

The Rhetoric of Knowledge Communities

Instructor Guide

Lessons:

- [Personal Knowledge Communities \(Instructor Guide\)](#)
- Local Communities and You
- Knowledge Production in Your Community
- Community Profiles
- Rhetorical Analysis
- Draft Workshop

Introduction:

The Rhetoric of Knowledge Communities assignment is designed to help your students familiarize themselves with the Iowa City community by exploring organizations that work in and around the state (nonprofit, school, church, cooperative, club, etc.) in terms of social context, and real and desired public image. The assignment asks students to craft a rhetorical analysis explaining the importance of the rhetorical qualities of a text that represents the public image of the community/group/organization. That text might be a web page, advertisement, song, building, statue, and more. Make sure that students do not choose a business for this assignment.

Unlike many other IDEAL assignments, the Rhetoric of Knowledge Communities assignment is designed to allow for most of the assignment and its accompanying process steps to occur outside of class time. This allows instructors to use the early time in their semester to design activities around their course textbook(s) and concepts that will help students develop the rhetorical skills they need to successfully complete this assignment.

*All instructors using this assignment should **contact IDEAL** (ideal@uiowa.edu) as soon as possible to receive adequate technical and instructional support. IDEAL is available to assist instructors with each step of the assignment, including preparation and lesson planning, troubleshooting technology issues, and making student work public.

Objectives:

- Students learn more about their college and local community, and envision themselves within it.
- Students demonstrate their ability to conduct a rigorous rhetorical analysis, supported with details and explanation.
- Students integrate rhetorical course concepts into their analysis of a local community.
- Students practice properly citing sources and building individual credibility.

Part 1 (Personal Knowledge Communities):

1. This assignment requires that instructors begin by having students complete the information literacy Personal Knowledge Communities activity. This information literacy activity asks students to explore how they've experienced learning and knowledge within their own communities, and is broken up into four activities. Activity #1 asks students to consider "what is a community," #2 helps students think through the communities they are already a part of, #3 asks them to choose one of those communities and determine the knowledge they already have, and #4 is focused on assessing both the community's credibility and that of the student. These documents, including student worksheets, are contained within the Personal Knowledge Communities module in our [Information Literacy curriculum](#). Completing this activity will help students consider what new communities they might like to explore and potentially join during their university education.

Part 2 (Local Communities and You):

1. After completing [Personal Knowledge Communities – Student Handout](#), have students work towards choosing a new local community to focus on for this assignment. Stress to your students the wide varieties of local communities they might consider. They should select for analysis a community with which they are not yet fully familiar in order to explore options for involvement during their years in college. The student assignment sheet has a wide-ranging list of suggestions for different types of communities, but instructors should feel free to add more if you think of them.
2. Have students (either in-class or as homework) compose 300 words about their interests and goals for college. This prompt is located on the student assignment sheet, and should help students start determining which local groups might support their goals and interests. Remind them to browse <http://csil.uiowa/pickone> as a starting point. If you have a course blog, you may want to have students post these 300 word compositions there. Respond to their ideas with guidance, when appropriate, and remind them that they should ultimately focus on communities they're genuinely interested in, and excited about.

Part 3 (Knowledge Production in Communities):

1. Students choose one of the communities they've previously identified as relevant to their goals and interests. Either in-class or as homework, students will describe two examples of the types of activities in which the community produces knowledge (i.e. through social expectations, like keeping a shared workspace clean, or through physical activities). Instructions for considering these activities are also located on the Rhetoric in Knowledge Communities Student Assignment sheet, and ask students to consider their chosen community's purposes (what the community wants to achieve), and the manner in which they communicate these purposes. This initial analysis of the community's purposes and methods will provide the basis for each student's final analysis.

Part 4 (Community Profiles):

1. Students should then compose a brief profile of their chosen community. The components of this profile are located on the Student Assignment Sheet.

Note: Students have the option to contribute their profile of their chosen community to the IDEAL website's Knowledge Communities Project. You may wish to encourage them to do so! Uploading instructions are located on the website ([Student Uploading Instructions – Rhetoric in Knowledge Communities](#))

Part 5 (Rhetorical Analysis):

1. Once students have profiled their chosen local community, they will find a text that is related to its public image. This text will comprise the focus of their 1200 word in-depth rhetorical analysis. Remind them that course concepts gained from textbooks, lectures, and in-class discussions should all play a role in their analysis.

Draft Workshop (50 minutes):

Once students have completed a draft of their 1200 word analysis, conduct a draft workshop. In pairs, students should read one another's draft and offer constructive feedback. Switching pairs after 20-25 minutes will help maximize the amount and variety of feedback the student will receive within a 50-minute time period. The instructor should also circulate and answer questions during this time. You may want to provide students with some questions to focus on answering during their workshop. Many students come to college with the idea that workshops are unproductive times for them to engage in conversation about their lives outside of the classroom, or to goof off-- this concept has often been ingrained in them by their previous experiences with the workshop model. As such, instructors are well-served by an organized workshop that provides students with specific aims and objectives. Carefully explain to them your goals in having them engage in the workshop model for this assignment (and all major assignments), and provide them with specific focuses as they encounter and respond to the work of their peers.

Potential Workshop Questions:

1. What is one thing you enjoyed about reading this essay?
2. Does this essay make a strong claim about the rhetorical qualities of their chosen text, and their relationship to the community's public image?
3. Does this essay connect its ideas coherently? (Consider the presence of topic sentences, transitions, overly short or overly long paragraphs, etc.)

4. Does the author provide specific details to support their points, and avoid summary in favor of their own analyses?
5. Does the essay's conclusion simply recap main points, or does it also ask broader questions, gesture outwards towards bigger conclusions, or similarly create additional interest in the essay's topic?

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