

Class Secretary/Meeting Minutes Analysis Assignment

Overview & Purpose

This assignment asks you to study, practice, and analyze a common form of professional writing: meeting minutes. Meeting minutes are “the written or recorded documentation that is used to inform attendees and non-attendees what was discussed and what happened during a meeting” (Heathfield). While not particularly difficult, taking minutes requires the minute-taker (secretary) to make decisions on how the meeting is represented to audiences. In fact, because of the many potential audiences and purposes of meeting minutes, David Ingham claims that meeting minutes “represent one of the most complex rhetorical situations imaginable” (229). As such, this activity invites us to [1] study the conventions of the meeting minutes genre and determine how we can work within a genre’s flexibilities and rigidities for our own purposes, [2] practice taking meeting minutes, a common form of professional writing, and [3] analyze how the decisions we make in our writing shape our readers’ perceptions and knowledge.

Part I: Study the Meeting Minutes Genre

As a class, we’ll study examples of meeting minutes in order to more fully grasp the genre’s purposes, conventions, flexibilities, and rigidities. We’ll also discuss relationships between these examples and the contexts in which they circulate, and then brainstorm ways we might adapt the genre so it supports our particular context.

Part II: Take Meeting Minutes

On your designated days as class secretary, you’ll take minutes of the class session. As you take minutes, consider the multiple possible audiences of the minutes (e.g. present classmates and absent classmates) and the multiple possible purposes of the minutes (e.g. to document class discussions, record verbal assignment instructions, serve as a reference point for classmates both present and absent). Keep these multiple audiences and purposes in mind as you decide *what* to include in your minutes and *how* to include it, as these decisions will be important to note in part III. Rather than providing you with a specific structure for the minutes, *you* will determine the format of the document. Refer to the examples we studied to help you decide what to write and how to write it. Save your minutes as a PDF. The file name of the PDF should reflect the date of the minutes (02.12.18.pdf, for example). **Within 24 hours of the class meeting, please upload your PDF to the Canvas discussion “Meeting Minutes.”**

Part III: Analyze Your Minutes

Recall Ingham’s claim on meeting minutes’ complex rhetorical situations (see above). Based on your experience taking minutes, how do you respond to Ingham’s statement? To support your claim, review Ingham’s article and discuss how you decided *what* to include (content) and *how* you included it (style, word choice, format, etc.).

Other questions to consider in your analysis:

- How do these minutes capture a particular narrative of the class session?
- How “True” or “true” are these minutes? That is, what do they not capture, and how would including other points in the minutes change the narrative, function, purpose, and/or audience of the minutes? Consider differences between truth and accuracy.

- What claim(s) might you abstract from this experience about professional/technical communication, genre, and/or meeting minutes?
- What else would you like to discuss about this experience?

Submit your analysis in a professional memo written to me. Also, for a thorough, well-supported, and detailed response, I imagine you'll need the equivalent of at least 1 full page single-spaced. **Email me your memo and a copy of your minutes as a single attachment within one week of the class session you recorded.**