Disciplinary and Professional Literacies

"Many pedagogical experts argue that schools should switch to teaching the 'four Cs'--critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. More broadly, they believe, schools should downplay technical skills and emphasize general-purpose life skills. Most important of all will be the ability to deal with change, learn new things, and preserve your mental balance in unfamiliar situations. In order to keep up with the world of 2050, you will need not merely to invent new ideas and products but above all to reinvent yourself again and again"

—Yuval Noah Harari, *Twenty-One Lessons for the 21st Century*, 311

Purpose

After looking at our past experiences to understand the knowledge and practices we bring to our class, we are going to think about your future goals and plans by investigating your future jobs/profession/discipline. To do this, you'll locate and analyze a set of sources related to your future job/discipline.

The goal is to use your sources to create a message that provides the audience with an understanding of what knowledge or practices are needed to be successful in your discipline/field/job.

Invention

Answering the above research question will mean finding and using some artifacts. To begging your inquiry, you will:

1. Analyze at least one article from a scholarly journal in your discipline.
2. Analyze at least one article from a trade publication related to your discipline.
3. Analyze at least one textbook from your discipline.

If you have the time and opportunity to do so, you may also:

4. Interview a person who teaches or conducts research in your discipline.
5. Interview a person who "practices" in your discipline or related field.

After locating and analyzing these sources, you'll have lots of material you can then synthesize into a new perspective for your audience. Remember, our goal here is not to repeat what these sources say, but to use these sources to create something for us to say.

These research modules through MSU libraries will help you in your inquiry and research.

Delivery

You're going to make an infographic. Or, to prevent your infographics from becoming too long, you might approach this as an opportunity to produce a series of related infographics.

If you click here, it'll direct you to a series of free infographic programs. I use Piktochart. Of course, if you're versed in Adobe and have a license, you can use it. Above all, be creative!

Your approach and infographic(s) will:

- draw on and synthesize the sources you've located and analyzed
- be rhetorically savvy (with particular attention to these design principles)
- demonstrate an awareness of the characteristics that define infographics
- be accompanied by a well-written cover letter

Arrangement

Bear in mind what we've already talked about regarding paragraph construction and the moves of each particular section of our writing (introduction, summaries, analysis paragraphs, conclusions). Also, don't forget about the importance of claims, evidence, and connections. We've also talked about ordering our claims according to time, space, complexity (simple to complex or vice versa), and according to some process. You'll notice that you can use our discussions around arrangement and paragraph construction as a heuristic in developing your own infographic(s).

Audience

For this project, you should imagine yourself writing to an audience of new MSU students interested in becoming members of your chosen discipline/field. Your infographic should help your audience understand what it takes to be successful in your field/discipline/job.

Style

The style of your writing should reflect your understanding of the rhetorical situation. It might be helpful to take a look at some infographics on the web to understand the essential parts and design elements of successful infographics. You might visit this page for some helpful information about putting together your infographic. Too, the choices you make--from fonts to colors and spacing to icons--should reflect and advance your ideas. In other words, all the design choices you make should help to bridge the gap between your ideas and the audience's thoughts/actions. Here is a useful starting point.

A Final Note

And, if this is the first time you've made an infographic, don't worry! Remember, we're here to learn, not repeat. So, it's ok if your infographic is a hot mess. We document our learning in our cover letters/reflections. Those reflections ask us to take up our essential questions: 1) what did you try to do? 2) how did you try to do it? 3) how well did you do it? And 4) what might you do differently the next time?