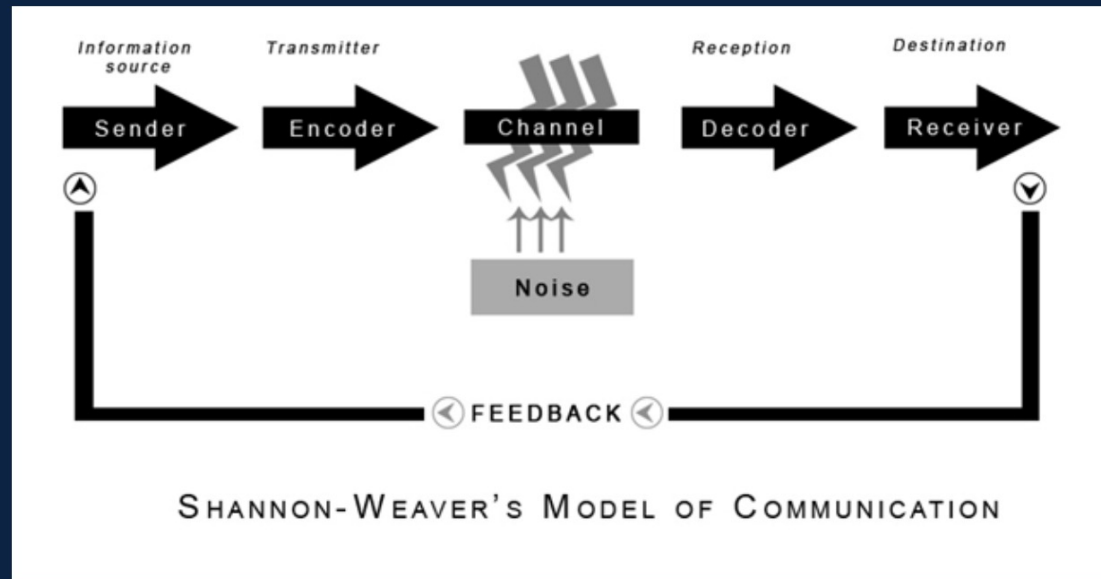# DATA 552
Communication and Argumentation

Lecture 2: Rhetorical situation

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UBC

A framework to understand communication

- The Shannon-Weaver model of communication is a popular framework to consider

Information source → Sender → Transmitter → Encoder → Channel → Reception → Decoder → Destination → Receiver

Noise

FEEDBACK

SHANNON-WEAVER'S MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

The Rhetorical Situation

To "cut through" the noise, one must have a strong grasp of the rhetorical situation:

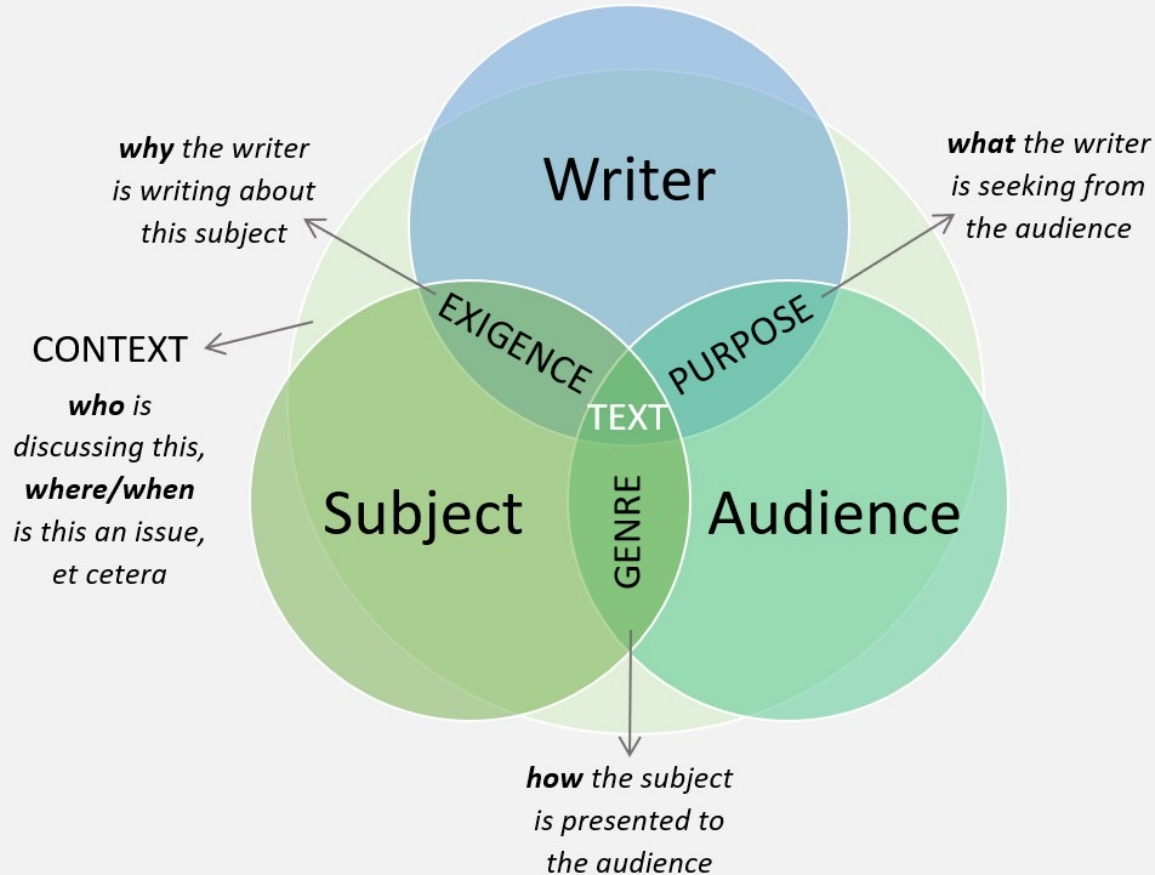|		
The topic	The angle	**The purpose**
The audience	**The context**	The communicator's role

The Rhetorical Situation

why the writer is writing about this subject

CONTEXT
who is discussing this, *where/when* is this an issue, et cetera

what the writer is seeking from the audience

Writer

EXIGENCE

PURPOSE

TEXT

Subject

GENRE

Audience

how the subject is presented to the audience

Source: OpenEnglish @ SLCC

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Purpose

The purpose is the reason for communicating

More specifically, it is what you are trying to achieve by engaging in communication.

Examples:
- Answering questions at a job interview → to get a job
- Emailing your boss → to set up a meeting
- Meeting with your boss → gain authorization for new project
- Presentation to boss + clients → convince to change priorities
- Text to partner → ask to delay dinner
- etc, etc.

Purpose

good ↑

Let's delve into the ethical considerations of data communication, focusing on how to present findings responsibly in a world inundated with information.

We're going to look into ethical considerations of data communication, touching on responsible presentation in our information-rich world.

Today, we might cover ethical considerations in data communication, thinking about responsibility in the context of today's information flow.

bad

Ethics in data communication is something we'll wander through, considering the vastness of information out there.

Purpose: To Persuade or Inform

Usually, we think of communication as either persuasive or informative.

To persuade is to convince someone to take a particular action.

To inform is to describe a concept/scenario or to outline information

Purpose: often persuasion is the goal

Even informative purposes generally have some form of persuasion associated, if you dig deep enough.

Examples:

- BC Daily Covid Updates were informative communication...but they arguably existed to persuade us to continue distancing/vaxxing/etc

- Telling my partner I had a bad day is informative...but I'm probably persuading them to chip-in more on the evening chores

- etc, etc.

Talking of persuasion
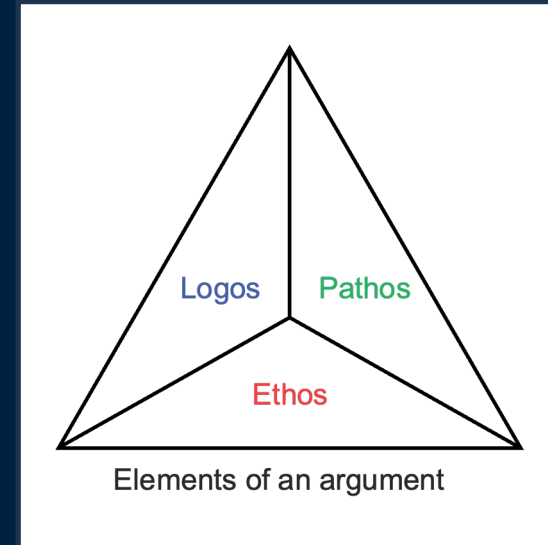
Ethos ('Ethics')

- Establishing personal credentials
- Getting your audience to trust you

Pathos ('Pity')

- Inspiring an emotional response
- Getting your audience to feel

Logos ('Logic')

- Arguing based on reason and facts
- Getting your audience to think

The rhetorical triangle

Purpose: Questions to Ask Yourself

When beginning an email, a formal business document (*i.e.,* a report or proposal), a blog post, a tweet, or a presentation you always want to ask yourself:

- What do I want to achieve/accomplish?

- Why do I want to accomplish this?

- What action(s) do I want the audience to take?

- When do I want them to take these actions?

- How does taking this action benefit my audience?

Portfolio

Q1: Can you think about a time when you either created a message or received a message that didn't have a clear purpose? (written/oral)

a)   Why was the purpose unclear?

b)   What could the sender/writer have done to clarify the purpose?

Audience

Clear purpose for communication is important, but that purpose can be lost in the "noise" if it's not tailored to your audience.

One extreme example*:* With a clear purpose of ordering specific food in rural Japan, without speaking Japanese, my message is incapable of reaching the target audience

What could be the many factors that can influence how well a communicator can relate to or connect with the audience?

Audience

Clear purpose for communication is important, but that purpose can be lost in the "noise" if it's not tailored to your audience.

This requires you, the communicator, to understand your audience – their quirks, their values and beliefs, and most importantly, their goals.

Audience

Prior to "sending signals" (communicating), ask yourself:

➢ What did they ask for? Did they ask for anything at all?

➢ What's important to them? What are they trying to achieve?

➢ What do they need to know? Why do they need to know this?

➢ How do they like to get their information?

➢ How will they feel about the information?

➢ Do they have any weird quirks? (i.e., you know they hate it when people verb nouns)

➢ What socio-economic, historic, or cultural events, values, or beliefs do they have and how will this change their reaction?

➢ What else might be impacting their understanding of the situation and impacting their attention?

➢ Will more than one person be reading/listening to this? If so, are all of their needs the same?
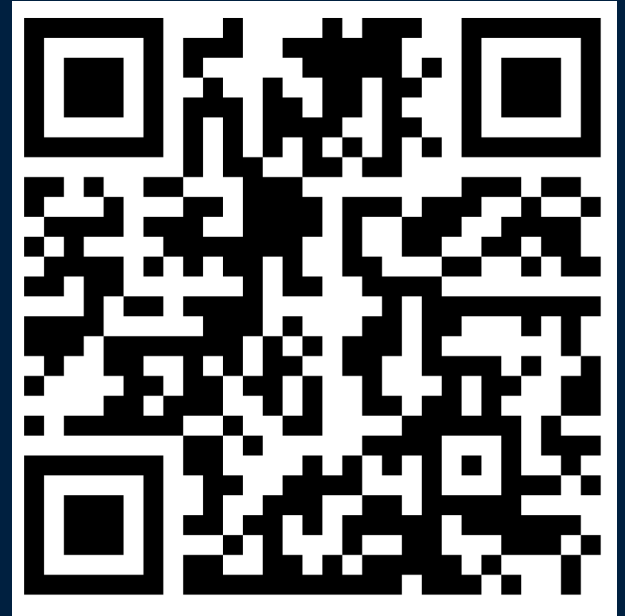
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Portfolio

Q2: You have been commissioned to run a survey of employee satisfaction at a large company, and you will be providing the results primarily to the HR department. The union representing these workers has also requested copies.

a) How would you describe the HR team's needs?

b) How would you describe the union's needs?

Context

The context refers to where, when, and how your audience will read or hear your message.

- In transit?
  - Going where? On vacation? Going to work, coming back from work?
  - On the bus, car ? (so email vs. phone call vs. text message)
- In office (email vs. phone call vs. in person)
- At home (phone call vs. text message)
- "When" isn't only about clock time:
  - After a bad quarter
  - After winning an investment
  - Before the financial year closing
  - Before a policy launch

Context

Part of the context which is worth focusing on, as it tends to frame your communication, is the genre

Common genres include
- Emails / Memo
- Proposals: solicited/unsolicited, formal/semi-formal/not formal
- Reports
- Blogs
- Tweet/Social media
- Presentations
- Resumes and Cover Letters
- Private direct message

Like audience, the context limits and frames how you communicate your ideas.

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Portfolio

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a) How would you describe the HR team's needs?

b) How would you describe the union's needs?

c) What are the potential/likely contexts?

Case study

SEATTLE -- Two seconds cost $74 million.

That amount was set aside to improve the Mercer Mess. Lanes were added. Signal capacity was improved.

Now GPS navigator TomTom, which tracks drivers using its app, says the average time through the corridor during the peak morning commute 7 minutes, 50 seconds before the Mercer Mess construction.

And now the travel time through Mercer is 7 minutes and 48 seconds.

That's right. An improvement of 2 seconds.

KOMO news

$74 million later, Mercer Mess is 2 seconds faster

by Matt Markovich | Monday, October 17th 2016

MILLIONS OF DOLLARS HAVE BEEN
SPENT TO GET TRAFFIC MOVING

00:08 / 02:12

VIEW ALL PHOTOS

Seattle cars crawl through the Mercer Mess. (Photo: KOMO News)

The corridor has an average of 30,000 more cars a day than it did two years ago.

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