate evidence, and to clarify our thoughts. We know that even wise, well-intentioned people don't always agree, so we consider others' ideas respectfully. After one person presents a persuasive argument, either orally or in writing, others respond to that argument with support, modification, or contradiction. Then, in turn, more individuals counter with their own versions, and thus, the interchange becomes a conversation.

**Rhetoric and Power**

Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the faculty of discovering, in a given instance, the available means of persuasion," which we might paraphrase as the power to see the means of persuasion available in any given situation. Each part of this definition is important. Rhetoric is power. The person who is able to speak eloquently, choosing the most suitable arguments about a topic for a specific audience in a particular situation, is the person most likely to persuade. In both Greece and Rome, the primary use of rhetoric was oratory—persuasion through public speaking. However, the texts of many famous speeches were studied as models by students, and prominent rhetoricians wrote treatises and handbooks for teaching rhetoric. To Greeks and Romans, a person who could use rhetoric effectively was a person of influence and power because he could persuade his audience to action. The effective orator could win court cases; the effective orator could influence the passage or failure of laws; the effective orator could send a nation to war or negotiate peace.

Skill with rhetoric has conveyed power through the ages, though in our contemporary world, rhetoric is often displayed in written text such as a book, newspaper or magazine article, or scientific report, rather than presented as a speech. Persuasive communication also can be expressed visually, as an illustration that accompanies a text or a cartoon that conveys its own message. Indeed, in our highly visual society, with television, movies, video games, and the Internet, images can often persuade more powerfully than words alone.

Using rhetoric effectively means being able to interpret the rhetoric we are presented with in our everyday lives. Knowledge of persuasive communication
or rhetoric empowers us to present our views and persuade others to modify their ideas. By changing ideas, rhetoric leads to action. By influencing actions, rhetoric affects society.

**Selected Definitions of Rhetoric**

Aristotle, 350 BCE—Rhetoric is “the faculty of discovering, in a given instance, the available means of persuasion.”

Cicero, 90 BCE—Rhetoric is “speech designed to persuade” and “eloquence based on the rules of art.”

Quintilian, 95 CE—Rhetoric is “the science of speaking well.”

Augustine of Hippo, ca. 426 CE—Rhetoric is “the art of persuading people to accept something, whether it is true or false.”

Anonymous, ca. 1490–1495—Rhetoric is “the science which refreshes the hungry, renders the mute articulate, makes the blind see, and teaches one to avoid every lingual ineptitude.”

Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, 1531—Rhetoric is “nothing other than an art of flatter, adulation, and, as some say more audaciously, lying, in that, if it cannot persuade others through the truth of the case, it does so by means of deceitful speech.”

Hoyt Hudson, 1923—Rhetoric is effective persuasion. “In this sense, plainly, the man who speaks most persuasively uses the most, or certainly the best, rhetoric; and the man whom we censure for inflation of style and strained effects is suffering not from too much rhetoric, but from a lack of it.”

J. A. Richards, 1936—Rhetoric is “a study of misunderstanding and its remedies.”

Sister Miriam Joseph, 1937—Rhetoric is “the art of communicating thought from one mind to another, the adaptation of language to circumstance.”

Kenneth Burke, 1950—Rhetoric is, “the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents.”

Gerard A. Hauser, 2002—“Rhetoric, as an area of study, is concerned with how humans use symbols, especially language, to reach agreement that permits coordinated effort of some sort.”
Activity 1.1 • Historical Usage of the Word “Rhetoric”

Read through the list of historical definitions of the word “rhetoric,” and choose one that you find interesting. In a discussion, compare your chosen definition with those of your classmates.

Are We All Greeks?

As Americans, we owe an immense debt to ancient Greek civilization. Our laws, our democratic form of government, our literature, and our art have their roots in ancient Athens. Earlier generations of Americans and Western Europeans who often studied Latin and Greek may have had a clearer understanding of the direct connections between our culture and Athens of the fourth and fifth centuries BCE. Indeed, the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley famously said, “We are all Greeks” because of the essential influence of ancient Greek culture upon Western civilization. However, even translated into twenty-first-century American English, the linkage is still there.

Something quite amazing happened in Athens, around 500 BCE. Instead of being invaded by a foreign country who appointed a puppet ruler or experiencing a coup in which a strong man seized power, the people peaceably chose to put in place a direct democracy. Attica (with its capital Athens) was not the only city-state to have a democracy, but it was the most successful. During the golden age of Greece, from roughly 500 BCE to 300 BCE, art, architecture, and literature thrived.

Direct or radical democracy meant all male citizens of Attica over the age of 20 could vote in the Assembly, the policy-making body of the city-state. They did not elect senators or representatives as we do today. Each of these men voted directly. Moreover, they could settle differences with fellow citizens by suing in the law courts. Out of 250,000 to 300,000 residents in Attica, some 30,000 were citizens. Amazingly, it was not unusual for 10,000 of these eligible men to vote in the Assembly. The law courts had juries of 500 or more. Imagine trying to speak to an audience of 10,000 people without modern loudspeakers. Even with the wonderful acoustics in Greek theatres, it would have been a challenge.

Ordinary citizens were required to speak in the Assembly or the courts to promote laws or defend themselves from lawsuits, since there were no attorneys or professional politicians. Certainly, speaking before such large audiences necessitated special skills acquired only through extensive training and practice. Many sought out teachers to help them learn how to speak persuasively, and,
indeed, training in rhetoric became the primary method of education for the elite young men (and even a few women).

The earliest teachers of the verbal persuasive skills we now call rhetoric were Sophists who migrated to Athens from Sicily and other Greek states. Some of their viewpoints were curiously modern—for example, some argued that knowledge is relative and that pure truth does not exist. However, they became known for teaching their pupils to persuade an audience to think whatever they wanted them to think. Sophists such as Gorgias often presented entertainment speeches during which they would argue, on the spur of the moment, any topic raised by the audience, just to show they were able to construct effective arguments for any subject.

Claiming the Sophists' rhetoric could be employed to manipulate the masses for good or ill, and that rhetoricians used it irresponsibly, Plato coined the term, rhetorike—from which we take the term, "rhetoric"—as a criticism of the Sophists. Ironically, Plato demonstrates excellent rhetorical techniques himself when he condemns rhetoric by arguing that only the elite who are educated in philosophy are suited to rule, not the rhetoricians. Aristotle, Plato's student, took a more moderate viewpoint toward rhetoric. Indeed, he was the first philosopher to classify rhetoric as a tool for practical debate with general audiences. His book On Rhetoric (though it was probably lecture notes possibly combined with student responses rather than a manuscript intended for publication) is the single most important text that establishes rhetoric as a system of persuasive communication.

Athens, even in its glory days, seethed with controversy and bickering over the many inefficiencies of democracy. Men trained in rhetoric executed two coups, the Tyranny of the Four Hundred in 411 BCE and the Tyranny of the Thirty in 404 BCE, neither of which was an improvement; after each coup, democracy returned. Moreover, Athenians fought wars with Persia (the Battle of Marathon in 490 BCE and the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BCE) and Sparta (the Peloponnesian War in 431–404 BCE and the Corinthian War of 395–387 BCE). Finally, the armies of Philip II of Macedonia defeated Athens at the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 BCE, ending Athenian independence. Despite coups and wars, democracy remained in place in Athens for nearly 200 years.

If Americans might be called Greeks because our country is based on Greek traditions, this does not mean that rhetoric does not appear in all cultures. True, one might say that all civilizations have some sort of persuasive negotiation process; but profound differences exist between cultures in terms of what verbal strategies are considered persuasive. Indeed, disparity in
expectations and the actions of individuals and groups from different traditions can be a cause of strife in any culture.

**Activity 1.2 • Contemporary Usage of the Word “Rhetoric”**

Find at least two recent but different examples involving uses of the word “rhetoric.” For example, search your local newspaper for an example of how the word “rhetoric” is being used. A search of the *Dallas Morning News* for the word “rhetoric” led to a story about citizen efforts to clean up a neglected area of town: “He now hopes for help to finally fill the gap between rhetoric and reality.” Or ask a friend, fellow employee, or a family member to tell you what the word “rhetoric” means, and write down what they say. Discuss your examples in your small group, and present the best ones to the class.

**Visual Map of Meanings for the Word “Rhetoric”**

The word map for the word “rhetoric” shown in Figure 1.1 on the next page has branches for different meanings of the word, with some branches splitting again to display subtle subsets of connotation. It was created by a website, *Visual Thesaurus* (www.visualthesaurus.com), which computes visual word maps for any word inputted in its search box. The idea is that words lead to branches that lead to more words, inspiring users to think of language in new ways.

If you recreate the rhetoric word map at the *Visual Thesaurus* site and place your cursor over any of the circles connecting the branches, a small box will pop up that defines that connection. One of these connection boxes is visible in Figure 1.1. Notice it says, “using language effectively to please or persuade.” This is the branch of the visual map that is closest to the meaning of “rhetoric” as used in this book. The other branches illustrate other contemporary uses of the word.

**Activity 1.3 • Explore the Visual Map of the Word “Rhetoric”**

In your small group, choose one of the five branches of words in the visual map of the word “rhetoric.” Go to one or more good dictionaries and explore the meanings of the words in that branch. A good place to start would be the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), which your college library may offer online. The *OED* offers intricate analyses of the histories of word meanings. Report to the class what you find out about the words on your particular branch.
**Figure 1.1 • Word Map for “Rhetoric”**

- magniloquence
- grandiosity
- ornateness
- grandiloquence
- rhetoric
- empty words
- hot air
- palaver
- empty talk
- using language effectively to please or persuade
- expressive style
- style
- rhetorical device
- literary study

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**Reading 1.1**

Have you bought hummus or coconut water at the grocery store? Worn a henna tattoo? Then you may have participated in Columbusing, the art of “discovering” something, usually from another culture, that is not new. The term echoes Columbus’s “discovery” of the New World, which had long been inhabited by non-Europeans.

Brenda Salinas writes about Columbusing in this article published on NPR.com.

There isn’t anything inherently wrong about eating hummus or getting a henna tattoo, argues Salinas. She attempts to persuade you that the problem is the stripping of cultural context from the item, in effect, engaging in cultural appropriation. To the Latinos who grew up eating empanadas, for example, it can feel like theft when Buzzfeed raves about “a hand pie, a little foldover pie that you can fit in your hand. They have flaky crusts and can be sweet or savory.”

As you read Salinas’s article, think about occasions when you may have engaged in Columbusing.

**“Columbusing”: The Art of Discovering Something that is Not New**

by Brenda Salinas

If you’ve danced to an Afrobeat-heavy pop song, dipped hummus, sipped coconut water, participated in a Desi-inspired color run or sported a henna tattoo, then you’ve Columbused something.

Columbusing is when you “discover” something that’s existed forever. Just that it’s existed outside your own culture, nationality, race or even, say, your neighborhood. Bonus points if you tell all your friends about it.

Why not? In our immigrant-rich cities, the whole world is at our doorsteps.
Sometimes, though, Columbusing can feel icky. When is cultural appropriation a healthy byproduct of globalization and when is it a problem?

**All the Rage**

Buzzfeed Food published an article asking, “Have you heard about the new kind of pie that’s *all the rage* lately?” It’s a hand pie, a little foldover pie that you can fit in your hand. They have flaky crusts and can be sweet or savory. You know, exactly like an empanada, a Latin American culinary staple.

On face value, it seems stupid to get worked up over an empanada. I mean, it’s just a pastry, right? But “discovering” empanadas on Pinterest and calling them “hand pies” strips empanadas of their cultural context. To all the people who grew up eating empanadas, it can feel like theft.

**Feeling Overlooked**

When it comes to our culinary traditions, Latinos are used to feeling robbed.

Latino activists spoke out in May when Chipotle announced plans to print original stories by famous writers on its paper goods and failed to include any Mexican-Americans or Latinos on the roster. The American-owned chain can profit from Mexican culture while overlooking the harsh reality of how Latinos have been treated in this country.

In this promotional photo shot, TV star Jennie Garth sprays the crowd with orange at the Shout Color Throw on June 21 at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles. Events like this one are being held in Europe and the United States, but most organizers don’t mention that these events are inspired by the Hindu festival of Holi—but stripped of religious meaning.

*Photo Credit: Jeff Lewis/AP Images for SC Johnson*

A man sprays colored dye on people dancing during Holi celebrations in India in 2012. Holi, the Hindu festival of colors, also heralds the coming of spring—a detail that partiers at the Shout Color Throw might miss.

*Photo Credit: Rajesh Kumar Singh/AP*
On Cinco de Mayo, chef Anthony Bourdain asked why Americans love Mexican food, drugs, alcohol and cheap labor but ignore the violence that happens across the border. “Despite our ridiculously hypocritical attitudes towards immigration,” writes Bourdain, “we demand that Mexicans cook a large percentage of the food we eat, grow the ingredients we need to make that food, clean our houses, mow our lawns, wash our dishes, look after our children.”

It’s frustrating when even the staunchest anti-immigration activists regularly eat Mexican food. It seems like a paradox to relish your fajitas while believing the line cook should get deported.

Admittedly, cultural appropriation is an integral and vital part of American history. And one day, empanadas might become as American as pizza (yes, I appreciate the irony of that statement). But the day when Latinos are considered as American as Italian-Americans, well, that feels further away.

**Why It Hurts**

The condolence prize for being an outsider is that you can take solace in the cultural traditions that make you unique. When outsiders use tweezers to pick out the discrete parts of your culture that are worthy of their attention, it feels like a violation. Empanadas are trendy, cumbia is trendy, but Latinas are still not trendy.

Code Switch blogger Gene Demby writes, “It’s much harder now to patrol the ramparts of our cultures, to distinguish between the appreciators and appropriators. Just who gets to play in which cultural sandboxes? Who gets to be the bouncer at the velvet rope?”

**Playing Explorer**

Of course, there is no bouncer, but we can be careful not to Columbus other culture’s traditions. Before you make reservations at the hottest fusion restaurant or book an alternative healing therapy, ask yourself a few questions:

- Who is providing this good or service for me?
- Am I engaging with them in a thoughtful manner?
- Am I learning about this culture?
Are people from this culture benefiting from my spending money here?
Are they being hurt by my spending money here?

It is best to enter a new, ethnic experience with consideration, curiosity and respect. That doesn’t mean you have to act or look the part of a dour-faced anthropologist or an ultra-earnest tourist. You can go outside your comfort zone and learn about the completely different worlds that coexist within your city. If you’re adventurous, you can explore the entire world without leaving the country and without needing a passport.

Just remember, it’s great to love a different culture and its artifacts, as long as you love the people too.

Activity 1.4 • Analyzing Columbusing as an Argument

"‘Columbusing’: The Art of Discovering Something that Is Not New" is a rhetorical document because the author is attempting to persuade her audience to believe something. In a group, use these review questions to discuss what Salinas is arguing.

1. What does Salinas want her audience to do differently? How does she define Columbusing? What does it have to do with Columbus?

2. Make a list of the examples Salinas gives of Columbusing. Then, make a list of other Columbusing items or activities you have bought or engaged in. Share your group’s list with the class.

3. What does Salinas say we can do to avoid Columbusing other cultures’ traditions? Do you agree that these are good suggestions? Why or why not? Discuss these questions in your group, and share your thoughts with the class.

Rhetorical Argument

Often, in our culture, the word *argument* is taken to mean a disagreement or even a fight, with raised voices, rash words, and hurt feelings. We have the perception of an argument as something that leads to victory or defeat, winners or losers. A *rhetorical argument*, however, is the carefully crafted presentation of a viewpoint or position on a topic and the giving of thoughts, ideas, and opinions along with reasons for their support. The
persuasive strength of an argument rests upon the rhetorical skills of the rhetor (the speaker or the writer) in utilizing the tools of language to persuade a particular audience.

**Types of Argument**

Academic arguments can be divided into several different categories, depending upon the extent of the writer's desire to persuade and the scope of the conversational exchange.

1. **Makes a point.** One type of argument simply makes a point about a topic. The article in this chapter, "'Columbusing': The Art of Discovering Something that Is Not New," argues, for example, that buying hummus or getting a henna tattoo is Columbusing, which labels as new something ancient from another culture. To do so strips the cultural context from things or activities. The subtext of the article suggests Columbusing is a bad thing and should be avoided. If the author of this type of argument offers sufficient evidence to back up the thesis, no one is likely to disagree, except to say, perhaps, the author is overreacting or the point the author makes is not important.

2. **Aims to persuade.** A second type of argument involves a controversial issue, and the writer's aim is to persuade the audience to change its stance on the matter. For the writer, the ideal result would be that members of the audience alter their positions to coincide with the writer's viewpoint. In this second type of argument, it is essential that the writer offer the complete structure of thesis, evidence, possible opposing viewpoints which are discussed and countered, and a conclusion. "The Sleepover Question," another reading in this chapter, presents this kind of argument. The author, who has conducted research in both America and Holland, argues the controversial position that if American parents would adopt more liberal attitudes toward their children's sexuality, like the parents in Holland, "the transition into adulthood need not be so painful for parents or children." A reading in Chapter 3, "Executions Should Be Televised," offers a more extreme version of this type of argument. Either executions are televised or they aren't, and the writer advocates that they should be.

3. **Tries to find common ground.** A third type of argument emphasizes multiple perspectives and viewpoints and tries to find common ground participants can agree upon. In Chapter 4, several readings are collected
in a casebook called “The $300 House.” The Harvard Business Review initiated a design competition called The $300 House, which was intended to spark inclusive argument with the aim of gathering ideas about how to build inexpensive but adequate homes for the poor in the world’s slums. One of the readings, “Hands Off Our Houses,” opposes the design competition, saying that bringing $300 houses into the slums of Mumbai is not the answer to the housing problem. However, the author of “The $300 House: A Hands-On Approach to a Wicked Problem,” attempts to find common ground with the authors of “Hands Off Our Houses” by saying he agrees housing for the poor is a complex problem “that can’t be fixed with a clever shack alone.”

In Chapter 5, Rogerian (or common ground) argument, named after psychologist Carl Rogers, is discussed and outlined. Rogerian argument has four elements: introduction, common ground and common arguments, a position or argument, and a positive statement of how the position could, at least in some instances, benefit the opposition.

These three types of arguments represent points in a spectrum, and all persuasive texts may not neatly fit into one of the three categories. A crucial thing to remember, though, is that all arguments involve the presentation of a line of reasoning about a topic or an issue—a thesis, hypothesis, or claim—and the support of that reasoning with evidence.

**Aristotle’s Three Appeals**

Aristotle identified three appeals (see Figure 1.2 on the following page) or three ways to persuade an audience, and we are still using these today, though often without using the Greek terms to identify the means of persuasion.

**Ethos**—The rhetor persuades by means of his or her character or credibility. In oratory, the speaker projects an air of confidence and authority. In writing, ethos is conveyed by the writer’s qualifications or the authorities cited and also by the quality of the writing.

**Pathos**—The rhetor persuades by playing upon the listener’s (or reader’s) emotions. He or she may refer to children, death, disaster, injustice, or other topics that arouse pity, fear, or other emotions.

**Logos**—The rhetor persuades by using reasoning and evidence. Arguments based on logos employ deductive or inductive reasoning.
Figure 1.2 • Aristotle’s Three Appeals

Although a good argument will contain at least traces of all three appeals, skilled rhetors analyze their audiences to determine which of the three will be most persuasive for that particular audience. Then, they construct arguments that emphasize that particular appeal.

In addition, a knowledgeable rhetor considers the time, place, audience, topic, and other aspects of the occasion for writing or speaking to determine the kairos, or opportune moment for the argument (see Figure 1.3). This factor or critical moment both provides and limits opportunities for appeals suitable to that moment. For example, someone giving a commencement address has certain opportunities and constraints. Likewise, an attorney writing a last-minute appeal for someone on death row has a very different set of options.

Figure 1.3 • Kairos
Microsoft Just Laid Off Thousands of Employees With a Hilariously Bad Memo
by Kevin Roose

Typically, when you're a top executive at a major corporation that is laying off more than 10 percent of your workforce, you say a few things to the newly jobless. Like "sorry." Or "thank you for your many years of service." Or even "we hate doing this, but it's necessary to help the company survive."

What you don't do is bury the news of the layoffs in the 11th paragraph of a long, rambling corporate strategy memo.

And yet, this was Microsoft honcho Stephen Elop's preferred method for announcing to his employees today that 12,500 of them were being laid off. (18,000 are being laid off companywide; Elop, the former head of Nokia, oversees the company's devices unit, which was hardest hit by the layoffs.)

How bad was Elop's job-axing memo? Really, really bad. It's so bad that I can't even really convey its badness. I just have to show you.

Here's how it starts:

Hello there,

Hello there? Hello there? Out of all the possible "you're losing your job" greetings, you chose the one that sounds like the start to a bad OKCupid message? "Hello there" isn't how you announce layoffs; it's what you

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Kevin Roose's essay, "Microsoft Just Laid Off Thousands of Employees With a Hilariously Bad Memo" illustrates the dangers of not considering kairos. When Stephen Elop needed to lay off more than 10 percent of Microsoft workers under his supervision, Elop did not say anything one might expect—like "sorry," or "I regret," or "thank you for your service." In a memo to the affected employees, he did not even get around to the news of layoff until the eleventh paragraph.

If Elop had considered the kairos of the situation, then he would have realized his audience would not be interested in all the planning information he crowded into the memo. They would want to know the bad news, if it had to be told, near the beginning of the memo. Elop, as Roose reveals in his analysis of the memo, was more interested in his corporate strategy than in what his audience at that time and place needed or wanted to hear.

The essay was published in New York Magazine.
say right before you ask, “What’s a girl like you doing on a site like this? ;)” It’s the fedora of greetings.

Anyway, carry on. Let’s hear the bad news:

Microsoft’s strategy is focused on productivity and our desire to help people “do more.” As the Microsoft Devices Group, our role is to light up this strategy for people. We are the team creating the hardware that showcases the finest of Microsoft’s digital work and digital life experiences, and we will be the confluence of the best of Microsoft’s applications, operating systems and cloud services.

Wait, what does this have to do with layoffs?

To align with Microsoft’s strategy, we plan to focus our efforts. Given the wide range of device experiences, we must concentrate on the areas where we can add the most value. The roots of this company and our future are in productivity and helping people get things done. Our fundamental focus—for phones, Surface, for meetings with devices like PPI, Xbox hardware and new areas of innovation—is to build on that strength. While our direction in the majority of our teams is largely unchanging, we have had an opportunity to plan carefully about the alignment of phones within Microsoft as the transferring Nokia team continues with its integration process.

Oh, I get it. This is the warm-up. You’re giving me a few minutes to sit down, compose myself, grab the Kleenex. Now you’re going to drop the hammer.

It is particularly important to recognize that the role of phones within Microsoft is different than it was within Nokia. Whereas the hardware business of phones within Nokia was an end unto itself, within Microsoft all our devices are intended to embody the finest of Microsoft’s digital work and digital life experiences, while accruing value to Microsoft’s overall strategy. Our device strategy must reflect Microsoft’s strategy and must be accomplished within an appropriate financial envelope. Therefore, we plan to make some changes.

“Financial envelope”? You don’t literally keep all of Microsoft’s cash in a big envelope, do you? Anyway, “changes.” I know what that’s supposed to mean. Now, please, give it to me straight: tell me I’m fired.
We will be particularly focused on making the market for Windows Phone. In the near term, we plan to drive Windows Phone volume by targeting the more affordable smartphone segments, which are the fastest growing segments of the market, with Lumia. In addition to the portfolio already planned, we plan to deliver additional lower-cost Lumia devices by shifting select future Nokia X designs and products to Windows Phone devices. We expect to make this shift immediately while continuing to sell and support existing Nokia X products.

To win in the higher price segments, we will focus on delivering great breakthrough products in alignment with major milestones ahead from both the Windows team and the Applications and Services Group. We will ensure that the very best experiences and scenarios from across the company will be showcased on our products. We plan to take advantage of innovation from the Windows team, like Universal Windows Apps, to continue to enrich the Windows application ecosystem. And in the very lowest price ranges, we plan to run our first phones business for maximum efficiency with a smaller team.

WTF. Is this some kind of joke? DO I HAVE A JOB OR NOT?

We expect these changes to have an impact to our team structure. With our focus, we plan to consolidate the former Smart Devices and Mobile Phones business units into one phone business unit that is responsible for all of our phone efforts. Under the plan, the phone business unit will be led by Jo Harlow with key members from both the Smart Devices and Mobile Phones teams in the management team. This team will be responsible for the success of our Lumia products, the transition of select future Nokia X products to Lumia and for the ongoing operation of the first phone business.

I AM GNAWING ON MY MOUSE PAD IN ANGER. ALL I WANT TO KNOW IS WHETHER I NEED TO START SELLING MY PLASMA TO MAKE RENT NEXT MONTH. PLEASE TELL ME THIS BIT OF INFORMATION.

As part of the effort, we plan to select the appropriate business model approach for our sales markets while continuing to offer our products in all markets with a strong focus on maintaining business continuity. We will determine each market approach based on local market dynamics, our ability to profitably deliver
local variants, current Lumia momentum and the strategic importance of the market to Microsoft. This will all be balanced with our overall capability to invest.

Our phone engineering efforts are expected to be concentrated in Salo, Finland (for future, high-end Lumia products) and Tampere, Finland (for more affordable devices). We plan to develop the supporting technologies in both locations. We plan to ramp down engineering work in Oulu. While we plan to reduce the engineering in Beijing and San Diego, both sites will continue to have supporting roles, including affordable devices in Beijing and supporting specific US requirements in San Diego. Espoo and Lund are planned to continue to be focused on application software development.

Blah blah blah I don't even care anymore. You have numbed me to the afflictions of mankind with phrases like “business continuity” and “market dynamics.” And now you’re probably going to use some crazy euphemism, like “streamline,” to tell me I’m fired. Go ahead.

We plan to right-size our manufacturing operations to align to the new strategy and take advantage of integration opportunities. We expect to focus phone production mainly in Hanoi, with some production to continue in Beijing and Dongguan. We plan to shift other Microsoft manufacturing and repair operations to Manaus and Reynosa respectively, and start a phased exit from Komaron, Hungary.

“Right-size”! “Phased exit”! Oh, you are so killing this. You get an extra snack ration at CEO summer camp.

In short, we will focus on driving Lumia volume in the areas where we are already successful today in order to make the market for Windows Phone. With more speed, we will build on our success in the affordable smartphone space with new products offering more differentiation. We'll focus on acquiring new customers in the markets where Microsoft’s services and products are most concentrated. And, we’ll continue building momentum around applications.

Life is empty. All that remains is dust.

We plan that this would result in an estimated reduction of 12,500 factory direct and professional employees over the next year.
These decisions are difficult for the team, and we plan to support departing team members’ with severance benefits.

There it is, finally. In paragraph 11. I would react more strongly to the news that I’m laid off, but my synapses are no longer firing properly. The badness of this email has rewired my brain’s circuitry. All I understand now is business-school jargon. And death. Sweet death.

More broadly across the Devices team, we will continue our efforts to bring iconic tablets to market in ways that complement our OEM partners, power the next generation of meetings & collaboration devices and thoughtfully expand Windows with new interaction models. With a set of changes already implemented earlier this year in these teams, this means there will be limited change for the Surface, Xbox hardware, PPI/meetings or next generation teams.

We recognize these planned changes are broad and have very difficult implications for many of our team members. We will work to provide as much clarity and information as possible. Today and over the coming weeks leaders across the organization will hold town halls, host information sharing sessions and provide more details on the intranet.

Oh, good. Because if it’s one thing I need right now, it’s more details.

The team transferring from Nokia and the teams that have been part of Microsoft have each experienced a number of remarkable changes these last few years. We operate in a competitive industry that moves rapidly, and change is necessary. As difficult as some of our changes are today, this direction deliberately aligns our work with the cross company efforts that Satya has described in his recent emails. Collectively, the clarity, focus and alignment across the company, and the opportunity to deliver the results of that work into the hands of people, will allow us to increase our success in the future.

Regards,

“Regards?” Really? We started at OKCupid stalker, and you’re ending at “over-eager candidate for summer internship?” Well, okay. Sure. Whatever. Not like it matters.

Stephen
Activity 1.5 • Discuss Microsoft’s Memo Laying Off Employees

In a small group, discuss Stephen Elop’s memo to employees who were being laid off and Roose’s colorful commentary.

1. What would you think if you received such a memo? How is Elop ignoring kairos in his memo? Reread the section earlier in the chapter in which kairos is discussed, and then decide with your group how Elop fails to take kairos into consideration in writing his memo. Report to the class.

2. Discuss what employees would have preferred to hear from Elop, assuming they must be laid off. Share your conclusions with the class.

Reading 1.3

This selection by Amy Schalet was first published in The New York Times. “The Sleepover Question” hazards an argument that many Americans—or at least American parents—may find controversial. Backed by her credentials as a professor of sociology, Schalet cites research from 130 interviews, both in the United States and the Netherlands, and tackles the issue of whether or not American parents should allow their adolescent children to have sex in the family home. Pay particular attention, for she shows how to argue a subject that is not only controversial but often ignored.

The Sleepover Question

by Amy Schalet

NOT under my roof. That’s the attitude most American parents have toward teenagers and their sex lives. Squeamishness and concern describe most parents’ approach to their offspring’s carnality. We don’t want them doing it—whatever “it” is!—in our homes. Not surprisingly, teenage sex is a source of conflict in many American families.

Would Americans increase peace in family life and strengthen family bonds if they adopted more accepting attitudes about sex and what’s allowable under the family roof? I’ve interviewed 130 people, all white, middle class and not particularly religious, as part of a study of teenage sex and family life here and in the Netherlands. My look into cultural differences suggests family life might be much improved, for all, if Americans had more open ideas about teenage sex. The question of who sleeps where when a teenager brings a boyfriend or girlfriend home for the night fits within the larger world of culturally divergent ideas about teenage sex, lust and capacity for love.

Kimberly and Natalie dramatize the cultural differences in the way young women experience their sexuality. (I have changed their names to protect
confidentiality.) Kimberly, a 16-year-old American, never received sex education at home. “God, no! No, no! That’s not going to happen,” she told me. She’d like to tell her parents that she and her boyfriend are having sex, but she believes it is easier for her parents not to know because the truth would “shatter” their image of her as their “little princess.”

Natalie, who is also 16 but Dutch, didn’t tell her parents immediately when she first had intercourse with her boyfriend of three months. But, soon after, she says, she was so happy, she wanted to share the good news. Initially her father was upset and worried about his daughter and his honor. “Talk to him,” his wife advised Natalie; after she did, her father made peace with the change. Essentially Natalie and her family negotiated a life change together and figured out, as a family, how to adjust to changed circumstance.

Respecting what she understood as her family’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, Kimberly only slept with her boyfriend at his house, when no one was home. She enjoyed being close to her boyfriend but did not like having to keep an important part of her life secret from her parents. In contrast, Natalie and her boyfriend enjoyed time and a new closeness with her family; the fact that her parents knew and approved of her boyfriend seemed a source of pleasure.

The difference in their experiences stems from divergent cultural ideas about sex and what responsible parents ought to do about it. Here, we see teenagers as helpless victims beset by raging hormones and believe parents should protect them from urges they cannot control. Matters aren’t helped by the stereotype that all boys want the same thing, and all girls want love and cuddling. This compounds the burden on parents to steer teenage children away from relationships that will do more harm than good.

The Dutch parents I interviewed regard teenagers, girls and boys, as capable of falling in love, and of reasonably assessing their own readiness for sex. Dutch parents like Natalie’s talk to their children about sex and its unintended consequences and urge them to use contraceptives and practice safe sex.

Cultural differences about teenage sex are more complicated than clichéd images of puritanical Americans and permissive Europeans. Normalizing ideas about teenage sex in fact allows the Dutch to exert more control
over their children. Most of the parents I interviewed actively discouraged promiscuous behavior. And Dutch teenagers often reinforced what we see as 1950s-style mores: eager to win approval, they bring up their partners in conversation, introduce them to their parents and help them make favorable impressions.

Some Dutch teenagers went so far as to express their ideas about sex and love in self-consciously traditional terms; one Dutch boy said the advantage of spending the night with a partner was that it was “Like Mom and Dad, like when you’re married, you also wake up next to the person you love.”

Normalizing teenage sex under the family roof opens the way for more responsible sex education. In a national survey, 7 of 10 Dutch girls reported that by the time they were 16, their parents had talked to them about pregnancy and contraception. It seems these conversations helped teenagers prepare, responsibly, for active sex lives: 6 of 10 Dutch girls said they were on the pill when they first had intercourse. Widespread use of oral contraceptives contributes to low teenage pregnancy rates—more than 4 times lower in the Netherlands than in the United States.

Obviously sleepovers aren’t a direct route to family happiness. But even the most traditional parents can appreciate the virtue of having their children be comfortable bringing a girlfriend or boyfriend home, rather than have them sneak around.

Unlike the American teenagers I interviewed, who said they felt they had to split their burgeoning sexual selves from their family roles, the Dutch teens had a chance to integrate different parts of themselves into their family life. When children feel safe enough to tell parents what they are doing and feeling, presumably it’s that much easier for them to ask for help. This allows parents to have more influence, to control through connection.

Sexual maturation is awkward and difficult. The Dutch experience suggests that it is possible for families to stay connected when teenagers start having sex, and that if they do, the transition into adulthood need not be so painful for parents or children.
Activity 1.6 • Analyze “The Sleepover Question”

In a group, discuss these review questions about the emphasis of *logos* in “The Sleepover Question.”

1. Can you paraphrase the logic of the argument? How does emotion (*pathos*) play a role in resistance to this argument?

2. What do you think about the “not under my roof” approach to a parent controlling a teen's sexuality versus the Dutch approach of allowing a teen's partner to sleep over?

3. How do stereotypes play against the argument for a more open approach to teen sex in America? How much of parents' discomfort with their teen potentially having sex is guided by how their parents treated the subject when they were teens?

4. In the article, the writer discusses the link between the use of oral contraceptives and lower teen pregnancy rates but does not mention the risk of STDs or condom use. Is it irresponsible of the author not to discuss the risk of STDs and sex, especially when she is willing to discuss teen pregnancy? Does it feel like an incomplete argument without discussing STDs?

After you’ve discussed these questions as a group, individually reflect on what you would say in a letter to the editor about this article.

Become Part of the Academic Conversation

As a student, you are asked to comment on or analyze texts others have written. In effect, you are expected to join academic conversations that are already in progress. How do you do that? How do you know what kind of response is appropriate? Have you ever entered a party where everyone is talking excitedly? Most likely, you paused near the doorway to get a sense of who was there and what they were discussing before you decided who to talk to and what to say.

Or, have you become part of a Facebook group or a listserv discussion group? If so, you know it is a good idea to “lurk” for a while before asking questions or contributing a remark. Writing an academic paper involves a similar process. You read about a subject until you have a good grasp of the points authorities are debating. Then you find a way to integrate your own ideas about that subject with the ideas of others and create an informed contribution to the conversation.

For example, the following students' introductions to movie reviews demonstrate they not only understand the films and have interesting things to say about them;
Roger Ebert claims that audience members who haven't seen the first two *Lord of the Rings* films (Peter Jackson, 2001, 2002) will likely “be adrift during the early passages of [the third] film's 200 minutes.” But then again, Ebert continues, “to be adrift occasionally during this nine-hour saga comes with the territory” (par. 3). Ebert, though, misses one crucial fact regarding *Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003). This third installment opens with a flashback intended to familiarize new spectators about what happened in the previous two films. Within these five minutes, the audience discovers how Gollum (Andy Serkis) came to be corrupted through the destructive power of the Ring. The viewer, therefore, will not necessarily be “adrift,” as Ebert claims, since the lighting, setting, and sound in the opening of *The Return of the King* show the lighter, more peaceful world before Gollum finds the ring, compared to the darker, more sinister world thereafter.

“It’s hard to resist a satire, even when it wobbles, that insists the most unbelievable parts are the most true” (*Rolling Stone* par. 1). This is Peter Travers’s overarching view of Grant Heslov’s satire, *The Men Who Stare at Goats* (2009). Travers is correct here; after all, Goats’s opening title card, which reads, “More of this is real than you would believe,” humorously teases the viewer that some of the film’s most “unbelievable parts” will, in fact, offer the most truth. We experience this via Bill Wilson’s (Ewan McGregor) interview of an ex “psy-ops” soldier, when Wilson’s life spirals out of control, and all the other far-fetched actions presenting “reality.” But again, it is the film’s opening—specifically, its setting, camera movements and angles, dialogue, effects, and ambient noise—that sets the foundation for an unbelievably realistic satire.²

In both of these introductions, the students quote reviews by professional film critics and respond to the critics’ opinions. Moreover, the students continue their arguments by using the critics’ ideas as springboards for their own arguments. These two short examples indicate these students have learned how to counter positions advocated by authorities without losing their own voices. If the rest of their essays continue as they have begun, the students will have written essays to which others can reply, thus continuing the conversation. Later in this text-

book, you will have your own chance to enter the conversation of film reviews by reviewing a favorite movie of your own.

**The Burkean Parlor**

Kenneth Burke, philosopher and rhetorician, described the "unending conversation" that surrounds each of us. To do academic research, we must enter the conversation of people who already know the topic and have discussed part or all of it before we are even aware the topic exists. Burke wrote,

> Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.³

**Activity 1.7 • Joining the Conversation**

Divide into groups of five or six members. Have one member of each group leave the room for five to ten minutes. Meanwhile, each group selects a topic and begins conversing about it. When the excluded member of the group returns, the group simply continues their conversation. When the excluded member figures out what the conversation is, he or she can join it by making a comment or asking a question.

After a few minutes, have each of the excluded group members tell the class what it was like to enter a conversation after it had already started. As a class, discuss how this is similar to what you experience when you research an academic topic and write about it.

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Collaborative Groups Help Students Enter the Academic Conversation

Likely, your writing class will include collaborative group work as part of the mix of activities, along with lecture, class discussion, and in-class writing. You may wonder why there is so much talk in a writing class, which is a good question. Use of collaborative groups is based on extensive research, which shows that students who work in small groups as part of their courses tend to learn more and retain the knowledge longer than students who are not asked to work in groups. Also, research shows students who participate in collaborative group work generally are more satisfied with the course. Groups give students a chance to apply knowledge they have learned and provide a change of pace from lectures or other class activities. There are several types of groups, and your class may include one or all of them.

Informal, one-time pairs or groups. After presenting some material, your instructor may ask you to turn to the person next to you and discuss the topic or answer a question.

Ongoing small classroom groups. Usually, these groups work together for a significant part of the semester, and your instructor may assign roles to members of the group such as recorder, facilitator, editor, and spokesperson. Often, the roles will rotate, so everyone has a chance to try out each job. Your instructor may give you a job description for each role or train the class in the tasks for each role.

Task groups. These groups are formed to write a report, complete a project, or do some other task together. These groups meet several times, often outside of class. The products of these groups are usually graded, and your instructor will often require members to rate each other on their performance.

Peer editing groups. When you have completed a draft of an essay or other text, your instructor may ask you to exchange papers in pairs or within small groups. You will be asked to read your classmate’s paper carefully and make comments, either on a peer editing form or on the paper itself. Likewise, your classmate will read and make comments on your paper. Then, when your paper is returned, you can make revisions based on your classmate’s comments.

An added benefit to the use of collaborative groups in writing classes is that students can help each other figure out what the ongoing conversation is for a particular topic or issue before writing about it. Also, groups provide a forum where students can practice making comments that are part of that conversation.
Why Study Rhetoric?

Rhetoric, or persuasive communication, happens all around us every day, in conversation at the grocery store, in blogs, on television, and in the classroom. We Americans constantly air our opinions about almost everything. Sometimes it is to convince others to share our opinions, and sometimes the reason is to engage in a dialogue that will help us understand the world around us, and sometimes it is to persuade others to action.

Argument is essential to human interaction and to society, for it is through the interplay of ideas in argument that we discover answers to problems, try out new ideas, shape scientific experiments, communicate with family members, recruit others to join a team, and work out any of the multitude of human interactions essential for society to function. When issues are complex, arguments do not result in immediate persuasion of the audience; rather, argument is part of an ongoing conversation between concerned parties who seek resolution, rather than speedy answers.

Rhetoric provides a useful framework for looking at the world, as well as for evaluating and initiating communications. In the modern world, writing and communicating persuasively is a necessary skill. Those who can present effective arguments in writing are, in the business world, often the ones who are promoted. In addition, those who are able to evaluate the arguments presented to them, whether by politicians, advertisers, or even family members, are less likely to be swayed by logical fallacies or ill-supported research.

Also, writing rhetorically is a tool with sometimes surprising uses. Research shows that we are more likely to remember material we have written about rather than simply memorized. Also, through the process of writing, writers often find that they initiate ideas and connections between ideas that they might not otherwise have found. Thus, writing may lead to new discoveries.

Rhetoric is a part of our everyday lives. When we're in a conversation with someone, we use rhetoric on a conscious or subconscious level. If you go to class wearing the T-shirt of your favorite musician or band, you're ultimately sending a rhetorical message identifying yourself as a fan of that artist or group.

If you've ever written a profile on a dating site, you've used rhetorical principles to convince an audience of potential partners to contact you or to write you back if you have chosen to make the first contact. You build ethos by talking about yourself in order to build credibility among potential partners, and you establish pathos when you talk about an interest that is shared by a potential mate.
Being able to use the tools of rhetoric effectively gives you the power to control your communication—both incoming and outgoing—and to affect your environment in a positive way.

**Activity 1.8 • How Do You Use Rhetoric?**

In your small group, make a list of five ways that you use rhetoric in your everyday lives. Then, create a list of five ways studying rhetoric could make a difference in your lives. As a class, compare the lists.

**Rhetorical Arguments Stand the Test of Time**

Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is the short speech that the president delivered at the site of the Battle of Gettysburg where, four months previously, the Union Army defeated Confederate forces. His was not the only talk that day at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery, but it is the only one remembered. In just over two minutes, he was able to reframe the Civil War not just as a victory for the North but as a "new birth of freedom" for all Americans. Now, during the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, is a good time to remember Lincoln's rhetoric—in terms of both the content and the style of his speech.

**Reading 1.4**

Though no actual recording exists of Abraham Lincoln giving the speech, you can listen to others reading it aloud if you search on the Internet for "recording of Gettysburg Address." Listen to the speech, noting the phrase "Four score and seven years ago," which is so famous that Americans know instantly, when it is quoted by orators or writers, that it is a reference to Lincoln. Consider what arguments the president makes in his speech. Think about their relevance today.

**Text of the Gettysburg Address by Abraham Lincoln**

Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.
But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Activity 1.9 • Paraphrase the Gettysburg Address

Rephrase each sentence of the Gettysburg Address in your own words, putting it in twenty-first century wording rather than Lincoln's ceremonial, nineteenth-century phrasing. In a paraphrase, the text does not become shorter; it is recreated in different words. This is a useful technique in helping you understand a text. It is also helpful when you are writing an analysis of a text because you can use your paraphrase rather than long, block quotes. Remember, though, when you are writing an essay, you must cite a paraphrase in the text and also include it in your list of references.

Activity 1.10 • Comment on Your Classmate's Paraphrase of the Gettysburg Address

In your small group, trade your paraphrase of the Gettysburg Address with the paraphrase of the person next to you. Read through the document carefully, looking for how well your partner paraphrased, rather than commented on, Lincoln's words. Mark each place where a comment or analysis appears. Give the paper back to the author for revision, if needed.

Why might it be useful to paraphrase a document rather than analyze or comment on it?

Respond to Visual Rhetoric

To the ancient Greeks and Romans, rhetoric largely involved verbal skills—the use of words to persuade an audience. But rhetoricians were also aware that
how something was said was sometimes as important as what was said, so they
also studied the use of visual cues such as gestures and tone of voice to deliver
oral arguments. Today, concern with gestures and other visual cues used to
persuade an audience is encompassed in visual rhetoric, which could be de­

fined as the use of images or other visual elements as argument.

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, for example, wears different ja­
bots, or collars, with her black robe to visually communicate her opinion of
different court decisions. In this, she differs from the other justices who tend
to wear similar collars, no matter their stance on a court ruling.

In an interview with Katie Couric, Justice Ginsberg decoded her jabots. She
wears a studded black velvet collar when she issues a dissenting opinion
about a court ruling. She wears her favorite, a white beaded jabot from South
Africa, when she is not trying to send a message. When she wants to signal
her agreement with the majority court opinion, she wears a beaded gold lace
jabot.

As a student, you can train yourself to be aware of visual clues expressed in
clothing choices such as messages on T-shirts, colors of men’s ties, or women’s
preferences of jeans or dresses.

Ruth Bader Ginsberg’s dissent jabot.

The favorite jabot from Cape Town, South Africa.
Activity 1.11 • Decoding Clothing Choices as Visual Rhetoric

In a small group, review these discussion questions in consideration of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg's choice of jabots or collars.

1. Search the internet using the keywords “Ruth Bader Ginsberg jabot.” What other jabots do you find? What do you think of her choices to indicate her agreement or dissent with the court decision on a case?

2. Discuss your own clothing choices in your small group. Are you making a rhetorical statement when you choose your clothes for work, class, or leisure time? How so?

3. Find an example of a rhetorical clothing choice on the Internet or in a magazine or newspaper. Bring it to class and explain to your group what the person is conveying with his or her clothing. Choose your group’s most interesting example and present it to the class.

Activity 1.12 • Keep a Commonplace Book

Ancient rhetoricians performed speeches with little warning, often to advertise their services as teachers of rhetoric. Thus, they frequently memorized arguments about specific topics that could be adapted to the audience and situation on a moment's notice. They called these memorized arguments "commonplaces." Commonplace books are an outgrowth of the Greek concept of commonplaces, but they are a little different. They became popular in the Middle Ages as notebooks in which individuals would write down quotes or ideas about a particular topic. These notations might later be used to generate an idea for
For thousands of years, people have been keeping commonplace books, a kind of journal or diary in which the author includes quotes, drawings, and images.
Activity 1.13 • Create Your Own Blog

Create your own blog by using a blog platform site such as Tumblr, Blogger, WordPress, or LiveJournal to create and publish it. Read the help screens for instructions on how to create your blog. Your design choices should reflect your personality. Keep in mind, though, that you are building an “academic self,” so all the topics you write about should be of an academic nature and in an academic tone. Some students decide to have two blogs, one for their friends and one for professional networking, so you may want to do this, especially if you already have a blog.

During this class, you’ll use the blog to explore different aspects of each chapter in the textbook (and other topics that your instructor directs). You can also blog about other topics related to your writing this semester, and you can link to other blogs that you think your readers would find interesting.

After you have created the look of your blog, write a first entry in which you introduce yourself to your readers. You might include your major, your college, and something interesting that might attract readers to your blog.

This student’s blog incorporates some pictures in her entry about her favorite memory. She also designed the blog with a personal title and category tabs.