Lesson Plans for Audio Visual Analysis

General Rule of Lesson Planning: Be Flexible! Whether or not you don’t through all the material you plan through for the day or you speed through it and run out of material, it is ok. Students respect a teacher who can be flexible and adapt. I usually try to build some flex days into my schedule for this purpose and also have some extra activities on hand in case I run out of material.

Unit:

Audio/Visual Artifact Analysis (approx. 2-2½ weeks, based on 2 day a week schedule)

One of the defining features of every community or culture are certain artifacts that are important and symbolic to the community. For this essay you will select one of the following audio/visual artifacts for analysis:

1. A movie, episode of a television show, video game, or music video that deals with important issues in your community.
2. A speech or other visual presentation (you could probably find these on YouTube) that deals with an issue in your community.
3. A song or album that was either created in your community or deals with issues in the community.
4. A piece of artwork that defines or is symbolic to a community.

After selecting your artifact, you will work to identify why it is important and how it makes its argument. This is not intended to be a review of the artifact (that will come later), but an analysis of why it is important, how it is constructed, and how it works to reach its intended audience within the community. As such, you will need to articulate a clear thesis that identifies the key rhetorical features of the artifact, describes the formal elements of the artifact, and then work to analyze how those features interact with reality.

This essay should be between 1,000 and 1,500 words and is due by Sunday 1/30.

Audio/Visual Artifact Analysis Student "A Paper" Example

Audio/Visual Artifact Analysis Rubric

Intended Outcomes:

1. Articulate a clear thesis that: a. identifies a clear argument and, b. selects specific rhetorical elements for analysis.
2. Mirror that basic structure in the organization of the paper
3. Write clear and cohesive paragraphs that argue each point

Lesson Plan, Activities, and Readings:
Day 1:

Objectives:

- Introduce assignment and rhetorical analysis in general

Activities:

- Watch a rhetorically rich short video as a class. In the past I have used both Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech and a music video by Mos Def called “It Ain’t My Fault.” Both are available on YouTube. In general students respond well to both texts – they particularly like music videos (I’ve also used Lady Gaga videos in other contexts and they really enjoy analyzing these).
- After watching the video, have the students just shout out things that stuck out to them in the video. Try not to lead them too much, they will often come up with rhetorical elements on their own, sometimes ones that you didn’t even notice at first. Write these on the board as the students speak.
- After collecting these bits of information, work to connect these elements to specific rhetorical elements that would be good for analysis. Grouping them into categories (visual, lyrics, ethos, pathos, logos) helps a lot here.
- Use this as a spring board to begin discussing the purposes of rhetoric and rhetorical techniques. I then usually go into a standard discussion of the rhetorical appeals and the rhetorical triangle. Always relating this back to the text under review and the analysis assignment.

Reading Assignment:

- David Dark’s chapter “Living in Fiction” from Everyday Apocalypse (which is in essence an extended rhetorical analysis of The Matrix and The Truman Show. This example is perhaps a little dated (believe it or not many students have not seen these films) but any sort of example analysis could be substituted here.
- The New York Times movie review of Gran Torino, or whatever film you are going to use in the next class. Film reviews are excellent because they are short, but are in essence really compact rhetorical analyses. This also gives the students a sense of what to expect next class period.

Writing Assignment:

- 250 word response on one or both of the assigned text, mine reads: “David Dark's piece "Living in Fiction" from his excellent book Everyday Apocalypse. Is an excellent example of the type of rhetorical analysis you are aiming for in Project One. What Dark does so incisively is to dig beneath the surface of the movies he is analyzing to draw striking conclusions about the messages the directors are conveying and the ways in which they do so. For this response, write 250 words outlining the main argument Dark is making about The Truman Show and The Matrix and then identify at least 3 specific ways in which Dark uses material from the movies to make his point.”
Day 2:

Objectives:

- Identify key elements of rhetorical analysis
- Identify arguments and rhetorical elements in texts
- Write thesis statement

Activities:

- I’ll usually begin with a brief discussion of the reading assignment. Generally I have looked at their responses and this provides the basis for leading discussion and gauging there level of understanding of the assignment. I usually just ask for impressions or questions about the text and go from there.
- I then show the first part of *Gran Torino*. I use this film because it fits well within the overall theme (Detroit) of my class and because it is so rhetorically rich. You could really use any rhetorically rich film, though. In the past I have also shown *Wall-E* and *Children of Men*. All three have gone over very well.
- I try to save a little bit of time at the end of class for discussion and we then work to identify the chief argument or arguments of the film. This is often difficult for students as they are not used to thinking about films in terms of it making an argument. After we narrow down an argument I ask them to shout out scenes that stood out to them. These usually stick out because there is something rhetorically interesting about the scene which we can then draw out.
- After brainstorming these elements on the board we then construct a thesis statement as a class that follows the skeletal structure: In __________ (text), __________(author or director) argues __________(argument of film), through the use of __________, __________, and __________ (specific rhetorical elements). This makes for a relatively cookie cutter final paper, but I have found that at this early stage in the semester they need this kind of structure, otherwise the final product is an unreadable mess. For better or worse templates really help students at this juncture.

Assignment:

- Select and watch or listen to a text over the weekend, develop a thesis statement and post in on your wiki page.

Day 3:

Objectives:

- Continue rhetorical analysis practice
- Write coherent and cohesive paragraphs

Activities:
• Continue watching *Gran Torino*. At this point the students should be watching for specific scenes and rhetorical devices that support the thesis we developed during the last class period. You probably won’t get through the movie today, so make sure to leave some time (30 min) at the end of class to work on paragraph development.

• After watching the film, outline and give examples of well developed paragraphs. I usually use the example of the “paragraph sandwich,” which has: 1. Transition and topic sentence, 2. Specific examples of the rhetorical device under review, 3. A statement of relevance that ties these examples back to the thesis.

• Break the class into small groups and give each group one of the rhetorical devices you developed in your group thesis statement. Have each group write a paragraph following this three part structure. Have them post this up on one of their wiki pages. You may not have time to take a close look at these paragraphs as a class during this period. If not, save it for next class period.

Assignment:

• Post up some rough body paragraphs on wiki page. These do not need to be polished or organized, but the students should make an attempt at analysis.

Day 4:

Objectives:

• Finish film
• Model paper organization
• Writing workshop

Activities:

• Finish watching film. At this point it should be almost over and there is not much more they can get out of it rhetorically, but I have found that students don’t react well to not seeing the end of the film. It shouldn’t take that much time.

• After finishing the film I will generally pull up the thesis statement and paragraphs they have worked on. In general, I have thrown these together into a rough paper and added an intro and conclusion (I work on these in more length in the next unit). I then have them (usually in groups) work through the rough paper looking for missing transitions, etc. This gets them used to proofreading, editing, and looking for common problems.

• After reviewing this with the class, if there is time I will have them work in groups on their papers and materials on the wiki. If not this can be moved to a separate class period or you can end the unit.

Assignments:

• Work on final draft of paper

Day 5 (if needed):
Objectives:

• Conduct writing workshop

Activities:

• I don’t always do a writing workshop on these first three papers because they are short and they are just practicing.
• However, if you choose to conduct a writing workshop I generally provide them with some common errors and questions to answer about each other’s papers.

Assignments:

• Finish A/V Analysis. I usually give them until the weekend to turn it in electronically, but whatever works best.