



Assignment: DC Ethnography

College Composition • ENG 1030 • Fall 2024

1. BACKGROUND

The kinds of writing expected of you in college are different than what you are used to in other environments. Throughout this semester, you've been working to understand the *discourse community* of college composition students. You may also have noticed that the type of writing you do in this class is different from what's expected in other classes. That's because academic disciplines each use writing for different purposes to communicate with distinct audiences. Then, when you leave class and go to work, the kinds writing you use to engage with fellow employees and achieve that company's goals are different again. You possess numerous literacies that allow you to engage with a variety of groups as an insider.

For this assignment, you're going to examine the structure, function, and dynamics of a group you're part of. Choose a specific discourse community that either involves or intrigues you, then research an answer to this question: **What are the goals, practices, and characteristics of this discourse community?** By examining the characteristics of a familiar discourse community for this class, you might become more aware of how communities function—and how you might smoothly join them—in the future.

2. PROCEDURE

In addition to class assignments and activities from Weeks 8–10, the following steps will help you create a robust ethnography.

Collect Data: Learn detailed information about a small segment of your discourse community. Think depth, not breadth. Recall situations where the community communicated effectively or strategies that set the community apart.

Organize and Analyze the Data: Using §2.4 of the Swales article as a guide, draw conclusions about the community. What characteristic(s) of the community are most enlightening or essential to understand?

Identify Conflicts or Problems: Using Alan (from the Wardle text) as an example, examine potential trouble spots within the discourse community, and explain how those issues relate to the unspoken rules or characteristics of the community.

Determine Your Focus: Now that you have analyzed your data and reached conclusions about your discourse community, you need to choose what is and is not worth writing about. What's the overall impression you want to leave readers understanding?

Write: Draft your analysis. Refer to the sample papers on Canvas for examples of how you might approach your response.

3. ASSESSMENT

QUESTION	IDENTIFICATION	ANALYSIS	CLARITY
Impressive Provides an insightful answer to the stated research question.	Writer clearly illustrates the textual framework used by the studied community and highlights the implications of that framework.	Author draws insightful conclusions about the studied community, showing research to be relevant to the field.	Writing is clear and easy to follow/understand; paper is logically and consistently organized.
Successful Identifies and answers a research question.	Writer identifies the studied community and identifies its characteristics.	Author analyzes the discourse community and provides documented support as evidence.	Writing, organization, and/or idea flow may have occasional issues that do not severely detract from readability.
Insufficient Provides no clear research question motivating the paper.	Writer does not illustrate the characteristics of the group and/or fails to identify it as a discourse community.	Author presents research findings but fails to analyze them or draw connections.	Technical problems and/or organizational inconsistencies make the writing difficult to understand and/or distract the reader.

TABLE 1. Discourse Community Ethnography Evaluation Rubric