

# Discourse Project: Discourse Communities in Action

## An Essay Progression

### ESSAY PROMPT

Write an essay that analyzes a discourse community that you are or were once part of. In the essay, you will also analyze a text created by, for, or about your discourse community. These are your two goals.

Write for someone who knows little to nothing about your discourse community. Include a brief introduction, a global statement that represents the goals of your essay, body paragraphs, a brief conclusion, in-line citations, a Works Cited, and a title. Include a word count at the end of each Draft. For Draft 1, submit 1000-1750 words (approximately 4-6 pages before Works Cited), which you will revise for Draft 2 and Draft 3. Write in any varieties of English that you are familiar with.

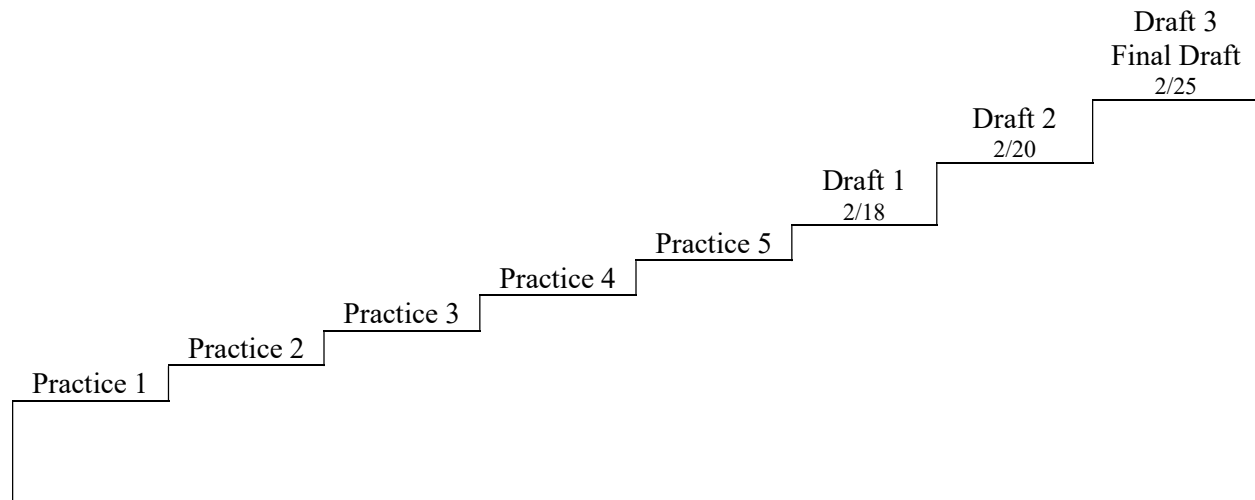
In the next few weeks, we will empower ourselves to write such an essay. You will become familiar with the concept of *discourse community* as defined by James Paul Gee and John M. Swales. To do so, we will translate their discourse-community criteria from academic English(es) to conversational English(es), and then we will turn the criteria into a quick list of questions that you can ask about any group. Moreover, you will practice identifying the *rhetorical situation* and *genre conventions* of various texts as defined by the *Bedford Book of Genres*. Here, I use the term *text* very broadly to include anything published with a purpose and for an audience. Texts may even include a combination of writing, visuals, sound, and other ways of communicating.

In short, *to analyze* means to take a complex thing, idea, situation, or text—and break it down into smaller parts or questions or observations—in order to understand how it works.

- You must introduce the name or scope of the discourse community. That is, describe how broad or narrow the group's membership seems to be. To analyze your selected discourse community, refer to and quote at least 4 of the 8 criteria in John Swales's definition of a discourse community. So long as you meet this requirement, you can use personal experience, interviews, and texts of any genre to describe your discourse community. I encourage you to explore what actually surprises, confuses, inspires, bothers, scares, or fascinates you about your discourse community.
- Given that you must also analyze a text related to your discourse community, you can either find an already published text, or you can create your own new text. The text might support, question, subvert, or reject something about the discourse community. To analyze the text, describe its rhetorical situation and genre conventions. In your essay, you can do this either as part of the discourse-community criteria or as a new section. If you choose to create your own text, you can imagine how you would publish the text, but you do not actually have to publish it. Include an attachment or link of the text with your printed essay.

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### OVERVIEW

You will develop your writing step by step, through a progression of practice assignments and drafts, leading to a final draft of 1000-1750 words (approximately 4-7 pages before Works Cited) in any varieties of English that you choose.

### WHAT'S THE POINT OF A PRACTICE ASSIGNMENT?

Each Practice is a take-home writing assignment that builds toward and can be used to construct Draft 1. For example, Practice 1 asks you to write a few sentences that closely read a specific text, while Practice 5 asks you to expand your previous assignments into a few paragraphs. In this way, the Practice assignments are neither whole drafts nor isolated assignments. They begin a guided path through the writing process. Instead of simply telling you to submit an essay one month from now, I've broken down the writing process into smaller actionable steps so that you can exchange feedback with me and with your peers along the way.

### WHAT'S THE POINT OF A DRAFT?

Each Draft is a writing assignment in which you make a full attempt at the essay. However, a single attempt will rarely be enough to create a strong piece of writing. The writing process, put simply, is an ongoing cycle of three modes: Generating New Writing, Revising, and Editing. Especially in the first two modes, you practice strategies for creativity, critical thinking, reading, writing, and discussing. A single Draft would provide you with a platform to engage intensely with these strategies. But each subsequent Draft offers you space to get some strategic distance from what you've written, workshop your draft with real readers, approach your ideas and writing with a fresh perspective, and then make major changes. From one Draft to the next, your goal is to continue generating new writing and to revise at least one-third of what you had written. In this sense, revision is *re-envisioning* what you had first submitted. As you approach the final Draft, you can then dramatically shift your focus from generating new writing and revising to editing.

To help you jumpstart revision and editing, I provide feedback as outlined below, I reserve office hours to discuss with you individually and in small groups, and I coordinate peer reviews for you to exchange feedback with peers, who themselves are in the middle of the writing process.

## HOW TO SUBMIT ASSIGNMENTS

- Type and print all assignments in Times New Roman, 12pt black font, 2.0 spaced with 1” margins on 8.5”x11” white paper, double-sided if possible, stapled. Prepare in-line citations and Works Cited in MLA format for each assignment. Include your name and the assignment title.
- Consult the Course Schedule for related readings and due dates. Submit all writing assignments by the beginning of class—in person or in my mailbox. For each day (rounded up) that an assignment is late, the grade will be reduced by 20% of the maximum possible grade. Computer, printer, or file errors will not excuse lateness; back up, store, or synchronize your files with free cloud programs like Google Drive, Dropbox, Microsoft OneDrive, Box, or Amazon Drive.
- If you are absent, you are responsible for (i) emailing relevant assignments by the start of class and (ii) submitting printed copies by the next class in person or in my mailbox. Otherwise, the assignment is late. To catch up on what you missed in class, (iii) consult the Course Schedule and visit me during office hours.

## FEEDBACK

- PRACTICE 1 – DRAFT 2. I will grade your writing based on completion, according to Rubric A.

### RUBRIC A

Work	Complete the task and practice specific writing strategies as defined by the prompt and syllabus		
Grade	0	√-	√, √+
Credit	0	50%	100%
Feedback	Suggestions for next steps, questions, or resources as needed		

- DRAFT 1. You will use a guided worksheet to do a peer review, during which you will focus on generating new writing and brainstorming major revisions.
- DRAFT 2. Similarly, you will use a guided worksheet to do a peer review. However, for this peer review, you will focus on minor revisions, editing, and final polishing.
- DRAFT 3 (FINAL DRAFT). I will grade your writing according to Rubric C (attached). Overall, your final draft will be graded on specificity of detail, relevance to the prompt, organization, and sentence structure. If I do not receive Draft 3 within the lateness window, I will treat Draft 1 or Draft 2, if submitted, as Draft 3.
- MINI PORTFOLIO (OPTIONAL). For extra credit, you can submit a “mini-portfolio” by email. For our class, the mini-portfolio is a single Word, PDF, or similar file that contains all assignments that you did for the essay progression. Label and put the assignments in order, including the final draft. I will grade your progress based on completion, according to Rubric A.
- DRAFT 4 (OPTIONAL). Near the end of the semester, you may submit Draft 4 for one essay progression of your choice. You must attach any feedback that you had received on Draft 3, and you must attach a three-paragraph reflection that guides me through how you revised and edited the paper. Between Draft 3 and Draft 4, lateness and length penalties will carry over, and the higher grade will entirely replace the lower grade. Requirements for Draft 4 will be finalized and announced later in the semester.