**ENGL 5328 Risk Communication and Intercultural Rhetorics Proposal**

**Summary**

The issue of water conservation in the state of California is an on-going discussion. However, often times this issue of conservation is not researched with a rhetorical lens. Before I can analyze the rhetorical choices, and attempts at communicating with the public I must first review literature on environmental rhetoric, and areas of technical communication and risk communication that address water conservation, and/or similar environmental issues such as behavior changes and health communications.

Therefore, I am proposing to complete a Literature Review that will attempt to address issues within environmental rhetoric, and risk communication. These articles and books will help me situate this issue in rhetoric in an attempt to research how rhetoricians have talked about water conservation and/or similar topics and issues.

**Need, Gap, Research Questions**

This issue of water conservation addresses the need to study how a risk was staged, using Beck’s theories, and can bridge the gap between theory and practice. This is not only a result of looking at how the risk was staged, but what has changed as a result of continued low water levels in the state of California. It can serve as a current, and real world example of staging a risk, reacting to the risk, and what the involved parties do as a result of the communication of risk regarding the drought.

The issue of water conservation in California follows a three-tier system, as set by water levels, to determine their reaction and actions taken in the communication of the issue with the public. It is clear that the information shared with the public exemplifies rhetorical choices, but rhetoric does not inform their actions. That is to say, the water companies, agencies and government do not turn to rhetoricians, but to engineers and scientists, in addition to focus groups, to inform their decisions. There exists a gap between what informs their rhetorical choices, and how they measure the reactions, or behavior changes by the public.

In my attempt to limit this issue to rhetoric, I am focusing the research questions on understanding the scope of environmental rhetoric, tying it to communicating information to the public, or possibly, its influence on policy and/or behavior change.

Specific areas of interest and research questions are:

What is environmental rhetoric and would this research impact communication of environmental issues to the public?

What impact could rhetoricians, and research on environmental rhetoric have on this issue of water conservation? How do rhetoricians approach the issue of water conservation, or similar environmental issues?

I am attempting to keep these questions broad at this point, because of the need to situate this issue in rhetoric, so that I can have a better understanding of how rhetoricians address these issues before I begin my analysis. Ultimately, this Literature Review will be the beginning of a larger project to be completed in the future.

**Proposed Project and Significance**

My proposed project is a Literature Review to assist in immersing myself in these areas of rhetoric. I believe that before I can analyze the information communicated with the public I must first understand how this issue of water conservation, and/or similar issues that could inform research on water conservation, is approached, theorized and put in practice by rhetoricians. This Literature Review will be in APA format, and the minimum will be 7.5 single-spaced pages.

The significance of this paper is two-fold. It will give me more practice writing a Literature Review, and as a native of Southern California it provides me the opportunity to become more informed about an issue that is affecting my community and learn more about how risk communication is used within my community.

**Methodology**

Drawing on scholars researching in environmental rhetoric, I will attempt to find voices that will set the groundwork for a comprehensive compilation of sources that exist on this topic, or topics that are similar wherein I can substitute their subject with water, or water conservation. This literature review should contain no less than 20 sources, but may have to become broader and include more sources so that the scope is wide and well informed. This theoretical framework will be necessary to understand the ways in which rhetoricians approach issues of risk communication. I will begin with the works of Grabill, Herndl, Simmons, and Druschke to situate myself in how the field of rhetoric approaches issues of water, water conservation, and/or health issues and communicating risk. Then, I will branch out to include other scholars in rhetoric that deal with similar issues. There may not be many articles that deal directly with issues of water and/or water conservation, but I will broaden my scope by reading works by scholars, such as Dr. Scott, than can serve as an example for a way to potentially analyze artifacts, and approach my issue in the future. This will also help to support that a gap does exist, and that it is centered on not only how this information is relayed to the public, but how changes in behavior are or are not monitored.

**Working Reference List**

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