

Critical Voter Lesson Plan – Modes of Persuasion

Overview

Key components of any political speech, advertisement, debate performance or other type of persuasive communication are logic (logos), emotion (pathos) and authority/connection to the audience (ethos). These are the Three Modes of Persuasion first codified by the Aristotle and are as relevant today as they were more than two-thousand years ago.

An understanding of all three Modes of Persuasion (including how logos, pathos and ethos work together to make persuasive communication more effective) can help us become more successful communicators as well as help us understand how political rhetoric and other types of arguments try to persuade (and sometimes manipulate) us.

Terminology

Important vocabulary terms used in this lesson include:

- Modes of Persuasion
- Logos (argument by logic)
- Pathos (argument by emotion)
- Ethos (argument by authority)
- Formal logic
- Premise
- Conclusion
- Syllogism

Goals

The goal if this lesson is to give students an understanding how an argument (or any type of persuasive speech or presentation) can include:

- An appeal to logic (logos)
- An appeal to emotion (pathos)
- An appeal to authority/shared values (ethos)

Students will be introduced to each of these three elements individually. In addition, they will understand how the correct balancing of logos, pathos and ethos can lead to successful persuasive communication.

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Primary Resources

The following resources are available at the www.criticalvoter.com web site to support this lesson:

- **Critical Voter Podcast 003 – Modes of Persuasion:** A 30 minute audio lesson covering the three Modes of Persuasion (logos, pathos and ethos)
- **Quiz** – A short quiz designed to determine if someone has listened to and understood the podcast.
- **Blog Entries** – The Critical Voter blog contains multiple blog entries dealing with the issues covered in the podcast (look for entries the week of August 19, 2012 or use the categories menu to look for stories in the category of Logos, Pathos and Ethos).

Additional Resources

Links to options for studying Aristotle and other classical thinkers can be found on the [Critical Voter Resources page](#).

Suggested Activities

Activity	Notes on this activity
Have students listen to the podcast and answer the quiz questions to ensure they have listened and understood the concepts covered in the lesson.	The podcast can be played in class or assigned as homework. The quiz is made up of four questions which were designed to be easily answerable by anyone who has listened to the podcast lesson in its entirety.
Discuss (and look for examples of) arguments based purely on logic (logos). Work together to “boil down” the logical argument to a simple set of logical statements (either a syllogism or a simple IF...THEN statement).	Examples could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short political statements (such as answers to questions during a press conference)• Empirical arguments (such as a scientific or mathematical proof)• Logical appeals from teachers or parents that students behave in a certain way (taken either from real life or fiction/television, such as “Wear a jacket or you’ll catch a cold.”)

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Activity	Notes on this activity
<p>Discuss (and look for examples of) arguments based purely on pathos (emotion).</p> <p>Discuss which emotions are being targeted by the examples and whether the appeal is being made to “good” vs. “bad” emotion.</p>	<p>Examples could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspaper/magazine advertisements or television commercials • Emotionally manipulative political speeches or newspaper editorials • Emotional appeals from teachers or parents to try to convince students behave in a certain way (taken either from real life or fiction/television, such as “There are kids starving in the world who would love to eat the vegetables you’re not touching.”)
<p>Review different types of presentations (classroom lectures, business presentations, political speeches, etc.) and identify the different ways the speaker is trying to create an ethos-based connection with the audience.</p>	<p>Examples could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting a speech with a story or joke related to an understanding of the specifics of the audience (such as a reference to the performance of a local sports team) • Statements of appreciation to specific named individuals in the audience • The use of industry or other community-specific language that the audience will understand • Declarations of shared values
<p>Provide students with three different colored markers and copies of one or more political speeches (current or historic).</p> <p>Ask them to color code text in the speech based on whether the speaker is making an appeal to logic (logos), emotion (pathos) or is trying to make a connection to the audience (ethos).</p>	<p>After color coding the speech, ask the students to comment on whether the primary persuasive focus of the speech was logical, emotional or ethos-based. Discuss whether or not the speaker got the right balance of the three Modes of Persuasion.</p>