English 225: Academic Argumentation
Research Essay Prompt

(adapted from Christie Toth's assignment)

Final Draft Due Date: Monday, November 19 by 11:59 pm on Canvas

Length and Formatting Guidelines: The essay should be 6-8 pages long, double-spaced, using 12-point font.

- Include a header (with your name, the date, and the course name/number).
- Include a creative and specific title.
- Include MLA, Chicago, or APA citation style (refer to the Purdue OWL formatting guide).

Purpose:

In this assignment, you will have the opportunity to speak with one or more experts in your field, in other words, insiders in your discourse community, in order to gain insights into writing in your discipline. In addition, you will identify at least one meta-genre (guidelines or explanations) for writing in your discipline. By synthesizing and placing the primary and secondary sources into conversation with each other, you will develop a specific claim about what it means to argue effectively in your discipline.

Audience:

Address an audience of composition scholars who are knowledgeable about genre theory, but who are less familiar with your academic discipline, and who are interested in learning more about the conventions of writing in your discipline.

Sources:

1. **Primary sources:** Interview one or two experts in your field or discipline (e.g., professors, GSIs, etc.)
   - *Optional*: In addition to conducting interviews, you may also observe a professor teaching a lesson on writing in your discipline.

2. **Secondary sources:** Identify at least one meta-genre (e.g., handbooks, websites, essay prompts, journal article manuscript submission guidelines, etc.) that offers guidelines or expectations for writing in a specific genre in your field or discipline.
   - You can find sources in the library database, on a department website, etc.

Interview Guidelines:

- As a class, we will develop a standard interview protocol (questions to ask the interviewees), which you can adapt to your academic discipline and interests.
- To ensure consistency in your research methods, use the same interview protocol for each for your interviewees if you are planning to interview more than one person.
- To ensure confidentiality, please ask your interviewee(s) if they are comfortable with using their real names or would prefer to use a pseudonym.
- To ensure accuracy, I recommend that you audio-record the interview(s) and check the recording against your notes when quoting an interviewee.
- I recommend that you take notes during the interview(s), though transcribing word-for-word is optional.

Project Proposal (LSWA 4): due on Monday, October 22 (1-2 pages, double-spaced)

1. **Topic and Research Questions** (1-2 sentences):

   a. Identify the academic discipline that you plan to investigate and explain why you are interested in studying writing in this discipline.
   b. Articulate the significance of the topic to you and to an outside reader.
   c. Develop at least three research questions that you are interested in investigating about writing in this discourse community. The questions should be open-ended (not yes-or-no questions).

Sample research questions (from Beaufort 2008)

- What does effective writing in this discourse community look like?
- How do the particular writing practices of this discourse community reinforce and achieve the group's goals and purposes?
- Why does this particular discourse community place more value on _____ in writing than on _____?
- What are the most common written genres used by the discourse community and why are these particular genres the ones utilized?
- What about writing in this discourse community would be of interest to people who are not members of the community?

2. **Meta-genre** (1-2 sentences):

   a. Identify at least one meta-genre that you plan to analyzes (e.g., handbooks, websites, essay prompts, journal article manuscript submission guidelines, etc.).

3. **Fieldwork Plan** (at least one paragraph)**:**

a. Describe your fieldwork plan in detail.
    i.   Include the name(s) of the people you plan to interview.
    ii.   Include your interview questions (at least five questions).
    iii. *Optional*: If you would like to conduct observations, list the classes or events you plan to attend or observe.
    iv.   Estimate the timeline for completion (schedule interviews before Wednesday, November 7).

4. **Perspective/Positionality** (a brief one-two sentence explanation):

a. Include a note in which you position yourself in relation to the topic:
    i.   Are you an insider or outsider in relation to this discourse community?
    ii.   Do you have any biases, or hypotheses or expectations that you have already formed about this topic?

Data Collection Field Notes (LSWA 5): due on Monday, November 5 (1-2 pages, double-spaced)

1. Interview: include the interview question and notes.
2. *Optional*: Observation: describe the observation you conducted and reflect upon the findings (include 5 questions).

Citations:

-   Cite each interview separately.
-   Cite each meta-genre.

Cite sources using the format appropriate to your discipline (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.). Refer to the Purdue OWL formatting guidelines.

-   MLA (Modern Language Association): humanities
-   Chicago: social sciences, business, history, and fine arts
-   APA (American Psychological Association): education, psychology, and the sciences

Essay Structure:

In the introductory paragraph:

1. State your interest and positionality in your chosen discourse community (as an insider or outsider, novice or expert, etc.).
2. In the final sentence of the introductory paragraph, include a thesis statement that makes a specific, nuanced, and original claim about writing in this discipline.

In the body paragraphs:

1. Analyze the interview responses and meta-genre(s) to develop a claim about writing in the discipline.
2. Incorporate specific quotations from the interview(s) and meta-genres(s) to support your claims.

In the concluding paragraph:

1. Reflect upon the larger significance and implications of the insights you have gleaned from your sources.
2. Consider whether your perspective on writing in your discipline has shifted as a result of your research.

Criteria:

Note: The difference between and A- and B-level paper is that while an A-level paper offers a sophisticated, original, and innovative idea, a B-level paper offers observations that are less original and well-crafted. A C-level paper may offer summary instead of analysis and provide less thorough development and support.

Development/Argument:	Structure/Organization:	Craft/Language:
A-Level: Extraordinary		
- Development: thoroughly develops ideas using specific evidence and consistent attention to detail	- Organization: incorporates a clear structure (introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion)	- Word Choice: employs precise, subject-specific vocabulary and an authentic voice

- Thesis: includes a specific, nuanced, and original thesis statement on writing in a particular discipline - Analysis: offers an insightful and sophisticated analysis of the evidence gleaned from the interview(s) and meta-genres(s)	- Transitions: integrates varied transition words and phrases in order to create a clear logical flow	- Grammar and Style: is written consistently in the present tense, using appropriate grammar and style

B-Level: Excellent

- Development: develops ideas using specific evidence, though some examples may be less thoroughly supported - Thesis: includes an effective, though less specific thesis statement - Analysis: offers an analysis of the sources, though the ideas may be more simple and less insightful than in an A-level essay	- Organization: incorporates a generally clear structure (introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion) - Transitions: integrates varied transition words and phrases	- Vocabulary: employs generally effective word choice and voice - Grammar: is written consistently in the present tense using appropriate grammar and style, though there may be a few errors

C-Level: Good

- Development: offers less thorough development and support and less specific evidence - Thesis: includes an ineffective or general thesis statement	- Organization: incorporates an unclear structure (introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion) - Transitions: includes limited transitions	- Vocabulary: employs general word choice and voice - Grammar: includes errors in grammar and style or is written in inconsistent tenses

- Analysis: offers some analysis of the sources, or includes summary instead of analysis		

Research Essay Assignment Schedule:

Formatting: Each assignment should be typed, double-spaced, using 12 pt. font.

Assignment	Due Date	Submission Guidelines
Project proposal (LSWA 4)	Monday, October 22 by 1:00 pm	Upload onto Canvas under Assignments.
Fieldwork notes (LSWA 5)	Monday, November 5 by 1:00 pm	Upload onto Canvas under Assignments.
First draft (6-8 pages, double-spaced)	Monday, November 12 by 1:00 pm	Email the essay to each group member and me.
Peer review letters + peer review workshop	Wednesday, November 14 by 1:00 pm	Email the letters to each group member and me.
Final draft (10-12 pages, double-spaced)	Monday, November 19 by 11:59 pm	Upload onto Canvas under Assignments. Include in one Word document: 1. Final draft 2. Reflective cover letter or annotations

Reflective Cover Letter/Annotations (one page for the cover letter): due with the final draft on November 19:

We will work on three major writing assignments this semester. For one-two of the essays, write a cover letter. For the other one-two essays, directly annotate your final draft using the comments function. The purpose of the letters/annotations is to help you reflect on your writing process. For either choice, consider the following questions:

1. How did you go about writing this piece?

2. If applicable, in what ways did our work in class influence your writing process?

3. What did you learn in doing this writing project about writing itself?

4. What do you want to remember to apply to the next writing project or situation?

5. What do you think works well in this piece, and why? Please provide specific examples.

6. In what ways, if any, do you think you could improve in writing this essay, or what might you do differently next time? Why?

LSWA (Low-Stakes Writing Assignment) Rubric *(adapted from M. Sweeney, E. Tacke, N. Limlamai)*

In evaluating the low-stakes assignments, I will provide feedback including a score from 1-5 as well as written comments. At the end of the semester, I will add the LSWA scores, and the total score will count toward your daily participation/engagement grade, which is worth 15% of the overall grade.

Score	Criteria
5: Extraordinary (A)	-thoroughly addresses all aspects of the assignment and may exceed the requirements -offers nuanced, insightful, and thoughtful analysis -provides specific evidence and support -demonstrates consistent attention to detail
4: Excellent (B)	-addresses all aspects of the assignment -offers thoughtful, though less specific or developed, analysis -provides evidence and support -demonstrates attention to detail
3: Good (C)	-does not address all aspects of the assignment -may be less thorough or developed -may need more evidence, support, or clarification -includes some errors
2: Fair (D)	-does not address all aspects of the assignment -may be less thorough or developed -does not offer sufficient evidence or support -includes several errors

1: Poor (F)	-does not address all aspects of the assignment -is underdeveloped, unclear, or oversimplified -does not offer sufficient evidence or support -includes several errors