Chapter One
Evaluating Arguments

Christopher Brennan, "Chair and Water Vessels"
Evaluating Arguments

Arguments, or attempts at persuading audiences to think or act in certain ways, are part of our everyday culture, yet we don’t always stop to consider how they work. To gain a stronger understanding of persuasion, and to become stronger persuasive writers, this rhetorical evaluation assignment asks you to learn the basic components of rhetoric and to analyze how those components work in a written argument. Understanding how an argument works and studying how rhetorical appeals function (in sometimes subtle ways) within that argument, will allow you to not only strengthen your critical thinking and reading skills, but also to eventually write your own effective argument in response as well.

Once you have identified the various relationships between an article’s intended audience, its overall claim, and its rhetorical appeals, this assignment then asks you to make a claim about what makes the argument particularly successful or unsuccessful for that specific audience. Your own rhetorical evaluation will then focus on your analytical and argumentative claim: is this piece effective for its target audience? In what ways?

As you develop this rhetorical evaluation, you will need to focus on how the argument applies rhetorical appeals; you should not, however, include your own feelings or opinions about the topic or the content of the article. You will write this analytical argument for a supportive audience that is interested in your perspective and ideas. For instance, you could imagine your classmates or peers as your willing audience. Because your audience is supportive, and therefore unlikely to need as much convincing as a resistant audience, a clear, direct tone is expected. Overall, your essay should be 1200-1500 words, or the equivalent of 4-5 typed, double-spaced pages, with standard 1-inch margins and 12-point Times New Roman or Calibri font.

Further, as you organize your argument for this assignment, consider this classic approach to the essay:

- provide a brief background about the central issue of the topic of the original argument
- identify the primary, intended audience of the argument and any challenges this audience presents to the argument of the ad due to its specific views and/or values
- present a focused claim with reasons about how successful (or unsuccessful) the original piece is in persuading the target audience
- explain how the rhetorical appeals (logos, ethos, pathos, and Kairos) in the text work (or fail to work) to persuade the target audience
- develop your claim and reasons by explaining how structure and content of the argument work in terms of the rhetorical appeals. For example, you may analyze and evaluate the argument’s use of analogy to indicate how the article successfully emphasizes its pathos

Objectives

By the end of the Unit, your Rhetorical Evaluation will meet these objectives:
• develop and support an argumentative claim
• analyze and evaluate how arguments attempt to appeal to and persuade specific audiences
• demonstrate awareness of the rhetorical moves that writers make when creating arguments
• properly apply the terminology of argumentation

**Beware of these common Rhetorical Evaluation weaknesses:**

• The writer engages with the content of the argument, expressing their own beliefs about the topic itself rather than analyzing the effectiveness of the argument in persuading the target audience
• The writer does not demonstrate awareness of the primary intended audience of the argument
• The writer does not demonstrate a clear and thorough understanding of the original text and argument
• The writer does not evidence an understanding of the various beliefs and values that members of the target audience hold in relation to the issue
• The writer only describes the original argument instead of supporting an argumentative analytical claim of their own
• The writer doesn’t explain how and why the rhetorical appeals are (or are not) persuasive to the target audience
• The writer gets stuck dealing with the surface/obvious aspects of the original argument, overlooking more in-depth, rhetorical moves and features
• The writer analyzes the original argument based on their own perception of it instead of the intended audience’s likely perception
• The writer does not evidence a working knowledge of the language of argument
• The writer uses an inappropriate and/or dismissive tone

**Reading Strategies: Getting to Know the Text**

In order to write an effective rhetorical evaluation, you’ll first need to demonstrate that you have a strong understanding of your text’s original argument. Here are several active reading strategies to use to help you become a better critical reader, both for this particular assignment and for any other complex texts.

**Says & Does Statements.** One way to get to know a text is to generate “says” and “does” statements for paragraphs that you find especially challenging. (You may also find that writing “says” and “does” statements for your own writing can help you figure out organizational problems or anticipate revision opportunities.)

“Says” statements answer the question: what is the paragraph saying? What is its main point? What is the gist of the paragraph?
“Does” statements, on the other hand, answer the question: what is the paragraph doing? These statements are related to the paragraph’s function as a whole, including how it is related to the paragraphs around it and to the text’s main claim. The following list provides a sample of some of the useful terms for determining what a paragraph does:

- Introduces a topic
- Explains a complex issue
- Provides a transition
- Rebuts an opposing argument or perspective
- Provides an example
- Provides background
- Summarizes an opposing argument or perspective
- Provides a call to action

**Notetaking and Active Reading.** Another way to get to know a text is to take notes as you read. In the margins or on a separate sheet of paper, pose questions, find interesting quotations or phrases, or identify other interesting aspects of the article that relate to the rhetorical appeals. Make sure that you can identify the main points (e.g., main claims and reasons). The list below includes some especially important questions that you should consider responding to:

- What motivated the author to write? What conversation are they joining?
- What was the author’s purpose for writing? Who was the primary audience?
- What “angle of vision” does the writer have? What organization or political stance, if any, is the author affiliated with? Where has the author been published, both for this particular text and elsewhere?
- What can you say about the logos, ethos, pathos, and kairos of this argument?
- What do you find striking about the construction of the argument?

**Reading Activity: Locating Rhetorical Moves in an Essay in Order to Summarize**

Writers make choices about words, evidence, organization, and tone/style that are often discussed as rhetorical moves. These rhetorical moves often demonstrate the relationship between the writer and the audience as well as the relationships between ideas in the writer’s argument. One way such moves can be identified is by paying attention to language choices the writer makes. Reading an argument requires careful attention to these choices in order to fairly
and accurately understand the text. Use the steps below to guide your reading and to identify the relationships between ideas in the argument.

1. Identify the main idea of the article by reading it through once.

2. Then, read the paragraphs more closely and carefully, and identify the main idea of each. (Hint: look for topic sentences.)

3. Next, identify key words that provide structure and reveal how ideas relate to each other, such as:

   - Linking relationships: So, therefore, also, as well as, too, and, additionally, similarly
   - Contrasting relationships: But, however, on the other hand, whereas, nor
   - Conditional relationships: If, then, in that case, consequently, resulting in

4. Finally, compare the main points of each paragraph to the known central claim. Where does the writer make connections?

Fairly summarizing the article is an excellent way to show your credibility and enable your readers to become more aware of the argument. For the purpose of a rhetorical evaluation, your summary does not need to be overly formal or long. Oftentimes, you can embed a full summary in your introduction and/or include shorter, more focused, summaries in the body of your paper to develop your evaluation. You will want to make sure that your own readers have a clear idea of what the writer’s main purpose, claim, and reasons are, making sure that you focus only on the key points from the article.

Using your active reading notes from the previous rhetorical reading activity, write a summary that demonstrates a concise, objective, and fair understanding of the text.

Invention Activity: How to Read for Performing a Rhetorical Evaluation

Use these questions as you read the text chosen for your own rhetorical evaluation. You might also employ these questions for “practice” texts to help strengthen your reading skills before turning to the assignment itself.
Chapter 1 Evaluating Arguments

Analyzing and Evaluating Logos

**Main Claim**

- What is the argument’s overall claim?
- Is it explicit or implied?
- Who is the intended audience? How do you know?
- Is the claim of the argument clear for the intended audience? What makes it so?

**Reasons**

- What are the main reasons presented in support of the claim?
- Are the reasons audience-based? How can you tell?
- In what ways do the reasons logically connect to, or support, the claim?

**Assumptions, Beliefs, and Values**

- What are the assumptions (the beliefs and values of the intended audience) that complete the logic of each of the argument’s claim + reason statements?
- Does the argument depend on assumptions the audience may not share? How do you know?
- How do the argument’s reasons and evidence build on the audience’s values/beliefs?

**Evidence**

- What evidence does the writer use?
- How effective is the writer’s use of evidence? What makes you think so?
- How does the writer connect the evidence to the argument’s reasons and claims?

**Alternative/Opposing Views**

- Is the argument one-sided, multi-sided, or dialogic?
- What alternative/opposing views are presented?
- What is the writer’s response to each alternative/opposing view?
- Does the response to the opposing view take the audience’s perspective into consideration?
- What alternative/opposing views are omitted from the argument?
Analyzing and Evaluating Ethos

**Writer & Their Credentials**
- Who is the writer?
- What are the writer’s credentials?
- Where are the writer’s credentials presented?
- What does the writer do in the argument to highlight her/his credentials?
- How does the writer present him/herself to the audience?
- How important is the character of the writer in this argument?

**Publication**
- What is the original source for the argument?
- What is the original genre of the argument?
- What is the argument’s original medium of publication (journal, online newspaper, etc.)?
- How does the genre and place of publication influence the argument’s content, structure, and style?
- How popular/scholarly or formal/informal is the publication?
- How is the argument’s scope limited given its genre/publication?

**Audience & Tone**
- What attitude does the writer have toward the subject and/or audience (formal, informal, friendly, aggressive, satirical, humorous, etc.)?
- What words, phrases, and/or sentences illustrate that attitude?
- If you are convinced of the writer’s credibility, what specifically about the crafting of the argument has earned your respect as a reader? How about that of the intended readers?
- If you are skeptical about this writer’s credibility, what in the text has caused you to question them? Why would the author’s intended readers doubt them?
- What is the relationship between the writer and the audience (i.e., supportive, skeptical, or resistant)?
- What words, phrases, and/or sentences establish that relationship?
- What effect might the writer-audience relationship have on the audience’s response to the claim of the argument?
- How does the writer’s language bring the writer and audience together?

**Alternative/Opposing Views**
- Where does the writer present and respond to alternative/opposing views?
- How knowledgeable does the writer seem on these different views?
- How fairly does the writer respond to alternative/opposing views?
Analyzing and Evaluating Pathos

**Audience**

- What is the audience’s position on the issue (resistant, neutral, favorable/willing)?
- What are the central values of the intended audience?
- What are the central belief systems of the intended audience?
- What are the emotions that this audience might express towards this issue and argument?

**Tone & Style**

- What examples, connotative language, and uses of narrative or analogy stand out in the argument?
- How do the writer’s language choices tap into the audience’s emotions, values, and imagination?

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### Drafting Activity: Working Claim

A “working claim” is a tentative claim that you expect to change or adjust as you write the paper. Rather than a definitive, permanent concept, a working claim is just a starting point for your writing process. When the paper is finished, the final claim may be significantly different from the initial working claim.

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1 The Writing Icon was designed by Luis Prado, Wikimedia Commons, https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=writing&i=397851.
Tension Claim Structure: The models below illustrate the move a writer needs to make from being informative to being persuasive. The more interesting and stronger claim models demonstrate how a writer can build rhetorical complexity into his/her own argument.

Dull/Weaker Claim Models

Informative: Argument X uses ethos, logos, and pathos.

Persuasive: Argument X has some strengths and some weaknesses.

Interesting/Stronger Claim Models

Persuasive: While argument X successfully employs pathos and ethos, it struggles with logos. This makes it less persuasive than it could be to the target audience.

Persuasive: Although argument X struggles to develop pathos, it successfully manages logos, which is all that this specific audience really needs to be persuaded.

Model Claim Statements:

Example #1
By using “Stop Googling. Let’s Talk” as her medium, Sherry Turkle argues that there is a conversational disconnect amongst people of all ages with strong appeals to logos, ethos, kairos, and pathos, successfully convincing her audience that technology is harming our ability to further our relationships, to have sufficient capacity for solitude, and to empathize with one another.

Example #2
Although the NHTSA successfully utilized logos and pathos to convey a memorable message and connect it to the audience, they failed to back up their argument with ethos.

Questions:

1. With which claim structure do the examples above most align?
2. Which example is most interesting?
3. Use the claim information above to generate a working claim for your evaluation.
Invention Activity: Identifying and Justifying the Intended Audience

One objective of this unit is that you analyze and evaluate an argument in terms of a specific audience. In other words, no argument will appeal and be effective for all readers.

While reading and re-reading the argument you want to evaluate, attempt to create a portrait of the rhetorical audience—the readers that the author imagines when they write. Although writers may occasionally explicitly identify their audiences, more than likely you will have to make an educated guess; furthermore, you might discover that there are primary audiences and secondary audiences.

In your argument evaluation, you should identify the intended audience and then, at least briefly, justify why you have come up with this audience. Try not to fall into the trap of referring to generic or universal audiences—all of the readers—and don’t simply assume that you are the member of the audience yourself.

Use the questions below to help you with these steps of identifying and justifying the intended audience.

1. If applicable, where does the author speak directly to or refer to their readers?
2. Consider the gender/sex, race, education level, income level, geographic region, political and religious affiliation, and other social factors of the audience.
3. Based upon the medium and the publication source, what can you say about the audience? For example, is there any demographic information available?
4. Given the topic and main claim of the author, what can you say about the values and beliefs of the audience?
5. Are there any important secondary audiences to consider? How do you know? How are they different from the primary audiences?
6. What particular appeals—ethos, logos, and pathos—will be the most persuasive for this intended audience? Why?
7. What makes the primary audience a difficult one to write for and persuade? What constraints will the author have to face when it comes to dealing with the intended audience?
8. Will the intended audience be supportive, neutral, skeptical, or resistant to the writer’s message?
Drafting Activity: Focus on Logos

Writing about logos is challenging, as you have to keep in mind the purpose and message of the writer – their overall main claim, reasons, and other persuasive strategies – as well as the beliefs and values of their intended readers. Although logos does include how writers use statistics, personal experience, examples, comparisons, testimonies, and other types of evidence, this rhetorical focus on research only tells part of the story about logos.

As you learn how arguments work, you also have to be mindful of how logos works to bring writers and readers together. Logos operates when writers link reasons to a claim, and readers find this core part of the argument (i.e., the claim and reasons) reasonable, understandable, and commonsensical. Another way of stating this is if writers use claims and reasons that match the assumptions – the beliefs and values – of the intended readers, they make themselves more persuasive.

**Example:** The United States should consider lowering the legal drinking age from 21 to 18 to enable young people to make better lifelong choices and foster more responsible drinking habits.

**Claim:** The United States should consider lowering the legal drinking age from 21 to 18.

**Reason #1:** (Because it would) enable young people to make better lifelong choices.

**Reason #2:** (Because it would) foster more responsible drinking habits.

Is this a successful use of logos? Perhaps. This claim and two reasons may appeal to readers who share these assumptions: it’s important to have laws in place that help adults make good life choices, and it’s important for a society to try to instill good drinking habits. The readers, nonetheless, may not see the logical connection between lowering the drinking age and these two good consequences. They would challenge the logical cause-and-effect relationship of drinking ages and better decision making and habits and counter with examples of poor and dangerous drinking habits when the drinking laws were set at 18.

As you analyze the logos of the argument you are evaluating, keep on thinking about these following questions:

- What is the main claim that the writer is making? What is their overall argument or message?
- What are their main reasons? How are they justifying and supporting their main claim?
- What types of evidence are they using? (Remember to use an inclusive definition of evidence, including anything from scientific reports to case studies, personal stories, interviews, and much more.)
• What is the most valuable piece of evidence that the writer uses? Why?
• Who are the primary and secondary intended readers of the argument? How do you know?
• To what extent will these readers be positive, neutral, or resistant? How do you know?
• What are the main values and beliefs of the intended audience, especially when it comes to the issue being explored?
• How likely will the intended audience accept the main claim? Why? How do you know?
• How likely will the intended audience accept the reasons? Why? How do you know?
• How likely will the intended audience accept the evidence? Why? How do you know?

Freewriting can be a good invention strategy for you to start exploring how you are analyzing your ideas about logos. Using the questions above, take several of them and then, for 5-10 minutes each, time yourself and write quickly, trying to generate as much language as possible. Do not worry about mistakes or getting stuck – just force yourself to keep on writing. Afterwards, you’ll find that you have generated a lot of material, some of which you’ll be able to use to start crafting a rough draft.

Another strategy is to look at how someone else has analyzed logos. Though you’ll find more student examples in the back of this chapter, David McCune’s rhetorical evaluation is included here. McCune is a K-State Salina student, who took his ENGL 200 with Kaleen Knopp. What is different about McCune’s evaluation than the other student examples is that he focuses solely on logos. McCune analyzes several different logos strategies that the writer, Brad Polumbo, uses to build his argument that ultimately challenges age-based restrictions for adults. Look out for the “Rhetoric Alerts!” to guide you through McCune’s logos-based rhetorical moments.

Evaluation: “18 or 21? Time to Make Our Mind Up on The Age of Adulthood”

Brad Polumbo argues that the current state of affairs regarding the age of adulthood in the United States is illogical and impossible to justify in his 2019 article, "18 or 21? Time to Make Our Mind Up On The Age of Adulthood" published in the Washington Examiner. Polumbo claims that with new legislation being passed that restricts the age to buy tobacco products from eighteen to twenty-one-year-olds, it is time to decide what should be the age of adulthood. He expresses that at the age of eighteen, citizens gain the right to vote, enlist in the military, marry without parental permission, and consent to sex. However, Polumbo asserts that those same citizens who are adults in the eyes of the law cannot be trusted with tobacco products, alcohol products, or the second amendment right to self-defense until they are twenty-one years of age. He argues that rolling everything back to the age of eighteen is not the solution because of compelling reasons to keep age restrictions at twenty-one: the human brain doesn't finish developing until age twenty-five, pushing the alcohol and tobacco age to twenty-one keeps the harmful products out of the hands of fourteen-year-olds who might otherwise have unrestricted
access through their eighteen-year-old friends. Polumbo contends that while the restrictions on adults are inconsistent, they are simultaneously well warranted and that the only option forward to make a logical age of adulthood is to raise that age to twenty-one rather than eighteen. Polumbo recognizes that changing the age of adulthood to twenty-one would be no small feat and require a constitutional amendment, certain grandfathering clauses for those in the military under twenty-one, and other numerous acts. Polumbo assumes that his readers already know – and agree – with the following: they are familiar with the current system of adulthood in the United States, understand the implications of the age of adulthood, believe in small government, and do not want more restrictions.

**Rhetoric Alert!** McCune is making an important move here at the end of the first paragraph, as he is revealing that the editorial writer is basing his arguments off of his understanding of the audience; in other words, the editorial writer is crafting his argument for these particular values and beliefs of his conservative audience.

As a twenty-year-old living in the United States today, it is easy to see that the age of adulthood is more of a grey area than a definitive demarcation. It is hard to understand how somebody that is legally an adult in the eyes of the law is not granted the same privileges as an adult that is three years older. Why should someone be allowed to enlist in the military or make other life-changing decisions like getting married at the age of eighteen but not be allowed to buy alcohol or tobacco? Polumbo illustrates the hypocrisy of the current system in the United States. However, Polumbo seemingly weakens his argument by his exclusion of evidence. He argues that the age of adulthood should be twenty-one rather than eighteen but fails to give any real reasoning behind his proposal. It certainly is a tragedy that minors are obtaining alcohol and tobacco products, but that will not stop them from doing so even if the age of adulthood is twenty-one.

Polumbo does not want his argument taken at face value; he used his argument for two purposes. The first purpose is to illustrate the illogical and unjustifiable restrictions on the age of adulthood in the United States. The second reason for his argument is that he wanted it to easily have holes poked into it so that the audience would be critical of his surface-level argument and ultimately agree with his libertarian views and values. Polumbo proposed a radical solution rather than a logical one to make a point about how the current restrictions on alcohol, tobacco, and other laws are inexcusable.

**Rhetoric Alert!** McCune is now summarizing his overall analysis of what the editorial writer is doing. What McCune is doing is showing that Polumbo’s argument is sophisticated – he is arguing something that he knows his readers will disagree with as a way to strengthen his overall point that the U.S. should not put restrictions that limit the rights and opportunities of citizens.

The article was published in December 2019 in the *Washington Examiner*. The genre is an op-ed piece that is full of author commentary. This article fits the genre, which typically has stylistic...
flair, undocumented sources or no sources, and short paragraphs totaling about 500-1000 words. The complexity and appearance of the article are unsophisticated and simple to read. Brad Polumbo is a libertarian journalist and deputy commentary editor for the Washington Examiner. Previously he was an editor for the libertarian media, Young Voices. Polumbo’s readers are typically conservative or libertarian.

The Kairos for this article is the recent law passed in the U.S. that raised the age to buy tobacco products from eighteen to twenty-one. Polumbo uses the moment to grab the attention of his audience and present an argument that excites his readers about the current situation on the age of adulthood. The Washington Examiner is a right-leaning source that often is critical of democrats and the U.S. Government. Polumbo’s perspective caters to his audience with his style and tone of writing. Many of Polumbo’s articles call the U.S. government a "nanny-state," which is to say that the government is overprotective and interferes with citizens’ personal choices. Without background on the author, readers can infer that Polumbo is making a pseudo argument, in which the goal is to persuade readers of the opposite of what is directly stated. Polumbo (2019) creates a compelling argument in “18 or 21? Time to Make Our Mind Up On The Age of Adulthood” because he purposefully strengthens his argument by including or excluding appropriate evidence at specific times while maintaining a clear and logical claim, combined with the awareness of multiple perspectives and opposing views.

Rhetoric Alert! In the previous two paragraphs, McCune is establishing the rhetorical situation of the editorial and emphasizing his overall rhetorical evaluation: Polumbo’s editorial is good (“compelling”) because of these three reasons all related to logos: use of evidence, use of a clear claim, and use of multisided argument (being aware of different perspectives and opposing views). McCune is also aware of the overall strategy of the editorial writer: to create an argument that is doomed to fail – what McCune calls here a “pseudo argument“ – to make Polumbo’s message about his libertarian beliefs more persuasive.

First, Polumbo is very precise in his use of evidence. On the surface, it would seem that Polumbo is sincerely arguing to raise the age of adulthood to the age of twenty-one. However, through his tone and purposeful exclusion of evidence, his argument has no support, which opens it up for attack from his audience. Polumbo wants his audience to be skeptical and critical of the article because then it allows him to present his underlying argument, which is to remove restrictions on adults who turn eighteen. He claims, “There are simply far fewer 19-year-olds living and working on their own today, with many of that age still at least somewhat dependent on their parents.” But he fails to provide any statistics or evidence for his claims, despite this being a key component to his surface-level argument. He purposefully includes the difficulty that raising the age of adulthood would require, such as changing a constitutional amendment and raising the age for military enlistment. It is not so much that Polumbo is making a strong argument, but more that he is making a straw man argument, which is a weak opposition set up to be easily refuted. The straw man argument in this context impels Polumbo's readers to be critical of the article and its argument, which in turn leads them to agree with Polumbo’s underlying argument.
Chapter 1 Evaluating Arguments

Rhetoric Alert! McCune is guiding us through what the editorial writer is doing in his use of logos – in this case, his use of research and support for his reasons; yet, McCune reminds us that Polumbo is aware of what he is doing: he is demonstrating a poor use of research, yet as a way to make a larger point about age restrictions.

Polumbo also presents a clear and logical claim for his underlying argument. He claims, “The years between 18 and 21 are defined by an odd hodgepodge of rule and regulations, the rights of adulthood only partially bestowed by those legally recognized as adults but, culturally, often still treated as children.” Of course, he is referring to the newly established tobacco law as well as other laws that place the twenty-one-year-old restriction on buying certain products. He argues that “philosophically, morally, and just sensibly, it only makes sense to keep these restrictions in place if we raise the age of adulthood to 21.” Polumbo is not arguing that the government should raise the age of adulthood; rather, he is critical of the restrictions on the age of adulthood. Then, Polumbo asserts, “The new restriction will only lead to more confusion about what we consider the age of legal adulthood and what rights adults are entitled to under the law.” Polumbo’s clear claims allow his readers to understand his position on the topic better. The driving force behind his argument is that the restrictions in place are already illogical and adding new ones will only create more confusion on who should be considered an adult. Polumbo uses his clear and logical claims effectively by stating them outright. His readers are taken by surprise when he proposes an illogical solution to his claims, which leads them back full circle to question the legitimacy of his surface-level argument.

Rhetoric Alert! McCune now turns to a second logos strategy, as he shows Polumbo’s use of his consistent claim to persuade readers. McCune’s attention to the editorial writer’s intended audience is highlighted in these following phrases: “...allows his readers to understand his position...” and “His readers are taken by surprise... which leads them back full circle...”

Last, Polumbo maintains awareness of multiple perspectives and opposing views. He admits, “the solution isn't quite as simple as just rolling back everything to age 18. While the inconsistency is puzzling, there are compelling reasons to keep some of these age restrictions at 21.” By admitting the complexity of the situation and showing his understanding that not everything can be solved by just rolling back age restrictions to eighteen, he opens another side of the debate. He continues with the assertion “the human brain doesn't finish developing until age 25.” Polumbo mentions this fact ironically while still maintaining his awareness of multiple views. In the debate of the age of adulthood, brain development is an argument that is always brought up, but Polumbo is truly mentioning this to show the hypocrisy that eighteen and twenty-one are both younger than twenty-five. Polumbo also argues that “Keeping the alcohol age at 21 is effectively all that keeps 14-year-old high schoolers from having unrestricted access to hard liquor through their 18-year-old friends in the senior class.” Polumbo knows and assumes that his readers also know that statement is not valid, seeing as high school students already have access to products they should not, even though the age to buy the products is set at twenty-one. He is able to use the idea of opposing views and multiple perspectives to highlight opposing arguments and simultaneously shut them down without refuting them with
evidence. He relies on his audience to remain critical readers and thinkers and decipher the argument he is making.

Rhetoric Alert! McCune now turns to the editorial writer’s awareness of his intended reader’s assumptions and alternative or opposing viewpoints. McCune uses specific examples from the editorial and then explains how these examples are working rhetorically. McCune underscores how thoughtful Polumbo has been when it comes to crafting his argument for his conservative readers: “He relies on his audience to remain critical readers and thinkers and decipher the argument he is making.”

Brad Polumbo (2019) presents an effective argument because he can rely on his readers to interpret his underlying argument. His exclusion of evidence in his surface-level argument is apparent to his readers and leads them to search for more. His clear and logical claim persuades his readers to agree with his libertarian values and ideas, and his use of multiple perspectives and opposing views allows him to refute shallow arguments without evidence.

Drafting Activity: Focus on Ethos

If pathos persuades through emotions and logos persuades through evidence and reasons, ethos persuades by the ways in which authors present themselves. Will the intended audience trust the writer? Will they find them to be credible? Will they like the writer? Does the writer demonstrate their awareness of the concerns, values, and beliefs of the audience?

Below, you will see a series of ethos strategies that you can look for while you are analyzing the argument and building your evaluation. As you pursue your own arguments in ENGL 200, you may also want to utilize some of these strategies to enhance your ethos.

Rhetoric Alert! Do not confuse ethos with ethics. Although both of these concepts ultimately derive from “ethos,” the classical Greek word for “character,” ethics is the study of “moral character” (ethikos), whereas we can use ethos more generally to analyze the ways in which writers or orators represent themselves to audiences to make themselves more persuasive. Of course, writers may want to demonstrate how ethical (i.e., moral) they are, and they might do so by associating themselves with symbols and props that their audience may find to be pillars of ethics.

Ethos based on the author or the source:

Strategy #1: The author’s name is clearly attributed in the byline. Readers will typically find clearly attributed authors to be more credible. Note: When looking at an editorial from a
newspaper, you may run across the convention of an article with the byline of “The Editorial Board.” You should consider this to be a highly credible source, as the editors of the newspaper are taking responsibility for the points that appear in the editorial.

Strategy #2: The author clearly states their credentials or does so indirectly. For example, a K-State student writing about student debt may use this strategy when she writes, “As a college student at K-State who has racked up over $20,000 in student debt, I completely understand the concerns about the high price of university-level education.” The author may also refer to books they have written, job titles they have held, or educational experiences.

Strategy #3: The author identifies their ideological perspective. For example: “As a middle-aged, white male, it was at first difficult for me to feel sympathetic towards...”

Ethos based on the argument and the use of evidence:

Strategy #1: The author uses evidence (statistics, examples, quotations of important authorities on the subject, legal precedents, analogies, science or political reports, etc.) that the audience will find persuasive. Note: Here, the use of evidence can be a moment in which ethos, logos, and pathos intersect.

Strategy #2: The author references or cites their sources; yet, be aware that most journalists and editorial writers are not expected to adhere to the citation systems that you may be expected to use as college students in a writing course.

Strategy #3: The author shows awareness of the multiple sides that make up the argument; the author shows their ability to concede and understand other perspectives.

Ethos based on language choices:

Strategy #1: The author uses pronouns, phrases, or a particular style to create a bridge between themselves and their readers.

Strategy #2: The author uses humor or sarcasm to entice their intended audience.

Strategy #3: The author uses inclusive pronouns (“we”) and words/phrases. For example: “As we have all experienced in our daily lives as residents of Manhattan, Kansas, the prairie burnings in the spring cause...”

Strategy #4: The author uses specific words and phrases (e.g., computer jargon) that demonstrate they know what they are talking about; of course, if the intended audience are laypeople, who may be turned off by or afraid of this specialized vocabulary, then this would not be an effective strategy.
Strategy #5: The author’s style is appropriate for their readers; for example, they match the level of formality that the readers would expect, given the rhetorical context.

Based upon these strategies, create an ethos-based reason that supports your overall claim about how persuasive (or unpersuasive) the argument is for the intended audience. Use these strategies to help you come up with specifics from the argument.

Drafting Activity: Outlining the Logos of Your Own Argument

The working claim you have developed provides the focus for your argument. You are writing an evaluation claim, which means that you are asserting whether the editorial is a good or bad argument. For example, Jarrod Moore, whose evaluation argument you can find at the end of this chapter, writes this evaluation claim about Terry Tempest Williams’ “Will Our National Parks Survive the Next 100 Years?”: “While this opinion piece has a weak appeal to logos, it is ultimately successful in persuading an already supportive audience with strong appeals to pathos, ethos, and kairos.”

Your main evaluation claim will be supported by reasons that help justify the position you have taken. In this case, you are going to use the rhetorical appeals of ethos, logos, pathos, and (possibly) kairos to serve as your reasons. You can assume that your readers are going to agree that these rhetorical appeals are essential qualities of a good argument.

You will then find evidence from the editorial you are analyzing to support the evaluation claim and the reasons you are asserting. Returning to Moore’s evaluation argument, he uses a reason about the importance of pathos as primary strategy for the author to appeal to her intended readers. Moore then supports his evaluation claim and pathos-based reason by finding examples from the editorial, such as the “strong use of imagery and idyllic language” as well as “warm feelings of beauty and nostalgia.”

Use this following outline to help you begin to map out your main claim, reasons, and evidence.

Main Evaluation Claim:

    Reason #1: Because...

    Evidence:
Reason #2: Because...

Evidence:

Reason #3: Because...

Evidence:

Reason #4: Because...

Evidence:

**Drafting Activity: Organizing Your Rhetorical Evaluation**

This evaluation argument will have three basic sections: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. Each of these sections can—and should—be made up of many different paragraphs. The information below outlines several different functions each section might perform for this particular paper. You are encouraged to experiment with your own organizational choices as you work to build your own ethos as a writer.

**Introduction**

- Establish the significance and timeliness of the issue. What is at stake with this issue, and who is arguing? Why is it controversial? What are the consequences?
- Identify the primary audience of the argument and show understanding of the audience’s values and beliefs.
- Summarize the argument, including its main claims, reasons, and warrants.
- Provide a forecasting statement that presents your overall claim and reasons: How do the rhetorical appeals work to make this argument persuasive for the target audience? What particular aspects of the article make this argument successful or unsuccessful in persuading the intended audience? What key rhetorical moves are you going to focus on?

**Body of Evaluation/Analysis**

- Focus on different rhetorical appeals (*logos, ethos, pathos*, and *kairos*) and how the argument works rhetorically. In other words, rather than simply saying that the author uses these appeals, show how the appeals are working and how and why they’re persuasive (or not) for the target audience.
• Support your points with specific evidence from the argument and make clear how your evidence illustrates your points.
• Solidify your credibility by correctly applying the vocabulary of argumentation.
• Show awareness of the rhetorical challenges: What about the particular target audience makes them resistant to the issue or claim of the argument? How do the rhetorical moves meet (or fail to meet) these challenges?

Conclusion

• Reinforce the main claim.
• Connect to your audience and rhetorical purpose.
Another Potential Organization Strategy

1. **Big Picture Background**
   - Introduce the “Big Picture”: the general conversation about the issue/controversy. Describe briefly the various points of view on the topic, including the article’s.

2. **Summary**
   - Share the article’s contribution to the general conversation by summarizing it.

3. **Thesis Paragraph**
   - Present your opinion in a thesis paragraph that transitions from the summary to your evaluation.

4. **Rhetorical Analysis**
   - Develop and support the reasons for your opinion about the article.

5. **Conclusion**
   - Conclude your argument by placing it into context with the “big picture.” Explain how your view of the article impacts its contribution to the larger conversation.
Closed-Form Writing & The 3-Ex Guide

This evaluation argument provides you with an opportunity to review closed-form writing strategies, which are used in many classroom-based types of writing to enable you to demonstrate your understanding of important concepts. The overall quality of closed-form writing is that it is highly explicit: you clearly signal to your readers your purpose and main claim; you then, throughout the essay, signpost your points and sub-points. Unlike open-form writing, in which readers may have to work more to interpret your overall point and purpose, you are presenting and organizing your ideas openly for your readers.

Here are the typical features of closed-form writing:

- **Clear Introduction**: In this initial feature of closed-form writing, you include an introduction to build background for your readers, showcase the main claim or thesis statement, and provide, perhaps, a “blueprint statement,” which tells your readers how the draft will be organized.

- **Explicit claim and reasons** (thesis and sub-points): Early on, you forecast to your readers exactly what your main message or position will be.

- **Explicit topic sentences**: For your main body paragraphs, the first sentence, sometimes referred to as the topic sentence, focuses your readers on what the paragraph’s main purpose will be. In a closed-form piece of writing, you should be able to read just the first sentence of each body paragraph and still have a good idea what the writer is doing and saying.

- **Unity of paragraphs**: You focus each paragraph around one main reason or point, which is announced in the topic sentence; in other words, you are not trying to do too much in one paragraph.

- **Transitions**: Your transitions shift readers from one main reason or point to the next; you are keeping your readers in mind and guiding them through the organization of your draft with words and sentences that clearly mark the relationship between ideas.

- **Readerly cues**: These are words or phrases that, similar to transitions, tell your readers how they should read your draft. Here are some examples of readerly cues:
  - In other words,
  - For example,
  - In short,
  - On the one hand,

- **Clear conclusion**: Your conclusion should emphasize your overall main point and reasons and, quite possibly, the overall significance of your argument.

At the paragraph level, closed-form writing guides the readers through the topic sentence (the main point or purpose of the paragraph), supporting examples or illustrations, and an explanation of the ways in which those examples connect to the main point and are significant
for the readers. As a way to remember these different functions of sentences, you can refer to it as the 3-Ex Guide: Exposition, Example, and Explanation.²

**Exposition** sentences *state your claim(s) or reason(s)*. If at the start of a paragraph (i.e., a topic sentence), exposition sentences can also introduce a paragraph’s point by explaining how it connects to the preceding paragraph.

**Example** sentences *provide support for the exposition in the form of evidence*. Evidence can be summarized, paraphrased, or presented as quoted sources; it might also come from personal experiences.

**Explanation** sentences explain how your example(s) illustrate your exposition and how your paragraph’s ideas are significant to your overall claim. Well-developed paragraphs are focused on explanation.

Take a look at one paragraph of Ryan Donnelly’s “From Practice Stems Success” (please see Donnelly’s student example at the end of this chapter) and look for the ways that Donnelly uses exposition, example, and explanation:

Another appeal to logos Oakley utilizes is through the sound structure of her argument. Her claim is clear (it’s even the title of her editorial!): parents should have their daughters practice math routinely. Oakley ensures her audience is well aware of the importance of her claim by continuing to relate every topic in her editorial back to the main claim. The audience, now focused on the claim, can clearly understand her reasoning. Oakley reasons that “to create a full set of options for [girls] in STEM is to ensure she has a solid foundation in math” (par. 2) and that “some learning just plain requires effortful practice, especially in the initial stages” (par. 11). With this, the audience creates the warrant that STEM career options are good from Oakley’s claim, based on their clear understanding of her reasons and evidence that backs up her claim. Because of Oakley’s careful attention to the structure of her argument, she increases the likelihood of her audience becoming convinced of her claim.

**Exposition:**

- Another appeal to logos Oakley utilizes is through the sound structure of her argument. Her claim is clear (it’s even the title of her editorial!).
- Oakley ensures her audience is well aware of the importance of her claim by continuing to relate every topic in her editorial back to the main claim.

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² Deborah Murray created the 3-Ex Guide.
Example:

- Oakley reasons that “to create a full set of options for [girls] in STEM is to ensure she has a solid foundation in math” (par. 2) and that “some learning just plain requires effortful practice, especially in the initial stages” (par. 11).

Explanation:

- The audience, now focused on the claim, can clearly understand her reasoning.
- With this, the audience creates the warrant that STEM career options are good from Oakley’s claim, based on their clear understanding of her reasons and evidence that backs up her claim. Because of Oakley’s careful attention to the structure of her argument, she increases the likelihood of her audience becoming convinced of her claim.

3-Ex Activity

Choosing a body paragraph from one of the student examples, label each sentence by its 3-Ex functions within the paragraph. Note how the writer might strengthen the paragraph’s exposition, example, and/or explanation.

Rhetorical Evaluation Workshop

- Exchange your draft with your workshop partner. Use the points below to engage with the draft and offer the writer feedback. You can write directly on the draft and/or create notes on a separate sheet of paper.

Focus/Purpose

- What is the claim for this essay? Underline it, keeping in mind that it might not be in the introduction. If you cannot locate the claim in at least one clear moment in the essay, make a note for the writer.
- This essay is meant to analyze how the article’s argument works for the target audience. Do you find places where the writer engages the ideas or content of the article instead? If so, label those areas.

Development

- What are the main points that support the claim? If these points are not clear, make a note for the writer and offer an explanation as to why you found them unclear.
- Where do you think the writer should say more? What questions can you ask that might help the writer say more about these points? Write them in the margins.
- Is the writer making clear and explicit connections between the way the appeals function and why those appeals are (or are not) persuasive for the target audience? If so, draw their
attention to where this is working well. If not, draw their attention to places where they need to develop this important connective information.

• If you had to argue against this essay’s points, what would you say? How might the writer incorporate your counter-argument(s) into the essay and still support its thesis?

**Organization**

• Where does the topic seem to jump without warning within a paragraph? Between which paragraphs does the topic shift abruptly? (Sometimes these sudden shifts cause the reader to go back and re-read; where do you have to re-read to follow the essay’s shifts?) Mark these areas with a note for the writer.

• Does the order in which information is presented make sense with the essay’s thesis? Circle any text/sections that seem out of place or that might be more effective elsewhere, and make a note explaining your idea for revision.

**Tone/Style**

• Are there moments where the writer is sarcastic, dismissive, or in any way rude to the reader (you), the original article’s writer or their ideas? Mark these areas with a note to the writer.

• Where is the essay’s language cumbersome or overly wordy? Make a note for the writer next to such an area; if possible, provide an example of how the same idea can be said more simply.

**Rhetorical Evaluation Workshop: Checklist**

Writer: Write down 2-3 questions that you want your workshop partner to focus on.

Workshopper: Use the checklist below to guide your reading of your partner’s draft. Whenever you select “No” or “Somewhat,” write down a revision suggestion or question on your partner’s draft. Meet with your partner and discuss the questions that they posed about their drafts and, at the bottom of this form, contribute one overall successful point and one main revision point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Yes</strong></th>
<th><strong>Somewhat</strong></th>
<th><strong>No</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The writer summarizes and provides some context about the argument they are analyzing and evaluating.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The writer identifies the intended audience of the editorial and briefly explains how they know this is the intended audience.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The writer explicitly states a strong evaluation claim that takes a stance on whether the argument is good (successful, effective, persuasive, appealing, etc.) or bad (unsuccessful, ineffective, unpersuasive,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
unappealing, etc.); the writer includes reasons that are based on the rhetorical appeals.

4. The writer includes body paragraphs that focus on ethos, logos, and pathos (and perhaps kairos).

5. The writer uses topic sentences in the body paragraphs to focus readers on the reasons and rhetorical appeals.

6. The writer uses evidence from the editorial to support their reasons and explain the rhetorical appeals.

7. The writer explains why each rhetorical appeal is effective (or ineffective) for the intended audience.

8. The writer uses the language of argumentation (rhetorical appeals, assumptions, evidence, etc.).

9. The writer uses readerly cues and transitions to guide readers.

10. The writer includes a conclusion that emphasizes the importance of the evaluation and shows how it links the argument to the "big picture" or issue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One overall strength:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One overall revision suggestion:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Using Student Examples

At the end of each of the first four chapters, you will find several student examples. Please use these to motivate your own writing and to examine how other students have interpreted the assignments and met the various rhetorical challenges in each chapter.

As you read these examples, you can also keep in mind the five major criteria in the Expository Writing Program. Please use this following chart to guide you.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>What to look for in the Rhetorical Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose &amp; Focus</strong></td>
<td>Your draft meets the overall purpose of the assignment; you effectively clarify and emphasize the main points to your readers; you stay on topic in each part of the draft.</td>
<td>Does the writer analyze and evaluate instead of responding? Does the writer provide an explicit evaluation claim? Does the writer support their claim with reasons connected to the major rhetorical appeals? Does the writer focus on how the argument is successful (or not) for the intended audience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
<td>You effectively use and explain different forms of evidence (e.g., personal anecdotes, analogies, secondary research, primary research research) to present and support your main ideas to your readers.</td>
<td>Does the writer provide specifics (e.g., examples, quotations) from the argument they are evaluating? Does the writer explain how they are using these specifics? Does the writer explain their reasons—how ethos, logos, and pathos are working (or not) on the intended audience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>You demonstrate awareness of the genre of the paper, your purpose, and your audience by the way you order your points and your evidence for your readers. You may demonstrate the organization criterion by your use of topic sentences, transitions, headings, and cues for the readers, among other strategies. You consider the organization of the overall shape of the paper as well as the shape of individual paragraphs.</td>
<td>Does the writer guide their readers with clear topic sentences and transitions? Does the writer use different sections (i.e., introduction, body, conclusion) to guide readers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Style &amp; Tone</strong></td>
<td>You interest, engage, and meet your readers’ expectations by making particular language decisions regarding word choice, sentence length and structure, grammar, and citation style. Similarly, you make language decisions to indicate your attitude towards your topic, ideas, and readers.</td>
<td>Does the writer fairly summarize and represent the author of the argument they are evaluating? Does the writer find ways to interest their own readers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Editing &amp; Proofreading</strong></td>
<td>This final criterion focuses on accuracy. You should edit and proofread carefully to meet your</td>
<td>Does the writer demonstrate that they have re-read and carefully edited their</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
readers’ expectations regarding spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, formatting, citation style, and other aspects of your draft. work? Have they made their citations accurate and consistent?

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Student Example

Ryan Donnelly wrote this Rhetorical Evaluation for Brenda Martin’s ENGL 200 class.

From Practice Stems Success

Occupations in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) are becoming ever-increasingly important in the modern world. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average projected growth for all STEM occupations in the U.S. from the years 2014-2024 is 6.5%, which will add on to the nearly 8.6 million jobs already out there (Fayer, et al.). And, parents who want their children to have the option of pursuing STEM careers should be aware that succeeding in STEM requires a solid foundation in mathematics (“Building...”). Considering this, it is worth knowing that girls face a disadvantage when compared to boys in securing this strong base in mathematics.

In her editorial “Make Your Daughter Practice Math. She’ll Thank You Later,” Barbara Oakley shines light on this issue and offers a solution to the problems girls face. She claims girls can become discouraged at their skills in mathematics because girls “are often relatively better at [reading and writing] than they are at math” (par. 4), resulting in girls thinking they just aren’t good at math. And, “thinking you’re not very good at something can be a quick path to disliking and avoiding it,” which leads to “a genuine lack of competence” (par. 6) in the subject. So, Oakley argues that parents of daughters should have their girls practice math routinely if they want their daughters to have STEM career options in their futures.

Throughout her editorial, Oakley successfully convinces her audience that they should have their daughters practice math more. She does this through her strong appeals to ethos and logos, despite her lesser appeals to pathos. This is primarily because her editorial is focused on being logical and rational; a large amount of appeals to pathos is unnecessary. Additionally, her appeals to ethos and logos are strong enough to successfully convince the audience of her claim without a similar amount of appeals to pathos.

Oakley’s appeals to ethos are by far her strongest rhetorical device. Oakley’s goal is to convince parents to have their daughters practice more math (even though they might hate math). What better way to establish credibility than how she does when telling parents to “[t]ake it from someone who started out hating math and went on to become a professor of engineering” (par. 12)? Even though she started out hating math, she tells parents specifically that practicing math has immense benefits, the proof being she is now a professor in engineering. Additionally, it is
mentioned under the title of the editorial that she is also an author on a book of learning, lending more credibility to any claims she puts forward. Who better to listen to than someone with enough knowledge to write an entire book about how children learn when you’re a parent interested in helping your daughter become a better math student?

Oakley also establishes ethos with her audience throughout her editorial by providing her audience with a wide range of sources for any claims she makes. This demonstrates to the audience that she is a trustworthy source of information, as all her claims are backed up and well-researched. For instance, Oakley references the international PISA test to back up her claim that “the United States ranks near the bottom among the 35 industrialized nations in math” (par. 10). Another example can be found when Oakley is demonstrating to parents that repeatedly practicing math truly makes you better at it, rather than just understanding math conceptually. She cites researcher K. Anders Ericsson for this claim, giving it substance. By backing up her claims with viable evidence, Oakley proves her trustworthiness to her audience, increasing the likelihood of convincing them to listen to her.

Oakley’s appeals to ethos do not end here. Oakley appeals to ethos yet again by showing she genuinely cares about girls’ futures, making her appear as a good person. In the beginning of her editorial, she writes “to create a full set of options for [girls] in STEM is to ensure she has a solid foundation in math” (par. 2). This quotation shows her audience she truly wants girls to have the best set of options for their futures, causing her audience to realize that she has good intentions and making her appear as a good person in their eyes. This appeal is an especially important one; after all, her target audience includes parents of girls. If parents believe that Oakley genuinely cares about their daughters’ success, then they will be more likely to be convinced to have their daughters routinely practice math.

In addition to ethos, Oakley also has many strong appeals to logos throughout her editorial. One important way she appeals to logos is through her use of rational thinking. Oakley allows the reader to follow along with her thoughts logically, granting the reader a better understanding of what she is trying to communicate. For instance, Oakley logically explains the problems girls face in math when compared to boys in paragraph four. Her explanation has a logical flow, includes a rhetorical question, and has “if-then” statements, all of which make it extremely easy for her readers to understand what she is saying. This strategy goes quite far when trying to convince an audience of a claim because if the audience coherently understands Oakley’s stance, her chances of successfully persuading them increase significantly (as compared to the audience not understanding what she has to say). If the audience can’t logically understand her claim, then what is going to make them agree with her?

Another appeal to logos Oakley utilizes is through the sound structure of her argument. Her claim is clear (it’s even the title of her editorial!): parents should have their daughters practice math routinely. Oakley ensures her audience is well aware of the importance of her claim by continuing to relate every topic in her editorial back to the main claim. The audience, now focused on the claim, can clearly understand her reasoning. Oakley reasons that “to create a full
set of options for [girls] in STEM is to ensure she has a solid foundation in math” (par. 2) and that “some learning just plain requires effortful practice, especially in the initial stages” (par. 11). With this, the audience creates the warrant that STEM career options are good from Oakley’s claim, based on their clear understanding of her reasons and evidence that backs up her claim. Because of Oakley’s careful attention to the structure of her argument, she increases the likelihood of her audience becoming convinced of her claim.

Unlike her appeals to both ethos and logos, Oakley’s appeals to pathos aren’t nearly as strong. This isn’t because Oakley struggles at connecting with her audience; it’s primarily because her paper isn’t meant to be emotionally appealing. Her editorial is mainly meant to logically convince her readers to act by having their daughters practice mathematics, so pathos is all but unnecessary. However, she does appeal to pathos well in a couple instances that help her persuade her audience. To appeal to pathos, Oakley paints a picture of the unfortunate scenario that girls face. Simply because girls “are often relatively better at [reading and writing] than they are at math” (par. 4), their futures can be harmed. Girls might end up disliking math, and as mentioned earlier, this could lead to a “a genuine lack of competence [in mathematics]” (par. 6), harming their total future career options in STEM fields. Readers’ emotions will be evoked due to this unfair scenario girls face. Oakley’s audience becomes compelled to act; after all, parents are the ones who have the power to solve this problem for their own daughters. By appealing to pathos even in a tiny way, Oakley causes the audience to sympathize for girls and aim to help girls’ futures by having them practice math more.

One more appeal to pathos Oakley utilizes is her use of analogies. Analogies are a great way to bridge the gap of understanding between an expert and a non-expert and elicit the audience’s emotions. Oakley does this by comparing practicing musical instruments to practicing mathematics (par. 8). It can be reasonably assumed that Oakley’s audience knows that the only way to get better at a musical instrument is by constantly practicing that musical instrument. Additionally, the idea of children practicing musical instruments at a young age is generally seen as something positive, such as a good use of time or a good hobby to have. This positive connotation associated with children practicing instruments evokes positive emotions in the audience. This guides the audience towards seeing practicing math in the same light as practicing musical instruments. Oakley stresses “that simply understanding how a chord is constructed isn’t the equivalent of being able to play the chord” (par. 8). So, Oakley claims, why should math be any different? By bridging the gap between her and her audience in a positive way by using analogies, Oakley is able to successfully convince members of her audience who might have not thought that rote practice was the best way to learn mathematics. With this, the “why” to the “why should my daughter practice math more?” is concretely answered and the audience can readily agree with her claims.

Overall, Oakley successfully convinces her audience to have their daughters practice math routinely. By skillfully combining strong appeals to ethos and logos, Oakley gains the trust of her audience and proceeds to make the logical case that having girls practice math comes with immense benefits. Oakley’s lesser appeals to pathos also help win over her audience; she ensures the audience feels sympathy for girls who might end up disliking math, inspiring them to
help them out, starting with their own daughters. Because the audience trusts her and believes she has good intentions, and because her thought process comes across as logical and well-researched, Oakley wins over her audience to make a small, but impactful, step to better her audience’s daughters’ futures by practicing math routinely.

Works Cited


Student Example

Alex Vontz wrote this rhetorical evaluation in Molly Burt’s ENGL 200 class.

**Rhetorical Evaluation of “Hey Computer Scientists! Stop Hating on the Humanities”**

As data technology and analytics have developed and prevailed in modern society, so has the abilities of its users. With the help of our technological tools, humanity has been able to do amazing things like to send people to the moon, map out the entire human genome, and even record evidence of gravitational waves sent from lightyears away. These feats of such great magnitude begin to beg the question: What is to stop anybody from using the power of technology and data analytics to do things that aren’t so morally correct? The answer is virtually nothing. This rationale has sparked a debate about whether computer scientists and data analysts need to be more ethically responsible and about who should be held accountable for instituting such regulations.

Emma Pierson discusses the matter in her 2017 WiredOp-Ed article, “Hey Computer Scientists! Stop Hating on the Humanities,” aimed at computer scientists and data analysts themselves. With a background in computer science herself, Pierson highlights the raw power of unchecked information technology, noting how this power can be dangerous when combined with ethical ignorance. She argues for integration of ethical responsibility into the computer science field and cites many experiences in which she has seen ethical boundaries crossed. To back her claim with
reason, Pierson suggests the computer science field lacks consideration for human implications and consequences, noting how ignorant programming is often of unethical programming.

While Pierson’s argument for more sensitivity to ethics in computer science favorably applies kairos, ethos, and pathos, her writing lacks strength in logos, ultimately yielding her argument unsuccessful to a target audience of computer scientists and analysts. Although she brings in many experiences to back her claims emotionally, Pierson fails to present empirical and credible evidence to her logic-based target audience, thereby weakening her appeal to logos.

Pierson published the article in a 2017 issue of *Wired* magazine, an information technology news outlet, bringing a strong appeal to kairos to her argument. *Wired* publishes articles across all platforms, including online, in-application, and print magazines, highlighting the latest information and ideas in the technology industry. Computer scientists and data analysts, the target audience, are likely to be frequent readers and subsequently encounter Pierson’s article. In addition, the information technology and data analytics field grew quickly as ever in 2017, making the rhetorical situation for an argument on the issue all the more ideal.

With this ideal rhetorical situation, Pierson relies heavily on ethos as a device to deliver reasoning first-hand and attempt to unite herself with the audience. While she opts out of citing outside credible sources, Pierson takes the alternative approach of building her own credibility to convey her own ideas and evidence. She clearly states her expertise to the audience and begins the article, “As a computer science PhD student.” Also, she later refers to her especially prestigious alma mater, Stanford University (par. 1). These appeals to expertise and intelligence boost her credibility, setting precedents for Pierson to present arguments about ethical responsibility in the field. In addition, she unites herself with her audience, establishing a common ground as members of the computer science community. This move communicates that her argument is worth considering because of who she is as both a computer scientist and an intellectual. She reinforces her expertise, and henceforth ethos, with her select use of elevated language and field-specific jargon. Incorporating phrases like “statistical desiderata” and “algorithmic bias in word embeddings,” Pierson delivers more evidence for her computer science credibility with purposeful use of jargon (par. 5, 6). This proves she brings more to the argument than mere academic and career titles by showing the audience she is a true member of the computer science field. When Pierson proves herself to be credible with such evidence, she invokes trust in her audience and in turn makes the ideas for ethical responsibility more persuasive and believable. Because of this strong base of credibility built by her appeals to ethos, Pierson is able to write the article in the first-person point of view and integrate her own experiences as reasoning.

Through these first-hand experiences, Pierson brings her strongest rhetorical appeal to the argument—pathos. She continuously presents personal narratives of situations that demonstrate the risks of unchecked computer science and analytics. For instance, she cites how Stanford provided her “as a teenager” with “algorithms that could pick out the terrorists most worth targeting” and “detect someone’s dissatisfaction with the government” (par. 1). The
thought of an ignorant teenager possessing so much power invokes feelings of uneasiness about the current lack of ethical responsibility in the information technology field. Pierson purposely provides this specific first-hand example of just how far removed programming can feel from extremely vivid, dangerous, real-world consequences. In doing so, she allows the audience to make this emotional connection about her situation and, consequently, situations they may have encountered themselves. Feeling discomfort about the current state of ethical responsibility in the field sets up readers to be more receptive and conscious of new ethical boundaries. Pierson plays on more emotions with her specific use of word choice and juxtaposition of phrases, calling algorithms “weapons both elegant and lethal” and referring to scientists as presenting “lethal innovations with child-like enthusiasm” (par. 2). These phrases purposefully juxtapose words of opposing connotative feelings in a way that demonstrates positive feelings of appreciation for information technology as field, but negative feelings about the potential dangers of ethical ignorance. By doing this, Pierson connects emotionally with her audience with positive feelings and simultaneously warns the audience why ethical responsibility is important with negative feelings. This wording also acts to apply humanistic and aesthetic ideas like elegance and enthusiasm to analytical and scientific topics, just as integrating ethical responsibility would to computer science.

Although she targets computer scientists and data analysts, Pierson fails to bring strong appeals to logos as she crafts her argument, likely causing her audience to be skeptical of her overall claim. While she institutes a fair amount of logical reasoning, her claims can be bold and insulting to her target audience. Furthermore, Pierson provides no statistical or scientific evidence to back these claims, but rather relies on personal experiences and her own credibility. The sub claim, “Computer science is wondrous. The problem is that many people in Silicon Valley believe that it is all that matters,” is a bold, negative accusation about members of her target audience (par. 2). When Pierson presents her reasoning in these statements, she directly accuses computer scientists, representatives of her target audience, of being ignorant as logical reasoning for her claim. She moves this idea farther by incorporating a string of repetitive parallel experiences beginning with “You see this when...” and “I’ve watched...” (par. 2). Even if the reader is not insulted by the controversial initial statement, they will unlikely be persuaded of any claim solely by unclear references to anecdotes with no proof or data. A data-driven audience of computer scientists and data analysts who professionally draw conclusions from statistics and evidence likely require statistics and evidence to be persuaded in the argument. This lack of empirical evidence occurs in almost every other sub claim Pierson makes, and often, the only evidence provided is mostly theoretical. Pierson cites a string of ethical questions she’s personally encountered, asking herself whether she should download messages from a teen anorexia support website or “write a program to post anonymous, suicidal messages” on college forums to gather data. She completes the idea, stating, “My answer to these questions, incidentally, was ‘no’” (par. 5). In these statements, Pierson attempts to support her main claim that computer scientists need to be more ethically responsible with situations that were prevented by good ethical responsibility. She provides an example of ethical responsibility already preventing a dangerous situation in the current state of the field, discrediting the need for anything to change. Again, the data-driven target audience will likely identify this logical fallacy and fail to be persuaded to add more ethics into their work. These logical issues weaken
the effectiveness of her claim to her target audience and ultimately make her argument unsuccessful.

In her argument to integrate more ethical responsibility in the information technology field, Pierson appeals effectively to kairos, ethos, and pathos. However, she fails to consider the target audience’s background in weak appeals to logos, making her overall argument ineffective. Pierson’s ideas may successfully convince a more general target audience that computer science and data analysis need more ethics, given her successful foundation of credibility-based and emotion-based arguments. However, the article targets computer scientists and data analysts specifically, who likely identify the flawed reasoning and fail to be persuaded without real-world evidence. In a well-crafted argument, the rhetor should appeal to all rhetorical areas with careful consideration and subjectivity to the target audience. Given Pierson and her audience are both experts on the subject, special consideration of logos should have been enacted to make her argument more successful. Although the argument itself proves unsuccessful, Pierson still raises awareness for ethics sensitivity in the information technology field and all fields simply by presenting the issue. In a modern society with so much power to freely access, it is almost always relevant to consider ethical questions in what we do and, more importantly, answer these questions correctly.

Work Cited


Student Example

Jarrod Moore wrote this evaluation argument in Caitlin Radonich’s ENGL 200 class.

Rhetorical Evaluation: Will Our National Parks Survive the Next 100 Years?

The land of the United States is vast and geographically diverse, with many places having scenic appeal or historic significance. As the young nation developed, concerns arose about whether the wonders of the western frontier would be diminished due to economic exploitation. To prevent this, national parks were established by acts of congress to protect certain areas as property of the federal government. According to Terry Tempest Williams, these parks are a cornerstone of life not just for Americans, but for people the world over. Concerned about the future of these parks, Williams wrote an opinion piece in the Los Angeles Times entitled, “Will Our National Parks Survive the Next 100 Years?” which seeks to persuade her readers to take action to preserve them. Her concern, as stated in the article, stems from the state and corporate interests as well as support from the GOP that have been steadily and silently selling
off the nation’s public lands, and increasingly so with the cover of noise from the 2016 presidential election.

While this opinion piece has a weak appeal to logos, it is ultimately successful in persuading an already supportive audience with strong appeals to pathos, ethos, and kairos. Terry Tempest Williams’ success in persuasion has much to do with her choice of audience and how she appeals to them. The decision to publish this piece in the *Los Angeles Times* is not insignificant, as the readership of the *Los Angeles Times* is primarily adults from metropolitan areas who lean left politically. In the United States, this group is largely supportive of environmentalism, especially notable in how they talk about the hot-button issue of climate change. It is no stretch to assume that this audience will already be in favor of protecting national reserves. Knowing this, Williams sets her sights not merely on persuading this audience to adopt her viewpoint but to persuade them to act on those beliefs and change the situation. To convince this supportive audience to proceed from belief to action, an emotional connection must first be established.

Williams’ usage of pathos as her primary vehicle of persuasion is immediately apparent in the opening two paragraphs. The article begins with a personal account of a visit to the Great Falls, which makes strong use of imagery and idyllic language to convey the beauty of nature. An example of pathos comes from the opening paragraph: “The cascading rapids and dramatic pour-offs were mesmerizing and soul-restoring in the extreme heat of McLean, Va., where high humidity and temperatures in the upper 90s were drawing larger crowds than usual at this 800-acre national park, only 15 miles from our nation’s capital” (1). Many references and allusions to history are also made, from personal childhood memories of Utah’s wildlife to significant historical figures such as George Washington. These warm feelings of beauty and nostalgia connected to history are then threatened with a hypothetical question: What if national parks and nature were stripped from the country? Williams answers this hypothetical with a world that is hollow and lonely, with no escape from the continual grind of modern life—this is very distressing for the target audience. The romanticization of history and nature, contrasted with the threat of an artificial and colorless world, is used elegantly to connect with the target audience’s value of beauty and the non-material over corporate or economic interests. Williams understands her audience very well, and she connects well with them as a fellow person who stands to lose as much as they do from the loss of natural parks.

Pathos in the article is supported and strengthened by the writer’s ethos. While not as strong or prevalent as pathos, the relationship between Williams and her readers does much to aid persuasion. Terry Tempest Williams is an established author whose work is deeply tied to national park preservation, and while this is not directly flaunted in the article, her knowledge and expertise is tastefully used to bring credibility to her argument, with a notable example being the history of the Great Falls. The personal accounts of the writer’s numerous visits to national parks do well to connect with the audience who have likely admired the beauty of a national park themselves at some point. What is also notable is the usage of “we” as Williams speaks on behalf of all people worldwide, with an example being the following: “The centennial of the National Park Service reminds us of history, both human and wild, and why we need our public lands more than ever in a changing world” (11). In the second paragraph, Williams
mentions that she stood viewing the Great Falls alongside friends and strangers from foreign countries, which adds a global element to “we.” The target audience of the article values unity and multiculturalism, so creating a sense of solidarity through story and language does much to get the audience on Williams’ side.

While pathos and ethos drive the article with a great understanding of the audience, the appeal to logos is less prevalent. This is expected to some degree as the piece is clearly labelled as an “Op-ed,” and the primary audience is already supportive; however, the lack of data will limit the article’s appeal to outside audiences. Historical context is used, most notably in the reference to George Washington, although this lacks a strong follow-up point connected to any reasoning. Figures of how many people visit national parks are brought up a couple of times, with an example being “Over 300 million visits to our national parks last year tells me I am not alone” (10), which suggests that national parks are undervalued by those who seek to privatize them. Aside from these points of evidence, there is not much else to shield the reasons from counterarguments. The claim, being that action should be taken to preserve national parks, and the reason, being that natural beauty is invaluable to society and could be lost without national parks, make a solid argument so long as the audience shares the warrant that nature is integral to the emotional and physical well-being of people. Some might not share the warrant, or they may believe that benefits due to economic growth outweigh the downsides of privatizing national parks. There is no attempt to speak to those with an alternative viewpoint, and the corporatist opposition to keeping national parks public is left alone, implied to be self-evidently bad. It is unlikely this article will reach resistant readers due to its preoccupation with the already supportive core audience. Nonetheless, the weaker appeals to logos will not diminish the appeal for the primary audience as they are already supportive of the claim and reasons, even without extensive data.

What the article lacks in logos, it makes up for in Kairos or the relevance to present-day society. The cause for concern over losing national parks is what powers this article. Losing natural land to private interests is, by its nature, almost irreversible. Williams brings up recent events to animate this: “What I read are headlines like this: ‘GOP Platform Endorses Disposing of Federal Lands.’ What I find is a bipartisan outrage over the selling off of our public lands, be it to the states or the highest bidder at the Bureau of Land Management’s quarterly oil and gas leasing auctions, beginning at $2 an acre” (10). There is a sense of urgency in protecting public land, which is especially noticeable in the concluding paragraphs that put forth the hypothetical situation of a future without national parks. This is important enough to occupy even the title of the article. This “act now” attitude is vital in encouraging the target audience to act in support of public land, and it energizes an audience who, despite already being supportive of national parks, may have been inactive in advocating for their continued support by the government. Kairos is what amplifies the other rhetorical appeals, most notably pathos, to energize the audience.

Ultimately, Terry Tempest Williams’ “Will Our National Parks Survive the Next 100 Years?” is successful in appealing to and persuading the Los Angeles Times’ audience to take action to preserve national parks: “Here is what we must promise the future: a legacy of care” (11).
While the suggested action is left vague, the audience is animated by a sense of urgency through kairos, an emotional connection through vivid pathos, and a sense of solidarity through ethos. Nature precedes us and will almost certainly supersede us, but the lingering question for our modern world is whether we can enjoy and find solace in nature instead of wringing it out for every penny. In our fast-paced, largely digital, and currently isolated world, it can be easy to forget the threats facing the natural world, and Williams’ article sheds an important spotlight on these dangers—it is just a little unfortunate that it makes no effort to convince those complicit in the destruction through dialogue.

Work Cited

Considering Revision

In a foundational research study conducted by Nancy Sommers over forty years ago, student writers and experienced writers were interviewed to ascertain their attitudes towards revision. The student writers used such words and phrases as “scratching out,” “reviewing,” “cleaning up,” and “marking out.” In short, they regarded revision as a final opportunity to delete words they found to be inappropriate or repetitive and to substitute new words.

The experienced writers, on the other hand, took a more holistic, meaning-based approach, consistently referring to their revision as “rewriting,” a process of re-reading and re-considering their work as a way to focus on their purpose and meaning and to reveal the overall argument or structure of their writing.

You are encouraged to view revision more like these experienced writers, as a process to clarify your thinking and purpose and to reach your intended readers more effectively. In addition to your teacher’s comments, keep in mind the assignment guidelines, your class discussions, the five-point criteria (purpose/focus, development, organization, style/tone, and proofreading/editing), and your classmates’ peer comments. When reviewing your teacher’s comments, look for the “big picture,” especially in terms of purpose, development, and organization. Remember as well that your writing is yours—not your teacher’s nor an outside reader’s. If your teacher diagnoses a concern in a particular part of your draft, anticipate these similar concerns in other parts.

In the following two examples, you will find Jessica Smallfield’s presentation draft and revised draft for her evaluation argument. First, look for what Smallfield is doing successfully in the first

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First Presentation Draft

Jessica Smallfield wrote this rhetorical evaluation in Rachel Schaller’s ENGL 200 class.

Rhetorical Evaluation of “Is College Too Easy?”

The general rule of thumb regarding college studying is that students should spend about 2-3 hours studying outside of class for every hour they spend in class. Many students fall short of this mark by half. In the article, “Is College Too Easy? As Study Time Falls, Debate Rises,” by Daniel de Vise, the writer discusses the recent, startling trend of study times falling in college. The article was found on The Washington Post website and published in May of 2012. The people that get their news from this source are mostly high-income earning, college and post college graduates, meaning they are smart, educated, and well off financially (“Audience Research”). The target audience for this specific article are college students but may also include postgraduates who are intrigued by the article’s title. The audience’s position will most likely depend upon their major; STEM majors tend to study more than liberal art majors. Vise communicates that students are as busy as ever focusing on school, work, and other activities, and that studies fail to address key components like the ones mentioned above. These factors explain why students’ study times have taken a plunge over the past 50 or so years. This claim is explicitly stated in the article because the writer conveys why study times have fallen while providing counter claims throughout the article. Vise logically connects the reasons to support the claim by utilizing statistics like how many students work off campus. However, he lacks ethical appeal, and his use of emotional appeal is insufficient.

Vise successfully utilizes logos and limited emotional appeal to convince the audience that college students are busier than ever. Vise uses statistics that support the claim that students are pre-occupied with jobs, commuting, volunteering, and other extracurricular activities. He provides evidence like how study times vary depending upon the major, the percentage of students maintaining jobs, and how technological advancements in recent years have made
completing schoolwork more efficient. The evidence is somewhat effective; some of the audience may remained unchanged on their opinion by the end of the article. They may believe that students remained unchallenged in college and that is why their study times have fallen. The arguments presented throughout the article seem to be multi-sided; there is evidence that supports the writer’s main claim and evidence that goes against it. The writer includes opposing views throughout the article to show that he acknowledges the opposing views people may have. Vise understands that people may believe students are learning less in college and becoming distracted by campuses that resemble resorts. However, Vise refutes this claim by stating that students have better technology compared to past times which decreases study time because of how much more effective it makes completing schoolwork.

The ethical appeal is implicit in this article. Daniel de Vise is an author and writer who works for The Washington Post, but does not explicitly state that. This shows that Vise has experience in writing articles and paper and has college experience, which is important in an article involving college studies. There is no mention of his educational background within the article, so it was something that had to be searched. The credentials of the writer has somewhat importance for the claim he is making because an article about college should be written by someone who not only provides sufficient evidence but has experienced college struggles; it helps to strengthen his main claim.

Vise attempts to use emotional appeal in the beginning of the paper. His word choice suggests that he is backing the idea that study times have fell and college students have gotten lazy. His word choice in the following sentence suggests a negative connotation: “declining study time is a discomforting truth about the vaunted U.S. higher-education system.” The words “declining,” “discomforting,” and “vaunted” are used in an unfavorable way. The word “vaunted” is seemingly used sarcastically, poking fun at how the United States should have a great and highly valued education system but appears not to. The resemblance of college to a resort suggests that students have grown lazy because they are distracted by numerous activities and new experiences that deflect studying.

Vise employs logical appeal when he includes statistics throughout the article. According to George Mason University, “seventy percent of seniors hold off-campus jobs,” which is a majority of that class. What undermines this piece of evidence is the fact that Vise does not state which study the statistic came from. Having an assertion and a refutable source can make an argument stronger. In one of his attempts at logical appeal, Vise uses evidence from the National Survey of Student Engagement, which is a respected source. According to the survey, students only study one hour outside each class they take, which misses the goal by half. This shows the audience that students are studying less, but Vise provides evidence throughout the article to show potentially why. Studying can also vary by major; architectural degrees are known for being more time consuming and intensive while marketing degrees are laid back. The latter major averages 24 hours a week dedicated to studying while the former is only 12 hours. These variations in a student’s major can affect study results.
Vise provides the hourly study time for various schools in Virginia. Howard University reported as little as 13 hours a week towards studying while Sweet Briar College, a private women’s school, reported 19 hours of study in an average week. Until 2010, evidence of declining study time has been ignored; two University of California economists brought the issue to attention in a paper called “Leisure College, USA.” Vise included data from a 1961 study that shows students studying about 24 hours a week, significantly higher than what students are studying now. The writer mentions that some academicians dispute the acquired evidence of study times dwindling; they say findings are based on different surveys and the accounts given by students can be fallible. Although some people may still believe the findings are sound.

Towards the end of the article, Vise states that college students are as busy as ever, just with things other than schoolwork. This is his main claim for “Is College Too Easy?” Students are working full time and going to college full time, so they have less time to study for classes. Vise backs up this statement with quotes from students who work and are pre-occupied with various activities. Students have also become more efficient in their schoolwork because technology makes research more effective and efficient. Instead of going to the library and looking up information in books, students have everything they need in the palms of their hands. However, this can also harm students and serve as a distraction. Study times can vary across universities depending on how committed their students are, what the majority of students are studying, and whether they work, commute, or do other activities.

Overall, Vise used many instances of logos and some emotional appeal. He ends the article in a significant way; he uses a quote from McCormick, the director of a student engagement survey, that says, “every one of these colleges has some students who are studying quite a bit and, to balance things out, students who are studying very, very little.” Ending the article with this quote leaves the audience with the writer’s main claim: that the studies involving study times are not entirely accurate and there are other variables besides students becoming lazier and studying less that affect this data.

Works Cited


Rhetorical Evaluation of “Is College Too Easy?”

According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities, the general rule of thumb regarding higher education is for students to spend about 2-3 hours studying outside of class for every hour they spend in class. However, many students fall short of this standard (McCormick). In the article, “Is College Too Easy? As Study Time Falls, Debate Rises,” Daniel de Vise discusses the recent startling trend of study times falling in college. De Vise communicates that students are as busy as ever focusing on school, work, and other activities and that studies fail to address key components like the ones mentioned above. These factors might explain why students’ study times have taken a plunge over the past 50 or so years. Undergraduates are expected to be a full-time student and a part-time employee and to be involved on campus simultaneously in order to be well rounded, which leaves less time for studying (de Vise). The article was found on The Washington Post website and published in May of 2012. According to The Washington Post, the majority of people who get news from their website are high-income earning, college and post college graduates, meaning they are smart, educated, and well off financially (“Audience Research”). The target audience for this specific article are college students but may also include postgraduates who are intrigued by the article’s eye-catching title. De Vise’s claim is explicitly stated in the article because he conveys why study times have fallen while providing counter claims throughout the article. De Vise effectively utilizes logical appeals to connect the reasons that support the claim by applying studies and statistics, like the percentage of students that work off campus. However, he lacks an appeal to creditability in the form of background and education because he does not explicitly state why he is qualified to discuss this topic. In addition, de Vise’s use of pathos in the form of appealing to the audience’s emotions by word choice is adequate.

De Vise successfully utilizes logos and limited emotional appeal to convince the audience that college students are busier than ever. De Vise uses statistics that support the claim that students are pre-occupied with jobs, commuting, volunteering, and other extracurricular activities. He provides evidence like how study times vary depending upon the major, the percentage of students maintaining jobs while going to college, and how technological advancements in recent years have made completing schoolwork more efficient. Within the article, de Vise says that “academic leaders counter that students are as busy as ever but that their attention is consumed in part by jobs they take to help make ends meet” (de Vise). So, it is not that the coursework in college has gotten easier, it is that students have focused their attention on other things such as part time jobs. The evidence and reasonings are pretty effective in supporting de Vise’s main claim. The writer is fair when presenting evidence and uses arguments that both support and counter his point of view. The writer includes opposing views throughout the article to show that he acknowledges the contrasting views readers may have. De Vise understands that his readers may believe students are learning less in college and becoming distracted by campuses that resemble resorts. In the article, De Vise says that the decline in study times over the past 50 years “has led some critics to question whether college is delivering on its core mission: student
learning” (de Vise). However, de Vise refutes this claim by stating that students have more resources and better technology compared to the past, which decreases study time because of how much more efficient and effective it makes completing schoolwork.

The appeal to credibility is implicit in this article because the writer does not state why he is qualified to write about this topic. De Vise is an author and writer who works for *The Washington Post*, but the article does not explicitly state that. This background information shows that de Vise has experience in writing articles and has a college degree, which is important in an article involving college studies. Since there is no mention of his educational background within the article, it was something that had to be searched. According to his website, de Vise has written “more than one hundred front-page stories for *The Washington Post*” (“Daniel De Visé”), which means this article is not the first one he has written, and Vise has done many other articles involving colleges and universities. The credentials of the writer hold some importance for the claim he is making because an article about college should be written by someone who not only presents sufficient evidence in a concise way but has experienced the struggles of college; this background helps to strengthen his main claim.

De Vise attempts to use emotional appeal in the beginning of the editorial by articulating his diction carefully. His word choice suggests that he is backing the idea that study times have fallen and college students have grown lazy. His diction in the following sentence in the article suggests a negative connotation: “Declining study time is a discomforting truth about the vaunted U.S. higher-education system” (de Vise). The adjectives, “declining,” “discomforting,” and “vaunted,” are used in an unfavorable way. The word “vaunted” is seemingly used sarcastically, poking fun at how the United States should have a great and highly valued education system but appears not to. The comparison of college to a resort suggests that students have grown lazy because they are distracted by numerous activities and new experiences that deflect studying. The use of these words draws readers in to see where the rest of the article is going. Towards the end of the article, de Vise chooses to use a specific quote from a college sophomore, who exclaims, “My planner is a wreck” and goes on to list why. De Vise continues this fraught mood in the hopes the audience will sympathize with her by mentioning that students from a couple other colleges report the “same stressful pace” (de Vise). Dixon is a tourism major, works 23 hours a week at an information desk, volunteers at church, and commutes up to two hours a day to and from school (de Vise). Her college experience is similar to others mentioned in the article and students from universities like Kansas State.

De Vise effectively employs a logical appeal when he includes statistics from various sources, like George Mason University, Sweet Briar College, and DePauw University, throughout the article. According to George Mason, Virginia’s largest public university, “seventy percent of seniors hold off-campus jobs,” which is a majority of that class (de Vise). When students hold part time jobs and take a full load of courses, that leaves them with less time to study throughout the week. In another one of his attempts at logical appeal, de Vise uses evidence from the National Survey of Student Engagement, which is a respected source. The national survey was devised in 1998 as a new approach to gathering information on the quality of universities. Since 2000, approximately
6 million students and over 1,650 schools have participated in the survey (NSSE). According to the survey, students only study one hour outside each class they take, which misses the goal by half (de Vise). This statistic shows the audience that students are studying less; however, de Vise provides evidence throughout the article to show potentially why this is. He includes data on how study times can vary by major; architectural majors are known for being more time consuming and intensive while marketing majors are laid back. The former major averages 24 hours a week dedicated to studying while the latter is only 12 hours (de Vise). These variations in a student’s major can skew a survey’s data. If a school is known for its liberal arts program, they are more likely to report less study time than a technical college. De Vise also provides the hourly study time for various schools in Virginia. Howard University reported as little as 13 hours a week towards studying while Sweet Briar College, a private women’s school, reported 19 hours of study in an average week (de Vise). Depending upon the school and what they offer, students’ weekly study times can differ. Apparently, until 2010, evidence of declining study time has been ignored; two University of California economists, Philip Babcock and Mindy Marks, brought the issue to attention in a paper called “Leisure College, USA” (de Vise). De Vise includes data from a 1961 study that shows students studied about 24 hours a week, significantly higher than what students are studying now (de Vise). The logical appeals the writer presents in the article are concise and effective in convincing the audience how much study times have dropped and why.

Overall, de Vise effectively utilizes several instances of logical appeal in the form of statistics and data, and somewhat effectively uses emotional appeal in the form of carefully chosen diction. He ends the article in a significant way; he employs a quote from McCormick, the director of a student engagement survey, who says, “Every one of these colleges has some students who are studying quite a bit and, to balance things out, students who are studying very, very little” (de Vise). Ending the article with this quote leaves the audience with the writer’s main claim: that the studies involving study times are not entirely accurate and there are other variables instead of students becoming lazier and studying less that affect this data. Students are working part time, or even full time, and going to college full time, so they have less time to study for classes. Study times can also vary across universities depending on how committed their students are, what the majority of students are majoring in, and whether the individuals work, commute, or do other activities.

Works Cited


Conclusion: Summary of Key Rhetorical Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria: The qualities or standards that writers use in order to evaluate something.</th>
<th>Evaluation: A type of argument in which writers make a value judgement about something, arguing that it is either good or bad.</th>
<th>Example: The evidence that the writer refers to as a way to build their argument and support their reasons.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explanation: An aspect of development, in which writers discuss their use of sources and research, make connections to their points, and explain the significance of their points and examples.</td>
<td>Exposition: These are moments in which writers are focusing readers on their main points (claims) and sub-points (reasons).</td>
<td>Intended Audience: The readers that the writer imagines when they are planning and writing the argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readerly Cues: Words or phrases that writers use to signal how they want readers to interpret what they are writing.</td>
<td>Rhetorical Appeals: The ways in which writers use ethos, logos, and pathos to persuade their audiences.</td>
<td>Topic Sentence: The sentence, usually at the top of the paragraph, that focuses readers on the main point or purpose of the paragraph.</td>
</tr>
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</table>