

Town Hall Project

Welcome to the beginning of our town hall project! This is a twelve-week long project with five major deliverables that will culminate in a town hall session during our last week of class. Think about a problem in your current or prospective field of study facing our community. It can be your neighborhood, your town, your school, your workplace, anywhere. Who or what is causing the problem? Who is affected by the issue?

Project Timeline:

1. Discussion/approval of topic in meeting with instructor: Due by end of week 2
2. One-page memo: Due by end of week 3
3. Three-minute speech: Due to be given in class during weeks 4 and 5
4. Report outline and annotated bibliography: Due for in-class peer review during week 6
5. Full rough draft: Due to instructor for major feedback by end of week 7 and returned to writer and peer evaluator by end of week 8
6. Peer review swap evaluation: Due back to your peer by end of week 9
7. Final report and slideshow: Due by end of week 11
8. Public educational handout: Due on Town Hall Day

Breakdown of final project grade:

- Memo 10% (graded for completeness only)
- Speech 10% (graded for completeness only)
- Outline and annotated bibliography: 20% (graded did not complete, complete, or high complete)
- Final report and slideshow 50% (letter grade)
- Educational handout 10% (graded for completeness only)

Caveats of this process:

- Schedule may be adjusted as necessary.
- Participation in the final-week town hall is optional. If you would like to *waive* one 10% assignment (the memo, the speech, or the educational handout) you can either
 - (a) present your slideshow presentation that came from your paper during the town hall OR
 - (b) bring your educational handout to the town hall and be prepared to discuss it with classmates.
- All students will evaluate projects brought to the town hall and the class will vote on which project receives the “funding” at the end of the semester.

Assignment description list:

Memo:

This should be a one-page memorandum to a person-in-charge who could grant you the time and resources to research your proposed problem more in-depth. Explain the issue you have chosen, who it affects, why you have chosen the specific selected recipient as the person to help with the problem, and why the issue needs to be solved. You should specifically request an audience at a meeting and propose that you give a three-minute speech. At this time, bring at least one scholarly and two community (e.g. newspaper, online forum, advocacy website) sources regarding the problem.

Format: follow the memorandum instructions on the Purdue O.W.L website.

Audience: person-in-charge of your choosing (mayor, town council, CEO, superintendent, etc.).

Purpose: to educate and convince the recipient to host you for an educational meeting.

Speech:

Congratulations! The mayor/town council/CEO/superintendent has invited you to give a short three-minute speech at their next meeting to discuss the problem you have informed them about and request resources to investigate the problem further.

Format: a three-minute speech is roughly 500 words. Remember, you are in a conference room with a small audience.

Audience: you tell us! At the beginning of the speech, be sure to address the audience you presume would be at this meeting. Is it the CEO, CFO, and Executive Director? Is it the mayor and the town council? When you assume the podium, be sure to thank them for the opportunity and address them properly.

Purpose: convince your person-in-charge that the issue needs to be solved, that you are the person for the job, and that you need resources (time? money?) to investigate and devise a solution to the problem.

Report outline and annotated bibliography:

Awesome! The mayor/town council/CEO/superintendent has awarded you some resources to investigate a solution to the problem you have summarized. They request a three-to-five page report and ten-slide presentation, but first, you need to outline your paper and summarize the sources you've gathered.

Format: paragraph-level outline up to 1.5 pages long; annotated bibliography with a four-sentence summary of each source. Note: you should have at least four scholarly sources and at least three community sources.

Audience: yourself! This is solely for your gain, however, your peers will be evaluating it for logic and major points.

Purpose: outline your report and get familiar with the sources you've gathered. Once you've done this, drafting your report should be a breeze.

Report and slideshow:

The report, as mentioned previously, needs to be three to five pages, have at least four scholarly and three community sources, include a title page and a works cited, and should be accompanied by an educational ten-slide slideshow presentation on the slide software of your choice (no requirement to present this in class).

Format: this is a professional report, so please be sure to include: a separate cover page, a background section, explanations of the affected players, and context as to why the issue needs to be fixed. At least two-thirds of the report should explain the fix for the problem and why it is the best fix given the context.

Audience: remember, this report is going to be delivered to the mayor/town council/CEO/superintendent, after they have given you "money" to research it. Be sure to impress!

Purpose: the ultimate purpose of this document is to *convince* the mayor/town council/CEO/superintendent that resources should be diverted to solve the problem that you have summarized for them.

Educational handout:

Wow, your presentation was really convincing! However, the public needs to get on board and educated about your solution. Concoct EITHER a one-page digital advert OR a physical printed brochure that described the problem and touts the benefits of your solution.

Format: one-page digital advert, deliverable in PDF or other image forms, OR a physical printed two-sided three-fold brochure.

Audience: this is for the general public; it needs to be eye-catching *and* convincing.

Purpose: expand public knowledge and approval of the solution you have proposed.

Critical Reading: Instructions from an Online Source

As we wrap up this course section on critical reading, let's use the skills we've acquired for some holistic evaluation. In this assignment, you'll be challenged to think skeptically about sources you may take for granted in your everyday life. It's not only necessary to critically read academic or literary sources; everything you read, you should read critically.

Most or all of us drive or ride in a car to get to campus; cars require regular oil changes to run properly. Think about your car—do you do the maintenance, or do you have a garage do it? How do the mechanics know what needs to be done on a car? If you do your own maintenance, where did you learn those skills?

Now, in-class, pull up the below sources:

- ChrisFix instructional video on Youtube "How to Change Your Oil"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1hF25Cowv8>
- WikiHow page on "How to Change the Oil in Your Car"
<https://www.wikihow.life/Change-the-Oil-in-Your-Car>

Before you watch the video or read the instructions, look at each page.

Reflect on these questions and write a short paragraph (at least FOUR sentences) response to each:

1. You want to change the oil in your car by yourself. You do a quick Google search, and these two pages come up first. Which one do you click into first? Why?
2. Which one do you end up consulting and helping you through changing the oil? Why?
3. Which site do you trust to give you accurate information? Why?
4. Which format do you favor for instructions? Why?

We will have a discussion in-class about our answers to these questions. There is no wrong answer here!

At home:

For this assignment, I recommend completing it at a desktop or laptop computer, rather than viewing the video on a phone. If you don't have access at home to a large screen, please visit the library computers. Multiple viewings of the video may be necessary.

Watch the ChrisFix video and read along with the WikiHow page at the same time

Reflect on these questions and write a paragraph (at least SIX sentences) response to each, addressing all of the sub-questions. Be sure to draw on the course concepts we've covered in class in the current unit:

1. Compare and contrast the presentation of each site: what is the home site of the instructional set? Who generated the content? What is the tone of each instructional set? How and why might the tone differ between the two?
2. Now, reflect on the content. Does one instructional set give more or less content than the other? Do they provide conflicting information? Do they give any unnecessary or inaccurate steps to your knowledge?
3. Consider the format of each site. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the written step-by-step? What is lost without a video format? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the instructional video? What is lost without a written step-by-step?
4. Finally, you have now watched and read both the video and written step-by-step. Which one would you consult for changing the oil in your car? Did your mind change from before you completed the assignment? If not, why not? If so, why?

Grading

The in-class part of the assignment (40%) will be graded for completeness. For the at-home part of the assignment (60%), responses will be graded on whether they answered each part of the entire prompt question.

Framing Essays

Major Assignment #1: Town Hall Project

This project serves a number of functions that promote academic and disciplinary literacies. Firstly, students are instructed to choose an issue that pertains to their field of study; in the context of this assignment, they will explore and write about both scholarly and non-scholarly sources in or adjacent to their discipline. Additionally, students flex the academic skill of writing to different audiences about a discipline-specific scenario; similar to how Blaauw-Hara uses the suit metaphor to illustrate “dressing up” writing for appropriate contexts, specific instructions in this assignment guide students to consider who will receive the deliverable they’ve been instructed to design. Finally, the long-term design of this project means that students will be able to put into practice principles about iterative writing, and see drafts and stopping points as part of the writing process.

Although this multi-page assignment sheet is the skeleton of the project, we would be sure to integrate a few key accompanying activities to ensure that the project works for all students. Michelle Cleary wrote that “Models can be one form of explicit instruction...” (532) and I believe that models will be essential in this assignment. Luckily, real-world samples similar to the expected products will not be difficult to find. Cleary also notes the necessity of conferencing for students to “talk freely...about their writing anxieties” (536). Kicking off the project with an instructor consultation should help all hesitant students, whether they are ethnic/linguistically diverse, returning, or full-time employees, confront their fears before diving into the unknown. This project is also a great place for a “treasure hunt” activity like that discussed by Millward, Starkey, and Starkey; students can explore campus resources pertaining to their discipline during class time at some point. Students are also instructed to be sure to include what I’ve dubbed “community resources”; these are essentially non-academic, local sources such as advocacy websites and newspaper articles. Students will be more comfortable working with the familiar and blending those sources with the more unfamiliar scholarly journal sources. Finally, I have integrated Sullivan’s choice in assignments principle. Students can drop a deliverable if they agree to participate in the town hall at the end of the semester; they can play to their own strengths in filling out the breakdowns of their final project grade.

Major Assignment #2: Critical Reading of Instructions

Although not nearly as huge of an undertaking as the Town Hall project, this assignment helps students critically read sources that may be familiar to them in their day-to-day lives. Students evaluate a clear format difference, which can guide them to finding more subtle content and rhetorical differences. The sources propped up for evaluation are seemingly authoritative; having them question these sources teaches them to approach all texts from a critical standpoint, no matter how taken-for-granted they are. This assignment is presumably done at

the end of a unit on rhetoric, so students should have ample notes and content to draw from for their responses. Finally, of key importance, students reflect on their own assumptions about the texts presented to them *before* they read the texts; this helps students evaluate the results of their critical reading against their own assumptions.

The bar of accessibility for this assignment would be very low. Presumably, most or all of the students in the course would drive a car and be familiar with oil changes; if they aren't, they are allowed to suggest other resources to work with. This assignment may aid students in developing some critical digital literacy as well. Additionally, the content on both of the sites is accessible and written/spoken in fairly basic language; the video is even captioned. Students of all linguistic or cultural backgrounds who had progressed into a transfer-level composition course should be able to approach these source documents confidently. Ultimately, the turned-in assignment does not need to be revised or edited for anything other than generic readability; the goal of the assignment is to demonstrate that students can find and articulate differences in content and rhetoric in different documents about the same information. Kicking off the assignment with an in-class activity accommodates students who need to focus on other things outside of class time, and emphasizes the Beaufort's discourse community principles.