October 23, 2023,

Dear Linda Fikes and Instructor Austin,

Project 2 in our course had us identify and justify, with concrete examples, the selection of our rhetorical hero. For this project, I’ve selected Michael Stevens as my rhetorical hero. The project has provided an experience that has broadened my view on rhetoric, teaching me a few valuable lessons. First, I’ve realized how much media rhetoric can shape your character. In the present, there are many ways information is delivered, especially through social media applications. I’ve realized that the content I would normally watch on YouTube when I was younger played a big impact on what I’m passionate about in the future. This observation could extend to people around me. I can identify character development based on the media consumed and rhetoric they are exposed to. Second, I learned how rhetoric can create a foundation of credibility for a speaker. I’ve learned that strong speakers who use rhetorical strategies generally are well received by the majority and are sometimes recommended. Lastly, I learned, specifically from Michael Stevens, that rhetoric isn’t limited to just the technical terms of Ethos, Logos, and Pathos. Michael often used body language, hand movements, critical pauses, interactions, and many more rhetorical strategies that don’t exactly fall into the three main categories but are equally as important. From these three observations, I can better identify rhetoric used from the content I consume, identify rhetorical superheroes, and avoid rhetoric used in an ill sense.

For this project, I had a particularly challenging time subdividing Michael Stevens’ quotes into rhetorical categories. This made it difficult to pick out one sentence and required large quotes in my paper for context. Michal Stevens often morphs the three rhetorical strategies when speaking. To solve this, I made sure to choose the quotes that would best reflect the rhetorical strategy being used. I also made sure to rewatch a significant amount of the speech around each quote to ensure that I had enough context to identify a specific category. I would have done this differently now knowing that some rhetorical speakers mix strategies. If I had the chance to redo the project, I would have chosen 6-9 quotes chronologically and then explained the various rhetorical strategies used in each and how they contributed to the success of the delivery. This way I could pinpoint rhetorical strategies used in each individually rather than categorizing them into rhetorical sections. Although this strategy would have been easier, I still think the sections are neater and make the paper easier to read with a specific topic in mind while reading. In this case I feel like making it easier for the reader to understand is more important.

Our class has a couple of outcomes that students must meet throughout the course. Our rhetorical project has contributed to the rhetorical knowledge which has allowed me to see the benefits of rhetoric and help practice identifying rhetoric used by someone influential to me. Like the previous project, the writing processes and reflective practice outcomes have been contributed to during this project. Drafting and peer review are essential to the writing process which both increases the credibility of the paper but also pinpoints certain weaknesses that may not be visible to the writer. This in turn increases growth and creates a systematic habit of writing. The newest outcome contributed to by this project is genre conventions. Due to the extensive research into a rhetor and including in-text citations, this project has required awareness of MLA format and in text citations to create a professional, easy-to-read, and structurally sound paper. This form of writing is a form of rhetoric that creates more trustworthy, credible, and intriguing papers, not only in an academic setting. These outcomes are extremely important for effective communication as they are the foundations of using rhetoric effectively when writing. Organization, outlining, and proper flow show Ethos and professionalism. Citations, labeled quotes, and format also show Ethos but in credibility. The creation of proper thesis statements and well-written justifications for the thesis statement being true is a form of Logos. Lastly connecting the thesis statement by extrapolation outside the scope of the paper to personal experiences is a form of Pathos. All these writing strategies provided by the course outcomes increase how adept we are when we want to share our thoughts. Which includes the success these thoughts have at influencing others for the better, allowing us to become our own rhetorical superheroes.

What I’m still very fascinated about writing is how people can express/explain extremely difficult concepts merely through words alone. These types of writing styles are mainly seen in Textbooks and Dictionaries but are fundamental in our understanding of everything around us. To gain more experience in this field I believe taking lab-based STEM courses is perfect. Whenever we write a report on a lab, we need to take an exclusive result and explain it in words that our target audience can understand without experimenting on themselves. My current major in college involves a lot of writing in this style which will help me become more confident in writing for a general audience.

Sincerely,

Nathan Fikes