**Project Three: Rhetorical Analysis of Generative AI**

ENGL1105 | Fall 2024 | Dr. Greene

A robot writing on a paper

Description automatically generated

Fig. 1: “Create an image of artificial intelligence writing an essay in college” prompt. *Adobe Firefly*, 8 July 2024 version, Adobe, 2023, <https://firefly.adobe.com/public/t2i?id=urn%3Aaaid%3Asc%3AUS%3A77249cc7-a4ff-4c35-923b-4d5e8d64f591&ff_channel=shared_link&ff_source=Text2Image>.

**Important Dates:**

**Mon., Nov. 18 by start of class:** 900-word Peer Review Draft due on Canvas.

**Wed., Nov. 20 by 11:59 pm:** 900-word draft for Dr. Greene’s comments due on Canvas.

**Wed., Dec. 11 by 11:59 pm:** 1800-2500-wordFinal Draft of rhetorical analysis

**Requirements:**

1. 1800-2500 words
2. MLA format
3. Academic titling conventions
4. Use of one of the two source texts as main analytical object (see below)
5. Analytical thesis statement conventions
6. Rhetorical Analysis genre conventions
7. AI-acknowledgement statement (Available on Canvas)

**Invention Writing Checklist:**

(Note: Dates may change as we progress through the project.)

1. Week Ten Invention Writing due by 11:59 pm on Fri., Nov. 1.
2. Week Eleven Invention Writing due by 11:59 pm on Fri., Nov. 8.
3. Week Twelve Invention Writing due by 11:59 pm on Fri., Nov. 15.
4. Week Thirteen Invention Writing due by 11:59 pm on Fri., Nov. 22.
5. Week Fifteen Invention Writing due by 11:59 pm on Fri., Dec. 6.

**Learning Objectives:**

* Understanding of rhetorical situations for communication (rhetorical knowledge)
* Understanding of use of basic rhetorical appeals (rhetorical knowledge)
* Analysis of rhetorical features of communication (rhetorical knowledge)
* Understanding of analysis genre conventions (genre conventions)
* Develop stronger invention, drafting, revising, and editing skills (writing process)
* Develop deeper critical thinking and analysis (rhetorical knowledge, reflective practice)
* Develop information literacy (rhetorical knowledge, reflective practice)
* Assessing the processes and ideas of the project (reflective practice)

**Guidelines:**

The goal of this assignment is to analyze how words and images are used rhetorically to create logic (logos), emotion (pathos), credibility (ethos), and timeliness (Kairos) in communications, something we encounter every day and in every space. The purpose of your essay is to identify and analyze the strategies used in creating communications, particularly the strategies that a generative AI tool (Microsoft Copilot) uses to mimic human linguistic language and thinking. The analysis should focus on the purpose and motivations behind the word, the claims and examples, the organization and structure, the authorial credibility, and other basic rhetorical appeals. You should choose **ONE** of the academic articles and corresponding AI analysis from the links below and on Canvas:

* [AI, Social Media, and Climate Change](https://virginiatech-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/jrgreene_vt_edu/EYB5I42zTU9Ejt-95LjVmUABmuyZ8u6DI7ryc1ruukqc-w?e=CiKc8R)
* [AI and Art](https://virginiatech-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/jrgreene_vt_edu/EYB5I42zTU9Ejt-95LjVmUABmuyZ8u6DI7ryc1ruukqc-w?e=LUF2vz)

First, you will need to familiarize yourself with the main article, making note of any significant rhetorical strategies the authors use. Next, read the prompt and Copilot’s output. Try to understand what rhetorical moves it makes and finds “effective,” how it chooses to phrase its ideas, and why it may do things in a specific manner. As you begin to look at your analytical objects, think about these central questions:

* What is this text trying to get me to believe, think, or feel, and why?
* How does it accomplish or not accomplish its intended purpose or goal?
* Who is the intended audience for the communication?
* How do they use logic (logos), emotion (pathos), credibility (ethos), and timeliness (Kairos)?
* What evidence supports my analysis of these rhetorical appeals?
* Is the writing successful in its use of these rhetorical appeals?
* What makes it successful or unsuccessful?

The analysis will consist of your engagement with the rhetorical strategies used within the text and your explicit argument about their effectiveness OR ineffectiveness, as well as the meaning of the strategies you identify. Becoming comfortable looking for and analyzing how rhetorical strategies are used by other cultural producers, even artificial intelligence, will help you gain a sense of how to deploy similar methods in your own communications both in university, in career tasks, and in personal interactions, but more importantly, it will further develop your information literacy through critical analysis.

Your intended audience for this project will be a group of college educated AI-skeptics. You should assume that they are highly doubtful of generative-AI’s abilities, particularly in the realm of human-like analysis and writing. As you develop your rhetorical analysis, consider how you will either support their skepticism or pushback on it with your insight onto the generative-AI content you’re rhetorically analyzing. You should break down the text using specific evidence to illustrate the rhetorical strategies you identify, and you should follow those specific examples with clear, concise analytical statements and conclusions to develop your audience. Additionally, you should pull specific evidence from the academic article to further support your thesis and subclaims.

We will use generative AI—Microsoft Copilot—to assist in the invention, revision, and editing stages of the writing process. You can choose to engage with the technology as much or as little as you’d like, and you will not receive lower grades if you choose not to use generative AI in any parts of the essay. Regardless, I want to make clear that the goals of the project are to develop YOUR writing and thinking skills, not AI’s. The section below provides clear guidelines for the assessment of this project, including criteria for the use/misuse of generative AI.

**Assessment Criteria:[[1]](#footnote-1)**

* **Weekly Draft Materials (40%):** Part of the learning process is your ability to develop and refine your ideas over time. If the drafts are solely AI-generated without further development, it shows a lack of engagement in the writing process.
* **Detailed and Specific Rhetorical Analysis (20%):** The focused analysis of evidence is a hallmark of this genre, and it requires a deep personal engagement with the text. AI-generated content can extract certain information and begin the analytical process. However, moving beyond the surface-level ideas of AI-generated text is necessary to achieve deeper-levels of critical thinking and analytical insight.
* **Thesis Sophistication (10%):** Developing and supporting an explicit thesis statement is a main learning goal, and it should be the backbone for your analysis. Generative-AI can assist you in refining the main claim of your analysis; however, relying on solely its output as the controlling idea of your analysis shows a lack of critical thinking.
* **Organization and Development (5%):** The organization and development of the essay should reflect your ability to structure your thoughts and arguments. If there is no development beyond what AI provides, it indicates a lack of critical thinking and personal input.
* **Language Sophistication (5%):** While AI can produce grammatically correct text, you are expected to understand and apply these rules yourself. Over-reliance on AI suggests you have not mastered these skills.
* **Originality and Personal Contributions (20%):** This criterion ensures that you are actively engaging with the material and contributing your own voice and perspective, which is essential for a rhetorical analysis essay.

The emphasis on “Weekly Draft Materials, “Detailed and Specific Rhetorical Analysis,” “Originality and Personal Contributions,” and “Thesis Sophistication” in the rubric underscores the importance of the writing process and personal engagement with the topic. Essays that rely heavily on AI-generated text without further development by you would not demonstrate the required level of critical reading and thinking or skill development, which are key objectives of the assignment. Therefore, such essays would receive a failing score. The rubric encourages you to use AI as a tool for assistance, not as a replacement for your own work.

| **Criteria** | **Points** | **Excellent** | **Good** | **AI-level** | **Below AI-level** | **No Content** |
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| **Weekly Draft Materials** | 4 | All drafts are complete, detailed, and show significant effort and progress. Generative AI is used during invention stages and expanded on significantly, making the drafts highly reflective of student thinking. | Most drafts are complete and show some effort and progress. Generative AI is used during invention stages and expanded on appropriately, but student could make drafts more their own. | Drafts are incomplete or lack detail. Reflects the level of a generative AI. | Drafts are incomplete and lack detail. Worse than a generative AI. | No drafts submitted. |
| **Detailed and Specific Rhetorical Analysis** | 2 | Analysis is detailed, specific, and insightful. Generative AI is used during invention stages and expanded on significantly, making the drafts highly reflective of student thinking. | Analysis is somewhat detailed and specific. Generative AI is used during invention stages and expanded on appropriately, but student could make drafts more their own. | Analysis is vague or general. Reflects the level of a generative AI. | Analysis is vague and lacks specificity. Worse than a generative AI. | No analysis provided. |
| **Thesis Sophistication** | 1 | Thesis is clear, arguable, and sophisticated. Generative AI is used during invention stages and expanded on significantly, making the drafts highly reflective of student thinking. | Thesis is clear and arguable but lacks sophistication. Generative AI is used during invention stages and expanded on appropriately, but student could make drafts more their own. | Thesis is unclear or not arguable. Reflects the level of a generative AI. | Thesis is unclear and not arguable. Worse than a generative AI. | No thesis provided. |
| **Organization and Development** | .5 | Essay is well-organized and ideas are fully developed. Generative AI is used during invention stages and expanded on significantly, making the drafts highly reflective of student thinking. | Essay is somewhat organized, and ideas are somewhat developed. Generative AI is used during invention stages and expanded on appropriately, but student could make drafts more their own. | Essay is disorganized or ideas are underdeveloped. Reflects the level of a generative AI. | Essay is disorganized and ideas are underdeveloped. Worse than a generative AI. | No organization or development. |
| **Language Sophistication** | .5 | Language is sophisticated and appropriate for a college-level essay. Generative AI is used during invention stages and expanded on significantly, making the drafts highly reflective of student thinking. | Language is somewhat sophisticated and mostly appropriate. Generative AI is used during invention stages and expanded on appropriately, but student could make drafts more their own. | Language is simplistic or inappropriate. Reflects the level of a generative AI. | Language is simplistic and inappropriate. Worse than a generative AI. | Inappropriate language or no content. |
| **Originality and Personal Contributions** | 2 | Essay is highly original and includes personal insights. Generative AI is used during invention stages and expanded on significantly, making the drafts highly reflective of student thinking. | Essay is somewhat original and includes some personal insights. Generative AI is used during invention stages and expanded on appropriately, but student could make drafts more their own. | Essay lacks originality or personal insights. Reflects the level of a generative AI. | Essay lacks originality and personal insights. Worse than a generative AI. | No originality or personal insights. |

1. Microsoft Copilot assisted in generating this section. The following prompt was used to develop the rubric: Create a rubric for a rhetorical analysis essay in a college-level freshman composition course. The assignment is worth a total of 10 points. The rubric should account for the use of generative ai in the developmental stages of the essay but should instruct students that generative ai is a failing baseline and that going well-beyond generative ai is paramount. The top row of the rubric should have the following: criteria, weight, excellent, good, AI-level, below AI-level, no content. The scoring criteria should be as follows: Weekly Draft Materials (most weight), Detailed and Specific Rhetorical Analysis (second most weight), Thesis Sophistication (third most weight), organization and development (fourth most weight), language sophistication (fourth most weight), and originality and personal contributions (fourth most weight). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)