

Personal Knowledge Communities – Instructor Guide

Summary

This exercise asks students to explore how they've experienced learning and knowledge within their own communities. The exercise is broken up into four smaller activities. Throughout the activities students explore information and knowledge resources that supported their own learning. Students are also encouraged to explore the authority of different types of information and authors. Reflecting on their own experience in contexts outside of the classroom can provide students an easy entrance to higher-level discussions related to the social-situatedness of authority, information use, and the nature of learning. This activity is best presented earlier in the semester, before students engage in research as it is designed to lay the foundation for subsequent discussions of information literacy topics, like: evaluating sources, authorship and authority, knowledge production, and searching as exploration. Note: Parts of this exercise draw on activities described in Harris (2008) and Lloyd's (2006) conceptualizations of knowledge.

Learning Objectives

- Students develop a working definition of community.
- Students examine the things that they know because of their participation in communities.
- Students reflect on how communities support learning.
- Students reflect on characteristics of knowledge, information and authority.

Class Materials

- Activity handouts #1-4
- Whiteboard, chalkboard or other collaborative brainstorming technology. While not required, each of the four activities described below can benefit from large group discussion and collaborative brainstorming.

Student Assignments

Instructors teaching the IDEAL Rhetoric in the Community may use this assignment to encourage students to explore knowledge communities that they are interested in joining.

Outline for Class Activity

The following activities (#1-4) are cumulative and can be presented individually (e.g., one activity per day), or could be combined into one larger activity that takes place during one class session. Students might find it useful to use [Coggle](#), a browser-based mind-mapping tool, to

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complete Activities #2-4. Of course, hand drawn mind-maps will also suffice. An activity handout is provided for each of the four activities. A completed example activity worksheet is included for each activity as well.

Activity #1

Learning objective: Students identify characteristics of communities and develop working definitions of community. In the process, students might also be encouraged to

As individual student activity

- *Distribute and review instructions for Activity #1 worksheet to students the night prior to the scheduled all-class discussion about community. Encourage students to refer to the Libraries tutorial on basic searching in JSTOR, EBSCOhost, and SCOPUS databases. You might encourage students to break into small groups to share their definitions of community prior to the large-group discussion. Ask individual students (or small groups) to share their working definition of community with the class. You might record students' definitions and community characteristics on the board as a way to record class discussion and help students synthesize ideas. Providing counterpoints to community characteristics provided by students (e.g. if a student's definition of community is based on people living in close proximity -- like a neighborhood -- you might ask them to think about at which block a community would end) can help students think critically and creatively about their definitions. You might also encourage students to reflect on their own experience as members of communities to prime them for Activity #2.*

As collaborative, small-group, in-class activity

- *Divide students into small groups. Students will need access to at least one computer with Internet access. Distribute Activity #1 worksheets and review the instructions with the class. You should encourage students to develop the best definition of community they can, encouraging them that there is no correct definition of community. You might also remind them that once they develop their small group definitions, you'll work as a class*

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to come up with a larger definition, so there will be opportunity to revise and review. If the students seem confused, you might encourage them to identify characteristics of (or words used to describe) communities (large, small, close-knit). It is best to provide students with at least 15 minutes to come up with their definitions of community. Once students have completed their definitions, or when the time is up, ask groups of students to share their working definition of community with the class. You might record students' definitions and community characteristics on the board as a way to record class discussion and help students synthesize ideas. Providing counterpoints to community characteristics provided by students (e.g. if a student's definition of community is based on people living in close proximity -- like a neighborhood -- you might ask them to think about at which block a community would end) can help students think critically and creatively about their definitions. You might also encourage students to reflect on their own experience as members of communities to prime them for Activity #2.

Activity #2

Learning Objective: Students identify a variety of communities of which they are a part and reflect on what they know because of their participation in these communities.

Activity #3

Learning Objective: Students reflect on how communities support learning and identify a list of things they know because of their participation in a chosen community.

Activity #4

Learning Objective: Students explore different types of authority (e.g., that related to training vs. that related to being at a historic event) and think about how information resources are related to creators' expertise, credibility and the context in which information resources are created and used.

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References

Harris, B. (2008). Communities as Necessity in Information Literacy Development: Challenging the Standards. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 34(3) 248-255.

Lloyd, A. (2006). Information Literacy Landscapes: An Emerging Picture. *Journal of Documentation*, 62(5), 570-583.