

# Chapter 17: Research Remix: Soundwriting Studies of the English Language

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## Institutional Review Board (IRB) Workshops

The following is a description of a series of scaffolded assignments/workshops that helped students navigate the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. Each campus has its own policies and procedures for human research. You will want to research your campus requirements for student research, adapt these workshops, and create mock documents using templates from your IRB board.

### Workshop I: Why IRB?

Our undergraduates—other than psychology majors—are not accustomed to conducting empirical research and completing the IRB process. So my initial workshop simply introduced students to the idea. I started this process in the second week of class, knowing our IRB approval process can take time. On our campus, students must complete a certification process through the CITI Program, using their campus identification to set up an account, choosing the appropriate course, and submitting their certificate of completion with their IRB application. In this initial workshop, I followed the why discussion with walking students through the potentially confusing process of signing up for an account, choosing the correct course for their expedited applications (assignment guidelines determined this status for the whole class), and getting them started in the course. Once they were “in” the CITI course, they completed the requirement within the week, uploading their certificate of completion to our learning management system to verify their completion. They also saved this document to their IRB application and final discourse ethnography portfolio.

### Reading

In the second week of class, we read and discussed John Swales’s (1990) “The Concept of a Discourse Community,” followed by a class discussion about what that concept means in a traditional sense. As our understanding of language use evolved, we returned to Swales’s concept to talk about exceptions/evolutions in light of communication shifts since its publication. For example, one student’s project of an online creative writing community replicated more of an affinity space (Gee, 2004) than Swales’s discourse community.

### Proposal

While working on their certification, I asked students to submit a proposal to let me know which group they hoped to study for the project. They submitted this proposal (below) in our learning management system (LMS), and I provided feedback within 24 hours. Though simple, this step was critical in helping me guide them to do-able projects, thinking through guidelines for human research as well as ways time and proximity may shape the study. Don’t skip this step!

Please, submit a brief proposal (150 words or less) for the discourse community you wish to study for your discourse ethnography study.

You should include the following:

- Describe the discourse community you wish to study.
- How are you [connected/not connected] to this community?
- What do you anticipate might be unique about their English language use?
- In what ways do you think they clearly qualify as a discourse community, using Swales’s characteristics as a framework?

## **Workshop II: Filling Out the IRB Application**

Again, I knew that asking undergraduates to navigate an IRB application would be difficult. To ease this transition, I created a template for their applications. I edited our campus application, putting directions in various sections (research questions, methodology, data collection) that asked questions of their projects while directing them back to the assignment itself. They downloaded this form from the Learning Management System and were able to edit each section using their information. In addition, I provided a starter consent and debriefing form that they could edit to suit their research study. As part of this workshop, they also provided peer feedback on research questions and IRB drafts. Following the workshop, students completed drafts of their IRB application, including addendums (consent form, debriefing statement, interview questions, certification). They submitted these drafts to me the following week for feedback. Following my feedback, they made final revisions to the application before bringing me a printed copy for a signature as the faculty researcher. These forms were then submitted en masse to the IRB committee for review.