Metaheur Workshop -- Instructional Sequence

**Overview**

The Metaheur Workshop assignment is an in-class activity integrated as part of a “discourse communities” assignment sequence. It would be used in an upper-level, disciplinary writing class in the health field. Following an overview of many health-related discourse communities, this assignment will narrowly focus on two genres, preferably two that significantly contrast with each other, such as those presented in this lesson. This limited selection allows for more focused class discussion and also for practical means of assessment.

**Before**

Students will learn about genre, audience, and voice, through readings, class discussions, and smaller homework assignments. Thus, the students will have an awareness of the techniques that writers use to address a select audience, and they will be able to apply that knowledge in the workshop.

**During**

The activities that take place during this in-class assignment are contained in the outline on the following page. The Metaheur premise is adapted from Richard Coe’s article, “Advanced Composition as Fishing Pole: Principles, Processes, Practices.”

This assignment is designed for a 1 hr., 15 min. course. The class is divided into two groups; one group reads an article from a popular health magazine, and the other group reads an article from a scholarly health journal.

**After**

Following this workshop, students will conduct “pair interviews.” In groups of two, students will interview an individual who has used one of the genres examined in the workshop. These interviewees will be Case graduate students and professors for ease of contacting and scheduling. The instructor will have already organized a pool of interviewees and provided a list with contact information to the class. In addition to helping students with this particular assignment, these interviewees could prove to be invaluable contacts for the students as they continue their educations and careers.

After the interviews have taken place, the students will call upon their observations from the in-class workshop and the interviews to construct guidelines for “how to write” for a particular discourse community. Following the instructor’s review of these guidelines, and subsequent suggestions for revision, students will then write an article based on their own Metaheur. Assessment of these articles will be based on how well students adhere to their self-constructed guidelines.
Part 1 -- Journal Entry (individual). 5 minutes.

Group A: Spend this time free-writing about fitness articles found in popular magazines (such as *Men’s Health, Muscle & Fitness*, and *Self*).

Group B: Spend this time free-writing about fitness articles found in scholarly health journals.

Some questions to get you started could include: Even if you don’t typically read such articles, what are your assumptions about this discourse community? What are the authors’ intentions, and what are the readers’ expectations? Are the articles “easy” to read, or challenging? Are the articles “easy” to write, or difficult?

Part 2 -- Discussion. 10 minutes.

As a class, we will briefly discuss our assumptions about these two genres and make a list on the board of the main ideas we have gathered.

Part 3 -- Article Examination. 30 minutes.

In your groups (A and B), read your assigned article and answer the following questions together:

1. What is the purpose of this article? Describe the discourse community you think it belongs to. What are the readers like? What do they want to learn? What is their level of knowledge? What are their attitudes?
2. Is the article divided into parts? If so, what do you think is the purpose of the division?
3. How formal are the word choice and usage?
4. Is the article likely to be read casually or seriously; for entertainment or for use? What is its readability?
5. How does the article begin, and how does it end?
6. How long are the paragraphs? How long are the sentences?
7. Are source citations used? If not, is any other form of evidence provided?

Part 4 -- Class Discussion. 30 minutes.

We will answer the following questions as a class:

1. What were the results of your group examinations?
2. What similarities do the two discourse communities share?
3. What differences do they display?
4. Does the article meet your expectations as a reader? In other words, does it seem like an article typical of its discourse community? Why, or why not?