Instructor: Jenna Alexander

ENGL 3100

**Unit 2: Discourse Analysis**

**Introduction**

People often attempt to read, interpret, and evaluate texts “objectively,” as though the text exists in a vacuum. However, many composition scholars emphasize the importance of *context* in reading and writing. For this essay, you will analyze and compare a text from mass media to a related scholarly source. Writing an analysis is more than just summarizing *what* the text is about; rather, it requires a close attention to language and *how* the language was used to accomplish the goals for a particular writing situation.

**Brainstorming, Research, and Analysis**

One way to understand the kinds of writing and thinking valued in the university is to compare them to more popular forms of writing and thinking. Toward this end, this assignment asks you to find a mass media source and then trace it back to the original report from which it was taken in order to analyze the differences between the two types of discourse. To begin, find a mass media report (e.g. a CNN headline, a blog entry, a “fake news” article). You may want to find a source related to your intended major or field of study (like political science, history, chemistry, etc.). Trace that report back to the original scholarly research from which it was taken. In addition, you should collect as much information about the rhetorical situations for those texts as possible.

Note: If you are struggling to find or select your texts, please meet with me.

Then, read the two sources closely and critically, analyzing similarities and differences between the popular source and the scholarly source. Consider the following questions:

* What are the purposes of writing this text? What are the author’s main arguments and goals? What patterns emerge within the text?
* What subtle or obvious claims does the author make? Does the author support those claims with evidence?
* Which lines stand out to you? Why?
* How does the author’s background influence the text?
* What kinds of evidence does the author use?
* How does the author organize the text? Why is the structure important?
* Who are the intended audiences for this text, and how did those audiences shape the text? How does the author attempt to relate to his or her audiences?
* What tone does the author use? What specific words does the author choose?
* Is contradictory evidence omitted from the text? If so, why?
* What similarities and differences do you notice between the two texts?
* What values are suggested by the language used in the two texts? For instance, does the scholarly source value objectivity more than the popular source?

Using your analysis notes, **provide a 4-6 analysis** of how academic discourse relates to popular discourse. In other words, you’ll **formulate an argument about how writing works within academic situations**, and how that writing differs from mass media. This argument may support, refute, develop and/or challenge the ideas that we’ve encountered in the assigned readings. Regardless, you should use your texts as evidence to construct an argument about the different values, conventions, and expectations in popular and scholarly settings.

**Goals**

The goals of this assignment are (one) to analyze examples of academic and popular writing and (two) to consider how those similarities and differences reflect the values and expectations of the two writing communities.

**The Process and Writing Calendar**

Tuesday, October 17: Two sources due

Wednesday, October 18 – Thursday, October 19: Conferences (first draft due)

Tuesday, October 24: Second draft due (bring two copies)

Thursday, October 26: Portfolio 2 due (with the final draft of the Discourse Analysis paper)

Rubric/Requirements

(Subject to change as announced.)

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| **Structure/Organization:**   * Follow prompt, use approved topic * Clear, focused purpose * Well-written thesis, represents essay in entirety * Brief summary of the two sources to help the reader(s) understand the debate * Introduction is attention-getting * Sets context, motive and criteria for analysis * Introduces the sources by providing relevant background information (author, publication information, etc.) * Clear organization that emphasizes content and strategies for development * Each paragraph clearly fits with purpose of essay * Utilizes effective transitions between main ideas and paragraphs (flows well) * Resolution/conclusion |
| **Development/Detail:**   * Analysis is clear and fully explained * Analysis demonstrates depth of thought, going beyond surface meaning for each example * Each main point (paragraph) analyzes specific detail from text and connects to thesis * Quotes are smoothly worked into paragraph, not dropped in * Quotes and support from text are fully explained in connection to thesis * Essay demonstrates a certain level of maturity, professionalism and appropriateness * Makes significant revisions from draft to draft, not just sentence-level changes |
| **Polish:**   * Grammar * Active verbs, present tense * Clarity * Sentence structure and variety * Punctuation—commas, colons, dashes and semi-colons * Mechanics |