**Discourse Community Analysis**

**The Assignment**

Explain the way writing, reading, and language both reflect and shape the priorities and practices of a community to which you belong (such as a sports team, a workplace, a high school, or a fan community). Specifically, consider the way communication practices contribute to or detract from community identity and community goals a) by using class readings to better understand your own community and b) by collecting and analyzing several samples of writing from your chosen discourse community.

Ultimately, you should answer:

*How do members of this discourse community communicate in*

*healthy and productive ways? How do they communicate in unhealthy and unproductive ways?*

**Nuts & bolts**

* Write to the discourse community (!) of our classroom—your instructor and your peers
* MLA format (double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1” margins, & page numbers)
* 750-1000 words (3-4 pages)

**Process guidelines**

1. Select adiscourse community you are a part of (with instructor approval). Consider the community in terms of the criteria articulated by John Swales (*Focus on Writing* 109-10).
2. Think about your community in relation to class readings, especially Ch. 2 “What Is the ‘Rhetorical Situation’ and Why Should I Care about It?”.
3. Describe when you felt like you were a member of this community and how you knew this.
4. Choose 4-6 samples of writing from the community to analyze. Connect each sample to the identity and purpose of the community and begin considering how the writing *includes* and *excludes*; how it *elevates* some values or belief systems and *minimizes* other values or belief systems; how it operates in *healthy & productive* ways and how it operates in *unhealthy & unproductive ways*; and how it helps or hinders community members as they attempt to accomplish community goals.
5. Draft by introducing readers to the discourse community and chronicling a) your initial sense of communication in the discourse community and b) complexities you noticed as you spent time analyzing communication and reading secondary sources. Ultimately, your analysis of the discourse community should teach readers not only about that particular community but also about how writing, reading, and language operate within a community in general.
6. Spend time on peer review, a writing center visit (or 2!), revising, and editing.

**Purpose**

This analytical work will help you recognize the ways language and genres are connected to the identity and purpose of a community. This recognition will help you become better able to modify your own approaches as you move from one discourse community to another (both in school and out of school). Sometimes you may want to adhere to community guidelines, while other times you may want to challenge and change what’s accepted within a discourse community.