

Journal Review Assignment

In this assignment, you will research journals that publish research and scholarship in professional writing, technical writing, and rhetoric.

All journals in a field occupy a particular niche. They may focus on research or on practice. They may favor certain research methods or theoretical positions. They almost certainly have guidelines that specify citation styles, length, illustrations, sections (abstract? author bio?), and style (such as prohibitions of gendered language and discouragement of passive voice).

Knowing a journal's niche helps authors determine where to send a manuscript and how to develop the article to meet expectations. It also helps researchers at all stages of the research process know which journals are likely to have the answers to the questions that arise during the research process.

Goals of the Assignment

Your journal review can accomplish several purposes:

- You will know a particular journal's niche in the field. With this knowledge, you will know how to best use the journal in future writing and research tasks.
- Collected reviews of class members will provide the whole class with a resource. In addition to knowing about individual journals, we will have a sense of how the different journals function in the field as a whole and how the journals collectively affect the research agenda and contributions of Professional Writing and Rhetoric.
- You will develop your knowledge of current issues in Professional Writing and Rhetoric by reading what is being published now.
- You may develop some ideas for your own research for this class and beyond.

Due:

Draft, October 2, by beginning of class. One hard copy per group submitted in class. Entire assignment must be outlined and at least 1 page of draft written text must be complete. We will meet to discuss your project progress during class and answer questions; I will evaluate the status and completion of your assignment then. All team members must be present.

Final, October 10, by the beginning of class. One hard copy per group submitted in class, one electronic copy submitted to Blackboard. During class, you will present on your journal research findings with your teammates.

Part 1: Journal Analysis (100 points)

You will work with 2 to 3 colleagues to review a major journal (see a list of journals at the end) in the field.

All team members will **read every issue published in the 2 most recent years of the journal**. For journals that publish only twice a year, read 4 years' worth of issues. You are welcome to read further back, if you have additional questions.

For your review, please describe and analyze:

- Audience, goals, and history: you should read and may quote from statements of purpose, but the best evidence will be from the articles. Does the journal speak primarily to researchers in the academy, practicing professionals, teachers? What about the articles makes

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you draw that conclusion? Who gets published? If you can determine readership (usually membership of an organization), report on that information as well. About how long have the organization and journal been in existence? Why was the organization/journal started?

- Editorial vision: What issues have occupied the journal over the past year? Do you see an editorial vision in the topics (perhaps through groupings or themed issues), or does the journal seem to publish the best submissions whether the articles have a relationship to each other or not? The editor's introduction to each issue may provide some sense of aims for the issue, but you can also draw conclusions by analyzing the articles.
- Research methods: Quantitative or qualitative analyses? What kinds of data do the writers analyze (Surveys? Interviews? Texts?) Do the methods vary within and among articles?
- Intertextuality: How do authors connect with ongoing conversations in the articles? How do other publications affect the purpose and arguments? What journals do authors cite? On average, how many publications do authors cite? What recent books have been reviewed?

The review will be about 1500-2000 words (3-4 pages single-spaced), with the longest section(s) being the analysis of audience, goals, and history and editorial vision. Use examples from specific articles in making claims about the expectations for articles and the contributions of the journal.

Part 2: In-class Presentation (50 points)

You will present your findings about the journal to your colleagues in class on October 7. Feel free to approach the presentation creatively, create handouts, a PowerPoint presentation, or any other format you prefer that you think will best relay your most important findings to your colleagues.

You will have 15-20 minutes for this presentation, including a brief period for questions and answers.

Part 3: Individual and Team Evaluation (50 points)

With your final report, hand in one hard copy of a letter, addressed to me, that evaluates your own and your teammates' participation. You are welcome to seal this in an envelope, if you prefer.

In your self-evaluation, reflect on what you learned, what you found most interesting or challenging about the project, and what questions remained. In your team evaluation, describe the working process with your teammate and evaluate that person's performance in the project. Did he/she contribute equally to the work? Did you work well together? What strengths did the person contribute? What areas were there for improvement?

The letter should be about a page, though could run to two pages if you feel you need the space. This is meant to be brief and instructive, not laborious, though.

These letters will be kept confidential and will not be shared with your team. This is a place for honest reflection on your learning and the teamwork you did. I will, however, consider your team evaluation when determining a final grade for each team member. Team evaluations can impact up to 10% of the final grade.

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Criteria for Evaluation

This assignment will be evaluated as follows.

The Journal Analysis must:

- Summarize what is in the journal AND carefully analyze the kind(s) of work the journal does, as it relates to the questions and requirements outlined in the prompt.
- Show first-hand knowledge of the journal and its contents.
- Make reasonable claims and interpretations based on *specific* evidence.
- Be organized according to the requirements.
- Be professionally prepared; it meets the expectations of the assignment, is edited and free of grammatical and mechanical errors, and the style is standard academic prose.

The In-class Presentation must:

- Be planned and appropriate to your audience (the class)
- Questions from the class must be fielded knowledgeably
- Reflect an equal contribution by each member of the during the spoken portion of the presentation

The Individual and Team Evaluation must:

- Answer the majority of the questions and issues, as prompted
- Thoughtfully reflect on the writer's own work and the work with his/her team

Journals (ones with an asterisk must be chosen)

- *Journal of Business and Technical Communication**
- *Technical Communication Quarterly**
- *Technical Communication*
- *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*
- *Written Communication*
- *Kairos (see note below)*
- *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*

Note: Dr. Doug Eyman is one of the editors and founders of *Kairos* and is therefore a great resource for anyone who chooses this journal. Though you are welcome to ask him supplemental questions about *Kairos* to aid in your own understanding of the journal, you should only do this **after** your analysis of the journal is complete. Please do not meet with him to discuss this assignment as a substitution for your own research.