Digital Discourse Community Activity: YikYak   (40 points)

Task: As a way to transition between the research reports of your chosen discourse communities and your remediation of those reports into websites, we are going to take some time to look closely at one digital community that is directly linked to our campus: YikYak's Purdue University network.

Though talking about social media in a composition course may seem strange, this activity is designed to help us work towards several goals laid out at the beginning of the semester, including: understanding that we can and should use writing for contexts outside of academic essays; learning about material, social, and cultural contexts we operate within; composing in a variety of situations, technologies, and modes—and for a variety of audiences; and promoting an overall awareness of the social nature of communication.

You may complete this assignment on your own, or in **pairs** (meaning no more than two people per group). Additionally, this assignment will require that you download the application to a smart phone or tablet—please talk to me if this presents an issue, and we will figure out an alternative approach to this assignment.

Process: This project asks you to do several things, listed and described below.

1. Survey YikYak for a period of several days, so that you can get a comprehensive idea of the range of topics and posts that appear from day to day. I recommend that you check the application's feed several times a day, since users post frequently, changing the order and the contents of the overall feed.

2. During and immediately after this period, identify at least **FIVE** topics that you find interesting, topics that appear to be regular topics of discussion on YikYak. Topics vary from day to day and time to time, but I would encourage you to go for variety (that is, don't choose Purdue football, Purdue basketball, Purdue golf, Purdue volleyball, and Purdue rugby as your five).

Here are some topics that seem to surface regularly:
- Campus Events
- Current Events
- Greek Life
- Athletics
- Student Groups
- Gender
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Background and Culture
- Majors and Minors
- Classroom Behavior
- Indiana University
- Partying
- Food

You can select any of these, or add to this list with your own observations.

(Flip to back of sheet for more instructions.)

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3. As you observe, think about the posts and try to figure out how they connect. Do you notice trends at particular times? Why do you think certain posts are up-voted and others aren't? Do you see any offensive or confusing content?

4. Now (this is the hardest part), I want you to participate in the discourse. That is, I want you to pick **TWO** of your five identified themes and compose some "Yaks." I would suggest that you pick one more global theme, and one more local theme—for example, a pairing of "Purdue Football" and "Gender" would give you the opportunity to work with two different concepts.

For each of your two themes, I want you to compose at least **five** Yaks (so that's **TEN** in total). Feel free to do more, if you want, since that would allow you to have a more varied experience. Please experiment—try different rhetorical moves, different patterns and styles of speech, and see what works best—what gets the most upvotes, what disappears, and so on. You need to have a rationale for the kinds of moves you make, so be sure to be cognizant of the types of texts you're composing.

Also, remember to take screenshots of your composed Yaks—you will embed some of these into your reflective essays.

5. Finally, write a short reflection about your experiences using the application. Think about your experience in terms of the conversations we've been having all semester: genre conventions, rhetorical situations, activity systems, transfer, discourse communities... Below are some questions to get you started:

- Consider Swale's definition of a discourse community that we've been talking about throughout Project 3. Does YikYak embody these requirements (specific lexis, rules, etc.)?
- What sort of insider knowledge is required to understand and communicate via YikYak? How does the idea of audience contribute to the application's function?
- How do the features of the application (anonymity, upvotes, hashtags, location-based restrictions, etc.) contribute to the user's experience?
- Are there any aspects of the application that you wish you could change? What does it allow you to do, and what does it prevent?

Your reflective essay will need to be at least 750 words—that's not a lot of room, so you'll have to get into the analysis and reflection pretty quickly.

No one is going to have the same experience—you're all going to find different trends and observe different posts, so we're all going to work together to come up with a comprehensive profile of YikYak and its function here at Purdue.