

### Essay One: Rhetorical Analysis

**Format:** 3-4 pgs. Your essay should be typed, double-spaced, TNR 12pt, with 1 inch side margins and page numbers. You will also need a title that relates specifically to your argument, i.e., it should be something other than “Rhetorical Analysis.” And PLEASE remember to staple your paper before coming to class. Please use MLA style of documentation for incorporating quotations from the texts you are using. You may want to refer to the *Harbrace Handbook* if you have questions about MLA style.

**Assignment:** This first assignment asks you to analyze an argument on your own using the concepts we’ve covered so far in class, namely logos, ethos, pathos, audience, and purpose. You will also be considering the ways in which arguments are far more complex and may depend upon more than these basic appeals. You will be writing about a text we have already discussed in class, so you should have plenty of ideas to develop your essay. The major obstacle will be trying to arrange your essay in an orderly way.

**Please choose ONE of the following topics:**

#### Option 1

Compare the styles of argument in Frost’s “Home Burial” and Todd Field’s film *In the Bedroom*. Both “texts” explore the relationship between a husband and wife attempting to come to terms with the loss of a child. Evaluate the ways in which both couples argue with one another. Do their approaches seem specifically gendered? Consider who controls these arguments. Can you see moments of shifting power? Why do you think the couples have such a hard time understanding one another? How do the arguments ultimately turn out? Who takes action in the end? In what ways are their conflicts resolved or unresolved? Do the final outcomes (which are quite different) respond to logos, ethos, and pathos? Why or why not?

#### Option 2

Explore the complexity of argument in *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*. What kinds of family arguments does the novel expose? What kinds of appeals are made? What positions do the characters’ take? What are their morals, values, motivations? Pay particular attention to logos, ethos, and pathos, but as you will notice, these conventional appeals are often less important tools of persuasion than power and/or desperation. For example, in the particular dynamics of Noura’s family, the moral righteousness of her decision to wear the hijab is ultimately undermined by her father’s authority. Halima’s decision to divorce, likewise, forces her to break the law in order to fight an unjust and corrupt judicial system. In what ways do power, manipulation, fear, physical force, corruption, prejudice, guilt, etc. figure into argument? How might a character’s circumstances override logic, reason, morals, and/or values? You may also consider the arguments that finally persuade the characters to emigrate from Morocco to Spain. What arguments must they consider? In what ways are they forced to compromise their principles? How do they justify their decisions to themselves in the end?