

## Ava Buckley, a Rhetorical Self-Analysis

### Part 1 – Introduction – Who I Am

Starting college has been one of the biggest transitions in my life so far. As a second-semester freshman at Fairfield University, I'm still figuring out who I am and how I want to present myself to the people around me. For this project, I'm thinking specifically about the Fairfield student body, especially other freshmen, because we're all going through similar experiences of adjusting to college, meeting new people, and trying to find our place here. I grew up in the energy of New York City but now call Southampton, New York home. Fairfield honestly feels like the perfect mix of both. It has the social energy of a city, even though it's smaller, and the calmness of being near the beach, which has always been a place that centers me when academic and social pressures feel overwhelming. Being close to the water also helps me feel connected to home, especially on days when campus life feels busy or stressful.

I'll often go down to the Long Island Sound just to walk or sit and breathe. It helps me reset and stay balanced. My first semester was challenging at the beginning, but I worked hard, stayed on top of my classes, and made some amazing friends along the way. School is very important to me because I want to get the most out of my Fairfield experience.

That means showing up to class, staying engaged, and putting real effort into assignments, discussions, and tests. At the same time, I love having fun and building friendships because those connections are just as important to me. Some of my favorite moments at Fairfield are simple ones, like going to eat in town with friends. Colony Pizza is a favorite for dinner, and the Firehouse Deli has the best sandwiches (and pickles) for lunch. Staying in the dorm watching shows with my roommates and



*This silly selfie with curlers and glasses deliberately shows my imperfect, lighthearted side; posting it signals that I value authenticity over perfection and makes me feel more relatable to other freshmen.*



*Sharing this beach photo connects my Southampton roots to campus life and visually reinforces the balance I describe between social fun and the calming influence of the water.*

friends also ranks high. Those nights are some of the best ways to relax, laugh, and catch up with people. I also love trying new things, which is why I joined several clubs last semester and plan to keep exploring until I find the ones that really feel right for me. I want to grow not just as a student, but also as a friend and as a person. Now that we're starting second semester, we're all adjusting to routines, balancing school and social life, and turning this campus into a second home. If I had to describe how I hope people see me, I'd want to come across as approachable, genuine, and balanced. I want to be someone who works hard and cares about learning, but who is also open to friendships, new experiences, and making memories. Whether that's inviting someone to watch a show, grabbing food, going to events, or just sitting by the Sound, those moments are a big part of what makes college feel meaningful to me.

## Part 2 – Modes of Self Presentation

1 - One of the most influential ways I shape my identity at Fairfield is through social media. Platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and LinkedIn play a huge role in how college students stay connected and form impressions of each other. Even though posting often feels casual, I've realized that what I choose to share helps shape how people see me. Unlike a lot of social media accounts that mostly focus on

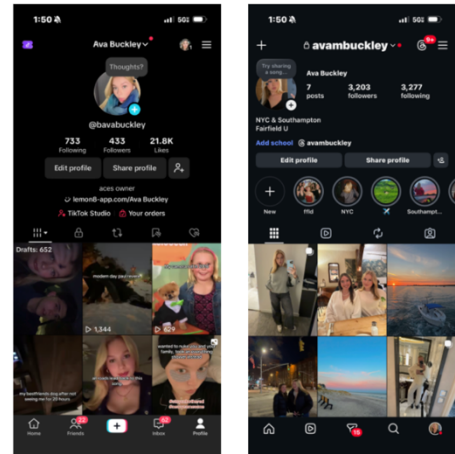


*Even in this more polished shot, I still include real-life context (friends, night out) rather than a studio-style portrait, keeping my feed honest and balanced.*

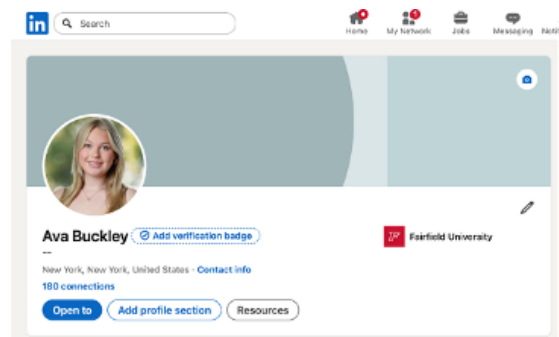
polished or “perfect” moments, I try to post a mix of things that feel more real. I share fun moments like going out with friends, campus events, or dinners in town because those are big parts of my life at Fairfield. But I also post pictures that aren't always perfectly posed or filtered. Sometimes they're slightly unflattering or just silly moments with friends. I've realized that posting those kinds of photos helps show my personality and makes me feel more genuine. I also

sometimes post parts of student life that people don't always show, like studying with friends or working through assignments together. Those moments are important to me because they reflect the balance I try to maintain between school and social life. Studying with friends is still social, but it also shows that academics are a priority for me. By sharing both fun and more everyday moments, my social media creates an image of someone who enjoys college but also works hard and values real friendships. I think posting less curated content helps people see me as more approachable and relatable instead of feeling like I'm trying to present a perfect version of myself. At the same time, I'm still aware that social media is selective. Even when I post more realistic moments, it's still only a portion of my life. Thinking about what I post has made me more aware of how social media contributes to my identity and how I present myself within the Fairfield

community. Another platform that shapes how I present myself is LinkedIn, which shows a different side of my identity. While Instagram and Snapchat reflect my social life and personality, LinkedIn focuses more on my academic achievements, leadership experiences, and professional goals. When creating and updating my LinkedIn profile, I'm much more intentional about how I describe myself and what experiences I highlight because the audience includes professors, future employers, and professional connections. I present myself as motivated, responsible, and career-focused, which reflects my academic priorities and long-term goals. Having both types of social media platforms has



*These grids show the blend of fun campus moments, friends, and everyday life that I share, helping me appear approachable and genuine rather than curated.*



*My LinkedIn profile presents a professional, career-focused version of myself—highlighting academic achievements and leadership experiences—which contrasts with my more casual social-media feeds and shows how audience shapes my self-presentation.*

made me realize how much audience influences self-presentation. Each platform shows a different but still authentic part of who I am, and together they reflect my effort to balance personal, social, and professional growth during college.

2 – Another way I present myself and connect with others at Fairfield is through fandom, especially my interest in Reality TV. While this might seem like just entertainment, I've realized that the



*These show posters visually represent the pop-culture interests I openly share, which create comfortable spaces for friendship and deeper conversations.*

shows I watch and how I engage with them play a big role in how I build friendships and show parts of my personality. Shows like *Dancing with the Stars*, *Summer House*, *The Summer I Turned Pretty*, and *The Traitors* have become regular bonding experiences for me and my friends. Watching episodes together in the dorm has turned into a routine where we relax, laugh, and talk about what's happening in the show, but also about our own lives. These moments help create a comfortable and fun environment where friendships grow naturally. Being part of these shared viewing experiences shows that I value connection and spending quality time with people, even in simple ways. *The Summer I Turned Pretty* especially connects to me because of its beach setting and themes of growing up, relationships, and change. Since I grew up spending a lot of time near the beach in Southampton, the setting feels familiar and comforting to me. Watching the show reminds me of home while also reflecting the stage of life I'm currently in, where friendships, relationships, and personal growth are all changing. Sharing that interest with friends often leads to deeper conversations about our own experiences,

which helps strengthen friendships and makes those moments feel more meaningful. Fandom also reflects how I balance academics with relaxation. College can be stressful, and having something familiar and entertaining to look forward to helps me reset mentally. Watching these shows gives me a break from academic pressure while still allowing me to stay socially connected. It shows that while I care a lot about school, I also recognize the importance of downtime and maintaining a healthy balance. At the same time, being open about my interests, especially something like reality TV or popular shows, helps me present myself as approachable and relatable. Not everyone expects those interests to be a big part of someone's identity but sharing them often starts conversations and helps me connect with people who have similar tastes or humor. It shows a lighter and more personal side of me that might not appear in academic or professional settings. Overall, fandom plays a bigger role in my rhetorical identity than I originally realized. It helps shape how I socialize, how I relax, and how I show parts of my personality to others. Through these shared interests, I'm able to build friendships, manage stress, and present myself as someone who values both connection and balance in college life.



*This photo of us gathered around the screen captures exactly the kind of relaxed, shared-viewing moments that help me build genuine connections and demonstrate my value of balance between academics and downtime.*

### Part 3 – Conclusion - Rhetorical Effects

Looking at my social media presence, professional platforms like LinkedIn, and the way I connect with others through fandom have helped me better understand how many different ways I present myself, and how those choices shape my rhetorical identity. Before thinking about this assignment, I didn't always realize how intentional or meaningful these everyday decisions were. I now see that each platform and social space reflects a different side of who I am, while still working together to create a complete picture of how I want to be understood by others. Through Instagram and Snapchat, I show a version of myself that values friendship, authenticity, and enjoying college life. By posting both fun and everyday moments, I try to present myself as genuine and approachable rather than perfect.



*This photo of me studying with friends demonstrates that academics are a genuine priority, balancing the fun posts and illustrating the “school-and-social-life” equilibrium I strive for.*

My LinkedIn profile reflects another important part of my identity by highlighting my academic goals, achievements, and professional ambitions. I present myself more professionally by choosing language and experiences that match what employers and professional audiences expect. It shows that I am serious about my education and future career while still balancing my social life. My participation in fandom and shared pop culture experiences shows how I build relationships, relax, and connect emotionally with others. These shared interests allow me to create meaningful friendships and show a more personal and relaxed side of myself. Together, these forms of self-presentation help position me socially within the Fairfield community. They allow me to connect with friends, build professional relationships, and show different aspects of my personality depending on the audience. At first, it might seem like presenting myself differently in different spaces could feel inauthentic, but I have realized that these roles actually reflect the many responsibilities and relationships that come with being a college student. Each space highlights a different priority, whether it is academic success, social connection, or personal well-being. Through this reflection, I've also come to realize that the accounts I follow, the companies and brands I engage with, and the content I like on social media all contribute to how others perceive me. My likes and follows subtly signal my interests, values, and affiliations, which helps shape how others see me online. I've also realized that what I allow other people to post or tag me in can influence how others perceive me, since those posts still become part of my public identity. In addition, even small, unintentional choices, like how I dress or present myself physically, can influence how others perceive my personality, confidence, and sense of belonging. Overall, this reflection helped me recognize how much college is shaping who I am and how I present myself to others. Fairfield has given me opportunities to grow academically, socially, and personally, and I've become more aware of how my everyday choices communicate parts of my identity. Moving forward, I want to be intentional about balancing school, friendships, and personal growth as I continue figuring out who I am becoming.