

**WRITING THROUGH THE RHETORICAL MODES**  
INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXT

**Introduction to Writing through the Rhetorical Modes**

By Ashar Foley

Why this Book?

This Open Educational Resource ENG1101 Course Reader was commissioned by the First Year Writing @ City Tech Program for use in an Introduction to College Writing course structured around an introduction to rhetorical modes.

Section 1 of this book offers readings in each of the four basic rhetorical modes—narration, exposition, description, and persuasion. While the first two modes are broken down into several sub-modes, the second two are presented without any such division. Each reading within this section is accompanied by two sets of questions, one to guide students as they read and to offer starting points for in-class discussion, and another to provide ideas for writing and research assignments. Students may respond to these questions as individuals, in groups, as a class, or in some sequence thereof.

Sections 2-4 compile links to teaching modules for the various types of college essays assigned by City Tech faculty, several sample research modules for both long and short research assignments, resources for the teaching of academic conventions, classroom and paper-planning activities, and links to articles on college-level reading, writing, and research instruction useful to faculty and students alike.

Because this text is a “living” document, it is the hope of its editors that it will expand to include, not only more OER readings that reflect the diversity of City Tech’s professors and students, but also more in-house teaching materials and examples of student work. Our thanks go out to those faculty who volunteered to be this text’s early adopters, and to those students who will work from it under their guidance.

Why Rhetorical Modes?

All writing exists for some purpose—it is a technology, used as all technologies are, to bring about an intended outcome. Put another way, we use writing to make ourselves and others do things: we write in diaries to help ourselves explore our feelings and ideas and to recall the day’s events at a later time; we make lists to remind ourselves of things we need to do or get; we write letters to our representatives to urge them to address our

concerns; we compose application essays to convince college admissions committees that we will be valuable members of their campus community; and we write responses and status updates on social media to debate issues and to maintain a presence within our social networks.

No matter what our intended outcomes are, the rhetorical modes are particular ways of writing that help us accomplish them. Another way to think about the rhetorical modes is as a set of tools that belongs to the technology of writing. Accordingly, this textbook aims to help students effectively accomplish their intended outcomes by acquainting them with these tools. By reading examples of and by practicing writing in each mode, students will leave ENG 1101 with experiential knowledge of the variety of ways to achieve their goals through writing.

### The Four Rhetorical Modes

*The Narrative Mode* appeals to a reader through story, be that story a reflection, an assertion of causation, or the laying out of a series. Each of these approaches to the Narrative Mode—expressed in this book as Reflection, Cause and Effect, and Process Analysis—organizes information for the reader by putting events in a sequence, often a chronological sequence. The Narrative Mode invites writer and reader both to reflect upon outcomes, to link present conditions to past events, and to ensure future conditions by taking present actions.

*The Expository Mode*—here, Comparison and Contrast, and Division, Classification, and Definition—analyzes or explains information so that the reader will come to share the writer’s understanding of what makes things similar or different, or of this or that type.

*The Descriptive Mode* is deployed in order to make any object—person, place, thing, or event—as present to the senses of the reader as it is to the senses or memory of the writer.

*The Persuasive Mode* is used when the writer explicitly wishes to convince the reader of something, and asks the reader to share or at least consider the writer’s point of view or belief by way of reasoning, emotional appeal, and/or the writer’s own authority as a speaker.

These modes interweave, of course: narration employs description in order to orient the reader, and description alone does not hold the interest very long if it isn’t attached in some way to a narrative or sequence; a writer’s statements of comparison, contrast, division, or definition asks the reader to agree that the objects under discussion are in fact similar or different, belong together or apart, are this and not that. Though the organization of this text does not explicitly reflect this interweaving, readers are invited

to discuss any reading collected here under the heading of any (or all four) of the basic modes.

Ashar Foley, December 2017



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