Franks — Cat 2 Assignment Draft

Cat 1:

[Week 1: Assignment

Week 2: Draft

Week 3: Review and Turn in]

Cat 2 Addition:

Week 4: Inquiry and Research

Week 5: Draft, Review, Turn in

Note: The following description includes both the key elements of the assignment and my own commentary; the precise instructions are rolled out on a daily basis depending on progress. This version of the assignment extends the Cat 1 assignment to Cat 2 by adding a research question developed by students and their research and answer to that question.

[Cat 1:

This rhetorical analysis centers on David Mindich’s article “The Collapse of Big Media: The Young and the Restless” from *Wilson Quarterly* (2005). The essay was republished in *Backpack Writing* but is also available through the library databases. We will write a 3-5 page paper with 3 parts: analysis, reflection, and extension.

In Week 1, we begin by reading the first two paragraphs and analyzing the claim and the audience, focusing on newspapers and print journalism. Then we analyze the next several paragraphs, focusing on the writing strategy Mindich uses to move from an obvious claim – young people aren’t reading newspapers as much as they did in the recent past – to a less obvious one – young people also aren’t getting news from the television or the internet. Next, in small groups we reflect on these claims (is this true of you? your peers?) and their assumptions (what counts as news?) and report back to the class. After discussion, we write up our reflections into a paragraph or two. Finally, in class we write up a provisional analysis of the essay’s claim, audience, and purpose (one paragraph each).

In Week 2, we begin by reading the second half of the essay and identifying its central claim, which notably is not in the first few paragraphs, and by discussing and writing in our Notebooks about the concepts of “civic engagement,” “journalism’s watchdog role,” and “sense of community.” Then we return to audience. After considering the usual suspects, young people and people who care about politics (or don’t), we analyze in more detail the essay’s own sense of its audience, people at all levels of the journalism industry and teachers/parents. After exercises on paraphrase and quotation, we revise our claim, audience, and purpose paragraphs, print them, and bring them to class to review, focusing on analysis and engagement with the source and effective use of paraphrase and quotation.

In Week 3, we revise our initial reflections in light of our further analysis. We also analyze the editorial purpose of *Wilson Quarterly* by investigating the “About” page on their website and discuss the purpose and audience of various publication venues. Last, we extend our reflection on the essay by considering potential research questions from particular disciplinary perspectives (education, journalism, technology, politics, etc). Since the article is nearly 10 years old, have some of the facts changed? Which ones and how? How are traditionally print-based media engaging digital media? (Fun fact: *Wilson Quarterly* used to pride itself on its contribution to print journalism but went to an entirely online format in 2013).]

Cat 2 addition:

In week 4, we refine the research questions we developed in Week 3 and begin to answer them. We first discuss the qualities and scope of a workable research question, and revise our questions, developing several possibilities and selecting the best or combining elements of each. Because Mindich’s essay is fundamentally about the social significance of current events, we tailor our questions to our own discipline-specific concerns. In other words, we shift the focus from news in general to developments in a particular discipline. We then investigate Mindich’s use of statistics and critical sources and research new developments from those sources, for example, the Pew Research Center. We also begin to make use of Joyner Library’s resources and databases, including the introductory library session if we haven’t done that yet.

In Week 5, we draft and revise our answers to our questions, focusing on effectively incorporating source material (3-5 sources) to support our answers. The emphasis is on incorporating source material effectively to engage a discussion happening within a discipline, and identifying and effectively addressing our audience on the model of Mindich’s essay.