CHAPTER LEARNING OUTCOMES

*After studying this chapter, you will be able to*

1. Define the rhetorical concept of *rhetorical listening*.

2. Explain how rhetorical listening sets the stage for arguments.

3. Employ tactics of rhetorical listening for analyzing and composing arguments: (a) building multiple cultural logics around one trope, (b) eavesdropping; (c) listening metonymically; and (d) listening pedagogically.

4. Explain and employ the style choice in terms of parallel structure.

WHAT IS RHETORICAL LISTENING?

The problem with arguments is that people Arguments often fail because two people

We all have disagreements with our friends, family, and acquaintances as well as with

TV characters, politicians, and even books we read in college. And we also observe
disagreements among others. In most cases, disagreements occur because people with different perspectives see the world differently. When we encounter competing perspectives about a topic, a normal reaction is to immediately defend the side we agree with. But this reaction does not help us better understand the situation. Nor does it typically lead to resolution. More often, it leads to greater conflict. One striking example is current US politics. How, then, do we solve this everyday problem?

Rhetorical listening is a concept of modern rhetoric that encourages listeners to choose a stance of openness when confronted with competing perspectives. This stance invites listeners to pause, to lay competing claims side by side, and then to reflect on these claims and the reasoning that supports these claims. The purpose is to better understand the topic and situation, not just one side.

But how does rhetorical listening work?

Consider the case of Galileo Galilei. In 1633 the Roman Catholic Inquisition summoned him to Rome for questioning. He had come to the Church’s attention when he published his famous book *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*. His book laid out two competing views of our galaxy: (1) the then-accepted idea that the galaxy is earth-centered, the Ptolemaic theory and (2) the then-revolutionary idea that the galaxy is sun-centered, the Copernican theory. Galileo’s writing about a sun-centered galaxy was deemed “vehemently suspect of heresy” by the Inquisition. As a result, his book was banned (a ban not lifted until 1835!), and he was sentenced to house arrest for the rest of his life.

What does Galileo’s situation have to do with rhetorical listening?
Well, it serves as a good practice case to demonstrate how competing claims contain dominant tropes that often take their meanings from competing cultural logics.

- **Claims** are assertions of what we know or believe to be true, and they take their meanings from the cultural logics in which they function. In the Galileo example, the competing claims are: “Our galaxy is earth-centered” vs. “Our galaxy is sun-centered.”

- **Tropes** are keywords that take on different meanings within different cultural logics. In the Galileo example, the dominant tropes are *earth-centered* and *sun-centered*.

- **Cultural logics** are different ways of reasoning common to different groups of people. In the Galileo example, two cultural logics are religion and science. Religious leaders in 1633 reasoned that the earth was the center of the galaxy; thus, they heard the earth-centered claim as logical and the sun-centered claim as heresy. Conversely, scientists in 1633 reasoned that the sun was the center of the galaxy; thus, they heard the sun-centered claim as logical and the earth-centered claim as non-scientific or superstitious.

Rhetorical listening does not demand that listeners accept all perspectives as the truth; rather, it invites listeners to attempt to understand why groups of people embrace their own perspectives as truth. By encouraging such understanding, rhetorical listening helps listeners better analyze disagreements and misunderstandings triggered by competing perspectives and, perhaps, find common ground. Such understanding, Aristotle tells us, is necessary for composing effective arguments.
Although your everyday life may not contain such earth-shattering arguments as Galileo’s, you probably have run into your share of competing claims at home, at work, and in school. Too often, such situations can trap you in the “I’m right, you’re wrong” form of arguments.

WHY DO WE NEED TO STUDY RHETORICAL LISTENING?

Studying rhetorical listening as a concept and tactic of modern rhetoric helps us negotiate “I’m right/you’re wrong” arguments, also known as agonistic debates. Such two-sided arguments assume a winner and a loser as well as a right and a wrong side. They can make people feel resented or resentful, powerless, or powerful. Agonistic debates haunt students’ writing experiences because in school students are often taught that academic argument is a genre that focuses on only two sides of a debate; then they are asked to determine which side of the debate is right and which side is wrong ... and write a paper arguing why.

Although agonistic debates have their place, they also have two downsides: (1) they ignore that there may be more than two sides to a debate, and (2) they often result in gridlock. Gridlock occurs when each side hunkers down, not giving an inch to the other side and, in the worse case scenario, deems the other side evil. Such gridlock can lead individually to violence and collectively to war.

Whether in family dynamics or global politics, agonistic debates often reinforce our already-existing thinking and do not help us understand what others are actually feeling,
thinking, saying, or writing. This lack of understanding is especially evident when our differences are troubled by our histories with, or ignorance of, one another.

In “I’m right; you’re wrong” arguments, sometimes one person is right and the other person is wrong, as in Galileo’s theory of a sun-centered galaxy. But sometimes, both people are right within their respective perspectives, as illustrated by the “Four-No Three” cartoon. In such cases, our own perspectives can make us myopic, unable to see that two competing claims might be true. For example, Newtonian physics tells us that our physical reality consists of solid matter that is subject to time and space as well as gravity (like the falling apple that supposedly fell on Isaac Newton’s head and inspired his theory of gravity), but quantum physics tells us that particle reality consists not of matter but mostly of space within space-time relativity. So which rules of reality are true? Both.

Whether we are right or wrong or whether we are myopic, it is a good idea to understand how competing claims and cultural logics work because it helps us generate more information with which to communicate with other people. But remember: recognizing multiple perspectives does not mean that truth does not exist. It simply means that truth may be larger than any one person can know and that competing cultural logics may lead to different truths and different interpretations of claims.

With this idea in mind, whenever we encounter “I’m right; you’re wrong” arguments and are tempted to argue that something is absolutely right or absolutely wrong, we might want to pause, listen, and reflect on the claims and on the different cultural logics being used.
Practicing rhetorical listening is not always easy, but it will provide us a better chance of understanding and, perhaps, even negotiating arguments.

**CRITICAL THINKING/WRITING ACTIVITY:** Identify competing claims, tropes, and cultural logics in your own experiences

- **Practice Activity:** Think of a situation where you were directly affected by competing perspectives, perhaps a situation in which you felt that your idea or belief was dismissed because someone in a position of power (a parent, a boss, a powerful peer) did not agree with you.
  1. Can you remember what you thought or felt? Did you want to argue back to prove you were right?
  2. Can you identify the competing claims, tropes, and cultural logics (you can name them yourself!) associated with that situation?
  3. How might that situation have gone differently if rhetorical listening had been practiced?

- **Process Activity:** Given where you are in your drafting process, how does practice activity above help you take the next step to (1) identify competing claims about your topic and (2) connect your personal experience to your topic?

**WHY ARE CULTURAL LOGICS IMPORTANT TO RHETORICAL LISTENING?**

The religious leaders and scientists in the Galileo example show how individual people’s ideas are tied to group reasoning, or cultural logics. Of course, cultural logics change over time.
and place (for example, religious leaders no longer believe the earth is the center of the galaxy).

To understand how cultural logics function, though, you need to learn the **three elements of a cultural logic**:

1. **trope**, a term that names a logic (for example, the tropes *science* or *religion*),
2. **associated beliefs**, a set of attitudes associated with a trope (for example, attitudes associated with the tropes *science* or *religion* at any given time/place), and
3. **cultural scripts**, a set of actions associated with a trope and its associated beliefs (for example, actions that identify a person—to him/herself and to others—as a scientist or as a religious leader).

How exactly do these three elements of a cultural logic—trope, belief, and cultural script—work together? Consider the following claim: Scientists (a trope) in 1633 believe that the sun is the center of the galaxy (a belief) and, thus, performed experiments to prove this hypothesis (a cultural script). In this example, the three elements of a cultural logic may coalesce in an if-then-therefore structure where *if* signifies an assumed definition of a trope, *then* signifies a resulting attitude or belief, and *therefore* signifies resulting actions.

Identifying and analyzing not just claims but cultural logics help us better understand, and respond to, any argument. One interesting thing about cultural logics, though, is that they often haunt claims as unstated assumptions.

**WHY ARE UNSTATED ASSUMPTIONS IMPORTANT TO RHETORICAL LISTENING?**
When disagreements arise, people often argue back and forth only at the levels of claims: “I’m right; you’re wrong.” “No, I’m right, and you’re wrong.” And so it goes, with the discussion trapped in a vicious cycle of competing claims. This cycle can be interrupted by identifying and analyzing the cultural logics haunting these claims as unstated assumptions.

Unstated assumptions have been part of rhetorical education since at least the time of Aristotle. In his *Rhetoric* he offers students a concept for naming unstated assumptions: that concept is the enthymeme.

_Aristotle defines the _enthymeme_ as a _rhetorical syllogism_.

In philosophy, a _syllogism_ is method of deductive reasoning that includes a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion. Here’s a famous one:

- **Major Premise:** All men are mortal.
- **Minor Premise:** Socrates is a man.
- **Conclusion:** Socrates is mortal.

Though technically syllogisms can take different forms, the _if-then-therefore_ structure that we identified in the previous section as the form of a cultural logic is a syllogism.

In rhetoric, a rhetorical syllogism or _enthymeme_ assumes this same syllogistic structure but leaves premises or conclusions intentionally _unstated_. The claim “Socrates is mortal” is an enthymeme because it leaves reasons (its major and minor premises) unstated for the audience to fill in. The claim, Socrates is mortal because he’s a man,” is also an enthymeme because, while it states a claim and a reason, it leaves the major premise unstated for the audience to fill in.
Aristotle argues that the enthymeme can be the most effective rhetorical tactic that a speaker or writer can employ to persuade his or her audience, but only if it is used well. Why is an enthymeme effective? It provides a shorthand for communication. Audiences can simply fill in their own ideas for the unstated assumptions and, thus, participate in a speaker/writer’s argument. When President Obama ran for President and used the slogan, “We need change,” that slogan was an enthymeme because voters could fill in their own definitions of change. The same thing happened when President Trump ran for office and used the slogan, “Make America Great Again”; different voters could fill in their own definitions of great. In the Obama example, change was often haunted by the cultural logics of moderate and liberal Democrats; in the Trump example, great was often haunted by the cultural logics of moderate and conservative Republicans.

Rhetorical listening asks listeners to attend to, (1) unstated reasons and (2) unstated cultural logics. Listening is fairly easy when the topic is not contentious, as in the Galileo example today; after all, everyone agrees that we live in a sun-centered galaxy. Listening is harder when the topic is contentious, as in the following cartoon about the Black Lives Matter debate.

Practice Activity: Listen to the cartoon by positioning yourself in a stance of openness and then answering the following questions:

1. Identify the main claim of each speaker in the cartoon

2. Brainstorm a series of unstated “because” reasons that could support each main claim. (remember: all claims are enthymemes with unstated because assumptions).

3. See if you can build a cultural logic that results with each claim being the conclusion of a syllogism (but do not get too hung up on perfectly fitting the if-then-therefore form!)

Process Activity: As part of your drafting process, start with an enthymeme from the perspective that someone you disagree with would use. Write a 250-word draft of their argument. Then free write a 250-word reflection on how this argument helps you understand your audience and anticipate potential counterclaims for your assignment.
As you have learned, rhetorical listening emphasizes analyzing stated claims as well as unstated reasons and cultural logics. It asks listeners to engage other people and texts with whom they disagree by taking the time to ask “Does the argument that I don’t agree with appear logical to a person functioning within a different cultural logic?” This question opens the possibility of understanding one another, even if listeners do not initially, or even ultimately, agree. With understanding comes the possibility for better communication.

**WHAT ARE TACTICS FOR RHETORICAL LISTENING?**

Rhetorical listening is important for writing teachers and students because, as a modern rhetorical concept, it suggests tactics for analyzing and composing. It suggests a set of tactics for hearing competing ideas and the cultural logics within which these ideas function. Such listening helps us understand how and why people with whom we disagree may feel, think, and act as they do. Such understanding offers us multiple options for exerting our own personal agencies: we may anticipate the counter-arguments and actions of people whose logics are different than ours; we may persuade them to think and act differently; or we may even decide to think and act differently ourselves.

But what exactly are the tactics of rhetorical listening?

**Tactic #1: Use a trope to build multiple cultural logics and analyze how a claim about the trope may accrue different meanings within different cultural logics.**

1. Identify an argument and its dominant trope
2. Build multiple cultural logics around this trope, using an if-then-therefore structure
3. Analyze each cultural logic in terms these questions:

a. What does a cultural logic offer its proponents?

b. What problems does a cultural logic create for people who do not embrace it?

c. What meanings does a single claim accumulate within different cultural logics?

Race is hard to talk about in the U.S.—not just because our history has a fraught relationship with race (though it does) and not just because U.S. citizens lack a way to talk about race (though we do), but because the different definitions of race and the different cultural logics of race confuse the issue. When people function from within different cultural logics, they may talk past one another, as illustrated in the “Race Matters” cartoon where the white man wants to be blind to race (one cultural logic) and the black man cannot afford to be (a different cultural logic).

To understand how the tactic of building and analyzing cultural logics may be used, consider the following examples. They focus on the trope race, the claim “Race matters,” and the multiple U.S. cultural logics of race (white supremacy, colorblindness, multiculturalism, and critical race studies).

**Cultural Logic of White Supremacy**

White Supremacy is associated with people who consider themselves white (a trope), who believe race matters because it determines innate intelligence, character, and human value (a claim), and who place white people at the top of a racial hierarchy,
a way of reasoning that informs their personal actions and cultural structures, such as law, education, etc. (cultural logic). Michael Eric Dyson, a professor at Georgetown University, has argued that white supremacy is especially insidious as a cultural structure because “it doesn’t demand the individual participation of the singular bigot. It is a machine operating in perpetuity, because it doesn’t demand that somebody be in place driving.”

To analyze the cultural logic of white supremacy in order to understand how it functions, we can build it by using the elements of a cultural logic (trope, belief, and cultural script) and their structure (an if-then-therefore logic).

- **IF (assumed definition of trope):** Race is defined as a biological, God-given essence that defines a person’s body, mind, and character and results in a racial hierarchy with “whites” on top.
- **THEN (associated beliefs):** Racial differences, it is believed, should be acknowledged and maintained by whatever means necessary – legally, economically, socially, religiously, scientifically, violently, etc.
- **THEREFORE (cultural script):** This cultural script not only justifies but insists upon oppressive actions by individual people as well as by institutional structures (legal, economic, social, scientific, moral, religious, etc.). Such scripts have socialized people in the U.S. to perform these actions: e.g., slavery, lynching, land grabs, segregation,
1. **What does the cultural logic of white supremacy offer those who embrace it?**

Believers are assured a simple system for classifying and valuing people as well as the assurance of superiority. What else?

2. **What problems does this cultural logic cause for people who do not embrace it?**

   For non-believers, this cultural logic poses a number of problems: (a) it assumes a biological definition of race that scientists have now rejected (yes, DNA variation occurs among groups of people who live with one another and have children together over long periods of time, but biological variation is not synonymous with race); (b) white supremacy creates a social structure with built-in barriers to the advancement of non-whites; (c) it undermines the idea of individual freedom on which the U.S. was based. What else?

3. **How does this cultural logic affect a speaker’s saying or a hearer’s hearing the claim: “Race matters.”** Someone functioning within this cultural logic would hear this claim as logical and think, “Yes, race matters in order to keep whites in positions of power as nature and God intended.”

   To understand the relationship of this cultural logic to other cultural logics of race, let’s build others.
Cultural Logic of Colorblindness

This cultural logic is organized around a founding U.S. principle that all people are created equal and should be treated equally. People persuaded by colorblindness assert that (1) race does not determine intelligence, character, or human value, and (2) people should function in the world by making themselves as blind to racial differences. Patricia J. Williams has argued that colorblindness is a political ideal that positions race as a non-relevant category for evaluating one’s actions or motivations, as in the wolf’s “All Lives Matter” t-shirt. The problem with this political idealism is that it ignores the reality of how the race affects everyone’s discursive, personal, cultural, and material agencies in our everyday lives.

The cultural logic of colorblindness may be built as follows:

- **IF** *(assumed definition of trope):* Race is defined as a category that is *not* viable either biologically or culturally in terms of affecting a person’s body, mind, and character.

- **THEN** *(associated beliefs):* Race, it is believed, is an unimportant and even detrimental category if employed in our daily lives and, thus, should *not* be acknowledged individually or structurally (legally, economically, socially, morally,
religiously, etc.); rather, it is believed, people should be blind to race by not seeing color.

- **THEREFORE (cultural script):** This cultural script justifies and indeed insists upon treating all people the “same.” Such scripts have socialized people in the U.S. to perform a wide array of actions: *e.g.*, challenging affirmative action and other laws about protected groups in terms of college admissions, hiring, and promotions; filming Hollywood westerns to represent unknowingly or willfully only white points of view; stocking products in stores for only one type of hair.

1. **What does the cultural logic of colorblindness offer those who embrace it?**

   Believers are assured a simple system for classifying and valuing people, a sense that they are performing the equality upon which our country is founded, and a pass from having to deal with race. What else?

2. **What problems does this cultural logic cause for people who do not embrace it?**

   For non-believers, this cultural logic is heard as, at best, an ideal that (by definition) does not reflect the reality of our everyday lives and, at worst, a passive consent for racism. What else?

3. **How does this cultural logic affect a speaker’s saying or a hearer’s hearing the claim: “Race matters.”**

   Someone functioning within this cultural logic would hear this claim as illogical and think, “No, it doesn’t.” Within this cultural logic, this claim is not only illogical but unutterable, and if it cannot be uttered, it cannot be addressed.
Cultural Logic of Multiculturalism

This cultural logic is associated with people who believe that ethnicity (defined as traditions of ancestry and culture) is a more important category than race for studying history, literature, etc. College students in their early twenties are the first generation to experience K-12 curricula grounded in multiculturalism: if you belong to that group, you have learned studied multiple cultures in order to appreciate their traditions and rituals.

The cultural logic of multiculturalism may be built as follows:

- **IF** (*definition of trope*): *Race* is defined as an imaginary (false) category that, when popularly used, is based in false science, false, religion, and false history.

- **AND IF** (*corollary tropes and definitions of trope*): *Ethnicity* is defined as an actual (viable) category that signifies ancestry and multiple cultural heritages via *multiculturalism*, the study of multiple ethnic groups.

- **THEN** (*associated beliefs*): *Ethnicity* and *Multiculturalism* as should be the operative tropes in our daily thinking and actions because it is believed that (a) these two terms are more important than *race* to our understanding of life, literature, language, music, etc., (b) multicultural education fosters appreciation/tolerance of multiple cultures,
and (c) ethnicity functions as only one marker of many constituting a person’s identity.

• **THEREFORE** (*cultural scripts*): This cultural script justifies and insists upon valuing all ethnicities for their differences as well as their commonalities. Such scripts have socialized people to perform the following actions: naming people and cultural artifacts/institutions by their ethnicities, not by their race (*e.g.*, saying African American literature, not Black literature); celebrating differences among ethnicities in education, the workplace, social situations, etc. (*e.g.*, gathering knowledge of, if not celebrating, Hanukkah, Christmas, and Kwanza rituals in December); and refusing to use stereotypes not only because they are inaccurate representations in that they invoke only one marker of a person’s complex identity but also because they are cruel in that they usually imply more about the user’s fearful imaginings than about the stereotyped people’s reality (*e.g.*, not calling people derogatory racial epithets).

1. **What does the cultural logic of multiculturalism offer those who embrace it?**

Believers are offered a way to lay different cultures side by side and acknowledge differences as an important element of a community. What else?

2. **What problems does this cultural logic cause for people who do not embrace it?**

The emphasis on ethnicity too often backgrounds considerations of race and, like colorblindness, risks rendering its proponents blind to the realities of race and its inequities. What else?
3. How does this cultural logic affect a speaker’s saying or a hearer’s hearing the claim, “Race matters”: Although someone functioning with this cultural logic might utter the sentence, “Race matters,” they most likely would follow up by quickly saying, “But ethnicity matters more.”

**Cultural Logic of Critical Race Studies**

This cultural logic is associated with the idea that race is a socially-constructed category created in the 17th-century to classify people according to a slave economy. Before that time, race as we know it was not related to skin color but, instead, functioned as a synonym for national/ethnic heritage such as the Irish race or the Gallic race.

This cultural logic denies that race is a God-given or scientifically-valid category. But it does claim that everyone in U.S. culture can be identified with race, which carries both positive consequences (e.g. celebrating cultural traditions) and negative consequences (e.g. discrimination and violence). Because race affects everyone, proponents of critical race studies argue that we must evaluate how it impacts everything from government policy to *New Yorker* cartoons (see the cartoon chart).

The cultural logic of critical race studies may be built as follows:
• **IF** *(definition of trope):* Race is defined as an imaginary (false) socially-constructed category that, when popularly used, is based in false science, false religion, and false history.

• **BUT IF** *(corollary definition of trope):* Race is also defined as a trope with existing cultural scripts that have real consequences, both positive and negative, in people’s daily lives.

• **THEN** *(associated beliefs):* Race, it is believed, is not a biological determinant of mind or character but, rather, is an embodied trope that informs people’s daily lives and cultures.

• **THEREFORE** *(cultural scripts):* This cultural script justifies and indeed insists upon both rejecting race as a biological determinant of mind and character and studying race for anti-racist purposes. Such scripts socialize people to perform these actions: e.g., identifying functions and effects of race in law, the workplace, literature, architecture, sociology, etc.; interrupting negative functions and effects; and researching the unstated in history, literature, rhetoric, etc., to remedy, as much as possible, centuries of misperceptions, oppressions, and violence.

1. *What does the cultural logic of critical race studies offer those who embrace it?* Believers are offered a way to lay all the “race cards” on the table and discuss them, with the intent of addressing their associated dangers and consequences. What else?
2. What problems does this cultural logic cause for people who do not embrace it? By engaging racial categories, this cultural logic risks making these categories appear natural and perpetuating the status quo. What else?

3. How does this cultural logic affect a speaker’s saying or a hearer’s hearing the claim: “Race matters.” Someone within this cultural logic would most certainly claim, “Yes, race matters.” But her meaning would imply a vastly different meaning from the same claim made by someone functioning within a white supremacy cultural logic.

CRITICAL THINKING/WRITING ACTIVITY: Use cultural logics as lenses for analysis

• Practice Activity: Select an event (a political speech, a protest, a movie, a class discussion of a reading, etc.) where race has become an issue. Discuss how that event might be viewed through lens of each cultural logic of race discussed above.

• Process Activity: Given your topic, identify the common trope that competing perspectives use. Using the enthymeme (a main claim or sentence using that trope) for competing perspectives, build a couple cultural logics (don’t get too hung on form). Then analyze them to find places where ethical, well-intentioned people disagree, and agree, about your topic. To what extent does building these competing cultural logics about your topic help you revise your original stance?

Tactic #2: Eavesdropping on an Argument

1. Position yourself as an outsider to an argument:
a. In an uncomfortable situation . . .

b. On the border of knowing and not knowing . . .

c. By granting others the insider position in terms of experience and/or knowledge . . .

d. So that you can listen to learn.

2. List what you now know that you did not know before eavesdropping.

3. Analyze these lists.

4. Reflect on how and why eavesdropping has changed your own reasoning, or not.

The word *eavesdropping* comes from the activity of standing outside a house under the eaves from which rainwater drops. Usually, eavesdropping has a negative connotation because it often violates someone’s privacy. But as a tactic of rhetorical listening, it can become an ethical activity. If you think about eavesdropping as a means for (a) listening to the discourses of others, (b) for hearing over the edges of our own knowing, (c) for thinking what is commonly unthinkable within our own cultural logics, then eavesdropping is not invading privacy but, rather, overhearing already-public discourses from an outsider’s position, listening to learn.

To practice eavesdropping, let’s return to the “All Lives Matter”/“Black Lives Matter” cartoon. Choose the side that you disagree with the most and position yourself as an outsider to that side, listening to learn. If you disagree with the “All Lives Matter” claim, you might try hearing the unstated reasons haunting this claim:

*All lives matter*

*because* all people are created equal under God;
because all people should be treated equally under the law;

because any consideration of race is inherently racist;

because any consideration of race hinders progress.

Likewise, if you disagree with the “Black Lives Matter” claim, you might try hearing the unstated reasons:

Black lives matter

because “all lives” erases the specific problems black people are facing;

because “all lives” sometimes codes as only “white lives”;

because there’s a difference between the ideal of how black people should

be treated (All Lives Matter) and the reality of how they are actually being treated (Black Lives Matter);

because colorblindness blinds people to reality.

Eavesdropping offers a starting point for thinking critically. For example, you might ask of the first list: Is any consideration of race really racist? Let’s test that claim with a specific example: Is saying that blues music grew out of the black experience racist? If so, why? If not, why not? And if it’s not, then what are the conditions that must exist for a consideration of race to be racist? Or we might ask of the second list: Does “all lives” really code as “white lives”? If so, how? If not, why not? Such critical thinking helps finetune your thinking and generate more ideas that may inform your writing, both in class assignments and in your everyday lives.
CRITICAL THINKING/WRITING ACTIVITY: Reflect on how eavesdropping enhances your learning

• Practice Activity: Select a cultural argument that you disagree with. To analyze this argument, position yourself as an eavesdropper, someone who is standing on the outside, granting someone else the inside position, listening to learn. How do you feel? And what do you learn?

• Process Activity: Think of a conversation about your topic that you’ve had with someone (another person or yourself) that you might be embarrassed by if someone listened in. How does your reflection help you think about the content, arrangement, or style of your argument? What would you have revised in that conversation, if you were given another chance? OR ... If you wouldn’t feel embarrassed about any conversation you have had about your topic, why do you think that is the case? What content, arrangement or style choices did you use that you feel good about having implemented?

Tactic #3: Listening Metonymically

1. Identify a person or text that intrigues you.

2. Identify the main identity category associated with that person or text (e.g., being an actor or a romance novel).

3. Analyze how seeing that person or text in terms of only one identity category enhances and limits your understanding of that person or text.
4. Consider what other identity categories are also associated with the person or text, and how do the intersections of these identity categories complicate your understanding of the person or text.

A metonym is a rhetorical trope that names a part standing in for the whole. For example, when a ship captain says, “All hands on deck,” she is calling for sailors’ entire bodies to go on deck, not simply their hands. In this case, *hand* is an appropriate metonym for the *whole person* of a sailor because the hand represents that a lot of sailors’ work on deck is done with their hands. Likewise, if we assume that any one person can never know absolutely everything about any topic, then listening metonymically means recognizing that our own arguments about a topic are, like hands, only part of a larger whole. Such recognition means we must lay our argument (or story) alongside the arguments (or stories) of others if we want to create an expansive view of a topic or of the world.

Listening metonymically proceeds according to three assumptions.

*First, a person or text is always a member of a larger cultural group of people.* For example, a mother is a *part* of a group of people called mothers, and a detective novel is a “part” of the genre called detective fiction.

*Second, the person or text is more than just one group association.* Obviously, there is more to a person’s or text’s identity than being stereotyped with only one identity category because a mother is also a woman, a friend, a daughter, a neighbor, etc., and a detective novel is also a book, a genre, a commodity to be sold, etc.
Third, a person or text is not necessarily representative of a entire group.

Although one particular mother (say one who cannot cook but is a great hiker and loves her children) is a member of the cultural group called mothers, the cultural group mothers contains many more options for mothers than the three found in this one example. Likewise, author Dana Stabenow’s detective Kate Shugak is a woman, an Aleut, and a citizen of Alaska; however, detectives in other fiction certainly extend beyond these three categories.

If we circle back and listen to the “All Lives Matter” vs. “Black Lives Matter” cartoon again, listening metonymically enables you to avoid stereotyping. You may see each character as more than just a white man and a black man or just spokesmen two competing causes. You may also recognize them as men, of a certain age, class, and nationality, with common values (such as a belief in fairness and justice) and with individual histories. You might also imagine them as fathers, brothers, husbands, friends, etc. And you might listen to what might be haunting their claims. Suddenly the two men do not appear simply as one-dimensional caricatures speaking for one cause. They just might be complicated humans who need a nudge in how to talk to one another.

CRITICAL THINKING/WRITING ACTIVITY: Reflect on how listening metonymically is linked to genre

• Practice Activity: Select a public figure who generates lots of press. What is the dominant identity category associated with that person, given the genre of “public figure” in the US?
Now, list other identity categories that inform his/her life. How does your understanding of that person change when you imagine that he/she embodies more than just one identity category?

• Process Activity: Given the genre of your writing assignment, what “parts” of your topic cannot be used or have difficulty finding a place in the larger “whole” of the conversation? What other genres, inside or outside the university, would allow you to include these “parts” in the conversation and thus enrich the “whole” conversation? What argument could you make to your writing teacher to allow you to revise the genre of your writing assignment?

Tactic #4: Listening Pedagogically

1. Identify instances of psychological resistance that you’ve noticed in other people, texts, or yourself in a classroom situation, or in your everyday lives.

2. Analyze whether this resistance hinders or helps the people involved to expand their learning, focusing specifically on what can or cannot be said or heard within that space of resistance.

3. Identify instances of political resistance that you’ve noticed in other people, texts, or yourself in a classroom situation, or in your everyday lives.

4. Analyze whether this resistance hinders or helps the people involved to expand their learning, focusing specifically on what can or cannot be said or heard within that space of resistance.
5. Attempt to find places of understanding where dialogue may begin within any of the resistances you’ve named.

Listening pedagogically involves considering how someone’s ability to learn (both inside and outside the classroom) is hindered and/or helped by resistance. Resistance is a funny word because it can generate completely opposite meanings. On the one hand, in psychology, resistance refers to dysfunctional behaviors that get in the way of our seeing reality in a healthy way (e.g., our denying that we have a problem, or our being defensive when someone tries to help us). On the other hand, in politics, resistance often refers to productive behaviors that help usher in social change (e.g., American resistance to England via the Declaration of Independence in 1776, French resistance to Nazis via the underground during WWII, and Martin Luther King’s resistance to racial oppression via non-violent protests during the mid-20th-century Civil Rights Movement).

Listening pedagogically entails listening for psychological resistance and determining when political resistance is needed. That is, listening pedagogically entails our ability to recognize dysfunctional resistance (in others and in ourselves), to analyze such resistance (what are its component parts and how do they function), and to productively resist such resistance when necessary in the classroom (for teachers & students) and in life (for all of us).

Below are a few types of psychological resistance that sometimes hinder our ability to listen and learn:

- Denial: refusing to acknowledge the existence of an idea/action
• **Defensiveness**: shifting conversation from idea/action to one’s guilt/blame or lack thereof
• **Dismissal**: acknowledging but not engaging an idea/action
• **Indifferent Compliance**: going through motions of engaging but not genuinely engaging
• **Overidentification**: being so involved in an idea/action that only personal reactions, not cultural or systemic analyses, are possible
• **Nonproductive Guilt**: blaming oneself for current privileges afforded one by history and, thus, adopting a patronizingly helpful attitude for those one imagines to be less privileged
• **Speaking/writing block**: lacking a conceptual framework or lexicon for discussing an idea/action

In the “White Lives Matter”/“Black Lives Matter” cartoon, we see the white man performing denial and defensiveness, denying the “Black Lives Matter” claim and sounding defensive via his strident tone; these types of resistance do not invite dialogue with those who disagree. Likewise, we see the black man performing dismissal of the “White Lives Matter” claim, which again does not invite dialogue. The absence of genuine dialogue prevents the two men from trying to learn from one another. Their initial reactions about one another, based on history, might be accurate, but the agonistic mode of their exchange does not afford them an opportunity for testing that initial reaction or building a way of reasoning together that moves them beyond their initial reactions..
To counter the resistance performed in the cartoon (defensiveness/denial and dismissal), we can listen pedagogically to the cartoon, attempting to resist the characters’ resistances and find a way to engage in genuine dialogue. For example, although the men are functioning from different cultural logics (colorblindness and critical race studies), they both imply an interest in fairness and justice. Perhaps that is a place to begin a conversation?

CRITICAL THINKING/Writing Activity: Listening pedagogically to/for resistance

- Practice Activity: To practice listening pedagogically, examine the following cartoons that lampoon millennials and answer the questions below:

  1. What kinds of resistance to millennials do you see being performed in these cartoon?
  2. What kind of resistance, if any, do you find yourself performing when reading these cartoons?
  3. Can you resist the cultural logic represented by these cartoon by developing another cultural logic for understanding millennials. If so, do so. If not, talk about why you cannot.
• **Process Activity:** Reflect, in writing, about the kinds of resistances that are associated with competing perspectives related to your topic (or are visible in your sources, if you’re using sources)? Are this types of resistance productive or not? Reflect on how you could you convert your topic in an academic genre to a public-facing genre that functions as a form of resistance?

---

**WHAT STYLE HINTS ARE RELATED TO RHETORICAL LISTENING?**

If style is defined as sentence-level choices that writers make and evaluated in terms of effectiveness, then rhetorical listening asks us to analyze how we lay competing ideas side by side in sentences. This idea suggests style hints about parallel structure, which is represented in this cartoon.

![Cartoon showing a conversation between two people with style hints](image)

**Style Hint #1: Put parallel ideas in parallel grammatical form.**

Parallelism has three important benefits:

1. **Parallelism makes sentences more concise (each word counts):**
   
   a. *Non-Parallel:* I like to ride bikes. I like to find hiking trails as well as go skiing with friends.
   
   b. *Parallel:* I like to ride bikes, hike, and ski with friends.

2. **Parallelism makes sentence meanings clearer:**
a. *Non-Parallel:* The government that the people have created so that they may govern themselves shall not perish from the earth.

b. *Parallel:* “… the government of the people, for the people, by the people, shall not perish from the earth.” — Abraham Lincoln

(3) *Parallelism creates sentence cadences, rhythms, that make sentences memorable and more easily quotable.*

a. *Parallel Sentence Shape:* “Mankind must put an end to war, or war will put an end to mankind.” — John F. Kennedy

b. *Parallel Dependent and Independent Clauses:* “If you do not tell the truth about yourself, you cannot tell the truth about other people.” — Virginia Woolf

c. *Parallel modifiers:* “There is a way that nature speaks, that land speaks. Most of the time we are simply not patient enough, quiet enough, to pay attention to the story.” — Linda Hogan

Frankly, whether you can name the type of parallelism is less important than if you can use the concept of parallelism as a tactic in your writing to make your sentences clear, concise, and memorable.

*Style Hint #2: Make the form and the content of a sentence parallel, each reinforcing the other.*
Literary writers use this style hint all the time, but it is useful for all writers because it also makes sentences clear, concise, and memorable. For example, consider these two sentences:

(1) Jack stopped.

(2) Jack, while contemplating the right action for all people involved, walked slower and slower and then eventually stopped.

Both sentences are grammatically correct; they both make the point that Jack stopped; but their shapes are very different. The first is short and quick; if you are trying to communicate that Jack stopped quickly, then this form is the better choice. The second is longer and meanders a bit; if you are trying to communicate that Jack took a while to stop, then this second sentence is the better choice because the form reinforces the content.

And to return to the example above: “I like to ride bikes, hike, and ski.” The form indicates that all three activities are equally well-liked. If skiing is preferred, then to make the form and content reinforce one another, the sentence might be revised: “Although I like to ride bikes and to hike, I really love to ski.”

Remember:

- Ideas that are parallel should be put in parallel grammatical positions.
- The shape or form of a sentence should parallel its content.

Style Exercise: Select a page from your draft and circle 3-4 sentences that you think need work. Then proceed sentence by sentence according to the following steps:
1. Find parallel ideas in each sentence.

2. Underline them.

3. Ask yourself: are these ideas in parallel form?

4. If not, revise your sentence accordingly.

SUMMATIVE CRITICAL THINKING/WRITING ACTIVITY: Practice what you’ve learned in this chapter

• Practice Activity: Read the student essay below and use the tactics of rhetorical listening that you’ve learned in this chapter to offer three suggestions for revision. Share your suggestions with another student in the class and discuss where your suggestions align and where they diverge.

[Insert: Whiteness in Mexican-American Families Student Essay ... (from spring 2018 class ... need to get permission)]

• Process Activity: Listen to yourself by reading your own essay and using the tactics of rhetorical listening that you’ve learned in this chapter to offer yourself three suggestions for revision. Reflect on the value of your suggestions.