

Topic Proposal Assignment Description

Paper Goals:

This paper is designed to help you focus your thinking about your final paper project. After completing this assignment, you should be able to identify a solid research question or questions, define your artifact precisely, explain why your research is important, and chart out a basic approach to examine your artifact in order to answer your research question.

Due Date: Papers are due by 5 pm in my office mailbox (CMU 102) on 10/26.

Paper Format:

1. Research Question(s)

In this section, you should identify the main research question(s) you want to answer.

2. Description of the artifact (300-700 words)

In this section, you should describe the artifact you want to analyze. Remember, this artifact can be something like the transcript of a speech, a movie, a television episode, or a series of pictures. Basically, provide enough background so that someone unfamiliar with your artifact has a good idea of what it is and its context

3. Justification of the project (100-300 words)

In this section you need to explain why analyzing this artifact is important. How will your research help us better understand the artifact? Does the artifact tell a larger story than itself? In other words, what will we, the readers, understand better as a result of reading your study? Moreover, why is it important for us to understand this?

4. Description of the approach (100-200 words)

We will get to a more detailed discussion of methods in the later half of the class. But you have been exposed to a variety of different approaches thus far. Spend a bit of time thinking about how you will design your study so you can answer your research question(s)? So, let's say you were interested in answering how President Clinton attempted to maintain credibility while acknowledging wrong-doing during the Monica Lewinski investigations. At this point, you know that you should spend time mapping argument elements, classifying evidence types, and perhaps charting out narrative structures.

Evaluation

Your paper will be assessed based on how well you accomplish the paper goals, the style of your writing, and the level of your insight.

The break down for these point allocations are as follows:

- Research Question(s): 2 points
- Description of the artifact: 5 points
- Justification of the project: 5 points
- Description of the approach: 2 points
- Paper style and citation: 1 point

Matt McGarrity
COM 431
Topic Proposal

Main Research Question(s)

How does *The Art of Public Speaking* frame rhetorical invention?

Description of the artifact

This study examines Stephen Lucas's *The Art of Public Speaking*. Stephen Lucas is the Evjue-Bascom Professor in the Humanities at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In addition to writing this textbook, he has published widely on Presidential public address and rhetorical criticism. I will be looking at the most recent edition, the ninth, which was published by McGraw-Hill in 2005. The book is a fairly traditional public speaking textbook and it is written explicitly for use in a college classroom. The book makes many references to college and the course instructor. This textbook is published by a college textbook publisher and is marketed almost exclusively to public speaking instructors. Lucas's book is widely acknowledged to be the best selling public speaking textbook in the U.S. Textbook publishers have attested to its publishing strength. Additionally, a 1999 survey of public speaking practices ranked the Lucas book as the most popular choice among the respondents (Morealle et al.).

The book itself contains eighteen chapters that walk the reader through all stages of speech preparation. These eighteen chapters are clustered into five basic sections: Speaking and Listening (Speaking in Public, Ethics in Public Speaking, and Listening), Speech Preparation: Getting Started (Selecting a Topic and Purpose, Analyzing the Audience, Gathering Materials, Supporting Your Ideas), Speech Preparation: Organizing and Outlining (Organizing the Body of the Speech, Beginning and Ending the Speech, Outlining the Speech), Presenting the Speech (Using Language, Delivery, Using Visual Aids), and Varieties of Public Speaking (Speaking to Inform, Speaking to Persuade, Methods of Persuasion, Speaking on Special Occasions, and Speaking in Small Groups). The book is sold with a number of other ancillaries for classroom use: sample video speeches, a teacher's resource manual that provides teaching, syllabus, and assignment suggestions, student workbooks. I have focused just on the textbook since it provides the basis for all the information in the accompanying materials.

Justification of the project

Answering the research question is important because it can tell us much about this particular textbook and about the larger issues of public speaking pedagogy. First, answering this question can tell us much about how Lucas treats invention. This is no small matter since his book is the most popular reaching thousands of college students each year. Second, answering this question provides a starting point for improving the teaching of invention. Once we have a better understanding of the status quo, we can begin to improve upon that notion as need be. Finally, answering this question can tell us a lot about how public speaking classes frame rhetoric. Historically, invention has played a vital part in understanding rhetoric as an intellectual art of argument formation. If invention is downplayed or absent, public speaking textbooks might be fostering an overly narrow view of rhetoric.

Description of the approach

As stated above, I have selected the top selling public speaking textbook as a text for analysis. Since my research question addresses Lucas's discussion of invention, I will focus my attention on inventional issues. I will identify all statements dealing with invention. Once identified, I will classify these statements in terms of their advice to readers. I also want to look for the overall narrative structures that provide a guide for students as they create arguments. Of course, I am particularly interested in what these narratives omit in terms of invention. Finally, a cursory view of the artifact reveals that instructional examples (in the form of break out boxes and sidebars) play a role in guiding invention. So, I will examine these examples in terms of the unstated lessons in instruction they provide.

Works Cited

Morreale, Sherwyn P., et al. "The Basic Communication Course at U.S. Colleges and Universities: VI." Basic Communication Course Annual 11 (1999): 1-26.