**Sample Outline: Rhetorical Analysis**

**I. Introduction**

A. Contextualize selected essay: discuss its exigence/social context; paint a quick picture of the cultural climate into which this argument was introduced

B. Introduce author and essay: mention essay's title and discuss briefly author's background, occupation, other writings, etc.

C. Describe briefly essay's subject matter/gist

D. Identify briefly author's main claim(s)

E. Identify very briefly author's intended audience(s)

F. Discuss briefly author's likely main goals

G. **State thesis:** the gist of your final evaluation--that is, how relatively persuasive/unpersuasive you find this argument for its intended audience, listing briefly some of its greatest strengths and weaknesses as considered from the intended audience's perspective.

**II. Audience**

A. Identify publication source (publisher, website, organization, college)

B. Identify author's intended audience--the likely readers of this publication

C. Describe how else we know--from the essay's subject matter, argument, etc.--that this is the likely intended audience

D. Discuss why the author likely chose this audience and how you know this

E. Discuss who else might be included in the audience, why, and how you know this

F. Discuss who is likely excluded from the audience, why, and how you know this. \* Note: Focus, though, on the primary intended audience above

**III. Logos**

A. Discuss Structure of essay

1. Provide roadmap of the essay's organization/logic for your readers (who we are pretending have never read the essay)

2. Do so by describing how the essay opens, how it unfolds, and how it concludes

3. Do so by describing major shifts in argument's reasoning

4. Evaluate argument's structure: conclude this section by commenting on how intended audience might respond to the argument's overall structure. \* Note strengths as well as possible weaknesses

B. Main claims of argument and supporting reasoning

1. Identify main claims of argument

2. Describe how the author supports these claims--what reasons he/she offers

3. Provide a handful of specific examples of representative (key and clear) instances of the author's reasoning--how he/she links reasons to a claim

4. Analyze each example briefly: discuss how the author uses that particular strategy to persuade readers

5. Evaluate argument's reasoning: conclude this section by commenting on how the intended audience will likely respond, overall, to the author's reasoning and use of the different kinds of arguments. \* Note strengths as well as possible weaknesses

C. Discuss Kinds of evidence used

1. Discuss the kinds of evidence the author uses to persuade readers (e.g. facts, statistics, personal experience, stories, anecdotes, etc.)

2. Provide a few key examples of different types of evidence

3. Analyze each example briefly: discuss how the author uses that type and/or specific bit of evidence to persuade readers

4. Evaluate argument's evidence: conclude this section by commenting on how the intended audience will likely respond, overall, to the author's use of different forms of evidence and the quality and quantity of that evidence. \* Note strengths as well as possible weaknesses

**IV. Ethos**

A. Discuss briefly author's extrinsic ethos: how it is established, how it contributes to the author's character/credibility, and how it might influence the intended audience

B. Discuss more fully author's intrinsic ethos

C. Provide a few key examples of how the author builds his/her ethos throughout the argument

D. Analyze each example briefly: discuss how the author uses that strategy to persuade readers

E. Evaluate author's ethos: conclude this section by commenting on how the intended audience will likely respond, overall, to the author's ethos. \* Note strengths as well as possible weaknesses

**V. Pathos**

A. Discuss author's appeals to pathos: appeals to intended audience's emotions, values, assumptions, sense of identity

B. Provide a few key examples of how the author uses pathos in different ways to persuade his/her intended audience

C. Analyze each example briefly: discuss how the author uses that particular strategy to elicit certain responses/feelings from readers

D. Evaluate author's use of pathos appeals: conclude this section by commenting on how the intended audience will likely respond, overall, to the author's appeals to pathos. \* Note strengths as well as possible weaknesses

**VI. Counter-arguments and qualifiers**

A. Discuss briefly how, where, and why the author might qualify main claims of his/her argument in crucial ways and what effect these qualifications might have on the reader

B. Discuss more fully how the author addresses counter-arguments, concessions, and refutations

C. Provide a few key examples of how the author addresses counter-arguments to persuade his/her intended audience

D. Analyze each example briefly: discuss how the author handles the counter-argument (how respectful he/she is to the opposition, how much he/she concedes and refutes) and what effect these strategies have on readers

E. Evaluate author's use of counter-arguments, concessions, and refutations: conclude this section by commenting on how the intended audience will likely respond, overall, to the author's treatment of the opposition and its arguments. \* Note strengths as well as possible weaknesses

**VII. Conclusion**

A. Concluding paragraph should highlight the argument's strengths and weaknesses (as concerns the intended audience)

B. After weighing strengths and weaknesses, offer a final evaluation of the argument's overall persuasiveness relative to the intended audience