

WP2: Observing a New Online Space

In writing project two, you'll be asked to observe a new online space for a significant amount of time while taking notes about what you observe. In order to prepare for this assignment, you must:

- Choose a **new online space** to observe. This space must be focused on a specific activity or affinity and have a clear standard for participation. A good example of this type of space would be a subreddit at reddit.com. You may also choose something such as a fan fiction website or an image site such as canv.as. This online space must be completely new to you. You cannot have visited this site before or already have a membership (NOTE: no NSFW sites please. Keep in mind that other students in the class will also need to look at your observational data and might be offended by overly sexual or violent content).
- You must then observe this website (without participating) for a minimum of 2.5 hours spread over a minimum of at least 5 different observation sessions. During each of these sessions, you should watch how other members of the site participate by reading and taking note of their interactions. Take extensive written notes, download files, and make screen captures of interesting posts and interactions. You may consider using a program such as Scribe to help you do so.
- After being a passive observer in the site, you must then participate for a minimum of 1.5 additional hours spread over a minimum of at least 3 different participation sessions. During each of these sessions, you may reply to other people's posts or interactions or conduct interviews with people on the site about their feelings about how the site works and what counts as "participation" on that site. As you participate, keep track of your participation with notes, screen captures, and so forth.
- Finally, you must create your own post or start your own interaction based on what you think will count as meaningful participation on this site. Your notes and participation should help you to determine what this might be.

After you have conducted all of your research about the site, you will need to write up a field report detailing what you have learned. This field report is significantly different than the notes described above. This report will:

- Explain what you have learned about the site. How does it function? What is important to people on the site? What counts as meaningful participation?
- Explain how you attempted to join the community of this site, first as a participant and then as a contributor. What did you learn in your observations that helped you to participate? Why do you think your contributions were meaningful?
- Make a **detailed claim about the site that is surprising or unique**. This claim should help your reader to "re-see" this community in a new way. What do you think you can say about this website now that you would not have thought to or been able to say when you first started observing it?
- **Back up your claim with evidence**: draw support from your notes, quote interesting posts or interactions, show screen shots of your website, provide links, or show support for your points in other ways.

Minimum Length: 1,500 words.

Audience: A new member seeking to join this community.

Additional requirements: All drafts must be typed, double-spaced, and in Times New Roman 12-point font. Please use 1-inch margins. All documents must be accessible through Microsoft Word (please use .doc or .docx format). Please name all attached files using your own name (i.e. RyanShepherdWP2.doc).

Your assignment will be graded on the following:

- **Clarity and Depth of Claim:** The claim that you make about your community is clear, explicitly stated, and unique or surprising. The claim helps your reader to see your community in a new way.
- **Focus on Your Claim:** Your claim about the community is the clear focus of the paper. You do not go off on unrelated tangents or write about things that do not help support your central claim.
- **Adequate Support for Your Claim:** You have used evidence to support your central claim, be it in the form of support from your notes, quotes of interesting posts or interactions, screen shots of your website, links, or other support. You take the time to explain how this evidence helps to support your claim.
- **Use of Observational Data:** The data you have collected while passively observing and then participating in the site is used to help you make your claim. Your observations are clearly referenced within your paper. You have, however, chosen only the specific instances that help to support your claim. Irrelevant observational data should not be used.
- **Content Organization:** You have organized the content of your paper in a reasonable way. Your information is easy to understand, and your points are easy to follow. There is both an introduction and a conclusion. The paper clearly presents a central claim, and the content is organized around that claim. Paragraphs are ordered in such a way that they cannot be reordered at random, but instead provide logical transitions between ideas.
- **Attention to Assignment:** You adhere to the assignment as presented above, including main objectives, word count, attention to audience, and the additional requirements. You clearly understand what the assignment is asking you to do and are attempting to do it.
- **Manuscript preparation:** You have made changes between drafts that reflect attention to both instructor and peer comments. You have made an effort to improve your paper.

First round of notes are due on **September 27 by 10 pm**

Second round of notes are due on **October 4 by 10 pm**

First drafts are due on **October 6 by 10 pm**

Revised drafts are due on **October 16 by 10 pm**

Final drafts are due on **October 25 by 10 pm**