Supporting Activities: A Brief Explanation and Sample
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A Brief Explanation:

With larger assignments, you will find it beneficial to incorporate smaller supporting, informal activities and writing exercises in your courses. While there are many aims of these activities, the main two include the following: 1) to explain better the expectations of that larger assignment and 2) to offer spaces that will better help students build the skills needed to accomplish larger projects successfully. In addition, these supporting assignments may serve as ways to aid students in breaking down the needed steps, which will not only assist them in their process and understanding but also reduce the amount of procrastination that might normally occur.

Before reviewing the below sample, you may want to read the “Faculty Guide: Tips on Writing Assignments” document, as this sample is meant to support the larger project sample in that document.

Sample:

In-Class Supporting Activity for Project 3:

**Purpose:** In Project 3, students are asked to select a sub-genre with the larger “position” genre; options include a letter to the editor in the *Hattiesburg American*, an op/ed column in the *Student Printz*, or a spin-off of NPR’s “This I Believe” series. Once students select their venue, they should make rhetorical choices based on that venue. However, the purpose of this in-class activity is to ensure that students do not simply jump to writing, ignoring or sidelinings the analysis of their selected venue – a much-needed step before they can begin writing effectively, appropriately, and mindfully, taking their audience and selected genre into account. Thus, this activity’s aim is to help students think about how their audience and venue affect what they will write and how they will write it.

**Activity:** Bring in a couple examples from each venue; have students group up according their selected venue for their essay. Then, pass out examples and ask students to first identify the genre features that relate specifically to that venue. After doing that, student groups should identify the audience for that venue, listing out what that audience may value, what may appeal to them, etc. Next, students should individually write out how that audience and the generic features might affect their own writing, indicating how they may approach their content, style, tone, and organization of their essay, sharing and discussing their ideas with their group of peers.

**Logistics:** Guided questions for the genre and audience analysis could be on a handout or could be projected. We could also have a class discussion, touching on each venue and going over what groups discussed to make sure each group is considering key features and appeals. Class would end with students thinking specifically about their individual topics and writing/brainstorming about how today’s activity would influence the rhetorical choices they might make in their larger essays when thinking about genre and audience. If time, students may begin drafts of their introduction paragraphs.

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1 This supporting activity is a variation of one created while attending USM’s Faculty Seminar on Writing and Speaking. Comments have been inserted by Dr. Rachel N. Spear (2014) to aid other faculty in thinking how they might approach creating their own supporting activities.