

Analysis of Writing in Your Major Assignment

In your Composition and Literature courses, you have likely engaged in analysis of texts, possibly even one that you wrote. Likely, the texts that you analyzed were narrative essays, short stories, and popular texts. For this assignment, you will take these skills a step further and explore scholarly texts in your discipline. Like popular texts, there are conventions that scholarly texts share, particularly texts in the same disciplines. As you make your move from student writer to scholar, it is important that you can recognize and apply the conventions and meet the expectations of writing in your discipline.

For this assignment, you will read three scholarly texts in your discipline (no more than ten years old and likely related to your research project topic), learn and share what content, rhetorical, organizational, and stylistic features make them work, and finally, persuade your readers that you have something valuable to contribute to their intellectual understanding of writing in your major.

Your analysis should be guided by a thesis that makes a claim regarding the content, rhetorical, organizational, and/or stylistic conventions of your discipline. You should refer specifically to the texts in your analysis, using summary, paraphrase, and direct quotation as appropriate. You are also charged with structuring your essay in a way that makes it coherent, cohesive, and engaging. This means that you will need to strongly consider what organization will best complement and enhance your paper.

You may want to begin this assignment by asking yourself (and your interviewee) some of the following questions about writing in your field:

- What do you know about writing in your field? What is the tone adopted by most authors? Can scholarship in this field be understood by a general audience? Why or why not?
- How are the theses in this field similar or different from the theses you've written for your Composition assignments?
- How do authors in this field support their arguments? How do the authors introduce sources? What kinds of sources do they use?
- What principles of organization govern the texts in this field?
- What documentation style is most commonly used in this discipline?

In sum, an effective Analysis of Writing in Your Major Paper will offer strong claims about the texts and writing in the discipline, at large, and support those claims with textual evidence.