

THE DISCIPLINE PROJECT

Translating a Scholarly Article in Your Field of Study for a Public Audience *(20% of final grade in the course)*

Adapted from *An Insider's Guide to Academic Writing*, by Miller-Cochran, Stamper, and Cochran. Bedford/St. Martin's P, 2016.

OVERVIEW

The goal of this assignment is to translate a scholarly article written about a current topic in your academic discipline for an educated public audience. Your purpose is to make the findings in that article comprehensible and relevant to an educated, non-expert reader.

There are three parts to this assignment:

- locate, read, and analyze a *recently* published scholarly article in your academic discipline that addresses a topic of interest to you and the general public
- "translate" (rewrite) the article in a new genre appropriate for public audiences
- write a reflective analysis about the choices you made as you wrote your translation

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this assignment, you should be able to

- analyze the rhetorical features of scholarly writing in your discipline and public writing
- Identify the conventions of various genres of scholarly, professional, and public writing
- write with an awareness of how the rhetorical situation and rhetorical context influence the structure, language, and reference conventions (SLRs) writers use to achieve their purpose in writing to specific audiences.

STEP ONE: CHOOSE A SCHOLARLY ARTICLE AND READ IT CAREFULLY

Choose a scholarly article *published in the last two years* so that your topic is relatively current. The topic of the article should address an issue in your field of study that would be of interest to the general public.

After you choose your scholarly article, read it carefully so that you understand its key findings and the basic research methodology the author(s) used to determine them.

STEP TWO: IDENTIFY YOUR NEW AUDIENCE AND GENRE

Next, identify a genre of public writing for your translation of the article and learn how it shapes its information for a general, educated audience. The objective is to shift the audience from an academic one to a public, educated one.

You may choose to write an article in a magazine dedicated to topics in your field, a newspaper article that reports research findings, or even a feature article in one of the better newspapers, such as *The New York Times*.

STEP THREE: ANALYZING YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE AND GENRE CONVENTIONS

Closely analyze two examples of the kind of public writing genre you're attempting to create and identify the characteristics of that genre, or its *conventions*. For example, identify how the example integrates and acknowledges its sources and how that differs from source integration and citation in a scholarly work. Look at how the example phrases its title, how it introduces the topic, the level of diction (word choice) it uses, and where it places the key findings of the scholarly work.

Your project will be assessed according to its ability to reproduce those genre conventions, so you will need to consider the rhetorical choices you must make in the construction of your piece. Consider all four elements of the rhetorical context: author, audience, topic, purpose.

STEP FOUR: WRITING THE "TRANSLATION"

At this point, you're ready to begin translating the article into the new genre. The format, structure, and development of your ideas are contingent upon the genre of public reporting you're attempting to construct. If you plan to write a feature newspaper article, for example, then the article you produce should really look like one that would appear in a newspaper. Try to mirror how the genre would appear in a real situation, to include complying with the way public writing acknowledges its sources. Public writing does not use MLA or APA, but it still acknowledges sources.

STEP FIVE: WRITING THE REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS

Once your translation is complete, compose a reflective analysis about writing to a new audience and in a new genre. As part of your analysis, compare and contrast the rhetorical choices between the scholarly article and the genre you chose for your public audience. Focus on the following: STRUCTURE, LANGUAGE, and REFERENCE CONVENTIONS (SLRs) as you constructed your translation. See *the sample student essay for how to do this*.

Offer a rationale for each of your decisions that connects the features of your translation to your larger rhetorical context. For example, if you had to translate the title of the scholarly article for a public audience, explain why your new title is the most appropriate one for your public audience. If you had to use signaling phrases and hyperlinks to acknowledge sources you reference, explain why.

Finally, reflect upon what you learned by adapting the scholarly findings for a public audience. What skills did you use that were new to you? How might you use those skills in other coursework or in your current or future workplace?

Failure to include a *good faith response* in the reflective analysis results in an automatic 10-point deduction in grade.

EVIDENCE

The Discipline Project does not require you to incorporate secondary sources, but if you feel it is appropriate to your reader and the genre you chose, then do so. Just make sure to use the format for acknowledging sources used in the genre of public writing. In most cases, this will be a hyperlink.

It is more important to think about how you will incorporate evidence from the scholarly article you are translating. Public audiences appreciate a quotation or two, but you will find that you need to rely more heavily on summary and paraphrase in translating the article for a general reader. Summary and paraphrase still require attribution, but public writing often accomplishes this with the signaling phrase.

FORMAT AND DOCUMENTATION

- Use the manuscript format for the genre you chose.
- Use signaling phrases and/or hyperlinks to acknowledge source material so that you comply with the genre conventions of public writing.



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