**WRT 105 | Common Rhetorical Strategies & Frameworks Used in Visual Arguments**

**(Adapted from Laurie Gries, PhD)**

**List of Common Rhetorical Strategies & Frameworks Used in Visual Arguments**

The list that follows provides you with different framework you may use to analyze your particular documentary. These frameworks are also rhetorical strategies that filmmakers (composers) and the films (artifacts) themselves deploy in making their claims. That is, we, as an audience can use these strategies as a way into the arguments our documentaries present. Note that we will still need to consider some of the specific visual moves a film may use – say, slow motion—in the service of evoking pathos and adding style to the argument the film makes (think of the slow-mo use in ***Gnarly in Pink***).

* Composer’s use of appeals:

Ethos--examining composer’s credibility (How does the composer project an authoritative stance? In other words, how does composer try to establish his or her credibility about the image?)

Pathos--examining a composer’s appeals to emotions in order to engage reader (What techniques does the composer use to appeal to the reader’s emotions/or to engage the reader? Or in other words, what techniques does the composer use to make audience feel a certain way? What does the composer want reader to feel and why?)

Logos--examining a composer’s appeals to reason. (What techniques does the composer use to appeal to the audience’s rationality? Or in other words, what techniques does the composer use to make the audience think about something? What does the composer want the audience to think and/or realize?)

* Organization of the information. (How does the arrangement of the composer’s arguments contribute to or detract from to the persuasive force of the visual artifact? What is emphasized/deemphasized? What parallels/juxtaposition does the composer employ and why? What does the composer want the audience to compare and contrast? Why?)
* Selection/Emphasis of information/visual representation. (What is emphasized in this visual artifact? How does the inclusion and emphasis of information/content/visual representation add to or detract from the persuasive force of the visual artifact?)
* Omission of certain information/visual representations. (What information/visual representation is excluded in this visual artifact? How does the exclusion of information/visual representation add to or detract from the persuasive force of the visual artifact? Why did the composer excluded this information/visual representation?)
* Privileging and/or excluding various positions or voices. (How does the composer’s choice to privilege or exclude certain positions or voices add to or detract from the persuasive force of the visual artifact?)
* Style. (How does the style of the visual artifact and/or text used in the visual artifact appeal to ethos, pathos, and/or logos? What tone is created by the style, which adds to or detracts from rhetorical purpose? How does composer create this tone? Colors? Font? Arrangement? Medium? Content? Emphasis? Omission?)
* Medium (What media is/are used—print? electronic? handwriting? type? paint? film? How does the medium create emotional and/or logical appeals? What emotional and or logical appeals might have been triggered had the composer used another medium?)
  + Genre: (What is the genre of the sources used within the film—ads? paintings? photographs? collages? maps? posters? graphs? Interviews? Overlapping voice-overs? Why documentary genre? How do you define that genre? What are the normal conventions used in that genre? Does the author/composer use the typical conventions? Or does the author/composer manipulate the conventions? If so, how? Why? For what effect?)
  + Framing: (Does the framing create an open or closed form? What is emphasized by the framing? What does the composer want the audience to think about by framing visual artifact in certain way?)
* Identification: (What does the composer want the audience to identify with in this visual artifact? Why? How does the composer get the audience to identify? Binary? Difference? Etc.)
  + Memory: (What cultural/national memories does the composer try to trigger in this image? How does the composer trigger these cultural/national memories? Why does the composer trigger these cultural/national memories? What logical/emotional/ethical appeals are made through triggering these cultural/national memories?
* Narrative: (What story is being told in this visual artifact? What does the composer want the audience to think or feel by telling this story? How does the composer tell this story in the visual artifact? Who benefits from this story? Who doesn’t?)
* Point of View—(Whose point of view is the visual artifact presented from? From what level? What is the relation of the composer to content? Why is this point of view used?)
  + Gaze(s):

Familial Gaze: (What common notions of family does the composer want the audience to see? What does the composer want the audience to understand about themselves, their or another community, culture, and/or nation in this visual artifact? For what rhetorical effect? Who benefits from this racial gaze? Who doesn’t?)

National Gaze: (What common notions of nationalism does the composer want the audience to feel? What does the composer want the audience to understand about themselves, their or another nation in this visual artifact? For what rhetorical effect? Who benefits from this racial gaze? Who doesn’t?)

Racial Gaze: (What common notions of race does the composer want to naturalize or challenge? What does the composer want the audience to understand about their or another race in this visual artifact? For what rhetorical effect? Who benefits from this racial gaze? Who doesn’t?)

Gendered Gaze: (What common notions of femininity and/or masculinity does the composer want to naturalize or challenge? What does the composer want the audience to understand about their or another gender in this visual artifact? For what rhetorical effect? Who benefits from this gendered gaze? Who doesn’t?)

Normalizing Gaze: (What representation of the body is normalized/challenged in this visual artifact? What does the composer want the audience to understand about their or another ability in this visual artifact? For what rhetorical effect? Who benefits from this normalized gaze? Who doesn’t?)