English 1102

As we have noted in our class discussions, your inquiry project will be a semester-long process. Here, I will give you a brief overview of what that will entail for the first half of the semester, **so that you might be better able to make informed choices about your inquiry along the way.**

HOW AN INQUIRY DEVELOPS

It is common, especially when one only accounts for their schooled experiences, to have the impression that a question or a thesis statement is what one starts with when they need to write a paper or create another form of rhetoric. However, inquiry is more than just researching and regurgitating information: an inquiry is something that develops over time only after one has immersed themselves within the topic, discourse, and community. For example, a scientist within any particular field is known to develop a hypothesis. After all, it is through one's creating and/or testing a hypothesis that the field to which they are a part of grows and learns. Here you can think of a hypothesis as being a thesis, since both are subject to "testing." However, one does not just create a hypothesis without having already had experience within a field: one learns from others through observation and research, one studies how others operate within the field and how they communicate with others (though in the moment we may not notice that we are taking such mental notes), one begins to apply what they have learned using the tools and manners appropriate to their field, and one begins to question their and others' application based one how they have interacted with what others have done and what they, themselves, have learned and become interested in during the immersion process. It is only after one has developed an interactive history within a field that one is able begin contributing to it.

BEGINNING THE IMMERSION PROCESS: WAYS OF DOING, BEING, AND KNOWING IN ORDER TO APPLY, QUESTION, AND CONTRIBUTE TO A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE (COP)

As you have already noticed, your inquiry project has several parts, which are all designed to facilitate learning and involvement within a COP. However, your homework assignments, though they account for a different portion of your overall grade in the class, are meant to inform the work you do in your inquiry project. Our class readings and conversations, as well as your inquiry blog posts, will serve as building blocks for your major assignments (listed in the inquiry project section of the syllabus).

So far, you have thought about six communities/groups that you are already a part of or want to know more about. This activity was designed to show you that, even before you engaged with class readings, you could identify characteristics specific to different communities/groups.

Through our first reading, you will begin to develop an understanding of what a COP is and choose a COP into which you want to immerse yourself. I strongly encourage you to pick a COP that are interested in and still have a lot to learn about. Otherwise, you will likely find

the process boring and tedious. You are not limited in your choice, as it is your choice to make. But know that going forward, the COP you choose will be the one you follow, question, and contribute to throughout the semester.

D/discourse: These readings and the homework assignments associated with them will give you a framework from which to analyze the ways in which a particular COP uses D/discourse, and how those D/discourse practices carry with them value and belief systems. After all, to be effective in ones rhetorical choices, one needs to know their audience—how they react and respond. In the past, you might have studied ethos, pathos, and logos. And such rhetorical strategies will also apply here. However, it is also likely that you have thought of these strategies in terms of a general audience. We will delve deeper still, as you make rhetorical choices for a specific COP/audience, in a specific context, using different genres. As with the example of the scientist above, you will start this process by first **observing and researching** what others in the COP are doing and how they are doing what they do. These activities are designed so that you will know what people are talking about and concerned about currently in the COP and how they are using writing and rhetoric to communicate and disseminate their work. You will also be collecting artifacts as you go along. Artifacts are things that people leave behind that give others an impression of "who" they are and what they value. In our case, you will gather artifacts for two reasons: 1) the information in them is something of value to you as you work to immerse yourself in the current conversation and, 2) they show how and in what forms members in the COP are communicating (e.g. podcasts, academic articles, T.V./magazine ads, among others).

Skipping ahead a bit, after a series of readings, class meetings, and homework assignments, you will begin the first draft of your Inquiry-Based Argumentative (I-B Arg.) paper. You will develop your inquiry by reflecting on what you have learned about the COP and where you see yourself able to contribute something of worth. There will be more information to come in terms of the guidelines for this assignment. However, it is worth noting here that you will be using the citation format that is appropriate for your COP and you will need to show that you are—in meaningful ways—applying what you have learned about the D/discourse practices within the COP in order to communicate as a member. In large part, this paper is designed as a "formal" paper because you will, inevitably, have to write "formal" papers for many classes to come. And, unfortunately, though writing in different fields and COP means that there are different conventions involved—to which you may or may not be familiar— in many cases people (authorities, such as professors or employers) will just assume that you know how to write for a field. Your goal, then, is to not only gain an understanding of how to write "formally" within the COP you study, but also to develop a metacognitive approach towards writing that enables you to have the ability to read into the expectations and parameters of even those writing tasks that you have yet to be presented with.

A few general (meaning not too specific) examples of COPs:

Photography,	Business,	Architecture,
Law,	Computer Science,	Teaching,
Historical Reenactment,	Engineering,	Hockey