

Common Text Workshop - Fall 2012
America Again Chapter Exercise

Names of group participants: Melissa, Tom D., Rosemarie, Paula
Chapter Title: Jobs

After discussing with your group your particular chapter and possible research assignments or exercises the chapter encourages, please pick two to share with the larger group. Fill in the tables below, one for each assignment, and take as much space as you need; the table will expand as you fill it with text.

Idea 1: Infographics, Statistics and You

Goal of the assignment:

Highlight the oversimplification and truthiness sometimes characteristic of visually represented data—helping them read and annotate texts critically

Help students decode and analyze the data that they see presented in visual formats

Encourage students to explore whether non-verbal texts as precise as (or more precise than) words

Help students analyze data that is graphic (or even numerical/statistical) in meaningful ways that let them integrate data effectively and responsibly in their essays

Help students learn how to responsibly summarize an argument in visual and numerical formats

Connection to College Writing II Learning Outcomes:

Finding, assessing, and analyzing primary and secondary sources of information

Managing various research tools

Students will continue to write texts that integrate their own thoughts with the words and ideas with others, practicing documentation skills and entering into the academic conversation.

Students will continue to sharpen their analytic skills by writing analyses

Required steps:

After reading chapter 2, and maybe some selections from Edward Tufte, show students Verizon's 4G LTE Easy Choice 2.0 Commercial

Have students bring in examples of infographics and assess them. Perhaps load the deck with spurious graphs.

Use the examples as object lessons on how arguments are embedded in the representations.

Have students write an essay analyzing how statistics about a particular topic have been visually represented by different interested parties. In their essays, have students include graphics (or if they're doing presentations, have them incorporate them in PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.

Potential challenges or other considerations:

Idea 2: Write to Work [labor humor, yuk yuk]

Goal of the assignment:

Get students thinking about how writing and jobs go together to reinforce that what they're doing will continue to matter

Having student practice conducting research in library databases

Connection to College Writing Learning Outcomes:

Finding, assessing, and analyzing primary and secondary sources of information

Managing various research tools

Students will continue to write texts that integrate their own thoughts with the words and ideas with others, practicing documentation skills and entering into the academic conversation.

Students will continue to sharpen their analytic skills by writing analyses

Required steps:

Reach Chapter 2 in Colbert and some other readings related to job searching, employment issues, and writing and communicating in the workplace

Set up a research paper assignment broadly about "Jobs," asking students to experiment (individually or in pairs or small groups) with several pre-writing activities before narrowing their focus for individual essays, such as:

- Look at job ads online (in their field of interest)

- Annotate texts (maybe resumes from Career Services using the model of exploding resumes from Colbert)

- Research the technology (and changes in the technology, like robo-reading of application materials, employer consideration of social media) involved in job searches on both employers' and employees' parts

- Identify and interview individuals who interview job candidates about what they are looking for, seeking to get students to articulate how interview questions reveal employer values

- Research employment data (perhaps revisit some of the questions we addressed in "Idea 1" above related to the interpretation of statistical data)

As a group, work on how to wrangle their pre-writing activities into a research question that will allow them to actually write their essays!

Potential challenges or other considerations:

Ensuring that students have appropriately narrow foci for their papers!!!!!!