Rhetorical Analysis

Rhetoric is the art of communicating. In rhetorical analysis a student examines stereotypical samples of writing in a particular field to grasp and formulate a concept of what its experts expect:

- Rationale—the purpose of the writing
- Audience—the presumed or targeted reader
- Assumptions—the shared context of writer and reader
- Diction—the specialized vocabulary assumed
- Attitude—the approach or methodology expected
- Voice/Point of View—the degree of personal tone allowed
- Format—the structure expected
- Development—the extent of the topic within the structure
- Evidence—the accepted modes of support
- Documentation—the preferred style

English 2001: First practices in a variety of fields, using samples and modeling
Junior WID Course: Focus on genres in the major field of study
Senior Capstone: Near-professional writing in the field

Best Practices for Junior WID and Senior Capstone Instruction—

- Supply examples of typical as well as superior writing in the field
- Share examples of your mentor’s practices
- Share your own writing, writing practices, and reflections
- Have students reflect on their writing and writing practices
- Show how to break projects into workable components
- Encourage students to peer edit and collaborate with each other
- Respond to successive stages of students’ work

The point is not to instill in students a fixed pattern or template for whatever rhetorical situation he or she finds herself in, however. The purpose is to help students internalize the very habits of thought that will make them insightful, creative, expressive, and contributing members of a chosen field.

Some general guides for further suggestions: