**Affecting Change through Academic Discourse**

**Subject area:** English/Language Arts, Composition 1

**Grade level/band**: 11–12

**STUDENT PROMPT SECTION**

1. **Task context:**

Those who wish to communicate effectively have certain ways in which they identify, analyze, and establish rhetorical situations in a discourse. In order for you to become a skilled communicator and to effectively engage in a discourse, you must understand and practice those skills. The following task asks you to identify a social, economic, or political issue that you find interesting and that you would like to affect. You will then join the conversation about that issue in a meaningful way.

Once you have identified an issue, conduct research to determine the conversation that academics are currently having about that issue. Your goal in this stage is not to gather evidence for your argument, but rather to analyze multiple texts’ rhetorical situations. You should compare and contrast those rhetorical situations and describe the collective conversation (the story) of your sources. Ultimately, you will make an argument about how each text’s rhetorical situation affects the overall discourse and identify a gap in the conversation that you can thus fill. To begin to fill the gap, you will establish your own rhetorical situation that argues for a particular change to be made to the discourse.

Keep in mind that to successfully engage in this project, you will need to gather sources with multiple perspectives and keep an open mind about the direction of the discourse. As mentioned above, your job is not to agree or disagree with a particular author’s argument, but rather to capture a snapshot of the discourse that is happening between the multiple entities. Once you have successfully told the story of the overall discourse, you will add your own perspective(s) to the discourse’s existing ones. In this way, you will join the conversation and evolve the discourse.

For this project, you will write multiple drafts and engage in a process of peer review and discussion. It is important to follow the instructions for each draft and to utilize your peer’s feedback to improve upon your paper. Remember, writing does not have to happen in isolation; most academic writers write within discourse communities and use feedback from others to develop their ideas and arguments.

1. **The task:**

After reviewing course materials and researching three academic texts on an issue of your choice, write a 3- to 4-page paper that explains the issue’s rhetorical situation and evaluates the “gap” in

the research. Then, determine how you might enter the conversation by establishing your own rhetorical situation that adds your perspective and argument to the discourse. In your paper, predict how your contribution to the conversation might ultimately transform and evolve the overall discourse. Ultimately, your paper should describe the rhetorical situations of each of your three sources, discuss how those three rhetorical situations come together to form a larger one, and then add your own rhetorical situation to transform the discourse of the larger one.

Your paper should:

* Clearly describe multiple sides of an issue.
* Be organized, coherent, and address the appropriate audience and purpose of your research.
* Make source-based arguments and include evidence, quotations, and passages from three academic works.
* Cite your sources correctly in the text of your paper and create a Works Cited page using MLA format or another style that your instructor chooses.
* Demonstrate a strong knowledge of rhetoric and “research as inquiry” as taught through course materials.
* Employ standards of English grammar and usage.
1. **Materials/resources**:

To complete this assignment, you will need three academic sources (journals, books, or articles, for example, accessed through the library or online academic databases) that collectively paint a picture of the academic conversation surrounding a particular issue. Your texts should represent multiple perspectives, and you should be able to clearly identify gaps in the collective’s research.

1. **Time requirements:**

You will have 3 to 5 weeks to complete this task, depending on your class schedule. You should plan to spend several hours out of class finding sources, reading them, and organizing your ideas.