Unit II: Analyzing Words and Their Place in a Particular Speech Community

**Part One**: Providing Support for an Argument with Analysis and Secondary Sources

Selfie. Cheddar. LOL. Bitch. Y’all.

These “slang” words, often disparaged in popular thought, are actually of significant interest to historians, linguistic, and composition scholars because they all help to reveal the rhetorical needs of different “speech communities.” We will study them in this unit in order to understand how meanings change in different contexts, to embrace different speech and discourse communities outside of Standard Edited English, and to explore the implications of linguistic and dialectical prejudice.

Your job, then, will be to write a **5-6 page paper** analyzing a specific word, what it means to a historically or socially based speech community, and what that word can tell us about the language community in question. (Small phrases or idioms are fine, too). Your research for this project should lead you to take a stance, an explicitly stated thesis which you will support through your secondary sources and close analysis.

How can we define a speech community? While we will discuss this term in increasing depth in class, we can understand this term for now as a group of speakers who share similar language values, social identities, and a set of specialized terms, or “lingo.” Examples of speech communities might include texting millennials, teenage skateboarders, the LGBTQ community, or a professional society of marine biologists.

For another example, look to the C.J. Pascoe piece we will read in class (“Dude, You’re a Fag”) in which she identifies adolescent males as a kind of “speech community.”

Requirements:

* 5-6 pages, 12 pt. Times New Roman, 1-inch margins
* 4-5 credible sources
* At least 2 academic sources
* Correct MLA formatting, in-text citations, and a works cited page, as shown in the *Penguin Handbook*
* A narrow and explicitly stated thesis (in other words, it should be very easy for any reader to identify what your argument is)

**Part Two**: Participating in Wikipedia’s Discourse Community

Wikipedia, whether we like to admit it or not, is a powerful resource for anyone engaged in research; though most people are unlikely to cite it as a credible source, it is a useful launching pad for millions of readers and students around the world. To solidify your research into the different types of language communities, you will become a member of Wikipedia yourself, and then contribute some of your research to this widely read and edited website.

In the second part of the assignment, you will add at least 4-5 sentences of content to a Wiki related to your chosen topic. (If you picked “LOL” for an example, you might contribute to the “LOL,” the texting, or Generation Z page). You can either add your content to an existing subhead or create your own subheads. Furthermore, these need not be consecutive sentences (meaning you can add one sentence to the beginning of the article, another two to the middle, and one at the end).

Wikipedia users, like all audiences, have specific expectations about the content and style of wiki material. Part of succeeding at this assignment, then, will include rewriting some of your existing material to better fit this style.

Because you’re writing within an established community, however, you will have to explain your edits in the edit summary text box. Like any successful research paper, you should also cite your sources. In addition to the online tutorials Wikipedia provides, I’ll also be demonstrating how to contribute to Wikipedia in class, so tech-savviness is not required for this assignment.

Requirements:

* A Wikipedia User Account
* 4-5 sentences of new content
* This new content is carefully chosen/rewritten to match Wikipedia’s style and tone
* At least 3 sentences explaining your edits in the edit summary text box
* Your Wikipedia name, the content you added, and your edit summary included on a separate piece of paper and stapled to Part One.

Important Dates:

Monday, Oct. 19: Class Canceled for voluntary conferences

Wed. Oct. 21: Peer Review (**3 pages required**)

This Project is Due Friday, October 23rd!

Grading Criteria

Part 1

Does this paper meet all the basic requirements of the paper? (MLA formatting, page length, etc.)

Does this paper clearly describe a specific speech community and explain why the chosen word was relevant to that community?

Does this paper include sufficient and relevant context for the chosen word and speech community?

Does this paper move from description to analysis, making sure to explore how the meaning of the chosen word changes in this context and what this word says about the speech community in question?

Thesis Rubric

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Excellent | This thesis makes an interesting and relevant argument, clearly prepares the reader for the rest of the paper, is very focused and specific, and offers a unique perspective on the subject. |
| Above Average | This thesis makes a relevant argument, prepares the reader for the rest of the paper, is fairly narrow and specific, and makes an argument that does not restate the obvious. |
| Average | The thesis makes a somewhat relevant argument, somewhat prepares the reader for the rest of the paper, and is at least somewhat narrowed and specific to the topic at hand. Though it may make an argument, it more or less restates commonly known information. |
| Poor | The thesis makes no discernable or relevant argument, does not serve to prepare the reader for the rest of the paper, or is entirely not present at all. |

Part 2

Did your contribution to Wikipedia meet the basic requirements of this assignment? (4-5 sentences, 3 sentences in the edit box, Wikipedia username).

Did your contribution match the tone and style of typical Wikipedia entries?

Did your contribution enhance and improve the ongoing discussion of this subject?

Remember to attach this grading criteria to the back of your paper!