

English 411: Technology, Rhetoric and Professional Communication

Final Research Paper Assignment

For your final research paper, you will take an issue from the recent history of communications technologies in professional or technical communication and develop it into a publishable research paper of approximately ten to fifteen pages (2,500-4,000 words).

Identify an issue/question you wish to discuss as your original contribution to the historical debates we have analyzed in class this term. Describe how: 1) the issue/question has come to exist; and 2) it is significant and deserves the attention of the community of writers addressing the issue. Remember that your description of this issue/question will be used when analyzing the approaches and positions taken by other authors, and thus must be both broad enough that it has some connection to most of these positions, yet specific enough that you can carry out concrete analysis of these positions. You may choose to revise and extend the first paper written for class earlier this term; if you do, plan to rethink its fundamental arguments to accommodate the differences in this assignment.

For your research paper, you should select at least any two of the works we have read so far this term and at least four articles we have *not* read in class, which you find through library research. Base your selection of articles on their relevance to the issue, question or problem you want to focus on. Your task is to use the *most relevant* authors as part of your available means of persuasion.

This assignment requires you to go beyond simply describing your issue and comparing and contrasting what other people might say. You will need to position yourself and your argument, and place other authors on main, faulty and return paths.

Your target audience for this assignment will be your peers—students in technical or scientific communication, who may or may not have read the works you discuss. You will need to consider where your readers stand in relation to the claims you will be making in your line of argument. Think of readers who do not understand your claims and those who may disagree with your claims. Justify and support your argument with your own good reasons. In analyzing each author's position, carefully consider the assumptions you feel underlie his/her position and think of counterexamples (from your experience or from another author's argument) which would challenge a claim or conclusion made by a particular author which you find to be problematic.

Plan to write approximately 10-15 double-spaced pages with one-inch margins. Use the *MLA Handbook*, either fifth or sixth edition, for the style of the paper. Keep in mind that your paper should be long enough to present a thorough analysis of the issue and its significance to contemporary communicators.

The final draft will be due in both electronic and paper formats on the last day of class, April 28th.