

Documentary Rhetorical Analysis Film Review

(175 POINTS)

AP Language and Composition

Mr. Eble

Your Assignment: You will analyze the rhetoric of a documentary film, specifically its purpose, audience, persuasive appeals, and its effectiveness. Essentially, you are analyzing the argument that the filmmaker makes, how he or she develops it, and the extent to which he or she is successful in achieving the purpose. A major part of your grade on this essay will be your understanding of how the filmmaker presents his or her case, I.E. through statistics, expert testimony, personal experience, humor, archival footage, soundtrack.

Process / Writing:

- 1.) Watch *King Leopold's Ghost* in class and discuss the filmmakers appeals and strategies. You'll use page three as a means of analyzing the film during our viewing and the discussion. As you watch, analyze the strategies and their effectiveness according to the rhetorical situation.
- 2.) Find reviews of *King Leopold's Ghost* from review websites, like Rotten Tomatoes (You can find this film's page at http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/king_leopolds_ghost/) or the *New York Times*. You will write a blog entry in which you integrate quotes from two or three reviews that bolster / exemplify your argument about the documentary.
- 3.) Watch another documentary film—choose a topic dealing with a cause that interests you enough to do more research and to act upon via informing others about the topic and persuading them to act. Write a **film review** in a publication of your choice—the *Moeller Crusader*, the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, the *New York Times*—in which you rhetorically analyze the film with researched comments from other reviews to bolster your own analysis of the film's rhetorical properties. On page two, you'll find a list of films from which you may choose, organized by topic.*

Remember—rhetorical analysis is a means to an end; that is, a means for you to express your own assessment of the documentary, rather than an end in itself. You are seeking to analyze how the filmmaker presents a message and to evaluate how effectively he/she portrays it.

- A. Watch the film; use page four as a note-taking guide (similar to how you did so with *An Inconvenient Truth*)
- B. Research the film; find reviews, background information, interviews with the director (or other directors)
- C. Write a rhetorical analysis of the film in which you analyze the rhetorical situation and appeals and their effectiveness.
- D. Be sure to cite all sources you use (reviews, background information, the film itself) in MLA format

Of course, we'll do some peer review to help you.

For your post-writing reflection, you'll write about the following questions:

- With what part of this assignment did I struggle? Which parts gave me problems?
- What changes did I make to my review? Why did I make them?
- How did I adjust my message to my specific audience? (Moeller students, the readership of your publication... this will depend upon the publication you choose...and you'll have to do research to learn about your publication's readership).

*Not all films on the list are exhaustive. If you'd like to watch / analyze / write about another film, please let me know.

List of Films by Topic

These films are by no means exhaustive; if you'd like to choose another topic / film not listed, please let me know.

Films about the Environment

- *The Future of Food* (2005)
- *Food, Inc.* (2008)
- *The Last Mountain* (2010)
- *Gasland* (2010)
- *Tapped* (2010)
- *No Impact Man* (2008)
- *Who Killed the Electric Car?* (2006)
- *King Corn* (2008)
- *The Cove* (2009)
- *Frankensteer* (2006)
- *A Crude Awakening* (2006)
- *Hungry for a Change*
- *Trashed* (2007)
- *Super Size Me* (2004)
- *A Chemical Reaction* (2009)
- *The 11th Hour* (2007)
- *Food Matters* (2008)
- *Fresh* (2009)
- *Carbon Nation* (2010)
- *Chemical* (2009)
- *Plastic Planet* (2009)
- *Bananas!** (2009)
- *The Garden* (2008)
- *A Place at the Table* (2012)

Films about War / the Military

- *Inside North Korea* (2006)
- *The Invisible War* (2012)
- *Poster Girl* (2010)
- *National Geographic's Inside Guantanamo* (2009)
- *Secrets of the Dead: World's Biggest Bomb* (2011)
- *Hunt for the Somali Pirates* (2010)
- *Countdown to Zero* (2009)
- *Delta Boys* (2012—Nigeria)
- *Body of War* (2007—Veterans)
- *The Empire in Africa* (2006—Sierra Leone)
- *Fahrenheit 9/11*
- *Iraq's Guns for Hire* (2009)
- *The Devil Came on Horseback* (2007—about Sudan / Darfur)
- *No End in Sight* (2007)
- *Hell and Back Again* (2011—Veterans)
- *The Ground Truth* (2006)
- *Iraq for Sale: The War Profiteers* (2006)
- *Will the Real Terrorist Please Stand Up* (2010)
- *Battle's Poison Cloud* (2004)
- *How I Planned to Kill Tony Blair* (2006)

Films about Politics / Cultural Issues

- *Hot Coffee* (2011—consumerism)
- *The House I Live In* (2012—Prisons)
- *Zeitgeist: The Movie* (2007)
- *Park Avenue: Money, Power, and the American Dream* (2012—economics)
- *Capitalism: A Love Story* (2009—economics)
- *The Flaw* (2011—economics)
- *Surviving Progress* (2011)
- *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front* (2011)
- *Koch Brothers: Exposed* (2012)
- *The Best Government Money Can Buy* (2009)
- *The End of Poverty?* (2008—economics / justice)
- *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism* (2004)
- *G-Dog* (2012—gangs and violence)
- *The Lottery* (2010—education)
- *How to Survive a Plague* (2012--AIDS)
- *Lynching Charlie Lynch* (2011—Drugs / Marijuana)
- *Miss Representation* (2011—gender issues)
- *Cocaine Unwrapped* (2007—drugs)
- *The Union: Business Behind Getting High* (2007)
- *End of the Road* (2011)
- *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006)
- *Freedom Fries* (2005)
- *Houston, We Have a Problem* (2008)
- *An Inconvenient Tax* (2011)
- *Unborn in the USA* (2007—Abortion)
- *Run Granny Run* (2007—politics)
- *Bully* (2011—bullying)
- *Shakespeare High* (2011—education)
- *Waiting for Superman* (2010—education)
- *American Teacher* (2011—education)

Note-taking guide for film viewing of *King Leopold's Ghost*.

Rhetorical Strategy	Example from the Film	Effect
---------------------	-----------------------	--------

Note-taking guide for film viewing of your chosen documentary.

Rhetorical Strategy	Example from the Film	Effect
---------------------	-----------------------	--------