

Key Rhetorical Terms

- **Rhetorical Situation:** the context of a rhetorical act (minimally made up of a rhetor, an issue, and an audience); this context can be both broad (historical, cultural, political, social) or narrow (such as specific circumstances pertaining to a particular issue).
 - **Rhetor:** anyone who composes discourse that is intended to affect an audience's or broader community's thinking or actions.
 - **Audience:** any people—real or imagined, contemporary or historical—designated by the rhetor as hearers or readers of his/her text.
 - **Exigence:** the event or occurrence that prompts rhetorical discourse; the exigence is that which begins the “cycle” of rhetorical discourse about a particular issue.
 - **Purpose:** the intended outcome(s) of the rhetorical discourse identified (implicitly or explicitly) by the rhetor.
 - **Constraints:** the limitations within which the rhetor must work; these limitations can be related to the genre, medium, register, audience, or the situation itself, among other things.
- **Appeals or “Proofs” (strategies):**
 - **Ethos:** Greek term for the character or reputation of a rhetor.
 - **Situated:** proof from character that depends on a rhetor's reputation within a relevant community.
 - **Invented:** proofs from character that are “invented” or deliberately created by a rhetor.
 - **Pathos:** Greek term for emotions or passions; appeals to audience members' emotions.
 - **Logos:** Greek term for the sense of logicalness or reasoning created by a rhetor. Logos pertains to the reasons drawn from people's beliefs and assumptions. Reasoning or “logic” in rhetoric uses probabilities, common themes, and shared understandings.
 - **Enthymeme:** a rhetorical syllogism; a means of “logical” proof or argument whereby the rhetor provides a tenable premise and expects the audience to fill in” or arrive at the desired conclusion; short-hand logical appeals.
- **Kairos:** Greek term for time pertaining to a sense of timing and timeliness (as opposed to chronological time); the “right” time, opportunity or occasion.
- **Genre:** the specific type or kind of rhetorical discourse. Classically: **judicial** (accusing & defending); **deliberative** (persuading & dissuading), and **demonstrative** (ceremonial oratory). Contemporary categories: movie review, op-ed, advertisement, resume, scientific research report, etc.
- **Medium:** the channel of communication. For example, shock radio, YouTube video, PowerPoint, oil painting, color flyer.
- **Identification:** a rhetorical situation in which an audience feels “close” with the rhetor; the audience's sense of “identifying with” the rhetor (shared values, experiences, desires, goals, etc.); a “bridging” between the rhetor and audience.