

Major Assignment 1: Initial Research Proposal

Proposed Due Date: 9/13

What It's Worth: 50 points

"And by the way, everything in life is writable about if you have the outgoing guts to do it, and the imagination to improvise. The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt."

- Sylvia Plath

◆ The Purpose

Throughout this course, you will be working on a semester-long research project. This project will eventually become a well-researched, expertly structured, and very well-written paper. However, this is not going to be your run-of-the-mill academic paper. You will be conducting research in the same way that real-world researchers do by joining a pre-existing conversation with an authentic question. Your question must center on the field of writing studies and it must be an aspect that you are genuinely interested in. This is the most important part of your research project.

It can be challenging to find a real question that you're invested in. You will need to identify an area within the realm of your interests that you care about and that has been unaddressed (or not really all that well researched) in previous studies. This requires an awareness of yourself and the context of your work. The reason behind coming up with this research question is to get you thinking about how to approach

research and how to critically analyze an area or an aspect within an area that you really care about.

◆ **The Content**

You will be deciding on a specific research question to explore, investigate, and analyze during this course. You will be using a writing studies lens as you determine your question. It is important to keep your eventual target audience in mind. Even though I am the initial target audience, the goal of your Final Research Paper is to get it published in *Stylus* or in an area where writing studies scholars can review and read your work. In fact, *Stylus* articles will be able to offer some guidance and insight into what previous ENC 1102 students have done for their respective research papers. It is an excellent resource and I highly recommend that you take a look there if you find yourself lacking inspiration. You might find some ideas about what writing studies questions could apply to the relevant discourse communities of your life. Keep these questions in mind when you read the *Stylus* articles: What questions were these students looking to answer? How did they go about finding the answers? How could I go about identifying a gap in my area of interest?

In your Initial Research Proposal, you will be expected to:

1) Pose your research question

2) Elaborate and explain the reasoning behind your research question

3) Discuss how your research question relates to writing studies

4) Elaborate and explain what a primary research study based on your research question will look like

5) Discuss your plan of action (i.e. how you plan on finding secondary sources, such as larger controlling writing studies that will guide your search [genre, rhetoric, discourse communities, and any others you can think of], and any other prior research surrounding your specific area of interest).

6) Consider any challenges you might encounter not only in terms of your research but in terms of your research question

◆ **The Structure**

The structure of this paper is up for interpretation. You can write a formal paper (using MLA format), an informal paper, or simply list the six components above in numbered order. As long as you address each of the components, I will be happy.

The style, language, and tone of your paper is also up for interpretation. All I ask is that you fulfill the listed expectations.

A truly in-depth paper will be in the 500 to 750-word range, but there is no required length.

◆ Additional Advice

There are several ways you can go about approaching this research proposal, but we can narrow it down to make things a little easier. This first thing you will want to do is to just focus on coming up with the area or topic that you would like to research. We will refine this question after doing some textual research into your chosen topic. For now, focus on broader aspects of your area of interest. There are a few questions you can consider while you think about your question: What do you want to know? Why do you want to know it? What does the discourse community have to say about it?

The best way to approach your research proposal is to choose a discourse community that you are already fairly familiar with. For example, if you indulge in memes and post them on every social media platform known to man, you might want to look at the rhetorical effects these memes have on audience engagement on social media. We all use writing in one way or another to enact and create an identity on some level. Consider how this might apply to you in your everyday life. Think about a discourse community or form of writing you are already invested in and use that as a starting point for your writing studies lens.

Do not worry too much about coming up with the 'perfect' research question just yet. Whichever question you do come up with will determine what discourse community you will be involved in over the course of the semester. You will be able to draft a more specific question as you research and analyze existing literature and find

gaps that can be addressed. This will give you the focus of your primary research.

Think of this Initial Research Proposal as choosing your direction (an area of inquiry to explore) and the future Revised Research Proposal/First Draft as your chosen path (the specific question you hope to answer with your primary research).