

Major Essay

We have spent the last month learning about the ways that discourse communities utilize written and spoken language and visual markers to communicate among members and with those outside the community. Through our classroom discussions of the MySpace discourse community and your individual work with your three chosen discourse communities, you have all spent time choosing and analyzing the commonplaces binding these communities.

The Assignment:

For this project, each of you will choose one discourse community and will focus on the ways language shapes and is shaped by the community members. You will more than likely wish to include some general history about the group you are studying, but remember that this is not simply a report. You will be asked to focus on the specific ways language and visual rhetoric is used by those within the community.

The Specifics:

This essay should be **8-10 pages** (approximately 2,000 words) and should be typed, double-spaced, and formatted in MLA style. Each essay will incorporate at **6-8 academic sources**. I realize that some of you may choose some popular discourse communities best discussed on websites so I will not mandate that all sources be from academic journals, but sources should be credible and reliable. We will be working with sources on several occasions in class. When in doubt about the appropriateness of a source for this assignment, please feel free to contact me.

Using What you Have:

Each of you will be compiling a commonplace book this semester. This book – in conjunction with our research blogs – should serve as a starting point for focusing on language use in your discourse community. You should include a **discussion of at least five** of the **commonplaces** you have or will identify for your chosen community. Additionally, each of you is a member of a researching community united by shared blogs. This site should allow you a place to organize and explore your own ideas and information for this project as well as allow an avenue for peer feedback about your topic.

The Goal:

By carefully studying both the how and why rhetorical elements are used in a given community, I hope it is easier to understand and dissect the ways language is used in communities we may wish to join. The ability to identify common themes, values, ideas, and sayings within a community makes joining such a community much more possible. Language – whether spoken, written, or represented visually – is currency in our culture and the ability to wield it successfully offers certain advantages. Additionally, there are drawbacks and risks inherent to those who do not recognize the power of language in our society.

Due Dates:

Thesis due **Wed. Sept. 27** for in-class workshop

Peer edit draft due **Mon. Oct. 16**

Rough draft due **Wed. Oct. 18**

Final draft due **Mon. Nov. 20**