

Writing Project 2: Forum Synthesis
"How Can You Enter A Scientific Discourse Community?" (25%)
WRT 334, Spring 2017
Dr. Caroline Gottschalk Druschke

Length:

6 pages double-spaced memo plus a reference list

Important Dates:

Tuesday, February 21: introduce project

Thursday, March 2: peer workshop #1

Thursday, March 9: peer workshop #2

Tuesday, March 21: final draft due (though I would encourage you to submit before spring break!)

Project Description:

Writing project two builds directly from writing project one, asking you to select at least five additional articles *from the same academic journal you selected for writing project one* in order to analyze the communication practices of the discourse community it represents and determine how someone could enter its conversation. You are seeking answers to questions like: who is the audience for this journal? How do they expect you to speak? On what topics? This project should equip you with tools you need to understand particular writing opportunities, whether those be academic journals or future papers, dissertations, or funding proposals. After analyzing your scientific journal by attending to its articles over the last two years, you will create a 6-pg. memo (with citations and a separate reference list) that serve as a could guide to scientists interested in publishing in the journal.

Step one:

Select 6-15 articles in the single academic journal you chose for WP1 from the last two years

Step two:

1) Read the journal's editorial guidelines and editorial information

What do they require and ask for? What kinds of institutional and/or organizational affiliation do they have? Who is on the editorial board? How big is the board? This should provide information about the editorial policy, philosophy, who is served, why the forum exists, and the conventions followed.

2) Look at article titles

What words are used? What topics are covered?

3) Read at least six articles from the past two years

What do they write about? How do they write about it? What kind of conversation are they joining? How are they entering this conversation—aligning themselves with names? with studies? with movements? with problems? with concepts? What are they trying to accomplish? What do they use to make their argument? What evidence do they provide? Where is the thesis and how is it stated? Where is the conclusion and how is it stated? Do they employ figures and tables? Management recommendations?

4) Read author biographies

Who are the writers? What credentials do they have?

Step three:

Consider from of the prompts from James Porter's "Forum Analysis" to investigate the journal:

Background

- Is there an expressed editorial policy, philosophy, or expression of belief? What purpose does the journal serve? Why does it exist?
- What is the disciplinary orientation?
- What is the origin of the journal? Why did it come into existence? What is its history? Its political background? Its traditions?
- What reputation does the journal have among readers? How is it regarded?

Discourse Conventions

Who Writes?

- Who is granted status as writer? By what criteria are writers selected?
- What kinds of people write in this forum? Credentials? Disciplinary orientation? Academic or professional background?
- **Who are the important figures in this forum? Whose work or experience is most frequently cited?**
- **What are the important sources cited in the forum? What are the key works, events, experiences that it is assumed members of the forum know?**

To Whom Do They Write?

- Who is addressed in the forum? What are the characteristics of the assumed audience?
- What are the audience's needs assumed to be? To what use(s) will this information be put?
- What is the audience's background assumed to be? Level of proficiency, experience, and knowledge of subject matter? Credentials?

What Do They Speak/Write About?

- **What topics or issues does the forum consider? What are allowable and valued subjects?**
- **What methodology or methodologies are accepted? Which theoretical approach is preferred: deduction (theoretical argumentation) or induction (evidence)?**
- **What constitutes "validity," "evidence," and "proof" in the forum (e.g., personal experience/observation, testing and measurement, theoretical or statistical analysis)?**

How Do They Write It?

Form

- **What types of discourse does the forum admit** (e.g., articles, reviews, speeches, poems)? How long are the discourses?
- What formatting conventions are present: headings, tables and graphs, illustrations, abstracts?

Style

- Technical or specialized jargon? Abbreviations?
- Tone? What stance do writers/speakers take relative to audience?

Step four:

Synthesize all of that information down to its most important content!

Step five:

Pull that synthesized information—with specific cited examples!—into a 6-pg. memo to future potential authors. Imagine your audience as your lab mates or professor: a member of this disciplinary community, with specialized knowledge, who wants to consider publishing in this venue.

CATEGORY	Meets expectations	Approaches expectations	Does not meet expectations
Analysis 30 pts.	Specific, developed analysis and insightful observations.	Analysis is generally sound but could be more specific, insightful, or developed in some areas.	Analysis is sparse, lacks insight, or missing altogether.
Supporting Details 20 pts.	Support information is related to analysis, supportive of the topic/subject, and specific.	Support information has minor or major weaknesses relative to analysis and/or support of the topic/subject.	Support information is unrelated, confusing, irrelevant, or absent.
Focus 20 pts.	Maintains focus on topic/subject throughout.	Exhibits minor or major lapses in focus on topic/subject.	Fails to establish focus on topic/subject.
Writing Fluency: Clear, Concise, Correct 15 pts.	Demonstrates skillful writing fluency; exhibits few or no mechanical errors.	Exhibits some mechanical errors that distract the reader.	Exhibits numerous mechanical errors that substantially distract the reader.
Documentation 15 pts.	Sources are cited consistently in the document and on the reference page.	There are some omissions or inconsistencies of citation.	Citations are lacking or absent.