

Asg-04: 2nd Paper—Virtual Communities

Date assigned: Mon, 16 July 2001

Date due: Mon, 30 July 2001

Notice that you have two weeks in which to complete this paper. Take full advantage and start NOW.

Required before you begin this assignment:

READ CAREFULLY these sections of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*

- ✓ Taking Notes
- ✓ Plagiarism
- ✓ Outlining (pay *particular* attention to the sub-section on *Thesis Statement*)
- ✓ Use of Quotations

PERUSE *at least* these sections:

- ✓ Quotations
- ✓ Preparing the List of Works Cited
- ✓ Documenting Sources

We will assume that you are very familiar with these important concepts when we grade your paper assignments.

LENGTH FOR THIS PAPER:

About 3-5 pages of text, double spaced. The suggested length is a guideline—you may go a little above it if necessary. For important additional details, consult *Misc-03–Written Assignments: Guidelines*, and [ER-03](#) (citing on-line sources).

Select only one Topic:

Virtual communities

Many critics believe that the term *virtual community* is an oxymoron—communities are either real, or they aren't. They believe that bulletin boards, mail lists, listservs, chat rooms, instant messaging, and other on-line forums do not constitute real communities—that they do not share many of the important defining characteristics of a real community; that, in fact, they actually take people away from face-to-face community, and may also warp our expectations of "real life" communities.

Proponents like Howard Rheingold argue that on-line communities are every bit as real and as valuable as those that are restricted by time and physical space.

What virtues of online communities are absent in off-line ones? Conversely, what virtues of off-line communities are absent in those that are on-line? Are virtual communities real? Should we agree that the definition of "community" is changing with the times? Or are virtual communities yet another way for people to disengage from their own real-life communities and neighborhoods? Are they simply artificial communities of strangers, of people typing anonymously at the keyboard? Or do they serve instead to recreate a new sense of community—getting people more involved in problem solving, for example—much of which has been lost with the popularity of suburbs and the growth in television viewing since the 1950s?

Are virtual communities real communities, or just poor substitutes for the real thing? Take a stance, and argue for your position, providing support for any assertions that you make.

Free speech & public safety vs. a right to privacy and the pursuit of happiness

A number of communities are now posting on their Web sites information that indicates when a convicted felon has moved into a certain neighborhood. Often the notice includes the nature of his/her crime, and his/her new address.

Is this really a fair or ethical use of that information? After all, that person has already served his/her time, and is trying to rejoin society and live a 'normal' life. On the other hand, it is public information if one chose to visit the county courthouse/records office, and the person might have moved into MY neighborhood.

Take a stance, and argue for your position, providing support for any assertions that you make.

Important notes:

Do your research to find enough articles that can help you to understand more about the topic, what the issues are, and the controversies herein. After you've done some research and reading, **choose a position** (your stance). **Re-read** the handout *Misc-03–Written Assignments: Guidelines before* you start. Read it again after you've written a solid draft of your paper. A successful paper will include a clear position-type thesis statement, will have strong, clear organization, and will include logic and evidence in support of your position.

You don't have to address every single question asked; the questions are included to help you to understand that a controversy exists, and what some of the related issues are. Of course, within your paper, you will address those issues and/or questions that make the most sense to what *you* plan to discuss once you've determined *your* thesis statement. And of course, there may be other questions that I did not ask that will relate to your thesis and which you should address. This also does not mean simply re-stating each question and answering each of them, as though you're taking a test—rather, integrate the *essence* of what's being asked in those questions or statements (those that are relevant to your thesis) into the body of your paper as you argue for your position.

We provided you with a sample outline for the term paper which, of course, should also be extremely useful to you for this assignment.

And please take advantage of the Writing Center, especially if you weren't particularly satisfied with your first paper.

15 July 2001