

Free an application of rhetorical analysis: on public choice essay example

[Politics](#), [Democracy](#)



[Student's name]

Introduction

What is Rhetoric? Rhetoric is the art of expression of ideas, either spoken or in a written form by a skilled proponent who tries to convince the audience or the reader of the accuracy of his statements, by pleading to their emotions, using subtle logic or cause and effect scenario, reminding them of his credentials and mastery over the main subject, etc. There appears to be a still existent idea that rhetoric is used mostly to prove illogical arguments and is a skill mostly practiced by advocates of mendacity. This is a false allegation.

Rhetoric can hide as well as disclose the truth too. The ends to its use will depend upon the individual using it and not the art form. Rhetoric is not a recent development and the first book written on persuasion or rhetoric was by the Greek philosopher Aristotle named Rhetoric way back in the 4th century BC.

The paper to be analyzed deals with 'Public Choice', written by William F. Shughart, II's. From the paper biography, we can derive that "Dr. Shughart is the F. A. P. Distinguished Professor of Economics at the University of Mississippi". He is the chief editor too of "Public Choice".

It is precisely in the area of understanding that "Public Choice" appears to be oddly pessimistic. It is ironical that while the article is concerned with democracy and politics, it also seeks to explain why voting is unimportant, as a person's sole vote will not accomplish anything. These are concepts, which are sure to be found fascinating by all people who live under democracy's umbrella. Yet, one has to part with a hefty sum even to read the article.

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Again, democracy as practiced today is of various types. However, from the article it appears that only US democracy has been dealt with here. The question therefore arises as to whether the thought process in the article is only for American Democracy.

It does not escape attention that the author in the first paragraph himself names two famous economists who are “ Amartya Sen” and “ James. M. Buchanan” both Nobel Prize winners in Economics. Nevertheless, names really cannot be that important. What is important is that the author should shore up his doddering castle by allowing it rest against a solid structure. If the names of Buchanan and Sen can shore up the author’s argument, it will be a case of having nothing to say. The tragedy here is that they do not help as effective struts.

Hence, from these examples, the thesis statement is that ‘ the author employs almost nothing in his defense in terms of rhetorical tools; the composition lacks references for checking and authenticity”. What needs to be clearly stated here is that this has nothing to do with the veracity of the author’s statements. That they are fragile and lack the support of a permanent structure to anchor them is the issue.

Rhetorical strategies and their analysis

The paper has a rather strict, leave-me-alone style with a cold tone. It offers no explanations or back up data with all due arrogance. For example, it says in the first paragraph towards the end, “ Public Choice has revolutionized the study of “ democratic decision making processes””. However, what is this revolution? Was there anything wrong with the study of democratic decision-

making processes before? There is not even a footnote reference. It is well understood that the paper is meant for peer reviews, but still a small reference to a previous article could have been given. The author has not tried to use any rhetorical tools so as to draw and maintain sustained interest of readers in it.

Ethos

William F Shughart II is a well-known economist but in ‘Public Choice’ he no longer remains in economics but formulates political science theories like the economic theories and combine them into a unified hypothesis, in a number of cases.

Dr. Shughart’s academic publications in the field of democratic consensus and political systems, if listed here would have earned his credibility many brownie points. Not that he needs any recommendations to qualify, but the ethos would have certainly benefitted from the move

Logos

There are gaps in the logos. For instance, under elections, it is said, “the voting process is thereby irrational as a single person’s vote cannot alter anything”. In that case why is the output in the US so high or is it a fact that the majority of Americans are irrational? Then referring to the first sentence in the second paragraph under the subhead Legislatures, the author states “the Legislative catering to the interests of the minority at the expense of the majority is reinforced by the logic of collective action”. The author, revealing another gaping hole in the logos analysis, does not state the reason behind this.

The gaps in the logos have the effect of riding in an automobile where the driver releases the clutch pedals intermittently. The vehicle moves forward but in jerks.

Pathos

Pathos is the art of conviction by tugging at the emotion of the reader. For example, one fine example of pathos will be Marc Antony's speech on the death of Julius Caesar, to the citizens of Rome, which directly contributed to the death of the Brutus and his co-conspirators. This is however fiction and in the dry world of academics, the use of pathos is unlikely. Dr. Shughart's paper is devoid of pathos.

Narration

The narration may be a trifle complicated but no fault can be found here. The words go on smoothly until a logic bomb crops up but we have already covered that in logos. It is important that the narration be smooth in a technical paper and the author's narration is smooth.

Transition Words

The importance of transition words cannot be overestimated in an academic paper. Without the correct transition word, the flow does not move from one paragraph to the other.

Causes and Effects

There are many instances where only the effect has been stated in the paper. However, that is understandable as it is a technical paper. Moreover, we also have the genuine cause-effect instances such as " One key

conclusion of public choice is that changing the identities of those who hold public office will not produce major changes in policy outcomes". In the original composition, the passage is at the top of the last paragraph.

Others such as

Oxymoron, Asyndeton, -: Not Applicable

Alliteration, Assonance, Imagery etc. -: Not Applicable

Metaphors and Simile:

There is no room here for use of the metaphor or simile as the author deals with the academic subject.

Test of the Theory

Helene Lundqvist, of the University of Stockholm, carried out a study to test the postulate of Public Choice theory of politicians as self-interested, on an empirical basis. Although there were a number of opportunities for political corruption, Helene decided to check if local politicians in Stockholm took advantage of the compensation reimbursable for municipal assembly meetings. Two different ways were tried to gather evidence.

1. A cut off system that acted at a point was introduced for clear strategy reimbursements at maximum economic return, made by the politicians.
2. Checked up whether municipality politicians who received a daily allowance arranged for meetings at different hours after adjusting timings with the politicians who were reimbursed hourly, to increase their legitimate compensation

Lindquist also examined the same group of politicians as this study as the Swedish municipal assembly politicians. She tested if any economic return

were there when elected to the assembly with a close margin compared to those who were not elected to the assembly by a close margin, but found nothing amiss (2011, nd)

Conclusion

If we go through the pages 3-4 of this assignment in the rhetorical analysis portion, we see the following

We have the following results of the analysis

Even though the socio-political theory of “ Public Choice” is interesting and is definitely, but Dr. Shughart so composes his lines that the readability of each paragraph falls as one goes deeper into the text. Now, it may be asked so what? What if the author’s writings are hard to comprehend and he is too wordy. He is an academic after all. The problem is that he is trying to convince me the reader of the truth of the Public Choice theory.

Nevertheless, how am I to be convinced of the truth if I do not understand what you are saying?

There is old story that a traveler who is from Japan tries to tell everyone in Paris that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. However, no one pays him any attention. He finally stops shouting and grumbles that Paris is a place of fools. However, it is the Japanese traveler who is to blame, for he was shouting in Japanese, which no one understood. The point here is that no matter how profound the truth is, it has to be understood as otherwise it is of no value.

Ethos: Medium . We have already discussed this aspect

Logos: Logical blanks remain here, there and everywhere in the paper. Some portions are logically erudite while others are bereft of any logic whatsoever.

Pathos: Not applicable

Cause/Effect : Good

Transition words : Good

Narration : Medium

Flow : medium.

Metaphor and Simile : Not applicable

Hence, we are able to prove our thesis statement pertaining to the rhetoric of the paper as correct. However, it will only be fair to say that the author perhaps did not anticipate such a large circulation or perhaps the same has been taken from a collection in a book. This is because; an economist of the stature of Dr. Shughart will not make such prominent errors.

Finally, allow me the liberty to express myself saying that rhetoric may be thousands of years old but its relevance to the truth is the most important thing in contemporary social science. One may be able to popularize the truth without practice of rhetoric, but using rhetoric gives faster results, which is a desired virtue.

Reference:

Lundqvist, H. " Is it Worth it? On the Returns to Holding Political Office",
Stockholm University,
2011 Web.