Savannah Mulderrig Week #1 Journal #1

ComS 168 Journal Assignment

**Description of what prompted you to write.**

In Fisher’s article, *Rhetorical criticism as criticism*, he takes the position that rhetorical criticism is an art, and not scientific. Although his justifications tend to support the idea that criticism is a fusion of the two, he boldly claims, “rhetorical criticism is not scientific activity, because the most fundamental task of the critic is to make evaluative judgments” (p.78). Fisher immediately goes on describing, “…the task of the scientist is to observe, measure, report and explain.” With these two statements juxtaposed a student of rhetorical criticism can quickly see that the all of these elements are present within the critical act. With the insight of this one would not come to the same conclusion as Fisher. Rather, one should see the elements of science, observation, measurement, explanation, and reporting as the structure of rhetorical criticism which allows the critic to be creative in the evaluation.

**Linkage to other ideas, concepts, quotations, articles, ect.**

This notion of rhetoric being art that Fisher puts forward holds some similarities with Hart and Daughton’s conclusion in chapter two, when they state, “Good criticism is the art of developing and then using critical probes: specific, intelligent questions to be asked of a given text” (p.35). They also claim that rhetorical criticism is an art form, but by contrast they seem to suggest that it is through intelligent questioning that one reaches the artful evaluation. Fisher seems to forget that scientific theory also changes and expands due to the intellectual questioning of scientists. Throughout chapter two we are presented with the ideals of a critic, ground rules, and standards for criticism, among others. These points outline how the critic can be compared to the scientist. The critic is skeptical, discerning, not timid and imaginative, all characteristics that a good scientist would exhibit. Just like there are standards in which science should follow there are standards within the rhetorical criticism. Rhetorical criticism does not make evaluative claims subjectively, but follows guidelines; a point that Hart and Daughton acknowledge, but Fisher seems to have forgotten.

**Explain insights generated by the connections you’ve drawn about rhetorical theory or praxis or criticism; feature what you are learning.**

The main insight that Fisher’s article has given me is that the theory of rhetorical practice is not set in stone and that rhetorical theorists continue to debate over the nature of criticism. Fisher makes a bold claim about criticism not being scientific, but comparing the ideas provided by different rhetorical theorists this claim is not supported across the board. Where Fisher sees rhetorical criticism as an art because of the evaluative nature of the ending product, many may argue, myself included, that the means in which we reach the end are neither less nor more important than the end. The systematic structure of criticism contributes to the validity of the evaluation, but the imaginative nature of the critic is what makes the new insight into the artifact interesting and relevant.

Savannah Mulderrig Week #1 Journal #2

ComS 168 Journal Assignment

**Description of what prompted you to write.**

In *The Limits of Rhetoric*, Natanson makes the interesting connection between philosophy and rhetoric and explains how the misunderstanding of the nature of rhetoric stems from the separation of rhetoric and dialectic, thus muddying the theoretical nature of rhetoric. “ The unification of rhetoric and dialectic is really the rapprochement between philosophy and rhetoric because dialectic is given a unique interpretation: dialectic constitutes the true philosophy of rhetoric…Dialectic understood as the philosophy of rhetoric—concerns itself not with fact but with the theoretical structure that is logically prior to fact” (p.137). By understanding dialectic this way one begins to understand rhetoric in a whole new light. This reconciliation points to the duty of rhetoric criticism, to bring the meaning of the artifact to light, by discussing philosophical ideas present in the artifact, i.e. the rhetorical framework chosen to comment on the artifact. By using a philosophical structure to analyze one hopes to gain a greater insight to the meaning. According Natanson and Weaver, this understanding of the whole is greater than scientific perception.

**Linkage to other ideas, concepts, quotations, articles, ect.**

The premise that Natanson puts forward differs from the idea of Fisher, that rhetorical criticism is not science, as well as supports his claim that rhetoric is art. Natanson claims that through the philosophical inquiries of theories of rhetoric, the conclusion one reaches is greater than scientific perception alone. Natanson seems to be saying that rhetoric functions within many realms, philosophy, science, and art, and being able to function within each of these disciplines, rhetoric is apt to give more insight and understanding to the intellectual questions posed against the artifact.

**Explain insights generated by the connections you’ve drawn about rhetorical theory or praxis or criticism; feature what you are learning.**

The insight of Natanson facilitates the understanding for me about the value of philosophical and theoretical analysis in criticism. Both Natanson and Fisher describe a different aspect of rhetorical criticism and in so doing, give a larger picture to criticism. By remembering the dialectic nature within rhetoric, one is better able to understand the motives and meanings of rhetoric through philosophical quandary. Fisher reminds of one of the artful imagination a critic must possess to reach such conclusion, but the systematic structure of rhetorical criticism reminds the critic of the scientific mindset needed to construct a valid critique.

Savannah Mulderrig Week #2 Journal #3

ComS 168 Journal Assignment

**Description of what prompted you to write.**

Chapter four of Hart and Daughton’s book, Modern Rhetorical Criticism, asserts two very interesting concepts about rhetoric. Within their example of Harold Hill they state, “…good rhetors must first be good listeners” (p.58). They go on to state that, “…persuasion involved understanding people’s first premises, their base-assumptions. The study of philosophy is the study of these first premises and the study of rhetoric is the study of first premises-in-use” (p.59). This idea connects the rhetor with critic, for it is the rhetor who attempts to listen and understand the audience’s first-premises and then repeat them back in order to persuade them of their motives. It is the critic who must listen and recognize the how the base assumptions are being used to persuade the audience. Hart and Daughton have a few suggestions on how a critic can isolate the messages’ main ideas, including recognizing what is and what is not present, patterns, and tone.

**Linkage to other ideas, concepts, quotations, articles, ect.**

Within the suggestions made by Hart and Daughton one can see that to analyze ideas need to use scientific methods, as well as moves beyond science to infer meaning through cultural philosophies. Again we see these rhetorical theorists describe the functionality of criticism as a multi-faceted concept. Like Natanson, this chapter is concerned with the philosophical nature of rhetoric. Here to understand the audience and the effects of the artifact it is key to understand the philosophy of the people, their values and traditions of culture. In Natanson understanding the philosophies of rhetoric was based on realizing that dialectic was not separate from rhetoric. Natanson describes dialectic as the philosophy of rhetoric.

**Explain insights generated by the connections you’ve drawn about rhetorical theory or praxis or criticism; feature what you are learning.**

It is through Hart and Daughton’s explanation that I am better able to understand what it was Natanson was saying about dialectic being philosophical. It is through our dialectical process, our language, the sharing of ideas, and the circulation of values and traditions, teaches our culture its philosophical ideals. Just by listening to what our culture talks about one can find the values built into our society. By understanding the values of a culture, as rhetor you are able to tune your message to meet expectations, and as critic, you understand the effective nature of the rhetoric to a specific audience. Through systematic observation, Hart and Daughton suggests rhetorical critics can find the meaning by analyzing the ideas present and not. Savannah Mulderrig Week #2 Journal #4

ComS 168 Journal Assignment

**Description of what prompted you to write.**

Black, in his article, *Theory and Practice of Criticism*, defines what the etic and emic perspectives of criticism look like. The etic uses theoretical assumptions to look from the outside into an artifact, whereas the emic looks from within the artifact to determine what direction the criticism should take. It is in his reconciliation of the two seemingly opposite concepts and how they may function together, that Black offers an interesting perspective on the nature of the critic. He states, “…the deficiency may be rectified only by the critic's extending himself, risking himself, not possessing a method but being possessed by it: mastering a subject by yielding to it” (p.335). His claim infers that to be a good critic and to fuse the ideas of etic and emic criticism together, one should let the method and subject take the wheel and lead the critic to where the artifact wants to go. The skill is to listen to both emic and etic points.

**Linkage to other ideas, concepts, quotations, articles, ect.**

Black’s conception of the etic and emic approaches to rhetorical criticism reminds me of Fisher’s distinction between the artistic nature of rhetoric and science, as well as, the philosophical nature attributed to rhetorical criticism by Natanson. Black highlights how these two approaches differ from each other, much like the argument of Fisher. In the end Black attempts to show how these two different elements function together, much like Natanson attempts to reconcile the philosophy back into rhetoric.

**Explain insights generated by the connections you’ve drawn about rhetorical theory or praxis or criticism; feature what you are learning.**

It is the connection that Black makes between how the etic and emic rely on each other and how the critic must rely on them both that has given me more insight in to the practice of criticism. It seems to me that many of the rhetorical theorist (minus Fisher) claim that the critical act possesses many elements. Having a strict scientific or theoretical (etic) approach may lead a critic to an uninteresting evaluation because the theory told you what it should. But following a purely artistic method in which you allow the rhetoric to speak to you (emic) has an underlying subjective nature, no matter how hard the critic attempts to leave personal assumption out of it. While each of these approaches have their drawbacks, fusing artistic and scientific approaches gives the rhetorical critique the structure it needs to function with structure and flare.

Savannah Mulderrig Week #3 Journal #5

ComS 168 Journal Assignment

**Description of what prompted you to write.**

Within Takis Poulakos’ article *Recovering the Voices of the Text: Rhetorical Criticism as Ideological Critique*, I find what compelled me to criticism. The article states that the social cannot be considered separate from the language it creates. What is fascinating about rhetorical criticism is the underlying cultural issues from where the artifact emerges. Poulakos asserts that the critic should ask how the artifact reconstructs what is “real” to maintain the existing power structures or, how it challenges them. Following this inquiry, the critic can unleash two different voices, one of what is and the other of what could be; of ideological and utopian. The description of human interaction as occurring on two different levels opens up criticism to a much larger field of inquiry.

**Linkage to other ideas, concepts, quotations, articles, ect.**

Poulakos’ example of an ideological critique has similar functions as that which was described in chapter 11 of Hart and Daughton. They speak about the values, myths, and fantasy themes present within a rhetorical artifact that would give a critic more insight into the effects it has on those in the society. Hart and Daughton give the reader a list of different values whereas Poulakos shows the ideological critique in practice, by demonstrating the presence of Athenian values within The Panegyricus. The demonstration shows how understanding the social situation of that time period, the community values, and as much as possible on the politics, positions the critic at a level of deep inquiry.

**Explain insights generated by the connections you’ve drawn about rhetorical theory or praxis or criticism; feature what you are learning.**

Poulakos presents Kenneth Burke’s argument that, “works are answers to questions posed by the situation in which they arose" (p.39). He goes on to explain that the ideological nature of rhetoric takes on real world contradictions. Poulakos article may have given us a criterion on which to choose rhetorical artifacts to critique. Criticism should have meaning within society and if the artifact does not speak to nature of human interaction, then one should not bother to critique it. The description given of human interaction as occurring on two horizons draws the connection of how rhetoric functions within that. In our lives, Poulakos makes the observation that we perceive the actual and the anticipated. That is, we act upon both levels, much in the fashion that the ideological and utopian operate within the rhetorical criticism. Within the practice of rhetorical criticism, the critic should focus on both of these levels to unveil what messages the rhetor has place on both horizons.

Savannah Mulderrig Week #3 Journal #6

ComS 168 Journal Assignment

**Description of what prompted you to write.**

Chapter 13 from Hart and Daughton’s book, Modern Rhetorical Criticism is about feminist criticism. Gender equal is a topic that like many women, LGBT members, and some men, I feel is extremely important. The chapter sates that most feminists are also humanists. Being discriminated against gives many feminists sympathy for other human discrimination. What is interesting in this chapter, which anyone who has taken the time to become familiar with women’s writings has probably experienced, is how this exploration is often painful and humbling in the realization “of one’s own part in perpetuating oppression, and the resole to try to be more conscious of this, and change when possible” (p.286). When I first encountered the idea that I was participation in the discrimination of myself and other women, I was dismayed and ashamed, but it was a big moment for me and the biggest ah-ha moment I’ve had in college.

**Linkage to other ideas, concepts, quotations, articles, ect.**

Of course, Hart and Daughton make their own correlation between this chapter and others. Most specifically to chapter 11, stating that feminist criticism assumes, like Cultural criticism, that artifacts shape and reflect the cultures that produce them (p.284). This chapter also holds similarities with Poulakos’ article about ideological critique. It was Poulakos’ point that rhetoric hold the voices from within that society, whether political, cultural, or social. The feminist critique would look at all of these different realms to determine how the structure of feminine and masculine roles are represented and expected to be played out within society. Like Poulakos’ depiction of the ideological voice and the utopian voice, feminist criticism can be looked as having two voices; one which they represent what they believe to be actual and another in which the rhetorical performance of gender and patriarchy with the culture, this can occur whether the rhetor is aware of it or not.

**Explain insights generated by the connections you’ve drawn about rhetorical theory or praxis or criticism; feature what you are learning.**

This chapter offers many question in which the critic should ask in order to understand the gender configurations within a rhetorical artifact. The one that holds the most intrigue is given in the conclusion of the chapter, “question what we think we know about rhetoric in case it is only what men know” (p.307). This poses a difficult issue for the rhetorical critic, for now one must look at the research method to determine whether it is sexist in its nature, whether it upholds patriarchal traditions. Being a good rhetorical critic was hard enough, but by recognizing through feminist critique that every theoretical model should be questioned because it may be inherently androcentric, adds another burden to the critic. Rhetorical theories, like scientific theories, work until they don’t. As critics, we should not be afraid to put theories to the test to determine whether they continue to be relevant tools.

Savannah Mulderrig Week #4 Journal #7

ComS 168 Journal Assignment

**Description of what prompted you to write.**

*Radiance: Experiencing Devine Presence*, by Gina Lake is an interesting book when you think about the tactics she is using to motivate the audience to experience the world in the way she is proposing. Her idea that the human existence is beyond the ego and definitions of self is hard one to handle if coming from a secular perspective, but if the audience is of a religious tradition the arguments put forward may be willingly accepted. Some of the most interesting point on this note includes, “The ego draws you into its unreal world of thought. It entices you to pay attention to the mind with juicy thoughts about the past, fantasies about the future, and thoughts that build up the ego and sense of being special, which often involve tearing other people down” (p.14), as well as, “You are programmed to feel that you are separate, and part of this programming is the sense that you are doing what you are doing rather than being moved by an Intelligence greater than this you” (p.17). The idea behind this writing is that one must repel the ego and the idea that we are special and accept that the world is propelled by something much larger, like a supreme Intelligence. This work advises that one should minimize thinking and by doing so continues to repeat that one will find peace, joy and happiness in this way of being.

**Linkage to other ideas, concepts, quotations, articles, ect.**

This article could be connected to a variety of different ideas and concepts. One being the idea that one should accept their lot in life and not complain about how they suffer may remind some of the biblical notion that all of life is God’s will. In this concept everything happens for a reason, and there would be no reason to be upset because it is what God has destined for you. This short book also has ties with the article by C. Helene Barker, *Wanted: A Young Woman for Housework*, in that it embraces the values and traditions embedded in our culture. In these two different works we can see how the culture perspectives become part of the rhetoric produced. Radiance also has a few concepts that we could relate to feminist criticism. First, most feminists are humanists, meaning they want to see a society in which power is equally distributed for all. Lake talks about our oneness with the all of the world, that we are one. Feminist speakers, like Lake, promote the equality, and similarities in gender. But a feminist critic may see a problem with the idea of being content with how your life is.

**Explain insights generated by the connections you’ve drawn about rhetorical theory or praxis or criticism; feature what you are learning.**

Lake’s, Radiance, brings to the surface of a piece of rhetoric having a variety of interpretation even if one uses a single framework. Looking at the rhetoric from a feminist perspective, one would see that it both supports inequality and challenges it. Inequality is supported when she suggests that to be truly happy one should accept what has been given in life. If women had not strived to gain more from society, we would still not have the right to vote. Lake also challenges the idea that women and men are separate with espousing that we are one with each other and with the world, implying that men and women are the same when it comes to Essence. The short book becomes a rhetorical artifact that speaks to the many different levels and voices that are present in our societal traditions.

Savannah Mulderrig Week #4 Journal #8

ComS 168 Journal Assignment

**Description of what prompted you to write.**

H. Suddoth’s critique on firearm hunting advertisements using feminist criticism brings several important ideas about gender in our culture. The ideas that are most interesting are not about what she said in regards to the firearms but what was used to support her claims. Quotation from both Woods and Foss help to define how gender is learned within society. Their claims help Suddoth show how dominant impressions of gender remain constant as well as how some expectations of society evolve. Woods states that children begin to recognize how genders act within their culture and start to emulate what they see. The representation of men within the firearm ads is a beneficial example of how feminist criticism can take shape.

**Linkage to other ideas, concepts, quotations, articles, ect.**

Suddoth’s article could be linked to a variety of articles, anyone that talks about the feminist perspective of criticism. More interesting is the connection it has with cultural criticism. While Suddoth uses feminism to criticize, feminism is and always will be part of the culture. It has not been a dominate part for very long though. This is where Suddoth’s article makes an interesting connection between feminist and cultural criticism. Showing how the cultural ideas about masculinity and hunting have shifted over time, the concepts for advertising hunting rifles have also had to shift.

**Explain insights generated by the connections you’ve drawn about rhetorical theory or praxis or criticism; feature what you are learning.**

Context has always be an important piece of rhetorical criticism. The ideas given within this piece among others, has solidified the importance of context. It will not merely be enough to have an understanding of the value that the country was founded on; one must understand the historical continuum that propelled the country further and the value on which it progressed. It would be impossible to take the isolated artifact and understand what it was truly saying. Most often rhetoric speaks to a social situation; it seeks to answer a controversial problem. The answer never lies in a single solution. Within the political, social, and cultural context, one should be aware of the evolution within the rhetoric. Suddoth demonstrates this practice by giving the historical evidence of the World Wars to explain why some companies highlight comradery in their advertisements. Suddoth also lies out how there has been a shift in this practice as newer companies come into the market and the imminent danger of wars diminishes.