

Using *Rhētorikós* Spring 2021 in the Classroom

A Teacher's Guide

Welcome to our [Spring 2021 issue of *Rhētorikós*](#)! We have split this issue into three sections—A Deeper Look; Legacy, History, and Culture; and Building a Better World—and hope you will consider using *Rhētorikós* in the Composition classroom.

Below, we have included a few suggestions for lesson planning and assignment design that spotlight and focus on some of the essays from our Spring 2021 issue. These assignments are meant to be flexible, general suggestions that you can tailor to your class and your students' needs. We also encourage you to browse our [Archive](#) page to access essays from previous issues to consider using in your Composition classes. For more general suggestions on how to teach with *Rhētorikós*, look at our teacher guide [“10 Tips for Using *Rhētorikós* in the Classroom.”](#)

If you have previously used *Rhētorikós* in the classroom and have an assignment or suggestion to share, we would love to hear about it! Email us at rhetorikos@fordham.edu. We look forward to reading your students' wonderful essays! Please look for our biannual call for submissions later in the semester, which for the first time in addition to essays will also invite multimodal compositions!

- Jessica D'Onofrio, Alex Finn-Atkins, Ellis Light, and the *Rhētorikós* Editorial Board
- Dr. Crystal Colombini, Faculty Advisor

Assignment Idea: Engaging with Nontraditional Arguments

- Use one or more of the following essays: “Madre Mía / Mother of Mine”; “Not Just Lustful Literature: Self-Liberation through Fanfiction”; “Traditional Baba Nyonya Cuisine in the Lower East Side”; “Çka Ka Qëllu: More Than a Restaurant”
- These works are more creative, and in some cases multimodal, incorporating poetry, photo essay, and fiction into their arguments. They also rely heavily on personal experiences, emotional connections, and unique rhetorical registers.

Assignment:

Assign one (or more) of these essays for reading, and ask your students to analyze its rhetorical approach through class discussion. For example, how does “Madre Mía / Mother of Mine” convey an argument through its bilingual, poetic genre? To what rhetorical effect does the author of “Not Just Lustful Literature” incorporate selections from her own fanfiction?

How do the authors of “Traditional Baba Nyonya Cuisine” and “Çka Ka Qëllu” authorize their arguments through their own personal experiences and emotions?

Then, ask your students to produce their own argument-driven piece using nontraditional means: this might mean a multi-modal approach, creative genre, or incorporating personal experiences as authoritative sources.

Assignment Idea:

Connecting to the Community Through Research and Reflection

- Use one or more of the following essays: “Decoding the Connections Between Policing and Systemic Racism”; “Climate Justice is Social Justice”
- Each of the essays contains at least one piece of evidence in support of the writer's argument that pertains to a community to which the writer belongs. These essays demonstrate how students use research to show how communities they belong to are affected by larger systemic and social injustices.

Assignment:

Assign one (or more) of these essays for reading as part of a social justice themed unit and/or a writing project with a research component. First, use the essays to generate class discussion. For example, you might ask students to consider how the writers use evidence and to identify which pieces of evidence they found to be effective and why.

Then, for sequenced, scaffolded writing assignments designed to help students brainstorm potential topics and begin research for a larger project, ask students to write one paragraph in which they recount a social injustice they have observed in a community they are part of or an adjacent community. From there, ask them to conduct research and find a source that highlights how a community they belong to or are a neighbor to is affected by this issue and have them write a paragraph on the significance of the source and how they envision it fitting in with their larger writing and/or multimodal project (annotated bibliography-style genre). Both of these short, lower-stakes writing assignments will serve to generate in class discussion on civic responsibility, show students how they can use both anecdotal and research-based evidence to support their arguments, and provide students with preliminary writing they can develop and revise as they work toward their larger project.

Assignment Idea:**“New York is my Campus. Fordham is my School”: Virtual Field Trips**

- Use one or more of the following essays: “The Water Flows from Kensico”; “Traditional Baba Nyonya Cuisine in the Lower East Side”; “Çka Ka Qëllu: More Than a Restaurant”
- These essays each focus on a unique location in New York that the writer has visited and deems important on a personal and/or communal level. In showcasing the significance of these locations, each writer includes one or more of the following in their essay: photograph(s) taken by the author, first-person testimony and reflection, personal interviews, research, and descriptive writing.

Assignment:

Assign one (or more) of these essays for reading in anticipation of students creating a “virtual field trip” project. Whether a location in New York or their hometown, students will identify a location they deem significant and have the opportunity to take the class on a virtual field trip to this particular location through sharing their project. Consider assigning a project that invites students to create a multimodal project that they will present to the class. For example, you may have your students write essays with accompanying photographs similar to the three essays highlighted from *Rhētorikós* or consider other projects that juxtapose or create dialogues between writing, images, audio, and/or video components including podcasts (with accompany scripts, infographics, photographs, etc.) vlogs, slides or storyboards with text and images, websites, etc.

Note: This assignment can be adapted for in-person learning or virtual learning. If circumstances permit, students can visit or revisit a particular location and conduct field research (such as descriptive writing, photographs, and interviews) as preliminary components of their project. If circumstances do not permit traveling to a location for the project, students can choose a place they have previously visited.

Assignment Idea: Evaluating Arguments

- Use three or more of the following essays: “Pageant Material,” “Prehistoric Animals: Could They One Day Walk Among Us?” “Not Just Lustful Literature: Self-Liberation through Fanfiction,” “Reel to Real: An Analysis of Harmful Stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims in American Film and Television”

- Each of these essays contains a generally clear and compelling thesis statement. This set covers a variety of essay topics, scopes, and relevance. Comparing one alongside the other can demonstrate to students the spectrum of argumentations and their range of strengths and limitations.

Assignment:

This is an in-class group work and discussion that will take between 45 to 60 minutes. First, start class with an overview or brief lecture on argumentation. Ask your students to consider the art of argumentation with questions such as *What is an argument? What arguments are the most compelling or useful? What arguments are less compelling or useful?* As class, come up with a list of 3-4 qualities of compelling theses. During this discussion, you might prepare a few examples of effective and/or ineffective arguments to give them examples to engage.

Next, break up the class into four groups of 3-4 students. Provide each group with an excerpt of a thesis statement from the latest issue of our journal. Ask your students to evaluate the thesis based on the rubric for effective arguments that you crafted together earlier in class. Ask them to come up with a 2-3 minute informal presentation explaining their findings to the rest of the class.

Finally, transition into group presentations. Ask each group to read their thesis statement aloud and explain to the class what is both effective and less effective about the thesis. Try to encourage each student in the group to speak. End the class with a short comment that summarizes, again, what makes a compelling thesis and share with the class something you learned from their perspective on this important topic.