WP2: Observing a New Space

Observing is a good way to collect data and draw conclusions about the world around you. In WP2, we will practice drawing conclusions from observation.

The Basics
- This assignment requires a lot of preparation before writing. To prepare, you'll need to:
    - Choose a space to observe. This space must be **new to you**. It cannot be somewhere that you have spent time in the past. I suggest choosing an **online space** because this is an online class. Consider an online forum or group that is focused on something that you are interested in or want to learn more about. In the past, students have chosen sites focused on video games, TV shows, hobbies (such as photography or building robots), or news discussion. In order to make it easier to observe the spaces, I suggest the following criteria:
        - The site should be active. The more active the better. If people only post once or twice a day, this assignment will be really hard to do.
        - The site should be user-focused. No one person (or small group of people) should control everything. Blogs, video sites, or magazine-style sites are bad choices for this assignment.
        - NOTE: If you want to choose an offline space or a site that doesn't meet the above criteria and have a good reason for doing so, please talk to me about it.
    - You will be required to observe this space, first as an "observer" and then as a "participant observer." As an observer, simply go through and read or look at various activity on the site. Try to get a feel for what is "good" participation and what is "bad" participation according to site rules or norms. Then, try to join the activity. This may include posting, responding to posts, or doing whatever else your space does. Consider sending important members of the space private messages to get their opinions on what the community considers good or bad participation.
    - Take notes as you observe. Of course, this means written notes, but I also suggest taking screen captures of important interactions or posts (they might get lost or deleted later, so it's best to save them).
- After you have chosen a space and observed it thoroughly, reflect upon what you've seen to come up with a **surprising or unique central claim about what the site values** in their interactions. What is important to them as a community? How do they show what's important?
- **Support your claim with evidence** from your notes. I want to stress this point: you will not use all of the notes you have taken. You should only focus on the notes that support your central claim. As with WP1, your support can come in many forms, but the most common will be links, quotes, and screen captures.
- Clearly **connect your evidence to your claim**. As with WP1, you want to make this connection as clear as possible. How does the evidence show that your claim is true?

The Audience
The audience for WP2 is a little more complex than WP1. Consider your reader someone interested in becoming a member of the space but someone who does not know anything about the space yet. As you write, think of what this audience is likely to know and not know about the space.

Additional Requirements
All drafts must:
- Be a minimum of **1500 words.**
- Include at **least one visual**—most likely a screen shot.
- Be double spaced
- Use Times New Roman font
- Have 1-inch margins
- Have a file name with your name, the assignment, and the draft (i.e. Ryan Shepherd WP1 First Draft)

Learning Objectives
In this assignment, you will learn:

- To gather data through primary research (observation and interviews).
- To take notes on primary data.
- To direct observation for specific outcomes.
- To analyze observation data and find patterns.
- To make a claim and support the claim with evidence.
- To incorporate screen captures as evidence in a written text.

Grading Criteria
Your assignment will be graded on the following:

- **Selection of New Space:** The space is new, active, and user-focused. It is appropriate for this assignment.
- **Familiarity with Space:** It is clear that you have spent enough time familiarizing yourself with the space. You understand their rules and norms. You do not simply have a superficial understanding of the space based on preconceived ideas.
- **Surprising and Unique Central Claim**: You make a clear claim about what your space values. This claim is not obvious when just glancing at the site. This claim is explicitly stated (and not just implied) and helps to <u>make your reader see your space in a new way</u>.
- **Focus on Your Claim:** Your paper stays focused on your central claim. You do not use evidence unrelated to the claim and do not discuss unrelated information.

- **Adequate Support for Your Claim**: You have used evidence to support your central claim, such as screen captures, quotes, or links. This evidence is clear and explained for your readers.
- **Connection between Your Evidence and Claim:** Your evidence has a clear connection to your claim. This connection is explained fully and is clear for your readers.
- **Content Organization**: You have organized the content of your paper in a reasonable way. Your information is easy to understand, and your points are easy to follow. There is both an introduction and a conclusion. The paper clearly presents a central claim, and the content is organized around that claim. Paragraphs are ordered in such a way that they cannot be reordered at random, but instead provide logical transitions between ideas.
- **Attention to Assignment**: You adhere to the assignment as presented above, including main objectives, word count, attention to audience, and the additional requirements. You clearly understand what the assignment is asking you to do and are attempting to do it.
- **Manuscript preparation**: You have made changes between drafts that reflect attention to both instructor and peer comments. You have made an effort to improve your paper.

Drafts
- **First Drafts** are due on **Friday, October 18th.** First drafts are graded only on "The Basics" above.
- **Revised Drafts** are due on **Wednesday, October 23rd.** Revised drafts are graded only on attempts to respond to comments from the first drafts.
- **Final Drafts** are due on **Wednesday, October 30th.** Final drafts are graded on the "Grading Criteria" above.