

## The Assignment:

### Project #3: *The Infosphere Probe*

Assigned: Wk. 6    Due: Wk. 9

Think about it. Information is all around you, surrounding you, circulating on your phone, your computer, in your mind. Information permeates every experience you have. Information arrives to you from the evening news, from calls home to your family, from your social media feeds, from the signs you see on the street and on TV. The information you encounter helps to expose you to new ideas or to repeat old ones. This information might try to sell you on some product; it may present an event in a particular frame or lens or narrative; it may try to persuade you to believe in a particular point of view; it might even attempt to mislead you or to deceive you in some way. Undoubtedly, though, the information a person encounters helps to determine that person's opinions on social, cultural and political issues that have real-life impacts on the world we all contribute to. The information a person is exposed to, then, goes a long way toward influencing that person's approach to their world and to particular issues.

This assignment challenges you to *probe* these ideas by investigating an *infosphere* to assess a conversation happening in our culture surrounding some issue of social, political or wider cultural importance. An *infosphere* is a conversation surrounding a particular topic that occurs on Twitter, on the evening news, in conversations on the street, in coffee shops, in all realms in which people communicate with one another, both online and off. The conversation you investigate may take on a variety of forms, but a good place to start might be in venturing a possible answer to the question: *what is the most important social or cultural issue currently facing our society?* To assess a conversation from a variety of information streams we as information citizens encounter on a daily basis, you will survey and assess: (A) two peer-reviewed academic journal articles that relate to your public policy issue; (B) a popular news article from a newspaper or web-based news site, national or local; (C) Two opinion articles published online that make diverging arguments regarding your topic (D) two Tweets or similar social media posts, (E) two news programs or television talk show segments (likely found on YouTube), (F) one YouTube video that does not take the form of a news show, and lastly (G) two streams of information this assignment hasn't yet formally called for of your own original choosing (students in the past have found commercials, advertisements, political cartoons, songs, poems, stories, articles from *The Onion* and other satire news sites, etc., but be creative and push boundaries if possible; nothing is off limits here. Bonus points if you ask a parent, a guardian, a friend, or a professor for their perspectives on your issue, or if you overhear something on the bus, in the fast-food line or in the hallway. These are streams of information too).

When you've located the above materials, cite them using proper MLA format (see Purdue OWL resources), and then write a short paragraph for each source type or component letter (ex. write a single

paragraph for the two Tweets/social media posts you've found, not a paragraph for each Tweet, though you will write an individual paragraph for each of your two unique materials; you'll have **8 paragraphs total**). Each analysis paragraph will **probe and explore *any or all of the following questions***: What types of information are contained here? Is the information opinion, speculation, factual, scientific, descriptive, narrative, etc.? What is the purpose or motive of the source? What is its currency, authority, relevancy, or circulation? Who is its audience? Who might agree/disagree/respond? Your contribution will be assessed based upon the level of detail within your analysis as well as the engagement with the learning objectives of the assignment that you display.