



Essay One: Observing Memes (100 points; 3 pages)

Assignment: For your first essay, you will observe a community that interests you to determine what memes seem prevalent within that community. *That means that you purposefully will watch a community—this is not a personal narrative essay about a memory.* Choose one community and observe the kinds of ideas or images that show up again and again.

What is community?

Sharon Crowley and Michael Stancliff, the authors of *Critical Situations*, define *community* as “the place where our strongest commitments lie” (p. 9). Your community is more than just the neighborhood where you grew up. You’re a part of many communities: the basketball team in high school, a member of a band, an employee at Starbucks, a Humane Society volunteer, a fan of Nirvana, a nursing major, a Hipster, a Buddhist, a Republican, etc. Think of all of the communities that you *don’t* belong to as well, because sometimes observing a new community allows us to be objective and see people and the ways they write in a new way.

What is a meme?

According to Susan Blackmore’s “Imitation and the Definition of a Meme,” we should define a meme as “cultural information that is copied. . . by imitation.” As Richard Dawkins pointed out when he coined the term “meme” in 1976, ideas, like genes, are selfishly reproduced (think survival of the fittest), so some memes persist while others die out.

Where can I find a meme?

Many people have become familiar with the Internet meme (see the picture above), but you can find memes in real life as well: fashion trends (skinny jeans) and phrases (fail), just to name two. To get started, think about a community you are in (or are interested in). For example, we all live in Ohio, right? Well, you can Google “memes about ohio” to see how our lovely state is represented “virally” online. Are you interested in teen fashion? You can visit stores (at the mall or online) to observe trends. Do you like a certain kind of video game? Observe players (or game-related items) to spot trends.

So, how does this turn into an essay?

Once you’ve finished your observation and look through your notes, you’ll draw conclusions about this community (or how the community is represented)—that’s your argument. After considering who belongs to the community you observed (or who doesn’t) and the content of the meme(s) you found, think about WHY the cultural information you found has become a trend.

Now, you need to your readers to believe what you saw and to come to the same conclusions that you did. What does your observation suggest about this community specifically, about memes, or about society and culture more generally? How does your position as a community member or non-member influence your perspective and interpretation?

Your essay should:

- Include a clear thesis, point, or focus;
- Be organized with an introduction, body, and conclusion to structure the essay;
- Clearly define the community you have observed;
- Explain your methods (how did you select and collect data or complete your observation)
- Incorporate specific observations (primary research, not memories) that reinforce your point;
- Be comprised of at least three pages (about 1000 words);
- Demonstrate your ability to use grammar, punctuation, and formatting suitable for college.
 - o **Format:**
 - Include a header (i.e., your last name and page number in the upper right corner of every page).
 - Include a heading (i.e., your name, my name, the class, and the date on the upper left side of the first page of the essay)
 - Use a standard font like Times New Roman in 12pt size.
 - Double space your essay.
 - Set line spacing at Opt.

This is a primary research assignment. As such, your essay should not:

- ⊗ Include (substantial) secondary research;
- ⊗ Just regurgitate what other researchers have said about your topic;
- ⊗ Be copied (ever) from another source

Remember:

- ✓ When saving your essay, you must choose .doc, .docx, .pdf, or .rtf.
- ✓ Please title your document using your first name. Ex: LaurenDEssay1.doc

Submitting Your Essay:

1. Log on to springboard.uakron.edu
2. Choose our class from your list: English Composition II
3. Click the Dropbox tab at the top
4. Choose Observation Essay (or Essay 1)
5. Click "Add File"
6. Click "Upload"
7. Locate the file wherever you saved it and select it
8. Click "Open"
9. Click "Submit"
10. Verify you have a submission in the Dropbox

Data Set/Field Notes Due for classroom work day: Wednesday, January 22

Complete draft due for workshopping: Wednesday, January 29

Final draft due via Springboard: Sunday, February 9