REVISIONS ASSIGNMENT SEQUENCE

R.E.S.P.E.C.T.—what words mean to people—and how to move your audience’s ideas

ASSIGNMENT SEQUENCE GOALS
This assignment sequence encourages students to:

• Learn a rhetorical process for analyzing and producing text
• Understand how audience and purpose shape effective communication
• Learn how reflection and invention are useful in developing communication
• Acquire practice in revising
• Discuss and analyze the ethical implications of a communicator’s choices
• Recognize our communication choices are effective only when we understand that different audiences interpret texts differently

WHEN TO USE THIS ASSIGNMENT
This sequence assignment is designed for the very beginning of the semester, and takes approximately four weeks.

This assignment sequence lays the foundation for the rest of the semester to be built on. Students begin by gaining a working knowledge of the key terms being used; they discover the difference between their former understanding of “argument” and how this idea applies to Rhetoric; they practice written, visual and oral analysis of argument as well as composing arguments in all three formats. They also become comfortable with speaking in class, small group work, large class discussions, the CDA textbook and work expectations for the class.

Finally, the tone of the class should be set as a place were discussion of different points of view is expected, that any idea can be raised that can be logically defended but it can’t be raised in such a way that is offensive for the sake of giving offense. On the other hand, differences of opinion are welcome and we will discuss what forms our different opinions, the idea that our actions/inactions are choices that affect others, and what responsibilities we have as members of social groups.

WHAT STUDENTS MAKE

• Working definitions for Rhetoric, Compose, Design, Advocate
• 2/3 page written argument
• 1-2 page design plan
• Visual communication piece (visual argument)
• Verbal analysis of personal communication
• Written, 2/3 page, analysis of personal visual argument

THE ASSIGNMENT SEQUENCE ITSELF

WEEK ONE

IN-CLASS
Introduction activity that shows students some of the differences among them. Writing: Have each student write a sentence or two for the following words-Rhetoric, Compose, Design, Advocate. Collect lists.

HOMEWORK
Read p. 1-10 of cda. Note one thing you’ve learned about each term compose, design, advocate that you didn’t know when writing in class that day. Go on-line and find a definition of Rhetoric. Write down the definition. Then look up the person whose definition it is. Why do you think they are being quoted? How are they important in the context of Rhetoric? (A hand-out can be created for homework assignment.)
IN-CLASS
Discuss: What is one thing you’ve learned about each term—compose, design, advocate.
Small-Groups: Discuss each other’s definitions of Rhetoric. Each group pick one of these definitions and write it on board—have spokesperson ready to read definition and then explain who person being quoted is and why they are important in this context.
Discuss: Definitions and approximate time-line of people being quoted, from earliest to latest.

HOMEWORK
Read pp. 12-16 of cda. Write a page about what has shaped you as a communicator. What communication contexts do you feel most comfortable in? When are you most uncomfortable communicating and why?

IN-CLASS
Small Groups: List the communication contexts where you are most and least comfortable and discuss why. Then transfer five items from each list to the board.
Discuss: What makes us comfortable when we communicate? Do the “comfortable” situations have anything in common? What makes us uncomfortable? Are there differences/similarities in the audiences/contexts involved in these situations? Are there certain topics that our society at large, or the campus community view as comfortable/uncomfortable? Why? Is it conceivable that you will one day have an obligation to discuss an uncomfortable topic? (What if you are part of a design team that creates a product and testing shows the product can harm people? What if it only makes them sick?)

HOMEWORK
Read pp. 18-22 of cda. Look for images/symbols of what impacts from your culture/society have shaped you as a communicator—these may be other people, events, technologies, groups you belong to, personal interests….

WEEK TWO
IN-CLASS
Discuss: Before you started attending this class (remember back two weeks) what did you think of when you heard the word “argument”? What are the contexts of some of the arguments you have personally been involved in? In these different situations, did you learn anything about how to move people toward your point of view?
Small-Groups: Reviewing your reading, list four things you’ve learned about argument as its being used in Rhetoric. Using the list on p. 19, pick one thing you clearly think is an argument and briefly discuss why. Then pick one thing you aren’t so sure is an argument (or your positive isn’t) and decide what might make it an argument. Who would be the audience? What would be the context?
Discuss: the results of small-groups; each group one situation you weren’t sure about and how they decided it could be an argument, what the audience/context would be.

HOMEWORK
(can begin as in-class brain storm) Find three things worth arguing about, in the Rhetorical sense of “argument”: One from your field of study; One from current events; One from your own interests/life. Write a paragraph for each explaining why its important, why people should care, how it could affect others.

IN-CLASS
Small-Groups: Discuss each person’s list and choose a topic for each heading to raise with the class (on board or just verbally.)
Discuss: What is at stake with each issue? Who is the audience? What is the context? Are some of these topics more/less difficult to argue Rhetorically? (Are some too central to people’s worldviews to allow for shifting their ideas/point of view?) What would be a successful medium for addressing some of these topics? Which lend themselves to visual presentation? What imaged do they bring to mind?
HOMEWORK
Read pp. 23-30 of cda. Reviewing from lists/ideas of in-class discussion, pick a topic and fill out the seven points p. 25-27, i.e. 1. Why are we communicating, 2. What will our audience expect etc. (hand-out could be used to clarify how to apply seven points.)

IN-CLASS
Discuss: write list on board based on student work of ideas for what is worth arguing. Pick a topic and work through the seven steps with the class. Pick several other topics and make sure class can identify audience and context for each.
Write: Have students take out a piece of paper and write about half a page of what they now think they find an idea worth arguing about and how a presentation of these ideas might differ if they a) wrote a paper, b) used only visual elements. (collect)

HOMEWORK
Read pp.33-47 of cda. Write a draft paper of two to three pages about the topic that you have found worth arguing about. Start to find images related to this topic that would support a visual argument about the same topic. Bring typed draft of paper to class.

WEEK THREE

IN-CLASS
Discuss: What are the basic elements of design you’ve found in textbook? What considerations does each entail (purpose, audience, context, medium, arrangement.) What are the kinds of audience you might consider (hostile/neutral), what appeals will you rely on pathos/logos and how are do you build ethos?
Write: On the back of your paper, write a sentence or two that is your statement of purpose; same for your audience and the context of the argument. List three choices regarding the arrangement of your writing that support your message/purpose. Finally, after in-class discussion, can you see a change you might need to make in your paper, including tone, word choices and how best to persuade your audience?

HOMEWORK
Read pp. 48-55 of cda. Save your initial draft of your paper; create a new draft and bring it to class.

IN-CLASS
Workshop: Using handouts, have readers look at papers and respond to what they would see as the purpose of the paper—what is argument topic, what does writer want reader to know/do, what points of support are offered, is there language that pulls reader in, is their language that pushes reader out/offends/confuses them. (Have readers put their name on their feedback.)

HOMEWORK
While you are still revising your written argument, you will start designing your visual argument of the same topic. To prepare, read pp. 264-294 of cda. Also, bring final draft of written argument and hand it in at beginning of class.
Due: Final draft of written argument.

IN-CLASS
Discuss: Elements of visual design.
Small-Groups: Compare “Drawing Cards” p. 269 and photo p. 271. Who are the audiences/ context for each? What choices did the designer make and why?
Discuss: Different conclusions groups came to. Look at design p. 272—why choose handwritten v. typed? P. 277—how does color change how we see things? What emotions do you associate with red/blue? Is there a “lazy” color, or “busy” color? An authoritative color?

HOMEWORK
Write a one/two page design plan for your visual argument and hand it in next class.
WEEK FOUR

IN-CLASS
Due: Design plan for visual argument.
Small-Groups: after brief brain-storm, on board design two invitations, one for fellow college students inviting them to after-graduation party, one for parents/family inviting them to graduation. (you may use poster or individual invitations according to audience/purpose.)
Consider font, colors you would use as well as layout/content.
Discuss: different designs/purposes/audiences.

HOMEWORK
Finalize visual argument. By end of week you will present visual argument and a verbal explanation of your choices (after class/audience has told you what they think your topic/purpose/points are.)

IN-CLASS
Presentations: Have students show their visual arguments to the class. (Presenter is not allowed to introduce the topic or say anything. Classmates can be given rubrics, feedback forms, or allowed to begin immediately with verbal response. Ask them to discuss what they think the argument being made is. What choices did the designer make that support their argument: arrangement, layout, color, images used.)
AFTER the class has discussed an argument, the designer is allowed several minutes (only a few) to explain what they had in mind, what choices they made to support their purpose.
Writing: After presenting, each student writes up several pages explaining how their argument changed from the written to the visual form, the choices they made in designing their visual presentation and [this is important] at least one paragraph explaining what responses from the audience they hadn’t expected. Why do they think the audience reacted as they did, saw what they did, interpreted it as they did? What changes would the designer make if further revising their visual argument.

HOMEWORK
Due: Written self-analysis of visual argument—would be due the following week (or could be collected over two days—requiring it to be due the class period after someone presented, and splitting presentations over two days.)