

Ethical communication and fallacies

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- Key concern in all elements of the rhetorical canons
 - Definitions
 - Arguers who act to undermine their audiences or weaken community bonds and structures are generally considered unethical
 - Ethical
 - Strengthens community structures
 - Works in the best interests of the audience
 - Inch and Warnick, Critical Thinking and Communication, 2010
 - Ethical (and persuasive) characters seek to be wise, trustworthy, fair and honest
 - Aristotle
 - The ability to meet their obligations to others
 - Balancing respect for the writer's audience with the complexity of the issue being discussed
 - I.e. For a complex issue, not using language that is too simple and vice versa
 - Ensures obligations to the audience is met because they are ensuring the reader has an accurate understanding of the topic
 - Willingly put ourselves in the place of our readers
 - Experience what they do as they read what we've written
 - Seek understanding of the ways that our writing affects the people we write about
 - Write in ways that help achieve the best interests of those communities
 - Being aware of community expectations about respectful language
 - ◆ Inclusive language according to Monash
 - ◇ Avoids marginalising people
 - ◇ Accessible and meaningful to a wide audience
 - Professional ethics according to Anne Surma (Public and Professional Writing 34)
 - Professional communicator might have different cultural backgrounds, goals and responsibilities to various parties
 - Complicating the rhetorical situation
 - E.g. Family and company
 - Oriented towards (rather than at) others
 - Imaging and acknowledging:
 - ◆ Their positions
 - ◆ Rights to respond to our missives in a challenging manner which may encourage us to re-evaluate our aims, ideas or beliefs
 - Aim is to achieve a close as possible correspondence between intended meanings and the interpretations others make of them
 - Marie-Segolene Royal's use of rhetoric was viewed as deceptive when used "tactfully, perhaps even tactically"
 - By Andrew Hussey
 - Richardson (2008) Introduction: What is rhetoric?
- Rhetorical fallacies
 - Definition
 - Collins Australian Dictionary
 - An incorrect or misleading notion or opinion
 - Invalid reasoning
 - Rendering an argument logically invalid
 - Rhetorical fallacy
 - Use of unfair tactics of argument in a particular situation
 - Rather than considering formal logic and universal validity, because:
 - a) Speech is presented in a rhetorical situation
 - i) See below

- b) The study of rhetoric considers text in relation to these factors (contextualisation), so texts cannot be faulty in a universal sense
 - c) Only in the situation in which it was presented
 - ◇ E.g. Fallacy can exist in one situation but not in another
- Examples
 - Appeal to fear
 - ◆ Made by increasing fear and prejudice towards the opposing side
 - ◆ Pathos
 - Slippery slope
 - ◆ Unjustified claim that a chain reaction, ending in dire consequences, will take place if one 'step' is made
 - ◆ Pathos
 - Appeal to ridicule
 - ◆ Presenting an opponent's argument as if it is absurd
 - ◆ Logos
 - Hasty (or biased) generalizing
 - ◆ Making assumptions to a broader case/group based on an inadequate sample size
 - ◇ E.g. Stereotypes
 - ◆ Logos
 - False dilemma (or false dichotomy)
 - ◆ Arguer sets it up as if there are only two choices, then eliminates one to leave the choice that they are pushing for
 - ◆ Logos
 - ◇ Logical option left
 - ◆ Pathos
 - ◇ Audience feeling cornered
 - False analogy
 - ◆ Arguments sometimes rely on analogies being made to compare objects/ideas/situations
 - ◆ Doing so falsely is to compare things that aren't alike in the aspects relevant to the argument
 - ◇ E.g. Hammers and guns are used to kill (but guns can be used to commit mass-murder)
 - ◆ Logos
 - Post hoc ergo propter hoc
 - ◆ Claimed that one event was caused by another, solely based up their chronology
 - ◆ Logos
 - Ad hominem
 - ◆ Bypassing an argument by launching an attack on the character presenting it (usually irrelevant one) and not their claim
 - ◆ Ethos
 - Guilt by association
 - ◆ Discrediting an argument by associating it with an undesirable person or group
 - ◆ Ethos
 - ◇ Attaching negative characteristics to the new argument
 - ◆ Logos
 - ◇ "You don't want that, so you don't want this"
 - Straw man
 - ◆ Anticipating an argument of the opponent and attacking it according
 - ◆ The arguer knocks down a distorted/weaker, watered-down version of the opponent's position, but this is less powerful than rebuking the principle points of it
 - ◆ Logos