

07 Rhetorical Skills

What is Rhetoric?

“Rhetoric” refers to the art of using language effectively and appropriately. While it is most often applied to argumentative writing—creating persuasive arguments—more broadly the concept applies to the effective use of language in any piece of writing. This means using language that fits the *situation* and the *purpose* of the particular writing task.

A narrative written for an informal family gathering, for example, will follow different conventions and be governed by different expectations than a formal academic paper. Choosing the best language and strategy for the situation and the *audience* is a key part of the success of any piece of writing.

The Importance of Audience

The most crucial task in understanding a rhetorical situation is to properly assess the *audience* to whom your writing will be addressed. In writing, *audience always matters*: the language we select, the tone we choose, the tactics we employ, the examples we present, and how we frame our evidence and details, are all dependent on our concept of audience. In short, a sense of the audience governs not only *what* we say, but also *how*, and often in what medium, we say it. As a quick experiment, examine the following situations, and write a short paragraph using language, tone, details, and style that would seem to fit the situation:

1. Write a short text message telling your best friend about the great time you had at a party off-campus this weekend.
2. Write an email asking your parent for permission to go on a trip to Las Vegas with your friend’s family this weekend.
3. Write a memo or email to your boss asking for time off from work to attend a required field trip for your Anthropology 101 class.
4. Write a paragraph for your English 101 teacher analyzing the difference between writing in high school and writing in college.

How does your approach to the writing task—even if it is a VERY casual piece of writing, like a text message—change with the situation? What is different about writing to your friends, parents, bosses, and teachers? How does an email differ from a memorandum or a formal academic paper?

We all write differently in different situations. Few of us would write to a professor or our boss in the casual, slang- and abbreviation-filled language of a text message. Is something like “Plz professr, I need u to giv me n xtensn on my paper ntil 2mro” likely to be received well by its intended audience? Of course not.

Would someone give you a job if your cover letter addressed him or her in a too-casual, friendly way? Clearly, such an approach would put the success of the writing in peril.

As writers, we often make a series of educated guesses about what our audiences expect from us. What learning to write for an audience requires is that we translate these intuitive guesses to conscious choices: when we think out what our audience wants, needs, and believes in, we can tailor our writing far more effectively to fit those ideas. More importantly, though, the writing will more effectively *reach* and *communicate* to our intended audience.

To begin to understand the audience of a given piece of writing, one needs to *analyze* the audience, through an exercise called an “Audience Analysis.” This audience analysis consists of a series of questions that we must as writers ask ourselves about what we know about the audience, their identities, their beliefs, and their values. Asking these questions in a systematic and conscious way will help us form a sense of what our audience cares about—and then how to reach them effectively.

The questions are, on the surface, pretty simple. But they relate very closely to one another:

1. Who is my audience?
2. What do they value?
3. How can I present my subject in a way that is relevant to those values?

First question: Who is my audience?

This question is in some ways the easiest to answer. What characterizes my intended audience demographically? What do I know about my audience’s race, sex, or social class? What ages are they? Are they politically conservative or liberal? Are they religious? Do they live in the city, the suburbs, or the country? In answering these questions, it is often helpful to try to conceive of a real-world context for your writing: in what publication might something like what you are writing appear? In front of what groups might you give this piece of writing as a speech? You should attempt to ascertain, to the best of your ability, the following demographic elements of the target group. This may require you to make some targeted “guesses” based on the group to whom you are composing your writing:

- Age
- Race or ethnicity
- Sex / Gender
- Social class / income level
- Sexual orientation
- Level of education: less than high school, high school, college, post-secondary

- Location / geographic situation (urban, suburban, rural)

This demographic data is the *first* step in assessing your audience, and is by definition a very broad and general statement of who your audience is on the surface.

Consider the following groups, and make some educated guesses about their demographic makeup.

1. The northern Baltimore county chapter of AARP (American Association of Retired Persons).
2. Readers of *Vibe* magazine.
3. Coppin State University's Faculty Senate.
4. Subscribers to the Maryland Eastern Shore's *Daily Farmer News*.
5. Coppin State University's incoming freshman class for the upcoming academic year.

Let's use #5 above, Coppin's next incoming Freshman Class, as an example. What inferences or educated guesses can we make about the demographic makeup of this group of people?

Age

Most first-year Coppin students, sampling an average English 101 class, are between 18-24 years old. But there are also many older "returning" or "non-traditional" students present in most classes as well; these students are often over 25 or 30 years of age.

Race or Ethnicity

Again looking at an average English 101 class, and considering that Coppin is a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), one can make the reasonable assumption that most students here are African-American. Other groups that are present on campus are international students, mainly from Africa, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe.

Sex / Gender

Coppin is more heavily populated by women, by about a 3:1 ratio (~75% women vs. ~25% men).

Social class / income level

Most students are working-class or middle-class in terms of their income level. Coppin is not prohibitively expensive (and is attractive for that reason), and many students work to put themselves through school.

Sexual orientation

At Coppin, the majority of students are heterosexual. A minority of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) students are present as well.

Level of education

By definition, most undergraduate students at Coppin do not have a bachelor's degree, and are actively seeking that degree. Students must complete high school to matriculate into Coppin. ~30% of Coppin students are graduate students, seeking advanced degrees.

Location / geographic situation

Coppin is an urban, regional university. Many students live and work in Baltimore City, and many more come from the surrounding counties and the mid-Atlantic region. Few students come from farther than 300-400 miles of the campus.

Once you have a basic understanding of the demographic makeup of your audience, you can now move on to:

Second Question: What does my audience care about? What do they value? What are their problems?

This part of the audience analysis is a bit more tricky, as it requires that you make even more educated guesses and inferences about your audience. A good strategy for hypothesizing about your audience would be to start from some general “types” of values then work toward more specific problems. Areas you might consider in relation to your audience would be the following:

- **Political values.** Where does your audience fit on the political spectrum? Are they more liberal or more conservative? Are they *socially* liberal and *economically* conservative, or some other combination of this? Does your audience believe in a government actively solving problems (like providing social welfare programs) or does it believe that government should do as little as possible, and leave everyone “on their own?” Considering this issue further, you can make some guesses as to how your audience would come down on certain specific political issues. Examples: is your audience *for* or *against* the revamped health care law? Are they *for* or *against* gun control? Abortion? Higher taxes on the wealthy? The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?
- **Social values:** How does your audience view their family and friends? What are their pastimes? What do they do on the weekends? Are they “soccer moms” who drive minivans and spend a lot of their time with their kids and supporting their kids’ social activities?
- **Financial values:** How does your audience view money? Are they investing in long-term, low-risk mutual funds or spending their entire paycheck in a single weekend? Are they carrying debts? What kind? What kinds of bills do they have to pay?
- **Educational values:** How does your audience view education? Who should provide education? What should a primary, secondary, and post-secondary education consist of?

From a sense of the “general” values above, you can draw some inferences as to the types of problems that your audience faces on a daily basis. What kinds of problems, for example, might a single mother have that relate to education? Finances? Social or relationship status? How would those problems be different if they were faced by a typical Coppin freshman?

Analyzing an Audience

In the space below, brainstorm some possible political, social, financial, and educational values for the three audiences given. Be prepared to justify your hypotheses.

The northern Baltimore county chapter of AARP (American Association of Retired Persons)

Political

Social

Financial

Educational

Readers of *Vibe* magazine

Political

Social

Financial

Educational

Coppin State University's Faculty Senate

Political

Social

Financial

Educational

Understanding the problems and values of the audience—or at least having a reasonable hypothesis of them—will enable you to situate the topic of your writing as a response to or solution to those problems. This, of course, leads to your third question:

Third Question: How can I relate my topic to the concerns, problems, and values of my audience? How can I position my writing as a solution to a problem they have?

In answering this question, you seek to include your audience's own values, pre-existing knowledge, or problems in your approach to the topic. If you do this effectively, you can create a sense of *importance* and *urgency* for your audience: this is called *exigence*. **Exigence** is an important part of writing: it gives your audience a reason to keep reading and to stay interested in your writing. In short, it answers the question “So What?” for your audience; it reminds them that they have a stake in what your writing is about.

But you may ask—how do I establish this sense of “So What” in my writing? Here are a couple of general strategies:

In your introduction, remind your audience of a problem that they have that relates to your topic. People care about their own lives and their own problems—and they sometimes need to be reminded about what they care about. Good writing, whatever the form it takes, seeks to point this out and make connections for its audience that they might not have made otherwise. Think about advertising for a moment. What does a commercial for any product *do* but try to make the consumer want the product? And why do consumers want products? Because the products *solve or address problems* that the audience has. A commercial for car insurance, for example, might point out to the audience that “bad things happen all the time”—and that they need to be prepared for them, *by purchasing insurance*. Similarly, a commercial for breakfast sandwiches might point out that feeling run-down all day (a common problem for many working adults) could be caused by not eating a healthy breakfast—and their product *is* a healthy and convenient breakfast.

This strategy is effective in academic or more formal writing as well. In an academic narrative essay, for example, the writing task might be to share an experience that changed the writer's life. Perhaps the writer might choose to write about the loss of a loved one. How might this reach out to a broader audience? The writer might discuss the value of the guidance of family members, the

importance of friendship, or the renewed appreciation that the writer has for the brevity of life. Reminding the readers that these ideas are problems and situations shared by everyone makes the writing more relevant to more people.

A paper comparing two companies or two products might do something similar: focusing on what problems they solve / create—and relating that set of problems to the audience’s own experience creates a sense of urgency and exigence. A paper contrasting the financial practices of Goldman Sachs (a large investment bank that took billions in Federal bailout money) to a smaller, local bank like BB&T, could relate directly to readers’ experiences since the 2008 financial crisis: companies went under, jobs were lost, homes foreclosed. These are common problems that the academic paper can shed light on. A research paper on effective gun control legislation, for example, might be very important for people living in Baltimore City, a city plagued by high homicide and gun-violence rates.

Connect your topic with an event that is currently of concern or interest to your audience.

Another way to generate a connection with your audience is to connect what you are writing with a current event that matters in their lives or that speaks to their value systems. Using a current event as a “hook” for your reader provides a sense of timeliness to the writing—it reminds readers that what your writing is talking about is particularly important at the present time.

A paper examining, for example, the positives and negatives of nuclear energy—or the steps the government should take to regulate that energy—might use the current nuclear crisis in Japan as a tie-in: since we are all worried about radiation leaking from the damaged Fukushima plant in Japan, talking about nuclear safety is ever more important *now*. One might also use an important anniversary as a lead-in: January 20th of each year, as well as April 4th, are important dates in the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr: dates of his birth and death, respectively. Around those times (or even on the anniversary of the “I Have a Dream” speech, the Montgomery bus boycott, etc.), essays and other pieces of writing discussing the important parts of his work—social justice, equality, reconciliation, liberation—are particularly timely. Even particular times of year can be a good exigence-builder: during the spring, when foliage and plants are beginning to sprout, one could make the case that it is a good time to discuss environmental issues like global warming.

Connecting the Audience and Subject

In the space below, come up with some ways to build exigence for the topics and audiences given.

For a paper on	Directed to	Possible ways of establishing exigence
Global warming / climate change	Chicken farmers on Maryland's Eastern Shore	
Cloning and Stem Cell Research	Students at Coppin State University	
The Quality of Inner City Education	Faculty at University of Maryland, College Park	
The representation of women in the media	The National Organization for Women (NOW) http://www.now.org	
American foreign military interventions	High school seniors in Maryland	
Same-sex marriage	The Committee to Preserve Traditional Marriage	

Different Situations, Different Languages

A piece of writing's audience and purpose also determines the language and tone with which writers approach a writing task: we call this the *rhetorical situation*. Simply put, this means that writers write differently for different groups of people. An email you write to your friend, for example, carries with it different expectations of tone and formality than does a newspaper article for publication or an academic paper. Readers expect vastly different standards of tone and approach in a text message, for example, than they do in a job application or résumé's cover letter.

Here's a quick example, taken from a professor's email in-box:

Hey Prof:

My computer is on the blink again and I can't submit ur Engl101 paper on time. You think it would be ok if I brought it to you printed out? I have it on my flashdrive and can print from the school's comp lab on Tues. Bye!

Student X

In what ways does the language and tone used in this passage accommodate itself to the intended audience? What does the language suggest about the writer, and the nature of his relationship to the audience / reader? Does this fit with the conventions of communication between professors and students?

Here's an example that fits more effectively with the expectations of communication between students and their professors.

Professor X:

Due to some computer problems, I am having difficulty submitting the assigned English 101 paper on time. Would it be possible to bring this assignment to you printed out? I will have access to the school's computer lab on Tuesday morning, and can bring you the essay at that time.

Thanks,

Student X

How are these two emails similar? How are they different in terms of the language that they use? The tone or sense of formality / seriousness that they convey? What specific words in the first example indicate a casual approach to the rhetorical situation? What words in the second example indicate a more serious approach?

Here's a more academic example from a student's paper. In what ways can the language be more appropriate to an academic audience?

Everybody knows that one of the main reasons that students drop out of college is money. Students, especially students in poor areas of the country or in big cities, are always strapped for cash, and this makes the college experience a lot harder for them. This could mean that students have a hard time scraping up enough dollars to pay tuition each semester, which makes even entering or continuing college harder, or that the student might have to work lots of hours during the semester to pay for rent, transportation, and other bills. If a student can't pay his tuition bill, that's that—no more college. If a student *can* pay the tuition bill and actually get to college, but has to work full-time, attending class and completing the actual work that college requires (which is a lot!) is a lot harder. I've seen a lot of good students brought to their downfalls in difficult classes because they had to stay up late and work the night before.

What in the above passage indicates a tone or language that may be considered too informal for an academic setting? Are there particular patterns that the student has used to establish a certain tone? What might we change to make this sound more serious? Rewrite the paragraph in the space below using more formal language.



Understanding Arguments and Debates with the Stases

Most of us have disagreements with people in our lives at one point or another. These disagreements can be simple, like deciding where to go for dinner on the weekend, or more complex, like considering the causes of a particular political or social problem, like racism or homelessness. People in all walks of life engage in *debate* over issues great and small. Rarely, however, will people involved in a given debate stop to consider the nature of the disagreements in which they are engaging. Writers and thinkers who can take the time, however, to analyze and understand the specifics of what is being argued—which particular problems are being discussed—have a far greater chance of making substantial contribution to the conversation, or even achieving their goals within it.

One system for organizing and understanding the different kinds of arguments that people make is called “the stases” (a plural, pronounced “stay-sees”; the singular of this is “stasis,” pronounced “stay-sis”). The stases are in some ways “boxes” for different kinds of arguments, different kinds of problems that people arguing address; they are a way to sort and categorize types of disagreements. Understanding the types of arguments that people make will enable you to a.) understand the progress and structure of “discourse” or “conversation” on a topic, b.) see where there are points of agreement or disagreement within a discourse, and c.) comprehend how your own particular arguments / opinions fit into the conversation as a whole.

There are five major stases used for categorizing types of arguments:

- Fact and Definition
- Cause
- Value and Quality
- Action
- Jurisdiction

Disagreements over Fact and Definition

These are disagreements on the most basic level: whether or not something happened (or is happening), whether or not something exists, or whether or not something fits a particular definition or should be categorized in a particular way.

A key element in the debate over global climate change, for example, is whether or not it is actually happening. Many scientists and other climatologists assert that the planet is empirically getting progressively warmer, on average, every year. Other voices in the media, in government, and in advocacy groups assert that this is not the case—that the planet is *not* getting warmer.

A similar controversy can be observed in the “birther” phenomenon. “Birthers” assert that President Obama was born outside the United States, in Kenya—many argue that this is a *fact*. They might also question the authenticity of any document that purports to prove that he was, indeed, born in Hawaii in 1961. People on the other side of the debate advance the idea that President Obama was born on American soil. The essential question here—regardless of how silly or immaterial it might be to current politics—is “what happened?” or, more specifically, “where did event X happen?”

This stasis also covers disagreements about definitions. All parties might agree that John took Jerry’s car on Tuesday night, but there might be disagreements over whether or not Jerry “stole” or merely “borrowed” the car. People might also disagree as to whether acts like school shootings or racial intimidation should be considered acts of “terrorism,” or what exactly constitutes an act of “plagiarism.”

Disagreements over Cause

If questions over facts are settled, areas of disagreement may exist over what caused the situation or phenomenon. Predictions, also, can be considered disagreements over cause, as they argue what the probable outcomes will be from a certain course of action.

To return to the global climate change example, disagreements over cause are easy to see in this debate. Most parties to the debate are in agreement that the planet has been throughout most of the 20th century getting warmer. There is disagreement, however, about the cause of the change. Many scientists believe that the warming is “anthropogenic,” meaning that it is caused by humans and human activity—particularly the buildup of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Others believe that the earth is warming up for other reasons, such as a slight change in the axis of the earth, or patterns of solar radiation related to sunspot cycles. Predictions about global warming show a similar divergence: some predict that the increasing temperatures will cause droughts, a rise in sea level, and stronger, more intense, and more destructive weather patterns. Others argue that the warming planet will have a positive effect on growing seasons and will result in milder temperatures in colder climates.

Historical arguments often revolve around questions of causality. Scholars often have arguments about the fall of an empire like that in Rome, of the causes of wars (like the American Civil War or either of the World Wars), or the rise of a particular leader or development of a particular political or social movement. Some argue, for example, that the “Tea Party” movements active today in the United States are a result of excessive taxation and government spending; others may suggest that these movements are the result of popular anxiety over the presidency of Barack Obama and the financial crises of the last decade.

Examples of arguments that center on *predictions* are often present in discussions of the economy. Some policymakers and economists argue that if the government cuts taxes, the economy, flush with more cash for consumers and investors, will grow faster. Conversely, others argue that cutting taxes will only increase government debt, thus slowing economic growth. When debating regulations or new laws, stakeholders will often cite the possible positive or negative outcomes of implementing them: one might argue that environmental regulation will cause businesses to spend

more on compliance and thus hire fewer employees, or that regulating financial markets more strictly will lead to more overall stability in the economy.

Disagreements over Value or Quality

Arguments in this stasis are about the qualities that a phenomenon exhibits, or its value or importance. Does the thing have a certain quality, like “beauty” or “ugliness,” “noble” or “selfish,” “moral” or “immoral?” Is the phenomenon under examination a good or bad example of its kind, or somewhere in between? Is the subject a “good” thing or “bad” thing?

These kinds of disagreements are present in many kinds of discourse (whether political, social, moral, philosophical, or educational). Advertisements and speeches about a particular politician or point of view, for example might argue that their subject is *good* or *bad* for the constituents of a particular district. Likewise, protests and efforts about particular legislation, like slots and gambling or same-sex marriage, are often couched in language about the subject’s value: slots are a *bad thing* for our town; same-sex marriage is a *good thing* for the state and nation. Similarly, though, debaters sometimes make arguments about more specific qualities: some argue for example, that sex before marriage is immoral and dangerous; others may put forth the position that such activity is natural and healthy. Abortion, for example, is hotly contested in this way. Many support legal restrictions on abortion because they see it as an immoral taking of an innocent life; others favor keeping it legal because restricting it would be an unfair restriction on women’s rights to choose how and when they reproduce.

Many competitions are also governed by disagreements (or rather judgments) of value. Entrants in dog or other animal shows, for example, are judged as to how good an example of their respective breeds they are, based on a common standard. Gymnastics, diving, ice-skating, and other sports are driven by judges evaluating competitors’ execution of a given program of moves. Sports writers often argue about the “greatness” (or lack thereof) of particular athletes: is Ray Lewis the greatest middle linebacker ever to play the game? Is LeBron James the best ever to lace up basketball shoes? Who is the best pitcher in the Major Leagues right now? While the criteria might change depending on the particular subject, the core strategy of arguing based on *quality* remains the same.

In many cases, these arguments also center on what kinds of criteria should be applied to a given evaluation. Should the works of a writer with objectionable political or social beliefs (like anti-Semitism or racism) be judged taking those beliefs into account? Or should the work stand on its own, judged solely on its artistic merits? Should politicians be evaluated on their personal and sexual lives, or just on their job performance? What about athletes? Should they be judged based on what they do off the field?

Arguments about value and quality are often connected deeply with two other stases: that of *cause* and of *action*, which we will discuss below. Writers often argue that a certain subject, person, or phenomenon is a good thing or bad thing based on things that the subject has done, or on the prediction of positive or negative things that will happen because of it. To return to the slots example: “Legalizing slots in Maryland is bad for our state, because it will cause an increase in crime, addiction, and financial problems.” Conversely: “Slots are a good thing for Maryland

because legalizing them will raise significant revenue for education in the state and will provide hundreds of good-paying jobs to our citizens.”

Disagreements over Action

These are disagreements about what action to take on a given problem. Once a problem is identified, and perhaps evaluated as a bad thing, the next logical step in the process is to develop and advocate for a particular course of action (or refrain from action) on that problem. These arguments can be simple, everyday occurrences between family members. Parents convince their children that they should clean their rooms or eat all of their oatmeal in the morning. Siblings argue that “he should stop poking / bothering / tormenting / annoying me” or that “she should repay me the ten dollars I loaned her last week.”

The possibilities of this stasis, in nearly every avenue of discourse, are endless: We should raise taxes on the wealthy; Taxes should remain at their current level; Our college should build more on-campus housing to encourage more students to spend time here; Our college should use the extra money in the budget to build an on-campus daycare; The United States should remove its combat forces from Iraq; Medicare and Medicaid should be reformed to be more like private insurance; Medicaid and Medicare should remain in their current forms.

Many, but not all, arguments lead up to the action stasis. First, a set of facts is determined or a phenomenon identified; next, the causes of the situation can be considered, as well as consequences of its existence / continuation. After this, one can evaluate the phenomenon as “good” or “bad,” and then consider what to *do* about it, if anything.

Of course, a given course of action can be debated using questions in the stases as well: what will the action consist of? What are the consequences? Will they be positive or negative? What should be done?

Disagreements over Jurisdiction

Questions over who has the right to take action, define terms, decide facts, or even participate in a debate are essentially questions over *jurisdiction*. Everyone who has ever watched a mediocre cop show (or a cop movie) has seen the concept in action: the bad guy, who has just robbed a bank in Town A, tries to Town B get over the state line, and out of the jurisdiction of the sheriff / police / authorities of Town A. The authorities of Town A have no *power* in Town B to make arrests or hold people responsible for their actions. Questions of jurisdictions are at their core questions of power.

These types of questions often frame many other types of arguments. Should a police commissioner, who lives outside the city where he works, get to decide law-enforcement policies for that city? Does the United States have the right to go into other countries and overthrow their governments? Does France have the right to evaluate American human rights policies or the conduct of the “war on terror”? Similarly, does Congress have the authority to force every American to have health insurance coverage? Can the federal government dictate policies on marriage and family that supersede those of the individual States? Who has the right to decide—or even talk about—what should be done about the problems of a particular ethnic or social group?

Identifying the Dominant Stasis of a Disagreement

For each of the following debates, identify which of the stases characterizes the primary point of disagreement.

1. The Senator from Vermont argues in a floor speech to his colleagues that the United States should raise taxes on the richest 1% of the American population.

Stasis _____

2. Professor Markus Von Rictus argues in an academic paper of the possible origins of reproductive genetic mutations in the species *rodentia gigantis*.

Stasis _____

3. Journalist Tah-Nehisi Coates and hip-hop producer Russell Simmons debate who is the most skilled “freestyle” rapper working today.

Stasis _____

4. Music historian and Coppin professor Robert Cataliotti gives a lecture arguing that 1960s American Motown soul music is less influenced by the tradition of the blues than originally thought.

Stasis _____

5. District Attorney Murphy Brownhill asserts in her opening statement that Wilfred Smith committed a burglary of a residence on the West Side of Baltimore on January 5th, 2011.

Stasis _____

6. Jay Powell, a student at Central University, argues that a Resident Assistant, Walker Helms, is not permitted to search a dorm room that is not in that RA’s building.

Stasis _____

7. Scientist Richard Dawkins argues in his book *The God Delusion* that there is no such thing as a “god” as we currently conceive of it.

Stasis _____

8. Theresa Bloom, graduate student, defends herself in an academic hearing, arguing that her appropriation of a particular passage from an article was not in fact an act of plagiarism.

Stasis _____

9. Astrophysicist Erica Linkshire disputes in a debate with a colleague as to what the consequences of a medium-sized asteroid hitting Earth would be.

Stasis _____

10. Arlene Finn, mother of three, argues with her fifteen-year old son that he should clean up his room more often.

Stasis _____

Tracing a Debate With the Stases

To put all this information in some sort of real-world context, let's consider a common debate—and its corollary set of problems or questions—according to the stases. The controversy over the legality and morality of abortion is a topic for which we can easily identify possible disagreements or questions in the stases.

Stasis	Questions / Disagreements
Fact and Definition	What constitutes an “abortion?” How many abortions are performed each year? Who is getting them? When does a fetus become a “person?” Is a fetus just a part of woman’s body? Is abortion “murder?” Do people have the right to get an abortion?
Cause	What motivates someone to get an abortion? What are the physical effects of having an abortion? The emotional effects? What would be the effects of making abortion illegal? Would different types of sex education or parental attitudes lead to a decline in the rate of abortion?
Quality	Is keeping abortion legal a good thing or a bad thing? Is abortion “moral?” Is outlawing abortion a bad thing for women? Is violence against abortion providers justifiable under any circumstances?
Action	Should the U.S. restrict abortions? Should the individual states ban particular abortion-related procedures? Should U.S. taxpayer money go to fund abortions? When should a woman

	get an abortion, if at all?
Jurisdiction	Do men have the right to decide under which circumstances women should be allowed to have abortions? Does the government have the authority to restrict what a woman does to her own body? Do human beings have the right to decide when and how to reproduce? Or does that authority reside somewhere else?

The topic of the legalization of same-sex marriage is also often defined by disagreements in the stases. Use the chart below to outline some of the principal disagreements in this debate. If you need to, use the questions above on abortion as a guide to get your thinking started.

Stasis	Questions / Disagreements
Fact and Definition	
Cause	
Quality	
Action	
Jurisdiction	

The Rhetorical Appeals

When we talked about the stases, we talked about the *types* or *classifications* of arguments or disagreements that characterize a debate. But how are specific arguments created? How does a writer (or speaker) reach out to his or her audience and create an effective argument in a given stasis? How does a writer convince his audience on a point of fact? On the validity of a particular course of action?

Many arguments are built around what the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle called the three primary types of rhetorical appeals: *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. Roughly translated, these terms mean the following:

Ethos: an appeal based on the person of the arguer, on credibility and likeability

Pathos: an appeal to the emotions of the audience

Logos: an appeal to the intelligence or sense of logic in the audience.

Each of these three methods of reaching out to an audience has its strengths and weaknesses, and good, sophisticated arguments often make use of more than one type of appeal at once.

Ethos

Ethos-based, or “ethical” arguments draw their power from the credibility and likeability of the person doing the arguing. Arguments based in this appeal seek to build a relationship of trust between the writer and reader, or the speaker and his audience. We are generally more likely to be persuaded by a person who seems trustworthy and likeable, rather than someone who, while “correct,” might come off as sneaky, angry, or not inviting.

Consider the following problem: when buying a car, what kind of salesperson do you best respond to? Are you more likely to respond to someone who seems genuinely concerned about you and with what you want out of your automobile? How effective would this person be compared to someone who is rude, cold, or “shifty,” if he offers the same product at the same price? Which salesman are you more likely to believe when he tells you about the features, benefits, and durability of the car he’s selling?

Politics often revolves around questions of ethos. Many people vote for politicians with whom they might disagree on policy matters (if indeed they understand or follow such things) because the candidate “seems like a nice guy” or that he’s “someone [they’d] like to have a beer with.” The candidate’s image is everything: George W. Bush projected an image of down-home friendliness; Barack Obama projects one of hopeful optimism and youth. And both politicians use that image to get what they want in the political arena.

Advertising often works on the same principles: many ads (which are, after all, simply very short arguments to buy a product) use a spokesperson that is meant to be likeable, respectable, reasonable, or even funny. Apple computer, for example, uses two different spokespeople to represent “Mac” people—a hip young actor—and “PC” people, a frumpy, middle-aged

management type. Each spokesperson carries with them a certain projection of their personality, which helps sell the product.

Two Types of Ethos: Extrinsic and Intrinsic

Ethos can be divided into two main types: extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic ethos means ethos “outside” the speaker; this can be considered the speaker’s reputation or the audience’s pre-existing knowledge of or disposition toward the speaker. An arguer’s extrinsic ethos can vary, though, depending on what the subject is; one might be a very credible speaker, with very high / positive extrinsic ethos on one subject, but have very low credibility or ethos on another. Here are some examples:

Barack Obama: More needs to be done by western democracies such as the United States and Great Britain to stabilize governments in Iraq and Afghanistan before the U.S. can withdraw its forces.

What kind of expertise does Obama have in this subject matter? What does his reputation suggest he knows about this? How does the fact that Obama is the President of the United States affect the credibility of his statement? To see the concept of extrinsic ethos in action, let’s put the same statement in the mouths of some other speakers:

CBS Nightly News anchorperson Katie Couric
Blogger Perez Hilton
Senator John McCain
Former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan
Peter Griffin, of *Family Guy*

How does our perception of the speaker alter our understanding of the argument that he or she is making? What do we look for in a commentator on serious matters of foreign policy? What are the qualities that define a “credible” speaker on this subject?

Similarly, our perception of a writer / arguer’s extrinsic ethos is also dependent on the particular subject matter. Peter Griffin, the oafish dad from *Family Guy* might have little credibility when talking about national security issues, but would have much more credibility when evaluating the qualities of certain brands of beer, the best buffet dinners available in Quahog, Rhode Island, or the benefits of having a family dog. This can also cut the other way: former president Bill Clinton, for example, is a recognized leader in foreign policy circles, but has extremely low believability / credibility in his personal life. While we might believe him when he is talking about the need for economic incentives for development in the Balkans, we are far less likely to find his words credible if he is denying an extramarital affair or giving advice on how to have a good marriage.

Ethos is not always a “fair” process: sometimes one’s reputation—or even a stereotype or prejudice—can bias his or her audience against what he or she may be arguing / reporting. Lawyers, for example, often select witnesses to testify in certain cases based on not only what they saw or heard, but on how believable their story might be to a jury. How might a prosecutor approach an assault case if his sole witness was a prostitute who happened to be working in the area when the assault happened? Or if his witness had a history of drug problems? Or was

homeless? Would it be different for the prosecutor if his witness was a suburban soccer mom? A member of the clergy? Audience perception *matters* here. The testimony of these people might be valid and truthful, but their audience might be biased for or against them because of their extrinsic ethos.

Advertisers also make use of ethos: they choose famous people who have credibility in subjects related to their product to serve as endorsers and spokespeople. Basketball players, like Michael Jordan or LeBron James, are used to endorse basketball shoes; respected or likeable actors sell life insurance or low-fat margarine; Jersey Shore cast members pour exotic shots at popular nightspots; NASCAR drivers appear in commercials singing the praises of particular automotive products. The very act of endorsement plays upon what the audience knows about the spokesperson, and is invited to “trust” that their judgment is valid.

Publications also have extrinsic ethos: the fact that a piece of writing appears in a particular publication may affect how readers respond to it—and again, the subject matter counts. What would be the extrinsic ethos of the following publications? On what subjects would they be most likely to feature credible material? Look up the publications on the internet if you are unfamiliar with them. In making your determinations, you should consider things such as the audience of the publication, the subject matter the publication covers, the writers who contribute material to the publication, and the level of education required to understand the articles in the publication.

The New England Journal of Medicine

General Impression:

Areas in which writing appearing in it would have positive extrinsic ethos

TheSource.com

General Impression:

Areas in which writing appearing in it would have positive extrinsic ethos

The Washington Post

General Impression:

Areas in which writing appearing in it would have positive extrinsic ethos

Dog Fancy Magazine

General Impression:

Areas in which writing appearing in it would have positive extrinsic ethos

TMZ.com

General Impression:

Areas in which writing appearing in it would have positive extrinsic ethos

Highlights for Children Magazine

General Impression:

Areas in which writing appearing in it would have positive extrinsic ethos

The Weekly World News

General Impression:

Areas in which writing appearing in it would have positive extrinsic ethos

Critical Studies in Television

General Impression:

Areas in which writing appearing in it would have positive extrinsic ethos

Intrinsic Ethos

While “extrinsic” ethos is the ethos that comes from an arguer’s reputation—factors “outside” the arguer’s writing, internal ethos is, as one might guess, ethos that comes from “inside” the argument. What this means is the impression of the writer’s credibility as demonstrated in the tone, approach, organization, logic, and reasonability of the writing itself. To be effective, writers need not only be “right” in what they say, but they must present a vision of themselves as credible sources on their subject matter. *Audiences are persuaded most effectively by writers with whom they feel a sense of connection, respect, and trust.*

But how does one present a positive image of oneself through writing? In short, one does this by writing well and respecting both the audience’s values and the views of other people, even the opposing sides in the debate.

Writing Well: Ethos and Grammar, Logic, and Style.

This is, of course, more difficult than it sounds. To “write well” means to use a language, style, and tone appropriate for the rhetorical situation, and also to present one’s ideas clearly, logically, and directly.

In the section on “audience” we covered the importance of understanding what expectations your audience would have for a piece of writing, and how those expectations might differ under different circumstances. A quick text message to a friend, for example, is governed by far different rules of language and grammar than is a formal letter to one’s employer or an academic paper. An essay for one’s political science class, for example, may say the “right” things and may have valid points. If that essay, however, is riddled with grammatical problems, such as misused verb tenses, or with typographical errors, it is far less effective in presenting a positive image of the writer. Instead of a thoughtful and “correct” analysis of the subject, the writing seems to be produced by someone too lazy to use spell-checker or to proofread properly. Or, even worse yet, the writing conveys a sense to the reader that the writer doesn’t grasp basic grammatical concepts, which is catastrophically damaging to the writer’s credibility. Here’s a real-world example, from a resume’ submitted to an employer. What does this resume’ suggest about the writer who composed it? What could be changed here to present a more positive image of Ms. Greengarden?

Estella Greengarden
2144 East View Terrace
Baltimore, MD 21235
443-XXX-1234

Goal:

To get a office job that pay me money for college educataiton

Education:

Millard Fillmore Higschool, Lakewood, MN, 1994

Job experience

2005-present: Customer servic representative, George’s Meat

Assist with input customer orders in computer, update system with delivery schedule, talk drivers and supervise warehouse people

1995-2004: Customer service Assistant, Welltown Food Distributors
Do boring data entry, help customer with orders on phone, work warehouse when they need me

1994-1995: Front end worker, McDonagle's Restaurant
Take order from customers, put food on trays, clean up at end of shift

Or, consider the email sent to the professor earlier:

Hey Prof:

My computer is on the blink again and I can't submit ur Engl101 paper on time. You think it would be ok if I brought it to you printed out? I have it on my flashdrive and can print from the school's comp lab on Tues. Bye!

Student X

What is the impression of the writer that such a piece of writing conveys? What does the lax, casual tone and the "texting" language say about a.) who the writer is and b.) how they are approaching this particular writing task?

But presenting writing using the appropriate language and grammar is not enough to present the audience with a positive vision of the writer. The writing must be clear, logical, and well-organized—as all good writing is—and maintain a respectful tone toward the subject matter, and even toward those within the debate with whom the writer might disagree. Writers build effective intrinsic ethos by showing a mastery of their own views—and a respect for the others involved in the debate. Consider the following example, one that is in the right language and uses the right language for the situation, but has a tone and respect problem:

Handguns should be banned in Baltimore immediately. These things are responsible for our kids dying at a truly frightening rate. The FBI Violent Crimes Index for this year shows that murders and assaults with handguns are at their highest level in twenty years! Last week, a twelve-year old boy was struck and killed by a bullet fired by one of the lowlifes that sees the streets of this city as the OK Corral. It's got to stop, and the lunatics from the National Rifle Association and their allied special interests just don't get it: they would rather keep assault rifles in the hands of criminals and scumbags than do anything about the violence problems in our inner cities. Nelson Cruk, president of the National Rifle Association said, in particularly idiotic statement, that "The 2nd Amendment is absolute on this point—the government can't regulate guns" (Cruk 234).

The above passage has some things to commend it—the writer has constructed some good sentences, and the point is very clear. BUT, the tone lapses into the casual and even insulting (“lowlifes,” “scumbags,” “lunatics”), which undermines the things the writer is trying to accomplish. Here the writer comes off as committed, but also angry, and overly ready to turn the argument into a personal attack on her opponents. Consider a similar passage that *doesn't* take a turn for the personal:

Handguns should be banned in Baltimore immediately. According to the FBI Violent Crimes Index, this year was one of the most violent we have had here, in terms of handgun-related murders and assaults. Just last week, a twelve year old boy was killed by a stray bullet, most likely fired by an illegal handgun. While Nelson Cruik, president of the National Rifle Association is well within his rights to argue that “the 2nd Amendment is absolute on this point—the government can't regulate guns” (Cruik 234), I respectfully disagree. The actual text of the 2nd Amendment to the Constitution is a bit more vague—it connects the people's right to keep and bear arms to service in “a well-regulated militia.” As there are no “well-regulated militias” in Baltimore City, it seems that the law allows for *some* regulation of weapons. Given the crisis we are in as a city, we desperately need to get some of these guns off the streets.

What are some of the major differences between how these two arguments are made? What has the writer done in the revised version that conveys a more reasonable, measured, likeable persona? How does the writer treat those with whom she disagrees?

Both passages above are “correct” in their use of grammar, a basic requirement for almost any formal writing task. But the second passage is far more respectful to the views of the NRA president; the passage refrains from calling him “idiotic” and implying that her opponents are stupid or misinformed. Instead, the writer notes, and accurately assesses the NRA position, but points out where it diverges with her own. It also omits the language that casts criminals as “lowlifes” who treat the city as a firing range or a shootout scene from a Western movie.

Pathos

Arguments based in pathos, or “pathetic” appeals, are appeals to the emotions of the audience. *Emotions* here, however, is a broad term. It refers to not just the innate feelings that the audience has, but also to that audience’s sense of self-interest, values, identity, and even their biases and predispositions. Arguments to these elements in our human nature are extremely powerful—they are at times explicitly *not* rational: they often speak to the things that we feel or believe in our core, but do not say out loud. Because of their intense power—power based on feeling rather than thought—“pathetic” arguments have often been decried (sometimes justly) throughout history as “cheating” one’s way out of an argument.

When one’s younger sibling, for example, pleads with his older brother to have mercy and not to tell mom and dad on him for breaking a picture frame, he uses *pathos*, appealing to his brother’s sense of mercy. Similarly, when a student asks a professor, in tears, for an extension on a paper because her house was broken into and all her possessions stolen, she appeals to the professor’s sense of fairness and sympathy.

Examples often come up in personal relationships: when a boyfriend wants something from his significant other, he might say “I love you” in order to get it; conversely, one might hear “If you love me, you’ll do X or get X for me . . .” These are pathos-based appeals.

Guilt is also a pathetic appeal, and often a very effective one. When a parent asks for a child to do something, he might play up the emotional importance of it for the child’s own welfare, or mention how much the parent wanted the task done, or even all he has done for the child in the past. The audience’s sense of guilt and responsibility is in play here.

But pathos also has a darker connotation: arguments targeting or eliciting hatred of a specific racial or ethnic group are often based in an extremely powerful emotion—fear. Hitler’s devastating propaganda campaign against the Jews in Europe, which of course led to the extermination of millions, played on the European fear of “the Jew.” Likewise, segregationists and racists in the American South used fear, usually sexualized, of Black men to garner support for racist policies and Jim Crow laws. We can see the same discourses operating now, when people campaign against homosexual rights as “unnatural” or a product of Satan’s handiwork: often these people propagate myths about gay people being perverts or sexual predators.

But the ease of misuse of pathos does not disqualify it from being a useful rhetorical tool. Strategically appealing to the feelings one’s audience has about a certain subject, paired with good writing and solid evidence, can enhance the effectiveness of one’s writing exponentially.

Consider the following passage from a speech given by the famous General George S. Patton to his troops just before a major battle in World War II:

Men, this stuff that some sources sling around about America wanting out of this war, not wanting to fight, is a crock of bullshit. Americans love to fight, traditionally. All real Americans love the sting and clash of battle.

You are here today for three reasons. First, because you are here to defend your homes and your loved ones. Second, you are here for your own self-respect, because you would not want to be anywhere else. Third, you are here because you are real men and all real men like to fight. When you, here, every one of you, were kids, you all admired the champion marble player, the fastest runner, the toughest boxer, the big league ball players, and the All-American football players. Americans love a winner. Americans will not tolerate a loser. Americans despise cowards. Americans play to win all of the time. I wouldn't give a hoot in hell for a man who lost and laughed. That's why Americans have never lost nor will ever lose a war; for the very idea of losing is hateful to an American.

You can see here that the General appeals to a couple of key *feelings* that the audience—American soldiers getting ready to go into battle—might have. He appeals to their sense of identity and patriotism: *Americans* like this, *Americans* are like that. He also appeals to their sense of male ego: real men, he argues, like to fight. Who wants to be a “fake” or feminized man?

Likewise, consider this key passage from Martin Luther King's famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” where he argues to Alabama clergymen about the need for immediate action for Civil Rights in the South:

We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five year old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross county drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"--then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair.

King here plays upon some key emotions present in his audience—where does he do this? Identify in the space below at least three places in which King attempts to generate an emotional response from the people to whom his argument is directed, and which emotions to which he appeals. Remember: this letter was written to those members of the clergy who criticized King’s nonviolent campaign in Birmingham, telling him that he should wait for the Birmingham government to take action on issues of Civil Rights.

Emotional Appeal 1:

Emotional Appeal 2:

Emotional Appeal 3:

Exercise: Pathetic / Emotional Appeals

For each of the following passages, identify which emotions the author is attempting to elicit in his audience:

1. If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer. It’s the answer told by lines that stretched around schools and churches in numbers this nation has never seen, by people who waited three hours and four hours, many for the first time in their lives, because they believed that this time must be different, that their voices could be that difference. It’s the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled. Americans who sent a message to the world that we have never been just a collection of individuals or a collection of red states and blue states. We are, and always will be, the United States of America. (Barack Obama, 2008)

Emotions:

2. No, I'm not an American. I'm one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism. One of the 22 million black people who are the victims of democracy, nothing but disguised hypocrisy. So, I'm not standing here speaking to you as an American, or a patriot, or a flag-saluter, or a flag-waver -- no, not I. I'm speaking as a victim of this American system. And I see America through the eyes of the victim. I don't see any American dream; I see an American nightmare. (Malcolm X, 1964)

Emotions:

3. Martin Luther King dedicated his life to love and to justice between fellow human beings. He died in the cause of that effort. In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the United States, it's perhaps well to ask what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in. For those of you who are black -- considering the evidence evidently is that there were white people who were responsible -- you can be filled with bitterness, and with hatred, and a desire for revenge. We can move in that direction as a country, in greater polarization -- black people amongst blacks, and white amongst whites, filled with hatred toward one another. Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand, and to comprehend, and replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has spread across our land, with an effort to understand, compassion, and love. For those of you who are black and are tempted to fill with -- be filled with hatred and mistrust of the injustice of such an act, against all white people, I would only say that I can also feel in my own heart the same kind of feeling. I had a member of my family killed, but he was killed by a white man. But we have to make an effort in the United States. We have to make an effort to understand, to get beyond, or go beyond these rather difficult times. (Robert F. Kennedy, "Remarks on the Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.," 1968)

Emotions:

4. Fans, for the past two weeks you have been reading about a bad break I got. Yet today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth. I have been in ballparks for seventeen years and have never received anything but kindness and encouragement from you fans. Look at these grand men. Which of you wouldn't consider it the highlight of his career just to associate with them for even one day? Sure I'm lucky. When the New York Giants, a team you would give your right arm to beat, and vice versa, sends you a gift

- that's something. When everybody down to the groundskeepers and those boys in white coats remember you with trophies -- that's something. When you have a wonderful mother-in-law who takes sides with you in squabbles with her own daughter -- that's something. When you have a father and a mother who work all their lives so you can have an education and build your body -- it's a blessing. When you have a wife who has been a tower of strength and shown more courage than you dreamed existed -- that's the finest I know. So, I close in saying that I might have been given a bad break, but I've got an awful lot to live for. (New York Yankees First Baseman Lou Gehrig, after being diagnosed with a terminal illness, "Farewell to Baseball Address," 1939)

Emotions:

Logos

Logos refers to the strategy of appealing to the audience's intelligence or intellect, using logic and evidence. In many ways, what people usually consider an "argument" is usually a set of claims and evidence based on *logos*. When we cite definitions, establish causal relationships, suggest parallels, comparisons, or analogies, or use testimony or other evidence, we are appealing to their audience's sense of logic.

When a scientist, for example, uses chemical data to make the claim that the presence of a particular chemical is harming the fish in a local lake, she is arguing logically. When a judge asserts that a defendant's actions fit the definition of a certain crime, he argues via logic. Similarly, when a student cites an expert on the causes of adolescent crime in an English 101 paper, she makes use of logos. There are many logical *lines of argument*; some of these are called the Common Topics, which we will discuss in the next section.

Lines of Argument: Aristotle's Common Topics

Logical arguments often follow particular patterns or templates; these patterns, which are very old, even dating back to ancient Greece, provide a strategy for arguers to build persuasive arguments. There are four basic Common Topics, according to the philosopher Aristotle; these Common Topics are “starting places” for arguments. The four Common Topics are as follows: Argument by Definition, Argument by Cause and Consequence, Argument by Comparison or Analogy, and Argument by Testimony and Authority.

Argument by Definition

When people argue using the Common Topic of Definition, they assert that something — an idea, a thing, an action — fits or does not fit into a particular category or classification. It essentially “labels” the subject as having certain qualities associated with that classification. Here is an example:

Marriage is not a full-contact sport.

Here, the writer claims that there is a class called “full-contact sports”— violent, competitive sports like football and hockey, and that the concept of “marriage” should be excluded from that class. The overall argument is that marriage should not be violent or competitive, but rather governed by other rules, such as sensitivity and cooperation. The argument could be further developed here by citing reasons and evidence why this definition should apply.

A slightly different example might be something like the following:

The Saw franchise is a perfect example of the “torture porn” genre of horror movies.

The writer in this statement has established the class of “torture porn”—with all its associated meanings (which are presumably negative)—and fits the *Saw* movies into it. In developing this argument, the writer may establish all the qualities of a “torture porn” film and discuss how *Saw* features them.

Political writing often makes use of the Argument by Definition. Here are some simple examples:

A vote for Abraham Johnson is a vote for lower taxes and smaller government.

To support my opponent is to support terrorists.

Senator Kelly's vote against the Ohio Farm Subsidy bill is a shameless and cynical political stunt.

Argument by Cause and Consequence

The tactic of establishing a causal relationship in an argument is one of **the** most popular and effective means of argumentation available. Arguments citing the cause or consequences of

something are common in many forms of discourse. These can range from relatively simple arguments:

Smoking cigarettes leads to an increased risk of lung and throat cancer.

To far more sophisticated formulations:

The consequences of procrastination for college students can be devastating: a lower rate of academic success, a higher dropout rate, and less retention of learned material.

Foreclosure is caused by several determining factors: the terms of the original loan, the employment status of the borrower, and the aggressiveness of the financial institution in pursuing the property.

Rampant speculation, extreme levels of bank leveraging, and unregulated trading in complex financial instruments led to the near-depression of 2008.

Much advertising also relies on *implied* cause and consequence arguments. Advertisements for body lotions, beauty products, and weight-loss supplements imply that using their product will enhance the quality of the user's life. Similarly, advertisements for athletic gear—particularly shoes—often promise to improve the purchaser's performance in their chosen sport.

To develop these arguments effectively, one must describe the relationships that the argument sets up: if the writer claims that smoking causes cancer, he must provide evidence, like facts, expert opinions, or other evidence (like credible statistics) to ensure that the audience sees the connection. Lots of description of the elements of cause (or the consequences) and the reasoning linking the two needs to be provided to the audience in order to make the argument work.

Argument by Comparison or Analogy

This strategy of argumentation is when the arguer uses a parallel situation or idea to persuade his audience of the validity of his claim, i.e., that his point is *like* something else, building a connection between the two ideas in the mind of the reader. This tactic can work in many ways and in support of many kinds of arguments (i.e., in many of the stases).

Analogies can provide clarity for definitions or descriptions:

The smallpox virus is like a shapeshifter, rapidly adapting to and consuming any organism it comes in contact with.

[Investment bank] Goldman Sachs: a great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money (Matt Taibbi, 2009).

Films like *Saw* and *Hostel* are like pornography for those obsessed with violence rather than sex.

They can also describe causes and predictions:

Heroin is like an epidemic causing the disintegration of American inner cities.

Education works like a magic bullet to improve the lives of disadvantaged youth.

The United States will most likely fail to achieve its military objectives in Afghanistan, just as the Soviets and British failed before.

Clarify evaluative statements:

Like all the horrible summer movies before it, *Transformers 5* is all spectacle and no substance.

The new album by *Bright Sky Singers* is an instant classic, reminding this reviewer of the best recordings of Bob Dylan.

And validate or support particular courses of action:

Homeowners should not put fertilizer on their lawn; it over-saturates it with nutrients, like putting sugar on candy.

Cutting taxes during wartime is like emptying a car's gas tank before a big trip.

Not going to class is like paying for groceries and then throwing them away.

Arguments by Testimony and Authority

Arguments using Testimony and Authority are based on the credibility or the *ethos* of others: experts, witnesses, authorities, organizations, publications, groups, or even popular opinion. When writers appeal to audiences using testimony or authority, they use the judgments or perspectives of others to provide evidence for their argument.

A writer might cite a famous philosopher or politician when advocating for a certain policy position, or may quote from a respected text (like the Bible, the Koran, or the Declaration of Independence) or publication (like the *New York Times* or *Journal of the American Medical Association*) to lend credence to his opinion on a particular controversy: all of these tactics use others to make the case.

Think of this as analogous to a lawyer calling a witness in a trial: the lawyer will present to the jury people whose comments will support her case. She might call a biologist to either confirm or dispute DNA evidence, a psychologist to discuss the defendant's state of mind, and witnesses to confirm that the defendant was elsewhere when the crime was committed. Similarly, the other side may call eyewitnesses or their own scientific experts to dispute the lawyer's arguments.

Likewise, advertisers use this idea all the time: by borrowing the credibility of respected voices in their fields, companies can persuade their audience to use their product. They might argue that 9 out of 10 dentists agree that Brand X toothpaste is the most effective, or that Dr. X, a respected authority from a weekday talk show, really believes in PainAway for everyday aches and pains. Celebrity endorsements work the same way: Reebok, Nike, and the other major shoe manufacturers are always looking for famous athletes to certify their shoes as the best in the world.

When arguing by testimony and authority, however, it is important to realize that this tactic demands far more than simply "finding a source" that agrees with or supports your point. Arguers must look for the most appropriate sources for their audience, and *remind that audience* of the source's *ethos*. It does no good to quote Bertrand Russell to an audience without reminding them who Bertrand Russell is and why they should care; it does no good to quote a respected foreign policy analyst writing in *Foreign Affairs* magazine without attributing the quote to that analyst and *using* her credibility to support one's argument.

There are many variations of Testimony and Authority-based arguments. Some use the authority of popular opinion to make a case:

Fifty million Jay-Z fans can't be wrong: the man is phenomenal. [Quality]

Las Vegas, Nevada welcomes millions of tourists each year: come see why! [Action]

Three-quarters of adults in Washington, DC support same-sex marriage legalization; we should pass this now. [Action]

Others use expert or academic opinions:

Dr. Willis Ostendarp of the Extra-Terrestrial Research Alliance (EXTRA) argues in his book *Star Thinking* that there “is a high probability of intelligent life on other planets . . . but it is equally unlikely that we will ever come into contact with it.” [Fact & Definition]

Psychologist Baron Kalzinsky suggests that there are four distinct motivators for entrepreneurial activity: economic gain, desire for public recognition, social necessity, and idealism. [Causation]

Paul Krugman, columnist for the *New York Times* and a Nobel Prize winner, suggests that U.S. government deficits are far less of a pressing problem than the sluggish pace of growth in the domestic economy. [Quality & Evaluation]

Most climatologists agree that the earth is getting progressively warmer. [Fact & Definition]

Sometimes the “authority” being quoted is a text or book:

The Bible says that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven. [Fact & Definition]

The ancient Hindu holy text the Bhagavad-Gita suggests that it is a soldier’s duty to fight in a righteous war. [Action]