

Audience and Identity

Goals:

- Facilitate an engaging discussion
- Introduce concept of discourse communities
- Further understanding of audience expectations
- Further understanding of sensitive subjects and ability to discuss these topics openly and non-offensively

Reading:

- The Craft of Research on audience

Additional materials:

- Two music videos portraying queer culture in different rhetorical situations
 - Rent's "I'll Cover You"
 - The musical as a response to the sociopolitical environment of the times
 - ALSO an argument to a theatre going audience
 - Thesis might be "I think they meant it
When they said you can't buy love
Now I know you can rent it"
 - What are the conventions of the genre of musical theatre? What do we expect? How does a musical make its argument for the intended audience?
 - Upbeat music
 - Ongoing narrative
 - Emphasis on pathos/emotional content
 - Two act structure (audience expectations)
 - Plot driven vs. character driven (in this case, the latter)
 - Conventions of a character driven song might include some connection with those characters
 - Who's the audience?
 - Interested in the subject but may or may not be experts
 - Will expect certain conventions
 - Different members might react differently (STEREOTYPES)
 - The theatre critic
 - The theatre scholar
 - The writer
 - The avid theatre goer
 - The person who has never seen a play before now
 - The gay man
 - The conservative man who thought he was taking his wife to Wicked
 - Sia's "The Greatest"
 - The music video, if not the song, are a response to the Orlando shooting
 - What are the conventions of pop as a genre?
 - Who is the audience?
 - What can we assume or not assume about the genre?

- As a reaction to the Orlando shooting, who is the specific audience for this song? Compared with, for example, a news article on the shooting?
 - What is the song's "thesis"?
- What are the conventions of academic writing?
 - Emphasis on logos and ethos
 - Note to self: Students will be working against prior training for a new discourse community. Their writing from high school to college is not cumulative.
- The texts the students produce are the play or the song.

Activity:

- Break into groups and write a short outline (ethos, pathos, and logos) for each song/video with a different audience for each
- What are the audiences (framing)? Write "I'll Cover You" for a music scholar, an academic audience (who might already be aware of the themes); Write Sia for your parents (How do you take this conversation back home?)
- Roles: facilitator, speaker (person who will share with the class; make the girls the speakers; people who regularly speak are good leaders), recorder
- Make them get up and write the outline on the board

~5 minutes for overview of audience from reading

~25 minutes for discussion of each song

6-10 minutes for group activity

10 minutes for review/discussion (improv; really be present to ask follow-up questions)

Reflection:

This was my first time teaching, so I was very nervous before class, but I calmed down a lot once I got started. The biggest issue was that, as the instructor pointed out, I talked way too fast. It was partially nerves, but partially my normal way of talking. I need to practice talking more slowly.

I was particularly worried that the texts would be too complicated for them. Sia's "The Greatest" has a lot going on, so there was every chance that they would just sit and stare at me. The discussion ended up being really productive though. Because the video is so complicated, the students started asking questions and then responding to my answers. An actual discussion got going, and two students in particular did a close reading of the video. My impression is that they rose to the occasion. I hope that the complexity of the video pushed them a little bit outside their comfort zone.

Another potential problem was the broadness of my questions. I didn't want to ask leading or simplistic questions, but I also wasn't sure how much to guide the students through each video. There were a few moments when students took a minute or two to think, but I think the wideness of the net, in this case, actually worked because they felt that they could just talk, rather than searching for the right answer. I may, however, have misperceived the situation. It will be useful to see in the future which method works best most often.

It was very encouraging overall because the class really got into the discussion, to the point that I had to cut down the writing portion. The discussion was going so well that I just let the students keep talking.