

“Who You Gonna Call”...for Papers The Scholarly Audience Assignment

Our Purpose as a Class: Presumably you’ve been writing academic papers for scholarly audiences for years now, but academic discourse at the graduate or professional level operates under a slightly different set of expectations. This assignment will introduce you to these expectations by asking to write an essay in response to an actual call for papers that exists in the real world. We begin the course with this assignment because it’s closest to what you’re already familiar with as an undergraduate scholar and therefore provides an occasion to review best practices for the writing process (invention, drafting, revision, etc.) and argumentative writing in general (organization, cueing your reader, etc.).

Your Purpose as a Writer: To craft an original scholarly argument intended to make a new and original contribution to an academic conversation currently occurring in your field/discipline. Rather than summarizing the ideas of others, as you might for an undergraduate seminar paper, you must utilize research to advance your own argument in *response* to the ideas of others.

Context: Academics aspire to generating new, groundbreaking ideas, but they cannot do so in a vacuum; rather, they must situate a new idea in the context of and in response to the work that past academics have done before. They must strike a delicate balance, using enough sources to support and contextualize their arguments so that an academic discourse community will accept them, but not relying on them so much that they do not say anything new. That’s why academic publications (journals) and conferences exist; they allow scholars who study similar issues to be in conversation with one another about their most recent ideas and hopefully work together to push the conversation forward. Unlike employees in a traditional workplace, scholars do not work together or see each other regularly; thus, it is through publishing and presenting at conferences that they communicate their ideas to each other. These academic discourse communities can be, and often are, very small and narrowly focused. Someone getting a PhD in film studies can’t just say they study “film”; they have to carve out a niche for themselves like “film adaptation of novels” or “1960s New Wave film.” Reflecting this niche-culture, academic journals and conferences often specialize or put out a specific Call for Papers (CFP) in the hopes of bringing together scholars who can participate in that specific conversation. A CFP or journal can also take a broader or interdisciplinary issue, theme, or topic to attract diverse perspectives from multiple disciplines. The journal *Victorian Studies*, for example, publishes articles that all relate to English culture in the nineteenth century, but scholars in history, literature, fine arts, law, science, etc. may author them.

Writing Task: Find a **Call for Papers (CFP)** for an academic conference or journal and respond to that call by writing a **researched argument** of around 2500 words (6-8 pages double-spaced) that contributes *original* ideas to the academic conversation on that particular topic.

Tips:

- There are lots of databases like <http://www.cfplist.com/> or <http://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/> with lots of CFPs, so take the time to look for one that you're genuinely interested in and can actually respond to without much of a stretch.
- Closely examine the CFP. What is it asking for? The more focused and specific a CFP is, the easier it is to formulate a topic; additionally, the longer the CFP, the clearer you will be on what the panel is about. Once you have chosen your CFP and done preliminary research to familiarize yourself with the current scholarly conversations occurring about the CFP's focus, you'll want to create a research question for yourself.
- You should incorporate at least **six outside sources** into your paper. At least three of these sources should be scholarly journal articles published within the last ten years, and at least two should be (excerpts from) scholarly books published within the last fifteen. You are welcome to use popular sources if appropriate, but they should not take the place of peer-reviewed scholarship. If there are highly influential sources about your topic published before then, the more recent sources will have to cite them and therefore lead you to them.
- Please follow the documentation system appropriate to your academic discipline (MLA, APA, Chicago Manual of Style, etc.) and have a separate works cited page at the end of your paper.
- While I encourage you to use your research, this is not a "research paper" in a traditional sense: you are not writing simply to present others' research. I can read that on my own. Instead, you are *using* research to establish the importance of this topic and to advance the conversation on it through your own contribution(s)—in other words, a perspective I can't find anywhere else. Furthermore, your thesis/argument needs to be clear to the reader and you need to actually articulate how your new work adds to or changes the conversation.
- Remember that the audience for this paper consists of other scholars in the same field; this means you shouldn't spend time trying to explain every little detail if you think someone else in the same discipline/field would already know or understand something (i.e. if it's a basic concept or widely accepted theory). Avoid summary or pure exposition of any kind; rather, judiciously reference your sources and other scholars to demonstrate that *you're* familiar with the conversation.

Due Date: Monday February 8th.

Upload to Turnitin assignment portal on Blackboard before class.