

digital demonstration (5%)

due: tbd

In the 21st century, "writing" no longer means writing traditional, alphabetic essays – at least not necessarily. It could be argued that to be competitive in an increasingly digital world, you will need to be able to use various digital tools. This assignment, then, is designed to introduce you to a number of different digital tools, tools that you will then be able to choose from when deciding how you want to complete other assignments.

The best way to learn a new skill is to teach it to other people. Thus, in groups of 3-4, you will present a digital tool of your choosing to the class at large. **The demonstration will consist of a ten-minute presentation with an accompanying handout that outlines basic instructions for new users.**

Your aim will be to give the class enough information so that they understand the basic functionality of the tool, so that they can then continue to develop proficiency with the tool on their own.

Below is a list of tools that you can choose from. All of these tools are available on campus. If you would like to demonstrate a tool that is not on this list, it must be open access and free, and you must run it by me first.

- Adobe Dreamweaver
- Adobe InDesign
- Adobe Photoshop
- Garage Band
- Evernote
- iMovie
- Jing
- LiveBinders
- Piktochart
- SlideShare
- VoiceThread
- Windows Movie Maker

You will want to conclude the presentation with some recommendations for using the tool.

Digital demonstrations will take place during week 4 through week 11. Sign-ups will occur during the second week of class.

This assignment is worth 5% of your grade. You will be graded on a pass-fail basis: if you satisfactorily complete all aspects of the assignment, you will pass. If you don't, you will not. The idea is that you will not need to have mastered the tool to present it to the class, so do not feel like you have to be "perfect" to pass. Thoughtful effort and engagement will go a long way.

Interview activity (15%)

due: no later than mm/dd/yy

For this assignment, you will identify someone on campus who works (and writes) in your chosen academic community and interview him or her about the reading, researching, and writing practices he or she engages in as a member of a particular discipline.

The activity has several facets:

- You will have to identify at least three potential interviewees (in the event that you are unable to coordinate with someone, you will want to have other options).
- You must reach out, via email, to your potential interviewee. We will talk about how to write such an email in class.
- You will draft a list of 6-8 interview questions (see the list below for inspiration).
- You will conduct a 20-30 minute interview and take notes throughout.
- You will write a 3-4 page essay that presents and engages with the content of the interview.
- You will send a thank you card to your interviewee after you conduct the interview.

Because of the nature of interviewing, this assignment has a flexible due date, so that you are better able to coordinate schedules.

In order to receive full credit for the assignment, you must submit a copy of your initial email, your interview questions, your notes, and your essay. With the exception of the essay, the components of this project will be graded on a pass-fail basis.

Your essay will be graded according to how well it presents the content of the interview – Is it clear what your conversation was about? Have you incorporated the most important responses to your questions? – and according to how well it *engages* with that content – What have you learned? What surprised you (or didn't)? Of course, because it is an academic assignment, you will want to make sure that the presentation of the essay itself is polished.

Below is a set of sample interview questions. Please feel free to take from this list, modify it, or add to it. It is important to remember that as an interviewer, you would like to cultivate an atmosphere in which the interviewee feels comfortable sharing his or her insights, so be sure to *listen* to the interviewee's responses, and be prepared to ask follow-up questions and/or deviate from the "script."

- What interested you about your discipline?
- What kind of researching and writing activities does your discipline involve?
- How do you stay informed about your discipline?
- How would you describe your writing style?
- How would you describe your writing approach?
- If I were to consult one source to introduce me to your discipline, which should I consult, and why?
- How did you learn how to write for your discipline?
- What else would you like to share with me?

Good luck, and please keep me informed on your progress as you work through this assignment!

curation activity (10%)

peer review: mm/dd/yy

due: mm/dd/yy

For this activity, you are going to compile a set of texts that have been produced in, for, or by your chosen academic community. Note that "texts" here does not necessarily mean alphabetic texts – they could be, but they could also be websites, videos, slideshows, etc. **You will create a PowerPoint or Prezi to house your representative sample and to briefly discuss how you identified these texts as belonging to your chosen academic community.**

You will want to choose at least ten distinct texts to showcase. At least one of those should be a style manual of sorts – a text that discusses document design, language conventions, citation practices, etc. Other texts you may want to consider for inclusion could be peer-reviewed journal articles, audio- or video-recorded lectures, books; anything, really, provided you can justify it as belonging to your academic community.

When rationalizing your choices, you may want to consider the following:

- What is the text about?
- Who is (or are) the author(s)?
- Where was the text published?
- What does the text look like?
- What kind of language does the text use?
- What kind of documentation does the text use?

Because this is a curation activity, it is important that you present this collection in a manner that makes it accessible. Thus, you will be expected to incorporate images, quotes, screenshots, and the like into your slideshow along with your rationale for including the texts.

It is difficult to set a standard for an appropriate number of slides, since that will depend on a number of rhetorical choices, visual and otherwise. A conservative minimum would suggest that you need at least 22 slides – one for each text and one for each rationale, plus a title slide and a works cited/references/bibliography slide.

You will be introduced to both PowerPoint and Prezi (different slideshow generators) in class and you may choose whichever platform you feel most comfortable working with. When it comes time to submit, you needn't provide a hard copy; digital access is more appropriate given the medium.

Because this assignment requires different kinds of labor than you may be used to, **we will work together as a class to decide on the criteria for grading.** We will not only want to consider the quality of the content (meaning the texts and the rationale), but also the work involved in amassing that content, as well as the effort put into creating a slideshow (in terms of both technical work and aesthetics). You will post your suggestions to the course blog. I will then compile those suggestions and present several of the most popular options, which you will vote on. Participation in this process is considered part of the assignment, and so you will not receive full credit if you do not suggest criteria *and* vote.

Have fun with this assignment – look for texts that interest you.

rhetorical analysis (15%)

choice of medium due: mm/dd/yy

peer review: mm/dd/yy

due: mm/dd/yy

By now we have learned that much discipline-specific writing is intended to contribute to a larger conversation in a field of study. What's more, that writing is advocating for the readers' acceptance of its claims as suitable for that conversation.

To that end, for this assignment, **you will select one of the texts from your curation activity¹ and critically examine it as a member of your chosen academic community.** Your aim will be not only to evaluate the text's effectiveness, but also its adherence to the communicative conventions of the field. In so doing, you will establish yourself as a critical and informed reader of the texts in your discipline.

Conducting a rhetorical analysis requires you to use specific criteria. Common criteria include:

- Purpose: Why is the author writing? What is the author doing?
- Audience: For whom is the author writing?
- Style: What is the tone of the text? How does the vocabulary and sentence construction contribute?
- Development: How does the author present his or her ideas? What kinds of information and approaches are privileged?
- Design: What does the text look like? Why?

You are not limited to these criteria, nor are you expected to attend to each of them equally in your rhetorical analysis. It is more important that you make it clear to *your* readers the basis for your evaluation.

You will choose the medium for this assignment. What this means is that you may choose to write a traditional alphabetic essay. You may compose a slideshow. You might decide to compose an audio essay, or make a video that superimposes your analysis on top of the text. Because assignment standards cannot translate across different mediums, once you select the form that your project will take, I will make a presentation in class outlining the criteria for the types of submissions I will be getting. Content-wise, I expect the level of detail that would be provided in a 5-6 page essay.

This assignment is meant to give you some practice critically thinking about the kinds of texts you might encounter as a member of your academic community, as well as the rhetorical affordances and limitations of different modes of writing. Be judicious in your selection of your text *and* your medium.

¹ Not the style manual.

final project: a discipline-specific writing activity, and a rhetorical self-analysis and reflection

peer review: mm/dd/yy

poster-style presentation: mm/dd/yy–mm/dd/yy

due: final exam period

Your final project has three parts: an alphabetic essay on a topic of your choosing that demonstrates your knowledge of the communicative conventions of your chosen academic community, a rhetorical self-analysis of your essay that attends to the choices you made during its composition, and participation in a poster-style presentation of your work.

The essay will be a persuasive and well-supported 7-8 page argument using secondary sources. You will choose your topic, which should be one relevant to your discipline, and underneath the umbrella of that topic, you will make a claim and support it: having researched thoroughly, by constructing meaningful assertions, and avoiding bias. Your content and your approach will be largely driven by what you have learned is valued in your academic community.

Your essay will need to use at least 6 scholarly sources to make its argument – given the length and the scope, this is an absolute minimum and thus I recommend that you use more. Remember the rule of thumb for source quantity is the number of pages required of the assignment plus one; however, I trust you to judge whether the amount of information you have is sufficient. You will need to use proper citation practices in your field's accepted style. You will also need to format your document according to that style.

The rhetorical self-analysis will take the form of marginal comments atop the text of your essay. For this reason, your essay *must* be composed in Microsoft Word. You are going to rhetorically analyze your own essay, to demonstrate (to me and to you) how the choices you made for its composition are reflective of the communicative practices of your chosen academic community. **You will also write a brief 1-2 page reflection on your choices, and on the writing and analyzing processes.** What did the process of rhetorically analyzing your own writing teach you?

Finally, **you will participate in an in-class poster-style presentation of your work.** What this means is you will be presenting simultaneously along with several other members of the class – you will not have a designated presentation time, nor will you have a designated time limit. Instead, you will present as you have an audience, and your audience may wander up or wander away at any time. This will teach you to adjust your approach to an ever-changing audience in a low-pressure environment, since at no point will all eyes be on you. Visual aids are not necessary, but you are more than welcome to use them.

15% of your grade is dependent on the quality of the content and presentation of your essay itself (see the flip side of this assignment sheet for more specific criteria).

5% of your grade is dependent on your successful participation in the presentation.

20% of your grade is dependent on the quality of the content and presentation of your rhetorical self-analysis and reflection.

Grading Criteria for the Alphabetic Essay

Grade	Typical Characteristics
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claims are well-supported by relevant, compelling evidence drawn from several sources. Style, voice, and tone are consistently effective and genre appropriate. Prose is consistently clear, brief, and coherent. Text is exceptionally well organized and effectively responds to the rhetorical situation. Text is free of errors in grammar, mechanics, and punctuation. Paraphrased and quoted sources are consistently cited using an appropriate documentation style and consistently support the logical development of the text.
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claims are supported by relevant evidence. Style, voice, and tone are typically effective and genre appropriate. Prose is typically clear, brief, and coherent. Text is well organized and effectively responds to the rhetorical situation. Text is nearly free of errors in grammar, mechanics, and punctuation. Paraphrased and quoted sources are consistently cited using an appropriate documentation style and typically support the logical development of the text.
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claims lack strong support or are supported by marginally relevant evidence. Style, voice, or tone is sometimes awkward or inappropriate for the genre. Prose is understandable but sometimes unclear or difficult to follow. Text has an identifiable organizational pattern, but it is not effective in responding to the rhetorical situation. Text includes some errors in grammar, mechanics, or punctuation. Paraphrased and quoted sources are sometimes cited unclearly or do not support the logical development of the text.
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claims are overgeneralized or supported by personal anecdote. Style, voice, or tone interferes with the readability of the text. Prose is frequently unclear, wordy, and difficult to follow. Text lacks an identifiable organizational pattern and fails to respond to the rhetorical situation. Text includes many errors in grammar, mechanics, or punctuation. Paraphrased and quoted sources are consistently cited unclearly or substantially interfere with the logical development of the text.
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claims are made without an attempt at marshalling evidence. Style, voice, or tone consistently interferes with the readability of the text. Prose is consistently unclear, wordy, and difficult to follow. Text lacks an identifiable organizational pattern and fails to respond to the rhetorical situation. Text includes many errors in grammar, mechanics, or punctuation. Paraphrased and quoted sources are not cited.