

WRRH201
Spring 2010
Social Network Site Analysis

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DUE: Monday, February 15

In the essay we read last week, “Visualizing English: Recognizing the Hybrid Literacy of Visual and Verbal Authorship on the Web,” Stroupe argues,

The more hybrid approach of a visualized English would describe instead the potential for dialogically constitutive relations between words and images—in a larger sense, between the literacies of verbal and visual cultures—which can function as a singly intended, if double-voice rhetoric (15).

This idea of a dialogical relationship between verbal and visual texts—or alphabetic and image-driven texts—can change the way that we use rhetoric as writers, designers, or rhetoricians. Stroupe sees “rhetorical implications of linkable environments” (23) emphasizing that visual elements placed within any sort of text is as intentional as the choices made to place verbal elements.

Remember our class discussion when I noted the importance of space and how it is used—a blank space in a text is just as important as what you might put in that space. How the balance is decided is part of our rhetorical choices with intentional purpose behind those choices.

When we consider social networking sites, we see how both the verbal and visual come into play to create a **user identity**. As Goodstein notes, “Even if your aesthetic sense is totally shattered by the design chaos of individual MySpace pages, teens definitely love to customize their pages and spend a lot of time and effort working on them” (60) and you will see this effort as you surf any of the social networking sites.

For this first assignment, I would like you to draft an analysis of a social networking site. Choose any of the popular ones that Goodstein discussed in Chapter Two, “Finding Their Space: Social-Networking Sites” or any other site that you might be familiar (consider Xanga and LiveJournal in addition to MySpace and Facebook). How you approach this assignment is up to you. You may compare MySpace to Facebook, for example, or compare three different users’ sites on MySpace.

The purpose of this analysis is for you to apply some of the theory we have been reading to a real representation of *visuality* (Kelly, 3). Consider the “money terms” we have discussed that came from the Stroupe reading: double-voiced rhetoric (15), hybrid literacy (15), elaborationism (15), usability (21), spatial matrix (23), digitality (23). **How might the social networking site that you are using for analysis show examples of how the verbal and visual elements work together to create a cohesive rhetorical text?**

You will want to address the basic elements of rhetoric such as audience, purpose, ethos, pathos and logos (For the purposes of this assignment, these most basic descriptions should suffice.)

Consider some of the below categories as you begin looking at your site. While you no doubt will be unable to address all of these categories in the limited space allowed for this assignment, do consider how each of these elements support one another:

General Information: Note what type of social networking site you will be analyzing. Note any comparisons between sites if you choose to create a comparison/contrast argument. You'll want to give your reader a basic summary of the site but don't lose yourself in summary without offering analysis.

Authorship: Note the creator and owner of the site? Is this someone you know or a random site you found in your research? Know that issues of copyright will come into discussion at a later date. For the purposes of this assignment, feel free to note any identifying information.

Verbal/Alphabetical: Make note of the various forms of verbal text the site creator has chosen to include in their site. How has an identity been constructed by the profile, quotations, wall posts or blog entries? Don't forget to note any hypertext links that allows users interactivity with the site.

Visual/Image: Consider how the site creator has used space on their site. What spaces are filled? What is left empty? How are images used? Color? Font choice? Are there any video or audio files embedded in the site? What kind?

Program Structure: Consider how much control the site creator has over the elements they have included in their site. Depending on the type of site you are analyzing, there may have been limitations initiated by the software program. How did the site creator work around any limitations?

Audience: Make a note of the audience for the site. Is this intended audience listed? Is the site appropriate for its intended audience? Is this site private or public? Do you get an idea that the readers for this site share common demographics with the site creator such as gender, age, race?

Purpose: Make a note of the purpose of the site. Is it a site for blogging? Is this a fansite up for analysis? A site for sharing files such as video or images?

You will need to do some strong critical analysis for this assignment. Remember that you are making an argument for how this specific social networking site has used both verbal and visual elements to create a multimodal text. Has the site creator done so, successfully?

Format:

While I am shooting for a traditional research paper of 2-3 pages, I don't want to limit you to creating a strictly verbal text—should you choose to draft this assignment in PowerPoint or in your own social networking site, for example, that's great. As long as you cover the assignment criteria, you'll be good. If you are uncertain that you might not be addressing the criteria with the format you are considering, come talk to me this week and together we'll make sure you are on track for what is required for this assignment.