**Some Common Rhetorical Devices**

A Reference Sheet

**A Note:** Typically, descriptors and examples follow “**the rule of 3,**” meaning that they appear in sets of 3. This is because “3” is the lowest (and, thus, simplest) number that can be recognized by the human brain as a pattern. Patterns are memorable.

**Inclusive/Exclusive Language:** Using words like “we,” “our,” and “us” to address the audience, or words like “them,” to describe the “enemy.”

* Example: Together, we will make this country great again!
  + Creates a sense of community, solidarity and belonging with the audience
* Example: They are the ones who have held us back from achieving our goals! They are the reason for the poverty within our country.
  + Effect: Creates a sense of alienation, opposition and separation.

**Metaphor** – Comparison between two things – but rather than stating how they are alike (as in a simile) a metaphor asserts that one thing is another.

* Example: The eyes are the windows to the soul
* Example: There are skeletons in his cupboard
  + Effect: Make the abstract more concrete
  + Effect: Engages the imagination

**Rhetorical Question:** Questions asked, but not answered because their answers are obvious, or obviously desired by the speaker/writer. These are usually yes/no questions.

* Example: How can we expect to enjoy the scenery when it is filled with distracting ads?
* Example: Marriage is a wonderful institution. But who wants to live in an institution?
  + Effect: Emphasis, or provocation of further thought or discussion

**Hypophora** – Asking, the answering one’s own question

* Example: And how, then, did human beings come to find ourselves in such a morbid predicament? Well….
  + Effect: Helps generate curiosity and engagement
  + Effect: Is helpful to the audience, because it answers questions they may have generated, themselves
  + Effect: Introduces or transitions into a new topic

**Metanoia:** Recalling a statement and expressing it in a better, stronger way

* Example: Chicken is good – no, more than that – chicken is great!
* Example: Fido was the friendliest of chocolate labs, nay, of all dogs!
* Example: The new speed limits will improve the lives of our children, or rather, all children.
  + Effect: Coaxes the audience into expanding their beliefs on the topic

**Asyndeton** – a list of items that omits the conjunctions (eg. and, but, so) between words or phrases.

* Example: He was intelligent, strong, fierce, noble.
  + Effect: Gives the impression that the list is not complete.
* Example: He was a winner, a hero.
  + Effect: Gives the impression of synonymy (close relation)

**Anaphora** – The repetition of the same word(s) at the beginning of multiple clauses or phrases

* Example: Not time, not money, not laws, but diligence will get this done.
* Example: Love is the most important of emotions. Love will help us make it through.
  + Effect: Emphasizes and dramatizes the author’s point

**Anadiplosis** – When a memorable or impactful word or phrase is used both at the end of one sentence/clause, and at the beginning of the next

* Example: Fear leads to anger, anger leads to hate, hate leads to suffering
* Example: …I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American Dream.
  + Emphasizes the items that are listed, as well as the connections between these items

**Parallelism** – A clear, comparing (similar) relationship between two ideas, created by joining them together or phrasing them in a similar way.

* Example: He speaks of ancient Aboriginal tribes and modern Caucasian civilizations.
* Example: See no evil. Hear no evil. Speak no evil.
  + Effect: Shows that the ideas are equal in importance
  + Effect: Human beings are categorizers, and pattern-seekers, so this type of rhetorical device makes drawing conclusions and making connections simpler by clarifying similarities between two subjects.

**Antithesis** – A clear, contrasting (opposite) relationship between two ideas, created by joining them together or juxtaposing them.

* Example: Success makes men proud; failure makes them wise.
* Example: I agree that it is legal, but is it moral?
  + Effect: Human beings are categorizers, and pattern-seekers, so this type of rhetorical device makes drawing conclusions and making connections simpler by clarifying differences between two subjects.