

ASSIGNMENT SAMPLE (SUMMARY)

The following assignment sample portrays the scaffolded approach to assignment design, including:

- the context and the summary of one assignment
- the sequence of drafting tasks and
- the assessment strategies (both formative and summative).

CONTEXT OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The sample materials are based on the *Genre Analysis* assignment, which is the first of three major assignments that students complete in my ENG 112 College Composition II course. In brief, students conduct a rhetorical analysis of two genres of communication (written, spoken, or visual) that discuss the same topic.

After analyzing how others present their arguments, students continue with their second major assignment, the *Argumentative Research Essay*, through which they conduct both primary and secondary research, and they write an essay by using a selected argumentative strategy (either Classical/Aristotelian, Rogerian, or Toulmin).

In the third major project, *Visual Communication*, students bring together their knowledge of rhetoric, research, and arguments and apply it to the creation of a visual (a selection of research poster, advocacy website, or video story).

SUMMARY OF THE ASSIGNMENT

Purpose

Before diving into composing their own rhetorically effective documents, students analyze the discursive artifacts created by others. In their *Genre Analysis* assignment, students:

- Identify different genres of communication
- Reinforce and expand their knowledge of rhetorical features
- Develop analytical strategies
- Compose a compare and contrast essay

Content

Students compare and contrast two genres that relate to a topic that interests them (for example, an article and a video on immigration). One of these pieces must be from the category of typography (written genre), while the second genre can be either iconography (visual genre) or oral (spoken genre). Students compare and contrast the following:

- The Rhetorical Situation (Exigence, Audience, and Constraints)
- Aristotle's Rhetorical Appeals (Ethos, Pathos, and Logos)
- Discourse and Epistemology (Rhetoric as Methodological, Sociological, or Ontological)

ASSIGNMENT SAMPLE (DRAFTING TASKS)

In a regular 16-week semester, students work on their Genre Analysis assignment over the course of four weeks:

Week 1: Introduction to Assignment and to Genres

In-Class Genre Analysis Planning

PART 1: Warm-up Activity

Small Groups

1. With your group, brainstorm on topics from the following areas: Education, Politics, Health & Medicine, Gender, Entertainment & Sports, Science & Technology.
2. Pick one topic from your list and search for two genres that discuss that topic.
3. Briefly compare the two genres: What is the purpose of each artifact? Who is the audience? How do you know all this? Pull evidence from each artifact to help illustrate your points. Which genre is more effective in addressing the issue? Why?

PART 2: Genre Analysis Planning

Individual

Choose a topic that interests you and find two genres that discuss that topic. Write down the basic info about the genres you have chosen:

Genre 1:

- Type of genre (written, spoken, or visual):
- Title of the piece:
- Author (if known):

Genre 2:

- Type of genre (written, spoken, or visual):
- Title of the piece:
- Author (if known):

Briefly explain: Why did you select these two genres? What characteristics make them different genres from one another?

Week 2: Rhetoric and Its Definitions

In-Class Discussion Leaders

Students are responsible for leading a discussion based on the readings for that week. The readings include Aristotle's rhetorical appeals, Bitzer's "The Rhetorical Situation," and Brummett's "Three Meanings of Epistemic Rhetoric."

Students engage in the discussion as chairs, facilitators, or respondents. The task requires that they: investigate larger contexts that surround our readings; stimulate discussions through questions and talking points from the readings; and connect the readings to other areas of their lives.

Taking a leadership role in the discussion makes students accountable for facilitating and enhancing the understanding of the rhetorical concepts that they will analyze in their Genre Analysis.

ASSIGNMENT SAMPLE (DRAFTING TASKS)

Week 3: Analyzing Your Genres

Genre Analysis Rough Draft: Matrix

Instead of a traditional draft in essay format, students use a matrix to help them generate ideas and to learn to distinguish between observations, examples, and analyses. Here is an excerpt from the matrix:

Aristotle's Rhetorical Appeals: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos			
	OBSERVATIONS <i>What is a specific genre doing?</i> For example, what types of audiences does your genre target? American teenagers? Seniors? Doctors?	EXAMPLES <i>How does the genre do what you observed? For example, which specific words, colors, sounds, images, etc. make you think that the audience is, let's say, American teenagers?</i>	ANALYSES <i>Why do you think that these specific words, colors, etc. signal your observation? For example, why does that specific word target American teenagers?</i>
How does this genre establish (or attempt to establish) its credibility with the audience?			
What emotions is the genre attempting to evoke from its audience?			
What types of evidence are used to support claims? Is it valid / reliable? If there is no evidence, what is used to help support the information presented?			

Week 4: Putting Together a Rhetorical Analysis

Genre Analysis Final Copy: Revising and Editing

After receiving feedback to their rough drafts, students revise their matrices and create an essay following one of the compare and contrast structures (either subject by subject or point by point). To help them with this activity, students:

- Highlight or tag parts where they are describing each genre.
- Highlight or tag parts where they are comparing genres.
- Note which organizational pattern they are using. If none, reorganize as needed (compare/contrast handout provided).
- Note where they need to add more or rephrase anything to make their points clearer by using more metacommentary (handout provided).

ASSIGNMENT SAMPLE (ASSESSMENT)

Formative Assessment

I provide formative assessment during class activities, as well as by responding to student submissions of work-in-progress. Here is a sample response to a student rough draft/matrix:

You show a good understanding of observations vs. examples vs. analyses. Room for improvement:

- *Provide more description of specific examples. For example, quote specific words or describe the colors, etc. so that your readers can visualize what you are seeing.*
- *To make your analysis even better, work more on explaining why a certain example has a certain rhetorical effect. A helpful way to do that is by using metacommentary (from this week's readings)--words and phrases that refer to the rhetorical elements that you are analyzing, like this: "As this example shows, the purpose of this article is _____ because _____."*

As you continue with this project, put your findings into essay format and bring an essay draft to our next class. The readings for this week will help you put together a rich genre comparison.

Summative Assessment

For summative assessment of all major assignments, I utilize assessment rubrics similar to the one below for the Genre Analysis:

CATEGORY	A	B	C	D	F
Analysis 40 pts.	Thorough, developed analysis and insightful observations.	Analysis is sound, but could be more specific or insightful.	General and/or undeveloped analysis.	Analysis is sparse and lacks insight.	No relevant analysis or insightful observations made.
Supporting Details 30 pts.	Specific examples are related to analysis and relevant to the claims about the topic/subject.	Specific examples have minor weaknesses relative to analysis and/or relevance to the topic/ subject.	Specific examples have major weaknesses relative to analysis and/or relevance to the topic/subject.	An attempt has been made to add specific examples, but the claims were unrelated or confusing.	Specific examples irrelevant or not found.
Writing Fluency 30 pts.	Demonstrates skillful writing fluency through clear and concise sentences with strong metacommentary. Follows a clear compare/contrast structure. Phrasing focuses on analyzing the genres and not on what the writers did.	Demonstrates good writing fluency through clear and concise sentences, but occasionally lacks metacommentary. Minor lapses in compare/contrast structure. Phrasing focuses on analyzing the genres and not on what the writers did.	Demonstrates adequate writing fluency through clear and concise sentences, but often lacks metacommentary. A few lapses in compare/contrast structure. Phrasing often focuses on what the writers did, instead of analyzing the genres.	Demonstrates limited writing fluency. Writing is unclear and without any metacommentary. Weak compare/contrast structure. Most phrasing focuses on what the writers did, instead of analyzing the genres.	Writing is not fluent. No evidence of compare/contrast structure.

In addition to the rubric, I provide more formative feedback for each rubric element since students have a chance to revise their essays and resubmit them to improve the grade.