We’ve spent the first several weeks of class discussing and analyzing the rhetorical situations of a variety of artifacts—short stories, items in the news, images from freak shows, and beyond. For your first formal assignment, you will be producing a 3-5 page close reading and rhetorical analysis of a hoax of your choosing. Who is the target audience? What strategies were employed to convince that audience of the veracity of the hoax? How is authority established? How effective were these attempts, and why?

If you do not have a particular hoax in mind, you could search [Hoaxes.org](http://hoaxes.org/) or search around for other hoaxes by Barnum. You could also use one of Poe’s other hoaxes—“The Journal of Julius Rodman,” “Von Kempelen and His Discovery,” or “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar.” You could even use an episode of a television show like *Ghost Hunters.* The world is your oyster. However, you’ll be analyzing a text, not the vague idea of the hoax, so you’ll want to be sure to have a “primary” hoax document, i.e., a newspaper article, an image, a broadcast, etc. Do not choose something we’ve discussed in any depth in class.

In your analysis, you must use the terms of rhetorical analysis that we’ve been practicing in class. You might use the “rhetorical triangle,” either with ethos/logos/pathos or with author/text/audience. You could also draw vocabulary from *The Little Seagull*—purpose, audience, genre, topic, stance/tone, media/design, evidence, counter-argument, and so on. Section W-8 is about composing a rhetorical analysis, so don’t hesitate to consult it. [This handout](http://rhetoric.byu.edu/Pedagogy/Rhetorical%20Analysis%20heuristic.htm) of questions for rhetorical analysis could also be a powerful brainstorming tool.

**Schedule:**

Tuesday, September 15: Come to class with a hoax selected

Thursday, September 17: Bring draft of Paper 1 to class

Thursday, September 24: Paper 1 due

**\*\*\*Note\*\*\* Be sure to save your paper to a new file for each major revision. You’ll need to be able to show evidence of progress for your portfolio at the end of the year.**

**Your Rhetorical Situation**

**Purpose:** To convince me that you can perform a thoughtful and compelling rhetorical analysis of a hoax—that you can attend to the details of a text and synthesize your observations into an argument about its rhetorical effectiveness.

**Audience:** Me! But also your peers, who will be workshopping this paper with you and reading drafts. This means you will have to provide enough of a summary that someone unfamiliar with your particular artifact will be able to follow along—but beware of including so much summary that we don’t get to hear your argument.

**Genre**: Academy-lite—I expect this to be a well-written, revised, and serious paper, but I don’t want it packed with jargon, and I don’t want you to do any research. I’m interested in your own interpretation of a text. Don’t worry about citations yet, but provide me a link to whatever your source document is so that I could consult it if necessary.

**Stance:** Critical, objective, authoritative.

**Medium**: Print. Please use 12-pt Times New Roman, double-spaced, with 1” margins all around. Last name and page number in the header. Note: 3-5 pages means *at least* 3 pages—so the text should begin to spill onto the fourth page.

**Relevant Class Outcomes**

* **Outcome 1: Rhetorical Awareness and Composition.** You will demonstrate understanding of genre, audience, and purpose in both reading and writing. You will analyze, use, and adapt generic conventions, including organization, development, and style, while composing in multiple genres and modes, including text, audio, and image.
* **Outcome 2: Writing as Process.**You will understand and practice writing as a process, recursively implementing strategies of research, drafting, revision, editing, and reflection. You will reflect on your own writing process, and learn to critique your own work and the work of others.