5a. Discourse Community Assignment

A *community* is a group of people who have common interests, goals and values.

A *discourse community* is a social group that communicates its common interests, goals and values through a shared vocabulary, either in writing or orally.

The types of discourse communities are numerous. For example, a family is a discourse community. So are friends and co-workers. Many people participate in online discourse communities such as MySpace and Facebook. Some students belong to academic discourse communities, honor societies or clubs related to their majors; other people belong to academic social networking discourse communities, such as fraternities or sororities. Still, other people belong to groups related their personal interests: for example, car enthusiasts belong to car clubs, readers to book groups, and science fiction enthusiasts to fan clubs. If a person knows another person with the same hobby, those two people belong to the same discourse community.

Think about the different discourse communities in which you are a member. You could consider the following as places you might identify yourself as a part of a discourse community:

- Family or friends
- Workplace
- School
- Sports you participate in/watch
- The gym
- Hobbies
- Self-help groups
- Online communities
- Your place of worship
- Community Service groups
- There may be other discourse communities that you belong to that are not listed above.

For your first assignment, you will write a paragraph of seven to ten sentences in which you *describe* one discourse community to which you belong. Consider the following as you describe your community:

1. How did you become a member of this discourse community? What got you interested in this community? How long have you been involved in this community?

2. How often do members of the discourse community communicate with each other? What ways do you communicate--speeches, conversation, e-mail, newsletter?

3. What kinds of special interests or knowledge do the people in this discourse community have that other people would not have. What kind of specialized vocabulary is used in this discourse community?

4. Does this discourse community have any specific goals? What are they? Why are they important to the community?

You do not need to include all of the above suggestions as you write about your discourse community, but be sure to address more than one.