Unit 2 and 3 Suggestions

**Annotated Bibliography and Other Genres**

You will see that quite a few of the Unit 2 examples use the “annotated bibliography” format. While I think these assignments are great (and I intend to keep doing them) I do think that there are some issues with the annotated bib, to be honest. First, I did not name mine an annotated bibliography, which was a mistake (I called it a “curiosity report”). Without naming the form, it seemed an oddly random set of rules that I was personally making up. Especially in an online environment, this kind of unfamiliar genre will need ***clear*** guidelines. One of the assignments attached is a VERY detailed annotated bibliography assignment from John Jay which you may find useful.

Another issue with annotated bibliographies is that students can get very frustrated with them mid-unit. To this, I would say: be patient. The hard work and frustration really pays off. I found the students developed expertise in their topics. I like Jackie Blain’s group annotated bibliography project (attached) which adds a bit of teamwork to it and might alleviate some anxiety. I think this will be doable online.

The annotated bibliography is not the only type of assignment that would work for genre awareness research. One thing I’d like to see, and perhaps I’ll write up for Unit 2 is a “genre how-to” assignment, in which students research a genre and then write a manual for writing in that genre. I would love to see other ideas as well!

**Coming up with Research Questions**

As far as coming up for research topics, this semester, one question Prof. Blain used this semester was “what is keeping you sane during the pandemic?” She wrote to me to say:

Heck, I just got a whole history of Bachata and its importance to keeping Dominican culture alive in this country! And I got a sort of MFK Fischer-like food thing about this young cook discovering the foods of his culture. (Just FYI, I also got human-animal connection and psychology, video game cognitive research, the effect of Work from Home on productivity... lots of cool and unexpected stuff!)

Remember to not prescribe a topic to your students, but to start thinking of questions that may help them find a topic, as Jackie has done. This can be quite difficult, but it can be something like “what is a genre you use in your field?” You may even ask them to begin their research on a phone or Zoom interview with a friend or relative and see if they can find an historical event for which they’d like more background. I personally usually have students start with their general topic or question and use the KWL+ model: what do you KNOW about this topic? What do you WANT to know? Then I have them research online for 10-15 minutes, and write what they’ve LEARNED and what they still want to know (+). This tends to elicit some really interesting questions.

**Unit Three**

In some ways, Unit 3 kind of writes itself. That is, students have already done so much research in Unit 2 that the task of Unit 3 is, in large part, to put that research to good use. The main things I’d mention here are:

* Make sure that you’re not asking the students to do a lot of new research in Unit 3. Now is the time to ask them to do something with the good research they’ve done!
* Ask them to think about audience. Who needs to know about what they’ve learned in Unit 2? Why?
* Ask them to think about genre, but as a writer. That is, now they’ve decided who needs to know what they’ve learned, what genre is the best way to reach that audience? Since they’ve also been researching genre, it’s best if they use a genre they’ve already worked in, since they have been studying the features of the genre.
* Encourage students to work in a genre that is at least somewhat new to them since the project began (not a standard paper, power point, Facebook post, etc...) The purpose of units 2 and 3 is that they learn to identify the features of and write in somewhat unfamiliar genres—we hope they’ll be able to do this when we’re not around and are faced with new genres they need to use at work/ at school/ in their communities!
* This assignment can be multimodal, but it doesn’t have to be.
* If students are, say, writing a song, or making a video, ask them to write an Artist Statement. And also consider if you think a video has some sort of word count equivalent