

First analytical essay

GH101/21, Fall 2009, Bradley Dilger

Summary: using our readings as a point of departure, develop an argument about social networks which calls upon relevant research. Write and rewrite to ensure a polished, substantive final essay.

As Kenneth Burke and other scholars have suggested, the best writing emulates good conversation by offering a mix of information and persuasion, while acknowledging the viewpoints of others, inviting them to join in the discussion. Follow this model by writing an essay which engages issues about social networks raised by the course readings. We will discuss possible topics in class. Some which have already emerged from our readings include:

- The effect of specific technological changes (the rise of texting, the decline of land-line use) on social network service use;
- Demographic changes on social network services;
- Relationships between social networks and overall happiness and well-being.

Your essay will be a scholarly argument: a position paper that mixes delivery of information with persuasion about particular issues, supported by acknowledgment of relevant research. For more information about this form, read Chapter 9 from the *Norton Field Guide to Writing (NFGW)*, part of our course pack, and review relevant cross-references in *NFGW*, on reserve at Malpass Library.

As you write this essay, target the following writing skills and concepts:

- **Select an interesting topic.** Pick a specific, focused issue which makes falling back on clichés and unsupported generalizations less likely.
- **Use research to develop your argument.** Read broadly about your topic. Select sources which help you refine your argument, then find more which provide support and evidence.
- **Integrate others' content in your writing.** Use paraphrase, summary, and direct quotation to address others' writing in your own. Properly use attributive tags, citations, and other elements of scholarly documentation.
- **Organize your writing.** Develop a clear, appropriate structure which helps guide the reader. If helpful, use signposting or forecasting elements.
- **Read and write reviews.** Learn the strengths and weaknesses of your essay from others. Learn to evaluate similar essays which approach the same writing tasks. Apply suggestions from a review to your essay.
- **Write clearly.** Write clear prose which is easily understood. Use standard English.
- **Adopt a scholarly style.** Follow a popular scholarly style, such as APA, Chicago, or MLA. Make your essay look professional and conventional.

Requirements

We'll target these in class via reading, with examples, and other means.

- Complete all required milestones (see below).
- Examples for some milestones are online (the prospectus, in particular).
- The draft and final essay must be formatted using a relevant documentation style. Refer to the appropriate chapters of Diana Hacker's *Pocket Style Manual* or the relevant style manual itself for details (e.g. *The Chicago Manual of Style* 15/e).
- Document all sources as needed.

- For your final essay:
 - Show improvement and substantive change from the draft.
 - Ensure that every sentence and paragraph is well-formed—work through your essay carefully to make it as well-written as possible.

Milestones & calendar

All milestones must be turned in.

Milestone	Brief description	Points	Due
Prospectus	A written plan for your essay. Write a description of your topic, your argument, and the readings which suggested it to you. Cut-and-paste this text into an email to me (<i>do not send an attachment</i>). I will respond with suggestions and starting points for research.	25	Sep 18
Draft	Write a draft which fits the requirements of the position genre as defined by the <i>NFGW</i> . While your draft need not be complete, experience shows that the better the draft, the better the final. Include an annotated bibliography. See the course web site for an example. Complete a self-evaluation which uses the form on the course web site. Two reviewers will use this review to write a quick peer evaluation.	50	Sep 28
Final	Revise your draft, addressing the issues raised by reviewers, and improving every aspect possible. As good as you have time to make it. Submit your final essay in a folder. Include all previous milestones, reviews, and self-evaluations.	125	Oct 16