Top of Form

**Rhetorical Decision-making and Multimodality: Two Class Activities.**

These activities are similar, and I wouldn’t necessarily recommend doing them on the same day. I’ve used them in different units to emphasize different skills.

The **first activity** is intended to help students think about the rhetorical effects of their modal choices. In most writing classes, these decisions are more or less circumscribed ahead of time (12 point, Times New Roman, etc.), but in this class, students can do almost anything they want, making use of any medium and any genre. But this doesn’t mean they can select media willy-nilly for the fun of it. I ask students to determine modes in which they will work based on the rhetorical capacities and other affordances of these modes.

The **second activity** achieves many of the same purposes. If you use both in the same quarter, you should spread them out, and be sure to emphasize the distinct goals you wish to achieve with each. For me, the primary distinction is that the second activity emphasizes argumentation and persuasiveness, whereas the first emphasizes decisions about genre, mode, form, and so forth. You will notice that, with the second activity, three of the prompts share an audience while the other three share a topic. I do this in order to facilitate some critical conversations about how topics and audiences shape possibilities for rhetorical effectiveness.

**First Activity: The Rhetorical Effectiveness of Multimodal Decisions** (30 min)

(I generally use this early in the quarter, when beginning to discus the rhetorical capacities of multimodal composition.)

* I will give you a list of **messages**.
* In groups, you must decide what **media and/or genres** are best for communicating each message.
  + How will you reach the appropriate **audience (pathos)**?
  + How will you establish your own **authority or trustworthiness (ethos)**?
  + How will you respond to the constraints of time and **context**?
  + Explain **why** you believe your method will be effective.
* Messages:
  + 1: You are running for student body president, and you must get people to vote for you (the election is in one month).
  + 2: You are the president of the university chess club, your membership is declining, and you need to find new members before the university cuts your funding (which will happen in two weeks).
  + 3: You are throwing a party next weekend that will be highly illegal in at least seven ways, but you want all the cool (which is to say, discrete) people to come.
  + 4: You have discovered that Kayne West is your estranged father, and you want him to come to your birthday party (which happens to be this weekend).
  + 5: You have discovered that the world is ruled by reptilian overlords, and you must rally resistance among your fellow humans before it is too late.
  + 6: You are reasonably certain that your roommate is an alien (who, furthermore, keeps eating your books), and you need to convince your residence director to give you a new roommate.
* Timeline: Groups plan (5 min); Share out and discuss (25 min)

**Second Activity: Elevator Pitch** (40 min)

(I generally use this activity when students are working on their video proposals. This provides a way to practice the genre of the short proposal and to discuss the effectiveness of certain techniques.)

* I will give you an **audience** and **something you must convince this audience to do**.
* In groups, your job is to come up with **a brief (2 min or so) pitch** to achieve your goal.
* Feel free to **use any modes, props, or tactics** that you have available.
* Prompts:
  + Convince the UW administration to offer a major in the Witchcraft and Wizardry.
  + Convince your fellow UW students to go on strike until the administration offers a major in Witchcraft and Wizardry.
  + Convince a group of investors to fund a brand new school of Witchcraft and Wizardry.
  + Convince everyone in this class to donate money to your dog adoption fund.
  + Convince everyone in this class to skip class tomorrow.
  + Convince everyone in this class to get tacos with you when class is over.
* Things to consider:
  + What primary examples will you use to demonstrate your point?
  + How will you appeal to ethos, logos, and pathos?
  + What is the most effective organization or structure for your appeal?
  + What tone of voice will you use?
  + Will you incorporate props?
  + How will you anticipate specific hesitations (or counter-arguments) on the part of your intended audience?
* Timeline: Plan (10 min); Share out and discuss (25 min)