**SCOM 4450**

**Historical Context Paper Rubric**

**DUE: March 28th by 11:59pm on iCollege**

**Assignment Description from Syllabus:**

The foundation of any good rhetorical analysis is the study and articulation of the historical context in which a text was crafted. You will be selecting a text, or object, or artifact, of your choice to serve as the foundation of your research this semester. *In the Historical Context Paper, you will highlight and articulate in 3-5 pages the rhetorical “exigencies” that called the text into being, the socio-political and or cultural climate of the time that constrained or influenced the text, the audience, and its impact at the time of delivery.*

**Grading Breakdown:**

Rhetorical Exigencies: 20 Points

Social/Political/Cultural Climate & Context: 20 Points

Audience Discussion: 20 Points

Impact Discussion: 20 Points

Writing Style, Clarity, Grammar & Sources: 20 Points

Total: 100 Points

**Detailed Assignment Breakdown:**

Rhetorical Exigencies (20 points):

Think back to our extensive conversations about exigencies. **What directly prompted the speaker to speak, or what prompted your artifact/object to come into existence and do rhetorical work? What are some indirect/secondary exigencies that prompted the rhetor of your text to engage in a rhetorical act**? Was the exigency an event? Was it another person? In short, what led to your selected text/object/artifact being communicated?

*I suggest that this section be at least a half page to a page long, depending on your text/artifact/object.*

Social/Political/Cultural Climate & Context (20 points):

Related to rhetorical exigencies, the social, political, and cultural climate of your selected piece of rhetoric is also important to articulate. **This can be a broad overview of the overarching/societal context at the time your text was communicated**. If I were examining a speech given yesterday, what would you consider to be important cultural context – could it be our polarized politics? Could it be our reliance upon technology? Our extensive use of social media? If your text is from America, ask yourself – “what was America like” when my speech/text was delivered. When Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg Address in November 1863, the nation was in the midst of a Civil War – that’s important context to understanding his address. **In general, ask yourself what the reader of your paper would need to know about the time-period in which audiences heard/saw your text.** There might be some overlap between your discussion on exigencies and the larger cultural context – and that’s okay!

*I suggest that this section be at least a half page to a page long, depending on your text.*

Audience Discussion (20 points):

**Who was the direct audience of your text? Who was the secondary audience?** Is there a difference between the intended audience – the audience the speaker had in mind when they delivered the text – and the audience that ended up reacting to the text? For example, one could argue that Lincoln’s direct audience in his First Inaugural Address was the American people writ large – but a more nuanced take could be that Lincoln was mainly addressing people in the South that were looking to start war.

**One could also discuss the audience physically present for the text’s delivery.** For example, in my sample paper available on iCollege, I talk about the student body of Liberty Baptist University that sat and listened to Senator Ted Kennedy speak.

*I suggest that this section be at least a half page to a page long, depending on your text.*

Impact Discussion (20 points):

**How was your text received at the time of its delivery?** Did people like it, love it, hate it, or were indifferent to it? **How is your text viewed today?** For example, many leading newspapers lambasted or shrugged off Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address in 1863 – today, however, we regard Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address as arguably the single greatest piece of American rhetoric. In short, how was your text received at the time of its delivery – and/or how is the text remembered today.

*I suggest that this section be at least a half page to a page long, depending on your text.*

Writing Style, Clarity, Grammar & Sources (20 points):

**This is a 4000-level course – and, as such, I expect a certain level of care and attention to detail to be put into this paper.** Are your sentences constructed clearly? Are things that should be capitalized actually capitalized? (This has proven to be a bigger problem recently and I am not entirely sure why). Do you use the same verb tense throughout the essay? When read aloud, does your writing have a flow to it or is it choppy and difficult to understand? I am happy to look at rough drafts and do line by line edits if you would like – so please shoot me an email and let me know. Also, see the general writing guidelines attached to the syllabus and my sample papers for more help in this area.

**Use whatever citation style you prefer.** I am not going to be militant about a missed comma in a citation on your reference page – ain’t nobody got time for that – but I will certainly be concerned if you do not have a reference page or in-text citations.

**Sources – I hate putting a number on this but let’s say at least 5. Of course, I will welcome more, but anything less than 5 could be concerning.**

**Finally, I would love a title page – see my sample papers for an example – and for you to use 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins.**