Abstracts

Phase 3 Handout

What is an abstract? An abstract is a self-contained, short, and explicit summary that serves as a synopsis of a larger work. Components included in abstracts vary according to discipline. An abstract of a social science or scientific work may contain the scope, purpose, results, and contents of the work. An abstract of a humanities work may contain the thesis, background, and conclusion of the larger work. An abstract is not a review, nor does it evaluate the work being abstracted. While it contains key words found in the larger work, the abstract is an original document rather than an excerpted passage.

What is the purpose of abstract for the portfolio assignment? An abstract for this assignment is meant to orient readers to each of your major essay assignments. Thus, you will write 3 abstracts for your portfolio—one each for your L&L Narrative, Synthesis Essay, and Translation 2—and you will place the abstract before each essay. Your real audience for your abstract consists of writing teachers and administrators who are not familiar with our course and assignments.

What is included in the abstracts for the portfolio? Each abstract should make these "moves":

    A. Introduce <u>the assignment</u> that your essay responds to (i.e., summarize what it is you were tasked to do, as indicated in the assignment prompt)

    B. Introduce <u>your rhetorical situation</u> (explicitly mention your purpose / argument, intended audience, the genre of the text you wrote, and what you "do"—analyze, argue, draw on sources, etc.)

    C. Highlight <u>the knowledge or skills you gained</u> by completing the assignment (look to the language in our course learning outcomes for ideas)

Analyzing Sample Abstracts. Read the sample abstracts below and highlight the three different "moves" defined above. Be sure to also underline when / if the writer explicitly mentions aspects of the rhetorical situation.

<u>Sample 1</u>. For our first assignment, the Rhetorical Analysis Essay, my class was assigned to rhetorically read and analyze four short texts written on the topic of millennials. The goal of the essay is to evaluate what a given author is "doing" in his or her text, for what audience, using what evidence and strategies, and why. Tasked with focusing on just one of four readings, I decided to analyze an article titled, "The Tethered Generation" by Kathryn Tyler. Tyler's argument about the need for millennials to mature in order to adhere to HR professionals' needs in the workforce led me to decide to speak directly back to Tyler herself. Imagining Tyler as my

primary audience, and using rhetorical analysis to point out the limitations of her argument, I gained experience analyzing arguments to try to understand the impact of rhetorical situations, especially an author's intended audience, purpose, and rhetorical appeals. In the end, what I most took from this assignment was that every piece of writing has a message, and that message can be interpreted differently depending on who may be reading it. My essay below nicely demonstrates my newly developed skills in rhetorically analyzing texts.

Sample 2. The largest assignment we had this semester was an argument-driven research paper. I chose to pursue the same topic I used for the previous phase, discrimination against LGBTQ parents. My argument question was "Are same-sex parents hindering the mental development of their children?" The purpose of this research paper was to learn how to incorporate and interlink researched sources into an argument to build and strengthen objective and credibility, and I believe that I was successful in attaining these learning goals. My intended audience for this paper were citizens "on the fence" regarding the competency of LGBTQ parents, and this audience choice allowed me to gain practice in being persuasive to undecided readers. I presented sources that spoke on the mental state of children in LGBTQ families, both same and opposing arguments, in order to establish the idea that same-sex parents are, in fact, not mentally damaging their children and that society must put a stop to this type of discrimination. My essay serves as good evidence for my ability to draw on sources and construct persuasive arguments.

Sample 3. For Phase 3, our class progressed into a multimodal assignment with a dual goal: to create a working visual argument using a unique media type, and to supplement this visual with a persuasive proposal advocating the publication of our visual argument to a board of executives. I created an ad that would appear in parenting magazines and that speaks to parents who want to be able to spend more time with their children after work but feel pressured by their workplace to continue to be available via phone or email after work, once they're home with their families. I targeted this specific group and honed my visual to emotionally appeal to these loving parents who value family time. The importance of my ad and supporting proposal becomes apparent as I reference a study done by a children's shoe company on kids' emotional reactions to being ignored when their parents are on their phones excessively. In both my ad and proposal essay, I demonstrate a keen awareness of my audience by paying careful attention to the way that I appeal to my respective audiences in distinct ways.

Extra tips for writing abstracts:

1. If you're struggling to write a summary of your argument, **reread the essay with the goal of abstracting in mind**. Consider specifically for these main parts of the essay: argument, audience, purpose. Reflect on what the essay "says" about your learning and writing strengths.

2. Try **writing a rough draft of your abstract without looking back at your essay**. Don't merely copy key sentences from the essay, which can lead you to put in too much or too little information. Don't rely on the way material was phrased in the essay; summarize information in a new way.
3. **Revise your rough draft to**
    - correct weaknesses in organization and / or improve transitions from point to point
    - drop unnecessary information and / or add important information you left out
    - eliminate wordiness and / or fix any errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation