

Elements of Persuasion

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ASTR 8500

4/28/20

Rhetoric, according to Aristotle

- Aristotle's treatise *Rhetoric* (4th century BCE) is considered the foundation of western thought on the art of persuasion
- Describes three main components of rhetoric
 - Logos
 - Ethos
 - Pathos



Logos

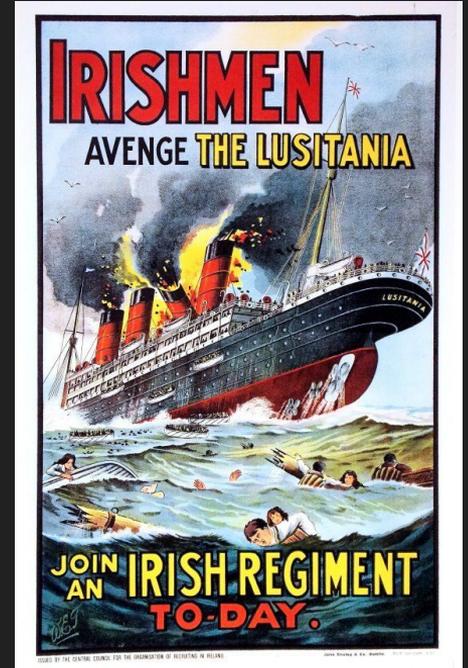
- The logical basis of an argument
- Content and form will vary based on speaker and audience
- Not going to go too much into the theory of logic, but lots of resources out there if you're interested

Ethos

- Ethos speaks to the character of the speaker/writer
- Its foundations lie both in the audience's prior knowledge of the speaker, and in action that the speaker takes to boost his/her credibility

Pathos

- Pull on audience's emotions
- Use simple imagery or stories to connect with audience's humanity



Understand your audience!

- The experiences, desires, knowledge, motivations, etc. of your audience have a huge effect on how receptive they'll be to your argument
- Your argument (of whatever form) should be tailored to your intended audience
- This includes modifying how much you rely on each of the three major elements of persuasion
- Also what each of these elements contains

Applications to astronomy -- Logos

- Present information clearly. Visuals are particularly important (see presentation on data visualization!)
- Speak to the level of your audience. Are you at a specialized conference, or a public talk attended by nonscientists?

Applications to astronomy -- Ethos

- Obviously, it's best if you're a well-respected researcher with decades of experience and thousands of citations!
- Doesn't apply to most of us though...

Applications to astronomy -- Ethos

- You don't have to be well-known to be credible
- Talk a little about your background
- Cite your sources
- Dress presentably
- Speak clearly, avoid typos

Applications to astronomy -- Pathos

- Need to make the audience care
- Particularly important when speaking to those outside your specific field, such as those deciding whether you get a fellowship, grant, etc.
- Convince them that your research is compelling and important. Spark their imagination!

Select online resources

<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.html>

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/establishing_arguments/rhetorical_strategies.html

<https://virtualspeech.com/blog/rhetoric-inform-persuade-motivate-your-audience>

Questions?