

**UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
EXPOSITORY WRITING PROGRAM**

**ENGLISH 131 INSTRUCTORS' MANUAL  
2019-2020**

*Welcome to the EWP!*

**Candice Rai, Director**

**Jacob Huebsch, Program Coordinator**

**Nanya Jhingran, Assistant Director  
Brittney Frantece, Assistant Director  
Misun Bishop, Assistant Director**

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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The English 131 Instructor's Manual is a living document, revised and sustained every year by the efforts of the EWP staff. The first incarnation of the manual was drafted in 1997, and since then has been continually developed and revised to reflect the changing Expository Writing Program goals and its teachers' needs.

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Gail Stygall (1997-2001)  
Steve Browning (1998)  
Katherine Frank (1998)  
Mike Flanagan (1999)  
Kim Emmons (1999-2000)  
Gary Ettari (2000)  
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Stacey Grooters (2001-2002)  
Ellen Bloom (2001-2002)  
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Lisa Thornhill (2003)  
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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO EXPOSITORY WRITING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

### Welcome to the Expository Writing Program (EWP) at the University of Washington!

The EWP is dedicated to excellence in teacher preparation and undergraduate student support across the university. We are committed to designing a curriculum that develops analytical, argumentative and research capacities and prepares students to compose effectively and ethically across:

- disciplines, genres, media, audiences, and situations;
- academic, professional, and public settings;
- linguistically, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse contexts.

The EWP teaches approximately **5000 undergraduates each year**, impacting roughly **80% of any given freshman cohort** at UW-Seattle.

This manual is intended to guide you as you develop course content, as well as help you understand the philosophies of writing and teaching that this program encompasses. Ideally, this manual will provide both **practical help** (*How do I create a writing prompt? How do I grade my students' work?*) and a discussion around key **pedagogical and philosophical challenges** (*How can students transfer the skills they are learning in this course into other contexts? How do I negotiate diverse student incomes or conflict that arises in my conflict?*). We hope that you will first read these materials as an overview of the course you are about to teach, and then return to challenge and broaden your approach to reading and writing pedagogy over the course of your time at the UW and beyond.

### OVERVIEW OF MATERIALS

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To support you in your teaching in the Expository Writing Program, we offer four main resources:

- This **Instructors' Manual**, designed to cover the basic elements of teaching a course in composition, with a focus on providing practical information and advice. (*However, since no manual can prepare you for everything, this material is meant to lead into the pedagogical work you will do in English 567.*)
- The **EWP Website**, including pages for students and instructors. Instructor pages include instructor policies, sample teaching materials, department resources, campus resources, and more: <https://english.washington.edu/expository-writing-program>. Within the website, you might begin with the instructor resources (which we are always updating): <https://english.washington.edu/teaching/expository-writing-program-instructor-resources>. Extensive resources can also be found in the **Expository Writing Program Archive**: <https://english.washington.edu/expository-writing-program-instructor-archive>
- **Writer/Thinker/Maker: Approaches to Composition, Rhetoric, and Research at the University of Washington**, a custom textbook designed to support the University of Washington's Expository Writing Program outcomes. The text includes rhetorical chapters on reading, researching, writing, and revising as well as a selection of readings.

- The **EWP Director** and **Assistant Directors** are available throughout the year to provide one-on-one support, workshop teaching materials, and consult on any teaching-related questions and concerns. We all hold weekly office hours. Please feel free to drop in or make an appointment.

## STUDENTS DEMOGRAPHICS

The following information is provided so you can consider, in a general sense, who you will be teaching. The demographic information below comes from the “State of Diversity at UW” report released by the Office of Minority Affairs & Diversity on February 11, 2016 and the Diversity Fact Sheet. This information is largely based on enrollment data collected between 2003 and 2017. It is crucial to note that the percentage of International students has increased from 3.5% in 2003 to 15.2% in 2015. At the end of this chapter, you will find a copy of a 2006 lecture delivered by Catharine H. Beyer, Director of the UW Study of Undergraduate Learning (SOUL). UW SOUL is a four-year longitudinal study on student attitudes toward their experiences at UW, and this lecture may give you a better idea of what to expect from your students and how you can best serve their interests.

**Table 1: University of Washington Student Enrollment Demographics, Autumn 2017<sup>1</sup>**

Enrollment By Ethnicity	
Undergraduates	
	%
African American	4.2 (1248 students)
American Indian	1.2 (362 students)
Hispanic/Latino	8.1 (2,417 students)
Asian American	21.7 (6525 students)
Asian - Filipino	1.8 (553 students)
Asian - Southeast	5.9 (1,761 students)
Hawaiian Pacific Islander	.5 (144 students)
Caucasian	40.3 (12,096 students)
Not Indicated <sup>2</sup>	1.1 (339 students)
International	14.5 (4,368 students)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>1</sup> These numbers reflect enrollment at UW's Seattle campus only. See <https://depts.washington.edu/dvrsty/BOR/DEI-Data-Book-2018.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> A study entitled “*Unknown*” Students on College Campuses (James Irvine Foundation, December 2005) found that a large proportion of the students who choose “unknown” or “other” for their ethnicity or leave the space empty are Caucasian students. See [http://www.irvine.org/publications/by\\_topic/education.shtml](http://www.irvine.org/publications/by_topic/education.shtml).

Enrollment By Sex <sup>3</sup>		
Undergraduates		
	<i>n</i>	%
Male	14224	47.4
Female	15789	52.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>29739</b>	<b>100.0</b>

UW Undergraduate Characteristics <sup>4</sup>	
% of undergrads who live at least 11 miles away from campus	20%
% of undergrads who commute to campus	35%
% of undergrads who work while enrolled in their undergraduate degree program	100%

## HOW TO USE THIS INFORMATION

The first table reveals that there is a dearth of self-identified under-represented ethnic minority students on campus. The third table also reveals that most of your students will be holding down part-time jobs while balancing a demanding full course load, and many of these students will also be commuting to campus. Still others will be balancing the demands of athletics, volunteer work, or other issues not compiled in official campus demographics. This information should remind you that you will have a variety of beliefs and attitudes represented in your classes. Your classrooms will also be linguistically and culturally diverse, and students will enter your classrooms with a variety of incomes, assumptions, and skill-levels. How will you create a classroom environment where students with varying beliefs feel comfortable sharing their perspectives? How will you and your students negotiate difference in your classroom? How will you craft curriculum, pedagogies, and assessment practices that support your diverse students? It is a good idea to remind students that difference may not always be visible, and that each student must respect a variety of viewpoints, even if they do not share them. It is also a good idea to remind students that the ability to critically examine a variety of viewpoints, including one's own, is a hallmark of academic and public inquiry and writing. It is toward

<sup>3</sup> The UW centrally collects data organized by "sex" which is clearly problematic in its enforcement of the binary and lack of adequate representation of gender diversity on campus. The Q Center is an excellent student organization on campus which increases access and care on campus for LGBTQIA+ students, faculty and staff.

<sup>4</sup> This data is from an ongoing survey titled Student Engagement at the Research University, found here: [http://depts.washington.edu/assessmt/pdfs/reports/SERU\\_2015/SERU\\_2015\\_Ethnicity\\_All\\_Colleges.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/assessmt/pdfs/reports/SERU_2015/SERU_2015_Ethnicity_All_Colleges.pdf)



this end—to practice and demonstrate academic forms of inquiry and discourse—that students will be asked to examine complex issues in EWP courses. Our goal is to prepare them to participate as active and responsible citizens within a diverse academic community and beyond.

Creating a classroom environment in which all members can engage with difference productively is not an easy task. Chapters 7 and 8 provide some strategies to support you and your students as you engage in difficult class material (about gender, race, ethnicity, etc.). While more support will be provided in the 131 orientation and in English 567 to help you negotiate diversity in your classroom, for now, we offer this draft statement on anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practices as it clarifies some of our commitments and investments and offers support for your writing pedagogies and praxes.

## **STATEMENT ON ANTI-RACIST AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATORY WRITING PEDAGOGY AND CLASSROOM PRACTICES**

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*DRAFTED Spring 2018 to be revised & finalized in Fall 2019*

### *Our Beliefs*

We in the Expository Writing Program believe in teaching writing as social action and ethical communication. In our role as educators, we are committed to better understanding and working against the various forms of systemic discrimination (racism, sexism, ableism, classism, and so on) that underscore the social conditions of teaching, learning, and living that we, our students, and others experience in the university, in our social institutions, and in our everyday lives. Rather than simply a matter of individual biases or prejudices, we believe that racism and other forms of discrimination are pervasive and built into our educational, economic, and political systems. Racism and other forms of discrimination are collective ongoing problems that concern all of us, that we all participate in perpetuating often unconsciously and unintentionally, and that require us to work together to undermine with empathy, care, and intention.

### *Our Vision & Practice*

In teaching writing as social and ethical literacy, we are committed to developing anti-racist, anti-discriminatory pedagogical frameworks in our writing program and policies, in our teaching preparation and mentoring efforts, and in our curriculum and classroom practices. Anti-racist pedagogical frameworks, as we understand them, are intersectional, which means that they examine the different forms of intersectional experiences of race, class, gender, and other social, political, and cultural identities and experiences that may manifest in texts that we read and write, in student and teachers' experiences, and in classroom and broader social dynamics. We seek to support our students and instructors through anti-racist and anti-discriminatory pedagogies that:

- contextualize writing as a social practice and that help students examine how writing might be practiced as ethical, empowering, and self-reflexive literacy;

- engage in reading and writing curricula that honor both mainstream voices, knowledges, and experiences and those from marginalized traditions
- explore the relationships among writing, language, power, and social identities such as race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, mobility, faith/religion and citizenship;
- create writing occasions through assignment design that invite students to practice their fluid language and literacy repertoires for different audiences, contexts, media, and situations with varying stakes;
- develop writing assessment criteria for grading, peer-reviews, and students' self-assessment that emphasizes writers' language choices and rhetorical effectiveness based on the writing occasion, genre, purpose, and audience rather than strictly on monolingual and dominant academic English norms and standards of correctness;
- nurture classroom learning environments in which students and teachers are committed to engaging in productive dialogue—even through uncomfortable moments—on issues of equity, justice, difference, and power as they manifest in class readings, writing, discussion, and more broadly;
- draw on and practice embodied, multiple, and vernacular knowledges, for example, by integrating lived experiences and library/academic research that complicate the notions of objectivity and neutrality in academic research;
- practice ongoing metacognition and self-reflexivity with regards to our own teaching philosophies, classroom practices, and positionality to help create more equitable classrooms and curricula.

Our statement on anti-racist writing pedagogy and classroom practices has been inspired by the following publications and documents:

[UW Tacoma Writing Center's Statement on antiracist & social justice](#)

[UW Public Health Program's Commitment to Anti-Racism](#)

[CCCC Position Statement on Language, Power, and Action](#)

[CCCC Statement on Students' Right to Their Own Language](#)

[CCCC Statement on National Language Policy](#)

## **WORKING WITH UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS**

It is important to note that there is a significant population of self-identified undocumented students at UW that embodies multiple identities, cultures, and countries of origin. Undocumented students are

not legal permanent residents and do not possess a current green card, visa, or other form of legal documentation. These students must navigate serious obstacles and challenges (from accessing housing and securing financial resources to worrying about the threat of deportation and shifting immigration laws). ***Should a student disclose their undocumented status to you, here are some concrete things you can do to advocate on their behalf:*** maintain your student's privacy; be willing to be flexible with deadlines and accommodate students who may need it; educate yourself on issues undocumented students face; attend ally trainings for supporting undocumented students; and share relevant campus resources with your student.

Two key campus resources to direct your undocumented students toward (and where you can further educate yourself) are:

- **Leadership Without Borders.** Located on the third floor of the Samuel E. Kelly Ethnic Cultural Center, the LWB Center at UW can offer information, guidance, and support to undocumented students on housing, study abroad opportunities, scholarships, academic support, and mental health counseling. It has also compiled an Undocu Ally Directory that can help connect undocumented students with trained allies across campus. In addition, LWB offers quarterly Undocu Ally Training for UW staff and faculty. They can be contacted at [undocu@uw.edu](mailto:undocu@uw.edu).

Visit: <http://depts.washington.edu/ecc/lwb/>

- **Purple Group.** This group is a peer support network of undocumented students that meets the first Wednesday of every month “to foster community building, connect with allies, share resources, participate in workshops, and discuss issues affecting immigrant communities locally as well as across the country and the world.” Previous Purple Group meetings have included workshops, presentations, and discussions on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), WASFA (state-funded financial aid), and so forth. They can be contacted at [undocu@uw.edu](mailto:undocu@uw.edu).

Visit: <https://depts.washington.edu/ecc/lwb/services/purple-group-peer-support-group/>

In addition to the above, should you be interested in learning more: The Northwest Immigrant Rights Project is a valuable resource for you that offers the latest immigration updates, community information, and important details about the NW Detention Center, “Know Your Rights,” and DACA/Dreamers. The UW Law School also occasionally holds UW Community Immigration Workshops that include informative panels as well as free attorney consultations.

## UW STUDENTS' PREVIOUS WRITING EXPERIENCES

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In many places in the United States, high school students receive very little training in writing beyond the literary criticism paper, although this is changing with the Common Core, which stresses writing and argument in a variety of genres and for various purposes. The University of Washington is considered a selective university within the state and the Pacific Northwest region. Because Washington State, like California, has a three-tiered system of higher education—community colleges, comprehensive master's granting state universities, and doctoral granting universities—the students entering the University of Washington tend to be particularly high achieving students. Approximately 80% were in the top fourth of their high school graduating class, and slightly more than

half of those students were in the top 10%. Their average SAT scores are above 1650, and their GPAs are generally 3.7 and above. But they are also quite varied in their abilities to write, and we know that most have never read any academic or scholarly writing, even when they have taken Advanced Placement courses. Some students have emerged from high schools having taken AP English and are adept at producing a 20- or 40-minute essay exam, but may not understand how to develop a topic, solicit readers' responses, or revise and edit a more substantial paper. Other students may be quite familiar with a kind of personalized, introspective writing process, but may have little or no idea of how a writer integrates complex, academic texts with personal reaction and opinion. Still others may arrive with exceptionally high quantitative abilities and less stellar verbal abilities. In addition, because the Puget Sound region has been an attractive place to settle for many immigrant groups, non-native speakers of English entering the UW may be very capable academically but may still be hesitant writers.

## CHAPTER 2

### ENGLISH 131: BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

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The previous chapter sought to introduce you to the student population you will be teaching; this chapter is intended to introduce you to the course you will be teaching. Composition has a long history in the American university system, and ideas about the goals of instruction in composition have been changing over the past few decades. If you took a composition course as an undergraduate, it may very well have approached the teaching of writing in an altogether different way than English 131. For these reasons, this chapter begins with a little historical context before proceeding to describe the goals and curriculum of English 131. After an explanation of the course outcomes, you will read descriptions of what students are asked to write in other classes, including other courses that satisfy UW’s composition requirement, in order to help you contextualize EWP goals and curriculum.

#### HISTORIES OF COMPOSITION & THE TEACHING OF WRITING

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The place of English composition in the United States university has, as the entry to higher education, always been simultaneously practical and disputed. As far back as the early Republic, written composition was taught in college in conjunction with oral discourse as rhetoric, claiming a heritage back to Greek and Roman rhetoric. In the last 50 years, every one of the items on the following list has been advanced as a reason to teach English composition:

- to act as the contemporary version of classical rhetoric
- to provide a place to analyze and debate civic issues
- to provide remediation for less traditionally-prepared students
- to be the Other to the more elite study of literature, providing work in more practical, pedestrian prose
- to teach writers prestigious forms of written English
- to understand one’s own unique creativity
- to provide introduction and practice in the writing and reading of belletristic essays
- to teach writing about literature or simply teaching literature
- to provide an introduction to academic discourse
- to learn rhetorical strategies of writing
- to perform a unifying service to the university

- to teach students in all disciplines how to write
- to provide a place for students to participate in liberatory pedagogy
- to provide a place for the reading and written analysis of “text” broadly understood, from the literary to the popular

No single course can possibly do all of these things, so writing programs select from among these possible goals. At flagship and partially selective state universities, such as the University of Washington, there is often a focus on academic reading and writing, and less focus on some of the other possible goals. Some of these goals speak to the history of composition in the U.S. as the “contact zone,” as new groups of first generation college students enter the university. In English departments in which the understanding of “text” has widened, as through Cultural Studies, for example, the final goal noted above, is often equally important, and this can be said to be true for many instructors at this institution.

Until 1968, the University of Washington required *three* full quarters of first year composition. During that year, the College of Arts and Sciences, the largest college, dropped the requirement and the number of sections taught dropped. By the 1980s, the three-quarter requirement had returned in a slightly different form, one that recognized that other disciplines also use and should teach discipline-specific writing. Students were required to take one general composition course (“C” course) and two writing intensive, “W” courses in the disciplines in which a significant amount of writing was required and in which there was an opportunity for the student to receive a response from the instructor and then complete a revision. The idea was that students would receive writing instruction in their chosen major. In 1994, the W-course requirements were somewhat loosened and it is now possible for students in some disciplines to complete their writing requirements completely within the English department, without ever receiving direct instruction in writing in their majors.

Two aspects of this institutional history are important to remember when teaching the primary English composition course, English 131. One issue is that we must compress a great deal of work into a single quarter, work that 30 years ago was taught over an entire academic year. And, while there is some distribution of the work of teaching writing outside the English department, we must remember that we continue to provide the majority of writing instruction for many majors and because we do so, we must be aware of the disciplinary distinctions that our students face as they compose outside of our English classrooms.

## ENGLISH 131: COURSE DESCRIPTION & OVERVIEW

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### THE CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Many course documents begin with the catalog description, those highly coded, open texts that may be interpreted in various ways. The University of Washington’s catalog description of English 131 reads as follows:

#### **ENGL 131: Composition: Exposition (5 credits) C<sup>5</sup>**

Study and practice of good writing: topics derived from a variety of personal, academic, and public subjects.<sup>6</sup>

From this description, English 131 could be any number of courses—a course focused on writing personal narratives, technical writing, academic writing, or civic writing—all very different approaches

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<sup>5</sup> The “C” indicates that the course satisfies part of the UW’s composition requirement.

<sup>6</sup> Available at <http://www.washington.edu/students/crsdesc/engl.html> with links to recent class descriptions.

to the teaching of writing at the college level. To help clarify the goals of English 131, we will now describe its curriculum as developed by members of the EWP over several years.

### COURSE OVERVIEW

The learning goals for this course emerge out of rhetorical and writing theories that understand language use, various forms of communication, and reception as:

- 1) inherently situated, contextual, dynamic, emergent, political, and consequential;
- 2) intimately tied (even when resistant) to culture, identity, material conditions, uneven instantiations of power, and diverse ways of knowing, feeling, and doing specific to different people, places, and times; and
- 3) recursive, ongoing, and strategic negotiations, translations, and engagements with respects to the various resources and constraints, dynamics, purposes, conventions, norms, genres, modes, contexts, audiences, arguments, institutions, relationships, possibilities, ideas, and the like that exist within a given situation.

Because of the deeply situated, dynamic, and political nature of writing (and communication, more broadly), we also believe that **writing is not a skill that can be mastered once and for all**. Writers must continually practice and refine their skills. While no one can learn to master writing in ten weeks, this course aims to teach students various skills, capacities, and habits of mind that will help them refine the skills they already have, develop new ones, and adapt their knowledge to various writing situations and contexts.

With these broad beliefs in mind, our 100-level composition courses all focus on helping students refine foundational capacities and skills required for effective and ethical composition and communication at the university and beyond, including:

*Rhetorical awareness and capacity.* **Rhetorical awareness** involves understanding how various aspects of the writing situation affect one's composing decisions. These aspects include audience, purpose, emotions, language, constraints, resources, styles, media, political climate, ethics, contexts, and genres, among other things. We refer to such characteristics, contexts, and variables that affect one's composing decisions within any given situation as the **rhetorical situation**.

*Metacognitive awareness.* **Metacognitive awareness** refers to the capacity to reflect on one's own thinking process, draw on and adapt previous knowledge for the task at hand, and articulate ways one might use what is learned in new contexts (or even to transform situations). In short, we want to teach students skills that will *transfer* across very different situations and that can be adapted in future contexts.

*Foundational skills of academic writing, research, and argumentation.* Although the conventions of academic writing, like all writing, will depend on the situation (and discipline), this class will stress one of the hallmarks of academic work: developing claim-based arguments that emerge from and explore a **line of inquiry** (e.g., inquiries are research questions and investigations that emerge from observations, personal interest, and analyzing

various texts, arguments, ideas, situations, and issues). In other words, this class will help students form important questions that matter to them and others; explore these questions through research; and formulate, support, and assess the consequences of arguments (and possibly actions) informed by their research.

*The understanding and practice of **writing as a nonlinear process that requires planning, drafting, reflection, redesign, and revision**.* Skilled writers engage in various flexible practices that can be learned and developed, including brainstorming, outlining, and organization strategies; rethinking ideas in conversation with others and through research; giving, receiving, and incorporating feedback; experimenting with tone, style, and grammar not just for correctness but for rhetorical effect; and so on.

In sum, rhetorical and metacognitive awareness—together with learning how to discover and follow a line of inquiry, generate complex arguments, and use flexible revision strategies—make up the transferable writing skills, capacities, and dispositions taught in this class that we hope will help students compose in future contexts. You'll notice, too, that these skills are featured at the heart of the EWP learning outcomes, which we introduce next.

## **The Expository Writing Program's Learning Outcomes**

English 131 is based on four outcomes, shared below, that define the overall learning goals for students in this course. The language of "outcomes" might be unfamiliar or strange, but the phrase is commonly used in education (and writing studies, more specifically) to refer to the skills and capacities, as well as goals, that one seeks to teach (or refine, hone, develop). We revised our EWP outcomes in 2017 in conversation with national research on writing practices and instruction; in response to the changing demands of 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies; and under the guidance of the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition published by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (<http://wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html>). They embody our belief that writing is a deeply situated and consequential act that involves a complex set of skills, knowledge, and dispositions that cannot be mastered once and for all. Instead, we believe that successful writers draw on and adapt writing strategies to participate meaningfully, effectively, and ethically within various contexts.

## **EWP COURSE OUTCOMES**

### **Outcome One**

To compose strategically for a variety of audiences and contexts, both within and outside the university, by

- recognizing how different elements of a rhetorical situation matter for the task at hand and affect the options for composing and distributing texts;
- coordinating, negotiating, and experimenting with various aspects of composing—such as genre, content, conventions, style, language, organization, appeals, media, timing, and design—for diverse rhetorical effects tailored to the given audience, purpose, and situation; and
- assessing and articulating the rationale for and effects of composition choices.

### **Outcome Two**

To work strategically with complex information in order to generate and support inquiry by



- reading, analyzing, and synthesizing a diverse range of texts and understanding the situations in which those texts are participating;
- using reading and writing strategies to craft research questions that explore and respond to complex ideas and situations;
- gathering, evaluating, and making purposeful use of primary and secondary materials appropriate for the writing goals, audience, genre, and context;
- creating a "conversation"—identifying and engaging with meaningful patterns across ideas, texts, experiences, and situations; and
- using citation styles appropriate for the genre and context.

### **Outcome Three**

To craft persuasive, complex, inquiry-driven arguments that matter by

- considering, incorporating, and responding to different points of view while developing one's own position;
- engaging in analysis—the close scrutiny and examination of evidence, claims, and assumptions—to explore and support a line of inquiry;
- understanding and accounting for the stakes and consequences of various arguments for diverse audiences and within ongoing conversations and contexts; and
- designing/organizing with respect to the demands of the genre, situation, audience, and purpose.

### **Outcome Four**

To practice composing as a recursive, collaborative process and to develop flexible strategies for revising throughout the composition process by

- engaging in a variety of (re)visioning techniques, including (re)brainstorming, (re)drafting, (re)reading, (re)writing, (re)thinking, and editing;
- giving, receiving, interpreting, and incorporating constructive feedback; and
- refining and nuancing composition choices for delivery to intended audience(s) in a manner consonant with the genre, situation, and desired rhetorical effects and meanings.

It is important to note that outcomes are not the same as “standards” or benchmarks of achievement. Outcomes in this context refer to the skills, capacities, and habits that we hope students will learn and/or refine and that should guide your curriculum design and assessment of student work. There are many ways to practice, emphasize, interpret, and engage these skills, and how you go about articulating and teaching the outcomes will be affected by your own philosophy and who your students are in any given quarter, among other things. Instructors are welcome to layer in additional goals and encouraged to find ways to teach these outcomes in ways that honor their own philosophies and commitments. Rather than limiting the work you might do, we hope that the outcomes provide generative and flexible clarity and a shared vocabulary for accomplishing your and your students’ goals.

Further, while we have broken down the learning goals into four broad outcomes, each outcome involves many complex and interrelated skills. The outcomes themselves are also interconnected, as opposed to independent standalone skills, and the way they are structured highlights the ways in which they actively refer to and build off of each other. So, while you may sometimes target skills associated with one outcome or another, you should also push students to understand how they work together organically and necessarily.

The four main course outcomes include traits that serve as “evidence” of that outcome. In a sense, these outcomes present a series of thinking, reading, researching, and revising *habits*. We believe that teaching students to perform complex, analytic reading and writing, as well as preparing them for the varied demands of writing both inside and outside of the academic context, is accomplished in part through the development of effective writing habits. English 131 is built on the premise that such habits are developed through a writer’s continued awareness of and engagement with why and how s/he writes.

While teaching and encouraging these habits is part of the core mission of this course, ensuring that our students are able to transfer these habits to contexts outside 131 is crucial to their success as well. As we read in Catharine Beyer’s presentation in Chapter 1, students rarely encounter the exact same writing situation twice and are often frustrated when how they’ve learned to write in one course does not easily translate into other courses. Such concerns are indicative of students’ writing experiences in college courses and beyond. We believe that these concerns are best addressed through attention to how audience, purpose, and genre all change depending on the writing context. An awareness of these variables, together with an ability to follow a line of inquiry, generate complex arguments from reading and research, and use flexible strategies for re-writing, make up the effective and transferable writing habits taught in 131.

In this course, students read and write a variety of texts, with a focus on learning to produce contextually appropriate academic arguments that reflect awareness of rhetorical situation. Such arguments should be supported by applied reading and analysis, emerge from primary and secondary research, and demonstrate comprehensive revision and careful editing. While students will not emerge from English 131 knowing something about writing in all disciplines, or in all public contexts (an impossible task), students who understand that there are disciplinary and situational differences in writing and have had opportunities to think about and practice adapting their writing to a variety of rhetorical situations will have many of the tools necessary to adapt to the various context-specific expectations for writing that they will encounter. For this reason, the first-year composition course cannot simply be a course in which students write “good” English papers, or one in which students simply study literature. A “good” English paper is unlikely to be a “good” sociology or history paper. *In other words, rather than focusing on discipline-specific writing, English 131 is the place for students to practice effective writing habits, develop rhetorical sensitivity, learn about general principles of academic analysis and argument, and become prepared for the varied demands of university-wide writing and beyond.*

The writing habits and skills embodied by the EWP outcomes— awareness of and ability to participate in a variety of rhetorical situations (Outcome 1); analysis and complex argument based on reading, understanding, and responding to diverse ideas, texts, contexts, and information (Outcomes 2 and 3); being responsive to and responsible for the stakes and consequences of arguments and actions (one’s own and others’) for diverse communities and contexts (Outcome 3); understanding writing as a recursive process and developing effective revision strategies (Outcome 4)—reflect a process of inquiry. This process—from initiating a line of inquiry to reading, research, analysis, claim development, and revision— may or may not already be familiar to your students.

Central to how writing is taught in 131 is that arguments **emerge** from careful, critical analysis of different types of evidence. This trajectory—from forming a line of inquiry, to reading, research, analysis, and claim development, while revising and complicating an argument—is a method your students will likely not be familiar with. The majority of our incoming students were taught writing in relation to new critical literary analysis. They are extremely adept at arguing for insular interpretations of symbols, metaphors, and themes, but may not be used to analyzing evidence through the lens of

cultural theory or through the close scrutiny of the many commonplace assumptions that often inform a new critical literary analysis. In other words, you may find students who are used to finding out “what it really means,” rather than examining evidence in relation to its surroundings. Our course textbook, *Writer/Thinker/Maker*, has been specifically designed to support you and your students as they practice and demonstrate these writing habits.

But what about grammar? Some people think that writing courses are solely about grammar and that a course that emphasizes rhetorical awareness and argumentation may deprive students of the chance to improve their mastery of the English language. But that’s not the case. In English 131, we teach students how to take a rhetorical, rather than a prescriptive approach, to the grammar conventions they already know. Our belief is that rather than thinking about grammar as a list of rules one must use to correct their writing, it’s more effective to think about grammar as a set of rhetorical techniques one can choose from depending on context, audience, and purpose. Not only does a rhetorical approach to grammar acknowledge the malleability of language, but it also encourages students to take into account all the ways in which their grammatical choices, from diction and syntax to mechanics and citations, affect their writing as a whole. That is: instead of worrying about whether a sentence is grammatically correct, we ask students to consider what the rhetorical effects of their choices are and how their grammatical choices influence their style. Grammar taught through a rhetorical approach has proven successful because it gives grammar a purpose, and teaches students that things like sentence structure and word placement can have an effect on their text’s reception. Such an approach also relates to Outcome 1, where students need to demonstrate an awareness of the writing strategies they’ve chosen for a given audience in a given situation. (In Chapter 6 of this manual, we discuss grammar in more detail and Chapter 16, “Rhetorical Grammar” from *Writer/Thinker/Maker*, written by Denise Grollmus, offers excellent support for you and your students on how to approach grammar—including, style, tone, micro-level language choices—strategically.)

By the end of English 131, students will have composed multiple types of projects that generate ideas, respond to texts, examine issues from different perspectives, and apply concepts on the way toward completing two larger assignments, all of which will be collected in a final course portfolio. In addition to numerous shorter assignments in the 2-3 page range, most students write final drafts of the major papers (or projects) in the 5-7 page range. They begin to realize that they need to develop their points, articulate the stakes, add more evidence, and fully explain their reasoning. These papers are longer than what they have typically written previously. As many of our students have never worked in this framework before, it takes a good deal of practice. Thus portfolio assessment (which we use in EWP and explain in more detail in Chapter 9) makes sense for this course in large part because students know much more about writing and revision at the end of the course and can make maximum use of what you have taught over the quarter.

## THE COURSE OUTCOMES & CURRICULUM

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Together, the English 131 Outcomes form the epicenter of the English 131 curriculum. They articulate the goals of the course and the expectations for the final portfolio students will submit, and they provide a shared vocabulary that students can use within their portfolio cover letter to reflect upon their writing choices. These outcomes are also designed to help you generate and evaluate student writing. Over two assignment sequences (roughly four weeks each), you will design several shorter writing assignments that lead up to a major paper (or project) at the end of each sequence. These shorter assignments can be discrete tasks that practice the outcomes in isolation, or they can be cumulative and build on each outcome on the way towards the major assignment. Throughout the course, you are encouraged to highlight for students which trait(s) of the outcomes are targeted in

particular assignments. It is also helpful for students to write periodic reflection pieces so that they get used to analyzing their own writing in relation to the course outcomes. Having completed two sequences, students will spend the last two weeks of the quarter completing a portfolio sequence, in which they compile and submit a portfolio of their writing (one of the two longer assignments and three to five shorter assignments of their choice), along with a critical reflection that analyzes their own writing in order to demonstrate an understanding of when, how, and why they employed the four main learning outcomes for the course and how they might use them in future rhetorical situations. In this way, instead of applying all the outcomes to each paper students produce in the course, the outcomes apply to the body of writing selected by students for the final portfolio. From assignment design to final evaluation, these course outcomes guide the work we do in English 131.

Because these are also the final outcomes for the portfolio, it is important that students be well acquainted with these outcomes long before they reach the point of assembling their final portfolio. Indeed, students' ability to identify and demonstrate these outcomes in their portfolios, along with their success in this course, depends on their being given opportunities to practice and reflect on these outcomes as they work through your assignment sequences throughout the quarter. In what follows, we will first provide an overview of each outcome and then break down each bullet in detail. While written for you, we imagine the below could provide helpful context for your students that you are welcome to share with them.

### **Outcome One**

To compose strategically for a variety of audiences and contexts, both within and outside the university, by

- recognizing how different elements of a rhetorical situation matter for the task at hand and affect the options for composing and distributing texts;
- coordinating, negotiating, and experimenting with various aspects of composing—such as genre, content, conventions, style, language, organization, appeals, media, timing, and design—for diverse rhetorical effects tailored to the given audience, purpose, and situation; and
- assessing and articulating the rationale for and effects of composition choices.

Outcome 1 targets skills, capacities, and strategies for composing in various contexts and situations. Because it is impossible to prepare students to write in all situations they may encounter and participate in, teaching the awareness of how different aspects of the rhetorical situation affect writing is critical to helping them become more flexible and effective writers. This outcome aims to dispel the sense that writing occurs in a vacuum and that there is one “right” way to write. Further, this outcome stresses the awareness that writing has social, cultural, political and institutional purposes, demands, and material consequences that vary by situation, audience, context, genre, and so on. We urge you to design opportunities for students to understand the social dynamics of reading and writing, and the complex reasons people read and write things differently.

Students should leave 131 with a deeper (rhetorical) awareness of the complex relationships and interdependence among writers and their audiences, form and content, language and power, genre and context, compositions and their material consequences, claims and ideology, and so on in any given situation, along with a more developed awareness of and ability to strategically (and ethically) coordinate and negotiate such considerations for various rhetorical effects.

The following bulleted subsections of this outcome explain the different dimensions for teaching rhetorical awareness and capacity. Part 1 (Chapters 1-4) of *Writer/Thinker/Maker* explores this

outcome in-depth and offers tips and strategies to support this outcome; however, the core skills of rhetorical awareness and strategic composition carries through the entire textbook.

Now, let's dive into more detail. The first aspect of Outcome One stresses the importance of developing rhetorical awareness:

- recognizing how different elements of a rhetorical situation matter for the task at hand and affect the options for composing and distributing texts

The teaching and honing of rhetorical awareness is perhaps the most important capacity you can teach your students because it will help them navigate diverse writing situations beyond your class. As mentioned above, it involves understanding how various aspects of the writing situation affect one's composing decisions. Rhetorical awareness also entails being mindful of the possible consequences of one's own writing and arguments for diverse communities and contexts.

Human beings, as social animals, are generally very skilled rhetors in their everyday lives, acutely aware of the need to nuance and adapt their language to suit the occasion—and yet, it is not uncommon for students to check the rhetorical awareness they already possess when they enter the classroom. We urge you to design assignments and invite conversations that help students tap into and develop their rhetorical awareness and to push against notions of writing as apolitical, acontextual, universal, or one-size fits all.

When thinking about academic contexts, for instance, it is important that students understand writing as an active process that requires attention to style, tone, and convention in order to be effective. Such attention to the changing demands of situation underscores that there is no such thing as the perfect academic argument paper that will satisfy all academic writing situations. It can help, then, to emphasize that they are practicing to write for a range of specific contexts and thus need to be attentive to conventions that are not idiosyncratic preferences but disciplinary (or situational, community, public, workplace, genres, etc.) expectations. You can ask students to write in different genres and apply different forms of disciplinary inquiry (as they work toward the two major assignments) so that they can experience making rhetorical adjustments within these genres and disciplines. Having students write in different genres and situations also has the added benefit of allowing students to examine an issue from various angles of inquiry as they work towards a major assignment project.

To help amplify the stakes of this outcome, you might ask students to write for local audiences they know something about. Doing so will also enable students to engage in the course readings from a place of expertise and incorporate multiple perspectives, which will enrich their understanding of these texts. Asking students to write for actual, local audiences will also allow students to reflect on how language is circulated in their communities, thus allowing for a deeper understanding of the importance of rhetoric. When considering assignments that are university classroom specific, emphasizing disciplinary differences can familiarize students with how audience expectations can change depending on the particular class, major, or larger discipline they are writing in. It is important for students to know that such changes affect things like what types of evidence are acceptable, how arguments are constructed, and what assumptions readers may or may not already have. In other words, the “academic papers” they write for you will likely not be the same as ones they write for other classes. See Chapter 10, “On Argument” (especially the second half on academic argument) and Chapter 14, “Structuring and Organizing Arguments,” in *Writer/Thinker /Maker* for more support on this.

Similar to teaching conventions appropriate to context, teaching students to consider audience is integral to rhetorical awareness. Although it seems like an obvious point—that audience and context

demands will alter the conventions and genres employed— audience analysis may not have been a big part of our students' previous writing experience. Discussions of audience are an important way to get students thinking about what happens when someone writes as well as reads. To get your students to consider the needs and expectations of a broader audience of readers, it can be helpful to discuss the particular audience for whom the students are writing—for instance, one that includes their classmates and the authors they are reading, or the readers of the UW Daily. It may also help to ask students to revise their writing for another audience so they practice making different rhetorical choices and notice these effects.

Let's move on to the next aspect of Outcome One:

- coordinating, negotiating, and experimenting with various aspects of composing—such as genre, content, conventions, style, language, organization, appeals, media, timing, and design—for diverse rhetorical effects tailored to the given audience, purpose, and situation

Beyond gaining a deeper sense of rhetorical awareness, this class also focuses on making use of one's rhetorical knowledge by coordinating this knowledge effectively in one's writing. In *Writer/Thinker/Maker*, we refer to this capacity as rhetorical capacity, which involves strategically acting on one's own rhetorical awareness by coordinating various aspects of writing (such as genre, language, tone, style, and so on) for the audience and situation.

The final aspect of Outcome One stresses the importance of metacognition to learning and the transfer of learning to future contexts:

- assessing and articulating the rationale for and effects of composition choices

As stated earlier, metacognitive awareness refers to the capacity to reflect on one's own thinking process, draw on and adapt previous knowledge for the task at hand, and articulate ways one might use what is learned in new contexts (or even to transform situations). Writing research has found that providing space for metacognition is crucially important for students' ability to learn and adapt skills and knowledge to future situations. Metacognition asks students to not only demonstrate rhetorical awareness but also engage in a very intentional and explicit reflection on their knowledge and learning. For students to demonstrate awareness of how writing choices help create rhetorically savvy writing, they must be able to explain why they have made particular choices in their writing and to what end. One obvious place to demonstrate such ability is in the final portfolio's critical reflection, in which students explain the reasoning behind their selections and how these pieces of writing demonstrate their achievement of the course outcomes. Again, asking students to do some reflective writing—that is, writing about other writing that they have produced—throughout the quarter can help them develop this metacognitive skill. You may want to ask your students to note which of their choices were more or less effective after you've handed back an assignment with your comments, to keep a journal in which they reflect on their writing choices, or to attach an explanation for their choices to one of their assignments. Asking students to explain their choices during peer reviews and conferences can also help scaffold this awareness of and reflection on rhetorical choices throughout the quarter. Along the way, you can also model students' reflection and analysis of their own rhetorical choices by having them analyze the rhetorical choices and effects of the texts they are reading. From *Writer/Thinker/Maker*, see Chapter 4, "Tools for Metacognition and Reflective Practice," by Jaclyn Fiscus, and Chapter 17, "The EWP Portfolio," by Kirin Wachter-Grene, both of which help support this practice.

## Outcome Two

To work strategically with complex information in order to generate and support inquiry by

- reading, analyzing, and synthesizing a diverse range of texts and understanding the situations in which those texts are participating;
- using reading and writing strategies to craft research questions that explore and respond to complex ideas and situations;
- gathering, evaluating, and making purposeful use of primary and secondary materials appropriate for the writing goals, audience, genre, and context;
- creating a "conversation"—identifying and engaging with meaningful patterns across ideas, texts, experiences, and situations; and
- using citation styles appropriate for the genre and context.

The readings collected in *Writer/Thinker/Maker* have been deliberately chosen to support the learning goals of English 131. Therefore, these readings emerge from a range of rhetorical situations, include a variety of genres, and showcase a number of discipline-specific uses of evidence and argument. We have purposefully expanded the notion of “reading” to include visual, multimodal, and textual pieces, as well as academic and non-academic texts. We encourage you to teach analysis, synthesis, and the incorporation of evidence in ways that treat all of the readings as cultural objects capable of providing: (1) a method of analysis (meaning they can provide techniques for analyzing a concept, idea, phenomenon, and the like), and (2) an object for analysis (meaning they can be analyzed for how they function, what they do, style, cultural assumptions, and so on). Because English 131 is a writing course and not a literature or cultural studies course, the texts you use should not serve solely as the subject matter of your course but instead should be used to support writing goals. Students should be able to create complex and interesting arguments (which may or may not be about the course texts), and marshal evidence from the selected texts to support their arguments in strategic ways. The critical reading and research chapters provided in Part 2 (Chapters 5 – 9) of *Writer/Thinker/Maker* are designed to guide students in this practice.

As you know, reading, analysis, and synthesis form the backbone of academic writing and research practices. The first aspect of Outcome Two stresses these skills:

- reading, analyzing, and synthesizing a diverse range of texts and understanding the situations in which those texts are participating

Your curriculum and pedagogy should provide students with opportunities to engage in a variety of reading and analytical strategies. *Writer/Thinker/Maker* offers a variety of useful strategies for rhetorical analysis, visual and multimodal analysis, close reading, reading for content, unpacking and challenging texts’ assumptions, and so on. We feel it is important to help students understand that reading practices, like writing practices, are not neutral and apolitical. There are many ways to read and many reasons, purposes, and goals for doing so—therefore, we encourage you and your students to work to clarify, in any moment, why they are reading/analyzing/ synthesizing, what forms of reading might be best to accomplish their aims, what the consequences of their practices might be, and what voices or perspectives they might be overlooking (whether intentional or not) and to what end. Furthermore, this aspect of Outcome Two also stresses the importance of not only reading (and clarifying one’s reading goals), but also of understanding and being responsible for how texts are participating in context—thus tying back to Outcome One’s concern for how a text emerges from and responds to various complex aspects of any given rhetorical situation. With Outcome One, however,

the emphasis is more on how one's own composing choices are affected by the rhetorical situation they're writing in, while Outcome Two stresses how other people's texts are/were affected by the historical and sociopolitical context/situation to which they were responding. Understanding the contexts that texts participate in is important for careful, analytical, academically responsible, and ethical reading practices.

Let's move on to the next aspects of Outcome Two:

- using reading and writing strategies to craft research questions that explore and respond to complex ideas and situations
- gathering, evaluating, and making purposeful use of primary and secondary materials appropriate for the writing goals, audience, genre, and context

Using texts in strategic and focused ways demands that students understand the relationship between the readings and the writing they are being asked to do. What is strategic for one writing situation may be entirely inappropriate for another. Similarly, what is considered a focused argument for situations in popular culture may be rejected for its lack of depth and sustained argument in academic contexts. In addition to using course texts for strategic content-specific purposes, this outcome is about using texts generatively in order to develop informed arguments and research questions that matter (to students and to others). One very clear way to tether reading/analytical skills to writing/research skills is to ask students to read a variety of texts with the intention of crafting and exploring important research questions that might guide, emerge from, and even shift as a result of one's reading. The goal is to challenge students to move beyond the comfort zone of reading in support of an already established point of view.

Instead, reading and analysis should support the discovery and exploration of possible inquiries and arguments student might make themselves. Rather than reading with the intention to cherry pick evidence to support an argument already mapped out, we strongly encourage you to help students see research as a way to understand the conversations already taking place before finalizing a research question or argument. This is a scholarly effort that is necessary to demonstrate your knowledge of a field or body of research, but it is also an ethical practice of taking care to learn the stakes and contexts of myriad perspectives participating and affected by an issue. Students should be able to identify and articulate the concepts in a text that are most relevant to their reading and writing goals, and how these concepts are rhetorically presented. Part 2 of Writer/Thinker/Maker also provides strategies for reading rhetorically in this way, as does Chapter 1.

The next aspect of Outcome Two focuses on intertextuality:

- creating a "conversation"—identifying and engaging with meaningful patterns across ideas, texts, experiences, and situations

This part of Outcome Two asks students to position their thinking in relation to the ideas (texts, arguments, experiences, situations, perspectives, assumptions, ideologies, etc.) of others. There are two primary ways to understand creating a "conversation" in writing. First, intertextuality can be stressed by teaching students that no writing occurs in isolation, and that powerful and effective writing responds to the ideas of others in order to make a difference. Practicing this type of intertextuality not only shows students that writing is a social and generative act, but it also reinforces the ideas of audience, context, and genre in that students must accurately assess those elements of situation in order to be accepted into and perhaps even recognized by those engaging in conversations they wish to enter. Second, students in 131 need to be able to put multiple texts into conversation with one another and articulate the significance of this relationship—for example, asking students to "read" a particular object through the lens of one of the essays in the textbook. This type



of intertextuality can take place on multiple levels: interaction of concepts, arguments, genres, style, modes of presentation, or conventions. Importantly, these conversations are not made haphazardly, but are in support of the writer's goals, which means that the writer must have an awareness of those goals. Chapter 9 of *Writer/Thinker/Maker* offers an in-depth explanation and exploration of intertextuality (pg. 214 discusses intertextuality in non-academic discourses/genres).

Some 131 students may not have much experience using “outside evidence” to supplement their own writing—especially using numerous sources to inform a single argument or using evidence to generate an argument as opposed to using evidence to substantiate an already formed argument. In 131, evidence that students use will come from a variety of sources. Some evidence will come from the *Writer/Thinker/Maker* essays in the form of close reading, summary, and textual analysis. Admittedly, this is the type of evidence analysis that most of us are used to, but, because 131 is not an introduction to the major, we emphasize taking students through multiple types of evidence analysis of both primary and secondary sources that occur in disciplines outside of English. Chapters 8 and 9 in Part 2 of *Writer/Thinker/Maker* complement this outcome and are designed to help students gather and use evidence from other sources in order to discover inquiries, refine research questions, and support their writing, as well as to gain exposure to the range of research methods they will be asked to use in other courses. In addition to these chapters, which are explicitly devoted to research methods (library research, interviews, observations, and surveys are among the methods demonstrated), a number of readings in *Writer/Thinker/Maker* rely on evidence developed from various sources and methods and thus serve as useful models.

The final aspect of this outcome deals with citation:

- using citation styles appropriate for the genre and context

For the academic genres you ask students to write in, including writer's memos, students should get accustomed to consistently and accurately documenting sources. It is a good idea to discuss the basics of citing sources and the style appropriate to the type of projects they are writing as early in the quarter as possible. (It can work well to pair this discussion with one about plagiarism.) It's also a good idea to explain that documentation conventions, like those of MLA or APA for example, are part of how academic writers identify themselves with and gain credibility within a discourse community. If you expect documented sources from the very beginning, students are more likely to take this seriously, and since inconsistent documentation has the potential to get them in hot water in other classes, it may be kind to insist they get it right with you. In addition to explaining how much of a source to use, how to introduce the source and its author, etc., a discussion of the reliability of sources is worth class time. A UW library workshop can be a handy way to address these issues (visit <http://lib.washington.edu/help/instruction/> to learn about arranging one) as can the library's online (and customizable) “Research 101” tutorial (<http://lib.washington.edu/uwill/research101/>). *Writer's Help* also provides a guide to APA and MLA conventions. Which citation style you teach and how intensively you plan to scrutinize entries is up to you in negotiation with your students, but please do teach and expect one. We also feel it is important to stress to students that not all genres require academic citation, but might still have forms of what we might call “citation.” Websites, for example, cite via aesthetic design or hyperlinks (see *Writer/Thinker/Maker*, 214). See Chapter 8, “Finding and Evaluating Evidence and Source Materials,” and Chapter 9, “Practicing Intertextuality: Joining the Conversation,” by Liz Janssen, from *Writer/Thinker/Maker* for more support.

### **Outcome Three**

To craft persuasive, complex, inquiry-driven arguments that matter by

- considering, incorporating, and responding to different points of view while developing one's own position;
- engaging in analysis—the close scrutiny and examination of evidence, claims, and assumptions—to explore and support a line of inquiry;
- understanding and accounting for the stakes and consequences of various arguments for diverse audiences and within ongoing conversations and contexts; and
- designing/organizing with respect to the demands of the genre, situation, audience, and purpose.

Although English 131 emphasizes the situatedness of writing, the course also attempts to teach several general hallmarks of academic writing that often transcend disciplinary differences, such as emphasis on arguments emerging from inquiry, use of evidence; stakes and relevance; analysis; and concession to complexity and multiple points of view. While 131 isn't a course in academic argumentation per se, the class should devote a substantial focus on both making and analyzing arguments in ways that reflect academic forms of inquiry, even if you also ask students to engage in non-academic forms of composition. Students are often quite skilled in argumentation in other arenas but need help identifying similarities between the skills they bring with them to class and the varied expectations of academic argumentation. In addition to the classroom, our students encounter various situations that call for writing at the university. The classroom is the obvious place, but many students are also actively engaged in extracurricular activities, projects, and activist/community-based work that deeply matter to them. Therefore, we encourage you to think of the phrase “academic context” broadly. On the one hand, there are the hallmarks of academic discourse mentioned at the onset of this paragraph; on the other hand, there are campus-wide spaces that students inhabit and participate in that also call for various forms of argumentation. Part 3 (Chapters 10 – 14) of *Writer/Thinker/Maker* is designed to support students in developing their own arguments in relation to issues, questions, and audiences that they themselves have identified.

- considering, incorporating, and responding to different points of view while developing one's own position

Learning to develop arguments of appropriate complexity is harder than it sounds. While it may seem obvious that papers must have claims, students may have had success in the past with simply declaring a topic and never specifying a stance toward that topic. Students also commonly offer “facts” or “personal opinions” as claims, neither of which is traditionally considered academically arguable. A related complication that you can help your students to tease out is the relationship between inquiry and argumentation. This outcome stresses claims that both emerge from and explore lines of inquiry. Claims that emerge from inquiry proceed from tasks outlined in Outcome 2, in which students actively examine multiple kinds of evidence in order to develop a complex claim. The importance of exploring a line of inquiry (rather than just hammering home a point) can be explained in terms of audience; because academic activities are based in inquiry, even when we want to make an assertion we acknowledge the intelligence of our readers by presenting evidence of inquiry alongside our claims so that readers can see why we have come to our conclusions. Therefore, this focus on the relationship between inquiry and argument has two sides. On the one hand, students are taught to generate claims through inquiry. On the other hand, students are taught to explore lines of inquiry in their papers. As they generally are not familiar with academic argumentation, many of the hallmark conventions of academic genres—such as admitting complexity, addressing counterarguments, and acknowledging limitations—may not strike them as persuasive; it will be beneficial to teach students that this type of exploration actually adds credibility to their papers.

This next aspect of Outcome 3 reinforces analysis skills, this time with more focus on supporting students' own arguments:

- engaging in analysis—the close scrutiny and examination of evidence, claims, and assumptions—to explore and support a line of inquiry

This part of the outcome echoes back to both Outcome One and Two. As we've mentioned, the outcomes are interconnected and there is no reason to see the analytical skills here as wholly distinct from those discussed earlier. In Outcome One, analysis is engaged to better understand one's rhetorical situation; in Outcome Two, to better understand others' texts in context; and here, analysis is being engaged with a more focused aim of supporting one's own argument that has emerged with increased clarity as a result of the research process.

Often, students rely on unspoken assumptions when analyzing evidence. Students will need to learn to explain how they arrived at their ideas, recognize the different kinds of knowledge and assumptions that different audiences bring to a text (themselves included), and think about how their assessment of a rhetorical situation will shape how they present ideas. Again, students may not be accustomed to defending their assertions (much less their assumptions) at all. One useful way to teach students the importance of identifying, questioning, and disrupting the assumptions undergirding their writing is to have them practice identifying these in others' arguments. As you engage in rhetorical analyses of course texts, you can ask your students, "What are the assumptions undergirding this argument? Based on the argument presented, what are the unstated and implicit beliefs that the author must be holding to be true?" Another useful exercise is to have students identify a particular assumption of theirs that is disrupted by a course text and to think through which cultural forces (family, education, media, personal experience, etc.) helped shape that assumption in the first place.

In addition to relying on assumptions, some students will provide too much evidence with too little analysis. It is also common to see description in place of analysis. Don't be discouraged if you have to go over this aspect of Outcome 3 many times. Once students think about support as an essential element of argument, you can move on to the more sophisticated issues of marshaling evidence, citing authoritative sources (and what counts as such in a given discursive context), and keeping the presentation of evidence at a level consistent with the anticipated audience.

The next aspect of Outcome 3 deals with understanding the stakes and consequences of arguments (both one's own and others'):

- understanding and accounting for the stakes and consequences of various arguments for diverse audiences and within ongoing conversations and contexts

Many students are used to writing papers because they have to, but may not have much practice in explaining why the line of inquiry they are addressing matters. Without some discussion of why it is important to explain the stakes of an argument, most students will assume that the existence of the writing prompt is explanation enough. However, once they understand the importance of heading off the "so what?" question by persuasively articulating both the reasons and the ethical and political implications of making a particular argument, students' papers begin to look much more like arguments than exercises and become more interesting both for them to write and for you and other students to read. If students are working in nonacademic genres where explicit articulation of the "stakes" would violate genre conventions, you might ask them to articulate the stakes of their composition in a writer's memo. One very productive way to get students to think about and explicitly articulate the stakes of their argument is to ask them, "For whom are you writing and to what end? Who is affected by your argument and in what ways? Whose interests are you prioritizing over others' when you make your argument and why?" You can do this in the written feedback you give on individual student papers or during student conferences. You can make space for it during peer review as well, by requiring students to answer these questions on each other's projects. You can also familiarize your students with thinking about stakes in this way throughout the quarter by leading

them through rhetorical analyses of course texts and asking similar questions of those texts—“What are the specific urgencies and stakes motivating this author’s project? Who is it addressing and why? What kind of material impact is it hoping to make? Who might be particularly persuaded by this argument and who may not be and why?” Requiring students to grapple with and answer such questions can help them think more critically, strategically, and ethically about why their argument matters.

Another way of teaching stakes is by returning to elements of Outcome 1. Many students have a hard time narrowing down the stakes of the argument, and it’s common to see broad generalizations about why something matters to humanity in general. Focusing on elements of the rhetorical situation, particularly on the audience and the reason for the argument, will ward off such broad statements. This also teaches them that stakes are culturally and historically specific, and that not all issues and arguments matter for all communities in all historical time periods, a point that might seem straightforward but is easy to lose sight of in the writing process.

Many students have little experience (in academic contexts at least) explaining what they think and why—the idea here is not that they should produce entirely original arguments, but that they should practice critiquing and building on, rather than simply regurgitating received knowledge. As mentioned above, basics of persuasive academic writing, like acknowledging complexity, will not necessarily strike your students as obviously persuasive since they may seem to detract from a clear-cut argument. Along these same lines, this kind of positioning may be new to the students who generally have more experience taking a stance for or against a position than they do considering multiple perspectives and engaging with them. Once you have them thinking that they do need to provide support for their assertions, you can move on to discussing how they can do this in relation to others’ contributions to the line of inquiry they are exploring.

Finally, students will need support on organization (or design for multimodal genres), which includes attention to how best to order, lay out, and craft your argument, ideas, and logic to suit the occasion:

- designing/organizing with respect to the demands of the genre, situation, audience, and purpose

Students will often promise arguments or topics in their introductions which, after the first page, are never to be seen again. Especially on early drafts, students are likely to present evidence which (at the time of writing, at least) seems self-evident in its relevance to the paper’s larger topic. They may need to be reminded to tie everything they say back to that claim or organizing idea. As academic papers increase in length, students need to know that readers need reminders of where they are in the paper. That said, one of the characteristics of “English”<sup>7</sup> is an overuse of “therefore,” “however,” “whereas,” and other relational signposts for letting readers know where they are in the argument. It’s worth some time to talk about how the transitions between paragraphs and sentences can, and should, serve to further an argument, and to illustrate the relationship between the ideas those paragraphs and sentences communicate. In Part 3 of *Writer/Thinker/Maker*, Chapter 12 and 13 offer direct support to organizing paragraphs and logics in academic papers that can be adapted for other genres. Chapter 7 offers strategies for design and organization in multimodal genres.

#### **Outcome Four**

To practice composing as a recursive, collaborative process and to develop flexible strategies for revising throughout the composition process by

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<sup>7</sup> A term for “the phony, pretentious language of the schools” popularized by Ken Macrorie’s book, *Telling Writing* (1970).

- engaging in a variety of (re)visioning techniques, including (re)brainstorming, (re)drafting, (re)reading, (re)writing, (re)thinking, and editing;
- giving, receiving, interpreting, and incorporating constructive feedback; and
- refining and nuancing composition choices for delivery to intended audience(s) in a manner consonant with the genre, situation, and desired rhetorical effects and meanings.

This outcome embodies the ideas that composition is hard, recursive work that can require, among other things, the substantial revision (re-working) of an entire project; disrupting and rethinking of one's core assumptions and values; and a lot of experimentation and false starts. The portfolio system—which builds in multiple drafts, stresses revision, and postpones final grading to the end—attempts to support this notion of writing as a recursive process. Part 4 of Writer/Thinker/Maker supports this outcome and offers instruction on developing meta-cognitive habits for revision, as well as explanations on how to revise and edit individual pieces of writing, from larger organizational issues to sentence level issues. The subsections of this outcome describe the types of flexible strategies that we hope students can take with them: knowing how to perform substantive revisions; being able to work with feedback by teachers and peers; and developing techniques not only for catching technical errors, but also for experimenting with grammar and style for intentional rhetorical effects. In many ways, successfully revising a piece of writing is as much a mindset as it is a set of skills.

What should be clear by now is that when we speak of revision, we do not merely mean end stage “error correction” or proof reading. Rather, revision entails everything from the refining of and experimenting with micro-level grammar and style choices to the changing of one's claims and argument as a result of what one discovers during the research and composition process. Such is crystallized in the first bullet:

- engaging in a variety of (re)visioning techniques, including (re)brainstorming, (re)drafting, (re)reading, (re)writing, (re)thinking, and editing

Like the previous outcomes, Outcome 4 emphasizes skills for students to practice in 131, but also, and perhaps more importantly, focuses on effective writing habits that students can take with them and apply to writing they do in the future. Therefore, lessons on revising, rethinking, playing with style, experimenting with micro-level choices for effect, editing, and proofreading need to simultaneously be about the project at hand and about flexible revision strategies in general.

Many of your students may be used to thinking of revision as a minimal effort of cleaning up typos at the end of the writing process and may, understandably, be resistant to making substantial changes to their drafts. Outcome 4 encourages students to rethink these perceptions and habits, and we encourage you to provide opportunities for students not just to draft work but to experiment and play with it along the way. One way we can do this is to make comments about revision part of our feedback response process. In short, we need to make revision “count” and we do that partly through our responses to drafts.

Bottom line: we recommend that you are explicit about your understanding of and expectations for revision and provide ample opportunities for revision, feedback, and experimentation. In addition to being clear about your expectations, consider constructing your assignments so revision is unavoidable, by asking students to adapt their original positions to new information, readings, or research. It is also essential that students can talk about the revisions they've done in their final portfolio critical reflection. The critical reflection is a place where students can demonstrate to you not only that they have revised the assignments included in the portfolio but also that they have

developed flexible strategies to employ in future writing, beyond the portfolio and beyond the class. From *Writer/Thinker/Maker*, see Chapter 17, “The EWP Portfolio,” by Kirin Wachter-Grene, and Chapter 9, “Portfolios in English 131,” from this manual for more on the portfolio critical reflection.

The next bullet stresses the importance of working with feedback:

- giving, receiving, interpreting, and incorporating constructive feedback

Being able to respond meaningfully to and incorporate feedback as opposed to simply “fixing” grammar and spelling errors is harder than it sounds, and your students will benefit from explicit instruction on how to take another’s comments and work them into their papers. Class lessons dedicated to moving from comment to revision will help, as will repeated focus on getting students to articulate, either verbally or in writing, what they think they should be responding to. But, in order for the students to successfully respond to comments, those comments must be clear and pertinent. For example, writing “awk,” or “?” or “explain,” often results in confusion and frustration. Drafts riddled with these types of comments are difficult for students to respond to. Therefore, class time needs to be spent on teaching students how to comment as well as how to respond to comments. Many students will come to class with the idea that only the instructor has anything relevant to say about his or her writing and ignore their peers’ reactions. Our response can direct them to specific peer comments in which the peer reader has given appropriate, interesting, or even compelling advice. At the same time, be sure students feel empowered to question advice that seems inappropriate. It is also important to emphasize that the comments you write not only address your concerns as an individual, but the alternative views of other possible readers that may not be currently accommodated by the draft. Getting students used to peer review and peer comments early in the quarter may help mitigate their resistance to their peer’s role in further developing their work. Such work also tends to create a collaborative atmosphere in the classroom and gets students used to sharing their work and ideas with others rather than writing in isolation. See Chapter 8, *Evaluating and Responding to Student Writing*, of this manual for more support.

Finally, we want to encourage students to both incorporate and push back on feedback, as well as to develop the ownership, agency, and skill for revising their work beyond whatever feedback they may receive. Some students may be tempted to simply respond to comments you or peers make and call it a day, perhaps assuming you noted all the “problems to fix.” So, here again, framing for students that while feedback is one valuable resource for improving their work, they should go above and beyond “fixing” and embrace revision as deep and meaningful rethinking for rhetorical effect.

Now, at last, to our final bullet:

- refining and nuancing composition choices for delivery to intended audience(s) in a manner consonant with the genre, situation, and desired rhetorical effects and meanings

This final aspect of Outcome 4 stresses the work involved in refining projects for “delivery” to intended audiences. While delivery is a complex rhetorical concept, let it suffice to say here that this is the outcome that asks students to, finally, polish their work for circulation (distribution, performance, etc.) in a way that jives with the context, genre, rhetorical situation, audience, and hoped for outcomes. Here, you might notice that Outcome 4 loops right back to Outcome 1 since this “refining and nuancing” should be done with all the rhetorical awareness one can muster. This bullet does not, as you can see, simply mean “cleaning up typos,” although that is part of what one might do—it also means being aware and in control of one’s composition choices in a manner that is persuasive, appropriate, and ethical given the situation, audience, genre, and context. What it means to “refine” a project for delivery will depend on the situation. Appropriate and effective writing in an academic essay will differ from a blogging project on environmental advocacy for young adults. This means that

students' work towards delivery and how you assess it will, likewise, depend. Should Standard Academic English always be used as the gold standard that students must aspire towards and that we must use to guide our assessment? Probably not. At least, not when students are not writing academic discourse/essays or attempting to reach a non-academic audience!

This said, because we are preparing students, in part, to successfully write at the academy, this should incline all of us to devote ample time to helping students understand and practice using academic conventions (and hopefully also to push back on such conventions, experiment with them, and understand how they are linked to access, power, and exclusion). *Writer/Thinker/Maker* offers support for both academic writing conventions (see Chapters 10 and 12) and non-academic, multimodal genres (see Chapter 7).

## ENGLISH 131: THE TEXTBOOK

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The textbook for English 131 (as well as 109/110, 111, 121, 182) is *Writer/Thinker/Maker: Approaches to Composition, Rhetoric, and Research*. This textbook is made up of six parts that are designed to support you in developing and practicing the EWP Outcomes. Parts 1–4 focus on building and practicing writing skills targeted in the EWP Outcomes; Part 5 introduces the EWP portfolio that you will need to create in this course; and Part 6 includes readings and other texts that provide contexts for your inquiry.

**Part 1 (Chapters 1–4)** targets Outcome 1 and explores how inquiry is a means by which students discover the aspects of their rhetorical situations that matter and a means to join important conversations in the academy and beyond. Chapter 1 defines rhetoric and rhetorical situations, offering a variety of tools for analyzing rhetorical situations; Chapter 2 provides resources for understanding and adapting writing for different audiences; Chapter 3 supports genre awareness and offers tools for genre analysis, a form of rhetorical analysis; and Chapter 4 provides resources for developing metacognitive reflective practices.

**Part 2 (Chapters 5–9)** targets Outcome 2 and focuses on reading and research skills that will help students generate and support their writing. Chapters 5–6 provide strategies for reading and conducting rhetorical analysis. Chapter 7 offers tools for reading and composing multimodal texts. Chapter 8 discusses strategies for finding, evaluating, and documenting sources. Chapter 9 offers tools for putting ideas, sources, and texts in conversation with each other and for joining the conversation.

**Part 3 (Chapters 10–14)** corresponds with Outcome 3 and introduces key skills in argumentation, making claims, conducting research, and supporting inquiries. Chapter 10 covers different types and forms of argument, as well as overviews of some of the key aspects of argument in academic writing. Chapter 11 provides strategies for formulating, developing, and supporting academic arguments and initiating a line of inquiry; Chapter 12 covers the creation of complex claims; Chapter 13 offers resources to your students for analyzing evidence and assumptions in constructing their own argument; Chapter 14 provides tools for designing and organizing persuasive arguments.

**Part 4 (Chapters 15–16)** corresponds with Outcome 4 by suggesting various flexible strategies for planning, drafting, revisiting, and revising ideas and writing. Chapter 15 targets various stages of revision, including outlining and developing revision strategies; Chapter 16 focuses on style and grammatical choices for rhetorical effect.

**Part 5 (Chapter 17)** provides the rationale behind the EWP portfolio, as well as helpful guidelines and resources for creating one. The EWP portfolio is the culminating project for this course, in which your students will be asked to deeply revise some of the writing they have completed for the course; to make the case for how their writing accomplishes and embodies the EWP outcomes; and to reflect on what they have learned. We strongly advise that you and your students peek at this chapter early in the quarter to see where the class is headed.

**Part 6 (The Reader)** includes materials carefully selected for range of genre, audience, context, and type of argument. The readings include texts that have emerged from distinct rhetorical situations and allow for a variety of applications, from close reading to rhetorical analysis to examples of disciplinary methodology. These texts provide materials for you and your students to critically read, analyze, and write about, but also demonstrate the multiple kinds of genres one might compose in.

## **WHAT STUDENTS ARE ASKED TO WRITE IN OTHER CLASSES**

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Having described the English 131 course outcomes and the course text, we will now briefly relate writing from 131 to other types of writing that students may encounter at the UW. While the amount of writing students are asked to do in large lecture courses is always less than optimal, UW students are asked to do a variety of writing in their other classes. Drawing again from research conducted by Catharine Beyer and Joan Graham, we quote from the first- and second-year students describing their writing assignments:

### **International Relations/English link**

We were asked to take theories from the international relations course and apply them to the end of the cold war. Which theory worked better? I chose interdependence and realism for mine. Research was required.

### **History**

We were asked to take one person in history, take the textbook's view of the person, and contrast that with three other sources we found on our own. I chose Martin Luther. I argued that the textbook gave a pretty shallow description of him.

### **Physics**

The assignment was to write a paper on something that interested us (about) the physics of music or sound. I wrote on the importance of the evolution of guitar strings—classical through acoustic.

### **Political Science**

We were supposed to compare the conceptions of human nature offered by Hobbes and Plato and show how each of these conceptions leads to the view that people are condemned to a horrible existence unless order is imposed on them from above. Finally we were to state whether we think Plato or Hobbes provides a more convincing justification for government and why.

### **Native-American Studies**



We had to examine at least six issues of a Native-American newspaper, following one issue. Then we were to find the same story in a mainstream newspaper. We had to describe the audience for the Native-American newspaper and compare the two newspapers.

What is common to all of these descriptions of other writing assignments is the students' need to create viable academic arguments, using analysis, application, evidence, and logical reasoning in ways acceptable to a particular disciplinary perspective—in other words, skills we hope to prepare students for in English 131.

## A NOTE ON CITATION PRACTICES AND READING SELECTIONS

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While *Writer/Thinker/Maker's* reader (Part 6) offers a wide range of useful texts that can help you design your course, you are not limited to this selection. While you should be drawing heavily on Parts 1-5 of the textbook to support the teaching of writing, research, and rhetorical skills, you are welcome to incorporate content readings outside of the textbook that you think will be generative and productive. As you begin thinking about which content texts you might want to work with, however, keep in mind that reading selection—much like writing itself—is always a political act that determines which kinds of knowledges are privileged and legitimated in academic contexts and which subjugated and obscured. Be intentional and purposeful about the kind of readings you weave into your class; the ethical and political implications of doing so; and the ways that readings are intended to support the goals of EWP, the diverse incomes and goals of your students, and your own personal philosophies.

You may find it useful to include a blurb in your syllabus that explicitly reflects on the particular practice of selection you are engaging in within the space of your classroom. Note that such an act can also model thoughtful metacognition and critical self-reflection for your students. The one below is from Belle Kim's syllabus:

"The collection of readings we will be engaging with in this class seeks to interrogate and disrupt a technique of selection that violently erases Black, brown, indigenous, trans\*, disabled POC, QT\*POC, feminist, activist, and disability/crip contributions from our intellectual genealogies. Sara Ahmed (2013) describes citation as a 'rather successful reproductive technology, a way of reproducing the world around certain bodies.' She argues that 'citational structures' can form disciplines and 'the reproduction of a discipline can be the reproduction of *these techniques of selection*, ways of making certain bodies and thematics core to the discipline, and others not even part.' In centering the writings and perspectives of those whose bodies and knowledges have often been appropriated or deemed irrelevant, disposable, and peripheral, this course pushes us to think through the politics of citation that make and remake our fields."

By including this blurb, the instructor reinforces the idea that writing—how we produce it, how we engage with it, how we circulate it—has material impact.

## RELATION OF ENGLISH 131 TO OTHER "C" COURSES

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The other courses with which students can fulfill the composition requirement are as follows:

**ENGL 109-110 (5-5 credits)**, *Introductory Composition*, is only open to Educational Opportunity Program students (through the recommendation of the Office of Minority Affairs) and to Student Support Services students. This course is guided by the same outcomes as 131 and provides the same level of academic reading and writing as English 131 over a two-quarter sequence, with the assistance of the Instructional Center and the guidance

counselors of the Office of Minority Affairs. This is usually called a “stretch” course, and it is a preferred approach for students who may have had less than ideal academic preparation.

**ENGL 111 (5 credits)**, *Composition: Literature*, is a one-quarter equivalent of English 131, with the same outcomes and curriculum for its students. What differs is the kind of texts students read. In English 111, students read and write papers about literature.

**ENGL 121 (5 credits)**, *Composition: Social Issues*, is another one-quarter equivalent of English 131, with the same outcomes and curriculum. Here the texts students read and write are combined with experiential and service learning in the community.

**ENGL 182 (5 credits)**, *Multimodal Composition*, is another one-quarter equivalent of 131, with the same outcomes and curriculum. English 182 focuses on teaching strategies and skills for effective writing and argument that are required of traditional academic genres, such as the research essay, while also expanding the skills for composing in multimodal genres that our increasingly digital and media saturated world demands.

**ENGL 197 (5 credits)**, *Interdisciplinary Writing/Humanities*

**ENGL 198 (5 credits)**, *Interdisciplinary Writing/Social Science*

**ENGL 199 (5 credits)**, *Interdisciplinary Writing/Natural Science*

**These three courses, offered by the Interdisciplinary Writing Program** (housed in the English department), provide a composition section in conjunction with a specified lecture course in the Humanities, Social Sciences, or Natural Sciences. Students register for both a lecture course for credit and for an additional course for composition credit.

**C LIT 240 (5 credits)**, *Writing in Comparative Literature*, is a comparative approach to literature and a workshop in writing comparative papers in English, with emphasis on cross-cultural comparison of literary works. Readings are in English with an option to read selected texts in the original language. Some C LIT TAs will have taught C LIT 240 before they train and teach in the English department; others will start with us and move back to C LIT. C LIT 240 is open only to C LIT TAs.

**ENGL 281 (5 credits)**, *Intermediate Expository Writing*, is a workshop course that focuses on increasing student awareness of how writing, rhetoric, and genre function, often with a greater focus on the demands of particular writing situations, of performing in different genres, of how and why particular writing situations require specific rhetorical “moves.” There is no prerequisite for English 281, and individual instructors may choose to emphasize some particular content more than others, for example, focusing more on genre than rhetoric.

**ENGL 282 (5 credits)**, *Intermediate Multimodal Composition*, offers strategies for composing effective multimodal texts for print, digital and/or physical delivery, with focus on affordances of various modes—words, images, sound, design, and gesture—and genres to address specific rhetorical situations both within and beyond the academy.

**ENGL 381 (5 credits)**, *Advanced Expository Writing*, is designed to sharpen and develop a range of specialized and advanced writing skills around various special topics that vary per instructor and might include travel writing, writing about film, workplace writing, nonfiction writing, legal writing, business writing, and so on.

**ENGL 382 (5 credits)**, *Special Topics in Multimodal Composition*, encourages students to develop a theoretical and practical understanding of multimodal composition via sustained, in-depth attention to emerging questions, debates, genres, and methods of textual production. Course topics may range from digital storytelling, digital humanities, audiovisual essays, new media journalism, and performance.

## GENERAL POLICIES FOR 100-LEVEL EWP COURSES

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All TAs in the Expository Writing Program are expected to meet the requirements specified in the EWP Policies for Instructors, which can be found on the EWP website (<https://english.washington.edu/teaching/ewp-instructor-policies>). These policies describe the basic requirements for teaching EWP courses and for meeting university expectations regarding conduct.

The Expository Writing Program Website (<https://english.washington.edu/expository-writing-program-policies>) also describes the policies for students in your course. (Please note that these policies are different from those governing TAs.) It is strongly suggested that you both direct students to the website and distribute a printed version of these policies. The policies for students are reprinted below for your convenience.

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Each course in the Expository Writing Program has specific policies determined by the instructor. In addition to those specific policies, there are several policies that apply to all courses and all sections in the Expository Writing Program.

### GRADE OF “2.0”

A grade of “2.0” or better must be received in all Expository Writing Courses for those courses to count toward the University’s “C” credit.

### OVERLOADS & AUDITORS

Because of the importance of maintaining writing courses as small communities of writers, there are **no overloads or auditors** in 100-level Expository Writing Program courses.

Instructors **cannot issue add-codes** for 100-level Expository Writing Program courses; all students must register on-line. Any student not officially registered by the end of the first week of classes will not be allowed into a class even if other students drop the course during week two.

### DROPS

Students can withdraw from courses during the first two weeks without an entry being made on the transcript. After that time, fees ensue. See the University’s [withdrawal policy](#) for more information and dates.

### INCOMPLETES

Receiving a grade of “I” for Incomplete is **extremely rare** in the Expository Writing Program as instructors are discouraged from issuing incompletes. To receive an incomplete, a special request must be made to the instructor and approved by the EWP director:

- all student work must be complete through the eighth week of the quarter
- there must be a documented illness or extraordinary situation
- the advance permission of the Director of Expository Writing must be granted

- a written contract stipulating when course work will be completed must be arrived at between instructor and student
- failure to complete the course by the end of the following quarter (summer term excepted) will result in a failing grade of 0.0

If a student leaves a class at any time during the quarter without explanation, an incomplete grade will not be considered. In such cases, grades are determined based on work submitted.

### **AMOUNT OF WRITING**

Courses in the Expository Writing Program are graded classes. Students are expected to write frequently, both in and out of class. The minimum writing requirement for our “C” classes is 7,500 words submitted, of which at least 3600 must be graded. Students should thus expect to be turning in an average of 3-4 pages each week.

The final grades for all students in English 131 are determined by submission of a complete portfolio of student work; students must turn in a portfolio to receive credit for the course.

### **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

While the Expository Writing Program acknowledges the importance of academic honesty, we also recognize that plagiarism (and the many reasons students might plagiarize) is very complex, requiring complex responses that must be negotiated on a case-by-case basis. In EWP, we do not uphold a mandatory policy of reporting plagiarism cases to the Office of Student Affairs, but we do ask instructors to discuss all plagiarism cases (or suspected cases) with students, and we insist that no plagiarized projects can be included in the final portfolio. Our general approach is to begin by listening to students with compassion and patience, rather than start with an approach that sees all cases of plagiarism as cheating that deserves strict penalty. We ask that all TAs seek consultation with the EWP Director when they encounter plagiarism cases for the first time (and whenever they would like additional support thereafter) prior to confronting students. Please see Chapter 7 and 8 of this manual for more information on ways to address plagiarism.

Plagiarism in the Expository Writing Program includes:

- failing to accurately cite sources
- representing someone else's work as your own
- undocumented paraphrasing
- the resubmission of work completed for another course or purpose
- undocumented collaboration

### **STUDENT CONDUCT**

All students in Expository Writing courses are required to follow the University's Student Conduct Code (available at <http://www.washington.edu/students/handbook/conduct.html>).

### **COMPLAINTS**

If you have any concerns about a course or instructor in the Expository Writing Program, please see the instructor about these concerns as soon as possible. If you are not comfortable talking with the instructor or not satisfied with the response that you receive, you may contact the following EWP staff in Padelford A-11:

- Candice Rai, Director: 543-0758 or [crai@uw.edu](mailto:crai@uw.edu)

- Nanya Jhingran, Asst. Director: 543-9126 or [nanyaj@uw.edu](mailto:nanyaj@uw.edu)
- Brittney Frantece, Asst. Director: 543-9126 or [britfran@uw.edu](mailto:britfran@uw.edu)
- Misun Bishop, Asst. Director: 543-9126 or [misungb@uw.edu](mailto:misungb@uw.edu)

If, after speaking with the Director of Expository Writing or one of the Assistant Directors, you are still not satisfied with the response you receive, you may contact Anis Bawarshi, English Department Chair, Padelford A-101, 543-2690, [bawarshi@uw.edu](mailto:bawarshi@uw.edu).

### CHAPTER 3

## DESIGNING THE ASSIGNMENTS & DESIGNING THE COURSE

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As discussed in the previous chapter, the English 131 curriculum is focused around the four EWP course outcomes. These outcomes articulate the goals of the course and the expectations for the final portfolio to be submitted by students. These outcomes are also meant to help you design your course and evaluate student writing. As discussed in Chapter 2, a driving principle of these outcomes is an approach to writing as a situated, inquiry-based and generative practice. In other words, the outcomes foster writing that not only helps students develop and hone their thinking, but which also leads to new and increasingly complex discoveries that emerge from ongoing conversations and pressing exigencies in various contexts. We believe these writing and thinking habits are integral to our students' success at the University of Washington and beyond; our 131 assignments and course design deliberately support this trajectory.

This chapter will focus on assignment and course design based on the educational principle of **scaffolding**.

***Scaffolding is a practice of course and assignment design in which big learning goals are broken down into a series of smaller tasks or skills with increasing complexities that build upon one another to lead to the larger outcome.***

Another way to understand the concept of scaffolding is as a skeletal structure that imparts and supports the learning objectives you have for your course. For example:

- If you ultimately want students to write a complex claim that has emerged from a line of inquiry, preceding assignments must guide students through the inquiry process in a way that

- continually complicates and adds new dimensions to their previous understanding of the topic.
- Or, if you want students to synthesize complex texts, they will first need to understand those texts in isolation—through summary and rhetorical analysis—before bringing them together to form an intertextual argument.

Scaffolding is built into 131 through the basic structure of **assignment sequencing** and **portfolio assessment** (please see Chapter 9 of this manual for more on portfolios). 131 consists of a number of **assignment sequences**.

***Assignment Sequences are designed with a mind to scaffolding: they each consist of 2-4 assignments of varying lengths which build on each other and increase in complexity. Each sequence can be understood as targeting a set of skills or practices which build up to the learning outcomes of the course. Sequences are internally scaffolded and can be scaffolded sequentially to build on each other.***

The most basic version of 131 consists of three assignment sequences:

- The **first two longer sequences**, typically four weeks each, consist of **two to four short assignments and one longer assignment each**, with each sequence generally drawing on a reading or a cluster of readings from the course textbook. Both the short and the long assignments in each sequence target the learning expectations outlined in the outcomes, and each should provide students with an opportunity to practice one or more of these traits in a way that builds as the quarter progresses. Throughout the quarter, instructors are also encouraged to highlight which trait(s) of the outcomes are accomplished by particular assignments. This transparency will allow students to take a more active role in scaffolding their own skills while also preparing them to think metacognitively about the work they are doing.
- **During approximately the last two weeks of the quarter**, having completed two sequences, students will work on a **final portfolio sequence**. Here, students **select three to five of their shorter assignments and one of their major assignments** that they will use collectively to demonstrate their ability to meet the course outcomes. The selection process that guides this final sequence teaches students to self-assess their writing (one of the learning goals listed in Outcome 1). Along with selecting and revising papers, the portfolio also requires students to **write a critical reflection**, which is at the heart of the final two-week sequence. This reflection, should argue for how the selected assignments demonstrate the four main learning outcomes for the course.

This metacognitive practice—demonstrating one’s own writing awareness—can only happen if students have consistently worked with the outcomes throughout the quarter and are then asked to focus attention on their own writing practices now they have their own “evidence” to work with.

**Important Note: The *three-sequence* model shared above is the most basic version and has been tried and tested by most 131 instructors. However, other forms of sequencing (with more or less assignments/sequences) are possible. Please reach out to *the Director, ADs*, and website resources to view other forms of sequencing or to talk to us about other ideas for sequencing that you may have. We are happy to support you in developing your curricula.**

Throughout the quarter, instructors are also encouraged to highlight which aspect(s) of the outcomes are accomplished by particular assignments. This transparency will allow students to take a more active role in scaffolding their own skills while also preparing them to think metacognitively about the work they are doing.

Although students will need to have sufficient exposure to and practice with the course goals, there is no set way to incorporate these outcomes into your assignments and sequences. You might consider targeting a few outcomes per assignment, or you might want to designate a set of outcomes for each sequence. No matter how you decide to scaffold the learning goals, experience has shown that students' success in the course (ultimately marked by their ability to knowledgeably and critically discuss their own writing habits and strategies) heavily depends on their being given opportunities to practice and reflect on these outcomes as they work through stages of your assignment sequences.

### **WHERE DO I BEGIN DESIGNING MY 131 CURRICULUM?**

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When scaffolding each sequence, it's a good idea to work backwards. Start with what you want students to learn and accomplish in the final longer assignment of the sequence and then design a series of steps or stages that simultaneously ask students to perform tasks that build toward the final project while practicing various traits from the course outcomes. Although working backwards may seem counterintuitive, it allows you to identify all the reading and writing tasks that are embedded in the end assignment so that you can explicitly teach those tasks throughout the sequence. It is common for instructors to feel frustrated with students who can't seem to write the major assignments that their prompts call for, but this is often the result of the student having not recognized the hidden literacy tasks they must have already accomplished in order to successfully complete the assignment.

As an instructor, you can never fully teach all the reading and writing skills that all students need in order to successfully complete the assignment, but there are a number of key literacy tasks that many students will not be familiar with.

#### **Students are likely to need explicit instruction in some or all the following areas:**

- building and complicating their claims and differentiating those claims from the traditional high school thesis statement (Specifically, students are usually much more adept at describing or comparing than they are at developing an argument. In the next chapter, strategies for teaching argument will be discussed in much greater detail.)
- analyzing, synthesizing, and arguing
- applying key terms from one context to another less familiar one
- close/critical/rhetorical reading that connects texts to historical, cultural, or situational context
- recognizing and evaluating assumptions
- reasoning in college contexts—for example, what “counts” as evidence
- returning to their claims throughout their papers, rather than just at the beginning and end
- organizing beyond the limited two-page papers most of them have written
- recognizing where explicit organizational structures are desirable and where they are not
- becoming attentive to the differences in disciplinary approaches (i.e., the disciplinary assumptions of one article may not be the same as another article)



- sustaining focus on the complex dynamics of rhetorical situation—particular audience expectations and genre conventions—as they write increasingly difficult arguments
- revising beyond surface level error correction
- identifying the stakes, both political and personal, for why writing matters in various contexts
- critical reflection on their own writing (Specifically, students often need substantial practice talking about why and how they employed certain strategies and conventions in a given situation.)

For a more detailed explanation of specific types of assignments that target these goals while helping students practice various literacy tasks, please refer to the final pages of this chapter.

***Assignment sequencing not only allows you to scaffold learning objectives for your students so that they learn new skills in stages, but it also allows for explicit explanation and practice of tasks, thereby breaking down expectations as assignments build towards a longer project.***

## DESIGNING ASSIGNMENT SEQUENCES

Because the goal of our course is to help students develop an awareness of when and how to deploy certain writing strategies, it is important to be as deliberate as possible when designing assignments. The clarity of your assignment's aims and requirements is helpful for students, but the explicit breakdown of assignments is also quite helpful for you as an instructor. For example, assignment prompts that explicitly describe such things as the genre, audience, source expectations, and outcomes targeted not only guide what you will teach the students prior to the assignment, but they also direct how you comment on and evaluate your students' work. Explicit prompts can ease anxiety over lesson planning by setting boundaries for skills that need to be taught, and they can ease frustration when commenting on student papers by providing a rubric for what to comment on in the limited time you have set aside for doing so.

### **The following questions can be used to guide your assignment design:**

1. What are the various skills, information, and capacities that students will need to complete the assignment? Which, among these, will I need to teach and introduce to students in the sequence and what might students already know?
2. Why am I asking students to do this and what will they gain from this sequence?
3. What prior experiences do students need to have to prepare them for this task?
4. What will students do with these skills next, either in this course or in future professional and academic contexts?

In this section, we will present two approaches to sequencing assignments: cumulative sequence design and serial arrangement design.

When designing your course, each assignment within a sequence can be made to build on the tasks practiced in the preceding assignment. This type of sequence is sometimes called the ***cumulative sequence design***, and these types of assignments generally move from simple to increasingly complex tasks. Generally, we encourage instructors of 131 to use the cumulative sequence because it provides the clearest (most explicit) trajectory for students and teachers to

follow, though it is not the only way to scaffold assignments.

Another common type of sequence design is ***the serial arrangement***. In this type of sequence, the short assignments all practice the various tasks that are called for in the longer assignment, but they do not lead to the major assignment in a vertical or hierarchical way. Although the serial sequence can be successful (and may be attractive in that, in some ways, it allows for more “creative” assignments), it is much more difficult to negotiate how learning will build from assignment to assignment. Often, instructors who choose to construct serial sequences need to pay even more attention to explicitly teaching the needed skills during class. No matter what type of design you choose, you will still need to consider how each stage of your sequence will target one or more of the course outcomes while helping students practice the skills they will need to succeed in composing the major assignment. It can be helpful to imagine your assignments broken down into stages; this may make the sequence more manageable during the design phase.

In the following, we map out one sample process that previous 131 instructors have found helpful when designing a sequence. Please note that there are many ways to approach scaffolding and sequence design, but this general trajectory has proven helpful for instructors in the past:

### ***Sample Pathway for Sequence Design***

1. **Identify your main goal(s) for the sequence**, which will be accomplished in the final assignment of that sequence. Goal(s) might include, for example:
  - researching using primary and secondary evidence and/or fieldwork
  - analyzing a cultural artifact through a theoretical lens;
  - composing in various genres (children's books, concert flyer, cookbook) and writing an argument paper that analyzes the ideologies supportive of that genre;
  - composing a multimodal project that combines images and text to create a coherent argument about identity, space, or other social constructs;
  - understanding how a concept or theme changes depending on context, discipline, or line of inquiry; or
  - using one's own writing as evidence to argue for the successful completion of 131.
2. Most often, **instructors identify a sequence's learning goals while choosing their course readings**. Working through these at the same time allows you to both settle on themes you find engaging while remaining mindful of the course outcomes. It also ensures that you are having students read materials to practice a specific literacy skill rather than just gaining content.
3. Begin to **craft a major assignment that combines the desired readings with the desired learning goals** you have for your sequence. Be sure to highlight all the outcomes that the paper calls for. If the students are writing an argument essay, it is guaranteed that they will be engaging in aspects of every outcome.
4. Close read your major assignment prompt and imagine what a successful student paper will actually look like. From there, **identify the skills** and knowledges that are required to write it well. List these and relate them to the course outcomes.
5. Begin to **craft the shorter assignments that will lead up to this longer one** in relation to the list that resulted from your close read of the end assignment, and try to scaffold the tasks done in each assignment with ones practiced previously; the following guidelines for initial and intermediate design can help you come up with assignment types.
6. **Be attentive to the amount of time you schedule in between each assignment**. Perhaps the most common dilemma for first time instructors is time management. The quarter goes by quickly, and students' lack of experience with these complex writing tasks may surprise you. Make sure to leave time for students to learn and practice the skills they need to fulfill your assignment. **Therefore, we recommend the "less is more" approach**. If, as the quarter progresses, you find that you haven't planned enough, it's easy to add elements to assignments or daily lessons.

Of course, this is only one process for developing effective sequences, and, like other writing you do, sequence design is a recursive process in which proficiency emerges from practice. We hope, however, that these steps will help you begin to develop a method for design that works best for you.

As you work backwards from your major assignment prompt, it is helpful to consider some general principles of sequence design. We will now provide some suggestions for working with early, middle, and later stages of a sequence. The key is that throughout the sequence you need to provide opportunities for students to learn the essential skills (rhetorical, argumentative, stylistic) necessary to complete each assignment in a way that builds on previous homework or in-class writings. For example, it isn't enough to tell a student that he or she needs appropriate details in a reader response paper; you'll need to provide explicit instruction demonstrating what that means.

Although there are no cut and dry ways to develop a sequence, there are a few principles that tend to help students as they move through their writing. We will now describe some general suggestions to consider during different times in the sequence. These have been broken down into early, middle, and later stages, and although they do not cover all the possible ways students tend to learn best, we have included some core practices that have long been used by successful writing teachers.

### *Early Stages of the Sequence*

The early stages of an assignment sequence should allow ample time for **introducing students to the designated course texts**. They will need guidance and practice in reading and engaging with “texts,” which may include academic articles, literary pieces, public or academic spaces, rhetorical situations, visual imagery, everyday cultural artifacts, and so on. The strategies for critical reading described in *Writer/Thinker/Maker* are applicable to various reading occasions; here, the key is to explicitly teach the kinds of interpretive practices students will need to perform for this or later assignments. For example, asking a student to perform a rhetorical reading of an academic essay is much different than asking them to read and observe a public scene where texts circulate and organize people’s activity within that space. In both instances, a specific kind of reading is required, and this type of reading practice should both target one or more of the outcome traits *and* lay the groundwork for the work you want students to do in the intermediate stages.

While a number of assignments in the early stages of the writing sequence ask students to read and then react to or analyze a reading from the textbook, many teachers also like to begin sequences by engaging students’ personal beliefs and histories or by preceding abstract concepts from the reading with concrete, commonplace examples that the students can relate to. Both methods have proven useful and have a long history in the teaching of writing. Regardless of how you decide to start the sequence, by beginning with “reading” or by starting with your students’ experiences, the following questions may help as you design assignments for this beginning stage:

- What are your expectations about students’ prior reading experiences?
- How are you imagining those experiences as being situated both socially and culturally?
- How will you accommodate their relative lack of experience with academic reading, reading rhetorical situations, reading cultural artifacts, or reading images through a critical and analytical lens?
- How will you help students to advance their readings of the text before the intermediate writing assignments?
- How will you use the readings to support the goals of writing in the course?

Initial assignments can take a number of forms, as they provide an opportunity for students to practice skills necessary for later work. For example, if students are ultimately going to analyze the University Ave through the analytic of Mary Louise Pratt’s “contact zone,” they will need to have spent early assignments summarizing her essay and fleshing out this term in particular before using it as the theoretical framework for analyzing a new context.

### *Intermediate Stages of the Sequence*

During the **intermediate stages** of the sequence, students typically compose texts that help develop an argument for their major assignment or practice some of the more complicated thinking necessary to making successful arguments. These middle parts of your sequence can be thought of as **points of enrichment**, moments at which students' writing **applies one concept to another; begins to examine multiple points of view; analyzes and evaluates evidence**, etc. Enrichment here means making a complex claim as well as analyzing, synthesizing, and integrating new materials into short pieces of writing, which may include elements of primary and secondary research. It also means learning the key task of **taking an idea from a text and applying it to a new situation**—the single most common assignment type that students will be asked to complete in college classes, from the sciences and social sciences and in parts of the humanities. Students should be using the readings in this intermediate stage as well, not just extracting information from the texts, but distinguishing and evaluating the arguments made and then applying them to new texts, new materials, different audiences, and perhaps using different genres.

In addition, assignments in this intermediate stage might also ask students to think about the context in which texts are produced, ones they are reading or ones they are producing. You can provide students with guided experience in developing arguments or analyzing evidence in a contextually bound way. For example, examining how a similar issue gets represented in different genres and for different audiences teaches students about the situatedness of writing and knowledge making, and ultimately helps them to understand their own writing as also existing with and being the product of cultural, historical, and rhetorical constraints.

### *Later Stages of the Sequence*

In the later stages of the sequence, as you approach the major assignment, your shorter assignments can help students begin to **develop complex arguments and articulate stakes**. During this stage you might also turn your focus to **self-editing, peer responses, and style and grammar**. After students have developed their arguments and/or crafted their compositions, it can be useful to focus on rhetorical grammar, style, and other micro-level writing and design concerns (see Chapter 6 of this *Manual*). Putting too much emphasis on these elements before students have a complex argument that matters in academic contexts may stymie the thinking and writing process. Therefore, when and how we cue our students to error is important, and depends in part on our students' needs, the number of drafts we have assigned, the degree to which the error interferes with our ability to assess our assignment's targeted outcomes, and our philosophy as instructors.

During this latter part of the sequence, you may also want to encourage students to **revisit earlier assignments** in order to reflect on what they've learned and what will be valuable for the major paper. This is also the point at which students are often asked to consider their peers' and instructors' responses to their work and to decide what needs to be addressed from their **feedback**. Many instructors build in-class time for discussing revision strategies and make revision an explicit part of the assignment. Most of our students have had some experience with "revising" papers, but their revisions may have amounted to nothing more than "fixing" spelling and grammatical errors while leaving substantive changes in reasoning, understanding of the issues, and structural change out of the process altogether. Research in revision suggests effective revision requires altering the task so that the writer "re-sees" the work. Therefore, during the later stages, you should continue to spend time teaching students how to read your comments (in the form of Writer's Memos or Revision Plans—for more on evaluating and responding to student writing, see Chapter Eight of the *Manual*) and how to comment on their peers' papers, both of which will ultimately lead to portfolio revisions that rethink the content of the paper rather than merely focusing on surface errors.

Hopefully, you will be able to make use of some or all of these suggestions as you design your sequence. But, even if these nuances are not integrated for you until later teaching quarters, one thing to remember when creating a sequence is that **if you want to see a particular aspect of writing appear in the student work, you will need to devote class time to teaching them how to produce it and a chance to practice it.**

The following questions may help you as you think about connecting papers with daily lesson plans:

- What activities have I planned that directly support the students' preparation of drafts?
- How have I coordinated the timing of peer readings with submission dates for drafts?
- What writing will students do in response to drafts that will help them, as the outcomes state, to "demonstrate substantial and successful revision" within their final copy? What flexible strategies will I help students develop for revising, editing, and proofreading writing?
- How will I maintain the focus on writing on days when the class works with the reading or research? Specifically, what in-class writing activities will I assign?
- How will I emphasize the ultimate importance of each of these activities?
- What activities will I include that involve student participation?

## DESIGNING THE COURSE

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Discussing the design of the entire course at this point may seem as if it comes in the wrong order, but **typically instructors often find it easier to articulate their course design after working through some of the types of assignments they wish to employ.** The most important question for you to answer is how your short and long assignments are related and why they are ordered the way they are. Many instructors design their courses around a unifying theme. Others have chosen to work from accessible texts to more difficult texts, to use history as the organizing principle, or to choose writers and tasks from a variety of disciplines. Whatever organizing principle you choose, *all versions of the course should gradually increase the complexity of the writing tasks, with the most demanding tasks later in the quarter.* For example, given how many skills need to be both taught and practiced in order to conduct successful research, an academic research project might work much better in the second sequence than in the first.

### *Making the Outcomes a Part of Your Course Design*

It's important to remember that your students need to hear, read, and respond to the language of the outcomes in some form throughout the quarter if they are to be expected to demonstrate and reflect on them in their final portfolios.

There are some interrelated issues that make it tremendously helpful to introduce these goals early in the quarter:

- 1) students often feel frustrated that what has worked for them in high school doesn't guarantee success here,
- 2) students often note that they "don't know what you want" and interpret your responses to their writing as idiosyncratic, and
- 3) students are not getting letter grades throughout the quarter, so they are anxious about what

to focus on in their writing.  
You can discuss the learning outcomes in various ways to avert and respond to these concerns:

- **To communicate to your students how they can approach an assignment and what elements will guide your response to their writing:** Because of the prevalent idea that “good writing” is a clearly defined and stable descriptor, it can take patience and perseverance to help students become aware of issues of context, audience, and genre in ways that help them to become successfully flexible writers. You can save both your students and yourself a great deal of frustration by ensuring that students understand and utilize the outcomes while writing. To this end, it is important to create opportunities for students to explicitly generate and ask clarifying questions about the outcomes (most students, when asked for questions, will claim to understand all of the outcomes perfectly). *For this reason, we strongly recommend that you explicitly identify the outcomes/traits you are targeting in your assignments.* You may also want to emphasize that these criteria represent the goals of the Expository Writing Program for students in all 100-level English courses—in other words, that they are not just “yours.”
- **As guidelines for you to use in evaluating and responding to your students’ writing:** Sometimes it’s hard to identify just why a paper—or a whole group of papers— isn’t working. These outcomes should help you remember things about constructing arguments that have probably become second nature to you as a writer. Some instructors even use these outcomes to create a rubric used to organize their end comments categorically, writing separate comments in response to student performance in each area. Whatever approach you take, be sure to use the language of these outcomes (especially ones you have targeted in your assignments) when responding and evaluating. This way, you reinforce and circulate the outcomes, keeping them active in students’ minds.
- **As guidelines for structuring the content of your class.** You will want to spend class time talking about academic inquiry and argumentation, academic conversations, rhetorical strategies, and the importance of presentation. Every issue addressed by the outcomes is worthy of some class time.
- **As an entryway into in-class analysis of student writing.** You will want to structure some class time to examine a few of these criteria as they are (or are not) manifest in the papers students are writing.
- **As guidelines for structuring peer review. Students often come to a greater understanding of these ideas by the comparative examination that occurs during peer review.** If they can identify a problem in other students’ writing, they will be that much better equipped to see that problem in their own writing. It will help, then, to make these outcomes part of peer review worksheets so students can talk to each other about their writing using the language of the outcomes.

### ***Other Considerations while Designing the Course***

Some additional things to consider while designing this course:

- How to accommodate and mobilize differences in students’ past writing instruction;
- What knowledges about writing and the writing process students bring to the course;
- How to take account of, accommodate, and mobilize students’ prior reading and research experiences;



- How the readings will be set up to support the course goals for the students' writing as detailed in the outcomes;
- How to integrate issues of stylistic choice and grammatical conventions into the course;
- How closely your evaluation of students' work matches what you spend time on in class;
- How you evaluate students' participation throughout the various sequences;

One final consideration for designing the course is how you will provide opportunities for students to gather information for the final portfolio critical reflection and what opportunities students will have to practice the rhetorical strategies necessary for an effective critical reflection. In the final critical reflection, students will need to be able to argue for how particular selections from their work over the quarter accomplish and demonstrate fulfillment of the course outcomes. That means they will need to be given time and opportunities to reflect on what their intentions were in each assignment and how successfully they think they were in meeting the goals of the assignment. Some instructors ask students to write journal entries reflecting on their work as they go. Others ask students to write a particular response to a single assignment. Some specific class time needs to be devoted to explaining the portfolio critical reflection, whether a cover letter or a web-based essay (if you are choosing to have students compose an electronic portfolio), as most students have little or no experience with these genres. It can be helpful to supply students with examples of both effective and ineffective reflections so that students can ask specific questions. These examples also supply students with models to reference when they are trying to compose their own versions.

## POTENTIAL ASSIGNMENTS

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As the above sequences show, there are a variety of ways to target the Outcomes for English 131. Below is a list of general types of assignments that will allow students to work toward creating a portfolio of written work to fulfill the outcomes for the course. These assignment ideas can be modified in large or small ways to fit the specific context of your class, and you are also encouraged to produce other types of assignments that will enable your students to meet the Outcomes.

Beneath the name of each assignment are key outcomes that the assignment targets. While all of the outcomes could be stressed and integrated in the below, we offer some ways of imagining how you might put extra emphasis in your instructor on one versus another outcome, depending on the assignment. These descriptions are designed as possible springboards for your own assignments, and to successfully use these assignments in your class, you will need to write a full assignment prompt (including expected length, due dates, the specific nature of the assignment, and expectations for students) and distribute and verbally explain the assignment to your students.

## MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS

### Revising for a New Audience

#### ***Possible Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4***

In this assignment, students are asked to write an argument-based paper relating to the reading(s) and topics in the course, then to revise that paper for a different audience. Audience here could be thought of in multiple ways (a different person? a different group? a different culture?). This could take the form of revising for an audience in a different academic discipline, or revising both audience and genre for a community outside of the university. This would entail previous short assignments involving researching various disciplines to learn what questions, genres, and rules such writers work



with. The focus of this assignment is on comprehensive revision, meaning that students would make *substantial* changes to such things as the questions motivating the paper, the approach, the overall structure, the writing, and what counts as evidence.

### **Using Interview or Survey Data**

#### ***Possible Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4***

In this assignment, students are asked to return to previous assignments in the sequence to produce a new, comprehensive, argument-based paper. Students need to have written both a critical analysis of a reading assignment and conducted interviews or surveys (Canvas works well for the latter) earlier in the sequence. In the assignment, students create an argument using both the reading(s) and data they have gathered on the topic.

### **Research Paper**

#### ***Possible Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4***

In this assignment, students use their research skills (both online and with library materials) to research a topic closely related to the main reading for the sequence. For instance, students reading Loewen's essay on heroification might research another historical or cultural event and its representation. Research papers should not be so focused on research that they do not involve complex arguments; instead, students should use research to allow them to develop their ideas on the topic. This type of major paper could be enhanced to involve revising for different academic audiences. A library orientation is suggested for this type of major paper assignment. You can arrange a library orientation for your class through this link:

<http://www.lib.washington.edu/Ouql/instructors/instruct.html>.

### **Focused Question and Application**

#### ***Possible Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4***

This might be the most common type of major paper assignment—one that asks students to respond to a focused question and apply key concepts from the reading. For instance, if students read “Panopticism,” they might be asked to answer the question, “How can Foucault’s ideas be used to make sense of a particular educational setting?” Students would then apply some of Foucault’s ideas (discipline, control, power, surveillance, etc.) in answering that question. Students reading “Handicapped by History” might be asked to explore one of their own textbooks in a way informed by Loewen’s readings and concepts. In this assignment, students are asked to develop an original claim, work with evidence, revise, etc. Note: a challenge of this type of assignment can be getting students to go beyond simply and uncritically applying the concepts from the reading.

### **SHORT ASSIGNMENTS**

#### **Reading Response**

##### ***Possible Outcomes: 1, 2***

Reading response papers are typically opportunities for students to summarize all or part of a text (particularly if the reading is long) and respond critically to one or two specific features or sections. These short papers (often 1-2 pages) can be used to respond to a reading in the class and, thus, prepare students for in-class discussion, or reading response papers can be required for outside sources students will use in their major paper assignments.

## **Textual Analysis**

### ***Possible Outcomes: 1, 2, 3***

In this short assignment, students are asked to focus on a particular aspect or feature of a text and analyze the argument, ideas, use of evidence, or other critical features. Note that the text could be written, visual, or both—an advertisement, say, or a film. As students often struggle with complex analysis, this type of short paper would help them develop complex ideas about a text.

## **Analysis of Rhetoric and/or Rhetorical Situation**

### ***Possible Outcomes: 1, 2, 3***

This short assignment shares a number of qualities with reading response papers but is geared more toward having students focus on the language and rhetoric of a text, exploring what we can learn about the writers, readers, and situation of which that text is a part. This type of work involves detective work. For instance, students might isolate particular phrases and references in Stanley Fish's article to determine Fish's values, what he expects his readers to know and care about, and the key features of the conversation Fish is responding to.

## **Close Reading**

### ***Possible Outcomes: 1, 2***

In this short assignment, students are asked to closely examine and analyze a sentence or short passage from a complicated reading. Such a paper would probably begin with close scrutiny of the sentence or passage itself, then move on to make connections between the sentence or passage and larger aspects of the text. Students then move to arguing for the significance of both the passage and their analysis. Attention to language, sentence type, and the use of evidence can be valuable here.

## **Dialogue between Texts/Authors**

### ***Possible Outcomes: 1, 2, 3***

This type of assignment is used in various ways and is geared toward having students explore and analyze how ideas are debated in academic discourse. Students may be invited to imagine a conversation, inquiring into, for instance, how Ramamurthy and Fish see the meaning of texts as determined quite differently. Alternatively, students could put a reading from the course into conversation with an outside reading. In papers like these, students are encouraged to focus mainly on ideas (*culture, texts, or representation*, say), or to focus on the types of arguments made by the two authors and how those arguments are presented (in terms of language, style, genre, etc.).

## **Analysis of Argument**

### ***Possible Outcomes: 1, 2, 3***

This short assignment is a lot like other reading response papers, but focuses exclusively on the argument(s) in a text. Students are asked to describe the argument—identifying the main claims, subclaims, types of evidence, use of concessions, and warrants. Or students are asked to visually represent the argument, using boxes and connecting arrows, say. For extremely complex readings with multiple arguments, students might be asked to analyze just one argument in the piece and then present that aspect to other students in the class.

### **Analysis of Genre(s)**

#### ***Possible Outcomes: 1, 2, 3***

Genre analysis can take several forms, all of which are aimed at getting students to be more aware of the larger contexts texts are part of. Students might analyze the genre of the book review, say, identifying key features of that genre and inquiring into what larger purposes and social structures the genre serves and represents. After analyzing such a genre, having students participate in that genre can be a way to utilize their knowledge in powerful ways.

### **Analysis of Multiple Audiences about a Single Incident**

#### ***Possible Outcomes: 1, 3***

One way to teach students to be increasingly aware of the strategies writers use in different rhetorical situations is to have them produce different responses to a single incident. For instance, students could write short emails about the writing they do in their courses to a parent, friend, and as a letter to the editor of the *Daily*. This exercise would be followed by a short paper analyzing variations in language, style, structure, and ideas in their responses or those of other students.

### **Analysis of One Audience About Different Incidents**

#### ***Possible Outcomes: 1, 3***

This assignment is similar to the one above, but targets how content and genre (not just audience) determine a lot about how writers compose and present information. Here, students are asked to write to the same audience (a parent or family member, say) about various events at the UW. For instance, students might be asked to write a letter about having broken their foot, an email apology for doing something bad, and a note arguing that the family member should read an article from the class. This exercise would be followed by a short paper analyzing differences between the texts.

### **Dialectic Essay**

#### ***Possible Outcomes: 3***

One way to encourage students to develop complex thinking and writing is to have them write a formulaic short essay that embodies a dialectic. This means that they write from at least two points of view and develop a complex synthesis of those points of view at the end. In such an essay, students would: 1) argue on behalf of a prompt you give them, 2) argue against that position (citing evidence), and 3) conclude by synthesizing between the two points of view. (Note that a dialectic essay of this kind is required in the MCAT.)

### **Personal Essay**

#### ***Possible Outcomes: 1***

While personal writing has been one of the more hotly contested topics in the field of Composition, your students may benefit from writing a short personal essay as part of one of your assignment sequences. If students were reading Loewen's article, for instance, they could write a short piece reflecting on their own experiences with high school history courses. This would give students a text (of their own creation) to compare with Loewen's argument. Alternatively, students might benefit from writing about their own cultural background (or other cultural knowledge that they have) if your major paper assignment asks them to explore cultural identity. But be careful: personal writing can be extremely hard to assess, and students who have experienced severe abuse and/or trauma may take

this as an opportunity to write about it, putting you in a difficult position as an instructor.

## **ACTIVITIES**

### **Class Discussion**

#### ***Possible Outcomes: 1, 2, 3***

Class discussion can be used to support and inform student work at any stage of an assignment sequence (see Chapter 7 of this Manual for more detailed treatment of class discussion).

### **Group Work**

#### ***Possible Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4***

Having students work in groups can be a very effective way to get them to explore multiple points of view on a subject, to understand and apply a reading more fully, to see connections between ideas, to scaffold class discussion, and to work toward greater complexity in their writing (see Chapter 5 for more about designing group work activities).

### **Peer Review**

#### ***Possible Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4***

Peer review sessions can be orchestrated in numerous ways—using writers' memos, formal rules for response, or informal written comments on the back of each essay. In peer review sessions, students both respond to texts and use feedback from their peers to revise their own papers (see Chapter 5 for more on using peer review). Tutors from the Odegaard Writing and Research Center are happy to come to your class to model and lead peer review sessions. Email Director Misty Anne Winzenreid at [owrc@uw.edu](mailto:owrc@uw.edu) to arrange an appointment.

### **Writing Conferences**

#### ***Possible Outcomes: 4***

Writing conferences can also take numerous forms and happen at different stages in the writing process. Early conferences might focus on developing an argument, while later conferences would likely focus on revising that argument, working more effectively with texts, making the stakes of the argument apparent, and beginning to edit (see Chapter 7 for more on conferencing).

### **Writing Center Visit(s)**

#### ***Possible Outcomes: 4***

Some of your students will not be able to get a 2.0 without regular visits to a campus writing center, such as the Odegaard Writing and Research Center (OWRC) or CLUE. Such visits can be required by you and something you assess at the end of the quarter (as part of the participation grade or as part of a major paper assignment). In these visits, students can focus on a range of tasks, from generating ideas to revising in order to create argumentative papers that matter in the academic context.

## Editing Workshop

### **Possible Outcomes: 4**

While seldom a focus of most writing classes, you can devote class time or particular assignments to editing. Here, students would focus on assessing how well their grammar choices match their rhetorical goals as well as on correcting errors in grammar, punctuation, and mechanics that interfere with reading and understanding (see Chapter 6 for more on grammar and editing).

## ACTIVITIES, OUTCOMES, & THE TEXTBOOK

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In order to lead students through the types of assignments and activities listed above, it is important to consider how each assignment or activity needs to be scaffolded. Letting the outcomes drive both your sequence design and your assignment design helps ensure that students are prepared to not only write each major assignment but also to compile their final portfolio and effectively argue in the critical reflection how they've demonstrated each course outcome in their selected body of writing. We will briefly connect *some* of the practical reading, research and writing tasks with the outcomes that call for them. Under each outcome are examples of tasks that you could incorporate into a more fully developed assignment, assignment sequence, or in-class lesson. Of course, these are not all the possibilities, but hopefully these ideas can guide you towards developing the assignments you are most comfortable with and most invested in exploring with students. In addition, you might wish to consult the corresponding chapters in *Writer/Thinker/Maker*, which not only provide useful readings for your students but also in- or out-of-class activities and exercises applicable to the learning goals.

### **Outcome 1: To compose strategically for a variety of audiences and contexts, both within and outside the university**

- Explicit reflection on students' own strategies throughout the quarter
- Writing journals
- Reflection memos accompanying assignments
- Daily/weekly end of class reflections on lessons learned
- Writing in different genres

### **Outcome 2: To work strategically with complex information in order to generate and support inquiry**

- Annotating
- Summarizing
- Close reading
- Critical reading/Reading against the grain
- Reading rhetorically
- Rhetorical analysis
- Applying theoretical concepts
- Quote integration
- Observing, making surveys, and conducting interviews
- Developing research questions
- Identifying "conversations" to enter
- Putting texts in "conversation" with one another
- Complicating readings through new evidence

### **Outcome 3: To craft persuasive, complex, inquiry-driven arguments that matter**

- Understanding argument versus opinion
- Making concessions and counterarguments
- Complicating claims through increased and diversified forms of evidence
- Ethical communication across difference
- Understanding the consequences of your own and others' arguments from diverse communities
- Examining assumptions
- Introductions
- Conclusions
- Paragraph development as it follows a line of inquiry
- Adding stakes—the so what?

**Outcome 4: To practice composing as a recursive, collaborative process and to develop flexible strategies for revising throughout the composition process**

- Reflective memos
- Peer Review Workshops
- Writing that responds directly to feedback (rather than just passively incorporating it)
- Writing Center visits with reflective write-ups
- Rhetorical grammar exercises

## MATERIALS, SAMPLES AND RESOURCES

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In the following pages, you will find some select course descriptions and assignment sequences that have been successful in 131 classrooms. In addition to these materials, you can refer to the following for additional materials and samples:

- ♦ **The EWP Instructor Archive:** an open-access archive of instruction materials for all 100-level EWP classes (including, but not limited to ENGL 131). Materials are organized by course as well as outcomes. Since all EWP 100-level composition classes share the same learning outcomes, you can often borrow and adapt material from course sections other than 131. The Archive is accessible through the Expository Writing Program page on the English department website or [through this link here](#).
  - On the archive, you can find **two full length curricula** (including assignment prompts, readings, and lesson plans) titled “Race and Pop Culture” and “Borders and Migration” developed for incoming instructors by Lubna Alzaroo, Laura DeVos, and Matthew Hitchman as part of the 2017-2018 EWP Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Grant.
- ♦ **The Expository Writing Program website:** hosts specially curated materials which have been peer-reviewed for rigor that you are welcome to use and adapt.
- ♦ **Teacher Talks and Critical Classrooms** are workshop series hosted at EWP where current instructors share resources, workshop lesson plans, and troubleshoot classroom dynamics in community with other members of the EWP community.
- ♦ The **Odegaard Writing and Research Center** as well as the **Center for Teaching and Learning** are both available for curricular consultations with writing instructors and will assist you with developing your sequence and sharpening your assignment prompts on an appointment basis.
- ♦ The **EWP Assistant Directors** hold regular office hours and will be glad to assist in developing, troubleshooting, or revising curricular materials (as well as other concerns).

## SAMPLE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

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Your course description should introduce the course goals and expectations in language that is accessible and clear. The EWP outcomes can help you develop and articulate course descriptions that give students a clear sense of how you will be defining, approaching, and teaching rhetoric/composition/writing in the context of your classroom. Using the specific language of the outcomes (stakes, assumptions, rhetorical analysis, and so forth) in your course description can help you set student expectations, as well as push against or disrupt students’ preconceived notions of what “good” college-level writing looks like. The outcomes can also help you ground your own philosophies in the EWP course goals.

As one example, if you wanted to challenge the assumption that form and content are separable, you could do so in your course description by articulating writing as “understanding and accounting for the stakes and consequences of various arguments for diverse audiences and within ongoing conversations and contexts” (Outcome 3). This highlights that writing doesn’t occur in a vacuum; it is always mediated and shaped by the material conditions out of which it is emerging; and it produces material impacts that are distributed and felt unevenly.

Your course description can also serve as a place to set the tone for the course, begin to establish your teaching persona, and introduce a course theme (if you choose one) through which you will teach writing (e.g., citizenship, environmental issues, public writing, exploring Seattle politics, etc.), among other things.

#### **EXAMPLE 1: Belle Kim**

Writing is a deeply political act. The production of discourse has never been divorced from entrenched structures of power and oppression that have historically guaranteed death and devaluation to targeted and marginalized groups deemed expendable, disposable, and exploitable. Given this premise, I will expect you to ask of each text that you read: what are the stakes and urgencies motivating this particular project? For whom are they writing and to what end? What is the specific historical context in which they are writing and how does that inform my reading of the text? The insights you gain from being critical readers who practice such strategies of rhetorical and critical analyses will help you generate complex, stake-driven arguments of your own that can contribute to ongoing academic conversations. As you do so, you will be expected to be accountable critical writers who consciously reflect upon the assumptions undergirding the argument you're making, as well as the ethical and political implications of your argument and the material impact your argument might have on those whose social locations and access to privilege look different from your own. Ultimately, the writing skills that we develop in this class will be useful across academic disciplines no matter where you end up. After all, the courses that you take from now on will have varying expectations and requirements when it comes to the style, tone, structure, and organization of your writing, but the core components of successful academic writing will remain the same. That's where this class comes in. English 131 will equip you with the necessary tools to...

- ✓ write for different audiences and contexts using conventions appropriate to each situation
- ✓ carefully analyze the writing of others in ways that allow you to build off of their thinking
- ✓ enter into academic conversations with a purpose-driven and persuasive argument that displays an understanding of relevant conceptual frameworks
- ✓ revise your writing successfully.

This section of English 131 will read a variety of academic and non-academic texts that are centered very broadly around the theme of "citizenship." We will read texts on immigration, policing, the prison industrial complex, US imperialism, and how the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality affects those who are excluded from the privileged status of citizenship. As you will come to find, citizenship is a complex concept that, in its uneven distribution of wealth, resources, and power, profoundly impacts how our society is constructed—from how we organize communities to how we think about our culture, legal system, and ways of life. Part of your challenge in this course will be to discover ways in which you can become personally invested in this theme: you will be asked to think critically about your own ideologies and assumptions and you will begin to articulate to yourself and others why it is important for us to develop a deeper understanding of this subject matter.

Please come to class prepared to carefully examine and unpack the readings, which will at times be challenging and difficult. I expect you to be ready to participate in respectful, informed conversations and, of course, to write. In return, you will leave the class armed with a host of skills and strategies that will help you to be a successful, analytical, and critically engaged writer capable of entering into



ongoing conversations about citizenship and the complex political realities of which it is a significant part.

**EXAMPLE 2:** Denise Grollmus

The goal of English 131 is deceptively simple. Ostensibly, this course is designed to help you become a better writer. But what does “better writer” *even mean*? And a writer of what? Of poetry? Of instruction manuals? And what does “better” writing look like? Is it a matter of making fewer grammatical mistakes (answer: in part)? Employing fancier language and academic jargon (answer: NO)? Even more mystifying: how exactly does one become this so-called “better writer?”

I swear: the point of asking all these questions is not to induce an anxiety attack. It is to illustrate the crucial first step one must take in order to improve one’s writing. That step is what we call **inquiry**. By being curious, skeptical, and critical—by asking questions—we open ourselves up to receiving the necessary information we need in order to better form our ideas, our beliefs, and our arguments in all contexts and **rhetorical situations**.

Now, to answer a few of the questions I posed above. What sort of writing will we be doing in this class? As you know, writing takes on various forms that we often refer to as **genres**, which can be as broad as poetry or prose and as narrow as black feminist science fiction or legal briefs. Because we are working in the context of a college-level English class, we will largely focus on **expository writing** in the humanities. When we hear “expository writing” we usually think of tediously dry research reports. But exposition is something we actually do everyday, and it is *always* a creative process. It appears in novels, newspapers articles, movies, and business plans. We sometimes use exposition when we post to Facebook or tell someone about how our day went. In fact, many of the tools we’ll be learning aren’t applicable only to academic exposition. They are crucial to all genres of verbal expression and are tools you will continue using and sharpening even after you leave this class. In fact, a big part of this class is about learning how to transfer the skills you learn here to tasks beyond this classroom.

The question of how you will improve as writers is probably the easiest to answer. We become better writers by writing. And then revising. And then writing some more. And then revising again. We also become stronger writers by becoming stronger readers. And in this class, we’ll be doing a lot of reading, writing, and revising. The class is structured into two modules that each includes two short assignments and one major project. As we write, we’ll also read from a variety of texts that we will carefully dissect and which we can model (or not) in our own work.

Most importantly, we’ll have a very clear guide for our course in the form of specific **course outcomes** (see below). These outcomes will help us stay on task and focus on developing those skills that are crucial to our success. As we read, write, and revise, we’ll frequently reflect on which outcomes (or goals) we’ve mastered and on which we can still improve and how. These outcomes will also help determine our overall performance in this course, which will be represented in our final portfolios.

Though I’m aware that no one has chosen to take English 131 (and that many of you might now see it as little more than an annoying requirement), it is my hope that you will come to see this class as one of the most productive, useful, and enriching of your college experience. But mostly, I hope that this course will help you to become a stronger and more confident writer, reader, and thinker.

### EXAMPLE 3: A.J. Burgin

English 131 is designed to prepare you for your academic career. Regardless of the path you are considering, be it Political Science, Engineering, Biology, or Pre-Law, you will require the ability to think critically about the world around you and to articulate that thinking in writing. Your coursework, both now and in the years to come, will require you to produce writing that varies greatly in tone, style, research methods, complexity, and organization. The ability to clearly articulate your ideas, however, will always be necessary regardless of framework. To that end, this class seeks to prepare you with the tools necessary for a successful academic life:

- the ability to thoughtfully analyze texts, materials, and the arguments of others
- the techniques of successful research and how to incorporate that research into your arguments
- an understanding of how to articulate your own complex claims
- the ability to successfully revise

This section of 131 will use popular culture as a vehicle to engage with the specific strategies of **rhetorical analysis** and writing discussed above. Non-traditional literary **texts** such as television shows and movies can serve as accessible mediums for discussion and **critical analysis**, as well as the ability to create **complex, stake-driven claims** of your own. In addition to giving you the opportunity to choose texts that interest you, popular culture allows us to use a topic that you are already thinking about critically to explore strategies of articulating that critical thinking on paper. Popular culture shapes our thinking in overt and subtle ways, and by using writing strategies to break down how that shaping occurs, we can become more astute and engaged citizens as well as writers.

As fun as popular culture can be to work with, it is important to remain **critically engaged** as much as possible. You should come to class ready to carefully unpack complex meanings as well as the strategies that produce them. It is important that you be prepared to examine texts, engage in respectful and informed conversations, and, of course, write, write, and then write some more. If you are willing to put in the effort, you will leave this class with the tools to be a successful academic writer and critically engaged member of society.

This course is also a **computer-integrated course**, which means we will use technology on a daily basis to develop rhetoric, analysis, and writing skills. It is your responsibility to use that technology responsibly, which means staying on task at all times, not typing while your peers or your instructor are talking (the keyboards are not at all quiet), and following general lab rules.

### EXAMPLE 4: Kelsey Fanning

In this course we will center the writing and perspectives of those people who have been historically marginalized and oppressed in the United States. Taken with our course theme—topics in university studies—this means that we will investigate writings that engage with issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion and the ways in which these categories intersect with the U.S. university as an institution. We are beginning with the premise that the university functions as a core gatekeeping institution to participation in public and economic life in the contemporary U.S. and will investigate together materials that reveal how uneven access to universities maintains entrenched forms of power, privilege, and oppression in our lives and communities. Histories of violence, dispossession, exploitation, and exclusion cannot be overcome through tokenistic engagement with the work of

minoritized people. Therefore, please understand that the decision to limit readings by white male authors does not reflect “reverse discrimination,” but is in fact informed by a scholarly and ethical commitment to resist tokenizing, fetishizing, stereotyping, or otherwise uncritically incorporating texts written by individuals experiencing myriad forms of violence and marginalization within our society.

Keep in mind throughout the quarter that the argument of an individual cannot stand in for an entire group but that these arguments do have something to teach us about the systemic and institutionalized nature of inequality. The writing we investigate in this class reflects various authors’ sophisticated rhetorical strategies. If you find yourself reacting defensively to a text, recall that it is very likely the author’s purpose to evoke just such an emotional response. Remember to stop and analyze WHY the writer would use this kind of rhetorical strategy in order to execute an argument and HOW such a strategy creates a rhetorical experience for the author’s readership.

The purpose of this course is to help you develop your skills as an academic thinker, reader, and especially writer. As a university student, you will find that the questions, problems, and concerns raised at the university level become increasingly complex—so much so that they often do not have a single, straightforward answer. In fact, one of the hallmarks of academic inquiry is that the best questions inspire many thinkers and writers to respond in order to reveal the complexity and nuance of an issue. In this course you will continue develop your critical thinking abilities in order to recognize and formulate the kinds of questions that fuel academic conversations. You will also hone a variety of strategies that writers use for developing purposeful, stakes-driven texts that matter to readers. In assignments for this course, students will learn to compose robust and complex claims and persuasive arguments informed by your sensitivity to and awareness of the various genres and rhetorical situations required by a unique writing context. Furthermore, you will utilize revision and reflection to strategically improve your texts based on the specific contexts to which you are writing.

## SAMPLE ASSIGNMENT SEQUENCES

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Generally, instructors have designed their 131 sequences around a particular thematic focus, such as cultural inquiry, rhetorical inquiry, or genre inquiry. These foci are all based on the overall premise that academic argument develops through close and critical analysis. All three of these foci culminate in a 5-7 page argument paper for each major sequence, based in a claim that has emerged from a line of inquiry. Any number of readings from *Writer/Thinker/Maker* can function equally well in any of these foci, and we encourage you to be as creative as you want when combining readings with other readings or with outside fieldwork and research. In the past, some 131 instructors have found it useful to vary the types of sequences between the first and second half of the quarter. Because 131 aims to teach rhetorical awareness for entering different writing situations, the hallmarks of academic writing across disciplines, as well as flexible strategies for revision, varying the assignment types ensures that students work both on the meta-awareness of the relationship between writing and context (genre and/or rhetorical analysis) *and* the specific hallmarks of academic writing such as analysis, synthesis, research, and development of arguments that emerge from a line of inquiry (cultural/textual analysis).

Below are five sample assignment sequences. As you read through them, it may be useful to note the kind of scaffolding each instructor employs and how. Following the explanation above of different kinds of scaffolding, Jeff Johnson’s sequence is serial in nature, Chelsea Jennings’ and Xuan Zheng’s are examples of cumulative courses, and Belle Kim’s and Ashley Alford’s sequences are primarily serial (though it contains some cumulative aspects as well). The first sequence, which

includes teacher commentary, is designed for one four-week chunk of time, and drew its readings—rhetorical and otherwise—from both an older edition of the EWP textbook called *Context for Inquiry* and outside sources.

These sample assignment sequences begin with the instructor's description of the rationale behind the sequence, followed by the assignment prompts that were distributed to students.

#### **EXAMPLE 1: Belle Kim**

Throughout the quarter, I define writing as a deeply political act and stress to my students that they are expected to be accountable critical writers who consciously reflect upon the assumptions undergirding the claims they're making, as well as the ethical and political implications of their writing and the material impact their arguments might have on those whose social locations and access to privilege look different from their own. I try to get my students to think about writing as an ongoing conversation with multiple stakeholders that is motivated by urgencies and informed by the specific context in which it is occurring. The organizing keyword and theme for my class is citizenship because I believe that it offers numerous possibilities for critical engagement: citizenship is a complex concept (both prevalent and invisible) that, in its uneven distribution of wealth, resources, and power, profoundly impacts how US society is constructed—from how we organize communities to how we think about our culture, legal system, and ways of life. The discourse around citizenship offers students many different possibilities for critical engagement because it encompasses a variety of complex, interrelated issues and ideas (ranging from immigration and policing to the prison industrial complex to US imperialism to how the intersection of race, class, and gender affects those who are excluded from the privileged status of citizenship) that can be articulated in vastly different ways depending on the context. As such, it is a provocative place from which to begin thinking about questioning assumptions and establishing stakes for writing.

On the first day of class, I ask my students to do a free-write reflecting on their understanding of citizenship--what it means to them, how much time they have spent thinking about this concept, and why it might be important to critically engage with the concept. In the following weeks, as students read and rhetorically analyze a variety of academic and non-academic texts that take up the question of citizenship in some way, they are encouraged to revisit the initial definition they developed on the first day. My first assignment sequence is comprised of two short assignments and a major paper designed to build both their critical thinking and their rhetorical awareness/sensitivity.

#### **SHORT ASSIGNMENT 1**

My students' first short paper was a genre translation assignment, in which they were asked to translate one course text (Lauren Berlant's keywords entry "Citizenship," Juana Medina's graphic essay "A Decade in Immigration Purgatory," Bill Ong Hing's "Two Contrasting Schemes: Understanding Immigration Policies Affecting Asians Before and After 1965," or NPS's "An Overview of the Role of the US in the World Community") into a different genre for a different audience. This assignment heavily targeted Outcome 1 and was designed to help students think about the strategies that writers use in different writing contexts, articulate and assess the effects of their own writing choices, and write for different audiences in ways that supported the goals of their writing. They were also required to produce a writer's memo in which they engaged in a critical reflection of the rhetorical choices they made in their genre translation. The writer's memo gave students the opportunity to think really critically about their targeted audience and how their awareness of audience informs what kinds of rhetorical decisions they choose to make, thus targeting and fostering my students' metacognitive abilities.

## SHORT ASSIGNMENT 2

The genre translation familiarized students with the practice of thinking critically about the rhetorical situation of a given text (in order to translate a text into another genre, one must think about its original purpose, targeted audience, meaning, and medium and then figure out a way to rethink these for a different context). The second assignment built upon these skills by asking students to engage in a careful and strategic rhetorical analysis of two texts—The Black Panther Party’s “Ten Point Plan” and the Combahee River Collective’s “A Black Feminist Statement,” which they read along with Angela Davis’ “Slavery, Civil Rights, and Abolitionist Perspectives Toward Prisons” for historical context—in order to put those texts in conversation with each other and evaluate the rhetorical effectiveness of each. This assignment was designed to help students understand writing as an intentional and purposeful act that is never divorced from the material conditions out of which it emerges. As they analyzed the texts, my class could see that the rhetorical choices made in each were guided by the agenda of the writers, as well as their potential intended audience; there were clear stakes and urgencies motivating the writing of each; and an understanding of the specific context in which these were produced necessarily impacted students’ understanding and engagement with the texts.

## MAJOR PAPER 1

The skills and knowledges built in the two short assignments culminated in their first major paper. The assignment prompt for Major Paper 1 instructs students to think about how the texts they have encountered throughout the quarter (the previous texts plus George Lipsitz’s “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness,” Leigh Patel’s “Nationalist Narratives, Immigration and Coloniality,” *Fast Food Women*, and Barbara Ehrenreich’s “Nickel and Dimed”) have challenged, complicated, or expanded their understanding of what it means to be a citizen, how citizenship as a category operates in the US, and who does or does not have access to this privileged status. In establishing the parameters of the assignment, my goal was to encourage students to launch a critical line of inquiry that emerges from their own lived experiences, explicitly name and question the various assumptions they have held about the concept “citizenship,” and think about the act of setting definitions and engaging in discourse/knowledge production as a critical form of power that has long been contested. Many of the texts we’d read in class leading up to this assignment had been written by those who rejected certain definitions that had been forced upon them by others and strove to reclaim their identity and agency by defining according to their own terms who they were and why they were here. By opening a space for them to join in the ongoing academic conversation about citizenship, I told my students that I was hoping they, too, would feel a similar sense of agency and feel empowered as both learners and writers.

This assignment encouraged students to think back to course texts and the ideas they had encountered in new and different ways. In working through this assignment, my hope was that students would be able to develop a deeper understanding of identity politics—a concept they had encountered when they first read the Combahee River Collective’s “A Black Feminist Statement”—as using one’s own lived experiences to identify and critique structural forms of oppression and violence, build solidarity and community, and demand radical change. Drawing from this concept, my students found that they could approach Major Paper 1 by starting from their own lived experiences and asking themselves what their initial understanding of the concept of citizenship had been. This assignment also allowed students to explore writing concepts in ways that helped bridge any perceived gaps between composition and the theme of the course. Earlier on in the quarter, they had been introduced to Toulmin’s model, in which warrants are described as links from the claim to reasons and evidence that take the form of assumptions and beliefs. We’d discussed in class that such warrants are taken to be self-evident by the writer and may or may not be explicitly stated—that they can be beliefs,

ethics, and convictions that a writer holds implicitly. In their initial engagement with this concept, students had been focused primarily on identifying other writers' assumptions and the ways in which those affect the effectiveness of the arguments being advanced. In the context of this particular assignment, though, my students had the opportunity to think about and apply their understanding of warrants in a new way: they were encouraged to think about what assumptions they had been holding that had shaped their original understanding of citizenship and to identify where these came from ("What cultural forces helped you shape and develop such assumptions? School, family, media, state of origin, country of origin, a personal experience that had a profound impact on you?). After reflecting upon their own personal background and experiences, then, students could go on to think about how course texts had pushed against and disrupted the assumptions they were holding to reshape their understanding of the concept to redefine what citizenship means to them now.

## Short Assignment 1: GENRE TRANSLATION

**Outcomes Targeted:** 1, 2

So far, we have discussed the relationship between **genre** and **audience** and learned how to analyze the rhetorical situation of a given text in order to make sense of the author's rhetorical choices (tone, style, mode of inquiry, content, structure, appeals, etc.)

### Your Task:

In this short assignment, you will choose one of the readings we've done for class and **translate it into another genre**. The possibilities are endless: you could turn "A Decade in Immigration Purgatory" into a letter to the president or to the director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement; you could translate Bill Ong Hing's "Understanding Immigration Policies Affecting Asians Before and After 1965" into a blog post or poster or a How-To magazine article; you could rethink NPS's "An Overview of the Role of the U.S. in the World Community" into a short story; you could even reimagine Lauren Berlant's "Citizenship" keyword entry into a political cartoon of some sort (that is, if you can figure out a way to clearly depict the original author's arguments, claims, and stakes).

You will then submit a **writer's memo** (1-2 pages) that describes your writing process and shows you tried to make **conscious rhetorical choices** with regard to audience and genre. Some questions to consider for the writer's memo: Why and how did you choose the audience and genre you did? What rhetorical choices did you make to translate from one genre to another? What genre conventions did you use and why? How did your choices change between the two genres/audiences and why did you make these changes? What do you think you did well on in this assignment and where do you feel you could improve?

A successful SA1 paper will demonstrate to me that you can....

- Compose strategically for a variety of audiences and contexts, both within and outside the university (*Outcome 1*)
  - Recognize how different elements of a rhetorical situation matter for the task at hand and affect the options for composing and distributing texts (*Outcome 1*)
  - Coordinate, negotiate, and experiment with various aspects of composing—such as genre, content, conventions, style, language, organization, appeals, media, timing, and design—for diverse rhetorical effects tailored to the given audience, purpose, and situation (*Outcome 1*)
  - Assess and articulate the rationale for and effects of composition choices (*Outcome 1*)

**Formatting:** 500-750 words total, including the writer's memo (2-3 pages), MLA heading, page numbers, double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins

**DUE DATE: Post to canvas by 11:59 P.M. on Monday, April 3.**

## Short Assignment 2: SYNTHESIS PAPER

**Outcomes Targeted:** 1, 2, 3

In class, we have spent some time reading and discussing The Black Panther Party's "Ten Point Plan" and The Combahee River Collective's "A Black Feminist Statement." We've been working on breaking down the rhetorical choices made by these writers by performing a careful **rhetorical analysis**. We've also been talking about **intertextuality** and putting texts in conversation with one another.

**Your Task:**

I want you to write a short paper in which you compare the rhetorical choices made by **two** of the authors in the form of a **synthesis** essay. Out of the two texts, which do you find more compelling and effective? I want you to make an **arguable claim** that **anticipates counterarguments and concessions** and is supported by concrete **evidence** from the texts. In order to effectively answer this question, you will need to **summarize** and **paraphrase** the authors' arguments. Identify their stakes, claims, targeted audience, and rhetorical strategies. Discuss what you think is and is not working in the text by **rhetorically analyzing** how their arguments are articulated and supported. And of course, provide your own evaluation of whether their texts are working and why. Think about how and why might others disagree with your argument, and how you would respond to them.

Your paper should have a clear introduction and a conclusion and cohere together as a piece of writing. Be sure to think about how you are structuring your paper and use effective transitions.

A successful SA2 paper will demonstrate to me that you can...

- Recognize how different elements of a rhetorical situation matter for the task at hand and affect the options for composing and distributing texts (Outcome 1)
- Work strategically with complex information in order to generate and support inquiry (Outcome 2)
- Read, analyze, and synthesize a diverse range of texts and understand the situations in which those texts are participating (Outcome 2)
- Gather, evaluate, and make purposeful use of primary and secondary materials appropriate for the writing goals, audience, genre, and context (Outcome 2)
- Create a "conversation" by identifying and engaging with meaningful patterns across ideas, texts, experiences, and situations (Outcome 2)
- Craft persuasive, complex, inquiry-driven arguments that matter by considering, incorporating, and responding to different points of view while developing one's own position (Outcome 3)

**Formatting:** 500-750 words (2-3 pages), MLA heading, page numbers, double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins

**DUE DATE: Post to canvas by 11:59 P.M. on Sunday, April 9.**

**Major Paper 1: DEFINING CITIZENSHIP****Outcomes Targeted:** 1, 2, 3

This assignment provides you with the opportunity to build upon the ideas and skills that we have been discussing and developing in class. On our first day of class, you drew from your personal experiences and anecdotes to critically reflect on what citizenship means and identified social issues and conflicts relevant to this theme that matter to you. In SA1, you demonstrated an understanding of the rhetorical situations in which texts are produced by translating a piece of writing into another genre. In SA2, you engaged in a rhetorical analysis of two texts that were both centered around the inequalities experienced by second-class citizens in the US. These three assignments developed your ability to generate a productive line of inquiry, make sense of authors' rhetorical strategies, and synthesize complex texts.

**Your Task:**

The goal of this Major Paper 1 is to help you enter into ongoing academic conversations on citizenship by providing you with the space to **rethink** and **redefine** your understanding of this complex concept. Drawing



from the readings we've done in class, I want you to ask yourself: How have the texts we've read so far challenged, complicated, or expanded your understanding of (1) what it means to be a citizen, (2) how citizenship as a category operates in the US, and (3) who does or does not have access to this privileged status? You will explain why this kind of conversation **matters in academic contexts**. Remember, you are writing for an academic audience.

A successful MP1 will demonstrate to me that you can...

- Read, analyze, and synthesize a diverse range of texts and understanding the situations in which those texts are participating (*Outcome 2*)
- Use reading and writing strategies to craft research questions that explore and respond to complex ideas and situations (*Outcome 2*)
- Gather, evaluate, and make purposeful use of primary and secondary materials appropriate for the writing goals, audience, genre, and context (*Outcome 2*)
- Create a "conversation"—identifying and engaging with meaningful patterns across ideas, texts, experiences, and situations (*Outcome 2*)
- Consider, incorporate, and respond to different points of view while developing one's own position (*Outcome 3*)
- Engage in analysis—the close scrutiny and examination of evidence, claims, and assumptions—to explore and support a line of inquiry (*Outcome 3*)
- Understand and accounting for the stakes and consequences of various arguments for diverse audiences and within ongoing conversations and contexts (*Outcome 3*)

Here are **some questions to consider** as you begin formulating your ideas:

- Which texts did you find the most compelling and why? Which texts elicited the strongest responses from you?
- What new insights have you developed after engaging with these texts? Which texts pushed you to think about citizenship in a different way? What assumptions of yours did the texts disrupt?
- What are the stakes of this conversation? Why is it important for us to think critically about citizenship?

#### **Length and Format**

5-7 pages (1250-1750 words), double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins, MLA formatting and Works Cited Page.

**DUE DATE: Post your first draft to canvas by class time on Tuesday, April 18. Your second draft is due by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, April 23.**

## EXAMPLE 2: Jeff Johnson

I chose to present the following writing assignment sequence to students as the first sequence of the quarter. Tying in with the course theme of revolution, the sequence allows (and challenges) students to reassess their concept of a volatile and often violent term by making them think of it in more personal terms. My goal with this sequence is to get students to think about their own lives as objects of critical inquiry while simultaneously demonstrating to them that critical inquiry is *not* something that occurs in a vacuum, but rather, that it can and *should* be applied to their own lives. I make these goals explicit to the class during our discussions of the assignments, especially as they relate to the course texts (“The Revolution Will Not Be Televised,” “The Veil,” Dr. King’s “Letter From Birmingham Jail,”—all from *Situating Inquiry*—and Al Gore’s film, *An Inconvenient Truth*).

Because of the personal nature of the assignments, I am able to begin building a personal rapport with students from the first Short Paper, where they are to begin considering “what examples of revolution [they] see in [their] own life” as they concurrently interact with Satrapi’s revolution in “The Veil.” These “personal revolutions” are brought into sharper focus in Short Paper 1.3 and Major Paper 1 where students construct PowerPoint pamphlets of the revolutionary figures that they will make claims about in Major Paper 1. SP 1.3 additionally asks students to write a reflection paper identifying and explaining the choices they have made in creating their PowerPoint slides. SP 1.2 is a slight anomaly (in the sense that it does not obviously lead from SP 1.1 to 1.3). I will explain its place more fully below.

### SHORT PAPER 1.1

As the assignment sheet indicates, the purpose of the assignment is to get students “to consider a term with which [they] are familiar in a new light and to get to know [their] classmates on a more personal level by sharing response papers with them.” By getting students to engage with *Situating Inquiry* right away, the assignment sets a particular tone for the course. However, the genre of the graphic novel is (often) one that they do not readily associate with “serious” academic work. Moreover, taking a very loaded term like “revolution” and showing an example of a very personal revolution, from a child’s point of view, makes students more comfortable using the term in their own critical vocabulary. In terms of the overall sequence, this assignment scaffolds not only critical inquiry into their own lives, but the process of pursuing and discussing that line of inquiry in small groups and then reporting back out to the class as a whole once the first draft of the assignment has been completed.

### SHORT PAPER 1.2

Between SP 1.1 and 1.2, I show the class Al Gore’s movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*. There is an obvious connection to the 2007 UW Common Book (*Fieldnotes from a Catastrophe*), but more importantly I used the experience of watching and critically analyzing the film to tie in directly with the course outcomes and to introduce the concept of academic, argumentative writing to my students. After I scaffolded the activity by introducing some key terms (like inquiry, claim, evidence, analysis), we all watched the film together in class. Students were instructed to take notes in such a way that they would be prepared to discuss Gore’s major claim and the evidence he used to support it. Moreover, they were invited to critique his claims, evidence, and analysis.

I allowed our discussion of the argument made in the film to grow naturally. That is, I had some questions to get the discussion started, but I made a conscious effort not to force any of the points on my agenda. Rather, I asked questions like “what was a piece of evidence that you found unconvincing?” As I had hoped, this generated a large number of responses which led to a discussion

around another question: “Well, what is his claim, then?” Again, this led to more discussion and more gentle steering on my part to questions of warrants, audience awareness (that is, what is the film’s target audience?), and stakes.

In fashioning this assignment, my goal was to create a space for the class to address issues of critical inquiry and to take apart an argument and then put it back together, all the while showing students which outcomes we were discussing. Near the end of the discussion, I offered the students an analogy of a tailor—if I handed them a jacket and asked them to take it apart, they could undo the stitching and put all the zippers in one pile, all the blue fabric in another, red fabric in another, all the buttons in another pile, etc. Then, if I asked them to reassemble the jacket the next day and they could do so, they would have demonstrated to me that they were becoming proficient tailors. Here, it is the same with argument construction.

The follow-up assignment was SP 1.2, which asked them to take Dr. King’s argument apart in “A Letter From Birmingham Jail” and show me how everything was functioning. They were asked to determine if “one piece of evidence [was] more compelling than another? Why?” When this assignment was due, we again took the argument apart—this time in small groups and then as a class. Later that week, I held my conferences and followed up with students to see where they were (on an individual basis) on the spectrum of understanding argument analysis. These conferences were also used as a bridge to the next assignment (SP 1.3), which was their PowerPoint presentation. And again the film was helpful because it set up a model for them to see how PowerPoint could be used as a tool for communication.

### **SHORT PAPER 1.3 AND MAJOR PAPER 1**

SP 1.3 and MP 1 go hand in hand in this sequence, which helps students a great deal and allows (and encourages) them to invest more effort in the project because they can almost kill two birds with one stone. For SP 1.3, there are two parts: the PowerPoint presentation and the reflection paper. When I assign the presentation, I also hand out MP1 and suggest to them that their presentation *should* look a lot like MP 1, but that the reflection paper should be quite different. That is to say, getting up in front of the class and discussing their own personal revolution (and their evidence thereunto) can be considered to be a “trial run” of the evidence they think they will want to use in their MP1. The reflection paper, however, should comment *only* upon the choices that were made when constructing their presentation, not the content itself. This is slightly tricky because they may not immediately see the difference, but any difficulties in comprehension of the assignment can generally be helped by extra explanation in the classroom, conferences, or office hours. I urge students to invest more time up front on SP 1.3 because nearly all of the hard work they put into creating their presentation can be integrated into MP 1 (assuming, of course, that they have selected a strong topic, etc.; but, again, these issues can be ironed out quite successfully during conferences).

### **CONCLUSION**

I used this sequence for three quarters in a row and it grew more successful every time I did it. I recommend this type of sequence to teachers who are looking for a way to get students to make a personal investment in the material because, as I found, the more I could show students that their lives were fertile ground for inquiry, the more they tended to invest in the assignment. And my initial fears that every student would talk about the same sort of thing (i.e. winning the basketball championship, etc.) were unfounded as students talked about a range of topics (moving to America, divorce, saving lives, friends committing suicide, sexual promiscuity, etc.). I was stunned by their candor and ability to take the assignment seriously. And their ability to execute the assignment successfully improved as my ability to explain the assignment improved (from quarter to quarter).



**A Very Personal Revolution**  
 Short Paper 1.1  
 Assignment Due: Tuesday, January 15<sup>th</sup>

*Putting all the clothes you've washed away  
 And as you're folding up the shirts you hesitate  
 Then it goes fast  
 You think of the past  
 And suddenly everything has changed*  
 – The Flaming Lips, from *The Soft Bulletin*

We will begin our exploration into the course theme by considering what the term revolution means and how we might unpack some meanings that we had not previously considered. Because the term “revolution” is so loaded with images of violence and radicalism, it is important to consider other applications that the term might have (especially in relation to our own lives).

With that in mind, consider Marjane Satrapi’s graphic novel “The Veil,” which is presented in *Situating Inquiry* as a story of a child whose experiences lead her to revolt against her community’s culture. And her revolution is brought about by influences surrounding her (especially her family).

For this assignment, write a response to this story and begin to identify similar revolutions in your own life by considering the following questions:

1. What factors lead this character (and not the other girls in the story) to revolt?
2. In what ways does the genre of graphic novel aid in the emotional message?
3. Who is the audience for the story?
4. After reading the story, how has your concept of “revolution” changed?
5. What examples of revolution do you see in your own life? (These may be very similar to the narrator’s story, or they may be quite different – **the important thing is that they are personal**).

The purpose of this assignment is to get you to consider a term with which you are familiar in a new light and to get to know your classmates on a more personal level by sharing your response paper with them. You should consider them your audience.

The Format:

Your reflection paper should be **2-3 double-spaced pages** with 1-inch margins in 12-point, Times New Roman font. Be sure to use MLA format for your in-text citations and your works cited page. Please bring **2 copies** of your assignment to class. Refer to the syllabus for the late paper policy.

The Outcomes:



**Locking Up  
The Evidence**  
Short Paper 1.2

Assignment Due: Tuesday, January 29th

In order to understand the concept of a revolution that is impacting on a personal level and the evidence which is used to describe/justify certain actions, we will critically examine and respond to a “Letter From Birmingham Jail,” written by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In his letter, which he addresses to his “Fellow Clergymen,” Dr. King draws upon a great deal of evidence to support his claim(s), which are answers to written criticisms of his revolutionary practices which label his behavior “unwise and untimely.”

For this second writing assignment, you will compose a response letter which will consider the evidence which King has used to support his claims. You will be writing this from the point of view of a first-year UW student in April of 1963 and your audience will be Dr. King himself (who we will assume is still in the Birmingham Jail).

Your paper should include the following:

1. **An analysis of his evidence** (including concrete facts, stories, opinions). Is one piece more compelling than another? Why?
2. **Suggestions** on how to make the less-compelling pieces of evidence more persuasive to his readers.
3. **An understanding of the style and tone** used in this particular writing situation.
4. **An articulation of the stakes** of King’s argument.

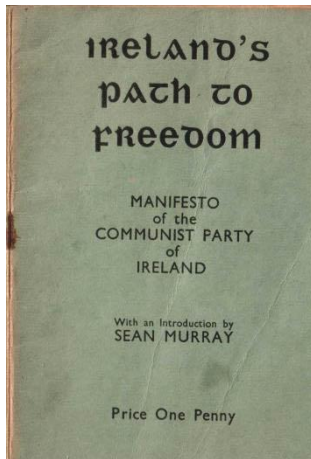
Remember:

1. He was locked up at the time he was writing this piece and was quoting several pieces of evidence from memory.
2. You are not supporting or condemning Dr. King’s principles. Rather, you are critically examining the evidence with which he makes his arguments and supports his claims.

The Format:

Your reflection paper should be **2-3 double-spaced pages** with 1-inch margins in 12-point, Times New Roman font. Be sure to use MLA format for your in-text citations and your works cited page. Please bring **2 copies** of your assignment to class. Refer to the syllabus for the late paper policy.

The Outcomes:



## Revolutionary Pamphlets in PowerPoint

### Short Paper 1.3

Assignment Due: Tuesday, February 5<sup>th</sup>

For this short paper, you will have the opportunity to think and write about the topic of your major paper using the composing tool PowerPoint. In class, we have been studying different revolutionaries and considering the ways in which their activities have been recorded. Historically, a very common medium for revolutionary writing has been in the form of a pamphlet which can be widely distributed for a small cost. Recently, revolutionary ideas have been communicated through other media (consider chants at a political rally, a poster, or a film).

This assignment has two parts. The first asks you to combine these forms of communication by creating a **PowerPoint presentation** (of approximately 5 minutes) that will **document the behavior of the revolutionary figure** you are exploring for your first major paper. Your presentation should include text, illustrations, sound, and anything else you think will help you document and communicate the impact of your revolutionary figure. Think of this pamphlet as a way for you to collect and examine evidence for your major paper and an opportunity to get feedback from your classmates on the way in which you present that evidence.

The second part of the assignment will be to write a reflection on the process by which you created your PowerPoint pamphlet. This reflection should not just be a restatement of your presentation. Rather, it should describe the creative and critical choices you made in documenting the revolution in which you are interested. Consider the following questions: How did you choose what to include/exclude? How did you select what we will see in your presentation (text, pictures, sound, etc.)? In what ways did PowerPoint help/hurt your ability to communicate your thoughts to us?

#### The Format:

Your reflection paper should be **2-3 double-spaced pages** with 1-inch margins in 12-point, Times New Roman font. Turn in **1 copy of your paper** and **1 copy of the slides** from your presentation. Be sure to use MLA format for your in-text citations and your works cited page. Refer to the syllabus for the late paper policy.

#### The Outcomes:



## Our Revolutions Of Culture

### Major Paper 1

Draft Due: Tuesday, February 12<sup>th</sup>  
Revision Due: Thursday, February 14<sup>th</sup>

*"You say you want a revolution, well you know,  
we all want to change the world."*

For your first major assignment, you will engage with a revolution that has materially impacted your life in some way. With the advent of the internet, more expressive music, movies, and other art, and the changing political climate of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, many components of our lives are in a state of dramatic change that is often the result of ideas suggested by a definable entity. To begin this assignment, you will need to choose an element from your own life that has impacted your life in a profound way. This can be a person, a place, an idea, an article of clothing (in Marjane Satrapi's case) – anything so long as it is personally impacting. This should not be a figure whose revolutionary reputation is already established. Once you have chosen your revolutionary figure, you will begin a line of inquiry by exploring and compiling evidence of revolutionary behavior.

In the texts that we have discussed about revolution (King's "Letter From Birmingham Jail," Satrapi's "The Veil," and Scott-Heron's "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised"), **those who record the events of a revolution are often people who are involved with carrying out the revolution or are directly and profoundly affected by the outcome of the changes that have occurred in their societies.** What compels these people to record the changes that take place in their lives? The purpose of this assignment is twofold:

1. To get you to examine and make a claim about a revolutionary figure that has had an impact upon your life while demonstrating an understanding of the models of revolution from *Situating Inquiry*.
2. From there, you should assess why you felt compelled to act as the documentarian for this particular figure. And, because you are arguing for their relevance and inclusion in a text like *Situating Inquiry*, you should consider the audience for this paper to be the editorial staff of that textbook (the staff includes instructors and administrators of English 131).

Ideas to Consider:

1. What makes an idea, an action, or a place revolutionary?
2. What is the relationship between the revolutionary figure and those who document the revolution?
3. Who or what are the sources of your evidence? Can they be trusted to be objective? (If not, is their subjectivity lending itself to the revolutionary behavior of the figure you are researching?)
4. In what ways does the revolutionary figure appeal for support? Does this public appeal actually make them more or less revolutionary?
5. In what ways does the presentation of information through different genres affect the message of change?

Your paper should include:

1. A **complex claim** about the revolutionary status of your figure
2. **Evidence that supports your claim** (which must include at least one of the readings from *Situating Inquiry* as well as personal reflective evidence). Remember you **must have evidence** in both halves of your paper
3. An explanation of how the evidence supports your claim – it is up to you to **make the connections** between the evidence and your claim
4. A discussion of **why you chose this figure** (when you could have chosen anybody/anything)

The Format:

Your paper should be **5-7 double-spaced pages** with 1-inch margins in 12-point, Times New Roman font. Be sure to use MLA format for your in-text citations and your works cited page. Please bring **2 copies** of your paper to class for peer review. Refer to the syllabus for the late paper policy.

The Outcomes:



#### EXAMPLE 4: Chelsea Jennings

Two of my primary goals in designing this course on genre were to capitalize on students' prior knowledge and to give students transferrable skills that they could use in other academic or work situations. The first sequence of assignments asks students to analyze the contexts and texts surrounding them, leading them toward arguments about how genres work, and how certain texts manipulate genre. The second sequence asks students to use this awareness to create a text in a genre of their choice, and then analyze their own text.

I have been consistently surprised by how difficult the concept of “genre” is for students to grasp, but I have been equally as surprised at how, with the right support, students are able to leverage previous knowledge to make meaningful observations and arguments. The quality of students' “genre projects” never ceases to amaze me; students who struggle to write academic prose can be deft writers in other genres (children's books, screenplays, promotional pamphlets, instruction manuals, magazine articles, etc.) when given the chance.

I borrowed a lot of ideas from *Scenes of Writing* (which I would recommend to anyone interested in teaching genre), and the texts in various genres included in *Acts of Inquiry* are excellent resources for in-class activities and as possible texts for writing assignments. One of the main advantages of this type of class is that it always keeps writing in the foreground, and the reflective component of the portfolio is built over the course of the quarter.

#### SHORT ASSIGNMENT 1

This assignment asks students to observe a place, and determine which written genres are used in this place and how. I like starting with this assignment because it catches students off guard—they are used to writing about texts (often literary texts), but not necessarily accustomed to writing about contexts, or thinking about texts as performing functions in the “real world”. It is also less intimidating than other assignments, but can still be used in the portfolio to demonstrate analysis and awareness.

#### SHORT ASSIGNMENT 2

In the first weeks, we spend a lot of class time looking at examples of different genres and analyzing them, which prepares students to do a formal analysis of a genre of their choice. The genre analysis assignment requires students to look at the specifics of particular texts in the context of the conventions that they're operating within; in other words, students have to negotiate the big picture and the details at the same time. This assignment gives lots of opportunities, too, for talking about rhetorical grammar, since this knowledge will help students analyze how the texts they read are operating on the sentence level.

#### SHORT ASSIGNMENT 3

This paper asks students to move from analysis to argument by asking them to critique a genre. This requires choosing a genre that might be open to meaningful critique, analyzing the genre, and considering how this genre might participate in real-world forms of power. *Scenes of Writing* has an example of a student genre critique of wedding invitations, and my students have worked on genres that include credit card offers, medical forms, state of the union addresses, beauty product advertisements, and course syllabi. Writing this paper shows students that there are real stakes for the ways that texts are written and used, and requires them to engage with social issues.

## MAJOR ASSIGNMENT 1

In this paper, students look at texts that are bending or breaking genre conventions in order to create particular arguments and effects. In doing so, students can see the kinds of critiques they made in their last paper in action, and they will have built the vocabulary to talk about how and why and author might critique a particular genre. “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” is a great example text to work on as a class to lead up to this assignment, and although I allowed students to choose any text that they felt was critiquing genre in some way, I also provided several texts that they could write about if they wanted.

## FINAL GENRE PROJECT (SHORT ASSIGNMENTS 3 & 4, MAJOR ASSIGNMENT 2)

This project has three parts: a proposal for a piece of writing in a genre, the piece of writing itself, and a self-analysis of that piece of writing. The proposal asks students to think about their genre piece before creating it, and it also introduces them to the genre of the proposal. I use this document as a way of peer-reviewing the genre pieces before they are produced, and I think this step results in more sophisticated and polished genre pieces. After executing the plan for the genre piece, students then complete the second Major Assignment, which involves analyzing their own writing choices. This paper serves as a bridge between the skills developed in the course and the self-reflection required in the portfolio.

## SEQUENCE 1:

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### Short Assignment 1: Scene Observation

#### Background

Today in class, we discussed the relationships between scenes, situations, and genres. In this context, we also discussed how a scene might be observed, and how observing a scene can give us clues about the genres that appear in that scene. Now it's time to jump in, and practice examining some of the many scenes that surround us.

#### Your Task

**Your task is to observe a scene and write a 2-3 page description of that scene.** This means that your paper should describe 1) the scene in general, 2) the situations in the scene, 3) the genres present in the scene, and 4) how those genres are used.

The scene you choose could be a different class at UW, a student group meeting, a coffee shop, a restaurant, a workplace, or any scene that's readily accessible where your presence wouldn't be an intrusion.

Be sure to bring a notebook, and take plenty of notes about the scene (you will need to turn these in with your paper). If there are pieces of writing in any genre that you can take away from the scene (a flyer, a menu, a syllabus, a business card, etc.), please do so. These “artifacts” will help you when you go to write your paper, because it will give you a text you can directly refer to. **When you turn in your paper, please attach your observation notes and any artifacts that you found (photocopies are fine).**

### Short Assignment 2: Genre Analysis

#### Background

In class yesterday, you were asked to examine a piece of writing for its rhetorical strategies, and draw conclusions about the scene surrounding that piece of writing. Today we expanded the scope of our analysis, looking at multiple examples of a particular genre to consider what the primary features of that genre are.

#### Your Task

For this assignment, you'll be doing a formal version of the activity we did in class today. Instead of looking at a specific piece of writing, **you will find three examples in a genre, and use these examples to draw conclusions about the primary features of the genre.** Your paper will be a 3-5 page analysis of the genre at hand, including the following pieces:

- An introduction that concisely describes the scene and situation in which the genre occurs.
- Several pages of organized analysis of the genre's main features. A conclusion that describes what the genre's patterns reveal about the scene and situation.

You should use the "Guidelines for Analyzing Genres" as a starting point, and focus on the questions that are most significant for your genre.

Although you will be analyzing the genre more generally, the evidence for your generalizations will be the specific examples you've chosen, so you should quote from your examples wherever you think is appropriate.

### Short Assignment 3: Genre Critique

#### Background

In your most recent paper, you analyzed three examples of a genre to determine what the expectations and constraints of that genre might be, and how the examples you chose are working with (or against) those constraints. In doing so, you most likely began to think about the genre critically, considering what problems the genre might pose, and for whom.

We have also been discussing arguments, including evidence, claims, and stakes. This paper is your first opportunity to take the analytical skills you've been developing and use them to produce a full-fledged argument.

#### Your Task

**For this paper, you will choose a genre and perform a 5-7 page critique of that genre,** using the questions on page 161 of *Scenes of Writing* as a starting point. You will need to find three examples from your genre to serve as textual evidence for your paper, and create an arguable claim about the possibilities and limits of that genre.

#### Choosing Your Genre

Because any genre can be analyzed for its important features, your choice of genre was wide open for your last paper. For this paper, you'll need to think about the possible stakes of your paper before deciding on a genre. While cookbooks may present opportunities and limits for their users, it will be hard to say why these limits or opportunities should matter to your reader—especially if your reader is not a world-class chef. On the other hand, looking at the fine print in credit card offers would give you the chance to say something meaningful about who is best equipped to read and understand these terms of agreement, and who might be at a disadvantage for doing so. Please visit my office hours if you'd like to talk through the question of stakes in relation to a genre you're thinking of writing about.

### Major Assignment 1

### Background

One way of critiquing a genre is to write the kind of academic argument that you made in your last paper. Another way is to bend or break the rules of a genre to make an argument about the genre itself. We looked at how Anzaldua's "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" critiques the conventions of "academic argument" through the use of personal anecdotes and multiple languages, and we analyzed several shorter texts (such as Cortazar's "Instructions for How to Cry" and Mayer's "Sonnet") that defy the expectations of a genre in order to create particular rhetorical effects.

### Your Task

Choose a text that breaks the rules of a genre in order to make an argument and/or create particular rhetorical effects. Then, write a 5-7 page paper that makes an argument about how the text in question works.

Your paper will need to answer the following questions:

- What genre or genres is this text participating in?
- How does the text bend or break the conventions of a genre, and why?
- What argument is the text making about genre?

## SEQUENCE 2:

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### Final Genre Project

Your final project is to do an in-depth study of a particular scene, genre, and topic, in order to produce a piece (or pieces) of writing in your chosen genre that will target a specific audience. You will also be required to determine what "publishing" venue will be appropriate to reach your audience using your genre. After your genre piece is produced, you will write a paper analyzing the purpose and effectiveness of the rhetorical strategies that you have used.

The project consists of four parts, completed in the following order:

- A proposal detailing the scope of your final project
- A piece of writing in a genre of your choice
- A 5-7 page paper analyzing your piece of writing
- An informal presentation explaining your project to your classmates

Each of these elements will be explained in greater detail in separate assignment sheets in this packet.

1. Brainstorm possible scenes, topics, and genres. At this point, they do not need to relate to each other.
2. Look at the scenes, topics, and genres you've developed, and pick a few that seem the most interesting and "do-able" to you. If you've chosen a topic, brainstorm particular scenes and genres. If you've chosen a scene, brainstorm possible genres and topics. If you've chosen a genre (you've guessed it!), brainstorm possible topics and scenes. This may require some research or informal interviewing.
3. Decide on a genre, topic, and scene. Then do some "research" into the audiences that are associated with this genre, topic, and scene.
4. Determine what "publishing" venues are available to target this audience.  
Keep in mind that there are a variety of media that incorporate written texts: Music scenes, for example, involve song lyrics, album notes, concert flyers, etc. Visual art exhibits in galleries or museums often include artist statements, descriptions of individual pieces of art, promotional materials, and coffee-table books about the exhibit. Business

letters often appear on letterhead, and may be accompanied by brochures and/or business cards. Poetry submitted to a literary magazine is often accompanied by a cover letter, but also may be read aloud at an open mic. Think outside the box!

#### **Short Assignment 4: Project Proposal**

In order to frame your thinking about this project, you will first be required to submit a proposal. **For this part of the project, I will be your audience, and your overall goal is to convince me that your project presents an effective way of reaching your chosen audience through a particular genre and publishing venue.**

Your proposal will involve the following:

- Statement of objective (1-2 pages)

- Audience analysis (1-2 pages)

- Publishing venue analysis (1-2 pages)

#### **STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVE**

What are you trying to achieve through this project? This section presents an overview of your scene, topic, genre, audience, and publishing venue. It should give a comprehensive context for your piece, and include the stakes (why this project matters), and why it is important for **you** to undertake the project.

**This sections of your proposal should make a convincing argument about why this project is important for you to complete.**

#### **AUDIENCE ANALYSIS**

Once you've determined what scene you'd like to respond to, you'll need to get to know the audience you're targeting. What age group are they in? What are their interests? How do they typically get their information? Once you've determined what your audience is like, what rhetorical strategies will you use to target them?

**This section of your proposal should make an argument about why those rhetorical strategies are appropriate for your audience.**

#### **PUBLISHING VENUE ANALYSIS**

In order to make the link between your genre piece and your audience more literal, you'll need to determine what "publishing" venues are appropriate to reach your audience. How do the authors of different genres in your scene reach their audience? Through the newspaper? Putting up flyers? Word of mouth? Speeches? Song lyrics? The radio? Film screenings? Leaving brochures in an office or a coffee shop? Posting a web page? Sending a message out on a listserv?

**This section of your proposal should make an argument about why this publishing venue is the best way to reach your chosen audience through your chosen genre.**

#### **Paper #6: Genre Piece**

For this portion of the final project, you will be carrying out what you've outlined in your proposal. The goal here is to produce an effective piece of writing that can reach your audience through your chosen publishing venue.

Genres, as we've often discussed, are more than just textual—they involve visual and tactile elements, too. As the sample projects did, your project will need to replicate the genre in its entirety (so keep this in mind when you choose your genre).

#### **Paper #7: Genre Piece Analysis**

Now that you have completed your genre piece, your task is to **make a 5-7 page argument about how your piece is using rhetorical strategies to effectively reach your audience.**

Perhaps the hardest part of this assignment will be to go beyond describing your rhetorical choices to sincerely analyzing them. The following questions are a good place to start in terms of engaging with your genre piece:

What opportunities did this genre provide you with? How did you capitalize on these?

What limitations did you discover while working? How did you address those limitations in the final product?

What factors influenced your choice of audience and/or publishing venue?

What rhetorical strategies did you consciously make in order to reach your audience?

What rhetorical strategies did you make unconsciously, and realize later? How do these choices relate to our study of genre?

Feel free to use the first person (“I”) in your paper when necessary, but keep in mind that using the first person is sometimes a shortcut and shuts down deeper analysis. Although you may include information about how you made choices or executed them, the paper should do more than tell the story of how you produced the genre piece.

#### **EXAMPLE 5: Xuan Zheng**

I use the following assignments as the first sequence for students to explore the complex relationship between language, identity and culture. The issue of language varieties and identities engages students from all backgrounds, and in particular students who speak multiple languages or have had cross-cultural experiences. Students start this line of inquiry by a personal engagement, and then as they read and discuss more about the role of English and its relationship to other languages, they take on their own questions and collect data by conducting interviews. By the end of the sequence the students are able to analyze and synthesize the evidence they have collected and form their arguments on multilingualism.

#### **SHORT PAPER 1.1**

The main purpose of this assignment is to get students to apply an author's argument in analyzing their own lives. It also serves as a starting point for students to look at the issue of language and identity in more depth. Students not only practice the skill of summarizing and quoting, but also engage in observing and reflecting on their experiences in relation to Amy Tan's arguments. The assignment is given after students have written a Go-post reflection and a class discussion on multiple "Englishes," code-switching, and cultural conflicts. This short paper usually generates topics that students are invested in and want to pursue further.

#### **SHORT PAPER 1.2**

The rhetorical analysis paper plays several roles in this sequence: First, in analyzing the effectiveness of two texts that have contrasting views on the English Only debate, students are able to provide reasons beyond their personal opinions of why certain arguments are more convincing than the others. That is to say, when they are asked to form arguments about multilingualism later, they are able to think critically, choose evidence selectively, and make stronger arguments. Second, it is the first time students are introduced to the idea of looking at a text rhetorically. It provides a set of vocabulary for them to talk about their own writing choices: e.g., audience, situation, ethos, pathos and logos. Later in the sequence I occasionally ask students to write a short rhetorical analysis of their own papers. In this way students also become more aware of the rhetorical situations and their own writing choices.

#### **SHORT PAPER 1.3 AND MP1**

Before this assignment, students have had extensive discussion on the English Only debate and multilingual speakers' challenges. They have also read two articles from educational scholars (Cummins and Morita) that provide academic evidence of how best to support multilingual speakers. Some of the evidence in the two articles challenges and complicates students' previous viewpoints on multilingualism, and they have been discussing how best to support multilingual speakers in class. Therefore, I have chosen a central question for the major paper, i.e., "*how to support multilingual speakers in the United States while still valuing their native language and identity?*" My experience teaching this assignment is that students may sometimes question the assumption behind this research question (e.g. "multilingual speakers' identity is only associated with their native language") and they may have a slightly different focus in approaching this research question. I welcome their critical thinking and I am open to their change in focus as long as they are still making an informed argument.

In order for students to explore the research question, I designed short paper 1.3 as a field research project, where students form groups that share the same research angle/interests (e.g. some may focus on the perspectives from parents while others focus on policy makers) and interview people that are central to this issue. The goal is to have students gather first-hand evidence from multiple

perspectives in order to pursue their research question. The interview project often proves to be the most fruitful experience for the students: they need to agree on a research question to explore together, find appropriate interviewees, design a set of interview questions, conduct interviews, and write up their report in a power-point format with their collected multi-media evidence: pictures and transcribed quotes from the interviewees, and video or audio recordings of the interviews. The presentation of their SP1.3 has also contributed to our collaborative understanding on the issues.

The major paper is an integration of the multiple evidence and thinking they have done up to this point. I usually have conferences with them when they bring me an idea draft or an outline for their MP. Since SP1.3 is a group project, the conferences can be done in groups as well. The challenging part is to help students apply what they have learned about argument into forming and articulating their own.

### CONCLUSION

Apart from having an in-depth and first hand understanding of the issue on multilingualism, the other merit of this sequence is that it empowers students, in particular multilingual students, to become insiders of their communities. It may, however, pose challenges or resistance from monolingual students who see themselves as speakers of privileged language varieties; but if scaffold well, the challenges can become fruitful teaching moments where students form more complex arguments by learning from others' perspectives.

### SELECTED READINGS

- Cummins, J. (June 01, 2009). Multilingualism in the English-language classroom: Pedagogical considerations. *Tesol Quarterly*, 43, 2, 317-321. (SP1.3 and MP1)
- Lewis, Greg. (2005). An Open Letter to Diversity's Victims. In Eschholz, Paul A et al. (Ed.) *Language Awareness*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 196-199. (SP1.2)
- Morita, N. (2004) Negotiating participation and identity in second language academic communities. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(4), 573-603. (SP1.3 and MP1)
- Patricia Ryan. (March, 2011). "Don't insist on English". TED. Retrieved from [http://www.ted.com/talks/patricia\\_ryan\\_ideas\\_in\\_all\\_languages\\_not\\_just\\_english.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/patricia_ryan_ideas_in_all_languages_not_just_english.html). (SP1.2)
- Tan, Amy. (2010). *Mother Tongue*. In Gross, A. et al. (Ed.), *Acts of Inquiry*. New York: Bedford/St.Martin's. (SP1.1)

### SEQUENCE 1:

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#### Short paper 1.1: Reading Response to *Mother Tongue*

**Due date: 4 /4 (On Dropbox and bring a hard copy)**

Now that we have discussed about Tan's essay *Mother Tongue* in class, we will begin our exploration of the course theme "language and identity." Your first assignment is to write a **reading response to this essay**.

First, summarize Tan's main argument, then write a response to the reading by reflecting on your own experience regarding language and identity issues: e.g. How does Tan's argument relate to your life (or not)? How does language (include multiple languages and/or the varieties of one language you are using) impact your life or identity (or not)? How does language and identity intertwine in your life? You can use the one paragraph narrative you wrote on the Go-post, but be sure to analyze it and connect it well with Tan's essay.



The purpose of this assignment is to give you an opportunity to apply the gist of a text in analyzing the life around you. Your engagement with the text and your own life will play as a basis for our future discussions on language and identity issues.

A successful paper will:

- Address an academic audience (your peers, not just “friends”)
- Identify the key arguments of the essay and summarize the text in your own words
- Demonstrate thoughtful application of Tan’s argument in analyzing life around you
- Proper formatting

Format: typed, 12 pt Times New Roman, double-spaced, 2-3 pages, 1 inch margins, stapled.

Please refer to MLA formatting in *Everyday Writer* for other basics. On the first page, put your name, instructor, course, and date aligned at left margin (double-spaced). Put your last name and page number in upper right hand corner.

**Outcomes targeted:** #1 #2

### **Short paper 1.2: Rhetorical Analysis**

**Due date:** 4/11

For your second short paper, write a rhetorical analysis of Patricia Ryan’s speech “*Don’t insist on English*” or Greg Lewis’s article “*An Open Letter to Diversity’s Victims*.” For the speech you may use the “transcription” document on the website to quote her exact words. Make a claim about how the author’s argument works: how it’s put together, how it’s working on its reader, and whether you assess it as effective in its context.

**Guiding questions** (*you don’t need to follow them rigidly*):

- What is the rhetorical situation (context) of this text/speech? What’s its purpose and who is the audience?
- What is the evidence the author uses to support her argument? How convincing is the evidence?
- What are the author’s claims? How do they fit together to create an argument?
- How does this text/speech appeal to Ethos, Logos, Pathos?

You can also refer to the guidelines and examples in *Acts of Inquiry* Chapter 3 and 4.

**Keep in mind:**

- Begin with a brief overview of the argument, and your main claim that sets up the reader with your overall assessment of the text. (**Use the Précis handout to help you.**)
- Analysis: use specific and relevant passages from the text. Make sure you analyze your quotes/evidence for your reader and show how they are relevant to your paper.
- Conclude your essay briefly that synthesized your discussion.
- For this paper, you are writing for an academic audience.

*Notice: whether you agree or not agree with the argument doesn’t matter for a rhetorical analysis paper.*

*You need to devote most of your attention to how well the argument works, even the one you dislike.*

**Format:** 12 pt Times New Roman, double spaced, 2-3 pages, 1 inch margins, stapled.

**Outcomes targeted:** 1&2&3

### **Short paper 1.3 Group work: Interview Report in PowerPoint**

**All due in Canvas: Interview questions, interview notes and transcriptions, and PPT report: 4/23**

Using personal anecdotes, Amy Tan, a second generation Asian American immigrant, has reflected on her experience using different Englishes, which implies the intimate relationship between one's identity and language. Tan described how she felt when different English speakers were treated differently. Similarly, from an insider's perspective, Morita has described the struggles and strategies multilingual students faced and used in participating in U.S. classrooms. She argued that English was not the only reason that affected the students' participation in a new academic community. Nowadays when English has been enjoying the highest degrees of privileges, several teachers and scholars (e.g. Ryan, Cummins) have advocated for multilingualism in order to embrace diverse cultures and ideas, while others (e.g. Lewis) have argued for an English only policy in the U.S. to enhance immigrants' Standard English skills. These texts lead to further questions that remain unanswered:

*How to support multilingual speakers in the United States while still valuing their native languages and cultures?*

*Who should be responsible for their adaptation to the U.S.?*

*What language(s) should be taught in school in the U.S. as well as around the world? Should we allow non-standard form of English in school and in the society?*

*What is the relationship between language and identity?*

For your MP1, you need to write an argument paper that answers the above question(s). In order to get at a complex claim for MP1, SP1.3 functions as a step for you to collect evidence from the perspectives of *the people that are involved in this debate*. Those are the steps you need to take for this project:

1. Work with 2 other classmates to conduct two interviews on the issue of multilingualism and identity. Depending on your research question, you can interview multilingual speakers (e.g. international students, immigrants, bilingual parents), school teachers or administrators, linguists, professors in different departments, social workers, translators, and etc. It is up to your group to decide who can be your interviewee for your project.
2. Design 5-7 interview questions based on the research question that's listed above in italics (You can create your own research question, but check with me first). We will workshop on developing interview questions in class.
3. Schedule a time to do the interviews. Conduct the interview (20 minutes each) and record the conversation if you can. Take as much notes as you can, no matter if you have a recorder or not. Write up their answers as soon as the interview is done. Take pictures or bits of artifacts from their daily lives if you want.
4. Create a final report in a PowerPoint slideshow (10 slides maximum). Be creative in using multi-modal texts (pictures, recordings, video clips etc.) while still presenting your information clearly. In this report, tell us the perspectives of your interviewees: What's their background and experience in the U.S.? What did they tell you that stood out as the most interesting and/or surprising? How do you interpret what they said? What are the other questions that emerged?
5. Present this group project to the class. Each group has 8 minutes, including a short Q&A section.

**Outcome targeted: 1&2&3**

#### **Report and Presentation guidelines (5 min presentation+3 min Q&A)**

1. Brief introduction of your interviewees
2. What are the most interesting or surprising findings?
3. How do you analyze and interpret what they said to answer your research questions?

4. What are the limitations of your study? (E.g. Is your evidence sufficient and relevant to answer your research question? You can think about how the educational/cultural background/discipline of your informants, their age and length of stay in the U.S., personality etc. have influenced your data. You may also think about how the interview and data analysis process - your interview language, your relationship with your informants, and your initial assumptions etc. - have influenced the data.)

**Major paper 1: Making an argument:**

**Due Date: 4/30**

**Idea draft (1page) due at the conference (AI Ch9 will be helpful for outlining your paper)**

Now that you have had some experience engaging with texts on the issue of multilingualism and identity, you have also collected your own data through the interviews, it is your turn to join the conversation.

For your first major paper, you will need to make a **focused and thoughtful argument** on multilingualism and multiculturalism in the U.S., which responds to your research question: *how to support multilingual speakers in the United States while still valuing their native language and identity? (Who should be responsible for their assimilation? What language(s) should be taught in school in the U.S.? Should we allow non-standard form of English in school and in the society?... )*

Think about how your interview data contradicts, complicates, or supports the arguments in the essays we read. Use multiple evidence including both texts and your interview data to support your argument.

For this paper, **you need to choose to address a particular group of academic audience:** language policy makers and/or university faculty and/or international/immigrant students etc., an audience to whom you think your argument matters the most.

A successful draft will:

- make a focused and thoughtful argument
- use multiple evidence in strategic, focused ways (summarized, cited, applied, challenged) to support the goals of the writing
- address appropriately to an academic audience that you specify
- make appropriate use of work previously done in class, including use of feedback

**Format:** 12 pt Times New Roman, double spaced, 5-7 pages, 1inch margins, stapled.

**Outcome targeted: 1&2&3**

## CHAPTER 4

# TEACHING INQUIRY & ARGUMENT IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

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Many students will enter your classroom with the sense that arguments are about winning a debate, changing other peoples' minds, or pinpointing the flaws in an opponent's position. While these are all legitimate uses of argumentative skills, we would also like students to see argument and persuasion as tools we can engage to solve collective problems, collaborate, and find common ground. Further, in teaching argument, we want to encourage students to be responsible for making ethical arguments and for understanding the myriad and uneven consequences of arguments (theirs and others') for diverse contexts, people, and communities. This sense of ethical communication is reflected in EWP's anti-racist pedagogy statement, included in the introduction of this manual, and within the EWP Outcomes, in particular within the bolded parts of Outcome Three below:

### OUTCOME THREE

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To craft persuasive, complex, inquiry-driven arguments that matter by

- **considering, incorporating, and responding to different points of view while developing one's own position;**
- engaging in analysis—the close scrutiny and examination of evidence, claims, and assumptions—to explore and support a line of inquiry;
- **understanding and accounting for the stakes and consequences of various arguments for diverse audiences and within ongoing conversations and contexts;** and
- designing/organizing with respect to the demands of the genre, situation, audience, and purpose.

Drawing on invitational, deliberative, and feminist rhetorical theories, EWP approaches the teaching of argument as something we should engage in not only to forward our own positions but also to better understand others with whom we may disagree and to navigate and cooperate across radical differences.

While we focus on academic argumentation here, we encourage you to read chapters 10-14 of *Writer/Thinker/Maker* alongside this chapter, as they offer extensive support on analyzing and crafting various types of arguments for different occasions and purposes. English 567, moreover, will introduce Krista Radcliffe's concept of "rhetorical listening," which helps develop students' capacities

not only for persuasion but also for being persuaded—a necessary skill within deliberate democracies and for ethical participation within our diverse, complex, and globalized world.

## INQUIRY IN SUPPORT OF ACADEMIC ARGUMENTATION

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As you've already read in earlier chapters, English 131 is committed to teaching students rhetorical awareness and the most transferable hallmarks of academic argumentation. This chapter will focus on what is probably the most repeated of hallmarks in college-level writing: claim-based argument that has emerged from and explores a line of inquiry based in reading, research, and critical analysis of evidence and assumptions. It might appear that we are presenting a contradiction when we say that writing—academic and otherwise—is contextually bound, on the one hand, but has certain key repeated features, on the other. Although it is true that each communicative situation is influenced by audience, purpose, and genre conventions (and therefore somewhat unique to its context), research has shown that *academic* writing, despite a number of often vast disciplinary differences, is related in its practice of inquiry. This is why the EWP puts so much emphasis on developing arguments from inquiry as one of the key thinking and writing skills that will help students in their future college courses. However, because the specifics of inquiry differ from discipline to discipline, this chapter cannot capture all the nuances, types of questioning, types of critical analyses of evidence, and types of argument that take place on college campuses. Instead, we will focus broadly on describing how inquiry emerges from research, reading, and participating in various communities; how to help students develop claims based on analysis rooted in ongoing conversations, rather than personal opinion; and how to use the Toulmin method—a widely used method for argument analysis and construction.

What is a line of inquiry? This is a question your students will certainly ask when presented with part 2 of Outcome 3: “engaging in analysis—the close scrutiny and examination of evidence, claims, and assumptions—to explore and support a line of inquiry.” Students may have difficulty with this outcome for a number of reasons. First, they might not be comfortable with the ambiguity of what it means for an argument to be appropriately complex. Second, they tend not to question and analyze evidence on the way towards making an argument, but instead come up with a stance they would like to argue (and these usually reflect some element of a debate that goes on in media culture) and then find evidence to support what they've already decided to be true. Third, they usually haven't been taught how to organize their essays in ways that build on and complicate ideas presented in the claim; more often, they are used to presenting a relatively straightforward demonstration of evidence through the five-paragraph essay or a compare-and-contrast piece; these types of organizational patterns fit nicely with the “search for evidence to fit the thesis” model. Overall, the biggest challenge you will face when trying to teach students how to work with lines of inquiry will be students' past writing and educational experiences. For the most part, incoming first-years have not been taught how to ask the kinds of questions that would lead them to develop complex claims that are more than restatements of commonsense cultural assumptions. *Therefore, integral to successfully engaging with practices of academic inquiry is a reorientation of thinking about how knowledge is made in the college context.* Inquiry encourages an exploratory attitude towards reading, research, and writing. It's important to remember that the same aspects that are exciting about such a process—discovering new ideas, questioning assumptions, and becoming comfortable with ambiguity—are sometimes the same things that make some students uncomfortable.

Although there is no set method for how to question and analyze evidence on the way to making a

claim, as each discipline takes a different approach to handling its artifacts and objects of analysis, there are certain habits of mind and habits of practice that students might find helpful. You might ask students to consider the following:

- Be mindful of the stances, points of view, and ideological and cultural contexts that inform the reading and analysis of evidence.
- Pay close attention to detail, and keep track of how the parts relate to the whole. Students are often quick to make sweeping generalizations without closely scrutinizing and examining the object of analysis.
- Be flexible when investigating your evidence or phenomena, and be willing to reformulate your findings and rethink connections and patterns. Students often balk at having to rework or reconsider parts of their emerging argument because it seems like the work they've done has been a waste of time. The key here is that students understand that they only got to that new and more interesting point in the analysis *as the result of* having asked the earlier questions and making the previous assertions.
- Move beyond binaries. Because of how argument is presented in popular discourse, students often assume that the “natural” and “right” finding must present clear oppositions. At first, students may not spot certain nuances and subtleties in the evidence they are analyzing simply because they haven't been trained in this type of reading practice. Once students develop new habits of approaching evidence, their overly simplified arguments begin to take on an appropriate level of academic complexity.
- Learn how to ask and answer questions. Part of developing the mindset that reading and research opens up avenues for further exploration is having the ability to ask questions and push against the material. “How” and “why” questions, for example, often produce much more complex arguments than “what” questions, which tend to be overly descriptive.
- Work collaboratively, with your peers and your instructor, to develop questions, hypotheses, and theories about texts you are analyzing. Often students are trapped in the individual creative genius paradigm. Organizing classroom activities that put students in dialogue with one another promotes a more diverse treatment of the evidence, and teaches students that partnerships often produce ideas and further lines of inquiry that they could never have come up with on their own.
- Related to the previous point, have students consider how the text they are reading has itself emerged from and is engaged in a process of inquiry.
- Use exploratory writing through the inquiry process in order to expand, complicate, amend, and process your ideas. Some students may be used to this practice, but others may think of writing as a means to present the end results of, rather than as a tool for thinking through, ideas. Getting students to understand that both reading and research is a generative act can be successfully taught by always attaching reading with writing assignments. These writing assignments could range from in-text annotation to a focused close reading of a passage to an application of a key term to an everyday practice. But by consistently having students write about the reading and other kinds of research, they begin to experience how active and engaged reading encourages thinking, raises questions, and leads to arguments that matter in academic contexts.
- Propel inquiry forward by asking the “so what?” question. Students are often at a loss for why what they are doing matters beyond the grade for your class. Therefore, in order to cultivate student motivation, as well as getting students used to crafting arguments that matter in

academic contexts, we recommend pushing students to continually ask why their analyses, their questions, or their arguments matter.

Beyond these general strategies for teaching students how to use inquiry to develop a claim, we would like to look at a specific challenge that you and your students may face as you try to teach them how to develop claims that emerge from a line of inquiry. The following section presents a small study done on a group of new 131 first-year students by a previous director of EWP. As you will see, these findings indicate just how entrenched non-critical and non-analytical reading practices are for our incoming students.

*The following samples, written by students just entering English 131, should give you a sense of what kinds of reading practices many of our students enter college with. We asked every student enrolled to complete the following task on the first day of class. As you will see, students tended to respond to the passage purely in relation to their own ideological stance, and not through a careful and close reading. Although this exercise is specific to textual reading, we believe the kind of thinking that students demonstrated here is indicative of how they might go about any other type of reading or research.*

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#### **DIRECTIONS**

Read the following paragraph below, drawn from Patricia Limerick's essay "Empire of Innocence," a paragraph appearing early in the essay. Then write a paragraph, using a close, careful reading, explaining what the paragraph says about the white American settlement of the West. In that paragraph, include at least one example, drawn from your own knowledge, that would illustrate, complicate, or argue against Limerick's position.

#### **LIMERICK PARAGRAPH**

Among those persistent values, few have more power than the idea of innocence. The dominant motive for moving West was improvement and opportunity, not injury to others. Few White Americans went West intending to ruin the natives and despoil the continent. Even when they were trespassers, westering Americans were hardly, in their own eyes, criminals; rather, they were pioneers. The ends abundantly justified the means; personal interest in the acquisition of property coincided with national interest in the acquisition of territory, and those interests overlapped in turn with the mission to extend the domain of Christian civilization. Innocence of intention placed the course of events in a bright and positive light; only over time would the shadows compete for our attention.

"Empire of Innocence," *Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*.  
New York: Norton, 1987.

#### **STUDENT RESPONSES**

**Student 1:** The paragraph explains how Americans who traveled west were misunderstood. In no way were the pioneers attempting to trespass. Their goal was not to kill or destroy but rather to reach a place of opportunity. Americans traveling west did not see themselves as if they were violating anyones spaces. They were on a conquest for their own personnel happiness. In the end, Limerick states, that the killing and

exploitation was worth it. It was in countries best interests. Limericks opinion is very arrogant. He sees the Americans doing no wrong. He believes the American was not at fault and that anyone who was in the America's pursuit for possession was not at fault.

**Student 2:** Limerick believes that Americans moving west were innocent. Americans were victims of the circumstances. Greed, which is a natural instinct, overlapped with the government's desires. Americans also though they "were not criminals, but pioneers," and what they were doing was okay. However, the innocence of mind does not make the action right. This is similar to the punishment African Americans had to endure in the South. Many white folks honestly believed prejudice was acceptable, but their innocence doesn't make the outcome justified.

**Student 3:** Limerick states that the expansion west and colonization of Native American land was motivated by "innocent" values. Western pioneers did not intentionally kill and conquer the natives with evil intent; rather they believed that western colonization was a saintly act. Pioneers were creating better lives for "pagan savages" and saving lives with Christianity. Acts of violence were justified by the pioneers in their own minds for their intentions were good.

Joseph Conrad also believed all colonization led to death and destruction. When oppressors began to claim an area, things began to fall apart, and societies began to collapse. He believed man was inherently evil and though innocence may have been the conscious motive, eventually human nature won over.

**Student 4:** I believe that this paragraph says that the whites weren't exactly welcome to the west. They thought they were pioneers, making a new home for themselves when they were actually taking away from the Indians. The white settlers thought of themselves as innocent and had no clue when they were trespassing. It is almost as if they thought everything was for their taking. It was all good and innocent for so long and only recently has anyone protested it. Now people are of mixed feelings as to whether it actually was innocent or not.

I disagree with what the author is saying because I believe the white man did just as much good as anything else for the Indians. When the settlers came out west, they brought luxuries that the Indians had never known. But, on the other hand, the Indians led a life of simplicity and when the white people came, they made everything complicated.

**Student 5:** In the passage above, Limerick portrays the idealistic frontiersman who is an entrepreneur, rugged, rugged, and freespirted. She defends these new "westerners" and their actions claiming that they are naïve and blinded from reality. In the quote "the ends abundantly justify the means" Limerick shows her own blindness to the past. Whether the authors sarcasm continues through the rest of the novel is unknown, however this passage serves as a starting point to unraveling the injustices of the Americans heading west.

**Student 6:** Limerick's claim is that the motivation of white American to



settle the west was innocent; that they were spurred to move west by the desire for "improvement and opportunity." This motivation being so pure, the white American's actions seem almost chivalrous when recounted by Limerick. Racism does not enter into Limerick's pretty picture. I am not sure how any convincing argument could be made to show that the white American's view of Native Americans was not racist. Nor could I see how the withdrawal by the U.S. government from honorable treaties with Native Americans could be seen as anything short of manipulative and sometimes evil. The manipulation of the Native Americans for their ancient lands and the subsequent rape of those lands by prospectors and entrepreneurs was in no way innocent or commendable. It is more along the lines of shameful.

Only about a third of our students noticed the key contrast in the last sentence between "a bright and positive light" and "the shadows," critical to assessing Limerick's probable position, though few of them expressed it directly. A significant number of our students treated this as an opportunity to offer their personal opinions about the primary rights of their ancestors or the good that Christianity brought to the West. Others offered their opinions about the relative merits of Native American and Western European cultures. A majority of our students included language in their responses such as "Limerick believes" or "Limerick feels," locating the argument in a personal belief system of the writer. Perhaps relatedly, students did not notice or comment on the fact that this passage was from a book; some students refused to believe that Limerick was a woman, sometimes changing her name to Patrick, other times simply using the pronoun "he." No one guessed that Limerick was a professional historian. One thing that students were able to do was to draw from their knowledge of Washington state history or the larger history of the United States for other examples. In short, they had some strengths, but at the same time, they brought with them their previous experiences in writing opinion papers. If their reading had been strategic and rhetorical, focused on the writing task itself, the results might have been different.

Overall, it's likely that students couldn't analyze this quote beyond personal experience because they were never taught how to develop and ask the necessary questions that would not only produce an interesting analysis, but that would allow them to move away from this one reading and explore other readings, other contexts, other practices through the lens and perspective of what this initial text could offer. In other words, students have not been challenged to read analytically or to use reading generatively.

## **EVIDENCE & DISCIPLINARITY**

Another important aspect of analyzing evidence and working through lines of inquiry will be helping students to understand what counts as evidence. First-year students do not generally know that each discipline (and sometimes each subdiscipline) has various schools of thought, forms of inquiry, and important, sometimes foundational, figures. Because they have not had contact with scholarly writing, they don't know the rules of the academic publishing game. Bringing in a scholarly journal with which you are familiar can be a means for showing how publication takes place. What organization or group of scholars publish a particular journal? Who are the people on the editorial board? Who are the peer readers? What topics does the journal take up? What other kinds of articles appear in the journal?

It will also be important to differentiate personal from professional opinion. When students begin to read academic texts, they will often have no framework for understanding what a professional opinion is. Does the author have credentials? Does the author have a degree and training in the area about which he or she writes? Does the author hold an academic appointment? Has the author written and

published other work? Is this author cited by others? Have there been published reviews of the author's work? All of these questions can assist students in understanding that they can evaluate and sort evidence on their own. Students have had to assume that whatever they were given in the classroom is authoritative and they have had no reason to think otherwise. Without the knowledge of how to evaluate the quality of what they read, it should not be surprising that they assume it is just opinion.

## THESIS STATEMENTS V. ARGUABLE CLAIMS

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*Nice people don't argue . . . but academics do.*

In addition to teaching students how to explore and develop lines of inquiry through reading and other kinds of research (observations of phenomena, interviews, surveys, etc.—see Chapters 7 and 8 of *Writer/Thinker/Maker* for more about helping students to distinguish between primary and secondary sources), you will also need to teach them about how to formulate and organize the arguments that emerge from that process (as a starting point, Chapters 1 and 5 of *Writer/Thinker/Maker* provides guidance in analyzing claims and arguments, while the Part 3 chapters help students build their own claims and arguments). One of the difficulties of teaching argument in writing to first-year students arises from a widely-held convention that nice people don't argue. People make enemies when they argue. Arguments can lead to violence. The word itself can raise the walls of politeness. We need only think about social conventions about not raising political or religious issues in polite company—for fear that it might cause an argument. Linguist Deborah Tannen wrote an entire book entitled *The Argument Culture: Stopping America's War of Words* (New York: Ballantine, 1998). So when we ask our students to stop writing thesis statements and to start making claims and arguments, we must, at the same time, ask them to redefine their understanding of the word *argument*.

What most non-academics mean by argument is usually a polar opposition. I win/you lose. You're a Democrat/I'm a Republican. I'm for the death penalty/You're a bleeding heart liberal against the death penalty. I'm pro-choice/You're against choice. Academic arguments are something different—often more complex, specific, interested in inquiry, and detailed—and the translation from one type of argument to another is not always easy for our students. Most academic argument is bounded by what is considered debatable within a discipline, acknowledging that some questions are already settled, though they, too, may end up being debatable. What our students will find disconcerting is that the “rules” of academic argument exclude the following, which they have likely been able to “use” in the past:

“Because my parents say so” (or my friends, or my community)

“Because I read it on the editorial page of the newspaper”

“Because that's what I think”

“Because it's morally right” (or in some cases, religiously right)

In addition to not quite knowing how to make an academic argument, students haven't yet had the chance to learn what academic argument can do and has done. For example, they usually don't know that one of the reasons they have read some women's, African American, and Hispanic literature in their high school classes is because academic argument in the disciplines of English and education paved the way. They often don't know that contemporary work in genetics begins in an academic argument about the structure of DNA. They often don't know that there are years of sociological studies examining the racial differential in actual punishment for crime. You have the chance to teach your students to understand argument, both their own and those made by others, as both emerging from and contributing to a process of inquiry; indeed, as generative and opening up rather than

closing down.

As suggested elsewhere in these materials, one of the main reasons students come to the university unprepared to write academic argument is that their high school papers have primarily required a descriptive thesis or a personal opinion. Also, any research done is usually collected for presentation in support of an already existing position (not as leading to a position), and not analyzed, interpreted, or questioned. This includes work done in AP classes.

Following are examples of descriptive thesis statements students write in high school. Each is drawn from the top-scoring AP English Language and Composition papers posted on the College Board website, and each will be unacceptable in your class (for reasons explained in a moment):

To be a writer, one must have an elite understanding of diction, syntax and tone. These literary devices are utilized by writers, including Eudora Welty, as a method for expressing the message that they wish to convey to readers.

In the excerpt from *One Writer's Beginnings*, Eudora Welty conveys a positive tone toward her childhood experience. She accomplishes this through the use of descriptive diction, impressionable images, and unusual syntax.

The language she employs to relate anecdotes of her childhood love affair with reading is invested with the same passion and value that she applied to books.

The author's response to nature is strong and vivid.

Oliver recognizes the overwhelming power and mystery of nature visible in this passage about the great horned owl. This concept is carried over to the reader by the effective use of detail and syntax.

Kincaid, instead of openly displaying her ideas, uses a clever mix of syntax and rhetorical structure to let us gradually realize that something is wrong in such a seeming paradise.

The two passages given describe the swamp in very different lights. Although they are in some ways similar, the styles of the authors of these paragraphs are very different.

Rather than being strong argumentative claims that set out to *explore a line of inquiry throughout the essay*, the strategy here is to create a thesis statement that *describes what the reader will find in the essay*. These are maps to the text. These are static and demonstrative statements that list in really conventional ways the obvious content of their object of analysis. As readers, it is quite difficult to find a motivation to read what's here because none of these thesis statements make connections to anything beyond the text itself. In addition, these thesis statements make no relationships that build, complicate, or intersect with other ideas in complex or interesting ways. In other words, the writers of these thesis statements aren't investigating anything beyond the text(s) itself. Another aspect important to notice here is the formula for describing writing: tone, diction, syntax, and rhetorical strategies. While the application of an idea—tone, diction, syntax—to a text is a step in the right

direction, there is no sense of the communication of complex ideas that matter to an academic audience.

Let's compare these thesis statements with some arguable claims produced for English 131. While the sentences listed above constitute, for the most part, the entire opening paragraphs of the essays, in the arguable claims below, students have created a context for their argument (which articulate the stakes), explained important concepts from an essay, and then, after either a lengthy paragraph or paragraphs, declared their claims:

Thus, I argue that any time a literary work is being retold by images, the story loses nothing from the original and can only give rise to a more diverse interpretation of the original story. Furthermore, the notion that a story can be tainted because it is a "reproduction" is a fallacy.

I claim that the constant training to conform into a disciplined society to avoid danger is the first step to individuals becoming more automated or compliant. Furthermore, it is this disciplinary society that is responsible for producing our robotic behavior.

Both instances, leper colony and plague town, institute processes to solve the issue of the sick, the leper through separation and the town through its meticulous segmentation. These processes are applicable to our experiences, and our public education is a modern example of Foucault's processes of panopticism, drawing eerie parallels with Stephen King's short story, "Quitter's, Inc."

While these personal accounts give people's opinions on how contact zones are formed and supported, the Articles of Confederation was a document that actually created contact zones, instead of merely describing them. These contact zones are worthy to note because they are important in shaping early American history.

We can identify source essays students are responding to in each of these claims: articles by Berger, Foucault twice, and Pratt. In each case, the student presents an interaction between a theoretical concept and an object or objects of analysis. What makes these claims more than mere descriptions of what the student "saw" in relation to their own personal points of view is how they complicate and expand our understanding of one text through the lens of another. These claims are also rich in stakes, which the previous thesis statements lacked entirely. Here, we can see students questioning assumptions and challenging conventionally-held beliefs in order to take a stand that is at once based in close scrutiny of evidence and takes risks with that analysis. The first student's paper compares a book and a movie, using Berger's quarrel with the notion of reproduction decreasing the value of the original work. The second student applies Foucault to the compliant nature of contemporary behavior, while the third uses Foucault to focus on public education and a story. The fourth student draws from Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the contact zone and applies it to a moment in U.S. history. In each case, the student either complicates, applies, or expands on concepts from one to other instances. Providing students with similar such examples can be very useful in helping them clarify what's different about argument in college writing; check the EWP website files for examples, ask your colleagues for examples, or write some of your own.

In addition to providing examples, working to identify the difference between an opinion and an argument will likely be a theme in your course. You may want to distribute something like the following assignment in the first week of English 131. Though students sometimes mock the assignment for its simplicity at the start, it usually ends up starting a complicated conversation about what qualifies as an argument:

**EXAMPLE 1:** Argument v. Opinion (Vidali)

**OPINION:** A recognizable type of statement is the opinion or personal opinion—a statement or personal taste that is intended to apply only to the person who makes it and which cannot be disputed for that reason. For example:

- I like disco music.
- I think Virginia Woolf is a better writer than Charles Dickens.

**ARGUMENT/ARGUABLE CLAIM:** The type of statement we will spend the most time and attention on in this class is the argument or arguable claim. This is a statement which intends to persuade, convince, argue, prove, or suggest something to a reader or to someone who does not necessarily agree with you initially. The basis for all of your formal academic writing will be just this type of a claim (also called a thesis, among other things). For example:

- Disco music began a dance craze because its rhythms and beats are readily apparent, especially compared to some of its folk and guitar rock predecessors.
- Woolf is a more effective writer than Dickens because she takes more chances in her writing, as revealed by her stream-of-consciousness style.

Notice that in each of these statements, the underlying motive is to get you to agree with the point of view behind the statement to some extent. For example, the writer of the first example is not just trying to tell you that disco music is better than all music, just that it is easier to dance to. Note that while in some respect these are opinions, there is evidence that could be used to support what the author is saying.

This is the difference between an opinion and an argument; an argument can be supported by evidence (in our case, academic evidence) while an opinion can usually only be supported by more opinion. However, realize that an argument paper does not need to be a research paper. A research paper usually picks a “safe” topic and the thesis it presents is not disputable. A research paper proves that something is a certain way. An argument paper usually has another side to it, which is what makes it both interesting and original. Rather than simply making a statement and supporting it with factual information, an arguable claim goes on to address: *So what? What are the implications?* At the university level, you’ll move more toward crafting your own arguments and away from safe research papers that reiterate what others have said.

Note below whether the following topics would result in a “factual” research paper, an opinion paper, or an arguable paper, as described above. Some don’t have easy answers!

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Seattle gets more rain each year than Los Angeles.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Cloudy weather makes people more productive.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I like sunshine better than rain.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Playing sports is good for women's self esteem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I enjoyed "Air Force One" more than any other Harrison Ford movie.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Malcolm X was in prison when he learned to read.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Diversity and equality don't have to be seen as opposites.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I hope we will commit to giving more money to education.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Mental and physical ability should be the goals of primary education.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Traditional education helps to maintain social classes in America.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Human beings are basically evil.

## TEACHING CLAIMS

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While students may be successful in distinguishing opinion from argument in the abstract, you may find that the arguable claims they produce are somewhat obvious; though someone could argue with them, no one likely ever would. You will probably spend most of the quarter pushing students from these obvious claims to more arguable, complex claims that matter in academic contexts. You can never provide too many examples. Below are some claims (obtained from plagiarism websites) that illustrate various problems common in student writing (these are somewhat overblown to make the point, though they are real):

### **Confusing an argument with reviewing what others think.**

In principle a case can be made on moral grounds both supporting and opposing capital punishment. Also, compelling arguments against capital punishment can be made on the basis of its actual administration in our society. Two different cases can be made. One is based on justice and the nature of a moral community. This leads to a defense of capital punishment. The second is based on love and the nature of an ideal spiritual community. This leads to a rejection of capital punishment.

### **The abuse of rhetorical questions.**

If your every waking moment was consumed by pain and nausea, wouldn't you ask for medication? What if the only medication legally available would leave you unconscious or do nothing at all? If you were the one suffering, would you resort to the only treatment that allowed you to live normally even though it was illegal? Thousands of people across the country are forced to break the law to ease their pain. They have chosen marijuana over anything legally available because it has various medicinal properties that cannot be found anywhere else. Due to these many unique medicinal uses, marijuana should be reclassified as a valid, legal form of treatment.

In addition to reviewing bad examples, students need examples of obvious as well as arguable claims on the same topic; this helps them to see what doesn't quite work and what does work.

## EXAMPLE 2: Argument v. Opinion

At certain moments, it is important to remember that we are learning to write a particular genre: argument. Thus, there are certain features that make an argument work and that differentiate it from other sorts of writing. Some of you have surely seen this comparison before, but this time we'll examine Foucault.

### Statement of Opinion

Foucault has important ideas about power and discipline that apply to Pike Place Market.

This isn't really saying anything, at least not anything that can be supported by academic evidence. It does not rely on analysis of what we've read and does not posit an original argument.

### Obvious Claim

Because Foucault is interested in the functioning of power, he chose to demonstrate his views mainly by discussing prisons and the plague, which are great examples as power is apparent and can be discussed in terms of Pike Place Market.

This seems arguable, but it is only rehashing Foucault's argument (and in some sense, simply proving that he does what he sets out to do, which isn't original). With this claim, you'll run out of information FAST. Also, this isn't focusing enough on the site you're supposed to be discussing.

### Arguable Claim

Foucault's discussion of how power functions seems to focus primarily on prisons and unusual situations like the plague. However, a closer examination reveals that authoritative power, as it is sometimes present in prisons today, is less important than making power seem "natural" so that people discipline themselves. While this model of power works in many ways, Foucault's theory is (perhaps unconsciously) oriented toward Western ideals, and this was revealed when I examined a Buddhist temple and searched for evidence of panopticism. While surveillance was evident in that...[go on here to list specific points]

Now here's an original argument that introduces Foucault and then takes the reader somewhere new and exciting. However, the claim isn't quite done because the writer hasn't explained how he/she is going to support the over-arching argument; thus, he/she would need to lay out an organizational "roadmap" and more specifics.

It may be useful to have students practice making arguable claims on topics they are familiar with before asking them to make claims about complex academic texts. In-class exercises like the one below may not result in profound insights but can help students recognize the differences between arguable claims and opinions, can open up discussions about various persuasive appeals (pathos, ethos, logos), and can allow students to create claims collaboratively and in a low-stakes environment.

### EXAMPLE 3: In-Class Claims Exercise

You have about 20 minutes: write an arguable claim for **three** of the following topics. Remember that not only must a claim be arguable, but it also must be able to be argued in a paper: supporting details must be available. You can make up the supporting details for this exercise, but be sure that they would support your claim if they were verifiable. *Each* of your final claims must have three elements:

- Your actual thesis
- At least two supports

At least *two* of your claims must have the following:

- An acknowledgement of a counterargument or complexity

- 1.) Legalization of marijuana
- 2.) Athletics in college
- 3.) United States media coverage of the most recent Afghanistan invasion
- 4.) The composition course requirement at UW

## CLAIM WORKSHOPS

Asking students to submit claims before launching into their entire paper is a great idea (and avoids unnecessary work on both your part and the students'), and you might give a fairly unstructured assignment like the one below:

### EXAMPLE 4: Claims Exercise

Over the weekend, develop the claim for your next sequence. Please include:

1. Your main argument, well-fleshed out. This will likely take more than a sentence or two to qualify as an arguable claim.
2. An explanation of the stakes of the claim: why what is being argued matters.
3. A description of how you plan to support your claim.

While you are certainly going to be a bountiful resource for how to write good claims, you'll find that many of your students understand the concept of an arguable claim even when they can't consistently write them. Thus, claim workshops (and peer review in general) can be successful and instructive for your students. Below is a fairly structured claim workshop form:

### EXAMPLE 5: Claims Workshop (Peer Review)

Writer: \_\_\_\_\_ Peer Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

**COMPLIMENTS ARE NICE.**



**BUT RESPECTFUL, CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM IS BETTER! ☺**

**Rate the claim on a scale of 1-5, 5 being the highest. Please write comments below your scores.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ The artifact discussed in the paper seems to be of reasonable size for the paper (not too big to be discussed specifically, not so small as to cause repetition).
- \_\_\_\_\_ The argument is about the community and is not opinion-oriented (there are arguments made with evidence to support, not just opinions stated).
- \_\_\_\_\_ The claim contains no “I think” phrases.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The claim makes an argument. It does not make a statement of fact, an announcement, or offer a description (even if that description is “interesting”!).
- \_\_\_\_\_ It is clear how Anzaldúa and/or Greenblatt will play into the argument. (This may or may not need to be stated in the claim itself; you be the judge!)
- \_\_\_\_\_ The claim does not merely “vote” for or against a topic or position without explanation. There seems to be a more complex argument going on.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The claim avoids vague or mysterious language. Circle words that seem vague.

What other suggestions do you have?

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**ADDRESSING FALLACIES**

Incorporating a unit on fallacy is simply a fun way to introduce more complicated discussions of logic and reasoning into your course, and more simplistic or assumptive logic out of student writing. In the examples to follow, various sorts of fallacies are presented—some more ridiculous than others—and students can familiarize themselves with these examples in order to recognize similar patterns in their own writing and the writing of their peers.

**COMMON FALLACIES**

**ANYTHING YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND IS EASY TO DO**

Example: “If you have the right tools, how hard can it be to take a good photograph?”

**APPEAL TO PITY (rather than “reason”)**

Example: “In a way, his argument is so bad that we should feel sorry for him.”

**APPEAL TO POPULAR SENTIMENTS (or, everybody’s agrees so...)**

Example: “If you have any doubt about joining the NRA, just remember that 5,000 join every year.”

**BEGGING THE QUESTION (or, the claim simply restated!)**

Example: “We can’t justify higher salaries for public school teaching positions because we can’t get good teachers.”

#### **CIRCULAR REASONING**

Example: “I want to lose weight so I’m not going to eat, which will keep me from gaining weight.”

#### **FALSE DILEMMA (or, assuming only certain options exist)**

Example: “I have to go to my Dad’s alma mater or else pay my own way through school.”

#### **FAULTY ANALOGY (or, offering similarities between examples)**

Example: “You can train a dog to fetch a stick, so how hard can it be to train a cat to come when you call it?”

#### **FAULTY CAUSE AND EFFECT**

Example: “As car advertisements are so prevalent, it is clear that they have created the American Dream.”

#### **HASTY GENERALIZATION (or, the few are the same as the whole)**

Example: “As the immigrants from El Salvador are clearly disillusioned, all immigrants likely feel the same.”

#### **I AM THE WORLD**

Example: “I have pulled myself up by my bootstraps, which means that others can too if they try.”

#### **IGNORING THE DOWNSIDE RISK**

Example: “Many childcare workers are not screened properly, so only college graduates should hold such positions.”

#### **INCOMPLETENESS AS PROOF OF DEFECT (or, throwing away everything over one thing)**

Example: “As this part of her argument seems faulty, we can safely dismiss her whole argument.”

#### **JUDGING WITHOUT COMPARISON TO ALTERNATIVES**

Example: “I don’t invest in U.S. Treasury bills because there’s too much risk.”

#### **OVERSIMPLIFICATION**

Example: “Those who favor nuclear energy development just want to save money. That’s all that interests them.”

#### **SHIFTING GROUND (or, subtly moving to another point without addressing the first)**

Example: “The author brings up an interesting point about nuclear fission, but more interesting is that...”

#### **STRAW MEN (or, exaggeration to make an argument seem ridiculous)**

Example: “The impact of a free-trade agreement with Mexico will devastate everything from the auto industry to the clothing industry. Countless plants and businesses will shut down and a full-scale depression will begin.”

#### **SUBSTITUTING FAMOUS QUOTES FOR COMMON SENSE**

Example: “Remember, ‘All things come to those who wait.’ So don’t bother looking for a job.”

#### **TOTAL LOGICAL DISCONNECT**

Example: “I enjoy pasta because my house is made of bricks.”

#### **UNACCEPTANCE THAT THINGS HAVE MULTIPLE CAUSES**

Example: “The Beatles were only popular because they were good singers.”

**UNCLEAR ON ROLE OF PAST ACTIONS (or, we did it in the past so it must be right)**

Example: “We’ve spent millions on gasoline every year, and there’s no reason this should stop.”

Here are some other examples of fallacies:

**AMAZINGLY BAD ANALOGY**

Example: You can train a dog to fetch a stick. Therefore, you can train a potato to dance.

**IGNORING EVERYTHING SCIENCE KNOWS ABOUT THE BRAIN**

Example: People choose to be obese/gay/alcoholic because they prefer the lifestyle.

**THE FEW ARE THE SAME AS THE WHOLE**

Example: Some Elbonians are animal rights activists. Some Elbonians wear fur coats. Therefore, Elbonians are hypocrites.

**GENERALIZING FROM SELF**

Example: I’m a liar. Therefore, I don’t believe what you’re saying.

**ARGUMENT BY BIZARRE DEFINITION**

Example: He’s not a criminal. He just does things that are against the law.

**JUDGING THINGS WITHOUT COMPARISON TO ALTERNATIVES**

Example: I don’t invest in U.S. Treasury bills. There’s too much risk.

**IGNORANCE OF STATISTICS**

Example: I’m putting ALL of my money on the lottery this week because the jackpot is so big.

**IRRELEVANT COMPARISONS**

Example: A hundred dollars is a good price for a toaster, compared to buying a Ferrari.

**INCOMPLETENESS AS PROOF OF DEFECT**

Example: Your theory of gravity doesn’t address the question of why there are no unicorns, so it must be wrong.

**IGNORING THE ADVICE OF EXPERTS WITHOUT A GOOD REASON**

Example: Sure, the experts think you shouldn’t ride a bicycle into the eye of a hurricane, but I have my own theory.

**FOLLOWING THE ADVICE OF KNOWN IDIOTS**

Example: Uncle Billy says pork makes you smarter. That’s good enough for me!

**REACHING BIZARRE CONCLUSIONS WITHOUT ANY INFORMATION**

Example: The car won’t start. I’m certain the spark plugs have been stolen by rogue clowns.

**FAULTY PATTERN RECOGNITION**

Example: His last six wives were murdered mysteriously. I hope to be wife number seven.

**FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE WHAT’S IMPORTANT**

Example: My house is on fire! Quick, call the post office and tell them to hold my mail!

**UNCLEAR ON THE CONCEPT OF SUNK COSTS**

Example: We've spent millions developing a water-powered pogo stick. We can't stop investing now or it will all be wasted.

**OVERAPPLICATION OF OCCAM'S RAZOR (WHICH SAYS THAT THE SIMPLEST EXPLANATION IS USUALLY RIGHT)**

Example: The simplest explanation for the moon landings is that they were hoaxes.

**IGNORING ALL ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE**

Example: I always get hives immediately after eating strawberries. But without a scientifically controlled experiment, it's not reliable data. So I continue to eat strawberries every day, since I can't tell if they cause hives.

## REMEMBER: YOU WILL TEACH ARGUMENT AGAIN AND AGAIN, MAYBE EVERY DAY

One student will get claims the first time around, another few in the workshop, and a decent handful in conference. But you will still be teaching claims when you get to the portfolio, so be prepared to make some good summary handouts, like the one below:

**“Purpose”                      =                      “Thesis”                      =                      “Roadmap”**

Identifies the **argument** that will be developed and supported in your essay.  
Purpose/thesis/roadmap has THREE functions:

1. **WHAT** the argument (point) of your paper is.
2. **HOW** you will prove your argument (identify key claims you will make to prove the argument).
3. **WHY** your argument is significant (or, what the implications are).

**“Development”                      ↔                      “Support”**

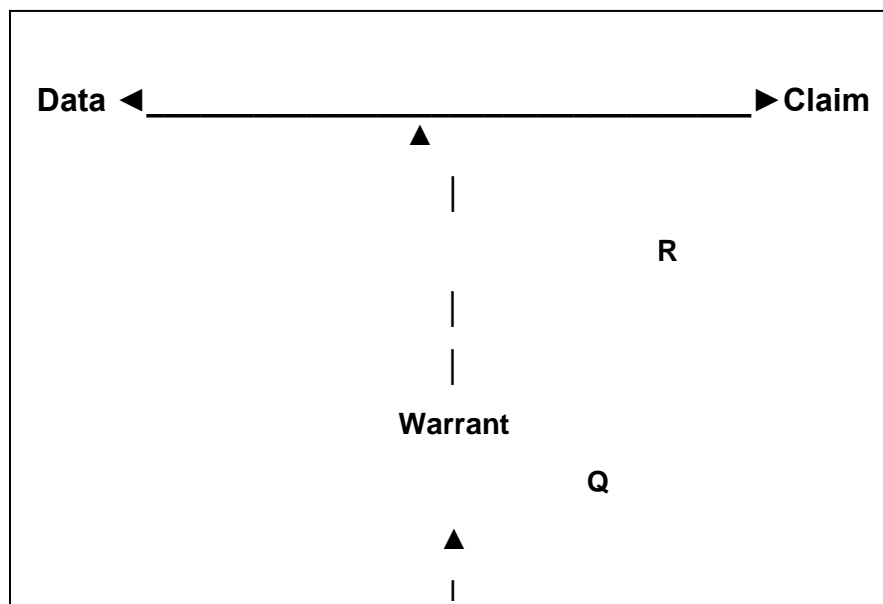
Develops and supports your argument by using logically progressing **interpretive claims** and **evidence** from the text. You must interpret and analyze. In other words, **show** your readers how the claims and evidence support and develop your argument. You are *not* a storyteller or summarizer. You are a **persuasive writer convincing** (*proving*) readers of your argument. You are satisfying a skeptical reader.

## TOULMIN ANALYSIS

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Another approach to argument in the writing classroom is that of Stephen Toulmin. Toulmin is a philosopher, best known for his work on informal logic, ethics, and the history and philosophy of science. He trained at Cambridge under Ludwig Wittgenstein, among others, but he has spent most of his academic career in the U.S. Because most of the practicing academic philosophers in this country are of the analytic school (symbolic logic, mathematical reasoning), Toulmin’s work is taken more seriously outside of academic philosophy in departments like history and philosophy of science and rhetoric and communications. His approach is especially useful in responding to arguments made from within a particular discipline, or argument field as it is called in some analyses.

This model is primarily used to analyze the logic and reasoning that drives arguments, so implementation of this model is primarily used in the reading of essays and articles from our reader or when students analyze their peers’ arguments, as well as their own. But the model helps students see how argument involves inquiry that is rooted in the ideologies and assumptions of various cultures, communities, places, and groups, wherein the assumptions (warrants) that underwrite a claim become the basis for another claim that needs to be argued, and so on. The basic model consists of six parts in two tiers, one primary (claim, data, and warrant) and the other secondary (qualification, reservation, and backing). The model is usually expressed visually as follows:



A **claim** is something similar to a thesis statement but at this level of writing it is usually a more complex argument, beyond a single claim, perhaps taking several sentences to establish. Claims are propositions and, in complex arguments, are often followed by words like “therefore” or “thus.” They are explicit statements and a reader should be able to identify an explicit claim in an arguable paper, article, essay, or book.

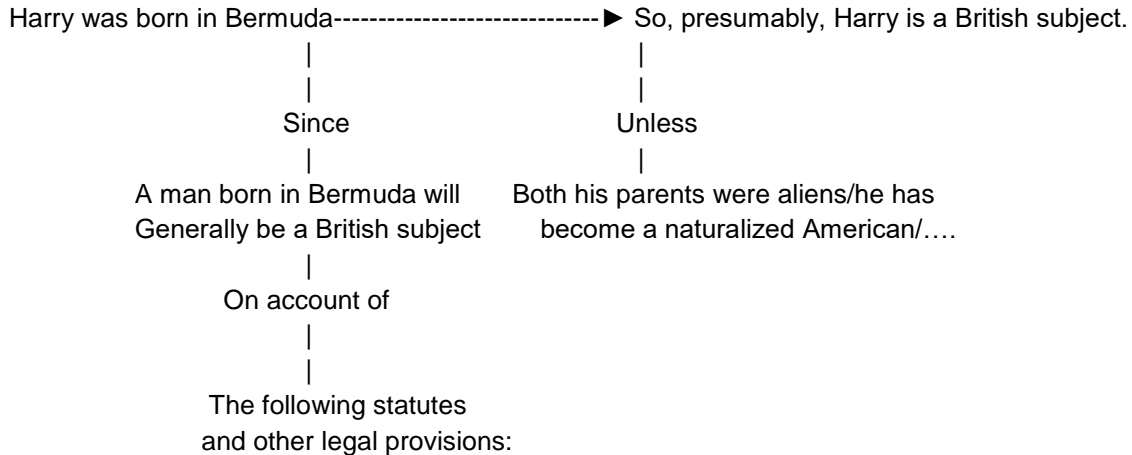
**Data**—sometimes called grounds or evidence—are those “facts” that establish the validity of the claim, that on which the claim is based. What “counts” as a fact may differ from discipline to discipline. Data usually answer the question, “How do you know?” Like the claim, data will be explicit, though the reasons for using particular evidence may not be explicit.

**Warrants** represent the most difficult part for students as they indicate presuppositions, the things we have to believe are true in order for us to accept the relationship between the data and the claim. Because warrants are typically implicit, students have difficulty “finding” them as they aren’t often right there in the text. Warrants in academic arguments are often signaled by citations to relevant literature in a particular field. As such, warrants also mark disciplinary differences and can be used to teach rhetorical awareness. Part of making an effective argument requires an understanding of audiences and their assumptions. Teaching students to examine and use warrants helps them demonstrate an awareness of the strategies writers use in different rhetorical situations.

In the second tier of the model, there are three other parts: qualification, reservation and backing. Some arguments require some of these parts to be explicit; others do not. **Qualification** is just that—how certain are we about the claim?—and are typical in academic arguments. Specific words that often signal qualification include *necessarily*, *certainly*, *presumably*, *in all probability*, *plausibly*, *it appears*, and *so it seems*. **Reservation** is similar and will indicate when the claim should not be applied. *Unless* is a word often used to signal reservation. **Backing** indicates the body of reasoning and knowledge operating in an argument and represents the body of knowledge from which specific warrants come. Generally speaking, it is the first tier of parts that will have the most use in the writing classroom, but some discussion of backing is probably necessary when identifying an essay or article

as located in a particular discipline.

The “classic” visualization from Toulmin’s *The Uses of Argument* involves a legal question. The representation is as follows:



*The Uses of Argument* (105)

“Harry was born in Bermuda” represents the data for this argument, with the claim or conclusion following “so” being that Harry is a British subject. The warrant for this connection between the data and the claim is that those born in Bermuda are generally British subjects, unless there is an exception such as having alien parents or Harry having become a U.S. citizen. The backing for the warrant is the applicable British statutes determining British citizenship or Commonwealth status.

Generally speaking, when we read academic articles, the analysis of the argument is not quite so simple. First, academic articles may indeed have primary claims, but we are also likely to find a number of subclaims, chained to the primary claim. This may be important for our students to recognize as some will not want to pursue the main claim of an article for their papers and will want to focus instead on a secondary claim. Second, because academic scholarship draws on a body of knowledge, we are likely to see multiple warrants and perhaps even separate warrants for analyzing the data. One of the difficulties of using the Toulmin analysis with nonacademic work is that the warrants may be completely implicit; academic essays tend to have at least some explicit warrants. Students who have had trouble in the past with notions of presupposition may find it easier to “see” warrants in academic reading. Third, what “counts” as data may differ from discipline to discipline, and our students may not recognize data as data because they don’t know much about the discipline. Toulmin himself has recognized that the model he proposed in 1958 is actually much more rhetorical and contingent than he originally envisioned, so the idea of multiple claims and warrants is an acceptable variant of the original.

Toulmin can be used in your classroom to help students identify parts of the argument and how these parts build on each other to produce complex claims. Toulmin can also be used not only to critique others’ arguments, but also to provide a vocabulary students can use to generate and interrogate their own arguments (and that you can use in feedback to students). For example, in the crafting of

argument, students might locate the key underlying warrants that matter for their intended audience or that resonate within a particular public issue that they seek to write about. Understanding the power and stakes of various claims and the warrants that underscore them might lead them to lines of reasoning and claims that would be more effective, given their contexts, purpose, and audience.

#### **EXAMPLE 6:** Toulmin's Ideas about Argument

Back in 1958 a guy named Stephen Toulmin spelled out what he considered the basic element of an argument. He sees every argument as made up of three parts: the claim, support, and warrant.

**Claim:** The claim is the main idea, or thesis, that you are focusing on. Basically, the claim answers the question, “What’s your point? Why does it matter?”

*One claim I make in my syllabus is that the portfolio system allows you to be graded on your best work.*

**Support:** The support is the statements given to back up your claim. These can take many forms: facts, data, personal experience, expert opinion, evidence from other texts or sources, emotional appeals. The more reliable and comprehensive your support, the more likely your audience is to accept your claim.

*I support my claim about the portfolio system by referring to “experts” whose actions give evidence that my argument is true, mostly gained from personal experience and the directions of my department.*

**Warrant:** The warrants are the beliefs, values, inferences, and/or experiences that you are assuming your audience has in common with you. If your audience doesn’t have the assumptions you are making about your support, then it won’t be effective.

*The syllabus relies on a number of assumptions. One is that you will trust my knowledge of writing. Another is that you wouldn’t automatically assume that the portfolio system is best. I also assume that you care about how you are graded and that you can understand the way I write.*

You can see how assumptions are crucial to your argument. If any of these assumptions aren’t true, the argument breaks down. When developing an argument, it is important to think through the assumptions you’re making. Often times one of the assumptions you’re making might be just as interesting as what you’re discussing and you can make it part of your argument.

Under each statement, note the warrants.

1. If we don’t stop underpaying our teachers, fewer and fewer people will go into this field.
2. You shouldn’t major in the humanities because you’ll never find a job.
3. We don’t need to have bilingual education because everyone should learn English.



## FURTHER READING

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Toulmin, Stephen. *The Uses of Argument*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1958.

Toulmin, Stephen. *Human Understanding: The Collective Use and Evolution of Concepts*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1972.

In this book, Toulmin provides an extensive analysis of the differences between compact (read: science) and diffuse (read: English) disciplines. If you want to explore further in disciplinary formation, this is a good place to start.

Toulmin, Stephen, Richard Rieke, and Allan Janik. *An Introduction to Reasoning*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Macmillan, 1984.

This book provides numerous examples of arguments in disciplines, presented in ways that students can understand. There are specific chapters on arguing in the arts, in science, in business, and in law.

## CHAPTER 5

### COLLABORATION IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

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You may find that collaboration of different forms helps you and your students achieve many of the learning goals you set for English 131, including the fourth course outcome: “To practice composing as a recursive, collaborative process and to develop flexible strategies for revising throughout the composition process.” Formal education and writing are often unproductively isolating activities; both on the teacher and student ends, collaboration can foster great insight and create key opportunities for working through and across difference. This chapter highlights some of the ways you can enable productive collaboration as a teacher and it provides sample activities that you can adapt for your own course objectives and lesson plans.

While this chapter focuses predominantly on fostering collaboration in the classroom, the Expository Writing Program also encourages instructor collaboration on curricular development or pedagogy-related research projects. As part of the EWP Equity, Inclusion and Diversity SEED grants, groups of instructors have developed complete curricula (with assignments, readings, and schedules) which can be found online in the EWP archive.

#### WHY COLLABORATE?

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Before assigning any type of task to your students—collaborative or otherwise—you will want to first spell out what it is you are trying to accomplish. In addition to facilitating learning goals that deal with reading and writing, collaboration *itself* can foster several things in the classroom:

- an increase in “talk-time” for students
- a feeling of community and connectedness
- the potential for students to learn from other students
- the sense of students as agents in the education of others
- the validation of students’ experiences and knowledge
- the creation of an immediate audience for student writing
- the practicing of close reading and critical analysis at an adjustable pace
- a de-centering of authority in the classroom
- an increase in the knowledge-base in the classroom
- a reduction of your workload (although the opposite can also be true!)

## PLANNING EFFECTIVE COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

If an assignment could just as easily be completed independently, there may be no reason to devise a collaborative assignment. Even if you do ask students to collaborate on something they could just as easily do themselves, they may choose to work individually on the assignment and then share their findings at the last minute, or one vocal student might dominate the activity to the exclusion of others. When choosing to have students collaborate, it's usually a good idea to make it clear from the beginning why an assignment is best done collaboratively and not individually or as a class. It is advisable that you center the collaborative process as crucial step in the assignment prompt. This may involve adapting previously independent assignments to be collaborative at their core. This can look like a short reflection on the collaborative process which counts as part of the assignment itself or a rubric item which requires students to cite each other's' arguments. Putting the collaborative process at the center of an assignment ensures that students partake in collaboration in meaningful and functional, rather than instrumental, ways.

Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford identify three types of tasks that invite collaboration: “‘labor-intensive’ tasks that need to be divided into smaller subtasks in order to be accomplished effectively and efficiently; ‘specialization’ tasks that call for multiple areas of expertise; and ‘synthesis’ tasks that demand that divergent perspectives be brought together into a solution acceptable to the whole group or an outside group” (123).

- **A labor-intensive task** could be a collaborative research project, in which groups of students each research part of a question and then exchange their findings; or it could be an annotation project, in which students or groups take the responsibility for annotating one part of a text.
- **A specialization task** might have students each take responsibility for becoming “experts” on a section of the text and then teaching the rest of the class about it; you might ask students to plan a presentation on relevant contextual information.
- **A synthesis task** brings different groups together as a class to process the work they’ve completed. The key to a synthesis task is to make each group responsible for the work of the other groups and to have students learning from and teaching each other. One trick for encouraging accountability is to provide a handout for students with spaces structured for note-taking.

### EXAMPLE 1: Note-Taking Handout on Evidence and Analysis (for use with Example #2)

*Use the space below to record the arguments of each group. Note questions you’d like to bring up in discussion.*

Group	Evidence	Analysis
1		
2		

3		
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## ESTABLISH CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

It is frustrating for students to be asked to “work in groups” without a clear sense of what they are being asked to accomplish. It can help to:

- assign a note taker in each group (to record findings)
- assign a reporter in each group (to report findings)
- ask students to decide on and turn in a schedule of meeting dates and a step-by-step plan for assignment completion
- give students a set amount of time and monitor how things are getting done
- give students a clear set of goals (handouts or notes on the board are *very helpful!*)
- go around to groups to facilitate discussion

## PROVIDE CLOSURE

Asking students to report the results of group work (either in class to the other groups or as individuals to you) validates group work and can take its ideas one step further. Talking about what groups “find” also allows students from other groups to learn from and interrogate the findings of others. Remember to budget time for this important step in group work.

### EXAMPLE 2: Handout for “Specialization Task” Activity That Includes Out-of-Class Work

*This example gives each group a different passage from the text to summarize and be responsible for. The group assignments are clear, and students prepare for the group work by completing their own individual homework the first night. With a long article, breaking up responsibility for the text can be a good way to get coverage of more material and make groups of students experts on a particular topic. (Adapted from J. Lundgren)*

#### For Wednesday:

The text is subdivided into three sections. Each group re-reads the section corresponding to their group number (Group 1 reads section 1, and so on):

- |          |                          |
|----------|--------------------------|
| 1. Pages | Group 1: (student names) |
| 2. Pages | Group 2: (student names) |
| 3. Pages | Group 3: (student names) |
1. Re-read and summarize your section (about 250 words). Be prepared to present your part to the rest of the class in 2-3 minutes, and to respond to questions. Bring 7 copies of your summary to class.

2. Generate two substantial questions that get at the heart of your section and could provide a springboard for discussion. Hand these in to me in class on Wednesday.

**In class on Wednesday:**

During the first 10 minutes of class, the three “homework groups” will convene to read each other’s summaries: discuss them, and agree upon what’s important to present to the other two groups.

A reporter from each group will present these findings to the class. As presentations take place, take notes on the Example #1 handout and think of questions to ask. After each presentation, members of the class will ask questions about the text and presentation.

**EXAMPLE 3:** Handout for In-Class Collaborative Activity

*This example (from a 200-level class) shows one way to structure an in-class collaborative activity. Students were asked to prepare the argument for their “position” individually outside of class and then rework their ideas with a partner. The top of the handout summarizes the readings that served as the focus of the debate.*

**The policy:** Reuters asks its reporters to “avoid the use of emotive terms” (such as “terrorist” in referring to individuals involved in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and in the 9/11 attacks). Instead of “label[ing] or characteris[ing] the subjects of news stories,” Reuters reporters instead “report their actions, identity, and background.”

Reasons given to support the policy:	Reasons given to oppose the policy:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It ensures “factual, unbiased reporting.”</li> <li>▪ Allows readers to make their own decisions, “based on facts.”</li> <li>▪ Terms such as “terrorist” are unevenly applied, and so until we use them consistently (i.e. by acknowledging that governments also engage in terrorist acts), we should just avoid them completely.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Terrorist” is being used to describe many situations, so it should be applied consistently to <i>all</i> applicable situations.</li> <li>▪ “[W]hen you don’t call this a terrorist attack, you’re not telling the truth.”</li> <li>▪ Reporting requires “judgment based on principles, not rules”; better to allow for human judgment—no matter how “flawed and inconsistent”—than to follow a rule blindly.</li> </ul>

**Today’s class:**

- 9:30 Get together with the other person(s) who has your text and position (there are two people assigned to each text and position, except Spurr who has three). Share the textual evidence you've identified and decide what points will be most compelling for supporting your position and arguing against the opposing position.
- 9:40 In the first go-round, each group will get to present one point supporting their position and one point arguing against the opposing view. We'll take turns, starting with Gorgias (in support), then Gorgias (opposed), and continuing through Cohn, Butler, Cameron, and Spurr. Try to keep your presentation succinct (around one minute). You will need to take notes for each group (see the back of this handout).
- 9:55 You'll then have five minutes to talk again with your partner(s)—or with the others sharing your position—to plan your response. You can respond to the points made by any of the opposing groups (not just those sharing your text). Be able to refer specifically to the point you're contesting before presenting your response.
- 10:00 For the rest of the discussion, each group should contribute at least one point in response; however, we won't follow any specific order this time. You can just jump in whenever it's relevant to the conversation. Continue taking notes.
- 10:15 Wrap up and conclusions.

## TROUBLESHOOTING

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Despite its potential benefits, there can be some definite drawbacks to collaborative work. You and your students are probably intimately familiar with most of them. The biggest challenges are listed below with some suggestions for addressing them.

### MAXIMIZING PARTICIPATION

No matter what you do, some students will always participate more than others...and who participates more does not always correspond to who learns or helps others learn more. Some suggestions for dealing with uneven or unproductive levels of participation follow:

- **Think about group size.** Smaller groups give members the chance to do and say more, but limit the resources of the group. Also, if groups will be reporting on their work, forming many groups means a lot of time for group reports. Large groups maximize resources and reduce reporting time, but reduce individual students' talk-time.
- **Consider student ability.** Grouping students by ability can be successful, especially for tasks where you want the stronger students to go ahead and leave you with time to give more guidance/support to weaker students. Grouping students by mixed ability can also be productive if you want students to learn from and teach each other.
- **Try grouping traditionally silenced and/or outspoken folks together.** This may seem counterintuitive, but can work to facilitate balanced and productive discussion.
- **Establish and maintain roles.** Assign specific roles to groups and group members and remind students of their roles.
- **Monitor students throughout the assignment.** Work with students individually who seem to participate in unproductive ways.

- **Discuss how group work is working!** Taking time out to “go meta” about your classroom can be a bit scary at first, but is often productive. Imagine asking, “Hey, how did group work go today? What can we do differently?” or even “So, why is no one doing the assignment?”

## CONFLICTS WITH GROUP WORK

For a variety of reasons, students may find it challenging to participate in all kinds of group work, particularly out-of-class group projects. The current political climate, family obligations, work, athletic practices, learning disabilities, a long commute, etc. can make it difficult for a student to contribute effectively in out-of-class group work. In-class group work can be hampered by learning styles, learning difficulties, interpersonal relationships, and various differences/similarities between students. As you get to know your students, you can usually group students more productively. Some suggestions include:

- **Get to know your students.** If you plan to do out-of-class group projects, mention in your syllabus and in class that you need to know of anything that might interfere with group projects. If students respond, you could work with individual students to plan around such considerations. For instance, you could put commuters in a group together and increase their chances for finding time to meet.
- **Give students time to plan ahead for group projects.** Even mentioning a day ahead that “We’ll be working in groups tomorrow” can help alleviate anxiety and help students plan.
- **Facilitate groups and troubleshoot problems as they unfold.** Group projects can be unpredictable and often take extra attention on the part of the instructor, monitoring how the projects are coming along and encouraging students to get work done on time. Breaking a large project into smaller chunks can be helpful.
- **Make intentional space and time in your classroom to troubleshoot problems regularly.** Working in groups, especially for graded assignments, causes a lot of anxiety amongst students. The possibility of losing control over their final grade or developing disagreements with group members may turn some students away from group work. When the space to unpack and troubleshoot such conflicts is intentionally provided in in-class time, such activities can play a transformative role in student learning and demonstrate the importance of community in college-level learning and work.

## SOME COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

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### PEER REVIEW

Peer review can help students write more effectively as they learn from what their peers have to say about their own writing and see what everyone else is doing. Peer review can also help put the course outcomes and associated traits into the hands of students as they use the language of the outcomes to discuss each other’s writing. An added benefit is that students also develop the reflective skills they will need when they write critical reflections, in which they identify and make arguments about how their writing demonstrates and fulfills the course outcomes. There are many ways to structure peer review; some instructors have had success with using different formats for peer review throughout the quarter and with doing peer review at different times in the assignment sequences. Peer review can happen in the invention phase, once students have a draft, or closer to the final draft.

**Please remember that tutors from the Odegaard Writing and Research Center are happy to come to your classroom to model and help lead peer review sessions.**

### **PREPARING FOR PEER REVIEW**

As with most things we do as instructors, it generally helps to justify to students why peer review is important. Many students have a hard time trusting their peers for productive feedback; they feel that the teacher is the expert, and that their peers don't have much to offer. Furthermore, because your students will have had a variety of previous experiences with peer review, you will want to teach them what you want them to do with the papers they review and with the comments they receive. Some suggestions:

- **Discuss the peer review process.** Have students freewrite, brainstorm, and/or get into small groups to talk about their past experiences with feedback (from teachers, coaches, friends, theater directors) and/or with peer review. As a group, you can decide what you want to get out of peer review and how you want it to work.
- **Model the kind of feedback you would like students to give.** This can be done real-time, using the overhead, or by circulating a handout. Without a model of what you see as effective comments in a peer review session, students may be unsure of what is expected.
- **Have students practice with a sample essay.** Give students a copy of a paper to review (or just one page of one). Have students respond in the way you have modeled, then have students discuss (in groups or as a class) the review process, working through difficulties.
- **Provide a student-generated feedback worksheet.** In small groups, you may want to ask students to generate suggestions for a peer feedback worksheet. You can then compile their suggestions to make up a peer review handout. If working with a set of questions for peer review, it is also important to phrase questions in such a way that they require something more substantial than "yes" or "no" responses. For example: asking students to put their peer's main claim in their own words or to annotate each complex claim component on the paper itself can be much more effective than "is there a complex claim in this paper?"
- **Emphasize the importance of peer review.** Depending on when you have writing conferences, you may want to begin by asking, "So, what did you learn in peer review?" and start there with plans for revision. This can challenge students' idea that what their peers think doesn't matter (i.e., "It's what the teacher thinks that matters").
- **Ask students to justify their responses to their peers.** In order to encourage thoughtful peer feedback and incorporation of feedback, it can be helpful to have students explain in an email, conference, or journal what elements of their peers' feedback they incorporated into their revisions and why. You can also ask them to note what they learned from the peer review and how they can use that knowledge in their future work.
- **Make peer review a major part of the participation grade.** Giving, receiving, interpreting, and incorporating constructive peer feedback on paper revisions is one of the stated outcome traits. However, despite your best efforts at carefully modeling productive peer review techniques and explaining why peer reviewing is important, some students will still not be convinced of its usefulness and may not put in a good faith effort



at offering advice. It may help these reluctant students “buy in” to the approach by explaining that their thoughtful participation in peer review is a major part of their participation grade. This will require you to devise some concrete way of evaluating students’ peer feedback, and you can do this by asking for copies of comments as they are produced, explaining that you’ll be taking a look at all peer reviews when you collect portfolios, or by asking students to evaluate their peers’ feedback themselves.

## STRUCTURING PEER REVIEW

Essential to successful peer review is a clearly articulated set of expectations for your students. Students need to know when to bring drafts, how many copies to bring, what state the drafts need to be in, and the consequences for not meeting expectations. If you do not emphasize the importance of peer review, students may not participate. Questions to ask yourself when planning include:

- What size groups will students work in?
- Will students remain in the same groups throughout the quarter?
- When will students read each other’s papers: in class or for homework?
- Will peer reviewers be anonymous?
- How much time will I give students to respond and discuss with their peers?
- To what degree will I structure students’ responses and what should student feedback look like? Will they use marginal comments, typed memos, answer specific questions, fill out a worksheet? Will students respond in writing at all, or only orally?
- Will I encourage or discourage commenting on grammar issues?
- Will I comment on or otherwise assess the quality of student feedback?
- At what stage in the drafting process will peer review take place? Will this remain constant throughout the quarter?

### EXAMPLE 5: Peer Review Worksheet

*This example lists specific questions for students to answer about their peers’ work. A worksheet of some kind can help student reviewers avoid commenting only on grammar and focus on outcome traits targeted by the assignment. Peer review can take a lot of time, so you’ll want to think about how many essays you want each student to be able to read when devising such a handout.*

Read your peer’s paper and answer the following questions. Write your answers on the back of the final page of the paper that you return to the writer.

1. What is the author interested in exploring and what is/are the argument(s)?
2. Why are you, as a reader, ultimately persuaded (or not) by the central argument?
3. Identify a place in the text where textual evidence is being used particularly well. Why is this moment so compelling? Next, identify a place where evidence isn’t being used as successfully. Why isn’t this working as well? How could this moment be improved—would it be better to not make this point at all (perhaps to allow for further development elsewhere), or is it about the way it is framed/explained?

4. Make a brief outline of the paper, noting what each paragraph is about and what it does.

#### EXAMPLE 6: Peer Review Guidelines

*This example justifies and explains peer review (briefly), and then gives students some guidance about the kinds of feedback that will be expected from them. These “fill-in-the-blank” type questions can be useful for students, giving them an idea of how “academic” discussion is carried on.*

##### Why Peer Review?

Peer review exercises are designed to benefit you in several different ways: 1) You will get feedback from your peers that will let you know how your paper comes across to other readers; 2) You will learn to be a critical reader of academic writing, which will help you evaluate and revise your own writing, especially when you get to your portfolio critical reflection; and 3) You will get a chance to see how other writers have approached the same writing situation, giving you new ideas for your own papers.

##### Getting into “Peer Review Mode”

Think of the peer review groups, and the class in general, as a community full of resources. We’re all here to help one another. We are all readers, and we are all writers. But we are all at different places in our development, all come from different places, and subsequently all have different writing and reading experiences to share.

Think of yourself and your peers as **readers**. Respond to your peers’ papers **as a reader**. It might be useful to begin every comment with the phrase, “As a reader, I thought. . .” Instead of relying on evaluative language (such as “I liked this” or “The paper is good”), put your comments in terms of the **effectiveness** of the paper (“This was effective because \_\_\_\_”). Instead of telling your peers what to do or where they did something “wrong,” try to indicate what seemed confusing, unclear, out of place, or irrelevant, or where you, **as a reader**, were lost, confused, or had questions. If you want to make suggestions to the author, say something like “At this point, I wanted to know (to hear, to see) \_\_\_\_” or “It would have helped me if you had done (explained, showed) \_\_\_\_.”

##### Using the Feedback You Receive

When reading or listening to your peers’ comments on your papers, remember that they are trying to give you valuable information about their experiences **as readers** of your paper. Since they have also been struggling with similar issues in their own papers, they may be able to suggest helpful ways for you to approach yours. Also, remember that you do not have to act on everything that your peers say; take their comments seriously as extra information, but remember that you must make the final choice of what to put in your paper.

#### EXAMPLE 7: Writer’s/Reader’s Memos

Writer's and reader's memos can be effective alternatives or additions to the standard peer review worksheet. These memos function as correspondence between the author and the reviewer about the text (often done over email). A writer's memo is usually one or two paragraphs, addressed to potential readers, giving a brief introduction to the paper. Most importantly, in a writer's memo, the student asks for specific feedback from the reader. The reader's memo, then, is a response to the writer's memo: it addresses the questions raised in the writer's memo and offers any other relevant feedback. Here is one example of how to use memos in the revision process:

### After the first draft . . .

You'll be writing at least two drafts for each unit: the first will be read by your peers, the second will be read by me, and the final draft is for your portfolio. Here are the basics of the feedback process:

1. **First draft:** Bring three copies. (You will be turning this draft into me later.) *You will also need to include a typed writer's memo* (see below) introducing your paper to your peers and giving specific suggestions for the kind of feedback you want (i.e., "Do I support my first claim well enough?" or "Would it be clearer to move the fifth paragraph closer to the beginning?").
2. **Comment on peers' papers:** Before the next class, read your peers' drafts and comment on them. You will need to both: 1) make comments within the text of the paper, and 2) **type** up your overall comments about the paper and suggestions for revision in a *reader's memo* (see below) addressed to your peer. Your reader's memo *must* address the questions posed in the writer's memo. We'll talk in class about what makes helpful feedback.
3. **Meet with peer group:** The day your feedback is due, you will discuss your papers with your peer group. Your written comments are meant to serve as a starting point for further discussion.
4. **Second draft:** You will typically have a week to finish a revised draft to turn into me along with a writer's memo and all previous drafts with peer comments and memos (I will be evaluating your peer feedback, so make sure I get all the marked drafts and reader's memos you received). *I will be looking for how you take your peers' comments into consideration when you revise.*
5. **Further revisions:** I will typically comment on and return your papers within one week. If you think it's a paper that you would like to include in your portfolio, then you'll need to revise it further. I am more than willing to look at additional revisions, and you can always visit one of the writing centers on campus. If you want to conference with me about a revision, I ask that you give me a few days to look at your paper before we meet.

...

**What is a writer's memo?** A writer's memo is a letter to your readers giving them an overview of the process you went through in writing this paper. You might choose to start with some kind of explanation of why you chose to write on this topic, what your goals are for the paper, or what you feel are its strengths and weaknesses. In each writer's memo, you must include some discussion of the kind of feedback you want from your readers. If it is a memo for a revised draft, then *you must also include some discussion of your peer feedback comments and how you are (or aren't) incorporating them in this revision.*

**What is a reader's memo?** A reader's memo is basically a response to your peer's paper and her writer's memo. In the reader's memo you should address all the questions/requests in the writer's memo. Also comment on anything else you feel should be noted. Remember that it's always easier to keep doing the same thing than to learn something new, so be sure to point out what you like about the paper—in addition to suggestions for changes—so that your peers can keep doing what's working.

### Sample memos from student writers and reviewers

#### Writer's Memo:

Dear Reader:

The focus of my essay is on how contact zones bring the school systems to become a better unity. Because of authorities, people tend to lose their self-identities. If contact zones existed, there would not be so much differences between people. My thesis is: "The existence of contact zones not only eliminates the authorities from people who have powers, it also help to bring principals, teachers, and students together and become a better unity." Here are some questions that I would like specific feedback and comments on:

□ My thesis: I would like any comments on my thesis statements. I feel like it does not really coherent with my body paragraphs, so just feel free to let me know how do you think about my thesis statement.

□ Body paragraphs: I just want to make sure I've shown both similarities and differences from both Pratt and Anzaldua's point of view on authorities and their needs of contact zones.

□ Conclusion: Just feel free to insert comments . . . I'm always not sure in concluding my essay.

Thanks a lot.

Cheers,  
Natalie

#### Reader's Memo:

I'll first address some things from your writer's memo, and then go on to some general comments. I felt that your thesis statement was fine, but didn't entirely reflect what you actually discussed in your essay. I felt that you were able to prove the point that "contact zones help to bring principals, teachers, and students together to become a better unit". However, I didn't really feel that you proved "contact zones eliminate the authority from people who have power." The definition of contact zone that Pratt gives in

her essay says, "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical power" (Pratt 575). I feel that you are almost arguing the definition of contact zones, which I don't think is a good idea at this point. If you took that part out of your thesis statement, so that it was simply, "The existence of contact zones helps to bring principals, teachers, and students together to become a better unit." It would match much better with the body of your text. The body paragraphs were fine, with good uses of textual evidence. Just make sure you cite ideas or stories from the texts, even if you don't quote them directly. The conclusion I felt might be improved if you took out the example of the Christmas party. I wasn't really sure what you were trying to prove with that. The use of authority in that case (if loud talking was the only reason you couldn't go to the party) is very different from the use of authority to oppress someone because of their culture or heritage. One is simply trying to impose discipline on a class because of a behavioral wrong (meaning something that you could have changed by acting differently), whereas the other is oppressing someone for being born a certain race (something you don't have any control over). Other than that I thought it was good. The works cited list was perfect! Good luck on your revisions!

-Elizabeth

## **EDITING EXERCISES**

As the time comes to turn in final, edited drafts, take advantage of the times your students have drafts in class by scheduling group editing exercises. These can be short, focusing only on one grammatical rule or writing "trick." For example: in pairs, small groups, or as a round robin exercise, have students complete specific editing tasks: looking for passive voice, applying the known-new contract, improving transitions, brainstorming introduction ideas such as "roadmaps," punctuation, etc.

## **WORKSHOPPING**

Though it can be time consuming, you might choose to set aside time to workshop an individual student's paper with the whole class. Provide enough copies of a student's draft to everyone in the class with sufficient time for guided discussion and commentary. Besides giving the student extensive feedback, this approach can reinforce good feedback practices and demonstrate what you mean by thorough revision.

## **COLLABORATIVE JOURNALS & ONLINE DISCUSSIONS**

Some 131 instructors have had good luck using email discussion lists, electronic discussion boards in Canvas, and sometimes group blogs. Class email lists are easy to set up using MyUW (just follow the link in the "My Class Resources" box, but be aware that course email lists are generated overnight and won't be available the same day you decide to create them). These technologies encourage writing (!) and are meant to provide students with potentially less intimidating spaces in which to work through their understanding of the texts and ideas. Students can also use these forums to refine paper ideas and reflect on their writing practices. Discussion lists and electronic message boards are adaptable: they can be assigned as a continuing assignment throughout the quarter or as part of a single assignment sequence. Providing specific prompts, required minimum number of postings, and deadlines for posting are usually important.

You may find that these technologies encourage otherwise quiet or seemingly withdrawn students to participate actively with their peers. Other students who are talkative in class may not feel as comfortable contributing online. Clarifying the goals of these collaborative spaces is usually a good idea, lest they fall into dis- or misuse.

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**EXAMPLE 10:** Collaborative Journals

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*This is an example of a quarter-long collaborative journal assignment.*

In the syllabus I proposed that writing is a process: that authors don't sit alone waiting for inspiration to strike, but rather interact with texts and other people as they work through ideas. It's also possible to think of reading as a process. Especially with the difficult essays we'll be working with in the next sequence, you'll need to keep reading, re-reading, and writing about these texts in order to formulate arguments about them. You'll also need to get other people's perspectives on the essays to compare with your own. Collaborative journals are meant to give you and your peers space to work through your reading and writing processes together.

Your journals can serve two functions. One, they are a space for you to engage in critical, reflective thinking about what you're learning in this class. And two, they are an opportunity for you to work through your understanding of the texts (using *close reading*) in preparation for the sequence's assignments.

In your journal you can reflect on class readings, written assignments, and/or class discussions. I expect much of the journal to be devoted to simply figuring out difficult readings and concepts. You can also talk about things happening *outside of* class (other readings, current events, personal experiences, the latest episode of *American Idol*), if you think they are relevant to what we've been doing *in* class. I'm always excited to see students making connections in their journals: when they can say "This reminds me of that essay we read three weeks ago and here's why."

Most importantly, this is a *working* space, a *productive* space, a space for critical reflection and close reading. This is *not* a diary recording the events of your day and your feelings about them. There is room for engaging your feelings in these journals, but only as a starting point for critical reflection. You need to ask questions and then try to answer them. And when you give an answer, support it and push on it—see how far it takes you. **In other words, strive for an "ah ha!" moment each time you write a journal entry.**

**Some different approaches:**

- **Write through your confusion.** Pick what you think is the most difficult part of the text and have a try at explaining what it means. Even if you're totally off, just making the attempt can help clarify your understanding. And your partners might be able to give you some insight.
- **Write through your frustration.** If you had trouble with a reading (because it was boring or confusing or exclusive or too long), then explain why and analyze why the

author might have chosen to write in such a way. Or consider how your own reading practices or expectations have influenced your reaction. What can you learn from your frustration?

- **Analyze the rhetorical moves of the texts we read.** What impact do the rhetorical choices of the author have on her text? Discuss how an author's choices reinforce or undermine his argument and draw conclusions about how you'll include/avoid similar choices in your own writing. What values do the author's rhetorical choices reveal?
- **Look for gaps.** Explain the contradictions or connections you see operating in the texts we're reading or in what people have discussed in class. Are there places where you can take an author's argument further or in new directions?
- **Start working through paper ideas.** See if you can explain the thesis you're planning on arguing. Send your partners a draft of the introduction for your paper or a paragraph explaining a key term and ask for feedback.

### The specifics:

You and at least two other members of the class will be journal partners for the quarter. To get started, one of you will email the others an entry that makes an argument about the texts using close reading (supported with reliable evidence). Include any questions you'd like your partners to address. The other members will then reply to that message—responding to the ideas/questions raised in the first message and introducing new ideas/questions of their own—being careful to include the text of the original message in the reply. *Date your correspondence.* Continue back and forth until the next due date. You each should have sent at least two messages before the due date. Each of you will need to contribute at least 1 1/2 – 2 pages of *single-spaced* text for each due date.

On the due date, each group needs to turn in *one* copy of their correspondence. In addition, each group member needs to attach a one-page, *double-spaced* cover letter addressed to me.

While I expect your email exchanges to be somewhat messy (jumping from idea to idea, informal in tone: it's your place to play with ideas), your cover letter will be more formal. In it I expect you to present a single, cohesive argument stemming from your email discussion. The cover letter is *not* a summary of your correspondence. Instead, it's a chance for you to glean a single idea from that exchange and present it in a clear, well-supported, focused argument. You only have a page, so keep a narrow focus; attempt too much and you won't be able to sufficiently support your claims. As in all close reading assignments, you will need to back up your claims with sufficient support and/or textual evidence. All references to texts must be properly cited.

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## LONG(ER) TERM GROUP PROJECTS

Another way to encourage students to work together both inside and outside of the classroom, as well as to vary the everyday routine of the class, is to assign group projects. Group presentations, cooperative research projects, even collaborative essay writing can expose students to the different writing practices of their peers. These projects may also be used to help expose students to material

that you do not have enough time to cover in detail in class. Most importantly, group projects maximize the resources of the class and place responsibility on the students for “teaching” some aspect of the course. For a portion of a class period, they are the experts on the subject while the instructor adopts a secondary and/or facilitating role.

**EXAMPLE 11:** Longer Group Work (Several Days)

*This example demonstrates how a longer-term group project can give students practice not only with electronic and library resources, but with working and writing together. The project has many steps and aspects—making working together an added benefit. This exercise also provides a mix of individual work and group collaboration. In the project, students were asked to form groups and research (in the library, online, and in person) departmental writing requirements, gathering textual artifacts and conducting interviews. (From S. Schaffner)*

This project is meant as a chance to explore your new writing environment, the University of Washington, and then to share your findings with the class. The project will have two parts: a presentation and a paper. First, however, you will have to choose an academic department you are interested in researching: sociology, business administration, English, or history. (I’ve selected these four departments because it is relatively easy to find information online about their writing requirements. If you want to research another department, let me know.) On Monday, we will meet at the computer lab again, this time to research departmental writing requirements that are posted online. I have linked to requirements on the website.

**1. Xeroxed Article by a Faculty Member in “Your” Department (Due Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>)**

Go to the homepage of the department you are researching. View the list of faculty members. Search the appropriate database (under “top 20 databases” on the Libraries homepage) to find an article written by a faculty member. Take note of the journal the article appears in, the volume, the issue, the date, and the page number. In the periodicals section of Suzzallo-Allen libraries, locate the journal and copy the article. We will discuss this article in class and you will have a short writing project on it.

**2. Write Up of Findings (2 pages max; Due November 5<sup>th</sup>)**

You can think of this assignment as a practical report on your research. Your group has researched writing requirements in a department on campus, both online and in person, and now it’s your job to condense your findings into a single document. A reader of your write-up should be able to get a strong sense of what’s expected of students taking a class in your department. In a short paragraph, make perfectly clear what type of student writing—and writers!—you see as privileged in this department.

**3. Group Presentation of Findings (10-15 minutes; Due November 5<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup>)**

This is your group’s informal chance to let us know what you learned about the writing expectations in your department. Sharing the responsibility between group members, let the rest of the class know: 1) what’s expected of student writers in your department and how you found this out, 2) your sense of the “general attitude” toward student writers in your department, 3) if it seems fairly easy or difficult to meet the writing expectations in your department, and most importantly, 4) what is implied by your findings. By this I mean that you should address the following questions:



What type of writing and writers are privileged in your department? What forms of micro-discipline (Foucault) are mandated by your department and what do they imply? Does your department seem sensitive to the issues Amy Tan and Victor Villanueva raise? Insensitive?

## FURTHER READING

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## CHAPTER 6

### RHETORICAL GRAMMAR IN THE TRANSLINGUAL COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

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In this chapter, we make explicit some of the key philosophies that underscore our work in the Expository Writing Program regarding teaching and assessing grammar and micro-level writing choices. It is important, first, to understand our conception of language and its relationship to culture and society in order to follow the rationale behind our more concrete teaching strategies regarding grammar, particularly as our understandings run counter to traditional, hegemonic beliefs about language and its role in composition classrooms. We begin with a broad statement on linguistic difference that draws on our philosophy of anti-racist and anti-discriminatory writing pedagogy to stress the need for compositionists to actively resist inherited and unexamined biases in language and, in this chapter in particular, instructor response to grammar. Such resistance is not only an ethical imperative, but, we argue, pedagogically necessary as well.

#### EWP STATEMENT ON LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCE AND THE TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT OF WRITING ACROSS DIFFERENCE

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Despite the “common-sense,” monolingual view of languages as static, discrete systems that can be codified abstractly (e.g. Webster’s Dictionary of the English Language), we understand language as dynamic, malleable, consequential, and necessarily situated within the socioeconomic, political, cultural, and material circumstances of the time and place of its production. In short, the meaning of actual language use always depends on its context, and so attempts to establish a “true” or “standard” meaning or usage generally obscure the asymmetrical power relations that determine what is “true” or “standard.” We further acknowledge that literacy education in the U.S. has been complicit in delegitimizing (and often penalizing) the language practices, experiences, and knowledges of minoritized and historically underrepresented peoples (See [CCC’s Students’ Rights to Their Own Language](#) and [Guideline on the National Language Policy](#) for more information).

We, therefore, seek to develop writing curricula, pedagogies, and assessment practices that better reflect our translingual reality; that recognize linguistic difference as the norm of communication; that stress rhetorical effectiveness and ethical language use across different contexts, genres, media,

purposes, audiences, and writing occasions; and that invite students to practice their fluid language and literacy repertoires across linguistic borders, including (but not exclusively focusing on) their fluency in dominant academic English norms and standards of correctness. So yes, we still use dictionaries and teach standard forms of English, we just don't grant them the final say in what is and is not "correct" or effective in all situations, genres, and contexts.

In line with the EWP statement on anti-racist and anti-discriminatory pedagogy, we encourage pedagogies and assessment that:

- acknowledge linguistic difference as the norm of any classroom or other context;
- create writing occasions through assignment design that invite students to practice their fluid language and literacy repertoires for different audiences, contexts, media, and situations with varying stakes;
- engage in reading and writing curricula that honor both mainstream voices, knowledges, and experiences and those from marginalized traditions;
- explore the intersectional relationships among writing, language, power, and social identities such as race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, mobility, faith/religion and citizenship;
- take a rhetorical approach to grammar, which helps students negotiate their micro-level language and design choices to produce various effects in different writing situations and become more aware of how micro-level choices are linked to macro-level meaning making and argument;
- facilitate students' awareness of how and why following various writing conventions (as well as how one's failure to follow or to strategically refuse to follow them) might produce different effects, meanings, and consequences for diverse audiences and in a variety of genres and contexts;
- prioritize "higher order" concerns in feedback over correcting grammar to a putative standard, especially in the early stages of the writing process (e.g. generally focus more on the students' meaning making, argument, claims, and purposes as a priority over marking micro-level errors. Restrict comments on micro-level, "low order" usage, especially in early stages of writing, to those instances that most impede comprehension);
- develop assessment criteria for grading, peer-reviews, and students' self-assessment that emphasizes writers' language choices and rhetorical effectiveness based on the writing occasion, genre, purpose, and audience rather than strictly on monolingual and dominant academic English norms and standards of correctness;
- draw on and practice embodied, multiple, and vernacular knowledges, for example, by integrating lived experiences and library/academic research that complicate the notions of objectivity and neutrality in academic research.

## **GRAMMAR AS RHETORICAL CHOICE**

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*We do our students a real injustice when we expect them to use the tools of language without telling them how those tools work, without letting them in on what the language can and will do.*

– Martha Kolln, “Miss Fiddich Gets a Makeover”

Grammar is often relegated to the (final) editing stage of writing: “Could you just quickly check that my grammar’s OK?” a student might ask. This attitude toward grammar robs students of the agency to make intentional language choices to suit the writing occasion, genre, audience, and purpose. While a monolingual ideology supports the perspective that grammar is simply a static set of rules that can be learned and executed (surely the premise behind various “grammar-checking” computer programs), a translingual (or more broadly, rhetorical) approach recognizes that grammar, like all other aspects of language use, is a flexible, evolving structure that depends on social context, genres, and purpose for its meaning and sense of “correctness.” In other words, grammatical choices—just like organization, crafting arguments, and use of evidence—is rhetorical. Part of our goal as writing teachers, then, is to heighten awareness and performance of intentional writing choices (in this case, micro-level choices) to suit the occasion. A monolingual, prescriptive approach to grammar—which typically fixates on “correct” use of standard academic forms—leaves students with very few options for negotiating their language choices, refining their ideas, and crafting arguments that best suit the occasion. Such approaches also may not strengthen students’ understanding of how and why to make choices for effects, which can translate to other contexts. In the rhetorical approach to grammar that we are advocating, grammar is instead understood as fluid, dynamic, context-dependent, and integrally tied to meaning making, cultural practices, and ideological assumptions (as opposed to fixed rules we must unquestioningly master). In this approach, grammar can be understood as rhetorical choices that writers make to best meet the demands of the rhetorical situation, hence the expression “rhetorical grammar.”

## **Introducing Rhetorical Grammar to Your Students**

Rhetorical grammar is what we (and others in Composition Studies) refer to as the intentional micro-level choices (and heightened awareness of the choices) that writers make for rhetorical effectiveness, given the writing occasion, genre, audience, purpose, and contexts they are writing in. While all of the EWP Outcomes develop awareness of and capacities for making language choices within rhetorical situations for various effects, Outcome Four focuses more attention to micro-level choices. For example, the part of Outcome Four that embodies the philosophy and practice of rhetorical grammar and translingualism reads as follows: “refining and nuancing composition choices for delivery to intended audiences in a manner consonant with the genre, situation, and desired rhetorical effects and meanings.”

Your students will be introduced to rhetorical grammar in Chapter 16 of *Writer/Thinker/Maker*:

When you are forced to memorize a set of definite rules without thinking about why those rules exist, it not only impedes your ability to think critically about why you use language the way you do but also hinders your capacity to be creative in terms of how you are using language. However, [...] [our grammar constantly changes depending on what genre we use, what community we’re in, to whom we’re speaking or writing, and according to what version of English we are using. For example, let’s say you had to email your professor to let her know were sick and couldn’t make it to class. You would likely use a formal version of Standard English. However, if you

were texting your friend to let him know the same thing, you would probably use emojis, slang, and acronyms—ones that you wouldn't use to text, say, your grandmother, who might be unfamiliar with that style of writing. It isn't that your email in Standard English is more correct than your emoji- and LOL-riddled text message—it's simply that the two styles have their own sets of rules. The key is to use grammatical structure and conventions that best suit your context.

In school contexts, you have likely been taught to primarily follow the conventions of Standard Academic English; however, it is important to note that even academic conventions vary by discipline, genre, and context. Beyond the university, as you already know well, you encounter on a daily basis many forms and uses of English (and other languages and ways of communicating) that follow rules specific to different communities, cultures, contexts, and genres. While it is important to understand and generally follow the rules and conventions specific to your writing situation, these rules can vary greatly and you need to be critical of conventions, reflect on them, and intentionally experiment with and negotiate various ways of using language for effect in your compositions (Grollmus 372-372).

Ultimately, our students, like writers everywhere, need to understand the dominant linguistic conventions for the genre, medium and rhetorical situation of their writing. Our ultimate aim here is not to encourage our students to “break the rules” just for the sake of flouting linguistic hierarchies, however momentarily satisfying that may be, but rather to encourage students to experiment with and become *conscious* manipulators of grammatical conventions. We also feel that developing a more nuanced awareness of and a more robust capacity to negotiate the various conventions students encounter (even if these are all conventions within academic genres in your class) will help prepare them to better transfer this knowledge to future writing contexts.

In the English 131 curriculum, there are two places to foreground grammar: in the essays from *Writer/Thinker/Maker* and in the texts that the students themselves produce. Both sites offer ample opportunities for examining the rhetorical impact of particular choices. In the initial stages of reading an essay, you might find that focusing on the rhetorical choices a writer has made helps students to better understand the author's argument or position. Using close reading in the service of writing is one way to encourage students to think about grammar rhetorically. When you turn to discussions of students' own writing, you can also help them to see the connections between their language choices and the effectiveness of their argument. For example, in suggesting revision techniques, you might find that a quick explication of transitions helps students marshal their evidence into more persuasive formulations.

## THE GRAMMAR CONUNDRUM: WHEN, HOW, WHY?

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Research has repeatedly shown that the ability to write well is not necessarily tied to the ability to parse sentences and avoid comma splices. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that, like it or not, a paper with many instances of grammar usage that are different from its reader's standards will likely diminish the reader's confidence in the author, as well as the effectiveness of the writing. Although it is also worth pointing out that this relationship seems to be a two-way street, with a lack of confidence in an author making it far more likely that a reader will find “errors,” (see Stygall's article on resisting privilege in the recommended readings below.) Reading always involves a negotiation of meaning, and this negotiation should ideally be generous and aware of the power dynamics at play in language use. However, the hierarchies of academia make it likely that our students will be read less

generously than they are expected to read.

While UW students are high academic achievers in a general sense, they are often unfamiliar with the language preferences of their professors. This does not mean that we as composition instructors must return to the days of papers measured solely by the number of red marks on them: “good” writing and “error free” prose are not synonymous. Nevertheless, we are asking our students, in Outcome 4, to practice “refining and nuancing composition choices for delivery to intended audiences in a manner consonant with the genre, situation, and desired rhetorical effects and meanings.” Grammatical choices are clearly part of this rhetorical nuancing, and one of our goals is to help students understand the likely effects of these choices on their intended audience.

### ***WHY IS TEACHING STANDARD ACADEMIC ENGLISH NOT ENOUGH?***

Since we are teaching students to write in rhetorically effective ways, one could argue, given the dominance of certain forms in academic writing, that rhetorical grammar, in practice, just means teaching these dominant forms in a contextualized way, where their “correctness” is transparently assigned to social factors rather than to some imagined internal linguistic necessity. There is some truth to this, and the argument that refusing to teach dominant forms is actually harmful rather than helpful to minoritized groups has been around at least as long as the debate over teaching writing skills versus teaching writing as a process (See, for example, Delpit, 1988). And, we are not suggesting you should deny your students access to Standard Academic English, however this is defined. If it has not already been made clear, a translingual approach to language does not mean that “anything goes” or that Standard Forms cannot be taught. In fact, we feel that a rhetorical grammar approach, for example, requires more, not less, attention to the likely effects of grammatical choices.

However, there is indeed a real need to push back on the very notions of linguistic bench-marking concepts like “Standard Academic English” and “Native Speaker of English.” The latter, for example, has no linguistic validity and is generally used to discriminate against minoritized groups (See Canagarajah in Further Reading below) and the former is, again, like all linguistic taxonomy, far from a monolithic or homogeneous category of language. Even when people can roughly agree on the demarcations of “Standard Academic English,” it is far less dominant in the actual writing of academics than is commonly believed (Young). In fact, the insistence that minoritized people need to learn and use “Standard English” is a well-documented and thinly veiled form of racist discrimination. This is painfully obvious when no actual linguistic difference exists (see, for example, in Lippi-Green, where white listeners routinely judged language as “accented” if they believed the speaker was not white, while judging the same language as unaccented if they believed the speaker was white.) But even when linguistic difference DOES exist, we wonder, as does Young, whether the main question shouldn’t rather be “how do we change the course of racism” rather than “how do we prepare students to get by in a racist world?” (62). Simply put, insisting that our students strictly conform to a traditional academic standard belies the mutability of such standards and perpetuates racist impressions of whose language counts. A rhetorical approach to grammar is fully capable of acknowledging racist realities while also challenging those realities.

### ***MARKING “ERRORS” OR READING THROUGH?***

Traditional methods of instructor response to grammatical issues in college writing classes have tended toward one of two extremes. The first method is to identify nearly every error in student papers, often with stern labels—“Comma Splice!” “Fragment!” “Awk!”—and sometimes with a good scolding: “Your work seems hasty—please proofread more carefully.” Another, and more contemporary method, is for instructors to completely ignore lower order concerns (such as typos and

grammatical concerns) to get to more important issues such as argument and support.

The problem with both of these approaches, in their extreme cases, is that they often ignore individual student needs and instructor goals. The first method fixates too much on error and can encourage students to approach writing as little more than uncritically matching an externally imposed standard. This obviously deprives them of the chance to consider the rhetorical effects of their grammar choices and can be devastating and discouraging to students. The second method provides a sort of benign neglect and allows students to feel complacent (even confident) about their skills, without warning them that not all readers are as forgiving. While this second method is, perhaps, more convenient for the instructor, it again provides little space for students to think about grammar rhetorically or to develop the metacognitive capacities that would allow them to understand the patterns and effects of their micro-level choices for future writing contexts.

English 131 instructors are more likely to meet their students' needs if they consider each student and each assignment on an individual basis. Some students actually desire more feedback on certain grammar points, other students will indeed be better served by providing only very limited grammar feedback (perhaps by pointing out patterns or with minimal marking or through mark up of only one paragraph), especially if an assignment is an early draft or component of a larger project. Feedback on grammar clearly does not have to be an all or nothing proposition. Consider choosing one or two low order concerns to discuss per paper and explicating both the kind of choice and the rhetorical effect(s) that will likely be produced. Commenting on a single instance of this issue will suffice, leaving it to the student to decide how to address similar issues in revision and in future work. This can be done for both ineffective and effective grammatical choices. Never underestimate the power of helping students to build upon their strengths!

## ***SO HOW DO GRAMMAR AND MICRO-LEVEL CHOICES FIT INTO OUR CLASSROOMS?***

Clearly, working grammar into your class activities can be a challenge—deciding what and when to teach is only the first of many obstacles—but asking your students to pay closer attention to their language (and to the language they encounter in the readings) *will* result in improvements in their writing. Consider the following suggestions:

Decide how you will address grammar instruction before you begin your course. Planning ahead will help ensure that your choices regarding grammar are based on principle rather than necessity. Decide when (which days and how much time) and where (in class or in conference) grammar will be part of your teaching. For example, when having students conduct rhetorical analyses, you might ask them to consider the rhetorical effects of a work's diction, syntax, and mechanics, alongside other issues. And remember: visuals have a grammar, too!

On that note, we suggest distinguishing between two different types of grammatical issues and discussing each in a different setting:

- Consider using small blocks of class time (perhaps one lesson of 10-15 minutes each week) to discuss issues of grammar as rhetoric: passive versus active voice, parallelism, cohesion, sentence fragments, etc. These issues are distinguished from issues of mechanics in that they present writers with viable choices, that is, they can be discussed as options with effects rather than rules that must be obeyed (*i.e.*, grammar as tools not rules).
- Consider using tiny blocks of conference time (perhaps 3 minutes each conference) to discuss a single grammatical concern that students have themselves identified as something they would like to work on.

If you choose to explain grammatical principles in class or in conference, it may be best to begin with

a positive model (an example of skillful usage or techniques) drawn from the context of your course—preferably from a student paper, or from a reading. In class, you can have a short discussion about what the writer in question is doing and how that affects us as readers. In conference, try to find a place in the student's paper where they have succeeded in using the technique in question effectively. Consider following the positive model and explanation with immediate opportunities for the student(s) to put the lesson into practice. Revision and editing activities work well for this.

Reinforce any explicit grammar lessons by calling attention to the principle in later classes, or when commenting on students' papers. Praise effective usage.

Be patient and supportive. It takes time for people to become familiar with the language conventions of new discourse communities, and the grammatical habits of academia are certainly no exception to this!

As a general rule, English 131 instructors should (1) prioritize identifying patterns of grammatical errors that most interfere with meaning making, (2) help students gain an awareness of and tools for using grammar and making micro-level language choices strategically, intentionally, and persuasively in various situations, and (3) point students toward the network of resources they can use to adapt to different writing situations, such as the Odegaard Writing and Research Center (OWRC), CLUE, the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) or relevant sections of *Writer/Thinker/Maker*.

## GRAMMAR & AUDIENCE

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It will quickly become apparent to your students that the writing in the readings you assign is **not** as easy to read or understand as their favorite mystery novelist's prose. This provides a unique opportunity to consider the choices these writers make in deference to their academic audience.

Using the readings to help students recognize disciplinary boundaries can be very effective:

I am sure that many of you will already have recognized the names on this list, but for the sake of the record, allow me to identify them. Roderick Jacobs and Peter Rosenbaum are two linguists who have coauthored a number of textbooks and co-edited a number of anthologies. Samuel Levin is a linguist who was one of the first to apply the operations of transformational grammar to literary texts. J. P. Thorne is a linguist at Edinburgh who, like Levin, was attempting to extend the rules of transformational grammar to the notorious irregularities of poetic language.

—Stanley Fish, "How to Recognize a Poem When You See One"

In Fish's article, the sense that he is talking to *us* (academics) is very clear to those of us who are inside the academic circle, but his prose might simply be alienating to our students. Discussing the rhetorical importance of Fish's acknowledgement that we "will already have recognized the names" can illustrate a way to provide important information to an audience that has varying levels of familiarity with the topic. Further, Fish's article helps point out the kinds of evidence that are valued—authorship, university affiliation, etc.—by his (academic) audience.

In student essays, the connections between grammar and audience can be highlighted when discussing the appropriateness of "I" in academic writing, or the use of terms that are considered by some to be slang. This might even be a good place to explore the rhetorical effects of using "gender-neutral" *he*. Your students may not be aware that this might offend some readers.



## GRAMMAR & CLARITY

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Hand-in-hand with audience considerations (at least from a student's perspective), clarity is something that academic writing lacks. A pause at the sentence-level can help students make sense of particularly vexing passages:

I shall not offer here a sociohistorical analysis of the author's persona. Certainly it would be worth examining how the author became individualized in a culture like ours, what status he has been given, at what moment studies of authenticity and attribution began, in what kind of system of valorization the author was involved, at what point we began to recount the lives of authors rather than of heroes, and how this fundamental category of "the-man-and-his-work-criticism" began. For the moment, however, I want to deal solely with the relationship between text and author and with the manner in which the text points to this "figure" that, at least in appearance, is outside it and antecedes it.

—Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?"

This passage screams out for a discussion of parallelism (not to mention a quick acknowledgement of Foucault's penchant for complex lists!) Students might want to consider why, after saying that he does *not* want to give a "sociohistorical analysis," Foucault proceeds with a lengthy list of worthy analyses along these lines. Also, what effect is achieved by running the last two thoughts together in the last sentence?

In student texts, un-looked for ambiguity might be dissipated by a discussion of pronoun antecedents, or even a quick check of subject-verb agreement. Other activities might focus on the "rules" for comma use and an examination of when and how those same rules are broken for rhetorical effects (see Dawkins). Asking students to restate complicated ideas in their own and their peers' work also reinforces the creative power of grammatical structures.

## GRAMMAR & PERSUASION

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Our classes ask students to create *persuasive* arguments—arguments that are convincing both logically and rhetorically. In addition to discussing the kinds of evidence that are most effective, considering the grammatical choices made by an author can highlight persuasive strategies for our students.

The president himself attended Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts—a school that spends \$11,000 yearly on each pupil, not including costs of room and board. If money is a wise investment for the education of a future president at Andover, it is no less so for the child of poor people in Detroit. But the climate of the times does not encourage this belief, and the president's words will surely reinforce that climate.

—Jonathan Kozol, "The Equality of Innocence"

This conclusion to Kozol's essay is very disheartening—students might want to ask why Kozol starts his final sentence with "But." Or, what would the effect have been if he had reversed the cases in the "If . . . then" construction (*i.e.*, If money is not necessary for the child of poor people in Detroit, it is equally unnecessary for the president)? What are the cohesive ties between these sentences? How does this paragraph highlight the economic disparities Kozol sees in US education?

The persuasive power of student work can often be hindered by those ubiquitous personal opinion statements. Helping students recognize the likely difference in reader reception between "I think

Kozol is right,” and “The truth of Kozol’s statements is undeniable” can go a long way toward teaching the fundamentals of argumentation. Other activities targeting rhetorical choices and persuasiveness might include effective transitions, active versus passive voice, and sentence length/complexity.

## SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS

We all know that worksheets are *not* the answer to grammar exercises, and therein lies the difficulty. Planning grammar exercises is most effective when you can:

- integrate student texts into the discussion,
- make the lesson relevant to the larger context of your course, and
- reinforce the skill in use (as in future student writing).

Therefore, what worked in one setting might not translate easily to another classroom. The following sample assignments are intended to help you think about ways to work grammar into your class without resorting to scolding and drills (you can find many more on the EWP instructor site and in the EWP archive).

### EXAMPLE 1: Sentence Fragments

*The following handout suggests one way to work through the conscious use of sentence fragments in student writing.*

#### SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

1. *What is a fragment?*

An incomplete sentence (doesn’t have both subject & verb)

The dog, the cat, the bird, and my sister.

**OR,** A subordinate clause that stands alone

The essay was written with a lively, engaging style. But, lacked relevant information.

2. *Where are fragments useful?*

For emphasis, authors sometimes fragment ideas.

**Instead of:** Essayists often use sentence fragments to emphasize the important information. John McPhee often uses this technique.

**Try:** Essayists often use sentence fragments to emphasize the important information. John McPhee, for one.

**Instead of:** The American West was adventurous, romantic and free.

Nonetheless, women and men provided their own manual labor.

**Try:** The American West was adventurous, romantic and free. But, not without labor. Women and men in the American West provided their own manual labor. Nonetheless, the West was adventurous and romantic. Free.

3. Identify sentence fragments within your own writing. Why do they occur? What purpose do they serve? What point are you emphasizing by placing a fragment in your writing?

Look for places in your writing where a sentence fragment might be useful. How can you add fragments for emphasis?

**EXAMPLE 2:** The Known-New Contract

*In Kolln's book, Rhetorical Grammar, a discussion of the "Known-New" contract provides a great way to help students recognize patterns of cohesion. The following examples suggest ways of working with and explicating this concept.*

**PRESENTING "KNOWN" INFORMATION**

Additional ways to fulfill the known-new contract include presenting information which qualifies as "known":

- Using repeated information, like repeated or related words and synonyms. (Examples: **suburbs/suburbanization** or **borders/edges** or **eastern/western**)
- Continuing a previously-stated theme or relying on common knowledge, information that a reader can be presumed to know; this strategy is more subtle and gives ties that aren't as strong as the use of pronouns or noun phrases.

(Example: The president delivered his State of the Union *address* to a *joint session of Congress* last night. Every seat in the gallery was full.)

- Adding words or phrases that drop hints about what a reader can expect next and suggest direction; this often turns a statement of fact into an opinion.

(Example: The president delivered his much anticipated State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress last night.)

Below, Adam Gopnik illustrates these strategies for fulfilling the known-new contract in his *New Yorker* article, "American Studies," of September 28, 1998.

What is this thing called "The Report"? A four-hundred-and-forty-five page **book**, among other things, a **story** to read and criticize—a "**narrative**," as its authors proudly call it. What happens if we try approaching it that way? After all, no one has had much success dealing with it as a **judicial** or a **legal** document—since **judiciousness** is a quality it so obviously lacks, and it is directed to no **court of law**. Nor can it be read as journalism, a reluctantly arrived-at exposé; its elaborations are far too ornate, its attention far too riveted. . . .

So why all the schmutz? Well, Ken Starr and his crew are **writing**, God help them—they're trying to **dramatize** a relationship, **depict** a mood, **evoke** a moral atmosphere. Think of "The Report" as a love child of the **novel**—as what the quarterlies call a **text**—and maybe that gets you closer to its purpose and to the undeniable spell it casts. . . .

You can almost read it as a novel in the **classic** tradition. *When Richard Nixon got into trouble*, the cliché was that there was something **Shakespearean** about his **crisis**,

and his **fall**, if it lacked **Shakespearean** poetry, had a **Shakespearean** subject: the slow **declension** of ambition into crime, and of crime into evil. But nobody would call *Clinton's troubles Shakespearean*; they're more bourgeois than that. There's something vaguely eighteenth century about them. It's there in the constant references to a higher piety that nobody believes in, and Monica gives new life to the word "wench." Not since Richardson's "**Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded**," one of the first **novels**, had so much ink been spilled on a pas de deux between a guy who owns a big manor house and the girl who works there, with the difference that this girl, unlike that one, succumbs. (So, "**Monica; or, Sin Punished**.") Even the special achievement, in Starr's report, of what Sean Wilentz has accurately called "**pornography for puritans**" recalls the original **novelistic** formula: **pornography for Puritans** is exactly what **novels** were accused of being. . . . "The Report" is a **classic** story about adultery, in which the **law** and **human affection** are in tension, and it resolves in the usual way. When there's a choice between **law** and **sympathy**, the **law** must take the **lovers**, but the **lovers** take the cake.

*The "Known-New" contract is a way of conceptualizing the links between ideas in a text. Just as close reading asks us to examine a passage minutely, the following exercise demonstrates how looking for links and repetitions can produce insights.*

#### GRAMMATICAL OBSERVATIONS / RHETORICAL CHOICES

The more clinical or "objective" passages from "The Report" (Gopnik) or "the Narrative" (Starr) contain fewer pronouns, and instead of "he" and/or "she," we get "The President" and "Ms. Lewinsky." The grammatical choice, in this case is to create a non-rhetorical (factual, scientific, objective, "truth") report of what really happened.

In light of the President's testimony, Ms. Lewinsky's accounts of their sexual encounters are indispensable for two reasons. *First*, the detail and consistency of these accounts tend to bolster **Ms. Lewinsky's** credibility. *Second*, and particularly important, **Ms. Lewinsky** contradicts **the President** on a key issue. According to **Ms. Lewinsky, the President** touched her breasts and genitalia – which means that his conduct met the Jones definition of sexual relations even under his theory. On *these matters*, the evidence of **the President's** perjury cannot be presented without specific, explicit, and possibly offensive descriptions of sexual encounters.

But, then you do get some pronouns. "He said, she said..." creates the effect of personal conversations, etc.

Everyone in whom Ms. Lewinsky confided in detail believed she was telling the truth about her relationship with the President. Ms. Lewinsky told her psychologist, Dr. Irene Kassorla, about the affair shortly after it began. Thereafter, **she** related details of sexual encounters soon after they occurred (sometimes calling from **her** White House office) (14). Ms. Lewinsky showed no indications of delusional thinking, according to Dr. Kassorla, and Dr. Kassorla had no doubts whatsoever about the truth of what Ms. Lewinsky told her (15). Ms. Lewinsky's friend Catherine Allday Davis testified that she believed Ms. Lewinsky's accounts of the sexual relationship with the President because "I trusted in the way **she** had confided in me on other things in **her** life. . . . I just trusted the relationship, so I trusted **her**" (16). Dale Young, a friend in whom Ms. Lewinsky confided starting in mid-1996, testified: [I]f **she** was going to lie to me, **she** would have said to me, "Oh, **he** calls me all the time. **He**

does wonderful things. **He** can't wait to see me." ... **[S]he** would have embellished the story. You know, **she** wouldn't be telling me, "**He** told me **he'd** call me, I waited home all weekend and I didn't do anything and **he** didn't call and then **he** didn't call for two weeks." (17)

*The following exercise combines the known-new contract with practice in using quotations.*

### **QUOTING AND THE KNOWN-NEW CONTRACT**

We've talked about the known-new contract and how it can work from sentence to sentence within paragraphs. This assignment asks you to think about how it can work to successfully integrate a quote into your paper.

The sentences below constitute "known" information. You will be given an ad that is "new" information. Your group's task is to come up with a following sentence that employs the known-new contract: a sentence that states some known information from the quote and new information from the ad that I will give you. In other words, pretend you've used the quote in your paper, and now your task is to think of how to integrate it. Your group will have about seven minutes to come up with a sentence.

For example:

**KNOWN:** I found myself absorbed by the advertisements. They had a remarkable power over me—to seize my attention and to stimulate, if only for a moment, fantasies of an erotic nature. —Arthur Asa Berger

**NEW:** [relating the known to a car ad] While looking at an ad of a Corvette, my fantasies may not have been erotic, but the imagined feel of zooming down an unknown backroad at inhuman speed had the remarkable effect of making the Heartbeat of America feel like my own heartbeat.

Sentences:

1. One thing seems quite evident—knowing the strategies used by people who work at creating and shaping desire is important, for then we can make more rational decisions and avoid manipulation. —Arthur Asa Berger
2. What were brilliantly brought together were the seemingly opposite worlds of advanced, ever-changing, American engineering technology and laboratory science (traditionally the province of men) and the preindustrial, timeless, beauty-oriented cultural authority of Europe. —Susan Douglas
3. The upper thigh thus became freighted with meaning. The work ethic, the ethos of production and achievement, self-denial and deferred gratification was united there with egoism, vanity, self-absorption, and other-directedness. —Susan Douglas
4. Using only the most advanced "delivery systems," presumably inspired by NASA, the Pentagon, and Star Wars, these creams and lotions deployed "advanced micro-carriers" or "active anti-age agents," presumably trained by the CIA to terminate wrinkles with extreme prejudice. —Susan Douglas

5. It is a fascinating business taking advertisements apart to see how they function and determining what they reflect about society. It is also a perilous business for there is always the possibility that we are not examining society's fantasies, but our own.  
—Arthur Asa Berger

*The next exercise combines the known-new contract with a peer review exercise.*

## PEER REVIEW EXERCISES & THE KNOWN-NEW CONTRACT

The following are two assignments for this weekend that you should do BEFORE you fully read your peer's essay. Both exercises will be given back to the writer to be handed in on the day the revised draft is due.

### 1. Looking for Collocational Sets

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Find any 4 opening sentences from any 4 separate paragraphs in your peer's paper. Then:

- Generate a list of 15-20 words you might expect after each sentence.
- List two to four collocational sets these words could fall under.
- DO NOT do this on your peer's essay. Use your own paper, and on Monday give this completed assignment to your peer. This will help them in the revision.

For Example:

In the evenings I'd sometimes borrow my father's car and drive aimlessly around town, feeling sorry for myself, thinking about the war and the pig factory and how my life seemed to be collapsing toward slaughter.

Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*

- Words a reader might expect: draft, guns, blood, fear, nightmare, depression, loneliness, automobile, road, swine, oink, hooves, skin, meat, steering, windshield, wheel, mother, street, streetlight, painted lines, etc.
- Collocational sets: (things to do with) meat packing, roads, war, killing, etc.

### 2. Satisfying the Known-New Contract

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This exercise asks you to look sentence by sentence to see if the writer satisfies the "known-new" contract.

- In pencil, circle two paragraphs of at least five sentences, and analyze each for the known-new contract.
- DO this exercise on your peer's essay by drawing lines, circles, arrows, and whatever other marginal comments you need to make.

We'll be going over this in class with examples on how to do it.

### EXAMPLE 3: Grammar & Audience

*One effective way to help students think of grammar as a set of choices rather than rules is to make the point that in different situations (and, especially, for different audiences) various grammars apply. This can be done by highlighting “academic” writing (using the readings) or by bringing in non-academic examples for comparison.*

#### COUNTRY GRAMMAR / STANDARD GRAMMAR

In the left column are the words to Clint Black’s “Summer’s Comin’.” Circle any words that are not what you would consider Standard Edited English. Try rewriting a few of the lines in complete (academic) sentences in the right column.

We have no problem understanding the song as it is written, right? So, we cannot rightly call the song “ungrammatical.” Nevertheless, if you made the same choices in your academic papers, you wouldn’t necessarily like the results. What makes both versions of the song “correct”? When and where would you expect to see each version?

Nothin’ on earth that’ll get me hummin’ Like a heat wave comin’ And I’ll come runnin’ With her makin’ that tan in The broad daylight And every night is a Saturday night And everything’s right with The summer comin I’m the first one standin’ in line For my day in the sun I’ve been workin’ ’Till the sun don’t shine ... When the day gets cookin’ Gonna grab my toys And it really doesn’t matter Which wave we’re on Get to turnin’ up them good old boys Crankin’ into the night, by the break of dawn All the towns are red and I still see blond  For my day in the sun I’ve been workin’ Till the sun don’t shine For my day in the sun I’ve been	
--	--

workin'  
Till the sun don't shine  
Summer's comin' to shine  
Summer's comin' to shine  
Summer's comin'

#### EXAMPLE 4: Simple or Wordy Writing as a Rhetorical Choice

### Eliminating Wordiness

It is easy to get in the habit of being wordy in writing – it not only seems to make your writing more 'complex', but it also helps you reach essay page limits. However, wordiness can actually make it harder for your reader to understand your writing. Think about the effects your words will actually have on your reader. If, upon reflection, you think your reader will understand you better with *fewer* words, then you are almost certainly correct!

#### 1. Consider eliminating words that explain the obvious or provide excessive detail

If passages explain or describe details that would already be obvious to readers, delete or reword them. Readers are also very adept at filling in the non-essential aspects of a narrative, as in the fourth example. Revise each of the following sentences and see how many words you can get each sentence down to, while keeping the reading clear for your imagined reader.

- a) I received your inquiry that you wrote about tennis rackets yesterday, and read it thoroughly. (15)
- b) It goes without saying that we are acquainted with your policy on filing tax returns, and we have every intention of complying with the regulations that you have mentioned. (29)
- c) Imagine a mental picture of someone engaged in the intellectual activity of trying to learn what the rules are for how to play the game of chess. (27)
- d) After booking a ticket to Dallas from a travel agent, I packed my bags and arranged for a taxi to the airport. Once there, I checked in, went through security, and was ready to board. But problems beyond my control led to a three-hour delay before takeoff. (47)
- e) Baseball, one of our oldest and most popular outdoor summer sports in terms of total attendance at ball parks and viewing on television, has the kind of rhythm of play on the field that alternates between times when players passively wait with no action taking place between the pitches to the batter and then times when they explode into action as the batter hits a pitched ball to one of the players and the player fields it. (77)

#### 2. Consider eliminating unnecessary determiners and modifiers

Readers often get bogged down when there are extra words or phrases that seem to determine narrowly or to modify the meaning of a noun but don't actually add to the meaning of the sentence. Although such words and phrases can be meaningful in the appropriate context, they are often used as "filler" and can easily be eliminated.



- a) Any particular type of dessert is fine with me. (9)
- b) Balancing the budget by Friday is an impossibility without some kind of extra help. (14)
- c) For all intents and purposes, American industrial productivity generally depends on certain factors that are really more psychological in kind than of any given technological aspect. (26)

Here's a list of some words and phrases that can often be pruned away to make sentences clearer:

- kind of, sort of, type of, really, basically, for all intents and purposes, definitely, actually, generally, individual, specific, particular

### 3. Think about omitting repetitive wording

Watch for phrases or longer passages that repeat words with similar meanings. Words that don't build on the content of sentences or paragraphs are rarely necessary and may cause your reader to lose focus.

- a) I would appreciate it if you would bring to the attention of your drafting officers the administrator's dislike of long sentences and paragraphs in messages to the field and in other items drafted for her signature or approval, as well as in all correspondence, reports, and studies. Please encourage your section to keep their sentences short. (56)
- b) The supply manager considered the correcting typewriter an unneeded luxury. (10)
- c) Our branch office currently employs five tellers. These tellers do an excellent job Monday through Thursday but cannot keep up with the rush on Friday and Saturday. (27)

### 4. Take a second look at any 'redundant pairs' in your writing

Many pairs of words imply each other. Finish implies complete, so the phrase completely finish is redundant in most cases. So are many other pairs of words:

past memories	sudden crisis	unexpected surprise
various differences	past history	free gift
each individual _____	final outcome	end result
basic fundamentals	terrible tragedy	future plans
important essentials	true facts	very unique (illogical)

- a. Before the travel agent was completely able to finish explaining the various differences among all of the many very unique vacation packages his travel agency was offering, the customer changed her future plans.

### 5. Pay attention to redundant categories

Specific words imply their general categories, so we usually don't have to state both. We know that a period is a segment of time, that pink is a color, that shiny is an appearance. In each of the following phrases, the general category term can usually be dropped, leaving just the specific descriptive word:

large in size	of a strange type	extreme degree
often times	unusual in nature	in a confused state
of a bright color	of an uncertain condition	honest in character
heavy in weight	of cheap quality	economics field
period in time	at an early time	round in shape

a) During that time period, many car buyers preferred cars that were pink in color and shiny in appearance. (18)

b) The microscope revealed a group of organisms that were round in shape and peculiar in nature. (16)

**6. Consider those times when your GOAL is actually to confuse the reader!**

In some writing situations, it might actually be in your interest to confuse the reader. Comedy routines make great use of confusing language to make people laugh. Not so funny is the way that banks use confusing language to prevent their customers from understanding how they will be charged fees.

Here is an example from Bank of America (the 3<sup>rd</sup> page of a 14 page explanation): *Additional accounts*. For accounts linked to your Interest Checking account, we waive the monthly maintenance fee on the first three linked Interest Checking accounts and on the first four linked savings accounts of any type. The minimum amount you need to open each additional account, and other terms and fees, apply to each linked account. While you can also have us link more accounts, this waiver of the monthly maintenance fee does not apply to them. Transaction limits apply to savings accounts. See “What are the transaction limitations on my savings account?” in the Frequently Asked Questions About Accounts section on page 14.

From: [https://www.bankofamerica.com/deposits/resources/personal-schedule-fees.go?request\\_locale=en\\_US](https://www.bankofamerica.com/deposits/resources/personal-schedule-fees.go?request_locale=en_US)  
(page 3)

**IN CONCLUSION . . .**

These are merely a few thoughts about how grammatical choices might be highlighted within your curriculum. As the quarter continues, we hope to revisit this topic and to continue the conversation. For additional lessons and explanations, please consult the EWP website, *Writer/Thinker/Maker* (Chapter 16), Martha Kolln’s *Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects*, and the resources listed below.

## **FURTHER READING**

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### **READER REACTION TO STUDENT ERROR**

Horner, B., Lu, M.Z., Royster, J. J., & Trimbur, J. “Language difference in writing: Toward a translingual approach.” *College English*, 73.3. 2011: 303-321

This article from Horner et al. is an early and oft-cited explanation of what a translingual approach to writing could be. The authors articulate their dissatisfaction with monolingual ideologies and explain that actual language use, including writing, is never purely “monolingual.” They argue that composition instructors would better serve their students by reading patiently, with a respect for linguistic difference and an attitude of “deliberative inquiry” rather than with an attitude that immediately seeks to correct perceived error. They also briefly address some of the confusions (e.g. Does translingualism mean that there is no such thing as “error”? No!) and concerns (e.g. Will a translingual approach hurt my students’ chances at getting a job?)

Also no!)

Krall-Lanoue, Aimee. “ ‘And Yea I’m venting, but hey I’m writing isn’t I’: A Translingual approach to error in a multilingual context.” *Literacy as Translingual Practice: Between communities and classrooms*. Edited by Suresh Canagarajah, Routledge, 2013: 228-234.

In this book chapter, Krall-Lanoue offers a detailed look at translingual practices in a multilingual writing classroom. She offers specific demonstrations of how teachers who wish to adopt a translingual approach might respond when encountering three common types of errors: tense, word choice, and sentence boundary issues.

Sohan, Vanessa Kraemer. “Relocalized Listening: Responding to All Student Texts from a Translingual Starting Point” *Reworking English in rhetoric and composition: Global interrogations, local interventions*. Edited by Bruce Horner and Karen Kopelson, Southern Illinois University Press, 2014: 191-206.

Sohan here explains how a translingual approach can also work with “mainstream” students, rejecting the implication that translingualism is only helpful and applicable for multilingual or otherwise marked groups. Her chapter focuses on how translingual precepts (e.g. assuming difference is the norm, acknowledging an individual writer’s agency) can help us “challenge the myth of monolinguality with our students and instead to see how we are all meshing [language] on a daily basis” (204). She offers her own reading of a “mainstream” student responding to Anzaldúa as an example.

## THE POLITICS OF GRAMMAR

Canagarajah, A. S. “Interrogating the ‘native speaker fallacy’: Non-linguistic roots, non-pedagogical results.” *Non-native educators in English language teaching*, Edited by George Braine. New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum. 1999: 77-92.

Canagarajah builds on the work of Robert Philpson, describing in detail why the category of “native speaker” is a linguistically meaningless term that serves instead to prop up colonial legacies of linguistic imperialism. He further describes the many harms that this term generates in language and literacy education.

Delpit, Lisa “The Silenced Dialogue: Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People’s Children.” *Harvard Educational Review* 58. 1988: 280-98.

In this article, Delpit observes that the push for a process orientation in composition, while good-intentioned, may actually result in the further discrimination of minoritized students. Specifically, she notes that composition curricula too often do not take minority perspectives into account, instead assuming that the majority understanding of “best practices” is universal.

Lippi-Green, Rosina. *English with an Accent : Language, Ideology and Discrimination in the United States*. New York: Routledge. 1997.

In this book, Lippi-Green offers the reader an abundance of empirical evidence to prove her principal claim: Children and adults are taught to rank linguistic difference, with the language of minoritized individuals, in most circumstances, being ranked lowly. On page 64 she explicitly indicates how accent can be a more socially acceptable excuse for racism.

Young, Vershawn Ashanti. *Other People's English: Code-Meshing, Code-Switching, and African American Literacy*. New York: Teachers College Press. 2014.

In this collection, several authors, including Young, offer their philosophical support for expanding and redefining notions of what is acceptable language in a classroom. Different sections offer different perspectives, ranging from theoretical elaborations on the meaning and importance of terms like “code-meshing,” to a classroom teacher’s practical look at how code-meshing can be integrated into (and indeed already exists) in classroom situations. As its title suggests, the book is centered on African American literacy, but the theories and practical implications are generalizable to any classroom setting.

### **GRAMMAR AS RHETORIC**

Dawkins, John. “Teaching Punctuation as a Rhetorical Tool.” *College Composition and Communication* 46.4 (1995): 533-48.

Dawkins looks at language as a series of clauses linked according to intended meaning by punctuation. His approach to teaching punctuation relies not on the “rules” (which he is quick to point out are often broken) but on the effect that the author wants to produce. This meaning-based approach to teaching punctuation allows students to “learn by doing.”

Micciche, Laura R. “Making a Case for Rhetorical Grammar.” *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 55, no. 4, 2004, pp. 716–737.

Micciche explains that the reaction against teaching grammar from progressives is not a productive way to combat linguistic inequality, and instead argues that ethical composition instruction should involve a rhetorical approach to grammar. She provided practical examples from her own teaching to demonstrate the advantages of this approach

### **INSTRUCTOR ATTITUDES TOWARD GRAMMAR**

Brosnahan, Irene and Janice Neuleib. “Teaching Grammar Affectively: Learning to Like Grammar.” In Hunter and Wallace: 204-12.

Brosnahan and Neuleib suggest that grammar must be taught affectively. They favor replacing grammar rules (at least initially) with the idea of unconscious and conscious grammar—helping students discover the grammatical choices they are already making in order to formulate the “correct” ways of using language. The lesson is well-taken: “If grammar instruction has been used only to punish students for their language choices, then certainly they are right to want to avoid grammar. Their fear of punishment must be replaced with an anticipation of success and enjoyment if future teachers are to be successful in their grammar classrooms” (212)

Stygall, Gail. “Resisting Privilege: Basic Writing and Foucault's Author Function”. *College Composition*

*and Communication* 45.3 1994. 320-41.

Stygall uses Foucauldian theory to argue that the academy generally privileges a form of authorship that excludes student writers, particularly “basic” writers, from the category of author. As a result, readers of student writing often do not grant these writers the same right to creatively transgress conventions that they would grant to more privileged writers. She calls for a resistance to discourses which define authorship in such exclusionary terms.

## CHAPTER 7

### TALKING WITH STUDENTS: CONFERENCING & CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

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#### PART ONE: CONFERENCING AND OFFICE HOURS

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Conferencing has long been a key part of a student-centered approach to teaching, allowing students and teachers to talk one-on-one in what are generally less formal circumstances. The aims are to give students more individual feedback and to allow you a chance to evaluate your own classroom by viewing it through the eyes of your students. While this view of conferencing is perhaps a bit naïve, a good conference is still the best way to talk about individual revisions with a single student. The following chapter explains the fundamentals of conferencing, gives some basic tips on good conferencing, and presents different modes of conferencing (group conferences, etc.).

#### CONFERENCING: WHAT, WHERE, & HOW?

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**The EWP requires that you hold at least two conferences per quarter with each of your students.** Generally, such conferences are held for all students (even those few who attend office hours regularly), primarily because you will often have specific goals for conferencing that won't necessarily match up with students' reasons for coming to office hours. You'll want to hand out a sign-up sheet in class for times you're available or have them sign up using an online scheduling system, such as Doodle; it's up to you whether you want to try to do them all in one or two days (which can be stressful at first) or spread them out over three or more days. It's worth noting that if your conferences are aimed at creating a revision plan on an assignment, spreading out conferences too far can give some students a potential unfair advantage when it comes to the turnaround time between receiving feedback and having to turn in the next draft. Conferences are generally 20 minutes long, and you can hold them in your office or at an alternate location, such as a café. Students often forget their conferences, so make sure there is a schedule posted somewhere they can refer to, remind them often, and make sure the location is clear (even if it is your office). Lastly, you may cancel a day (if you teach two days per week) or two (if you teach four days per week) of class to compensate for the time you spend conferencing (which will be nearly 11 hours in talk time alone by the time you're done); canceling class also allows you to schedule conferences during class time—sometimes a must for those busy students who have packed schedules. To be more clear, this

means if you teach two days a week, you may cancel a total of two days worth of classes per quarter to compensate for the required two conferences you hold with each student. If you teach four days a week, you may cancel up to four days of class per quarter.

## WHEN TO CONFERENCE?

Deciding when to schedule the two required conferences will depend on what you're trying to accomplish. Here are a few suggestions with some of the benefits of each:

WHEN?	WHY?
In the <u>first couple weeks</u> of the quarter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lets students find your office early</li> <li>▪ Gives students a chance to ask questions about the class that they may have been reluctant to ask in the larger group</li> <li>▪ Gives students a chance to bring up issues such as learning disabilities and accommodations, multilingual concerns, etc.</li> <li>▪ Gives you a sense of your individual students (helps to learn their names), their interests, and their attitudes toward the class, which can give you a clearer idea of the audience you are addressing</li> <li>▪ Can help establish an early rapport that may foster more open communications when students come across any questions or concerns</li> </ul>
<u>Between assignments</u> in a sequence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Allows you to clarify/decipher comments you or their peers have made on previous assignments</li> <li>▪ Gives students individual help on specific writing outcomes or concerns</li> <li>▪ Assists students in coming up with a writing plan for a major assignment (research they might need to do, etc.) and lets you redirect plans that aren't addressing the assignment</li> <li>▪ Gives you a chance to show interest in students' ideas and writing projects, which may help to develop nuance and also discourage plagiarism</li> </ul>
<u>After they've gotten the first long assignment back</u> from you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Allows you to clarify comments</li> <li>▪ Allows you to ask for feedback about difficulties students had with the first sequence so you can make adjustments in the second</li> <li>▪ Allows you to make reference to the portfolio and revisions they'd make for this next step should they choose to submit that paper</li> <li>▪ Allows you to choose to give fewer written comments since you'll be able to address your concerns directly with students (in other words, might save grading time)</li> </ul>
In the <u>last weeks</u> of the quarter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Helps students decide which assignments to revise for the portfolio and focus their critical reflections</li> <li>▪ Allows you to get feedback from students about the overall effectiveness of the class</li> <li>▪ Allows you to clarify grade questions and prepare students who are getting low grades, which might head off grade complaints and improve evaluations</li> </ul>

## THE CONFERENCE "PROCESS"

Early discussion in the field of composition regarding conferencing was often rather directive; various authors provided "how to" articles that emphasized the role of teacher as expert. For many of us, this

is an unappealing set-up. We try hard to deconstruct traditional power relations in our classrooms and would like our conferences to reflect this. It likely does not need much elaboration here that this move toward more student-oriented conferences is to be lauded.

However, it is important to think about how students view conferences and realize that having the sort of conference that “feels good” may not achieve your goals or theirs. It’s fairly simple really—many of these students would never come to talk to you if they weren’t required to, and many of them are going to be uncomfortable talking about their writing. While flaunting your authority or being merely directive would be out of place, it is not necessarily appropriate to act like you are simply having a conversation as equal partners either. Question and challenge your motives and approaches, but also realize that you will always be “the teacher” and that many students would prefer that you not “pretend” otherwise.

There are many things to be aware of when conferencing. Laurel Johnson Black’s analysis of conferences in *Between Talk and Teaching*, which you will read in English 567, reveals that teachers ignore student attempts to narrate their experiences; teachers reinforce gender and class divisions; students are sullen and uncommunicative (because they sense the unequal balance of power and resent it); and students don’t participate in their own learning. Yet, despite all of these factors, the teachers and students who participated in the conferences described considered each of them “successful.” Thus, as teachers, we are in the tricky position of trying to resist simply telling our students what to do as we want to “create” knowledge with them, but at the same time sometimes need to “communicate” knowledge to them. Unsurprisingly, you’ll need to decide what your goals are for individual students as you plan to conference: Will the session be an opportunity to flesh out the student’s ideas as a team? Will the conference be about explaining to the students that they’ll likely need to start a paper over for one reason or another? Clearly, these are different kinds of conferences and need different approaches.

## BASICS OF GOOD CONFERENCING

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### ASK THE STUDENT WHAT WORKS FOR THEM

As with everything you do, students will have different needs. While some of us have been trained under strict writing center rules to “never write on papers” or to “always require students to take notes,” this will not always work for all students, particularly students with certain disabilities. Be sure to offer a variety of choices in order to make the conference accessible to each student (the student taking notes, you making some notes while you explain your comments, tape recording the session if they would like, etc.).

### CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

There isn’t much that can intimidate a student more than trying to come up with something to say during that first face-to-face encounter with an instructor. Since most of your students are unfamiliar with the idea of conferencing, they’ll be looking to you to take the lead and guide them through the conferencing process. This doesn’t mean that you have to take full responsibility for directing the conference, but it does mean that you have to make clear what responsibilities you’re expecting your students to assume. **Articulate your expectations during class time before each conference (you might even write them out in a handout or in the syllabus) and clarify them again before the conference begins.**



## HELP YOUR STUDENTS PREPARE

Part of making your expectations clear is giving your students tasks to complete before (or at the beginning of) the conference. **Telling students to “be prepared to talk about your paper” isn’t usually enough guidance.** Here are some specific activities to help students prepare for conferences:

1. **Writing at the beginning of the conference:** you can ask your student to answer a brief question at the beginning of the conference. For example:

Paraphrase or restate your central claim/argument in this paper. Doing this will take you back to your original goals and give us a chance to explore how you met them.

While the student is writing, you can reread the paper and your comments, and remind yourself what you wanted to accomplish with this individual student.

2. **Freewrite in class:** give students time in class to write out a plan for the conference. This can be as simple as having them jot down a few questions that come to mind or a more involved exercise where they go over an assignment, mark sections that worked well or didn’t, take time to respond to your comments (so you know they really had time to read them), etc. Have students bring their response to the next conference.

3. **Worksheets:** asking students to fill out a “pre-conference worksheet” is often a good way to make sure that they arrive at your office prepared and engaged with their work. This has the added benefit of giving you a chance to remind students what they should bring to your office (drafts, their textbook, etc.).

### EXAMPLE 1: Pre-Conference Worksheet (Due in conference)

For this conference, bring a revision plan. This consists of no more than one page of notes describing specifically how and where you plan to revise your paper. Feel free to write on your paper so we can talk specifically in conference.

The content of your notes should follow the grading assessment rubric (see “Essay Evaluation Criteria” in this packet). What are the paper’s strengths and why? What are its weaknesses and how do you plan to address these? Remember that revisions cover more than grammar and spell-check; these should be last on your priority list.

Examples:

Argument: needs to be sharpened (still vague)

Support: needs to be more fully developed with other outside sources

Organization: A BIG problem. I need to rearrange the order of my evidence and provide more transitions in between paragraphs.

### EXAMPLE 2: Conference Preparation Worksheet

As talked about in class, I want you all to feel comfortable with 3-step quotation analysis (the “quote sandwich”), as this will be important in all your papers. Please take some time to examine each quote in your paper. Which is your strongest quote integration? Which could use some more work? Why?

Also, bring any other questions you may have.

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### ASK QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY THE STUDENT'S GOALS/INTENTIONS

It's essential that you and your students agree on what needs to be addressed before you try to address it, so ask students real questions, perhaps based on the course outcomes and traits you are targeting at that time (they can spot a leading question from a mile off). Questions might include: "What do you mean by flow?"; "What specific places in the essay aren't flowing?"; "Which places are?"; "Are you satisfied with the ways you have supported your claim, or do you want to modify it?" (Okay, that last one was leading.)

### CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENT CRITIQUE

For obvious reasons, students tend to not want to critique or question you or the class. Create opportunities for them to do so by directly inviting critique, such as: "What just isn't making sense so far? Or, What can I clarify? The relationship between inquiry and argumentative claims? The idea of pitching your writing to address a particular audience?"; "If something about the class could be different, what would work better for you?"; "What do you feel you need more time and space to practice?" While these will sometimes elicit the "it's fine" response anyway, you may be surprised what you hear and the students may even feel a bit empowered.

### ASK FOR FEEDBACK

A simple way of evaluating our conferencing practices is to ask students to respond to the conference after it has taken place. The following example presents a few brief questions that accomplish two goals: students respond to the process of conferencing, thereby asserting some power over the shape of future conferences; and, students are asked to reflect on the content of the conference, a method which reinforces the learning that happened there.

<b>EXAMPLE 3:</b> Conference Feedback
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After our conference, please respond to the following questions:

1. What was the most useful/helpful comment that I made? Why/how was it useful?
2. What was the most important new idea you had about your paper during (or shortly after) the conference?
3. What questions did you have that were not addressed satisfactorily during the conference? How would you change the process of the conference for the next time?

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## VARIETIES OF CONFERENCES

Most TAs choose to have individual conferences with students, but you may choose to design conferences in alternative ways:

1. **Group conferences:** sometimes working with more than one student at once is useful. This is especially effective if you ask students to do longer-term group projects/presentations. Meeting with students in small groups is also a good way to cover the same ground (e.g., a particular grammatical issue) with several students. Remember,

however, that you cannot discuss an individual student's grade in front of other students (or other TAs), as this violates the FERPA Act:

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

2. **Brainstorming sessions:** working with students at the very beginning of the writing process is usually rewarding for both of you. This kind of conference is especially useful if you have asked students to analyze a new genre or conduct some other type of research, as students are often overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information they have collected. A productive brainstorming session can head off obvious claims and broad generalizations before they make their way into an essay draft.

3. **Revision workshops:** the revising process is one that most students are (at least at first) resistant to. Rewriting large chunks of prose is uncomfortable and won't happen without some encouragement from you. Asking students to bring a page of writing to a conference and then working extensively with that single page can be a good way of modeling the revision process.

## DIFFICULT CONFERENCES

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There are times when you need to conference with a student because of more serious issues than the student's writing. For example, you might suspect a student has been dishonest in the production of their paper, or you may want to discuss a student's disrespectful behavior/language in the classroom. These situations can easily become painful ordeals. **Please talk with any of the EWP staff about any concerns you have, and, where possible, it may be best to do so before meeting with the student.** In addition, you have the right to request that a faculty member or one of the Assistant Directors be with you when you conference with a student. *We are here to back you up, and if you are at all uncomfortable meeting with a student alone, don't hesitate to ask one of us.*

## PLAGIARISM

See the EWP website for specific University and EWP policy guidelines, as well as Chapter 8 of this manual for a discussion of the nuances and complexities involved in plagiarism. Our general approach is to begin by listening to students with compassion and patience, rather than start with an approach that sees all cases of plagiarism as cheating that deserves strict penalty. If you are concerned that a student's work might be plagiarized, consider the following conferencing approaches:

- **Check-in with your student to see what their take is on the assignment in question.** Many students who have "plagiarized" don't realize that they have done anything that could be considered wrong. Consider asking your student to describe their writing process so that you can better understand where they are coming from. Did they get a bit too much writing assistance from a friend or tutor? Did they simply forget a citation? Did they simply not understand that paraphrases must be cited, even if the words are original?
- **Explain in plain terms why the assignment in question is problematic.** Depending on the situation, the best tactic may be to simply explain why the assignment seems troubling from your point of view (and/or how others may perceive the issue as problematic) and to suggest a way that the assignment might be made right. This can be an effective course of action for any form of plagiarism that you feel has emerged from

ignorance, misunderstandings or cultural differences (See the “Plagiarism” section in Chapter 8 of this manual).

- **Ask for help before your conference!** If you feel that your student has indeed been deliberately dishonest and you are uncertain how to proceed, the EWP Director and Assistant Directors are available to help!

## GRADE COMPLAINTS

Because students don’t receive grades in English 131 until the end of the quarter, meetings with students to discuss grade complaints typically happen after the quarter is over. Grade complaints are not common, but it is likely that you will receive one at some point. It is important to note that they can occur for a variety of reasons and that there is a range of outcomes to grade disputes. If you have any questions about handling a grade dispute, please reach out to an EWP staff member *before* meeting with your student.

Grade disputes are often resolved through conversation with the student. When you handle grade disputes, we encourage you to express a willingness to listen to the student’s rationale and to avoid being defensive. In advance of meeting with the student, we also encourage you to ask the student to prepare her/his complaints in writing and be prepared to explain why s/he feels her/his work was graded unfairly based on whatever examples or reasoning s/he may provide. If the student is serious, this will give her/him time to formulate a coherent argument. Also, be wary of dealing with grade complaints over email. Students will sometimes say things over email that they would never say in person, but such discussions also violate the student’s FERPA rights.

If you have no intention of changing the grade, consider telling the student this before or at the conference (though of course this doesn’t mean that you can’t talk about why the student received the grade s/he did). Unlike the regular student conference, grade complaint meetings usually require you to be firm and “explain” or “justify” the negative.

If you have either made a mistake in your evaluation or find that there is a reasonable case for reassessment, given the student’s argument, you can submit a change of grade form (or give the student more credit for the assignment in question). However, keep in mind that you cannot reevaluate every essay from every student and that it would be unfair to the rest of the class to change the grade unless you had genuinely made a mistake (It helps to remind students of this fact). If the student is still not satisfied with your explanations/responses to the complaint, refer the student to the procedures for course complaints (which should always be included in your syllabus and are posted to the EWP website).

## OFFICE HOURS

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You should set and keep two office hours per week, and let students know if you must change/cancel a given office hour. Some TAs find their Padelford, Art, or Savery offices less than appealing, and prefer to hold office hours in an on-campus café—in which case, department policy requires that at least one of the two office hours be held in your office. In any case, **make sure your chosen meeting place is accessible to all your students** (who may or may not tell you they have a mobility impairment).

Many students do not know what office hours are for, are intimidated to come in for a one-on-one meeting, or just don't know how to find the Art Building or navigate Padelford. If you want students to attend office hours voluntarily, make it clear that you have reserved that time especially for them, and that you will always be happy to see them during office hours. Explain the advantages of face-to-face discussion as opposed to email, and be sure that your students know where your office is. (Offering students the option of walking back to your office with you after a class early in the quarter can help with this problem.) Some TAs find it helpful to require students to drop in for a quick hello in the first weeks of the quarter to break the ice and let students see that it's really not so painful to stop in during office hours, and this approach can work wonders for building rapport in your classroom.

## PART TWO: CLASS DISCUSSION

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Regardless of your teaching style, the fact that you will be teaching writing to a class of about 23 students shifts the basic course structure away from lecture and towards discussion. This is not to say that lecture does not have a place within the English 131 classroom—it does—but our small class sizes provide rare opportunities for UW students to express and develop their ideas in close cooperation with their instructors and with one another. Particularly during the beginning of each writing cycle, fostering student-centered discussions is an excellent way to take advantage of these opportunities.

## DISCUSSION, LECTURE, OR Q&A?

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Typically, there are three ways that information gets bantered about in a classroom: 1) lecturing to students when you need to convey information; 2) using question and answer when you're testing for understanding or want "right" answers; and 3) leading discussions when you want to flesh out the material and student ideas in perhaps more organic ways.

What makes for a rather unsuccessful experience for many new teachers is failing to clearly establish which approach they are taking (especially when they let lectures or question and answer sessions bleed into their discussions). For example, if you begin a discussion with the goal of getting your students to talk about their understanding of a text but keep interrupting with biographical tidbits about the author, you are sending the message that your reading of the text should be privileged over theirs, which defeats the purpose of trying to get them to talk in the first place. Even worse is when you hold a question and answer session under the guise of a discussion. This is where the dreaded "leading question" comes into play and the discussion turns into a test of mind-reading.

**Whatever approach you choose, you need to make that choice clear to your students and make it clear when you're shifting gears.** If you decide to start out your class with a lecture that leads into a discussion, mark that shift: "Okay, enough of me talking. Let's hear what you have to say about all this." Or, if you want to finish a class by putting the discussion in context: "It's been great to hear all of your perspectives on this text. You've given me a lot to think about. Now, for the last ten minutes of class, I'd like to sum up with what I believe are the key points of this essay."

## FACILITATING PRODUCTIVE DISCUSSIONS

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Although many of the factors affecting class dynamics are out of your control, there are some basic practices you can learn that will improve your chances for having successful discussions:

- **Share with students your discussion goals.** Let students know what you hope to accomplish through discussion: what issues or questions you hope to examine and why, and how this discussion fits in the progression of the assignment sequence. This way, students participate more knowingly in their learning, and they will recognize that the discussion will actually help them with their writing assignments.
- **Establish discussion guidelines.** Acknowledge with your students that productive discussions are challenging, but rewarding, if everyone pulls his or her own weight. Often students *want* to have good discussions but don't know how to contribute, or don't realize that it's actually tough for you to lead discussions if not everybody is involved. In order to set guidelines for productive discussions, you can ask students to describe what makes for a good discussion and what makes discussion boring or unsuccessful. Make sure someone takes down all of the contributions (you can make two columns on the board), type them up, and distribute them as written guidelines at the next class meeting.
- **Ask students to prepare for discussion.** Discussion preparation can be more or less formal: you may ask students to answer questions for homework, or you may simply have students freewrite for a few minutes before discussion starts. Sometimes just letting students know ahead of time that they'll be discussing a particular text or idea will allow them to gather their thoughts and make more substantive contributions. Preparation may also help less talkative students have the confidence to enter the conversation.
- **Resist the temptation to respond to every student's comment.** If students come to expect your response after every remark, then they'll be less likely to jump in and respond to each other. Furthermore, you risk setting up a situation in which you are seen as the only judge of which contributions are valid and which are not. Try to limit yourself to neutral responses like "ok" or "anyone else?"—until at least a few students have chimed in. Take notes during discussions if you're worried about losing a thought (plus, this can model good discussion habits for your students!).
- **Redirect discussion back to students.** Consider asking the class "what do you think?" when a question or comment comes your way. Not only will your students surprise you with their abilities to often explain things better than you can, but you might also get a better sense of where the gaps are in your students' comprehension.
- **Get comfortable with silence.** Be willing to wait out the silence in order to give students time to reply. If the silence continues, you might try another approach: have the students free-write on the question or get them to talk about what makes that question so hard to respond to.
- **Call on students.** In every class you're going to have students who do not volunteer to speak up, especially in large group discussions. There are a number of reasons for this—cultural differences, disability-related issues, lack of preparation, indifference, shyness—and you can't make everyone talk. But sometimes, these students *want* to share their ideas, but they aren't sure how to get their voices into the discussion. Calling on them takes that pressure off and gives them an excuse for contributing. One key to making this work is to be sure that your request is an invitation to respond, not a demand. If a student

still doesn't want to participate after being called on, then respect their choice and move on. Another strategy is to not let any student speak twice before everyone (or most everyone) speaks once. In these cases, the zealous talkers tend to help the less talkative ones speak (mostly because they look like they'll explode if they don't get to contribute again). Asking students to prepare for discussion (especially in writing) can make calling on students easier and more productive, since they can have the option to report what they've written rather than thinking on the spot.

- **Be willing to not call on the zealous talkers.** As referenced above, some students will want to talk too much. You can certainly say, "I'd like to hear from some new voices," etc.
- **Recap the discussion.** It will help both you and your students get the most out of your discussion if you can briefly summarize the main points at the end of class (helping students remember the vital bits of class) and/or the beginning of the next class period (providing continuity between classes). Many students will have a hard time extrapolating ideas from discussion, incorporating discussion points in their papers, or using their peers' comments as a launching point for their own ideas, so if you model this students will get a lot more out of your discussions. It may be hard for you to do this at the beginning of your teaching career, when you may be more worried about your own performance in the classroom, so you can pass this job to students if you prefer. You can make it a rotating job for students to verbalize or circulate via email or Canvas the most important discussion points.

## FACILITATING CONVERSATION ON DIFFICULT TOPICS

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Over the course of the quarter, you will be facilitating conversation on a wide range of topics that can at times feel tense, fraught, and uncomfortable for you and your students. Here are some practices that can help you navigate such situations.

- **Center the discussion around the readings you assign.** Lead students to conduct a thorough rhetorical analysis of the text that asks, what are the stakes and urgencies motivating this particular project? For whom are they writing and to what end? What is the specific historical context in which they are writing and how does that inform our reading of the text? Having an explicit discussion of the stakes motivating a particular piece of writing (for example, to make a call for an equitable distribution of wealth, resources, and power and the building of a just society that affirms rather than devaluing human life) as well as the specific context in which its author was writing will make it more difficult for students to dismiss the text as irrelevant, uninteresting, or outdated. Let students know that even if they disagree with the text, they will still be expected to be able to know, engage with, and respond to it in a thoughtful and analytic manner.
- **Use students' emotional reactions to texts as a starting point for discussion.** If students have a particularly negative reaction to a text, push deeper—ask them why and what assumptions of theirs the text has disrupted. A common student response to the Black Panther Party's "Ten Point Plan," for instance, is that it is too aggressive, outrageous, and irrational. Yet, what the Black Panther Party is ultimately demanding is universal healthcare and employment, a complete overhaul of the criminal justice system and prison industrial complex that has consistently criminalized black people, and reparations from the state for its ongoing exploitation of black people. For the Party, these are completely reasonable, rational, and fair demands. Rather than dismissing the "Ten Point Plan" as "outrageous," then, students can be pushed to engage in a deeper

analysis of their own emotional reaction to think through how an assigned reading has pushed, complicated, expanded, or challenged their understanding of the topic and issue in question.

- **Establish a code of conduct on the first day and make it clear to your students what your commitments are as a scholar and instructor.** Make it clear on the first day what kind of classroom and intellectual community you're expecting to build for the rest of the quarter by explicitly defining what appropriate behavior and conduct looks like to you. Belle Kim includes two clauses—a Statement of Commitment and Code of Conduct that she crafted—in her syllabus. She uses the language of “We at the English department” in order to convey the idea that the commitments she describes is shared across the body of instructors and professors in the department rather than just being her own individual preference. Having such clauses in writing is useful because they allow you to set clear expectations and hold your students accountable from the first day onwards. You are welcome to use or adapt either.
  - *Statement of Commitment.* We at the English department are committed to valuing the lived experiences, embodied knowledges, and scholarship produced by people of color and Indigenous peoples; queer, trans, and disabled people; immigrants and refugees, and other targeted identities who have historically been excluded from sites of knowledge production; denied access to wealth, resources and power; and forced to negotiate multiple interlocking forms of structural and institutional oppression and violence. This commitment emerges from and reflects our shared vision for a just and equitable world that actively affirms and values the humanity of every individual and group. It is this vision that informs our pedagogical practices.
  - *Code of Conduct.* We at the English department do not condone hate speech. According to the American Bar Association, hate speech is “any speech that offends, threatens, or insults groups, based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or other traits.” While this could and does apply to many groups, one of the tenets of this course is that hate speech is a violence, and that these violences do not impact everyone equally. Rather, the force of their impacts is dependent on systems of power. Marginalized communities and people are vulnerable to and impacted by such speech in ways that groups or individuals in power are not. With this in mind, I will specify that I interpret “hate speech” to be any forms of speech that targets already vulnerable people/communities. Racism and xenophobia will not be tolerated in this course, nor will transphobia, homophobia, ableism, classism, or other statements or practices that uphold white supremacy.
- **Consider also inviting your students to help you generate ground rules for productive difficult conversations across difference.** Rather than just providing rules to students, you can also provide guidelines for a code of conduct, such as those examples above, and then ask students to discuss and grapple with them in class and to generate a collective set of practices, commitments, and rules for how the class is going to productively hold space for difficult conversations. This give students a chance to share input and might facilitate a sense of shared trust and responsibility for facilitating conversation.



## PREPARING FOR DISCUSSION

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Although many of us remember our favorite professors as the ones who made teaching look easy—who could breeze into a classroom and apparently lead brilliant discussions without notes or any other evidence of forethought—most good teaching results from solid preparation.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

One simple way to prepare is to assemble some discussion questions in advance. Impromptu discussion questions often come across as complicated and muddled, so having a note card or handout with your discussion questions on it will help ensure that your students get the clearest possible articulation of the question. In general, good discussion questions share several qualities:

- **They cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.”** For this reason, questions that ask “How,” “What,” or “Why,” tend to be more effective than questions that begin with “Can” or “Is.”
- **They are specific rather than general, and they do not place too much of the burden on novice students.** As graduate students, we are familiar with the practice of classroom discussion, and arrive at our seminars prepared to comment on the text(s) in question and respond to one another. We know that the burden may be on us to provide the class activity, so if our instructor should begin by asking “So, what did you think?” we can still initiate a productive discussion. Not so for our English 131 students, who are generally unfamiliar with student-centered discussions and will respond to initial questions such as “What should we talk about today?” with a combination of dismay, distrust, and/or horror. While we do not want to be so specific that students have no latitude for response, we need to establish some kind of point from which students can work and add some initial structure to the discussion.

### EXAMPLE 1: Discussion Freewrite (Vidali)

Here’s where we apply Percy’s principles to something in particular, and I’ve attached a description from the “Grand Canyon Junkies” website [not included here]. This helps you transition from only doing personal readings to applying Percy’s theories to something specific. As you’ll read, these folks have a little bit of a different take on the “wonders” of the canyon.

The goal is for you to **make some connections between Percy and the attached piece**. You might wonder if this piece describes getting off the beaten track of the Grand Canyon or not, whether dialectical movement might apply, etc. You may also bring in other ideas regarding these “junkies” as experts, loss of sovereignty....Don’t worry about making a brilliant argument – just do your best to make some connections.

*Most important is coming up with something you can share with the class during discussion, so concentrate on ideas, not perfect writing.*

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### PLAY WITH YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Try putting the class in a circle (if your desks are moveable). This encourages students to look at each other and to acknowledge that their audience is the whole class, not just you. In addition, many feminist and liberatory pedagogies encourage circling desks because it can disrupt the traditional hierarchal structure of the classroom. Of course, explain to your students why you want them to sit in

a circle and what you want the circle to look like (each student should be able to see everyone else, no huge spaces between desks, etc). Don't be afraid to give specific instructions to students—especially in the beginning weeks—in order to get your classroom the way you want it (i.e. “Suzy, could you scoot your desk back a little so that Paulo can see?”).

## OTHER SUGGESTED DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

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- **Read a passage from the text that you want to use as an entry point.** Because some students cannot read from the text easily or feel uncomfortable doing so, be sure to ask for a volunteer. Reading first allows students to participate who might not otherwise; it reminds the students what the text was about; and it allows students who didn't do the reading to find an entry point into the conversation.
- **Start in small groups.** Ask students to take 10 minutes (or so) and work in small groups to accomplish specific tasks, such as having them summarize the text and generate one or two discussion questions. You can have students report back to the class or write ideas on the board. The latter is a good idea as it refocuses the class' attention onto *ideas* rather than *people*.
- **Start with students' experiences.** If students are hesitant to talk, you can always start with a topic they are experts on—their own. Ask if they had favorite passages in the reading and ask them to explain why, or if it was particularly difficult and why. Did they find anything in the piece they could relate to? It shouldn't be long before you can make a connection back to your planned questions.
- **Have a written discussion.** To prepare, write out your discussion questions, putting one each on the top of a separate page (or have student groups come up with their own questions). Then divide the students into small groups and give each group one question to discuss. They should record their response on the question page. After about 10 minutes, have the groups pass their question and response around to the next group who will then read the previous group's response and offer one of their own. You can continue this in a “round-robin” fashion until all the groups have responded to each question. You also might reserve a day in the computer-integrated classroom and take advantage of GoPost, Catalyst Tool's real-time, online discussion board program.
- **Have students write the discussion questions.** Once students have had time to practice discussion, and have seen your discussion questions in action, you can review the qualities of effective questions and ask students to come up with the questions for the next discussion. Giving students this responsibility teaches them to engage critically with the material, and it can also be a way for students to collaborate on comprehending a difficult reading or idea.
- **Guest panel.** Some TAs have had success inviting other graduate students to come to their classes and model an academic discussion. One approach is to have the guest panel begin by the TAs discussing the text amongst themselves—so that the students can see the kinds of statements and responses that are used—and then ask the students to join in. It can also be effective to make time for the students to discuss what they noticed about the graduate student discussion as compared to the discussions they've encountered in undergraduate classes. You could end by generating a list of goals or guidelines for discussion in your classroom community.

## CHAPTER 8

# EVALUATING & RESPONDING TO STUDENT WRITING

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During the quarter, you'll be giving your students individual written feedback on each of their short and major assignments, and this feedback will be instrumental in helping students improve their writing and revise their chosen assignments for the portfolio (see the pathways in Chapter 6 to help you think about connecting feedback with assignment sequencing). While individual assignments are not graded, your feedback will be one of the primary ways that you set up expectations for how students will be graded when they turn in their final portfolios. This chapter will present some guidelines by which you can evaluate and respond to your students' writing, and information on grading portfolios can be found in Chapter 9: Portfolios in English 131.

The chapter is divided into two main parts. "Part One: Response" takes up the sometimes tense issue of how to most helpfully respond to student writing, being careful to differentiate between critique and response. "Part Two: Dealing with Troubling Papers" offers some strategies for working with challenging student papers that can feel very violent to read. "Part Three: Dealing with Plagiarism" explains how to prevent plagiarism in your class and what to do if a student does engage in academic dishonesty.

## **PART ONE: RESPONSE**

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Though you will grade your students in the end, most of your feedback will be in the form of writing on drafts (and having conferences, as discussed in Chapter 7). Because the EWP uses the portfolio for determining final grades in 131 and does not assign letter grades to every writing assignment, the responses the students receive from you—and from their peers—will be all the more important. One of the ideas behind removing formal grades from every assignment is that your comments on the paper will fill the discursive space that was once filled by justifying the formal grade. Of course, the grades do not totally disappear, and we'll discuss grading in Chapter 9.

As instructors in the EWP, you will be spending a lot of time responding to student writing. There are as many ways to go about this as there are English instructors; the time spent on each paper and the number of drafts that can be graded in one sitting (while preserving your own intelligence, energy, and coherence) will vary from person to person. Everyone will respond to student writing in their own way, and while there are few if any hard-and-fast rules, what follows are some things to keep in mind in developing your own commenting style.

## TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE RESPONDING

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### GOALS IN RESPONDING

The primary goal of commenting on a student's draft is to give your student the benefit of a clear and articulate "reader's eye" view of his/her writing; referring to specifics in the writing lets the student know which elements really stand out to a reader, either as well-crafted or in need of work. In addition, this kind of commenting will keep you from falling into a "rubber stamp" kind of response ("more support, more evidence" written at the end every argument paper), which despite coming pretty easily after the eleventh or twelfth paper of the night, is not all that helpful to the student. These comments are also generally forward-reaching, meaning that the comments deal with skills and strategies so that the feedback can be used in subsequent writing assignments, even when they aren't explicitly revising the one you've just commented on.

### FIRST THINGS FIRST: TIME SPENT RESPONDING TO ASSIGNMENTS

You could spend the rest of your life editing freshman English papers and no one would benefit from it. It seems to be a fact of life that when you first start grading, you grade obsessively. You spend time writing long comments, filling all the margins, and "fixing" punctuation errors, misspelled words, and strange new syntactic constructions—the latter of which may very well keep you from considering the content that speaks to the primary focus of the assignment. With this in mind, here are four reasons to avoid the overachiever grading attitude:

1. You will go insane. There are not enough hours in the day, and your other work will suffer.
2. The students at the bottom of the pile will bear the brunt of you having spent an hour on each of the first 15 students' assignments. Save some steam!
3. This kind of commenting will often lead the student to think of the draft less as a project-in-progress, and more as a fixed object which, if only s/he goes through the list of "repairs" that you've prescribed, will be finished. Your comments will be for naught.
4. Your students are human, and as such, they can only absorb so much information. Remember that competence in all of the outcomes describes a final aim of a quarter-long course, not the aim of each every draft. Be reasonable and pick your battles.

Time management may be one of the biggest challenges you face teaching 131: how to balance commenting on assignments with the rest of your teaching, your own scholarship, and your life outside UW (which you shouldn't feel guilty about having!). Here are some ways to manage:

- Skim each student's draft before you begin commenting on it. You'll notice major things that require attention and won't be tempted to waste your time on smaller issues. An alternative method: Skim through all of the drafts once before settling down to read them. You can sort them into high, middle, and low range. This will help you comment consistently and highlight common mistakes that will make your commenting more efficient.
- Decide how much time you'll spend with each draft before you begin, and stick to this time limit! Use a timer if you need to. (This will also ensure that you distribute your time fairly among students.) A good time limit may be 10-15 minutes on shorter assignments and 20-30 minutes on longer assignments. It may be hard at first, but you will get faster as you become more experienced.
- "Rule of 3": Limit yourself to three written comments per page, plus an end comment if you'd like. Keep your end comments to three sentences.

- For shorter assignments, design a chart or checklist rubric that you complete and return to students along with their drafts. Your rubric can list the things you're looking for in the assignment (perhaps directly citing the outcomes or the evaluation criteria outlined in your assignment prompt), and provide check boxes for evaluation using the language of the final portfolio rubric (outstanding, strong, etc.) You can also leave (a small) space for more specific written comments.
- Don't read all 23 assignments in one sitting. You'll go crazy by the end and will not be able to approach those last papers with the same fair eye you had for the first few.
- If you see students making similar choices that you find particularly in/effective, don't offer the same advice over and over for each student; bring these issues up to the whole class. When doing so, you may want to bring in anonymous samples (get students' permission first) or make up your own samples.
- Consider leaving a draft or two you know will be good for the end, rather than deferring those you know will be hardest to read; you'll be glad you did!

### USE THE COURSE OUTCOMES

If you design each assignment with the outcomes in mind, are explicit about which outcomes or traits are targeted in each assignment by including evaluation criteria in your assignment prompts, and discuss the outcomes and your expectations with your students, you can use these expectations to guide your comments. For example, if one of your assignments asks students to support their claim with evidence that comes from a text they have read, you can focus your comments on the strength of their evidence and their use of quotation and summary. It would not be as helpful to your students to focus on the complexity of their claim if the exercise was meant for them to apply evidence in a particular way.

Sometimes it's hard to identify just *why* a draft—or a whole group of drafts— isn't working. The course outcomes and traits should help you remember things about conducting research, for example, which have probably become second nature to you as a writer. As mentioned earlier, some instructors even use these outcomes to organize their end comments categorically, writing separate comments in response to the student's performance in each area that has been targeted in the assignment. Whatever approach you take, be sure to cite the language of these outcomes (especially ones you have targeted in your assignments) when responding and evaluating. This way, you reinforce and circulate the outcomes, keeping them active in students' minds. Just as importantly, the course outcomes and traits give you a vocabulary you can use for responding to student writing.

The Course Outcomes can be found on page 39 of this manual, at the beginning of *Writer/Thinker/Maker*, and on the EWP website.

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### USE THE EVALUATION RUBRIC

The evaluation rubric below is meant to work in conjunction with the course outcomes. Having identified the trait(s) you are targeting in an assignment, you can then use the value terms below to communicate to students how well they have demonstrated these traits in their work. Be sure to supplement these value terms with explanation related to the outcomes.

- Outstanding:** Offers a very highly proficient, even memorable demonstration of the trait(s) associated with the assignment outcome(s), including some appropriate risk-taking and/or creativity.

- Strong:** Offers a proficient demonstration of the trait(s) associated with the assignment outcome(s), which could be further enhanced with revision.
- Good:** Effectively demonstrates the trait(s) associated with the assignment outcome(s), but less proficiently; could use revision to demonstrate more skillful and nuanced command of trait(s).
- Acceptable:** Minimally meets the basic assignment outcome(s) requirement, but the demonstrated trait(s) are not fully realized or well-controlled and would benefit from significant revision.
- \*Inadequate:** Does not meet the assignment outcome(s) requirement; the trait(s) are not adequately demonstrated and require substantial revision on multiple levels.

*\* Some instructors opt for “Needs Improvement” instead of “Inadequate”*

## RESPOND SPECIFICALLY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ASSIGNMENT

“Nice job with *Aladdin* and *The Fox and the Hound* in para. 3—this really shows an engagement with Lippi-Green’s idea of bias toward a Southern dialect” is better than “Nice job with Lippi-Green.” It is not as simple as “more is better,” but it is worth keeping in mind both the amount of **specificity** you offer your students and the example that you set for your students’ own work as peer responders.

## DIFFERENT DRAFTS = DIFFERENT KINDS OF RESPONSES (FOR DIFFERENT STUDENTS)

Your responses to drafts will vary with the specific assignment, targeted outcomes, and the different stages in a sequence of assignments. In early assignments, for instance, you might focus more attention on the inventiveness of the thinking, on violations of the known-new contract, or on problems in focusing or framing an argument. Nearer to the end of a sequence, you may find that you’re spending more time on support and development issues; and, in the final stages, you may concentrate more on stylistics. Remember that each draft is different, and also remember that your students will be at different places in their writing processes. There is no rule that says your commenting has to be homogenous from assignment to assignment, or from student to student. For more information about how to tailor your feedback to the specific expectations of your course calendar and/or to align it with your pedagogical values as an instructor, please refer to the pathways outlined in the EWP Statement on Assessment of and Feedback on Grammar Correctness in Chapter 6. You will also find helpful suggestions for dealing with grammar issues in your students’ work more broadly.

## RECOGNIZING STRENGTHS

Let your students know when you recognize they’ve done something well, without evaluating or making suggestions. If something strikes you as elegantly presented or as a nice example of some element of writing you’ve been discussing in class, don’t hesitate to make a note saying so, or even better, use it as an example in class (be sure to get permission; students hate surprises). It is generally worth the effort to pass through a draft again in order to find something positive (as recommended by Donald Daiker). Also, be honest with students about how you tend to respond; if your “constructive” comments tend to outweigh your positive ones no matter what you do, be honest with them about this in class (or, if appropriate, try to adjust your style).

## GIVE EQUAL TIME AND ENERGY TO EVERY STUDENT’S ASSIGNMENT

It is difficult not to spend more time on the drafts of students whose work has been consistently well written, or on drafts by students who we like or who contribute productively to class discussions. But it’s important to give equal time and effort to every student—even if that means taking extra time to

find specific positive things to say on an outstanding draft or deciding not to comment on the clichéd conclusion because you've spent time commenting on the unsuccessful organizational choices in a poorly written paper. That said, if a student has clearly not fulfilled the assignment, there is no reason to respond as though he or she has; you should feel free to return the assignment with minimal comments and explain that in order for you to give feedback, the student must rewrite the assignment according to the guidelines and outcomes described in the prompt. You might also consider that if the student really does require extra feedback, you can ask that they come see you during office hours to talk about their paper (more on this below).

### **ASK QUESTIONS (INSTEAD OF GIVING DIRECTIONS)**

If you find yourself asking questions as you read (and you will), let the student know what they are. Questions—particularly those asking for clarification—identify problem areas (both general and specific), and as students respond to them, they can be led where they need to go in their argument, without your having prescribed or dictated that they go there. In addition, questions that suggest implications and extensions of the student's argument can indicate the extent to which the student's work has produced engagement on the part of you, the reader.

### **APPROACH EACH DRAFT AS A DRAFT**

The assignments your students submit throughout the quarter are, after all, *drafts*; your students will have a chance to revise their work for their portfolio, so when you comment, keep this in mind. You might write something like, "If you choose to revise this assignment for the final portfolio, think about..."

### **TIE YOUR COMMENTS TO CLASS DISCUSSIONS**

You may want to re-present some elements of the student's writing using some of the terms you've established in class: "I like the way you present your controlling idea about education and indoctrination in the opening paragraph, and then move on to your supporting statements about your experience here at the UW. You wait until you've fully presented your position before considering counterarguments." Or you may refer specifically to something that went on in class: "Remember what Joanne said about Ron's paper—a little humor goes a long way." (This kind of commenting also comes in very handy as a reminder that it is a good and necessary thing to attend class.)

### **REMEMBER, FOCUS ON WHAT YOU'VE DONE SO FAR**

Having spent time pouring over the criteria and going over it with the class, it may be tempting to respond to everything in every assignment. Though this is a bad idea for time reasons (as discussed before), you also want to remember that there is no point to writing "weak transition" if you haven't discussed transitions; the comment will not mean much to the student. Of course, when it comes time for the portfolio, the student will need to take all the criteria into account, but it will be their job to return to that first paper, where you hadn't yet done transitions, and figure out what needs work.

### **END COMMENTS V. MARGINAL COMMENTS**

Generally, try to spend more time on end comments than on marginal comments, as end commentary is written as a response to the entire essay and is likely to contain your more important thoughts and reactions, especially overall suggestions for revision. Marginal comments are likely to be more fragmented and seen by students as "fix-it" items. However, for some instructors, end comments tend to be blasé, so decide for yourself. Also, avoid marking repeated mistakes: it's usually better to identify the problem in an end-comment and leave it to the student to identify and "fix" the problem.

## **KNOW WHEN TO SAY “SEE ME”**

Sometimes, a student will submit a draft that is so far “off” or confusing that you don’t know where to start; often, in these cases, you’ll uncharacteristically stare at the page for several minutes thinking “where do I begin?” Sometimes, the appropriate move can be to write a small note asking the student to come see you. In writing, you may leave the student with a predominantly negative response (and one that cannot take into consideration valid but unanticipated reasons students might have for “missing the point” of an assignment). But in person, you are more likely to understand the student’s point-of-view and successfully articulate your own. It’s best to get the student’s take on how he/she did/did not meet the assignment *first*, in order to gauge your response appropriately. Lastly, “see me” has the same stigma as red pen: watch your phrasing, and consider writing something such as “please come see me in office hours soon so we can talk about your paper and brainstorm ways to refocus and strengthen it.”

## **COORDINATING YOUR RESPONSES WITH SCHEDULED CONFERENCES**

At a few points in the quarter, you’ll likely be coordinating your responses on assignments with conferences; be sure to take advantage of this! As discussed elsewhere, the conferences are a great opportunity to talk to the student, and you’ll need to gauge how it changes your response strategy. You may find that you can write less and instead have the student write down ideas as you present them in conference (this also keeps them from spacing out in conference). You may also decide to use a response strategy or symbol that allows you to easily locate areas you want to discuss in conference (which you often think you’ll remember but won’t by your ninth conference in a row). Some students with different learning styles and preferences will appreciate the kind of feedback they receive in conferences. By the same token, keep in mind that certain students with learning and other disabilities may require you to write your comments, even if you plan to conference.

## **AGAIN, USE THE LANGUAGE OF THE OUTCOMES**

Let the student know how s/he is doing: where you’re convinced by their argument, where you’re not, and why; what’s detracting from or adding to the overall quality of her/his piece, and why. Even (and in many cases especially) in portfolio courses, students will often be (quite justifiably) anxious about their eventual grades; you don’t need to assign a letter grade to communicate your evaluation of their performance on an assignment draft. Students are very savvy about translating the implications of adjectives, so, for example, if you mean “outstanding” don’t just write “good.”

## **EXPLAIN YOUR STYLE**

After a quarter or two (and after seeing your colleagues’ approaches), you’ll recognize your feedback “approach.” When you can identify what you tend to do, be honest with your students. They will respect you for this “meta-discussion” on feedback, and it will also give you a chance to admit your strengths and weaknesses, such as tending toward the negative, writing messily, ignoring conclusions in first drafts, etc.

## **MAKE SURE YOUR STUDENTS READ YOUR COMMENTS**

Some students have a tendency to stuff returned work into their backpacks as soon as you hand it back, only to dig them out when it’s time for them to revise for their portfolios. It is important to explain to your students that because 131 assignments are constructed as a series of scaffolded sequences, students should expect to work toward incorporating your suggestions on each successive assignment to avoid making the same mistakes or unsuccessful choices. It will be frustrating to both you and your students if you make suggestions on how to make their claim more focused, but they don’t read this comment and repeat the same type of vague claim statement in their next assignment.



So build in time for students to read your comments; you might leave a couple of minutes at the end or the beginning of class for them to gloss your comments and write a “Revision Plan,” have them email you a question or two about the comments you’ve given them on a draft, or have them keep a journal or log of comments/ suggestions/things they should be working on in their writing throughout the quarter. These strategies will also help students with their critical reflection at the end of the quarter, where they will need to explain how they revised their work, and will help them become more critical readers of their own and their peers’ work.

## UNDERSTAND YOUR ROLE

Considering what many of us find important in our studies, it is unsurprising that we often enter the classroom hoping to temper the power relationship between teacher and student; we understand we have authority but perhaps don’t want to flaunt it. In terms of responding, this can sometimes result in “wishy-washy” responses or a failure to recognize the authority you really do hold as an instructor, which can be understandably frustrating for the student. Be honest and clear, and recognize that you are not simply “another reader,” but are not the supreme dictator either. Of course, it is also possible to be too authoritative, especially since your students will expect you to be, and this is something to be careful of as well and can be tempered by a stronger emphasis on peer review and positive response from you.

## OPTIONS FOR RESPONDING

Though there are many different ways that you can respond to assignment drafts, outlined below are a few styles to consider:

- **Reader response mode:** I’m confused here when you say \_\_\_\_; I thought you meant \_\_\_\_, but this next paragraph makes me think \_\_\_\_\_. Can you clarify for me? I like your image here; it reminds me of \_\_\_\_\_.
- **Argument response:** Your claim says \_\_\_\_\_, but your examples argue for \_\_\_\_\_. Can you help me understand how you think the examples support your claim? I think you skipped a step here—what I would expect here is \_\_\_\_\_, but maybe you’re saying something else. Which is it?
- **Peer responses:** I noticed that your peer said \_\_\_\_\_ when you mentioned \_\_\_\_\_. I agree. Can you clarify for us? Your peer said that you needed additional sources and I see that you didn’t change any in your revision. I think your peers had the right idea.
- **Other resources:** In class, we read \_\_\_\_\_, but I notice that you didn’t mention that article. Doesn’t it fit with your argument?
- **Reference language of assignment:** You seem to be arguing \_\_\_\_\_, but the assignment asks that you consider these options, in addition to the basic claim. What else can you say about these options?
- **Returning to heuristics:** Your peers and I found that we needed more detail for this example. How about a brainstorming list from the article you use listing all the occasions where your point is mentioned?
- **Recommending further reading:** Another source on our recommended reading list was \_\_\_\_\_. I think it might be useful for you to consider for your final version.

## FURTHER READING

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## PART TWO: DEALING WITH TROUBLING PAPERS

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This section is designed to help you develop flexible strategies for dealing with ideologically troubling papers, which can feel very uncomfortable, and even violent, to encounter and engage with. Such student papers might contain perspectives that deeply conflict with your own or might contain what you understand as sexist, racist, or otherwise discriminatory or problematic discourse.

First and foremost, it is important to recognize that it is not always clear how (or whether) to respond to such perspectives that appear in student papers (or comments in class for that matter). Your response to any given paper will be a negotiation affected by many factors, including your own teaching philosophy and commitments, your identity and comfort level with the student, your sense of the intentionality or seriousness of the ideas you encounter, the dynamics and context specific to your class in any given quarter, and so on. While our responses will differ, one of our goals is to help all of our students make effective arguments and to become more responsive to and responsible for the consequence arguments have (their own and others') within diverse communities and contexts.

Secondly, we urge you to remember that students may be encountering new ideas that might deeply challenge perspectives they hold. In many cases, students using troubling discourse may not be fully aware of the impact and effects of their argument. In such cases, helping students better understand the consequences of various arguments and ideas (which is one of the aims of Outcome 3) and being open to listening to their reasoning can open productive space for dialogue, learning, and trust. While not always possible, such a space can become an opportunity for students to challenge their own thinking and gain a deeper understanding of and responsibility for the serious consequences of language in the world.

Finally, and just as important, it's crucially important for us to acknowledge and recognize the emotional and intellectual labor that goes into reading and responding to such papers—it can be a deeply taxing, stressful, and isolating experience. After all, while it's true that your students are demonstrating vulnerability in submitting their works and opening themselves up for critique, teaching, too, can be a deeply vulnerable act—especially if you're a first-time teacher. Please reach out to us and to your peers if you encounter anything in student papers (or class interactions) that is worrisome. We are here to listen and to help you troubleshoot, offer strategies, and address any safety concerns.

Below, we offer a list of methods and strategies that Belle Kim has used in the past to respond to two challenging papers. The first (Student A) condemns #BlackLivesMatter and the tactics the movement has used to further their cause to argue that they have brought police brutality and racial policing upon themselves by being disruptive and making themselves ready targets; the second (Student B) claims that racial discrimination results from cultural difference and immigrants' inability to assimilate successfully into the US; the third (Student C) argues that Syrian refugees should not be admitted into European countries because they are more likely to be terrorists and criminals, cause political strife, and cannot offer anything to their host country to offset the cost of their relocation. The instructor's goal was to encourage her students to think more deeply about the issue at hand by using a variety of tactics to respond that sought to disrupt their assumptions and push against their line of argumentation.

In offering these examples, we hope that you can feel more supported and prepared to tackle such scenarios as they rise.

## TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE RESPONDING

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### NAME AND QUESTION THE ASSUMPTIONS THAT UNDERGIRD THEIR ARGUMENTS

Explicitly naming the unstated beliefs and assumptions students hold that motivate their unsubstantiated claims is a crucial strategy that you can use to push against students' arguments. In doing so, you can tell your student that an argumentative research paper emerging out of such an assumption is fundamentally unsound unless they can cite and analyze credible evidence or reference reliable (scholarly) secondary sources and research that can back up the assumption.

*Example:* Student A argues that #BlackLivesMatter is ineffective because “the justice system only target those who intentionally make an enemy of it—usually in the form of committing crimes” and the tactics of the movement (described as “relentless protests”) “makes an enemy of that system, thus inviting the targeting they wish to end.” In her response, the instructor names and questions his assumption that the justice system evenly targets and punishes only those who commit crimes: “Here, you’re making a lot of assumptions—that there is no racial bias within the police force, for instance (an assumption that scholars such as Angela Davis [discussed in class] and Michelle Alexander have specifically disputed); that

all the unarmed black civilians who were killed by police were engaging in criminal acts at the time of their deaths, which hasn't actually been the case; that there hasn't been a history of racial violence against black Americans in the States, etc.—that you'd need to prove in order to be able to convince your readers of the interpretation you're offering here.” Here, she pushes against his central argument by showing that it is built around a series of assumptions that cannot be proven with material evidence or analysis.

### **RECOMMEND OTHER CREDIBLE (SCHOLARLY) SECONDARY SOURCES THAT DISRUPT THEIR ASSUMPTIONS**

Another tactic that you can use is to suggest relevant and credible scholarly secondary sources whose core arguments disrupt the assumptions your students make in their paper. In doing so, you will be able to show that the arguments they are interested in making are actually part of a much larger ongoing (academic) conversation that includes multiple stakeholders and scholars with more expertise and knowledge. Your response to their work, then, cannot be read as just the proclivities of one individual; rather, it is situated in a larger context and conversation. Moreover, your recommendations can serve as additional guidance and direction that can help students think through the questions you pose throughout your reading of their paper.

### **REFER BACK TO COURSE TEXTS AND DISCUSSIONS THAT ACTIVELY WORK AGAINST THEIR CLAIMS**

Referencing specific class discussions, lectures, and course texts can help remind students that they're expected to engage with the shared knowledge you build with them in your classroom throughout the quarter in their individual writing. After all, building upon and expanding on the ideas of others is a critical part of thinking of writing as a conversation rather than as something that occurs in isolation. It also pushes students to grapple with compelling evidence and analysis that work against the very claims they're making.

*Example:* In his paper, Student B argues that racial discrimination and the harassment of immigrants and people of color result not from white supremacy (which he argues has been “constantly altered and diminished”) but from cultural difference and the newcomers’ inability to assimilate effectively into the US: “The inequality that can be observed in the society, may [be found to be] the faults of the immigrants, since they share different culture, origin and ideas.” The instructor responds to the unsubstantiated assumptions he makes here by citing course texts and referencing relevant class discussions that work against his claims. Addressing his first point, she asks, “How might Lipsitz respond to such a claim given his argument that institutional and structural racism continue to very much organize US society and culture? Is white supremacy really diminished given the xenophobic/racist/nativist attitude of the Trump administration and the ongoing prevalence of social activism such as #BlackLivesMatter and #Not1MoreDeportation?” To the second, she writes, “Is what you’re trying to argue, then, that racial discrimination has existed solely because of cultural difference? How might such an argument run the risk of being reductive? Think back to Hing’s claim, for instance, that the cycles of acceptance and rejection that characterize US immigration policies were motivated by the desire for cheap, rootless, easily exploitable labor and capital on the one hand and racial prejudice and fear of economic competition on the other. How might his argument complicate your own?” With these comments, she reminds the student that she expects him to be drawing from and adding to conversations they have been having in class even if he had the freedom to choose which topic to write on for this paper.

## USE THE LANGUAGE OF STAKES TO URGE STUDENTS TO THINK THROUGH THE ETHICAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THEIR ARGUMENTS

Ask your students about the urgencies and stakes motivating their argument—what are they writing about and why? Who is most affected by this issue? What are they trying to achieve by forwarding a specific argument? What is their argument and writing being mobilized toward—that is, for what end? What might be the material impact of their writing for those most affected by the argument they’re wanting to make and how have they taken this into account? In demanding that they think through such questions, you are reminding students that, at least within the parameters of your classroom, being a good writer means thinking carefully about the ethical and political implications of your arguments and being accountable critical writers.

*Example 1:* In response to Student A’s continuing critique of #BlackLivesMatter and assertion that “I look down upon those who take tactics such as those of BLM, and invite all who share a desire for a healthy future of discussion in America to join me,” the instructor asks, “What are the stakes of engaging in a project like this? That is, for what purpose are you launching and mobilizing this critique of the BLM movement? Compare this to the stakes and urgencies motivating the BLM movement—how do they compare? How might you take the latter into account more fully in your argument?” Here, she stresses that the student needs to think about both the stakes that inform his project *and* those of the movement he criticizes so it is clear he isn’t critiquing the BLM just for the sake of doing so.

*Example 2:* Student C argues in his paper that “only by facing the negative effects refugees bring to Germany can German media and politicians realize how much damage refugees [have] done and new policies should be publish[ed] to properly control refugees.” Throughout his paper, he remains focused on narrating the “negative effects,” “damages,” and “harm” that Syrian refugees have brought to their host countries but neglects to examine the issue from the vantage point of those most affected by his argument—the refugees themselves. In response, the instructor writes, “Is it only the damages? What benefits have they brought? What are the conditions that have led these refugees to seek asylum in other countries? Note that these people are escaping a war-torn country (the political instability of which has been actively facilitated by European/US powers) and while it’s important to think about the costs/drawbacks, it’s equally important to think about what they’ve contributed, the specific traumas they’ve had to negotiate, and the ways in which various countries have been implicated in the making of the refugee crisis. To clearly establish the stakes of your project, then, you need to think more about who your argument affects and in what ways.” The instructor thus pushes the student to consider more carefully the perspective of those most directly and materially impacted by his assumptions about the cost of refugee relocation.

## USE THE LANGUAGE OF “RESISTING BINARY THINKING” AND “COUNTERARGUMENTS/ CONCESSIONS” TO PUSH THEM TO CONSIDER QUESTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES THEY HAVEN’T YET CONSIDERED

Remind students that an effective piece of writing does not shy away from complexities or contradictions; the most compelling and powerful arguments emerge not from cherry picking for only those pieces of evidence that backs up one’s claims but from pushing deeper, asking difficult questions, and engaging those perspectives they have discounted or neglected to take into account.

*Example:* Student A writes that #BlackLivesMatter, “instead of convincing the populace and political groups to ignore the members of the movement and the Black people...paints an even bigger target on it—one labeled this time ‘impulsive and violent’ rather than ‘inferior and

irrelevant.’ In acting and speaking out so thoroughly and extravagantly...they also ensure they are treated differently as well, defeating the point of trying to end the differential treatment members of the Black people receive.” Here, the instructor offers in her margin comments a strong rebuttal to his argument that he’d need to address in order to be convincing to his readers: “How might you respond to a counterargument that says it was necessary for the BLM to explore different tactics because so many other approaches have been unsuccessful (as signaled by the ongoing devaluation of black lives)? Why might they have been calling for large-scale action to begin with? Doesn’t it also point to the difficulty of disrupting the status quo?” To push against the student’s assumptions that the only thing #BlackLivesMatter mobilizations have achieved is to make African Americans even more of a target, she asks, “Has this been the only outcome? What might have been gained? I think your argument would be strengthened by making some concessions and acknowledging that which the BLM has done well—doing so would lessen the risk of alienating your readers and engaging in binary thinking.” She thus tries to push the student to add more complexity and nuance to his argument by asking different questions than those currently motivating his writing.

### **ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS AND REQUIRE STUDENTS TO RESPOND TO THEM DURING REVISIONS**

Ultimately, in dealing with papers like the ones discussed in this section, one of the best strategies you can use is to leave margin comments throughout that pose specific questions for the students to answer. The questions can ask for clarification, more evidence and in-depth analysis, a metacognitive reflection on the student’s purpose and agenda as writer, a discussion of the stakes and urgencies motivating the student’s paper, etc. You can then require your student to respond directly to these questions in writing, which will also necessitate that they engage in more research and reflection. Asking carefully thought-out (and phrased) questions thus allows you to offer guidance without simply leaving unaddressed the troubling content. While some of the tactics offered in this section may seem inadequate at best, keep in mind that they’re also a way for you to protect yourself against potential accusations that you’re a “biased,” “unprofessional,” “social justice warrior” who practices “reverse racism” and tries to “indoctrinate” her students.

*Example:* Student A argues that the Black Lives Matter activists’ interruption of Bernie Sanders’ speech is indicative of the “reckless aggressiveness” of the movement: “Sanders has publicly stated views that align with those of BLM...however, the protesters refused to acknowledge this; they denied offers of negotiation while insulting the audience, leading to jeers and profanities from the audience...It directly showed how a group of liberal activists—closely aligned with the movement itself and not opposed—were quickly made into enemies due to the methods of the protestors and the reckless aggressiveness they tend to employ.” For this student, the disruption is a compelling piece of supporting evidence that backs up his critique of the #BlackLivesMatter. The set of questions the instructor asks in response shows, however, that such an example can be interpreted and read in a very different way: “This is a useful example that helps advance your argument, but I think you could do an even more in-depth analysis of what took place: what do you think the BLM activists were trying to accomplish and point out by interrupting Bernie Sanders? What do the pejorative responses of the audience suggest about the BLM’s perception of the gap between white liberals’ presentation of themselves as “good allies” and their actual political practices?” Such questions demand that the student engage in a more thoughtful analysis that goes beyond his own personal opinion.

## **TALK TO YOUR STUDENT IN PERSON**

This is not always possible, but if you have more serious concerns, you might ask to talk with the student in your office or during a conversation. The experience of reading written comments is very different than a conversation where you can ask students why they made certain choices and you can listen and respond to the student. See Chapter 7 for more information on and strategies for conferencing with students.

## **PART THREE: PLAGIARISM**

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Plagiarism is a complex concept that, depending on who you talk to, can encompass everything from forgetting to apply quotation marks to copying an entire paper verbatim or from unintentionally patching a few words together from a passage to submitting a paper purchased online. Determining what is inappropriate textual borrowing (and how to respond) requires a situated, nuanced, and flexible case-by-case understanding and response. In many circles, plagiarism is treated as a serious offense and even a criminal act, so whatever your personal philosophy regarding the ownership of language and ideas, plagiarism is a topic that deserves explicit attention in our 131 class.

### **PLAGIARISM: A CLOSER LOOK**

At the broadest level, inappropriate textual borrowing can be divided into two rough categories. In the first category, there are borrowings based on misunderstandings, inexperience, and cultural differences. Examples of this category could include paraphrasing without enough change, having a friend write portions of a paper, and even copying whole paragraphs directly from an unmentioned source. The vast majority of “plagiarism” that you will experience in 131 will be of this variety, and this kind of inappropriate borrowing generally deserves a pedagogical response. The rules for citation are hardly intuitive or transparent, and many of our students will be learning the expectations of the Western academy for the first time. It is our job as 131 instructors to coach our students through the vagaries of citation practice.

While the second category is rarer, you may also experience an instance where a student is being deliberately dishonest. After spending hours and hours pouring your heart and soul into constructive feedback, painstakingly tailored to each student’s interests and needs, the sense of betrayal upon finding that a student has not submitted their own work can be intense. Even in such situations, however, we encourage you to not take such instances personally, but rather take a moment to evaluate the situation. What forces might have compelled a student to make such a decision? How might you go about explaining the situation to the student in question? What is the most reasonable response to such cases within the context of your class? What are the ethical and pedagogical consequences of allowing the student to re-write the assignment? What are the ethical and pedagogical consequences of officially reporting the student to the University? Before taking any action or confronting the student, we strongly encourage you to consider such questions, and also to discuss the situation with the EWP Director, especially if this is the first time you are handling a case of plagiarism.

### **FIRST STEP- ESTABLISH CLEAR GUIDELINES REGARDING PLAGIARISM**

Before your class even begins, you can help prevent many unintentional plagiarism cases from ever arising. As you design your syllabus, assignment sequences, and lesson plans, make sure that students understand early on what plagiarism means in your class and how you will respond to it.

There is a standard UW policy on plagiarism available on the EWP website and it, or a more contextually appropriate one of your own devising, should be included on your syllabus. Make sure that you also give yourself the time to explain your policies verbally early in the quarter. Whatever your own take on plagiarism, it is important that your students understand that the University, as a whole, considers it a serious offense which could even result in expulsion. See the standard UW policy on Academic Honesty below:

***Plagiarism, or academic dishonesty, is presenting someone else's ideas or writing as your own. In your writing for this class, you are encouraged to refer to other people's thoughts and writing—as long as you cite them. As a matter of policy, any student found to have plagiarized any piece of writing in this class will be immediately reported to the College of Arts and Sciences for review.***

You should take the time to educate your students on what could be considered plagiarism at UW, particularly things that may not seem dishonest to many students (e.g., turning in the same paper for two different classes or turning in previously written work).

### **DESIGN YOUR COURSE TO REDUCE STUDENTS' ANXIETIES AND TO ENCOURAGE UNIQUE COMPOSITIONS**

You are encouraged to make full use of the example assignment sequences on the EWP website and in the EWP archive. As you do so, however, it is important to consider how well your sequences scaffold students' unique responses. Prompts that encourage students to make use of their unique set of talents and interests will increase student investment, reduce the temptation among students to make questionable textual borrowing choices and, perhaps most importantly, will improve your chances of staying sane as you read dozens of papers week-in and week-out.

It is also worth noting that some students are tempted to plagiarize because they feel their own work will not be successful, or because they have run out of time to complete an assignment and they panic. If you create room for students to ask questions about your assignments, discuss time management issues, and let students know that you understand that writing is a difficult process, you may be able to cut down on plagiarism. Some instructors find it helpful to explain to students that it's much better for them to ask for an extension at the last minute than resort to plagiarism. Moreover, it may help to remind students that the portfolio system allows space for students to do their best along the way without penalty to their grades and provides room for revision of self-curated course projects for the final portfolio.

### **WHEN PEDAGOGICAL RESPONSES FAIL...**

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If you do find yourself in a situation in which you feel your student has plagiarized, your first step should be to contact the EWP Director to explain the situation and get advice, as there are many things to keep in mind and ways for you to respond. In the EWP, we do not uphold a mandatory policy of reporting plagiarism cases to the Office of Student Affairs, but we do ask instructors to discuss all plagiarism cases (or suspected cases) with students, and we insist that no plagiarized projects can be included in the final portfolio. Our general approach is to begin by listening to students with compassion and patience, rather than start with an approach that sees all cases of plagiarism as cheating and deserving of a strict penalty. We ask that all instructors seek consultation



with the Director of the EWP when they encounter plagiarism cases for the first time (and whenever they would like additional support thereafter) prior to confronting students. In most cases, instructors resolve matters with their students without formal reporting to the University.

**Please keep in mind that it is University policy that teachers cannot independently fail a student or take disciplinary action for plagiarism or cheating without formal due process.**

If you decide, after consulting with the EWP Director, to individually handle an instance of plagiarism, the student in question will need to waive their due process before you can exercise any penalties, including simply asking them to rewrite a paper.

If the case is reported to the University, you cannot assess a penalty (or final course grade if the case occurs at the portfolio stage) until the college committee has adjudicated the case. The committee will ask the student to present his/her case against the case you have made, and then render a decision. If the plagiarism is confirmed, then you can assess a penalty, which can vary and the EWP Director can help you determine. At minimum, the student will need to rewrite the passages or papers that are plagiarized for the portfolio. If reported, the typical first ruling marks the violation of the Student Code on the student's permanent record. A second violation usually means expulsion.

## UW RESOURCES ON PLAGIARISM

For information detailing the rights that both you and your students have when faced with plagiarism as a disciplinary issue, see the Faculty Resource on Grading (FROG) website:

<http://depts.washington.edu/grading/>. This site also has a detailed description of the review process: <https://depts.washington.edu/grading/conduct/reporting.html>

## FURTHER READING

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Bennett, Karen. "The Geopolitics of Academic Plagiarism." *Publishing research in English as an additional language: Practices, pathways and potentials*, edited by Margaret Cargill and Sally Burgess, University of Adelaide Press, 2017, 209-220.

Evering, Lea Calvert, and Gary Moorman. "Rethinking Plagiarism in the Digital Age." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, vol. 56(1), 2012, pp. 35-44.

Pennycook, Alastair. "Borrowing Others' Words: Text, Ownership, Memory, and Plagiarism." *TESOL Quarterly*, 30(2), 1996, 201-230.

## CHAPTER 9

# FINAL PORTFOLIOS IN ENGLISH 131

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In English 131, **70%** of a student’s final grade is determined by a final portfolio. A typical 131 Final Portfolio consists of a selection of three to five **revised** showcase pieces, **including at least one of the two major projects**, and a series of critical reflections that discuss these showcase pieces. While students are required to include original drafts of all their work done over the course of the quarter, they are empowered to select which assignments will be evaluated and explain their choices in the critical reflection.

The remaining 30% of the student’s course grade is determined by participation.

This chapter provides an overview of the rationale behind using portfolios in English 131, shares strategies for how to prepare students to compile their portfolios, discusses how to determine students’ final grades through the evaluation of their portfolio and class participation.

### THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND PORTFOLIO EVALUATION

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The philosophy behind portfolio grading in the Expository Writing Program is captured in three words: COLLECT, SELECT, and REFLECT.

- **COLLECT:** Over the quarter, students work on various assignment sequences—a sequence consists of several “short” assignments (generally two to three pages in length) that provide an opportunity to practice and build the skills they will need in order to successfully complete a “major” assignment (of five to seven pages). These sequences run through approximately eight weeks of the quarter.
- **SELECT:** Out of all the assignments completed during the sequences, students then select three to five showcase pieces (at least one of those being a major paper) from these assignments, to be evaluated in the portfolio.
- **REFLECT:** In their reflection for the portfolio, students assess their own writing in terms of the course outcomes. Students develop their meta-cognition—which research in composition studies has shown to be a skill that transfers to new writing situations—by reflecting on how the selected writing assignments act as “evidence” to showcase their successful demonstration and fulfillment of the course outcomes.

The best reason to use portfolios in the writing classroom is consistency with our belief that **revision**

**and reflection are key elements of developing a mindful and effective writing practice.** If we teach in a process-based classroom, in which revision is emphasized, then we present our students with a contradiction when we grade individual assignments. **Portfolios honor process and revision.** Additionally, our students would be likely to receive grades that do not reflect their development over the course of a quarter. For instance, if a student received a 2.5 on the first assignment and 4.0 on her second, her average would be 3.3. But doesn't the grade on the second assignment suggest that she has come much further in her ability to demonstrate the outcomes? (Though you can focus on what you have taught "so far" when grading, this is often difficult.) By grading primarily on what a student can do at the end of the quarter, we avoid penalizing them for what they weren't yet able to do at the start of the quarter. Another reason for using portfolios is the opportunity portfolios provide for students to reflect on and assess their performance in light of established learning outcomes; such self-reflection on one's thinking (or metacognition) is a crucial part of one's ability to adapt to and write effectively in various contexts. A final reason for using portfolios has to do with our role as coaches rather than as evaluators. Most writing teachers prefer to function as coaches, as composition scholar Peter Elbow calls it. Judging is deferred in a portfolio evaluation curriculum and is instead replaced by guidance and critical feedback throughout the quarter. We will discuss these different types of evaluation in more detail in English 567.

## **BUILDING THE PORTFOLIO: WHAT DOES IT INCLUDE?**

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Most portfolios have three basic parts:

### **THE CRITICAL REFLECTION**

In a portfolio cover letter (for paper-based portfolios) or reflective web essay (for online portfolio), students use the writing they've chosen for evaluation as evidence for arguing how they understand and can perform the course outcomes. The language that students use will come from the course outcomes; without this language students will not know what they are meant to be demonstrating. In this reflective piece, the students show they have a self-awareness of their writing and that they know when and why they are choosing certain strategies. As described above, students develop **meta-cognitive skills** through these reflections, with which students can use in other writing situations.

In order for students to be ready for the tasks involved in the final portfolio, and the critical reflection in particular, they need opportunities for self-reflection throughout the quarter. We strongly recommend that you plan opportunities for your students to reflect on their successes and failures in relation to the outcomes often and in writing. Reflection is not a transparent task that students will be able to do without instruction and in only one or two nights just before the final portfolio is due. Reflections that punctuate the quarter can serve as the basis for their selections and their explanations in the final reflection; the students will be grateful to have had the time to practice, and your final grading will go more smoothly because students will be more adept at producing what you are asking of them.

### **PAPER-BASED AND ONLINE PORTFOLIOS**

In 1997, the EWP began using portfolios as a means of assessment. Currently, instructors have the option of using paper-based or online portfolios through Canvas or other UW tools, such as Google sites. Both options include the same required materials and assessment criteria. At the end of this chapter, we include student instructions for how to complete a paper-based and an online portfolio.

In a **paper-based portfolio**, students usually present their critical reflection in the form of a portfolio cover letter (approximately three single-spaced pages) following a standard business letter format (sample letters are available on the EWP website). The portfolio then includes the ready-for-

evaluation major assignment and two to four shorter assignments, along with their drafts. For a portfolio to be considered complete, it also needs to include all the remaining assignments completed throughout the quarter. Students usually submit their paper-based portfolios in a large manila envelope, binder, or clasped with a clip. (You may specify a standard submission format if you like.) Keep in mind that students should not leave their portfolios in a public space to be picked up later. If you decide to use paper-based portfolios, please establish a time and place when students can drop them off directly to you during office hours or slide them under your office door.

In an **online portfolio**, students submit all of the same materials they would in a paper-based portfolio via Canvas's Assignment submission tool. They upload their critical reflection in the form of commentary (the textual equivalent of roughly three single-spaced pages), their revised and ready-for-evaluation major assignment, two to four shorter assignments, and all drafts of all assignments completed over the quarter (this section is referred to as the "Compendium"). This option works particularly well if you have collected drafts through Canvas and commented on them electronically throughout the quarter.

*Please note that you have the option of asking students to submit some portion of an online portfolio in paper format—a collection of first drafts with hand-written comments from you or peers, for example.*

*The annotated sample in the EWP Portfolio appendix of Writer/Thinker/Maker is an online portfolio.*

There are many benefits, pedagogical and otherwise, of **using online, rather than paper-based, portfolios** in your class. These benefits include:

- Incorporating multi-media, multi-modal texts (such as PowerPoint, videos, and websites) as part of the portfolio;
- Incorporating aspects of visual rhetoric and design; and
- Widening the audience for the portfolio beyond the instructor, especially for peer review;
- Saving the reams and reams of paper used in the paper-based model (which students generally never pick up after the end of the quarter).
- Using electronic materials generated throughout the quarter decreases the odds of students losing these materials, especially in the case of hand-written feedback from their peers and instructor.

## ONLINE PORTFOLIO TEMPLATES

There are two ready-made templates of online portfolios that you can choose from. While both of these templates allow students to present a critical reflection alongside a collection of work, they organize the reflection and work differently:

**Option 1 — Organized by Outcome:** a series of webpages each addressing a specific outcome, and

**Option 2 — Organized by Showcase Piece:** on a series of webpages each addressing a specific assignment.

Please note that with either template, you have the option of asking students to submit the non-graded (but required) drafts either in paper form or electronically. If asked to submit materials

electronically, students may need to scan some of their work in order to capture handwritten comments. However, if you've been commenting on students' work electronically all along using Word's Comment feature, and your students and you have been using Canvas as a way to turn in work and return it with feedback, students can easily just attach these commented-on electronic drafts into their compendium of work.

## 1. The Template Organized by Outcome

In the template organized by outcome, the instructions prompt students to consider the homepage as the introduction to the portfolio. In this section, they welcome their reader and provide an introduction to their critical reflection. This is followed by a separate page for each of the four course outcomes in which the student will articulate how the paper(s) attached to each respective outcome are specifically demonstrating and fulfilling that outcome. This approach is helpful if your assignments are designed to focus on one or two outcomes over the others. Here's what the homepage of a portfolio organized by outcome looks like:



## 2. The Template Organized by Assignment

This template is similar to the one organized by outcome (the homepage and final reflection are likely identical) but is organized by assignment. In other words, students will specifically discuss how each of the four outcomes are represented within each respective paper. This approach is valuable for it imagines that some aspect of all four outcomes must be present in successful papers.

The screenshot shows a Canvas LMS interface. On the left is a purple sidebar with icons for Login, Dashboard, Courses, Calendar, Inbox, and Help. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: Russell's Portfolio > Home > Welcome to my English 131 Portfolio!. Below this, the page title is 'Welcome to my English 131 Portfolio!'. The content area contains a paragraph of text about the writer's progress in English 131. To the right of the text is a toolbar with icons for various actions. On the far right, there is a 'Home' section with a list of pages for this section, including 'Welcome to my English 131 Portfolio!', 'Assignment 1', 'Assignment 2', 'Assignment 3', 'Assignment 4', 'Final Reflection', 'Compendium of Work', and 'Release Form'.

## RESPONDING TO STUDENT WRITING WITH PORTFOLIO EVALUATION

The differences between responding to a single student draft and the final submission of the portfolio are typically categorized as **formative versus summative evaluation**. Until the student submits the portfolio, any submitted work counts as a draft and should be read and responded to as a draft. That means the form of the response should be oriented towards questioning, readerly (as opposed to evaluative) responses, and requests for more information and more detail, rather than summative, evaluative responses.

In addition to your responses and feedback during the course, we ask that you build in opportunities for peer response and, as mentioned earlier, for continuing self-assessment/reflection for the writer. The writer's self-assessment will typically deal with issues of intention: what do they intend for readers to understand? Peer responses may take a variety of forms, but often starting with highly descriptive responses is good policy. Some students see peer responses as their one opportunity to "be the teacher," often with confusing or even incorrect information. Providing the opportunity to be purely descriptive blunts some of that evaluative tendency and gives the writer a chance to notice how their writerly intention translates into impact on the reader. The preferred schedule of reading has instructors setting a "due date" for a "final" draft of an assignment, subject to further revision for the submission of the final portfolio. Each assignment then has two due dates: one as a draft and one as a final submission in a portfolio (and perhaps both "first draft" and "second draft" dates for major papers or projects). The instructor and/or peers give comments on the draft, anticipating that the student may choose to revise it for the final portfolio. Emphasizing the student's need to make choices about what to submit as their best work, we discourage instructors from taking that choice out of the student's hands. If the instructor tells the student how to do everything, there isn't much opportunity for the student to learn to make decisions and reflect on the outcomes of those decisions.

### GRADING THE PORTFOLIO

The portfolio represents 70% of the student's course grade. In evaluating the portfolio, instructors should respond **as a whole** rather than grade assignments separately to arrive at several individual grades that are then averaged. Students are submitting their work as a culmination of the entire quarter's work and not as separate essays, no matter what form you choose to have them submit the portfolio. Their critical reflections will address the work of the quarter as a body of work, showing how

the selected portfolio corresponds to and demonstrates the learning outcomes in the course. In other words, the grading of the portfolios is holistic.

The best reason for not giving students a provisional grade on their drafts is that both the student and you, as the evaluator, are empowered to grade based on growth and effort rather than initial impressions of a student's writerly capacities. Once you categorize the student as a 3.3 writer (B+), for example, you tend to stick with your original judgment. As a consequence, your student may think they already have a grade slot and won't try to improve. Alternatively, the student who receives an early 3.7 (A-) may conclude that they don't need to revise at all.

Though you will likely be adept at responding to drafts by the end of the quarter, you may face a new challenge: assigning grades to the portfolio and to students' participation. What follows is the portfolio grading rubric we use to evaluate student portfolios. This rubric can help students evaluate their own work, help you assign grades, and help provide some feedback for students regarding what the number grades *mean*. Before you grade your first set of portfolios towards the end of your first quarter, the EWP director and assistant directors will hold a portfolio grading workshop to help you practice evaluating 131 portfolios.

The portfolio evaluation rubric is used as an assessment tool for both the critical reflection and the selected papers. Using the rubric, instructors assess students on their development and acquisition of skills (the outcomes) at the end of the quarter rather than at the beginning. Even though students are not given grades on their assignment drafts throughout the quarter, they do receive extensive feedback on these drafts. As a result, they have some idea about the areas of their writing that need improvement. As mentioned earlier, feedback on the drafts generally takes the form of reader-response and coaching comments. Judging comments can also be included, but these comments are not connected to a particular grade. In this way, portfolios are effective in emphasizing revision as an important part of the writing process.

Portfolios also most closely resemble a form of assessment that allows for and embodies social constructivism — writing is situated and must be contextualized. Students create their own context for the work in the portfolio because they get to shape their analysis of the assignments (i.e., the context in which they understood the assignment) in their reflection. Further, portfolios respond to the uneven development of individual student learning because assessment doesn't take place until the end of the quarter (see Carroll).

**Students do not receive composition credit for English 131 if they receive below a 2.0. The average grade across all sections is a 3.3.**

## PORTFOLIO RUBRIC

### **Outstanding Portfolio 3.7-4.0**

This portfolio exhibits outstanding proficiency in all outcomes categories—academic argumentation, purposeful use of texts, rhetorical awareness, and revision, editing, and proofreading—outweighing its few weaknesses. The critical reflection clearly indicates which items in the portfolio demonstrate the course outcomes, and makes a compelling argument for how they do so. In so doing, it displays thorough and thoughtful awareness of the writer's own writing, using evidence from the course outcomes, assignments, self-assessments, peer responses, and teacher responses by quoting or paraphrasing from these materials in support of its argument. The selected major assignment and shorter assignments offer an outstanding demonstration of all the course outcomes through a very highly proficient and skillful handling of the traits associated with them. The outstanding portfolio will likely demonstrate some appropriate risk-taking, originality, variety, and/or creativity.

### **Strong Portfolio 3.1-3.6**

The strong portfolio exhibits strengths clearly outweighing weaknesses, but may show somewhat less proficiency in one or two of the outcomes categories, perhaps strong in academic argumentation, purposeful use of texts, and rhetorical awareness, but slightly less in revision, editing, and proofreading. The critical reflection clearly indicates which items in the portfolio demonstrate the course outcomes, and makes an effective argument for how they do so. It also displays thoughtful awareness of the writer's own writing, using evidence from the course outcomes, assignments, self-assessments, peer responses, and teacher responses by quoting or paraphrasing from these materials in support of its argument, but may not present as clear an argument for the choices as the outstanding portfolio. The selected major assignment and shorter assignments, although slightly less consistent in demonstrating the course outcomes, nonetheless offer a strong demonstration of effectiveness in many traits associated with the outcomes, handling a variety of tasks successfully. This portfolio engages the material and follows the assignments given, but may risk less than the outstanding portfolio.

### **Good Portfolio 2.5-3.0**

The good portfolio also exhibits strengths outweighing weaknesses, but may show less strength in two of the outcomes categories, perhaps strong in academic argumentation and purposeful use of texts, but less so in revision, editing, proofreading, and rhetorical awareness. The critical reflection indicates which items in the portfolio demonstrate the course outcomes, and makes an argument for how they do so, although the argument may display less thoughtful awareness of the writer's own writing by using less evidence from the course outcomes, assignments, self-assessments, peer responses, and teacher responses in support of its argument. The selected major assignment and shorter assignments effectively demonstrate the course outcomes, but with less proficiency and control. The portfolio usually will not display the appropriate risk-taking and creativity of the strong and outstanding portfolios.

### **Acceptable Portfolio 2.0-2.4**

The acceptable portfolio is competent, demonstrating that the course outcomes are basically met, but the traits associated with them are not as fully realized or controlled. The writing can succeed in the academic environment. The strengths and weaknesses are about evenly balanced, but should be slightly stronger on academic argument and purposeful use of texts, as these represent key facets of academic writing. Some parts of the selected assignments may be underdeveloped, too general, or predictable, or leave parts of the outcomes unconsidered. While demonstrating knowledge of conventions, this portfolio typically will not display rhetorical awareness or control over revision, editing, and proofreading. The critical reflection indicates which items in the portfolio demonstrate the course outcomes, but may not make as effective an argument for how they do so, one based in evidence from the course outcomes, assignments, self-assessments, peer responses, and teacher responses. There may be moments of excellence, but in general the portfolio simply meets successfully the demands of the course outcomes.

### **Inadequate Portfolio 1.0-1.9**

A portfolio will be inadequate when it shows serious deficiencies in three of the four course outcomes, especially in academic argument, purposeful use of texts, and revision, editing, and proofreading (for example, revision is limited to correcting grammar or to adding or deleting sentence and phrase level changes.) Alternatively, this portfolio may be error-free, yet does not adequately demonstrate the other outcomes. The critical reflection will be brief and may not indicate which items in the portfolio demonstrate the course outcomes or make an effective



argument for how they do so. The portfolio indicates that the student may need more time to be able to handle the demands of both academic reading and writing as characterized in the course outcomes and associated traits.

**Incomplete Portfolio 0.0-0.9**

A portfolio will be considered incomplete if no portfolio is submitted (0.0) or if the portfolio includes only part of the required work for the class, sometimes missing significant portions of the work of the course.

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## GETTING TECHNICAL: THE GRADING SCALE

Though the above information is helpful, you'll find that the UW grading scale provides many choices (some say too many) within the categories listed above. The UW grading scale is as follows (from [http://www.washington.edu/students/gencat/front/Grading\\_Sys.html](http://www.washington.edu/students/gencat/front/Grading_Sys.html)):

A	4.0-3.9	
A-	3.8-3.5	
B+	3.4-3.2	
B	3.1-2.9	
B-	2.8-2.5	
C+	2.4-2.2	
C	2.1-1.9	
C-	1.8-1.5	
D+	1.4-1.2	
D	1.1-0.9	
D-	0.8-0.7	Lowest passing grade.
E	0.0	Failure or Unofficial Withdrawal. No credit earned.

This grading scale may be rather different than the grading scale you were graded on (where the lowest C was a 2.0, or where a 3.7 was an A-). You can approach grading your students in a variety of ways. Using the rubric and grading scale above:

- **Begin with letter grades.** You may find that it is easier for you to identify a “B+” portfolio; then figure out what it should be on the numerical chart. However, this can be tricky, as you have to do some “translating” and are still only left with a range of grades.
- **Begin with percentages.** This can be useful, though there is again a translation issue, as the scale does not correspond to percentages precisely.
- **“Go with numbers.”** Try to familiarize yourself with the system and start working directly with the numbers. This will be helpful in 200-level teaching, where portfolios often aren’t used.

A good strategy, especially when first grading, is to put “temporary” grades on the portfolios, making notes for yourself that you can eventually change. Then, you can put the portfolios in order, and look through to see if the progression seems to make sense. Of course, it isn’t a strict progression, but this approach allows you to question yourself (“I gave this a 3.1 and *this* a 3.1?”) and to identify anomalous grades (often given to good students, bad students, and students at the bottom or top of the pile). Also, you can get a physical look at how many As, Bs, Cs, and Ds you are giving.

## PARTICIPATION GRADES

While the portfolio grade represents 70% of the total course grade, **30% is reserved for participation**, which typically includes engagement in class discussion, submitting assignments on time, working on peer readings, on group activities, and on brief daily assignments such as reading logs and other homework.

Students should pass the class if they submit the portfolio and all drafts for peer review on time, complete the required number of peer readings, submit all reading logs or journals, complete all required self-assessments and reflections, make use of additional resources (such as the Odegaard Writing and Research Center, the CLUE Writing Center, or the Instructional Center, when necessary),

and respond with revision or rethinking to your comments and the comments of their peers. Remember, most students at the University of Washington do not consider a 2.0 (C) a successful grade, nor the “passing” 0.7 (D-), a grade that counts in the grade point average but doesn’t fulfill the Composition Credit general education requirement.

There is great variance in how instructors calculate the participation grade, varying from meticulous record keeping using an online system such as Catalyst’s Grade Book, to eyeballing a sheet of checks. Some tips:

- **Decide Your Strategy Early:** Early on, you need to decide how you are going to grade the daily assignments your students turn in, such as in-class freewrites, short responses, and questions brought to class. You will also need to keep track of drafts and peer reviews submitted, which factor into the participation grade. Most choose to use a check, check plus, check minus system (or a version of it), and it is a good idea to decide how you plan to translate that into some sort of grade. Though it will be tempting to eyeball the sheet of checks and make an estimate, this will not be helpful if the student contests the grade. Also, you will likely need to keep track of at least two types of participation: (1) the sorts of submitted assignments discussed above, and (2) actual in-class participation. You’ll need to decide how to keep track of the latter: will you mark daily if they participate? weekly? how do office hour visits factor in? e-mail? It’s a good idea to have these things worked out before the end of the quarter.
- **Know Your Late Policy (and stick to it):** Your late policy, as stipulated in your syllabus, may also play a role in your participation grading. As there are no grades given throughout the quarter, the late policy can be an important “motivating” force—stick to it!
- **Keep Your Students Informed:** Like with their final grades, students often imagine that their participation grades are higher than they actually are. You can keep them informed by discussing their progress in conference, and also by providing an indication on a draft you’re returning (maybe above their name). This can be as vague as simply indicating a “+”, “ok”, or “-”, or, if you are keeping different sorts of records, you can give some sort of percentage or ballpark grade. Additionally, if you are using Grade Book, you can publish your students’ individual participation grades that they can access throughout the quarter simply by logging into Canvas. You may also want to give some written commentary, such as: “I’d love to hear more from you in class,” “Thanks for participating each day!” or “Attendance is causing many missed daily assignments.” Of course, for problem students, you’ll likely want to discuss problems directly with them.

For more information and discussions of grading, visit the Faculty Resource on Grading (FROG) at <http://depts.washington.edu/grading/grading.htm>.

## **PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT SESSION (PORTFOLIO DAY)-FALL QUARTER, FINALS WEEK**

In the fall quarter of your first quarter teaching, you will need to **make your portfolios due by the second day of finals week** (at the latest). During finals week of your first quarter, you will attend a four-hour portfolio reading session, in which the EWP Director and ADs support you in assessing your students’ writing portfolios. While we will conduct activities aimed at grade calibration, the ultimate focus, unlike traditional norming sessions, is less on achieving consensus regarding what grade should be granted to a given portfolio and more on helping you better understand the tensions and politics underscoring assessment; articulate your own approach to assessment within the context of your teaching philosophy and organic classroom practices; and navigate tensions among institutional

standards, standards within the EWP, and your individual pedagogy. Given the linguistic diversity of EWP classrooms and the socioeconomic factors that impact students' performance of Standardized Academic English (SAE), the EWP—along with writing programs nationwide—calls to question the strict focus on “correctness” and performance of SAE as the basis of grading. Because the EWP places more emphasis on students' writing process, revision, and growth, as well as on their refinement of metacognitive/rhetorical awareness as central transferable skills, “norming” final portfolio products for consensus without attention to classroom context risks undermining these aims. The EWP portfolio session seeks to balance the need for communal standards in our writing program with the myriad factors, including variation in instruction, student incomes, and teaching philosophy that might affect assessment.

## **DISCUSSING THE PORTFOLIO WITH YOUR STUDENTS**

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The following information provides a more in-depth explanation of portfolios that you can use for handouts that you give to your students at the start of the portfolio sequence. You are free to modify this information as you see fit for the context of your particular class; however, all instructors should clearly identify the requirements for the portfolio—including the learning goals and requirements for paper selection. It is also helpful to provide students with a checklist of the items to include in their portfolios. As you will see, the language of the portfolio rubric is used throughout these two packets to emphasize how the portfolio will be evaluated. (For more sample materials, portfolio prompts, and a useful power point, please consult the EWP website.)

## **PORTFOLIO ASSIGNMENT PACKET**

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### **PORTFOLIO PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The final assignment in English 131 is to create a portfolio of your work, in which you select from, revise, organize, and reflect on your sequence-related writing in relation to the course outcomes. The portfolio is designed not only to allow you the opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned, but also to give you the advantage of being graded on a final proficient product. In this portfolio, you are graded on what you can do at the end of the quarter rather than at the beginning. The final portfolio, then, is a culmination of your efforts and allows you to select the assignments you feel represent your best work in relation to the course outcomes.

In creating a portfolio, you are producing in a new genre. Therefore, you should consider not only your portfolio's content, but also its visual representation and organization. Just as you would with other genres, you should consider elements of design that are audience appropriate.

### **PORTFOLIO PROJECT LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

The learning objective of the final portfolio is to COLLECT, SELECT, and REFLECT (through a claim-driven argument) on the sequence-related work in relation to the course outcomes. This means you are selecting three to five showcase pieces (including at least one major assignment) from the work you produced this quarter, and constructing an argument about how your selected work is demonstrating and fulfilling the course outcomes.

These outcomes are:

1. To demonstrate an awareness of the strategies that writer's use in different writing contexts.

2. To read, analyze, and synthesize complex texts and incorporate multiple kinds of evidence purposefully in order to generate and support writing.
3. To produce complex, analytic, persuasive arguments that matter in academic contexts.
4. To develop flexible strategies for revising, editing, and proofreading writing.

### PORTFOLIO PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

The portfolio must include the following:

- Three to five showcase pieces (**at least one must be a major paper**)
- a critical reflection on these materials;
- and all drafts of your sequence related work.

In your reflection, create a compelling argument about how the selected assignments collectively demonstrate the four course outcomes. In order to support this argument, use evidence from your selected assignments, self-assessments, peer responses, and teacher responses. Quote or paraphrase from these artifacts to connect your work with the course outcomes.

In addition to the materials you select as the basis for your portfolio grade, your portfolio must include all of the sequence-related writing you were assigned in the course (both major papers and all the shorter assignments from both sequences). A portfolio that does not include all the above will be considered “Incomplete” and will earn a grade of 0.0-0.9. The grade for complete portfolios will be based on the extent to which the assignments you select demonstrate the course outcomes. Please see the grading rubric for a more detailed explanation of how portfolios are assessed. The portfolio will be worth 70% of your final grade.

### THE PORTFOLIO COVER PAGE AND TABLE OF CONTENTS

Your portfolio is an assemblage of all of the sequence-related work you’ve done this quarter. In addition, this portfolio showcases the work you feel best represents your learning of the course outcomes, and is accompanied by a critical reflection that argues for how your best work does so. In order to introduce the reader to your work, you will create a cover page and table of contents. This introductory material can take a number of forms. It can be simple and streamlined, or it can be something showier. But no matter how you choose to introduce your reader to your writing portfolio, remember that she or he is seeing it for the first time. What do they need to know? What impression do you want to make? How do you want to guide the reading of your quarter’s best work?

For example, you could organize your table of contexts this way:

1. Critical Reflection
2. The final forms of your 3-5 showcase pieces (at least one of which is a major paper)
3. Previous drafts of the selected pieces with my comments, as well as any peer review sheets
4. The rest of the assignments that you have done and attendant peer reviews, in chronological order from the beginning to the end

Remember, like all other genres, portfolios are *rhetorical*. This means that your organization choices have effects, and therefore you should carefully consider how you want your audience to experience and interact with your compendium of work.

## WRITING THE CRITICAL REFLECTION

Your critical reflection should be yet one more example of your ability to make claims, to utilize evidence, to analyze that evidence, and to draw pertinent conclusions. Your cover letter functions as a self-assessment of the writing you have done throughout the quarter. Here, you use your own writing as evidence of how you have performed the course outcomes. An outstanding critical reflection clearly indicates which items in the portfolio demonstrate the course outcomes, and makes a compelling argument for how they do so. The critical reflection displays thorough and thoughtful awareness of your own writing. You will incorporate evidence from the course outcomes, assignments, self-assessments, peer responses, and teacher responses. Strategically (and briefly) quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing passages from your own work (both strong and weak samples) is a great way to make your argument concrete.

In order to accomplish the above goals, your critical reflection should do the following:

- make a claim about how your writing as a whole responds to the requirements in the Portfolio Evaluation Rubric (This is not about making a grade claim, but about making an accomplishments claim);
- identify, analyze, and argue for how your portfolio selections demonstrate key course outcomes. This is successfully done through quoting and analyzing your own work in direct relation to the outcomes and the rubric;
- use the language of the course outcomes, the portfolio rubric, and your own assignments in ways that support your portfolio claim (Remember: You are not describing that you accomplished certain outcomes, but you are arguing for *how* your work accomplishes the outcomes).

An especially effective way to argue for how your final assignments demonstrate the course outcomes is to compare drafts of your work. This way, you can point to specific parts of your writing where you used teacher or peer comments to make earlier claims, analyses, syntheses, etc. more sophisticated in the final version.

## CONCLUDING YOUR CRITICAL REFLECTION

If there are aspects of the class and of your experience throughout the quarter that you would like to discuss, but haven't been able to thus far, you might conclude your critical reflection by reflecting on those aspects. Remember, in order for these comments to serve an evaluative function, you should talk about them in relation to the course outcomes or the evaluation rubric. Like any conclusion, there are a number of avenues you can take. Here are some options, but feel free to invent your own:

- summarize how your writing within the entire portfolio represents the progress that you have made throughout the quarter;
- discuss how your portfolio as a whole displays thorough and thoughtful awareness of your own writing processes, habits, and strategies;
- discuss the ways in which your portfolio demonstrates risk-taking, originality, variety, and/or creativity;
- discuss any extra-class activities that enhanced your learning and writing. For example, the number of times that you went to the Writing Center (with dates) or any other tutorial help that you received;

- discuss how you see the work you've done this quarter translating to other situations, either in or out of school;
- discuss how you benefited from collaboration with your peers and/ or from conferences.

### **SELECTING ASSIGNMENTS FOR PORTFOLIO EVALUATION**

Throughout the quarter, this course has taught concepts of argumentation, development and support, organization, rhetorical choice/awareness, and conventions usage. However, the criteria for selecting essays can be highly subjective. Here are some questions and criteria for judging the qualities of an effective final portfolio paper. Consider these questions for selecting your showcase pieces:

#### **DOES THE PAPER SATISFY THE ASSIGNMENT?**

Look at your assignment sheet, look over your draft and instructor and peer comments, and consider whether your paper is on task. Satisfying the assignment also includes using assignment-appropriate conventional formatting and mechanics, and meeting the required length.

#### **DOES THE PAPER EFFECTIVELY DEMONSTRATE THE COURSE OUTCOMES? WHICH ONES?**

Part of your selection process should consider what course outcomes are being employed and practiced by the assignment. Take a look at the course outcomes, your assignment prompts, and instructor comments in order to narrow down which paper supports which outcome. Which of the skills or concepts are used, for what purpose, and to what degree? How does your paper demonstrate your understanding of the outcomes and what is the importance of the outcomes to your writing? You will need to choose different assignments to reflect the range and depth of the outcomes.

#### **HOW MUCH REVISION DOES THE PIECE REQUIRE?**

While the ease of revision should not be your sole reason for selecting assignments for your portfolio, you may not want to choose a piece that would require a monumental investment of time and energy. Go with the assignments that stir interest, have a number of positive aspects upon which to build, and received positive feedback from your peers and other readers. Also consider whether you, yourself, are interested in and excited by the topic of that assignment. Why work on something you are not energized about?

### **TURNING IN THE FINAL PORTFOLIO**

Please bring your final portfolio to my office [time] on [day and date]. Please indicate if you would like me to return your portfolio with comments. You may turn in your portfolio in a manila envelope or a secure notebook. If you would like me to return your portfolio by mail, you need to turn in a manila envelope along with a SASE (Self-addressed stamped envelope).

Don't forget to double-check that ALL materials are included. An incomplete portfolio will earn a grade of 0.0-0.9.

## **ONLINE PORTFOLIO PACKET**

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### **PORTFOLIO PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The final assignment in English 131 is to create a portfolio of your work, in which you select from, revise, organize, and reflect on your sequence-related writing in relation to the course outcomes. The

portfolio is designed not only to allow you the opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned, but also to give you the advantage of being graded on a final proficient product. In this portfolio, you are graded on what you can do at the end of the quarter rather than at the beginning. The final portfolio, then, is a culmination of your efforts and allows you to select the assignments you feel represent your best work in relation to the course outcomes.

In creating an online portfolio, you are producing in a new genre. Therefore you should consider not only your online portfolio's content, but also its visual representation and organization. Just as you would with other genres, you should consider elements of design that are audience appropriate.

### **PORTFOLIO PROJECT LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

The learning objective of the final portfolio is to COLLECT, SELECT, and REFLECT (through a claim-driven argument) on the sequence-related work in relation to the course outcomes.

These outcomes are:

1. To demonstrate an awareness of the strategies that writer's use in different writing contexts.
2. To read, analyze, and synthesize complex texts and incorporate multiple kinds of evidence purposefully in order to generate and support writing.
3. To produce complex, analytic, persuasive arguments that matter in academic contexts.
4. To develop flexible strategies for revising, editing, and proofreading writing.

### **PORTFOLIO PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS\***

The portfolio must include the following:

- The final forms of your 3-5 showcase pieces (at least one of which is a major paper)
- a critical reflection on these materials, organized either by assignment or by outcome
- and all of your sequence-related drafts with my feedback collected in a "compendium of work."

In your reflection, create a compelling argument about how the selected assignments collectively demonstrate the four course outcomes. In order to support this argument, use evidence from assignments, self-assessments, peer responses, and teacher responses. Quote or paraphrase from these artifacts to connect your work with the course outcomes.

In addition to the materials you select as the basis for your portfolio grade, your portfolio must include all of the sequence-related writing you were assigned in the course (both major papers and all the shorter assignments from both sequences). A portfolio that does not include all the above will be considered "Incomplete" and will earn a grade of 0.0-0.9. The grade for complete portfolios will be based on the extent to which the assignments you select demonstrate the course outcomes. Please see the grading rubric for a more detailed explanation of how portfolios are assessed. The portfolio will be worth 70% of your final grade.

**\*ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS ARE EMBEDDED IN YOUR ONLINE PORTFOLIO TEMPLATE**

### **CREATING YOUR PORTFOLIO'S HOMEPAGE**

Your portfolio is an assemblage of all of the sequence-related work you've done this quarter. In addition, this portfolio showcases the work you feel best represents your learning of the course outcomes, and is accompanied by a critical reflection that argues for how your best work does so. In order to introduce the reader to your work, you will create a homepage. This introductory page can



take a number of forms. It can be simple and streamlined, or it can be something showier. But, no matter how you choose to introduce your reader to your writing portfolio, remember that she or he is seeing it for the first time. What do they need to know? What impression do you want to make? How do you want to guide the reading of your quarter's best work?

### **WRITING THE CRITICAL REFLECTION**

Your critical reflection should be yet one more example of your ability to make claims, to utilize evidence, to analyze that evidence, and to draw pertinent conclusions. Your critical reflection functions as a self-assessment of the writing you have done throughout the quarter. Here, you use your own writing as evidence of how you have performed the course outcomes. An outstanding critical reflection clearly indicates which items in the portfolio demonstrate the course outcomes, and makes a compelling argument for how they do so. The critical reflection displays thorough and thoughtful awareness of your own writing. You will incorporate evidence from the course outcomes, assignments, self-assessments, peer responses, and teacher responses. Strategically (and briefly) quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing passages from your own work (both strong and weak samples) is a great way to make your argument concrete.

In order to accomplish the above goals, your critical reflection should do the following:

- make a claim about how your writing as a whole responds to the requirements in the Portfolio Evaluation Rubric (This is not about making a grade claim, but about making an accomplishments claim);
- identify, analyze, and argue for how your portfolio selections demonstrate key course outcomes. This is successfully done through quoting and analyzing your own work in direct relation to the outcomes and the rubric;
- use the language of the course outcomes, the portfolio rubric, and your own assignments in ways that support your portfolio claim (Remember: You are not describing that you accomplished certain outcomes, but you are arguing for how your work accomplishes the outcomes).

An especially effective way to argue for how your final assignments demonstrate the course outcomes is to compare drafts of your work. This way, you can point to specific parts of your writing where you used teacher or peer comments to make earlier claims, analyses, syntheses, etc. more sophisticated in the final version.

### **WRITING THE FINAL REFLECTION\***

If there are aspects of the class and of your experience throughout the quarter that you would like to discuss but haven't been able to thus far, you might conclude by reflecting on those aspects. Remember, in order for these comments to serve an evaluative function, you should talk about them in relation to the course outcomes or the evaluation rubric. Like any conclusion, there are a number of avenues you can take. Here are some options, but feel free to invent your own:

- summarize how your writing within the entire portfolio represents the progress that you have made throughout the quarter;
- discuss how your portfolio as a whole displays thorough and thoughtful awareness of your own writing processes, habits, and strategies;
- discuss the ways in which your portfolio demonstrates risk-taking, originality, variety, and/or creativity;

- discuss any extra-class activities that enhanced your learning and writing. For example, the number of times that you went to the Writing Center (with dates) or any other tutorial help that you received;
- discuss how you see the work you've done this quarter translating to other situations, either in or out of school;
- discuss how you benefited from collaboration with your peers and/ or from conferences.

**\*Note:** In the “Homepage Template,” this section appears as the concluding paragraph of your critical reflection cover letter; in “Template by Outcome and Template by Paper” online portfolio form, this section appears as your “Final Reflection.”

## **SELECTING ASSIGNMENTS FOR PORTFOLIO EVALUATION**

Throughout the quarter, this course has taught concepts of argumentation, development and support, organization, rhetorical choice/awareness, and conventions usage. However, the criteria for selecting essays can be highly subjective. Here are some questions and criteria for judging the qualities of an effective final portfolio paper. Consider these questions for selecting short and major papers:

### **DOES THE PAPER SATISFY THE ASSIGNMENT?**

Look at your assignment sheet, look over your draft and instructor and peer comments, and consider whether your paper is on task. Satisfying the assignment also includes using conventional formatting and mechanics, and meeting the required length.

### **DOES THE PAPER EFFECTIVELY DEMONSTRATE THE COURSE OUTCOMES? WHICH ONES?**

Part of your selection process should consider what course outcomes are being employed and practiced by the assignment. Take a look at the course outcomes, your assignment prompts, and instructor comments in order to narrow down which paper supports which outcome. Which of the skills or concepts are used, for what purpose, and to what degree? How does your paper demonstrate your understanding of the outcomes and what is the importance of the outcomes to your writing? You will need to choose different assignments to reflect the range and depth of the outcomes.

### **HOW MUCH REVISION DOES THE PIECE REQUIRE?**

While the ease of revision should not be your sole reason for selecting assignments for your portfolio, you may not want to choose a piece that would require a monumental investment of time and energy. Go with the assignments that stir interest, have a number of positive aspects upon which to build, and received positive feedback from your peers and other readers. Also consider whether you, yourself, are interested in and excited by the topic of that assignment. Why work on something you are not energized about?

## **SUBMITTING YOUR FINAL PORTFOLIO**

Please submit your portfolio's URL to the Portfolio Assignment page on Canvas by midnight on [date]. If you would like me to make comments on your final portfolio, please let me know by choosing to include the “comment” feature in your online portfolio.

Before sending me the URL, make sure that all of your work is accounted for. A portfolio that does not include all of the below mentioned work will be considered “Incomplete” and will earn a grade of 0.0-0.9.

## JUSTIFYING PORTFOLIOS: HOW TO “SELL” THEM TO YOUR STUDENTS

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Initially, students might complain mightily about not receiving any grades until the end of the quarter. Nonetheless, once they understand it is to their advantage to suspend grades until they have had an opportunity to revise on the basis of the entire course, they relax and do the work. Most research has found that students complete more substantial revisions for a portfolio than they do on individually graded assignments. Once students receive detailed comments from their peers and from you, they are often relieved to set aside grade worries.

To reiterate, here are some points that you can make for your students (repeatedly throughout the quarter) that will help them adjust to and understand the importance of using portfolios in 131:

- By using the portfolio, you are grading students on what they can do at the end of the quarter rather than the beginning.
- By not worrying about grades on each assignment, students will have a chance to relax and take risks that they may not otherwise take. This will inevitably result in better writing.
- Your students WILL receive feedback from you, so they will have some idea about the areas that need improvement. Personal and insightful comments from you can be even more indicative of how they're doing than a letter or number grade.
- Portfolios allow for equitable grading across all sections of English 131 offered by the entire University. As noted earlier, we will be holding a portfolio “norming” session at the end of the first quarter to allow instructors to grade consistently across 131 sections. You can, for example, see how other instructors would grade a portfolio you were considering to be very strong. If you give your students grades throughout the quarter, and it turns out that you were a much more generous grader than your fellow instructors and feel that you should modify your grades accordingly, your students will be very upset.

If you “sell” the portfolio system at the beginning of the quarter, many students do get to feel comfortable with the system and can focus on their process and progress rather than their grades. In her 2002 study of 131 student evaluations (see Chapter 11), Amy Vidali found that only 2.5% of students felt that the lack of grades during the quarter detracted from their experiences in 131. If you do have anxious students, there are a few ways you can address them, beyond the four points above:

- Since revision is a major component of the outcomes, and therefore a major part of their final grade, there is no way you will be able to predict their grade until they turn in their portfolios.
- You can give them information about their participation grade, and even a specific participation grade if they so insist.
- You can tell students that if you feel they are in danger of earning less than a 2.0 by the final week of the add/drop period (if, for example, they have missed a large number of classes and work), you will let them know in time for them to drop the class.

## FURTHER READING

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Carroll, Lee Ann. *Rehearsing New Roles: How College Students Develop As Writers*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2002.

Reynolds, Nedra, and Richard Aaron Rice. *Portfolio Teaching: A Guide for Instructors*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006.

Yancey, Kathleen Blake, and Irwin Weiser. *Situating Portfolios: Four Perspectives*. Logan: Utah State UP, 1997.

## CHAPTER 10

### BEING IN & MANAGING THE CLASSROOM

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Teaching composition at the UW can be very rewarding, but it also involves a lot of responsibility, which can lead to some anxiety. This portion of the manual is meant to acknowledge and address that anxiety by focusing on the day-to-day dynamics of being a teacher in the classroom.

#### A TEACHING PERSONA?

***A Teaching Persona is a sense of self that an instructor presents and establishes with students (Richardson & Alsup, 2015). A teaching persona is negotiable and fluid – a useful tool for instructors to establish boundaries in, build connections to, and enhance the classroom experience.***

While some instructors are “pretty much the same person” in and out of the classroom, others take on a pronounced teaching persona. Don’t be shocked if you find yourself acting differently as a teacher than you predicted you would; because of the cultural baggage that comes along with teaching, this is normal. Keep in mind that:

- **Your teaching persona can benefit you.** If things about who you are as a teacher are not in your own best interest, you may think about subtle ways to adjust. This need not be manipulative, just part of successfully taking on the role of teacher.
- **Your teaching persona can benefit your students.** Even slight movement in either direction along the continuum ranging from highly-directed teaching to the less-directed teaching may benefit your students. If you find that students need something you are not offering them (strict deadlines? firm rules? one-on-one instruction? more jokes?) consider adding these things to your teaching repertoire and seeing if you still feel comfortable.
- **Your teaching persona may differ radically from “who you are” in day-to-day life . . .** and don’t be shocked by this! While it is not true for all teachers, some find that in order to really be good at what they do major adjustments are necessary. It may even come naturally!
- **Your teaching persona can and may change over time.** Particularly if you are new to teaching, you may find yourself experimenting with your teaching persona over time. What you think is causing a problem in your classroom (your way of addressing students, say) may or may not be as important as you think it is. Your students’ needs may also change from quarter to quarter.

- **Your teaching persona (as well as how you are perceived by students) will also be affected by many things in and beyond your control.** Your identity, age, gender, body, ethnicity, race, mannerisms, dialectic, philosophy, politics, and so on, will affect what persona you might feel comfortable adopting or even have available to you. All these factors will also impact how your diverse students perceive and interact with you. Figuring out how to be a teacher in any classroom will always be a negotiation, and, at times, an uncomfortable one. *(If you ever feel unsafe, troubled, or overwhelmed as you navigate teaching or interacting with students, please reach out to the EWP Director, Program Coordinator, or Assistant Directors for support. We are here to help you.)*
- **Practice Makes Perfect.** Your teaching persona is something that takes time and practice. Whether you adopt one that works well during your first day or continue to develop it long after your first year of teaching, keep in mind that you are not alone in building a teaching persona. Speaking with staff in the EWP, fellow colleagues and other instructors can help hone your teaching persona and reinforce those positive aspects while locating and shedding those aspects that you would rather not carry into the classroom.

## AUTHORITY & CARING IN THE CLASSROOM

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Maintaining your authority (a productive sense of order and responsibility in the classroom), while expressing to students that you care about them and their work, can be a challenging balancing act. For new teachers, having a firm grip on the authority in the classroom can come at the expense of expressing pedagogical caring. As you negotiate this balance, remember:

- **You are well qualified to teach English 131.** As a graduate student (even if you're new to graduate school), you have been recognized for your critical thinking skills and ability to write well. You enter the classroom with a considerable amount of knowledge and experience about culture and education, making you fully qualified to be your students' teacher.
- **Your position as a graduate student can be an asset.** Your own current engagement in the educational process as a graduate student means you are particularly well positioned to facilitate academic discussions in the undergraduate classroom.
- **Students know that *you are the instructor*.** This title alone confers a certain amount of authority upon you as a teacher—something most students will never question.
- **Establish your accessibility, guidelines and expectations early.** It may feel unnecessary to explain classroom behavior expectations in a college class, but keep in mind that the majority of your students, especially in Fall quarter, are new to college and need these guidelines. Establishing clear expectations and requirements from the beginning builds a foundation for your class and can help prevent problems further on.

Being in the classroom, then (and this is true for any teacher), requires you to negotiate between your qualifications and how you are perceived. As the quarter progresses, the balance you maintain between asserting your authority and expressing pedagogical caring about your students will be the product of your daily interactions with your students—in other words, being in the classroom.

Obviously, there is no one way to “be in the classroom,” and what works for one instructor may not work for another. Some things that construct your authority in the classroom are:

- The tone and choice of language in your syllabus.
- The way you choose to address students.
- The way you ask students to address you.
- Forms of teacher/student interaction you enable.
- Forms of student interaction you encourage.
- How you choose to respond to student writing.
- How you conduct conferences.
- Your accessibility in and out of class.
- How you present yourself in the classroom.
- The types of classroom dynamics you foster.

## EXPECTATIONS & EXPLANATIONS

Whatever style you adopt in the classroom, you will need to tell your students repeatedly what you expect from them and what they should expect from you. Once you have established those expectations, you will need to tell the students how they are (or aren't) fulfilling your expectations and learn how you are fulfilling theirs. Circling back to the relationship of daily activities and reading and writing assignments to the course outcomes will help students know what they're doing and why. Making this a practice helps create a shared understanding of how the assignments and outcomes are linked.

- **Begin the explanation process on the first day.** Whatever topic you have chosen to take up through the essays you assign, be very clear about the relationship between the development of that topic (no matter what it is) and the development of student writing skills as detailed in the outcomes and in *Writer/Thinker/Maker*. You cannot be too clear about learning goals.
- **Demonstrate the topic's continuity.** Spend a few minutes at the end of class or conference summarizing important points from the discussion. Consider beginning class by asking your students to recap the previous day's discussion and speculate upon connections between established terms and new material.
- **Emphasize goals.** Throughout the quarter, **the goal of 131 is to produce flexible writers who are prepared for the variety of writing tasks that will be required in other classes.** Students need to know that difficult paper topics are practice for the even harder papers they will be asked to write later, not an unnecessary complication of a simple process. Most of all, share with your students the learning outcomes and traits you are targeting in each assignment so students know why they are doing what they are doing.
- **Offer "meta" comments.** Frame daily activities and discussions with references to course goals, or more specifically, upcoming writing assignments ("Today we're comparing Harriet Jacobs to Harriet Beecher Stowe because you will be asked to write on both authors this weekend"). Similarly, use writing assignment topics to reiterate the goals you established in the syllabus. Your students need to be reminded that your decisions about course content aren't arbitrary.
- **Explain portfolio grading early and often.** Familiarize your students with the EWP's four main learning outcomes and emphasize the advantages of portfolio grading: they get to decide what gets evaluated, and they get more time to revise. Students will still be nervous about not knowing their grades until the end of the quarter, so be prepared to explain (both to individuals and to the class as a whole) how students can assess their standing in the class using paper comments and/or conference feedback.

*Establishing patterns that clarify, ground, and reinforce how learning goals/outcomes and assignments are related benefit both you and the students as it keeps those goals and expectations visible and relevant for the class to interact with or question, if necessary.*

## MONITORING THE CLASSROOM

Not every lull in discussion, or low-energy group assignment, is a reflection on you or your abilities as a teacher. Such lapses, however, can help you to gain insight into how your students work and are learning. If, for example, an assignment produces unexpected problems in your class, you may be able to



learn from them. You will want to use such moments, as well as solicited and unsolicited feedback from your class, to think about ways to address problems in your classroom (many instructors express concerns about discussion particularly). Monitoring the state of your class, both formally and informally, can allow you to begin to improve classroom dynamics. Some things to try:

- **Keep a teaching log.** Taking a few minutes to write an account (even informally) of a day's teaching can help chart what works and what doesn't for a specific class, as well as provide the opportunity to monitor individual reactions to the material.
- **Have your students reflect on the class.** One-minute freewrites at the end of class, in which students write down the most important point from the day's discussion and pose an unanswered question, can be useful. So can impromptu discussions starting with such questions as: "So, what's not working today?" or "Why isn't anyone talking?"
- **Stop everything and talk about the class.** This may not always solicit the most frank comments from students, but sometimes such a discussion can improve class dynamics.
- **Use conferences to get feedback.** Conferences can be a good time to address the needs of individual students. Asking a student what you can do to help them participate more effectively in class can be useful and show that you care about their learning.
- **Have students fill out mid-quarter evaluations.** Students can respond to the class with the comfort of anonymity, while you can assess what's working and what isn't. Decide what changes you are willing to make, and follow up evaluations with a discussion of those changes. This gives students the chance to see the results of the evaluation process in action, and if possible, to take responsibility for the changes.
- **Take inspiration from other instructors.** As graduate students, you have access to watching, critiquing and learning from other instructors, specifically those who are teaching classes you are enrolled in. You may consider talking with instructors with whom you share a positive relationship to learn how they manage their own classes. While this advice may not directly relate to your own teaching experiences, it may produce new insights that you can take into the classroom.
- **Emphasize (and re-emphasize!) that you want to see your students in office hours.** This can be a time for students to talk about their writing, reading, or other tasks in the class, but you may also receive useful feedback about the class during short chats in your office hours.
- **Invite an outside observer into your class.** You are required to be observed by the EWP staff once during each of your first two quarters of teaching, but you can always ask to be observed more often. One of the EWP staff will be happy to come in at any time for a general observation or to help you with a more specific issue (slow discussions, problem students, etc.), and these observations will be kept confidential. The UW Center for Instructional Development and Research (CIDR) is also a great resource; a trained staff member will observe your class, interview your students, and give you confidential (and gentle) feedback (<http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/consulting/assessment.html>). While it may be scary to have someone come in and observe you teaching, it can be extremely productive, and you will learn positive things about your teaching approach that you were never aware of!

## MAKING MINDFUL DECISIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

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Put simply, you must be conscious of the decisions—however mundane—that will define your authority and accessibility in and out of the classroom. This sounds quite simple but requires a certain amount of

thought on your part, and making decisions may be difficult when you find yourself in the midst of a heated discussion, or faced with an unexpected question. In addition, you will find that as the quarter progresses, it becomes harder and harder to alter patterns of interaction that have been established early on . . . even in the first day or two!

- **As a teacher, think about what kind of presence in the classroom you want to create and what kind of presence comes naturally to you.** For example, trying to be stern with your students when you gravitate toward a more easy-going demeanor may not make you a more effective teacher—only uncomfortable. On the other hand, if you're comfortable being even more stern as a teacher than you would be in daily life, and you see that as helpful to students in your classroom, you may want to enact that kind of presence.
- **Be clear about your expectations, particularly regarding respect and other classroom values.** The classroom should be a “safe space” for discussion, and students need to see both that they play a role in developing and maintain that space, but also that you hold authority in decision making in that space. Heated disagreements and discussions need not happen at the expense of respect.
- **Pay attention to the patterns you establish in the early days of class.** Whatever patterns you establish early on are likely to become the culture of your classroom. If you want discussion to be part of that culture, have discussions right from the start. If you want students to write in class, get them writing as soon as you can.
- **Establish reasonable guidelines (e.g., extensions for illness, less reading during midterms) and accommodations.** Telling your students you won't give extensions and then crumbling at the first well-crafted excuse will only undermine your authority. At the same time, remember that it is much easier to start out strict and become more lenient.
- **Respond to passing comments.** Although not every aside you hear a student make will need a response from you, indicating to students that you are paying attention in class can help establish your presence in the classroom. Addressing minor complaints, for instance, can show your willingness to take into account the specific circumstance of the class, demonstrating your accessibility.
- **The bottom line: you are the teacher.** In the classroom, this is inescapable. You may be interested in changing power dynamics in the classroom, in creating a student-centered learning environment, but ultimately you're there to teach. Depending on where you fall on the spectrum ranging from directed-instruction to less-directed instruction, you may find it helpful to use clear demarcations—such as the ringing of the bell—to mark the divide between “you the \_\_\_\_” (recent college grad, fellow student, fan of Buffy, etc.) and “you the teacher.”

While all of this information may seem daunting to keep in mind prior to your first day of teaching, remember that whether this will be your first time teaching or your twentieth, the expectations and practices that you develop in the classroom are often in flux. As the quarter ends, you may consider examining what worked and didn't work, making adjustments for the next time you teach. The EWP staff would be more than happy to talk through successful and unsuccessful moments in the classroom. Additionally, at the end of each quarter, you will be expected to create evaluations for students to respond to. The evaluations, which will be discussed in the next chapter, are yet another way for you to receive feedback on your teaching practices.

## CHAPTER 11

### BEING EVALUATED & INTERPRETING EVALUATIONS

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#### EVALUATIONS

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The course evaluations a new instructor receives in January, after the first quarter of teaching (returned to you online at <http://www.washington.edu/cec>) are often surprising: favorable, mediocre, or just downright lousy. Because of the nature of the forms used for course evaluations at the UW (see sample form below), this feedback is best thought of as only a partial gauge of your effectiveness as a teacher. Any one-to-one relationship between teaching ability and feedback on the course evaluations is probably unsafe to make; still, there are things you can learn from these course evaluations.

While we would all like to receive “good” evaluations, the frustration instructors often feel as a result of “bad” evaluations is not necessarily a product of criticism, but of criticism that results from miscommunication. Monitoring the classroom, giving explicit explanations for course content, and establishing an accessible and respected presence in the classroom are all methods through which you can “manage” your evaluations. The following section discusses these management techniques in more detail.

The EWP Director meets with every new instructor to discuss, help read and interpret, and troubleshoot course evaluations in year one of teaching in the program. This meeting typically takes place in Winter quarter. If you ever have concerns about your evaluations (e.g., you feel you are being unfairly targeted due to your identity or politics or teaching style, you are consistently receiving feedback that is lower or more negative than you desire, you need help processing or understanding feedback) *please* reach out to the EWP Director for support. You are always welcome and invited to seek support.

*Form E is designed for those classes that are skill oriented and in which students get "hands on" experiences related to future occupational demands. Such classes include nursing, art studio, social-work field experience, etc.*

Instructional  
Assessment  
System

FORM  
E

Fill in bubbles darkly and completely.  
Erase errors cleanly.

Instructor \_\_\_\_\_ Course \_\_\_\_\_ Section \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Completion of this questionnaire is voluntary. You are free to leave some or all questions unanswered.

	Very Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	
1. The course as a whole was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
2. The course content was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
3. The instructor's contribution to the course was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
4. The instructor's effectiveness in teaching the subject matter was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
5. Opportunity for practicing what was learned was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
6. Sequential development of skills was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
7. Explanations of underlying rationales for new techniques or skills were:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
8. Demonstrations of expected skills were:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
9. Instructor's confidence in students' ability was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
10. Recognition of student progress by instructor was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
11. Student confidence in instructor's knowledge was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
12. Freedom allowed students to develop own skills and ideas was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
13. Instructor's ability to deal with student difficulties was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
14. Tailoring of instruction to varying student skill levels was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
15. Availability of extra help when needed was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
16. Use of class time was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
17. Instructor's interest in whether students learned was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
18. Amount you learned in the course was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
19. Relevance and usefulness of course content were:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
20. Evaluative and grading techniques (tests, papers, projects, etc.) were:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
21. Reasonableness of assigned work was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
22. Clarity of student responsibilities and requirements was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>Relative to other college courses you have taken:</b>						
23. Do you expect your grade in this course to be:	Much Higher	Average	Much Lower	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. The intellectual challenge presented was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
25. The amount of effort you put into this course was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
26. The amount of effort to succeed in this course was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
27. Your involvement in this course (doing assignments, attending classes, etc.) was:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
28. On average, how many hours per week have you spent on this course, including attending classes, doing readings, reviewing notes, writing papers and any other course related work?	<input type="radio"/> Under 2	<input type="radio"/> 6-7	<input type="radio"/> 12-13	<input type="radio"/> 18-19	<input type="radio"/> 20-21	
	<input type="radio"/> 2-3	<input type="radio"/> 8-9	<input type="radio"/> 14-15	<input type="radio"/> 20-21	<input type="radio"/> 22 or more	
	<input type="radio"/> 4-5	<input type="radio"/> 10-11	<input type="radio"/> 16-17	<input type="radio"/> 22 or more	<input type="radio"/> 22 or more	
29. From the total average hours above, how many do you consider were valuable in advancing your education?	<input type="radio"/> Under 2	<input type="radio"/> 6-7	<input type="radio"/> 12-13	<input type="radio"/> 18-19	<input type="radio"/> 20-21	
	<input type="radio"/> 2-3	<input type="radio"/> 8-9	<input type="radio"/> 14-15	<input type="radio"/> 20-21	<input type="radio"/> 22 or more	
	<input type="radio"/> 4-5	<input type="radio"/> 10-11	<input type="radio"/> 16-17	<input type="radio"/> 22 or more	<input type="radio"/> 22 or more	
30. What grade do you expect in this course?	<input type="radio"/> A (3.9-4.0)	<input type="radio"/> B (2.9-3.1)	<input type="radio"/> C (1.9-2.1)	<input type="radio"/> D (0.9-1.1)	<input type="radio"/> Pass	
	<input type="radio"/> A- (3.5-3.8)	<input type="radio"/> B- (2.5-2.8)	<input type="radio"/> C- (1.5-1.8)	<input type="radio"/> D- (0.7-0.8)	<input type="radio"/> Credit	
	<input type="radio"/> B+ (3.2-3.4)	<input type="radio"/> C+ (2.2-2.4)	<input type="radio"/> D+ (1.2-1.4)	<input type="radio"/> E (0.0)	<input type="radio"/> No Credit	
31. In regard to your academic program, is this course best described as:	<input type="radio"/> In your major?	<input type="radio"/> A distribution requirement?	<input type="radio"/> An elective?	<input type="radio"/> In your minor?	<input type="radio"/> A program requirement?	
	<input type="radio"/> Other?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

Data collected by NCSS SURVEYS-2

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This yellow sheet is included with your "Form E" evaluation forms and is often where you receive the most useful feedback.

# Instructional Assessment System

## Student Comments

rev. 10/96

Instructor \_\_\_\_\_

Course \_\_\_\_\_

Section \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Your handwritten comments in response to the following questions will be returned to the instructor after grades are turned in. We encourage you to respond to all questions as thoughtfully and constructively as possible. Your comments will be used by the instructor to improve the course. However, you are not required to answer any questions.

	Yes	No	Why or why not?
What aspects of this class contributed most to your learning?			
What aspects of this class detracted from your learning?			
What suggestions do you have for improving the class?			

Please use the back of this sheet for any additional comments or to respond to additional questions. Thank you.

name\ass\document\comments.doc  
 rev. 10/24/96

## BEING EVALUATED BY YOUR STUDENTS

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*“Kids, you tried your best and you failed miserably. The lesson is, never try.”*

*– Homer Simpson*

Since Autumn 2014, UW’s campus has made the formal transition from paper to online course evaluations. This system is eco-friendly, but it also makes distributing and keeping track of these records much easier. Furthermore, there are options for customization that allow instructors to seek feedback on individualized teaching goals. Course evaluations are not only posted on the internet, but when you receive them you are required to download copies for yourself and give the originals to the EWP program coordinator, Jacob Huebsch. Perhaps the most important thing for instructors to do with evaluations is to figure out how to learn from them, no matter how incomplete an evaluation process they represent.

- **Request the forms early.** The course evaluation forms are provided by the Office of Educational Assessment, and you can order the forms online from OEA (<https://depts.washington.edu/iasuw/formreq/cerequest.php>). Once you order online, the forms become available in about 4 days. There is not an “expedited” option, so be sure to have online forms ready to go by week 8 or 9. You are then able to specify exactly when forms will be accessible to students.
- **Get to know the forms.** Instructors have found it useful to utilize the language of the forms in their spoken and written instruction. For example, the forms ask students if they have had, for example, “the opportunity for practicing what was learned”—something that you could both build into your class and make clear to students when they’re doing it.
- **When to distribute forms.** You’ll want to think about the best time to distribute course evaluations in your class. They are usually conducted some time in the final two weeks, and it is important to give students plenty of time to complete the evaluations. Because they are online, you’ll also want to make sure that students have access to some kind of technology—laptop, tablet, or computer lab—to access and complete the forms. Some instructors have found it useful to:
  - have conferences close to the time when the evaluations are done, as conferences emphasize individual progress and your contribution to that progress as an instructor.
  - keep the evaluation day away from major due dates, as stress can lead to overly negative reactions on the forms.
  - make it very clear to students when they’ll be doing evaluations, and how important they are to you.
  - have students fill out evaluations during class time. While online evaluations can be completed at home, trial runs have demonstrated that response rates are *much* higher when students are given time to respond in class rather than finding time to do so at home (even with constant reminders and clear instructions).
  - conduct evaluations early in the class period, giving students at least 20 minutes to fill them out; this keeps them from rushing through and leaving early.

## EXPLAINING THE EVALUATIONS TO YOUR STUDENTS

Unless you explain it to them, most students will not understand what course evaluations are used for, who reads them, and the consequences of their responses. Many students think the form will only be

seen by you (resulting in jokes, informality, or indirection), while others think only “the university” will see their feedback. You may want to:

- Emphasize the importance of the forms to you, explaining that they become part of your file (perfect if you’re teaching Foucault!) and that you use them to improve your teaching.
- Recognize the one-size-fits-all nature of the forms, but ask students to try to work with the forms, giving meaningful responses anyway.
- Inform students about how the grading scale found on the evaluation forms functions. While some students may perceive an “Excellent” rating as similar to a “Very Good” rating, providing insights as to how those will be analyzed will help students better understand how to fill out the evaluations.
- Tell students who reads the forms. Responses to both forms go to you and the department; summaries of responses to the scanned forms go on the Internet.
- Encourage students to spend time on the handwritten form, as that feedback is usually the most revealing and helpful for you.

## READING & INTERPRETING YOUR EVALUATIONS

By the time the evaluations come back to you, you will likely be engrossed in your next class. It may be tempting to access your evaluations and read them immediately. Because the evaluations are sometimes hard to get meaningful data out of, and because evaluations are often not what instructors expect, it is a good idea to designate a specific time (when you’re ready!) to read your course evaluations.

New instructors often expect higher marks than they receive, and it is important to have reasonable expectations and be in a “good place” (both physically and mentally) when you read the evaluations. Truth be told, it will likely take a few quarters for your evaluations to be acceptable to you. Reading through your evaluations, no matter how good or how bad, the trick is *to identify one or two themes in the evaluations that you can work on in your teaching*.

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) is a fantastic place for insights and tools to be used by instructors in their classrooms. The CTL also has a series of useful tips for when you finally receive your student evaluations and how to interpret them. Below are some questions that the CTL recommends you ask yourself as you look over student evaluations:

### Questions for identifying patterns and themes in data:

- What patterns, if any, are indicated in numerical ratings? Ratings for some items may help to make sense of ratings for others.
- What patterns or strong themes are indicated in qualitative comments? Themes in qualitative comments can be quantified to demonstrate the degree of student consensus on particular aspects of the course.
- Are there patterns across sources of data? Quantitative ratings may reflect points raised in students’ open-ended comments or vice versa. Both sets of data may inform an instructor’s own self-assessment, a peer review, or other forms of data.

### Questions for contextualizing student data:

- What is the teaching context? Take into account course characteristics such as size of the course, whether an instructor is co-teaching, and whether the instructor supervises TAs. How do these ratings compare to: The instructor's other courses; ratings for courses with similar sizes, levels, or content; or other courses with similar backgrounds and preparation?
- What changes have occurred over time? What has improved?
- What ratings stand out to the instructor and why? Instructors have the most context for the course, including their aims in teaching. What ratings do instructors find most useful for their own self-assessment in both strengths and areas for growth, and why?
- What information is available to help clarify specific issues? Qualitative data, particularly, may help provide a more nuanced understanding of the course context or a particular issue raised in other data under review.

What information may help reconcile divergent ratings? Qualitative data may also help review and promotion committees interpret divergent student ratings – for example, when instructors receive very high and very low rankings from different groups of students in the same course, or across multiple quarters of teaching the same course.

***Student evaluations carry with them a variety of influencing factors, including students' reasons for enrolling in the course, day-to-day experiences, conscious and unconscious beliefs and expectations and the list goes on. Keeping these factors in mind while reading evaluations can help you better understand how to read evaluations.***

In the section below, a former graduate instructor, Amy Vidali conducted research on how students interact with, and how instructors should consider interpreting open-answer evaluations for English 131 classes. The goal of this case study is to reveal that student evaluations are a genre of their own, and a strong one at that, which requires instructors to strategize when reading evaluations.

## THE OPEN-ANSWER EVALUATION FOR ENGLISH 131: A CASE STUDY

by Amy Vidali

In the spring of 2002, I performed a study of 454 of the (at this time) handwritten open-answer evaluations for English 131, gathered from 17 instructors in 29 courses taught during Fall 2000 to Winter 2002. The data from the study shows the sorts of things students in 131 seem to find important (at least when they filled out the forms). Also, the data gives you some idea of “what’s to come”—which will hopefully ease your mind, and in some cases, make you laugh. After the data is a brief discussion of “What to take from this study.” *If you’re in a rush, skip the data and read this brief section on meta-teaching.*

**The data is organized by the four questions on the hand written form:**

1. Was this class intellectually stimulating? Did it stretch your thinking? Yes No Why or why not?
2. What aspects of this class contributed most to your learning?
3. What aspects of this class detracted from your learning?
4. What suggestions do you have for improving the class?

The information the students provided is in the tables, followed by limited analysis and examples from the evaluations themselves.

**1. Was this class intellectually stimulating? Did it stretch your thinking? Yes No Why or why not?**

<b>YES</b>	<b>total: 441</b>	<b>total: 93.0%</b>
Yes—general explanation	429	90.5%
Yes with no explanation	12	2.5%
<b>SORT OF</b>	<b>total: 14</b>	<b>total: 3.0%</b>
Sort of with explanation	13	2.7%
Sort of with no explanation	1	--
<b>NO &amp; OTHER</b>	<b>total: 15</b>	<b>total: 3.2%</b>

**ANALYSIS & EXAMPLES**

Most English 131 instructors would likely claim not to have such an enthusiastic response in the classroom (93% claimed to be intellectually stimulated). While we can be hopeful that we are doing so well, it may also be that the binary presented (“yes or no”) before explaining their reactions may sway student response; after taking the course for 10 weeks, they probably want to think they got something out of it, or they may figure they “should” have and try to “prove” that this is the case. The responses to this question display a quite dependable “I once was lost but now I’m found” sort of pattern:

- “Because it helped me realize that my writing was not at the college level yet....At times it did stretch my thinking because I had to grasp a certain concept that I had never used before.”
- “The class was very stimulating for me because it made me think about things I would have never thought about...”
- “[teacher] started us off in the beginning with some works that made us stretch our mind so much that we thought we would never enjoy the class. But in the end we all now look at everything in a far more intelligent way. i.e., we can see Foucault in Everything.”
- “The class was intellectually stimulating. It made me think to the point where it felt like my head was going to explode.”

**2. What aspects of this class contributed most to your learning?**

**\*ALL APPROPRIATE ANSWERS MARKED\*** (n = 474, total ≠ 100%)

Discussions	159	33.5%
writing/revising	107	22.6%
Instructor	103	21.7%
Conferences	60	12.7%
Readings	50	10.5%
peer review/group work	50	10.5%
abstract comments	46	9.7%
Other	22	4.6%
mention of unusual class activities/assignments	13	2.7%
nothing written	9	--



writing center	2	--

These responses are interesting in that they reveal that students do remember what it is that we have done and appreciate alternate approaches. Interestingly, compared to the first question, the responses to this second question tend to be much more pragmatic, focusing on writing skills rather than personal growth (we could spend the next 20 years theorizing why students chose these categories...).

### 3. *What aspects of this class detracted from your learning?*

**\*ALL APPROPRIATE ANSWERS MARKED\*** (n = 474, total ≠ 100%)

<b>POSITIVE FEEDBACK</b>	<b>total: 160</b>	<b>total: 33.8%</b>
nothing written	60	12.7%
nothing/none/?	88	18.6%
nothing and positive comment	12	2.5%
<b>GRADES, EXPECTATIONS</b>	<b>total: 28</b>	<b>total: 5.9%</b>
lack of grades, grading system	12	2.5%
didn't know what teacher expected, expectations changed	16	3.4%
<b>WORKLOAD</b>	<b>total: 70</b>	<b>total: 14.8%</b>
too much work	64	13.5%
length of readings	6	--
<b>CONTENT</b>	<b>total: 56</b>	<b>total: 11.8%</b>
course content	33	7.9%
not understanding content	23	4.9%
<b>APPROACH</b>	<b>total: 70</b>	<b>total: 14.8%</b>
peer review/group work	21	4.4%
instructor style/organization	19	4.0%
too little discussion/participation	13	2.7%
use of class time	13	2.7%
too much discussion	4	--
<b>OTHER STUDENTS</b>	<b>total: 16</b>	<b>total: 3.8%</b>
off-topic discussion (usually blame students)	9	--
students generally distracting	7	--
<b>GENERAL CRITICISM</b>	<b>total: 19</b>	<b>total: 4.0%</b>
Bored	5	--
Strike	4	--
too easy	3	--
use of technology	3	--
more freedom	2	--
writing center/tutoring	2	--
<b>BEYOND THE CONTROL OF THE CLASS</b>	<b>total: 93</b>	<b>total: 19.6%</b>
comments on room	21	4.4%
other (all unduplicated comments)	18	4.0%
blamed themselves	16	3.4%
class too long	11	2.3%
complaint lodged, then taken back	8	--
personal issue	6	--

Humor	5	--
book (2), cell phones (2), weather (2), earthquake (2)	8	--

### EXPECTED FEEDBACK

Responses that pertained to grades/expectations, workload, content, and approach seem to address the question at hand, as do general comments on students' own progress and comments on other students. These comments can often be very helpful to you and help distinguish between what you meant to do and what you achieved (and what you altogether missed). Keep in mind that workload will be a complaint no matter what you do! What is perhaps surprising is that these "useful" results constitute only 55% of the responses. Some examples:

- "I felt that the class periods were sometimes wasted with lecture. We could have used that time to [work] hours more on our writing."
- "The part of the class that I didn't like was the grading papers. Often times comments made on a rough draft were completely opposite to those made on the revision....It was difficult to understand what was expected."

### NO CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

33.8% provided no constructive feedback when elicited. It is perhaps surprising that so many students are not critical after having proclaimed their ability to be critical in responding to the first question on the evaluation. Perhaps encouraging the students to be critical, as you've discussed all quarter, can help get more feedback for you. Also, repeat (many times!) that you won't get the evaluations until after grades are in.

### RANDOM FEEDBACK

Nearly 20% of all feedback commented on issues beyond the control of the instructor, and you will likely find this frustrating. As an instructor, you can try to explain the purposes of the evaluation to eliminate such responses, though they will likely persist to some degree. Responses include:

- "the lack of circulation in the room. the heat."
- "The only distractions may have been my stupid chemistry class that should have been 8 credits and took up way more time than it should have..."
- "I hate to say it, but: The jocks in the class. They put a pressure on me to say funny stuff."
- "...also, I don't like the organization of the room."

#### 4. What suggestions do you have for improving the class? (condensed table)

**\*ALL APPROPRIATE ANSWERS MARKED\* (n = 474, total ≠ 100%)**

<b>POSITIVE FEEDBACK</b>	<b>total: 178 (154)</b>	<b>total: 37.6% (32.5%)</b>
only positive feedback	78	16.5%
Nothing written	44	9.3%
"nothing/none"	32	6.8%
Positive feedback in addition to suggestions	24	5.1%

<b>GRADES, EXPECTATIONS</b>	<b><i>total: 44</i></b>	<b><i>total: 9.3%</i></b>
<b>WORKLOAD</b>	<b><i>total: 55</i></b>	<b><i>total: 11.6%</i></b>
<b>CONTENT</b>	<b><i>total: 60</i></b>	<b><i>total: 12.7%</i></b>
<b>APPROACH</b>	<b><i>total: 97</i></b>	<b><i>total: 20.5%</i></b>
<b>GENERAL CRITICISM/COMMENTS</b>	<b><i>total: 27</i></b>	<b><i>total: 5.7%</i></b>
<b>BEYOND THE OF CONTROL OF CLASS</b>	<b><i>total: 60</i></b>	<b><i>total: 12.7%</i></b>

Feedback that seemed to pertain to the course in some way is a smaller percentage than the previous question: 44.9%. This may be because this question and the one that precedes it are somewhat similar. It may be helpful to the students to discuss how these categories can be interpreted differently (if only to get more feedback). Of course, there is also the possibility that you will force a response. Random suggestions were also common for this question:

- “Buy a coffeemaker and put it in class. Therefore the class would be more energetic...”
- “a bigger classroom—just kidding!”

### WHAT TO TAKE FROM THIS CASE STUDY

Hopefully, this has given you some idea of what to expect, and more importantly, motivation to explain that specific responses are more helpful. Overall, you will likely have mixed reactions to your evaluations, ranging from disappointment to delight, from confusion to humor. This project was motivated by a genre theory class, and this is important: what I found, both by studying these particular evaluations as well as evaluation history and theory, is that these evaluations have lives of their own, and to some degree are self-perpetuating and self-reifying. Their content is often not as useful as it could be to you, and while you can (and arguably should) do your best to rectify this, the genre of the student evaluation is a strong one, and no amount of “instruction” from you may change that (though I’d still try). Furthermore, for some students, there will simply never be any real motivation to fill out an evaluation thoroughly; in fact, some students transgress by not filling out the form at all. Also, as we tend to point to the evaluation as a safe place to complain (see the critical reflection instructions), we probably shouldn’t be surprised by what we get.

### WHAT WE LEARN: META-TEACHING

It makes sense that evaluations should not be regarded as a truly “accurate” reflection of your teaching or effort, especially at first. This is not to say that they are useless or totally off the mark—far from it. In fact, what evaluations most often teach us is the difference between what we thought we did and what came across to the students. From my first evaluations, I learned that I needed to spend more time meta-teaching; that is, not just teaching, but explaining why we (and I) were doing certain things and not others, and how we/I would go about accomplishing the goals of the course. Some meta-teaching examples:

- Don’t launch straight into teaching each day; take time to explain what you are going to do and why (rather than students having to figure out “why” on their own).
- Explain the purpose of doing a particular exercise in groups instead of independently (rather than simply putting students in groups and beginning the exercise).
- When giving praise, explain why you are pleased that something was done well (rather than implying that you simply “got what you asked for”). Students may not be used to getting this pedagogical information, but they’ll appreciate it!

When you first start teaching, explaining your motivations specifically may seem obvious, but you can never be too clear in your goals, so take the time to explain why, how, and when in no uncertain terms. If you meet these goals, your evaluations will likely be more positive. Students are looking to see that they got what they expected, and they learn what to expect from you. That said, laugh at the anomalies and surprises that evaluations will also always contain.

# **COURSE OUTCOMES**

## **EXPOSITORY WRITING PROGRAM**

University of Washington

### **Outcome One**

To compose strategically for a variety of audiences and contexts, both within and outside the university, by

- recognizing how different elements of a rhetorical situation matter for the task at hand and affect the options for composing and distributing texts;
- coordinating, negotiating, and experimenting with various aspects of composing—such as genre, content, conventions, style, language, organization, appeals, media, timing, and design—for diverse rhetorical effects tailored to the given audience, purpose, and situation; and
- assessing and articulating the rationale for and effects of composition choices.

### **Outcome Two**

To work strategically with complex information in order to generate and support inquiry by

- reading, analyzing, and synthesizing a diverse range of texts and understanding the situations in which those texts are participating;
- using reading and writing strategies to craft research questions that explore and respond to complex ideas and situations;
- gathering, evaluating, and making purposeful use of primary and secondary materials appropriate for the writing goals, audience, genre, and context;
- creating a "conversation"—identifying and engaging with meaningful patterns across ideas, texts, experiences, and situations; and
- using citation styles appropriate for the genre and context.

### **Outcome Three**

To craft persuasive, complex, inquiry-driven arguments that matter by

- considering, incorporating, and responding to different points of view while developing one's own position;
- engaging in analysis—the close scrutiny and examination of evidence, claims, and assumptions—to explore and support a line of inquiry;
- understanding and accounting for the stakes and consequences of various arguments for diverse audiences and within ongoing conversations and contexts; and
- designing/organizing with respect to the demands of the genre, situation, audience, and purpose.

### **Outcome Four**

To practice composing as a recursive, collaborative process and to develop flexible strategies for revising throughout the composition process by

- engaging in a variety of (re)visioning techniques, including (re)brainstorming, (re)drafting, (re)reading, (re)writing, (re)thinking, and editing;

- giving, receiving, interpreting, and incorporating constructive feedback; and
- refining and nuancing composition choices for delivery to intended audience(s) in a manner consonant with the genre, situation, and desired rhetorical effects and meanings.

## q u i c k   r e f e r e n c e

Materials **for your students**, including policies on drops, adds, and more, are online:

<https://english.washington.edu/ewp-resources-students>

Supplemental Material **for you**, including a link to our orientation website and Canvas discussion board, sample teaching materials, department FAQ, campus resources, and more are password protected and online:

<https://english.washington.edu/teaching/expository-writing-program-instructor-resources>

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There is a copy machine for reproducing teaching materials in Padelford A-11:

- copy code = last five digits of your student number
- quarterly copy limit ranges 1,500

All graduate lounge computers print directly to the A-11 copier, and your office computer should as well. If the A-11 copier does not appear as a printing option on the desktop, contact Rob Weller (weller@uw.edu).

Please note that the A-11 copier can print double-sided. You can and should specify this setting under “Advanced Options” when possible.

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## q u i c k      r e f e r e n c e

### **BEFORE THIS (AND EVERY) QUARTER BEGINS ...**

- ☐ register for classes and/or independent study courses (with Jennifer in A-135)
- ☐ work with Carolyn Busch to set up payroll (and direct deposit)
- ☐ update address w/payroll office ([www.washington.edu/admin/payroll](http://www.washington.edu/admin/payroll))
- ☐ update address on MyUW
- ☐ provide your office location and office hours (to Annee in A-101)
- ☐ file a copy of your syllabus (with Jacob in A-11)
- ☐ edit course description on MyUW Teaching Tab
- ☐ check course enrollment and classroom location
- ☐ visit your classroom so you know what to expect on the first day (optional)
- ☐ schedule library visit (optional)  
[http://lib.washington.edu/help/reference/selectors.html#c\\_e](http://lib.washington.edu/help/reference/selectors.html#c_e)
- ☐ schedule computer-integrated classroom instruction days (optional)  
<http://depts.washington.edu/sacg/facilities/classrooms>
- ☐ place materials on reserve at the library (optional)  
<http://lib.washington.edu/services/course/>

### **DURING THE QUARTER**

- ☐ work no more than an average of 20 hours a week on teaching; 220 hours per quarter (talk to EWP director if you are routinely going over hours)
- ☐ remember to do peer review
- ☐ remember to do two sets of conferences
- ☐ request course evaluations
- ☐ periodically check enrollment list on MyUW Teaching Tab ... this will keep you apprised of who is (still) registered so there are no surprises on your grade sheet at quarter's end

### **AT THE END OF THE QUARTER**

- ☐ email or speak with students who you can predict may not be earning a 2.0 ... this may minimize the shock, grade complaints, etc.
- ☐ have your students fill out course evaluations (using online system)
- ☐ submit student grades online (instructions available on the EWP website)
- ☐ make copies of sample student work (multiple drafts, your comments, etc.) that you might like to use in a teaching portfolio or application for teaching awards (be sure to have students sign release form)
- ☐ attend portfolio grading session (first quarter of teaching only)
- ☐ submit grades by 5 p.m. the Monday after finals week



**AFTER EACH QUARTER**

- ❑ copy course evaluations for yourself (they'll arrive in your mailbox early in the quarter)
- ❑ file original course evaluations (with Jacob in A-11)
- ❑ schedule a time to meet w/Candice about your teaching (after first quarter of teaching only; Winter quarter)