

SAMPLE WRITING ASSIGNMENT FOR ENC 1101

Adapted from
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Discourse Community Ethnography

First, choose a discourse community that has impacted you or interests you. Some possibilities include specific clubs, occupations, Greek organizations, or religious groups that you belong to, come into contact with, or would be interested in joining. Then, find a preliminary answer to this research question: “What are the goals and characteristics of this discourse community?” Your job is split into three steps:

Step 1: Collect Data

Observe members of the discourse community while they are engaged in a shared activity; take detailed notes (What are they doing? What kinds of things do they say? What specialized language do they use? What do they write? How do you know who is “in” and who is “out”?).

Collect anything people in that community read or write (their genres)—even very short things like forms, football plays, notes, IMs, and text messages.

Interview at least one member of the discourse community (tape-record and transcribe the interview). You might ask things like, “How long have you been here?” “Why are you involved?” “What do X, Y, and Z words mean?” “How did you learn to write A, B, or C?” “How do you communicate with other people [on your team, at your restaurant, etc.]?”

Step 2: Analyze the Data

Use the researchers we read (Swales, Mirabelli, and Wardle) to help you organize and analyze the data you’ve collected.

Step 3: Present Your Findings

Given all the data you’ve collected and analyzed, decide what you want to focus on in your paper. Is there something interesting regarding the goals of the community? Types of literacies in the community? Its lexis or genres? Refine the above research question to fit your purpose(s) and then construct an essay that demonstrates what you’ve learned about discourse communities, reviews relevant literature, describes your methodology and your findings, and presents an answer to your specific research question.

NOTE: For this paper you must submit all transcripts, interviews, and documents you gather.

Format: Your paper should be from 4-6 pages, typed, and formatted using MLA style. Appendices should include collected data.