Rhetoric: Making Sense of Human Interaction and Meaning-Making

DOUG DOWNS

Framing the Reading

There is a genre within rhetoric studies that summarizes broad swaths of rhetorical theory into relatively compact, coherent accounts. This selection by Doug Downs — one of the editors of Writing about Writing — is one of these. It was composed specifically for this book to create a guide to rhetoric that would work for readers new to the study of rhetorical theory. The reading goes deeper into some of the principles discussed in the introduction to the chapter. This means that unlike most other pieces in this book, this selection is primarily addressed to readers like you — not writing scholars.

Downs’s article uses an extended example of grant-writers for a nonprofit organization to walk readers through many of rhetoric’s main principles. It integrates concepts from classical (Greek) rhetoric such as rhetorical situation, the rhetorical canons, kairos, and the pistes (you might know them as logos, ethos, and pathos) with late twentieth and twenty-first century rhetorical principles such as rhetorical ecology, embodiment and fall sense, narrative ways of knowing, informal logic, and identification. (To the extent the paper’s subject is interesting to you, you may want to pay more attention than normal to the footnotes, which include suggestions for additional reading on these various principles.)

Many of the ideas overviewed in this piece are addressed in greater depth in other readings in the chapter. If you find yourself losing track, in some other readings, of what they talk about relates to rhetoric and writing as a whole, you may find it helpful to turn back to this reading and see how the concept fits in to the larger whole of rhetorical theory. Two particular ideas in this paper — ecology and embodiment — aren’t addressed as such in other readings (though they are presented in the chapter introduction). Take in what you can about them here so you’ll be able to see how these ideas connect to those you’ll encounter later in the chapter.

Downs is an associate professor of writing studies at Montana State University, where he also directs the university’s Core Writing Program and serves as editor of Young Scholars in Writing, the national journal of undergraduate research in rhetoric and writing studies. He studies the teaching of reading and research in writing classes, and he has published widely on writing-about-writing pedagogy.
WHAT DOES THE TERM "RHETORIC" APPLY TO?

The term "rhetoric" applies to the study of the effective and persuasive use of language. It involves understanding how to construct arguments, convey ideas, and influence others through the use of persuasive strategies.

### GETTING READY TO READ

Before you read, consider the following activities:

- Write a definition of "rhetoric" as you understand it right now. What does the word mean to you?
- How do you usually define "rhetoric"?
- Write a paragraph describing a situation in which you have recently come across an example of rhetoric. What was the context, and how did it influence your understanding or actions?
- Before you read, at least one of the following activities?

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### This Guide Walks You Through Rhetoric: A Set of Principles for Human Interaction

This guide introduces a framework for understanding human interaction and the ways in which rhetoric can be used to shape communication. It provides tools and strategies for effective communication and critical thinking.

### What Concepts Does This Selection Address?

- The importance of context in rhetoric
- The role of effective listening and active engagement
- The use of persuasive language and argumentation
- The ethical considerations in rhetoric

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### Chapter 4: Rhetoric

Doug Downes - Rhetoric: Making Sense of Human Interaction and Meaning-Making

"Critical thinking is not the opposite of being a fast thinker..." - John F. Kennedy

"Getting ready to read..."
and people have a tendency to interpret.

1. Understanding is often more than interpretation. When there's an idea or concept, a symbol, it induces us to interpret. To understand something, we need to have an understanding of the symbol, or an 'idea' in the mind of the speaker.

2. Understanding is a form of interpretation of the symbol or idea. In other words, understanding is an act of translating the symbol into a form that we can comprehend.

3. Understanding is a process of associating new information with information already known to us. This process involves making connections between new and old information, which helps us to comprehend and integrate new information into our existing knowledge.

4. Understanding is a form of cognitive processing that involves the brain's ability to make sense of new information by relating it to what we already know.

5. Understanding is a form of cognitive processing that involves the brain's ability to make sense of new information by relating it to what we already know.
In the context of educational policy and practice, the concept of "educational equity" has become increasingly important in recent years. The emphasis on educational equity reflects a growing awareness of the need to address historical and systemic inequalities in education. This chapter explores the concept of educational equity, examining its various dimensions and implications for policymakers, educators, and practitioners.

The term "educational equity" refers to the fair treatment of all students, regardless of their race, gender, socioeconomic status, or any other characteristic. The goal of educational equity is to create opportunities for all students to succeed academically and to contribute to society in meaningful ways. This requires attention to both the structural and cultural aspects of education, as well as the role of policymakers and educators in creating equitable learning environments.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of educational equity. This has been driven by a number of factors, including increasing awareness of the social and economic inequalities that persist in many countries, as well as the growing body of research that shows the benefits of equitable education for all students. As a result, there has been a shift towards policies and practices that are designed to promote educational equity, including initiatives to reduce achievement gaps, increase access to high-quality education, and address the needs of marginalized and underrepresented groups.

However, achieving educational equity is a complex and multifaceted challenge. It requires a comprehensive approach that addresses both the supply and demand sides of education. On the supply side, this includes issues such as teacher quality, school resources, and infrastructure. On the demand side, it involves addressing the social, cultural, and economic factors that influence students' access to and engagement in education.

In conclusion, the concept of educational equity is a crucial issue in contemporary education. It requires a commitment from policymakers, educators, and practitioners to work together to create fair and equitable learning environments for all students.
we have a value for the curricular expression of our collective "creative" sensibilities and "self-expression," and our own "emotions," and "emotional" sensibilities. If we take the view that a thing is a "good" thing, then its value is not a "good" thing, but a "good" thing. Therefore, anything that is not "good" is therefore "bad." This is the point at which you see the world on your own terms. And if you see the world on your own terms, then you are in communion with existence, from which your individuality is derived. And if you associate with fiction, you are in communion with fiction, and the terms of fiction immediately become real.

To say about death, the unfolding of events is a function of the organic, the "living," and the "natural." We call these "events." We call them "reality." We call them "facts." In the world of fiction, death is not a function of the organic. It is a function of the narrative. The world of fiction is a world of imagination, not of reality. It is a world of the mind, not of the body. It is a world of the imagination, not of fact or reality. It is a world of the imagination, not of the organic.
Abraham Maslow's Theory of Needs

Figure 1: Hierarchy of Needs

- **Physiological Needs**: Food, water, shelter, and safety needs.
- **Safety Needs**: Security, shelter, freedom from fear, and harm.
- **Love Needs**: Belonging, friendship, and affection.
- **Esteem Needs**: Respect, recognition, and achievement.
- **Self-Actualization Needs**: Personal growth, self-fulfillment, and potential.

These needs are organized in a hierarchy, with lower needs being more basic and higher needs being more advanced. People tend to pursue higher needs once lower needs are satisfied.
you think about it. In the 1970s, some people "thought" we were on the "verge of world peace." But, as you say, people think a lot of things, in the absence of a convincing argument to the contrary. As a lawyer friend of mine once said, "The legal system is a laboratory in which we test our ideas about the world."
How much do we know about the concept of "information}? This is a question that has been debated for years in the field of psychology. Do you think that we know more about what information is, or less? Is it easier to define or measure information?

In the context of human interaction, information plays a crucial role. It is the foundation upon which all communication is built. Without information, it would be impossible to understand or convey any message. However, the concept of information is not as straightforward as it may seem. There are many different perspectives on what information is, and how it should be measured.

Some scholars argue that information is simply data that has been processed to provide context and meaning. Others believe that information is a subjective construct, dependent on the individual's perception of the data. Still others argue that information is a combination of both data and context, and that it is the relationship between the two that gives rise to meaning.

Regardless of the definition, the importance of information in human interaction cannot be overstated. It is through information that we are able to connect with others, share ideas, and collaborate on projects. In the age of digital communication, information has become even more important. With the rise of social media and virtual communication tools, we are able to interact with people from all over the world, regardless of distance or time.

As we continue to explore the concept of information, it is important to consider how it can be measured and evaluated. There are many different methods and tools available, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. It is up to us to choose the most appropriate approach for our needs, and to use it to its fullest potential.

In conclusion, the concept of information is complex and multifaceted. It is a cornerstone of human interaction, and its role will only become more important as we continue to evolve and adapt to new technologies. By understanding the nature of information and how it can be measured, we can better communicate and connect with others, and ultimately create a more connected and informed world.
PHILOSOPHICAL COMPOSITION AND INSPIRATIONAL PLE CANS

and valuable,

When framing in this paper is to develop the material for your

Invention: the making of any text or discourse


correlation of concepts, conclusions, and ideas. This is the key to

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Summary of the article, I find that it involves principles of human

experiences and in-person activity.

Research shows that knowledge and intuition are intertwined. Without a directed intervention, the world of experiential learning is a complex and dynamic system. The process involves the interaction of various factors, including observer, observer and observer's reality. The study of intuition and experience suggests that there is a feedback loop that exists between the two. This interaction is characterized by a dynamic and evolving relationship. As people engage in activities, their experiences and intuitions are shaped and refined. Understanding this relationship is crucial for improving decision-making processes and enhancing learning outcomes.

The feedback loop between intuition and experience is not straightforward. It involves a constant interplay between the two. The process is dynamic and evolves over time. This feedback loop is characterized by a two-way interaction, where intuition and experience influence each other. The relationship is not static, but rather, it is constantly changing. The feedback loop is characterized by a continuous process of trial and error. As people engage in activities, they learn from their experiences and refine their intuition. This process is not linear, but rather, it is characterized by cycles of exploration and refinement. The feedback loop is a powerful mechanism for improving decision-making processes and enhancing learning outcomes. Understanding this relationship is crucial for improving decision-making processes and enhancing learning outcomes.
could actually be—what some of these rhetorical principles are, and how they actually come into play when we try to make decisions, decide who and what to believe, consider how to present ourselves to others, and try to understand where other people are coming from and why our interactions with them take the shape that they do.

If it hasn’t happened already, you’ll probably eventually get tired of hearing the term rhetorical applied to everything—and the more you think about it, the more you’ll probably also start applying it to everything yourself. So let me finish by trying to say more about what that term actually implies and requires. When we say that something is rhetorical, we’re saying that it has the qualities of rhetoric, which are these: This “rhetorical” thing is situated, meaning that it happens in a particular place, time, and moment, and therefore that it cannot be universalized. It is motivated, meaning that there is some motive behind it, that therefore it is subjective rather than objective, and that our interpretation of it will depend in part on our understanding what motivates it, its exigence. It is contingent, meaning that its shape depends on the situation, exigence, and motivations that call it into being, and that it must be unique to its situation, not purely determined by pre-existing, universal rules. It is interactional, meaning that it can only exist in the interaction between itself and the rhetors who shape its meaning. It is epistemic, meaning that it creates knowledge for the rhetors interacting with it, rather than merely transmitting pre-existing knowledge unaltered from one rhetor to another. And it is embodied, meaning that it takes material form and that its material form shapes the interaction and rhetors’ interpretations of it; it cannot be “just ideas.”

As one who is still learning to understand rhetoric after twenty years of study, and who needed more than ten years of that study just to come to the description in the previous paragraph (and all twenty to come to the totality of this paper), I don’t expect everything in that last paragraph to make sense to you right now. I offer it instead as a jumping off point for things you should be trying to understand as you continue to study rhetoric.

Works Cited


Questions for Discussion and Journaling

1. Compare how you’ve thought of rhetoric in the past to how it appears to you after this reading. Have you shared one of the conceptions listed in the beginning of the article on pages 458–59? What differences between your previous thinking and what you think now are most obvious? Are there similarities?

2. Using your own words, explain what the term epistemic means. What is the difference if rhetoric is epistemic versus if it is not?