VISUAL RHETORIC FOR STUDENT WRITERS
Main Points:

• Definition(s) of visual rhetoric
• Why visual rhetoric is important today
• Visual rhetoric and
  • Text
  • Color
  • Graphics
  • Overall design
What is Visual Rhetoric?

Visual Rhetoric includes:

• The use of images as an argument;
• The arrangement of elements on a page;
• The use of typography (fonts, etc.); and
• The analysis of existing images and visuals.
What is Visual Literacy?

Visual Literacy

- Visual Thinking
  - Metaphoric Thinking
  - Visualization
  - Source of Imagery
  - Right Brain/Left Brain
  - Mental Nodes

- Visual Learning
  - Design of Materials
  - Read Pictures
  - Research on Learning

- Visual Communication
  - Art
  - Media Visual Rhetoric
  - Aesthetics
Visual Rhetoric matters because...

• We use **visual thinking** as a major part of our cognition (thinking process).
• We live in a **visually dominated world**, so...
• We must be able to **read, dissect, and produce effective visuals**.
Visual Rhetoric and...

Text elements
- How type functions and choosing appropriate fonts
- Headline versus body text
- Text and the Web

Color

Visuals and graphics
- Clip art
- Illustrations and diagrams
- Graphs
- Photographs and manipulated images

Overall design
How Type Functions

Type has different “Personalities”:

• There are formal and informal fonts

• The consequences of font choices:
  • Consider the effect of each font
  • What is the selected font’s personality and appropriateness?
Font Personalities

1. Lorem ipsum
2. Lorem ipsum
3. Lorem ipsum
4. Lorem ipsum
Choosing Appropriate Fonts

Your font choice can either build or harm your ethos (credibility) as an author.

The context and purpose of the document is important.

The cultural and visual associations of the fonts should fit the purpose of the document.
Operating Instructions
Dear Mrs. Smith,
Medieval History
Bigfoot Captured!
In deepest sympathy
Lafayette Teen Center
Chemistry Lab Report
Museum of Natural History
Headline versus Body Text

How text functions:

• Type of text dictates font choice:
  • Emphasis and attention
  • Information

• Sustained readability
Again, the first two examples may not jump out at you. But if “In deepest sympathy” were on the front of a sympathy card, it would seem cold, callous, and impersonal. With the “Lafayette Teen Center,” that font face may be appropriate in, say, a fundraising drive, but probably not for promotional materials to get teens to come there off of the streets (for that, we’d want a font that was exciting, more youthful in appearance).
There are text and type differences between print and the Web.

When choosing type for the Web, consider:

- Accommodating users and browsers;
- HTML standard fonts; and
- Screen readability.
Color is the most basic and most critical choice you, as an author, can make:

- Black text on white background shows high contrast and is the most common choice.
- White text on a black background, however, is not ideal.
Font Contrast: Example

Run black text over a neutral beige
Computer Screens and Color

Deep blue text on a bright red background

vs.

Desaturated blue on darker red background
More Color Examples

- Pixels and colors are different **on screen** than in print
  - RGB values
  - Color saturation
- **Cultural associations** of color

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Using packaged clip art:

• Avoid the “cartoony” effect.

• Choose clip art that truly fits the purpose of the document.

• Match design schemes

Consider creating images instead!
Illustrations and Diagrams

Visuals to inform:
• Convey specific information
• Relate to content in the document
• Are more than an accent

Striving for visual clarity:
• Avoid clutter
• Choose selective pictures of reality
• Break up large amounts of information
Choosing how to represent quantitative information:

- **Pie charts** – showing parts of a whole
- **Bar graphs** – numeric comparisons
- **Line graphs** – plotting changes
Photographs

Found images vs. captured photographs

Considerations:

- Copyright
- Composition and quality
- Achieving effects with photos
Photo Examples
Design Considerations:

1. Creating **paths for the eye:**
   - Striking, eye-catching elements.
   - Finding information easily.

2. Design as **rhetorical organization**

3. **Consistency** in design:
   - Avoid “kitchen-sink syndrome.”
   - Pitfalls of pre-fab templates.
To evaluate your design, ask yourself:

- Is your design clarifying your information?
- Is your design unique enough to make it stand out?
- Is your design readable from its intended distance?
- Have you checked for typos and errors?
- When designing for the Web, have you checked your design on different computers and in different browsers?
Additional Resources

*The Non-Designer’s Design Book* and *The Non-Designer’s Web Book* by Robin Williams

*Color Index* and *Idea Index* by Jim Krause

*What is Graphic Design?* by Quentin Newark
THANK YOU

Purdue University On-Campus Writing Lab
Krach Leadership Center (2nd Floor)

Web: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/
Phone: (765) 494-3723
Email: owl@owl.english.purdue.edu