Discourse Community Analysis:
 Professional Organization in Your Field

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: After completing this 2-part Discipline Awareness project in English 302, students will be able to:

Understand the concept of a discourse community

* Be able to identify and analyze a major professional association in the field

Understand the concept of genre and the concept of the rhetorical situation

* Be able to differentiate among genres in periodicals [from the examples they find through the organization websites they choose for the assignment; see assignment prompt: Students must explain the intended audience, purpose, writing style of each genre they include, explain the writing distinctions between genres, and explain how each genre furthers the organization’s common goals.]

Be able to identify an issue in their field that interests them

* From the discoveries they make when exploring the organization’s website and writings from different genres, students should discover issues / topics for future assignments.

PREPARATION FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT:

Read Swales excerpt posted on Blackboard
Watch YouTube: “Facebook as a Discourse” Community (References Swales)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NPPQajrqSA>

Part 1. Your Personal Discourse Community (ungraded):

In groups, discuss a membership / interest group you belong to: a book club, sports team, fraternity, sorority, stamp collecting group, gaming group, a church group, even a closed Facebook page with a specific focus.

Identify the following points:

* What are the group’s agreed upon common goals?
* How do group members communicate with each other?
* How do participating group members provide information and feedback to each other?
* What genres or forms of communication, topics, and texts do members of the group use to uphold the purpose of the group?
* What specific forms of language does the group use exclusively, including specific terms, “lexis” (jargon), and / or acronyms?
* What is the relationship between novice and expert members in your group?

Write a 1-1/2 to 2- page paper, double-spaced, and formatted in APA style (or appropriate style for your discipline), discussing your group. Failure to post personal DCA will result in a grade penalty (loss of 1 letter grade) on the professional DCA.

Part 2: Professional Discourse Community in your Discipline:
Discourse Community Analysis Essay (20% of course grade)

Moving beyond your personal discourse communities, think of your future career in your field after graduation. What kind of professional organizations can you find in your discipline? Choose one that interests you. Applying the same considerations to this organization as you did with your personal discourse community, look for the same criteria:

* Shared goals
* Mechanisms for intercommunication between groups
* How does the group **use the above participatory mechanisms** to provide information and feedback to members?
* Genres and **the role written texts play in furthering the group’s goals**
* Shared vocabulary (“lexis”) specific to this particular community
* Novice and expert members: Who may join? What is the relationship between novices and experts?

Explore the discourse community’s website: Look for social media presence, newsletter, blog, and at least one published article from a professional / scholarly publication from this community. What can you learn about this organization through these writings?

Write a 4- to 5-page analytical essay, arguing that the organization is an example of a professional discourse community.

Introduction: Your introduction should define the term “discourse community,” based on Swales; mention the name the professional organization you have selected for this assignment and briefly explain its purpose in no more than 1-2 sentences. **Thesis:** argue that your chosen organization is an example of a professional discourse community, according to Swales’ six-point definition.

Body paragraphs **must use Swales’ specific points** and identify examples from your professional organization that correlate with each aspect of a discourse community (one Swales point per paragraph in Swales’ order).

Direct Quotes: Provide a quote from **each** of **three different genres** the organization uses, e.g. scholarly article, trade magazine article, newsletter, blog, social media platform, etc., as evidence of your claims about each genre and the rhetorical situation (**audience, purpose, style**). Required: one quote from each genre, properly formatted in APA style, **one paragraph per genre (3 genre paragraphs total)**. Cite all quotes and paraphrases from Swales and website.

Conclusion: Remind the reader of the definition of a discourse community; emphasize that your organization is an example of a professional discourse community. Explain the benefits for professionals in your discipline who join the organization.

**Mandatory:** You must follow the DCA Essay Structure handout, posted on Bb, to earn a passing grade on this assignment.

Your essay should be double-spaced, using APA style (or the appropriate style for your major), with properly formatted title and References pages. See sample Title page on Bb Course Content page. Title and References pages are in addition to the 4- to 5-page analysis.

 This assignment, “Discourse Community Analysis,” is the original work of Margaret Scolaro, created and revised between 2016 and 2018 in the context of a Learning Community led by Jessica Matthews during the 2016-2017 academic year and ongoing conversations with colleagues in the George Mason University Composition Program. The assignment is licensed [CC-BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which means that it may be reused, adapted, or remixed by others as long as any document that incorporates content taken from the assignment includes or links to the following: a statement giving credit for the borrowed content, a link to the license, and an acknowledgment of any changes made to the content.