

RHET 120-31: 2/1 Homework

Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Argument (documentary film): *Night Will Fall* (2014)

Finish watching *Night Will Fall* (you can go to this [link](#) or if you have HBOgo, you can access the film there). Analyze the argument that the filmmaker makes, how he/she develops that argument and how successful he/she is in achieving that purpose on the basis of audience and rhetorical elements used.

For the techniques, try to give 1-3 examples of the elements you identify and be sure to EXPLAIN your points sufficiently.

Rhetorical Context

- **subject**
- **title**
- **background**
- **author/director/producer**
- **audience (s)**
- **purpose**
- **argument/thesis** (*summarize in 1-2 sentences*)

Rhetorical Techniques

- **appeals to ethos, logos and pathos**
(*consider specifically types of evidence provided: facts, statistics, personal experience, expert testimony, etc.*)
- **style**
(*tone, word choice/language, rhetorical questions, structural repetition, analogy, allusion, satire, irony, etc.*)
- **cinematic style techniques**
(*soundtrack/music, editing, flashback or other time sequencing, use of archival footage/other images, use of narrator*)
- **structure/organization**
- **counter-argument** (*if applicable*)

RHET 120-31

Assignment One: Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Argument (documentary film)

Documentaries often focus on controversial issues that affect our lives and present carefully constructed visual arguments about those issues.

For this assignment students will choose a documentary film and analyze the film as a rhetorical argument, paying particular attention to the filmmaker's (director and/or producer) claims and choices regarding evidence, persuasive appeals and other style strategies as listed in the rhetorical analysis guide for *Night Will Fall*.

Ultimately, each student will make his/her own argument about not only what the message of the chosen film is but also how persuasively the filmmaker conveys that message on the basis of audience and rhetorical techniques used.

CAVEAT: This is not a summary, nor simply a review based on your personal reaction.

This assignment should be 3-5 pages in length and should follow the appropriate guidelines (paper format, in text and end of text) for MLA, APA or CMS documentation.

- Post your film choice on Canvas discussion board by 11:59 pm on Wednesday, 2/3
- Draft 1 due: Tuesday, 2/9 by 11:59 pm on Canvas
- Final Draft due: Tuesday, 2/16 by 5pm to KA 204 and 11: 59 pm Canvas

Oral Presentation, Monday 2/8

Students should be prepared to present their preliminary findings to the class in a 3-5-minute presentation. Included in that presentation should be

- a summary of the message, rhetorical context
- an overall assessment of how effectively the film achieves its purpose
- a clip/s from the film that demonstrate 2-3 rhetorical techniques used in the film that contribute to your assessment of how well the film achieves its purpose (the trailer is not generally a good option & clip/s should take up no more than 1-2-minutes of your speech)

A word about choosing your documentary:

Students are free to choose any documentary film that fits in with their interests. However, choose a film from the last 5 years and there should be no duplicates. If you don't already have a documentary in mind, try doing a Google search on any of the below websites or hunt around elsewhere for something that interests you:

<http://www.bustle.com/articles/135568-how-to-watch-2016-oscar-nominated-documentaries-so-you-can-make-an-informed-bet-on-the>

<http://www.imdb.com/genre/documentary>

<http://www.pastemagazine.com/blogs/lists/2014/07/the-50-best-documentaries-streaming-on-netflix-2014.html>

http://www.hbo.com/documentaries#

PBS, Discovery Channel and the History Channel are also good sites to look for documentaries

<http://www.vulture.com/2015/01/oscar-nominated-documentaries-where-to-stream.html>