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Student Evaluations

Writing for Social Media (ENGL 2850), Summer 1 2020

Enrollment: 18, Responses: 7

Student Evaluations Quantitative Report

Category	Instructor Mean	University Mean	Instructor Median	University Median
Assessing Students' Online Experience	4.7	4.2	5.0	5.0
Course Related Questions	4.4	4.2	5.0	4.0
Learning Related Questions	4.6	4.3	5.0	4.0
Instructor Related Questions	4.9	4.4	5.0	5.0
Instructor Effectiveness	5.0	4.5	5.0	5.0

TRACE Qualitative Responses

- Professor Messina's feedback on essays were very helpful and helped me learn ways to improve my writing overall.
- This is a really good class for anyone to take because it deals with something we all work with every single day - social media - and helps you be more aware of the ways in which we use it.
- I think this is a very good class to take. It discussed many aspect of current topics and very up to date. Very interesting!
- Very kind, fair, and helpful professor who gives great feedback, and is clearly qualified to teach writing.
- Cara is very kind and always will and ready to help you with any questions you have. The classwork is fun but informative and Cara is really good at establishing a relationship between students. I absolutely recommend this professor.
- This is a very organized class. I learned a lot.

English Department Responses

- I found it easy to stay engaged with this course. I thought the scope of what we covered in class was just right, and the structure of the class worked well for me. Cara provided frequent updates about deadlines, further readings, and feedback on both our major assignments and our regular homework.
- The course met all the goals. The reading responses involved interpreting and analyzing media and text, and they also oftentimes involved historical and cultural contexts. The activities and the assignments fulfilled the rest of the goals
- In all of our assignments, I did something that I had never done before. The assignments were good vehicles for teaching us about different methods of studying social media.
- I enjoyed pretty much every aspect of this course. Of course, in person classes always are preferable for any learning environment, but I am a visual learner so this was perfect for me in the adjustments needed for

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COVID-19. Our professor fulfilled every aspect of the course goals. And all of the subjects were informative and engaging

- Professor Messina's curriculum was consistent the entire way through, and very organized. There were never any abrupt surprises or areas of miscommunication. The assignments were always clear, and they were appropriately challenging as they regularly involved analysis and explanations of ideas, as well as self reflections

Interdisciplinary Advanced Writing (ENGW 3315), Summer 1 2018

Enrollment: 19, Responses: 5

Student Evaluations Quantitative Report

Category	Instructor Mean	University Mean	Instructor Median	University Median
Course Related Questions	4.1	4.2	5.0	4.0
Learning Related Questions	4.0	4.3	4.5	4.0
Instructor Related Questions	4.7	4.5	5.0	5.0
Instructor Effectiveness	4.8	4.5	5.0	5.0

Student Evaluations Qualitative Responses

- The professor gives great feedback in projects and always gives you an opportunity to improve and develop your writing. She is also a lot of fun with such a positive attitude.
- Cara did an excellent job teaching the class, leading discussions, and allowing everyone to express different and diverse perspectives.

English Department Evaluations

- She cares a lot for her students and really wants them to improve. Also, she is very good at giving feedback on writing as she is very supportive of your work but she is direct with what you can improve.
- Commenting on writing and being clearly passionate and engaged with us and the material.
- Very good at communicating, providing support and feedback, enthusiastic and fun, and always prepared for class

First Year Writing (ENGW 1111), Spring 2018

Enrollment: 18, Responses: 16

Student Evaluations Quantitative Report

Category	Instructor Mean	University Mean	Instructor Median	University Median
Course Related Questions	4.4	4.0	5.0	4.0
Learning Related Questions	4.6	4.2	5.0	4.0

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Instructor Related Questions	4.9	4.4	5.0	5.0
Instructor Effectiveness	5.0	4.4	5.0	5.0

Student Evaluations Qualitative Responses

- Cara was great! Participation wasn't required but everyone's opinions were heard and respected. She also did a good job letting everyone know what was expected and her assignment were fun and interesting
- Cara was always energetic in class and appeared as though she loves her work. It was very welcoming coming into class everyday to a teacher who really cared about her students and the course. I loved coming to class everyday to have an engaged discussion, and the assignments were very effective at reinforcing the ideas we learned in class.
- She was really passionate about what she was teaching and was always prepared to teach. When we were talking about sensitive topics she was extremely respectful to everyone in the class. She was great about giving us feedback on our writing as well as having us give each other feedback.
- The professor gives great feedback in projects and always gives you an opportunity to improve and develop your writing. She is also a lot of fun with such a positive attitude.

English Department Evaluations

- Cara was very good at getting us excited about writing and see the deeper meaning in writing. Comments on writing were also very helpful.
- She cares so much about all of us as students and really wants us all to learn and improve in everything we do in class. She always had a good lesson plan ready and gave detailed feedback on our writing. We always knew what was expected of us.
- Cara overall is a great instructor. Her communication is very effective and she does a great job pointing out both what her students did well and also how they can improve. She does a great job with laying out goals for each day and then sticking to them.
- We had a really interactive and friendly learning environment. Everyone got along really well, and we always had a really great and deep discussion about the material. Cara is a great professor. She treated everyone with respect and was always helping us and challenging us to think deeper and write better.
- WE HAD A GREAT CLASS ATMOSPHERE. Cara treated us all like adults and always respected us and valued our opinions and feedback. We were able to have a really productive semester due to the classroom climate and we all looked forward to coming to class.

Sample Syllabus: Writing for Social Media

Writing for Social Media

Online Summer Course, Can Be Reimagined for First Year Writing

Course Description

Social media writing, like all writing, entangles political, ethical, social, and cultural values. Writing and participating in any genre requires an awareness of discourse communities, your target audience, your motivation/purpose, and writing conventions that you may include or challenge. In this course, you will explore how these values play out in social media writing, community engagement, and research. You will engage with social media communities of your choosing, reflect on your engagements, conduct your own (ethical) social media writing research, and read scholars' social media research.

We will discuss the interwoven, complex worlds of social media. Social media writing is more than posting and engaging with others on digital platforms. Writing for social media comes with understanding the intersections of:

- **Breaking down the virtual/in-real-life binary:** How do our virtual activities impact the world, from how we present and others read our identities to climate change?
- **Data surveillance, big data, and advertising:** How do data and back-end information impact how we write and interact on social media?
- **Platform analyses:** What are the constraints and affordances of different platforms, different platforms' purposes, and the different modes and forms of engagement?
- **Ethics:** What are ethical guidelines for engaging on social media or studying social media engagement? In what ways do larger social media companies follow or ignore ethics?
- **Moderation (systems of accountability or lack-there-of):** How do platforms and/or communities encourage or discourage systems of accountability? How can we as individuals challenge online violence and harassment?
- **Community-building through textual creations, platform choices, and moderation policies:** How do we build and participate in different communities across different platforms? How are online communities formed through various connected interests, such as activism, positionalities, fandoms, memes, and more?
- **Audience awareness and reach:** How does building audience awareness help us reach our potential audience? What are the different methods for engaging with audiences?
- **Discoverability:** What are the different modes of discoverability on different platforms? How does this impact audience reach? How does this impact what we learn and see? How can we curate our newsfeeds and find the communities that empower us?

Class Environment Statement

Even though this is an online course, this is still a classroom. Language holds immense power, so we are all accountable for how we use it. Because we will be discussing sensitive topics, as writing is a sensitive action, we must be sure to respect and listen to one another. By embracing discomfort, especially when it comes to learning about and with digital tools and writing, we can learn so much from one another. Our course will be a place for

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empathetic inquiry and a space where diverse perspectives are valued. Please do not use any gendered, racist, ableist, classist, or otherwise harmful language. Please also follow our course's Subreddit Guidelines and Rules. We will also have a larger discussion to add to these rules by discussing how we each learn and communicate in safe methods.

Grading

Participation (35%)

Since we are not meeting in-person, your engagement with the weekly assignments will count as your participation. You will receive 5% participation every week for 7 weeks (5% x 7 weeks=35%). Every **Tuesday** and **Friday**, you will have some informal assignments due, which I will be reading along. If you miss an informal assignment, that will hurt your grade. Please always keep in contact with me.

Reading Response (2% each week):

- Respond to all the reading discussions on the Subreddit and answer the question asked by your colleague. Sometimes, you will only have one reading; other times, there will be two readings. You are expected to write approximately 250-500 words in this response.
- Many of our readings will be from the edited collection [*Social Writing/Social Media: Publics, Presentations, and Pedagogies*](#), edited by Douglas M. Walls and Stephanie Vie

Activity OR Social Media Post and Reflection (2% each week):

- Activity: Instead of posting on a social media platform and writing a reflection about it, you will follow the activity assigned for that day.
- Unless otherwise stated in the course calendar, you will reflect on your own social media engagement (approximately 250-500 words + at least one artifact, which may be a screenshot of proof of your engagement or something else). You will do some form of social media writing (whether you make your own post or comment on someone else's post), take screenshots/share URLs, and reflect on your engagement. You will post this on the course Subreddit under that day's "Engagement Reflection Discussion Board". In this reflection, engage with terms from the glossary or course readings.

Glossary Submission (1% each week):

Update our course glossary with a new term or extend a term's definition. You can also build off definitions. Most terms have multiple and sometimes contentious definitions. If you want to add more. We will use Google Sheets to collect these terms. Potential terms to use located on our course Subreddit.

Reading Discussion Leads (15%)

You will choose to lead one discussion about one of the readings this semester. As the discussion leader, your job will be to summarize the readings and pose discussion questions for your peers in the class.

Your discussion questions should also tie in larger themes/issues from both texts. You will post these on our course subreddit **two days** before the reading response is due (example: if the reading response is due Tuesday,

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you should post your full discussion lead by Sunday), and your colleagues will respond on your post by Tuesday. In this discussion, tackle these steps about the reading:

- Provide a basic summary of the reading.
- What are the arguments the author is making?
- How do these arguments apply to social media writing?
- What are some important terms or definitions that appear in the text?
- Provide **2-3** questions for your peers to answer. These questions should ask your colleagues to engage more deeply with the text on an individual, cultural, and/or political level.

Note that some of the readings will have *two* shorter texts/projects/videos, so if you choose to write about these, talk about how these two readings relate.

Formal Assignments (50%)

You will have **four** major formal assignments, each worth 12.5% of your grade, which you will receive letter grades and feedback on. For each of these assignments, I will provide a detailed prompt with my expectations articulated. [Please see the assignments section below for more information.](#)

- Peer review (2.5% for each)
- First draft (5% for each)
- Final draft (5% for each)

Formal Assignments

What if I want to incorporate specific examples from social media that I did not create?

You are welcome to incorporate screenshots or even recordings of these communities. However, some users may not be comfortable with their information being used for a paper. Before using anyone's posts, **please reach out to them first and ask for their permission.** Please also anonymize posts when possible, such as erasing their usernames or avoiding any personal information when taking a screenshot. If the poster is an **influencer** (has a blue check) and does not respond, you can make your own ethical decision if you want to include their post without their permission.

Will I need to use sources?

For every assignment, you will be required to use at least **three** peer-reviewed or reputable sources, such as the New York Times. If you have any questions about the reputability of a source, please ask! I am always happy to discuss this. These sources can include what we have read for class, or you can do your own external research. I will also include a mix of peer reviewed articles and popular culture think-pieces that may be useful on our Subreddit. Here are some great academic journals to check out:

- *Technical Communication: The Journal of the Society for Technical Communication*
- [Computers and Composition](#)
- [Transformative Works and Cultures](#) (open access)
- [Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy](#) (open access)
- *New Media and Society*
- *Game Studies*

Assignment 1: Analyze a Social Media Discourse Community

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For this assignment, you will be doing a **discourse community analysis** as described by Ryan Shepherd. What this means is you will be analyzing a particular online discourse community, looking at the language used, the different genres used, the values/politics, and the different forms used to communicate. Choose a social media discourse community that you engage with. This may be a Facebook group, a hashtag, a subreddit, a forum, or your own social media network.

Assignment 2: Your Social Media Story (autoethnography)

You will be studying a *digital culture* you belong to and identify with. In this paper, similar to your discourse community analysis, take time to define the culture *and* explain your relationship with the culture. Within your digital culture, pick a particular *theme* or *component* or *practice* of that culture. Moya Bailey, for example, focuses on health; Les Hutchinson focuses on anonymity; and Amber Buck focuses on graduate students' professional identities on Twitter. You can even practice coining a term, as Buck does with "personally professional!"

Assignment 3: Digital Activism

You will be participating in digital activism! To participate in digital activism means you must **produce** something and post it somewhere. These will be your **artifacts**. Once you have posted your artifacts, you will write a short reflection paper due on **Tuesday, 06/16**. In this reflection paper, you will talk about the types of artifacts you produced, your **cause**, your **purpose** of these artifacts, and the **methods** you used.

Assignment 4: Semester Reflection

For this final assignment, you will write a semester reflection about what you have learned in this class in regards to writing for social media, social media genres, social media communities, larger social and political issues that are either exposed or created by social media, and who you are as a social media writer/reader/user.

Course Modules

[\(Full list of readings and activities available here\)](#)

Week 1: Introductions & Content Moderation	Week 5: Data Surveillance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assignment 2 Final Draft
Week 2: Discourse Communities & Ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assignment 1 First Draft	Week 6: Online Communities (Fandoms & Memes)
Week 3: Hashtag Activism & Parasitic Publics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assignment 1 Final Draft	Week 7: Accessibility <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assignment 3 Due
Week 4: Embodiment & Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assignment 2 First Draft	Week 8: Finals Week <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assignment 4 Due

Sample Assignment One: Digital Activism and Artifacts

Digital Activism

Assignment for Writing for Social Media or First Year Writing
(Text-heavy because of online course)

Framing Digital Activism

Our readings have focused quite a bit on digital activism and the different methods of digital activism that take place. There are, of course, layers to definitions of digital activism. For example, in [Alexander and Hahner's "The Intimate Screen,"](#) they address how digital activism uses technologies' affordances to create connection and familiarity for social justice purposes, or specifically for reshaping narratives around people with Down syndrome. This type of digital activism is posting images, sharing stories, and celebrating children with Ds. Christy's Instagram account is specifically focused on digital activism & creating an intimate screen. In "#MyNYPD: Transforming Twitter into a Public Place for Protest" by Tracey Hayes, Hayes explores how Twitter can be an actual *site* of protest, not just a place to disseminate information and form connections. Unlike Christy's Instagram account, Hayes looks at a collection of Tweets from various users who hijacked the #MyNYPD hashtag to protest police brutality. By disrupting this hashtag, digital protestors rejected the NYPD's attempt at making a connection with the community.

We also see fan labor merge with digital activism in ["Black Panther fandom and transformative social practices" by Tracy Deonn Walker.](#) Fan labor, or fan composing practices, are the different creative and analytical approaches fans take to engage with each other and celebrate the texts they love; in Walker's article, her subjects are fan--particularly Black fans--of *The Black Panther*. While Walker does not straight up refer to these fan labor practices as digital activism, specifically, she looks at narrative extraction, which "is the process and labor that audience members undertake when engaging with narratives that don't represent them as protagonists or fully realized characters." We have also seen digital activism in Moya Bailey's, Les Hutchins, Liza Potts, and so many other articles.

About this Assignment

For this assignment, you will be participating in digital activism! To participate in digital activism means you must **produce** something and post it somewhere. These will be your **artifacts**. Once you have posted your artifacts, you will write a short reflection paper. In this reflection paper, you will talk about the types of artifacts you produced, your cause, your purpose of these artifacts, and the methods you used.

If you want to remain anonymous and not post through personal social media accounts, I recommend looking to Reddit as an answer. There are a lot of different subreddits you can follow, such as r/BlackLivesMatter, r/GirlGames, r/ClimateActionPlan, and so many others. Pretty much any cause you care about, there is a subreddit! If you do not want to post at all, you can draft up artifacts (example: draft a IG story and take a screenshot, or write a Facebook post in a Word Document file) and just use those in your reflection. A large part of digital activism is sharing, but I also understand this may come with a lot of stress.

Digital Activism Artifacts

For your digital activism, you will obviously want to choose a **cause**. Because of the current Black Lives Matter movement, I *highly* recommend this cause. There are also sub-causes in BLM, such as #BlackInTheIvory and defunding police. The more specific, the better! You will also want to choose a particular **reason** to post. Are you trying to **educate, create an intimate screen, disrupt someone/an organization**, or another purpose?

Finally, you will choose your **method** of digital activism. This will be the actual way you reach your purpose to perform digital activism of your cause. Here are some suggestions (you can choose multiple of these, of course):

- Create a Twitter bot to disrupt harmful/racist hashtags, such as #WhiteLivesMatter
- Find an online fan community and engage in conversations around race, gender, and forms of discrimination or misrepresentation in the particular community or larger cultural material
- Post a story on Instagram or Facebook about this cause (if you have multiple pages for one story, each page counts as one artifact)
- Create or remix memes
- Engage with a particular digital activism hashtag on Twitter or Instagram
- A post on Facebook about your cause
- Collect Tweets from a particular hashtag to archive them. **Please email me if you want to do this because we will need to discuss ethics and logistics**
- Create a video for YouTube or TikTok on a particular topic
- Create infographics or posts sharing information using [Canva](https://www.canva.com/) or a similar user-friendly design platform
- Here are other ways for “storytelling” on social media that you can also use for digital activism: <https://buffer.com/resources/social-media-storytelling>

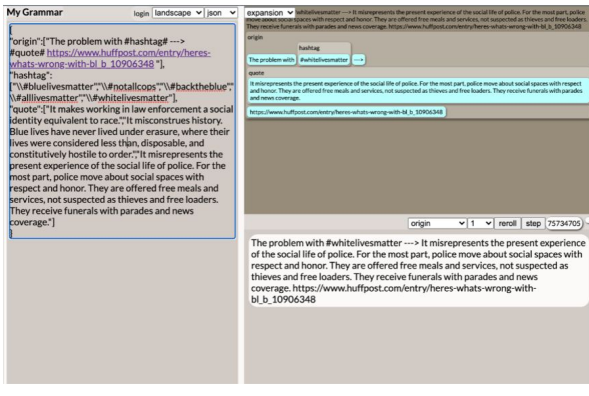
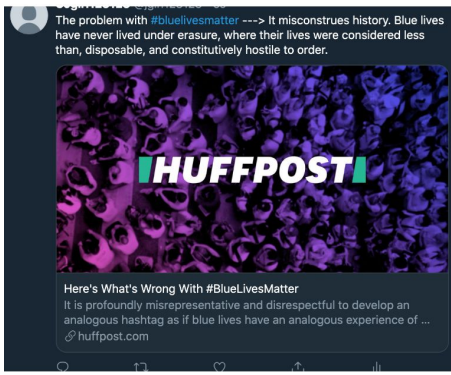
Assignment Requirements

- **BE RESPECTFUL.** Digital activism comes with an awareness of the social and political issues, as well as how your activism may impact others. If you are engaging in digital activism, you are likely participating in a difficult conversation. Be cautious with how you take up this activism, and maybe look up some bigger activists in the cause to see how they engage?
- **Digital activism artifacts:** You must compose and show at least three digital activism artifacts that *you* created about one cause. You will put these artifacts in your reflection piece.
Please email me if you decide to do a Twitter bot
- **Reflection piece:** Write a reflection (between 800-1500 words) about your digital activism. In this reflection, you should:
 - **Artifacts:** Link to or screenshot your different artifacts. Describe each artifact, including your purpose, some of the choices you made in composing these artifacts, your reasoning for posting it where you posted it (if you posted it), who your intended audience was, and how others’ reacted (again, if you posted it).
 - **Engage with at least 2 scholars:** Engage with at least 2 scholars from our readings this semester. This may be to define digital activism, discuss purposes, or explain your own process.
 - **Reflect:** Reflect on the process of creating these artifacts and what you learned about the composing process, digital activism, the cause you chose, and your methods. The reflection genre is a strange one, so I will describe some of the typical aspects of a reflection genre here:
 - Describe a particular **experience** during your composing process

- Discuss or share your particular **emotions** about your composing process
- Describe your personal **beliefs** and perspectives as well as how these influenced your choices while composing
- Show an awareness of **difficulties** by describing any challenges you faced
- Demonstrate an awareness of **other perspectives**, like thinking through theory or historical/political/social contexts
- Describe **lessons learned** and/or how you might apply what you learned from this digital activism in other situations

Exemplary Digital Activist Artifacts Created By Students

Twitter Protest Bot

Protest Bot Back-End & Code	Protest Bot Output
	

#JunkTerrorBill Infographics



#JUNK TERROR BILL

what is it and why should you care?

Philippine lawmakers have passed a bill that allows President Duterte the power to define what terrorism is, and more importantly, declare individuals or organizations terrorists.

what does that mean exactly?

Some actions that could be considered terrorism:

- Donating to organisations that are not state recognised
- Writing or sharing social media posts that are related to any "terrorist activities"
- Participating in rallies that could cause a "serious risk to public safety"

This means to any suspect the Philippine government can:

- Arrest *WITHOUT* a warrant
- Detained for 14 days (extendable by 10 days)
- Wiretapped & tracked
- **TAG THE EXERCISE OF RIGHTS AS TERRORIST EXPRESSIONS**

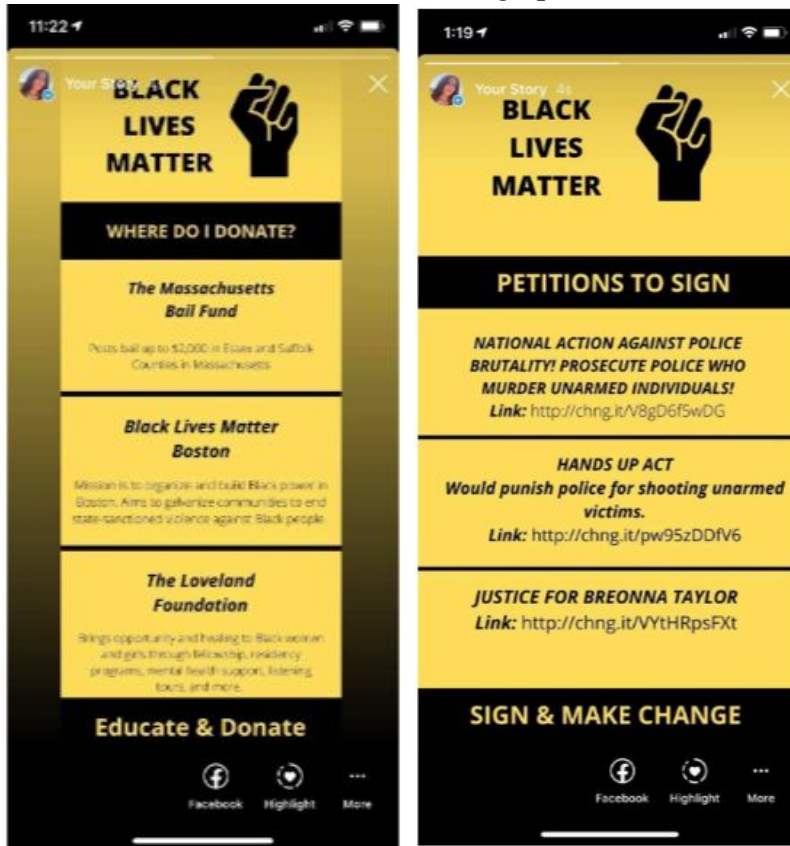
The terror bill violates the constitution and human rights of Philippine citizens.

What can we do to help?

- Protest through email
- Sign petitions
- Donation drives

Visit junkterrorbill.carrd.co & junkterrorbill2.carrd.co for more resources & information.

#BlackLivesMatter Infographics



Sample Assignment Two: Rhetorical Genre Analysis

Rhetorical Genre Analysis

Assignment for First Year Writing

In this unit, we are discussing genre and discourse communities; genres help to create discourse communities and vice versa. The purpose of this assignment is to help you better understand how communities in your discipline communicate, expectations for communication, and why these expectations exist. For this assignment, you will be thinking specifically about not only the form and function of a particular genre within your discourse community, but how the texts you chose within that genre represent larger ideological values in your discipline. You will choose a particular genre in your discipline. This might be a type of academic journal, a public-facing genre, a multimodal genre, etc. Find **two** examples of texts in this genre, analyze them thinking about the rhetorical situation and ideologies they represent, and finally create a meta-version for this genre.

You will create three distinct pieces of writing: the first is a genre analysis, the second is a meta-genre, and the third is a reflection about your writing process and choices.

Genre Analysis

A genre analysis looks at larger trends and conventions in a genre and then analyzes how a particular text from that genre follows and pushes against these conventions. The **genre** is the larger social practice and set of conventions, while the **text** is the individual piece within that genre. A genre analysis also asks *why* these conventions and trends are part of this genre.

For this genre analysis, you will analyze **two** texts from one genre (300-500 words for each text of). Think particularly about the values and ideologies these genres present and the rhetorical moves made throughout the piece. How do you know what genre this is? What are the conventions of this genre and how does this specific text fall into and push against these conventions? What ideologies and values are represented in this individual text and the larger genre? For bullet points of topics to focus on in this analysis, please see the A2 Template.

- Example from class: If you are analyzing “academic blog posts” as your genre, you might use Miram Posner’s [“Some things to think about before you exhort everyone to code.”](#) For your analysis, you should first understand some conventions of academic blog posts and why those conventions exist. Why do blog posts typically have hyperlinks and images? Why is the language more familiar and accessible? Why are there shorter paragraphs and sentences? Why is the author more personable, talking specifically about their perspective/opinion on a larger issue in their field? Why even write the blog post at all? Once you begin tackling these ideas, then you can think about it in relation to Posner’s specific text. For example, you might think about why Posner uses 1) hyperlinks, 2) blog post tags, 3) italics, 4) “you” and “I”, 5) the comic, and more.

Meta-Genre

According to Giltrow’s definition, a “meta-genre” is “situated language about situated language” (190), meaning that meta-genres are genres about how to participate in other genres. She provides examples of guidelines, templates, feedback, rubrics, prompts, and more. These meta-genres provide a sort of “how to” for “outsiders” to participate in particular genres; what are the conventions and expectations for particular genres? Who is the audience? What type of language should you use to reach that audience? How might your text be organized?

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Using your analysis of the two examples, create a “meta-genre” (Giltrow, 2002), of this genre. Imagine you are writing it for someone who wants to learn how to participate in this genre.

- **EXAMPLE:** Look at Design for Diversity’s Case Study prompt. What is the goal of this prompt? What are some key points that the prompt addresses? What are some of the conventions it makes explicit? Where does the prompt encourage creativity from the author to push against these conventions?

Reflection

Write a reflection (300-500 words) about the process of locating this genre in your discipline, finding the specific examples you choose, how you analyzed these examples, your choices to create the meta-genre, your interaction with your peers with whom you worked throughout this assignment, and finally your revision process.