Prompt Analysis Questions (PAQs) for Creating Rhetorically Based Writing Assignments

1. What is the *central claim/topic* called for?

   What choices will students have to make with regard to this claim/topic? Will they need to focus the claim/topic in order to write a good essay? What arguments could students make for this claim? What do students know about this topic?

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2. Who is the intended *audience*?

   Will you name the audience specifically or leave it up to the student to infer? If you are creating an imagined audience, what will your students know about this particular audience? Do students know what kinds of expectations this audience has?

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3. What is the *purpose/mode* for the writing task?

   What is the purpose of this writing assignment? What is this writing supposed to accomplish? What mode of writing (narration, exposition, description, argument) or combination of modes are you expecting from your students? How will they be able to glean the expected mode from your prompt?

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4. What *strategies* will be most effective?

   What does the purpose/mode suggest about possible strategies? Of the strategies your students are comfortable using—strategies like examples, definitions, analysis, classification, cause/effect, compare/contrast—which will be most effective here? Are there any strategies—such as number of examples or type of support—that you will specify as required?

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5. What *role* should the writer assume to achieve the purpose?

   Are you assigning a specific role like *applicant* or *representative*? If students are not assigned a specific role, what does the prompt or assignment tell them about the level of expertise they should demonstrate, the stance they should assume, or the approach(es) they should take?

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Draft your prompt here:

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