ABSTRACT

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RESPONDING TO STUDENT WRITING USING RHETORICAL APPEALS

By Abbey Leigh Reynolds

This thesis reflects on case studies I conducted with two students from my English 111 class in order to find out if responding to student writing using ethos, pathos and logos was an effective teaching practice. My research study began fall semester of 2004 and was completed spring semester of 2005. My research questions were: Does responding to student writing using the rhetorical appeals help students understand how to improve their writing? Do they understand my rhetorically based comments and know how to use them to make revisions? Did they revise and how?
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RESPONDING TO STUDENT WRITING USING RHETORICAL APPEALS

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INTRODUCTION

Like most graduate students, I was very anxious about my first day of teaching. My worst fear was that I would get so nervous on the first day of class that I would sit down and act like a student out of comfort. Once I sat I would have to stay seated or they would think I was odd. So, I imagined myself sitting with my students, wondering where the teacher could be. “Wonder if she got lost?” However, I realized that I would eventually be expected to teach so this form of flight could not be attempted.

In order to decrease my anxiety, I decided to arrive to my classroom ten minutes early so I could prepare before my students started filing in. My assumption of freshmen tardiness was destroyed when I walked into a classroom with nearly ten students already seated in the stadium-like lecture hall, all looking down on me. My face must have been bright red but I suspect they didn’t notice since they were sitting in the dark. No doubt they were waiting for the “teacher figure” to show up and turn the lights on for them.

I scurried toward the restroom to check my face and was stopped by a weary student searching for his English class in the Biology hall. You see, my classroom was actually a biology lab room with rows of stacked seating and old style chairs with desks that flipped upward. There were pictures of frogs and fish in the hallway and a huge lab station in the front of my room. While the weary student was not in my class, I know he was sent from God because in the exact moment I needed it most he gave me a sense of confidence to face my class for a second try. I thought, “Well, at least I look like a teacher, right?”

So, I sent the weary student in search of his English class, neither of us knew where he was going. Then I walked over and turned the lights on, which in fact turned out to be a mistake because it only made me feel more self-conscious. I told the students that we were going to do an icebreaker to get things rolling and that I, being the teacher who is supposed to be the least nervous (and because I had already prepared what I would say about myself), would go first. I said, “Hello, my name is Abbey Reynolds. I will be your instructor this semester. I am a graduate student in the Department of English. I have a degree in Communication and Professional Writing.” Then I just stood there… crickets chirping… and eventually said, “I was going to say something else but I can’t think of it at the moment.”

Looking back, my first teaching experience was a disaster. Yet, while I must admit that my first semester was exceptionally painful, it was also exceptionally rewarding. Like most first
time teachers, I was lacking confidence but eventually created a professional identity and learned a lot about my pedagogy and myself. However, the most important thing I learned the first semester was that responding to student writing is the most difficult task a teacher will encounter.

I had discussed the difficulty of responding to student writing with many frightened first year teachers; however, it wasn’t until the night before I had to turn the first papers back to my students that I started wondering whether my students would understand or value my comments. I layed in bed that night imagining the students revolting, throwing their papers back at me, or worse, asking me to explain why I made a particular comment on their paper. Like everything I do for the first time, I decided to rehearse. As I was explaining my grading style to my pillow I suddenly realized, even though I didn’t use the terms, I was using the rhetorical appeals to respond to student writing. I immediately felt a surge of confidence. I was relieved to find out that I, in fact, had a response style, and it was a good one.

It may seem strange that a first year teacher would accidentally respond to student writing using the rhetorical appeals but it doesn’t seem strange to me. I have a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communication and so, as an undergraduate, I took many classes in rhetorical and communication theory. Because classical rhetoric stresses only a few well-known and mostly Greek philosophers, I, of course, studied Aristotle. Also, my degree emphasis was interpersonal communication, which is why I continue an interest in analyzing ethos and pathos. It seems natural that most teachers are trained to respond to logic in writing, yet I was also responding to things like the student’s credibility on the topic or his or her relationship with the audience. I was excited to realize I was responding this way because until that moment I felt so insecure in my capability as a teacher. I could barely remember my name on the first day of class so this was a major breakthrough.

The morning after my epiphany I asked the students, “What makes writing good?” Most of them were unable to answer and immediately wanted to know what I thought. So, I asked them to start naming qualities of good writing. They responded with things like “claim/thesis” and “introduction, body and conclusion,” which I listed on the board under the heading logos. They weren’t able to list things under the headings ethos and pathos, possibly because students often have problems identifying themselves as authors or anyone other than the teacher as the audience; therefore, I listed things for them. For example, I wrote, “author doesn’t contradict
him/herself” under ethos, and “considers audiences values” under pathos. The goals of this exercise were to introduce the terms and to have students recognize there is more to writing than just logos. Finally, I let the students know that I would start using these terms to respond to their writing and that we would be discussing the terms often.

Throughout the semester I asked students to submit papers with memos explaining how they used ethos, pathos and logos in their writing, and I responded to their writing using these terms. My hope was that responding to student writing using ethos, pathos and logos would help students have a better understanding of the terms and how they function in writing. Then knowing how these terms function, students would be able to analyze their own writing, make more informed choices in writing, and have more control and confidence in their writing. I also hoped that understanding the terms would help them become better readers. Further, I connected this response style to in class discussion, providing students the opportunity to help build their own definitions of the terms and context for understanding my comments on their writing.

However, as I reflected on my first semester of teaching, I wondered if my comments were helpful and if I could have done more to help the students understand the rhetorical triangle. While I developed my commenting considerably since I first started using this response style, I decided to examine whether the students understood my comments and if the comments helped them revise their papers. Therefore, during the fall semester of 2004, one year after my first semester of teaching, I conducted a research study to investigate the effectiveness of responding to student writing using the rhetorical appeals. This paper explains the results of that study.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many composition teachers have studied the practice of responding to student writing and developed theories based on what works well within their classrooms. They have also conducted research to provide the composition community with information to support their theories. While I am not aware of any research that has been done on responding to student writing using the rhetorical appeals, there has been plenty of research on writing assessment in the past twenty years. Before beginning my study I decided to read the most well known research and theories in order to determine how my research fits into the field of composition and rhetoric.

In 1982, Sommers, Brannon and Knoblach used several methodologies to question if students understood the comments they received on their papers and if the comments motivated revision. In her essay “Responding to Student Writing,” Sommers writes that they studied the commenting styles on first and second drafts of 35 teachers at 2 different universities and interviewed a representative number of these teachers and their students. These teachers commented on the same set of three essays, and in an effort to limit bias one of these essays was entered into a computer that contained “Writer’s Workbench,” a computer program that can read and comment on essays. Their first finding was that “teachers comments can take students’ attention away from their own purposes in writing a particular text and focus that attention on the teachers’ purpose in commenting” (Sommers 149). They found that students are given contradictory messages, such as to condense a sentence but to develop the paragraph. Further, they discovered that students do not understand the degree of importance of each comment and that many comments suggest that the text is already finished.

Their second discovery was that “most teachers’ comments are not text specific and could be interchanged, rubberstamped, from text to text” (Sommers 152). They suggest that there is an unwritten cannon for commenting on student writing that allows teachers to be vague without telling students how to improve their paper specifically. This is interesting since the researchers felt it was a good idea to have a computer respond to one of the essays. In summary, they found that “teachers do not respond to student writing with the kind of thoughtful commenting which will help students engage with the issues they are writing about or which will help them think about their purposes and goals in writing a specific text” (Sommers 154). They suggest that the key to commenting is to make sure that what is taught in the classroom is somehow connected to the comments we make on students’ papers.
When I used *ethos, pathos* and *logos* to respond to student writing I heeded Sommers advice by using the terms in the classroom, providing a context for students to understand my comments. Responding to student writing using *ethos, pathos* and *logos* may sound like a vague way to respond to student writing; however, these comments have an abundance of context supporting them. Even when I simply write, “Great *ethos,*” the student is able to draw context from our classroom discussion on *ethos.* Therefore, students are able to make a connection between what is taught in the classroom and what I teach through commenting. Also, because we are constantly working as a class to define *ethos* we end up discussing it much more than we discuss other aspects of writing. Therefore, students are more likely to understand comments using the rhetorical appeals than comments regarding the use of a signal phrase, which is usually only discussed once.

Additionally, I wonder if responding using the rhetorical appeals steers students from their original goals for the text, as Sommers claims typical teacher comments do. It seems any sort of responding would provide this result if the student didn’t feel they had the authority to make choices in their writing. In their essay titled “Students’ Rights to Their Own Texts,” written in 1982, Brannon and Knoblauch conceded that it is the author’s right to make decisions with his or her text and the more authority an author has the more we allow them to retain the rights to these decisions. They expressed that writers depend on the fact that their readers will withhold judgment of their text, even if it is very difficult. However, “this normal and dynamic connection between a writer’s authority and the quality of a reader’s attention is altered because of the peculiar relationship between the teacher and student” (Brannon & Knoblauch 158). While the role of the teacher is to provide the student with the feedback needed to write a better text, many times this feedback only serves to show the student that the teacher’s agenda is superior.

Since I comment on student authority in their writing we often have discussions framed around the idea that students have authority over their writing. Nevertheless, I have found that while the students appear to be thinking about their authority and making choices in their writing, they are also motivated to make these choices because of my positive feedback or good grades. The nature of the student-teacher relationship requires that teachers have some authority over a student’s text. We must teach writing and we must eventually grade writing.
Further, Brannon and Knoblauch conducted a clinical study to determine whether teachers’ Ideal Texts interfere with their ability to read and comment on student writing in ways that help the student achieve his or her goals. Their study revealed that the teachers made assumptions about the student’s writing based on his or her Ideal Text. Brannon and Knoblauch “asked students to write an essay on the Lindbergh kidnapping trial, stating the purpose and intended audience” (Brannon & Knoblauch 160). They chose one student’s essay and asked forty teachers “to assess the quality of this writing in light of what the writer was trying to do. They responded in one of two ways, neither of which recognized the writer’s control over choices” (Brannon & Knoblauch 160). The teachers were either conservative or liberal. The conservative teachers tended “to underestimate the writer’s competence, using the Ideal Text to measure degrees of failure” (Brannon & Knoblauch 159). However, the liberal teacher was more likely to overestimate the writer’s competence noting that some quality of their writing excused their failure to write the Ideal Text. Both groups of teachers ignored that the student was actually making choices in his writing. Brannon and Knoblauch suggest that this could be avoided if the teacher-student relationship allowed teachers to consult the student writer before making assumptions about his or her choices. Unless a teacher conferences with every student on every paper it would be difficult to determine whether the teacher is responding to her Ideal Text or to the student’s Ideal Text. However, I have found that providing comments that ask students questions about their writing is less directive than just assuming their logic is incorrect.

Furthermore, because it takes so long to provide context for comments, we should consider alternative methods of commenting. In order to improve his pedagogy, Chris Anson conducted an informal study using tape-recorded response. In his article, “Talking about the Text: The Use of Recorded Commentary in Response to Student Writing” written in 1997, Anson writes that recorded response has changed the tone of his comments. He feels as though his response has a narrative quality and he often provides much more feedback and advising than he would in his written responses. He states that his students now prefer the recorded comments and are able to provide the technology (a blank tape) for the assessment. He recommends that we start considering using different forms of technology to respond to student writing because it can be a welcomed change to the stale, authoritative tone used in traditional written responses. This seems like a great idea in Universities where technology is equally available to every student.
However, teachers can also provide context for their comments by finding ways to connect their response style to their classroom goals. Consequently, students will receive the context they need to understand the comments. On the other hand, in the case of using the rhetorical appeals to respond to student writing, I’m not entirely concerned that students know exactly what my comments mean. As long as they have an understanding of the rhetorical terms they will be capable of considering how my comments relate to their own goals.

Responding to student writing is such a major part of teaching composition and it is important to provide feedback that gives direction and also allows students to remain confident in their writing. Richard Straub published his essay “The Concept of Control in Teacher Response: Defining the Varieties of ‘Directive’ and ‘Facilitative’ Response” in 1996 in order to draw attention to the binary teachers of writing have constructed between the terms “Directive” and “Facilitative.” Straub writes that professional talk in the past 20 years has been focused on providing response to student writing that is not directive (critical, highly controlling, more local than global, closed questioning); however, we must be aware that there are degrees of control and that sometimes directive comments are appropriate. He states, “Given the power relations that adhere in the classroom, all teachers comments in some way are evaluative and directive” (Straub 148). He notes that it is possible to be directive and facilitative at the same time.

Straub also points out that we must learn how to comment in ways that fit our teaching styles, classroom goals and the needs of our students. While there are definitely commenting styles that can be considered inappropriate, and even harsh, as writing teachers we should respect and value our differences in commenting.

Using the rhetorical appeals to respond to student writing can be directive or facilitative depending on the focus of the responder. This response style does not prevent the teacher from using both local and global comments and the comments can still be phrased in a positive way. For example, my end comments provide global comments regarding the authors overall ethos, pathos and logos. These comments are less controlling than typical local commenting that focuses mainly on error. I also try to focus my local commenting on positive aspects of the student’s use of the rhetorical appeals and ask questions about the student’s logic instead of assuming my logic should be privileged. Further, because the definitions of ethos, pathos and logos are negotiable and constantly changing, students can make revisions based on their understanding of the terms.
Like Straub, Don Daiker suggests that we need to be more aware of how our responses will be understood by our students. In 1989, Daiker wrote “Learning to Praise” in response to a study he conducted on response to student writing. He asked 24 colleagues to mark an essay as though they had received it in one of their freshman writing courses. Of the 378 separate marks made on the papers, 338 (89.4%) of them cited error while only 40 (10.6%) gave praise (Daiker 153). Daiker remarks that the surprising part about his study was that the department had recently circulated a memo asking teachers to not mark every error on a student’s papers because students could not handle that much criticism. The memo also suggested that teachers make sure to use praise in their responses.

Daiker realizes that giving praise on every student’s work is not an easy task. In fact, he suggests that we must learn to praise and apply it in a conscious manner. He also recommends that praise be given on an individual basis to note good improvements and even modest achievements. I agree that most students respond well to praise but too much praise can contribute to the idea of a finished product. Some students aren’t able to see the need for revising if they are given too much positive feedback. However, comments can be both positive and constructive. We should consider each student’s needs when giving praise in order to spark confidence while motivating revision.

It is easier to provide positive feedback through global commenting; however, it is also necessary to provide more specific comments, which are better made locally. Beginning in 1985, Conners and Lunsford, conducted research to find out if teachers comments “have become more or less prescriptive, longer or shorter, more positive or more negative” (Conners & Lunsford 200). They conducted a rhetorical analysis of texts to compare historical information with current trends of teacher commenting, specifically looking for global commenting (comments that address large scale structure/development issues in student’s writing). As historians, Conners and Lunsford declared in their essay “Teachers Rhetorical Comments on Students Papers” that teachers responding to student writing, beyond editing, did not exist prior to the early 1950s. In the early 1900s teachers relied on composition rating scales, “by which more qualitative elements of composition could be reliably judged” (Conners & Lunsford 202). While this form of assessment served administrators more than students, attention to correcting student papers remained the focus until the 1950s when practitioners started suggesting that teachers engage their students in rhetorical dialogue.
Conners and Lunsford began collecting assessed writing in 1985 and later developed a checklist consisting of different kinds of global commenting. In 1991 they assembled a group of “experienced writing teachers and eager readers” to review 3,000 papers using this checklist (Conners & Lunsford 206). While Conners and Lunsford’s study yielded very in-depth results, the least surprising were the range of rhetorical comments. Only 6% of the 3,000 students received comments on their paper regarding audience, only 11% received comments about the purpose of the paper, 28% received comments on overall organization and a notable 56% received comments regarding providing supporting evidence, examples or details. Conners and Lunsford suggest that the disregard for audience may be because it is assumed that the teacher is the audience. Finally, 77% of the papers received global commenting, either at the end or beginning of the paper. As I alluded to in my introduction, teachers are trained to give and students expect to receive comments regarding logos, even if the term is never used. However, most students do not receive feedback regarding ethos or pathos. Students should be made aware of their own authority and how the audience will perceive their choices.

Assessing writing is difficult which is why the composition community has been striving to find easier ways to respond quickly to student writing. In 1999, White explained how symbolism could be used to assess writing using Scoring Guides in his essay titled, “Using Scoring Guides to Assess Writing.” His system is numeric and has clear expectations: 1 (incompetent) through 6 (superior). The expectations listed under each symbol change for the assignment and can be negotiated among the class. This way the purpose of the assignment is clear. White notes that when standards for performance are public, students have a clear understanding of how their work will be assessed while writing. Further, they will have some responsibility in how their writing will be judged.

White states that Scoring Guides also make self-assessment and peer review more successful. Students are able to assess their own writing and the writing of their peers because they have clear expectations of the assignment. White writes, “Since the students now have both a vocabulary and a scale to use for discussing and evaluating the writings they examine, they need no longer deliver only the vague and unhelpful comments common to unstructured peer groups” (White 211).

Responding to student writing using ethos, pathos and logos is similar to White’s scoring guides in that they provide context for the student, they are negotiated and provide a vocabulary
for discussion. However, using the terms *ethos, pathos* and *logos* also provide valuable feedback on the student’s authority, emotion and logic that is not always addressed in typical commenting.

Many of these studies have determined that students do not understand the comments we make on their papers. They also show that, when commenting, teachers need to be aware of their own authority over the student’s work. Because responding to student writing is integral to the teaching of writing it is important that we continue to theorize and research ways of responding to student writing which will lead to understanding and revision. This is why I decided to conduct research to investigate the effectiveness of responding to student writing using the rhetorical appeals.
My research study began fall semester of 2004 and was completed spring semester of 2005. My research questions were: Does responding to student writing using the rhetorical appeals help students understand how to improve their writing? Do they understand my rhetorically based comments and know how to use them to make revisions? Did they revise and how?

Like most teacher-researchers I find ways to informally conduct research on my pedagogy as I am teaching. Last year I began asking students to read the comments I made on their papers and summarize them in their own words. They were instructed to focus solely on summarizing but could respond to my comments in an additional paragraph if they felt that was necessary. I conducted this informal research to make sure that the students were reading my comments and that they understood them. If a student didn’t understand my comment I responded back to them to help clarify my comment. Because the students were learning the meanings of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* for the first time, some of them confused the terms. However, most of the time I received great feedback from the students. It seemed that not only did they understand my comments but also they expanded them in appropriate ways.

Although I had been performing informal research already, I decided to conduct a more controlled study in order to provide additional results. As a teacher-researcher, I decided to conduct qualitative research in my own classroom in order to answer my research questions. I conducted two case studies using volunteers from my English 111 course last fall.

The Institutional Review Board for Human Subject Research (IRB) approved this study in September of 2004. In October, I began recruiting participants by telling students enrolled in my English 111 course about my research project and providing them with voluntary consent forms. A copy of the voluntary consent form is provided in Appendix A. Each voluntary consent form had a campus mail envelope addressed to Dr. Lewiecki-Wilson attached to it. They were instructed to return the consent form to Dr. Lewiecki-Wilson because I wanted their identities to be anonymous. When this recruiting method failed, Dr. Lewiecki-Wilson came to my class and asked students to return the consent forms to her in person. From this method I obtained four student volunteers, two of whom completed the research study. I had hoped to conduct case studies on at least four students.
The study was confidential so I do not know much about the participants. Because they were both enrolled in my course, I do know that they were freshman enrolled in their first semester at Miami University. The students were not compensated for their participation.

In order to increase internal validity I felt it was important to safeguard the confidentiality of the student participants. I felt this could help limit my bias and their dishonesty. I get close to many of my students and I didn’t want them to feel obligated to participate or to participate in a way that would compromise my results. Therefore, Dr. Lewiecki-Wilson retained the signed voluntary consent forms and gave the participants information directly to Sarah Bowles, who conducted the interviews.

During the semester I engaged in normal classroom activities (discussion of rhetorical terms, writing papers, peer response, writer’s memos, etc.). As a class we discussed the meaning of ethos, pathos, logos in relation to every sequence required by Miami’s standard syllabus. At the beginning of the semester I asked the students if they had ever heard of ethos, pathos or logos. None of the students indicated that they had ever heard of the terms. However, I am aware that they may have known a lot about the rhetorical triangle prior to my class, even if they were unaware of the terms themselves. I will discuss this limitation further in my reflection.

In addition to constant discussions of the terms, I also responded to student writing using the specific terms of ethos, pathos and logos in my marginal and end comments. A sample end comment worksheet is provided in Appendix B. I made copies of graded work from the rhetorical analysis paper, argumentative research paper and final revised paper of 24 students enrolled in my English 111 course. These three papers were used in the interviews with the research participants.

In order to provide increased anonymity to the research participants, the students met with Sarah Bowles, a third party interviewer whom I trained. Sarah is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of English at Miami University. She completed English 735: Research Methods at Miami University in the spring of 2004. Sarah was instructed to give directions, answer questions, probe for more information and ask follow-up questions; however, she chose only to give initial directions and asked no questions of the subjects. A copy of the participant instruction sheet is provided in Appendix C. IRB specifications did not allow me to interview the students myself. I will discuss the consequences of this in my reflection.
At the beginning of spring semester Sarah met with the participants. In an attempt to hear the student’s voices they were asked to give an oral history. The research could be categorized as an interview; however, the students were not asked any questions. I wanted the students to be able to speak about their experience without leading questions from an authority figure. At the interview, Sarah provided the students with a copy of their work and a participant instruction sheet (Appendix C). They then chose a pseudonym to replace their real name on their papers so that their identity would not be associated with their observations. The participants chose pseudonyms, which replaced their real name on all information I received about them. The students chose the names Taylor and Sarah. These are the names I have used to analyze my research. Their real identification has not been associated with their responses in any way. I do not know the gender of the participants; however, I have referred to both of them with feminine pronouns.

Using the copied work, the interviewer asked the participant to read their papers aloud, stopping to read and describe how they understood my comments. They were recorded on a tape recorder. The students followed logically through their writing from the course. First they read their rhetorical analysis paper (major paper #1). Then they read the argument paper (major paper #2). Finally, they reviewed their final projects. In this part of the interview the student was handed their final paper. The assignment was to revise or recast one of the two aforementioned papers. Then each student was asked to explain why he or she revised or recast the paper the way they did. Specifically, they were asked, “How did the paper change from the first draft I commented on?” Both of these students choose to recast one of their papers into a different genre for the final.

Each interview lasted approximately one hour. It took approximately one month to schedule the interviews and complete data collection. Once the interviews were complete the tapes were sent to a transcriber. The interviewer shred all papers not being used in the research study. The tapes were destroyed after they were transcribed.
CLASSROOM CONTEXT

At the end of English 111 last year I began a final discussion about the rhetorical appeals by handing out a worksheet I had created showing ways to use \textit{ethos, pathos} and \textit{logos} in writing. I have provided a copy of this handout in Appendix D. The reaction to this handout was shocking to me. First, many students thanked me as though I had provided a valuable parting gift. Second, as I began going over the handout, a few students seemed exhausted by what I considered a summary discussion of the semester’s focus. One student joked that if we discussed the terms anymore he would start having nightmares about them. We talked about the terms regularly throughout the semester. In addition to the comments I provided on their writing, we discussed how the appeals related to each of the required sequences, the students used them to respond to writing and we often related the terms to things outside composition.

How the Sequences Introduced \textit{Ethos, Pathos and Logos}

I believe that response style should reflect classroom goals; therefore, throughout the semester I incorporated discussions of the rhetorical appeals into the Standard English Composition syllabus. This syllabus consisted of five sequences: Autoethnography, Rhetorical Analysis, Entering Public Debate, Design Your Own Project and Reflection. Each sequence consisted of small assignments that lead up to a paper or project. In this section I will briefly explain each sequence and describe a few exercises using the rhetorical appeals from each sequence.

The Autoethnography sequence lasted for the first three weeks of the semester. In this sequence students were introduced to the theme of the course: Writing as Citizens of a Diverse World. They were also introduced to the rhetorical appeals on the second day of class. I assigned several journal entries and other assignments to help students reflect on the cultures they belong to, as well as times when they were outsiders. Then I assigned the autoethnography paper, which was approximately three pages long. The purpose of the paper was to critically analyze their culture from an insider’s perspective. Because insider status was so important to this narrative we spent time discussing how \textit{ethos} is created or granted by the audience. We debated the reasons why outsiders would not be granted the authority to discuss artifacts or aspects about another culture and how credibility would have to be created if an outsider wanted to discuss these aspects.
The second sequence was Rhetorical Analysis, which lasted four weeks. The purpose of this sequence was to teach students to rhetorically analyze texts. Therefore, we completed many exercises using the rhetorical appeals. We started the sequence by analyzing magazine advertisements for their use of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. For example, we discussed how Snuggle uses both *ethos* and *pathos* to persuade us to purchase their fabric softener. The product has credibility because it is a brand name reliable product and evokes an emotional response by using a cute fluffy teddy bear that reminds us of childhood. Snuggle has also provided scratch-n-sniff advertisements for new scents, which evoke different emotional responses for each of us. This was probably the most successful exercise we did to discuss the rhetorical triangle.

We later analyzed former President Clinton’s speech at the Vietnam Memorial in 1993. We discussed the choices President Clinton made in order to be granted authority from a hostile audience who believe him to be a draft dodger. For example, President Clinton evoked *pathos* through repetition and word choice, such as his use of the word freedom. The students went line-by-line discussing his use of rhetorical appeals, which led us to consider how the appeals function and overlap.

We also read an article from *The Onion*, in order to discuss rhetorical situation, rhetor, purpose and audience. We discussed what conditions were necessary for us, as the audience, to find the article humorous. Additionally, we read an article about Starbucks and discussed how cultural narratives confirm the rightness of our worldview. We discussed how unaware we are about the ways our culture socially constructs our identities by creating these cultural narratives and how outsiders may view our behavior and ideology differently than we do.

In order to prepare them to write a rhetorical analysis, I asked the students to choose a text to analyze. First, they summarized the text and then they completed a rhetorical analysis worksheet. Using the information from the worksheet they each wrote a four-to-six page rhetorical analysis of their text. I asked them to focus on the author’s *ethos*, the emotional appeals he or she uses, and the arrangement and logic of the text.

Entering Public Debate was the third sequence of the semester. It lasted for four weeks. As in the previous sequences, we investigated the rhetorical appeals again in this sequence. We discussed making an ethical argument by reading Linda Pastan’s poem “Ethics,” which asks the audience to decide if they would save an old woman or an original Rembrandt if there were a fire at a museum. We discussed both lines of argument and how important compassion is to
establishing credibility. However, we also discussed how ethos could be established in different ways if we choose to save the painting.

During this sequence I also asked the students to write a journal entry asking them to consider how they would persuade a friend to go on a blind date using the rhetorical appeals. This allowed them to once again relate the terms to their own experience. They typically said things like, “Using my ethos I would tell my friend that I am their best friend and they have to trust me. Using pathos I would say that the girl is hot. Using logos I would explain that I have never let my friend down in the past and won’t let him down this time.” We ended the sequence by writing an argumentative research paper. The purpose of the argument paper was to research a public issue and form an original claim. The paper was between four to six pages long.

Sequence four, Design Your Own Project, lasted three weeks. The purpose of the project was to design a multi-genre project on a public issue while working in groups of three to four students. The students presented their projects to the class as a group. Then they wrote a memo reflecting on the project, the presentation and the contributions of each group member.

The final sequence, Reflection, lasted two weeks. The students were asked to revise or recast either the rhetorical analysis or argument paper. If they chose to revise the paper, they were required to show major revision from their last draft. They were required to submit the last draft I commented on, a draft that showed they used two revision exercises and a draft that received peer response. The students could also choose to recast their paper into a different genre. Many students chose to recast their paper because it allowed them to be creative. Most of these students conferenced with me to discuss how to write for different genres and audiences. All of the students submitted a writer’s memo explaining the choices they made in revising or recasting their paper and a reflective letter about the course.

How Students Used Ethos, Pathos and Logos to Comment on Writing

In order to make sure I wasn’t the only one using the rhetorical appeals to comment on writing, the students used the appeals to comment on each other’s writing during peer review and about their own writing prior to handing it in to me. I felt the students must practice using the terms to evaluate writing in order to better understand how I used the appeals to comment on their writing.
The class before each paper was due was devoted to peer response. The students broke off into small groups of three to four students. Each student provided their group members with a copy of their draft. They read the draft out loud while the group members followed along. It was always difficult to get students to read their papers out loud but they usually found the exercise to be successful. After the student finished reading, the group members discussed the paper and filled out a group peer review worksheet for the author. This worksheet was molded to fit the assignment; however, it always asked the group to identify how the author used ethos, pathos and logos in their text.

At the end of each sequence the students submit a writer’s memo with the final draft of their paper. The writer’s memo is a worksheet that they fill out in class the day the paper is due. An example is provided in Appendix E. The writer’s memo asks, What is the main point of this piece?; List two strengths of your piece; Where or when did you struggle the most? Why?; If you had more time, energy, ideas, or different parameters, where would you go next with this piece?; How did you demonstrate ethos, pathos and logos in this paper?; and How do you think I will read your paper and do you agree with that reading? I asked them these questions because I wanted them to reflect on their own writing and consider their choices. I also wanted to see how they used the rhetorical appeals to analyze their own writing.

When assessing their writing, I started by reading their writer’s memo. Students often indicated they demonstrated ethos, pathos, and logos in ways I had not considered. For example, one student wrote that he demonstrated ethos by reading the text he was going to analyze. While I consider demonstrating knowledge of the text in your analysis a way to show you are a reliable rhetor, I had not thought that just reading the text gave him ethos. Often students would demonstrate their confusion about the rhetorical appeals in their memos. Or, they would demonstrate their knowledge of how the appeals overlap.

**How Real Life Relates to Ethos, Pathos and Logos**

Occasionally, we had the opportunity to begin class by discussing how one or more of the rhetorical appeals was used in real life. The most interesting discussion of the semester occurred when our classroom space was invaded by an “authority figure.” The students had been working in groups on a collaborative writing project and several groups hit a stopping point. They were scattered around the room in groups of three or four students. Seeing that they were done I
decided to make an announcement and let them leave a little early. As I was making the announcement a teacher from another class entered and laid her things on the table at the front of the room. I looked at her, finished my announcement and allowed the students to leave. Several students came up to me to ask questions about conferencing while the woman proceeded to unpack her belongings. It was now fifteen minutes prior to the start of her class. The woman was taking off her jacket and getting comfortable. She didn’t realize I was a teacher. I was wearing jeans and a sweatshirt, evidently not the uniform of a credible teacher.

She smiled at me when I approached her (with that eager teacher look that we give students when they are about to ask if they can use the restroom). I said, “We did get done a little early today but my class usually runs until 9:30.” She looked shocked. “Could I possibly be the teacher?” She apologized to me for not realizing she had entered during my class.

When this teacher entered a room full of students (assuming the teacher was absent) she was comfortable invading their space because students have little ethos in the university (or she was just incredibly rude). More importantly, her intrusion bothered me because I was sensitive about the struggle for authority that I was dealing with as both student and teacher. Did I have ethos and in what instances could I or should I evoke it? If I didn’t assert my authority in my classroom I would fall short of the expectations of my students, and for a few students I did. However, I also felt that the ways in which I lacked power in the university allowed my students to relate to me as a peer, which was always helpful in creating knowledge as a classroom as opposed to the top down method used in lecture halls throughout campus.

I wanted my students to see how complicated it was to define ethos, therefore, I began the next class by discussing whether students have ethos in the university. When discussing this with students I got a sense that they did not expect to have ethos in the university. Several students indicated that they were aware of the event because they perceived the woman as being rude to me, the teacher. It wasn’t until I pointed out to them that my supposed absence from the room did not give the woman the right to walk into a room full of students that they even acknowledged the idea of their ethos as a discussion point.

Andrea Lunsford explores authority in the university in her essay “Refiguring Classroom Authority,” written in 1999. Lunsford reflects on the problems with authority in the classroom and the difficulty involved in refiguring that authority to be a more positive term. She states that one problem with authority is that the term is tied historically and politically to the author
construct, that is, that we own our ideas and contributions. Another problem is that authority is masculine, individual and exclusionary. Lastly, she argues that the aim of authority is to gain control over others. She states, “the teachers and scholars I have read and talked to all seem to be reaching beyond classroom models based on traditional conceptions of authority to define not a classroom authority, but a classroom ethos based on dialogism and connection (and hence struggle) rather than on hierarchy and order” (Lunsford 70).

She would rather redefine authority rather than throw away the term altogether; however, she realizes that this is a difficult challenge because of the expectations students bring to the classroom. She asked students to define authority and most defined it as being masculine or negative. She writes, “These expectations, these deeply embedded perceptions of authority, mean that students who hold them will not easily be able to cede authority to teachers who act in ways that break their expectations” (Lunsford 72). When discussing authority with my students I realized that they were not all that interested in their ethos until I pointed it out to them. Still, it is much easier for students to recognize their authority over their writing than it is for students to acknowledge their authority in the classroom space. This is because authority is tied to the author construct and the idea of individualism. While they acknowledged the inappropriateness of the teacher who entered our classroom, I do not believe they felt I shouldn’t have authority over them. Further, I was not always sure I shouldn’t have authority over them.

Lunsford argues that the way to refigure classroom authority may be to use a different term. She suggests that we focus on negotiating classroom responsibility, instead of authority. She states, “If members of a class agree or contract to take responsibility for their words, actions, and positions – to and with others in the class – then such responsibilities can become the basis for or sites of ongoing negotiation and for the construction of an ethical classroom community” (Lunsford 74-5). In order to accomplish this goal she suggests we need to change the way we use time, space and rewards. While she does not explore these suggestions I imagine that my students could have benefited if I changed the way I graded their writing, especially since I wanted them to consider my comments as suggestions for revision rather than requirements for a higher grade. Perhaps if I provided evaluative comments but delayed grading until the final portfolio students would be more inclined to consider their ethos over mine.
CASE STUDIES

For this research study, I responded to my student’s writing using the specific terms of ethos, pathos and logos in my marginal and end comments because I wanted to see if the students understood my comments and if and how they used my comments to revise. For my end comments I used a worksheet that had comment space for each of these terms. This way I could give very specific information on what I mean by “good ethos” in my marginal comments. For example, under the heading ethos I might write, “You demonstrated ethos through your deep analysis of the text, as well as knowledge of the rhetorical situation surrounding the text. This shows you are a reliable rhetor.”

When responding to student writing I like to focus on providing positive feedback, while commenting on only a few problem areas. For example, last semester I had a student who was severely unsympathetic while arguing a sensitive topic; therefore, my feedback focused on how his lack of compassion affected his ethos, pathos and logos. In fact, focusing on the appeals to show how a callous argument does not work has been very effective for me because it forces students to justify their decisions in relation to how their audience will feel about the decisions.

As I stated in my methodology section, when I handed back their papers I asked students to read the comments I made on their papers and summarize them in their own words. They were instructed to focus solely on summarizing but could respond to my comments in an additional paragraph if they felt that was necessary. My goal in this exercise was to make sure that students were reading and comprehending my comments. Occasionally students confused or misunderstood my comments and this exercise gave me an opportunity to respond back to them with clarification.

For example, one student wrote a rhetorical analysis on a speech given by George W. Bush prior to the 2004 election. She was making fun of the president for misusing words and for what she felt were unclear statements about his policies. In her paper she also mentioned to her audience that she was not a Bush supporter and her arguments about his intelligence in the speech were a bit harsh. In my comments I explained to her that her harsh comments might have ruined her credibility with Bush supporters, especially since she was not voting for him. Given that, she summarized my comments by stating, “Ethos: you said that I showed ethos in my background explanation and that because I was a voter I had rhetor (sic). However, you brought up the point that I lost rhetor because I was not voting for Bush” (Krammer Memo).
First, this student was trying to employ the language she was learning in our class but needed help understanding the proper use of the terms. In my response I crossed out the word rhetor and replaced it with ethos. Then I gave her the definition for the term rhetor. Second, it was clear that we could have had a long discussion about how her politics affected her ethos. She needed to know that she could have made the same argument and retained her ethos as a Kerry voter by making other choices in her writing. For example, she could have changed her tone or not mentioned whom she was voting for.

Additionally, I found this discussion interesting because it showed me that perhaps I misunderstood her audience. Prior to writing this paper, I had many discussions with this student about her politics. Since this was her first time voting she was struggling with having to be so decisive about her politics. To make matters worse, her parents had told her that she was absolutely not allowed to vote for Kerry. Through our conversations it was apparent that I was a Kerry supporter. Because she most likely considered me to be her audience, it is possible that I misunderstood her logic. If she were writing to an audience of all Kerry supporters then making fun of Bush would have been more acceptable and her support of Kerry would have had a positive affect on her ethos.

While clarification of my comments was necessary for some students, most students accurately summarized the comments in their own words and often expanded appropriately on the definitions. They not only understood the rhetorical appeals but they were considering how they related to their own experience and understanding of the terms. For example, one student wrote in response to my comments about his ethos, “Through the knowledge that I provided for background information, I demonstrated ethos. It showed to the audience that I knew what I was talking about when they were reading the paper, and it showed that I’m in charge” (Snell Memo).

I have already explained the recruitment and interview process for the two case studies in the methodology section. In this section I will first explain the context of the student’s papers. Second, I will discuss their understanding of the terms ethos, pathos and logos in their interview session and in the writer’s memo they submitted with their original papers. Then I will analyze why the students revised the paper they did and reach some conclusions concerning how my comments using ethos, pathos and logos helped the students make revisions. Additionally, I analyze a few fascinating results from my research that are not directly related to the use of the rhetorical appeals.
For the rhetorical analysis paper Taylor wrote a paper titled, “2000 Presidential Election Controversy: President-Elect George W. Bush’s Task of Uniting the Country.” Taylor started her paper by giving the reader background on the 2000 presidential election controversy to demonstrate the rhetorical situation proceeding President-Elect George W. Bush’s acceptance speech on December 13, 2000. She wrote, “Bush has the unenviable job of convincing an entire nation filled with critical and biased Americans that he was worthy to be the President of the United States and that during the next four years he will lead this country into a hopeful tomorrow” (2000 Presidential 2-3). Taylor was referring to the controversy that occurred when the final election results were not known for more than a month after the election. She explains, “Florida’s 25 electoral votes ultimately decided the election by a razor thin margin of actual votes, and was certified only after numerous court challenges and recounts” (2000 Presidential 1). She felt that this controversy lead President Bush to make purposeful choices in his acceptance speech that he would not have made otherwise.

In her paper Taylor analyzed Bush’s logos, pathos and ethos and why he made the choices he made in his speech. For example, when arguing Bush’s pathos, Taylor wrote, “Bush related to the people by showing that he is a family man by thanking his wife and daughters for their love” (2000 Presidential 4). Taylor supported her claims with evidence from the text.

I felt Taylor addressed the particular rhetorical situation Bush endured at that historical moment, even though she was not of voting age at the time of the election. On her paper I made many marginal comments. Most of my comments were positive observations meant for encouragement. I did not make many marginal comments using the rhetorical appeals in this paper because of the nature of the paper. I didn’t want to confuse Taylor by writing about her ethos in the same space she was writing about George W. Bush’s ethos. I didn’t feel the margin would allow me enough space to be clear. However, I provided end comments, noting how well I felt she demonstrated her ethos, pathos and logos. For example, under the heading ethos I wrote, “You demonstrate great knowledge of the text, which shows you are a reliable rhetor. You also provide great insights that add to the conversation and demonstrate your credibility.”

Taylor wrote “We Have Freedom, But at What Cost?” for her argument paper. This paper was about the public issue of concealed weapon laws. She began her paper by trying to
draw emotion from her audience in order to get them concerned about her topic; however, the story she chose to tell does not directly relate to concealed weapons. Rather, the story was about a boy who was shot while playing with a gun at the home of a friend. She wrote, “Authorities said no adults were home at the time and that the classmates were playing with the sawed-off shotgun in an upstairs bedroom” (We Have 1). I made marginal comments to let Taylor know that while the story demonstrated great pathos it did not logically foreground her argument.

Next, Taylor gave detailed information about Ohio’s 2004 Concealed Weapons Law. She claimed, “Immediate access and availability of weapons enhances the chance for firearm violence” (We Have 2). She supported that claim throughout the rest of the paper. However, a lot of her claims apply to gun laws in general, rather than concealed carry laws. I suggested that she either broaden her topic or narrow her support to make her argument stronger. Again she framed her paper by returning to a narrative about an accidental shooting in the conclusion. In my marginal comments I asked her to consider whether the new law would change the rates of accidental shootings in the home. I wanted to point out to her that she needed to better connect the story to her argument. I believe she used these stories because accidental or rage shootings caused by the new law could not be found, and she didn’t imagine or find any appeals of pathos to personalize the dangers of concealed weapons for her readers.

However, she did effectively use pathos in her introduction by asking rhetorical questions. In my endnotes under pathos I wrote, “Also, the rhetorical questions in your introduction draw the reader into the debate by personalizing the issue for them.” Throughout her paper I also made several marginal comments about her logos. I asked her several questions about her logic, provided positive statements and made a few mechanical suggestions. Finally, I provided comments about her ethos, pathos and logos in my endnotes.

**Interview**

In her interview, Taylor read her rhetorical analysis and argument papers stopping at the end of each paragraph to respond to my comments. Then she read my end comments and responded to them. Specifically, the interviewer asked her to “explain the best you can what you understood those comments to mean.”

Taylor confirmed that she understood my comments about ethos in a number of instances. In her argument paper she was able to correctly identify the reason I wrote, “Nice
ethos – great info” next to one paragraph. I did not tell her specifically what information I was referring to but Taylor responded, “And she also wrote that I have nice ethos and I showed great info because I was explaining the whole Ohio concealed weapons law” (Interview T4). Even though I didn’t indicate which information showed great ethos she correctly identified why I wrote the comment. Taylor recognized that giving the reader information about the law helped to develop her credibility on the topic.

In another marginal comment I wrote, “he has great ethos,” next to the name of an expert she quoted. Taylor stated, “In the margins she said that this person was a good person to put into my paper because he showed great ethos. So that helped to support my argument” (Interview T7). This is not a very strong comment but I think it shows Taylor recognized that supporting her thoughts with expert opinion supported her argument.

Taylor also demonstrated her knowledge of the term pathos in her interview. In my final comments on her rhetorical analysis paper I wrote, “You did a wonderful job of setting up the rhetorical situation for the reader so that they could better understand the gravity of this speech and the rhetorical moves. This helps your audience understand your analysis better.” Taylor responded to this comment by stating that she let her reader understand “how important his speech was.” She rephrased my comments in her own words by stating, “I did a good job of setting up the whole rhetorical situation so that the reader could understand where my analysis was coming from and what my argument was trying to say” (Interview T44). Taylor also demonstrated her understanding of the term rhetorical situation and its purpose by adding, “I was able to let her as the reader, or anyone that reads my paper, that they would be able to understand, like, what was behind President Bush’s speech and like what was… what that whole situation was about… and how important his speech was and I let the reader understand that so that they could understand what my argument was” (Interview T44).

Likewise, in her interview Taylor also confirmed her understanding of the term logos. I wrote, “Great logos. Great info. This is your best support,” next to a paragraph in which Taylor compared the ease of obtaining a license for a weapon to the ease of obtaining a driver’s license. In the interview Taylor said, “She just said that I showed great logos and I had great info to support my argument” (Interview T15). In my end comments I reiterated this comment by stating, “Besides factual statistics, your best support for your thesis is that you need more training to drive a car than to get a gun.” Taylor demonstrated her understanding of this
comment and also analyzed this decision further. She responded to this comment by stating, “And that really made the reader think and, like, showed great support of… maybe… if the reader was on the edge of supporting or being for or against concealed carry this would be a great argument to sway the reader to be against or to make them realize where my argument was coming from” (Interview T22). Taylor acknowledged that this argument was the best support in order to persuade her reader to consider her thesis.

Since Taylor had some problems with logic in her argument paper, some of my marginal comments were written in the form of questions in order to persuade her to analyze her own logic. However, I did not label these problems as poor *logos*. As I stated previously, Taylor demonstrated great *pathos* in her opening and concluding paragraphs by recounting incidents of accidental home shootings by children. Next to her concluding paragraph I wrote, “This wasn’t because of the concealed weapon law though, was it?” Taylor responded by stating:

That goes along with what she put in my very first opening paragraph. I guess the stories that I put into this paper they support not having guns in the home period or having people own guns period so if I wanted to put these stories into my paper to show *pathos* I would also have to broaden my thesis so that these stories would go along with having weapons period. But these stories, even though I was showing great *pathos*, they did not support the thesis of concealed carry weapons but they would have if I would have broadened my thesis. (Interview T16)

This analysis showed that Taylor was aware that while she was attempting to use *pathos* to persuade her audience the stories did not support her thesis. My question appears to have done more to help Taylor analyze her writing than my comments using the rhetorical appeals. In fact, expanding her thesis was one of the only things about revising Taylor talked in her entire interview.

Similarly, I also commented on her logic in my end comments under the heading *logos*. I wrote, “You provide great support for an expanded thesis.” Again Taylor showed she was thinking about revision when she responded to this comment by stating, “If I wanted to write another paper on this I could expand my thesis and include a lot of the background and evidence I showed in my support” (Interview T22). While this comment was written under *logos* in this instance I cannot be sure whether this comment or the previous question led to her analysis. Therefore, I cannot say that the use of a rhetorical appeal in my comment led to her thinking about revision.
Taylor also demonstrated she was thinking about revision after reading other comments using questions. I asked Taylor many questions on her papers in order to encourage her to analyze her logic. In her argument paper I wrote in a marginal comment, “How many people use a gun for protection? Is this reported to be good? Isn’t the gun usually used on them?” Taylor responded by stating, “Here I think she is asking for me to maybe find more percentages or more info and more statistics on how may people have a hand gun and how many guns are used against them. Finding those statistics maybe would’ve helped improve my paper… helped improve my argument” (Interview T8). Taylor used these questions to think about improving her paper, even though she didn’t specifically mention revising. While I only provided a few questions throughout both papers, she seemed to respond well to this type of commenting.

Finally, in her interview Taylor responded well to positive feedback on her papers. Throughout her papers I made several marginal comments stating that she made a great insight or provided a great analysis. More specifically, in the final comment of her rhetorical analysis paper I wrote, “Wow this is an excellent analysis. I can tell you worked very hard on this. Nice work.” Taylor responded to this comment by stating, “That actually made me feel very good that… she let me know that I got my point across.” She continued, “And she as my reader enjoyed my writing” (Interview T42). It was important to Taylor that I liked her writing.

**Writer’s Memo**

Prior to my grading, Taylor filled out writer’s memos for each of her papers. This allowed her to use the terms ethos, pathos and logos to analyze her own writing before I made comments on her paper. For the rhetorical analysis paper Taylor seems to have misunderstood the question, “How did you demonstrate ethos, pathos and logos in your paper?” She gave an outline of how George W. Bush demonstrated his ethos, pathos and logos instead of analyzing her own paper. For example, she wrote, “Ethos – President-Elect George W. Bush was Governor of Texas and voted into Presidency. He is the son of President George H. Bush” (Rhetorical Analysis Memo).

However, Taylor answered this question appropriately in the writer’s memo for the argument paper. I suspect that this was because it was later in the semester and we had discussed the terms more by that point in the semester. For ethos Taylor wrote, “I demonstrated ethos by stating a strong opinion and supporting that opinion with different sources” (Argument Memo).
It is notable that Taylor chose the word opinion. If she had chosen a word like support or fact she could have been referring to building her ethos by quoting experts on the topic. Often students believe this is the only way ethos is established. The word opinion here is referring to her understanding that her own beliefs have credibility, especially if she supports them with outside sources. This reflection on ethos demonstrates that she was aware that she couldn’t rely solely on expert opinion to support her claims. She needed to provide her own original thoughts as well.

For pathos Taylor wrote, “I demonstrated pathos by including the two stories to put it on a more personal level” (Argument Memo). As I mentioned earlier, Taylor framed her paper with two narratives about accidental shootings of children because guns were left out in the house. She felt these stories allowed her audience to relate to her argument on a personal level. The stories evoked an emotional response of urgency and despair. They allowed the audience to imagine the possibility that a similar tragedy could happen to a child in their own lives. Her stories were effective in evoking an emotional response; however, they didn’t directly support her thesis. Therefore, they were less effective than she thought. This reflection on pathos shows that she realized it was crucial to consider the audience’s emotions toward the topic. Also, because it is vital that the audience believes your argument is important, her reflection shows that she understood it was possible to make choices to persuade the audience to identify with the gravity of the issue.

For logos Taylor wrote, “I demonstrated logos by stating different claims and supporting those claims” (Argument Memo). In her paper Taylor made several claims to support her thesis and supported those claims with her opinion, facts, statistics and expert opinion so that the reader would be persuaded to appreciate her argument. This statement demonstrates that Taylor realized the importance that logic plays in convincing the audience. Not only did she need to state more than one claim but also she realized she must also develop each claim for her readers.

Overall, Taylor’s reflection in her writer’s memo demonstrated that she understood the terms ethos, pathos and logos. Further, her memos showed that her understanding improved during the semester. In the argument paper she appropriately used the language to analyze her own writing.
Revision

Taylor submitted a writer’s memo with her final project explaining the choices she made in her revision. She also commented on these choices in her interview. In the interview she was asked to explain why she had recast the paper and how the paper changed from the draft I commented on. For the final project Taylor chose to recast her rhetorical analysis paper into a different genre. For the project Taylor wanted to “see how effective [Bush] was at getting his point across to a Democratic voter and Gore supporter” (Revision Memo). Taylor’s final provided an introduction on the rhetorical situation, lines of argument from her original paper and a final analysis of the interview intertwined throughout a question/answer formatted interview with her mother about Bush’s speech.

Taylor interviewed her mother because her mother voted for Gore in the 2000 election. She asked her mother questions about the speech and then compared her answers to Bush’s objectives, as she saw them. Taylor chose to investigate whether Bush was effective in persuading his most unsympathetic audience members. She understood the importance of identifying the beliefs of the audience when making choices in writing. Taylor believed Bush was effective in persuading her mother to believe that he could unite a torn country after the 2000 election controversy.

Taylor chose to recast this paper because she “felt like she got her point across the best” (Revision Memo). She also affirmed that it was the paper she enjoyed working on the most (Interview Revision). I suspect that she chose to recast this paper because she received a higher grade and more positive feedback on it than on her argument paper. She stated in her interview, “Abbey’s comments on my paper showed that she really enjoyed the paper so that was the big reason why I chose to recast this particular paper.” She continued, “So I knew that if I recast or I did something else with it she would also be more likely to enjoy that a lot more” (Interview Revision). I believe she chose to recast the paper to please me, the teacher, not because she thought I would give her a better grade on her project.

In his 1993 essay, “Ranking, Evaluating and Liking: Sorting Out Three Forms of Judgment” Peter Elbow suggested that writers learn to like their work once they know their audience likes it. He writes, “It is not improvement that leads to liking but liking that leads to improvement” (Elbow 191). Given this hypothesis, the more I like my student’s writing the more likely they are to want to revise their writing. This was certainly true with Taylor.
Throughout her interview Taylor appeared to respond well to positive feedback. It was imperative to her that I liked her work.

However, this also proves that I maintain greater authority over her writing than she does because of the nature of the teacher-student relationship. After all, I assigned the writing and have responsibility for deciding its worth. Further, I have noticed that even if I love their writing this will not always lead to the student’s loving their writing. Liking may lead to revision; however, how do we know that they aren’t just making changes solely for the grade? According to Sommers, students don’t often understand the comments they receive on papers and if they do understand, these comments “can take students’ attention away from their own purposes in writing a particular text and focus that attention on the teacher’s purpose in commenting” (149). Therefore, once my students read my comments some of them will make changes based on what I want and not based on their own goals for their paper.

Taylor did not speak directly about how my comments helped her to revise her paper; therefore, I have analyzed how my comments on her original paper may have led to the choices she made in her final paper. Since Taylor didn’t traditionally revise but recast her paper it in another form, I cannot be sure whether my comments helped her. Admittedly, most of my comments were positive and may not have offered enough critical feedback to push her to revise traditionally. However, I feel my positive feedback encouraged her to rework the paper. In this sense I think my comments helped her make decisions in her final paper.

For example, in my end comments of her rhetorical analysis paper I praised Taylor by stating under the heading *pathos*, “You did a wonderful job of setting up the rhetorical situation for the reader so that they could better understand the gravity of the speech and the rhetorical moves. This helps your audience understand your analysis better.” In her final paper Taylor continued to do a wonderful job of setting up the rhetorical situation for the reader. In her opening paragraph Taylor summarized several paragraphs from the original paper into one paragraph. She wrote that during the 2000 election controversy, “Many people were uneasy as to how Bush came about becoming president and whether his victory was legitimate” (Revision: 2000 Election 1).

She went on to interview her mother. In order to help remind her mother of the rhetorical situation she provided quotes directly from Bush’s December 13, 2000 speech and asked her mother how she felt about them. For example, she quoted Bush, who stated, “I know America
wants reconciliation and unity. I know Americans want progress. And we must seize this moment and deliver. Together, guided by a spirit of common sense, common courtesy and common goals we can unite and inspire the American citizens” (Revision: 2000 Election 2).

Knowing that her mother did not vote for Bush, Taylor asks her if she agreed with his statement. She realized it was important to provide her mother with the information she needed to respond to questions about Bush.

Taylor also considered her ethos when writing her final. In my final comments on her rhetorical analysis paper under the heading ethos I wrote, “You demonstrated great knowledge of the text, which shows you are a reliable rhetor. You also provide great insights that add to the conversation and demonstrate your credibility.” Taylor provided background information in her final paper and offered several quotes from Bush’s December 2000 speech. Further, at the end of her final paper she wrote an analysis of her interview with her mother. This analysis showed that Taylor not only wanted to demonstrate how an actual audience member responded to Bush through her mother’s interview, but also that she was capable of analyzing the data she gathered in order to “add to the conversation.” In her analysis Taylor summarized her mother’s comments by stating, “She feels Bush has to step up and make things happen in his next four years. She felt that most presidents state a lot of things they want changed, but most never really follow through with them” (Revision: 2000 Election 4). Her analysis was important because she related the historical viewpoint from the 2000 election to the 2004 election of Bush for a second term. This confirmed her paper was relevant to current issues.

Additionally, Taylor showed she continued to think of logos in her final paper. In my final comments on her rhetorical analysis paper under the heading logos I wrote, “You did a great job organizing your thoughts. You also did a great job providing proof for the claims you made about the purpose of the text and how Bush used the rhetorical appeals.” Taylor made some interesting choices in her final paper regarding logos. She intertwined two short arguments from her rhetorical analysis paper with the interview she conducted with her mother. The first argument was regarding Bush’s use of pathos and the second was regarding his logos. In her interview she asked her mother questions that would support these arguments. For example, Taylor asked her mother, “Do you think Bush lives up to what he quoted, ‘the President of the United States is the President of every single American, of every race and every background?’”
(Revision 3). She was trying to find out what affect this quote had on Bush’s audience in order to support her claims about his pathos.

It appears that it was Taylor’s decision to use the interview to support her arguments regarding Bush’s use of the rhetorical appeals. However, Taylor seems to have left out her argument regarding Bush’s ethos from her rhetorical analysis paper. She asked her mother questions that would support her argument about Bush but she does not go on to provide her own analysis of his ethos. This shows she was thinking about Bush’s ethos but overlooked her own logos by not connecting her mother’s comments to her original argument.

Overall Taylor responded well to positive feedback, which is why she chose to recast her rhetorical analysis paper into a different genre for the final. Taylor seemed encouraged by my positive comments and used my comments concerning ethos, pathos and logos to make effective choices in revising her paper.

SARAH

For the rhetorical analysis paper Sarah wrote “Putting a Price on Infant’s Flesh.” In this paper Sarah analyzed Jonathan Swift’s eighteenth century pamphlet, “A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People in Ireland from Being a Burden to Their Parents or Country and for Making Them Beneficial to the Public.” In this political satire Swift suggested that the poor people of Ireland eat their babies. Sarah wrote, “His humorous reflection on the politics of the time period clashes with the sheer disgust of the storyline” (Putting a Price 1).

Sarah began her paper by setting up the rhetorical situation for the reader. This is significant because her audience may not be aware of the pamphlet or the politics surrounding the purpose of it. She also gave key information about Swift, allowing the reader to imagine why the man would write such a disturbing piece. She then went on to analyze Swift’s use of pathos to shock and appall his readers in order to show them the magnitude of the current political situation in Ireland in the 1700s. Sarah stated, “Swift makes it seem as if he is writing about something as common as making bread, instead of cannibalism” (Putting a Price 4). Sarah also did a wonderful job of acknowledging how pathos and logos overlap in the development of his argument. She wrote, “He wants it to seem logical to eat a baby. This is disgusting. It attacks the emotions in a way that Swift hopes will make his readers more passionate about the crisis” (Putting a Price 3). It is because of his simple logic that the argument seems so absurd.
I provided many marginal comments throughout Sarah’s paper. Because her paper was so well written most of the comments were positive in nature. I only made a few comments using the rhetorical appeals since she was writing a rhetorical analysis and I didn’t want to confuse her. However, I analyzed her ethos, pathos and logos in my end comments. For example, under pathos I wrote, “You picked a text full of pathos and provided a thick description so that your audience could vividly and visually understand the text.”

Sarah wrote, “Overlooking the Real Issue One Vote at a Time” for her argument paper. This paper was written in response to Ohio’s Issue One during the 2004 election; therefore, it was a very current topic at the time, which she appeared to be very passionate about. Issue One asked for an amendment to the Constitution of the State of Ohio declaring that only a union between one man and one woman may be a marriage. Sarah argued against this amendment stating, “There are many reasons that an educated, well-informed citizen would vote no, regardless of their belief about homosexuality” (Overlooking 1).

Her main argument was that the amendment was poorly worded and created problems for all unmarried individuals, both homosexual and heterosexual. She questioned why the amendment was labeled a gay issue, as well as why Ohioans felt it was necessary to pass an amendment for something that was already illegal. She argued that one effect caused from the passing of conservative issues like this is that many young people will leave the state. She stated that, “This will greatly damage Ohio’s already faltering workforce and economy” (Overlooking 3). She ended her argument by stating that Ohio needs to attract diversity, not close the door on it.

I provided mostly positive comments in the margins of Sarah’s paper. I also made many comments about her ethos, pathos and logos in my marginal and end comments. For example, in my end comments under the heading pathos I wrote, “You anticipated some readers may have issues with gay rights and, therefore, also provided further proof unrelated to gay rights.”

**Interview**

In her interview, Sarah also read her rhetorical analysis and argument papers stopping at the end of each paragraph to respond to my comments. Likewise, she read my end comments and responded to them. Equally, the interviewer asked her to “explain the best you can what you understood those comments to mean.” Like Taylor, Sarah also appeared to understand the
meaning of my comments when I used the rhetorical appeals. She also appropriately analyzed her paper using my comments.

Sarah demonstrated her knowledge of the comments about ethos in several instances. For example, next to one paragraph I wrote, “Great point, nice ethos – I like how you add to the conservation.” Sarah responded to this comment by stating, “I just took this to mean that it was good that not only was I finding facts and who was against it but also using them in a way that showed that I was against also and explaining why the opposition of these programs was important” (Interview S37). She was explaining that she felt that ethos is created by taking a stance on a topic but by also stating the opposing side of the issue. If she had not discussed the topic fully the audience may believe she is not a credible source.

I reiterated this comment under the heading ethos in my final comments for her argument paper about Issue One. I wrote, “I can tell you did a lot of research on this topic. You demonstrate your authority by providing relevant background information on the topic. You are credible because you add valuable insights to the debate while respecting the possibility that your audience may be against gay rights. You also sound very passionate about the topic.” Sarah stated:

This is kind of what I mentioned before. I took this to mean that first of all it was good that I brought in background to show that I cared enough about the topic to not only be writing about it but that I did all the research to back it up. And that I didn’t just present the facts but I told them in like my own way and why I was upset about it. And on like a personal note, like I live in Cleveland Heights so everything about Cleveland Heights is first hand. And I wasn’t able to vote when it [gay marriage] came out but it was really big deal for my parents and our like we’re Catholics so some people at our church were like really against it especially that my parents were voting for it [gay marriage]. So I do have like authority on the subject. She said that I sounded very passionate about I took this as a really good comment because I was passionate about it so I’m glad that that came through in my writing. (Interview S43)

Not only did Sarah restate my comments but she also analyzed them in relation to her own experiences with the meaning of the term ethos. In this analysis, Sarah identified her ethos as a resident of Ohio during the election she was speaking about. She realized that not being able to vote might lessen her credibility but that she gained insider status through her residency and through the beliefs and actions of her parents. Also, her parents were credible because they were Catholics who were standing up against opposition to vote for something that was considered
controversial. As Catholics, the audience would have to assume they had morals, which was important since many Ohio residents considered Issue One a moral issue. Additionally, she provided support for her claims from Cleveland Heights, which was her hometown and, therefore, allowed her to speak from first hand knowledge. The support she provided from Cleveland Heights was from a Cleveland Heights lawyer and president of the group Ohioans for Growth and Equality, who stated that he knew of many families who would move out of Ohio if Issue One passed. I think Sarah felt that living in Cleveland Heights helped her verify his statement was true. Finally, she also realized that her personal opinion and passion about the topic allowed her audience to consider her a reliable rhetor, as long as her passion was well supported.

Sarah also demonstrated her understanding of the term pathos in my commenting. In my end comments for one of her papers I wrote under the heading pathos, “You provide very interesting information, which helps the reader maintain interest in your paper. You picked a text full of pathos and provided a thick description so that your audience could vividly and visually understand the text. Also, many of your word choices provide connotative meaning for the readers, evoking an emotional response.” Sarah responded to this comment by stating, “… I did a good job making the reader like feel what was going on in the paper. And also I know that cognitive [sic] meaning is words that have an emotional meaning too not just… they have like an underlying meaning also besides what they initially mean” (Interview S20). While Sarah used the word “cognitive” instead of “connotative” and didn’t do a wonderful job of articulating its meaning, I think it is clear that she understands that words have both dictionary and emotionally personal meanings. She is aware that the words she chose in her paper evoked emotion in her audience.

In a similar comment I wrote, “great word. Nice pathos” next to the word homophobic. Sarah stated, “I took this to mean that she agreed with my word choice and trying to get the reader to see the wrongdoing of what happened” (Interview S30). Sarah is conscious that she chose this word on purpose to evoke a response of urgency in her audience.

As well as her word choices, Sarah also analyzed her choice to support gay rights in relation to her audience. In my final comments under pathos I wrote, “You anticipated some readers may have issues with gay rights and, therefore, also provided further proof unrelated to gay rights. You did a great job providing emotionally charged words and examples.” Sarah
commented, “… it would have really been bad if I was just talking about that it wasn’t fair to gay people because for a lot of people that’s not a good enough reason and they don’t care. So it was important that I brought up other stuff” (Interview S44). Sarah realized it was important to consider the audience’s values when providing support for her claims. She recognized she had to provide support that would be valued by her audience.

Sarah also demonstrated her knowledge of the term *logos* in my commenting. Next to one paragraph I wrote, “Nice *logos*, great support for claim.” Sarah correctly identified the purpose of my comment by stating, “She was mainly talking about the man who says that five families are going to be moving. And that just shows that… I was using logic to present my argument” (Interview S32). Likewise she correctly identified the purpose of a similar comment in the following paragraph. Sarah responded to my comments by stating, “And next to the quotes from the census she wrote nice *logos*, great facts” (Interview S34). The census information provided great support for her claim.

In my final comments for her argument paper I wrote under the heading *logos*, “You did a wonderful job of stating a clear claim and thesis and supporting that claim with logical ideas. You then supported those ideas with examples and facts.” Sarah responded by stating, “So, I just took this to mean it wouldn’t have been enough to say my opinion and just say that it wasn’t a good idea. I had to present statistics and quotes and first hand examples of why Issue One was unfair” (Interview S45). Here she articulated that good *logos* means providing facts to support her opinion.

In several instances Sarah demonstrated knowledge of how the rhetorical terms overlap. When speaking about her *logos* in her argument paper, Sarah wrote, “That you not only have to make your argument but make it in a way that is effective to your reader because that’s the whole point of it” (Interview S45). This remark verifies that she understood how my comments regarding her *logos* also applied to her *pathos*.

Sarah also comments on how her *ethos* was dependent on her *pathos* as well. When commenting on how her knowledge of background information contributed to her credibility she states, “I added all that background otherwise most people don’t really know what the satire is about or the point of it” (Interview S19). She understood that providing background information helped to build her credibility but also helped her audience comprehend her argument.
Further, when commenting about her *logos* Sarah added, “And I don’t know that maybe my viewpoints as reliable ideas or reasonable ideas show like my authority as a writer [sic]” (Interview S21). In this comment Sarah recognized how *logos* and *ethos* overlap. Providing reasonable ideas helped to build her reliability. In class we had discussed how unreasonable or unrealistic claims demonstrates poor *logos* but also shows the author is not reliable because the audience cannot trust his or her point of view.

However, Sarah did not always understand my comments when I did not use the terms *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. For example, I wrote, “Maybe this needs a signal phrase?” next to one of the quotes she used in her paper. Sarah responded by stating, “I’m actually not sure what a signal phrase means so I’m not sure what she meant. If I was to redo this I would have to look that up before hand” (Interview S1). As a part of the rhetorical analysis sequence we discussed how to use signal phrases when quoting from a different source. We discussed how to use signal phrases again during the argument sequence. Both times we only discussed the concept for a portion of one class period. Also, it may have been discussed again during peer review for each of these sequences. In contrast, we discuss the rhetorical appeals in nearly every class period, which is why Sarah had no problem remembering them two months after the class had ended. I am happy that Sarah remembered the rhetorical appeals because I think they are most helpful in learning to write well. Forgetting to add a signal phrase is not as important as forgetting that your audience has not read the book you are about to discuss. Incidentally, this was also the only time Sarah mentioned the possibility of revising her paper. Her comment suggested that when or before she revised, she wanted to understand what every teacher comment means.

In addition to admitting her confusion about the term signal phrase, she also misunderstood when I wrote, “ok” next to one paragraph. Sarah stated, “I think that those are positive comments but maybe saying that she could see something that needs improved with them but they’re ok the way they are” (Interview S5). In fact, I only meant to imply that she was on the right track.

Sarah also did not respond to several of my comments in her interview. Many times she just read my comment and did not provide any sort of analysis. There were also a few occasions when she did not read my comments at all. This could be because the comment seemed too obvious for reflection or that she did not know what the comment meant. Of the seven comments she did not respond to, two of them were comments that used one of the rhetorical
appeals. The other five comments were positive comments such as “good,” “ok’” or “nice.” These comments were vague and were not intended to motivate revision. As Sommers found in her research, “Most teachers’ comments are not text-specific and could be interchanged, rubberstamped, from text to text” (152). She writes, “We have observed an overwhelming similarity in the generalities and abstract commands given to students” (153). However, because it is often difficult to provide much context on each student’s draft it is important to link your comments to classroom context. While I do this for the rhetorical appeal comments, I do not provide context for some of my positive comments. Further, I believe understanding the context of comments that tell a student what is good is just as important as understanding the context of comments that tell them what is needs improvement. The student needs to understand positive comments so that they are able to repeat the behavior in future writing. I learned I need to be less vague about my positive comments in the future.

Like Taylor, Sarah also responded well to positive feedback. In my final comments for her rhetorical analysis paper I wrote, “This is a nice rhetorical analysis. You did a wonderful job analyzing the rhetorical moves and the effectiveness of these choices. You are a great writer.” Sarah responded to this by stating, “I took this really well because I had never written rhetorical analysis before. So it gave me a lot of positive reinforcement” (Interview S18). I believe that building a student’s confidence is an important part of teaching writing.

In response to one of my comments Sarah stated, “I took this to mean that she liked my text choice” (Interview S20). Further, I made several statements throughout her paper, like “good pathos” or “great quote.” Sarah commented each time on my liking, instead of focusing on the fact that she made good choices in her writing. Focusing on my liking shows that on some level she is aware that I have an Ideal Text and that she made the right choices in relation to my ideal and not necessarily her own. Brannon and Knoblauch state, “When we pay more attention to our Ideal Text than to the writer’s purpose s and choices, we compromise both our ability to help students say effectively what they want to say and our ability to recognize legitimately diverse ways of saying it: (159). They suggest that we use multi-draft assignments to help us have conversations about the student’s purpose for the text, as well as fulfill the teacher role of helping writers write better than they could alone. What’s interesting here is that I have conferences, students complete multiple drafts, and I provide commentary that is more facilitative than directive and which actually discusses the student’s ethos. Yet, both Sarah and
Taylor focused on my liking when choosing which text to revise. My commenting gave them confidence in their writing but it did not prevent them from valuing my ethos.

**Writer’s Memo**

Sarah also submitted a writer’s memo with each final draft. Likewise, she answered the question, “How did you demonstrate ethos, pathos and logos in this paper?” The comments Sarah made on her writer’s memo for the rhetorical analysis paper are vague; however, I am fairly positive that, like Taylor, she was referring to the appeals used in Swift’s text, not her own. She wrote, “My paper blatantly touched on a three. Ethos – respected writer, pathos- the topic of the paper and logos – babies weight, quotes, etc.” (Rhetorical Analysis Memo). Even though both participants misunderstood this question in reference to the rhetorical analysis paper, both of them appropriately considered these terms in their papers.

However, Sarah appropriately answered this question on the writer’s memo for the argument paper. For ethos Sarah wrote, “Logically presented my argument. Told my own take/opinion but backed it” (Argument Memo). Without asking for clarification it is not clear why Sarah felt that logically presenting her argument helped to establish her ethos; however, it would certainly be true that making an illogical argument would ruin a person’s credibility. Like Taylor, Sarah also acknowledged that her opinion helped to establish her authority on the topic. This reflection demonstrates that Sarah understood that providing her own opinion on the topic, especially if she supported the claim, helped develop her credibility.

For pathos Sarah wrote, “All the people it will hurt. Leigh Mumlin story/example” (Argument Memo). Sarah is referring to the claims she made in her paper that attempted to persuade the audience that, even if they do not support gay rights, to identify with the idea that many unmarried people will be greatly affected by this amendment. Also, she tried to evoke sympathy and support for her claim by showing an actual example of a person who will be hurt if the audience were to vote in support of Issue One. This analysis of her choices shows that Sarah was aware that it is necessary to consider the values of the audience in order to provide the most persuasive support for the claim. She was also aware that telling a personal story, and giving a name and face to the issue, allows the audience to relate to the issue on a personal level. If the audience can relate to the person in the story, they are more likely to understand the relevance of the argument.
For *logos* Sarah wrote, “Listing who opposes it. Census facts” (Argument Memo). Again, I am not sure what she meant by “listing who opposes it.” I assume she was trying to say that she provided a balanced argument by giving a voice to the opposition. Also, I would guess that she feels providing census facts provided the best logical support for her claim.

**Revision**

Like Taylor, Sarah also turned in a writer’s memo with her final project discussing the choices she made in her writing. She discussed these choices in her interview. In the interview she was asked to explain why she had recast the paper she did and how the paper changed from the draft I commented on. Sarah chose to recast her argument paper into two texts: an article for The Miami Student, a school newspaper, and a fun handout mocking the official Issue One Ballot on one side and listing her argument against it on the other. She briefly considered audience and purpose by stating that the newspaper article was “exactly what I would have liked to tell all of the student voters at Miami before they stepped into the booth” (Revision Memo). She also indicated that she would have handed out the mock ballot at the poles before the voters went in to vote.

Sarah wrote that she was very proud of both her argument paper and the final project. She was very interested in the topic and really enjoyed writing these papers (Revision Memo). Sarah wrote that she originally chose a boring topic for her argument paper that she really didn’t care about. She stated, “not only would this have been boring for me, but probably a waste of time for my readers if it was not a good paper” (Revision Memo). This analysis illustrates that Sarah was thinking about her audience when she chose her topic. She understands the consequence of choosing a topic that will interest both her and her readers in order for her paper to be successful.

Sarah wrote, “After [my argument paper] received a good grade and I was still passionate about the topic,” she decided to recast that paper (Revision Memo). Like Taylor, it was important to Sarah that she received a good grade on this paper. However, while Taylor responded well to positive feedback, it appears that Sarah would have responded better if I had provided more criticism on her paper to push her to revise. In her interview, Sarah indicated, “I got a good grade on it and I was pretty happy with it and didn’t see the point in revising it so I recast it…” (Interview Revision). My liking did not motivate her to revise the paper in a
traditional way because she felt it was perfect the way it was. However, Sarah also indicated in both her writer’s memo and interview for this project that she decided to recast the paper instead of revise it in its current form because recasting involved creativity. She stated, “It was good to be creative rather than just writing a paper” (Interview Revision).

Finally, Sarah stated, “And I used her comments about ethos and pathos and logos to, well, first of all make sure that I stayed on track about my argument. And tried to, especially in The Miami Student, I tried to keep in mind that a lot of people would probably be against gay rights” (Interview Revision). This was the only remark Sarah made regarding my comments on her paper. However, I feel that it shows that she considered my comments using ethos, pathos and logos when she recast her paper. I have analyzed how my comments on her original paper led to the choices she made in her final paper. Like Taylor, Sarah didn’t traditionally revise her paper so I cannot be sure how my comments helped her recast her paper.

Sarah created ethos through document design but also by providing the same background information in her final that she provided in her argument paper. On her original paper I wrote, “You demonstrate your authority by providing relevant background information on the topic.” Sarah condensed the introduction from her original paper for her recast paper. She then clearly stated the purpose of the paper saying, “Issue One is an amendment to the Constitution of the State of Ohio that, if passed, will take away and prevent any unmarried couple, even heterosexual couples, from having the rights of married couples” (Revision: Overlooking 1).

Additionally, Sarah seemed to be very aware of how her choices affected her audience and indicated in her writer’s memo and interview that she made most of her decisions in relation to her audience. In my final comments on her argument paper under the heading pathos I wrote, “You anticipated some readers may have issues with gay rights and therefore also provided further proof unrelated to gay rights. You did a great hob providing emotionally charged words and examples.” In her revised paper Sarah again articulated support that did not involve gay rights. She wrote, “Issue One is too broad and poorly worded” (Revision: Overlooking 1). Additionally, she considered my comments about her great word choice by using the same words in her new article. For example, in her original paper I underlined the word upheaval and wrote “good pathos” next to it, which she used again in her final.

However, Sarah also may have turned her audience off when she stated, “This law is on the ballot because of anti-gay rights activists.” I feel that this strong of a statement distracts from
her other logical arguments that do not consider this a gay issue (even if it was one). She later called it “an extremely pointless effort because it is already illegal for gay couples to get married in Ohio” (Revision: Overlooking 1). The words extremely pointless would not have been effective if her audience were anti-gay; however, I think she chose these words on purpose because she recognized they were emotionally charged.

Further, Sarah responded to my comments regarding her *logos* by incorporating the same claims from her argument paper into her final project. For example, she wrote, “... it is already illegal for gay couples to get married in Ohio” (Revision: Overlooking 1). She also wrote, “Besides hurting many couples in many ways, if passed, Issue One will also hinder Universities’ ability to attract some qualified workers...” (Revision: Overlooking 1). Both of these claims were from her original paper.

However, because the purpose of her paper changed through recasting she did not provide enough support for her claims in her final project. In her argument paper under the heading *logos* I wrote, “You did a wonderful job stating a clear claim/thesis and supporting that claim with logical ideas. You then supported those ideas with examples and facts.” While Sarah provided a clear thesis and supported that thesis with great ideas, she did not provide the same examples and facts that she provided in her original argument. This may have been because the final paper was very short compared to her original paper.

Sarah used my comments to help her think about recasting her paper into a new genre; however, that doesn’t mean that she always made the best choices in her writing. She was attempting to consider audience based on my previous comments but made a few statements that might have turned off her audience. What seems like passion may have worked against her credibility on the topic. Further, she neglected to include any actual facts from her original paper, demonstrating prior *logos*. 
PROJECT REFLECTION

As I reflect on this research project, I feel that these case studies showed that the participants understood the meaning of the terms *ethos, pathos* and *logos*, the purpose of my comments using the terms and how to use the terms to discuss and analyze their own writing. However, I feel like it would be worthwhile to conduct further research to collect more conclusive data under a different research plan. Still, I learned a lot from this project to complicate how I think about responding to student writing. In this section I will discuss the learning and limitations of my project and begin to discuss how I would change my research design.

I learned that responding to student writing using *ethos, pathos* and *logos* was successful because I also incorporated discussion of the terms into our classroom goals. This sentiment supports Sommers’ and Brannon and Knoblauch’s essays which both suggest that teacher’s minimize misunderstanding by relating comments to classroom context. I feel that any type of commenting could be understood as long as it represents the real conversations we have about writing within the classroom on a consistent basis. However, because the meanings of the rhetorical appeals and how they overlap are complex students are able to apply their own conception of the terms to understand my comments. Also, I like that there are only three appeals for students to consider, increasing the likelihood they will remember and understand how to use them to improve their writing.

One of the limitations of this study is that I can’t be sure that the students didn’t understand the rhetorical appeals prior to my class because I didn’t test their knowledge as a part of my research design. The only thing I know is that none of the students indicated that they had ever heard of the terms *ethos, pathos* or *logos*. This doesn’t mean that they weren’t already thinking of these things prior, even if they couldn’t provide these labels to their knowledge. However, I can say that the student’s responses in the writer’s memos and class discussions became more complex as the semester progressed. Still, this could mean that they became more aware of the complexities of the terms or merely indicate they were more comfortable in the class so they were more engaged. In future research I would modify my research questions to ask whether the student’s knowledge of the terms and meanings became more complex as the semester progressed.
While both students seemed to understand my comments, there were only a few instances where they didn’t understand my comments not using the rhetorical appeals. This was certainly not enough to show that using the rhetorical appeals to comment is better than other types of commenting. In fact, Taylor seemed to respond very well to the questions I posed to her throughout her paper, which I didn’t label *logos*. The questions were more directive than my rhetorical comments and seemed to push her more to think of revising.

I hadn’t realized how often I tend to ask questions of my students in their writing until I analyzed the results of this study. However, I like the idea of asking students questions about their logic instead of just assuming my logic is superior. Of course, this is complicated by the fact that they need to be aware of how their logic is perceived by their audience. Mike Rose writes in his book *Lives on the Boundary*, that what strikes him most is the “ease in which we misperceive failed performance and the degree to which this both reflects and reinforces social order” (205). He states that class and culture set up boundaries that blind us to the logic of error and encourage the designation of otherness and deficiency. Further, he writes that our teaching and testing contribute to our inability to locate these boundaries (205). It’s important for teachers to question our perceptions concerning our student’s logic.

I remember responding to one of my student’s papers last year by stating that I wanted him to be aware that I was confused by his logic until the very end of the paper but that it didn’t mean that his logic was incorrect. I asked several questions in the margins but when I got to the end of his paper it was very clear what he was saying. I wanted him to be aware that he could choose to make his point clearer throughout the paper or to leave it the way it was. Either way, I felt that a different reader might not have been confused. When this student responded to my comments he stated that he was glad I didn’t ask him to change it because it made sense to him the way it was. His comment showed that he was thankful that I appreciated his authority, even though it still showed that my authority to veto or grant his authority was superior. His comment indicated that if I had asked him to change it he would have. Still, I plan to continue asking questions when commenting on student writing because I feel this method helps me acknowledge my student’s *ethos* and *logos*.

Further, I discovered that both participants responded well to positive feedback but that giving positive feedback is more complicated than I had realized. As Daiker explains, praise can decrease writing apprehension and lead to improvement in writing. He writes, “A major cause of
writing apprehension is past failure – or a perception of past failure” (156). Since writing apprehension is directly related to teacher response it is important to find elements to praise in every student’s writing.

My comments appeared to help Sarah and Taylor build confidence in their writing. However, my liking did not lead to conventional revision because I may have provided a little too much positive feedback and not enough critical evaluation. In fact, I learned that I needed to use the terms to provide more constructive feedback, as I mostly used them to explain to the students what they were correctly doing in their writing. For example, commenting in the margin of a student’s paper that a paragraph demonstrated “nice pathos” is effective in showing the student where they were successful so that they can repeat the behavior in the future. However, if the student showed “poor pathos” it is possible that a much greater explanation would be necessary. In the future I need to improve my constructive feedback in my endnotes.

Further, I found that liking led to revision but also showed students that they met my expectations for an Ideal Text, even if they hadn’t met their own expectations. My liking appeared to be more important than their own, or perhaps supported their own liking because it was coming from an authority figure, the teacher. This was a little disheartening to discover since I hoped my comments on their ethos would help them claim their own authority. However, I realize that the nature of responding to student writing automatically places me in a position of greater authority because I have the responsibility to evaluate. As Brannon and Knoblach state, “The teacher-reader assumes, often correctly, that student writers have not yet earned the authority that ordinarily compels readers to listen seriously to what writers have to say” (158). However, they do not acknowledge that even if I do value my student’s choices it does not prevent my students from having expectations about my authority. The act of my granting my students ethos proves that they do not have complete authority over their writing, otherwise I would not have to grant it to them.

On the other hand, one of the more interesting things about my findings was that both participants felt that their own opinion helped to establish their credibility. This may show that discussing ethos with students is a way to get them to claim their authority as rhetors, at least more than they would otherwise. Again, responding to student writing using the terms ethos, pathos and logos did not prevent students from granting my ethos over their own. I have found that while the students appear to be thinking of their authority and making choices in their
writing, they are also motivated to make these choices because of a teacher’s positive feedback and good grades.

Another limitation of responding to student writing using the rhetorical appeals is the time it takes to provide written feedback on every student’s paper. In their essay “Teachers Rhetorical Comments on Students Papers,” Conners and Lunsford admit of the papers used in their study, “A teacher with too many students, too many papers to grade, can pay only small attention to each one, and small attention indeed is what many of these papers got” (Conners & Lunsford 214). Likewise, in her essay “Responding to Student Writing” Sommers writes, “Most teachers estimate that it takes them at least 20 to 40 minutes to comment on an individual student paper, and those 20-40 minutes times 20 students per class, times 8 papers, more or less, during the course of the semester add up to an enormous amount of time” (Sommers 148). During this research study I found that it took me 30 to 40 minutes to respond to each student’s paper. Since I had 47 students this means that I spent approximately 28 hours grading each assignment. In research on new ways to respond to writing, one goal might be to consider how responding can be effective and less time consuming. Unfortunately, responding to student writing using ethos, pathos and logos is not time effective. However, I feel that this is a limitation of all commenting.

Additionally, I had a difficult time recruiting participants. This study provided case studies for only two students. Consequently, my results are not generalizable. I feel that two case studies would have been sufficient if I were able to collaborate with these students to generate more valuable data and more accurate portrayals of their experiences using the rhetorical appeals.

Further, if I were to continue this research I would have liked to gather more data regarding the student’s revision processes using my rhetorical comments. I don’t feel that the data I gathered was the kind of data needed to show how the students used my comments to revise. In order to answer this question better I would have to change my research design. Unfortunately, because of the design of my research, I was unable to reflect on my project until it was completed. In addition, since I was conducting the research for my thesis I was limited on the amount of time I had to collect data.

While I was conducting my research I was reading Gesa Kirsch’s Ethical Dilemmas in Feminist Research. While I did not conduct feminist research, I feel the principles Kirsch
outlines should be considered by all researchers. I admire her ideas about reflexive and collaborative research. However, both of these principles were impossible to incorporate into this project due to the fact that I was researching my own classroom and followed the IRB requirement that my students be anonymous.

Further, Kirsch writes that reflexivity allows researchers to adjust and refine their research goals once they get to know the participants (Kirsch 3). I wish I had been more involved in the collection of data in order to monitor the progress and get the kind of data that more directly answered the questions I was asking. This way I could have learned what wasn’t working and changed my research plan to accommodate problems. Kirsch writes, “I received valuable feedback from women during the first interviews which allowed me to add and refine questions for the second interview” (Kirsch 19). Also, reflection exposes us to scrutiny by examining our limitations. It allows us space to improvise our design and/or goals prior to reporting our final data.

Moreover, Kirsch writes, “We must begin to take responsibility for our representations of others by examining who benefits from the research we conduct, whose interests are at stake, and what the potential consequences are for participants involved in our studies” (Kirsch 46). Unfortunately, due to IRB specifications I could not check with respondents for accuracy and clarity of my interpretations or explore unusual responses. I wish I could have had dialogue with the participants in order to make sure that they were not misrepresented. It is difficult to interpret data without feeling like you are speaking for the participant. I had hoped that my students would begin to claim their authority over their writing. Since I couldn’t speak with my students, my interpretation only acts to negate their authority in this thesis.

The IRB requirements kept me from being able to interact with my research participants in order to gain access to the information I needed to evaluate their knowledge and performance using my comments about their writing. The IRB’s criteria for conducting research specifies that risks to the participant should be minimized, risks must be reasonable in relation to benefits, selection of participants is equitable, informed consent is obtained and documented, provisions to protect confidentiality are adequate and vulnerable participants are protected (Anderson 271-6). In my case it was important to guard my student’s identity from me in order to protect the students from coercion to participate since I had the authority to grade the students. Further, even though the research was conducted during the following semester, my authority may have
led to dishonesty in their participation, and, therefore, skewed my results. The IRB attempted to remove my authority; however, as a teacher-researcher my authority will never be removed entirely. Even though I didn’t interview my students, they were aware that I was their teacher and that they had the responsibility of helping me earn my Master’s degree.

Sarah Bowles conducted the interviews for me because I was not allowed to know the identity of the research participants. Sarah was trained to follow the participant instruction form, provided in Appendix C. She was told to ask follow-up questions if the responses were unclear or if the student needed to provide more analysis. Sarah indicated after the research was over that this task was difficult for her given that she was unable to make the necessary connection between my comments and classroom context. Therefore, she stated that she wasn’t sure if the students were providing enough analysis to provide the data I needed to show their understanding.

I have already indicated a few easy ways I could improve my research plan, such as testing prior knowledge and providing more constructive feedback. Since I feel it’s important that my comments are connected to classroom context, I think it’s important that I retain the position of instructor in my new research design. I think it might be too difficult for me to analyze the findings if I were to have another instructor teach the students using this method of assessment just so that I could conduct the interview. Instead, I would like to again conduct case studies of only a few representative students from my class. However, I would start each case study by having the interviewer give the student a written interview with space for the student to freewrite about their experiences. Then I would review this written history and provide the interviewer with follow-up questions to ask the students. This way I could collaborate with them on my analysis of their responses. However, I’m not sure if I would be able to get the students to commit to a two-part interview, given that I had such a difficult time recruiting participants for this research project. I will consider many possibilities before committing to a new research plan.

The first paragraph of my thesis serves as a metaphor for my struggle with my authority as a teacher. I would like to sit down with my students in a teacherless classroom but I realize I must claim my authority and eventually be expected to teach. When I first started teaching two years ago I felt so uncomfortable with my authority that I was searching for ways to show I was a credible teacher. I was as unsure of my agency as a teacher as my students are as writers. I
realize now that I used Aristotle’s *ethos* to claim my own authority as a teacher. When I started responding to student writing using the rhetorical appeals I felt as if I had found a way to justify my commenting that would prove I was an expert and was capable of teaching my students. Since then I have come to realize that I have just as much to learn from my students as they do from me. I can’t allow myself to be intimated by this because that would mean that I would have to value my own authority over my students in their writing. While it’s undeniable that the classroom space requires my authority I never want to abuse this authority to silence my students. I’m never going to be able to get rid of my authority but I can help students become more aware of their own *ethos, pathos* and *logos*. This is why responding to student writing using the rhetorical appeals deserves more research to determine if and how it will be most effective.
WORKS CITED


Voluntary Consent Form

Dear Student:

You are invited to participate in a study to assess the effectiveness of responding to student writing using rhetorical terms. The purpose of this research is to discover if using rhetorical terms to assess student writing helps students better understand how to improve their writing. In other words, I am studying whether you understand my comments and what you do with them.

Your participation will be completely confidential and anonymous through the design of the study. I will never know whether you have or have not volunteered to participate. If you wish to participate please fill out the bottom portion of this form and return to Dr. Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson, Director of Composition using the enclosed envelope. Those of you who have volunteered will be contacted in January to meet for one interview session with a trained interviewer, lasting approximately one hour.

This semester I will make copies of two of the major papers before I hand them back to you. I will keep papers for all students and the interviewer will shred the papers of students who have chosen not to volunteer. If you have volunteered to participate, the interviewer will provide you with copies of your papers. You will then choose a pseudonym to replace your real name on your papers. You will read the papers aloud, stopping to describe my comments. If you have revised one of these papers, you will also be asked to read the revised paper. Finally, the interviewer may ask brief open-ended follow-up questions if clarification of your responses is necessary. Your name will not be associated with your observations in any way. You will be tape-recorded during this interview. The tape will be transcribed so that I do not hear your voice.

Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the session at any time or refuse to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable. You will not be asked to do anything that exposes you to risks beyond those of everyday life.

If you have further questions about the study, please contact me at reynolal@muohio.edu or speak with me after class. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please call the Office for the Advancement of Scholarship and Teaching at 529-3734.

Thank you for your participation. I am very grateful for your help and hope that this will be an interesting session for you.

Sincerely,
Abbey Reynolds

I agree to participate in the study of the effectiveness of responding to student writing using rhetorical terms. I understand my participation is voluntary and that my name will not be associated with my responses.

Participation’s Signature: ________________________________
Date: ____________________________
Appendix B

Name: ____________________________________
Grade:__________

Final Comments:

Ethos:

Pathos:

Logos:
Participant Instructions

Dear Student:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research study. The purpose of this research is to discover if using rhetorical terms to assess student writing helps students better understand how to improve their writing. In other words, I am studying whether you understand my comments and what you do with them.

You will be audio-recorded during this interview. The following are the instructions for beginning the interview:

1. Please choose an anonymous name that you would like me to use for you in my research.
2. Ask the interviewer to replace your real name with this pseudonym on your papers.
3. The interviewer will start the tape. Please start the tape by declaring your chosen pseudonym.
4. Please read the first paper you have written out loud. Stop at the end of each paragraph to read my marginal comments stating, “Abbey has written in the margin…” Then explain the best you can what you understood those comments to mean. Repeat this process until you have read the entire paper out loud.
5. Repeat this process for the second paper and any revised papers.
6. At the end of the session the interviewer may ask open-ended follow-up questions if clarification of your responses is necessary.

Thank you for participating.

Sincerely,

Abbey Reynolds
Rhetorical Appeals

**Ethos** – Ethical Appeal

- To establish credibility and/or authority as a rhetor:
  - Demonstrate knowledge of the topic by providing background information and informed opinion (appropriate vocabulary/terms, definitions, history etc.).
  - Personal experience shows you are a credible source of information because you have insider/first hand knowledge (this is also why primary sources are better than secondary sources). You are a representation of your ideas as much as your ideas represent you.
  - Show confidence and integrity by not contradicting previous claims you have made.
  - Appear trustworthy by respecting your audience, citing outside sources, providing true/accurate and plausible information, and staying on topic.
  - Give credit to past rhetors (either through a literature review, quotes from experts, citation and works cited page). This also shows you are informed.
  - Grammar and mechanical errors, when abundant, can undermine your professionalism.
  - Offer new claims (claims not already common to the topic) so that you are adding your valuable insights to the conversation. Use your own voice.
  - Having respect and compassion for the opposing debate allows the reader to view you as an ethical and, therefore, credible rhetor. Be fair-minded when refuting opposing viewpoints and consider establishing common ground (things all sides believe are true).

**Pathos** – Emotional Appeal

- To evoke an emotional response in your audience:
  - Be aware of the beliefs your audience may have about your claim and anticipate where warrants need to be stated.
  - Provide your audience with the information they need to understand your claims (consider what they know).
  - Unless it is your goal to be offensive or to evoke anger in your audience, be respectful of their beliefs by not attacking them as people and by not using phrases like, “obviously, it is ignorant to believe that.”
  - Evoke emotions by using words, phrases or common experiences that call to mind connotative meaning (and be aware of whether that word evokes anger, fear, sadness, happiness, etc.).
  - Use thick description to describe a scene to inspire images (as opposed to simply telling the scene). This gives a face to your message and allows the audience to relate better to your message.
  - When appropriate, using personal narrative allows your readers to relate to you and your topic.
  - Apathy is an emotion. Consider how you can keep your reader’s interest.

**Logos** – Logical Appeal

- To provide a logical argument within your text:
  - Provide a thesis statement that outlines your main point in one or two sentences.
  - Offer claims that support that thesis statement (usually the best claim is first).
  - Present support for those claims in the form of your informed opinion, expert opinion (direct quotes, paraphrased statements or summaries – cited), or objective facts and figures to evoke a rational response.
Appendix D

- Make argument stronger by considering the warrants you do and do not have in common with your audience. You may need to explain your logic.
- Combine wordy sentences in order to convey concise ideas so you do not appear redundant.
- Avoid logical fallacies.
- In order to provide a linear argument, each paragraph will contain one claim (although you can break that paragraph into two sequential paragraphs if it is longer than ½ page). If you begin talking about a new claim this is where you start a new paragraph.
- Stay on topic and offer relevant information to support your claims.
- Make claims your audience will think are reasonable (you don’t have to change their views – you only have to show them you have reasonable claims).

**Ethos - Author/ Speaker**
Ethical Appeal (authority, credibility and moral stance)

Rhetorical Triangle

**Logos – Text/Argument**
Logical Appeal

**Pathos - Audience**
Emotional Appeal
Writer’s Memo

What is the main point of this piece?

List two strengths of your piece?

Where or when did you struggle the most? Why?

If you had more time, energy, ideas, or different parameters, where would you go next with this piece?
How did you demonstrate *ethos, pathos* and *logos* in this paper?

How do you think I will read your paper and do you agree with that reading?