

Television as Text: Rhetorical Analyses of Popular Shows

Thomas Endres, University of Northern Colorado

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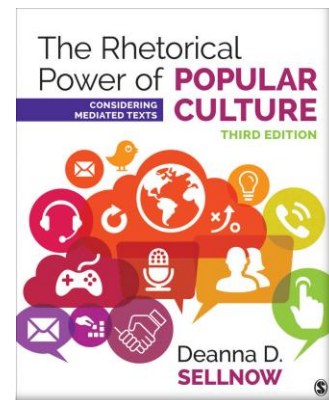
Introduction

The student works linked to this session are from my current **JMS 490: Television Criticism** course. From the beginning, students were given an option of (a) writing *an outline* and delivering *a longer* presentation at SASSI, or (b) writing *a paper* and delivering *a shorter presentation* in class. All presentations required a visual supplement like PowerPoint.

The names in the program are those who originally selected the SASSI option. With COVID-19 disruptions melding into the start of Spring Break, not everyone – understandably - was able to meet the deadlines.

The purpose of this assignment is to take some mediated text, like a television show or series, and provide a rhetorical analysis using one of the methodologies outlined in Deanna Sellnow's (2018) The Rhetorical Power of Popular Culture: Considering Mediated Texts, 3rd ed. (Sage). I highly recommend this text to anyone teaching a rhetorically-focused course in popular culture. In her book, Deanna walks students through the rhetorical tradition, including our Neo-Aristotelian foundations, and follows with a variety of contemporary approaches for humanistic analysis. The methods include:

Narrative Paradigm
Burke and Dramatism
Bormann's Symbolic Convergence Theory
(chapter written by yours truly)
Neo-Marxism
Feminist Approaches
Music Perspectives
(especially Sellnow's own Illusion of Life method)
Visual Perspectives
Media-Centered Perspectives



Each chapter walks students through how to do the research and how to write a paper applying the method. Multiple examples are provided throughout, and each chapter ends with one or more student papers showing what the end product looks like. Finally, she concludes with a great appendix differentiating *the written analysis* from *the public presentation* thereof.

For almost everyone in my class, this is their first exposure to humanistic interpretation. It's a gratifying journey to share, and I hope you enjoy these preliminary explorations.