***Unit I Project***

*Analyzing a Text Rhetorically*

For the first writing project, you will write a rhetorical analysis of a short text. This assignment builds on the reading and writing strategies you have learned in English 101 and focuses on interpreting a text from a rhetorical perspective (some of you may be familiar with rhetorically analyzing an image/text). Performing an analysis of a written or visual text will help you enhance your analytical ability and practice the kind of work you will do in your other courses at the university, which is central to being an active participant in both academic and civic life.

We live in a world where we continuously use language to persuade, communicate, and inform in order to change attitudes and induce cooperation in an audience. This rhetorical function of language can be found in various forms of written, spoken, or visual texts such as political speeches, commentaries, editorials, opinion pieces, poems, lyrics, documentaries, advertisements, and even the news we watch. While we are all aware of this to some degree—we speak differently, for instance, to family, friends, and teachers—much of the subtlety of rhetoric passes by without our notice. In the process, it slowly influences our worldview in ways that we might not even recognize. Becoming aware of the rhetorical moves used in public discourses, then, is essential to critical thinking and decision-making.

In this project, you will choose one of the following short texts—Michelle Obama’s 2012 Democratic Convention transcript, Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” or George Orwell’s “Shooting an Elephant”—and analyze its rhetorical situation.

You may need to address such issues as: What historical/social/political situation does the author respond to? What are the author’s purposes? Who is the intended audience? What message does the author hope to convey? What effects does the text have on the reader? What rhetorical strategies does the author use to establish her ethos/credibility and to appeal emotionally and/or logically to the reader? How do these strategies/textual features help the author deliver her message? How successfully does the author communicate her ideas to the reader?

When you analyze your chosen text, do some research to find out its historical/political contexts and the author’s background, read the text closely, and identify its rhetorical strategies. You may quote specific phrases/sentences and use them to help you interpret the text. Examine everything about the rhetorical features of the text, even how and why the writer uses specific words. Think also about how the author arranges words, including the order in which they appear and their function in specific sentences. Providing thorough explanations of how your textual examples connect to your observations is the key to an in-depth analysis.

**GRADING CRITERIA**

**As I read your essays, I will consider the following questions:**

* Does the essay have a clear controlling idea thoroughly developed throughout the essay?
* Does the essay provide a detailed analysis of the rhetorical situation of the chosen text and the major rhetorical strategies used by the author?
* Do the paragraphs develop well-defined claims with specific examples from the text and detailed explanations?
* Are the paragraphs linked together into a well-developed and coherent interpretation of the chosen text?
* Do the sentences of the essay express the writer’s ideas clearly and effectively?

Your essay should be double-spaced, 4-5 pages in length (1500-1800 words), 12 pt. Times-New Roman font, 1” margin, and include a creative title. Prepare your works cited page according to the MLA style manual. Feel free to meet with me to discuss your ideas.

**Deadlines:**

**Monday, February 9**:*Rough Draft #1:* must bring ***at least*** two pages; failure to attend class and/or failure to bring at least two pages will result in a lower letter-grade

**Friday, February 13:** *Rough Draft #2*: must bring full rough draft (4-5 pages); failure to attend class and/or failure to bring full rough draft will result in a lower letter-grade

**Monday, February 16:** *Final Draft due*