Rhetorical Analysis Paper Guidelines

Audience: Academic, specifically advanced undergraduate and graduate students in your discipline.

Purpose: This assignment is designed to meet the Students as Scholars objective that you

learn "how knowledge is situated and shared in relevant scholarly contexts" and to

understand how genre functions in your future professional discourse community.

Requirements: Select a recent issue of a peer reviewed journal published by your association and select either a primary (original) research article or a secondary literature review and follow the instructions below. If you can find something on your research topic all the better, but that is not a requirement. Your response to this assignment should take the form of a well organized 2-3 page essay (double-spaced, Times New Roman12-point font).

Grading: This paper is worth 10 points or 5% of your total grade for the course and may be revised if it is resubmitted, along with the original graded copy, one week after it is returned.

Due Date: Feb. 11

Citations: Please use correct APA or IEEE both in-text and on a separate references page at the end.

Once you have a professional association in your field and considered how these groups functioned as *discourse communities* to advance the objectives of their disciplines, you are well prepared to complete this paper. The assignment outlined here is designed to help you discover how those goals are achieved through the various *genres* employed by writers in those communities. A useful way to think about this is to consider James Martin's comment that "genres are how things get done when language is used to accomplish them" (as cited in Swales, 2010, p. 221). Thus, genres are purposeful and their rhetorical features reflect the values and expectations of their discourse communities. For this paper consider the mission statement of your association (this may be under "aims" or similar language on the publication's web site) and make a point of your own about how the article found in your journal's issue meets the group's stated goals. What does the genre "get done"?

The purpose of the following is to guide your examination of the journal and the article:

* Your introductory paragraph should mention your association and its goals, as well as the journal and its audience. Be as specific as possible about the journal's readers; for example, the American Medical Association's publications are obviously written for physicians, but who else would read them? Include the name of the publication's editor and supply his or her credentials. Organize the information requested below into coherent paragraphs; each item does not require a separate paragraph.
* Review the table of contents (ToC) and report on various topics represented (just some examples); is there a wide variety of subject matter, or are the articles more narrowly focused? Is yours a special issue devoted to a single topic?
* What genres does the journal contain? Are there editorials, book reviews, or other material in addition to the scholarly articles?
* Select an article that interests you the most (this may also help with your choice of a research project if it is in your area of interest) and be certain it is peer reviewed (the genre should tell you that). In addition, provide a sentence or two on its topic and biographical information on the lead author with a few of his or her other publications (e.g. John Smith, professor of planetary harmony at Sky University, has also written .....). Then carefully review the article and identify its genre (think about our in-class examples and our "Types of Sources" handout). Start thinking about the authors' purpose in selecting this particular genre.
* Conduct a short rhetorical analysis of the piece. Find and quote examples of the specialized vocabulary used by their discourse community. Remember to correctly cite quotations and paraphrases in APA or MLA style and provide a references page.
* Finally, as suggested in the prompt above, reflect on how what gets "done," as Martin put it, by the genre you examined. How did it help their writers advance knowledge in your discipline and meet the goals of the association's membership? In other words, connect their goals with the genres they choose.

Please let me know if I can help.

Swales, J. (2011). The concept of discourse community. In Wardle, E. & Downs, D. (Eds.), *Writing about Writing* (pp. 215-227). Boston: Bedford St. Martins.

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