English 1121

Discourse Community Project

Final Paper: 1000-1500 words

Instructor: Patrick Redmond

Over the next couple weeks, we will be studying discourse communities. In particular we will be addressing Swales definition that discourse communities have common goals, participatory mechanisms for intercommunication that provide information and feedback with its members, community specific genres, specific lexis, and hierarchy of expertise within the community. For this project I want you to examine a discourse community that you are a part of and write an article directed at your peer group in the community. For example, if you are writing from the perspective of an 18-year-old college student, then you will be educating others in the same age group about your discourse community. Please investigate the community **in the two following ways**:

 First, I want you to analyze the group you choose through its ways of saying/writing, doing, being, valuing, and believing. Ask yourself: How long has the group been around? Who is a member? Why does this group exist? What are the groups' shared goals? How does the group communicate with each other? What genres are used as communication?  Are there specialized languages used? etc. This section will make you cognizant of how your chosen community functions, and it will familiarize yourself with analyzing future communities.

In the second part of your paper I want you to investigate how the discourse community has evolved from the past. Even if you choose to write about a community that is fairly new, it most likely has undergone changes.  For example, if you choose to write about a discourse community that exists on social media, the community may change rapidly with new language or evolving values. You may ask yourself: Have certain values changed in the discourse community overtime? Has language changed? Have beliefs strengthened or weakened? Have mechanisms of communication changed? Has ways of inclusion into the group changed? etc. For this part you will need to do research to adequately answer the question. You may find it useful to interview those that have been involved longer in the discourse community than you have as they will be able to specific changes that have occurred.

In the conclusion of your article I want you to reflect on these changes in the community and communicate them to an audience of your peers. Do you think they’ve made the community stronger? Are there values that your generation can evolve further?

\*\*As always, you will be graded in accordance with the rubric that was given to you the first day of class. The major due dates to keep in mind are as follows:

**Rough Draft/ Peer Review: February 19, 2019**

**Final Draft Due: February 24, 2019**

**Freewriting exercise:**

As you read in Peter Elbow’s, “Freewriting Exercises,” freewriting is an effective way to improve your writing and help you find ideas for a paper. Using the project above I would like you to begin freewriting for the first half of the class to see if you can come up with ideas for your project. The following is a structured freewriting exercise that will help you get closer to deciding which discourse community:

1. Begin by jotting down discourse communities you think you are a part of. This can be simply a list. Try to at least get 3-5 down. I would recommend when you start writing papers to think past the first idea you come up with. Most likely when you start thinking deeper you will find better ideas to focus on.
2. After you have your list of discourse communities, I then want you to go through your list and see if you can come up with the six characteristics of a discourse community we discussed last time in class for each community.
3. For The final part of the freewriting I would like you to ask some of the questions that I mentioned on the previous page: Have certain values changed in the discourse community overtime? Has language changed? Have beliefs strengthened or weakened? Have mechanisms of communication changed? Has ways of inclusion into the group changed? Etc.

**For Monday 2/10** I would like you to bring in a typed (250-500-words) project proposal on the discourse community that you decided to choose. This project proposal should include why you chose your discourse community, a plan for how you will answer the project, and a working thesis. We will go over these briefly on Monday.