

# Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

## Using Humor and Whimsy to Practice Persuasive Writing

### Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

In this English course, writing is learned through interactive activities during which students critique and create rhetoric. The instructor uses humor, collaboration, and creativity to engage students in learning the three rhetorical appeals.

This lesson begins with students observing example advertisements for specific instances of ethos, pathos, and logos. After learners demonstrate proficiency, the instructor assigns students to small groups of three. Within each group, students number off and, based on their number, are assigned to ethos, pathos, or logos.

After creating small groups, the instructor introduces the next classroom enterprise. In this activity, groups work together to present a pitch designed to sell an unusual item for \$1,000 to an unlikely audience. Examples include selling a penny-farthing bicycle to an audience of ninth-grade girls or an antique camera to astrophysicists. Pitches are presented to the class and must include recognizable arguments from each participant demonstrating their assigned rhetorical appeal. To illustrate, the persuasive argument using ethos should establish credibility differently for an audience of astrophysicists than one composed of ninth-grade girls. After each presentation, the class votes on the pitch's persuasiveness and guesses the intended audience and appeal exhibited by each team member. This activity is conducted in a single class session.

In addition to spoken directions and visual aids, the instructor hands each group a set of written instructions to reference throughout the activity. As students are preparing their pitches, the instructor ensures engagement by circulating among the groups, offering feedback and answering questions. During the pitches, student show engagement by paying attention during the presentations, laughing at appropriate times, tracking the speakers, and using evidence from the pitches to guess the audience or rhetorical appeal. After this lesson, students demonstrate learning by utilizing and recognizing the rhetorical appeals in their writing.