SC300W Critical Paper #1 (200pnts.)

Rhetorical Analysis of an Artifact using Traditional, Narrative, and/or Dramatistic Critique Methods.

Choose an Artifact and Method:
Your first step is to find an artifact that is appropriate for the method you will be applying, or choose the appropriate method to use on an artifact you have already chosen. You may choose any rhetorical artifact to analyze: speech, book, article, advertisement, cartoon, film, website, etc. Then choose an appropriate method or combination of methods from: Traditional, Narrative, and/or Dramatism. In selecting an artifact, whatever it is that intrigues, baffles or excites you about the artifact might be able to be explained by the method(s) you choose to apply to it.

Code or analyze your artifact:
Analyze your artifact using the procedures or units of analysis provided by the method. For example: speeches lend themselves to Traditional Analysis, so you would reconstruct the context of the speech; identify the elements of ethos, logos, pathos; or apply the five cannons, examine the organization, arrangement and structure; then assess the effects on the audience. A story would lend itself to Narrative Analysis or on a deeper level Dramatism. You would then follow the appropriate units of analysis.

Formulate a Research Question:
Based on your analysis, ask yourself, “What do I want to find out about the rhetoric of this artifact?” Although you will probably not state your research question as an actual question in your essay, it is something you need to have clearly embedded in your thinking, so write it down. Research questions tend to be about four basic components of the communication process: the rhetor, the audience, the situation, or the message itself. When formulating your research question, avoid the common mistakes of: 1) asking too broad or generic a question, 2) using wording in the question that does not allow much of interest to be explained—too narrow, and 3) avoid a question that focuses solely on your artifact alone. A good research question goes beyond the artifact. Instead of asking, “How did President Bush reassure the nation after 9/11?” ask, “What strategies are employed by politicians to reassure people after catastrophic events, and how do Bush’s strategies compare?”

Write your Essay:
After analyzing your artifact, you are ready to write a critique. Think of the analysis and writing the essay as two separate processes. All of your thinking and analysis steps will probably not be included in the essay. You want the essay to reflect the results of your research. You want to report your insights. Critical essays usually include five major components:

- **Introduction:** where you discuss your question, its contribution and significance, and pose your thesis.
- **Description of your artifact:** where you summarize the artifact and its context.
- **Description of your method of analysis:** where you identify the person(s) who created it and define the key concepts, tenants and/or procedures you are using.
- **Report the findings of the analysis:** which constitutes the bulk of your essay. Tell the reader what you found out from the method you employed, supporting your assertions with examples and evidence.
- **Conclude with how your analysis contributes to rhetorical theory:** This is the answer to your question. You should move away from your specific artifact answering your question more generally and abstractly. What is the bigger picture?

This particular essay should be no longer than 5-7 pages.