

Writing Assignment Sequence 2: **OVERVIEW**

YOUR GOAL: Use your writing, research, rhetoric, and argumentation skills to solve an authentic problem faced by a community that you belong to. This sequence of writing assignments will give you the opportunity to learn more about the communities you are a member of, and help learn how to use the tools used by academic writers. You will also deepen your understanding of how to write to multiple audiences, how to use effective rhetorical strategies, and how to conduct research in order to deepen your understanding of the world.

YOUR TASK: After identifying a community you belong to, and defining a problem that the community faces, you will write about that problem to **four different audiences** in **four different pieces of writing**. Each of the pieces of writing will have its own assignment -- follow the links to see more details about each assignment.

- First, you write to **your professor** proposing your project. You will provide a brief outline of the problem you'd like to solve, why the issue is important to you, and what sorts of research you expect to undertake in the project. We'll call this part of the assignment your **Project Proposal**.
- Next, you will write about the problem to a **general academic audience** of classmates, professors, and other interested scholars. Since you are writing to an academic audience, you will need to use the standard features of academic writing, including clear organization, a tightly focused main claim, source documentation using MLA or APA guidelines, well-edited prose, patterns of evidence to support claims, standard MLA or APA formatting, and explicit reasoning. We'll call this your **Academic Research Paper**. You will write a Rough Draft, and then workshop, revise, and edit into a Final Draft.
- Then, you will write a proposal to the **members of your community**, outlining your solution to the problem in a form and language that your community will respond to. We'll call this the **Letter To The Community**. You will write a Rough Draft, and then workshop, revise, and edit into a Final Draft.
- Finally, you create a piece of public writing aimed at educating a **public audience** about the issue. This piece of writing should *not* be a standard academic essay. In fact, it does not need to be a piece of "writing" at all! Instead, make sure that your message uses the form of a public genre, such as a poster, a pamphlet, a video, a web site, a handout, a newspaper editorial, a blog post, or something other authentic, real-life form of communication. We'll call this the **Public Writing** assignment. You will present your piece of public writing to the class.

START HERE: One of your biggest challenges will be to identify a good subject for your project. Start by identifying *all* the communities that you belong to. Define "community" as broadly and as narrowly as you want. Answer all of the following questions that apply to you:

- Where do you attend school?
- Where do you work?
- Where do you live?
 - What city?
 - What neighborhood?
 - Do you live in a dorm or an apartment complex? A shared house?
- What is your major?
- What is your intended career field?
- What clubs do you belong to?
- What sports teams do you play on?
- Where do you worship or attend church?
- Do you identify as a part of the military? If so, what branch?
- What activities do you participate in regularly?
- At what locations do you frequently find yourself? (i.e., grocery store, library, farmers' market, the gym, etc.)
- What "class" are you in school? (i.e., freshman, sophomore, etc.)
- Do you live on campus? Do you commute?
- What is the *largest* group you are a part of?
- What is the *smallest* group you are a part of?

Next, choose one of the "communities" you've listed. Begin thinking about how that community is defined. What makes someone part of the community? In other words, how do you know if someone is a member of that community? What makes someone *not* a member of that community? How is the community organized? Who are the formal leaders of the community? Who are the informal leaders? What sub-groups exist within the community? What are the community's common interests and concerns? What are the community's goals? How do others outside the community perceive your community?

Now, consider the problems, issues, questions, and controversies faced by each community you've listed. When you gather with the other members, what do you talk about? What are points of disagreement within the community? What obstacles keep the community from achieving its goals? What do individual members of the community care about most? What are the hot-button issues, topics, or concerns among members of the community?

After doing all of this pre-writing, begin crafting a brief description of your community and one problem that it faces. Possible subjects for this assignment sequence include:

- Why don't more women major in the natural and applied sciences?
- Video games, social isolation, and violence: Myths vs. Reality
- How can the Park University baseball team attract more fans to attend games?
- Teaching students about writing: what are the best methods?
- Declining young adult membership in United Methodist Churches
- How can public high schools in Missouri attract and retain talented teachers?
- Predictions of the economic impact of the KC Streetcar
- Creating effective student life programming at a largely commuter campus
- What is the connection between a college student's choice of major and her future engagement in civic life?

NEXT STEPS: Now that you have begun to define your subject for this assignment sequence, the best thing you can do to succeed is to attend class! Make sure that you participate in all in-class activities, complete all homework assignments, participate in peer review workshops, and meet deadlines.