

# Memoranda

*ENGL 306, Fall 2015, Bradley Dilger*

**Summary:** Write a series of memos which demonstrate your understanding of the six theoretical issues which shape our course.

Our course is shaped around six concepts which I believe most professional writing scholars would find important for theorists and practitioners alike (rhetoric, genre, networks, situated learning, ethics, and user-centered design). In a series of memos written to me (and perhaps to others in class), explore these concepts, demonstrate your understanding, and clarify and articulate questions you may have. This will establish a theoretical framework we can explore in-depth in the second half of the semester.

Memos should refer to our readings and other professional writing texts you've relied on in the past. Remember the constraints of your audience, and offer context and/or background for texts from outside our common reading set. You are always welcome to discuss the implications of the concept for your learning and/or for professional writing as a whole.

## Prompts

### **Memo 1: Defining professional writing (09/04)**

What is professional writing? Describe this professional field, its goals, its institutional contexts, and key opportunities it offers for you and your colleagues. Include your specific expectations about the major (including this course).

### **Memo 2: Rhetoric and professional writing (09/11)**

Describe and define rhetoric, providing some background. What rhetorical knowledge should writers have? How is attention to craft, in the manner suggested by Kleon, important for rhetoric and professional writing?

### **Memo 3: Writing and genre (09/17) (09/18)**

Why does genre offer much to professional writers? Explain how a social model of genre is distinct from more structural definitions. How do genres shape writers' decision-making?

### **Memo 4: Networks and professional writing (09/24) (09/25)**

What are networks, as understood by professional writers and rhetorical scholars? Explain how a networked understanding of writing differs from hierarchical or organic models. Note some implications for invention and research.

### **Memo 5: Learning in (networked) contexts (10/01) (10/02)**

Describe a networked understanding of learning. How does it differentiate from flatter models which focus more on accretion of knowledge? What key concepts emerge in models of learning shaped profoundly by social theories of writing?

### **Memo 6: Ethical writing (10/08) (10/09)**

What does it mean to be an ethical researcher, given the reach of networks? Explain how ethical thinking can and should guide professional writing invention and research.

(Our sixth and unifying concept, user-centered design, will be featured in our midterm examination.)

## **Specifics**

I have created and shared an FAQ based on questions I receive about the assignment; please see the course web site ([dtext.org/fl15/306](http://dtext.org/fl15/306)) to review answered questions and share your own.

**Audiences:** Internal—you, me, and classmates. This gives you the freedom to speak of concepts we've learned, and examples we've encountered, without providing context.

**Assignment length:** One to two pages each (600–900 words).

**Structure and style:** You need not write elegantly, but should still write coherently and with care to detail. Use memo format; if you need help, please consult a technical communication text such as Johnson-Sheehan, *Writing Today* or Anderson, *Technical Communication*. (I assume you have one or more of these texts in your personal library.) Use lists, tables, and other structures as needed. Refer to sources in a consistent but compact format.

**Submission:** In weeks two through seven, print a hard copy and deliver to me in class on Thursday, or to my office on Friday. (Due dates are noted above.) Copy and paste the memo text into a single Google Doc you've previously shared with me, so that all your memoranda are in one place for easy access. (We will set up this Doc in class together.)

**Grading:** Three key criteria, in this order of importance:

1. Engagement with and demonstration of knowledge of the key concept at play.
2. Engagement of invention and research questions offered in the prompt.
3. Format, coherence, and adherence to assignment requirements.

**Points:** 250 (50 per memo).

## **Errata**

8/25 Corrected due dates of Memos 3, 4, 5, and 6