

WP2: What Does It Mean to Go Viral?

Purpose: Picture to Write

Research on writing pedagogy shows the importance of students building a mental model of their topic before writing, and research on learning shows the benefits of visualizing information efficiently for better learning. Picture to Write (P2W) is a kind of '*visual grammar*': it sets out the most basic ways that words and images can be combined to express different sorts of meaning. For Writing Prompt 2, we will complete exercises and activities that help us develop visual thinking and communication skills in a series of graduated steps of increasing difficulty and complexity. We will use these skills to master clarity, cogency, and cohesion between our ideas, and to practice gathering, integrating, and interpreting evidence in our papers.

Skills: We will embed the thesis in developed introductory paragraphs, collect and organize data in simple visuals, close read those visuals, and embed our interpretation in five-element body paragraphs. **Content Knowledge:** We will become familiar with critical theory in the anthropology of what it means to be "viral" in the digital world. **Beyond Class:** We will be able to apply our learning in the real world by identifying what it means to influence others; know how to ask, recognize and respond to different question types; and how to use mental models to pick apart complex problems so that we can make sensible decisions.

Background

Whether a tweet, a meme, a TikTok video, or an Instagram hashtag, something goes "viral" when the number of times it is shared occurs exponentially in a short time. Researchers (Feng et al., 2001) have verified that whether or not material goes viral depends on approximately "48% emotional factors, 32% interactive factors, and 20% usability factors." In other words, reactivity to digital content seems to matter more than how applicable that content may be. Additionally, there are significant differences between what is most liked, most shared, and most actionable. We will test these two arguments by doing the following:

1. Identify a meme, hashtag, tweet, or video that has gone viral.
2. Develop five questions (informative, comparative, reflective, analytical, divergent) to do a close reading of your selected viral content.
3. Conduct a sentiment analysis of the viral content by collecting and analyzing social media comments. Integrate the analysis into your paper.
4. Integrate a heat map (i.e., #onemilliontweenmap) or other visual map that visualizes content analytics. Integrate at least 2 visuals into the paper, with captions.
5. Cite 5-7 peer-reviewed articles to support your arguments.

Topic

You will develop a 1500-2000-word response (approximately 7-10 pages) that answers the following prompt:

What does it mean to go viral?

Note that you will explore "what does it mean to go viral" in the context of the five question types we have studied together.

Readings & Resources

#onemilliontweetmap: <https://onemilliontweetmap.com/> : visualize how often people are tweeting around the world and the top trending topics they're tweeting about."

banned hashtags: https://blog.kicksta.co/a-complete-list-of-banned-hashtags-you-should-avoid/#What_are_banned_hashtags

all reading content posted under the WP2 Content Reading Files

Formatting Requirements

- Double-spaced lines
- 12-point Times New Roman font
- 1" margins
- MLA, Chicago, or APA citations
- Title Page
- Centered (and interesting!) title
- Last name and page number in upper-right header
- Word count at the end

Tasks

M 2/14 In-person: Review Prompt, Close Reading
W 2/16 Online: Writing the Introduction and the Conclusion
R-Su 2/18-2/20 At-home: Read Article Collection, Research your viral content. Submit your 5 questions by Sunday
M 2/21: Online: Article Discussion
W 2/23: In-person: Sentiment Analysis
R-Su 2/24-2/27 At-home: Complete sentiment analysis worksheet, submit by Sunday
M 2/28: In-person: Writing Body Paragraphs 1: 5 elements, diagramming your paragraphs
W 3/2: Online: Writing Body Paragraphs 2: effective citation, avoiding plagiarism
R-Su 3/3-3/6: At-home: Create the outline for your paper
M/W/F 3/7-3/11: Online: 1:1 Conferences to discuss your outline, draft your paper
Su 3/12: Paper Due via Blackboard by 11:59 pm PST

Criteria

Note that for this essay, we will attach greater weight to writing characteristics that we have been working on together: developing body paragraphs, forming a persuasive argument that is cogent, formal grammar and style. (See writing textbook, pp. 133-136)

- I. Elements of Stickiness
 - a. Does your hook include an original simulation, story, statistic, etc. to grab attention?
 - b. Does your conclusion include a strong “residual message” that the audience will retain after reading your paper? Does the hook of the conclusion tie into the hook of the introduction?
 - c. Do you “show” rather than “tell” in your background sections of body paragraphs by giving plenty of concrete and tangible examples?
 - d. Do you employ elements of stickiness such as simplicity, unexpectedness, concreteness, credibility, emotions, and stories throughout the paper? Remember, though, that this is a formal essay, so should NOT employ first-person or personal stories.
- II. Introduction
 - a. Creative hook
 - b. Thesis statement of 2-3 sentences that includes your topic, purpose of the paper, and list of key points (your stakeholders)
 - c. Blue print that carefully outlines on a granular level (concretely) what you will discuss under each stakeholder section of your paper
- III. Body Paragraphs
Each body paragraph should generally include:
 - a. Topic sentence that clearly links back to Thesis
 - b. Background
 - c. Citation
 - d. Analysis (explains citation AND relates back to main paper topic); Question Type is clear
 - e. Concluding sentence (wraps up AND transitions into the next)

- IV. Include a general concluding paragraph that mirrors the general introduction paragraph by restating the blueprint and thesis (using new wording) and closes with a hook/residual message that is ideally linked back to your intro hook
- V. Style and Grammar
 - a. Did you proofread the paper to ensure no grammar, spelling, or spacing errors?
 - b. Did you use a sophisticated language, especially for verbs? Did you avoid copulative verbs?
 - c. Did you avoid repetitive, redundant and clumsy phrases (i.e., I think)
 - d. Did you avoid first-person references and remain formal throughout?
 - e. Did you use complex forms of punctuation such as semicolons, dashes, parentheses, italics, colons? Avoid overuse of commas.
- VI. Formatting (link takes to APA examples at OWL Purdue)
 - a. Are subheads used consistently, or are first lines of each body paragraph indented ½ inch?
 - b. Are margins 1-inch on all sides? Are images no more than 1/3 of a page, and aligned with the text in a way that is appealing and logical? (i.e., if an image is aligned with text, the text next to image should be directly related to the image)
 - c. Are there page numbers, a header, and an original title?
 - d. Are citations formatted using the proper style (APA, etc.)?
- VII. Does the paper include at least 2 visuals that reflect meaningful content, include storytelling that connects the visuals and captions them, and meets aesthetic best practices for color coding and image clarity and placement.