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Résumé de l'article

The article describes a publicly oriented writing assignment that can be adapted across disciplinary contexts. The assignment is linked to the JSTOR Daily publication with its tagline “where news meets its scholarly match.” Emulating the style of writing published in this open-access online context, students produce informative writing that contextualizes contemporary issues by drawing on applicable scholarship. As JSTOR Daily publishes a wide range of topical content, student writers can use the genre to explore a variety of topics and perspectives found across the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. This assignment can either stand-alone as a piece of web-based, potentially multi-modal, public writing, or it can be used as a starting point that supports heuristic learning as students write for this public genre then move on to write on the same topic in a scholarly genre. Teaching materials, including a sample assignment sheet and workshop prompts, are appended.

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Article

The *JSTOR Daily* Project: Building Genre Awareness through Heuristic Learning

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Abstract

The article describes a publicly oriented writing assignment that can be adapted across disciplinary contexts. The assignment is linked to the *JSTOR Daily* publication with its tagline "where news meets its scholarly match." Emulating the style of writing published in this open-access online context, students produce informative writing that contextualizes contemporary issues by drawing on applicable scholarship. As *JSTOR Daily* publishes a wide range of topical content, student writers can use the genre to explore a variety of topics and perspectives found across the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. This assignment can either stand-alone as a piece of web-based, potentially multi-modal, public writing, or it can be used as a starting point that supports heuristic learning as students write for this public genre then move on to write on the same topic in a scholarly genre. Teaching materials, including a sample assignment sheet and workshop prompts, are appended.

Introduction

The need to prepare young people to communicate with stakeholder audiences scattered across the public landscape is clear. For example, examinations of citizen science often focus on rhetoric and communication (e.g., Spoel 2021; Roche et al. 2020) and a recent special issue of the *Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning* that focuses on the public communication of science (e.g., Kiernan 2023). Output like this compels educators to ask how we might we empower sudents to draw together analytical skills and ethical sensibilities in a way that prepares them for sustained civic engagement. Further, how might we design assessment structures that encourage students to see connections between public issues and scholarly research?

In what follows, I will describe a publicly oriented writing assignment that can be adapted across disciplinary contexts. This assignment—The *JSTOR Daily* Project—can stand alone or it may scaffold into an academic writing assignment within a single class in any discipline. In the latter case, the public writing component has the potential to become a heuristic tool that enables students to develop 1) increased awareness of audience and purpose as they make the rhetorical choices involved with pivoting between genres and 2) stronger understandings of the relationships between genre, social action, and knowledge production. I developed the *JSTOR Daily* Project (JDP) while teaching at a STEM-dominated private research university in the United States. Within that context, I was always looking for inroads for integrating civic engagement and scholarly research activities in an intermediate writing course. Using public writing as a springboard into academic writing empowers students to understand the interconnectedness of public and academic issues and debates. Accordingly, students are better prepared to effectively participate in disciplinary discourse and to develop a deeper understanding of the concept of genre. Teaching materials, including a sample assignment sheet and workshop prompts, are appended.

About *JSTOR Daily*: An open access online publication

It is first important to describe the type of writing *JSTOR Daily* publishes. An understanding of the publication—primarily its organization and content—will help readers develop an understanding of the site's pieces as belonging to a certain genre. *JSTOR Daily* is the public arm of the JSTOR digital library. The "about" section of the website characterizes the publication as follows:

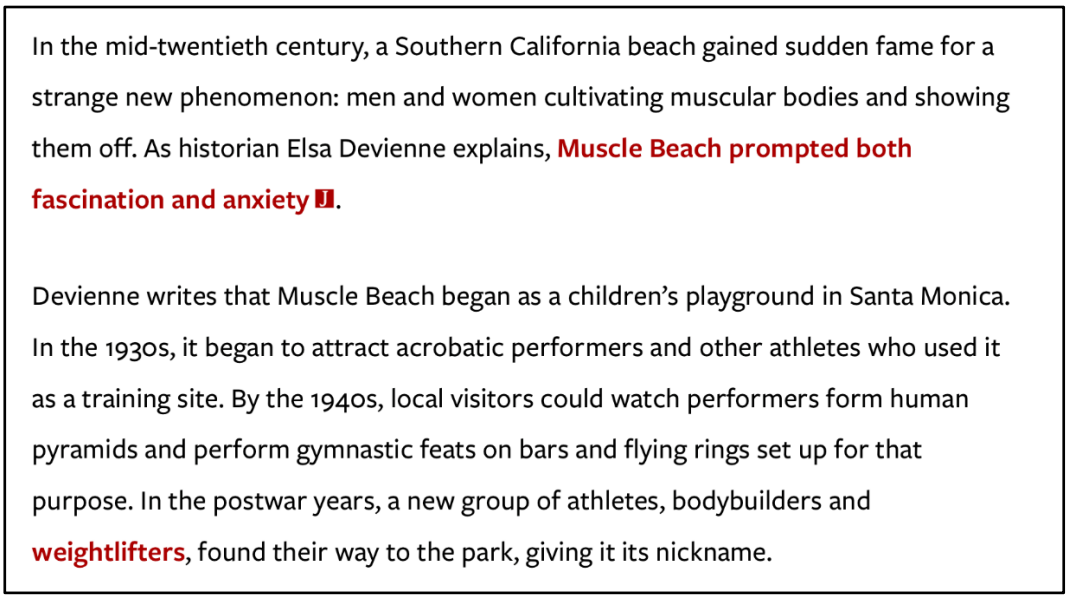
> *JSTOR Daily* is an online publication that contextualizes current events with scholarship. Drawing on the richness of JSTOR's digital library of academic journals, books, images, primary sources, research reports, and other material, *JSTOR Daily* stories provide background—historical, scientific, literary, political, and otherwise—for understanding our world. All of our stories contain links to free, publicly accessible research on JSTOR.

The goal of contextualizing and understanding the world around us is, of course, at the centre of all teaching and learning done in university classrooms. Whether this is a deep dive into rhetorical analysis, theorizations of institutionalized racism, or the problem of algorithmic bias, curricular choices across the disciplines are very much in step with this general project.

JSTOR Daily stories are organized into broad categories such as Science & Technology, Business & Economics, Politics & History, and Education & Society. These categories are further broken into a variety of sub-sections such as natural science, technology, sustainability and the environment, social

history, religion, etc. These categories and sub-sections are further supplemented by dedicated columns, such as Unfolding AI, which "provides broad context for making sense of the risks and opportunities of AI," or Lingua Viva, which "considers where language lives now and how fast it can change…within and because of sociocultural contexts and events."

Across these categories and columns, all *JSTOR Daily* stories have a recognizable set of features. Each piece is tagged by category, has a relatively short title, a more descriptive subtitle, an image, and the estimated read time is included in the byline. In addition, a series of social media portals are listed below the byline, and the stories tend to include at least one pre-fab Tweet that can be accessed and disseminated by clicking on the Twitter bird in the margin. Another notable visual feature is the use of red font and tiny logos to demarcate information derived from scholarly sources that are housed in the JSTOR digital library. For example, a 2022 *JSTOR Daily* article entitled "Gay Panic on Muscle Beach," draws heavily on the scholarly work of Elsa Devienne to contextualize mid-twentieth century reactions to American body building. Looking at Figure 1, we can see that Devienne's work is cited by use of bold red hypertext font that becomes underlined when one hovers the cursor over it. These hypertext notations are further demarcated by a tiny red J logo, which indicates that the source material is archived in the JSTOR digital library. Relatedly, all material cited by *JSTOR Daily* writers becomes open access by extension, which has notable accessibility and information literacy implications.


In the mid-twentieth century, a Southern California beach gained sudden fame for a strange new phenomenon: men and women cultivating muscular bodies and showing them off. As historian Elsa Devienne explains, **Muscle Beach prompted both fascination and anxiety**.

Devienne writes that Muscle Beach began as a children's playground in Santa Monica. In the 1930s, it began to attract acrobatic performers and other athletes who used it as a training site. By the 1940s, local visitors could watch performers form human pyramids and perform gymnastic feats on bars and flying rings set up for that purpose. In the postwar years, a new group of athletes, bodybuilders and **weightlifters**, found their way to the park, giving it its nickname.

Figure 1.

Teaching the *JSTOR Daily* Project

This assignment (Appendix A) can be adopted in two different ways: 1) as a stand-alone piece of web-based, potentially multi-modal, public writing, or 2) as a starting point for a scaffolded foray into academic writing. I will describe how I have used the assignment in a scaffolded manner, which, being the more detailed of the two options, serves as an illustration of both approaches. The scaffolded approach accomplishes two interrelated goals: 1) It helps student-writers better understand the contours of participating in disciplinary discourse and 2) It helps them develop a deeper understanding of the concept of genre. These types of learning goals are often found within writing courses, and they are also valuable in any disciplinary context where writing is used as a mode of assessment.

When using the scaffolded approach, it makes sense to assign the JDP early in the term. This allows sufficient time for students to research, draft, and revise multiple papers within a single term. When introducing the JDP, it is useful to prime students for thinking about the interrelatedness of audience, purpose, content, and genre. This, of course, involves a larger understanding of the rhetorical situation. I have often drawn on Charles Bazerman (2015) to raise questions about "how we perceive the situation, what more we can understand about it, how we can formulate our goals, and what strategies we may take in our utterances" (p. 36). These what, how, and why questions are central to understanding new genres and conceptualizing writing as conversational inquiry. This, Bazerman suggests, can help to reveal what we may be able to do with our writing, how we do it, and why it matters (p. 36). To begin this process, I start with a workshop where students "excavate" the *JSTOR Daily* site.

The "excavation workshop" (Appendix B) guides students through noticing how the interface is organized, thinking through its organizational rationale, exploring content-based sections, identifying topical areas of interest, thinking about what defines the "*JSTOR Daily* genre," and imagining themselves writing in that genre. I accomplish this by offering a discussion of the genre concept, then instructing students to form small groups and collaborate to build a list of shared qualities they have observed across the *JSTOR Daily* articles they have reviewed so far. This typically starts with students noticing organizational and linguistic characteristics and their noticing evolves to encompass rhetorical and content-based characteristics as they become more familiar with the site. Most of this workshop is organized around giving time for small group conversations, circulating to confer and answer questions, then coming back together for a full group conversation. This works

well in smaller classes of 20-30 students, but this workshop could also be assigned as online, asynchronous group work in larger classes. Regardless of specific logistics, these conversations introduce students to the recursive cycle of reading, writing, and thinking that will define their work as they complete the JDP and other writing assignments. They start by reading genre samples, take preliminary notes on genre conventions, discuss, and repeat.

Once students are building an understanding of genre as a concept and how to compare, understand, and otherwise analyze genres, they move on to identify a topic and an audience for their own project. At this point in the writing process, students are relatively comfortable with the *JSTOR Daily* genre, and they are starting to envision how they might contribute to this larger project. Creating the conditions for students to locate their writing as a part of an ongoing, visible online project goes a long way toward making the work feel authentic and agentive. It creates space for students to write like their professors do: in response to a larger disciplinary and/or social need. To support all of this, I developed an invention workshop (Appendix C), which invites students to engage with this question: Why does this essay need to be written? Much research underlines the value of teaching writing in terms of authentic rhetorical contexts (e.g., Wardle 2009; Bean and Melzer 2021; Lauer and Brumberger 2019). The invention workshop, then, asks students to reverse engineer a social exigence and use their knowledge of the *JSTOR Daily* genre to craft an appropriate response. This workshop asks students to engage with questions such as: Why do you find the topic interesting, exciting, troubling, or puzzling? Why are you drawn to the topic? How or why is it "of the moment"? Once students start to conceptualize their own interest in a topic, they can start to imagine themselves contributing to its surrounding debates, decoding its complexities, and otherwise sharing vital information with a public audience.

Moving further along this trajectory, I guide students through the "audience and tone" workshop (Appendix D), which invites them to think about how a writer's rhetorical or linguistic choices cultivate a tone that is consistent with their purpose and audience. Here, students work in small groups to examine excerpts from published *JSTOR Daily* articles and engage with discussion questions. Once again, this type of exercise works best in small classes, but it could be adapted for online, asynchronous use in larger classes. Taken all together, these workshops give students the space to develop audience and genre awareness they can transfer, adapt, and otherwise repurpose within other writing contexts. In cases where the JDP is bundled with a subsequent academic writing assignment, students are given an immediate opportunity to apply this theoretical knowledge as they pivot to write about the same social phenomena while engage with wholly different audiences,

purposes, and rhetorical strategies. This is to say, the scaffolded approach gives students practical experience in differentiating the rhetorical strategies used in different genres.

At its core, the scaffolded approach bridges what William Covino (1988) has referred to as "knowledge-as-information" and "knowledge-as-exploration" (54). The "information" piece manifests in two ways: students are crafting a piece of writing whose purpose is to inform and they are applying their technical writing knowledge in the process. On the "exploration" end of things, the students are exploring and expanding their knowledge of genre as an analytical lens.

Impressions of the *JSTOR Daily* Project

This assignment has the potential to immerse students in authentic, agentive writing contexts, which helps with the emotional management that comprises any writing process. In my experience, this value only deepens when the JDP is used as a springboard into academic writing. By way of conclusion, I will now discuss how the assignment yields some pragmatic, time related affordances and how it supports some common learning outcomes.

When using the scaffolded approach, there is value to the fact that students only go through the topic selection process once. This means that they can start writing the second assignment more immediately. Not only do they have the topic in hand, but they have already learned a great deal about the subject. More importantly, since students have already used more familiar linguistic and rhetorical approaches when crafting their public-facing informative essay, they are better prepared to delineate and engage with the conventions of academic writing when they start the second essay. This is to say that they have a personal understanding of the fact that their second essay must be qualitatively different because of its different purpose and audience. For example, shifting from public to academic writing allows for a deeper understanding of how genre, audience, context, and purpose shape citation practices, format, use of evidence, linguistic and rhetorical approach, etc. And in creating space for student-writers to explore a single topic from multiple angles, the scaffolded approach allows for more in depth reading, writing, and thinking. This is goal is supported most fully when faculty re-orient, restructure, and otherwise reproduce the workshop activities, so students do parallel invention work when they begin the academic writing assignment. Finally, pedagogical approaches to generative AI are changing as quickly as the software (e.g., Vee, Laquintano & Schnitzler 2023), but questions surrounding authenticity in student writing have many faculty re-centering the writing process via scaffolding assignments and engaging their students with in-class writing promots. The workshop activities discussed and appended here mesh well with this general

trend because they give students artifacts illustrating their behind-the-scenes work. Creating the conditions for students to think, pre-write, and write then frees them up to experiment with integrity if they choose (and are permitted) to use tools like ChatGPT, Claude, Elicit, etc. to expedite their revision processes.

Appendix A: The JSTOR Daily Project Assignment Sheet

This assignment asks you to familiarize yourself with the writing that is published by JSTOR Daily. Their tag line, "where news meets its scholarly match," should give you a sense of the kind of writing you will engage in: public writing that is explicitly informed by scholarly research. You will select a topic of contemporary interest and write an *informative* essay. Your writing should support JSTOR Daily's purpose of "provid[ing] background— historical, scientific, literary, political, and otherwise— for understanding our world." This essay will be roughly 1,000 words in length, and it should be formatted like essays on the JSTOR Daily site.

Audience + Content. You will name your own audience for this essay. For example, perhaps you're concerned with the relationship between food waste and climate change. You may then decide, for example, that you want to write for people who may be unaware of this link and are also the primary food buyer or preparer in their households. To inform effectively, the writer must have a specific audience in mind, and that audience must in some way "need" the information the writer has to share. In terms of content, your main goal in writing this essay is two-fold: 1) You need to figure out what kind of background and context will be most helpful for understanding the issue you're writing about and 2) In doing so, you will write an informative essay that appeals to a specific audience of your choosing. In pursuit of these goals, you will sharpen your research skills by analyzing and synthesizing the ideas that comprise the larger conversation to which you're contributing (e.g., the intersection of food waste and climate change). Following the *JSTOR Daily* model, you should integrate a variety of sources into your paper. You should aim to draw on no fewer than four sources in total, at least two of which should be scholarly.

As you begin writing, consider some of these content-related questions:

- What are the most interesting and important parts of the topic?
- What context does my audience need to understand to make sense of it?
- What have others written? What's missing?

- What academic theories and perspectives could help me enact the goal of "provid[ing] background … for understanding our world"?

You may also want to consider these technique-related questions:

- What techniques do other writers use to capture their audience's attention?
- How are other writers using evidence and citation?
- How do they transition between sections of their article?
- How do they illustrate the consequences of the issue they're writing about

Organization + Format. As you begin your research, pay close attention to the examples of informative writing that we examine in class, as well as the arguments you will encounter as you complete your own research. Paying attention to other writers' organizational strategies will help you imagine an appropriate structure for your own essay.

Timeline + Due Dates. We are now in the beginning of Week 2, and you'll need to circulate a first draft in the end of Week 4 when you'll participate in a reader response workshop. You will then revise based on peer feedback and submit a second draft at the beginning of Week 5. I will provide you with comments no later than the beginning of Week 6.

Appendix B: The Excavation Workshop

Drawing on the work of Lloyd Bitzer, rhetorician Charles Bazerman has discussed the concept rhetorical situation. He suggests that this concept invites recognition of 1) the specific details that define the situation, 2) that which the situation needs or demands, and 3) the fact that communication can improve the situation. He specifically notes that this awareness is comprised of several variables: "how we perceive the situation, what more we can understand about it, how we can formulate our goals, and what strategies we may take in our utterances. It helps us put in focus what we can accomplish in a situation, how we can accomplish it, and what the stakes are" (2015, 36). Our objective here is to think about the interrelated variables of audience, purpose, content, and genre. To begin, please visit www.daily.jstor.com.

Notice how the interface is organized.

- The balance between images and text
- Sections and subsections
- About JSTOR Daily

Explore the sections.

- What headlines catch your attention?
- Once you find something that catches your attention, click on the subheading tag (Film & Media, Quirky History, Natural Science, Education, etc.) and explore more.
- From there, select and read through a short article (some are as short as two minute reads).

Define the genre.

Genres are typically understood as "types." These are types of films or books or articles that have recognizable, and nameable, forms based on a shared set of structural or thematic qualities. Genres are not, however, as stable as they may seem. They exist, evolve, and sometimes disappear in response to human actions and social conditions. JSTOR Daily is an example of a hybrid genre: "where news meets its scholarly match." What shared qualities do you see across these articles?

- Work together to create a list of genre conventions.

How do you see yourself contributing to this publication?

- How do your interests mesh with the headings and subheadings?
- What topics currently in the news need scholarly contextualization?
- Who would benefit from understanding that larger context?

Appendix C: Invention Workshop

We have spent a lot of time thinking about the fact that writing is a contextual technology that allows us to communicate in socially responsive ways. Given this, we know it's important to select a topic that needs to be written about. As such, we are engaging today with this question: Why does this essay need to be written?

Start by listing your potential topic here _____.

Now, read through the following prompts and jot down the notes that come to mind.

1. Why do you find the topic interesting, exciting, troubling, or puzzling? Why are you drawn to the topic? How or why is it "of the moment"?
2. What other phenomena is this topic like? Unlike? How has it changed over time? What other ideas are connected to this topic?

3. Who are the stakeholders? How or why are they invested in this topic?

4. How can you break this topic down into sub-parts? What scholarly disciplines or ideas might help you better understand this topic? What seems to be missing in "standard" understandings or descriptions of the topic?

Appendix D: Audience and Tone Workshop

Today we will consider how a writer's word choice cultivates tone and communicates a particular stance toward their subject matter and/or audience. When we talk about tone, we're thinking about the vibe or feeling a piece of writing cultivates. We will begin by examining some writing from the *JSTOR Daily* website, then we will move on to apply those observations in a mini reader response activity.

Part 1: Reading for tone. In small groups, take a few minutes to review the sample ledes and jot down some notes in response to the discussion questions. Be prepared to share your group's ideas and observations.

Tag: Lingua Obscura
Author: Chi Luu

Title: Young Women's Language Patterns at the Forefront of Linguistic Change
Subtitle: Linguists observe that young women's language patterns invite negative reactions, comments, and suggestions to change.

Lede: **Linguists observe that it is often the more marginalized groups in society that seem to effect language change** over time, not the high-status networks where all the social capital and power reside. Consider young women's language patterns and speech. By merely speaking, young women can invite negative reactions, comments, and suggestions to change the way they naturally talk **if they want to be taken seriously**. Linguistic features such as *uptalk* (sometimes known as *high rising terminal*, where the intonation rises at the end of a sentence like a question) and *vocal fry* (or *creaky voice*, produced by vibrations in the larynx) or discourse fillers such as the ubiquitous "like," have been regular fodder for discussion on **the state of the language**, across a range of different dialects and demographics, whether from an American English, British English, or Australian English perspective.

Discussion Questions: 1. Who do you imagine this is written for? 2. Does the writer explicitly name a problem or controversy they are responding to? Or is it implicit? 3. What kind of purpose does the writer seem to have? Does the writing feel informative, reactive, argumentative, something else? 4. Which of the writer's rhetorical or linguistic choices lead you to this conclusion? 5. Does the writer seem knowledgeable of or sensitive toward their audiences' feelings, views, or experiences? What textual choices help (or hinder) the writer in cultivating that tone?

Tag: Lingua Viva
Author: Ann Delaney

Title: Filler Words and Floor Holders: The Sounds Our Thoughts Make
Subtitle: So, well, okay, um, like, you know, right?

Lede: Filler words, filled pauses, hesitation markers, thinking sounds, call them what you will: these little sounds season and serve as added ingredients in our spoken word salads. We all use them, and we all observe and have opinions about them. So what function do they serve? Repetitive sounds, filler words, and discourse markers are universal and ubiquitous, serving cognitive and interactive functions. Their usage may be unconscious on the part of the speaker, while aiding others in processing and digesting what is being said. In this sense, filler words are essential elements of spoken discourse for both speaker and listener. They serve to hold the floor or maintain a turn, and signal that something is about to be said.

Discussion Questions: 1. Who do you imagine this is written for? 2. What kind of purpose does the writer seem to have? Does the writing feel informative, reactive, argumentative, something else? 3. Which of the writer's rhetorical or linguistic choices lead you to this conclusion? 4. Does the writer seem knowledgeable of or sensitive toward their audiences' feelings, views, or experiences? What textual choices help (or hinder) the writer in cultivating that tone?

Part 2: Applying observations via reader response. Pull up a draft of your JDP title, subtitle, and lede. Swap with someone else in your group. Tell each other about your intended audience, purpose, and tone, and provide feedback on the following points:

1. Does the writing in this draft feel consistent with the writers' purpose and audience? What kinds of words might help the writer better connect with their audience?
2. What kinds of rhetorical choices do you observe? Do they feel consistent with the writers' purpose and audience?
3. Does the draft contain link(s) to scholarly materials? If not, would it be a good idea? How does the presence or absence of source links impact the feeling of the draft?

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