



Digging into the Nitty Gritty: A Deeper Insight into the Work of Custodians

Alyssa Wombles

1. Throughout the semester there have been copious challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic for us students, but the people who are experiencing the undeniable brunt of the impact and have the most risks to be cautious of are the custodial staff. They have been working overtime to help keep all of Virginia Tech and colleges around the world's students and faculty safe and assured. As a student living on campus, I am immensely grateful for all of the hard work they have been putting into their job and respect them highly for putting their lives in danger for the greater good. Their job changed from being just an ordinary job to a dangerous and highly essential job overnight to prevent the spread of this deadly virus and they risk their lives doing so.
2. The piece I have chosen for this topic is an article by the name of "National Custodian Appreciation Day Takes on New Meaning Amid COVID-19" written by Mike Robertson for the College of Charleston's newspaper, *The College Today*. As expected from the title, the article discusses how everyone should appreciate the custodial staff of our colleges all the time rather than one day a year, especially in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. There are heavy uses of *pathos* in this article both by the author and the actual custodians that he pulls quotes from. One custodian by the name of William McCoy stated that "in the early days, when the pandemic first came out, I think there was a lot of concern and a lot of anxiety about whether we felt safe coming to work" which exemplifies this seemingly intentional use of

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pathos. There is also some use of *logos* with information and statistics being explained to show just how much custodians have to clean in reality. For example, “on average, CofC’s custodians each clean over 30,000 gross square feet of classroom space, offices and common areas per day... equivalent to cleaning about 15 average sized houses every single day” (Robertson) is the author utilizing *logos*. Robertson also uses slight *ethos* by using quotes from the College of Charleston’s vice president for Facilities Management. This could help the audience see that he took the time to talk to people in higher power positions and see him as a more reliable source of information and opinion on the topic at hand about the custodial staff at his specific college, the College of Charleston.

3. I completely agree with Robertson and think about this fairly often. Before the pandemic, I will reluctantly admit, I used to take the custodians around me for granted and not think twice about everything that they do and keep running sometimes, since this was just a normal job before the Covid-19 pandemic. Many of my peers think the same way as me in that sense and feel incredibly guilty. Now, however, my roommate and I take every possible opportunity to say thank you to our residence hall custodian when we see her. I also think it is kind of sad that we had to be *told* by our resident adviser to say thank you to our custodians when that should be a common courtesy *especially* during the pandemic. My roommate and I, along with many of the other girls that live in our hall, even wrote sweet thank you notes to our custodian on our whiteboards outside of our door to help possibly brighten up their day. I think that really helped improve their work ethic and mood; they would always express to us how much they appreciate the love and support during this hard time. There are many other ways we, as students, can encourage them and support them during this time. I think it is important that they have a welcoming and loving environment that helps them do the best they can. My roommate and I got our custodian a gift one time just to show her we still appreciate her and the thanks are not just a one time or passing thing. While I am aware that our custodians do everything they can and more to keep the hallways and bathrooms clean and appreciate them, there is no one in the residence halls at Virginia Tech that is able to come clean on the weekends even in cases of emergency which has proven difficult to navigate. The weekends are times with the highest traffic in the residence halls,

so it would make more sense to at least have someone to be on call and available if needed. There have been incidents in my personal experience, and others who I know that also live on campus, where feces and/or vomit have had to stay uncleaned in the bathroom for up to three days as there was a long weekend one of the times. It was especially difficult, since close to no one wanted to use our floor's bathroom because of it. In turn, the third floor's bathroom got even more traffic than usual which increased the likelihood of what happened to our bathroom happening to theirs. It ended up being a vicious cycle for a couple of weekends throughout the semester so far.

4. With everything having been said, this brings me to my change proposal of adding at least one custodian to be available to clean on the weekends of all of the Virginia Tech residence halls. There would not be very many obstacles standing in the way of this change. Simply finding willing people to hire and budgeting would be the major extent of it. I do not think it would be very difficult to find people who are in need of part-time jobs or someone who would want to be a custodian as a side job for extra money. With the lack of job openings during the pandemic, this could be someone's only option and it would be amazing to be able to provide a job for the people who truly need it. They can apply easily for this job as it would only be two to three days a week at most of work. Honestly, it even has the potential to be a student job; with the proper training, anyone could learn how to clean safely and properly. For budgeting, I suppose it would be logical to pull some funding from another aspect of the college that does not need as much attention during the pandemic. For instance, maybe sports funding could be cut a little bit, since in person activities have been limited. There would also be several benefits to going through with this proposal to all parties. The custodians who regularly clean the halls still get a break on the weekend as someone else takes over while the students do not have to worry about the cleanliness of their shared living spaces. Virginia Tech could also potentially improve their reputation because, without it, guests or current residents have the option to make bad comments online about this issue and strangers and/or parents might believe that their custodial staff does not do their job correctly when that is not the case at all. This bad reputation, while somewhat harmless, could possibly lead to not as many prospective students applying to

Virginia Tech.

5. At the end of the day, this has been a highly prevalent and ongoing issue on the Virginia Tech campus from my personal experience and other students I know. I hope the overseers of the Virginia Tech custodial staff recognize that this is an issue for many students like myself and, if nothing changes, it has the potential to make people not want to come back. I hope they implement some sort of addition to the staff, even if the change is minute, in the coming semesters; it will make me and others more confident in the cleanliness and safeness of the school as a whole and feel like we *want* to come back. I would hate for it to feel like a burden to live on campus because I really do enjoy almost all aspects of living on campus, but this issue is kind of outstanding in my peers' and my own eyes. It is like a dead patch of grass on an otherwise lush and vibrant field. In the long run, I believe the benefits will outweigh all of the disadvantages of implementing this change. To name a few: it would open up job positions to those struggling to find work during the Covid-19 pandemic, keep the students comfortable living on campus, and possibly improve the reputation of Virginia Tech. I do, however, recognize the cons that could arise when trying to help alleviate this issue; money is the main and most difficult obstacle to overcome. I understand that Virginia Tech already had to hire more custodians to work all over campus, so that ate up a bunch of their budget; however, I would argue that it is almost more important that the residence halls stay cleaner than actual campus because that is where us students spend almost all of our time especially during this unusual semester. Therefore, possibly getting rid of *some* of those extra custodial hires and just implementing more self-sanitizing stations like the hand sanitizer stations already all over campus or providing gloves and using the extra money to employ extra residential custodians could make a substantial difference. Seeing as classes are almost all online and at least I personally almost never left my dorm unless it was to get food, I believe it is more important to have the extra custodians be in residence halls.

References

Robertson, Mike. (2020, October 1). *National Custodian Appreciation Day Takes on New Meaning Amid COVID-19*. The College Today. <https://today.cofc.edu/2020/10/01/national-custodian-appreciation-day-takes-on-new-meaning-amid-covid-19-fs/>

Instructor: Derek Mueller (Associate Professor)

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Project Three: Rhetorical Analysis (20%)

 Blueprint

 Published

 Edit



ENGL1105 - Project Three Overview (Mueller, 84445)



Overview

Rhetorical analysis initially ventures toward *understanding* an issue--an assertion, a claim, or an action-oriented message--that is being spoken about or written about. The analysis provides footing before weighing in and contributing to a conversation already underway. Toward understanding the issue and what is being said about it, the analysis sorts things out using rhetorical terms and concepts to identify, describe, and discuss how the issue is being framed, why it is being framed that way, and how the rhetorical situation is working in a well-defined case (that is, the better defined the case, the more manageable the analysis). For our purposes, the third major project in ENGL1105 moves from analysis to production, from interpreting to having a say, and from grasping to participating more actively. Your rhetorical analysis should focus on an issue you believe to be significant for higher education--for you as a college student or for you or others on your campus. The project divides more or less evenly into two parts: 1) rhetorical analysis (what is at issue) and 2) op ed or change proposal (what should be done about it). In the first part, the rhetorical analysis of the issue must include the following distinctive sections, though you can decide about how best to arrange them:

- What is the key, central issue, and how is **at least one focal text** (an opinion piece, an article, or a public relations release) constructing a rhetorical situation that warrants some follow-up action or response? Introduce the text or text(s) you are focusing on, why you have chosen them, and how they work rhetorically.

- As you account for how the text works rhetorically, present your analysis of key rhetorical features, including but not limited to audience and purpose, *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*, and *kairos*. Provide some history and context for the issue outside of the text. To whom is this issue important? Why? What is at stake for you or for others who you think would be invested in this issue?

Then, in the second part of the project (use a distinct break or sub-heading to signal this move), weigh in on the issue by developing a **change proposal or op ed** (opinion piece, much like you would find in the *Collegiate Times* (<http://www.collegiatetimes.com/>)).

- After providing some context and positioning yourself as an author with stakes in the issue, **make a case** for meaningful, significant change--whether that change is material, concrete, and substantive, or whether that change is applies to mindset, attitude, and values. What actions should be taken? By whom? What should be done about the issue in light of the focal text and the context as you have framed it? Whether you frame this as a change proposal or as an op ed, this portion of the project should convey an action plan (or a recommendation for something to be done, as well as how you think it should be done, how much it would cost, if anything, and whose responsibility it should be).

As you plan and write, remember that you should be bringing rhetorical terms to bear on the issue and on the focal text, demonstrating an awareness of the Who, What, When, Where, and Why of the issue, then accounting for the *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*, and *kairos* of the focal text, in these terms. The discussion of action ought to be solution-oriented, taking seriously that what stands out as an issue may be complicated and weighed down by sticking points, but that it nonetheless can be changed, reframed, or productively re-imagined, and that such actions are constructive toward making higher education more responsive to students. You are encouraged to focus on issues at Virginia Tech, but you can also take into account something happening (or learned from) another college campus, from an community-campus or industry-campus partnership, or from some other angle on higher ed you consider to be relevant, timely, and important.

Like Projects One and Two, your third project should be highly focused. The project forecasts some of the work you will be doing in ENGL1106 next semester—selecting a contemporary source text, reading it well, drawing upon it to reinforce your writing.

Deadlines and Specifications

- A half-draft of at least 800 words is due for peer review by **Tuesday, November 7**.
- Project Three and Invention Portfolio are due in your Google Folder by **Sunday, November 22**.
- At least six pages, typed and double-spaced (i.e., 1600 words)
- A title that adheres to the model, **Catchphrase: Description**, all the better if it has a playful, memorable turn of phrase in the first half

Grading Breakdown and Rubric

Grades for Project Three will be returned to you on a grading worksheet much like Project One and Two. It assigns values to the following criteria:

- **Project Three - Rhetorical Analysis**

- **Establishing a focal Issue with context** - The project establishes a focal issue related to higher education and presents the history and context for the issue.
- **Rhetorical analysis**– The project introduces and applies a rhetorical vocabulary for analyzing the article. It makes rhetorical terms explicit and demonstrate a grasp of the concepts.
- **Balanced and purposefully arranged accounts** - The project dedicates sections to history and context, to rhetorical analysis, and to concrete action steps. The sections are balanced and arranged with purpose.
- **Overall development (inc. title and length)**- The project honors specifications concerning title, length, and any other formatting noted in class.
- **Style** - The project reflects control and consistency, which is evident in the presentation of understandable, accessible syntax (word order) and diction (word choice), regardless of multilingual and vernacular variation.
- **Invention Portfolio**- Evaluated based on the pattern of checks, check-plusses, and check-minuses in the collection of work.

Points 20

Submitting a website url

Due	For	Available from	Until
Nov 22	Everyone	-	-

Project Three - Rhetorical Analysis

You've already rated students with this rubric. Any major changes could affect their assessment results.

Criteria	Ratings					Pts
<p>Establishing a focal Issue with context</p> <p>The project establishes a focal issue related to higher education and presents the history and context for the issue.</p>	<p>2.8 to >2.38 pts Exceptional</p>	<p>2.38 to >2.1 pts Acceptable</p>	<p>2.1 to >1.82 pts Needs Improvement</p>	<p>1.82 to >0.0 pts Narrowly Applied</p>	<p>0.0 pts Not Applied</p>	<p>2.8 pts</p>
<p>Rhetorical analysis</p> <p>The project introduces and applies a rhetorical vocabulary for analyzing the article. It makes rhetorical terms explicit and demonstrate a grasp of the concepts.</p>	<p>2.8 to >2.38 pts Exceptional</p>	<p>2.38 to >2.1 pts Acceptable</p>	<p>2.1 to >1.82 pts Needs Improvement</p>	<p>1.82 to >0.0 pts Narrowly Applied</p>	<p>0.0 pts Not Applied</p>	<p>2.8 pts</p>
<p>Balanced and purposefully arranged accounts</p> <p>The project dedicates sections to history and context, to rhetorical analysis, and to concrete action steps. The sections are balanced and arranged with purpose.</p>	<p>2.8 to >2.38 pts Exceptional</p>	<p>2.38 to >2.1 pts Acceptable</p>	<p>2.1 to >1.82 pts Needs Improvement</p>	<p>1.82 to >0.0 pts Narrowly Applied</p>	<p>0.0 pts Not Applied</p>	<p>2.8 pts</p>

Criteria	Ratings					Pts
<p>Overall development (inc. title and length)</p> <p>The project honors specifications concerning title, length, and any other formatting noted in class.</p>	<p>2.8 to >2.38 pts Exceptional</p>	<p>2.38 to >2.1 pts Acceptable</p>	<p>2.1 to >1.82 pts Needs Improvement</p>	<p>1.82 to >0.0 pts Narrowly Applied</p>	<p>0.0 pts Not Applied</p>	<p>2.8 pts</p>
<p>Style</p> <p>The project reflects control and consistency, which is evident in the presentation of understandable, accessible syntax (word order) and diction (word choice), regardless of multilingual and vernacular variation.</p>	<p>2.8 to >2.38 pts Exceptional</p>	<p>2.38 to >2.1 pts Acceptable</p>	<p>2.1 to >1.82 pts Needs Improvement</p>	<p>1.82 to >0.0 pts Narrowly Applied</p>	<p>0.0 pts Not Applied</p>	<p>2.8 pts</p>
<p>Invention Portfolio</p> <p>Evaluated based on the pattern of checks, check-plusses, and check-minuses in the collection of work.</p>	<p>6.0 to >5.1 pts Exceptional</p>	<p>5.1 to >4.5 pts Acceptable</p>	<p>4.5 to >3.9 pts Needs Improvement</p>	<p>3.9 to >0.0 pts Narrowly Applied</p>	<p>0.0 pts Not Applied</p>	<p>6.0 pts</p>

Total Points: 20.0