**The Parody Project**

**Objective:** You will learn the conventions of a genre in your discipline and write a parody of that genre.

**What is a Parody?**

“Parody” is defined as “an amusingly exaggerated imitation of the style or writer, artist, or genre” (*Compact Oxford English Dictionary*) and “a literary or artistic work that imitates the characteristic style of an author or work” (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*).

**The Situation**

You have been asked by your peers to add to a training module for writers in your major. It’s not your average humdrum training module. Your peers think that the parody, complemented with a source review and with a self-analysis stage, can vividly teach genre conventions.

Your parody can take one of many forms, depending on what genre you choose. You will employ parody strategies and devices, which we will discuss in class. Your parody’s grade will be based on the clarity of your purpose, the quality of your execution, and the articulation of your knowledge of conventions. [This grade explanation could use much work. Just one qualifier—while the parody is the assignment’s reason for being, it is ultimately a low-stakes assignment. It will be graded along with the self-analysis, and it will be weighted no more heavily than the preparatory exercises.]

**Preparatory Exercises**

To parody one of the forms of writing in the discipline you are pursuing, you must become well acquainted with the conventions of the genre you choose. You will complete two preparatory exercises. In the first exercise, you will find and analyze three different composition genres in their discipline. Next, you will choose one of these genres—the one you’ll parody—and find and analyze three more sources in that genre. [This is a quasi-annotated bibliography.]

**Self-Analysis**

In the self-analysis, you will explain the decisions you made while writing the parody. This short paper also will make it clear that you understand the genre conventions.

**Timeline**

Week one: Introduction to parody

Week two: First exercise due

Week three: Second exercise due

Week four: Conference

Week five: Rough draft and polished due

**Grade Breakdown**

20% First Exercise

20% Second Exercise

10% Conference

10% Rough draft

40% Parody and Self-analysis

**Justification**

In “Apologies and Accomodations: Imitation and the Writing Process,” a 1993 essay, Frank Farmer and Phillip Arrington cite many professors and theorists who recognize parody’s educational value. According to the various theorists (whose names you can see in parentheses next to their indirectly quoted or paraphrased passages), parody has the ability to

* “elicit discoveries… through bypassing the conscious mind” (Brett Mandel)
* enable students to practice “new patterns and powers” (Hans Guth)
* have students engage in “critical role-playing” (Farmer and Arrington)
* teach students the conventions of different academic disciplines (David Bartholomae; David Hamilton)

The last bullet is the kicker.

The parody may offer a partial-solution to the problem Liz Wardle wrote about: the difficulty of having students write assignments in courses that do not provide the “exigences” (her word) for these genres.

The assignment might inspire creativity and humor—things that we might have a hard time adding to ENGL 2201.