

Paper 2. Research paper using Rogerian argument.

UNIT 2 OVERVIEW

All of the texts in the second unit deal with subcultures and identity politics in response, or in opposition to mainstream society. Mercer's text defends the use of "Black hair" as a cultural representation or embodiment of politics and identity. Turner and Surace trace how the Zoot Suit became a symbol of *Mexicanness*, which in turn came to signify criminality. Selassie's speech (echoed in Marley's song) pleads for people's liberation from colonial oppression; furthermore, the reggae or rastafarian subculture that stems from Haile Selassie's speeches embodies rasta religion and culture and distinguishes those who hold these beliefs through their clothing, hairstyle, speech pattern, etcetera; and finally, the movie *West Side Story* emphasizes racial tensions amongst White Americans and Puerto Rican Americans who fight for turf control, and cultural representation in 1950s New York.

Even though the texts in unit 2 were written years, or even decades before our discussions; many, if not all, of these cultural embodiments are seen as controversies in our modern society as well. For this second paper choose one or two of the readings from unit 2: Kobena Mercer's "Black Hair/Style Politics", Ralph H. Turner's and Samuel J. Surace's "Zoot-Suiters and Mexicans: Symbols in Crowd Behavior", Haile Selassie's Speech to the United Nations, **ALONG** with Bob Marley's "War", and finally, the movie *West Side Story*, and choose a controversial aspect of the text that interests you.

You will then write a Rogerian argument on your chosen issue. For example, let's say that you'll use the Zoot Suit as a symbol of criminality (as Turner and Surace found in their research). Since the purpose of a Rogerian argument is to explore all sides of an issue and end in compromise, you can analyze how Turner and Surace's research equates the suit with criminal activity that resulted in racial tensions between Anglo American and Mexican American youth; in addition, you could also deconstruct how Zoot Suit culture also created generational tensions between young Mexican Americans and their older counterparts. **Then**, doing your own research, you can find articles, essays, or other sources that validate the use of the suit as a personal choice, identity politics, ethnic pride, etcetera. Since the readings on unit 2 present ideas or evidence from some years ago, you could update your

argument, and present contemporary research, which would not demonstrate that most of these issues are still controversial, but it would also be a bit easier to find recent sources than go deep into archival research. **Finally**, you will find a compromise where you will try to get both (or however many) sides to reach common ground. For example, if the wearing of the suit is the issue that causes rifts between White Americans and Mexican Americans, but the suit is a representation of one's culture, then what? What could be a compromise between that could alleviate the clash between these groups? Why or how would that compromise work? Why is it a better choice?

Remember that Rogerian arguments:

1. Present a controversial issue to analyze.
2. Validate all sides of an issue.
3. Provide or propose a compromise to the issue.
4. Analyze fairly, accurately, and objectively all sides of an issue. Tone, syntax and sentence style matters!
5. Avoid emotional appeals and biased language that demonstrates preference to one side. In other words, it is "neutral", as neutral as possible.

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Essay requirements and due dates:

Your essay must be typed, double spaced, 12-pt. font, 6-8 pages + works cited, include specific examples from the texts and follow MLA citation style, and include a works cited listing the sources used, also in proper MLA format.

Tuesday 10/31: Rough draft (2 pages minimum) due on BB, and bring a copy to class for peer review.

Thursday 11/2: Updated draft (4 pages) due in class. Bring copy for workshop and feedback.

Sunday 11/5: Final draft (6-8 pages) due on SafeAssign through BlackBoard. Make sure to submit on PDF, doc. or docx format.