Writing to Analyze: Rhetorical + Visual Analysis Assignment

The goal of a rhetorical and visual analysis is not to analyze what a writer is arguing about concerning an issue, but to analyze how the writer and creator of the visual is presenting the argument. You’ll do this by analyzing the use of rhetorical strategies. Using a visual related to the issue of humanitarian issues, as Greitens discusses, you will provide an objective analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in the photographer’s/advocate’s/artist’s use of ethos, logos, and pathos within his or her textual and visual argument(s). We have been discussing argument, the rhetorical situation, and how authors can persuade using three rhetorical appeals (ethical, logical, and emotional). You will combine what you’ve learned in a rhetorical analysis of an image to evaluate its purpose.

Rhetoric - What is it? In this essay, you will find a photograph, printed advertisement, image, cartoon, photograph, or piece of art (or photograph of the piece of art) to class that deals with the issues we have been discussing from The Heart and the Fist. Consider examining National Geographic Magazine for photographs, humanitarian group websites for advertising images, or art exhibits. How does your image represent humanitarianism? How is the work effective in sharing this message? Type a 3 page minimum double-spaced response and bring it along with your document or a photo or copy of the document to class when the assignment is due.

You could evaluate also why you chose this document, who the audience is, what rhetorical appeals it utilizes, and if the document is successful. Why did you choose this document? Who is the intended audience? How does the document use rhetorical appeals (ethos, logos, pathos)? Where was this document printed and what kind of audience might read that publication? Ultimately, do you think your chosen document is successful? Why or why not?

Some notes: Choose an image that is appealing to you and that you believe will allow for a successful rhetorical analysis. Some images may not be detailed enough to analyze or may be difficult to understand in terms of rhetoric. Please check with me if you’re not sure that your image is appropriate for this assignment.

Format: Your essay must be typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, with one-inch margins and your MLA header in the top left-hand corner and a header with your last name and page number on the upper right hand side of each page. Your essay must be a minimum of 3 pages (no maximum). An essay of less than 3 pages will receive a deduction. Include a title that reflects the main point or claim of your essay. Don’t forget to cite your image in your works cited page.

Rhetorically Analyzing your image:

A successful rhetorical analysis will answer the following questions and address the following concerns (not necessarily in this order):

- What are the claims/arguments of the text? What is the purpose of this text? (For an advertisement, this should go beyond simply stating “the purpose is to sell the item.” What is the deeper meaning?)
- Who is the intended audience for this text? Why do you believe this to be the intended audience? Where do you fit in as an audience for this text?
• What rhetorical appeals does the text use to persuade the audience? (Focus particularly on ethos, logos, and pathos, as applicable.) How effectively does the advertisement employ these appeals?
• How does the text fit into a particular culture or time? How does the text reflect cultural beliefs or ways of thinking in our society?

Your essay should make an argumentative claim about the piece you analyze and use the above questions to illuminate and support that claim. You should provide ample evidence from the image itself—citing moments in the image, discussing specifics from it, etc.

The purpose of this assignment is to aid you in your visual literacy and also to ask you to engage with a document and to evaluate its rhetorical strategies. This assignment should also help you develop your rhetorical argumentation skills that will be required for use in your final paper.