

# Pupil

## The Remix Edition

Teaching Writing Club

California State University, Fullerton

## **Pupil Editorial Team:**

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Jamie originally planned to study literature until she went blind, but somewhere along the way she fell in love with pedagogy instead. She now hopes to teach composition until she loses count of the years she spends teaching. She would also like some gorram air support.

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Pamela Simon Dunsmore recently finished her Master's of Arts in English at California State University, Fullerton. She is now working as an adjunct instructor at Irvine Valley College and Cypress College.

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Adira Edmund recently received her MA in English at California State University, Fullerton. While earning her degree, Adira was part of the Teaching Associate program at CSUF and taught English 101.

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Christina Kennedy recently received her MA in English at California State University, Fullerton. While earning her degree, Christina tutored writing and pursued teaching internships at Mt San Jacinto Community College, where she now teaches.

### **Nicole Neitzke**

Nicole graduated spring, 2015, and received her Master's in English and Comparative Literature, with a Professional Teaching Certificate. The end goal for her is to teach community college, while also writing and publishing her own comics/graphic novels. In her humble opinion, the best teachers are also the best storytellers, and she does her best to excel at both.

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Katie Snyder recently received her MA in English at California State University, Fullerton. While earning her degree, Katie was part of the Teaching Associate program at CSUF and taught English 101.

## Letter from the Editors

First of all, thank you for using *Pupil* as one of your pedagogical references. We know the importance of finding inspiration to help maintain a supportive learning environment for our students, and we are happy to serve as a facilitator, spreading ideas from educator to educator.

Whether you are just about to begin your teaching adventure or have been teaching for more years than you can easily recall, we know that instructors are always looking for new ways to keep their classrooms fresh and remix their material to engage with their students in new and exciting ways. Regardless of how excited we get about composition, we know it takes hard (but infinitely rewarding) work to help students see how important reading and writing can be.

To that end, California State University's Teaching Writing Club created *Pupil*, a resource designed to give first-time instructors sample materials in order to create better, more informed course materials of their own. Teaching is a great collaborative effort; we strive to assist that collaboration.

This year's theme is Remix. Some of the activities here interpret that theme as a mash-up of various forms of popular culture, and some interpret it as a revision strategy. Whatever remixing the original authors did, we hope that you can remix some of these activities and strategies into your own pedagogical work.

Thank you, and we hope you enjoy shaking up your classroom!

The Pupil Editorial Team

## **Pedagogical Theories**

As natural as teaching may come over time, we all must begin by following the footsteps of those who came before us. Rather than constantly inventing the wheel from scratch, it is far easier to see how others have invented it before us so that we may make our wheels better, faster, and stronger.

In this section you will find essays written by tutors and instructors on a variety of subjects, but they all have one common goal: to help others take the ideas and experience they have gained and remix it for their own purpose. We hope something in here strikes a chord with you and enables you to make a wheel that better fits your wagon.

## “Best Practices for Creating an LGBTQ-Inclusive Classroom”

Omar Swartz

University of Colorado Denver

Omar Swartz (Ph.D., Purdue University, 1995; J.D., Duke University, 2001, *magna cum laude*) is Associate Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Colorado Denver. His areas of research and teaching are law and diversity, mass media law, cultural criticism, and philosophical problems in the social sciences. Specifically, his work focuses on the intersections between the U.S. legal system and the history of social injustice and intellectual intolerance in the United States. He is the author or editor of 13 books and more than 100 essays, book chapters, and reviews.

## “Best Practices for Creating an LGBTQ-Inclusive Classroom”

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As someone who writes and teaches courses on diversity, I wish to raise five points with regard to inclusive pedagogy in the context of LGBTQ students. First, I am an ally. That is, I make “intentional choices to support or work for the rights of those from disadvantaged groups of which [I am] not part. [I am] are committed to eliminating forms of oppression from which [I] benefit.”<sup>1</sup> Social worker Diane Finnerty provides a real world example of this practice. She writes:

Think about how powerful it is when I, as a white parent, approach the school district and challenge that I want my daughter to be taught about racism and multiculturalism to make her stronger and more prepared to create authentic community in the future; when I challenge our public officials about why there are more Brown and Black men in prison in our state than there are in institutions of higher education; when I as a white monolingual English speaker oppose “English Only” laws.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, I believe that those who have privilege should use it to empower others by challenging the institutions and practices that reify social injustice. I take this very seriously as an educator and encourage my students to widen their moral imaginations, to allow the inclusion of more people into their sense of community. In my graduate seminar that I’m teaching this semester, I have three students who identify as Christian and five or six others who identify as transgender, gay, or questioning. The three Christian students have all sincerely expressed admiration for the perspectives they are gaining from listening to the narratives and input of the LGBTQ students.

Second, I model for students a way of interacting with others. I model for LGBTQ people that they are our peers worthy of respect and acceptance. These tend to be simple things, such as having a “safe zone” sticker on my door, which not only communicates to LGBTQ students my openness, but also to other students, letting them know that I, as a faculty member, stand strongly for LGBTQ students and,

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<sup>1</sup> Diane J. Goodman, *Promoting Diversity and Social Justice: Educating People From Privileged Groups* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001), 164.

<sup>2</sup> “An Open Letter to My White Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Sisters and Brothers,” *White Anti-Racist Community Action Network* (2004). Retrieved from [http://www.pflag.org/fileadmin/userupload/An\\_Open\\_Letter\\_12-04.pdf](http://www.pflag.org/fileadmin/userupload/An_Open_Letter_12-04.pdf).

by implication, for *all* students. I reinforce this with my demeanor in class in the way that I moderate class discussions. In short, my approach to all my students is to be available to them, open to the various subjectivities they embody. I take all students on their terms and work with them from that position.

Third, I acknowledge and correct for what I do not know. By recognizing the shortcomings of my academic expertise, I am able to go on an educational journey with my students and embody the idea of life-long learning. To take a recent example, I'm finishing a book on homophobia and I made a conscious decision to limit my study to gays and lesbians. I did not do this to slight other identities, but to make my research manageable. I use a draft of my manuscript in my graduate seminar in which a quarter of the class involves the study of homophobia. As I mentioned above, I have at least three people in my class who identify as transgender and a few more in my graduate program. The transgender students in my class asked me if I were going to discuss transgender issues in my class. My heart sank. I wanted to say "yes" but I could not. My knowledge is too sketchy here to do so with a degree of authority. I had to say no and I gave my reasons why, and I talked about how I had to struggle with whether or not to include transgender issues in my book. I think my students were satisfied by my response; however, I was not. I felt like I had let down these students. So the next week when we came back to class, I announced that I had organized an extra-curricular meeting with a transgender expert that I recruited and I invited any student in my program to attend. Quite a few did and we had a useful discussion on issues important to transgender people in which I learned a great deal by listening to my students talk about their experiences. This is an example of the simple things that faculty can do to support students it starts from being able to both understand and embrace the limitations of our knowledge.

Fourth, the biggest issue I face in teaching my diversity courses is how to be respectful of religious people who oppose gay rights. As someone with formal legal training, I am an outspoken advocate of gay and lesbian rights. From a legal point of view, I feel justified in stating my arguments boldly. The legal position, the position determinative of our rights, has, in our society, no room for religious bias. However, as an educator when discussing these issues, I realize that my positions make some students upset. When I can identify these students, I make an effort to reach out to them, and I am

generally successful in so doing. Yet I had one sobering case a few years ago in a graduate class in which I was guest lecturing where I failed to perceive a student who became upset by my lecture. The student in question never said anything in class, but later remarked to her classmates that she felt offended by my discussion of religious objections to marriage equality. Other students then became offended by her offense. One of these students asked, “Is Professor Swartz really expected to remove religious material from his presentation on gay marriage? How can you talk about gay marriage and not talk about arguments that oppose it? Is he supposed to omit certain truths in order to make religious people feel more comfortable? How far do we have to go to make the oppressive group more comfortable?”

This is a delicate issue and this experience has had a big impression on me. I bring it up before any lecture when I discuss LGBTQ issues. I want my students to know that I value all of them, regardless of their stance on this issue. I reach out and work with any student who approaches me regardless of their beliefs. At the same time, I feel obligated to do the work of teaching for social justice, which means asking questions and presenting histories that may make some people feel uncomfortable. To be effective in this task requires getting the people who disagree with me to feel like their voice has been taken into consideration. Happily, in the 14 years I have been teaching diversity courses on both the undergraduate and graduate levels, I have managed to do fairly well. I just know that I can never stop thinking about it or taking my past success for granted.

This suggests my fifth and final point: mindfulness. When engaged in the type of work we do as educators, teaching a vast array of students with different needs and experiences, it is essential to be mindful that each student is an individual and each student, no matter what his or her views, deserves a voice in the classroom—it is the multiplicity of voices that contributes best to a robust and vigorous learning environment.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This paper was presented at the Creating Equity for the LGBTQ Community in Higher Education: Teaching and Learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, CU System-Wide LGBTQ Symposium October 25, 2013, at the University of Colorado Denver.



## Creating a Continuum of Literary Text Complexity

Colin Irvine

I am a former high school English teacher, a former Fulbright Roving Scholar (who taught American Studies and education methods in secondary schools in Norway), an education methods instructor, and, as of today, a *former* associate professor of English and environmental studies (tomorrow I begin my new role as Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College). I am committed to learning what I can from great teachers at every level about effective teaching methods, and I'm interested in sharing whatever insights I might have about teaching with others. I have co-authored this submission with a former student, Mary Cornelius, with whom I researched the topic as part of a summer-research grant we were awarded this past academic year.

## **Creating a Continuum of Literary Text Complexity**

### **I. The Common Core State Standards, Text Complexity, and What's Missing**

In 2010, Minnesota – not unlike other states throughout the country – adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts (ELA). State legislators added two additional criteria regarding media literacy; but otherwise, they left its content untouched. The Standards reflect an amorphous force already pulling across educational and professional arenas, one toward science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). STEM redefines “Career and College Readiness” (CCR)—the Standards’ goal for all graduating students—and changed outcomes require a changing approach.

One change requires classes across the curriculum to teach reading and literacy. The introduction to the Standards explains,

“most...required reading in college and workforce training programs is informational in structure and challenging in content; postsecondary education programs typically provide students with both a higher volume of such reading than is generally required in K–12 schools and comparatively little scaffolding” (2010: 6).

So, to prepare students for the onslaught, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) implemented the 50/50 rule (2010: 6). Its premise is simple – fifty percent of what a student reads in school should be fiction and fifty percent should be nonfiction –but the name of the rule is misleading. “50/50” is the recommended percentage for fourth grade; by senior year, the split is 30/70 (2010: 7). Increasing nonfiction not only occurs across the curriculum, however; to meet the mandate, literary nonfiction must increase in ELA classrooms as well. Obviously, increasing nonfiction requires decreasing fiction, yet little regulation exists to help teachers decide which books should stay and which should go.

The Standards’ large-scale change toward nonfiction insinuates fiction plays no significant role in preparing students for the professional and intellectual complexities associated with college-level reading ahead, swapping out classic novels for more recently written nonfiction as if simply upgrading a car or a laptop computer. ELA instructors as well have lost sight of why they teach supposedly old, confusing

books: Jim Burke, a teacher and the author of the commonly-used instructional handbook *The English Teacher's Companion*, takes on the persona of a student as he asserts in agreement that “nothing happens if I don’t understand a Joseph Conrad short story, but if I can suffer financial penalties if I sign a contract I shouldn’t have or misread the rebate instructions” (2008: 45). Here, reading has been reduced to its extrinsic capabilities, to merely a vehicle of financial loss or financial gain, with its intrinsic value as an instrument for building metacognitive skills and, more simply, as a pleasurable activity largely erased.

If instructors do not understand their own purpose in teaching, it is no surprise that students have even less of a grasp on why struggling through *The Great Gatsby* or *The Scarlet Letter* could be important or why, in a recent Minnesota Public Radio roundtable from June 2014, a 15-year-old student panelist could suggest the point of reading such classics was to gain insight into “the history of literacy” and that high school English classes should require “at least one” before moving onto more relevant, contemporary works without the other panelists, an author and a publisher respectively, objecting in any significant way (2014: “Why are fewer teens reading?”).

This is not surprising, but it is ironic. As legislators, teachers, students, and the general public alike lose sight of why reading novels was ever required, in academia cognitive scientists and literary theorists are joining forces to explore how our brains work when we read. They are finding and demonstrating with palpable proof that the process of reading literature is much more interesting, complex, and crucial than we have ever fully realized.

Reading literary fiction is a demonstratively different experience from interpreting other forms of communication, and yet “to read a novel expecting the satisfactions of closure and the receipt of a message is what most people find enough to do,” notes Frank Kermode (1980: 88). Kermode argues that most readers choose “this method...because it resembles the one that works for ordinary acts of communication,” and then points out what, thirty years after the publication of his essay, the creators of the CCSS did not address as they changed their recommended percentages: fiction works in a way almost all nonfiction does not (1980: 88).

Because the point of nonfiction is commonly to inform the reader about a topic – setting possibly dense, confusing, area-specific jargon aside for a moment – its utmost value is clarity, which makes the “receipt of a message” as likely as possible. To do this, nonfiction relies heavily on narrative “sequence,” or the sense of what should, in a text, inevitably come next (Kermode 1980: 87). Sequence is often valued above all else and makes the other values of nonfiction – like veracity and relevance – possible. To deviate from sequence serves little purpose in nonfiction, but such deviation is what makes fiction possible—and great.

Kermode calls any deviation from narrative sequence a “secret,” and secrets are what create the multiple interpretations possible in fictional narratives (1980: 87). No matter how much narrators seem to know, “they are certainly not all-telling”; and so “a narrator is always secretive [about] both the notion of storytelling-as-gradual-revelation and the question of what we...perhaps can never know about this narrator” (Bennett and Royle 2014: 273). Never knowing quite how much we know in fiction creates a unique interpretive environment, one where, within certain limits, play, exploration, and invention are possible. Under the premise of New Criticism – the structure-based school of criticism that began in the 60’s and focused on the construction of the actual text versus the history of its author as the source of meaning – any idea that can be defended using characteristics of the text in question, be it stylistic or content-based, is plausible.

This is why we can debate the meaning of *The Scarlet Letter* in a way we cannot debate the meaning of *Walden*: in the latter, Thoreau, as himself, tells us his experiences and opinions, but in the former, Hawthorne creates an alter-ego or “implied author” in the essay “The Custom-House” who then “discovers” and tells the story of Hester Prynne from a unique and, if we are looking for it, telling angle.

Understanding operates differently in each experience—where the first calls for a reader to listen and comprehend, the second calls for a reader to go beyond comprehension. To gain the full benefit of the text, the reader must enter in with the author and become a creator and co-conspirator in the narrative, putting pieces together as they are presented and anticipating any that are withheld, all while creating a continuous representation of why the story is being told the way it is being told in the first place.

Of course, not all fiction asks the reader to expend the same degree of effort to reach understanding—this difference is what theorist Frederick Luis Aldama calls the author’s “will to style,” the way an author “carves out and fashions material to guide the reader’s cognitive and emotional reactions and engagements” (2008: 256). Will to style, Aldama says, is what separates popular fiction novels from literary fiction, and nonfiction from fiction as well. Literary fiction “teaches the reader how to read it,” or unravels its secrets, as Kermode would say, while popular fiction and nonfiction, despite area-specific language in the latter that may temporarily confuse the reader, lay out information largely along the lines of narrative sequence and, rather than teaching a reader how to read, “simply tells a story” (2008: 256). We contend that the former – the complex fiction that teaches readers how to read – is what should fill up the fictional 30%, if not more, of what kids read in school.

The metacognitive skills created by reading challenging fiction are useful elsewhere, and Lisa Zunshine, a professor at the University of Kentucky and a premiere researcher in the field, has realized this and foreseen the gap that will be created by asking students to read nonfiction at the expense of fiction. She is now urging those at colleges and universities to take notice. “Ignoring [this change] will have a short-term negative impact on ... students (particularly those from low-income backgrounds) and a long-term negative impact on every discipline in higher education” says Zunshine in an essay concerning the topic (2013: B4). She ends her message in a tone that borders on apocalyptic:

We’ll never know what breakthroughs in ecology, biochemistry, economics, and neuroscience will not have happened because, for years before entering college, students will have been reading more informational texts and less fiction. Twenty years from now, who will take seriously the suggestion that we still don’t have a solution to this or that problem because our children haven’t been reading enough fiction in school? Yet in a world more complex than we appreciate, that may very well be the case. (2013: B5)

Reading fiction teaches a student about more than the characters in this or that specific text. The inherent, unconscious skills necessary to intuit the unstated motivations of characters or an unreliable narrator are

the same skills needed to successfully navigate complex, stressful, and confusing social and intellectual situations, and so, as Zunshine sees it, removing this training ground will result in overall weaker thinkers, even if we could never empirically pinpoint the deficit as a specific cause.

The following essay and research take Zunshine's warning seriously. If we cannot remediate the CCSS to teach a higher percentage of fiction, we must at least make sure that the fiction we are teaching is being taught well, to maximize its skill-building potential. After first exploring the lack in complexity measurements currently outlined by the CCSS, our research will look at what, according to narrative theorists, fiction does that nonfiction cannot, and then, from there, it will ask how well various novels perform such tasks. The result is a continuum of text complexity based not on sentence length or Lexile word counts but on how hard the structure and content of a piece require a reader to work in order to gain understanding, a continuum that can be applied and used not only as a rote measure of complexity but as a window into a complex text's clockwork, a launching point for student inquiry, and a tool for bringing forth both subconscious questions and their answers that, before becoming aware of narrative theory, readers might not have known they had.

## **II. A Brief Note on Current Measures of Text Complexity**

Current measures of text complexity are addressed specifically in the Standards' Appendix A, which simultaneously affirms the need for our research and then inadequately addresses that need. Appendix A states "the complexity of what students read matters...[W]hile reading demands in college, workforce training programs and life in general have held steady or increased over the last half century, K-12 texts have actually declined in sophistication" (2010: 2). So, in all situations, students need to be reading better than they currently are, and experts recognize reading more complex books as a way to foster that skill. "The Standards' Approach to Text Complexity" is illustrated as a three-part model, of which each part is weighted equally: "qualitative dimensions...such as levels of meaning or purpose," "quantitative dimensions...such as word length or frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion," and

“reader and task considerations,” which involve what students are asked to do in relation to the books they read (2010: 4).

These dimensions, while all easy to outline and explain, are not all easy to measure. The Standards look to Lexile and similar scoring systems to measure their second quantitative dimension, and they look to organizations such as the RAND Reading Study Group to identify how to implement the third—“reader and task considerations”—in a challenging way (2010: 7). The first, however, remains abstract, beginning with a warning (“the four qualitative factors [Levels of Meaning or Purpose, Structure, Language Conventionality and Clarity, and Knowledge Demands] described below are offered here as a first step in the development of robust tools for...qualitative analysis” (2010: 5) that is both a caveat and a challenge.

We believe the lenses provided by cognitive narrative theory, which will be explained in greater depth in the following section, are the “robust tools” the Standards call for. They provide new language capable of illuminating specifically what structures in a text make “multiple levels of meaning” possible, for example, to answer just the first question asked by Appendix A’s current measure of text complexity. Without the language of cognitive narrative theory, to answer this question, a reader would only be able to allude vaguely to symbols or metaphors, maybe style of narration—but with this language and the distinctions it provides, aspects of texts become clear instead of hidden, and instead of being confusing and exclusionary, they enable readers to join a text’s conversation, allowing it to become exciting and explainable.

### **III. Creating a Better Measure: the Continuum of Text Complexity**

To fill in the gaps noted above, we have drawn on the work of accomplished narrative theorists from the last few decades to illuminate the spectrum spread between poles of popular fiction, nonfiction and complex fiction. After choosing three central concepts from the many, sometimes overlapping ideas that speak to how the brain works when it is reading narrative fiction, we created questions that correspond with each concept to gage how complex a text is according to that particular lens.

Taken as a whole, the information gathered by answering these questions should help teachers and students alike gauge the relative complexity of a text compared to others, illuminating deeper differences between fictional and nonfictional texts rooted in how they are constructed instead of in merely their genre, tone, or subject matter.

All of our lenses rest on the distinction between two elements present in all narrative, both fictional and nonfictional: story and discourse. They have been called by different names—such as “histoire” and “discours” or “fabula” and “szjuet,” respectively—but whatever the title, they convey the same idea (Shen 2005: 566). “Story” refers to the chronological plot, the “what happens?” of the text. “Discourse” refers to the structural elements of how that plot is conveyed.

They are easiest to understand from working examples, such as F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. Fitzgerald’s story is about the narrator’s summer many years ago, about a man in love with a married woman who goes to incredible lengths to reconnect with her, and the discourse is the way the story is told—from Nick Carraway’s the first-person perspective, as an older, wiser character looking back (and writing about) past events. Changes in the discourse—what if it had been told from Gatsby’s perspective? Or from Daisy’s? Or from Nick’s as it was happening, instead of in retrospect?—all inform, whether we are conscious of it or not, the meaning we glean from the story.

The first of these lenses, named after and based upon Dorrit Cohn’s iconic essay, “Signposts of Fictionality,” seeks to analyze how intricately a text uses some of the tools that Cohn identifies as only available in fictional environments. We’ve outlined a few with our sub-questions—extensive play with time/space (especially implicitly signaled play), for example, asks the reader to do more work in constructing sense and chronology in a piece than a more direct or implicit navigation of time/space. The second sub-question, which measures use of multiple points of view, free indirect discourse, and focalization, looks at the ways fiction can present information that could never be fully substantiated in a nonfiction context (Cohn 1990: 785). All these tools allow authors to relay information about their plots and characters elliptically, requiring a reader to grasp and interpret these concepts before such nuances can be fully appreciated and understood. There are many more of these signposts which clue a reader in



that she is reader fiction, however, such as figurative or genre-specific language (I doubt there is a nonfiction article that begins with “Once upon a time...”). These small but integral fictional cues can be accounted for when answering the final sub-question of this section.

The second lens, titled “Embedded Frames,” draws on the work of Marie-Laure Ryan and Manfred Jahn and examines how an author constructs his or her text to create levels of meaning. Frames can be both “ontological” and “illocutionary,” Ryan notes, meaning they are created by either a change in the reality of a text (like Alice slipping into Wonderland or Katniss entering the arena in the *Hunger Games*) or in the speaker of the text (like the chapters in Ayana Mathis’s *The Twelve Tribes of Hattie*, where each chapter is narrated by a separate member of Hattie’s family to create a mosaic whole) (1990: 874). They can also be created with “paratext” information, like epigraphs, author’s notes, prefaces, and even cover images, if they are deliberately chosen to give a book a certain façade, as with Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The more frames that are added to a piece, the more realms the reader is presented to form interpretations with, about, and between, and so, therefore, a book with four or five frames will naturally lend greater interpretive ambiguity than one with only two.

Our final lens, pioneered by Alan Palmer and Lisa Zunshine, also looks at embedded items, but the content, opposed to the wide-ranging “embedded frames,” is much more specific. “Nested Mental States” looks at how many minds are working to interpret other minds and situations in a text at one time. Zunshine asserts that to work as fiction, at least three states must be used, so that marks the low end of the continuum, with four, five, and six states marking the high end, depending on how these states are communicated (Zunshine, “Theory of Mind” 2014: 92). Again, “mind-reading” can be signaled explicitly or implicitly, with implicit marking the more difficult end of the spectrum.

Our ranking system within these lenses is intuitive and hopefully adaptive to the inherent challenge of qualitative analysis, which makes one worry about putting numbers to such concepts in fear of being arbitrary or of unfairly simplifying these situations. Each sub-question for each of our three concepts hence requires an answer backed by textual evidence instead of just a number alone. After interpreting that evidence, the reader is then asked to score the book’s complexity in that area as low (1),

medium (2), or high (3). In the case of split or unclear answers, 1.5 and 2.5 are also acceptable scores. After tallying the scores in each section (for eight questions total), the final count is placed on the continuum of textual complexity, where 8, 16, and 32 represent the low, middle, and high poles of the spectrum, respectively.

With that said, we mean for these rankings and our criteria to open up the conversation about text complexity, not end it. In a way, attempting to assign numbers to these elements shows how truly unquantifiable they are; and yet, to preserve the quality and complexity of the fiction that will be taught in years to come, we have no choice but to do so. As the government seeks to regulate and change what is taught in K-12 schools – and, by extension, what is understood at the college level – it is our sincere hope and highest goal that no decision be made arbitrarily, with incomplete or inconclusive research, or based on the economic pulls of the day over the lifelong needs of students to remain open, inquisitive, and curious.

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# The Spark of the ESL Writer

Christine Garavito

## The Spark of the ESL Writer

The idea of adopting another's language as one's own is a difficult task to accomplish; however, when the acquired language begins to impose certain ideals and responses onto an individual, that person's voice becomes silenced and is made to merely regurgitate the information given without allowing for the individual's voice to be heard—his or her voice becomes overshadowed by another voice that instructs this individual to speak and write a certain way. *The Book Thief* directed by Brian Percival is demonstrative of the difficulties that many face with language as the struggle to articulate one's true thoughts is exemplified in the protagonist, Liesel Meminger. This film takes place in Germany during World War II and focuses on Liesel's interest in literature; she "borrows" books and reads them to Alex Steiner, a Jewish refugee. Liesel cannot read and has difficulties expressing herself, yet she finds tranquility in the process of learning how to read and by sharing the stories with Alex. The following scene is presented in the film after Alex has been hiding in Liesel's parents' basement for protection; he has not been outside, nor has he breathed fresh air for at least two years:

Alex: Can you do me a favor? Can you describe the day for me? What's it like outside?

Liesel: It's cloudy.

Alex: No, no, no. Make the words yours. If your eyes could speak...what would they say?

Liesel: It's a pale day.

Alex: "Pale." Good. Go on.

Liesel: Everything's stuck behind a cloud. And the sun...doesn't look like the sun.

Alex: What does it look like?

Liesel: Like a silver oyster?

Alex: Thank you. I saw that.

The depiction Liesel gives of the "silver oyster" and her hesitation in making such a statement, as she essentially questions her own description, resonates with the English as a Second Language (ESL) student as both have an innate sense of creativity that is suppressed by an expected language or implemented form of speaking. Her desire to learn how to read is also similar to an ESL student who is hungry to acquire knowledge of literature and proper ways of speaking English. They have the drive and motivation to learn; however, their voices are often overshadowed by an expectation of the university that is implemented through a specific and "correct" form of writing. The interaction between Liesel and Alex

displays the exact notion of one's voice being silenced, her words changed because she initially provides Alex with the expected description of the sun (what a university expects from an ESL student), not what she truly thinks. What was originally described as "cloudy" now turned into "pale" with a "silver oyster" being "stuck behind a cloud." It was not until Liesel gave the description of what she internalized and truly felt that Alex was able to see the day as she did. Liesel's description is the perfect example of the creativity and imagination that ESL students hold, yet they are forced to compromise their creativity over formalities to simply "fit" the standards that are imposed upon them by universities.

This problem that ESL students are encountering lies within the academic expectations of their writing and the clarity of their work; moreover, their ideas often seem to get overlooked because of the glaring grammatical mishaps that are encountered throughout their papers. This is where the problem lies: the hard work of ESL students becomes invalid due to a professor's inability, or lack of motivation, to decipher what the student is trying to say, simply lumping them in the category of "just another ESL student." Some students propose amazing ideas and give great insight/analysis throughout their papers but are told that their ideas and their writing overall is incorrect simply because it is not "proofread" and made 100% clear, therefore, upholding certain professors' standards. Instead of focusing on the creativity of ESL students and how language is used throughout their papers, they are often chastised for not having a correct form of sentence structure or verb-tense. Liesel serves as a representation of the ESL student's voice as her beautiful description of the sun is a commentary not only on the weather but of the situation that she finds herself in amidst this war she is experiencing. The description of the sun can be interpreted as a creative form of expressing the chaos around her, or it could be her way of creating beauty in the tragedy she sees around her. If this description were to be implemented within a paper of an ESL student, it might be seen as unnecessary or incorrect because it fails to uphold one standard or another. In this case, the ESL student would have been told that his/her writing is wrong because it fails to meet the expected standard. This student would have probably had to change the creative language he/she initially used, changing his/her description from a "silver oyster" to a dull description of a "shiny sun." It is the overgeneralization of having "bad grammar" and the inability of expression that strips the ESL student's

voice. As a result, the individual may completely surrender his or her voice and replace it for a more suitable one, using language in a way that he or she thinks is acceptable in order to fulfill the desired standard.

An example of this is shown throughout a tutorial session I had with an ESL student who was told to eliminate key components of her essay because it was “too long,” though the entire essay did not exceed five pages. She was struggling with her essay because she was not sure how to do so. The prompt was asking for the student to write of a situation in which she had learned from and how she grew the experience she chose. The student wrote about a difficult situation she faced as a child where she had to confront an intimidating adult who was treating her unfairly and took advantage of the fact that she was a child without any authority. She was in England and was waiting to buy the new *Harry Potter* series that had just come out, something she had been anticipating for several months. After hours of waiting in line, a lady cut right in front of her and yelled at her after her attempts to get the stranger to move because it was unfair. As an eleven-year-old little girl, this can seem very intimidating. She was able to overcome the situation, and this was the basis of her essay. Unfortunately, the professor thought that the essay was too long and told the student that she needed to cut out at least one full page. There was no commentary on the assignment itself, and the student was distraught, unknowing what to do. Her concern was understandable because of the little commentary she received from her professor. His lack of explanation led her to believe that her entire essay was wrong.

She asked me my opinion and what I thought should be removed from the essay. This was probably one of the most difficult questions to answer because, honestly, I did not want her to remove a single word. The descriptions she gave of the long line she had to wait in, the details of the day itself and the structure of the building were very vivid—as she was reading the paper to me, I could imagine the entire scenario being played out in my head. The fluidity of the language she chose worked perfectly with the story. She used the creative writing technique of “appeal to the senses” and created beautiful images throughout her writing. In this moment, I completely disagreed with the professor’s request, and it was an enormous struggle to tell this student to eliminate her creativity because it did not fit the professor’s



standards. But in this situation, with the authority I am assumed to have, what am I supposed to do? How can I possibly contest the authority of the professor and supplement it with my own opinions of the paper? This can make for a very difficult tutorial and does not allow the writer to explore her ability to its fullest potential.

Professors who are unwilling to take the time to explain to their students exactly what the problem within their writing is create animosity between the student body and the faculty/staff/university as a whole. Students begin to resent the system and these authoritative figures merely because they do not understand the problem (because no one has taken the time to explain to the student exactly what is wrong and *why*). By not taking the necessary time for students to understand areas of improvement within their writing, professors are essentially dismissing these students, leaving them distraught and confused. The effects of this can vary from students failing a class or giving up on writing overall, learning to hate English, because they simply do not understand what they are supposed to do and why their essays are “wrong.” This is why our jobs as tutors are really important; often, we function as the tool that students need in order to understand what is happening in the course and what the professor’s expectations are for that student, but if a professor is unwilling to help students improve or gives vague descriptions of what needs to be done to achieve better writing, several students begin to feel hopeless and often become careless about their work.

In a survey-response given to college freshman at the community college level, the problems that students face with English and writing derives from a lack of explanation of exactly what went wrong with their work so that they can achieve a clear understanding of what the next steps to improvement are. Because professors and teachers have dismissed these students and sent them elsewhere to get their writing “corrected,” “edited,” or “revised” by someone else (or the Writing Center), a huge lapse in learning the correct forms of writing has been created. In this case, the professor is only concerned with the ease of being able to get through a student’s paper, completely ignoring the hard work and effort that was put into writing a paper a language that is not familiar to the student. In a casual conversation with a professor regarding an ESL student in her class, she disclosed to me how much she dreads reading this

particular ESL student's essays because "they're just so hard to get through." This professor finished her commentary by blatantly stating, "I don't even want to read it." This is the exact mentality that needs to be shifted when it comes to addressing ESL students' writing. If professors remain with the assumption that all ESL writers have bad essays that are "hard to get through" and "dreadful," then the opportunities for ESL students to improve will slowly diminish. This is not the objective we want to achieve as teachers and tutors.

Students are simply told that they are wrong and need to fix their papers but are not told *how* or *why*. This prompts the students to become frustrated and annoyed, resulting in a mild retaliation from the student. This retaliation is not where the problem lies but in the simple fact that the student has now given up and is careless about his or her outcome in the course. The result could be detrimental to a student's future in academia. Neglecting student needs creates an enormous issue and causes several students to become confused, but these feelings are amplified with ESL students as they are struggling to communicate and understand the errors they are continuously making. When prompted to write about the difficulties of being an ESL student, Student X writes,

"As an ESL student, language is one of the biggest issues for me. If I met a professor, he/she would just lefe me alone to figure out what's wrong with my paper. I would get angry. I don't know what I can do but only angry, and I don't want to be angry. As an ESL student, we came here for study, not for angry. But we do be treated differently when we got into trouble. This is not fair. Is this cultural gap?"

Student X's opinion on the educational system that is currently in motion describes the frustrations that several ESL students face while trying to learn and improve their writing. It is not to say that improper grammar should be completely overlooked. ESL students should be able to meet professors half way at the very least, but when students are attempting to better themselves and fail because of the professor's lack of explanation, the situation becomes completely unfair and failure seems almost inevitable. Student X addresses the lack of communication professors allow when she states that professors "just lefe me alone to figure out what's wrong with my paper." Unfortunately, ESL students cannot be left alone to figure it out because they have absolutely no direction in which to turn. Whatever their primary language

is most likely has a completely different sentence structure and way of articulation, let alone the differences in the writing process itself. ESL students absolutely cannot be ignored.

Another student, Student Y, who responded to this same survey, expresses the same concerns regarding her experience with teachers and professors who lack the ability to effectively communicate with students, except she is a Native English Speaker (NES):

“Rather than explain to me what the issue was and how I could improve on it, [the professor] simply let me know that it was wrong. This is very discouraging because it takes away from my ability to better myself as a writer; furthermore, it also kills one’s spirit and renders one incompetent.”

The language used by Student Y perpetuates the very flaws within the system, mainly the lack of communication between the professor and student. This is a clear example of a student becoming discouraged due to a professor’s inability to give proper instructions for the student, one who is more than willing to follow directions and improve. Student Y states that the professor’s lack of explanation is “discouraging,” “takes away from [her] ability to better [herself] as a writer,” “kills [her] spirit,” and “renders [her] incompetent.” These are all very powerful words to describe the harmful effects of a professor not taking the time to explain to students exactly what problems arise within their writing and why those issues are considered problems to begin with. If a NES student is struggling in attempting to understand what a professor’s concerns and expectations are, the confusion can only be amplified for an ESL student.

So why do we have such a negative perception of ESL students at times? Honestly, I have also fallen into the trap of scoffing at the appointment list, knowing I have a full day of ESL students to tutor ahead of me. The only reason why I previously did not want to conduct so many ESL tutorials is because of how hard it can be to explain to these students certain grammatical concerns and/or essay structure overall. It is easier for tutors and professors to overlook the problems that are presented with ESL writers because the explanations can be so difficult to achieve. It is a true struggle for some students to understand *why* we do what we do because in their language, it is totally different. For these reasons, it is completely understandable why any given professor would want to bypass the curious ESL student who is

confused and needs the same explanation repeated ten times before achieving a mild understanding of what needs to be done. I get it. It's frustrating. But is it right to just ignore these students or send them elsewhere to get help without direction? No. The problems that ESL students present are a part of our job, and if we give up on these students, we are neglecting a huge responsibility to not only the students we are working for, and might I add the very reason we are employed, but to the university itself as we are denying the university the opportunity of having students with an alternate perspective engage in academia and possibly contribute to research for the university in the future. Then, we are confronted with the aggravated ESL student who is so frustrated that he/she is not even willing to listen to the multiple ways we tutors can show him/her how to fix the proclaimed errors; at this point, most students just want their errors to be fixed and could care less about the explanation that goes along with the corrections made. All of this is a direct result of the pressure put upon ESL students and the expected level of writing, what is considered "university material."

The idea of acculturation in universities remains prominent as students are expected to be "up to par" when it comes to writing in the academic setting. It is this expectation that intimidates and discourages several students, specifically ESL. In *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors*, Shanti Bruce and Bennett A. Rafoth emphasize the importance in acknowledging ESL students each as individuals, not as a group that might have the same "problems," a category that is very easy to lump them into (13). This, though simple and obvious, is extremely important to remember because each ESL student has individual needs; most students in these categories have difficulties with similar grammatical mishaps, but each student is different in that their cultural background and experience allows them to view material in a certain way that might not necessarily be thought of by a student who was born and raised in America. These different life experiences contribute to their writing form and what they might have to assert about the topics they are given. It is these experiences that ESL students have to offer that contributes to the academic setting that is currently in motion because of the different perspectives they have to offer. If we are gaining so much from ESL students, why silence their voices to make them conform to what we think is "better writing?" It is an absolute necessity to preserve their voices, including

their use of language, because they offer a potential that cannot be acquired by having lived in the States their entire lives. Therefore, we must focus on improving ESL students' writing so that they have a better of articulating the ideas they have and are able to share them with the rest of the community established in universities.

This is where Stephen M. North's notion of "[producing] better writers, not better writing" in his essay, "The Idea of a Writing Center" comes into play (438). It is of utmost importance to allow the tutee to grow as a writer so that there will be improvements in all of that student's future work, not just the one paper that was brought into the Writing Center. This can often be a hardship to overcome with ESL students because of the amount of corrections, usually grammatical, that need to be made. Additionally, the tutor should never take on the responsibility of "correcting errors" that are in the student's paper, nor should the tutor feel the "need to appear infallible," an idea introduced by Donald A. McAndrew and Thomas J. Reigstand in their book *Tutoring Writing* (19). In doing so, the tutor would be taking away the tools that are supposed to be provided for the students to learn. If this is not implemented with ESL students specifically, absolutely no progress will be made, and their confusion will only grow. *Tutoring Writing* exemplifies what to do when faced with these situations: "Part of being an effective tutor means equipping writers with strategies for discovering their own answers" (20). By simply having a conversation with the student and being their guide throughout their moments of struggle (without giving away the answers), the student will be able to come to their own conclusions without the intrusion of the tutor. By acting as a mentor and guide through the writing process, the student will gain more confidence in his or her own ability to write because he or she will learn that the power to succeed and write is within him or herself—not dependent upon the instructions of the tutor or professor, which most ESL students are subjected to.

Furthermore, in *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors* Nancy Barron and Nancy Grimm focus on identification within their chapter "Addressing Racial Diversity in a Writing Center." Their focus is on race and diversity because of students' particular race within the classroom setting; however, the isolation these students feel and difficulties they encounter can be applied to ESL students as they,

too, are culturally distanced from what the “norm” is. The question of identity is then brought to surface and can also be applied to ESL students as they often feel displaced in a culture they are completely unfamiliar with. Not only do they feel distance culturally but also within the writing process because they are very much aware of what they lack language-wise and of the fact that this separates them from the rest of the general student body. It is this separation that creates uncertainties within the ESL student’s writing, leaving them feeling distraught about their progress in English and writing overall. ESL students’ cultural distance is obviously displayed through their writing, which is reinforced through the previously mentioned example of Student X who questioned the lack of communication between professors and students as being a cultural gap. Academia within certain cultures can completely differ from the academic standards and setting that is established in America, which ultimately causes confusion for many students attempting to adopt English as their language. The inability for ESL students to properly express themselves, therefore, creates the need for assimilation, causing them to lose their voices in the process.

Oftentimes, ESL students exhibit feelings of low self-esteem in the academic setting because of their cultural upbringing, resulting in miscommunication and ineffective problem solving throughout tutorial sessions. Thus, as tutors and supplemental instructors, it is imperative to understand that we should not ignore students’ cultural identity; instead, we must foster an environment in which a diverse range of students can feel comfortable in tailoring themselves to their education. We often do not take into consideration the students, their struggles, and the difficulties they have had to overcome to simply receive a higher education, let alone ask the Writing Center for help. Language can be a huge barrier for non-native speakers, and it is this barrier that discourages them from striving to execute their writing to the best of their abilities. We should not generalize these students by simply dismissing them as an ESL or a “difficult student,” and it is imperative to keep this in mind when raising awareness to future professors and educators so that these students are not overlooked. It is important to acknowledge them as writers in need of improvement, not just students we are tutoring temporarily; we must remember that the main goal of our jobs is to focus on student writers, not the writing that is produced.

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Winning the "Race" of Education: Understanding the Effects of African Americans'

Cultural and Linguistic Heritage in Collegiate Composition Classes

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## Winning the "Race" of Education: Understanding the Effects of African Americans' Cultural and Linguistic Heritage in Collegiate Composition Classes

With the rapid growth rate of cultural diversity in the United States, educational settings must accommodate this demographic expansion for the future sake and well-being of the nation. In American education, African Americans have always fallen behind predominantly-white majority ethnic groups in terms of academic literacy advancement. Robert E. Slavin and Nancy A. Madden study minority students' academic achievement and indicate that "on several scales of the *National Assessment of Educational Progress*, or the NAEP, African American...seventeen-year-olds perform at the level of white thirteen-year-olds" (74). Although proven to not directly impact or influence an individual's intellectual capabilities, ethnicity must be taken into consideration when identifying the underlying reasons for this deficiency and developing strategies for improvement. To combat this continually-expanding achievement gap, educators must understand how African American students' cultural backgrounds shape language acquisition, influence learning styles, generate misconceptions among educators and society, and produce various controversies regarding the stigmas and validity of African Americans' variations of Standard English. This insight allows instructors to implement effective practical and methodological approaches to collegiate composition pedagogy, as well as begin to bridge the disparities of students' academic achievement and writing performance.

From the time they are very young children, African Americans learn to appreciate spoken language as their primary transmitter of knowledge. Namely, spoken language represents the method by which they learn to construct meaning within the world and develop relationships with other individuals. Malian author Amadou Hampate Ba explains that that "it would be virtually impossible to over-emphasize the importance of the oral tradition in Africa where, it has been said, whenever an old man dies, a whole library disappears with him" ([52]). Although every society emphasizes communication forms differently, spoken interactions among African Americans prove especially significant, as this type of exchange not only serves as a way to share information and reveal ideas, but even more so as a process of self-expression and cultural awareness.

African Americans indeed utilize spoken language as a common method of identity-development. Valerie M. Balester states that because they "share a heritage of language use that is unique" (34), African Americans "are likely to have a firmly established rhetoric" (34) that "black adults teach their children...almost exactly like...a generic portrait of the teaching of the rhetorical *paideia*<sup>4</sup> to Western schoolchildren" (33). Although the speaker's setting represents the dominant deciding factor when determining which form of Black English vernacular to utilize, other factors, including socioeconomic status, gender, and age also contribute to an individual's language identity. While not all African Americans participate exclusively in these traditions, they do influence all African Americans to some extent.

Language and communication methods prove crucial components of culture for virtually everyone; therefore, it is important to consider how other types of language and communication influence these students. As most people know, learning begins at very young ages, where a child becomes more alert, observant to his surroundings, and willing to absorb all observations and experiences like a sponge. Of these influential experiences, parental interactions prove one of the most significant types, in terms of children's learning abilities and intellectual development. Providing insight to the achievement gap between white and African-American students, Phillip Whitten and Jerome Kagan assert that, "the most likely determinants of the black child's lower I.Q. score are absence of...quality...parent-child interaction in the home during the opening years of life, and nutritional deficiencies in the pre-and postnatal environment" (121). Whitten and Kagan define parent-child interaction with actions such as smiling and talking to infants, affectionate physical contact, playing together, "rewarding the child's maturational progress" (121), and demonstrating consistency in expectations and disciplinary procedures. Nutrition

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<sup>4</sup> According to the Preface of Werner Jaeger's *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, the term *paideia* is defined as "the shaping of the Greek character" (ix). Jaeger states that "no one seems to have attempted to explain the interaction of the historical process by which [the Greeks'] character was formed and the intellectual process by which they constructed their ideal of human personality" (ix). His primary goal of this endeavor was to provide "a unique understanding of the educational genius which is the secret of the undying influence of Greece on all subsequent ages" (ix).

comprises an important component of physical well-being, but parental interactions, as confirmed by Whitten and Kagan, greatly influence development of children's cognitive abilities and highlight the effects and magnitude of body language and non-verbal communication.

Much of this influence becomes evident through African American students' learning styles, as "these specific deficits...retard mental growth and lead to lower intelligence-test scores" (Whitten and Kagan 121). As important as these interactions prove, however, they do not substitute for actual spoken language and verbal communicative exchanges. Because of the significant role that oral communication, spoken language, and human interaction plays within African American cultures, Roger D. Abrahams identifies that Black English vernacular fails to make distinctions "between performer and audience, speaker and hearer, and so on" (101). Unlike Standard English, in which "response is expected only when there is a cue given by the speaker or performer" (Abrahams 101), Black English vernacular speakers, on the other hand, "expect a high degree of complementary audience participation in answer to their efforts" (101-2). A thorough understanding of this notion is very important for composition classrooms, because African-American students' similar classroom behaviors may potentially be perceived as disruptive, clownish, or immature, when, in actuality, these behaviors represent their unique methods of class participation and comprehension. Barbara Monroe acknowledges that these students "have historically valued learning from peers and from adults, in apprenticeships or by demonstrations" (68). Since these students are often taught the value of collaborative efforts at very young ages, this method of interaction retains its value as a method that they prefer to utilize whenever possible. Much composition pedagogy focuses on students' individual work while minimizing collaborative activities; fostering a communal atmosphere in composition class settings, however, fulfills African American students' kinesthetic learning preferences and draws upon their lively energies to stimulate active participation and allow them to enhance their writing skills within the most positive and beneficial learning environments.

During an interview conducted by Julie Landsman, Professor Emeritus Joseph White declares that "concrete hand-on experience is essential to African American students [because] if they have this experience, they will learn" (54). This notion indicates the importance of creating direct reflections

between students' academic pursuits, post-academic endeavors, and interests that expand beyond educational settings. When students distinguish personal relevance in academic activities, they become more engaged, focused, and enthusiastic, all of which result in more learning and personal growth. Examinations of African American students' learning preferences, alongside their energetic and garrulous cultural styles, confirms that *much* more effective student learning occurs when educators base pedagogical approaches on implications within the classroom's diversity, rather than for the sake of holding fast to old-fashioned academic traditions.

Some of the main reasons behind this particular group's struggles with collegiate writing lies within the fact that many aspects of their culture and language is misconceived in educational settings. Monroe asserts that these assumptions "not only hinder learning, [they] also perpetuate pernicious stereotypes, which can become self-fulfilling prophecies" (63) for these students and educators alike. Consequently, clarifying these misunderstandings implies substantial magnitude for African American students' educational experiences and academic success in writing classes. Perhaps the most substantiated misinterpretation regarding African American students lies within the assumption that all of these students speak the same dialect of African American English or Black English vernacular; in reality, African Americans' "expressive culture is neither monolithic nor static" (Monroe 61). Just as the United States alone encompasses several dialects of English, African American patois includes just as much, if not more, varieties of discourse.

Confusion also arises between the different functions and formality levels of Standard English and African American dialects. In Standard English, 'conversational' dialect typically refers to casual, everyday language use, whereas 'academic' language implies much more formal tones. These varieties of Standard English dialect and formality registers entail different functions, depending on individuals' intended purposes. For example, as Donna Walker Tileston explains, much of Standard English's formal, or academic, discourse "is about negotiation...[or] networking" (28). Black English vernacular employs similar variations; in many African American cultures, however, "language is about survival" (Tileston 28). Therefore, African American students tend to emphasize the differing levels of formality within their

language much differently than Standard English speakers. While factors such as the desire to display professionalism and convey prestige, for example, typically determine formality levels in Standard English, African American dialogues "tend to place value on work and play and on when to speak and when to be silent [in settings] that differ from those of mainstream Euro-American communities" (Balester 35). Because of these differences, African American students may not necessarily understand that academic settings, along with academic writing, involve more sophisticated and conventional language registers. Many educators, especially writing instructors, often become exasperated because they inaccurately perceive the lack of formality within African American students' work as representations of laziness, deliberate foolishness, or unconcerned, dispassionate attitudes.

Further misconceptions regarding African American students' writing errors derives from their technological inexperience compounded with economic hardships that often prevent them from purchasing or even accessing computers. Collegiate-level writing assignments most often require using computers equipped with, at minimum, word-processing software. Monroe warns that unawareness of these students' technology barriers cause many writing instructors to "assume certain linguistic and computing competencies" (63). Regardless of students' technological know-how, word-processing equipment fails to denote errors such as verb-tense shifts and inadequate development, both of which constitute the most frequent weaknesses in African American students' writing. While features such as spell check catch typos or blatantly misspelled words, they do not account for grammatical errors or incorrect word usage, such as typing the word *an* instead of *and*. When writing instructors vaguely remind students to 'look over' and proofread their work, the instructors fail to recognize students' inability to understand these errors, much less identify them in their own writing. As a result, "this increased error rate at a later age will make it *appear* that African American students are ignorant or even intellectually-deficit" (Monroe 63). These mistaken impressions often provoke unfortunate consequences for these students' confidence levels and continued motivation, both of which pose seriously detrimental effects to African American students' academic success.

Opponents of Black English vernacular often stigmatize this dialect by associating it with "a lack of status...slavery, poverty, ghettos, and ignorance" (Balester 34). As a result of these divergent perceptions, Marcia Farr and Harvey Daniels admit that "differences in communicative systems lead to both cultural conflict and linguistic conflict in the classroom" (25). In order to alleviate classroom strife, educators must understand that 'nonstandard' dialects bear stigmas because of their "lesser political, economic, or social value, not because they are any less adequate linguistically" (Farr and Daniels 24). All languages and dialectical variations bear significance because they allow for the sharing of cultures between individuals. Nancy Rule Goldberger acknowledges that "public experience of a growing cultural diversity in the United States...has led to an upsurge of sentiment against [it] by those who are protective of American 'truths' and foundational values" (10). Rather than approach the changing demographic atmosphere with curiosity, many individuals foolishly produce unwarranted panic and resistance to the constantly-transformative face of society.

Because of this resistance, Standard English speakers have long perpetuated faulty analogies that link certain dialects directly to social class, economic standing, and intellectual capacity. Arnetha F. Ball and Rashidah Jaami` Muhammad explain that because "language is dynamic and ever changing, consequently, there are no permanent or absolute standards...the notion of 'good' or 'bad' English is a misguided one" (78). Cultures adhere to languages because they represent outward expressions of the self and of society. In the wake of ethnic and societal diversity, cultures themselves also experience change. As long as languages reflect culture, languages will reflect these changes and continue expanding and transforming to accommodate more widespread cultural differences. Because these cultural differences often provoke inevitable feelings of hostility among narrow-minded, reluctant individuals, changes reflected within languages, including dialect variations, become inaccurately associated with linguistic incorrectness and social indecency.

With the rapidly increasing rate of racial and ethnic diversity within American society, educational perspectives must adjust to accompany these cultural differences. As Georges Vernez, Richard A. Krop, and C. Peter Rydell proclaim, "education, more than ever, is key to a person's lifetime

economic prospects...by 2015, a majority of those entering the labor force for the first time are expected to be...blacks (18 percent)" (v-vi). As the American economy and society continues to necessitate education, more African American students will begin enrolling in higher-education institutions. Because freshman composition courses constitute requirements for all students in all areas of study, writing instructors hold an enormous responsibility to meet the demands of diverse student populations.

Although African Americans place heavy emphasis on spoken communication, Geneva Gay ironically reveals that "African American voices have been too long silenced or distorted about their own experiences [in American classrooms]" (49). By engaging in writing activities that provide meaningful experiences and demonstrate relevant implications beyond academic settings, African American students will be able to employ their rich cultural heritage engrained in the use and manipulations of spoken words and truly absorb their individual, academic, social, and cultural identities. In order to facilitate these types of cultural and linguistic interactions among students, writing instructors must establish multicultural settings and perspectives that encourage learning, as well as implement various pedagogical practices to provide each student with the best opportunity possible for academic success. Carol D. Lee and Diana T. Slaughter-Defoe clarify that African Americans value "education highly, [but] typically have less positive responses toward the educational system itself" (463). Moreover, Whitten and Kagan affirm that "90 out of 100 [students]...are capable of adequate mastery of the intellectual requirements of our schools" (122), regardless of race, ethnic heritage, or cultural background. They explain that educators, therefore, "should concentrate [their] efforts on determining the conditions that will allow this latent competence to be actualized with maximal ease" (122). To create effective learning environments that enable students to maximize their academic capabilities, cultivate deeper intellectual perceptions, and generate more positive perspectives, especially from African American students, educators must implement both practical and methodological approaches.

Among the most beneficial practical practices involve transformations in curriculum and pedagogical approaches, feedback procedures, and reevaluations of textbooks and other learning materials. Kim Lovejoy explains that utilizing a "process-oriented curriculum" (106) within linguistically-

diverse pedagogies in composition classes will "enable students to produce intellectual work using their own varieties of language, while drawing, as needed, on the forms and features of traditional academic writing" (96). By making use of students' current dialects as starting points, this type of curriculum gradually builds students' academic language skills, hence the term *process-oriented*. Tileston provides an example of this method by suggesting that students "write first in casual register <sup>5</sup> [of language] and then translate it into formal register <sup>6</sup>" (28). This strategy allows educators to convey the importance of learning linguistic formalities while simultaneously acknowledging students' dialectical comfort zones.

By exposing students to varieties of discourse in composition classrooms, educators provide opportunities for students to explore and experiment with discourse varieties of language. In doing so, educators pragmatically demonstrate "that language is multifaceted and, in the written mode, capable of communicating meaning in various forms and styles" (Lovejoy 101). Despite its intricate versatility, this strategy avoids bombarding students with overloads of information at one time, and the gradual, cumulative nature of the approach allows students to create their own ways of understanding by allowing them to build their knowledge on their own linguistic grounds of familiarity.

In addition to curriculum development, methods for providing feedback on students' writing represents another practical (and highly crucial) factor for educators to consider when working with African American students in composition classes. Farr and Daniels caution that a major 'trap' into which many educators fall when providing feedback on student writing involves "focus[ing] mainly on the problem of error" (44). Focusing on negative aspects of students' writing patronizes cultural differences and further emphasizes existing achievement gaps between particular ethnic groups. Monroe advocates that a better strategy for improving African American students' writing "is to identify the pattern of error, one or two patterns at a time" (63), while taking precaution "not to compromise the writer's ethos and credibility in academic writing" (66). By helping students identify a small amount of errors at a time,

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<sup>5</sup> Tileston defines *casual register* as "the language [students] use outside of school or the way they [naturally] talk" (28).

<sup>6</sup> *Formal register* entails "using proper grammar" (Tileston 28).



writing instructors avoid overwhelming students by allowing time for them to mentally process corrections.

This type of paced approach also compels instructors to recognize African American students' unique writing styles and representations of cultural diversity within their work. Not only do these revelations provide a rewarding experience for educators, but it deters instructors from dominating students' writing. By overly-editing students' writing, rather than guiding students through the writing process and strengthening their compositions by continuous practice, overbearing instructors strip away every ounce of a paper's personal identity and deprive students of seizing opportunities for creativity and self-expression. James A. Berlin clarifies the writing instructor's purpose in providing feedback by avowing that it "is to make the student self-sufficient and responsible for his own work rather than reliant on the teacher for approval and judgment" (142). By focusing on this goal when formulating feedback, instructors help students understand *why* they make particular mistakes, which represents the most crucial factor in enabling students to correct their errors *and* avoid repeating them in the future. In turn, by providing students with the appropriate skills to strengthen their writing proficiency, writing instructors enable students to become more independent learners and more importantly, provide them with skills that they will be able to implement within virtually *every* academic discipline or career field.

Another practical consideration that maintains especially significant implications for improving African American students' writing competency involves the content of teaching materials, such as textbooks, software programs, visual aids, and any other supplements that accompany lessons and classroom activities. Doreen Starke-Meyerring notices that many textbooks and curricula that present so-called varied linguistic approaches "merely concentrate on writings by or about representatives of either various nations of the world or various racial and ethnic groups within the United States [and then refer to these ethnicities as] 'the other' or...'the rest of the world.'" (140). These types of references tend to alienate particular cultures and provide students with very limited and isolated perspectives regarding themselves in relation to cultures that differ from their own. This type of exclusion portrays ethnic diversity as a "constricted concept" (Starke-Meyerring 140) and renders African American students incapable of

making connections between or reflecting upon their own cultures, much less the ones portrayed in the curriculum.

In order for educational resources to fulfill any meaningful purpose of arousing students' curiosity and stimulating their desires to improve their abilities, these materials must convey information about diversity in ways that enable students to formulate informed opinions and reflections regarding different cultures. Additionally, these materials must provide students with more enlightened perceptions of their own heritage. Dr. Joseph White affirms that African American students "need to see connections to their lives and what they need and want [in academic curricula]" (Landsman 54). In this sense, educational resources serve as powerful agents in diminishing stereotyping by depicting minorities executing the same roles as individuals of majority ethnicities. Tileson explains that these subliminal messages empower students to "see the relationships between [their choices, actions,] and their success" (29). In doing so, African American students will begin to foster more solid, secure senses of cultural identity, pride, and individuality that will reflect in their progressions and growths as writers.

Practical pedagogical approaches within collegiate composition settings involve the various practices that writing instructors implement in order to effectively facilitate writing instruction. Methodological approaches include creating the dynamics of personal power, establishing high expectations for students, and attaining new levels of consciousness to move beyond static tolerance. However, methodological approaches must precede practical approaches in order for writing instructors' practices to bear any significance at all. Before educators begin to promote high expectations and heightened consciousness levels, they must first establish firm perceptions of themselves. Verna Cornelia Price rationalizes that "knowing who you are naturally leads to understanding a powerful force in you called personal power" (124). Personal power enables individuals to inspire others and influence positivism among all individuals with whom they interact. In composition classes, it represents a critical factor in earning students' trust that educators "authentically [see] them as important, valuable, and intelligent people" (Price 126). Only after this realization will students "begin to respect and learn from that teacher, regardless of [the instructor's] color" (126). After students develop trust and respect for a

writing instructor, their overall attitudes toward writing and personal demeanors within the classroom generally undergo more positive shifts.

With these newfound outlooks, students will begin to demonstrate greater efforts in improving their writing, not only out of their desire for seeking the instructor's approval, but because they have learned not to view writing as an intimidating and burdening endeavor; writing assignments become intellectual challenges and opportunities to explore their imaginations. When educators employ personal power in academic classrooms, students reciprocate with cooperation and participation. Price declares personal power as "the catalyst for teacher-student interactions...[that] will either empower students to pursue academic excellence or unconsciously encourage students to disengage from school" (128). Ultimately, personal power's transformative nature will bestow upon students refined dispositions regarding education and newfound senses of self-confidence, independence, and motivation to exert their utmost efforts and maximize their achievements, not only in composition classes, but also within society.

Establishing and maintaining high expectations for students represents perhaps educators' most advantageous academic implication. This notion applies especially in composition classes, because many students, predominantly those who harbor deep anxieties about writing, tend to take the path of least resistance and push themselves only as far as the minimum standards. Patrick Sullivan denotes "that high expectations from teachers lead to better performance from students...[because] teacher expectations help shape student achievement" (12-3). Indeed, teachers' predicted outcomes of students' academic performance influence instructors' attitudes, teaching methods, and pedagogical approaches in the classroom, which in turn, affect students' attitudes, efforts, and ultimately, their progress and success. Moreover, Carolyn L. Holbrook even identifies "low expectations [as] the worst form of racism" (110). Therefore, educators' expectations often become self-fulfilling prophecies, whether positive or negative, because students will aim for the level at which instructors set their expectations and goals.

Interestingly, Pedro A. Noguera explains that many African American students "may adopt attitudes and behaviors that undermine their possibilities for achieving academic success...rather than risk being ostracized for differentiating themselves from their peers" (142). African American students do not

separate their various roles (student, son/daughter, athlete, employee, friend, etc.) according to their specific locations, as do many Anglo individuals. The various roles that African American individuals fulfill accumulate to establish their complete perceptions of self-identity, which follows them everywhere and often influences how they are viewed throughout their cultural subgroups. Consequently, because many African Americans "view schooling as a form of forced assimilation to White cultural values," (Noguera 9) and have "come to equate academic success with 'acting White'" (9), these students often adopt devaluated outlooks of educational experiences and participate in "self-defeating behaviors that inhibit possibilities for academic success" (9). This attitude manifests predominantly in collegiate writing classes, where students must forgo their casual, comfortable dialects and utilize more formal diction in order to fulfill many writing assignment requirements.

Educators can lessen the severity of African American students' analogous assumptions by promoting the simultaneous existence of academic achievement and maintaining cultural and individual pride. The best method for accomplishing this task lies within the inclusion of a variety of assignments that requires students to incorporate a more extensive and formal vocabulary, as well as allows them to include personal aspects of their life, heritage, and values. Since educators hold influential positions, especially to students, instructors who maintain high student expectations and encourage individuality stimulate students' own optimistic demeanors, determination, and positive attitudes towards writing education.

Developing these high expectations first requires educators to establish the right mindset. Starke-Meyerring suggests that writing instructors reconsider academic approaches to multicultural education as not only simply informing students, but as enabling them to develop new levels of consciousness. Attaining new consciousness levels entails individuals looking beyond their present or former levels of recognition to perceive more intellectual and philosophical meanings within their experiences and their surroundings. For academic classrooms, Crystal M. England describes this new consciousness as one that encourages instructors to "move beyond the concept of tolerance" (11) and fully encompass all cultures. Although tolerance represents a starting point for pluralistic states-of-mind, it does not necessitate actual

action. As England points out, "tolerance is really at the root of all growth. Simple endurance, however, will not cause the perpetual shift necessary to create change" (11). By continuously expanding their own minds, as well as the minds of their students, educators help these students acquire new levels of understanding, acceptance, and mutual respect for fellow citizens, hereby inspiring desire for social revolution and stimulating student motivation to make it a reality.

In an increasingly-diverse world full of change and innovation, educators within collegiate-level institutions must learn to develop pedagogical practices and perceptions that accompany this growing cultural medley and prepare students for the challenges of working as innovative thinkers of the twenty-first century. Since African Americans comprise perhaps the largest minority group in the United States, educators must understand how these students' cultural heritage influences everything from their dialect, learning styles, classroom decorum, and academic performance, especially in collegiate composition classrooms. This understanding allows educators to employ effective pedagogies and develop meaningful, trusting relationships with students. In doing so, educators will simultaneously supply students with the intellectual tools necessary to interact and flourish, not only within composition classes, but also within an increasingly-diverse global society.

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On the Literal Cut-and-Paste Job, or Using Old Technologies to Achieve New  
Perspectives

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## On the Literal Cut-and-Paste Job, or Using Old Technologies to Achieve New Perspectives

“What rhymes with ‘love’?” was a recurring question from the 13- to 15-year-olds during the poetry unit in a creative writing course that I taught for Duke University’s Talent Identification Program (TIP) some ten years ago. I was surprised that these bright students, who read voraciously and who had earlier in the course written developed short stories, were now producing uninteresting pieces with predictable word sequences, forced rhymes, and an insistent yet fuzzy focus on romantic love, that abstract topic with which they themselves were not yet all that experienced. I gave prompts to move the students away from their focus on love, asking them once, for example, to write a poem about something specific in their life that they absolutely do not enjoy. (In response, one student produced a tremendously good poem on having blood drawn at the doctor’s office and subsequently illustrated the poem with small and large circles drawn in red marker.) As a class, we also read and discussed poems that represented a range of poetic forms, from sonnets to free verse, and I sought to develop a few in-class activities that I hoped would prompt them to think more deeply about the language and the formal elements of the poems that they were writing and, ultimately, to produce more original and more interesting work.

One activity that was vaguely inspired by my own reading of William Burroughs’s *The Soft Machine* calls for an at least momentary return to the older technologies of scissors and tape. The students typed and printed out their poems on the computer, as usual, but they then cut up their poems into multiple pieces, often individual lines or small groups of lines, and finally rearranged those pieces on a sheet of paper and secured them in place with adhesive tape. This cut-and-paste activity was not a complete success. Some students went through the motions and then dismissed what they had produced as gibberish. However, one student embraced the activity and reorganized her poem to produce something that she and I both found to be more interesting than the original. More than 10 years have passed, and now I can only paraphrase some of the lines from the student’s original poem and from her “remix,” as she titled the reorganized piece.

The student’s original poem included a series of noun phrases that focused on some of the many things that a woman might do in the course of a lifetime:

A mother who cooks dinner for her children  
A businesswoman who gives a great presentation at work  
A real estate agent who sells her first house  
A grandmother who loves to grow flowers  
A young woman who learns to play the piano  
A child who is fearless in school and out of school

To create the remix, the author first cut out each line of the poem and then cut each individual line in two, separating the beginning noun (e.g. “A mother”) from the relative clause that formed the rest of that line (e.g. “who cooks dinner for her children”). She then rearranged the beginnings and the remainders of the lines to produce a poem with pairings that were much less predictable. In her remix, the woman identified by role or by stage in life does not perform the activity that we (including the poem’s own author) had initially expected of her:

A mother who is fearless in school and out of school  
A businesswoman who learns to play the piano  
A real estate agent who cooks dinner for her children  
A grandmother who sells her first house  
A young woman who gives a great presentation at work  
A child who loves to grow flowers

In her written reflection at the end of the TIP creative writing course, the author joyfully explained that she preferred her remix to the original version. For her, the remix had remained true to her initial idea for the poem – it was to be a poem on what sorts of things a woman might do in the course of a lifetime – and had widened the range of those activities tremendously.

The remix can be taken much further, of course, by breaking the poem into ever smaller pieces, perhaps into individual words or even individual sound units. We can find word artists of the early to late twentieth century doing this very thing, from the cut-up techniques formulated by Tristan Tzara (in his short instruction-poem “To Make a Dadaist Poem” in section VIII of “Dada Manifesto on Feeble & Bitter

Love") to the thorough, one might even say merciless remixing in Tracie Morris' sound poem "Africa(n)" of a single sentence, a seemingly authoritative statement about the one commonality of African American identity: "It all started when we were brought here as slaves from Africa."

On a more modest scale, perhaps using units of several sentences or even whole paragraphs, this method can help when revising an essay that we have written, possibly allowing us to discover more meaningful sequencings of ideas within the body paragraphs of the essay or to identify a more interesting introduction by replacing that all-too-common, overly general opening (usually a variant of "Throughout time, people have always...") with a specific example or observation that is otherwise buried in the body of the essay. Many of us have a bad habit of writing things out from beginning to end and then leaving what we have written in that original order, as if our first attempt is always our best. The remix, however thoroughly we choose to pursue it, can push us to consider how what we have written can always be arranged differently on the page and how one of those arrangements might even be better than our original version.

## White Rabbits, Alices, and the Writing Center

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## White Rabbits, Alices, and the Writing Center

“Who in the world am I? Ah, that is the great puzzle!”

Alice, *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll

Like Alice, some tutees find themselves in a world so dissimilar to their own that they feel as if they have stumbled upon an Academic Wonderland. They are asked to accomplish incredible tasks: write clear and cohesive narratives, convincing proposals, and to explicate various ideas or rhetoric. However, most of these tutees do not possess the academic vocabulary or critical thinking skills that are required to successfully complete these tasks. Again, like Alice, these tutees must make the decision whether they are to take a bite of the academic cake labeled “EAT ME” (Carroll 19) or sip out of the discourse bottle labeled “DRINK ME” (Carroll 17). With either decision, the tutee will forfeit a part of his or her writing identity in order to better fit the academic ideal. As tutors, we often play the part of the White Rabbit leading our various Alices throughout their adventures in Academic Wonderland, but one has to wonder, are we, in actuality, doing them a disservice by asking them to conform to the University’s ideals?

While Alice was not colonized when she entered Wonderland, she experiences the inability to concretely identify who she is: “‘I’m afraid I can’t put it more clearly,’ Alice replied very politely, ‘for I can’t understand it myself to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing’” (Carroll 55). Similarly, many tutees have difficulty in telling who they are. They begin hopeful, ready to embark on a new journey, but by the time they have reached the Writing Center, they have become dejected, down trodden, and, possibly, they have lost the hope with which they began. This struggle to reconcile various identities is common in post-colonialist countries, and those who have experienced Diaspora due to colonialism; however, the struggle has transgressed into literature and the literature into the University’s literary cannon. The recent commonality of post-colonialism and its theories has caused it to be able to be applied abstractly to various situations of displacement, instead of solely referring to Diasporic peoples. Sara Suleri describes the redefinition:

Where the term once referred exclusively to the discursive practices produced by the historical fact of prior colonization in certain geographically specific segments of the world, it now more of an abstraction available for figurative deployment in any strategically redefinition of marginality. (759)

Therefore, Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski's statement: "[The University's] purpose: to acculturate students who speak, read, and write Other dialects, Other languages, Other discourses, and initiate them into academic discourses" (81), while it does not apply to a true Diasporic people, it applies abstractly, and truly, to those students not yet acculturated into the University. Bawarshi and Pelkowski suggest that acculturation into the University's academic discourse is effectively colonizing the student, and thus the student's "ideas have been altered, and his home discourse has been silenced" (85). Bawarshi and Pelkowski further their assertion by stating that Writing Centers serve to effect the University's change: "the change is meant to transform the student and his or her texts into the acceptable standard of the university" (85).

The idea of dual consciousness or plural consciousness originated in post-colonialist studies; therefore, if one is to consider the University as the colonizer and the student as the colonized, it is logical that the student would experience either dual consciousness or plural consciousness. As many post-colonialist or Diasporic texts suggest, the rejection of one consciousness in favor of another is typically detrimental. However, there is a significant difference when comparing tutees to those who have been colonized: the students willingly come to the colonizer and accept acculturation. For example, I had a tutorial with a business student whose native language is Korean. He came to me so he could "make sure it sounded like English" because he had typed his speech in Korean and translated it on the computer. In this case, his ideas and home discourse have not been altered, since he wrote in his native tongue; however, by coming to the Writing Center ensure that his speech would follow the English speech pattern, I colonized his paper. We have discussed, at length, how we should not appropriate students' papers, but colonizing their papers, as Bawarshi and Pelkowski described it, has not been fully discussed. So, he read his speech to me, and immediately I could identify aspects that were clearly cultural. That is to say there were certain aspects of his speech, such as diction, sentence structure, and formality, which were not American. He began his speech by instructing his audience to "sit down" because it was "his turn to speak". We, as Americans, effectively ask our audience to do the same things; however, we do so in a more flowery manner and stay away from the imperative: "sit down". After ending his speech, which

was about “Korean costumes”, I asked about his use of the term “madam” and what he meant to convey. First, he told me that a madam was a prostitute. Second, he told me that she was a married prostitute. (I think at this moment I clearly looked dumbfounded. And, for a moment, I felt displaced. I could relate to Alice’s confusion to the residents of Wonderland perversion of common objects and words.) Finally, he said that in Korea they are not supposed to say that someone was a prostitute in formal conversation, so they used the Korean word for madam. What struck me as interesting, and almost comical, is how Americans freely use the term prostitute in formal conversation, but we cannot tell an audience to sit down? The tutee then asked me, since I had asked him about the term madam, if he would be able to say prostitute in class without offending his classmates and teacher. I told him that he would be able to, because prostitute was the proper term for that type of work. When we began to discuss his speech, I found that he was not interested in the reasoning as to why he needed to change certain parts. He just wanted to know what was culturally acceptable. This, to me, appeared to be a clear colonization of a student’s work. He came to me seeking acculturation: This student sought English language to replace his native tongue, he desired to transform Korean syntax to English, he wanted to assume English mannerisms and etiquette, and, perhaps most frightening, he did not question my authority, or correctness, on anything.

Acculturation, as Bawarshi and Pelkowski suggest, is a form of colonization, because the student is losing his or her unique writing style. In following with the idea of the “mestiza consciousness”, we are supposed to encourage students to maintain their original writing style while teaching them how to survive in an academic environment. I would have liked to explain to my tutee that he needed to maintain his original thought process while he is writing for the University; thus encouraging him to maintain his home discourse while learning the standards of the University, but I did not have enough time. The idea of a “mestiza consciousness” relates to the Diasporic concept of plural consciousness: a fragmented identity. Within each person there are many identities; for example, I know I have at least five: student, tutor, woman, friend, and daughter. Each identity gives me a different perspective on life, and, thusly, influences my writing. If I were to eliminate, or even subjugate, one identity in favor of another, there are



a plethora of deteriorating effects. Instead, we should promote, as Bawarshi and Pelkowski describe “mestiza consciousness”: “a consciousness marked by the ability to negotiate multiple, even contradictory, subject positions while rooted in dominant discourse” (Murphy 90). This will create a fragmented writing identity that could, potentially, strengthen a student’s writing.

It is important, while navigating and negotiating these consciousnesses, to not disregard the influence of the dominant culture. Many Diasporic authors, poets, and theorists have discussed the potential harm that one can do to Bawarshi and Pelkowski mention that it is also detrimental to reject the “dominant” culture: For Walcott, a complete rejection of the dominant/dominating genre and language is limiting. Nor does his choice and resistance: “it is this awe of the numinous, this elemental privilege of naming the new world which annihilates history in our great poets.” (Murphy 90)

The Diasporic poet, Countee Cullen, would agree with Walcott. Through the rejection of the dominating culture’s discourse and language, one limits the language and topics one can discuss, either in analytical or creative writing. In his forward to *Caroling Dusk*, Countee comments that “[as] heretical as it may sound, there is the probability that Negro poets, dependent as they are on the English language, may have more to gain from the rich background of English and American poetry than from any nebulous atavistic yearnings toward and African inheritance” (Cullen). Cullen’s comment tells his readers that while the Negro poets may have to utilize English as their primary language, they may be able to find more inspiration and a wider breadth of topics if they were to look into the English and American history. Bawarshi and Pelkowski acknowledge that: “As colonial subjects usually had to learn to speak in a language different from their own, so basic writers are expected to speak an academic language foreign to them in many ways” (Murphy 89), and, yes, the University does expect its students to conform to their standards of writing; however, students need to maintain their original thought process. This would create a unique form of acculturation: one that conforms student’s academic writing, but allows them to keep their “ideas...[and] home discourse” (Murphy 85). Through the development and management of several writing consciousnesses, students will be able to draw upon many experiences; thus, strengthening their writing.

How do we, as tutors, accomplish a reconciling of identities for our tutees? I often feel like the caterpillar in *Alice in Wonderland*, when he says: “Who are *you*?[...]What do you mean by that?[...]Explain yourself!” Perhaps I am not as stern or contemptuous as the caterpillar, but I still feel as if I am asking an unanswerable question. Oftentimes, I receive an answer similar to Alice’s: “‘I can’t explain *myself*, I’m afraid, [...]’ said Alice, ‘because I’m not myself, you see.’” As aforementioned, it is dangerous for one to eliminate or subjugate an identity, and one is supposed to negotiate their multiple identities. Perhaps, then, what I should offer my tutees is a solution instead of a question, but what is the answer? How do I help my tutee find who he or she is and how he or she can negotiate his or her plural consciousnesses? I am sure, because I am experiencing the same emotion as I am writing this, that many tutors will find this task daunting. The negotiation of differing consciousnesses is difficult, as many author’s have expressed through novels, such as Paule Marshall’s *Praisesong for the Widow*; however, we are not, hopefully, helping students discover a consciousness that has been subjugated to the point of invisibility due to pressure from the dominant culture, but, rather, we are helping students to maintain their original “home discourse” while learning and, initially, conforming to the University’s standards.

It is, possibly, presumptuous of me to assume that all students – ESL or SDS – are aware of their plural consciousness. However, there are students that are aware of the, oftentimes, warring consciousnesses within them. I am reminded of the exercise that we did in 402<sup>1</sup> when we were handed a piece of work that a tutee had done, and we were to participate in a mock tutorial. Dr Westbrook, as the tutee, asked us, the hydra-tutor, to read the piece and to give him feedback. If I were to accurately describe the next hour and a half that followed, I could only compare it to what an ESL student must feel every time we ask he or she to “describe what they are attempting to convey by using “osseous” in their paper”: they have no idea and are even more frustrated by us asking. However, the student’s piece is an incredibly accurate and effective way to represent the dual consciousness that the student was experiencing, and, undeniably creative.

This student’s piece is a unique representation of double consciousness, in the sense that it is visual and literary. The piece looked like a shape poem: half of a square on the left side of the page and

half of a square on the right. However, it was not the shape that confused the class, but it was the way the words were positioned within those squares. At first glance, I was confused, and it wasn't because the words were in a different language, but they were arranged differently. They did not appear to be random, because they looked like they were grouped into different types of food: Western and Asian. Through a series of questions that were sometimes frustrated, we were able to figure out the piece, and Dr Westbrook asked the class what we thought of the piece. I remember feeling frustrated because I couldn't immediately figure out what the piece was saying, and the tutee did not want to give any instructions until we had given it a few tries. I remember that a lot of the students in our class kept saying that the piece wouldn't pass in the portfolio. Granted, the piece, as it was lacking reading directions, may have not passed, but that was not what the tutee had asked us to do: he wanted us to read the piece and tell him what we thought. So, after finishing the piece and considering mine own and my classmates' reactions, I could only conclude that the tutee's purpose was to make us feel as he did when he was reading and writing English. Dr Westbrook explained to us that Bobby Chen was an ESL English 99<sup>2</sup> student who wrote this piece and brought it to the Writing Center. Bobby had to face, every day, the complications of being an international student in a University that is forcing him to acculturate to its standards. Bobby, however, was able to express his double consciousness and the frustration that it caused him through his poem. The frustration was conveyed through the lack of reading directions and the odd shape of the poem. Bobby had combined the Chinese method of writing, vertically, with the American method of writing, horizontally. Bobby's piece reminds me of when Carroll describes Alice as a "curious child [who] was very fond of pretending to be two people" (19), but, like Alice, Bobby appears to have negative feelings toward the situation: "But it's no use now," thought poor Alice, "to pretend to be two people! Why, there's hardly enough of me left to make *one* respectable person!" (19).

Bobby and the fictional Alice present us, the tutors, with a difficult situation: how do we help tutees maintain their home discourse while helping them conform to the University's standards? Since most of us are neither psychology majors nor psychologists, we are not able to provide them with any insight to their situation, but we can offer them patience and compassion. As Bawarshi and Pelkowski

state, “a consciousness marked by the ability to negotiate multiple, and even contradictory, subject positions while rooted in a dominant discourse – is the goal of the postcolonial writing center,” (90).

While I am tentative to compare the University to colonizers, I am empathetic to the analogy because the University is forcing the incoming students to accept and acculturate to its society. Students apply to the University expecting that they will have to make some changes to their study habits and they are hoping that their minds will be challenged and, perhaps, changed. So, the analogy of colonialism is harsh, since I am not aware of any colony that applied for colonizing or paid the colonizers willingly to colonize them. Students know that their methodology may not meet the University’s standards and are willing to change in order to achieve them; however, English 99 students are often led to believe that their work is so subpar that there is little to no chance that they will pass the remediation class. It then comes to the tutor’s attention that this tutee may need more than just help organizing an essay or working on his or her grammar, but, possibly, he or she needs reassurance that he or she is worthy of attending the University. The desire to meet, or succeed, their professor’s expectations places students in the difficult position of deciding whether to subjugate their home discourse or to retain it and chance not passing. As W.E.B. DuBois posits, the subjugating of one consciousness in favor of the other creates tension within the person. Students may find themselves dissatisfied with their education and University because they feel as if they do not “fit in” or that they are not what the University is looking for. And, this is where we, as tutors, can begin to help these students.

Bawarshi and Pelkowski end their article stating that the writing center should act as a “guide and a translator” (93) for the tutee. It is important that tutors are able to relate to their tutees and to guide them through their academic journey. As the White Rabbit guided Alice through Wonderland, we will have to guide tutees through complicated English grammar, teacher’s syllabi, and undecipherable teacher’s notes. We can commiserate with illegible professor’s notes, and help the student work through the dreaded “AWK”<sup>3</sup> sentence. And, by so doing, we reassure the student that they are not the only person going through this experience. I feel that it is important that students are aware that they are not alone in experiencing negative comments or feelings of displacement, because many students have felt it, and

many future students will feel it. Bawarshi and Pelkowski suggest that, as a post-colonialist Writing Center, we should guide students through the University and help them translate academic jargon; however, I propose that we go one step further than solely guiding and translating and provide encouragement to students that appear to feel displaced or frustrated. When students ask a question, even if the answer appears obvious, we must remember to always answer with patience and understanding, and not in the same manner as the Mad Hatter when Alice inquires where three sisters in well would acquire treacle: ““You can draw water from a water-well,” said the Hatter; “so, I should think that you could draw treacle from a treacle-well – eh, stupid?”” (Carroll 85). Many students have already encountered this type of attitude from their teachers, as Bawarshi and Pelkowski quote Wagner’s opinion of remedial and ESL students: “[he] laments that ‘illiterate’ students, whom he variously refers to as ‘dunces’ (43), ‘misfits’ (129), ‘hostile mental children’ (247), and ‘the most sluggish of animals’ (163)” (Murphy 81). With this sort of degradation and discouragement, there is no reason for tutors to be overly critical of a tutee’s paper. Bawarshi and Pelkowski quote Mary Louise Pratt’s definition of a contact zone as “a place in which different discourses grapple with each other and are negotiated” (Murphy 81), and I would have to agree with the notion that the Writing Center can become an academic contact zone. Students are attacked with red pens and degrading verbal comments, and come to the Writing Center to be further subjugated to University standards. However, tutors have several choices when it comes to tutees with this problem: tutors can be indifferent and solely address the mechanics of the essay, tutors can tell the tutee that this is how the University is, and they need to get used to it, or the tutor can empathize with the tutee and reassure he or she that negotiating the university will become easier the longer he or she is there.

We have all, at some point, asked ourselves the existential questions, who am I and why am I here, and felt insignificant, frustrated, and, probably, misunderstood. Since we can commiserate with our tutees’ feelings when they are attempting to navigate their double and plural consciousnesses, we should approach each tutorial with patience, compassion, and understanding. The Writing Center can become a place less like a “contact zone” and closer resemble a meeting place for peers: A place lacking judgment

and harsh criticism, but full of understanding and the desire to help guide the tutee. After all, we are the White Rabbits of Academic Wonderland.

### Notes

1. English 402: Theories of Response to Written Composition at California State University, Fullerton. Students working to complete the Professional Certificate Program in Writing and Teaching and those students working in the Writing Center are required to take 402 in conjunction with 402S, Tutor Supervision. (Information taken from [English.fullerton.edu](http://English.fullerton.edu).)
2. 099 Developmental Writing: Intensive course in basic writing skills. Prepares students for ENGL 101 and intended for students who score 133 to 144 on the English Placement Test. Degree credit is not awarded for this course. (Information taken from [English.fullerton.edu](http://English.fullerton.edu).)
3. AWK refers to a general term used by instructors to indicate that there are grammatical, structural, or logical issues with the sentence(s).

### Works Cited

- Bawarshi, Anis, and Stephanie Pelkowski. "Postcolonialism and the Idea of a Writing Center". *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*. Comp. Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 2007. 79-94. Print.
- Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2004. Print.
- Cullen, Countee. "Caroling Dusk". *An Online Journal and Multimedia Companion to Anthology of Modern American Poetry*. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2002. Web. 2 December 2010.
- Suleri, Sara. "Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition". *Critical Inquiry*. 18.4. Identities (Summer 1992) 756-769. Web. JSTOR. 2 Nov. 2010.

## **Syllabi**

A successful class begins with a well-designed syllabus. A syllabus helps structure and scaffold a class, setting up not only themes and expectations but also the tone and personality of the course. Each class is different, and no two syllabi are alike. We hope that the syllabi here will give you ideas; whether it's a reinforcement of your own methods in constructing your syllabus or something new that you would like to adopt, we hope the enclosed syllabi will help you find the music in your own course.

## Maryellen Diotte

Graduate Teaching Assistant in the English Department at the University of Kansas  
Maryellen is currently working on her MA in Literature at the University of Kansas. Her research interests include identity formation especially concerning racial and national identity in nineteenth-century American literature. Her thesis focuses on exploring Pudd'nhead Wilson as a pursuit of the American dream novel that can be taught alongside other novels of the same theme. Maryellen earned her BA in English at California State University, Fullerton.

I teach English 102 courses in the English Department at the University of Kansas which focuses on teaching students how to read and write critically by helping them to understand the ideas and perspectives from diverse readings and incorporate these authors' ideas effectively into the students' own writing. This course requires students to conduct research for each assignment and effectively utilize the ideas and language from other authors to enhance their own ideas and writing. Although this course is taught by many instructors in the department, I designed the course with the intent of making the writing process more appealing for my students by working with them to create assignments that would appeal to their personal interests topic-wise or even genre-wise.

Although English 102 is a general course that is taken to fulfill one of the writing requirements at the University of Kansas, I took it upon myself to design my syllabus around a central theme to give my students a goal to work toward. The central theme of this course is identity formation, and each assignment is designed to enhance the student's understanding of identity formation and how language plays an important role in defining it.



**English 102: Critical Reading and Writing**  
**Spring 2015**  
**TTH 1:00-2:15PM**

**Maryellen Diotte**

**Email: [msdiotte@ku.edu](mailto:msdiotte@ku.edu)**

**Office: 2008 Wescoe Hall**

**Office Hours: TTH 11:00AM-12:30PM**

**If you cannot make these times, please contact me to schedule an appointment.**

“Writing is a form of personal freedom. It frees us from the mass identity we see in the making all around us. In the end, writers will write not to be outlaw heroes of some underculture but mainly to save themselves, to survive as individuals.” –Don DeLillo

**Course Overview:** Students will use their reading, writing, and critical thinking skills acquired in English 101 to examine intense readings in order to understand the process of writing, and as a result, improve their own writing skills. By reading diverse readings and responding to them with their own writings, students will navigate the process of inquiry and synthesize other works with their narratives to form research papers. The end result will leave students with not only a work of academic writing but also a piece of the conversation that the students entered upon exploring their topic. Although various cultural perspectives will be provided through readings, a significant amount of understanding and appreciation for diverse perspectives will come from collaboration among the students.

**Course Goals: This course satisfies KU Core Goal 2, learning outcome 2.**

By the end of this course students should be able to:

- Maintain and continue to improve the abilities gained in English 101
- Use writing and reading for inquiry, thinking, learning, and communicating
- Write in ways appropriate to academic rhetorical contexts
- Engage in a variety of research methods to study and explore topics

**Required Materials:**

*Composition and Literature*, 2013-2014 (Department of English, KU)

Faigley, *The Brief Penguin Handbook*, 4th ed., 2012 (Pearson/Longman)

Greene and Lidinsky, *From Inquiry to Academic Writing*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Bedford/St. Martin's)

8½ x 11 Spiral Notebook (for Journals)

Collegiate Dictionary (recommended)

**Grading:** Your final course grade will be based on the following weightings of graded work:

Project #1	20%
Project #2	20%
Project #3	20%
Final Project	15%
Journals & Other In-class Writing	15%
Collaborative Work	10%

**In this course we will be using the +/- grading scale, approved by the College of Liberal**

**Arts and Sciences to describe intermediate levels of performance between a maximum of A and a minimum of F. Intermediate grades represented by plus or minus shall be calculated as .3 units above or below the corresponding letter grade.**

**Writing Projects:** In this class, you will be composing three writing projects along with a final revision project. A separate prompt for each writing project will be provided at the beginning of each unit. **All papers should be formatted with one-inch margins and written in 12 point Times New Roman font and must include a Works Cited page when necessary. All papers must be uploaded to Blackboard and saved as a .doc or .docx file. Late writing projects will be penalized one-third of a letter grade for each day turned in late. If you're experiencing any technical problems, contact me well in advance before the project due date so you may not risk receiving a penalty.**

**Journals:** The key to writing is to make it a part of your everyday routine. For this reason, students are required to keep a journal to respond to the activities, readings, and discussions we have in class. Journals are an opportunity to get your thoughts flowing and should be used to generate ideas for your project writing assignments. **Each journal entry should include the date, a brief summary of the prompt, and no less than a one-page (double-spaced) response. I will collect your journals twice a semester on March 5 and April 28. For each day that journals are turned in late, your grade will be lowered by one-third of a letter grade.**

**Make-up Journals:** Since journal entries are typically used to record thoughts on the in-class activities or assignments issued for that class day, students who miss class during a journal day cannot answer the same prompt that was assigned in class. However, **students can still make up a journal entry they missed by responding to a new prompt found under "Journal Make-Ups" uploaded on Blackboard. Students can make up no more than three missed journal entries.**

**Collaborative Work:** Peer review workshops and the group conference during Unit II will be graded as collaborative work. You will be graded by your peer's reflection on your feedback as well as your participation in each workshop and group conference. Students will also be required to complete one collaborative annotated bibliography for Unit II. More specific details will be provided later.

**Class Attendance and Participation Policy:** In order to fulfill the goals outlined for this course, students are expected to arrive on time and prepared to learn. All assigned readings should be completed prior to each class period. Since most class days will be spent preparing students for the writing project due at the end of each unit, it is necessary to regularly participate in class.

In addition to daily journal entries, other in-class writing activities will be assigned and graded. Students who are tardy or absent will not be able to make up any of the in-class writing activities, so be sure to regularly attend classes on time. In the event that the class ends before we have time to finish an assignment, the in-class assignment may become homework and will be posted on Blackboard. For this reason, it is also important to regularly check Blackboard for any new updates.

**Conferences:** You will meet with me (individual conferences) and with your peers (group conferences) to discuss your writing and assist your peers with their writing at least twice this

semester. You are responsible for bringing a complete draft with any questions that you might have for your scheduled conference. Since classes will be canceled during mandatory conferences, failure to participate in your conference will count as two missed class meetings as well as lower your overall project grade for that unit. We will meet in my office (Wescoe 2008) unless otherwise indicated.

**Technology:** While technology has many benefits, it is ultimately a distraction in the classroom not only for its user but those around him or her. Unless necessary, laptops, tablets, phones, and other electronic devices should **NOT** be used in the classroom. If you are expecting an important call or text, please alert me in advance prior to the start of class, and I'll allow you to step outside and take your call. If you are accessing the required texts on a digital device such as a Kindle, let me know ahead of time, and I'll give you permission to use them. **Students accessing Facebook, Twitter, tumblr, or any other social media sites or students using their electronic devices in any way that does not contribute positively to class discussion will start losing participation points. Be aware that if I catch you, I will not always let you know.**

**24-Hour Reflection Policy:** You may not in any way discuss an assignment and/or grade with me for 24 hours after I return any graded assignment to you. For example, if I return Writing Project #1 to you on a Thursday during class, you may not telephone, email, or see me in person to discuss that assignment and/or grade until Friday. You need to use this time to consider all comments I have written on your paper, work up an objective reflection of your work and the grade, gain critical distance, and prepare an organized list of specific concerns that you have about the assignment and/or grade. Of course, feel free to contact me about anything else during that period of time, especially unanticipated absences and/or emergencies.

**Academic Honesty:** Stealing and passing off as your own someone else's ideas or words, or using information from another's work without crediting the source, is called "plagiarism." Some specific examples of actions that constitute plagiarism include pasting together uncredited information or ideas from the Internet or published sources, submitting an entire paper written by someone else, submitting a paper written for another class (and thus not original work), and copying another student's work (even with the student's permission). In order to avoid unintentional plagiarism and to represent your work honestly, you will need to be meticulous about giving credit to any and all sources, whether directly quoted (even a few words) or paraphrased. Please see your instructor if you have any questions about documenting sources.

Because one of the goals of this course is to help you improve your writing, plagiarism hurts you as much as it does anyone. If you plagiarize another's work, you will not be receiving the needed feedback to improve your own writing. There will be a zero tolerance policy for any type of plagiarism in this class. All incidents of plagiarism will be penalized, reported, and kept on file in the English Department, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the University Provost's Office.

**Religious Observances (USRR 1.4.3 & USRR 2.1.4)**

According to university regulations, in cases of conflicts between regularly scheduled class activities and mandated religious observances, the student is responsible for initiating discussion with the instructor to reach a mutually acceptable solution. Please speak with me privately if

scheduled papers/activities conflict with mandated religious observances, so that a make-up paper/activity may be scheduled for you at a mutually acceptable time.

**Writing Help:** For help with your writing, I strongly encourage you to contact KU's writing centers, called Writer's Roosts. At a Writer's Roost you can talk about your writing with trained tutors or consult reference materials in a comfortable working environment. You may ask for feedback on your papers, advice and tips on writing (for all your courses), or for guidance on special writing tasks. Please check the website at <<http://www.writing.ku.edu/students/>> for current locations and hours. The Writing Center welcomes both drop-ins and appointments, and there is no charge for their services. For more information, please call 864-2399 or send an e-mail to [writing@ku.edu](mailto:writing@ku.edu). The website is loaded with helpful information about writing of all sorts, so even if you consider yourself a good writer, check it out!

**Accessibility Statement:** The Academic Achievement & Access Center (AAAC) coordinates accommodations and services for all KU students who are eligible. If you have a disability for which you wish to request accommodations and have not contacted the AAAC, please do so as soon as possible. Their office is located in 22 Strong Hall; their phone number is 785-864-2620.

Information about their services can be found at <http://disability.ku.edu>. Please contact me privately in regard to your needs in this course.

**Drop Policy:** If you are having trouble succeeding in the course, it is especially important that you consult with me so that we can develop a plan of action that may enable you to complete the course. If you decide to drop this class, please refer to the Website below:

<http://www.registrar.ku.edu/current/schedule.shtml>

From **February 10 to April 20**, you will be assigned a grade of W. **You may not drop or withdraw after April 20.**

**Student Academic Creations:** Since one of the aims of this course is to teach students to write for specific audiences, ungraded student-authored work may be shared with other class members during the semester in which you are enrolled in the class. Please do not submit materials on sensitive subjects that you would not want your classmates to see or read, unless you inform the instructor in advance that you do not want your work shared with others.

Other uses of student-authored work are subject to the University's Policy on Intellectual Property and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. If your instructor desires to use your work outside of this class (e.g. as a sample for another class or future classes), you will be asked to fill out and sign a written form authorizing such use.

**Civility Statement:** Comments, questions, and opinions about the topics covered in class are encouraged; however, they should be expressed in respectful and appropriate language. It is essential that we maintain a constructive learning environment. This means that no one is permitted to make offensive, intimidating, or malicious comments or behave in a disruptive manner. Student conduct which disrupts the learning process shall not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action and/or removal from class.

### **Class Schedule**

This schedule is intended to serve as a flexible guide. I reserve the right to adjust dates and coursework and will promptly notify the class if I do so. Homework and in-class activities will be added and will be announced in class.

#### **Week 1: Unit I: What's in a Name?: A Personal Inquiry**

Jan. 20T: Introduction & Expectations of English 102: A Peek into the Syllabus; Ice Breakers; Field Trip to Office

22H: In-class writing: What do you know about yourself?  
For Tuesday, Read from *Inquiry*, pp 1-7

#### **Week 2:**

27T: Journal Entry #1; Grammar Lesson #1; Return In-Class Writing; Discussion on Reading: What is academic writing?; Distribute Unit #1 Prompt  
For Thursday, Read Rachel Toor's "Becoming a 'Stylish' Writer," "I Just Wrote This Last Night," & "What Looks Like Productivity" (all posted on BB under Unit 1)

29H: Journal Entry #2; Grammar Lesson #2; Discussion on Readings; What is a personal academic essay?  
For Tuesday, Read from *Inquiry*, pp 136-138 "Evaluating Internet Sources" & pp 307-311 "Interviewing"; and David Jarmal's "The Magic Word" (posted on BB under Unit 1)

#### **Week 3:**

Feb. 3T: Journal Entry #3; Grammar Lesson #3; Discussions on Readings; Expectations on Sources & Interviews; Is there such a thing as an academic 1<sup>st</sup> person?: 1<sup>st</sup> Person Formal vs. Informal

5H: Journal Entry #4; Grammar Lesson #4; MLA & Paper Formatting; What kind of questions should I be asking for Writing Project #1?

#### **Week 4:**

10T: Optional Conferences – No class

12H: Peer Review: Bring a rough draft of your Writing Project #1 to class.

#### **Week 5: Unit II: What Can I Do with My Major?: An Inquiry of Academic Interests**

17T: **Writing Project #1 Due via Blackboard by 11:59PM**; Journal Entry #5; Grammar Lesson #5; Distribute Unit 2 Prompt; Organize groups; How to Research KU Professors; Sample Email

For Thursday: Read from *Inquiry*, pp 12-14 “Academic Writers Understand That Writing is a Process”; and Anne Lamott, “Shitty First Drafts” (from *Bird by Bird*) posted on BB under Unit 2

19H: Journal Entry #6; Grammar Lesson #6; Discussion on Readings: Writing as a Process

Assigned Homework: Email 2 KU Professors in your group’s academic field  
For Tuesday, Read from *Inquiry*, Ch 2: “From Readings as a Writer to Writing as a Reader” (pp 29-39); and “How Grading Reform Changed Our School” & “A is for ‘Adjunct’: Examining Grade Inflation in Higher Education” (both posted on BB under Unit 2)

Week 6:

24T: Journal Entry #7; Grammar Lesson #7; Discussion on Readings: How to Annotate and Analyze Readings Rhetorically; What is an Academic Text?

For Thursday, Read from *Inquiry*, Ch 6: “From Finding to Evaluating Sources” (pp 120-135)

26H: Research Day

For Tuesday, Read from *Inquiry*, Ch 5: “From Formulating to Developing a Thesis” (pp 99-105) & Mark Edmundson’s “On the Uses of a Liberal Education: As Lite Entertainment for Bored College Students” (pp 322-336)

Week 7:

March 3T: Journal Entry #8; Grammar Lesson #8; Discussion on Readings: How to construct a thesis statement?

For Thursday, Read from *Inquiry*, pp 182-198 “Integrating Quotations into Your Writing”; and “Physiological and Perceptual Responses to Nintendo Wii Fit in Young and Older Adults” (posted on BB under Unit 2)

5H: Journal Entry #9; Grammar Lesson #9; **Annotated Bibliography & Journals Due**; Discussion on Readings: Specialized Language and Academic Texts

Week 8:

10T: Group Conferences

12H: Group Conferences

Week 9:

17T: **SPRING BREAK**

19H: **SPRING BREAK**

Week 10: **Unit III: What Makes Race, Gender, and Class?: An Inquiry into Various Perspectives**

- 24T: **Writing Project #2 Due via Blackboard by 11:59PM**; Journal Entry #10; Grammar Lesson #10; Privilege and Perspective; Distribute WP3 Prompt For Thursday, Read from *Inquiry*, pp 297-307 “Writing a Proposal” & Deborah Tannen’s “How Male and Female Students Use Language Differently” (pp 345-350)
- 26H: Journal Entry #11; Grammar Lesson #11; Discussion on Readings: Gender For Tuesday, Read from *Inquiry*, pp 8-10 “Academics See Writing as a Conversation”; and Toni Morrison’s “Recitatif” (posted on BB under Unit 3)
- Week 11:
- 31T: Journal Entry #12; Grammar Lesson #12; Discussion on Readings: What is race? For Thursday, Read from *Inquiry*, Bell Hooks’s “Seeing and Making Culture: Representing the Poor” (pp 431-437)
- April 2H: Journal Entry #13; Grammar Lesson #13; Discussion on Readings: Class
- Week 12:
- 7T: **Proposals Due**; Watch *Falling Down*
- 9H: Finish *Falling Down*; Evaluating Issues on Class
- Week 13:
- 14T: Individual Conferences
- 16H: Individual Conferences
- Week 14:
- 21T: Peer Review  
For Thursday, Bring a copy of both of the graded projects to class
- 23H: **Writing Project #3 Due**; Journal Entry #14; Grammar Lesson #14; Distribute Revision Project Prompt; A Lesson on Multimodality
- Week 15: **Revision Project: How Do You Envision a Multimodal Revision?**
- 28T: Journal Entry #15; Grammar Lesson #15; **Final Journals Due**; Multimodal Project & Resource Tour
- 30H: Ideas for Making Your Project Multimodal; *Hey Arnold* Episode: Why Your Individual Voice Matters
- Week 16:
- May 5T: Evaluations; Share Ideas & Work on Final Project
- 7H: Optional Conferences

**Final Revision Project due Tuesday, May 12 by 11:59PM via BB**



## Jamie Lynn Greuel

Jamie Lynn Greuel is a Jane-of-all-trades who claims at least a mild knowledge of teaching, tutoring, medieval treachery, sexual divinity, and global domination with three circles. Her pedagogical interests have led her to tutor privately and through a variety of community colleges and four-year universities and to teach English 101 at Cal State Fullerton. Her professional aspirations include teaching composition full-time, and her personal goals include finding enough hidden Mickeys to impress anyone brave enough to adventure through Disneyland with her.

I built my course around the concept of revision, not simply as a series of corrections but as a process of envisioning and re-envisioning a work in order to create an intended meaning for a specific audience. As such, I have my students review their work with their peers and submit reflections detailing the choices made in their essays. These reflections force students to consider their essays as a series of decisions rather than a 2-am mad-typing session. I also include a revision paper, where I ask students to examine a work they created earlier in the semester and alter it in light of a different audience or genre. In this way, my students are never finished with any of their writing until the end of the semester, something I hope they will take with them into future courses.

Instructor: Jamie Greuel

Office: LH 534

Office Hours: M 9-10 (or by appointment – appointments welcome!)

E-mail: jgreuel@fullerton.edu

Phone: (657) 278-2667

### **Required Text:**

*Remix: Reading + Composing Culture* Second Edition, Catherine G. Latterell, Published by Bedford/St. Martin's ISBN 978-1-4576-8341-1

### **Course Description:**

Developing effective writing and thinking skills will help you not only in all future courses but also in your personal and professional lives. The ability to communicate effectively with an intended audience via written word is crucial. As this course aims to strengthen your written communication, by the end of this class you will be expected to:

- Compose written works that identify and respond to the needs of a particular audience
- Respond clearly, verbally and in writing, to your own and others' writing
- Be able to use conventions of Standard Written English appropriately
- Develop written works that contain a clearly articulated purpose and use well-developed examples to further that purpose.
- Utilize the writing process; understand that writing is not an isolated event but an ongoing cycle of reading, thinking, and writing that produces finished products that improve upon early drafts; no essay is ever "perfect" or "right."
- Think critically about texts that you read and compose, forming your own ideas and identifying and questioning assumptions.

In order to write effectively, you must think critically. Like everything else in life, in order to write or think well you must practice. You will do a great deal of writing and talking about writing in this course, so be prepared!

### **Assignments and Responsibilities**

#### **Attendance/Participation: 150 Points**

This is a discussion-based class. Participation in discussions, activities, and in-class writing is mandatory. Preparing for and attending one-on-one conferences with me, completing assigned readings, reviewing your peers' written work and having your own work discussed, and creating conversations with your fellow students on Titanium will all also count toward your participation grade. More than three absences will adversely affect your grade. Arriving late or leaving early from class three times will equal one absence. This class is only fifty minutes; please try to leave during class only if it is absolutely necessary. If you have extenuating circumstances, maintaining open communication is the best course of action. Be honest and contact me in advance when conflicts arise.

#### **Classroom Conduct:**

This class room is, first and foremost, a safe space for students to learn and grow as writers. I will not tolerate any comments or behavior that belittle, intimidate, or harm other students in any way. Keep all comments respectful, and keep an open mind.

**Cell Phones:**

Part of respecting your fellow students is refraining from using your cell phone while in class. Cell phones should be placed on silent (NOT vibrate, SILENT or OFF) during class time and should be put away out of sight. Relatedly, at no point in time are you allowed to take a picture of the board. This is a writing class. Write all notes and assignments down. With pen or pencil.

**E-mail:**

Make sure you check your campus e-mail frequently, as you may miss important class information if you neglect it. You may also contact me via e-mail with questions and for feedback on drafts. Please be respectful of e-mail etiquette. If you request feedback on a draft of an essay, you must submit it no later than noon the Friday before it is due in order to give yourself sufficient time to incorporate my feedback. I attempt to respond to e-mails quickly; during the week, you will always receive a response within 24 hours. Over the weekend, my responses may be slower. Take this into account when you ask questions regarding upcoming assignments; I may not respond to you in time if you wait until Sunday night to ask a question.

**Readings:**

All readings should be completed prior to your arrival in class on the day beside which they are written in the course schedule. Readings will be added and changed with prior notice in class or via e-mail. Read all assigned material thoroughly and come to class prepared to talk critically about what you have read.

**Quizzes:**

I reserve the right to assign surprise quizzes at any time. Make sure you keep up with the readings and other assignments, as there is a direct correlation between my suspicion that students are not completing assigned reading and the odds of a pop quiz worth a large quantity of points.

**Titanium Posting: 150 Points**

Every week you will be asked to create a Titanium post of at least 300 words and comment on at least three other posts; comments are to be kept respectful and supportive. All Titanium work is due by 11:59pm on the due date listed in the course schedule unless otherwise stated in class or via e-mail. Prompts for each post will be posted online in the description for that week's forum. The Titanium discussion board will be a way for us to grow as a community of writers and enter discussions with one another rather than writing in isolation. Responses and posts will be graded based on the effort and insight you put into them.

**Essays: 425 Points**

You will write three out-of-class essays and one in-class essay for this course. Specific prompts will be given to you in class. All out-of-class writing will be typed in MLA format. Essays are due no later than five minutes after the start of class on their due date. You will be expected to revise these essays a number of times. Remember, writing is a process. **Please keep all of these drafts, as you will need them for your portfolio at the end of the semester.**

**Reflections: 100 Points**

Following each essay's submission, you will be asked to reflect on the process of writing your essay. The specific questions for each reflection will be given out in class on the essay's due date. Reflections will each be at least one page long and due the following class session.

Reflections will be graded on the level of engagement with the essay and the prompt. **Please keep your reflections, as you will need these, too, for your final portfolio.**

**Peer Review:**

Peer review is mandatory. We learn the most about our writing when we learn to talk about it with others, explaining what we have done and why. Any paper for which a student misses peer review without prior approval from me will receive a deduction of one letter grade in addition to lost points for the day's participation. Peer review is meant to help you gain perspective on your writing. Expect to read your paper aloud and discuss the choices you made while writing your paper. **You will always peer review complete drafts; outlines will be insufficient.**

**Writing Center: 75 Points**

The Writing Center, located in Pollak Library North on the first floor, is an amazing resource available to all CSUF students. You can go there for help at any step in the process of composing any written work for any discipline. For this course, you will receive credit for attending the Writing Center 3 times, but you are welcome to attend many more times. You may make appointments by visiting the Writing Center's website at [fullerton.mywconline.com](http://fullerton.mywconline.com). You may also walk-in; appointments are given priority, but when tutors are available, they assist students on the walk-in list. You may have one appointment per week and one walk-in per day. If you are going to be late to your appointment, please call the Writing Center's front desk at (657) 278-3650 and let them know; if you are five minutes late without notice you will be marked as a no-show and your appointment will go to someone else. Two no-shows in a semester disable your account. Don't miss your appointments!

**Portfolio: 100 Points**

Rather than submit a term paper or write a final, your last assignment in this class will be a portfolio project in which you revise an essay you wrote earlier in the semester, modifying it in light of your newly increased awareness of rhetorical choices. You will also write a justification of your revision, detailing what you altered and why. This assignment will be graded not simply on the essay itself but on the quality and quantity of changes from its earlier incarnations. The specific prompt will be given to you later in the semester, but be aware that you will need to save all drafts of all of your papers in order to ensure full credit on this assignment.

**Course Policies****Grading:**

This course will not use plus/minus grading. Grades are determined by a point system:

A – 900-1000      B – 800-899      C – 700-799      D – 600-699      F – Below 600

The points for this course will be broken down as follows:

Attendance and Participation		150 points
TITANium Posts	15 @ 10 points each	150 points
Essays 1 & 2	2 @ 100 points each	200 points
Portfolio		100 points
Essay Reflections	4 @ 25 points each	100 points
In-Class Essay		50 points
Essay 3		175 points
Writing Center Visits		75 points
		Total 1000 points

All grades are non-negotiable. A grade of C or better (700 points or more) is required to pass this course.

### **Late Work:**

Late work without prior permission from me will receive a deduction of one letter grade per day. Please note that this is not per class day but per calendar day; an essay due Monday but submitted Wednesday will be dropped two full letter grades. Work submitted more than three classes late will not be accepted. As with attendance, honesty and communication are key. If you have difficulties, please talk to me.

### **Academic Integrity:**

The University Policy Statement on Academic Dishonesty states: "Plagiarism is defined as the act of taking the work (words, ideas, concepts, data, graphs, artistic creation) of another whether that work is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near verbatim form and offering it as one's own without giving credit to that source. When sources are used in a paper, acknowledgment of the original author or source must be made through appropriate citation/attribution and, if directly quoted, quotation marks or indentations must be used. Improper acknowledgment of sources in essays, papers, or presentations is prohibited" (UPS 300.021). Any infringements on this policy will be reported to the Dean of Students Office, Judicial Affairs and will result in an F for the course and may lead to expulsion. You can find more information here: <http://www.fullerton.edu/senate/documents/PDF/300/UPS300-021.pdf>

### **Special Needs:**

If you require special assistance or accommodations, please let me know during the first week of class. CSUF requires students to document disabilities with Disability Support Services, located in UH-101, in order to receive accommodation. You may register with them in person, online at <http://www.fullerton.edu/DSS/>, or via phone at (657) 278-3117.

### **Emergency Policy:**

Please see the following website: [prepare.fullerton.edu](http://prepare.fullerton.edu)

**If you have questions about any of these policies, please ask me. Your enrollment in this course beyond the first week of instruction signifies your acceptance of and willingness to comply by these policies, so make sure you are familiar with this syllabus!**

## Course Schedule\*

### Week 1

Monday, 1/19: Holiday – No Class

Wednesday, 1/21: First day of class; Syllabus, course expectations

Friday, 1/23: Assigned: Essay 1: Narrative **Due:** First Titanium post

### Week 2

Monday, 1/26: **Due:** Comment on at least 3 Titanium Posts **Reading:** James Tiptree Jr. Handout

Wednesday, 1/28 **Reading:** Neil Gaiman Handout

Friday, 1/30 **Due:** Titanium Post **Reading:** “Shitty First Drafts” Handout

### Week 3

Monday, 2/2: **Due:** Comment on at least 3 Titanium Posts **Reading:** *Remix* Sanovia Jackson, “Slang” page 655-656

Wednesday, 2/4: **Reading:** *Remix* Introduction page xxix-xl

Friday, 2/6: **Due:** Titanium Post **Reading:** *Remix* Introduction to Identity page 3-13; Emily White, “High School’s Secret Life” page 15-19

### Week 4

Monday, 2/9: Assigned: Essay 2: Concept **Due:** Essay 1; Comment on at least 3 Titanium Posts **Reading:** *Remix* Queen Latifah, “Who You Callin’ a Bitch?” page 33-36

Wednesday, 2/11: **Due:** Essay 1 Reflection **Reading:** *Remix* Andrew Sullivan, “The ‘He’ Hormone” page 38-51

Friday, 2/13: **Due:** Titanium Post **Reading:** *Remix* Mrigaa Sethi, “Facebook: Editing Myself” page 60-61

### Week 5

Monday, 2/16: Presidents’ Day-Campus Closed **Due:** Comment on at least 3 Titanium Posts

Wednesday, 2/18: **Conferences: Bring your Concept and an Outline!**

Friday, 2/20: **Conferences: Bring your Concept and an Outline! Due:** Titanium Post

### Week 6

Monday, 2/23: **Peer Review: Bring 3 copies of your essay!!! Due:** Comment on at least 3 Titanium Posts

Wednesday, 2/25: **Peer Review: Bring 3 copies of your essay!!!**

Friday, 2/27: **Due:** Titanium Post **Reading:** *Remix* Sarah Adams, “Be Cool to the Pizza Dude” page 106-107; Azar Nafisi, “I Believe in Empathy” page 109-110

### Week 7

Monday, 3/2: **Due:** Essay 2, Comment on at least 3 Titanium Posts **Reading:** *Remix* Henry Petroski, “The Toothpick” 677-687

Wednesday, 3/4: **Due:** Essay 2 Reflection **Reading:** *Remix* Kade Ludeman and Eddie Erlandson, “Alpha Male Syndrome” page 225-237

Friday, 3/6: **Due:** Titanium Post

### Week 8

Monday, 3/9: Film Day **Due:** Comment on at least 3 Titanium Posts

Wednesday, 3/11: Film Day

Friday, 3/13: In Class Essay – Come prepared to write! **Due:** Titanium Post

### Week 9

Monday, 3/16: **Due:** Comment on at least 3 Titanium Posts Assigned: Essay 3: Argument and Research

Wednesday, 3/18: **Reading:** *Remix* Michael Pollan, "In Defense of Food" page 539-548; Handout: James Tiptree Jr.

Friday, 3/20: **Due:** Titanium Post **Reading:** *Remix* Al Gore, "An Inconvenient Truth" page 551-558; Alan Weisman, "Polymers are Forever" page 560-575

### Week 10

Monday, 3/23: **Due:** Essay 3 Proposals; Comment on at least 3 Titanium Posts **Reading:** *Remix Smith Magazine*, "Six Word Memoirs" page 657-663

Wednesday, 3/25: **Reading:** Scott McCloud, "Words and Pictures" page 664-675

Friday, 3/27: **Due:** Titanium Post, Comment on at least 3 Titanium Posts

### Week 11

**Spring Break; No Class! Enjoy :)**

### Week 12

Monday, 4/6: **Conferences; Due:** Essay 3 Annotated Bibliography

Wednesday, 4/8: **Conferences**

Friday, 4/10: **Conferences; Due:** Titanium Post

### Week 13

Monday, 4/13: **Peer Review; Due:** Comment on at least 3 Titanium Posts

Wednesday, 4/15: **Peer Review**

Friday, 4/17: **Due:** Titanium Post

### Week 14

Monday, 4/20: **Due:** Essay 3, Comment on at least 3 Titanium Posts Assigned: Essay 4: Revision

Wednesday, 4/22: **Due:** Essay 3 Reflection **Reading:** *Remix* Lucy Grealy, "Masks" page 66-71; Gloria Anzaldua, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" page 77-82; Firoozeh Dumas, "The 'F Word'" page 84-87

Friday, 4/24: **Peer Review; Due:** Titanium Post

### Week 15

Monday, 4/27: **Due:** Comment on at least 3 Titanium Posts

Wednesday, 4/29: **Reading:** *Remix* Paired Readings: Focus on Hollywood page 451-458

Friday, 5/1: **Due:** Titanium Post

### Week 16

Monday, 5/4: **Peer Review; Due:** Comment on at least 3 Titanium Posts

Wednesday, 5/6: **Reading:** *Remix* Christine Kenneally, "The First Word: The Origins of Language" page 650-653

Friday, 5/8: **Due:** Final Titanium Post, Comment on at least 3 Titanium Posts

### Week 17

**Revision Essay and Reflection Due in my office NO LATER THAN 5PM Friday, May 15<sup>th</sup>!**

\*I reserve the right to change this schedule as necessary with prior notice via e-mail or announcement in class.

## Pam Simon

Pamela Simon Dunsmore recently finished her Master's of Arts in English at California State University, Fullerton. She is now working as an adjunct instructor at Irvine Valley College and Cypress College.

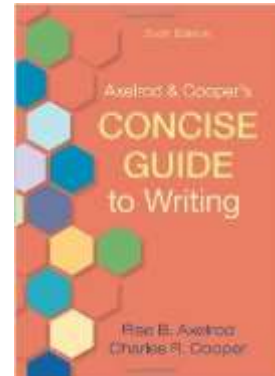
Theming my class around race and gender was a good decision for me because I do not mind managing differing opinions in the classroom. If you are interested in going in a similar vein, know that these readings can spark contentious debate. It is rewarding, however, when a student tells you that you got them thinking about issues that they had never considered before. That was exactly what I was hoping for.



## English 101: Beginning College Writing

### California State University, Fullerton | Spring 2015

Course: English 101, Section 11  
Classroom: UH-319  
Class Time: MWF, 9:00-9:50am  
Instructor: Pamela Simon Dunsmore  
Office Hr: Fri 10-11am and by appt  
Office: LH-514  
Email: pasimon@fullerton.edu



#### Course Description:

In this composition course, you will become familiar with several different types of writing that you might come across during your college experience and beyond, and you will build strategies for approaching different steps of the writing process. In addition to learning writing strategies and grammar concepts, we will be exploring writing through the lens of **race and gender issues**. The majority of our reading and discussion material will focus on topics such as privilege, discrimination, intersectionality, and performativity. Our essay prompts will also engage these topics. In the first half of the course, you will be building a vocabulary with which to discuss race and gender, and then you will apply these terms to what you see in current events and popular culture in the second half of the course.

This course fulfills the General Education Requirement A.2 Written Communications.

#### **Course Objectives:**

By the end of the course, you will not only be able to speak knowledgeably about race and gender issues, but you will also be able to write about them by utilizing narrative, argument, analysis, and research skills. You will also understand that writing is an individualized process that involves steps such as brainstorming, revising, and proofreading.

#### **Required Text:**

Axelrod and Cooper's *Concise Guide to Writing*, 6th edition

- ISBN 0312668902
- orange cover (cover image above)
- abbreviated in the course outline as CG
- available at **Little Professor Bookstore** on Placentia Avenue in Fullerton

#### **Essays:**

There will be four essays: three take-home and one in-class. To know how many points each essay is worth of your final grade, see Grading Policy and Rubric below. **When you turn in the final version of your take-home essays, you MUST attach your rough draft with comments and markings from me/your classmate at the back if you want credit for it.** It is worth a portion of your final essay grade.

### **Assignments:**

Assigned readings are listed on the schedule on the day that we will discuss them. I will either put the readings on Titanium or hand out hard copies of the readings the class before.

**Complete all readings before class so that you can participate in discussion.** Remember that you are graded on your in-class participation.

For each reading assignment, there will be either study questions or a short writing assignment to help you understand the material. In addition to homework on the readings, you will also need to complete some creative writing assignments and some homework that involves practicing skills learned in class. **There are 11 homework assignments total, and each one is worth 10 points. Since homework is worth 100 points of your overall grade, you can miss one assignment if you need to.** If you do all of the assignments, however, you can earn 10 points of extra credit.

### **Writing Center Appointments:**

You must also visit the Writing Center (located on the first floor of Pollak Library North) at least twice in the semester. Your first visit needs to occur before the mid-point of the semester, and your second visit can be at any other time. **It is wise to complete your second visit before the last couple weeks of the semester:** at the end of the semester, everyone wants to get his or her visits in, and making an appointment becomes very difficult.

### **Grammar Lectures/Quizzes:**

We will have four grammar lectures in the course of the semester. I call these “grammar lectures” merely out of convenience; not all of the concepts are related to grammar. The class immediately after the lecture will usually feature a quiz on the concepts.

### **Final Exam:**

It is important that you **take notes on everything** that we cover in class—writing strategies, grammar concepts, discussions about the readings, any terms that I define (especially the ones that I write on the board)—because any of it could be on the final exam. While you will receive a study guide for the final, it will not be detailed, and you will need to rely on your class notes to prepare.

## Attendance and Tardiness:

We will have one-on-one conferencing two times during the semester. Individual conferencing is extremely important. If you miss your scheduled conference time, the missed conference will count as two absences. Missing a peer-review day also counts as two absences. Except in the event of a medical emergency, **you will only be allowed three free absences in the course of the semester**; missing more than three classes will result in your grade being lowered an entire letter grade (A-->B). Missing more than six classes will result in your grade being lowered two letter grades, and missing more than nine means that you cannot pass the class. Finally, **being late to class twice is considered one absence**, so budget your absences and tardies accordingly.

If you know in advance that you will be absent from class and have a good excuse (funeral, doctor's appointment, etc.), please let me know in person or via email. I may excuse your absence depending on the circumstances.

## Late Work:

All assignments must be turned in on time. If you are unable to turn in an assignment by the deadline, it is your responsibility to speak with me **BEFORE** the due date.

## Revision Policy:

**You may revise any/all of the first three essays** for a higher grade. To revise, pay attention to my marks throughout your essay and, more importantly, the comments that I write on the rubric at the end of your essay, and then address those concerns. Your final grade for that essay will be an average of your original score and your revised score. **Your revision is due two weeks after I return your graded essays (see dates in course outline)**, whether I remind you of the revision due date or not.

## Plagiarism:

We will discuss plagiarism in class, for ideas about it can differ from culture to culture. But for now, here is Cal State Fullerton's definition of plagiarism: "[Plagiarizing is] taking the work (words, ideas, concepts, data, graphs, artistic creation) of another **whether that work is paraphrased or copied in verbatim**...without giving credit to that source. When sources are used in a paper, acknowledgment of the original author or source must be made through appropriate citation." If you plagiarize, you will receive a zero for that assignment, and it will be reported to the Dean of Students Office. Please talk to me if you are unsure about how to properly cite sources—I am happy to help! For more information on plagiarism, see the Academic Dishonesty Policy at <http://www.fullerton.edu/deanofstudents/Judicial/Policies.asp>.

## Special Needs:

Please come to me in the first week of class if you require any special accommodations. You will need to be registered with the Office of Disability Support Services (UH 101). If you are not registered but think that you should be, visit the office, call (657) 278-3117, or look online at <http://www.fullerton.edu/disabledservices>.

For physical and mental health needs, please see <http://www.fullerton.edu/shcc/> for contact information, location, and more details.

## Grading Policy and Rubric:

I use the +/- grading option along with letter grades, and I do not give out solicited extra credit assignments. A grade of C (2.0) or better is required to meet the GE requirement. A grade of C- (1.7) or below will not satisfy the GE requirement.

Essay 1 (narrative)—200 points  
Essay 2 (argumentative)—100 points  
Essay 3 (research)—200 points  
Essay 4 (movie analysis, in-class)—100 points  
Final exam—100 points  
Participation—100 points  
Homework—100 points  
Writing center visits (2)—60 points  
Grammar quizzes (4)—40 points

**Total = 1000 Points**

## Course Outline (subject to change):

### Week 1

W 1/21	First day of class, go-around question/meeting your classmates, writing activity
F 1/23	Go-around question, syllabus activity, plagiarism discussion

### Week 2

M 1/26	<u>Assigned reading</u> : Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue," Chapter 2 in <i>CG</i> ("Remembering an Event") Questions due for Tan reading, go-around question, watch Sheryl Sandberg Ted Talk, discuss prompt for Essay 1 (discrimination)
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- W 1/28 Go-around question, discuss methods of brainstorming/ how to start an essay ppt, grammar lecture 1 (MLA format)
- F 1/30 Go-around question, grammar quiz 1, "how to write an introduction" ppt, discuss thesis statements (narrative)

### Week 3

- M 2/2 **Draft of Essay 1 DUE IN CONFERENCE**  
Individual Conferences, NO CLASS MEETING
- W 2/4 Individual Conferences, NO CLASS MEETING
- F 2/6 Individual Conferences, NO CLASS MEETING

### Week 4

- M 2/9 Assigned reading: Peggy McIntosh's "Invisible Backpack"  
Questions due for McIntosh reading, go-around question, discuss privilege in groups and as a class
- W 2/11 Go-around question, grammar lecture 2 (fragments)
- F 2/13 **Essay 1 DUE**, go-around question, grammar quiz 2, race card project intro

### Week 5

- M 2/16 **Presidents' Day, NO CLASS!**
- W 2/18 Assigned reading: chapter 5 in CG ("Arguing a position")  
Race card writing assignment due, discuss prompt for Essay 2/ watch videos
- F 2/20 Create a rubric for Essay 2, grammar lecture 3 (run-on sentences)

### Week 6

- M 2/23 Assigned reading: bell hooks's "Racism and Feminism"  
Questions due for hooks reading, grammar quiz 3, discuss intersectionality in groups and as a class, get essay 1 back
- W 2/25 **Draft of Essay 2 DUE**, discuss thesis statements (argumentative), peer-review day
- F 2/27 **NO CLASS**—writing day for essay 2

### Week 7

- M 3/2 Assigned reading: Rocio Prado's entry on Black Girl Dangerous  
Questions due for Prado reading, discuss intersectionality
- W 3/4 Discuss how to write a body paragraph (body paragraph cheeseburger); State, Support, Explain
- F 3/6 More on State, Support, Explain; discuss counterargument

## Week 8

- M 3/9      Assigned reading: excerpt from Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands*  
Questions due for Anzaldua reading, discuss language and la mestiza, revisions due for essay 1
- W 3/11      First Writing Center visit checked TODAY; Ethos, pathos, logos
- F 3/13      **Essay 2 DUE**, emergency evacuation debate

## Week 9

- M 3/16      Assigned reading: read chapter 4 in CG ("Explaining a Concept")  
Discuss prompt for Essay 3, discuss how to cite/research, grammar lecture 4 (formatting quotations)
- W 3/18      **Library visit—meet in Pollak Library!**
- F 3/20      Research/topic assignment due, grammar quiz 4, narrowing topics exercise

## Week 10

- M 3/23      **Draft of Essay 3 DUE IN CONFERENCE**, get essay 2 back  
Individual Conferences, NO CLASS MEETING
- W 3/25      Individual Conferences, NO CLASS MEETING
- F 3/27      Individual Conferences, NO CLASS MEETING

**\*\*Spring Break—NO CLASS 3/30-4/3\*\***

## Week 11

- M 4/6      Assigned reading: Sarah Manley's blog on Judith Butler, Article on plastic surgery in South Korea  
Writing assignment due for Butler and plastic surgery readings, watch Big Think video on Judith Butler, discuss gender performativity
- W 4/8      Circle activity with research/citation queries
- F 4/10      **Essay 3 DUE**, catch-up day

## Week 12

- M 4/13      Assigned reading: chapter 7 in CG ("Justifying an Evaluation"), Article on gender roles in *Hunger Games*  
Writing assignment due for *Hunger Games* article, discuss prompt for essay 4
- W 4/15      Movie analysis exercise
- F 4/17      Movie analysis assignment due, revisions due for essay 2, summary vs. analysis partner activity

## Week 13

M 4/20      Assigned reading: Blog about objectification in *Pocahontas*  
Writing assignment due for *Pocahontas* blog, get essay 3 back  
W 4/22      Catch-up day  
F 4/24      How to revise/reverse outline, watch movie

#### **Week 14**

M 4/27      Watch movie  
W 4/29      Watch movie  
F 5/1      **Essay 4 in-class essay**

#### **Week 15**

M 5/4      **Essay 4 in-class essay revision**  
W 5/6      Review for final exam  
F 5/8      Last day of class, review for final exam, end-of-semester wrap-up, revisions due for essay 3, second Writing Center visit checked TODAY

#### **Finals Week**

W 5/13      **Final Exam**, 9:30-11:20am (in our usual classroom)

## **Activities for First Year Writers**

The activities here are incredibly varied. Some are essay prompts. Some are handouts to give your students. Some are guidelines for discussions. From fantasy to music to scholarly sources, the activities here concern a wide variety of subjects. We hope you will be able to adapt some of these to your course, or that they will inspire you to create a new activity for your classroom.



## Maryellen Diotte

Graduate Teaching Assistant in the English Department at the University of Kansas

Maryellen is currently working on her MA in Literature at the University of Kansas. Her research interests include identity formation especially concerning racial and national identity in nineteenth-century American literature. Her thesis focuses on exploring Pudd'nhead Wilson as a pursuit of the American dream novel that can be taught alongside other novels of the same theme. Maryellen earned her BA in English at California State University, Fullerton.

I teach English 102 courses in the English Department at the University of Kansas which focuses on teaching students how to read and write critically by helping them to understand the ideas and perspectives from diverse readings and incorporate these authors' ideas effectively into the students' own writing. This course requires students to conduct research for each assignment and effectively utilize the ideas and language from other authors to enhance their own ideas and writing. Although this course is taught by many instructors in the department, I designed the course with the intent of making the writing process more appealing for my students by working with them to create assignments that would appeal to their personal interests topic-wise or even genre-wise.

This course is a remixing of the traditional English classroom since students are expected to write traditional essays for the first assignments as well as required to develop multimodal projects for the last two assignments. With this setup, students begin writing a standard research paper that they typically struggle with before writing a paper for the multimodal genre which they all enjoy because they feel less stress over the process of writing and more excited about the ideas in their projects. When students finally create their multimodal projects, they understand the process of organizing their ideas because multimodal projects offer a visual of their ideas which are not as apparent in large bodies of text in traditional essays. Furthermore, each assignment was created to incite each student's curiosity or at least encourage them to write on a topic that is personally interesting or at least relevant to each student's academic interest. By designing assignments that students can enjoy writing about, they are more likely to put more effort into their writing as well as challenge themselves to become better writers even when they possess reservations about writing because they were discouraged by a teacher or a family member.<sup>7</sup> For the remainder of this entry, I will include the relevance of the course based on the attached syllabus, the class schedule, and the prompts for each assignment.

Although English 102 is a general course that is taken to fulfill one of the writing requirements at the University of Kansas, I took it upon myself to design my syllabus around a central theme to give my students a goal to work toward. The central theme of this course is identity formation, and each assignment is designed to enhance the student's understanding of identity formation and how language plays an important role in defining it.

We begin with Unit I: "What's in a Name?: A Personal Inquiry," which focuses on sparking the student's curiosity about their own identity to ease them into the process of conducting research. Students are expected to interview a family member and research the origins of their name so that they may write a

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<sup>7</sup> One of the common problems I found from my students was that many of them hated writing because they were told by someone that they were "bad writers" and never given any direction on how they could improve. In some cases, these students were constantly taunted by their instructors or parents about their "terrible" writing and refuse to try believing that there is no point since no one is taking the time to help them improve or give them positive feedback. These same students who have shared their negative experiences with me have also given me feedback regarding the accessibility of the assignments that are offered in this course.

personal academic essay that shows how students can use themselves as the focus of a paper while having their audience connect to their narratives by writing on universal themes. Since one of the major issues of research assignments is that students do not do well with incorporating the language of their sources into their writing, this assignment is designed for students to focus less on the language of their writing and more on the content or their ideas. Therefore, this assignment is a less intimidating way for students to get started with writing research projects, and they learn that first-person voice can be an effective way to guide the audience in their writing.

The course then carries into Unit II: “What Can I Do with My Major?: An Inquiry of Academic Interests” with another assignment on a more traditional approach to the research paper. Although this paper is more intimidating because students will be required to conduct research on more critical sources (rather than the popular sources in the first assignment), it is practical and also interesting to students because they can focus on their academic field of interest. Students are asked to contact professors from their major and ask them for popular topics in their field that they might be able to write about. Students then conduct research on these topics by finding out what other scholars have said about them by creating an annotated bibliography before developing their thesis based on their discovery. This unit not only familiarizes students with scholarly writing but also teaches them that writing is a process so that they can divide their research project into manageable chunks to make it easier to write on.

By the time students finish the second unit, many of them begin developing their own writing processes once they realize that there is more than one way to write. Unit III: “What Makes Race, Gender, and Class?: An Inquiry into Various Perspectives” further emphasizes this concept by allowing students to create a multimodal project on an issue of their choice (as long as it relates to race, gender, or class). Students are expected to create a Powerpoint or a Prezi and identify the issue they are addressing, the ideal audience that they are addressing this issue to, and the solution or call-to-action that they are proposing to the audience after learning about some of the major issues in the readings for this unit. Many students create successful projects for this unit because this assignment makes it easier for them to organize their ideas more effectively. This unit emphasizes the importance of clarity of language because if any of the major points lack clarity (an unidentifiable issue, relevant audience, or solution), the presentation of the project will not be as effective.

After students have learned how to organize their ideas into a multimodal project for the third unit, the revision unit allows students the choice of revisiting the first or second project and re-envisioning it as a multimodal project of their choosing. The purpose of this assignment is to show students how to transfer their ideas from one genre into another while understanding how some of their points from their previous assignment might be irrelevant or unclear. By revising a previous project, students also get to see how a multimodal project can be a helpful way of organizing ideas and making them as clear as possible. By the time students reach the final project, they are less focused on emulating what they thought defined academic writing and learn to channel their creativity so that they can write using their own individual voices.

## Writing Project #1: An Inquiry into Your Name

For this assignment, you will write a researched essay on the topic of your name. The style of this essay should be an *inquiry*, i.e., an essay that begins with questions rather than answers. Your paper should also employ the style of *personal academic*—that is, because this paper will incorporate both formal research and personal narrative regarding the topic of your name, a first person narrative should be used appropriately throughout the paper.

While you will all be writing on the topic of your own name, your task in writing this paper is to make it your own. In this essay, you will be asked to use two outside sources as well as an interview with a family member about your name, along with personal insight. You will also be responsible for formulating the question(s) that give the situation for your essay.

### Purposes

- \* To encourage your curiosity about a topic you may have otherwise not considered worthy of inquiry. While researching your name and conducting your interview, try to keep an open mind; proceed in the spirit of curiosity.
- \* To practice finding and incorporating a variety of reputable and appropriate sources into your writing.
- \* To practice mixing formal research and a narrative style of writing. Since the essay is a combination of two different styles, using both first (“I,” “we,” etc.) and third person (“he,” “she,” “it”) is appropriate. The personal narrative that you share should connect your name to the wider context in which you place your name through research.

### Requirements

- \* 3-4 pages (950-1200 words) double-spaced, formatted according to MLA guidelines
- \* Use of 2-5 outside sources (not including your interview). These should be the best, most credible resources you can find about your topic (ie; not Wikipedia).
- \* Credit your sources correctly by using in-text citation and a works cited page, using *Penguin Handbook's* guide to MLA

### Important dates

Optional Conferences: Tuesday, Feb 10

Peer Review: Thursday, Feb 12

Final draft due: Tuesday, Feb 17 (Submit via Blackboard by 11:59PM)

## **Writing Project #2: Formal Research on Academic Interests**

For our second writing project, you'll be composing a formal researched paper in an academic discipline of your choosing. You will contact KU professors that teach in your discipline to help you choose a specific topic which you will be conducting research on. Before writing the paper portion of this assignment, you will also create a group annotated bibliography that will help you find sources that are directly related to your thesis.

### **Purposes**

- To practice conducting academic research and making sense of often difficult academic texts, skills that are absolutely necessary at the college level.
- To become familiar with Watson Library and the research tools that you have access to through the university, and to practice using those tools.
- To practice collaborative learning. This unit will require you to contact experts in your chosen field, and work with classmates doing research on the same topic as you.

### **Requirements**

- 5-6 pages double-spaced, formatted according to MLA guidelines
- Use of at least 5 academic sources – journal articles, textbooks, etc.
- Credit your sources correctly by using in-text citation and a works cited page, using *Penguin Handbook's* guide to MLA

### **How is this assignment different than WP1?**

- It's significantly more formal. You won't use a personal narrative, and your language will be much more academic.
- The research will come from academic sources like textbooks or scholarly journals, rather than popular sources like newspapers or websites.
- You'll be composing an annotated bibliography with at least one other student. An annotated bibliography contains a short (200-ish words) writeup of each source listed. The writeup includes a summary of the argument, the evidence and the work's strengths and weaknesses.
- We have required group conferences scheduled for this unit. Since the purpose of group conferences is to not only receive feedback from me but also your peers, being unprepared for or absent from group conferences will result in one letter grade being deducted from your WP2.

### **Deadline Reminders:**

February 24 – Email 2 professors in your academic field by this date

March 5 – Annotated Bibliographies Due

March 10, 12 – Group Conferences

March 24 – Writing Project #2 Due

## **English 102: Unit 2 Collaborative Project**

This unit will require you to do some collaborative work in addition to your independent paper writing. You will be assigned to a group based on your academic interests (I will do my best to get everyone in their first or second choice groups). Then, each member of your group will email or meet with two KU professors in the field that you're researching in to ask them for suggestions on a topic that is currently of interest to scholars in that field. You'll choose between their suggestions to select a paper topic, and turn in a topic proposal due on **Wednesday, February 22.**

After getting your topic proposal approved, we'll have our library session on **Monday, February 27** in Watson Library to discuss research methods for finding academic texts. Each member of your group will continue to do independent research (though you should be communicating to make sure you're not all reading the same articles). Each group member will be required to contribute a minimum of five citations to the group project, an annotated bibliography on the group's topic, due **Friday, March 2 at 5PM.**

The purpose of the annotated bibliography is to help each group member decide what articles are relevant to their paper without having to read all of them. You'll be able to read your group members' short write-ups and decide whether or not it's worth it for you to read that same article, just like reading an abstract. These sources will be more difficult (and probably more time-consuming) than what you've done so far, so working collaboratively to sort through the scholarship will be much more productive than having to read it all yourself.

That said, you will be graded only on your own annotations. You are not responsible for the work done or not done by your group members, and you will be graded independently rather than being given one group grade.

Here's a sample email to a professor:

Hello Dr. Mielke,

My name is Ellen Diotte, and I'm a student in English 102 right now. For my formal research paper, I'm required to contact KU professors in my academic area of interest, which is English. I was hoping you would be able to suggest one or two topics in English studies that are currently being discussed in academic journals in the field. It needs to be a topic that I'd be able to find sufficient peer-reviewed research on to write about, and also something that won't require a significant amount of specialized knowledge.

I really appreciate your time and consideration.

Thank you,  
Ellen Diotte

### **Writing Project #3: Representing Other Perspectives with Multimedia**

For your third project, you will create a multimedia presentation using either Powerpoint or Prezi to design a plan to persuade your chosen audience to take action about a certain issue related to race, class, gender, or something else related to what we discuss during this unit. For example, you might choose to focus on the lack of equality in Kansas with regards to same-sex marriage and address Governor Brownback as your audience. Since your project will deviate from the non-traditional essay format, I expect you to include visuals appropriate to your project to help illustrate your cause. Although you will not be writing an essay as you have been for the first two projects, since Powerpoints and Prezis are used to supplement presentations (rather than have the audience read them off the slides as you do with a paper), I will also require you to turn in a separate 3-5 page list of elaborations and your intentions for each slide in your project.

In a nutshell, your project should include the following:

- Powerpoint or Prezi of 15-20 slides or “bubbles” (for Prezi)
- Summary of the issue that you’re presenting
- A clearly identified audience that you’re addressing
- Call to action or your solution to the issue you presented. In other words, what do you want your audience member to do?
- A separate paper assignment that will list the elaborations and purposes of each of your slides in your project.
- Use of 4-8 outside sources (including popular and/or academic sources)
- Visuals to help illustrate your project for your audience
- Credit for your sources within the text of each slide as well as include a formal Bibliography page at the end. (The Bibliography page is not included in the 15-20 slide count.)

Something to consider:

- Powerpoint: These are great for linear projects that have a clear beginning and a clear end. Powerpoint presenters normally do not skip back and forth through slides unless they are unorganized, so if you want to present your issue in a “storytelling way” (i.e. having a beginning, middle, and end), then a Powerpoint is your best option.
- Prezi: Prezis can zoom in to show specific bubbles as well as zoom out to show all the bubble clusters in your project. Since you have the ability to see the complete project at once, you have the ability to start on any bubble you wish. This medium is best for not only providing an interactive element to your presentation but also showing your audience the bigger picture in the beginning or at the end of your presentation.

#### Proposal Requirement:

Since you will be making a multimedia project with other components, you will also be writing a formal project proposal that will be due before the project due date. Unlike the informal topic proposal from Unit 2, this proposal will be longer and address the main points in your project. Your proposal should address each of the following:

1. Identify the major issue that you’re addressing. Simply saying that you’re tackling issues of race, gender, or class is too broad. Be specific.

2. Identify your target audience. Who are you specifically addressing? Why did you choose this person, group, or organization? What power do they have to help make change to address this issue? Be specific.

3. Identify the purpose of this project. Why does this issue need to be addressed? Why do others need to be aware of it? Who does this issue affect? How does it affect them? What is the bigger picture?

4. Propose a potential call to action or solution for this issue. If you haven't thought of something original, what solutions have others proposed? How might you alter other solutions?

5. Identify the conversation going on about this issue. What have others said about this issue? To put it another way, think about why you're inspired to address this issue. What has been said that made you realize how important it is to address this issue?

Purposes:

- To understand audience awareness by learning how to communicate using a medium that differs from what is required for a traditional essay and knowing how to persuade your audience using your given medium and appropriate language to persuade them successfully.
- To practice writing a formal proposal before working on the bigger project.
- To understand the purpose of each medium used for communication and using them appropriately for each situation.

**Deadline Reminders:**

Tuesday, April 7: Formal Proposals Due

Tuesday/Thursday, April 14/16: Individual Conferences

Tuesday, April 21: Peer Review

Thursday, April 23: Writing Project #3 Due

## Revision Project: Multimodal Conversion

Now that you have completed three separate projects for this course, you have the choice of revising one of the previous two projects. A “revision” is more than just correcting grammar, spelling, or other mechanical “errors” in a paper. You might eliminate words, sentences, paragraphs, or even sections of the content from your previous paper after deciding that they do not support your original or revised argument. You might add new content for the purpose of clarifying or elaborating on existing points. You may revise the writing of your previous project to a certain extent, but this revision project will ask you to essentially revisit the concept and ideas from your previous project and then convert them into a multimodal project instead. In other words, like the third unit project, you will not be expected to write a traditional paper as you did for the first two units.

Since your third unit project already involved aspects of multimodality, you will only be able to choose to revise either Writing Project #1 (Inquiry of Your Name) or Writing Project #2 (Research on Academic Interests). Your project must consist of two or more of the following modes: 1) visual; 2) audio; 3) gesture; 4) spatial; 5) linguistic (in order for it to truly be *multimodal*) as well as use some type of digital medium to display the project (i.e. Weebly website, social media platform like Tumblr or Twitter, Powerpoint, Prezi, Youtube video, etc.). Since this revision project highlights the ideas behind the first projects rather than focuses on the formality of writing, it is important to clearly identify the main parts that will make your project successful: the purpose (the “so what?”), the target audience (who should care? Or who might be interested?), the supplemental points (what does your audience need to know to understand your main point?), and the conclusion (what should your audience essentially take away from this project?).

In order to truly show me that you have revisited the content of your original project and envisioned how it might be converted into a visual, I will also require you to write a 3-5 page Statement of Purpose and Choices. The “purpose” should explain why you decided to revise whichever project you decided on and why you made it into whichever digital medium you chose. This part should be about a paragraph or two long and should serve as an introduction to the project itself as a way of justifying what you’re doing. The “choices” can be typed up as a chart or in bulletpoints and should explain every single choice you made in your revision project.

### The Nuts & Bolts

- Your multimodal project should be the equivalent of a 5 minute presentation. Meaning, if you chose to make a video, it might be about 5 minutes long. If you chose to make a Powerpoint/Prezi, it should be about 15-20 slides. Basically, if you can’t talk about your project for 5 minutes, it’s not long enough.
- Your multimodal project should include no fewer than two modes of communication. (See the second paragraph for examples.)
- Your multimodal project should include a Bibliography page somewhere for reference.
- Include a 3-5 page Statement of Purpose and Choices.
- Be creative! This project promotes creativity to the max. You don’t have to stick with one medium if you don’t want to. If you want to create a website and stick multiple videos on it, go



for it! If you want to create multiple social media accounts and link them to a website, be my guest! There's a lot of things you can do with this project if you keep an open mind.

**Important Dates**

Optional Conferences – Thursday, May 7

Revision Project Due – Wednesday, May 13 by 11:59PM on BB

## Nicole Neitzke

Nicole will be graduating this spring, 2015, and will be receiving her Master's in English and Comparative Literature, with a Professional Teaching Certificate. The end goal for her is to teach community college, while also writing and publishing her own comics/graphic novels. In her humble opinion, the best teachers are also the best storytellers, and she does her best to excel at both.

## **Lyrics and Music Video Analysis**

### Goals:

- To introduce students to the conventions of analysis, i.e. making a claim and finding support.
- To prepare students for alphabetic and visual analysis, particularly how the two work together to create a more complex and more complete meaning.
- To further facilitate their alphabetic literacy and begin developing their visual literacy.

### Defense:

- Some will argue that it is not a composition teacher's responsibility to teach visual literacy. I would argue that ignoring visual literacy in the classroom is actually doing our students a disservice. Contemporary society is driven not by the alphabetic mode, but primarily by the visual mode that continuously bombards our students through magazine advertisements, billboards, television shows and movies, memes, web comics, etc. The same rhetorical practices used for alphabetic analysis can easily be applied to visual analysis, and consequently better prepares our students to question things they face in their everyday lives.

### The Assignment:

- I decided to use Lana Del Rey's "Summertime Sadness" for this activity, though any song and music video combo would suffice. The reason "Summertime Sadness" worked so well, however, was due to the very different meanings that can be pulled from just the lyrics and the lyrics in combination with the music video.

- 1) Have the students work in pairs.
- 2) Pass out the lyrics, one to share between pairs, and then read the lyrics out loud.
- 3) Start with a simple question: what is the song about? Have them underline, circle, highlight words that back this up. Then ask: what is the theme of this song? Have them write it down.
- 4) Discuss for however long they come up with varying ideas.
- 5) Watch the music video, and have them take notes on the flip side of the paper so the lyrics are out of sight.
- 6) Ask the same questions and have them find visual examples.
- 7) Discuss how their opinions changed, if they did, and why. Did the visuals create a more complex and complete meaning?

### My Class:

This worked really well for my class. There was laughter during my reading of the lyrics, but serious thought when it came to analyzing. Some ideas that came up during lyric discussion was a couple (man and woman) dying in a car crash, the speaker committing suicide, the end of a summertime romance, and a lover dying. After I played the music video, many students were

shocked to hear the original song by Lana and were only familiar with the remix. Some ideas that came up during the music video discussion were the suicide of a sister, of a best friend, or of a lover (woman). While they all agreed a suicide had taken place, they disagreed as to the relationship between Lana and the “red-head” in the music video, citing different images and words that backed up their idea. To conclude the class, I revealed what Lana’s intent was. Some students celebrated being “right,” which allowed me to explain how all the students were right because they found textual and visual evidence to back them up. This is the idea I want them to carry as they read the comic assigned in my class.

#### Suggestions:

- If you have a MWF class, do **not** do this on a Friday. While my class did a good job analyzing the lyrics and music video, many were clearly checked out already and had side conversations.
- Prepare for loud discussion. Laughing at the way the lyrics sounded when they were read created a more relaxed classroom environment for that day, which allowed for loud discussion after someone pointed out something different in the texts. This was fine, but it was a bit hard to get control back sometimes.
- Prepare for competition on “who was right.” During the loud discussion, I heard partners say “oh wait; we didn’t see that, maybe we’re wrong!” Then they asked for Lana’s intent. When I told them, some students high-rived saying they got it “right.” Thus, my speech that everyone was right at the end of class.
- Let them take as much time as they need analyzing and discussing. It’s best not to rush this assignment because some really awesome ideas can come out of it, which makes the students feel pretty good about themselves.

#### Samples:

“I got my red dress on tonight  
Dancing in the dark in the pale moonlight  
Done my hair up real big beauty queen style  
High heels off, I’m feeling alive”

“Got my bad baby by my heavenly side  
I know if I go, I’ll die happy tonight”



## Essay #2: Comic Analysis

For this essay, select **one of the prompts** below and write an essay in response.

#1 - *An Archetypal Shift*: Bill Willingham uses familiar fairy-tale characters from our childhood as his protagonists in *Fables*. However, it would seem that some of these characters have “grown-up” in order to attract a more adult audience. For this prompt, select one character who you felt really changed and pull out your archetypal handout. Find which archetype the character once was in the past and what archetype you feel they are now. Make an argument about this, using *Fables* and *Understanding Comics* or *Reading Pop Culture* as your support. (You can also find an original fairy tale, if you like.)

#2 - *Where do Your Sympathies Lie?*: The animals at The Farm seem very unhappy with their current living situation and launch a rebellion again Snow White as a result. Do you sympathize with them? Why or why not? Was their rebellion just, or did they take it too far? For this prompt, fight in defense of or against the actions of the fables at The Farm. Make an argument about this, using *Fables* and *Understanding Comics* or *Reading Pop Culture* as your support. (You can also consider some real world examples that are similar, if you like.)



#3 - *So What Have We Learned?*: Animal fables are often seen as a metaphor for human experiences and aim to teach a moral. If the animal fables are so similar to us, what characteristics make them humanlike? What characteristics allow us to identify ourselves with them? If fables are meant to teach a lesson, what can we learn now from these revised fable characters? Make an argument about this, using *Fables* and *Understanding Comics* or *Reading Pop Culture* as your support. (You can also use older animal fable stories, like Aesop.)

#4 - *Create Your Own*: If you do not care for any of the above prompts, then create one of your own! Just be sure to meet with me after class or during office hours to discuss your idea and get my stamp of approval. Be sure to make an argument about something, using *Fables* and *Understanding Comics* as your support.

### Requirements:

- Must be typed in MLA format
- 12 pt font
- Times New Roman
- double spaced
- 1 inch margins all around

- appropriate heading (your name, class, my name, date)
- MLA in-text citations/
- Beware second person “you” and first person “I/we.”
- The rough draft due \_\_\_\_\_ must be **3-4 full pages.**
- The final draft due \_\_\_\_\_ must be **4-5 full pages.**

Meta Journal:

“Meta” is short for metacognitive, or thinking about your thinking. What this means is examining the thought process you used when creating your essay and discussing why this thought process worked for you, challenged you, or failed you. I will ask for two paragraphs: one paragraph where you examine how you selected your topic for the essay, and one where you examine how you constructed your essay.

When writing your first paragraph, consider these questions: Did you select something you really liked? Something you really disliked? Something you wanted to know more about? Did you talk to your friends about this essay topic? Your parents or siblings? Did you do some brainstorming by writing down some ideas first, or did you instantly know what to write about? Did you look to yourself for specific information on the topic, or did you need to do some research?

And for your second paragraph, consider these questions: How did you decide the order to present your evidence? Did you write your first draft in one sitting, or multiple? When you revised your essay, what big changes did you make, and why? How did you decide on revisions (such as: listening to your peers in peer views, to me during conference hours, color coding your ideas, physically cutting your paragraphs and rearranging them. Copy and pasting parts of your essay to a new document)? How long did it take you to revise? Was it enough time? How was editing; did you read aloud to yourself or a friend?

Teaching Rationale: Metacognitive writing was something I was introduced to my senior year of high school and was typically used for creative writing. We would write about our piece, as in we would write about what motivated us and why we made the creative choices we did. Now that I am a first year Teaching Associate, I wanted to remix the purpose of this assignment and have my first year composition students use it for their own writing, be it narratives or critical writing. I have my students complete this journal after every essay, so that the paper is out of their hands and in for grading. That way, they are more open to reflect back on their writing process and assess how productive or lethargic they were when it came to approaching their writing task. Most often, students see a connection between their writing and their earned grade, and make adjustments if necessary. For instance, those who scored lower on an essay might feel motivated to see outside help, such as utilizing office hours or making a Writing Center appointment, if that was a component missing from their meta. Getting students to think about their academic writing process through metacognitive writing promotes self-motivation and determination to achieve the goals that they set for themselves.

## Jill Goad

I am an Assistant Professor of English at Shorter University. Currently, I am pursuing my PhD in literature at Georgia State University. My work, psychoanalytic approaches to contemporary literature, has been published in several journals.



## **The Monster and Culture Essay**

Monsters and monstrous figures such as zombies, serial killers, vengeful spirits, giants, and aliens in literature and film have long captivated human imagination. However, certain monsters are popular because they symbolize the fears of a particular time period. For example, giants such as Godzilla were popular post World War II because they represented people's fear of nuclear war.

Analyzing all facets of a single monster or single type of monster can help us understand where our deepest fears once lay and what our current fears are.

For this essay, you have the option of taking one of two possible approaches:

- Examine a monstrous figure in one literary work to show how this figure embodies the fears of the culture of which it is a part (For example, Frankenstein showcases the fear during the Romantic period about the dangers of scientific progress).
- Examine how a recurring, popular monstrous figure in film and literature during a certain time period showcases the fears of people during that time (popular figures in the 2000s could include zombies or vampires). **\*\*See below for a sample outline of option two.\*\***

### **When planning your paper, take into account**

- What caused the monster to come into being
- What the monster looks like
- How the monster attacks its victims
- How the monster is defeated

### **Objectives**

- Use analysis to determine the symbolic function of a monstrous figure.
- Connect symbolism of a monstrous figure to cultural beliefs and concerns.

### **Essay Format**

3 pages minimum, MLA format (12 point Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins, double-spaced, page number in the top right-hand corner, your information and the class information in the top left corner)

### **Criteria for Grading**

Thesis and focus: The thesis should be clearly presented in the introduction, abide by the criteria for an appropriate thesis, and serve as a forecast of the paper's content. For this particular essay type, the thesis should state what fears a certain monster or monster type embodies. Ideas in the paper should be clear and focused so that they consistently support the topic, thesis, and audience for the paper. In the paper body, paragraphs should each center on one key idea; paragraph content should be consistent with this key idea.

Introduction: The introduction should arouse audience interest and provide a forecast of the paper's content. To set the essay's context, one option would be to discuss when this monster emerged. Another option would be to give examples of this monster's representation in its most popular time period. You could also appeal to the reader's perceptions of this monster.

Conclusion: The conclusion should provide closure by using techniques appropriate to the paper topic. For example, you could note why monster depictions are the most appropriate way to showcase a culture's fears.

Organization: Organization should be coherent, unified, and effective in support of the paper's purpose/plan and consistently demonstrate effective and appropriate rhetorical transitions between ideas and paragraphs.

Development: Development should be fresh, with abundant details and examples that arouse audience interest and provide relevant, concrete, specific, and insightful evidence in support of sound logic. Evidence of at least one of the analytical methods we covered should be present in the paper.

Stylistic Fluency: Style should be confident, readable, and rhetorically effective in tone, incorporating varied sentence structure, precise word choice, and correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Formatting: Format should be correct and meet all assignment directions.

## **Option #2 Essay: Zombies Sample Outline**

### Introduction

- Describe the nature of the zombie figure
- Discuss where this figure has been seen in the past years ("The Walking Dead," *World War Z* (the novel will be used in this outline), *Zombieland*, *Shaun of the Dead*, *Resident Evil*) to justify that it is a commonly seen monster
- Discuss why this figure is frightening to viewers/readers (examples: it is human yet not, it marks the devastation of the end of the world, the zombie cannot be cured)

**Thesis: The zombie figure speaks to a wide array of fears our society has concerning interpersonal relationships, the government, the ability of logic to solve our problems, and entering into dire circumstances.**

### Main Point One

*Topic Sentence*: In our current era, Americans have concerns about interpersonal relationships.

*Examples in society*: Technology distances us from each other (texting, the Internet), we carry tremendous responsibilities that may make cultivating relationships difficult (school, working multiple jobs in the economy), arguments about values and politics may distance us from each other (the Republican/Democrat divide, debates about hot-button topics)

- Examining *World War Z*, we can see this concern about isolation because the villagers in the China excerpt are away from the rest of society.
- We can see this concern in "The Walking Dead" because people others thought they knew become zombies; others they knew die.

### Main Point Two

*Topic Sentence:* Contemporary Americans also have concerns about the government.

*Examples in society:* Concern that the government is too big or too small, concern that the government is not acting in our best interests or is manipulating us (give examples to support that these fears exist).

- Examining *World War Z*, we can see in the South African section that the government's plot to separate haves and have nots and leave the have nots behind shows lack of concern for people.
- In *World War Z*, the China section indicates that the government has no concern for displacing people and treating them in an undignified fashion.

### Main Point Three

*Topic Sentence:* Zombies speak to an American fear about the limitations of logic to solve our problems.

*Examples in society:* Global warming, epidemics (SARS, HIV)

- In *World War Z*, the doctor in the China section cannot fathom what he is seeing with the little boy, Patient Zero. This patient defies what he knows.
- In zombie films, there is rarely a cure for zombies; only "killing" them ends their destruction.

### Main Point Four

*Topic Sentence:* Considering the state of America currently, there is a reasonable fear of dire circumstances.

*Examples in society:* Armageddon scares, the economic downturn (which would lead to difficult decisions being made)

- In zombie films, often the zombies bring on the end of the world.
- Zombie films often include a main character having to face that his/her friends or significant other is a zombie, which would lead to undesirable solutions.

### Conclusion

Discuss the power of monsters to give insight into our greatest fears.

Christina Kennedy

## **Exercise: Analyze Your Princess!**

by Christina Kennedy

**This Exercise can be done when teaching students about cause and effect (and hopefully in conjunction with a cause and effect essay).**

**Instructor Directions:** Prior to this exercise, ask your students to read an essay titled “Little girls or little women? The Disney princess effect” by Stephanie Hanes. To prepare for the exercise, print out images of different Disney princesses (don’t forget Tinkerbell). The ones I used are below. Pair your students and pass out the princesses. Make sure you have extra princesses in case your students are not familiar with the princess they are assigned.

**Student Directions:**

- Discuss your Disney princess’ actions, features, strengths, etc..
- List the good and bad messages conveyed to girls.
- What would be the good and/or bad effects of these messages?

After the students have discussed, have them share with the class!

**Example Princesses:**

**Pocahontas (*Pocahontas*)**

**Tinkerbell (*Peter Pan*)**

**Ariel (*The Little Mermaid*)**

**Mulan (*Mulan*)**

**Belle (*Beauty and the Beast*)**

**Anna (*Frozen*)**

**Cinderella (*Cinderella*)**

**Jasmine (*Aladdin*)**

**Meg (*Hercules*)**

**Merida (*Brave*)**

**Aurora (*Sleeping Beauty*)**



Katie Snyder

## English 101

### Essay #2 Prompt - Argumentative Essay

In your last essay, I asked you to describe a moment in your own life using your personal experience. For this essay, I ask that you take that personal experience and use it to support an argument. The topic of your argument will be your choice, just like with your personal narrative, therefore you will be choosing something you are familiar with enough to be able to argue solely on your personal experience (no secondary sources are needed).

That being said, the topic of your argument must fall under the category of a trend (we will discuss in depth what exactly I mean by trend in class, if you have any questions, however, please email me). Your task is to choose a trend from your generation that you have taken part and/or are somewhat of an expert in. This could be a trend that you are in support of, a trend you hate, a trend you think is important, a trend you think is useless, or even a trend you are as of yet neutral about and have yet to decide one way or the other. Hopefully with enough analysis and evidence you will decide how you feel about it. The purpose is for you to think critically about the popular culture that surrounds you, and decide whether you are for, or against, what is happening in the pop culture of your generation.

#### Guidelines:

- Must be 3-5 pages, typed, 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced, in MLA format. Essays that do not meet the FULL page length will not be given credit.
- A proper title & thesis statement.
- Additionally (as with the narrative essay) this paper will be turned-in in several stages: brainstorming, rough draft, peer review, and final draft. 10 points will be taken away from your final draft grade for every element that is missing, so make sure you do each step!
  - Brainstorming will be due TUESDAY 3/3. Requirements: At least a full page of your brainstorming method (your choice. But I need to see your thought process on page, showing me you have given the subject thought). With this in mind, *your brainstorming does not have to be typed* (some methods involve charts and the like), but please be sure to use a blue or black ink pen for this step.
  - Rough Draft (at least 2 full pages, typed) will be due TUESDAY 3/17. There is no writing center stamp required for this essay. HOWEVER, I highly recommend you visiting the writing center for additional help with your writing.
  - Peer Review will happen on THURSDAY 3/19. **You must bring 3-4 copies of your paper with you.** Peer reviews happen in groups, so you must have a copy for each person in your group.
  - Final Draft is due THURSDAY 3/26 IN CLASS. This is your completed draft. It must be a hard copy, no emailed copies allowed. Make sure you bring it to class *stapled together*.

#### Things to consider:

- Logos, Pathos, and Ethos. A good argument has proper support (logos), appeals to the emotions of the reader (pathos), and illustrates the credibility of the writer (ethos).



Through proper use of logos and pathos, you should naturally come upon ethos. We will discuss this further in class.

- Descriptive writing. Your descriptions may be slightly different for the argumentative paper than they were for your narrative, but you need to help your audience understand your point with every method you have available to you. First off, you will need to describe, in detail, the trend you choose. Additionally, part of a strong argument is the use of examples. The best way to make your audience believe your examples, and trust your use of them, is to give as many details as possible.
- Critical thinking. You're not just giving examples and describing a trend, you are analyzing all aspects to create a strong argument. Consider why you chose the trend and why you have taken the stance you have. Why is this important to recognize? Why should we be thinking about this trend? Why does it stand out from others? What does it offer, if anything? There are many things to consider here, so start thinking critically!
- Organization. The structure of this essay will differ greatly from the narrative. We are moving away now from creative agency and moving more toward the strict guidelines of the academic writer. How should your argument be organized? Consider that you want your reader to be persuaded toward supporting you. That said, your goal should be to have a well organized argument that the reader can easily follow.
- Tone. We have touched on academic writing in class, now is your chance to utilize this skill. Remember that this is an academic assignment that requires an academic tone. You're not writing a letter to a family member, or a text to a friend. This is an essay that allows you to analyze a trend you are familiar with and find an argument for or against it. You must persuade your audience that you are not only credible, but that you are right.

## English 101 Lesson: The Sorting Hat

### Purpose:

To help students find their perspective as preparation for writing their personal narrative essay by “sorting” them into the Hogwarts houses from J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series: Gryffindor, Slytherin, Hufflepuff, and Ravenclaw. By utilizing pop culture in the classroom, not only do the students become more involved and amused by the lesson, but they take away more of an understanding of who they are and what they value.

### Beginning:

This activity starts with the assigning of my personal narrative essay, which asks my students to write about a point in their lives when their perspective completely changed. It’s a rather broad and open topic; I leave it up to my students to decide. The next class meeting, then, is dedicated to helping my students figure out what exactly they can/should write about. Choosing a topic can be daunting, especially when the prompt doesn’t offer enough guidance in that area. This activity is perfect because the students take time to decide what is important to them as far as values and characteristics they associate with themselves.

I start by listing on the white board four columns and label them 1, 2, 3, and 4. The point is to keep them anonymous and keep the students unaware of how pop culture is applying to their essay until after they have given it serious thought. I have found that even if students have not read the *Harry Potter* series or perhaps haven’t seen the movies, they are aware of the reference to the houses at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The names and titles within the series have become part of this generation’s vocabulary, so without realizing it, the students form opinions just by hearing “Slytherin” or “Gryffindor.” By leaving this activity ambiguous in the beginning, it offers me the chance to get honest answers out of students, rather than getting responses based on whether or not the students want to be in Gryffindor like Harry and his friends.

So, under each column on the board, I write characteristics or values\*. For example:

1	2	3	4
Brave	Cunning	Patient	Wisdom
Daring	Power-hungry	Loyal	Intelligence
Chivalrous	Confrontational	Modest	Wit
Honor	Resourceful	Trustworthy	Competitive
Virtue	Ambitious	Hardworking	Creative
Leadership	Self-helper	Fair play	Curious
Egotistical	Resilient	Protective	Originality/individuality

1	2	3	4
Adventurous	Trust issues	Caring	Elegance
Reckless	Traditional	Honest	Perseverance
Active	Self-preservation	Teamwork	Innovative
Rule breaker	Small friend groups	Practical	Non-confrontational

From here I have the students write on their own sheet of paper the words they make a connection with. The most important step, however, is that they keep track of which column those characteristics are coming from.

### **Discussion:**

Once it is clear that everyone has had a chance to pick the values they want, I turn to a whole group discussion. I go column by column asking how many had a majority from each. Sometimes I count the number of hands and write it at the top of the column so that the class may see how many fell under each column. Since I introduce this activity as a “Personality Test,” it often amuses my students to see whether or not they fall under a certain category and how many are just like them within the class.

Often times, more than one student will have ties between two or more columns. I save commentary on them until after we have counted up each column, but I tell them to raise their hand for each column they have a majority in.

At the end I go back column by column and ask the students to discuss why they chose certain words from the column they fell under. I ask them to consider what it was that made them “traditional,” or “Practical,” or “Adventurous,” or “Non-confrontational.” I ask for them to assess their responses and choices, not just list all the characteristics they chose. This can often be a chance to define and describe what certain words mean for students who may not understand, and in fact I tend to ask students what certain words mean or to explain it in their own words.

Once this discussion is finished, I reveal what each column actually is: 1 = Gryffindor, 2 = Slytherin, 3 = Hufflepuff, 4 = Ravenclaw. Each time I have done this activity, the majority of my students have fallen under column 3 (Hufflepuff), much to their dismay. As I stated before, they understand the pop culture reference and it is commonly said that Hufflepuff is the house where the less-intelligent and less-capable students are placed. Yet, as I argue to the class, this isn’t the case. Especially when I have them consider how many people fall under several different columns, including the Hufflepuff column. Why do we associate kindness with weakness, or Ambition with cruelty (as is often considered with Slytherin house)? What does it mean if we choose several column? Do we only have to think one way, within one column, or can we choose multiple schools of thought? If we fall under several categories, can we choose which house we want (not unlike Harry who chooses his own house and destiny)? The possibilities are endless with this part of the class discussion.

**Result:**

Depending on time remaining, I often have students continue on the same sheet of paper by brainstorming topics for their essay. By this point they have an idea of what it truly means to be given a new perspective (perhaps they hadn't realized they were more like a Ravenclaw than a Gryffindor, and so on). As the semester goes on I will often ask certain questions in response to readings and frame them toward certain houses ("What do my Slytherins think of this part of the essay?" or "Would a Hufflepuff respond this way to this situation?"), and see if the students who associate with those houses and values can offer new insight thanks to being secretly sorted into a house.

At the end of the day, it's about the students understanding who they are in the grand scheme of things, and how they feel about the class and even their education as a whole. By the time I collect and grade their essays, I find that students are more able to compare and contrast how they thought before the moment they chose and after the moment. It makes for better developed thoughts within their essays, and it certainly helps ease them into choosing a topic to write about to begin with.

\*More characteristics associated with the Hogwarts houses can be found online via a Google search or the like. This is just a small sampling of words to describe each house and its members from the *Harry Potter* series.

Adira Edmund

### **Grammar Group Presentations**

I learned about this activity when I was an Instruction Student Assistant for Kim Vandervort's English 99 class. I have done this activity twice in my classes, and the students really enjoyed it. It is fun to watch the groups come up with really interesting ways to teach an often tedious, but necessary, subject (bleh grammar!).

This activity allows students to teach a grammar concept to each other, while learning the value of cooperative group work. The grammar topics are adjusted based on the needs and abilities of the class, so there is always something for everyone. Because some students find it difficult to get together, I allow one day in class for the groups to plan their lesson. I will bring in a variety of writing handbooks, encourage them to utilize Internet sources, and answer any questions they may have.

I schedule the presentation throughout the semester on either a Thursday or Friday. It is a great way to kick off the weekend!

### Grammar Presentation - worth 50 points

You will work as a group to teach a grammar lesson to your fellow peers. Each presentation will have a designated theme and should be 15-20 min. in length. You may present the topic using any media, methods, or styles, as your group decides, but the lessons should also be informative and engaging.

Your group will be graded on:

- **Content:** Presenting the topic in a clear and comprehensible manner that demonstrates your group's understanding of the content.
- **Organization:** The presentation must be well developed, planned, and informative to your audience.
- **Professionalism:** All members equally are prepared to participate in the presentations. Speakers maintain eye contact and speak in a clear manner.
- **Originality:** The information is presented in a unique and/or creative way. A variety of methods and/or visuals are incorporated into the presentation.
- **Reflection:** Each group member will submit a 1-2 page reflection on the presentation discussing what worked well, what could have been improved, any surprises that occurred, and their overall impression of the presentation. Reflections are due one week after the presentation.

### **Grading Rubric**

Presenters:

Workshop:

Grammar Presentation Score: \_\_\_\_/50 points

- |  |    |   |   |   |   |
|--|----|---|---|---|---|
| 1. <u>Content</u>  | 10 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| Topic is presented in a clear and comprehensible manner.                     |    |   |   |   |   |
| Presenters demonstrate understanding of subject.                             |    |   |   |   |   |
| The organization of the presentation is well developed and engages audience. |    |   |   |   |   |
| 2. <u>Preparedness</u>   | 10 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| The group is prepared and has rehearsed                                      |    |   |   |   |   |
| Presentation is 15 minutes long  |    |   |   |   |   |
| All members of the group equally contribute to the presentation              |    |   |   |   |   |
| 3. <u>Professionalism</u>  | 10 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| Presenters appear relaxed and confident                                      |    |   |   |   |   |
| Establishes eye contact with the class                                       |    |   |   |   |   |
| Speaks clearly and loud enough for everyone to hear                          |    |   |   |   |   |
| 4. <u>Originality</u>  | 10 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| Information is presented in a new, unique, or creative way                   |    |   |   |   |   |
| Presenters use a variety of modes and/or visuals to present information      |    |   |   |   |   |
| 5. <u>Presentation Write-Up</u>  | 10 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 2 |

Comments:

### **Grammar Presentation Sign Up**

Active & Passive Sentences (Date)	Fused Sentences & Comma Splices (Date)
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

<div>Using Commas (Date)</div> <div>1.</div> <div>2.</div> <div>3.</div> <div>4.</div>	<div>Parallel Structure (Date)</div> <div>1.</div> <div>2.</div> <div>3.</div> <div>4.</div>
<div>Transitions (Date)</div> <div>1.</div> <div>2.</div> <div>3.</div> <div>4.</div>	<div>Dangling Modifiers (Date)</div> <div>1.</div> <div>2.</div> <div>3.</div> <div>4.</div>



## Using Tolkien to Teach Informative Writing

### Part 1:

I introduce this next theme by calling attention to the purpose of informative writing, and then explain in depth what it means to define, divide, and classify. As we are going through the definitions, I will have my students help me come up with examples to write on the board.

At this point we go over the essay prompt in detail. I highlight areas that link back to our lesson on informative writing. I also pass out their homework assignment, “Concerning Hobbits,” a prologue excerpt from J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Fellowship of the Rings*.

### Part 2:

In class we discuss the reading in depth. I call attention to Tolkien’s style, tone, and purpose. Why is he writing this way and how is it different from our expectation of fictional stories?

I explain to my students that even though Hobbits are a fictional community, “Concerning Hobbits” is written to inform readers about Hobbit culture and history. Tolkien provides his readers with a detailed description of who the Hobbits are, how their community functions, as well as a historical account of how they migrated to the Shire. In essence, this anthropological piece is a good example of defining and identifying a particular community, exactly what I ask my students to focus on for this next essay.

Then we look more closely at the information provided. What do we know about Hobbits from the reading? How does Tolkien organize his information?

At some point, I also have my students watch a clip of this section from Peter Jackson's extended version of *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

### Part 3:

As a class, we utilize what we learned in parts 1 and 2 to develop a definition of community, or the Hobbit community. We also classify and divide information about the Hobbit culture/community on the board.

As we go along, I make sure my students understand that they will be utilizing this process for their own essays.

I also provide my students with graphic organizers that will help them brainstorm, divide, and classify information about their selected community group.

### Informative Writing Prompt:

Community. When you hear the word, what pops to mind? Family. Friends. Your city. Your country. Your religion. We usually define the word in terms of shared geographical location, common beliefs, or related by ancestry. However, is this the only definition of community?

Think about what community means to you. Does it only include your family and friends? Or can it be a group of people who share similar interests, hobbies, or behaviors? Is a classroom a community? A club? What about Cosplayers? What communities and/or sub-cultures do you identify with?

For this essay, you will inform your audience about a specific community or cultural/sub-culture group through definition and analysis. To do this, you will investigate, explore, and explain what makes this group a community.

Think about:

- What are the characteristics that define this group?
- What are their values, beliefs, and rules?
- What are their behaviors and attitudes?
- How does this group establish a sense of community?
- How do others identify this group? Stereotypes?
- How do they see themselves?

Your purpose will be to enlighten and inform your readers about this particular group. Choose one option and write an essay defining a particular community or group:

Option 1:

Choose a community group that you belong to and define it. For example, you could talk about what it means to be a Boy Scout or a cheerleader. You can bring awareness to your readers about the Brony or Twihard community. The more unique your group is, the more interesting your essay will be for your readers.

If you choose this option, you will use your own personal experiences and observations to support your claim. Remember to keep this essay predominately third person, and use “I” sparingly and only when necessary (such as for personal evidence).

## Option 2:

Choose a community group belonging to popular culture. For example: what does it mean to be an X-men? A wizard? A Lannister? A Disney princess? If you choose this option, you will need to refer to books, movies, TV shows, or comic books for supporting evidence.

## Essay Requirements-

- Your essay must be 3-5 full pages, stapled.
- Your essay must be written in MLA format.
- It must be in 3rd person voice, with 1st person used sparingly.

## Due Dates:

- Outline and Thesis due \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 copies of your rough draft (must be 3 full pages)
- Final Draft of essay will be due \_\_\_\_\_

Christopher Jackson

## **Comparody: Using Humor for (Re)Thinking and Reviewing Comparing and Contrasting**

Christopher Jackson

Stephen Brookfield, an adult education professor, holds that “Teaching is about making some kind of dent in the world so that the world is different than it was before you practiced your craft. Knowing clearly what kind of dent you want to make in the world means that you must continually ask yourself the most fundamental evaluative questions of all—What effect am I having on students and on their learning?”<sup>8</sup> Before every semester, when a teacher sits down to write or revise his or her course’s syllabus, this question looms large. In fact, the course description section delineates this very idea. While the overall dent is worthy of much consideration, one should not forget that it is often necessary to think about the daily ones—each class contributes some type of blow. Ironically, some of the harder dents to make are the ones that have already been made, such as the analytical tool of comparing / contrasting (or comparison / contrast or similarities / differences or whatever name it is going under in a particular class). This is such a basic tool that students have probably encountered it on numerous occasions by the time it is covered in a first year writing course; on top of this, it will probably be reviewed at some point in the semester.

In order to make this concept ‘new again’ during a review, I have discovered that parodies, especially ones that are funny (or at least attempt to be so), are very effective as example texts. I choose humorous parodies because they are a good way to counter the challenge of reviewing an item that can come across as dry because it is something that students have seen before. By their very nature, parodies are productive for generating similarities and differences. More specifically, humorous ones are effective tools because they are imitating a text in order to make fun of it. If students are familiar with the text that is being imitated, then it will be even easier for them to pick out specific details. I believe that ‘funny pieces of evidence’ can be powerful teaching tools. Everyone remembers this advice: do not let evidence speak for itself. I mention it because it is a common problem in student writing. A student writer may have the tendency to let the evidence speak for itself, which makes it difficult for a reader to understand how the writer moves from the evidence to what is important about it. Humorous texts can help alleviate this issue because they force a student to explain why the detail is funny. By having students explain why a detail is funny, they will need to move beyond passively listing details into actively analyzing evidence. Moreover, students will not always find the same parts humorous; consequently, an entry point into discussion is, “why did you find this funny?” Thus, humorous parodies offer a chance to engage students with multiple layers of analytical thinking.

While these types of texts can be used to introduce the topic of comparing and contrasting, I find them particularly useful for reviewing it. The reason is that if you find some funny examples, it can make the activity more enjoyable for students. I would begin this activity with a short

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<sup>8</sup> Brookfield, Stephen. *The Skillful Teacher* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991) 18-19.

review. Below, I have included an example of one of the PowerPoint slides I would use for a review; it is adapted from David Rosenwasser and Jill Stephen's *Writing Analytically*.<sup>9</sup> The reason I include this possible review is that I have attached a handout that focuses on finding differences within a similarity and or similarities within a difference.

#### Focus on Difference within Similarity (or Similarity within Difference)

- especially useful with obvious similarities and differences
- can be used with any similarity or difference
- you may want to examine unexpected similarity or difference

#### Difference within Similarity

- examining a similarity
  - move to examining the significant differences within the similarity
    - find the implications of these differences

#### Similarity within Difference

- examining a difference
  - move to examining the significant similarities within the difference
    - find the implications of these similarities

For my review texts, two parodies are better than one. In particular, I have found that *Saturday Night Live*'s "Celebrity Jeopardy!" and *SCTV*'s "Half Wits" are an effective pairing.<sup>10</sup> First, multiple clips of both sketches are readily available on youtube.com, which give you some flexibility in choice. Second, these parodies are easy to compare because they have a common frame of reference—*Jeopardy!* This show has been on television for a long time; thus, there is a good chance that students will be familiar with the "original" text of these parodies. Third, the two poke fun at the game show in explicitly different ways. Here are just a couple of examples: *SNL* uses celebrities vs. *SCTV* uses regular contestants and *SNL*'s Will Ferrell as Alex Trebek vs. *SCTV*'s Eugene Levy as Alex Trebel. Additionally, and perhaps more interestingly, the two employ differing strategies to generate humor. This is why I find 'funny texts' effective because they force students to think about *why* something is funny and *why* these differing strategies work or don't work. Moreover, these two sketches parody the game show in explicitly similar ways due to the simple fact that they have the same source material.

Again, I have found this to be a successful review activity. If I want a longer review, then I will just play more of the two clips. After the students have viewed the clips, I have them break into groups in order to come up with a list of similarities and differences. In order to make it easier for students to come up with a 'more critical' list, I provide a few questions on the board to help

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<sup>9</sup> Rosenwasser, David and Jill Stephen. *Writing Analytically*. (Boston: Wadsworth, 2012) 157-158.

<sup>10</sup> My favorite "Celebrity Jeopardy!" to use is the one with French Stewart, Burt Reynolds, and Sean Connery; I have also had success in using two different "Celebrity Jeopardy!" sketches. Again, various websites make it easy to find different clips and you can always 'self-edit' them for time constraints.

generate an analytical conversation. The ensuing discussion can be fruitful because you can use follow up questions to get the students to engage the issue of why these differences and or similarities are significant. In other words, you can get students to think about what they could actually do with these texts if they were going to perform a more in depth analysis of them. Lastly, this review can set up another activity—discussing possible similarities and differences in two texts that they are going to be analyzing for an out-of-class assignment. After we are done discussing the two sketches, I will pass out the handout that is on the following page. Each group will take a few minutes and complete it. I then collect them in order to type their responses into one master list of similarities and differences, which I then post on the course website. Depending on the nature of the assignment, I have also found it useful to use the handout to post a master list of class discussion as an example.



## Objects for Comparison:

### Similarities

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

### Differences

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

### Differences within a Similarity

A. *Similarity* =

*Differences within* =

1a.

2a.

3a.

B. *Similarity* =

*Differences within* =

1b.

2b.

3b.

### Similarities within a Difference

A. *Difference* =

*Similarities within* =

1a.

2a.

3a.

B. *Difference* =

*Similarities within* =

1b.

2b.

3b.

Nicky Rehnberg

## Preparing for Peer Review: An Activity

### Goals:

- To encourage students to re-think what peer review can mean to their process of writing
- To see how peer review can work effectively
- To reinforce the idea that writing is a process
- To show that the “hive mind” of class is quite powerful
- Raise awareness that they individually know and have opinions about writing
- To have a conversation that writing doesn’t come naturally, and that while every paper has a process that it follows, the writer is *also* in process, and will be for the rest of his or her life.

### Activity:

I give them a paper that I “found in the English department,” which addressed a prompt that seemed to merge their last assignment (a narrative) with their current paper (which was defining an artifact). I do not tell them that the paper was actually the first college paper that I had ever written, and I remove all markings that indicate that it is my work (my essay is at the end of this activity’s description). Before passing it out, we discuss their previous experiences with peer review, and I ask them what they most frequently want feedback on when they have asked someone else to look at their writing.

The list of questions they usually generate:

- Does my paper make sense?
- Does my paper follow the prompt?
- Do my ideas flow from one to the next?
- Are my ideas building off of each other?
- Are the commas that I’m using correct?
- Am I spelling things correctly?
- Am I making grammar errors?

I then write these on the board and star the ones that more than one student wanted feedback about and talk about what these questions mean and why they were important to look at.

Then I pass back the paper and gave them ten minutes to review the paper themselves, reminding them to keep the questions written on the board in mind, but I also encourage them to comment on things that they thought were important. I then give them five or ten minutes to discuss with their table group about what they thought of the paper and how they approached commenting on it.

When they finish, I put the paper on the projector and ask them to tell me what they focused on and how they commented on the paper. With their direction, I went to the parts of the essay that they commented on and let them tell me what to comment using the “comments” feature. I questioned some comments on grammar when they came up and asked if that comment be helpful to the bigger picture of what the writer needed help with. We then go over the questions that we put on the board to bring the focus back to what the “hive mind” of the class had said they would want feedback on.

Then, we take a step back. I ask them what they had thought about the paper. In some classes, they have been *very* disparaging, commenting on everything from style to subject matter to the actual writer. Since I've done this for a few years, I prepare for the worst, but the class is usually kind—saying that the writer needed to work on some things, particularly focus and being clear with what they were trying to say, but it wasn't a bad paper. I asked them what grade they thought the paper received, and they said "C" range. I told them that it was an "A" (in another class—I should have gotten a C!) and that it was my first college essay ever.

With the last few minutes of class, I thank them for being kind with their comments (or remind them to be kind) and to do the same awkward tango of being respectful to the writer while focusing on the questions that we as a class care about.

**Suggestions and Things to Consider:**

- Showing students how to peer review is very important. Many students said they didn't know or think that they could comment on Higher Order Concerns (HOCs) rather than Lower Order Concerns (LOCs) on a peer's paper.
- Using your own paper can put you in a vulnerable position that isn't bad if you use it as an example of how people grow and change throughout their college careers. I've found that students who have little confidence appreciate this and feel more comfortable asking for help since it's "part of the process"
- Generating the list of questions and concerns that the students are concerned with shows that most of the class does want to know what their peers think of their papers.
- This activity can help introduce the idea of HOCs and LOCs and clear up what kind of grammar comments are helpful
- Putting students' comments on the projector can help them see how to comment on peers' papers and encourage them to do so.

Virginia Wolfson

Dr. Professor

English 101

02 February 2009

### More Than a Book

"He'll be famous—a legend—I wouldn't be surprised if today was known as Harry Potter day in the future—there will be books written about Harry—every child in our world will know his name!" (*Sorcerer's Stone*, pg. 17). When I read this when I was nine, I had no idea that I would be one of the children who knew his name. My purchase-by-chance copy now looks war-torn and tattered in comparison to the near-perfect tomes that occupy most of my personal library. With all of my well-kept copies, you can tell which one is *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, because the spine is falling to pieces and expanded. This is probably because of the countless times I have dropped it into the bathtub—more than once. Upon opening the book, you can smell “old book” and a body wash I used when I was eleven. To muggles, or non-wizarding citizens, it may just be a badly beaten paperback, but to me it was and still is a way to escape my problems and find hope and optimism for the future.

According to Professor Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts, “to the well-organized mind, death is just the next great adventure” (*Sorcerer's Stone*, pg. 370). When my parents told me that my dad's cancer left him with six months to live, I dusted off my *Harry Potter* books. I picked up *Sorcerer's Stone*, and while Harry Potter found out what really happened to his parents, I tried to ignore what was happening to mine. Reading is an amazing route to take as far as escapism is concerned and I have a genuine appreciation for the solace that books have provided me over the years. When life would get hard, I would just imagine myself on the Hogwarts Express, zooming toward a magical place where I could reach my full potential. Since my childhood was not easy, I needed something to hold onto, and would fall asleep reading about the adventures of Harry, Ron and Hermione. It was comforting to read

about a poor orphan who had nothing, to find out he was much more than a scrawny boy with “jet-black” hair and find he was a hero.

Soon after my dad died and I entered middle school, it became blazingly apparent that I did not have many friends, and that the next two years of my life would be nothing like what I saw on television. When the aggressively lonely thoughts would come, I would smile and think serenely of Harry and his friends that were so true and loyal. I admired Harry’s virtue, and wanted to be like him. I wanted to find happiness like he did. I wanted to know that my suffering was going to achieve something. His story gave me hope that maybe something extraordinary would happen to me. I knew it was improbable that an eight-foot tall man would come knocking on my door with a letter addressed to my exact location telling me I was a wizard, like what happened to Harry. However, at this point, it would have been extraordinary to make friends and be able to breathe without hurting. I just wanted to escape the death and dismay.

All the problems that started in my pre-adolescence lead me to irrationally fear leaving home. When I did have to leave home to visit my dad’s side of the family or when I had the opportunities to go on school trips, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* was the first thing in my suitcase. I first read *Sorcerer’s Stone* on a trip to Florida, and it has been on almost every trip I have been on since I was nine. The lonely feelings I felt on the tour bus or the airplane always subsided when Harry would figuratively sit next to me. All of my near panic and anxiety dissipated when I would just open my book and escape.

Over the years, it feels like I know Harry personally. It feels like we have grown up together, and in a way we have. He grew and developed as I did—I understood him more and more as I began to understand myself. Harry became more cerebral and complex as I did, and that is amazing. Books give their readers so much, and I am so glad for the respite they provide. So while I look at my massive bookcase, I smile when I see a destroyed copy of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, because it is not just a book, it is a tangible example of how I have grown as a person, and how I am continuously growing.

## Elizabeth Switaj

Elizabeth Switaj teaches composition, literature, and creative writing at the College of the Marshall Islands. Her essay "Web Writing and Citation: The Authority of Communities" appeared in the recent collection *Web Writing: Why and How for Liberal Arts Teaching and Learning* from Her book, *James Joyce's Teaching Life and Methods* is forthcoming from Palgrave. She blogs at [www.elizabethkateswitaj.net](http://www.elizabethkateswitaj.net).

### Two Activities to Improve Students' Use of Sources

For first-year composition students, integrating research into their essays can prove challenging. Often, they will resort to hunting for quotations that fit—more or less—with papers they have already written, an approach that can result in disjointed prose and insufficiently supported claims. While some students go quote-hunting because they have waited too long to start the writing process, others do so because they do not understand how else to use sources in their work. This pair of exercises provides students with pre-writing tools that will help them to synthesize research into their essays more effectively. At the same time, by combining a fairly traditional approach with social media, they help students see how this kind of approach can be relevant even outside of academic writing and also why it is important to be able to back up one's claims. Both activities can be assigned as work outside of class, but I prefer to use them in-class so that I can make sure students follow the full process instead of taking shortcuts.

### Connecting Research to Original Ideas & Opinions

For this activity, students are assigned to read an article or essay online. I usually give students a bibliographic entry and ask them to find it from there in order to improve their familiarity with citation styles and search techniques. Students are asked to complete the following chart for the piece, completing the first row as they read and the second after they finish:

<b>Notes on details</b>	<b>Your response(s)</b>
<b>Summary of article</b>	<b>Your response(s)</b>

As students complete this step, I emphasize to them that their notes should generally not be exact quotations (and do not, at this stage, need to be grammatically correct) and that they should include reasons with their responses. After students have completed the chart, they each choose one of their responses, write a sentence that includes the initial idea (using a signal phrase such as “according to” and the author’s name), their response, and the reason for their response. Then, they post the sentence, together with the course hashtag, and the article’s URL on Twitter. Other social media sites could be used here, but I prefer Twitter because the enforced brevity helps students get directly to the point. Students who finish early can repeat the process or read their peers’ tweets and reply. As they challenge each others’ ideas, it helps them to see why it’s not enough simply to say that another writer says something they agree with.

To conclude the activity, I provide students with a blank or electronic version of the chart and encourage them to use it as part of their pre-writing activities. I also highlight some of the stronger tweets and explain how they could be embedded into essays.



## Synthesizing Sources

The second activity in this pair builds on the first. Depending on the group I am working with, I either use this exercise immediately after the other or wait until students have had the opportunity to apply what they have learned to a graded essay. This time, students work with multiple sources; I assign a series of articles providing different perspectives on the same issue. *The New York Times* Room for Debate series is a useful resource for up-to-date pieces that meet this description. Students first take notes on and summarize each article. Then, they write sentences describing the relationships between each article. I provide them some template language in the style of Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's *They Say/I Say* to get them started, though I also encourage students to use other signal phrases.<sup>11</sup>

*When sources agree:*

Both Rodriguez and Jones argue that

\_\_\_\_\_.

Rodriguez states that \_\_\_\_\_. Jones expands on this view, saying that

\_\_\_\_\_.

Rodriguez, Jones, and Lai agree that

\_\_\_\_\_.

Many experts, including Rodriguez, Jones, and Lai have claimed that

\_\_\_\_\_.

According to Lai \_\_\_\_\_. Jones agrees, adding that

\_\_\_\_\_.

*When sources disagree:*

Rodriguez claims \_\_\_\_\_, but Jones argues that

\_\_\_\_\_.

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<sup>11</sup> Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say / I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010),

<http://trincoll.worldcat.org/oclc/286490473>.

Despite X's argument that \_\_\_\_\_, Jones believes that \_\_\_\_\_.

While Rodriguez and Jones both agree on the importance of \_\_\_\_\_, they take different approaches to it, with Rodriguez claiming \_\_\_\_\_ and Jones claiming \_\_\_\_\_.

While Rodriguez states that \_\_\_\_\_, Jones states that \_\_\_\_\_.

Rodriguez argues \_\_\_\_\_, but Jones believes that \_\_\_\_\_.

Then, I ask students to add their own opinions to each synthesizing statement, using what they learned in the first activity. Finally, I ask them to choose one or two statements to post on the class's Google Plus community. Again, other social media sites could be used, though Twitter's character limit would make it impractical here. The rest of this activity runs in a manner similar to the first one: students engage with each other's posts, and I select some of the better examples to discuss how they could be included in an essay.

Together, these activities help students understand how and why to engage critically with sources as part of their writing process. Because of the social media aspect, they also may be drawn into written conversations that go beyond the classroom, allowing them an authentic experience of writing to defend their ideas as engaged citizens.

## Notes

## Jamie Lynn Greuel

Jamie Lynn Greuel is a Jane-of-all-trades who claims at least a mild knowledge of teaching, tutoring, medieval treachery, sexual divinity, and global domination with three circles. Her pedagogical interests have led her to tutor privately and through a variety of community colleges and four-year universities and to teach English 101 at Cal State Fullerton. Her professional aspirations include teaching composition full-time, and her personal goals include finding enough hidden Mickeys to impress anyone brave enough to adventure through Disneyland with her.

I assign my students many prompts and activities to strengthen an idea of writing as an ongoing process rather than a one-time event. Included here are two assignments. One is the final revision portfolio I assign students, asking them to revise or remix an old assignment according to new parameters. The other is one of the reflection prompts I assign, this one for their argument essay. For this essay, students were asked to engage with a small-scale problem affecting a specific community. I gave them the option of doing this in a traditional academic essay or in a more creative outlet such as a poem, short story, or scrapbook. For either option, the students first wrote proposals and then completed research and created annotated bibliographies that would inform their work.

**English 101**  
**Instructor Jamie Greuel**  
**Final Revision Portfolio Prompt**

Shake it [Up]: Remixing Old Essays into New Masterpieces

For this course, I've asked you to write multiple drafts of your essays. You've taken drafts to the Writing Center for feedback, you've discussed your papers with your peers in class, and you've come to me for conferences. Some of you have even e-mailed me early drafts of your essays. You've all revised your papers to some degree. Now it's time to focus on revision as a new way of seeing things rather than simply editing or "fixing" an existing paper.

Revision, as we discussed early in the semester, is the process of envisioning something again or in a new way. Revision is bringing a new set of eyes to an existing product and modifying it to suit new needs or fit a new context. For this assignment, I am not asking you to simply proofread or edit your existing papers. I am asking for brand new creations. **I am asking you to significantly revise your paper and turn it into something completely new.**

For your final revision portfolio, you will choose one of your previously written essays and **select at least one of the following major elements to revise:**

Tone  
Audience  
Mode/Genre  
Perspective

If you have other ideas, **talk to me** after class, in OH, or via e-mail to get your idea approved **before you start.**

In addition to revising your essay, you will submit a reflection of your writing process as part of your portfolio. Your reflection should refer back to both your original essay and your reflection of that essay and should address the changes you made to improve your original essay. **While I do not expect you to "fix" or make your original essay "right," I do expect you to make this essay well-thought out, polished, and far better than your original.** This means you will be focusing both on your chosen shift (tone/audience/genre/perspective) and on the elements of craft we have honed throughout the semester such as organization, topic sentences, descriptive language, etc. Your draft will not only be substantially different but will also reflect your rhetorical decisions and growth.

**What You Will Turn In:** When you submit your final revision portfolio, you will include, on top, your revised essay. Below that, you will include your reflection detailing what you chose to change and why. Below that, you will include the first submitted copy of your essay, with my feedback. Below *that*, you will include your reflection of your initial essay. Both of these documents (your original essay and reflection) should be referenced heavily throughout your revision reflection. You may turn these four documents in to me in any way you choose, but exceptional presentation will positively impact your grade.

### **Why We Revise:**

Revision assignments are an opportunity for you to demonstrate your ability to look at something from more than one perspective. They also enable you to focus on creating a polished, critically analyzed document. As such, you will be graded on the following:

- First and foremost, your revised essay will be graded **on its difference from your original essay**. I cannot emphasize this enough, **IF YOU DO NOT MAKE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO YOUR ESSAY, YOU WILL NOT PASS THIS ASSIGNMENT**. Choose to revise in a way that **completely** changes your original work. This does not mean I want you to discard your original work and begin anew; this means I want you to **think critically** about what you wrote and how it can be altered and improved in light of new contexts.
- Each revised essay should be **at least** a full 4 pages, but they will often, if done right, be much longer. There is no page maximum for this assignment. You will be graded on how well you defend and develop your position; if you hit page five and you have still not done your subject justice, then you are not done!
- Each revision reflection should be at least two full pages, but, again, if done right, you will often need more space than this. To receive full points on this assignment, you will need to think critically about the choices you make in revising and articulate them clearly here.
- Each essay and reflection should be proof-read, professional, and in MLA format, unless you have spoken with me and I have told you it is okay to do otherwise.
- Each portfolio should reflect attention to presentation; this does not mean that you need a fancy folder with a table of contents, but the documents you return to me should be attached to each other in some way (even a paperclip will do), and additional credit will be given to portfolios that are exceptionally well presented.
- All essays are due **NO LATER THAN NOON ON FRIDAY MAY 15<sup>th</sup> IN MY BOX IN THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT (UH 323)**. **NO EXCEPTIONS WILL BE MADE!!!! LATE ESSAYS WILL RECEIVE NO CREDIT!!!!**

May the odds be ever in your favor!

Professor Jamie Greuel  
English 101 MWF 8-8:50  
Essay 3 Reflection

### How Well Did You Argue?

You now have three genres of writing under your belt for this class: Narrative, Concept, and Argument. For **next class, Wednesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>**. I want you to write a **reflection** on the process of writing your argument. In **1-2 pages, typed, MLA format**, I'd like you to answer the following questions.

- 1.) What was the hardest part of writing this essay for you? How did you overcome it? How have the challenges you face in your writing process changed from previous essays to this one? What have you learned that you can apply to future essays?
- 2.) How did your sources support your argument? How did you differentiate your argument from those articulated in your sources? What would you do differently next time?
- 3.) How strong were your sources? How well did you weave them into your argument to support your position?
- 4.) Was there additional information you could have used sources for? Were there sources you wish were stronger? How did you manage without these things, and would you do it again?
- 5.) If you had the whole thing to do over again, what would you do differently? Is there anything you did not have time/tools/patience to do?

Creative writers: Much of what I'm asking here has been addressed in your write-up. What I'd like here is for you to answer any questions you did not answer in that write-up and also reflect on the process of reflecting: in what ways did commenting on your rhetorical choices change or influence your creative process? Was this challenging for you? Was it helpful? Will you articulate your rhetorical choices next time you write creatively?

This assignment, whether for creative writers or critical writers, will be graded on your own, honest engagement with the questions and your own text. Use this time to think critically on your own work, questioning what you did and how you could have done it better. Remember, writing is a process; just because it is finished does not mean it cannot be improved!

## **Activities for Upper Division Courses**

While this journal primarily provides examples and support for new instructors, we hope that the materials here can provide an inspiration to anyone who has been teaching for two days or twenty years. Additionally, even if someone is at the beginning of a pedagogical career, there is still much to be learned by looking forward to the challenges students will face in the future. With that in mind, we have included here some activities that may not be suited, as they stand, for the beginning composition classroom. We hope that, regardless of how long you have spent teaching composition, you can find something that inspires you either to strengthen an aspect of your teaching you already do or motivates you to make changes in your activities – to remix them into something new.



R.P. Singh

# COMPARATIVE LITERATURE IN CLASSROOM: A MODEL

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## Abstract

Many questions arise in understanding the texts produced in different locales within the bigger ambit of world literature. It is here, the need arises for applying various modes of enquiry in understanding them. Comparative literature can become a common platform for understanding different cultures and literatures. The present paper is a modest attempt towards introducing the concept of comparative literature to a fresh learner and then scaling the literatures of two different contexts (Dalit and African American) together for practical purposes. A model is proposed for discussing comparative literature in classroom. Thus it becomes an authentic and unique research bringing theory and practice together.

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**Keywords:** Comparative literature, Dalit Literature, African American Literature, A model

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**Introduction:** In the present paper, a model is being proposed for discussing comparative literature in classroom. Various steps are given in a sequence:

**Step 1: Recapitulation:** After a brief introduction of the concept of Comparative Literature, the following rubric will be given to the learners. For a better understanding of the concept, and attaining the maximum level of SLOs, before taking this exercise in the classroom, the learners

shall be advised fore hand for studying the concept, nature and development of comparative literature with the help of authentic references in print and on web.

### **Rubric 1: Comparative Literature: Conceptual Understanding**

Note: Select the most appropriate option that matches the statement given in the 1st column from those given in the 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> columns, in each of the following:

Time: 20 Minutes.

1.	Comparative Literature is	a comparative literary work	a literary work in two languages	a specific discipline	literary phenomenon across the literary systems, languages and cultures
2.	Comparative Literature is	useful in publishing	useful in advertising	useful in librarianship	useful in publishing, advertising and librarianship
3.	Comparative Literature Includes the study of	orally transmitted literature	written literature	performed scripts	all kinds of dynamic, contextual literature including oral, written or performed ones
4.	Nature of Comparative Literature is	rigid	Flexible	cursory acquaintance with great texts	referential
5.	Purpose of Comparative Literature is	to equip with methodologies of reading	to equip & train in the application of	to develop skills and insights	to develop ability to establish a particular purview

			reading methodologies to cultural texts	regarding a particular discipline	
6.	Comparative Literature establishes	relationship between art and culture	relationship between science and religion	relationship between literature, music & painting	relationship between Literature on one hand and other areas of knowledge, beliefs, all forms of art, sciences, religion, etc., on the other
7.	Comparative Literature is -	contextual study of world literature	consensual study of world literature	stipulative study of world literature	simulative study of world literature
8.	Comparative Literature is continuously connecting	a poem with dance	a film with novel	photography with essay	all the earlier options
9.	The term Comparative Literature is often exchanged with	history play	world history	world literature	cultural studies

10.	ICLA is	a society	a journal	a magazine	an association
11.	Modes involved in Comparative Literature are	inquiry through literary movements	investigation through history, theory and genre	understanding cultural significance and engagement in reading copious books	all the earlier options
12.	Comparative Literature is	transnational interdisciplinary and responsive humanities	a dialogic establishment	explorations of our past imagination	diverse human condition

Score Out of 12.....

Signature/Name .....

**Note for the Teacher:** After twenty minutes the teacher shall read out the correct answers and the learners shall match their responses (The correct answers of the Rubric1 are given as Appendix 1). Accordingly the learners shall evaluate their level of performance under the following criteria:

Score 10-12: Excellent

Score 8-10: Satisfactory

Score less than 8: Revision Required

If 90% learners reach satisfactory level the class should proceed for Step 2.

### **Step 2: Comparing Dalit Literature and African American Literature**

In this task we shall evaluate the common traces and trajectories in Dalit and African American literature. Under the preparatory activity the learners shall be refreshed with their previous knowledge of Dalit and African American literature. In recapitulation part Rubric 02 will be given to the learners.

#### **Rubric 02: Comparing Dalit Literature and African-American Literature**

**Note:** Fill in the blanks selecting suitable options from the box:

Pedagogic, Repulsive, Abominable, Ethnification, African American, Hegemony, Equality, Liberty, Embryonic state, Africans, America, White denizens, African- American literature, Racial discrimination, Fraternity/reality, Varna ,India, Dalit issues, both the literatures ,reality.

A comparative study between African American and Dalit literature can be particularly.....1.....as far as their forms are concerned. As far as the character of this comparison is concerned, both African American and Dalit literature are .....2.....and .....3.....While attempting a comparative study between African American and Dalit literature, there is a general pressure towards assimilation among various communities of the world, however there is always a risk of increasing.....4.....in the minds of people of different culture. Both ...5.....and Dalit literature have raised voice against the.....6..... of the established class. Both African American and Dalit literature advocate .....7.....and .....8.....In comparison to Afro- American literature, Dalit literature is in its .....9.....African

American literature is by the.....10.....who were brought to .....11.....by the .....12.....as slaves to work on the plantations. The initial goal of .....13....was to abolish slavery which later turned into a struggle against .....14..... African - American literature has therefore, taken a shape from an expression of art to an expression of.....15..... Dalits were the victims of.....16..... (class) system that prevailed in ...17.....for centuries. The literature on ...18 ..is known as Dalit literature. A comparative study of ...19 .. establishes them as two different .....20..... yet similar when it comes to share equality, freedom and brotherhood in asserting their identity against the establishment of their respective society.

Score out of 20: ..... Name & Signature:.....

**Note for the Teacher:** After twenty minutes the teacher shall read out the correct answers and the learners shall match their responses (The correct answers of the Rubric 2 are given as Appendix 2). Accordingly the learners shall evaluate their level of performance under the following criteria:

Score 15-20: Excellent

Score 10-15: Good

Score 8-10 Satisfactory

Score less than 10 Revision Required

If 90% learners reach satisfactory level the class should proceed for Step 3.

### **Step 3: Scaling the common traits**

Now we shall analyze two well known poems from the literatures in question .These are “White Paper” by Sharankumar Limbale and "Negro" by Langston Hughes.

Sharankumar Limbale's "White Paper", addressing the plight of Dalits in India, shows strong similarities with "Negro" as far as the motif is concerned. In this poem the narrator demands the fundamental rights for a human being. It shows the plight of the Dalit class in India. They have been deprived of their basic human rights for ages. The poet writes, "I do not ask/for the sun and/moon from your sky/your farm, your land,/ your high houses or your mansions/I do not ask for gods or rituals,/castes or sects/or even for your mother, sisters, daughters./I ask for/ my rights as man."("White Paper", Sharankumar Limbale).The poem is a vivid portrayal of the emotions emanating from the downtrodden class called Dalits. The Dalits have lived their lives in utter inhuman situations. The view of Om Prakash Valmiki, a noted Dalit writer is shared here for the better understanding of the plight of Dalits. In his autobiography *Joothan*, he writes, "my village was divided along lines of touchability and untouchability. The situation was very bad in Dehradun and in Uttar Pradesh, in general, at time when I saw well-educated people in a metropolitan city like Bombay indulging in such behaviour, I felt a fountain of hot lava erupting within me"(95).

The Dalits were not only deprived of their rights as a human being but also they were supposed to be a demeaning object rather a grave pollutant. To quote again the lines of Sharan Kumar Limbale, "each breath from my lungs/sets off a violent trembling in your text and traditions/your hells and heavens/ fearing pollution./Your arms leapt together/to bring to ruin our dwelling places./You'll beat me, break me,/loot and burn my habitation/But my friends!" ("White Paper").

Langston Hughes has shown the plight of the African American in the "Negro". The poem begins as, "I am a Negro:/Black as the night is black,/Black like the depths of my Africa." ("Negro", Langston Hughes) The emotion intensifies in the lines: I've been a slave:/Caesar told me to keep his door-steps clean./I brushed the boots of Washington." ("Negro", Langston



Hughes).The obstacles created by the unfavorable colonizing forces are challenged by the courage and vigor of the protagonist who makes a realization in the words: “I’ve been a worker:/Under my hand the pyramids arose./I made mortar for the Woolworth Building./I’ve been a singer:/All the way from Africa to Georgia/I carried my sorrow songs./I made ragtime./I’ve been a victim:/The Belgians cut off my hands in the Congo./They lynch me still in Mississippi.” (“Negro”, Langston Hughes).These assertions prove him a master of all .His personality is proved to be a perfect blend of finer sensibilities and finer traits at par.

Langston Hughes belongs to the group of the poets of Harlem Renaissance of the 1920's.He has supported the associates of the Harlem renaissance who were expressing the racial pride through art, music, and literature. “Negro” is a true portrayal of the history of African Americans who have gone through the phase of trials and tribulations. The race has been portrayed to be comprising slave, workers, singers and victims who had suffered many forms of discrimination and exclusion. Thus it becomes a moving poem which shows the trails and travails that the African-Americans have braved throughout history. The poet gives a vivid description showing the torture on the masses ,and thus the poem becomes a saga of the pain and exploitation of the downtrodden not only in a specific locale but across the human civilization in different parts of the globe.

If we compare the plight of human being as reflected in both the poems in question, it is deplorable .Both the situations simply make the mockery of the very first article of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which proclaims that, “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood” (‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’)

**Conclusion:** Many important issues may come on board in appreciating the literatures produced in different cultures. Comparative literature can become a platform towards

understanding different cultures and literatures. I have successfully used the present model in my classes. , and hope it will certainly contribute towards teaching pedagogy of Comparative literature.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Answers**

#### **Rubric A: Comparative Literature: Conceptual Understanding**

1. Literary Phenomenon across the literary systems, languages and cultures
2. Useful in Publishing, Advertising & Librarianship
3. All kinds of dynamic, contextual Literature including oral, written or performed ones
4. Flexible
5. To equip & train in the application of reading methodologies to cultural texts
6. Relationship between Literature on one hand and other areas of knowledge, beliefs, all forms of art, sciences, religion, etc., on the other
7. Contextual Study of World Literature
8. All the earlier options
9. World Literature
10. An association
11. All the earlier options

12. Transnational interdisciplinary and responsive humanities

**Appendix 2**

**Answers**

**Rubric B**

1. Pedagogic
2. Repulsive
3. Abominable
4. Ethnification
5. African American
6. Hegemony
7. Equality
8. Liberty
9. Embryonic state
10. Africans
11. America
12. White denizens
13. African- American literature
14. Racial discrimination
15. Fraternity/reality
16. Varna
17. India
18. Dalit issues
19. both the literatures
20. reality

## Elizabeth Chamberlain

I'm a third-year doctoral student in rhetoric and composition at the University of Louisville. I started teaching in 2009 while working on my Master's in English at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. My BA is also in English, from Cal State Los Angeles, where I worked at the writing center for a couple of years before graduating in 2007. My dissertation research compares publication practices in academic journals (both open-access online and traditional) and web magazines, with a focus on citation.

When I finished my first year teaching, I thought every future class would be easier—at least I'd never be starting from scratch again. I'd never feel like I was floundering at the beginning of the term, trying to imagine a full course of scaffolded in-class assignments building up to bigger projects. But, of course, every time I begin planning a new class (and often even when I plan an "old" class) I go through the same thing: What are my bigger goals? How can I break those up? How can I make what we do today lead up to those big goals?

I actually first assigned an "in-your-field article analysis" paper in my first year teaching. At Cal Poly, students arrive having already declared a major—and I felt pressure to make my first-year composition assignments relevant to their careers. So, I asked them to get on the article databases, find an article in their field, read it, and answer a bunch of questions about its rhetorical strategies. I then had them write a short paper answering the question, "How do people write in your field?"

This assignment was, honestly, mostly a failure. My advisor, Brenda Helmbrecht, wisely warned me that I might be asking a little much of first-year students. Of course, they didn't revolt (as they always do in my teaching nightmares, one of which involved a group of students blocking me out of the room and urinating on the projector). They didn't even complain. They tried, but they got stuck. Most of them hadn't yet taken a single class in their major, so they got lost in the jargon. They struggled even in comprehending their articles—let alone trying to assess those articles' writing strategies. Almost every student answered, "How do people write in your field?" with something like, "Densely. And with a lot of jargon and statistics."

I shelved the assignment until Summer 2013, when I had the privilege of teaching a 300-level scientific and technical writing course at the University of Louisville. It was a lightning-paced summer half-session, meeting for 90 mins Monday-Friday for five weeks. I'd planned most of the course to focus on a technical writing project; students were writing repair manuals for technological devices, publishing on the free repair manual site iFixit. I wanted a short, one-week assignment sequence to focus on scientific writing. These documents are that sequence.

I was pleased because these assignments met my original goals for the in-your-field rhetorical analysis. My scientific and technical writing students, mostly juniors and seniors, were much more equipped to read articles in their disciplines. They were also aided (if I can take a little credit for my own improvement) by the scaffolding leading up to the final rhetorical analysis.

I share these assignments with the hope, of course, that someone might adopt them or remix them yet further. Perhaps the method of scaffolding might be useful to folks planning other kinds of courses. More importantly, though, I know that when I first started teaching it was really helpful to hear stories of failure: an assignment can go badly, but class goes on. And someday, pieces of that failed assignment may be remixed and reborn into something much more successful.

# In Your Field Rhetorical Analysis - Due July 9

As you have likely already realized, “academic writing” is not easily defined: rather, it’s a very broad term used to describe the many formats, styles, and tones of writing that happen within the university.

Even within your particular field, you will find that a range of voices is acceptable. However, each discipline does have particular conventions for how documents are conceived, constructed, and executed.

In this project, you will examine some of those conventions within your major field of study.

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## Part One: The Research and Analysis (15 points)

Your first step will be to find **a publication** within your major field of study. This may be a scholarly article from the article databases or a piece from a professional publication.

First, read the article and **write a two-sentence summary of its major finding or thesis** (2 points). Then reread the article and note as much about the writing as you can. **Type out answers** to the following questions (8 points):

- 1. Purpose:** Why was this written? What need does it address? What big questions (in the field, in life) does it answer?
- 2. Mode:** Is this informative? Analyzing? Persuading? Reporting? A combination?
- 3. Structure:** How is it organized? Is it in IMRAD format? Is there an abstract? A literature review? A results section? How long is it?
- 4. Audience:** Who is going to be reading this? To whom is the publication distributed?
- 5. Tone:** How formal is it? Does it use the first person or the third person?

**6. Vocabulary:** Does it use any specialized vocabulary? Does it define those words?

**7. Use of evidence, quotes, etc.:** How does it make its point? Are there charts and graphs—and if so, what tools of “invention and arrangement” like the sort Joanna Wolfe describes do they use? Quotes from experts? Photographs or diagrams?

**8. Ethos, pathos, and logos?:** All publications are persuasive texts at some level. Even the driest report is designed to convince people within the field that its findings are relevant. How does this text persuade you? What sense do you get of this author / these authors? How does the text demonstrate that it is written by a knowledgeable professional in the field? Does it ever appeal to you emotionally?

Finally, **in about 500 words**, based on your experience and a small amount of secondary research, **describe how this article fits into other work being done in your field** (5 points). Does it make any big contributions? How many times has it been cited, and for what purposes (check Google Scholar for this information)? Is it typical, in terms of language, style, organization, presentation, and data manipulation?

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## **Part Two: The Presentation (5 points)**

On July 9, you will **present for 5-7 minutes** to your classmates about writing in your field, based on what you’ve discovered from your article. In your presentation, you should do the following things:

1. Summarize and describe your article.
2. Tell us what’s interesting about it. Why does it matter in the field? What contributions does it make? What about it is typical/atypical?

3. Describe one thing the article does particularly well and one thing it does particularly poorly (e.g. stylistically, organizationally, charts, graphs, persuasion).

You will need to **prepare slides** to accompany your presentation. There is no minimum or maximum number of slides, but all should follow the guidelines we will discuss in class and Markel's suggestions in Chapter 15. You're welcome to use whatever slideshow software you prefer (e.g. PowerPoint, Prezi, Keynote, Google Docs).

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## Due Dates

### June 25: Proposal

A bibliographic citation (in whichever citation style is preferred in your field) for your chosen article and a couple sentences explaining your choice is due to me via email (efcham01@louisville.edu) by class time.

### July 9: Analysis Due and Presentations

Your report is due at the beginning of class on July 9, and you will present during class.

## Article Influence Analysis

Return to the article you examined in our activity yesterday. Go to <http://scholar.google.com> and search for the name/title of your article. The entry should look something like this:

**[English only and US college composition](#)**

**B Horner, J Trimbur** - *College Composition and Communication*, 2002 - JSTOR

In this article, we identify in the formation of US college composition courses a tacit policy of **English** monolingualism based on a chain of reifications of languages and social identity.

We show this policy continuing in assumptions underlying arguments for and against ...

[Cited by 90](#) [Related articles](#) [All 9 versions](#) [Cite](#)

How many times has your article been cited?

Click on “Cited by X.” This should bring up a list of all the articles that reference yours. Locate and examine the first three articles on that list. You will likely not be able to access them just through Google Scholar—you’ll probably have to return to the library databases. Write the author(s), title, and publication location of each below:

Author(s)	Title	Publication

Do an in-text search to find the place where each article mentions your article. Take some notes on how the texts talk about your article. Then, on the back of this sheet, answer the following questions:

- How is your article described in each? Positively? Negatively? Indifferently?
- How do the other articles make use of your original article? Do they quote from it, use ideas or frameworks from it, or use statistics or charts from it?
- How often does each reference your article? Does it happen only once, in a citation string (e.g. “see Smith, 2009; Yoran, 2010; and Kimball, 2013”)? Or is it key?
- Based on what you’ve read, how would you characterize the reception of your article in your field?



## In Your Field Citation Analysis: Charts and Graphs

Return to the article you examined in our activity yesterday. Analyze it using one of the three options below. Put your results into a Google Charts table, and create some kind of visualization of your data. Save the chart as an image and upload it to the class folder.

1. Calculate the average number of parenthetical citations per page. Can you tell where the “literature review” section of the paper is from your graph?
2. Plot the years of cited articles. Does this paper mostly cite recent literature, or is it more grounded in the past? Are there outliers?
3. Count numbers of verbs in the four verb group types:
  - a. **Argue** verbs: argue, suggest, assert, point out
  - b. **Think** verbs: think, assume, feel, believe, know, understand, hope, fear
  - c. **Show** verbs: show, demonstrate, reveal
  - d. **Find** verbs: find, observe, discover, establish

Does this chart give you any indication of what type of paper this is?

Be prepared to explain your graph to the class. What do you think it suggests? Do you think this is likely to be “typical” for an article in your field?

## In Your Field Article Rewrite

Imagine you're writing a textbook for high school juniors. Take a paragraph from a sci/tech article in your field, identify all the things that might be incomprehensible. Rewrite it.

- Highlight jargon. Highlight long sentences. Highlight things that need unpacking (obvious to someone in the field but not someone outside). Highlight parts that are too embedded.
- Do Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level test before and after to compare.

$$0.39 \left( \frac{\text{total words}}{\text{total sentences}} \right) + 11.8 \left( \frac{\text{total syllables}}{\text{total words}} \right) - 15.59$$

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- <http://www.readability-score.com/>
- Summarize the paragraph in one sentence. What's its main purpose?
- List supporting points.
- Then rewrite using Lanham's suggestions: who's kicking whom?

## Journals in Your Field

Find the names of three major journals in your field (you can Google “journals in X,” look on the library website’s course guides, find links to journals via a professional website):

1.

2.

3.

Fill out the chart below about those journals:

Journal	Circulation (# of copies sold)	Publisher	Publication location	Years published	Issues per year	Impact factor, if available	Intended audience
1							
2							
3							