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Joining a Conversation Research Project

Nicole Green and Debbie Minter Spring 2020

Description, Time Frame, and Aim & Scopes

Description:

This unit is a culminating (end-of-semester) project designed to have students bring together the knowledge they have developed throughout the semester in the service of purposefully joining a real-world conversation, addressing a specific audience (or related set of audiences) who are part of that conversation. This unit has a small number of texts that the whole class reads and/or analyzes together. Instead, a lot of the work happening in this unit is project-driven and process-oriented.

Time Frame:

This unit was designed/paced as the last unit of the course (and it followed an earlier unit focused on rhetorical analysis of a multimodal artifact). Thus, students had some prior experience with thinking about and analyzing rhetorical situations, and with analyzing how different modes of a text work together rhetorically. In this unit, we focus on helping students identify serious issues and ongoing conversations occurring in their social spheres and local communities. Students are asked to do some research on these issues/conversations and ultimately to assess the credibility and relevance of particular sources for their rhetorical purposes. Originally, the unit was designed to take about 7 weeks but when we moved classes on line in Spring 2020, a week of class was cancelled and the unit was adapted to fit the remaining weeks.

ACE 1/English 151 Aim & Scopes:

This unit is built around ACE 1 and the Aims and Scopes for Engl 151 related to “gain[ing] practice at primary and secondary research as a means of developing and clarifying their stance toward their topic and/or acquiring a richer understanding of the context...of their argument” (Goal 5). Engl 150 has a similar outcome focused more specifically on inquiry and this project can be adapted to Engl 150 as well.

Organization, Readings, and Suggested Activities

Suggested Organization: The file below includes the organization of readings, activities, and due dates of the various aspects of the larger assignment within this Unit. This particular organization was designed for a Tuesday/Thursday class set in the Spring 2020

semester. Organization, readings, and aspects leading up to the larger assignment may be revised or adjusted to suit your own unique design of this unit.

See the suggested schedule on page 4.

Readings/Activities Description:

For this unit, you will work in the “writing group” area of the CANVAS course site. In the files area of your group’s website, create a folder titled “Project 3 Research Journals”. (Each person in your writing group will, then, start an MSWord document that is his/her research journal and save it to this space.)

The following informal writing activities will be assigned over this unit. As you complete each of these pieces of writing, you will just keep adding to your “Research Journal” document rather than saving them as separate, stand-alone documents. The reason for this is to give you a single place where you can track your evolving ideas, research process, and composing process for this project. I will ask you to label each entry with the writing assignment number and date so I can find it quickly in your journal. Note that at some points in this unit, you will be responding to group member’s research journals.

Activity 6: Brainstorming Conversations to Join

Early in the unit, you will do a good deal of free writing and discussion to develop ideas for the kinds of local conversations you are already immersed in. You will be asked to explore a few of them and share a text from those local conversations that feel most important/urgent to you.

Activity 7: Genre and Audience

After deciding on a conversation you want to join and thinking about how you might contribute to that conversation, you will do some writing to explore what specific audience you want to address and what genre(s) you might compose for your project.

Activity 8: Project Proposal

You will develop a proposal for your project that, with feedback from your group members and from me, will help you create a plan for researching and composing your project. This proposal will include:

- A brief description of the conversation you are hoping to join with your project and an explanation of why you are interested in joining it.

- A brief summary of what you already know about the conversation you'll be joining. In this summary, you should spend at least half of the time/space identifying important GAPS in your knowledge.
- A short overview of the different audiences you COULD address as well as the decision you've made about the audience you WILL address.
- What form (or forms) will your project take and why? How do you see this/these form(s) affording you a good opportunity to get your ideas across to this audience (or help you achieve your purposes for this project)? How and where would your audience encounter a text like your project (in its particular form)?
- What do you see as the exigency for this project? Why this project for this audience in this moment?
- Finally, include in your proposal a list of the kinds of ideas, information, or research you think you will want to look for and potentially include in your project.

Activity 9: Model Text Analysis

To help you and your group explore the concept of genre, apply the readings assigned during this unit to the social media campaign, #Neneedsyou (<https://ruralwellness.unl.edu/youth-suicide-prevention-resources>). After some whole class discussion in which you explore genres, find a model text(s) to help you discover the specific conventions associated with a genre you are using in your Proj. 3. The subject of this model text may or may not be similar to yours, but the model text you study should address the same audience you are addressing and making use of the modes you'd like to use for your project.

Activity 10 and 10.5: Collection of Potential Voices

Having searched for voices (information, ideas, model texts) to draw on or include for Project 3, these activities ask you to reflect on the sources you have collected. The first time you do this, you will provide a summary and analysis of a subset of sources. The second time you do this, you will provide a summary and analysis of a new set of sources and then step back and analyze the whole set you've collected via set of questions.

See the PDFs with the full text of the suggested readings in the Appendix and in the “unit packets” materials in the 2023 New English GTA’s Canvas page.

Ball, Cheryl E., et al. "Why is Genre Important?" and "Working with Multimodal Assets." In *Writer/Designer*. Second edition, Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2018, pp. 60-84; 150-3.

Miller, Richard E., and Ann Jurecic. “On Joining the Conversation.” *Habits of the Creative Mind*, Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2016, pp. 1–3.

Pipher, Mary Bray. “Growing Our Souls.” *Writing to Change the World*, Riverhead Books, 2006, pp. 53–64.

Engl. 151 Unit 3 Tentative Daily Schedule

All assignments are due at **11:00 AM on the day they appear** unless otherwise noted

	Monday 3/30	Tuesday 3/31	Wednesday 4/1	Thursday 4/2	Friday 4/3
Read		Read Pipher "Growing Our Souls" (on CANVAS)			
Due		Activity 6: "Conversations to join" in Research Journal Copy and Paste Act. 6 into a new Discussion in your Group's Discussion Board (see Canvas Assignment for instructions)		Feedback on Activity 6 for Workshop Group (see instructions in Canvas Assignment)	
	Monday 4/6	Tuesday 4/7	Wednesday 4/8	Thursday 4/9	Friday 4/10
Read		Read W/D pg. 63-72			
Due		Act. 7: Genre, audience, purpose brainstorm in Research Journal		Feedback on Activity 7 for Workshop Group (see instructions in Canvas Assignment)	Activity 8: Project 3 Proposal in Research Journal @ 11:00 AM

		Copy and Paste Act. 7 into a new Discussion in your Group's Discussion Board (see Canvas Assignment for instructions)		Sign up with a partner from your workshop group for Zoom Conf.	
	Monday 4/13	Tuesday 4/14	Wednesday 4/15	Thursday 4/16	Friday 4/17
Read		W/D: Ch. 3 pg. 73-83			W/D Ch 6: 150-153
Due		START Activity 9: Model Text Genre Analysis		Activity 9 Workshop Group Model Text Genre Analysis	Activity 10: Summary of at least 2 sources in Research Journal (see Assignment on Canvas) @ 5:00 PM
	Monday 4/20	Tuesday 4/21	Wednesday 4/22	Thursday 4/23	Friday 4/24
Read					
Due	Sign up for Group Zoom workshops Thursday/Friday	First Draft of Project 3 + Author's Note due		Feedback to your group member's drafts due before Zoom Workshop (see Assignment on Canvas)	Activity 10.5: At least 3 more Sources + summaries in Research Journal (see Assignment on Canvas) @ 5:00 PM
In-Class				Group Zoom Workshops	Group Zoom Workshops

	Monday 4/27	Tuesday 4/28/2020	Wednesday 4/29	Thursday 4/30/2020	Friday 5/1
Read					
Due			Second Draft of Project 3 + Author's Note Due in Dropbox and to Workshop Group on Canvas	Feedback due to Workshop Group Members (see Assignment on Canvas)	
Tuesday 5/5 (Finals Week)					
Due @ 5:00 PM	Final Draft of Project 3 + Writer's Reflection due to Project 3 folder				

Assignment Sheet for Students

Teachers note: This course calendar reflects the on-line shift to a 5- or 6-week unit due to the online learning shift at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020.

Joining a Conversation: A Researched Multimodal Project

What Are We Doing?

So far this semester we have spent a great deal of time learning about '*the rhetorical situation*,' exploring *multimodality* and putting those concepts to use in our rhetorical analyses. Now, we will build on those skills to develop a multimodal text of our own that is designed to appeal to a specific real-world audience and contribute to a larger social, cultural, political, or intellectual conversation that is important to us. In order to do that, we'll examine a range of texts (and a range of *genres*) in order to make effective choices as writers.

For this project, then, you will create a multimodal text or set of texts using a minimum of 2 modes. This project should reflect your research into a conversation that you seek to join and it should respond to an issue or problem that is somehow important to you. More details are offered below.

Why Are We Doing This?

In this project, you will

- Learn to conduct the necessary research to create a project that is designed both for a particular real-world audience and to contribute to a particular intellectual, political, social, or cultural conversation.
- Explore the affordances of genres and modes in order to make strategic choices about your project.
- Build on the rhetorical knowledge that you've developed across the semester.

The Work Entailed in this Project:

Join a Conversation

For this project your goal will be to choose an ongoing social, cultural, political, or intellectual conversation that you want to join. After studying that conversation, your project will respond to others who have been discussing or thinking about this issue or problem (and your project will need to acknowledge these existing voices in some way).

Discover Your Purpose/So What?

Your project should:

- **Real World Purpose:** Rather than writing for “academic” or “school” purposes, your WP3 should attempt to serve a genuine purpose in the real world. That is, the purpose of your project should have an effect on the world around you or get your audience members to do something, think about something in a new way, or change their perspectives.
- **Exigency:** Your project should be responding to a particular exigency. That is, you should be able to answer: why your specific audience could be persuaded to care about this thing you created at this particular moment in time. (This is the “so what?” question we’ve raised across the semester.)

Identify Your “Real World” Audience

As we learned from the rhetorical analyses we completed for WP2, texts are composed for particular audiences with particular goals in mind, and are responsive to particular contexts. To be successful in this project you will need to select a very specific audience at whom your project is directed. This audience should exist in the “real world” so that you can actually imagine some of the people your project is addressing.

Just as we discussed in the last unit, the audience for a text is very rarely “anybody.” To be successful with this project, it is really important you’re your audience be more specific than “anybody” or “everybody.” Think in terms of specific groups such as: the UNL campus community, members of a Greek house or other campus organization, legislators, adult Husker fans, a high school or UNL

teacher/professor or administrator, your hometown community, readers of a particular news source or blog (e.g. *Journal Star* readers), members of a particular sub-community (e.g. LGBTQA+ millennials), etc.

Choose Your Genre(s)

Based on the purpose of your project and your chosen audience, you will select an appropriate genre or combination of genres that will allow you to communicate your ideas to your audience.

- The genre (or kind of text) you create—must exist in the world outside of academia. That is, “a research paper” (while an important and useful genre in academic circles) doesn’t work for this project
- The number of genres (or the number of texts) you create will depend on your purpose, audience, and the complexity of each genre. For example, if it makes most sense for you to create a lengthy YouTube video, you might only create this one text because of the number of modes and the amount of labor involved in creating a quality video. Alternately, your project might be better suited to creating a set of a few simpler texts that work together. For example, if you wanted to create some kind of campaign to encourage participation in an important campus event, you might compose several texts including the text for a “Next at Nebraska” announcement, a poster that would advertise the event on campus, and create a basic website that provides information about the event, it’s history, and why it’s important for others to participate.
- Examples of genres you might consider include letters to legislators, editorials, a series of blog posts, an infographic, a presentation to policymakers, a website, a podcast, a series of social media posts or a social media campaign, etc.

Integrate Multiple Modes

Few genres employ only one mode (just text, for example). Your project should incorporate at least 2 modes (i.e. visual, linguistic, aural, spatial, gestural, etc.).

- You will need to choose these modes purposefully--based on the rhetorical situation your project is entering/occupying and based on the modes that are/can be effective in a given genre (i.e. you’ll want to be able to answer, given my chosen genre and what I want to convey and to whom I want to convey it, why these modes?).

- If your genre doesn't lend itself immediately to multimodality, you may want to consider creating several smaller genres with different modes for your project (e.g. a poster, an email to a group organizer, and a PowerPoint presentation).

Required Research

- In order to help you accomplish your purpose in this text and support your claim(s), your text will need to be informed by your collection and analysis of at least 5 secondary sources. (The term "secondary" means sources of information or ideas that come from people or institutions other than you). Now that the course has moved online, I'll be asking you to do this work in your research journal and I'll leave feedback for you there.
- These sources should be carefully chosen and be reasonably valid and reliable given your intended purpose and audience. For example, if you were writing to a state legislator asking that they sponsor a bill about better mental health education in schools, the MedicalNewsToday.com might not be the best source for the definition of "mental health," but the American Psychological Association's definition might be. Alternately, if you were writing about a particular term used in gaming to an audience of non-gamers, it might make sense to use something like a post on Twitch to define some of the terms used in a particular gaming culture.
- At least one source should be chosen for the model it offers of one of the genres you included in your project. This particular source will, most likely, not be focused on your subject matter. Rather, you've selected it because it does something really well that you also want to do for/with your audience.
- Many of the informal writing assignments during this unit will be geared toward helping you find and evaluate sources and will be entries in your research journal.

Important Dates: Proj Prop due April 9

Draft 1 + Author's note due April 21

Draft 2 + Author's note due April 29

Final draft + Writer's Reflection due May 5

Final Draft Rubric

Criteria	Adequate or Meets Expectations	Above Expectations	Below Expectations	Outstanding
Real World Purpose	A real-world purpose is evident in the project and is sometimes developed in parts of the project	Mostly clear real-world purpose evident in a part of the project and developed throughout most of the project	Minimal attention to real world purpose	Clear real-world purpose evident in the project which is well-developed throughout the project
Clearly seeks to communicate with a specific, real world audience(s)	Project attempts with some success to address a specific, real world audience.	Project is largely successful at addressing a specific, real world audience.	Project fails to identify or address a specific, real world audience.	Project clearly and powerfully addresses a specific, real world audience.
Joins a conversation	The specific conversation the writer wishes to join in this project is broadly identifiable by the reader.	Project is composed in ways that enable it to be mostly successful at joining a conversation.	The conversation this project seeks to join is not well-defined across the document(s) that make up this project.	Project clearly enters into a well-defined ongoing conversation regarding a particular question/issue/concern.
Conveys the stakes of addressing this concern/situation	The project is sometimes successful at helping readers understand the importance or value of	The project is mostly successful in helping readers understand the importance or value of addressing	The project does not respond to readers' needs to understand what's at stake in this project	The project is successful in helping readers understand the importance or value of addressing this concern with

	addressing this concern	this concern with the targeted audience in this current moment		the targeted audience in this current moment.
Includes a framing document for an appropriate audience (<i>not class instructor</i>)	Represents at least a partial plan for dissemination (eg. the means by which key components of the project get to the target audience) AND some explanation for how pieces of the project work together. This document is addressed to an appropriate, real world audience.	Represents a workable plan for dissemination and a reasonable explanation for how the pieces of the project work together. This document is usefully addressed to an appropriate real world audience.	The framing document is absent or missing important components. Perhaps document is not be addressed to a real world audience that can not help the writer achieve his/her purpose for the project.	The framing document represents a well-conceived dissemination plan (plausible) and a well-coordinated set of texts (increasing the odds of success).
Integrates multiple modes and works successfully within one or more real world genres	Employs at least two modes somewhat effectively and clearly attempts to match genre(s) to the rhetorical situation of the (writer's) text with some success	Employs two modes in mostly effective ways and genre(s) is/are mostly well-matched to the rhetorical situation of the (writer's) text and mostly successful	Employs less than two modes or employs two modes in ways that are not very effective and/or genre(s) is/are not well-matched to the rhetorical situation of the (writer's) text	Employs at least two modes very effectively and genre(s) is/are well-matched to the rhetorical situation of the (writer's) text and successful
Free of distracting errors	Some distracting errors	Mostly free of distracting errors	Many distracting errors	Free of distracting errors

