Discourse community project. Unit 1.

Professor James Wu

English 1121/ Sections 399 and 420

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Assignment 1. Discourse Community, Personal Relationships and the Social Context of Writing. Due Feb 26th.

How do personal and family relationships fit into larger, external discourse communities? Write an essay or 3 mini-essays of 1600-2000 total words. You can use the two reflection writings you have done to build your essay or mini-essays. This is a discussion of Diaz’s *Drown* along with a reflection on your own experience.

Part 1. 600-800 words.

 In Diaz’s *Drown*, Yunior has a **close bond to his mother**. They communicate, sit together, hold hands. Their closeness has no other social or public purpose. Yet when they interact outside of this intimate mother-son relationship, the outside world intrudes and they must display different roles. Analyze the language they share. Discuss how their mother – son relationship changes when they go to a fiesta and interact with other people, when they go shopping, and especially when the father is present. Contrast the difference between a private relationship vs a public discourse in which you display the relationship to and interact with others.

 The **masculine display** of the father and of the brother seem to be a model for Yunior, and they seem to be very important to him. Yet much of Drown is concerned with Yunior’s internal conflict between being a victim himself and victimizing others, dominating or committing violence against others. How does masculine show of domination fit into the public discourse of how people see men and how they talk about men and how men should or shouldn’t act to fit into the community? How do men communicate their masculinity? Who are they communicating this to? Is this a discourse community? Quote the text and comment on Diaz’s descriptions. Use examples of language and gesture from your own experience.

 Yunior was **best friends with Beto**. Yet when Beto gets too close, Yunior does not want their relationship to be known. In fact, he ends their friendship. Why? Analyze this friendship and rejection in terms of personal relationship vs. discourse community. What would happen if Yunior went public and told people about what happened? There is a gay bar in the area, which the boys reject and ridicule. Are gay and straight separate discourse communities? What are the rules of each group? What are the modes of communication, language, gestures that separate the communities? Is common ground possible? For Yunior, the answer seems to be no. What do you say?

Part 2. 500-700 words. **Compare and contrast** a personal or family relationship of yours vs. a discourse community that you are a part of. It could be a job, school, or an informal group of friends who have some activity and purpose in common and about which you discuss, or write or communicate and share information. Discuss the language specific to this discourse community. Can other people join this group? What genres of writing or types of documents do you produce? Texts, Emails, Chats, Notes. Reflect on the difference between a discourse community vs a personal relationship. Compare to Diaz.

Part 3. 400 to 600 words. **Diaz as writer**. Who is his audience? Is he only writing for the D.R. immigrant community? Or is he reaching out to a wider audience? What does the audience do in response to a text? Do some research on Diaz. What kind of writing do you now do and how has that changed over time? In what ways do you think of yourself as a writer? Compare your personal writing genres, text messages, emails, journals, schedules, calendars to any writing you do at work or in school. What are the differences and the common features? Reflect on the mental activity of organizing and presenting information efficiently and practically in order to communicate your ideas and participate in various social discourses and discourse communities.

How this assignment facilitates the student’s progress toward the 6 learning outcomes of the first year writing program:

This writing assignment has the student read the text critically and analytically, and reflect on personal experience and different discourse communities. We will have discussed the text extensively in class. (Learning outcomes 1, 3, 4.)

The student will explicitly compare personal genres of writing and communication in his or her own discourse communities to those represented in the text and compose in an academic mode. However, the student is also invited to reflect on life experience and social discourse using more personal modes of writing. (Learning outcome 2, 4, 5.)

We will begin the research as inquiry process by researching the author and discussing current controversies of author in relation to the “Me Too” movement and comparing the conflicts of the character in the text. The student will reflect on social and ethical responsibilities and consequences of writing. (Learning outcomes 3, 4, 5.)

Learning outcomes 3 and 5 will be more intensely focused on in Assignment 2, and Learning outcome 6 will be heavily focused on in Assignment 3.