

RWS 100, Fall 2019, Writing Project # 2: Analyzing Strategies and Sources

Introduction:

Our work with Clive Thompson's "Public Thinking" has indicated that digital technologies like social media and search engines impact human cognition in a variety of ways, most of them what I would consider to be positive. Nonetheless, toward the end of Thompson's chapter, he asserts that the omnipresence of digital technologies like Facebook and Google in people's everyday lives could prove detrimental when interlocutors strive to communicate through digital platforms. Indeed, Thompson recognizes the practice of *tummeling*--according to Thompson, a *tumbler* is "the person at the party responsible for keeping the crowd engaged and getting them dancing at a wedding" (79)--as an approach to ensure public conversations do not fall victim to trolling.

Some may not be surprised by Thompson's concern as anecdotal evidence exists to support his claim. For instance, consider this recent exchange between the Maine Department of Transportation and someone who appears to reside in Maine:

With the example to the right, one may begin to understand how attempts to communicate important information like new laws that will impact an entire state's population or one's perspective about social and political issues may not promote democratic behavior from all participants.

While Thompson is primarily concerned with digital technologies' influence upon how people think, other authors have explored whether companies like Facebook, Google, and Amazon and the applications they have created may prove harmful to American society and democracy. It is in this direction to which we now turn our attention.



Prompt:

For this assignment, you are expected to read four texts about social media's impact on thought and democracy.

1. Zeynep Tufekci's "YouTube, the Great Radicalizer,"
2. Roger McNamee's, "I Invested Early in Google and Facebook. Now They Terrify Me,"
3. David Golumbia's "Social Media Has Hijacked Our Brains and Threatens Global Democracy,"
4. Chris Hughes' "It's Time to Break Up Facebook."

This assignment consists of two related but separate projects.

Part One is a group assignment in which groups of 3 – 4 class members will be **assigned two of the four arguments above** and are expected to produce a multimodal analysis in which they accomplish the **following two central tasks**:

1. Identify rhetorical strategies used to support an argument(s) and analyze how these strategies contribute to the author's appeals (ethos, pathos, logos).
2. Evaluate the extent to which the appeal(s) effectively persuade the intended audience and analyze assumptions the author makes about that audience (can be comparative).

These presentations should integrate written and visual modes of communication and are expected to be delivered during class. For instance, creating a PowerPoint or Google Slide presentation should provide ample opportunity to integrate written and visual modes of communication. However, slide-based presentations are not the only genre of text groups may create.

Presentations are expected to run 8 – 10 minutes, and groups should be prepared to respond to questions from class members.

Part Two is an individual essay that requires students to select one of the four texts listed above and examine the rhetor's use of outside sources. Students are expected to locate print or digital versions of sources used by the author and then examine the original source material, analyzing how the author makes use of it. Specific attention should be dedicated to identifying what the author included and excluded from these outside sources, and why.

Submissions for Part Two are expected to be 3 – 4 MLA pages in length with additional page(s) for Works Cited. Print or digital copies of outside sources do not need to be provided, but Works Cited entries should contain sufficient information to facilitate your instructor's efforts to locate them.

Criteria for Evaluation:

Separate standards for assessing the group project and the individual essay have been established and are detailed below:

Part One—Group Presentation Evaluative Criteria

1. Precisely identify specific significant rhetorical strategies used by two of the four rhetors listed above; strategies may vary between the two selected rhetors' texts;
2. Exemplify the rhetors' respective use of these strategies with textual evidence;
3. Examine to what extent these different strategies enable the rhetors to appeal to logos, ethos, and pathos;
4. Explicate whether these strategies will prove successful as the rhetors persuade their target audiences
5. Use rhetorical strategies successfully in the presentation itself, particularly organizational, stylistic, and visual strategies;
6. Use correct sentence structure, punctuation, and grammar, and employ tone and diction that are appropriate for audience of your peers;

Part Two—Individual Essay Assessment Standards

1. Write your essay as if addressing an audience that acknowledges that social media impacts human thinking and democratic processes;
2. Compose a fitting introductory section, making sure to clearly indicate how the paper will proceed;
3. Provide a brief account of the selected author's argument, emphasizing their central claim and key supporting claims;
4. Explore the author's use of outside sources, paying specific attention to what the author has included and excluded from the source material;
5. Explain the impact of these decisions in relation to the author's argument;
6. Create a Works Cited page for any texts you use in completing this assignment;
7. Use an effective structure that carefully guides the reader from one idea to the next and be thoroughly edited so that sentences are readable and appropriate for an academic paper;
8. Use correct sentence structure, punctuation, and grammar, and employ tone and diction that are appropriate for academic readers;

Due Dates:

- ★ Group projects will be delivered during class the week of November 4, 2019. Groups should anticipate having a total of 15 minutes from set up to finish.
- ★ Individual essays are due at the end of the week and will be submitted **on the last class meeting of the week (paper copies) OR by 11:59 p.m. on the last meeting day of that week (Blackboard)**. [pick whichever option you would like your students to use]

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Page 1--Posted by u/the_frightened at r/insanepeoplefacebook, "I bet this lady passes stopped school busses, because free will," 19 August 2019.

https://www.reddit.com/r/insanepeoplefacebook/comments/cspmg5/i_bet_this_lady_passes_stopped_school_busses_too/