Rhetorical Analysis—Topic Connected to Major (Comparison) Approach

You will be completing a rhetorical analysis two texts surrounding the topic you have chosen from your discipline. You should begin by locating texts, at least one of them scholarly, about a debate, issue, or argument surrounding your topic. You may choose to select texts of different genres, comparing their effectiveness and differences in discourse communities. You may choose two scholarly texts of articles or short essays in books from the discipline of your intended major, or you may choose one scholarly text and one popular sources in a different medium, such as a press release, internet article, popular study, etc. The only limit on choice is that this text must satisfy the following requirements: at least one of the texts must be located within a scholarly or academic journal, magazine, or book, and both texts must be relatively short in length, no more than twenty pages, and they both must relate to your topic.

In order to best organize your argument about the texts you’re analyzing, please use the following headings to address different elements of the texts and their overall effectiveness. Throughout all of these sections, you should be comparing the rhetorical elements of these two texts, making an argument about which text is more effective and why.

I. Introduction
- Introduce the texts, their authors, where it was published, and how they contribute the scholarly and/or popular discussion surrounding your topic. This section should focus on describing your text, its exigence, and its rhetorical situation. Questions for consideration in this first draft include:
  - What is the title of the texts and their authors?
  - Where and how did you locate them?
  - Why were they written and how do they contribute the scholarly conversation of your field?
  - What is the purpose of these texts? What does the author hope to achieve? (Provide a brief summary of the texts and the author’s main points.)
  - How do these texts relate to my topic?
  - Why did I choose these texts to analyze?
  - What are they arguing for or against?
  - What are the contexts—social, political, historical, cultural—for these arguments? Whose interest do they serve?
  - What type of genres are these texts?

II. Rhetorical Triangle

A. Author/Encoder: Describe how the author/encoder establishes credibility by citing his or her credentials, using examples from the text, etc. If you have information about the writers’ work, include it here. Use specific examples and analysis to make your claims.
  - What is the writer’s attitude toward the subject and audience?
  - Who is making the argument? What ethos does do they create?
  - What authorities do the writers rely on or appeal to in order to make their argument?
  - Does an author of one text seem more reliable than the other? If so, why?

B. Audience/Decoders: Using examples from the text and your own analysis, describe who the intended audience of these texts are and why.
  - Who are their intended audiences? How do you know?
  - What discourse communities do these texts appeal to, and why? How do they differ from one another?
  - What does the audience know and what does it need to know?
-What does the format and packaging of each of these texts tell you about the intended audience? What is the documentation style? Does the author use headings? What type of language is used? And, what does this tell you about the discourse community associated with each text?

C. Subject: Describe the subject of the texts and how they are delineated. Examine the information, argument, reasons, evidence, data, and structure of the text.
-What can you tell about the writer and the audience from the choice and limitations of the subject?
-How does the medium or genre affect the subject?

III. Rhetorical Appeals

A. Ethos: Explain the character and background of the authors and how that influences the text’s overall effectiveness.
-Are these people or organizations credible and trustworthy? Why?
-What is this person’s bias? What do you know about him or her that would influence your interpretation of the text?

B. Pathos: Describe the emotional appeals within the texts and how they influence the text’s overall effectiveness.
-What emotions do the authors appeal to? How?
-Are these emotional appeals effective? If so, for whom?
-Does one text rely more heavily on emotion than the other? If so, what is the significance of this?

C. Logos: Describe the logical appeals within the texts and how they influence the text’s overall effectiveness.
-What logic, reason, facts, statistics are presented?
-What evidence is used to convince the audience?
-What facts are used in the argument? What and whose logic?

Use specific examples from the text when analyzing the rhetorical appeals.

IV. Discussion and Conclusions
-How effective were these texts for you as the audience? Why?
-What elements of the rhetorical situation of the texts stand out, grab you, or surprise you?
-What conclusions can you draw based on your analysis?
-What do the texts tell you about your topic and writing in your field?
-Is one text more rhetorically effective than the other, and why?

You must cite at least three secondary sources, including the text you’re analyzing, and incorporate at least four direct quotes to support your argument along with information from at least two other sources.

Your final draft should include headings, in-text citations, and a Works Cited/References page, formatted correctly in APA or in the documentation style of your major. You should submit an Abstract and a copy of the article you’re analyzing when you hand in your final draft.