

INITIAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Due: 1/26

Points: 50

I. Why are we doing this?

The semester-long research project that we'll be working on throughout this course might be a little different from the research papers that you worked on in the past. In ENC1102, your final paper is going to be conducted using the same principles that researcher use in the real world: joining a pre-existing conversation with a genuine question -- in this case a question in the field of writing studies.

But finding those real questions that you're invested in can be a challenge. You need to have something that you care about, and you have to have a question that's either been unaddressed (or unsatisfactorily addressed) in the previous writing studies research. It requires an awareness of yourself and the context of your work in a way that "Write 500 words on the cause of the Civil War" doesn't.

That's why we'll be approaching this research proposal in two steps. This first step is just focused on forming an ignition point for your inquiry. We'll refine this question later (after doing some textual research into your chosen topic), but for now, we're focused on the broad strokes of your interest.

What do you want to know? Why do you want to know it? This will likely involve applying a writing studies eye to a community you're already familiar with. For instance, if you have use gifs heavily on twitter, you might ask what rhetorical effect gifs have on audience engagement on social media. We all use writing to enact and create an identity on some level, consider how this might apply to you in your everyday life. Think about a community or form of writing you are already invested in, and use that as a jumping off point for your writing studies lens.

Whatever raw initial question you stumble onto will determine exactly what conversation you'll be listening in upon. A more specific question will form as you catch up on existing literature and find the gaps, and that will give you the focus of your primary research. Think of this Initial Proposal as where you choose your direction (an area of inquiry to explore), and the future Revised Proposal as where you choose your path (the specific question you hope to answer with your primary research).

II. What will you be doing?

Using a writing studies framework, you will be deciding on a specific research question to explore in this class. These questions should be relevant for your eventual intended audience, readers of *Stylus* and writings studies scholars. If you're stuck, look to *Stylus* articles for models. What questions were these students answering, and how did they go about finding the answer? This might help give you some ideas about what writing studies questions could apply to the relevant communities of your life.

In this paper, you will be expected to:

1. Introduce your question
2. Explain why you chose it
3. Explain how it relates to writing studies (refer to course readings)
4. Describe what a primary research study into this question might look like

Some broad questions to consider as you compose your proposal:

How does a specific community use writing to make meaning?

What is the writing/revision process for those who compose texts for a specific community or situation?

How does writing change based in different contexts?

How do texts in different genres interact with or change one another?

What power structures do the norms of a particular genre uphold or subvert?

How does a text or genre evolve over time?

What commonly held assumption about writing might not hold up to closer inspection?

5. Describe how you plan on finding your secondary sources (any larger controlling writing studies focus that may guide your search [ie: genre, rhetoric, discourse communities, etc.], any types of studies you may look for, prior research done on your specific community, etc.).
6. Note any challenges that you anticipate encountering with this question. You could do this by thinking about potential difficulties in conducting the primary research, or you could also focus on more general factors that could complicate your answer/research.

III. How will you know if it's good?

This can be an informal paper -- you are not required to format this like an essay. If you want to just list those expectations in numbered order and answer them one by one, that's also fine. I'm only going to be focusing on whether you are addressing each of those six focuses. The formality of your style (language, tone, structure) doesn't matter to me as long you make an effort to fulfill those listed expectations.

There is no length limit, but I would expect that most papers with an appropriate amount of depth would be in the 500-750 word range.