Project 2: Empirical Research Report on
Writing in the Workplace – Individual
20 Points

Purpose: Conduct primary and secondary research to compose an empirical report on the types of communication technical writers perform in the workplace. Discuss connections between accurate and rhetorically effective communication and success on the job. Please note that you are responsible for finding your interviewee.

Audience: Your instructor, your classmates, and future potential employers, intern sponsors, or graduate school program directors

The Assignment

For Project 2, conduct primary (interviews, observations) and secondary (from class readings) research to compose an informational report on the types of professional writing people in your field perform in the workplace. **Discuss connections between accurate and rhetorically effective communication and success on the job**. You should follow the five journalism questions:

- **Who** writes in the workplace?
    - In the workplace, we rarely write alone. So, who are the collective authors of documents? Do they write in teams? Do people compose with other writers, or do they collaborate with people from other fields (lawyers, engineers, programmers, etc.)? Also, do not forget about audience. For whom do people in your field compose (co-workers, bosses, clients, Internet)?
- **What** do they write?
    - *What is the most common short document (around five pages), besides an email, that people in your discipline write*? Do people in your field just compose instructions and annual reports? What other forms, memos, proposals, or presentations do they compose? In what formats do these compositions appear (PowerPoint, web, social media, PDF, RoboHelp, etc.)?
- **When** and how often do they write?
    - Do people in your field compose everyday? At what point in the composing process do they contribute to documents? Are they original authors? Or do they contribute to others' work later in the process? What does the composition process look like? In what rhetorical situations (contexts) do they compose?
- **Where** do they write?
    - With laptops and mobile devices dominating the workplace, our places of authorship are more diverse than ever. Where do people in your field compose? In cubicles? At home (remember that some proprietary information is not allowed off-property)? How might location impact the composition process?
- **Why** do they write?
    - Do people in your field write to help brainstorm ideas? To communicate with co-workers, bosses, clients? Or do they write for legal reasons, to archive information or compose legally-binding documents of agreement or understanding? To they write to pitch sales ideas? Or do they write grants at non-profit organizations to secure funding from foundations? What are their goals when they write? What purposes do they fulfill for the organization? What part of the production process do they fill? Do they contribute to the decision making process of a product? Do they influence policy and the direction of their organization?

- **How** do they write?
  - This is another process question, so tracing the lifecycle of writing and communication projects is important to answering this. But it also involves technology, like laptops, mobile devices, social media, and probably old-fashion pen and paper. Do people in your field follow a style manual/sheet? If so, investigate it. Do they just communicate with words, numbers, and pictures? What about visuals (video) and oral presentations? Social media and mobile devices? How do these emerging technologies impact the composition process?

Make sure you connect some of the ideas we learn about from the Anderson text—for example the reader-centered approach—and from other readings to your report. So for instance, you might answer some of these questions:

- How do people in your field follow the reader-centered approach? Or perhaps they haven't heard of this idea. How *might* they use it? (Hint: just following the reader-centered approach could land you a job.)
- What are some other connections you see between what we have learned in class and what you have learned in your research? What are some disconnects?

Goals of the Assignment

This assignment will help you better understand the writing that people in your field complete on the job. The assignment should also help prepare you to enter the workforce as a more knowledgeable writer and to communicate professionally. Lastly, the assignment should help you revise errors in organization, clarity, and rhetoric, as well as errors in grammar and mechanics. So, the goals of the assignment are to help you:

- research and understand the types of communication people in your field do on the job
- better understand the rhetorical situations (purpose, audience, context, medium, angle) they face when they communicate on the job
- produce professional documents
- practice following genre expectations for a high-level writing course.

The Format

This report *must* adhere to MLA, APA, or CMS guidelines and must be at least *1,750 – 2,500 words in length*. The report will be titled, typed in 12 point *Times New Roman (or similar font)*, single-spaced, with *1 inch margins* all the way around. Please follow the superstructure outlined in *Technical Communication* chapter 25. Please type the following statement and sign your name: "I understand and will uphold the ideals of academic honesty as stated in the Honor Code."

Grammar/mechanics rubric: for every 5 errors, I will deduct 1 point.

Project Deliverables

You will complete three deliverables for this project: an audience analysis, a draft, and an empirical research report.

Audience Analysis
Please see the Project 1 assignment sheet for the audience analysis tables.

Peer Feedback Questionnaire
On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest score, rate the following:

Front matter:
Introduction:
Research methods:
Discussion:
Back matter:
Document design/visuals:
Grammar and mechanics (syntax, word choice, punctuation):

Overall score for the report:

Please answer these questions about the report:

Did you understand the report? If so, why? If not, why not?

Was the report clear? If so, why? If not, why not?

What did you like about the report?

What did you not like about the report?

Do you have any suggestions for the report to make it more effective?

Revision
You will have opportunities to revise your work throughout the writing process, and you will be able to revise *one individual assignment* after you have submitted your final draft. The revision is due with Project 3 on the day of our final exam. You may not use the revision due date as an extension for this assignment. I will average the grades from your original and your revised documents for your final assignment grade.