Unit 2 - Circulation Analysis Essay (3 pages minimum)

Our second writing project makes up a sequence of readings and assignments that build up to you composing an edited **Circulation Analysis**(at least 3 pages long) on a text of your choosing. Your essay will use lateral reading strategies to research how this text is part of a ‘networked and online community.’

In our last unit we began with basic rhetorical terms (audience, context, purpose, message, rhetor) and a review of terms that specifically focus on multimodal forms of composing and sharing (the 5 different modes). With this next unit, we will begin focusing on critical research and media navigation literacies, including a review of “reading laterally,” practice with “citation chasing,” and familiarization with the information cycle.

The goal here then is to not only understand how texts communicate, but to trace how they are published and circulate information ways that impact our social and cultural worlds.. Another way of looking at this project, is we are investigating how texts persuade, how digital technologies and online sharing impact that persuasion, and how that persuasion leads to ideological change for our world.

Such study, of course, will be important not only for your ability to research and find sources related to your final project (research for this is coming up in Unit 3), but also for imagining how your own voice will enter the conversation in order to research and advocate for your own purposes.

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***Language of Circulation***

Circulation is a key component of other concepts we’ve learned in RHET 102 thus far.

Lateral Readingmeans moving beyond the text you are looking at to identify further context about a specific text.

Filter bubbles create ideological frames through intellectual isolation. They are created through the algorithmic curation of websites and social media.

Information cycles help us understand how texts and source types circulate, and why they are circulated by different people at different times.

Citation chasingand reading for research clues are strategies that help us backtrack to identify the original source of the information, or to find earlier, relevant sources. This is important because the original source, and its intended use or purpose, can get easily lost as a text circulates digitally, especially with such speed via social media.

*Three Components of a Circulation Analysis*

**PART 1: IDENTIFY**

Identify Related Texts

After you’ve reviewed the initial text for this assignment, and taken some good notes on its content and rhetorical components, identify the various texts related to or connected to this podcast. While we usually think about analyzing a text, like a book, in a static way that examines only the elements that are one the page, circulation analysis asks you to attend to various connected texts and their mediums. You can identify these related texts through lateral reading strategies, such as:

* Clicking on and reading embedded media:
  + What related sources, articles, social media, or websites does the text directly link out to? Relatedly, what mediums (Youtube/News Article/Wiki page/ etc.) are these other texts published on? Read and explore this media, and remember to bring read from (and take note of!) the various technologies used to publish and share the new content. For example, if a Youtube or Vevo video is embedded on a website, click on the video to go to the Youtube page from there to see what other texts and responses you can find. Perhaps there is a description of the video or a series of user comments that are helpful for better understanding the primary text.
* Searching for key terms, events, people, or locations described in the text:
  + Use a search tool (like Google or DuckDuckGo) to find additional information related to the primary text.
  + Track down recent news sources related to the topics described in the primary text. How do issues related to a particular post come up in news searches? How do particular key words or phrases resonate with other popular searches or trending news stories?
  + Type the topic or key terms into social media searches (such as Facebook or Twitter). What stories/memes/tweets/hashtags/photos/threads do you see?
  + Are there any Youtube videos, Ted Talks, or other forms of video presentations related to this information? What comes up?
  + Are their related podcasts? What are they?

NOTE: You don’t need to use every strategy question or prompt above to identify related texts. Some strategies will work better for certain texts or topics over others.

After you have spent some time with lateral reading strategies, choose 4-5 of the related texts you find most compelling to focus your analysis on and save these links in a Word Document. You should select a range of mediums for these connected texts, as opposed to, say, five news articles from the same source.

**PART 2: CONNECT**

Connect Related Texts to Expand Contextual Understanding

Compose a 3 page analysis that considers how these texts “outside” and “alongside” of the original text have reshaped your understanding of the original text. Analyze the connected/related texts both in terms of the new information you gathered from them, and the role of the medium in shaping your relationship to that new information. Below are some questions to help you jumpstart your analysis:

Analyzing Content:

* What connected/related texts seem to be most important to understanding the primary text and why?
* Where do these connect/related texts fall on an information cycle? Is there a range of mediums or source types across an information cycle, or are they all clustered at one or two points on a cycle? What might that suggest about the role or value of these connected/related texts in developing additional information about the topic of the podcast?
* What additional context do the related texts offer to a reader? And how may that additional context shape what how a reader cares about or engages with the topic?
* Identify some of the key conversations surrounding the topic, based on your search. How does the primary text, or podcast, support, challenge, or digress from these other conversations?
* Who else was involved in the larger conversation about the podcast? What perspective did they add to it?
* What content or ideas related to the podcast seem to circulate the most? What does these that tell you about public knowledge and perception of the topic?

Analyzing Medium:

* Why are certain texts directly linked out to the website? Why may the rhetor(s) of the page on which the podcast appears choose to link directly to other mediums given the content contained there?
* Are other connected texts referenced more “indirectly” than a link, such as a reference to a person, time, event, study, etc.? Why is some information and sources more directly available than others?
* As you searched, was there a particular medium that was more useful than others at conveying or articulating certain forms of information? Explain.
* Are there any response options embedded in the sources, such as an email option or a comment thread? Why may different mediums invite different forms of responses from readers?
* What role, if any, did social media platforms have in how people approached this topic?
* What is the pace of publication and circulation for the related content and how does this pace relate to the particular medium the information was distributed on?

**PART 3: REFLECT**

Reflect on What You Discovered through Your Circulation Analysis

Complete your analysis essay by composing an additional one-two page reflection that considers your responsibility as a reader/actor/composer in an online circulation context. The following questions are designed to help get you started with this reflection but this list is in no way definitive.

* What were the most significant discoveries you made about reading texts that circulate online?
* After looking at outside websites, links, forums, and searches, what perspective have your gained about how information circulates in the twenty-first century? What do you hope to remember as you continue your reading and research in RHET102
* Did you run into any questions about validity or credibility? What kinds of mediums seemed to bring up those concerns and why do you think that is?
* What did lateral reading strategies make possible that standard reading practices ( as in reading from left to right and up and down on a page) do not?
* Were there any perspectives or content that you were more resistant to listening to? Which perspectives and why (consider your own values and ideologies here)? How do you hope to move forward when you find content that you are resistant to or that you disagree with?
* Given your analysis, what forms of content, stories, videos, or posts tend to circulate more often? Why might this be?
* Take some time to compare your feed with someone else’s: Does your feed appear dramatically different than theirs? What is being shown to you but not to them? Speculate about why this might be the case.
* How does what is being shared with you shape the forms of composing you are invited to do on social media?

**Learning Outcomes**

(What you should aim to learn/accomplish with this essay)

The Circulation Analysis will:

* Convey the text’s main points accurately, objectively, and concisely within an appropriate length.
* Accurately describe the rhetorical situation of the texts being analyzed.
* Provide appropriate context and explanation of key terms to show an awareness of the audience.
* Incorporate descriptions, direct quotes, and/or paraphrases effectively and accurately to meet an academic citation genre of choice (e.g. APA, APA, or Chicago).
* Demonstrate clarity and organization.
* Make purposeful grammar and mechanics choices that convey an academic ethos.