

## Project two proposal

Bradley Dilger ~ Fall 2014 ~ <http://dtext.org/>

Your research project proposal should note critical deadlines and the steps you expect to complete as you conduct interviews, complete your draft and revised reports, etc. You will need to conduct some research to shape your proposal — a mix of using library resources, web searches, and preliminary contact with relevant people. See the course web site for suggestions.

At the minimum, your proposal should answer the following questions and/or provide the following information:

1. Identify and briefly describe the discourse communities you wish to volunteer for and then study. Why have you selected it? If this discourse community is not related to your major, a hobby, or past experiences, why have you selected it? How are you involved with it?
2. What volunteer work will you be performing? When? With whose help?
3. Did you engage this discourse community in your literacy narrative? If so, how?
4. What experiences do you already have with this community? What questions do you have about it?
5. What activities are central to this community and its members? Are there any you expect to learn more about?
6. Who can you interview and/or observe? Why have you selected these people? Describe what you already know about them.
7. What methods (observation, interviewing, library research, etc.) do you expect to use to gather information about the discourse community you've identified?
8. What questions do you have about this community? Use the frameworks of genre, discourse community, and activity theory to create a list of possible questions.
9. What texts do you expect to collect and analyze? Why do you think these genres are important to your interviewees? Describe any sources you have for these genres other than your discourse community.
10. How do you plan to conduct research about your discourse community and the people involved before conducting interviews and observations? What does preliminary research suggest will be useful?
11. When do you expect to begin? When do you expect to complete key tasks? Outline a schedule of work.

Will you stick to this proposal 100%? No. However, you will be required to request approval for any significant changes, such as changing the discourse community you target or significantly altering your schedule. So, do the work necessary allow me to give you meaningful feedback. Our shared goal is helping you avoid the awful feeling which comes from realizing a project is about to collapse irretrievably because of questionable planning. I've been there. It sucks. Take this opportunity to start getting my help.

Look to our readings for help, too—Driscoll pp. 157 and p. 7 of Kain & Wardle show how our frameworks of discourse community and activity theory can help flush out the questions you'll be asking—and thus much of your proposal.

## **Strategies for a successful proposal**

1. If you need some more time, just ask (in writing, please).
2. Once you have people and a community in mind, make two quick checks to ensure success (these can be phone calls, quick f2f visits, or emails):
  - a) with me, to get my feedback about how to proceed;
  - b) with them, to ensure they are really interested in helping you—non-receptive research participants are no fun.
3. I strongly recommend you read both the project three and four assignments and consider them from start to finish as you create your proposal. Check the course web site for a list of updates and clarifications, too.
4. If you don't know how to use Google Docs, we can do a crash course in class Thursday.
5. Use our readings to consider what you need to understand. How big is the community? What texts and technologies do members rely on? What activities do they engage alone? together? in connection with other communities? What rules, written and unwritten, guide their work?
6. Our readings suggest you need to consider the privacy of your interviewee: what assurances do they need about the ways you will handle documents? Redact or anonymize identifying information as needed. Consult me if you need help.
7. Our readings also suggest that researchers need keep some distance from the communities they study — though you need to know enough to be available. So if you want to study fantasy football, a league you are participating in is a bad idea — but one your roommate or sister is involved in would be okay.

## **Format and submission**

**Assignment length:** At least 1+ page single spaced (400+ words). But don't pad.

**Format:** Create a Google Doc with your proposal and share it with [cbdilger@gmail.com](mailto:cbdilger@gmail.com).

**Genre and style:** Not terribly important—it's all about the content. Refer to *NFGW* Ch. 17 (on the course web site) for more on proposals, including several examples. Use lists and tables as much as you want. If you prefer to break out things like interview questions and your schedule as separate documents, do so.

**Submission:** Due 10/11. Share the document with me. Ensure the name follows the format "Lastname ENG 108 Proposal," with the appropriate substitution.

**Points: 50.**