Rhetorical Concepts and Tactics

By Krista Ratcliffe

1. Plato’s Dialectic
   a. Ask general question (e.g., Should men marry?)
   b. Turn it into a statement (e.g., Men should marry.)
   c. Divide the statement (e.g., men should marry)
   d. Define each term
   e. Restate the claim, based on definition
   f. Test claim against real-world examples
   g. “Divine” Truth (first principles of syllogisms or unstated assumption in enthymemes)

2. Aristotle’s Rhetorical Triangle
   a. Author
   b. Text
   c. Audience

3. Aristotle’s Enthymeme
   a. Identify unstated assumptions or conclusions in a statement
   b. Evaluate effectiveness of a statement based on what is included and what is omitted
   c. Example of Enthymeme: Class is cancelled.
      Unstated Major Premise: Teacher illness is reason to cancel class
      Unstated Minor Premise: As the teacher, I am ill.
      Stated Conclusion: Class is cancelled

4. Aristotle’s Appeals:
   a. Logos (appeal to logic)
   b. Ethos (appeal to authority)
   c. Pathos (appeal to emotion)

5. Aristotle’s Topoi: 4 general topoi & 28 common topoi (cf. HO)
   a. possible/impossible
   b. past
   c. future
   d. degree (more or less)

6. Ratcliffe’s Words as Tropes
   a. signify differently in different times (words have a history)
   b. signify differently in different places (words have cultural locations)
   c. signify differently within different cultural logics

7. Ratcliffe’s Cultural Logics
   a. A “logic” (or way of reasoning) common to a group of people who come together based on common beliefs (careers, peer groups, etc.)
   b. A belief system (or ideology) that a group of people share
      - Greens/Democrats/Republicans
      - Christianity/Islam/Judaism/Buddhism
      - Capitalists/Socialists/Fascists
   c. IF certain ideas/definitions are assumed (all women = overly emotional)
      THEN certain conclusions follow (women ≠ fit to be president)
      THEREFORE certain actions are justified (don’t fund or vote for women)
d. As the previous example shows, cultural logics are often grounded more in tradition than truth.
e. A word signifies differently in different cultural logics.

“The sentence “Gender matters” signifies differently in a patriarchal cultural logic that in a feminist cultural logic.

8. Burke’s Identification
   a. Identify a point of identification.
   b. In that point of identification, identify who/what (substances) are put into play together.
   c. Analyze how identification is intended to work (substances – author/text).
   d. Analyze how effective identification actually is (substances – audiences).
   e. Identify/Analyze which of your own identifications affect your responses to #4.

9. Harris’s Discourse Communities
   a. Identify discourse communities
   b. Identify dominant discourses in these communities
   c. Identify discourse conventions/literacy practices in the discourse communities:
      What are significant conventions/practices (i.e, tactic) of the discourses?:
      1. cultural logics (ways of thinking together as a community)
      2. dominant tropes (words/lexicon)
      3. topics: what can … and cannot … be talked about
      4. identification moves (common ground that community members share)
      5. genre choice (form informs what can be thought/said/heard/read/written
      6. speakers (who can speak, who cannot—when, where, why, how)
      7. what counts as authority (ethos)
      8. cf. HO on D2L for a list of several other types of discourse conventions
   d. Evaluate the discourse conventions/literacy practices in the communities:
      1. What kinds of thinking, communicating, behaving are possible given these practices?
      2. What kinds of thinking, communicating, behaving are impossible given these practices?
         —i.e, what do they forbid or preclude?
   e. How does a-d provide you information that helps you agree with Anna Fourkiller or argue against her stance? Is there a third option?

10. Royster’s Scenic Analysis
    a. Identify Story/Scene
    b. Identify Rhetorical Issue in Scene
    c. State Personal Reaction
    d. Extrapolate Cultural Lessons
    e. Name & Reflect on Remaining Questions

11. Ratcliffe’s Rhetorical Listening
    a. A stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person/text/culture.
    b. A performance that occurs when listeners pause to consciously
      (1) promote an understanding of self and other … via “standing under” the discourses of self and other
      (2) proceed within an accountability logic, not a guilt/blame logic
      (3) analyze claims plus the cultural logics within which claims function
      (4) locate identifications across commonalities and differences.
    c. Stances:
       (1) Recognition (not denial)
       (2) Critique (not defensiveness)
       (3) Accountability (not guilt/blame)
d. Cultural Logics
   (1) If … a certain definition is assumed
   (2) Then … certain attitudes accompany the definition and are associated with the CL
   (3) Therefore … certain actions (cultural scripts) are associated with the CL

12. Ratcliffe’s Eavesdropping
   a. choosing to stand outside . . . in an uncomfortable spot . . . on the border of knowing and not
      knowing . . . granting others the inside position . . . listening to learn.”
   b. lay what you learn alongside what you believe and draw conclusions about the knowledge under
      consideration and your own thinking processes

13. Booth’s Rhetorical Stance
   a. Definition:
      (1) Balance of writerly voice, subject, and audience (i.e., Aristotle’s triangle)
   b. Definition via Negative: (Avoid corruptions of the rhetorical balance):
      (1) Pedant’s Stance (too much emphasis on subject)
      (2) Entertainer’s Stance (too much emphasis on speaker/writer’s charm)
      (3) Advertiser’s Stance (too much emphasis on what audience wants to hear)

14. Hermagoras, Stasis Theory
   a. Questions of Conjecture Does (x) exist?
   b. Questions of Definition What is (x) named?
   c. Questions of Quality/Value How is (x) evaluated?
   d. Questions of Procedure What should be done about (x)?

15. Bitzer, Rhetorical Situation
   a. Identify and Analyze effects of Exigences
   b. Identify and Analyze effects of Constraints
   c. Identify and Analyze effects of Audiences

16. Anzaldua, Mestiza “Rhetorical Situation”
   a. Identify and use borderland positioning to generate information: geographic site
   b. Identify and use Borderland positioning to generate information: cultural/spiritual/psychological
   c. Use Nepantla to generate information: an evolving process of being “torn between ways”
   d. Use Mestiza consciousness to generate information: a perspective where everyone lives in
      Borderlands

17. Cicero, Style
   a. Identify & Analyze elements and effects of Plain Style
   b. Identify & Analyze elements and effects of Moderate Style
   c. Identify & Analyze elements and effects of Grand Style

18. Figures of Speech (Symbol, Aporia, etc.), Style
   a. Classical: Identify Figures & Analyze effects of the figure on the meaning of the text
   b. Contemporary: Identify Word Choice and talk about how the associations with that word (the
      different discourses and cultural logics that haunt them) generate ideas about the meaning
      of the text

19. Booth/Phelan/Rabinowitz, Chicago Style of Narrative Theory
   a. Identify and Analyze effects of Speakers in/out of Text
(1) Character (agents within the plot)
(2) Narrator (the teller of the story within the narrative)
(3) Implied Author (traces of the author only within the narrative)
(4) Actual Author (actual person who writes the story)

b. Identify and Analyze effects of Audiences in/out of Text
(1) Ideal Narrative Audience (characters who believe other characters)
(2) Narrative Audience (readerly role that text forces readers to believe is true)
(3) Implied or Authorial Audience (readerly role that attempts to find writer’s intent)
(4) Actual Audience (real readers who have their own reactions)

20. Berlin, Poststructuralist Rhetorical Heuristic
a. Find key terms (tropes)
b. Situate these terms within the meaning of the text
c. Foreground the binary oppositions, establishing
   (1) hierarchies
   (2) privileged term (w/in hierarchy)
   (3) unstable, shifting terms (w/in each hierarchy)
   (4) diverse interpretations
d. Situate binary terms within the narrative structural form of text
   (1) find coded stories that establish patterns of behavior
   (2) analyze how terms force readers into positions within stories
3. Situate narrative structures within social structures (e.g., political, cultural, political, familial)