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July 16, 2007

Dear colleagues,

Welcome to the Junior Year Writing Program and our new instructional Sourcebook!

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is so fortunate to have writing courses specifically designed for each discipline. I have been called on multiple times to consult with universities around the country desperate to improve their students’ writing abilities. Here, we have a built-in mechanism to support the development of our students’ discipline-specific writing skills. Writing courses within each discipline offer students the opportunity to clarify their thoughts and develop their ideas while becoming more articulate about the issues of their chosen fields.

This first edition of the Junior Year Writing Sourcebook was designed to support your work with students. The Sourcebook contains, among other things, a brief history of our nationally-acclaimed program, basic expectations of junior-year writing courses, and samples of successful syllabi and assignments. The ideas presented here – for teaching, assigning, and responding to student writing – are offered as options to consider in your own courses. We have included useful articles about grading writing, grammar, and scaffolding your students’ work from low stakes to high stakes writing.

In addition, the writing workshops we offer periodically are designed to provide hands-on opportunities for you to broaden your teaching repertoire when it comes to writing. This year we hope to build on the success of our writing workshops last spring. Look for upcoming announcements!

Finally, our website – http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/ – offers information about the teaching of writing with links to more in-depth resources. Let us know what other types of guidance, materials, or consultation services would be of interest to you. We are here to promote student writing and support faculty, teaching assistants, and teaching associates in that endeavor. I hope you enjoy our Sourcebook!

Sincerely,

Genevieve E. Chandler, RN, PhD
Associate Professor of Nursing
Junior Year Writing Coordinator
University of Massachusetts Amherst
A biographical note:

Ginny Chandler came to teach junior-year writing through her involvement with Amherst Writers and Artists (AWA) and her work with Pat Schneider. She was so taken with the experience of being an AWA workshop participant that she developed a research thread on writing, healing, and voice in her scholarship. The studies, chapters and books authored by her and listed in our bibliography at the end of this Sourcebook are representative of this line of work. Today, she uses aspects of the AWA method in her junior-year writing class while focusing on the content area of nursing ethics. Every semester, she teaches the course to 64 juniors, and in the summer she offers it as a component of the online RN-to-BS Nursing Mobility program. She claims to be far from an English major, but she’s learning every year how to teach writing better. Student writing in her junior year course has resulted in such impressive clinical narratives that the stories produced there have served as a basis for her Ultimate Guide to Getting into Nursing School, due out in September of 2007. And this year, one of her students won the Best Essay award for Junior Year Writing at the Writing Program’s annual Celebration of Writing. So, she must be headed in the right direction!
Letter from the Director of the University Writing Program

July 16, 2007

Dear colleagues,

Junior-Year Writing courses at the University of Massachusetts Amherst are part of a broader effort on campus to improve and enhance students’ writing here. In addition to the Junior-Year Writing Program, the University also sponsors an extensive First-Year Writing Program, made up of two courses, Basic Writing (Englwrit 111) and College Writing (Englwrit 112), as well as 200-level Experimental Writing Workshops, and the University Writing Center, which provides free tutoring for any student on campus, at any level, working on any kind of writing project.

Supporting all this is the University Writing Program, an independent campus unit reporting directly to the Deputy Provost and overseen by a standing body of the Faculty Senate: the University Writing Committee (UWC). UWC members include faculty and librarians from across campus, student representatives at both the undergraduate and graduate level, and ex-officio members from the Provost’s office, the Faculty Senate, and the First- and Junior-Year Writing Programs.

The Writing Program has its own budget and full-time staff; in addition to the director, who is a faculty member in the English Department, there is a deputy director, two assistant directors, an office manager, and a receptionist. Writing Program offices are located in Bartlett 305. We welcome visits from any of you on any matter at any time.

The University’s two-part writing requirement was designed to balance a general, first-year writing course, centralized and uniform, with a discipline-specific junior-year course, designed, taught, and administered within the various departments on campus and directed by a campus coordinator, currently Prof. Genevieve Chandler of the School of Nursing. But even with this dispersal of responsibility at the junior-year level, the Writing Program remains a central resource for the entire campus community. We run an extensive TO training program for our first-year courses, sponsor writing workshops for the University as a whole, support active committees engaged with various aspects of writing and writing instruction, have a lending library of books on writing and the teaching of writing, oversee the University’s writing placement test for entering students, produce an annual anthology of student writing, and organize a yearly Celebration of Writing to showcase student writing from across campus.

Please call us if you have any questions or need any further information or assistance.
David Fleming, PhD
Associate Professor of English
Director, University Writing Program
University of Massachusetts Amherst
A biographical note:

David Fleming has been teaching and studying writing for over 20 years. Although he is a faculty member in the English Department and has special responsibilities for the First-Year Writing Program here, he has extensive experience in writing across the curriculum and is thrilled to be working with faculty, TOs, and TAs from across campus on their junior-year writing courses. In fact, his dissertation was a study of writing in the design professions, and he has been especially interested (in both his teaching and research) in the ways rhetorical practices are embedded in particular communities and situations, including disciplinary and professional ones. A list of some of his research publications on writing in the disciplines is included in the bibliography at the end of this volume.

And a note of thanks to our many collaborators:

Ginny and David wish to thank the many faculty, TOs, TAs, and students associated with the Junior Year Writing Program at UMass who offered their advice and provided sample syllabi, assignments, and essays for inclusion in this Sourcebook. We also wish to express our deep gratitude to the former coordinators of the Junior Year Writing Program and the past directors of the University Writing Program at UMass, on whose foundation we here build. We are especially appreciative of the work of former Writing Program Director Donna LeCourt, whose collection of web-based resources for Junior Year Writing served as the basis for this expanded and updated Sourcebook. Finally, we thank Stacy Jiang for her help with editing and production.
Invitation to all faculty, TOs, and students in Junior Year Writing courses:

Come to the annual

Celebration of Writing!

The Celebration of Writing is a yearly event that showcases and honors the work done by undergraduate students in the many parts of the UMass Amherst Writing Program, including First-Year Writing courses, Experimental Writing Workshops, the Writing Center, and Junior Year Writing courses.

The Celebration is held every May on the reading day of Spring final exams and includes readings, performances, displays of class publications and projects, a keynote speech, recognition of peer tutors from the University Writing Center, celebration of student authors from the Writing Program’s annual Student Writing Anthology, and presentation of awards in the Best Essay Contest.

The Writing Program sends out notification and requests regarding the Celebration every Fall and reminders throughout the Spring. For more information about next year’s Celebration, contact Peggy Woods at 545-6313 (pwoods@acad.umass.edu) or Heidi Terault at 545-0633 (hterault@acad.umass.edu).

And encourage your students to submit their writing
to the annual

Best Essay Contest

Perhaps the highlight of the Celebration every year is the announcement of winners in the Best Essay Contest. All students enrolled in a first- or junior-year writing course are eligible to submit an essay. Awards are given in the following categories:

Englwrit 111, Basic Writing;  
Englwrit 112, College Writing; and  
Junior-Year Writing courses across the University.

Prizes for each category will be awarded as follows:

First Place: $200  
Second Place: $150  
Third Place: $75

Essays must have been written for an assignment in Basic Writing, College Writing, or a Junior-Year Writing course. A panel of judges will be looking for excellent writing that reflects the goals of the course the student is enrolled in. Contest submissions from Fall
classes are due in December, Spring classes in April, with winners announced at the Celebration of Writing in May. More information about the Contest is available through the Writing Program website at http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/, by phone at 545-0610, or by email at writingprogram@acad.umass.edu.
The
Junior Year
Writing
Requirement
History of the Junior Year Writing Program
at UMass Amherst

by Charles Moran

In the late 1970’s there was a general sense that American college students’ writing skills were slipping, and that something should be done about it. In 1975, a *Newsweek* cover story, “Why Johnny Can’t Write,” noted declining SAT scores; and in 1983, President Reagan’s Commission on Excellence in Education issued its report, *A Nation at Risk*, which deplored what the Commission saw as declining educational standards in this country.

Partly in response to this *zeitgeist*, and partly in response to local administrative dynamics, on April 29, 1982 the University’s Faculty Senate accepted the “Special Report of the Academic Matters Council Concerning a University Writing Program” and approved the new University Writing Program in very much its present form: “Basic Writing,” to be taken by first-year students whose placement test results indicated that they needed two semesters of writing; “College Writing,” to be taken by all first-year students; and a one-semester junior-year writing course given as part of the student’s declared major and designed and staffed by the faculty of the department offering the major. The first-year writing requirement was implemented in September of 1982; the junior year writing requirement was implemented in September of 1984, as the students entering in 1982 attained junior standing. (The 1982 report is available at [http://www.umass.edu/senate/fs_docs/SEN_DOC_NO_82-057_WRITING_PROG.pdf](http://www.umass.edu/senate/fs_docs/SEN_DOC_NO_82-057_WRITING_PROG.pdf).)

This new University Writing Program, both its first-year and junior-year components, was to be overseen by a newly-created University Writing Committee, which would report annually to the Faculty Senate. Membership of the Committee was to be cross-campus, including two members from the professional schools and one from the Library. The program was to be directed by a faculty member from the English Department, ideally one whose research interests coincided with the work of the program.

The “Special Report” argued for the Junior-Year Writing Requirement in language that still carries weight:

> Students write better when they are expected to write better; they are likely to develop the habit of careful writing when this expectation is satisfied in various intellectual contexts over a number of years.

The Report further defined the function of these courses, locating them in the tradition of “writing to learn”: 
The function of writing in these third-year courses will be to enhance and reinforce the subject being studied, not to teach grammar and spelling at the expense of that subject.

In the fall of 1982, the University Writing Committee issued a call for junior-year writing course proposals from all major-offering academic units. In that year, members of the Committee met with the relevant faculty in every department, helping the departments think through the goals and structure of their junior-year writing course. By September of 1983, all departments had drafted proposals and had received feedback on these proposals from the Committee. During this year and the next, the Committee mounted a series of faculty workshops in the teaching of writing. In these workshops, faculty met across the disciplines to read students’ writing, talk about what they valued in particular pieces of student writing, and to consider ways in which, in their junior-year writing courses and in their major programs generally, they could help their students improve as writers in their disciplines. By September of 1984, all departments had junior-year writing courses approved by the Committee and ready to offer to their junior majors.

Among the most thoughtful of the junior-year course proposals came from the Physics Department, whose undergraduate director, Professor William Mullin, became the first junior-year writing program director and Associate Director of the Writing Program. He continued in this position through 1992, leading the biennial junior-year program evaluation, a formative process that included meetings of University Writing Committee members with appropriate faculty from all academic departments.

The Junior Year Writing Program has been blessed with strong leadership ever since, and it continues to be a national model in writing-in-the-disciplines. In fact, in 2003, U.S. News & World Report named the junior-year writing program here one of 25 “Programs that Really Work” in writing in the disciplines (America’s Best Colleges, p. 114). Local research has borne this out as well: in a 2000 study by the University’s Office of Academic Planning and Assessment, three-quarters of surveyed UMass juniors reported that their general education courses helped them learn to write clearly and effectively, and two-thirds rated their junior year writing course in particular as helpful in preparing them for their careers, with nearly 40% strongly agreeing with that sentiment. These were among the most positive findings in the whole study. (See http://www.umass.edu/oapa/oapa/publications/assessment_bulletin/2000/JuniorAttitude.pdf.)

The UMass Amherst Junior Year Writing Program has also been a fertile ground for interdisciplinary, collaborative research on writing in the disciplines and professions. See the bibliography at the end of the Sourcebook for examples.
Charles Moran is Professor of English Emeritus at UMass Amherst and former Director of the University Writing Program (1982-1990).
Structure of the Junior Year Writing Program

The University Writing Committee is charged by the UMass Amherst Faculty Senate with overseeing the University’s dual writing requirement. Composed of faculty and students from across campus, as well as the Writing Program director, the Junior-Year Writing Coordinator, and representatives from the Provost’s Office and the Faculty Senate, the Writing Committee is responsible for approving all major changes in the curriculum for the junior-year course offerings in a given department. Further, the committee reviews both the First-Year Writing Program (Englwrit 111 and 112) and the Junior Year Writing Program every five years by examining the course offerings in each department. The next major review of the Junior Year program will take place in 2007-08.

The Provost’s office and University Writing Committee also provide financial and pedagogical support to departments and faculty teaching departmental-specific junior-year courses. The committee fields all questions related to the requirement and works collaboratively with departments to ensure compliance with the Junior-Year Writing requirement. The Junior-Year Writing Director and the Writing Program offer specialized workshops, conferences, and consultations on the teaching of writing to groups across the University. Through the University Writing Program, the Provost’s office provides funding for the junior-year course to each department as an additional supplement to aid in the extra work such a requirement adds to content courses.
Funding FAQs

Funding for the Junior Year Writing Program comes primarily from the departments themselves, since, ideally, the junior-year writing course also meets a requirement in the major. Supplemental funding is provided through the Writing Program (via the Provost’s office) at a set amount per junior in each major. The number of juniors per major is taken yearly from the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) Fall Admissions and Enrollment report. Funding is distributed based on the previous year’s junior count. During the spring of a given semester, each department is contacted by the Writing Program to confirm the “junior count” and address any questions; funds are distributed at the beginning of each fiscal year.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does the junior year count not match course enrollment?
Departments receive funding for a given academic year based on the number of juniors shown in the OIR report for the previous year (e.g., for AY ’07-08, funding is based on the junior count for ’06-07). The count does not attempt to project increased numbers of juniors for the next year; those additional majors will be accounted for in the following funding cycle. Similarly, the count does not attempt to track when a student actually enrolls in a junior-year writing course. If a student delays taking the course until his or her senior year, the funding will have already been provided to the department for that student.

Why does my junior count differ from reports I run through the registrar?
The reports generated by the Registrar’s office frequently differ because SPIRE counts juniors by year of graduation (which continually changes). The OIR report counts juniors differently. The OIR report calculates student rank by total credit hours and thus removes the redundancy of potentially counting the same student as a junior in more than one academic year if she/he changes her/his year of graduation.

Why doesn’t the junior-year funding cover the cost of the course?
JYWP funding was never meant to fund junior-year courses entirely. When the requirement was instituted by the Faculty Senate in the early 1980s, the assumption was that the requirement would be met by a course already required in the major. That course would be writing-intensive and emphasize instruction in discipline- and profession-specific writing. Thus, funding for the course is meant to be a supplement, not a means of covering the entire expense. The understanding is that part of the funding would come from the department/college because the course would also be part of the major and be taught by faculty. Ideally, in other words, the junior-year writing course not only meets a general education requirement; it’s also an integral part of the student’s major course of study.
Developing or Changing a Junior Year Writing Course

Any major change in a department’s junior-year writing course must be approved by the University Writing Committee, including but not limited to altering its structure (e.g., the amount of credits or the way credits are distributed), major content or curriculum changes, or its teaching staff (e.g., shifting instruction from faculty to TOs). Typically, all that is required is a detailed syllabus, a memo explaining the need for the change, and a short form. If you need help planning such changes, the Junior-Year Director is always available for consultation before a change is proposed to the committee.

There are a few basic expectations of a Junior-Year Writing Course at UMass. The questions below will help to ensure that the proposed course fills Writing Program requirements. Please submit the responses to these questions with the course for review. (See also “Curricular Expectations and Options” below.)

1. What are the writing assignments offered throughout the semester and the approximate length of each? (Total writing should be at least 20 pages of finished prose.)

2. How do the assignments teach students the kinds of writing and research valued by professionals in your field?

3. Which assignments would you consider “low stakes” (i.e., writing as a way of learning/thinking on paper) and which “high” (i.e., finished, polished work written for an audience and a grade)?

4. How many drafts do the high stakes’ assignments require?

5. How is feedback on writing provided during the writing process? (i.e., for which drafts/assignments do students receive teacher feedback? How do students conduct peer response/editing and how often is there peer response/editing?)

6. How are assignments progressively developed to build writing skills?

7. How is a writing handbook used?
Curricular Expectations and Options
Basic Expectations of Junior Year Writing Courses at UMass Amherst

Instructors should be members of the discipline or field sponsoring the course. If teaching assistants are employed to support faculty efforts, the department should provide training and supervision.

New Teachers or Graduate Teaching Assistants should consult with your department representative, chair, or dean. The University’s Junior Year Writing Coordinator may be able to offer you assistance in designing a syllabus, planning, and grading writing assignments.

Characteristics of Exemplary Junior Year Writing Courses
A primary characteristic of JYWP courses is that they respond to the educational and professional needs of students by encouraging writing that is used in the specific field. The courses strive to meet both the “learning to write” and “writing to learn” goals of the broader international and national “Writing Across the Curriculum” (WAC) movement, of which our 1982 JYWP initiative was a part. To this end, JYWP instructors across campus exercise a great deal of creativity in designing their courses.

Student writing should take place in multiple genres and for diverse purposes and audiences. Students may develop professional writing portfolios that contain samples of various documents. Portfolios are also a helpful way to organize grading in the course, which should reflect discipline-specific expectations for content as well as style and correctness.

Assignments

• The course should have at least 4-5 main writing assignments scattered throughout the semester, mixed in length (some of them perhaps as short as 2-3 pages, at least one paper 10 pages +).

• Avoid the “term paper” model in which students’ writing efforts are poured into one large assignment at the end of the semester. Students learn most from thinking, drafting, and revising over many weeks.

• Students should write drafts of the main assignments and get responses from the teacher (and if possible from other students), and then revise at least once. A separate “last draft” where the only task is to get the paper error-free can be extremely useful for stressing grammar, spelling, and proofing skills, but see the point below.

• The course should mix informal, lower-stakes writing for the sake of learning and grappling with course concepts and knowledge, with more careful, higher-stakes writing similar to that which novice professionals in the field would produce. It is
appropriate to demand high standards of correctness in usage and mechanics in final drafts, provided, of course, that students can develop their thinking in early drafts without being distracted by demands for surface or mechanical correctness. The practice of drafting is encouraged because students’ writing can deteriorate when an assignment asks them to grapple with new or unfamiliar concepts in the discipline.

Peer Response

Students should have plenty of opportunities to share their writing with peers – at both draft and final stages. Sometimes this can just be sharing in order to hear what their writing and thinking sounds like, but there should also be chances for substantive responses from fellow students.

- Peer sharing (students just reading out loud, or trading and reading each other’s papers) helps students clarify thinking and develop a sense of audience.

- Peer sharing is particularly useful in early drafts and takes little class time.

- Peer responding is an important source of mutual help in which students can improve their ability to analyze strengths and weaknesses in a written text.

- Peer editing, in which students copy edit each other’s work, is an activity that can help students improve their personal editing skills, but it should be carefully guided and reserved for final draft review (the use of a writing handbook is encouraged).

Career Development

Professional development elements (e.g., resumé writing, oral presentation skills, etc.) may be incorporated into the syllabus as a way to add value to the course and give students an opportunity to plan ahead for their careers.

Writing Handbook

Students should be expected to use a writing handbook; instructors can assume that most students purchased one when they were enrolled in the freshman course. New JYWP teachers can take comfort in the fact that about 60% of their students will have had the first-year writing course here at the University, and these students may be accustomed to some or all of the practices listed above. This will make it easier to introduce and build on these skills and practices in courses that are content-heavy in a particular discipline. Note, however, that about 40% of our juniors are transfer students who may need extra assistance.

Grading
Grades should reflect discipline-specific writing styles as well as content, processes as well as products. The Writing Program offers a number of handouts on grading, and some departments have developed criteria grids that can be adapted across a number of disciplines.
Learning Goals for JYWP Courses

In September, 2000, the UMass Amherst Writing Across the Curriculum Writing Assessment Group published Establishing Learning Objectives: Applications for Course Planning and Assessment, which included the following “Statement of Learning Goals for JYWP Courses”:

Mastery of Basic Composing Skills

Most students enter your JYWP courses reasonably competent in these areas, but in some cases considerable review and reinforcement is needed. A few students will need intensive, individualized work to develop this mastery. Work on these skills can continue simultaneously with work on the more advanced composing and thinking skills that follow.

Basic composing skills include:

- To compose coherent sentences and logically developed paragraphs
- To draft, revise, and edit one’s own writing as well as give useful feedback to others
- To edit so that final drafts contain minimal, if any, grammatical errors
- To cite secondary sources correctly using conventions appropriate to a given discipline

Proficiency in More Advanced Composing and Thinking Skills

Most students enter your JYWP courses less competent in these areas and needing more focused instruction and practice. To complete your courses successfully, they will have attained competence although not necessarily the facility that comes with full mastery.

- To evidence constructive thinking in one’s writing; that is, to go beyond recall and restatement to re-organize information and make one’s own sense of it. Constructive thinking includes being able to
  - represent accurately what one has read and to make sense of that reading through processes such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, reflection, and problem-solving;
  - gather, select, and organize information and evidence from multiple sources with an eye to patterns, points of difference, and overlap; and
  - tolerate and work with ambiguity, indeterminacy, complexity.

- To compose a focused, coherent text
  - that moves effectively between generalizations and details to achieve specific purposes. (The kinds of generalizations and detail used will depend on the purpose of the text, e.g., to re-explain complex concepts, to
explain and evaluate, to develop an argument, to recommend a specific course of action.; and
   o that has a logical overall line of development.

- To be aware of rhetorical context, particularly within a given discipline or related profession, including being able to
  o write with the authority or ethos of a professional in a given discipline or profession;
  o write in at least one genre (in some cases more than one) valued in a discipline or related profession; and
  o be conscious of audience and be able to adapt one’s writing – including language used – to accomplish a particular purpose with a particular audience.

**How do these goals and objectives differ from course to course?**
Common objectives for any program can only go so far. Different courses and disciplines require different standards and give varying weight to the importance of one learning behavior over another. While JYWP courses have the goal to improve writing and communication skills in upper level students, there are differences across these courses in:

- the weight given to certain goals and objectives,
- the kind of assignments posed, and
- specific teaching practices.

Examples of areas of difference follow, taken from the work of the JYWP faculty involved in the yearlong analysis of JYWP courses across the disciplines. You may find these examples helpful in thinking about your own goals and objectives and the importance you assign to each. It is important to keep in mind, however, that these examples are drawn from the findings of specific JYWP classes only. They are not used to generalize but to illustrate the different ways the common goals and objectives might play out within your own classroom.

**Attention to audience, specifically the relation of writer to audience.**
Most JYWP courses focus on students as writers cultivating an audience or audiences. Students are asked to write to various audiences throughout the semester. These audiences differ across courses and departments. For example:

- In the Management, Chemistry and Physics classes, in particular, there is more focus on students learning to adapt their writing to various audiences.
- In the English literature class, the writer-audience relation for student essays is often not explicitly named, with the focus on cultivating students’ awareness of themselves as an audience.
Particular ways of thinking and purposes for writing.
Critical thinking is often mentioned as a key skill for your undergraduates to acquire before graduation. Our review of JYWP courses yielded different interpretations of this term, with critical defined as either analytic and evaluative thinking or as something essential. While all courses reviewed valued analytic thinking, there were also distinct ways to name other ways of thinking within specific disciplines and courses such as “constructive” thinking, “reflective” thinking, and “strategic” thinking. This was also true for the value assigned to different purposes for writing:

- In English literature, for example, students are asked to formulate arguments about texts.
- In Physics, they are asked to comprehend and re-explain complex concepts.

Attention to career development.
Most JYWP courses touch on career development by asking students to write in one or more disciplinary context. Some courses, however, give more attention to this than others:

- Chemistry and Management focus more on career development in general than Physics, English literature, and English teaching.
- In Chemistry and Management, developing a resumé is a course assignment.

Collaborative writing.
Collaborative writing is more valued in some disciplines than others. This is reflected in the focus it is given in JYWP courses across the departments. For instance:

- In the Management course, a collaborative writing project is one of the major assignments.
- In the English teaching course, collaborative writing for a research project is only an option but not required.

Attention to language.
Developing an awareness of the role of language and writing is an important goal in all JYWP courses. What differs are the ways in which this is accomplished in each course:

- In the English literature course, the emphasis is on an awareness of language as a plumb line to intuitive thinking about literature.
- In the Management course, there is more focus on pragmatic thinking and instrumental use of language, as well as on understanding cross-cultural differences in communication.
• In the Physics course, language is valued as a means of qualitative thinking about what are often quantitative subjects.
• In the English teaching course, the focus is on students developing self-awareness of their own ways of using language and writing, and on understanding the link between literacy practices and culture.
• In the Chemistry course, language and writing are represented as conversation, as a way of carrying on the dynamic process of creating knowledge within the discipline.

Examining the differences described above can help you understand why certain objectives are emphasized in one field and assigned less importance in another. This allows you to re-consider the weight you assign to the goals and objectives you have identified as important. Understanding areas of difference is a valuable assessment tool in identifying common objectives and applying common criteria for assessment. The value of assessing the extent to which students are meeting common goals in JYWP courses is clear within the mission and goals of the program. However, the individual articulation of the objectives and the methods through which they are assessed may, and often do, vary for each course. When you review these objectives, it is important to remember that the learning goals and objectives for student writing are very much context-specific.

Members of the UMass Amherst Writing Across the Curriculum Writing Assessment Group were Laura Doyle (English), Anne Herrington (English), Linda LaDuc (Management), William Mullin (Physics), Martha Stassen (Academic Planning and Assessment), Julian Tyson (Chemistry), Donna Zucker (Nursing), and Kathryn Doherty (Academic Planning and Assessment).

Options for Departments Offering Junior Year Writing Courses

A department or program can customize their JYWP course to fit their needs. The following are the three most frequent models used:

• **A stand-alone 3-credit course**, required for juniors and ideally taught by a faculty member expert in the field (or sometimes by a professional writing specialist with knowledge of the discipline or profession of the sponsoring department). 85% of JYW Program courses adopt this model. Department faculty members provide regular feedback on the content and effectiveness of the course. With this model it is important that responsibility for writing be widened beyond the 3-credit course, with other faculty members in the department incorporating into their courses writing that builds on the required course assignments.

• **A year-long course sequence**, required and taught by faculty in the field and including the minimum amount of writing desired for all courses: 6-8 short writing assignments of 2-3 pages each, per semester. (This course may be a tutorial, taught one on one.)

• **A series of 2-3 designated “Writing Intensive” courses or workshops**, each carrying an additional 1-2 credits when taken as a JYWP course, and each taught by participating faculty from the department. Courses may be required or elective, but students need to tell the respective instructors that they are taking the course for JYWP credit, and then instructors will give the students 2-4 additional writing assignments in that course. Ultimately, students must complete a required sequence.

All three models assume that writing is an instrument for thinking and learning, as well as a means of communication. In addition to the core course, some departments offer additional writing services, such as small, local writing centers or “writing intensive” or “writing across the curriculum” initiatives that help their students get even more help with their writing.
TO Training

Although the original intent of the JYWP was for the course to be taught by faculty, some departments have moved to courses taught primarily by Teaching Associates (TOs). If this is the case in your department, the University Writing Committee requires that TOs receive specific training in the teaching of writing from, and are supervised by, a faculty member in the relevant field. Some departments have used this as an opportunity to offer practicum credit to their graduate students where TOs for the course meet regularly to consider topics related to the course, do further research, and learn from guest speakers. Other departments require a standard course curriculum that all TOs follow and supervision in the form of regular meetings with and observations of classroom teaching by the faculty member. There are a wide variety of models out there for how to help support TOs in their teaching of the course, and both Writing Program staff and the Junior-Year Coordinator are always willing to consult on different models and/or serve as guest lecturers concerning any issue in the teaching of writing.
Sample
Course
Syllabi
Course Description
Effective written communication is fundamental to science. This course will provide students with an opportunity to write extensively, to critique the writing of others, and to have their own writing critiqued.

Textbook

Class Meetings
The course is scheduled for Wednesdays from 2:30-4:25 pm in Morrill Sci. Ctr. (l) rm 319 North. Several weeks, we will be meeting in the BCRC as well. For an overview of the semester's events, consult the Class Schedule.

Prior to coming to class, students should consult the appropriate week’s course Preparation Page, which will review the activities to be completed before class. The preparation pages, posted on Fridays, will provide specific assignments and activities to be completed before class.

Course Structure
Write, write, write! The goal of the course is to give students practice writing. Writing includes weekly unstructured writing (journal writing and perfect paragraphs), individual projects (Methods and Reflective Essay), as well as group projects (Observation, Research Proposal, and Research Project). Each of these is described on the Projects page.

I encourage you to do all of your writing using a text editor and to keep local backup copies of all of your writing, against the event of technical problems. I strongly encourage you to become comfortable using a text editor, rather than a word processor for everyday writing. Please consider write your submissions -- all of the words -- and then transfer them into a wiki to post.

For Macintosh computers, I recommend using TextWrangler. This is currently a free program that requires Mac OS X. For Windows computers, I recommend using TextPad. This program has a free demo, but eventually requires registration, which is currently $27.
All writing is to be posted in the Wiki. For each project, including the group projects, please also **independently** format and submit an RTF document that meets the course formatting guidelines.
Assessment
Student performance will be assessed on each of the components of the course plus a score on Class Participation. For each project, a detailed rubric will be provided that explains how the project will be assessed. Grades will be assigned using the table below.

Many of the activities in the class depend on comprehensive preparation before class and enthusiastic participation during class. For that reason, I am reserving 100 points for class participation to encourage you to come to class prepared and participate fully in the class activities.

Projects in the class are worth the following points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Journal Entries</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect Paragraphs</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation Project (Group)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods Project (Individual)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Proposal (Group)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Project (Group)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Essay (Individual)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation (Individual)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total points possible</strong></td>
<td><strong>500</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And grades will be assigned using the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Numeric Score</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>460-500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>450-459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>440-449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>410-439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>400-409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>390-399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>360-389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>350-359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>340-349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>300-339</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academic Honesty
Students are expected to uphold the highest principles of academic honesty as outlined in the UMass Code of Conduct.

Safety
All laboratory procedures will be conducted with strict attention to accepted safety practices. Students will be provided with copies of safety guidelines during the first laboratory exercise.

NOTE:
Any student in this course who has a disability that prevents the fullest expression of their abilities should contact me as soon as possible, so that we can discuss class requirements.

Additional course materials for Biology 312 are available online at http://bcrc.bio.umass.edu/courses/spring2007/biol/biol312section3/node/3.
Economics 397W
Writing in Economics

Books:
- Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat*
- Charles Fishman, *The Wal-Mart Effect*
- Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*
- William Strunk and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*
- William Zinsser, *On Writing Well*
- Brent Beebe, John Stifler, etc., *A Street-Fighter's Guide to Writing for Economics Majors*

The first five are stocked for this course at Food For Thought Books in Amherst; the sixth is the course packet, available at Collective Copies in Amherst. Readings from the first three will be assigned and listed on the syllabus below. So will some readings in *On Writing Well*. Whenever we have a current reading assignment in one of the first three books, bring the book to class. Bring *The Elements of Style* and the course packet to every class.

Besides pens, computer, paper, dictionary, etc., you will need (1) a spiral notebook or folder to use as a journal and (2) a highlighter.

* * *

Hi.

Read this syllabus and be responsible for its contents.

The Economics Department has offered (and required) the Junior Year Writing Course since 1984, the year the university created the Junior Year Writing Program. I've been teaching it since its inception, in a variety of formats. This year's format is quite new, and some of the announced schedule may be subject to some changes as we go along. Watch the course Web page for updates, and pay close attention in class.

Speaking of class, before we go any further, here's the word on attendance: Come to every class. Absences will be excused for obvious reasons (religious holiday, family emergency, sickness), but it is your responsibility to let me know in advance if you must miss a class or else to follow up as soon as possible with the appropriate documentation. If you miss class, you are still 100 percent responsible for knowing what went on in it. No other absences will be excused. If you miss one class, I will notice. If you miss more than one class, you will notice.

This attendance policy is not a professorial ego trip. It's a natural fact of how the course
is set up: your attendance in class is a significant part of the work for Econ. 397W. On a related note, this is not a good class for falling behind and then trying to catch up.

Assignments
There will be many writing assignments, plus readings that will cover all of The World Is Flat, The Wal-Mart Effect and Brave New World. Expect probably ten short assignments, "short" meaning somewhere between 300 words and three pages, as explained in the particular assignment. There will be three longer assignments, "longer" meaning 5-7 pages. The longer assignments in particular will involve a good deal of revision and editing.

Grades
There is no numerical formula for computing grades in this course, but in general your grade will be a function of these things:

- Quality of your writing. Show your reader the very best writing you can do.
- Quality of your revising. Reviewing, revising, rewriting what you have written is possibly the most distinctive feature of this course and the biggest part of how this course may help you learn to write better.
- Punctuality with assignments.
- Attendance. I expect to see you in every class. See exceptions as noted above.
- Collaboration. Part of the course work involves class discussion, discussion in small groups, review of each other's papers.

If you attend every class, hand in every assignment on time, and make a substantial effort to practice writing and rewriting, you are almost certain to get a grade of at least a B-. Last semester, a semester in which attendance and participation were excellent, most students in the course earned a grade of B or higher.

Academic Honesty
You've been in college long enough to know what this phrase refers to: using someone else's writing, ideas, etc., in your own writing and presenting them as if they were your own words, ideas, etc. You've also been living in an Internet-oriented world long enough to know that it is never all right to copy words or other information from a Web site into your own writing without clearly identifying the source. We’ll review citation practices you should observe.

It is really easy to avoid plagiarism in this class. Your own writing is the most interesting thing you can give your reader to look at in this course. Anything else can, and should, be plainly identified as such. For example, if you find good ideas on the Internet in response to an idea you are writing about, you simply need to tell your reader where these ideas come from, using appropriate citation. Same goes for ideas you get from fellow students and other people. That’s a big part of what academic work is.
Punctuality
This is a bad course to fall behind in. If you sense that you are falling behind, talk to me about that fact as soon as possible. My job includes helping you figure out how to get it done. Whatever you do in this class, don't hide.

Ever been bored in a course? In this course, it’s your own job not to be bored. If you can figure out how to make the work interesting for yourself, you’re probably doing it right. And don’t be afraid to take risks.

Additional materials available online at http://courses.umass.edu/ec397w01/.
Comp-Lit 397B
Writing for Comparative Literary Studies

Course goals and objectives
This class is based on reading, interpreting, discussing, and writing about literature. It is tailored specifically to teach advanced writing skills to students majoring in Comparative Literature. Students will learn how to 1) do a close reading of a poem, a short story, a novel, and a film; 2) approach a text through the lens of various literary theories; 3) organize their findings into a researched academic paper; 4) present their work in a formal setting. In addition, this course will help students prepare for a career (in the humanities) and/or apply to graduate school.

Required Texts
The following required books are available at Amherst Books, 8 Main St, Amherst. If you have your own copies, want to purchase the books at other locations, or can borrow them from the library, do so, but make sure that you have the right edition, that you do the reading on time, and that you have a copy of the text to bring to class.


A course packet containing the rest of the required texts is available at the CopyCat Print Shop, 37 E. Pleasant St, Amherst.

Further Reading
For a list of further readings on literary theory, literary analysis, and writing a research paper, please see the course packet.

Grading
- CV/resume and statement of purpose 15%
- Quizzes (lowest grade dropped) 10%
- Participation in class discussions, peer review sessions, and lightning rounds 15%
- Participation in theory trials 10%
- Conference paper abstract and annotated bibliography 10%
- Outline and rough draft of the conference paper 10%
- Final conference-length paper 20%
• Paper presentation at the JYW colloquium 10%

Notes: 1) Attendance is crucial to the successful completion of this class. After more than two absences (excused or not), your final grade will be lowered a full letter grade for each additional absence. 2) No makeup quizzes will be given; no late papers will be accepted. 3) All the requirements must be fulfilled in order to pass the class.

Plagiarism
The definition of plagiarism as stated in the Academic Honesty section of the UMASS handbook on Undergraduate Rights and Responsibilities is "knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own work in any academic exercise." This means that you cannot present papers or even sentences written and published by others as your original work (including papers you might have borrowed from friends or found online). It also means that you need to cite properly your sources, including the books that you are discussing. Use MLA style for your bibliography. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious infraction of University conduct and will be dealt with accordingly.
Physics 381
Writing in Physics

Course Prerequisites
a) ENGLWRIT 112, College Writing. You cannot take the Junior writing course before you have finished the Freshman writing course. b) PHYSIC 284, Modern Physics I, or equivalent. If you have not had this course I recommend that you drop 381, and take it only after you finish Physics 284.

Course Goals
Physics 381 is designed as a part of the University’s writing requirement. Since its main goal is to improve your writing skills, you will do considerable writing—the theory being that you learn it by doing it, with some coaching from the instructors and your fellow students. The course is taught in the Physics Department rather than, say, the English Department for several reasons:

- If a Physics professor tells you writing is important to your field, you might take the advice more seriously than you would hearing it from a professor in the English Department.
- The course content is in your major. There is indeed course content; see below.
- There are styles and techniques of writing that are peculiar to Physics and to the sciences; an English professor is unlikely to be able to demonstrate these.

The course content is the interpretation of the fundamental concepts of quantum mechanics. Quantum mechanics is taught in our Modern Physics courses, Physics 284 and 424, as well as the senior course, Physics 564. However those courses, while touching on questions of interpretation tend to concentrate on problem solving and the applications of quantum mechanics. The fundamental concepts tend to border on philosophy, and are usually swept under the rug in these introductory courses by use of the standard “Copenhagen interpretation.” What we want to emphasize in this course is “quantum weirdness”, the way certain experiments and their interpretation force us to take on a very unusual view of the world, at odds with our intuitive classical view. The wonderful feature of quantum weirdness is that we can approach it very qualitatively and use it for verbal rather than quantitative or mathematical presentations.

Physics has two parts: the mathematical part, including variables, equations, derivations, and experimental data; and a verbal part, in which we interpret what the equations and variables really mean qualitatively. Mastering the latter part is fundamental to being a physicist, and yet we do not emphasize this aspect sufficiently in our course work, which is usually more problem-oriented (i.e., mathematical). This course is an attempt to fill in that deficiency.
Textbooks
The required texts for the course are two books on quantum mechanics and quantum weirdness to be found in the Textbook Annex. They are


I also plan to hand out my own notes on the subject. There are many other books that you might acquire for your library and that would be useful to this course, for example,

- N. David Mermin, *Boojums All the Way Through*, Cambridge, (1990). (Mermin is one of the most graceful writers among physicists. Sec. II is perfectly on the subject.)
- J. S. Bell, *Speakable and unspeakable in quantum mechanics*, Cambridge (1991) (Bell single-handedly changed the way we understand quantum mechanics. The book has several classic articles intended for a popular audience.)

There are many others books on quantum mechanics. I will hand out reprints of individual articles.

*You are expected to own a writing Handbook.* If you still have one from your Freshman writing course, it will do. Otherwise buy whatever one you want; at least one will be on the shelves for sale at the Textbook Annex in connection with ENGLWRIT 112.

How Classes Will Be Conducted/Attendance
While most graded writing will be done outside of class, there will be short non-graded writing assignments in class. In class we will also discuss the required readings, have brief lectures if necessary, and do peer reviews of draft papers. Because papers are due at class time and handed to other students for peer review during class, and because class discussion is crucial, it is important that you **attend every class**. In fact, you are allowed only two unexcused absences before your grade is affected. Lateness for class can be a problem in this course, so being on time also will be counted in the attendance part of your grade.

Writing Assignments
Each paper you write will go through several drafts. You will presumably make notes, outlines, etc., and then write an initial draft. You will polish this by one or two more drafts and put into neat form for handing in. This is the mid-process draft (MPD). Note that it is not the first or rough draft, even though it is probably the first one seen by anyone else. The MPD is read by fellow students and by me and/or the TA. Suggestions for improvements are then incorporated into the final draft. It is even possible that this “final draft” may need revision.

During the semester I will assign approximately five papers, each a minimum of 1250 words (if you are unsure of the number you have, use your word processor to count the words). Shorter papers may lose credit. Length counts because writing is somewhat like learning to play a musical instrument; the longer paper your paper, the more you have practiced, and the more you improve your writing.

I will assign some in-class writing projects, and you will also keep a journal describing your reactions to the assigned readings.

I will strictly enforce due dates for the various drafts; see the accompanying due date sheet. Since everyone’s schedule (peer reviewers’, instructors’) depends on having the papers to read, it is absolutely necessary that you turn in assignments on time. You will be allowed one free late assignment. Each further late assignment will lower your grade. Plan ahead.

There are many possible styles of writing in physics and science in general. Mostly we will be concerned with writing qualitative pieces, those without a lot of mathematics. These involve qualitative interpretations of physical concepts where one is not able to hide behind a flurry of math symbols. The technical level used depends strongly on the capabilities of the intended audience. Among the types of writing involved in physics, in rough order of increasing degree of sophistication of the intended audience, are a science article in a newspaper (for example, Science Times in the Tuesday NY Times), a Scientific American article, a chapter from a conceptual physics text, a Physics Today article, a Physics Department colloquium, a proposal to the National Science Foundation or some other agency, a textbook chapter, a journal article, etc. Learning to write at a variety of levels will help you in whatever profession you enter.

All writing that is submitted should be done on a word processor. There are computers available in several locations, including the Departmental resource room in Hasbrouck 205.

Peer Critiques
One or more fellow students will critique every MPD. Lest you feel that this is the blind leading the blind, let me note that the peer critique is done as much for the reader’s sake as for the writer’s! Reading someone else’s material gives the reader a lot of insight into
how others solve writing problems—or not. Moreover, the student critic can usually give helpful suggestions of ways to improve the writing. The TA and I will also read every MPD and provide further suggestions for improvements. On a later page of this outline you should find “Guidelines for Preparing a Critique of a Draft Paper.” Read this as a guide to writing.

Conferences and Portfolios
Occasionally I will talk to each student individually about his or her writing. At such a conference I may want to look at all of your work to date. You should keep a portfolio with all your notes, outlines, rough drafts, MPD’s, and final drafts of all papers so I can see how you attack your work. The portfolio will be handed in at the end of the semester for final evaluation.

Oral Presentations
Each student will make at least one oral presentation, and possibly two, based on the writing he or she is doing.

Grades
While I will give you analyses of the strong and weak points of your writing, generally I will not assign a letter grade. I feel that seeing a low letter grade on a paper may discourage a poor writer who may be working hard and improving rapidly. Also good writers may begin to take it easy upon seeing a high grade. However, I will be glad to look over your portfolio at any time and tell you how you are doing and what your likely grade is—it is not meant to be a military secret, just disassociated from each individual piece of writing.

Class participation will also be counted in the final grade. Approximately 15% of your grade will depend on your contributions to the discussion. If you are really shy and don’t like to speak out, I will try to work out some alternative to help you earn these points.

It would be wonderful if there were no time pressures in student life and everyone was always perfectly organized, highly motivated, and got all assignments in on time. Exams would be unnecessary, etc. But in the real world, it is often the fear of penalties that makes us do what we might have wanted to anyway. So...

Late papers (unless excused for good reason) affect your grade as follows:
- First late paper (less than five days late)—no penalty
- First late paper (more than five days late)—grade is lowered on that paper one grade level at the beginning of each five-day period of lateness
- Second late paper—grade on that paper is lowered two grade levels (an A becomes a B) at the first missed date and that is repeated for each three-day period of lateness.
• Subsequent late papers—your final overall grade is lowered one level for each missed due date.

Lack of attendance and lateness to class (unless excused for good reason) have the following penalties:
• Two absences—no penalty
• Third and fourth absences—Grade on next paper due is lowered one grade level.
• Each instance of late arrival (beyond 5 or so minutes) counts from one-third up to a full absence depending on how much of class is missed.

Plagiarism
Occasionally a student author writes a paper containing plagiarism even though the author had no intention of being dishonest. The student simply did not know that the method of using source material was improper. Attached is a detailed description of what plagiarism is and how to avoid it; please read and understand it. You are responsible for knowing what is and what is not plagiarism.
WOST 391W
Writing for Women’s Studies Majors

Course Description
This junior-year writing course provides fundamental instruction in critical thinking and composition techniques as well as the process of research and documentation necessary for academic and professional contexts. The aim of this course is to acquaint students with the many genres and styles of writing and research practices expected from Seniors and graduates of the Women’s Studies major. WOST 391W is structured around a set of readings selected to represent a large variety of stylistic approaches including scholarly writings in a number of fields, cultural text (e.g. film, book, music, art) reviews/critiques, journal writing, letters to the editor, zines, web pages, personal and self-reflexive prose, and conference abstracts/reports. Readings will be selected from academic, professional, and public contexts, and assignments will facilitate skill development in critical reading, thinking, writing, and research.

To bring substantive coherence to the course, we will focus on readings by authors that present the political, ideological, personal, and cultural positionings of feminisms. Some of the readings are from feminists who, over the last thirty years, have helped define and shape our understandings of feminism; other readings are from self-defined anti-feminists who challenge feminism both in principle and in practice. For our purposes throughout the semester we will be asking the main question: What does feminism look like in the 21st century? I pose this question to guide us through our readings, personal reflections, writing assignments and class discussions. I also ask this question to Women’s Studies majors, who, as part of larger disparate communities, are the voices of feminism. The underlying objective of asking this question for WOST 391W is the belief that both writing and feminism matter; the written word is intricately related to how one negotiates with self and others in the past, present, and future.

Course Objectives
The goal of this course is to hone your writing abilities in response to a variety of contexts and audiences. WOST 391W is divided into five modules: writing (autobiographical) prose; summarizing arguments; evaluating arguments; writing as politics; and building research and writing skills in Women’s Studies. Through producing multiple written assignments of differing lengths and purposes, we will work together to meet the following goals:

- to discuss the importance of writing as social intervention and political activism;
- to familiarize oneself with interdisciplinary writing and research practices germane to scholarship in the field of Women’s Studies;
- to recognize reasoning strategies and create clearly written arguments;
- to improve writing skills through peer reviews/edits, revision of drafts, and
management of your own writing process;
• to gain confidence in incorporating and properly documenting source information in writing projects;
• and gain an understanding of how one applies an intersectional analysis to a written feminist critique.

Course Materials
• Colonize This!: Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism. Eds. Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman. Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2002 (referred in syllabus as CT)
• Feminist Studies 32.2 (Summer 2006).

Texts are available at Food for Thought Bookstore, 106 North Pleasant Street, Amherst. Colonize This! is also being held at the Reserve Desk, Du Bois Library.
• E-reserves: Available at: http://ereserves.library.umass.edu
• Web readings: As assigned on syllabus

Course Requirements
The pre-requisite for this junior-year writing course is Englwrit 112/113 or an approved transfer course for first-year writing. The junior-year requirement can only be met with a course in a student’s major.

Please read the Code of Student Conduct and especially the regulations pertaining to academic honesty, grading, attendance, examinations, and absences due to religious observance (http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/code_conduct). We will pay strict attention to these.

Writing Projects
This course combines “low stakes” writing assignments (writing exercises that are reviewed but not graded, including multiple in-class writing assignments and journal entries submitted online) and “high stakes” writing (formal written papers). The assignments include: five formal written papers, a series of in-class writing exercises, an annotated bibliography, an abstract, and peer reviews/edits. Check the syllabus for due dates for individual assignments. (More on Projects in Assignments Section.)

Peer Review/Attendance/Participation
Your physical presence along with your active participation makes up a sizable portion of your grade in this course. It is critical that you attend class in order to understand assignments, ask questions about project requirements, and review peer work. You are expected to complete assigned readings before the session in which it is scheduled and come to class prepared to discuss the main points and ask/answer relevant questions.
There will be various homework and in-class activities throughout the semester, which will include submitting an online journal entry (minimum 250 word entry, 5 entries total of your choosing) and reviewing and carefully editing your colleagues’ work. Throughout the semester, you will be required to write about the course readings, do some online research and take initiative in classroom discussion. You will not be allowed to make up these exercises, so choose your absences wisely.

**Writing Portfolios**
Each formal writing assignment must be submitted in portfolio form (notes or outlines made en route to your first draft, the first draft, the peer response, the final draft). This provides a means of avoiding charges of plagiarism, and a way of documenting positively your writing progress. The Writing Portfolio will also include any submitted and graded journal entries from the semester. You will hand in the portfolio on the last day of class for a final grade; all work will be returned to you.

**Student Conferences**
Learning to write benefits from close reading and one-on-one discussion of your work. As such, during Fridays of weeks #10 and 11 we will schedule student-teacher conferences to discuss progress in the course, work through major assignments and discuss the development of your writing. These conferences will also give us the chance to begin thinking about possibilities for your final cultural text analysis project.

**Grading**
- Paper #1: Autobiographical Essay 10%
- Paper #2: Summary of an article 5%
- Paper #3: Evaluation of an argument 10%
- Paper #4: Letter to Editor/Gov official 15%
- Project #5: Cultural Analysis 40%
  - Annotated Bibliography 10%
  - Conference Abstract 5%
  - Final Paper 25%
- Class participation/Journal Entries 20%
- Total 100%

Grade scale: A (94-100), A- (92-93.5), B+ (90-91.5), B (82-89.5), B- (80-81.5), C+ (78-79.5), C (70-77.5), C- (68-69.5), D+ (66-67.5), D (58-65.5), D- (50.5-57.5), F (0-50)

**Course Policies**
1. **Attendance**: Attendance is necessary since new information about assignments will be presented every class, and various pieces of the writing process will be discussed. Participation is worth 10% of your final grade. This attendance requirement safeguards against unnecessary repetition of the lessons as well as any surprises in the grades your papers will receive: when you attend, you will know the details of each assignment, and
therefore you will be clear on what is expected. If you are ill or otherwise impaired, or have an athletic event notify me in advance and provide appropriate written documentation. If you celebrate specific religious holidays that conflict with class, please inform me prior to your absence to make specific arrangements. You are allocated three unexcused absences for the semester without penalty. Your final grade will be deducted by 5 points for every additional class missed past 3 unexcused/undocumented absences. Students who miss more than six (6) classes during the semester will fail.

2. Preparedness: It is imperative that readings be done before class, that you think about these readings, and that you are prepared to contribute to a discussion about them.

3. Deadlines: All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date set in the class schedule. If your paper is not ready at that time, it is a late paper. Your ideas deserve the time required for careful organization, clarity, and sophistication, so plan ahead. Other than your five (5) journal entries, electronic paper submissions will not be accepted.

4. Rewrites: Students will be expected to write drafts of the main graded assignments for this course to be shared with instructor and peers. Substantial revisions of drafts are an integral aspect of the writing process. However, you may rewrite any or all of your final essays to achieve the grade you desire, provided that the following requirements are met:
    • We have an individual conference about the paper before beginning the rewrite.
    • The rewrite consists of substantive revision, not just minor editing based on the comments I may have written in the margins of your paper.

5. Paper Format: Typed, double-space, 12-point font, one-inch margins, page numbers. Papers are to be stapled. If the pages are not stapled, I will not read or grade your paper. I expect you to use the spell check function on your word processing program. In general, you should always have someone proofread your work before handing it in; if you have particular trouble with spelling, grammar and syntax, a proofreader is a must. All formal writing assignments must have a coherent, original thesis and support for your argument. Students must incorporate proper in-text and bibliographical citation of sources according to the Modern Language Association (MLA) or American Psychological Association (APA) citation style.

6. Plagiarism: I assume that students are generally honest. However, necessary action will be taken against students who commit plagiarism and academic dishonesty in compliance with official University guidelines. All projects must be your own and must be original to WOST391W, Fall 2006. Submissions of content from other courses will not
be accepted. In this course, plagiarism carries the grade of F for the assignment as well as the course. For proper citation of text and ideas that are not your own, please refer to your course book, writer’s reference, or see me. For the definition of “plagiarism” adopted in this class, and for procedures concerning academic dishonesty, see sections I and II, “Academic Honesty,” in the UMass Amherst Code of Student Conduct. Find it here: http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/code_conduct/acad_honest.htm.

7. **Unique Needs**: Please be sure to notify me in the first two weeks of class if you have needs that require specific accommodations. Obviously this class requires you to pay attention to your writing skills so let me know if you have special learning or writing needs.

8. **UMass Writing Center, Bartlett Hall 303A**: The Writing Center provides one-on-one assistance to writers at every stage of the writing process. For those students who are having specific difficulties, consultation with the Writing Center staff is highly recommended. At times I may refer students for particular problems. The Writing Center offers drop-in service (http://writingprogram.hfa.umass.edu/writingcenter). They may be reached at writingcenter@acad.umass.edu.

Available online at http://www.umass.edu/wost/syllabi/fall06/391W.pdf
Designing Effective Writing Assignments
Designing Writing Assignments

Because the rationale behind the Junior-Year course is to provide writing instruction specific to a student’s major, the kinds of writing assignments that are most effective consider specifically what kinds of writing tasks are best suited to one’s discipline and how the writing tasks help students integrate disciplinary content. Most instructors meet these goals with a mix of informal, short writing assignments and longer, formal assignments.

Formal Assignments

The intent of the Junior-Year course is not to simply have students write but to construct writing experiences that will best foster student learning as future professionals in a particular discipline. Below are several questions you can ask yourself that will help ensure writing assignments meet the goals of the JYWP and also provide the best learning environment for your students.

What Do I Hope Students Will Learn from the Assignment?
Although many times assignments may have more than one goal, the following categories are useful ones to consider as you design assignments since they suggest different tasks for the students:

- Leaning course content by integrating it with students’ own ideas or extending it to other venues.
- Taking the skills learned in class to do their own independent research.
- Writing to position oneself in professional conversations and begin to take on the voice of an expert.
- Practicing with professional genres, purposes, and/or audiences.

How Should I Write the Assignment Itself to Meet My Goals?

- Center each piece of writing around some question, problem, or issue that provides a reason for writing. Without a strong sense of exigence (i.e. why the piece of writing matters beyond getting a grade), it is difficult to write effectively.
- Create a rhetorical context for each writing that suggests a purpose for writing, a specific audience, and a role for the writer and audience.
- Provide some guidance in exploring and shaping ideas and presenting them to the reader (e.g. questions to guide their inquiry). Or provide evaluation criteria linked to the important intellectual demands of the task.
- Make a clear connection to content/methodological/analytical knowledge learned in class and the writing task.

How Should I Plan the Various Stages of the Assignment to Get Quality Results?
Scaffolding refers to the process by which a teacher plans the entire course or part of the course with a long, formal assignment in mind. The lower part of the scaffold provides support and a foundation for the eventual, larger and more central task. Scaffolding helps students become more successful writers by breaking up the cognitive task of a more complex assignment, allowing feedback and intervention on particular skills and ways of thinking in discrete units, and more clearly help demonstrate the relationship between in-class and out-of-class work. Here are some tips for scaffolding your writing assignments:

- Practice, when possible, different skills entailed by a sort of writing (e.g., in-class activities practicing analytic skills or interpretative skills).
- Discuss audience expectations and examine models of types of writing you hope they will produce.
- Work smaller assignments into course that will prepare students to think about the content in the ways the assignment requires (e.g., journals, question logs, response papers).
- Break the assignment into sub-topics or “chunks” that will eventually be put together in a more comprehensive format to break down cognitive task and allow for feedback.

How Should I Plan Such a Sequence?
The best way to think about what students will need to be successful is to work backwards from the assignment itself:

- Consider the skills required to produce an assignment (e.g. analysis, summary, synthesis, case study methodology, etc.).
- Consider what content knowledge students must understand before they can say something of their own about it or apply that knowledge to a new situation.
- Work smaller assignments into the course that will prepare students to think in the ways the assignment requires and have access to the materials and content they need to complete assignment.

What Kinds of Scaffolding Might I Consider?

- Informal writing assignments sequenced throughout the semester or part of the semester.
- Prewriting tasks that help student think through the paper assignment before they begin drafting.
- Staging the assignment itself into sub-topics or “chunks” that will eventually be put together.
- More formal, short assignments that help build knowledge and skill for larger assignments sequenced throughout the semester.

How Should I Plan the Assignment to Allow Opportunities for Feedback?

- Solicit feedback right from the beginning to help clarify and get a sense of how
students interpret the assignment. This can be done easily in discussion or through a short, ungraded response asking them to explain the assignment in their own words.

- Be flexible and willing to let students revise when necessary. Many instructors include due dates for first and second drafts to help this process along and use class time or homework for peer feedback to the drafts.
- Include feedback while drafting or ask for proposals or progress reports so that you can intervene as the work progresses.
Informal Assignments

There are many kinds of informal writing assignments, from something as informal as a journal that is merely checked off “complete” to shorter, assigned writings that are graded. One of the best ways to consider how informal or shorter assignments might help you meet your course goals is to consider what you hope students will learn or practice in such assignments. The descriptions below are organized by four possible goals with ideas about how informal assignments might help you reach each goal. Any of these assignments could provide the basis for a longer, more formal assignment or could be used only to promote class discussion and/or thinking about course material.

Assignments that help students integrate and analyze course content.

Summaries: Have students summarize the class reading for the day in a single paragraph. Use the summaries as a way to begin class, or as a record of readings to be incorporated into exams or a more formal writing assignment. Or, have students summarize a group of articles, and then write a more formal synthesis and critique of a group of articles at various points in the semester (perhaps at the end of specific units or topics).

“Jargon” Journals: Have students keep a journal of key terms that come up in the readings and/or class lecture. Have them paraphrase a definition in their own language as a way of ensuring that the student has “understood” the term and has acquired something to paraphrase. Such journals would be useful both in checking on student’s understanding of material, preparation for exams, or incorporation into other types of writing.

Response to Readings: There are several ways to encourage a critical response to a reading or class topic. One is to use a “double-entry” log in which students separate their approach to the reading in two columns. In the first column, they list summaries, paraphrases, or quotes about what seem to be significant issues; in the second column, they respond to these issues with questions, challenges, definitions, etc. Another way to help students actively engage with the course material is to require “response papers.” Response papers might ask for an open response that takes the reading one step further, or be written directly in response to a question or prompt given by the instructor. Any of these types of responses can be incorporated into another assignment (e.g., a position statement) or serve as a research-base for student papers.

Problem-Statements: When a student asks for an appointment to discuss a problem, or has a question for class discussion, ask her to write out as precisely as she can the question(s) that she would like you to respond to. The technique not only saves conference time but encourages the student to work through the often fuzzy sense of puzzlement of what is bothering her. Another version of this exercise is to have students write a problem statement that is passed on to another student whose job it is to answer it. Such peer answers are especially useful in large classes.

Exam Questions: Have students prepare examination questions which may be used
on quizzes, midterms and finals. Here, the instructor will gain some insight as to whether the students have grasped the main concepts for a topic. Also, students will more carefully evaluate their notes since it is their own exam they are composing. **Freewriting:** Freewriting—writing down quickly what thoughts come to mind without censure—can be used in a variety of ways to focus the class. Have students freewrite about questions or important topics in the reading at the beginning of class, to summarize the major points of the lecture at the end of class, or to clarify a difficult concept mid-way into the class.

**Assignments that ask students to apply knowledge to a context beyond the course**

**Annotations:** Have students annotate sources consulted in a project whereby they define the purpose and scope of the work and offer an evaluative statement about the value of the work in relation to the class project. Another way to use annotations would be to assign a certain number of articles for each student to annotate on a topic not covered in the course. Compile all the annotations into a handout for the class. The handout could serve as a resource for future paper assignments.

**Problem-Creation:** While students frequently get practice at problem-solving, they are less adept at framing a problem. Have students search outside sources in the community that could be addressed by the course content and write up a frame for the problem that could be addressed by the class.

**Case Studies:** Assign case studies of typical problems to be analyzed, with written analysis and recommendations brought to the class by each student. These cases are then discussed in groups to refine the analysis and agree on a consensus recommendation. You may even give the groups roles to play that would model the type of negotiation of recommendations that take place professionally.

**Assignments that investigate the norms and skills of disciplinary writing**

**Content Analysis:** In class, have students, in groups of three or four, analyze an article from a professional journal. The instructor then critiques and discusses the article in class. Students critique a second article chosen by a fellow student. The critiques are shared in class. This assignment helps students get involved with what is happening in the discipline right now and gives them an appreciation for the real-world significance of the content they are studying.

**Multiple Perspectives:** As a way of encouraging critical thinking skills, have students write an analysis that takes different perspectives on a body of material: cause-effect, comparison/contrast, etc. For example, a cause-effect exercise might ask a student to look at the results of a project or at a problem and arrange the causes in order of the most prominent to the least.

**Analyze an Expert’s Revisions:** As a class or individually, analyze the revisions of a piece of writing from an expert in the field (perhaps your own). Have students look at drafts to see how the final product came to be. Looking at the entire paper may not be necessary; you might concentrate on how one section of a paper is synthesized from raw data and notes and transformed into a finished presentation. This helps students
better understand the specific methods and techniques for writing in that discipline and may help them see the value of revision as well.

**Rhetorical Analysis:** Have students examine two or three pieces of writing commonly used in the profession (either scholarly articles or professional materials) for the way they are written. Have them closely examine how the texts are ordered, what type of language is used, what counts as a “fact” or proof, and if there are sub-headings, what information is appropriate for each section. This assignment not only helps students become more familiar with the writing conventions of their field, it can also lead to an analysis of how these conventions relate to the discipline itself (i.e., what counts as knowledge, how context affects what should and can be said, etc.). For an example, see below:

**An Exercise in Rhetorical Analysis.** The following questions, provided by English Prof. Donna LeCourt, are meant to help students invent and structure material for a rhetorical analysis of a text.

**Purpose/Context**
1. What is the text about? What content does it attempt to cover and/or explain?

2. What overall purpose does the text serve? For example, is it meant to answer a question, pose a problem, add to research on a given topic, introduce a new idea, summarize someone else's ideas...? How can you tell?

3. Who is the author(s) of the text? Are they named? Is any biographical information given about them? What qualifies them to write on this subject?

4. Are the authors “present” in the text through the use of personal pronouns or self-reference or are they never referred to?

5. Can you tell what the author(s) thinks about a topic from reading the text?

6. What gains the most emphasis in the text: the author's ideas, the content (i.e. the data or research), previous research, etc.? For example, is the novel a person is writing about given more emphasis than their ideas about the novel or vice versa?

7. Why might one aspect of the rhetorical context (the analysis, the author's ideas, the subject matter, etc) be given more emphasis than another? What does this emphasis say about what's really important to consider about a topic within this discipline or profession?

**Audience**
1. Where does this text appear? What, from the journal or magazine or the article itself, can you tell about its anticipated readers? For example, are they well versed in the topic? How can you tell (i.e., what leads you to your conclusion)?

2. Is the audience ever addressed explicitly in the text? implicitly? List two examples of such explicit or implicit addresses. (Look for hidden references such as "of course, we all know ...."

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or "we accept that X is true.." as well as more explicit examples).

3. Are there references cited directly in the text or in a works cited/bibliography?

4. When references are used, which ones receive a lot of information? the least?

5. Are authors or studies referred to without references or explanation? Where?

6. From your answers to 1-5 above, what can you conclude about the article's audience? How much do they already know about the topic? What does the author presume they care to know more about? In sum, why does the author presume they want to read this text? What's in it for them?

Organization
1. Is your text broken up by sub-headings? What are they? If not, can you designate certain sections of the text in a backwards outline (e.g., "first the author critiques other people's readings of the novel, then she explains that her reading is more accurate because it accounts for the details the others leave out, etc.).

2. Why would these headings or sections be ordered in the way they are? Why must one precede the other? (Consider the needs of the audience when answering this question.)

3. Within each section, is there an order to the information presented? Do a backwards outline for each section.

4. What can you conclude about why the text is organized as it is? Is the organization driven more by the content (the information that needs to be presented), by the author's argument, if any, by the needs of the audience, or some combination of the three? Explain your answer.

Argument
1. What type of proof, if any, is used to defend a conclusion or idea in the text (e.g. references to other work, original data, personal experience)?

2. Is one type of proof used more often than another or to the exclusion of all others? Which one(s)?

3. What type of analysis is the proof subjected to, if any? In other words, does the author simply present something as a fact, does he argue for a conclusion's validity, does he analyze a piece of information in a certain way, etc.?

4. What parts of the discussion receive more space than others? Why would the author devote more time to these topics (or topic) than others?

5. From your answers to 1-4 above, how would you rank the authoritativeness of certain types of proof? (Hint: Usually those that need the least explanation or analysis are considered the most authoritative or those used the most often.)
Style
1. Look at the pronouns in the text. Does the author(s) ever refer to herself (themselves) as "I"? Why would she chose to refer to herself (or not) in the text?

2. Does the author ever refer to other readers or include them by using "we"? Why would he chose (or not chose) to do this?

3. Look at a "chunk" of approximately 10 sentences. What usually occupies the subject position in the sentence (e.g., another author's name, an object, a piece of data, etc.)?

4. If there is any consistency to what receives a subject position in the sentence, why might this aspect be emphasized in this way?

5. What portion of your "chunk" could be considered technical terminology or jargon? How pervasive is technical terminology in the entire article?

6. Are these technical terms ever explained? Which ones receive an explanation and which do not? Why would the author chose to explain the ones she did?

Putting it all together
Look over your answers to all the questions above. What patterns emerge? How are the answers to the questions in one section related to those in another section?
**Assignments that give students practice in professional communication**

**Memos to the Instructor**: Rather than stopping after class or in the office to ask a question about an assignment or ask for an extension, students must write a memo to the instructor. This not only provides practice in the types of internal communication in most businesses and industries, it also forces the student to present her question in a fully thought-out manner and become accustomed to writing such communiqués in a short space of time.  

**Letters of Request**: Have students write business letters geared for the purpose of introduction and research gathering, introducing their project and plans for approval. Another version of an introductory letter could have students try to persuade an interested party (e.g. a foundation, the NSA, etc.) to provide funding or approval for their research. Or have them write a letter after completing a project which tries to persuade someone interested in the project to accept their recommendations.

**Collaborative Writing Assignments**

In many disciplines, collaborative authorship is the norm, and there is no reason not to engage students in such activities. In fact, collaborative writing can be useful in a wide variety of disciplines as it helps students account for a variety of perspectives, share the research burden, and negotiate drafting and revision with peers such that one’s reasons for writing in particular ways must be more overt. The added benefit of fewer papers to grade when 3-4 students are composing a single paper is, however, frequently overshadowed by the extra preparation and intervention necessary to help collaborative writing be successful.

**Elements of a Good Collaborative Assignment**

- pedagogical goal of assignment  
- purpose for writing (what are students trying to prove, etc.?)  
- audience (who should they imagine as readers besides the teacher?)  
- reason for collaborative work (groups work better if they understand why the paper needs many writers rather than only one)  
- direction on what the final text should look like, specifically  
  - should the text look as if it were written by one author or can different styles and voices be obvious?  
  - does the group need to reach consensus on their topic/project or can they include their disagreement (and reasons for it) in the final document?  
  - can they use headings and sub-headings in the paper? any other organizational aids you can provide?  
- a “grievance” procedure for resolving conflicts or have students create one at the onset of collaborative work.

**Staging of Tasks**
• Assign due dates for different portions of assignment (research, first draft, etc.).
• Require that students create a “working” plan that clearly defines the distribution of labor and projected dates of completion for tasks.
• Perhaps break the paper down into sections due at different times and then put together.
• Possibly include individual as well as group assignments (short papers or journal entries from individuals that will then be used in group paper).

**Style of Collaborative Work**

Many students will have never collaborated on a paper before, so it’s helpful to address different ways groups might work together in class or through a handout and then ask students to develop a “working plan” for their group that they will pass in. Considering how they will work together prior to getting into the research and writing is essential so that the group does not end up negotiating all of this at the last minute. Some options for ways to work and/or assign a particular style include having

- groups divide actual writing tasks into units that each student takes responsibility for.
- groups gather to write all of the paper together.
- groups delegate various writing process responsibilities.
- groups divide research responsibilities but write together.
- each group member draft the entire paper, then cut and paste sections from each person's draft into a single draft.

**Assigning the Groups**

Most instructors have found assigned groups to be more effective than allowing students to choose, particularly since “friends” do not make the best collaborators. The best group assignments are done with some reason in mind, whether it be the expertise each member of the group might bring, the different writing strengths each has, or a deliberate mix of people with different perspectives. When assigning groups, however, it is important to let students know what criteria you were using so that they value each member’s contribution. Further, it is recommended that you collect each person’s schedule of available times outside of class to ensure at least a two-hour block in common with other group members. If time together is difficult, suggest modes of communication for group (e-mail, bulletin boards, shared drafts over network as well as group meetings)

**Monitoring Student Progress**

In addition to requiring drafts as you would for most other assignments, collaborative work requires more monitoring to ensure that each member is “pulling his weight” and that there are no group conflicts spiraling out of control. Some ways to keep up on what groups are doing and how well they are working include the following:

- **Topic Proposals**: In addition to working out their topic, have students include information about negotiating the group tasks (e.g., what happens when
someone misses a meeting, who is responsible for what parts, a time line for completing certain sections, etc.).

- **Progress Reports**: Progress reports from groups can include what has been done, what's left to do, and what plan and schedule the group has for the remaining work.

- **Status Memos**: At certain stages, ask each member individually to report in on the progress of the group membership and their working relationship; if problems are to be included, be sure to ask for specific recommendations about how they can be resolved. For longer projects, require weekly or bi-weekly status reports via e-mail.
Sample
Assignment
Sequences
A sequence of assignments from  
Biology 312, Writing in Biology, Spring 2007  
(with thanks to the instructor, Steven Brewer)

Projects

The primary focus of this class is completing a series of projects. Below is a general set of guidelines for how the projects are evaluated. Each project includes a description and a rubric that explains how the project is going to be assessed. Please refer to these carefully as you work on projects.

For each group project, plus the methods project, all writing associated with the project must be contributed using the wiki. I encourage you to do the bulk of your writing using a text editor (as described in the syllabus) and then to paste your work into the wiki as you develop your documents. The formatting of the document in the wiki is not evaluated.

When the document is complete, each co-author will independently take the text from the wiki and use it to correctly format a word-processor document using the formatting guidelines adopted by the class. Please submit these documents in Rich-Text Format (.rtf) as a file attachment via email.

Writing and formatting are evaluated separately. For Group Projects (Observation, Research Proposal, and Research Project), I will evaluate the project and assign it a numeric score. I will then assess the contributions made by each author by examining the edit history in the wiki. I reserve the right to reduce the percentage awarded to co-authors if they contributed less than their peers. Finally, I will assign each author a separate score for the formatting of their .rtf-file.

1. Journal Writing

Each week, I expect students to invest approximately three hours in writing. These hours do not have to be completed in a single block: 20 minutes here and 20 minutes there is fine – just aim for at least three hours of total time spent writing each week.

This writing can be about anything related to life sciences. I encourage you to write about things you actually observe, but you can also include rough drafts of on-going projects in this course or work related to other courses. Please do not paraphrase writing from any other single source, although you could write a synthesis of two other sources. If you choose to use other sources, please be sure to comprehensively identify these sources (with appropriate bibliographic entries). You will select one paragraph of this writing to use as a Perfect Paragraph (see below). Your writing should all be posted in a blog you will maintain at the course site.
Rubric. There are 50 points possible for weekly journal entries. To receive all 50 points, simply make sure you post a substantial body of writing every week (with the possible exception of spring break) and identify sources, if you use them. Expect to lose 5 points for any week where little or no writing is posted. Expect to lose 5 points for any point where it appears that some other work is being paraphrased without the sources being adequately referenced.

2. Methods Project

Scientific writing generally includes a METHODS section, which describes the procedures that were used in the research project described. A primary goal of science is replication: for scientific work to be held valid, others must be able to reproduce the same results that were obtained by the researcher.

The goal of the Methods Project is to produce the best possible photographic representation of a living organism and write a specification of the procedures used that is sufficient for someone else to make an identical figure. Here's what to do:

1. Think carefully. What represents an ideal scientific figure? What characteristics should the figure need to represent? Can you represent everything you want to represent with a single image or will you need a composite of images?

Please think carefully also about what "an organism" means. It doesn't mean a species or a population or just a body part. I also recommend against creating an image of something that might have organisms in it. But you could also think flexibly about what is an organism, e.g. the Gaia hypothesis, provided you offer a compelling rationale of what organism you elected to represent.

2. Take Pictures. We have some digital cameras in the BCRC that you can reserve. Please select a subject for your picture that is a living organism (from whichever kingdom you want: animal, vegetable, etc.) and that is less than 10 minutes walk from the BCRC. Remember that someone else is going to have to replicate your procedures, so be thoughtful of others. Don't make someone climb a tree or something.

3. Create a Figure. Using Gimpshop, or other imagery manipulation software, create a final figure (by creating composites, adding labels, etc) that best illustrates the living organism you've chosen to represent. Create a finished figure in jpeg format with a size approximately 400 x 300 pixels, name the file "your-lastname-1.jpg", and keep it secret until after your methods have been followed.

4. Write Your Methods. Create a document in the Wiki called something like
"StevenBrewerMethods" and post your methods writing in that document. Then copy the text from the wiki and send them to me in an email.

5. Follow Someone Else's Methods. As soon as I have some Methods, I will start asking people to follow someone's methods while they're taking their own picture. If no methods were available when you came in the first time, please schedule a time to come back and check out the camera to follow someone's methods to take the same picture. Attach your finished file should be posted to their methods paper in the wiki using a filename like "their-lastname-2.jpg". Once your own Methods have been followed, your matching image should show up attached to your methods and you should be able to complete your paper. You can then attach your image and look to see how they compare.

6. Write your paper. In your INTRODUCTION, be sure to describe how you came to select the subject you chose and why you think it represents “a picture of a living organism.” In your RESULTS, carefully identify all of the differences you can observe between the two pictures. Do not provide analysis or attempt to guess what led to the differences -- just the differences. The DISCUSSION should include a thoughtful analysis of what led to the differences you observed. Explain what things you might have controlled (by selecting a different subject or writing your methods in a more explicit fashion. Be thorough and specific. Don't forget that you still need an Abstract, Acknowledgements, etc, as per the formatting guidelines.

Note: Writing methods is usually a pretty tiresome topic and so I'm trying to make this activity more fun than it might otherwise be. So relax! Have fun with it! Be whimsical!

Rubric

Process (10 points)
Was the Methods Project Description followed carefully?
• Was an organism identified?
• Was a rationale provided?
• Was a figure constructed?
• Did the author have fun?

Structure (20 points)
Does the INTRODUCTION provide an adequate literature review of the biological topic to explain how the methods were generated? Is a thoughtful rationale for the work provided?

Do the METHODS describe what the experimenters actually did? Are the METHODS specific and comprehensive? Things to avoid: Are the METHODS written as a set of instructions to someone else, rather than a description of what the experimenter did?
Do the RESULTS describe and summarize the observations and measurements? Is there a clear narrative supported by tables and figures? Things to avoid: Does the RESULTS narrative mix describing observations and trying to explain them?

Does the DISCUSSION assess and explain the interpretation of the data and its relationship to the initial questions or hypotheses? Things to avoid: Were any observations not mentioned in RESULTS referenced in the DISCUSSION?

Are references used in the literature review cited properly in the REFERENCES? Is every reference cited? Are there any citations for which there are not references?

Writing (20 points)
Strive for simple, clear, well-organized prose. Use paragraphs. Maintain a formal, scientific tone. Avoid slang, colloquialisms, and jargon. Avoid using "commonsense" measures and adjectives like "some" or "large". Don't anthropomorphize (assign human characteristics to other living things). Things to avoid: Are there any grammatical or spelling errors? Are there obvious stylistic changes from one section to another or from one author's contributions to another's?

Formatting (0 errors to receive credit)
Authors must take the text from the wiki and create an independently formatted word-processor document, to be submitted in Rich Text Format. The formatting guidelines must be adhered to strictly. Only submit documents that you believe are perfectly formatted. Documents must:
- Use a style-sheet and styles.
- Be double-spaced.
- Contain all required sections, in the correct order, with page breaks as necessary.
- Have page numbers and an appropriate heading.
- Have font size and typeface as specified and be consistent across the entire document (with the exception of Figures).

Authors must submit a perfectly formatted document to receive credit. Each resubmission will incur a 5-point penalty. Please check your paper carefully before submitting. Authors who can succeed in submitting two perfectly-formatted papers in a row need not subsequently submit formatted papers.

3. Observation Project

In the Observation Project, student teams should identify a biological topic or problem which they can observe and collect some quantitative data. Over the course of 2-3 weeks, conduct a literature review that describes the biological topic or phenomenon.
Based on the review, collect some quantitative data locally that supplement or could be compared with results from other places, times, and conditions.

This project should result in a paper that uses the formatting guidelines we adopt in class.

**Rubric.** This paper is worth 25 points of the 500 points possible in the course. The rubric used in evaluation is similar to that of the Methods project.

### 4. Perfect Paragraphs

Each week, by noon on Tuesday, you should post a "perfect paragraph" in your blog. Please use an appropriate title, such as "Perfect Paragraph for Week X". This will be one paragraph you select from the current week's journal writing to polish and improve into a paragraph that is as nearly perfect as you can make. This paragraph must appear in its original form in your journal and in an improved form as a perfect paragraph. In this one paragraph, strive to have beautiful prose with no structural, stylistic, grammatical, or spelling errors.

As with all your journal entries, the writing must be life science related, not paraphrased from a single source, and should reference any sources used.

**Rubric.** There are 50 points possible for perfect paragraphs. In assigning points, I will look for evidence that you tried to perfect this paragraph from its original form in your journal. Expect to lose 2 points for any perfect paragraph that's late. Expect to lose points for obvious spelling or grammatical errors. Expect to lose points for repeated errors.

### 5. Research Proposal

Most scientific work begins as a proposal that provides an INTRODUCTION that lays out the rationale for the work and may include a comprehensive literature review. The METHODS are generally written in future tense and describe what the researchers will do. The DISCUSSION describes potential eventualities depending on what the outcomes turn out to be. There is generally no RESULTS section in a proposal.

The goal of this project is to develop a proposal for a research project that can be actually undertaken by the entire class. This includes a thorough introduction that lays out a compelling rationale for undertaking the project, a complete set of methods that describes how data is to be acquired (if any), and a discussion that describes potential findings and their implications for changing the course of the project.
The proposal should include specific goals for 8 to 10 teams to complete sub-projects in the larger project. Again, the goal is for us to actually do this project so please be realistic in terms of time and expense to acquire or build experimental apparatus and gather data.

This project does not necessarily require gathering data independently. The project could represent a "meta-analysis" (i.e., reviewing findings from many similar studies). Even a project that simply laid out a rationale for compiling a group of related review projects could work for this assignment.

A key goal of proposal writing is to use persuasive language. The goal of a proposal is to convince your peers that your project is the best one and the one that the class ought to follow.

Each group will take their proposal and use it to construct a 3 foot by 3 foot poster, to be printed on the BCRC poster printer, and used for a poster session, to be conducted in class.

After the projects have been submitted, we will rate all of the proposals and choose the best one for the class to carry out for the Research Project that follows. I encourage you to look over the review criteria and use them in constructing your proposals.

Rubric (100 points possible). This rubric lays out the criteria by which each poster will be assessed. Authors are encouraged to study these guidelines to improve their posters.

OVERALL (10 points)
• Was the Research Proposal Description followed carefully?
• Was an attractive, well organized poster produced? Is the visual presentation compelling and readable from a distance? Is space used well?
• Things to avoid: Are there any grammatical or spelling errors? Are there any differences in content between the version in the Wiki and the version submitted on paper?

INTRODUCTION (40 points)
• Does the INTRODUCTION explain why the authors selected the subject?
• Is a thorough rationale for the project provided?
• Is an adequate literature review conducted?

METHODS (40 points)
• Do the METHODS describe what is proposed?
• Are the METHODS specific and comprehensive?
• Are enough subprojects defined for the entire class?
• Is the work among subprojects reasonably divided?
• Things to avoid: Avoid qualifying language like "should" or "might": use confident terms like "will".

DISCUSSION (10)
• Does the DISCUSSION briefly summarize the value of completing the project?
• Does the DISCUSSION describe potential outcomes and implications for conducting the project?
Short Assignment #1

Write a description of what one of your parents – or another close relative of your parents' generation -- does for work. To help shape your paper, follow any of these guidelines:

- Give some real descriptive detail. Help your reader see the workplace, or this person as he or she is going to work and coming home again, or anything else that puts your reader visually into the story.
- How long has this person done this work? How did he or she get into it in the first place?
- What effect does this work, this career, this person’s routine and means of employment, have on you and the rest of your family?
- What does this person's job/career/profession do to influence your own possible career direction?

2-3 pages. Due in class Feb.1.

Short Assignment #2

1. The question: What does the word “equilibrium” mean?

2. Elaboration: "Equilibrium" is a technical term in economics. Also in chemistry and biology and perhaps some other disciplines. It’s also a more generic word, used loosely in a non-technical sense. It refers to some sort of balance, right? Okay, so what do we really mean when we say something is at, or in, equilibrium? Do we mean its two sides are balanced? Then what do we mean by “balanced”? Do we mean “equal”? How do we know when two sides of something are equal? And what if the thing we're talking about doesn't have two sides or parts? What if it has three? Four? Ten? None? You see how this question can quickly spiral out of control -- but don't feel as though you have to chase it to the ends of the earth and back again. Instead, imagine that you are talking or writing for a listener/reader who is, say, 15 or 16 years old and pretty bright, but who has said to you, “I've heard this term ‘equilibrium,' but I think I don’t really understand what it means. Help me understand it.” What do you say to this person?

3. Some suggestions for a strategy in writing this paper:
   - Do NOT bother looking up “equilibrium” in the dictionary, and do not try to start your explanation by telling your audience what the dictionary says. Your
audience has already looked up the word in a dictionary, and somehow the
dictionary definition seemed not really to convey the concept.

- If you really want to look back at some economics textbook to refresh your
memory about what you've learned about equilibrium in economics, that's okay,
but don't try to answer this question by spewing economics terminology.
- Instead, concentrate on finding some way to establish for your reader a concept of
something (or some things, or whatever) being in what we call equilibrium.
Develop the idea before you try to use the term.
- AVOID simply repeating the sort of things you might write on an Econ. 103 exam
on the subject. Remember, your reader is not a graduate student in economics, or
even an undergraduate majoring in economics. Your reader may be a professional
musician, a butterfly collector, a computer geek.... Use your imagination.
- On the other hand, it's fine to explain why "equilibrium" does become a significant
concept in economics. (But how much does your audience understand about
economics?)
- Specific illustrations or examples will probably help. So will concrete language.

Two pages maximum. Due in class February 6

Short assignment #3

Discuss the implications of the “flattening” of the world, as Thomas Friedman describes
it in the first 200-plus pages of The World Is Flat, for the person about whom you wrote
in SA #1. Is that person's job likely to change in some way(s) because of any of the
trends or global changes or new kinds of commercial activity that Friedman describes?
Indeed, has that person's job perhaps changed already as a result of any of these
phenomena? Does that person's job perhaps even owe its existence to the new kinds of
business activity Friedman describes? Where does your subject for SA #1 fit in this
ever-flatter world?

1-1.5 pages. Due Thursday, Feb. 8

Long Assignment #2 (preliminary stage)

Answer as many of the following questions as you can between now and April 5th.

- On page 151 of The Wal-Mart Effect, Charles Fishman introduces contrasting critical
views of Wal-Mart's low prices: It's the company's ability to operate super-
efficiently, it's the company's willingness to compromise on quality, or it's a mix of
the two. What other pairs of contrasting views of Wal-Mart can you find?
Identify one or more other ways in which observers differ in their view of the real
Wal-Mart effect.

- On page 179 Fishman quotes one of his sources (Leape) as saying that a key problem with Wal-Mart is that they don't internalize all their costs. Consider just the Wal-Mart store in Hadley; what specific costs might this store not internalize? (Hint: You'll find stories on this subject in the past year's archives of The Daily Hampshire Gazette; the UMass library has an on-line subscription.)

- On page 247, Fishman warns that we may be surrendering control of our communities, our economy, even our destiny to Wal-Mart, unless we do something or other. How scared are you at this warning?

- Look through your wardrobe. Do you have any clothes you don't need, don't like, don't wear, that are in at least halfway decent condition (i.e., not ripped or stained, and reasonably clean)? What are they? * If you are feeling adventurous and/or charitable, take these clothes to the Amherst Survival Center (in North Amherst near Pine Street/Route 63 intersection) or the Northampton Survival Center (on Prospect Street) or some other similar place and donate them.

- Using a Web browser or other means, find four different recent references to Wal-Mart, including if possible one from the Wall Street Journal. List them in correct bibliographical form. Summarize one of them in a paragraph.

After doing as many of these as possible, write a two- or three-page speech in which you explain to a hypothetical audience of bright 10th grade students at your old high school why anyone – Charles Fishman, small business owners, big-box retailers, environmentalists, total stoners – should be concerned about anything Wal-Mart is or does. Include for these 10th-graders at least some real economics, something you might have learned in Econ. 103 or some other course – and remember that when you talk to this audience about economics, you are doing something like explaining a chair to someone who has no concept of what "furniture" is.

The total length of this assignment may be 4-6 pages.

Long Assignment #2 (final stage)

The basic assignment:
Think of the most interesting thing you can say about Wal-Mart, and say it in 4-6 pages.

Elaboration:
There are many ways to write this assignment. Do not, however, write it by just playing back a variety of ideas from The Wal-Mart Effect or from class discussion. By all means use those ideas, but use them to support, illuminate, or serve as a starting point for your own discussion. Assignment 2.0 gave you some ideas of topics to discuss. Here are some other ideas that you may be able to react to, or comment on, or just think about, in your paper. There are many more.
On the Sam's American Choice Cola machine outside the Wal-Mart in Northampton, Mass., in large white lettering on the red background, appear these words: Sam Walton believed in the ability of American workers to produce the finest products in the world. Innovative products made to our own higher standards, that we're proud to call Sam's American Choice. We believe these products offer better value than the leading national brands. We think you'll agree, or we'll refund your money.

Responses to assignment 2.0 included such statements as these:
  o "Wal-Mart's allegiance is unquestionably to its customers."
  o "It is inevitable that a corporation will capitalize on the market and excel beyond any other."
  o "To its credit, Wal-Mart is using most of the money saved by paying their employees dirt to pass on to the consumer as savings."
  o "Wal-Mart is not concerned with the economy of the United States, only with keeping its prices as low as possible."
  o "We are not surrendering to Wal-Mart or to any other huge corporation, but to our own drive for consumption."

From the song "Where's Maria" by Greg Brown: “There’ll be one corporation/Selling one little box./It’ll do what you want and tell you what you want/And cost whatever you’ve got.

Format:
You may write this assignment as a straightforward essay. Or as a dialogue between two people who hold contrasting views. Or as a brief history of 21st-century retail business, written in the year 2020. Or as a long memo to your boss, who is figuring out a new retail business that will totally displace Wal-Mart and drive Sam Walton's baby into the ground. Or ... you can think of other ways.

Due at the start of class on April 19.
Assignment 1

Write a five page newspaper article (such as might appear in the New York Times or Boston Globe science section) describing an experiment that illustrates some phenomenon characteristic of quantum mechanics. The point is to show aspects of quantum mechanics that are absent in classical mechanical systems. I will give you some examples of such effects in class. Others are discussed in the texts. You have certainly seen such examples of these in your course Modern Physics I.

When discussing this phenomenon, try to go beyond the usual textbook description and find some aspect of the effect that is new to you and gives good insight into the nature of the concepts involved. In some cases, looking up the original journal article or finding a popular description, say, in Scientific American or Physics Today about the effect by one of the original discoverers will provide the desired insight. You should include as much theoretical background for the ideas of quantum mechanics as you are able, this early in the course, as well as experimental verification of the effect.

The audience is to be an intelligent college-educated reader, who is interested in science but has no formal physics education beyond, say, a Physics 100-level course (Conceptual Physics).

Newspaper articles are usually written in the “inverted pyramid form”: Catchy beginning to hook readers, general outline of the ideas, gradually more detail later on. Details are usually given later on so that an editor can cut parts off the end without completely ruining the logic of the article. You don’t really need to follow this format strictly, since no one is going to lop off your ending.

Assignment 2

The Quantum Challenge discusses some two-slit experiments, including some famous ones involving photons. (Chapter 3 of the John Gribbin book, Schrödinger’s Kittens also considers several interesting two-slit photon experiments.) Pick a modern two-slit (or some other closely related type) experiment, which has actually been done, from those experiments discussed in these books or elsewhere, and pretend you are thinking of doing this experiment yourself. In one fantasy, the experiment has not been done and you are, say, Alain Aspect.) The assignment then is to write a five-page proposal to the National Science Foundation, asking for funding you your experiment. In an alternative scenario, you are proposing to set the experiment up for an Advanced
Laboratory course or as an Honors Thesis in the Physics Department at UMass and the proposal is to be submitted to the Undergraduate Studies Committee for funding.

If you pick an experiment from one of the books mentioned, go beyond the use of just that reference. Look up the original articles and other commentaries on that experiment.

Proposals are a necessary part of academic and business life. There are often read and reviewed by individuals who have less than perfect knowledge of the subject area. Thus you should not assume that the reader has a high level of background in the subject. Keep it relatively simple (with a low math level, i.e., mostly verbal). On the other hand, if the reviewer believes you are not giving enough knowledgeable detail, he or she will think you probably don't really know what you want to do or how to do it and won't support funding. You have to strike the correct balance.

What are the necessary sections of a good proposal? We will discuss this in class.

Some other places to look for references:
American Journal of Physics
Physics Today
Science News
Scientific American
There are many others.

In connection with this assignment prepare a 20 minute oral presentation to the class, describing the experiment of your proposal.

Assignment 3

One of the basic non-classical concepts in quantum mechanics is superposition; the wave function can be a linear combination of several, even an infinite number of different states. This feature leads to the possibility of entanglement as well as one of the most interesting neo-classical ideas: non-locality. Write a five-page essay for Physics Today that explains some aspect of quantum non-locality (this could involve some aspect of EPR, for example) or quantum entanglement (which might involve EPR, or even quantum teleportation or encryption, for example). Your description should be designed to illustrate the meaning and consequences of these fundamental ideas. Experimental implications and tests should be included in your description. Pick one aspect of all the possible phenomena and concentrate on that rather than considering generalities, if possible. Be as specific as possible and avoid considering only vague abstractions.
This paper is conceptually the most difficult of the semester. By probing these ideas in detail you will be getting to the heart of some of the material we are attempting to understand this semester.

Articles in *Physics Today* are meant for professional physicists; however, they must be set at a level so that almost any physicist, whatever specialty, can get the general idea of the topic. Thus while all can be expected to understand quantum mechanics at some level, the fine details may need explanation.

There should be lots of references available. The review article by Balletine has many references. You can also look in *American Journal of Physics, Physics Today, Science News*, the magazine *Science*, or *Scientific American*, for example.

**Assignment 4**

Write a five-page essay, intended to be read by your fellow students, that treats some aspect of an important event or idea in quantum mechanics from a historical or biographical point of view. In other words, you are to seek the human factor of the advance, or the historical context in which the advance was made. You should spend about 2/5 of the paper on the history or biography and 3/5 on the explanation of the quantum physics involved. Such an essay is common in the physics literature, with many such articles occurring in *American Journal of Physics, Physics Today, or Scientific American*, for example. The books of Abraham Pais on Bohr and Einstein are good examples of longer versions of this genre.

In connection with this assignment you should prepare a 20 minute talk to be presented to the class. The topic of the talk can be the subject of the present assignment, or of the one of the previous assignments.

**Assignment 5**

The last assignment can be on the topic of your choice as long as that topic is related to the foundations-of-quantum-mechanics material treated in the course. The intended audience is also up to you. Required length, as always, is about five pages.

You might think of this paper as kind of a capstone of the course, that is, you might want to summarize rather philosophically what have you learned in the course. What are the implications of quantum mechanics? How does it affect your view of the world? What are the remaining mysteries you would like to probe?
A sequence of assignments from
WOST 391W, Writing for Women’s Studies Majors, Fall 2006
(with thanks to the instructor, Kirsten Isgro)

1. Writing (Autobiographic) Prose (10 points)

This essay is an opportunity for you to explore how you identify yourself as a feminist. The goal of this assignment is to produce concise, informative, and colorful first-person prose that explores how you came to feminism. What significant memories and/or experiences have shaped who you are today? This 5-6 page paper will focus on memorable details of your life experiences, allowing the reader to visualize and understand the ways that feminism shapes how you move through the world.

2. Summarizing Arguments (5 points)

Write a summary of one of Katha Pollitt’s Subject to Debate articles: “No Presents, Please” OR “Invisible Women.” Begin with a summary of each paragraph (paraphrasing), and then revise these summary sentences into a concise 250 word summary.

Preface your summary with a lead-in statement such as, “In her commentary, ‘No Presents, Please,’ Katha Pollitt offers a controversial proposal to abolish social security benefits for certain individuals. To summarize, Pollitt argues…”

Provide a summary only of what Pollitt argues. Note the assumptions she makes, but do not include your evaluation of them in your summary.

3. Evaluating Arguments (10 points)

In an essay of approximately 500 words, write an evaluation of the argument by Keely Savoie in "Unnatural Selection: Questioning Science's Gender Bias" in Bitch magazine, Spring 2004. Drawing from the material covered in Barnet and Bedau's readings ("Critical Thinking," "Critical Reading," and "Writing an Argument"), as well as the strategies employed in class, evaluate Savoie's thesis, purpose, methods, and persona. Since this is an evaluation, you will want to state your claims and your support for your position. This paper will be graded based on the following criterion: 1. Have you fairly stated the writer's thesis and summarized her supporting reasons? 2. Have you indicated where you will be taking your reader in your critique? 3. Have you commented not only on the logos (logic, reasoning) but also the ethos (character of the writer, as presented in the essay)? 4. If there is an appeal to the pathos (appeals to emotion), is it acceptable? 5. Is your analysis effectively organized? 6. Does your essay clearly indicate your agreement/disagreement with the writer? 7. Is your tone appropriate?
4. Letters to the Editor or Political Representative (15 points)

This writing exercise provides you with an opportunity to apply your skills in critical thinking, reading, and argument evaluation.

You are to write a formal letter to the Editor of a major newspaper (regional, national, or international), to your hometown politicians, or to the governor. Choose an issue, debate, or current topic about which you are familiar. Be prepared to undertake whatever research may be required in order to substantiate your argument. The length of your letter will be contingent on the issue you have chosen. However, you should strive for clarity and cogency in crafting it.

If you are having trouble determining a topic, you may wish to read selections from a periodical of a different political persuasion from your own (The Nation if you lean toward the right, or The National Review for students on the left).

This will be a formal, “high-stakes” writing assignment since you are encouraged to mail the letter.

5. Cultural Analysis Project (40 points)

Your final project will be broken into three writing assignments: an abstract, an annotated bibliography, and a final essay. The project involves the analysis of a popular culture text (e.g. literature, music, television show, sports event, film), of your own choosing, from a feminist point of view. A “text” can be defined as any medium of communication that you believe has contemporary cultural significance and can be examined in light of economic, political, and historical conditions.

You now have all the skills necessary to undertake scholarly research (choosing and narrowing your topic by using resources available through the library including databases, journal and book holdings), data collecting (reviewing source material with a view to its relevance to your project), critical reading and argument evaluation (to determine which sources will work to help substantiate your claims and the overall argument you will construct), and proper documentation. Designed to bring together your skills in research, summation, critical analysis, and interpretation, you will write a final cultural analysis of your own, focusing on the content, meanings, and significance of a cultural practice or artifact.

- **Conference Abstract** (250-500 words) (5 points)
  The abstract should a) formulate critical questions pertinent to the research project; b) outline the thesis and major ideas of your research paper; c) specify methodological and theoretical approaches that you are using in the paper; and
d) summarize relevant scholarship on which you are building your argument. For more information and examples of abstracts, look at:

- **Annotated Bibliography (10 points)**
  A. 1 page typed progress report which includes a:
     - one paragraph summary of the research project thus far
     - description of the data you are analyzing (e.g. a specific movie, television show, record label/industry, etc…)
     - one sentence thesis statement
  B. An annotated bibliography includes citations of primary and secondary academic and trade sources (approximately 10+ sources total; 5 for the first draft and 10+ for the second draft) that you will be using in your Cultural Analysis paper. Each citation is followed by brief (100-150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraphs, informing the reader of the thesis and content, limitations, methods, and reliability of the source. For each citation, students should also indicate how the source is useful and relevant to their own research project, including specific passages, quotes, and/or ideas.

- **Final Paper (10-12 pages) (25 points)**

  You are required to draw on and properly integrate a minimum of three (3) scholarly sources. These may be found in edited anthologies or book-length monographs, and in academic peer-reviewed journals. You may draw on newspaper and magazine sources as well (that is, in addition to the minimum required three sources). **Your essay will go through three rounds of review before it is submitted in final draft.**

  Use the introduction of your essay to engage your reader’s interest in a problem or question that you would like to address in your essay. Show your reader what makes the question both significant and problematic. The body of your essay should be your own response to this question made as persuasive as possible through appropriate analysis and argumentation, including effective use of evidence. Your paper should demonstrate the context in which the popular culture form exists, with a particular focus on an intersectional feminist analysis.

  The final draft of your essay (10-12 pages) is to be typed, double-spaced, in 12 point font, with one inch margins, and page numbers. Papers are to be stapled. Use APA or MLA style documentation for this assignment.

6. **Journal Entries**
Five times over the course of the semester, you will be expected to submit an online journal entry (minimum 250 words each) via WebCT by 9 a.m. on dates marked on your syllabus. These journal entries provide you with a chance to get your ideas on paper and force you to actively engage with the reading material as an academic/feminist and as a reader. Think of these journal entries as gentle reminders to keep up with class readings as well as a space to explore how feminism and writing intersect. It also is a time for you to share with your classmates your personal reactions in written form. Check your syllabus for dates that you may choose to submit a Friday journal entry; there is a total of eight possible dates, so choose your entries wisely.
A sequence of assignments from
English 491R, *Writing and the Teaching of Writing*, Fall 2004
(with thanks to the instructor, Anne Herrington)

1. Personal/Cultural Literacy Collage

The purpose of this first writing is for you to reflect on your literacy practices: yourself as a writer and reader— for example, experiences, likes, strengths—and the literacy practices of formative groups and institutions (e.g., family, school, church). I hope that the process of composing this collection will further your own self-awareness. The final collages as a group should give readers a further understanding of literacy values and practices, as they reflect our uniqueness, our interactions with specific people, our social/cultural backgrounds.

A Collage? Think of it as a multi-genre piece. Like an essay, it will have some overall unity of intention: the overall picture you want to convey about yourself as a literate individual and as also shaped by certain social/cultural contexts. Unlike an essay, you will select bits from various genres and order them as you wish to create an overall effect that has some underlying unity, but also some variation and texture.

I'm asking you to use this form to encourage you to view your literacy from multiple perspectives, instead of a single one. It's also both a creative and disciplined form that invites you to experiment and think about how you want to shape a text to create some overall effect.

In composing this collage, I'd like you to begin by drafting lots of exploratory bits that together will constitute your "first draft" material. Think of this exploratory writing as brain-storming writing where you're aiming to try out lots of ways of thinking about your literacy. The more you generate, the more ideas you'll have and the more material you'll have to work with. Then, once you have a good bit of exploratory writing, select from that some bits that you think you'd like to use in the collage: revise those and start playing with how to order them. At this point you may decide to go back to some other bits, omit a few, generate a few others. I'll also structure time in class for you to consult with one another.

I realize that a comprehensive literacy profile for any one of us could fill a book, so you will need to be selective. What you want to foreground is your choice. My only stipulations are that 1) it should fulfill the overall purpose of the assignment; 2) it should not be just a single, long memory, nor a single genre; 3) one of the segments should provide an ethnographic perspective; and 4) it should be consciously crafted and well edited.

Process and Schedule:
September 16: Exploratory Draft due. In addition to the literacy memories you’ve already drafted, generate at least 3 more pages. Also read the Villanueva excerpt (as explained below).

September 21: Mid-Process Draft due for peer review. For this draft, make selections from your exploratory draft material, add to them as you feel you need to, order your selections, and begin to craft them.

September 23: Final Draft due to submit to me. I’ll compile these in a class publication that I’ll distribute on Sept. 28 and we’ll discuss on Sept. 30.

You’ve already gotten a start on the exploratory draft with the writing on becoming literate. We’ll do some more today using some, but not all of these prompts: (Feel free to try out the others on your own as you work on the exploratory draft.)

1. Instant definitions of literacy.
2. Memories/scenes of writing and reading experiences: begin by listing, then selecting from the list and moving in to compose a close-up scene of the memory. Go back to another item on the list and do the same.
3. Self-portrait: Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a particular place writing, a place where you often do/have done your writing or where you particularly like to write. Imagine that place and what’s around you. Describe your surroundings. Now, come in for a close-up of yourself.
4. Tell a couple truths and a couple of lies about yourself as a writer, as a reader, as a language user.
5. Rules you learned in school. Compose a list of them.
6. Dialogue: Think of someone who has a different opinion than you about you as a writer, reader, or "literate" person. Have a conversation with that person. It might begin with you saying, “I know you think that…”
7. Transform one of your literacy memories from a first person account into a third person ethnographic account in the manner of Fishman.

Villanueva:
Read the Villanueva excerpt from Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color, a personal memoir of his educational experiences, focusing a good deal on his literacy experiences. I’m assuming that for some, it will prompt other literacy memories that you might want to include in your exploratory writing. If so, do that writing. Otherwise, just do some informal writing to think about implications of this passage for teaching; also about the differences/similarities between this first person memoir recollection and Fishman’s ethnographic perspective.

PRELIMINARY: Due for September 14, the day I introduced the literacy collage:
Fishman is a cultural anthropologist. As an anthropologist, she is interested in social/cultural values, beliefs, and practices. After reading Fishman, do some informal writing addressing the following. This writing will become part of the exploratory writing for the Personal/Cultural Literacy Collage.

1. How does Fishman define literacy? Look back at your own initial definition: does hers reinforce or change or even challenge your own?

2. Recall and write some about your own process of becoming literate. To prompt your memory, make a list of activities and scenes that stand out to you. Begin with your earliest memories. Consider home, school, and any other institution that you believe contributed to your particular literacy development. Then, select ones that are particularly salient, for whatever reason, and write some more about each.

POST: Following the submission of the individual final drafts:

**Assignment for the Collage Publication**
Read and enjoy.
Write a written response as follows:
What stands out to you in these collages? What do you like and/or find striking?
All but one of you attended U.S. public schools. From these collages, what do you infer are dominant literacy values and practices in these schools?

**In-Class Discussion of the Collage Publication**
We began with everyone reading a short segment from their collages, reading around in turn, just to hear their voices, enjoy, and make the collages more present for the discussion.

Then we discussed what we liked and found striking.
Then dominant literacy values and practices, as inferred from the collages.

Then in groups of four, I asked them to identify implications for teaching. Those were reported out and I then typed them out and distributed them the next class.

**2. Open Choice Writing Collection**

**Objectives:**
- to write on topics/ideas/itches of interest to you and in genres of your choice
- to experiment with more than one genre
- to generate a good bit and then craft a selection from what you generate
- to evaluate your own work
Here are the details. I present them to serve as guides as you work on the project and as basic criteria for evaluation. I've developed them to try to encourage you to experiment and also write on things that interest and matter to you and in ways that you want.

Process: expectations and criteria for evaluation (50%)
From start to finish: experiment, generate text, reflect, and revise, and reflect some more on your process throughout. DO NOT USE ANYTHING YOU’VE WRITTEN FOR ANOTHER PURPOSE.

Write a minimum of 3 rough draft pages by Oct. 7. Compose an additional 2 to 3 draft pages for Oct. 8, for a total of 5 to 6 rough draft pages. They should include at least three different genres. The more you generate and experiment with initially, the more you’ll have to select from to revise and craft.

Select from the rough draft pages and revise two to three selections to mid-process point. If it works better for you, you might revise at least one to mid-process point for peer feedback in class on Oct. 14 and then do the other revising for feedback soon after on your own time.

Actually revise, that is, make some changes—particularly in going from rough to mid-process pages, even if it means you experiment with a new tack that you ultimately do not follow. You can always go back to the previous draft if you don't like the effect of the new version. Use the early revisions as a chance to re-see and experiment.

Keep a process log throughout. In it, record when you work on something for this assignment, what you were doing, and how you assess it/feel about it/what choices and decisions you made. Use the log both to trace your process and talk with yourself throughout it. Once you’ve finished your collection for Oct. 21, complete a thoughtful process letter in which you a) highlight key points and decisions as you worked from beginning to end; b) comment on anything that's salient about you as a writer, and c) comment on what you were trying to accomplish with each selection that you chose to revise to a final draft.

Final "Collection": expectations and criteria for evaluation (50%)
Include at least two selections in at least two genres, using that term loosely: at least one is to be non-fiction of some sort. By saying "at least," I am not implying that more than two is better, just that more than one is expected. I am also not assuming that these selections will be related in any way. That is, this is not expected to be a collage of related selections that constitute a whole, just two or three pieces of writing.

Be the equivalent of 3 to a maximum of 4 single spaced pages long.
Be free of grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors.
Be well written according to criteria appropriate to the genre.

3. Inquiry Project:
Exploring a question or issue related to writing, teaching writing, or literacy

For this project, I ask you to explore a question or issue of interest to you and compose a text that has some purpose for teachers or prospective teachers who have as much knowledge as you and your colleagues in this class. By explore, I mean find out more about something that you genuinely want to know more about and to develop your thinking about this question: that is, as you do the research and think about it, to make your own sense of it. Then, compose a text that is shaped by your thinking and achieves a purpose you want to accomplish. For example, that purpose might be to help readers better understand a given concept by sorting out different ways of conceptualizing it or to help readers better understand different approaches to teaching something--in either case, you’d focus on differences that have some significance. You might want to examine an issue, again to understand it better and/or to persuade us of the nature of an issue. You might want to develop an argument for a certain position or pedagogical approach. We’ll talk about more specific possibilities as you proceed. Right now, your focus should be on deciding what you want to spend some time investigating and thinking about.

More specific purposes for doing the project:
• To investigate some question or topic of genuine interest to you and relevant to this seminar;
• To develop your thinking and knowledge by drawing on multiple sources of information;
• To become more familiar with professional scholarship on writing pedagogy, theory, and research;
• To evaluate sources, select from them, and synthesize them in order to develop a text that is controlled by your line of thinking and purposes, and that accomplishes a purpose for readers as well.

Some More Specific Guidelines (If you wish to propose some change given the nature of your project, see me. I’m open to adjustments. Honest.)

Since the aim is for you to extend your knowledge, I want you to do some research and use it. Your final text should use at least 7 to 8 good sources, at least 5 of these should be other than course readings and should be article or book-length works. It’s fine to draw on other sources as well, e.g., web-based sources, surveys, and, with permission from those interviewed, interviews. (If you wish to interview, see me about obtaining informed consent.) In addition to these sources, it’s also fine to include your own experience and/or observations.
The final text should also use MLA conventions for in-text citations and the Works Cited page.

Scope of the final text? To give you a general idea, here’s a suggested length: 12 to 15 double-spaced pages. If you do the project collaboratively, I assume your final text would be on the longer side of that range.

What should the final text look like? What kind of genre? It could be an essay written for a professional journal such as *English Journal*, guided by a purpose such as I’ve suggested above. Within this broad frame, there is still room for choice. It could also be a stand-alone resource guide for teachers with an overview essay on a given topic and an annotated bibliography of key sources that readers might want to consult. It may be done collaboratively.

How to come up with a topic or question to focus on? You might start with something related to yourself as a writer. You might also start with a question about literacy. Or a question about a particular teaching approach or issue for teaching. Or a concept of writing. Your Personal Literacy Collage, Open Choice Collection, process letters, and reading log might prompt ideas. You might also look ahead to other course readings for ideas.

Try to come up with more than one possibility so you have some options if one turns out to be a dead-end or not so feasible. You might want to begin with something you already have a little knowledge about but about which you want to extend your understanding or pursue a related question. Don’t select something about which you’re already set in your views and don’t really feel you need or want to find out more.

My role throughout this project is to organize the project to keep you working on it, assessing where you are, and moving forward; introduce possible sources; help you navigate the library; and, in general, assist each of you in response to your questions or requests of me.

**Key Due Dates:**
Tuesday, Oct. 26: “I” Search.
Tuesday, Nov. 2: Proposal for Inquiry Project
Tuesday, Nov. 16: Progress Report
Tuesday, Dec. 7: Full Draft due, for in-class peer review.
Tuesday, Nov. 30, Thursday, Dec. 2, and Thursday, Dec. 9: In-class presentations on something related to your research.
Wednesday, Dec. 15: Final Draft with all previous work due to me by 3:00 p.m.

**Details Regarding the Process:**
*"I" Search: approx. 1 to 2 pages, typed or neatly hand-written. What’s one possible question or issue you’re thinking of pursuing, what do you already know about it, and what do you still want to know? If you’re not sure what you want to pursue, then try doing this for two possible questions or issues as a way to try out possibilities. I encourage you to write speculatively: e.g., I might want to focus on . . . I’m interested in it because. . . Some things I know. . . . I wonder about . . . ). In short, informal, but still with thought and care put into it.

*Proposal: approx. 2 pages. Typed. Now, focus in on a specific project. The purpose of the proposal is two-fold: to move forward with your thinking and planning and get formative feedback from others, including myself. Here’s what I’d like you to include:

1) What's the topic or general area that you're interested in researching? Identify at least one or two possible focusing questions or angles.
2) Why are you interested in it? In other words, what’s the source of your interest?
3) Briefly, what do you already know or have hunches about?
4) What sources do you already know about? Where might you look or go to research the topic?
5) Questions of me and others? (You might have already alluded to these in the previous sections.

Address these questions in whatever order and combination works best for you. You need not note them by number unless you wish to do so. Again, I encourage you to write speculatively (e.g., I think I want to... One possible source might be ... but I'm not sure about ... I've been wondering why ... or how...) and in ways that invite feedback (e.g., Do you think x is too broad a topic? I was thinking I might... but I wonder if... ). In encouraging you to write speculatively, I am not implying that this proposal can be done hastily: put serious thought into it and use it to begin to shape and plan your project. Some initial brain-storming writing may help.

Progress Report: Purpose: to take stock of where you are and what you still need to accomplish and figure out. As with the Proposal, this report is also to serve as a basis for consulting with others, classmates and me both. Here’s what I’d like you to address in this report:

1) What's your guiding question/focus now? (By now, it should be focused.)
2) What's the status of your research: a) What are you finding that seems promising? b) Any difficulties? Problems? Questions? c)What remains to be done?
3) Questions for advice or assistance.
4) List three key sources with a brief annotation for each. List each as you would in a "Works Cited” list, following MLA conventions. In the annotation, state briefly what the source offers and evaluate its quality and usefulness for your study. (Two or three sentences is fine unless it’s helpful for you to write out a fuller comment positioning and evaluating the source.)
**In-class Presentations:** Even if you're not working collaboratively on the inquiry project, I want you to collaborate on these presentations. (For example, folks whose projects have some commonalities may join together for the presentation.) Each group will have up to 10 minutes multiplied by the number of group members for presentation and discussion. I want you as a group to plan how to use that time so that it is time well spent for all of us: I do not expect each of you to summarize your full study. Indeed, as a group, you may even decide to have us do some activity that relates to something in your research.

On the day of your presentation, **each** of you is to have copies for all of us of a one-page hand-out for your study, written for us as a resource: focus/guiding questions; most interesting/important findings/conclusions; key sources. (If you get it to me by 10:00 a.m. that day, I'll make the copies.)

**Full Draft:** This draft should be a complete, readable text that you've already worked on to the best of your ability. That is, it won't be your first thoughts. Still, I assume that it will be a draft: it's okay not to be completely satisfied; okay to have questions about it; okay not to have it fully edited yet. We'll talk about how to arrange peer feedback so it can be most effective for you. I'll also provide feedback. If you finish it sooner and want feedback from me sooner, fine. I'm happy to do so. Just let me know.

How will I evaluate? 60% for the final manuscript; 40% for all preliminary work and presentation. I'll average the two together for the grade.
A sequence of assignments from
Envd 394A, Writing for Environmental Design, Spring 2007
(with thanks to the instructor, Annaliese Bischoff)

Assignment # 1: Environmental Autobiography

A. Introduction

In the design fields, there are many occasions where creative writing is appropriate in design presentation. Those with this expertise can use it to broaden the types of clients and projects they attract.

The first type of writing you are asked to complete centers on personal expression. Each of us has a unique history of spaces where we have spent time. This history not only offers a potential source of special meaning to us, but helps shape our particular attitudes and values toward the environment. As designers, it is very important to understand our particular attitudes and values because we often draw upon our personal experience in design. In this exercise you are asked to bring your history of environmental spaces into consciousness for review and analysis. Through this process, you should be able to tap into a valuable source of reference (your own experiences) with a new awareness. Further, in this creative writing exercise, the development of your “voice” will foster and enhance personal expression.

B. Sample Writing Styles

Before beginning your environmental autobiography, find a descriptive passage of writing which vividly portrays a landscape in which the author (or character) lives or has lived. You are free to choose from any author whose writing style appeals to you. Authors whose work you may want to consider include Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Henry David Thorough, Willa Cather, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Joseph Conrad. Turn in the passage with your assignment. A citation must be provided (author, title, etc).

C. Suggestions for How to Start Your Own Autobiography

Isolate yourself with a media which is comfortable to you (computer, paper, pen, pencil) as you recall your first memorable place. Visualize the qualities of this space which stand out and seem important. Record the ideas which come to you in a writing style which is comfortable to you. Continue this process for all of the places which you consider to be significant in your life (for example, important residences in which you lived or visited). Obviously, time will be a limiting factor with this assignment. Therefore you may want to select 3-5 places.
This process of recall and analysis will help you to determine what to include in your autobiography. What you choose to communicate should be comprehensible to others. You may want to include the following kinds of information:

- **Descriptive**
  - Type of place, location, size, age, length of stay;
  - Memorable physical qualities: light, dark, cold, damp, hot, etc.
- **Associative** (i.e., did you feel fear, joy, security, loneliness, etc. in this place?)
- **Functional/Uses** (i.e., socializing, personalizing, privatizing)

Finally, what insights can you draw from this? (For example: are there special memories you associate with similar places because of your earlier experiences?)

D. Requirements

A thoughtful written presentation of your environmental history and your analysis of it is required. The format for presentation, although up to you, should be appropriate for review by your classmates. While organizing your thoughts and ideas, an outline will help you determine the structure of your essay. Many writers find that an introduction is written best after everything else has been written. A simplistic, yet often effective, guide to structure is:

- **tell us what you are going to tell us**;
- **tell us**; and then
- **tell us what you told us**.

Ask yourself whether your essay has unity, coherence and emphasis.

The first draft of your essay (and your chosen descriptive passage, as described above) is due in 1 week. The essay should be two pages (typed and double-spaced). Your peers, teaching assistant and instructor will participate in reviewing your work.

E. Objectives

- To increase your awareness of the qualities of environments which have been significant to you and which may provide insights toward your career preference.
- To give you experience and encouragement in the development of a personal style of expression.
- To give you feedback on what aspects of your writing communicate effectively and how you might try to improve your writing effectiveness.

Assignment # 2: Cover Letter and Resume
First determine and find a real purpose for writing a cover letter to accompany your resume. Is it for employment or advanced study? Find the name of a specific person to whom you will address your letter. Find the correct address. Select a purpose that is real; it is helpful to have a context that you can relate to at this point in your career. Make sure that this purpose is feasible. You want to make sure you select something real and something you expect to do within one year’s time. If you are focusing on future study, consider writing to the program director. You may want to use this type of letter not only to introduce yourself, but also to consider related employment. For example, if you are writing to a graduate director of a master's program, you might also be applying for a research or teaching assistantship in your area of interest. If your purpose is for employment, make sure you have a realistic view of the position. Seek out employment opportunities such as internships that interest you. Search the internet and bulletin boards in Hills for specific opportunities that motivate you. Develop your resume to accompany this cover letter.

A good cover letter adds value to your resume. Five potential ways your letter can accomplish this are summarized below:

1. Highlight specific items of particular importance to your prospective employer.
2. Reframe items so that they will connect to the prospective employer’s interests.
3. Elaborate further upon material which is relevant to the specific situation of key interest to you.
4. Motivation: clearly explain why you want the particular job.
5. Address any credibility gaps. If you have any gaps this is a perfect place to address them.

Bring a rough, but typed, complete draft of the assignment to your discussion section next week.

What is a resume?

A resume is a self-promotional document that presents you in the best possible light, for the purpose of getting invited to a job interview. It's not an official personnel document. It's not a job application. It's not an obituary. And it's not a confessional.

Top Ten Technical Resume Writing Tips

. List your technical knowledge first, in an organized way. Your technical strengths must stand out clearly at the beginning of your resume. Ultimately, your resume is going to be read by a thoughtful human being, but before it gets to that point it often has to be categorized by an administrative clerk, and make its way past
various sorts of key word searches. Therefore, you should list as many directly relevant buzz words as you can which reflect your knowledge and experience. List all operating systems and UNIX flavors you know. List all programming languages and platforms with which you're experienced. List all software you are skilled with. Make it obvious at a glance where your strengths lie - whether the glance is from a hiring manager, a clerk, or a machine.

- List your qualifications in order of relevance, from most to least. Only list your degree and educational qualifications first if they are truly relevant to the job for which you are applying. If you've already done what you want to do in a new job, by all means, list it first, even if it wasn't your most recent job. Abandon any strict adherence to a chronological ordering of your experience.

- Quantify your experience wherever possible. Cite numerical figures, such as monetary budgets/funds saved, time periods/efficiency improved, lines of code written/debugged, numbers of machines administered/fixed, etc. which demonstrate progress or accomplishments due directly to your work.

- Begin sentences or clauses with action verbs. Portray yourself as someone who is active, uses their brain, and gets things done. Stick with the past tense, even for descriptions of currently held positions, to avoid confusion.

- Don't sell yourself short. This is by far the biggest mistake of all resumes, technical and otherwise. Your experiences are worthy for review by hiring managers. Treat your resume as an advertisement for you. Be sure to thoroughly "sell" yourself by highlighting all of your strengths. If you've got a valuable asset which doesn't seem to fit into any existing components of your resume, list it anyway as its own resume segment.

- Be concise. As a rule of thumb, resumes reflecting five years or less experience should fit on one page. More extensive experience can justify usage of a second page. Consider three pages (about 15 years or more experience) an absolute limit. Avoid lengthy descriptions of whole projects of which you were only a part. Consolidate action verbs where one task or responsibility encompasses other tasks and duties. Minimize usage of articles (the, an, a) and never use "I" or other pronouns to identify yourself.

- Omit needless items. Leave all these things off your resume: social security number, marital status, health, citizenship, age, irrelevant awards, irrelevant associations and memberships, irrelevant publications, irrelevant recreational activities, a second mailing address ("permanent address" is confusing and never used), references, reference of references ("available upon request"), travel history, previous pay rates, previous supervisor names, and components of your name which you really never use (i.e. middle names).

- Have a trusted friend review your resume. Be sure to pick someone who is attentive to details, can effectively critique your writing, and will give an honest and objective opinion. Seriously consider their advice. Get a third and fourth opinion.

- Proofread, proofread, proofread. Be sure to catch all spelling errors, grammatical weaknesses, unusual punctuation, and inconsistent capitalizations. Proofread it
numerous times over at least two days to allow a fresh eye to catch any hidden
mistakes.

- Laser print it on plain, white paper, if you are not going to consider specialty papers. Handwriting, typing, dot matrix printing, and even ink jet printing look pretty cheesy. Stick with laser prints. Don't waste your money on special bond paper, matching envelopes, or any color deviances away from plain white if your resume will be photocopied, faxed, and scanned numerous times.....defeating any special paper efforts, assuming your original resume doesn't first end up in the circular file.

from: http://www.taos.com/resumetips.html

Assignment #3: Environmental Biography

Introduction. In this next assignment you are asked to develop a documented essay. You will develop, sketch, and suggest environmental biographical influences upon an American literary figure whose life has been informed, inspired, or shaped by the New England landscape. Suggested figures include William Cullen Byrant, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, Nathaniel Hawthorn, Herman Melville, Adrienne Rich, or Edith Wharton. If you have other people you would prefer to research, please discuss your ideas first with the instructor. It is very important that you have some degree of interest and curiosity in learning more about the individual's life and work.

For the first part of this assignment select one figure mentioned. On February 27th the Tuesday discussion group will meet at the library during class time from 1:00 until 3:30 in the Calipari Room. Both Thursday discussion sections will meet in the library on March 1st during the 1:00 to 2:15 class time with extended and optional work time until 3:15. This will be the only meeting of the week. At the library you will have help finding an adequate, but not overwhelming amount of material on the life and works of this person.

Objectives: 1) To give you experience in researching and documenting a particular subject. 2) To expose you to the many resources in the UMass library for this and for future work. 3) To give you feedback on the efficacy of your writing style and how to improve it.

Requirements. For First Review: Develop a research journal of all your research efforts. In this cite at least three quotes from the author to illustrate your ideas. Note at least two secondary sources in citations as well. Bring your journal (in the form of rough notes) of your preliminary investigation to the next discussion section class.. Keep careful track of all your references for citation. First reviews are due during your discussion section on either March 6th or March 8th.
For Final Draft: An essay 2-3 pages in length (typed and double-spaced) with a list of references (your documented sources) at the end. Your final drafts are due during your discussion section on either March 13th or 15th.

Suggestions for the Research Journal/First Review and Final Draft. Reflect upon the information you have gathered. Write a rough not only historical, but also interpretive account of this person's life. Consider the following: Who was/is this person? What were/are the major personality traits? What did/does this person enjoy, loathe, dream, and accomplish? What influences have New England landscapes had upon this person and his/her work? At different developmental stages what different influences and interests can be documented? What are the most important environmental memories of this figure? Do these relate to specific literary works, and if so, in what ways? Can you discuss specific examples?

Be sure to develop two elements together in your sketch: First, include a description of the person, the work, and the landscapes of note; second, develop a review using some degree of conclusion, assessment, critique or conjecture about any important connections. Reflect upon your own environmental autobiography as a possible model for your inquiry. If you have any time for a brief field trip, consider visiting any actual landscapes which these figures found important. You may want to read a selected piece of writing before a site visit. Your essay may be shaped and structured by these two types of experiences. Don’t neglect the development of your title.

Assignment # 4: Proposal Writing

The ability to write a successful proposal is one writing skill that will distinguish you from your competition in the job market. The ability to write effective grants for either yourself or for a firm is a skill which can open doors of your choice. Take this assignment very seriously. Find an idea that you really would like to develop, if only you had some funding. Select an idea that you can not only concretely envision, but also something that you are qualified to undertake right now. Do some research on your own for the background of this project. Investigate the kinds of funding sources that are available to you. Develop your idea more fully. Sketch out as much detail as possible that would constitute a full proposal. Then write a draft of a proposal summary. This is the document that is required and due for this assignment. One of the most crucial parts of any proposal development is the summary. It is here that you summarize your entire proposal “in a nutshell.” The summary is also known as an abstract. In this assignment you will learn what the proposal summary is, how to write one, and how important it is.

What is it? A paragraph (or a series of short paragraphs) that presents a clear
Concise summary of your entire proposal. It should stand alone as a brief description of your proposed program.

- What does it look like? It is relatively short; about a page or two in length. What should you put in it? Each paragraph should parallel the sections of your proposal narrative (i.e., a paragraph for introduction, problem statement, objectives, methodology, evaluation, and anticipated outcomes).
- In the case of a project proposal submitted to a foundation, also include the total cost of the project, the length of time it will take, and the amount requested.
- Where does it go? It is inserted at the beginning of your proposal, but you don’t write it until your proposal is complete. It’s the last thing you write.
- Is it important? It is VERY important. Oftentimes, the summary is read and determines whether the proposal is considered further.

The Summary is a one or two page description of your entire proposal. Although placed at the beginning, write it after completing your proposal. Its importance cannot be overestimated, because grant reviewers will sometimes make their first cut for prospective awards after reading just the summary alone! So, in the grant, learn to summarize completely and succinctly!

Proposal Outline.

The following is a sample outline for a project proposal. Note that all questions for a section may not apply to your proposal, but can be used as a general guide.

- Introduction and Problem Statement (1 or 2 paragraphs)
  - Motivation Sentence
  - Summarize the problem (1 or 2 sentences)
  - Summarize the solution (1 or 2 sentences)
  - Describe why you are the best person to undertake this proposal
- Motivation, Need, and Justification (1 to 3 paragraphs)
  - What is the history of the problem?
  - Why is this problem interesting?
  - When and why does the problem occur?
  - Is the problem already solved? What is done now?
  - Are there any similar systems or solutions to the one you propose? If so, reference and very briefly explain them.
  - Are there are possible improvements to current solutions?
  - What makes your project unique?
- Project Objectives (1 paragraph)
  - What in general will this project achieve?
- Project Deliverables
  - Deliverables (3-5 paragraphs)
    - What will the project produce? (program, report, exhibit, design
implementation, etc.)

Methods: Describe the features of each of the project's products and the methods or approach you will take.

Evaluation: How will you measure/evaluate the effectiveness of your work?

Outcomes: Emphasize what your project contributes or achieves!

Timeline (1 paragraph - point-form is suitable)

Provide an estimated timeline of project deliverables and important dates.

Conclusion (1 paragraph)

Summarize the project including the problem, motivation, and proposed solution, and re-state important planned contributions.


General Proposal Writing Websites:
http://members.dca.net/areid/proposal.htm
http://www.cpcwnc.org/Toolbox/writinggrants.html
http://www.fdncenter.org/learn/shortcourse/prop1.html
http://www.cs.uiowa.edu/~rlawrenc/teaching/writingProposal.html

Assignment # 5: Abstract Writing

Writing an abstract is another type of writing environmental designers and landscape architects find useful. Whether the abstract is for a conference proposal or a paper to be published, knowing how to write an effective abstract can be valuable. For this assignment, follow the guidelines for the Undergraduate Research Conference, the Massachusetts Statewide 12th Annual Conference on Research, Scholarly, Creative and Public Service Activities. Any project of depth, including independent studies, internship experiences, or the outcomes of a studio, could be suitable for presentation. For more background, information, and application, visit the website at: http://www.comcol.umass.edu/conference

You are encouraged to submit your abstract (250 words) for presentation at this conference to be held at the Campus Center at the University of Massachusetts Boston on April 27, 2006. Note that deadline for submitting abstracts is March 2, 2006. We are fitting this assignment in our course spring schedule so that you could meet this deadline easily. Please do consult and use the online website and handout for more specifics.
With this assignment your style should be objective and professional. The appropriate voice to use is 3rd person singular, rather than 1st person singular. The abstract is due in this class on February 23rd with a revision due March 2nd. If you do submit your abstract to the conference and it is accepted, this success will add impressively to your resume.

**Assignment # 6: The Journeybook**

In this next assignment you will document your experiences over spring break and interpret these in the form of a visual book. The shape of the visual book will depend upon your interpretation of your experiences. You can creatively think of a form that you feel appropriately conveys the essence of your experience over this time frame. Whether you spend time working, resting, recreating or traveling, you can imagine turning your experience into a shared visual and verbal package. A visual book can take any form that recreates a sense of your serial or sequential experiences. Just as a traditional book has pages to turn, the components of a visual book can operate metaphorically just as the pages do. A visual book may have drawers that open instead of paper pages that turn. A visual book may take the form of a traditional book where images and words combine to convey information. Use your imagination in thinking about your experience before deciding what form seems most appropriate to you. Examples in lecture will illustrate several ideas.

Over the course of our break document your experiences over a minimum of five days. This part of the exercise is like a conventional journal. Then translate the experiences into a form of a visual book. Share a draft of this in class the week after spring break. During that week the class will move to a new assignment on proposal writing. The following week all final projects are due. You will present your concept briefly.

The objectives of this exercise are to stimulate creative thinking, to explore inter-\-connective relationships between verbal and visual material, and to foster the development of creative presentation styles. The project will be graded on the basis of creative concepts, logical organization, and presentation crafting.

**Assignment # 7: Writing a Press Release**

A press release is a statement about events or ideas of interest that the writer wants to broadcast to a large group of readers via local or national mass media. News releases may be produced by non-profit groups to announce fund-raising events, for example, or they may be produced by individuals or departments within an organization. Editors of newspapers and journals use new releases as they decide what stories or events they will report. So do television and radio directors. Editors receive competition
for time and space, so they are apt to print better written submittals. These are less work on their part.

Include your name, address, phone, fax, and email on your press release. Also be sure to include the name and phone number of any person to be contacted in case of questions about the content.

A news release may:
. Announce changes
. Announce opportunities
. Announce new developments
. Explain the other side of negative events
. Inform the general public

Two Examples of Press Releases

NOFA: FOR PRESS RELEASE

On February 3rd at the 2001 Annual Meeting for the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) held at the Quabbin Regional High School, Patty Gambarini and Annaliese Bischoff, from the Department of Landscape Architecture & Regional Planning at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, organized a session “Web Sites: How Farmers are Using Them” and “Getting Started with Your Own Site.” Presenters included Bill Coli, who spoke about his experiences developing a web site for the Blue Heron Farm in Charlemont (www.blueheronfarm.com), and Annaliese Bischoff who relayed the story of the Tregellys Fiber Farm in Hawley (www.tregellysfiber.com). Denise LeDuc from Uplinc, a professional computer solutions business, discussed the process of designing a web site. She also talked about marketing her own blackberry products on her own bed and breakfast business web site. Interested farmers had the opportunity to sign up for web site planning and design assistance later this spring with “Savuka,” an afterschool program with the 21st Century Community Learning Center at the Amherst Regional Middle School, under the direction of Nancy Abdalla with teacher Paul Plummer. The session at NOFA was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, supporting a research assistantship for Patty Gambarini, a second year graduate student in Landscape Architecture. Any farmer interested in learning more about the opportunities with this grant for assistance with web site planning can call Annaliese Bischoff at 413-545-6623.

BHMA: FOR PRESS RELEASE

“Music is in the air above, so joy cannot be far.” So sang Greg Williams, Academic Dean of the Berkshire Hills Music Academy (BHMA) in the rafters of the old barn on a tour of the South Hadley former Skinner Estate, which will open this fall as a residential school
for young adults with Williams Syndrome. Helping with the master planning of the 40 acre grounds is a second year graduate studio from the Landscape Architecture & Regional Planning Department at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst under the direction of Associate Professor Annaliese Bischoff. Dave Collette, Director of Operations for BHMA, led the tour for the studio class along with Sharon Libera, Ph.D., member of the BHMA Board of Directors and parent of a Williams Syndrome son. According to Dr. James E. Hoffman at the University of Delaware, “Williams syndrome is a rare, genetically-based disorder resulting in mental retardation and an unusual pattern of strengths and weaknesses.” People with Williams Syndrome have spatial deficits and motor skill impairments, but are highly social, amiable, and outgoing, usually with a great love of music. Some have an unusual gift and talent with music. The challenge for the landscape architecture graduate students is to understand the needs of this special population and to recommend design ideas for the development of social and recreational outdoor spaces at the academy. This will be the first program of its kind in the world, as a nine month two year residential program, centered on a music curriculum. Up to now there have been music camps, such as in France and the Berkshires, typically one week long for this population.

Helping with this project as a guest critic and lecturer is noted designer Julie Moir Messervy, featured with Yo-Yo Ma in the PBS series “Inspired by Bach” while designing the Music Garden, constructed in Toronto. Richard Van Emmerik, from the Exercise Science Department at the University of Massachusetts, will advise the graduate students on aspects of Williams Syndrome relating to motor skills and spatial perception. The eight graduate students will complete a site analysis of the Skinner property, develop concepts for a master plan and build models illustrating selected details of their individual designs. “It is a very inspiring project to design a special place for people with William Syndrome; there is something about working with this population which is contagiously joyful,” remarks Annaliese Bischoff. Paul Bengston, Jennifer Claster, Patricia Gambarini, Sara Hage, Nancy Howard, Mark Lerch, Michael Schreiber, and Mary Scipioni will present their final projects in Hills 105 at the University of Massachusetts in mid March.

Assignment # 8: Art of the Word

In this assignment you are asked to explore the interface between the visual language and verbal language. Reflect upon how the arrangement of letters on a page can add another layer of communication to the understanding of the meaning of the words themselves. You must determine the message and content for yourself. Give yourself a prompt to get started: Start with something important for you to communicate. Research examples if you have trouble jumping in with an exploratory spirit of play and adventure.
In lecture several examples from a range of advertising to creative writing will be presented. Look at the connections between the look of words and their meaning. You may want to write a poem that has a special use of the physical relationship to how it appears on the page. Or you could work with a series of words you translate into visual images. Explore the interconnections between the meaning of words and the physical space they occupy on a page.

Color, texture, and mixed media are all permitted. Consider keeping the size standard at 8.5 by 11 inches suitable for including in the portfolio. However, if your idea would be better executed at a different scale, you can consider including a photocopy or a photo image of the assignment in your portfolio at the end of the semester.

Assignment # 9: Writing an Effective Critique

For this assignment you are asked to write a critique on a subject related to your field of study. This critique could focus on a project in the built environment, a book in the field, a relevant lecture, or a proposed plan. Whatever the content of your subject is, the common purpose among all critiques is the development of critical analysis, a thoughtful assessment of two or more issues. Typically a critique includes two types of writing, description and evaluation. The descriptive purpose must help the reader envision the subject. Beyond the mission of descriptive writing a critique must also include some appropriate type of evaluation. You may be developing and sharing your opinion on a topic. Part of your critique would then need to include support for your logic and reasoning. Critiques represent an important type of writing because they reveal your ability to think critically, an invaluable job skill.

The following is intended to stimulate thought/discussion about how to write a critique and is not meant as “the final word” on critique writing. These points should be considered, where appropriate and supplemented with your own thoughts and ideas. Good luck!

Tips on How to Write a Critique

Getting Ready to Write a Critique

- Read the book thoroughly/visit the landscape/examine the plan. Think critically (not necessarily negatively) about the material and ask yourselves these (and other) key questions: How? Why? How well?
- Points of view: How do the ideas/design presented compare to others with which you are familiar or that you have studied (and with your own ideas)? Does the design work? (Do you agree or disagree with the arguments being put forward in the book?) Why/why not?

Consider opposing points of view—this will help to clarify your arguments.
Writing a Critique

Analyze a design: Why was this design built? What is the designer’s concept? Who is the intended audience? What are the elements of the design and how well do they work together? Does the overall design work? why or why not? Does the design have the intended effect? why or why not?

or

Evaluate a book: Why was this book written? What is the main idea/point? Is the argument logical and the facts accurate? Do the arguments support the main point? Is the text appropriate for the intended audience? Does the text present and refute opposing points of view? Does the text help you understand the subject? Do any of the words or sentences evoke a strong response from you? What people, articles, or discussions have influenced your views? How might these be compared/contrasted with this text? What questions/observations does this article suggest? Does this text inspire thought/discussion, etc. and, if yes, to what end? Does this text accomplish its objective?

Write in standard essay form: Prepare an outline—state your main points and how you will back up your arguments. Begin with an introduction: define the subject, your approach and conclude with your point of view. Defend your point of view by raising specific issues/criticisms.

An Example of a Critique
by Ethan Carr, an assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

The spectacle of the Gates in Central Park has triumphed as one of the great public art projects of our times. The Gates captured New York’s—and the world’s—attention and imagination. They did so in no small measure by riding piggy-back on another, greater public art project, Central Park itself.

Of course it is unfair to compare two works of “public art” when the meaning of the term has shifted. When Frederick Law Olmsted described Central Park as public art in the 1850s, he meant that he and Calvert Vaux were creating a unified landscape composition in which all parts were “confluent and helpful” and contributed to a planned sequence of emotional “effects.” The sense of “enlarged freedom” in open, pastoral meadows, for example, balanced a more personal response to nature in the picturesque Ramble. The structured spaces of the Mall and Terrace induced a more staid sense of awe, and allowed for large public gatherings in which, at least for a while, New Yorkers could come together in a common appreciation of outdoor beauty and activities.

This kind of landscape design was a compositional art that emphasized emotional
effects and spatial sequences over specific details. Most of the details, after all—trees, shrubs, rock outcrops, water—possessed their own perfection. Park design was also public art, because the entire project served a functional program that included open spaces for play, lakes for ice skating, paths and drives for people and carriages, and scenery for physical and mental health. But Vaux and Olmsted sublimated this social functionality into their artistic composition of trees, grass, water, and sky. This would be no arbitrary collection of ballfields, ice rinks, and museums set down on a site. The landscape itself, or more correctly the sequence of emotional experiences the landscape offered, would become the most prized “function” of all.

The Gates were a different kind of public art: an ephemeral counterpoint superimposed over the larger, more permanent artwork around them. They succeeded mainly by highlighting (like “immense Magic Marker lines” according to one critic) the many miles of pedestrian paths that wind through every corner of the park. Here Christo and Jeanne-Claude found a rich vein to mine. No other aspect of the park’s construction received more attention or money. Each type of traffic in the park—pedestrian, horseback, carriage, and crosstown commercial—received its own system of paths, bridle paths, drives, or sunken transverses. The overlaid systems were separated by dozens of ornamental underpasses and overpasses in an elaborate choreography that allowed all of the potentially conflicting traffic of the park to proceed unimpeded by intersections. Diversity was accommodated; conflicts were resolved. When Vaux described the park as “the big art work of the Republic,” he was referring to it as an optimistic and ideological vision of social cohesion and unity at a time of massive immigration, urbanization, and the threat of regional secession.

The Gates obviously inspired reflection on the park’s path system, but the project failed to elicit much more thought about the complex landscape it adorned. The obsessive tracing of the pedestrian paths alone produced a one-dimensional commentary on the spatial complexities and symbolic meanings of movement through the park. Did Christo and Jeanne-Claude really think about the larger meanings of the circulation system they highlighted, or were they simply fascinated by an abstract curvilinear pattern, available to be used as the massive template for their own, admittedly epic, drawing?

A lack of conceptual depth plagued the entire work. Did Christo and Jeanne-Claude really consider the significance of the concept of “gates” for Central Park? Nothing in their elaborate production suggested they did. The artists made brief reference to the park’s entrances, which were named in 1862. Boys and Girls, Artisans and Mechanics, and Merchants and Mariners all were among the dedicatees of the park’s eighteen “named gates,” which cataloged the range of groups and individuals who were to be welcome in the new park. These named gates, however, were never really gates: they were merely gaps in the low perimeter wall that defined the park’s boundary. Appropriate designs for the park’s perimeter walls and entrances were carefully
considered, and then fiercely debated. Olmsted, in particular, objected to iron fences, suggestive of European parks opened to the public only at the pleasure of aristocrats. Vaux and Olmsted both rejected an 1864 proposal for more monumental, architectural entrances to the park, even though they were designed by the brilliant Richard Morris Hunt. Central Park was to be a “people’s park,” in rhetoric if not entirely in reality, and fences and gates were considered inappropriate both iconographically and functionally.

Central Park, perhaps more emphatically and significantly than any park in the world, has never had gates. The Gates, again, at least inspire some reflection on a potentially rich theme. But even after twenty-six years to think about it, today’s artists were stunningly unaware of the irony (or potential meanings) of erecting 7,500 Gates in a park characterized by the absence of such restrictions. The Gates did not exploit the subject or meaning of gates in the park anymore than they revealed new meaning or insight about interlaced movement through the landscape. They were simply the formal means to “wrap” an abstract pattern of winding asphalt paths.

Perhaps the strongest aspect of the Gates was the degree to which they resulted in a sense of physical, visual, and emotional restriction, in a landscape that was carefully conceived (and more recently restored) to create the opposite experience in every sense. The Gates corralled visitors onto paths, often eliminating even visual contact to any reference points or surroundings. Walking through the park, the sequence of complementing and diverse landscape “effects” was reduced to a singular, claustrophobic experience of one overpowering color, and one constricted, extruded space with an oppressively low ceiling replacing the open sky. Was this contrast between the experience of the Gates and the experience of the park landscape what Christo and Jeanne-Claude intended? Not if they were to be taken at their word, since they repeatedly insisted that the Gates were never intended to have any meaning, but simply to be there, and to be art.

But it is also true that as an event—what we used to call a “happening” in Central Park—the Gates have also simply been great fun for hundreds of thousands of visitors. Novelty, celebrity, and the sheer weirdness of seeing the park so completely bedecked in bright orange all had their own appeal. Now that they are coming down, we can also say that the project has been a success, in the sense that it was installed and removed without damaging the park. Central Park should not be subject to this kind of imposition often, but the exorbitant cost of the Gates (whatever it actually was) makes that unlikely. Nevertheless the Gates, as a work of art, occupied a privileged position, perched high on the back of the nation’s single greatest public art project. From that vantage point, we might have hoped to see farther.

Assignment # 10: A Digital Writing Portfolio
In this assignment you are asked to develop a digital writing portfolio that will include all the of previous assignments. For this purpose you will plan and design a web site. For your web site you are asked to have a “home page,” as well as other web pages that are linked to this page. Include at least two links from your home page to other pages you intend to design on your site; these are known as internal links. Include at least one link to another web site; this is known as an external link. It might be to the LARP Home Page.

First, spend some time designing the structure of your web site. Consider the purpose of your site, what content it must have, and how you want to structure the site. Take time to plan the design so that your web site will have a unified appearance and clear organization. Create a storyboard on paper to conceptualize what you want your site to contain. Then move on to choose a consistent design across the pages on your Web site. Background, colors, fonts, layout should be consistent. Make sure you create links back to your home page from all the other pages in your site. Consider the use of what will be fast loading images for your site. Images can act as buttons or links to other Web pages. Read and follow the steps outlined in Fred Zinn’s article “Planning Web Sites.” Information on the organization of the structure, the navigation systems, and visual style are particularly important factors to consider. There are also important sites recommended to help in designing and creating Web sites. Remember that users can view Web pages on several different kinds of monitors with different browsers and with different speed modems. Take these factors into consideration when you design your Web pages; it becomes important to test your pages on different platforms and in different browsers. For this assignment you are required to upload design your web site online. The time on planning and designing a solid web site is important for our focus. Technical support to translate your web site into the digital version will be provided in class.
Sample
Student
Essays
1. A Student Paper from Chemistry 391, Writing in Chemistry

Ben DiTrollo’s essay, “Molecule of the Year: Carbon Dioxide,” was written in response to the following assignment from Chemistry 391A: Writing in Chemistry in the Fall 2006. The course was co-taught by Lynmarie Thompson and Holly Davis; Julian Tyson also deserves some credit for helping develop the “Molecule of the Year” assignment.

Project #2: A short persuasive essay to nominate the “Molecule of the Year”

Since 1927, TIME Magazine has chosen a man, woman, or idea that “for better or worse, has most influenced events in the preceding year” as the “man of the year” (although the title was changed in 1999 to “person of the year” in an effort to avoid the appearance of sexism.) Note the phrasing “for better or worse,” as controversy has arisen on occasion because the designation was mistakenly viewed as an honor despite the magazine’s frequent statements to the contrary. While many admirable people have been selected over the years, (Ghandi, F. D. Roosevelt, Martin Luther King) a number of individuals whose influence was quite different have also been chosen (Hitler, Stalin, Ayatollah Khomeini) as the designation is meant to acknowledge influence or impact rather than positive contribution.

Imagine that TIME magazine chooses a “Molecule of the Year.” As with the designation of “person of the year,” molecules are selected for better or worse, based on the impact they have had on events in the preceding year, and how deserving they are of being discussed and acknowledged not just within the scientific community, but by thoughtful people from a range of backgrounds. Part of the challenge here will be to render complex scientific concepts understandable to a broad audience.

Choose a molecule that you can convince the magazine editor is worthy of being on this list (and choose a backup molecule or two in case yours is chosen by one of your classmates). Your goal is to persuade a nonscientific reader or audience that your molecule is worthy of their attention and concern because of the extent of its influence. A secondary goal is to inspire some interest in chemistry in your audience. Think about why this molecule would be of interest to a non-scientist. Choose a non-scientist relative or friend to imagine as your audience. Give some thought to what scientific terminology may be too specific or technical to be understood by someone not trained as a chemist and either use language that is less technical or take care to define terms and explain concepts so that your target reader will understand them.

Organize the points you want to make so that they tell a logical and interesting story in 2 double spaced pages (#2). Do not present your points as a disjointed collection of facts. Instead you should construct a logical argument about why this molecule is especially important, interesting, or useful and offer compelling evidence that will make sense to a person not trained as a chemist (think Professor Davis).

This and all written assignments:
• should be submitted with a cover sheet including basic information (your name, the course number and title, which project this is. e.g. Project #2: Persuasive Essay);
• should be free of any errors in punctuation, grammar, usage and spelling;
• should avoid abbreviations;
• should be written in your own words and should acknowledge any sources using ACS Style;
• should make a compelling case for your molecule;
• should be accessible and understandable to a non-scientist (anticipate the needs of your reader).

Reminder: The mid-process draft is not a rough draft but should be the very best that you can do on your own up to that point, so that we can help you improve it further.
Molecule of the Year: Carbon Dioxide

By Ben DiTrolio

Responsibility for the onset of the global warming phenomena that may very well lead to our destruction is hard to assign at the macroscopic level. So let’s assign blame at the molecular level and choose carbon dioxide as “Molecule of the Year.” Carbon dioxide, or CO₂, is a gas produced during the combustion of fossil fuels that plays a significant role in heating our global climate. Analysis of atmospheric gases trapped in ice that formed thousands of years ago confirms that the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere corresponds directly to a rise in global temperature (1,2). These experiments reveal that CO₂ levels had remained constant for thousands of years up until about two-hundred years ago when the Industrial Revolution began. Since then a thirty percent increase in the amount of CO₂ present in the atmosphere has been documented.

Frequently the amount of CO₂ emissions released into the atmosphere as a consequence of industry is disputed, as CO₂ is not only a byproduct of combustion. For example, a series of advertisements from the Competitive Enterprise Institute explains that CO₂ is simply, “what we breathe out and plants breathe in.” This is true, but rather misleading and irrelevant in the context of CO₂’s relationship to climate change, and a brief discussion about the chemistry of CO₂ can explain why. Carbon dioxide that is produced when fossil fuels are burned is distinguishable from that which is produced by living organisms today, in that the ratios of carbon isotopes produced by each method are different (3). For the purpose of this discussion, an isotope can be simply thought of as a marker on the carbon atom — the “C” in the CO₂ molecule — that does not significantly change the properties of the molecule. Experimental data using isotopic tests have shown that the increased levels of the gas are attributable to the CO₂ produced by burning fossil fuels—not breathing. In fact, research confirms that atmospheric CO₂ levels are still increasing and will continue to do so unless some action is taken (4).

So why is this important enough to warrant CO₂ to be chosen as “Molecule of the Year” in the same spirit that Hitler and Stalin and Henry Kissinger were selected as Time’s “Man of the Year”? Well, CO₂ absorbs light reflected off of the earth that would normally travel into space, and light carries with it energy, and energy carries with it heat. This heat has been enough to raise global temperature by more than 0.5°C in the past century (1,2). Although 0.5°C may sound small, according to a number of scientists at the Seventeenth Annual Global Warming Conference held in May 2006, this slight temperature rise, the effects of which are already being observed, may be indicative of our environment’s approach to a “tipping point,” after which the climate will no longer be able to maintain an equilibrium temperature, and the rate at which temperature rises will increase rapidly.

The oceans of the earth play a significant role in maintaining this equilibrium as they dissolve much of the atmospheric CO₂ into their waters. Carbon dioxide in the
presence of water, however, forms carbonic acid, and this acid has caused a reduction in overall ocean pH. Reducing the pH, or making the ocean more acidic, has been shown to kill off numerous types of photosynthetic organisms, such as plankton (3), which as we learned earlier “breathe in” CO₂, and are in fact a major source of CO₂ removal from the atmosphere.

So excess CO₂ not only warms the planet, but disables an essential mechanism that assists in its removal, meaning more CO₂ and more warming, which further disables a key mechanism capable of removing atmospheric CO₂. Hopefully, it is clear that a rather destructive and unsustainable cycle is emerging here. Consequences of passing the tipping point of this cycle, as it has been described, are said to be catastrophic at best. With this in mind, I contend that CO₂ should not only be nominated as molecule of the year, but should be granted tenure for the position, as it poses a threat to life at least as dramatic, and possibly much greater than that posed by many human contenders for “Man of the Year.”

References


Ben DiTrolio is a pessimistic nihilist who thinks that human life always ends in some sort of hardship. However, he would like to ask you to please make an effort to save the environment so that other people might remain alive enough to feel miserable.
2. A Student Paper from Psychology 392, Writing in Psychology

Nancy Lattinville’s essay, “Signs of Empathy Observed in Animals,” was written in response to the following assignment from Psych 392: Writing in Psychology in the Fall 2006. The course was taught by Amanda Dettmer under the supervision of Carolyn Cave.

Paper 3: Writing an Effective Argument

- Partial draft due (bring 5 copies for me & group peer review): Nov. 2 (Thursday)
- Complete draft due (bring 5 copies for group peer review): Nov. 9 (Thursday)
- Complete 2nd draft due (bring 1 copy for 1-on-1 peer review): Nov. 14 (Tuesday)
- Final draft due: Nov. 21 (Tuesday)

Writing a persuasive argument is critical in academic and professional writing. You may have to recommend treatment for a patient, convince a funding agency to give money to your research, or propose a new psychological theory you have developed. This assignment will focus on writing an effective argument. You will choose to defend or refute (i.e., contradict) a controversial statement, and support your claim with reasons and concrete evidence. You will also acknowledge the other side. You should write for an academic audience, keeping the tone professional and objective (i.e., in the 3rd person).

TOPIC GOALS: The topic goal of this assignment is to give you detailed exposure to a controversial area within evolutionary psychology.

WRITING GOALS: Clarity! Brevity! Accuracy!

In each assignment, you should always strive for these writing components. For this assignment, focus on establishing a persuasive, effective argument. To do so, you should incorporate the following parts into your paper:

1. Claim: What stance do you take on the issue? What side are you arguing? Because a claim is debatable, it must always be based on:

2. Reasons: Why do you adopt one side of the argument? What are the logical bases for your claim? Because your reasons are debatable, they must always be based on:

3. Evidence: How do you know? What are the concrete, objective facts that lend support to the reasons for your claim? Arguments are not merely based on strong opinions or emotions. BE SURE TO CITE YOUR REFERENCES according to APA format.

4. Acknowledgement: Do you recognize alternate claims that counter yours? Do you provide responses that answer these counter-claims and assess the weight of evidence for them?

ASSIGNMENT:
Select one of the following statements and either defend or refute it, writing a persuasive, effective argument for your claim as outlined above and discussed in class. (Note: You may choose your own controversial topic to argue, but it must be approved by me by October 26).

1. Homosexual behavior has evolutionary advantages. (Keywords: homosexual; adaptation; advantage; non-human)

2. Men and women evolved different types of romantic jealousy. (Keywords: jealousy; evolve; romance; infidelity)

3. Empathy is a uniquely human trait. (Keywords: empathy; emotion; feelings; human; non-human; evolution)

After selecting the statement you want to defend or refute, decide on your claim (e.g., you agree that homosexual behavior has evolutionary advantages). Next, think of logical reasons for your claim. Why might this be so? Begin initial research into the topic, starting with the keywords I’ve provided (don’t limit yourself to just these!). Based on your research, decide which pieces of empirical evidence you will use to support the reasons for your claim. Be sure to acknowledge arguments against your claim, and develop appropriate responses that show your analysis of the evidence for the counter-claims. Remember that an effective argument is one that convinces your audience to agree with your claim based on logical reasons supported by concrete evidence.

WHAT TO HAND IN:

Partial draft (5 copies due 11/2/06): Your partial draft should include the following:

1. A full draft of your introductory paragraph, which indicates that you understand the crux of the issue, why it is important, and how it can be attacked or developed (be sure to state your claim!).

2. The rest of your paper in outline form, which will include your reasons, evidence, and acknowledgements. The argument charts handed out in class may be useful.

3. An annotated bibliography, which will include APA-style citations of your references and which pieces of evidence you will extract from each reference to support your argument.

Complete 1st draft (5 copies due 11/9/06): Your complete first draft should NOT be an outline, but should be a fully-written argument containing all the parts outlined above. It should be persuasive and effective, and between 5-7 pages in length (without references), double-spaced.

Complete 2nd draft (1 copy due 11/14/06): Your one-on-one peer review draft should be close to the final draft, with few errors, and between 5-7 pages in length (without references), double-spaced.
Final draft with cover letter (due 11/21/06): Your final draft should be error-free and should provide a strong, convincing argument. It should be between 5-7 pages in length (without references), double-spaced. Your paper MUST include your references in APA format, and citations of the references in the text. Your cover letter should be addressed to your instructor and should include a synopsis of your peer comments and how you responded to them; a description of at least two substantive changes you made in your paper; or a defense of your paper if you think it is perfect the way it is. It should be 1 page in length.

NOTE: You must use at least FIVE references that are NOT websites (i.e., research or review articles, book chapters, professional magazines, newspapers, etc.). You may obtain these sources from web-based databases, etc. You may also use websites, but be sure they are reliable sources and are not your only means of evidence.
EVALUATION:

Your paper will be evaluated based on these criteria:

1. The presence of an explicit claim and reasons: I must know from the beginning what you are arguing, and why. Additionally, your reasons should be clear and logical.

2. Sufficient evidence to convince me that your reasons are sound. There should be ample support for your claim/reasons that is concrete and empirical.

3. Your acknowledgement of the other side of the argument, and responses to these claims that support your claim.

4. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation: the best way to make your argument most effective is not to distract the reader with these types of problems. Your argument will flow more smoothly without these speed bumps.

Signs of Empathy Observed in Animals

By Nancy Lattinville

Everyone at some point in their lives has been helped by someone else. A man gave a woman a dime when the soda machine ate hers, or a woman cried along with a friend at a low point in her life. These people showed empathy with another’s troubles, and in return, took steps to alleviate their distress. As far back as Darwin, scientists classified the ability to express empathy as a human trait. There has been debate on whether animals possessed this level of emotional response. Research indicated that many different types of animals expressed empathy within their communities. On an evolutionary scale, these results point toward similarities between the way animals and humans evolved and that both species are even more closely linked to each other than originally thought. The time has come to embrace the concept that animals also possess the amazing trait known as empathy.

To fully understand if animals possess empathy it must first be defined. There has been much confusion in the scientific arena about the differences between empathy and sympathy. In the past, researchers had intermixed one with the other which caused an assumption that they meant the same thing. Wispe (1986) asserted that “The object of empathy is to ‘understand’ the other person. The object of sympathy is the other person’s ‘well being’” (p. 318). For example, if someone was in a flood, we feel sorry for that person and we sympathize with their situation. Empathy occurs when we become emotionally involved and proactively try to alleviate the other person’s suffering because we feel their pain as if it were our own.

Do animals have the capacity to empathize? To find the answer to this question, researchers have studied behavior in several species to see if they showed any signs of
empathy. They discovered so many examples of empathy in animals, that the results can not be ignored. For example, the findings reported in the magazine Greater Good by de Waal (2005-06), concluded that animals, especially monkeys, showed signs of empathy because they understood the suffering and hardships of the other monkeys. Chimps showed empathy when they comforted another chimp after a fight. Rhesus monkeys felt such distress at the idea that they might injure one of their own to get food that they went so far as to starve themselves for 12 days because they refused to hurt another monkey.

In another study done with elephants, Douglas-Hamilton, Bhatta, Wittemyer, & Vollrath, (2006) observed that elephants took great care in nursing the sick and paying respect to the dead. The animals were empathizing with the suffering of the other members of their kin. This was noted when the elephants assisted their matriarch when she fell down. They helped her back on her feet and pushed and pulled her so she would stay upright. They stayed with her to see if she would be alright but she fell down again. This distressed the elephants and they vocalized their concern while they tried to help the elephant get up again. When the matriarch died, the elephants of her family unit stayed close by. Over seven days, other elephant families came and touched the carcass of the dead elephant. Researchers were unsure if it was a way to pay respect to the dead or just a show of empathy for their loss because elephants from different groups usually will not interact with one another.

Darwin’s theory on animal behavior had no place for empathy. Darwin suggested that survival of the fittest was the way animals dealt with problems that they faced. He used this theory to explain that animals had a self-preserving attitude when it came to interactions among their own kind. If Darwin’s theory was correct, the elephants would have abandoned the sick elephant instead of trying to help. In the case of the monkeys, they would not have cared that one was getting shocked as long as they got their food. The research results contradicted Darwin’s theory on survival: empathy had to play a major role in the animal kingdom.

Empathy appears to have had an evolutionary component to it. In Hoffman’s (1981) paper, he quoted research performed by Trivers that “natural selection had to favor altruism, even between nonrelated individuals, because of its long-term benefit to the organism performing it” (p. 123). This meant that an individual would sacrifice to save someone else, even if it was not family, but in return, would expect that person to reciprocate the behavior. Hoffman speculated that because of the type of social groups that people lived in, selflessness would have been a benefit to the community because it promoted peaceful group living. A gene that supported a self-sacrificing nature would have benefited our ancestors. This tendency to be selfless would have insured the survival of the community at the loss of only a few. Since this proved to be beneficial for our species, evolution picked this gene to be passed on to the next generation.

This protective and self sacrificing behavior has also evolved in animals. In bonobos, de Waal (2005-06) noted that when a bird was hurt and the ape found it, it understood that it could not fly and protected it until it could fly on its own. This parallels the altruism that Hoffman spoke about that natural selection would favor. The
ape, in a primitive way, used his knowledge of empathy gained from his family unit and tried to stretch that concept to include other animals. He did not fully understand that the bird probably could not reciprocate the behavior. This selfless behavior supports that a gene for empathy would benefit animals.

de Waal (2005-06) also talked about how the chimps showed empathy when they interacted with their young. Mothers would come to the aid of their young when they cried out for help, and these signs of empathy showed to the young chimps helped them to build strong social bonds in their primate family. Social bonds are essential for promoting empathy in communities because they help to maintain peaceful living and cooperation between family members. Lionesses also show empathy when they band together to hunt for food. Empathy and cooperation have to work together to promote the survival of the pride (de Waal 2005-06). All this evidence supports the idea that evolution has picked this gene to pass on to animals as part of the natural selection process.

Some researchers suggested that empathy could be a learned trait and not linked to genes. A study done by Worthington and Scherer (2004) suggested that “forgiveness is an emotional-focused coping strategy” (p. 385). If empathy was just a learned process, then anyone could learn empathy including animals.

If there was no genetic basis for empathy and it was merely a learned process, how do we explain that people with low empathy are considered social misfits? People with autism might want to help others, but lack the cognitive empathy necessary to engage in this behavior. Smith (2006) defined empathy into two forms: cognitive, which relates to the ability to take another person’s perception and emotional, which relates to the way we share our emotions with others. Smith (2006) argued in his paper that people with autism used avoidance to stop themselves from becoming attached to other people because they could not handle how those empathic emotions would make them feel. They have a hard time adapting to changes in social settings and they withdraw and act indifferent to other people. Animals also depend on their ability to maintain a strong social environment. The great apes depend on each other not just for protection but social and emotional support. Elephants also show strong community bonds which are vital for a well functioning society (Douglas-Hamilton et al., 2006). Empathy could have a learned component to it, but it would be more likely that animals were predisposed to cognitive empathy which would be genetic in nature.

If animals were genetically predisposed to emotional empathy, that does not mean they do not express it in different ways. Animals pick up emotions from their families through observations and feelings. The nonverbal expression of empathy would be imperative for survival in the wild. Nakayama (2004) preformed research to see if empathy could be transmitted between animals by actions such as scratching when upset because a stranger was near. She concluded that whenever a stranger got too close, the monkey closest to the danger would scratch and other monkeys observing this behavior would then give vocal calls and scratch themselves too. This behavior then alerted the rest of the group that danger was near and they became more attentive for any additional signs of danger.
The monkeys appeared not just to be mimicking a behavior, but they were actually transmitting the distress of one monkey, and by repetition of the scratching, conveyed distress to others in the family unit. The prolonged scratching only occurred when a stranger was close by noted Nakayama (2004), so it is unlikely that this could be attributed to something else. This behavior in animals could be an instinctive survival technique used as a form of nonverbal communication and a primitive form of empathy between close family members.

Human babies will cry in a nursery if another baby has started to cry. Some researchers concluded that the babies were mimicking what they heard and not really empathizing. Decety and Jackson’s (2006) research concluded that this behavior was a result of mimicry and that others could reproduce the desired response just by watching the behavior or picking up on the emotions of someone else and coping it. Since this form of transference should not be considered empathy, some scientists suggest that animals only mimic behavior and empathy does not come in play.

In a mimic response you would not see forms of self denial, or a willingness to sacrifice for others. The rhesus monkeys showed self denial when they starved themselves for 12 days because they refused to injure one of their own for food (de Waal 2005-06). That was not mimicking but empathy, and a form of empathy so strong that it overrode their basic need for food and promoted a higher need; one of protection. The elephants showed self denial when they stayed with the sick matriarch to tried to help her regain her strength. They showed a willingness to deny basic animal instincts to help an injured family member (Douglas-Hamilton et al., 2006). Mimic responses can not explain these actions, but a selfless response to the emotional needs of others or empathy can.

Allot (1992) asserted that empathy “serves as a mode of communication between members of a family, between members of a group or even between hostile individuals or groups” (p. 3). The research conducted on empathy so far has mirrored Allot’s claim. For critics who still believe that animals do not show empathy, the evidence discovered makes it increasingly difficult to argue their case. Empathy’s a complex issue, and now it is not just a question of IF animals have empathy, but in what forms do animals incorporate empathy into their lives and how do they parallel human expressions of empathy.

Nancy R. Lattinville is currently a junior psychology major at UMass Amherst. Originally from Easthampton, this working Mom hopes to pursue a professional career in student counseling when she graduates.
3. A Student Paper from English 297H

R. J. Boutelle’s essay, “Writing for a Philosophical World,” was written in response to the following assignment from English 297H: Tutoring Writing in the Fall 2006. The course was taught by Haivan Hoang.

Essay #3: Rhetorical Analysis: Writing in a Discipline

The first two essays for this class focused on your own writing experience and your idea of collaboration. We’re turning, in the next two essays, to an examination of writing that pushes us beyond our own experiences. Essay 3 asks you to examine the strategies employed by writers in a specific discipline. Your assignment is to write a rhetorical analysis of a specific discipline’s writing. As a collective, you and your classmates can pool your resources in order to learn about writing in literature, philosophy, business, nutrition, and more.

As you write, focus on these questions: What are the conventions for writing in this discipline? AND WHY does this discipline adopt such conventions? Together, these questions ask: what does it mean to be a member of this disciplinary community?

This academic essay should include detailed references to specific essays as well as interpretations of those details. Again, you should remember that analysis means to take apart, so you must have sufficient details in order to even begin your rhetorical explanations. Finally, one challenge will be to decide how you’ll focus your essay—as opposed to randomly listing features of writing in a particular discipline. See my email message for brainstorming tips.

Mark These Dates
1. Draft and email me two analysis paragraphs by Friday, November 3, 2006. Identify a convention and analyze it in depth. I’ll respond in an email message.
2. Revise and extend your draft for class Wednesday, November 8, 2006. We’ll talk about these drafts in class.
3. OPTIONAL: If you found it helpful to talk with me about your last essay, email or talk to me to schedule an individual conference this week.
4. Revise again, and bring your draft for another Writing Workshop on Wednesday, November 15, 2006.
5. Make final revisions. Email me the final draft, and turn in your portfolio of drafts.

Nitty-gritty details
- At least four double-spaced pages
- MLA format with bolded title, headers after first page (last name and page #), 1” margins, and standard 11-12 point font

Grading criteria
A: The essay asserts a surprising and insightful argument about why your specific discipline writes in the way that it does. This focused argument not only puts forth a detailed and nuanced explanation of writing choices in that discipline but does so through interpretations of specific examples.
B: The essay asserts a solid analysis of writing strategies used in that discipline but may need more explanation about WHY the discipline adopts those conventions. The argument is clear and well-organized.

C: The essay satisfactorily addresses the assignment and proposes a basic description about how writers in that discipline write essays. This analysis could be complicated—perhaps with more details from writing or more explanation of WHY the discipline adopts such conventions.

D/F: The essay does not meet the assignment criteria. For instance, the essay does not address the assignment. AND/OR one or more elements of the writing process are incomplete.

Writing for a Philosophical World

By R. J. Boutelle

The field of philosophy is often regarded as one of the most abstract and intangible courses of study that one can undertake. Philosophers are typically accused of being intellectuals without application and envisioned as hermits who seek unattainable knowledge (e.g. the meaning of life). In reality, the discipline explores a whole range of topics including morality, knowledge, existence, logic, language, science and society. A philosophy degree offers just as many professional opportunities as the topics addressed are very difficult to articulate in concrete terms and examples, and require vigorous analysis. As a result of this abstract nature, philosophical writing uses very specific and somewhat intimidating conventions. However, if one can overcome these initial rhetorical differences, the field can be very rewarding. As the University of Massachusetts - Amherst Philosophy Department advertises, “One of the things philosophy does is to prepare you for this most important activity of living for and with yourself. This does not mean that it teaches you a selfish activity; rather that it helps to instill self-understanding. Philosophy helps you to learn by doing, by actively doing analysis, questioning, reflecting, and understanding.”

One convention of philosophical writing is the use of ‘possible worlds.’ Possible worlds are thought experiments used by philosophers to further arguments by appealing to a hypothetical version of the world. Joshua Hoffman and Gary S. Rosencrantz employ the use of possible worlds in their book The Divine Attributes. In an attempt to demonstrate the conflict between divine omniscience and free will, they write,

“Suppose in the actual world, Jones is in C and Jones freely chooses to attend the lecture this Friday. Yet, there is a possible world, W*, in which there is a person, Jones*, such that: (i) Jones* in W* is other than Jones in the actual world; (ii) Jones* in

1 http://www.umass.edu/philosophy/undergrad_program/undergrad-program-main.htm
W* and Jones in the actual world are qualitatively indistinguishable from one another in their intrinsic properties up to this Friday; and (iii) in W*, Jones* is in C but Jones* freely chooses to refrain from attending the lecture this Friday.”

The dilemma posed here between the contrasting notions of free will and a God who is omniscient would be difficult to express without appealing to the hypothetical notion of a possible world. This argument is one of the more simple arguments because it utilizes mainstream ideas (free will and omniscience) and only a single alternative world. More complex arguments can utilize several possible worlds as well as much more difficult topic matter.

This argument not only sufficiently expresses the complexity inherent in philosophical writing, but also its purpose: furthering an argument that the author is trying to defend. This usually involves entering a conversation on a given topic and exploring it in more depth or from a different angle. By entering into a conversation it becomes important to have a firm grasp of the content explored by previous philosophers. This, combined with the often strictly theoretical nature of philosophical writing creates the need for a very specific and concise vocabulary, as it is very important for different authors to possess the same frame of reference in regard to theories, movements, and ideas used in philosophical texts. As a result of this, there are entire dictionaries devoted to defining philosophical theories, movements and methods. This specificity applies to many commonplace adjectives, especially words that one would usually use to describe inquisitive theories. For example, in George Berkeley’s Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous has the express purpose of “admit[ing] the opinion for true, which upon examination shall appear most agreeable to common sense, and remote from skepticism?” Here, the use of the word ‘skepticism’ could mean, “a doubting or questioning attitude.” However, in the strict philosophical sense it describes, “the view that nothing can be known with certainty; that at best there can be some private probable opinion.” It is very clear that this is an important distinction to make. According to the traditional definition to be ‘skeptical’ is to be a philosopher! The very nature of the field requires a “doubting or questioning attitude.” However, to call a philosopher a skeptic is a severe accusation that can be very offensive if not properly grounded or defined.

This same need for very precise language arises with other nondescript words such as “valid,” “sound,” and “circular.” While each of these words can be used in a plethora of different contexts in other writing disciplines, each can be used with but a singular meaning in philosophical texts. The words “valid” and “sound” are both

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utilized in describing the effectiveness of an argument. “Valid” refers to an argument whose conclusion must be true if all the premises are true. “Sound” refers to an argument whose premises and conclusion are all true. Claiming an argument to be “valid” or “sound” according to different definitions than these could destroy not only the reputability of an argument but that of the entire paper. This shows the reader that the writer does not even have a grasp of basic philosophical principles and therefore cannot take the paper seriously.

The word “circular” also plays a large role in philosophical writing. This word refers to an argument or definition that defines itself. For example, a circular definition would be to describe something ‘beautiful’ as ‘having beauty.’ The use of this word becomes very important in one of the major conventions of philosophical writing: refuting opposing arguments.

Arguments in philosophical writing are usually presented immediately and then sometimes not again until the end of the paper. The main body of the text is comprised of a series of smaller arguments that the author will either endorse or refute. In many cases, the author will actually interrupt the text to present an argument. Hoffman and Rosenkrantz frequently interrupt the flow of their text by inserting arguments amidst the paragraphs. In their chapter, “Eternality” for example, the authors are exploring the question of whether God exists in time or out of time. They present five different arguments that stand alone between paragraphs, including:

(Premise A1) Necessarily, if God is temporal, then he has temporal parts.
(Premise A2) Necessarily, if God exists, then he does not have parts.
Therefore, necessarily, if God exists, the he is atemporal.\(^6\)

Here, the disruption of flow is of little concern because the clarification of the argument being presented takes greater precedence. This is the result of the very theoretical language often used in such philosophical texts that can often make the reader feel overwhelmed. By the writer taking a brief second to elucidate an argument, the reader has a much better chance of grasping the material.

Writers in philosophy not only grapple with the problem of properly presenting arguments, but of addressing objections to them. Because of the conversation-oriented nature of the discipline, every argument presented is open to discussion and critique. In this sense, philosophy is much like debate: the arguments being presented are important, but not nearly as important as the debater’s ability to address and refute the arguments of the opponent. This is another defining characteristic of that is not found in other disciplines.

One common method employed to address this convention is the use of dialogues. Here, the author will assume the voice of a character who is discussing the arguments with one or more people. This allows the author to seamlessly raise and refute objections to their own arguments. The most famous example of this would be

the writings of Plato. Here, Plato uses Socrates as a mouthpiece for his own beliefs and engages him in a variety of conversations with those who impugn his beliefs. Plato will then have Socrates systemically reveal the flaws in the opposing argument and often leave the opponent embracing his the Socratic view.

Another method of refuting objections to an argument is by using very clear phrases that would seem out of place in other disciplines. These phrases, often referred to as “signposts,” include seemingly obvious statements like, “My argument is...” or “I will now show that this objection to the argument is ineffective.” For example, in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, John Locke starts the book by explicitly stating, “my purpose [is] to inquire into the original, certainty, and extent of human knowledge; together with the grounds and degrees of belief, opinion, and assent.”

These signposts, although somewhat patronizing to the reader, can be very effective in philosophical writing in that they help the reader to better understand the exact claims being made or arguments being formed. It also helps the reader to distinguish which views the author holds and which views are being criticized.

The deviations of philosophical writing from the conventions of standard writing can be attributed largely to the abstract content and highly conceptual descriptions of the problems and arguments being addressed. This engenders the need for a unique approach, making clarity and organization become infinitely more important. As a result of the scrupulous attention to detail inherent in the discipline, writing about philosophy can be very frustrating. It almost seems foolish to write a paper with the foreknowledge that every person who reads it is looking for a logically fallacy or misuse of a term. But while this may be very upsetting to philosophers, it can also be very rewarding. If the proper time is taken and research completed, then an argument can be presented that will earn the respect of the entire community, a challenge not easily met. It is obvious that no philosophical writing will ever be exempt from scrutiny or even sensible objections. However, by furthering the conversations and delving deeper into the arguments presented, even if only to criticize, will at least provide the philosophical (and general academic) community with a better understanding of the ever important issues the discipline addresses.

Works Cited


R.J. Boutelle is originally from Winchendon, MA. He is entering into his third year at the University of Massachusetts and is currently pursuing knowledge in the fields of English and Philosophy. After graduation, he intends to enroll in a doctoral program in American Literature.
4. Another Student Paper from English 297H

Nicole Carreiro’s essay, “A Closer Look at Linguistic Anthropology,” was written in response to the same assignment as R. J.’s above: from English 297H: Tutoring Writing in the Fall 2006. The course was taught by Haivan Hoang.

A Closer Look at Linguistic Anthropology

By Nicole Carreiro

Anthropology is the study of human groups and their respective cultures. Linguistic Anthropology is a sub-field in which the main concentration is on language and its discourses on macro and micro levels. Members of this working community analyze language from various perspectives and for diverse reasons; for example, some elect to examine dominant linguistic ideologies in a given society while others focus on how language serves as a medium for communication, to whom, how, and to what extent. The following will discuss the conventions of writing used by linguistic anthropologists in a rather specific area of this sub-field—the area which question how individuals judge their own identities based on the system of language in their own cultures and surrounding cultures. Readers of this essay, ideally, will learn how to recognize some of the field’s predominant reasons for inquiry and writing, as well as how to be critical of the content matter and how it is presented. This essay will pull examples from successful articles written by influential members of the field that will demonstrate some conventions of the discipline and the values that motivate them to contribute to their fields.

To best delve into this particular sort of linguistic anthropology, first some background should be given: primarily, to explain why the field is so vast, impressive, and important. Linguistic Anthropologists study just about every culture around the world, primitive or modern for a more whole understanding of the power behind language constructs. Many inquire as to whether or not language may be credited for supporting the way each one of these structures work and change. Often, these structures render some human groups in worse shape than others—this many time being the key motivation for many anthropologists. Many will choose to focus on the influence of language on social constructs such as gender, race, class, and other marginalizing aspects of society. I believe many feel extensive work could help close the divide between those worse off and those who are not affected. So writers in this field take time, do the research, and write these analytical/persuasive essays because they feel they can help change or lessen just how much an individual’s own psyche will be influenced by his own society’s vernacular or what the dominating parallel society’s ideal expectations may be.

Another reason for study is that rectification of language is used for many negative means: persuasion, propaganda, labeling, etc. By researching and exposing many of these problematic effects, anthropologists use their findings for more positive reasons and outlets: education, reform, activism, and the promotion of equality and
understanding. In society, many are aware of gross inequalities, but how often do they look at the language used to fuel them; for example, when first being introduce to this discipline, the example of double standards in the relationships between adolescents was given as somewhat of an easy entry into the complicated field. We examined such questions: Why don’t our rational minds notice the common irregularities between terms describing the same actions? Why is it that a girl who dates three guys is pegged a “whore”, a negative connotation yielding detrimental effects on her self-esteem, while a guy who dates three girls is hailed a “pimp”? Questions like these are looked at in this sub-field because many are enthralled by the prospect of exposing how common uses of language do push stereotypes which are damaging to the individual and/or the masses.

Jane H. Hill, a member of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Arizona, wrote “Language, Race, and White Public Space”. Hill’s article exemplifies the structure of writing in this discipline that can be modeled. In having to deal with presenting complex ideas and data, she breaks up her essay into sections in consideration of her readers whom she should assume may be totally foreign to these ideas. So, she opens with a definition of white public space, giving more than dynamic for them to consider before they begin reading the intense subject matter. Intense foci like for example, why African Americans and Latinos often adapt their own dialects to sound more “white” to not be discriminated against or judged. The importance of this issue is staggering and thus Hill presents her analysis in sections.

She begins with a background into the study of racism in Anthropology and how it offers further study of racism in language discourse. The organization of Hill’s essay, again, is the main factor to stress because in this field, many times, writers will have to present information in a way that guides the audience into fully understanding the context. Some of her categories and sections offer titles that state what will be discussed: for example, “Spanish Accent” and “Mock Spanish”: Linguistic Order and Disorder in White Public Space. For the last one, Hill has a sub-section, “Puerto Rican Linguistic Marginalization: Disorderly Order.” From all of this, we see the organization allows readers to see not only the complexity of the matter, but, also, how complex this field may be for its members when having to write about the discourse of language on a wide scale.

What is undeniable from Hill’s work is the importance of the matter she is observing which, I feel, strengthens the discipline’s ideals. Hill doesn’t just drum out countless facts; she uses audience-friendly prose to convey her reasons for inquiry; in this case, the damage it may have on individuals who feel they have to act according to the laws governed by the unmarked “white” space while, also, trying to manage staying true to themselves and their communities. Hill conveys to the writer the struggle, “the most poignant of the intricate ambiguities of this duality are that worries about being “disorderly” are never completely absent from the intimacies of the inner sphere, and people who successfully negotiate outer sphere order are vulnerable to the accusation that they are “acting White” betraying their friends and relatives” (Hill 681).

A writer who can introduce an innovating concept while giving a detailed argument for the studies she has conducted is setting herself up to appear as a credible
researcher and critical thinker. Also, she is becoming a more active member of the field’s community by offering new ideas for further debate. I feel Emily Martin, from John Hopkins, does this with her essay, “The Egg and The Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles” — another great case of writing in this field. Martin refers to the language used in science texts and journals as evidence to support her theory that masculinity and femininity (gender roles) are conveyed in the descriptions around “sperm” and “egg”. She argues the underlying sexist use of describing biological terms is clear from her research and collected data from science texts. She explores why the subtle use of words will for the most part fail to strike students who read them—perhaps, illustrating how pervasive and invisible discriminating language may be for some within a society that may be used to it—perhaps, the same society with flagrant double standards?

Audiences will vary: some will be interested in the subject matter while others may find it offensive or over-exaggerated. Writers in this discipline, in being aware of this, should work to present their inquiry and ideas in ways that will surprise readers and motivate them to read more. Martin states the reason for her analysis in the beginning. It’s interesting to note how this is in contrast, for example, to the plots of novels or movies, where the climax is something the reader/viewer enjoys guessing or predicting. Rather, this “up-front” technique is important because, in this field, the subject matter is meant to be taken seriously and should not be fancied as being delivered like with the power of a punch line; but, rather, I’d say a punch in the exact direction the reader should face and find new ways to look at language. Martin begins by stating, “I am intrigued by the possibility that culture shapes how biological scientists describe what they discover about the natural world… In the course of my research, I realized that the picture of egg and sperm drawn in popular as well as scientific accounts of reproductive biology relies on stereotypes central to our cultural definitions of male and female” (Martin 485). Being clever, she states her goal with strong prose: “Part of my goal in writing this article is to shine a bright light on the gender stereotypes hidden within the scientific language of biology. Exposed in such a light, I hope they will lose much of their power to harm us” (Martin 486). Her astuteness and responsible presentation of the inquiry is worth appreciating by those who may be inspired to join this discipline. In particular, the use of the words “harm us” can show readers how signal may hook an audience. To relate back to audience, women members, I imagine, will be immediately intrigued as to what the harm may be from how language is used in science texts, and how it may helps them put them in positions of inferiority to men.

Linguistic anthropologists must have an independent thinking of the issue that they must incorporate when forming a plan for better results, or new inquiry. These personality traits will probably be evident in the writing. Martin’s essay flows with countless quotes from scientific texts to support her argument, and while quoting them she remains open-minded and assertive—an important mindset and crucial front for anthropologists to keep in mind and enact. In this case, Martin pulls everything together, the clever analogies and the data, to express her overall concern for the
stereotype’s effects on society. She finishes with a declaration for members of her field and the public alike to keep in mind. “Even if we succeed in substituting more egalitarian, interactive metaphors to describe the activities of egg and sperm...we would still be guilty of endowing cellular entities with personhood. More crucial, then, than what kinds of personalities we bestow on cells is the very fact that we are doing it at all. This process could have the most disturbing social consequences” (Martin 501).

Due to its evolving nature in different cultures, language must be scrutinized and updated recurrently; hence, the continuing mechanism of this discipline can characterized as always evolving; which, of course, is a positive and negative thing (albeit this paper’s tone may suggest the latter which is unfortunate). Still, it is unlikely linguistic anthropologists will run out of areas to study and contribute. Because of the vast numbers of cultures in our world, and even the vast diversity one may see in his own “small” world, language’s causal relationships in cultures will always be rediscovered and then studied further. Linguistic Anthropologists may write for their field’s communities in ways that tackle norms and inequalities, or they might offer new ways to look at the importance of language in a primitive culture; nonetheless, all ways in which they contribute are similar in that they must be clear about the inquiry and provide data and analysis to justify it. Like Emily Martins and Jane H. Hill, they should add to their field’s inquiries and research that will matter and can be argued as being important and vital. Readers of essays written in this discipline should be able to acknowledge that the work they are reading serves a purpose in conveying some impact of language on the social and individual psyche.

Works Cited


Nicole Carreiro is presently a junior studying Anthropology and Journalism. She is originally from Fall River, Massachusetts and hopes to be a freelance journalist.
Robinson and Glover:
Two Different Times for Tap-Dancing in Hollywood Film

by Alice Gray

Abstract: Comparing the tap dancing of tap stars Bill ‘Bojangles’ Robinson and Savion Glover in the two Hollywood films Stormy Weather (1943) by Andrew Stone and Bamboozled (2000) by Spike Lee, calls for the analysis of each film’s historical context. There are race issues deeply embedded either in the political and social situation at the time the film was made, as is the case with Stormy Weather, or in the narrative of the film, as with Bamboozled. This article proposes that the markers for the evolution of tap have been closely aligned with the progress of African Americans in this country.

This paper was nominated for the Michael S. Roif Award in Film Studies.

Keywords: tap dancing, Hollywood film, (self-)representation of African Americans

TAP DANCING, an art grounded in African American culture, has moved from an upbeat style with its collection of steps that characterize the Jazz Age, such as the Charleston and the Stomp Time Step, to a style that better mirrors rap’s explosive rhythms and tendency towards synchronization. Much like African American music, tap-dancing’s evolution has been closely aligned with social progress and the slow breaking-down of stereotypes developed in the minstrel shows of the late 1800’s. The direct effects of racist stereotyping on tap-dancing are best observed in pre-1960’s Hollywood films because these films reached a wide, mostly white, audience and were financed and directed by Whites. Tap legend, Bill ‘Bojangles’ Robinson, the star of Stormy Weather (1943), was forced to funnel his talent through a colander of social prejudices set to White Hollywood’s liking, and these social confines are visible in his dancing in this film. It was not until the 1980’s that modern tap emerged in Hollywood as an energetic battle cry from young African American dancers who demanded respect for their art form by refusing to conform to stereotypes. The film Bamboozled (2000), directed by Spike Lee, contrasts modern-day tap to the old-school style. In it, Savion Glover performs both the funky, urban style in street scenes and the smiley, traditional style in modern-day minstrel shows recreated for the film. In order to demonstrate how early conformity with and later break away from stereotypes have fueled the formation
of two different generations of tap dancing, I will discuss historical context, and specifically the influence of minstrel shows on *Stormy Weather* and the 80’s tap revival on *Bamboozled*, before isolating and analyzing a scene from each film as representative of the two styles of tap-dancing.

*Stormy Weather*, by white director Andrew L. Stone, follows the story of Bill ‘Bojangles’ Robinson’s character (Bill Williamson) as he makes his way to the top in show business. Robinson stars in the film with other performers associated with American jazz culture of the time like Fats Waller, Cab Calloway and the Nicholas Brothers. This film not only brings together some of the great jazz artists of the time, it also pushes boundaries by being one of the first all-black Hollywood musicals, and by allowing the depiction of a romantic relationship between the two leading roles (Robinson and Lena Horne). Black entertainment was already a hot commodity, and it made sense to put African American talent on screen, especially when it came to tap-dancing. In a way Whites accredited Blacks as better performers when they eventually allowed them on stage rather than exclusively dressing themselves up in blackface as they had done when minstrel shows began. Fred Astaire himself once called Robinson the greatest tap dancer of all time (Bogle 84). In this ironic world, the minstrel show continued to degrade a race seen as inferior, even as black performers proved their talent as dancers and comedians.

*Bamboozled* on the other hand, with an African American director (Spike Lee), is the story of a T.V. screenwriter, Pierre Delacroix (Damon Wayans). He is encouraged, in a condescending manner, by his white boss to use his African American background to write material that will boost the station’s ratings. Pierre, offended, decides to present an idea so racist that it will get him fired. However, his suggestion of a new age minstrel show, once aired, starts a nation-wide frenzy to see more. It is easy to recognize the minstrel show scenes, in which Savion Glover’s character blacks out his already black face and performs satirical representations of old-school tap dancers, as motivation for the anger that drives the abrasive style of tap we also see him perform in street scenes. Behind the success of stereotyping in the entertainment industry is the audience, and Hollywood is always aware of its audience.

In the opening scene of *Stormy Weather*, Bill ‘Bojangles’ Robinson is tap dancing on a wooden porch out in the country, surrounded by five small black children happily doing Stomp Time Steps with him. Robinson has already been placed in circumstances in which contemporary white audience would have expected to see him. The set for this opening scene is very similar to the set constructed for the “New Millennium Minstrel Show” in *Bamboozled* with its typically southern plantation setting, wooden porch and vast cotton fields. The adorable children at Robinson’s feet are taken straight from a stereotype initiated by the minstrel shows which often employed cute black children labeled “Pickaninnies” whose main purpose in variety shows was to charm and delight (Bogle 7). While Glover performs a simulation of offensive stereotypes, for Robinson, these confining stereotypes were a reality, considering he himself got his start in show business as a Pickaninney (Haskins 43). Since the very beginning he was forced to
conform to Whites’ stereotypes in order to get work, and since the very beginning
*Stormy Weather* employs those stereotypes.

Author Donald Bogle remembers firsthand how clear it was that his race was
being falsely portrayed on the silver screen:

When I watched *Stormy Weather* with an all-black audience that openly mocked
the stereotypes on screen... or when I saw *The Birth of a Nation* with a black
audience that openly cheered for the black villains to defeat the white heroes [...] I knew I was seeing reactions far different from those that initially greeted these
[...] films and other black movies. (Bogle xi)

In *Stormy Weather* the characters that were ‘openly mocked’ by black audiences as Bogle
mentioned, were drawn directly from minstrel types and it is “The Coon” and the
“Uncle Tom” types that are most prominent in the film. “The Coon” served as comedic
relief by stressing his own inferiority (Bogle 8). “The Uncle Tom” stereotype was the
“Good Negro” in the sense that he was ready to please, loyal to his white master, and
satisfied with his place in society (Bogle 5). Together, these two stereotypes made
Whites feel good about themselves by providing reassurance that African Americans
were happy in their ‘place,’ willing and ready to entertain and too simple to merit more
humane treatment. From a modern point of view, it is striking how socially acceptable
the use of these stereotypes was in the 1940’s.

Comedian Tommy Davidson who plays a coon in the new-age minstrel show in
*Bamboozled*, expressed awe at the talent of his comedic predecessors even while they
mocked their own supposed inferiority: “...these brothers that were behind blackface
were talented... comedy skills, dramatic skills, they really gave a show, but the flow of
their material was geared towards putting themselves down, putting down who they
were, and making whites feel superior (Pollard and Robinson).” African American tap
dancers, as part of the variety acts featured in minstrel shows, suffered the same
constraints on their art form, and were bound to the expression of a single emotion,
happiness, and as long as political freedom for African Americans remained restricted,
so did their art forms. Tap dancing suffered a recession in the late 1950’s when hoofer
could no longer make a living by dancing were forced to take jobs such as bell
hops and bar tenders, and it eventually became more of an American pastime than an
active art form (Hill 252). It was not given the chance to truly thrive again until well
after the passage of the Civil Rights Act in the 1960’s.

Interest in tap dancing was rekindled in the 1980’s, and it gave rise to new forms
of the dance. African American artists were able to take advantage of new political
freedom, and to break out of the prison of stereotypes. Along with the emergence of a
hip-hop and rap boom, tap dancing changed and adapted to the times. With the success
of African American dancers like Alvin Ailey, came a new push by African American
tap dancers to be regarded as artists rather than purely as entertainers (Hill 246).
Harriet Jackson, a writer for *Dance Magazine*, described the 1980’s phenomenon as
artists “emerging from the minstrel-vaudeville cocoon” giving way to “the Negro
dancer and choreographer who no longer feels he must be confined to dancing ‘Negro Roles’ (246).” The movie Tap (1989) starring Gregory Hines put the reality of an evolution of mainstream tap on the big screen.

A young Savion Glover starred in Tap, and today has clearly developed into a modern-day product of the 80’s tap revival. Glover’s style is a grounded one as opposed to Robinson’s uplifted and uplifting dancing. Glover is less animated in the traditional vaudeville sense, and allows his dancing to express more than one emotion. In one particular scene from Bamboozled where his character has been thrown into a back alley for refusing to perform in blackface any longer, he runs at the door and, airborne, kicks it. When he lands he begins to pound furiously and rhythmically at the ground with his precise feet. This scene is a clear example of how tap, when given the freedom, can be used as a dynamic instrument to express emotions. In this case Glover’s character uses his art to express anger, something that would never have been allowed in a pre-Civil- Rights Hollywood film when white audiences did not want to see black entertainers expressing their discontent.

I chose one tap-dancing scene from each film to illustrate old-school and new-school forms in Hollywood. Both scenes involve makeshift stages and unconventional audiences. In the scene from Stormy Weather, Robinson’s character is working on a steamboat, trying to make his way south to Louisiana. He has just lain down for the night and announced that “there ain’t no money in the world can get me on my feet again... unlesnin’ this boat sinks” when he hears the sound of a traveling minstrel show practicing on deck. His feet begin to twitch, his eyes grow wide at the sound of the music and he is compelled by some inner force to find them and join them. His character’s audience, therefore, is made up of the members of the traveling minstrel show while Robinson’s audience remains Hollywood’s target audience, white America.

In the scene I selected from Bamboozled, Savion Glover’s character, Man Ray, is performing for change in the courtyard at the Lever Building off Park Avenue. We can see that Man Ray’s audience, the upper-class population working in downtown New York City, crowded around the courtyard, is mostly white. Glover’s audience is not meant to be a single race. By 2000, Bamboozled was Spike Lee’s fifteenth film and the director was already known for making movies, mostly controversial, about the African Americans’ experience in U.S. society (Pollard and Robinson, Pinkett). In other words, many of the people who see this film will do so because they are familiar with Lee’s work. The proportion of African American viewers is likely to be high because of the subject matter, but anyone of any color with either an intellectual interest in race issues or an appetite for Hollywood films is likely to be drawn to this film.

The set and costume for the steamboat scene from Stormy Weather are important for understanding how prevalent and socially acceptable the stereotyping of black people in film was in the 1940’s. All the black actors in this scene have supposedly appropriate occupations. There are the entertainers, dressed up in ill-fitting tuxedos, who dance, tell jokes, play music, and throw their bodies into violent spasms for the amusement of Whites. Then there is Robinson’s character whose job is to clean the boat. He is dressed in dingy clothes and a country hat, his sleeves rolled up. There are men
around him sleeping on the hard wood of the decks, and other men passing the time by
listening to the minstrel show practice. We understand this setting to be how white
people would have imagined 'a good time' among black people performing for each
other. The scene presents their manner of singing and dancing as hardly veering from
their presentations on the traditional stage. This shows how important it was for white
audiences to believe that the jolly performances they were used to, accurately reflected
the black entertainers’ satisfaction with their status in society.

In *Bamboozled*, Glover and Womack are also dressed in dingy clothes that suggest
poverty. Both men have five-o’clock shadows and wear gloves with the fingertips cut
out. The warm yellow hat on Womack’s head and the terracotta color of Man Ray’s
pants clash not only with the cold structure of the Lever Building, but also with the
black and white suits worn by their audience. This time there is a self-awareness about
the film that openly comments on the fact that these two men living on the streets are
both black. A major element of this film is its criticism not only of the history of the
representation of Blacks in American culture, but also its effects still present today in
television, art, sports, music and film. Spike Lee’s film rallies for a more keen awareness
of modern-day utilization of the leftovers of racist stereotypes. And in the same way,
Glover’s tap dancing breaks through these age-old stereotypes that used to constrain his
art form.

When we first see the all-black traveling minstrel boys in the scene from *Stormy
Weather*, they are in the middle of their routine. One young man who shakes his thick
lips and be bops at the same time is followed by a second young man who steals center
stage and uses his own voice to imitate the sound of a trumpet. Robinson’s character
ads the missing tap-dance sequence when he marches in and happily lays sand on the
planks beneath him to create a certain sound. The base violin, kazoo, ukulele, guitar,
washboard and drum set that make up the band, slow down to meet the tempo
Robinson sets with his steps. He begins with two bars of a traditional Buck and Wing
step then falls gracefully into a turn, dragging his foot along the planks made grainy by
the sand. His feet move fast and he bounces effortlessly with the music, smiling all the
while. Robinson’s arms stay at his side and his upper body is smooth as he verbally sets
up his next step and then moves into it “here’s one I stayed up all night tryin’ to do. Get
this.” The step is a combination of Scrapes, Slides, Taps and Shuffles done within the
frame of the familiar Time Step: a two bar pattern repeated three times and followed by
a “break” (Gray 111). The next three steps he performs follow the time step form and
they are all given a feminine edge reminiscent of the harmless Pickaninny type.

In the first step Robinson places one hand on his hip and turns in circles while
executing pivoting Toe-Heels. When he comes full circle his eyes are rolled back and he
is still sporting an ear-to-ear smile. The next step, a flapper-like version of the
Charleston, brings him forward and backward as he flings his heels out keeping his
knees together and his hands on his hips. The last Time Step ends in a finale that
involves the entire troupe gleefully jumping up and down to the sound of the kazoo as
it grows louder and louder. This scene is magnificent and energetic, its main aim being
to leave the viewer with a good feeling.
In the scene from *Bamboozled* at the Lever Building, Glover’s dance set begins in an almost menacing fashion. Before we even see him, we hear the sound of his steady heels pounding “one, two, a three and four” over and over again with intricate variations building each time on the last beats. When we finally see him, he is surrounded by a small crowd of mostly white business men and women, waiting in suspense for him to truly begin. When he does, it comes in a commotion of complex rhythms, and we hear him clicking his mouth and loudly breathing in rhythm with his feet. Glover hardly looks up and hardly smiles. What follows is not a one-dimensional use of talent for simple entertainment; it is a dynamic expression by Glover of himself and his genius. Throughout the dance sequence he keeps a deep base beat with his heels while he jumps around and makes lighter, more intricate sounds with his toes. His dancing, between spinning and dragging his toes, is a flurry of Cramp Rolls, elaborate Adlibs, multiple variations on Paddle and Rolls, Heel-clicks, Pullbacks, Stomps and Stamps. In the middle, his partner cleverly jumps in and shines his shoe in rhythm, craftily referencing an occupation traditionally held by African Americans, and conjuring up an image of a scene in *Stormy Weather*. In it, Robinson approaches his shoe-shiner friend and taps in rhythm to his friend’s shining cloth. Glover references the past again by ending with a traditional tap step, “Shave and a Haircut, Two Bits.”

Glover pays tribute to tappers who came before him by including this last step whose rhythm mirrors the jingle that give it its name. It still indicates the end to his routine, but it no longer has to come across as a final high note demanding that he freeze with a smile and open arms. Instead it can signal the ending, on a powerful note, of an emotional routine. The “Shave and a Haircut” step is a reminder that not only is Glover the embodiment of modern-day urban tap, he is also the keeper of an old American art form that nearly died out. Glover reveres the hoofers who came before him and acknowledges the African American role in stereotypes as “something that we did. It was us pretending to be someone who was pretending to be us (Pollard and Robinson, Glover).” As we have seen, the evolution of mainstream tap-dancing has been recorded in *Stormy Weather* and *Bamboozled*. Robinson’s style, with its femininity, predictable reliance on phrases like the time step, and loyalty to the singular expression of joy, clearly adheres to white Hollywood’s devotion to black stereotyping in the 1940’s. Glover on the other hand, refuses to mold to stereotypes, tapping with his head down rather than making eye-contact, and letting his legs go in all directions rather than keeping them contained and underneath him as Robinson does. Tap dancing was a nearly forgotten art form, but it survived because it evolved. Evolution, however, does not mean a complete break with the original dance and dancers. In order for a historically oppressed society to progress, it must first fully embrace its past. Glover embraces his talent and makes no apologies as he drills out complex rhythms of his own, and jazzes up traditional tap moves originated by hoofers from Robinson’s era.

Filmography


**Works Cited**


Alice Gray, originally from Austin, Texas, graduated with a Comparative Literature degree from UMass and decided to stay in the area. She works with the children of women with substance abuse problems at the Gracehouse in Northampton though writing is always on her mind.
Responding to Student Writing
Peer Response

There are many different ways to ask students to respond to each others’ writing. Most teachers use a mixture of

- sharing without response,
- supportive response, which helps a writer re-envision his or her essay, and
- evaluative peer editing with specific suggestions for improvement.

All models are useful and can help writers revise to improve their work; the type of response you ask for is best determined by the context of the essay itself and the stage in the writing process. The one constant in getting useful peer response from your student writers is to provide guidance and training in the kinds of reading and responding you expect them to do. Even though most students will have had some experience with peer sharing and responding in their first-year writing course at UMass, they still need some guidance. Teachers give this guidance in various ways. They conduct whole-class feedback exercises on just one or two papers to illustrate the kinds of responses that are helpful and not helpful. And they provide questions and criteria to guide the responders. With this guidance, teachers often assign some peer response activities for homework.

Excerpt from Peter Elbow & Patricia Belanoff, "A Community of Writers: Sharing & Responding" (McGraw Hill, 1995)

Here is an overview of eleven different and valuable ways of responding to writing – and a few thoughts about when each kind is valuable.

1. SHARING: NO RESPONSE.  Read your piece aloud to listeners and ask: "Would you please just listen and enjoy?" You can also give them your text to read silently, though you don't usually learn as much this way. Simple sharing is also a way to listen better to your own responses to your piece, without having to think about how others respond. You learn an enormous amount from hearing yourself read your own words--or from reading them over when you know that someone else is also reading them. No response is valuable in many situations: when you don't have much time, at very early stages when you just want to try something out or feel very tentative, or when you are completely finished and don't plan to make any changes at all--as a form of simple communication or celebration. Sharing gives you a non-pressured setting for getting comfortable reading your words out loud and listening to the writing of others.

2. POINTING AND CENTER OF GRAVITY.  Pointing: "Which words or phrases or passages somehow strike you? stick in the mind? get through?" Center of gravity: "Which sections somehow seem important or resonant or generative?" You are not asking necessarily for the main points but rather for sections or passages that seem to resonate or linger in the mind or are sources of energy. Sometimes a seemingly minor detail or example—even an aside or a digression—can be a center of gravity. These quick, easy, interesting forms of response are
good for timid or inexperienced responders—or for early drafts. They help you establish a sense of contact with readers. Center of gravity response is particularly interesting for showing you rich and interesting parts of your piece that you might have neglected but which might be worth exploring and developing. Center of gravity can help you see your piece in a different light and suggest ways to make major revisions.

3. SUMMARY. "Please summarize what you have heard. Tell me what you hear as the main thing and the almost-main things." (Variations: "Give me a phrase title and a one-word title—first using my words and then using your own words.") Say back: "Please say back to me in your own words what you hear me getting at in my piece, but say it in a somewhat questioning or tentative way—as an invitation for me to reply with my own restatement of what you've said." These are both useful at any stage in the writing process in order to see whether the reader "got" the points you are trying to get across. But say back is particularly useful at early stages when you are still groping and haven't yet been able to find what you really want to say. You can read a collection of exploratory passages for say back response. When readers say back they hear and invite you to reply. It often leads you to find exactly the words or thoughts or emphasis you were looking for.

4. WHAT IS ALMOST SAID? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO HEAR MORE ABOUT? Just ask readers those very questions. This kind of response is particularly useful when you need to develop or enrich your piece: when you sense there is more here but you haven't been able to put your finger on it yet. This kind of question gives you concrete substantive help because it leads your readers to give you some of their ideas to add to yours. Remember this too: what you imply but don't say in your writing is often very loud to readers but unheard by you—and has an enormous effect on how they respond. Extreme variation: Make a guess about what was on my mind that I didn't write about.

5. REPLY. Simply ask, "What are your thoughts about my topic? Now that you've heard what I've had to say, what do you have to say?" This kind of response is useful at any point but it is particularly useful at early stages. Ask for this kind of response even before you've written a draft; perhaps you jotted down some notes. You can just say, "I'm thinking about saying X, Y, and Z. How would you reply? What are your thoughts about this topic?" This is actually the most natural and common response to any human discourse. You are inviting a small discussion of the topic.

6. VOICE. (a) "How much voice do you hear in my writing? Is my language alive and human? Or is it dead, bureaucratic, unsayable?" (b) What kind of voice(s) do you hear in my writing?" Timid? Confident? Sarcastic? Pleading?" Or "What kind of a person does my writing sound like? What sides of me come through in my writing?" Most of all, "Do you trust the voice or person you hear in my writing? This kind of feedback can be useful at any stage. When people describe the voice they hear in writing, they often get right to the heart of subtle but important matters of language and approach. They don't have to be able to talk in technical terms ("You seem to use lots of passive verbs and nominalized phrases"); they can say, "You sound kind of bureaucratic and pompous and I wonder if you actually believe what you are saying."

7. MOVIES OF THE READER'S MIND. Ask readers to tell you honestly and in detail what is going on in their minds as they read your words. There are three powerful ways to help readers give you this kind of response: (a) interrupt their reading a few times and find out what's happening at that moment; (b) get them to tell you their reactions in the form of a story that takes place in time; and (c) if they make "it-statements" ("It was confusing"), make them translate these into "I-statements" ("I felt confused starting here about ... "). Movies of
the reader’s mind make the most sense when you have a fairly well developed draft and you want to know how it works on readers -- rather than when you’re still trying to develop your ideas. Movies are the richest and most valuable form of response, but they require that you feel some confidence in yourself and support from your reader because when readers tell you honestly what is happening while they are reading your piece, they may tell you that they don’t like it or even get mad at it.

8. METAPHORICAL DESCRIPTION. Ask readers to describe your writing in terms of clothing (e.g., jeans, tuxedo, lycra running suit), weather (e.g., foggy, stormy, sunny, humid), animals, colors, shapes, etc. This kind of response is helpful at any point. It gives you a new view, a new lens; it’s particularly helpful when you feel stale with a piece, perhaps because you have worked so long on it. Sometimes young or inexperienced readers are good at giving you this kind of response when they are unskilled at other kinds.

9. BELIEVING AND DOUBTING. Believing: "Try to believe everything I have written, even if you disagree or find it crazy. At least pretend to believe it. Be my friend and ally and give me more evidence, arguments, and ideas to help me make my case better." Doubting: "Try to doubt everything I have written, even if you love it. Take on the role of enemy and find all the arguments that can be made against me. Pretend to be someone who hates my writing. What would he or she notice?" These forms of feedback obviously lend themselves to persuasive essays or arguments, though the believing game can help you flesh out and enrich the world of a story or poem. Believing is good when you are struggling and want help. It’s a way to get readers to give you new ideas and in fact improve your piece in all sorts of ways. Doubting is good after you’ve gotten a piece as strong as you can get it and you want to send it out or hand it in---but first find out how hostile readers will fight you.

10. SKELETON FEEDBACK AND DESCRIPTIVE OUTLINE. Skeleton feedback: "Please lay out the reasoning you see in my paper: my main point, my subpoints, my supportive evidence, and my assumptions about my topic and about my audience." Descriptive outline: "Please write ‘says’ and ‘does’ sentences for my whole paper and then for each paragraph or section." A “says” sentence summarizes the meaning or message, and a “does” sentence describes the function. These are the most useful for essays. They are feasible only if the reader has the text in hand and can take a good deal of time and care--and perhaps write out responses. Because they give you the most distance and perspective on what you have written, they are uniquely useful for giving feedback to yourself. Both kinds of feedback help you on late drafts when you want to test out your reasoning and organization. But skeleton feedback is also useful on early drafts when you are still trying to figure out what to say or emphasize and how to organize your thoughts.

11. CRITERION-BASED FEEDBACK. Ask readers to give you their thoughts about specific criteria that you are wondering about or struggling with. "Is this section too long?" "Do my jokes work for you?" "Do you think I’ve addressed the objections of people who disagree?" And of course, "Please find mistakes in spelling and grammar and typing." You can also ask readers to address what they think are the important criteria for your piece. You can ask too about traditional criteria for essays: focus on the assignment or task, content (ideas, reasoning, support, originality), organization, clarity of language, and voice. You ask for criterion-based feedback when you have questions about specific aspects of your piece. You can also ask for it when you need a quick overview of strengths and weaknesses. This kind of feedback depends on skilled and experienced readers. (But even with them you should still take it with a grain of salt, for if someone says your piece is boring, other readers might
well disagree. Movies of the reader’s mind are more trustworthy because they give you a better picture of the personal reactions behind these judgments.

Sample Peer Response Activities

General peer edit
1. What stayed with you?
2. What did you like?
3. Was there a place you got lost?
4. What needs to be clarified?
5. What needs more detail?
6. Any other suggestions?

Peer edit guidelines for a synthesis paper
1. Can you easily identify the theme? Write down the thesis statement as you heard it.
2. Is the aim of the literature review clear to the listener? What would help?
3. Are the methods for conducting the literature review identified?
4. Are the issues in the 6 studies clearly identified? What does the author need to clarify to make it easier to understand?
5. What research methods were used to study the issues?
6. Were the results of the 6 studies presented in an understandable way?
7. What is the analysis of the literature review? Does that flow easily?

Peer edit for “End of Life/Elder care” paper
1. Is there an APA title page?
2. Is there an APA abstract?
3. Is there a “hook” first sentence to bring the audience in? What is it?

4. Identify the thesis statement: write it out here:

5. Is there a plan for the paper stated? What is it?

6. Are there topic sentences at the beginning of each paragraph that follow the plan?
   a. Is there evidence in the paragraph that supports the topic sentence?
   b. Is there a conclusion sentence in the paragraph that wraps up the topic?
   c. Is there a transition sentence to the next paragraph?

7. Were there new insights? Critical thinking? What were they?

8. How is the spelling? Punctuation? Grammar?

9. Are in-text sources correctly cited?

10. Is there a conclusion that wraps up the paper from the intro? Is there a call to action? Can you identify it?

11. APA reference sheet correct?

**Peer Grading Rubric for a Persuasive Paper**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Always……………..Seldom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title page</td>
<td>APA format</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>APA format</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intro.</td>
<td>Includes a hook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thesis statement is clear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plan of paper is stated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First ¶</td>
<td>Topic sentence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evidence to back the topic is clear and persuasive

Concluding sentence for paragraph

Transition sentence to next para.

Second ¶

Topic sentence

Evidence to back the topic is clear and persuasive

Concluding sentence for paragraph

Transition sentence to next para.

Third ¶

Topic sentence

Evidence to back the topic is clear and persuasive

Concluding sentence for paragraph

Transition sentence to next para.

Conclusion

Paraphrase of main points

Personal comment or call to action

Mechanics, spelling, grammar, punctuation, proofreading

Content, insights, thinking

APA in-text

APA reference list
Writing Conferences

Although time consuming, one of the best ways to help student writers is to make time to talk with them one-on-one about their work. Some faculty schedule required conferences once or twice a semester and meet with each student for 15-30 minutes each, depending on class size. Others require students to meet with them in office hours sometime during the drafting process. What most have found is that once a required conference is held, students are much more likely to bring a draft to an office hour even when not required.

The only rule of thumb about a writing conference is that it help the writer see other options for his or her work. In other words, the most effective discussions involve responding as a reader—asking questions where you are confused, highlighting areas that seem contradictory and explaining why—and asking the student about his or her draft and content: e.g., why certain choices were made in terms of sources or organization, what the main point is, what assumptions are made about audience, etc. Many times the answer will indicate where a problem area lay with the paper or can simply help the writer consider options, perspectives, and possible foci for revision they may not have considered. The least effective conferences are those where a teacher simply gives directions about how to “fix” the paper; in such cases, there is no need for the writer to be present.

The Writing Center is also a strong option to recommend to students; while the Center asks that you do not require students to attend, tutors are on-hand for such one-on-one conferencing throughout the week.
Teacher Feedback

Providing feedback to writers at many stages of the writing process is one of the most helpful things we do as writing teachers. Having another voice of response helps writers understand how a reader interprets what they say; having a more experienced responder (the teacher) helps writers see weaknesses, possible new avenues of thought and development, and consider options for organization, style, and logic that may not have occurred to them. For these reasons, it is useful to distinguish between evaluation and response. When we read an essay to evaluate it, we frequently assess it for what it does well and what it fails to do; when we read an essay to respond, we assess in a similar way, but our comments are best focused on what can be done rather than what is not present. While the former certainly implies the latter, the difference is much about style and tone as we try to offer choices, ask questions, and provide feedback that puts the responsibility for revision in the writer’s hands. Comments written on a final draft will typically include both evaluation and response; feedback to early drafts are usually focused on response.

Responding Techniques: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Positive Responding Strategies (“The Good”)

Good comments help writers not only understand their problems with a specific text but also develop strategies and a critical approach that can be used in future writing situations. Since there is no one set formula for these types of comments, each instructor needs to articulate a conscious rationale and philosophy for commenting in the way he or she does. In other words, many different types of comments can work as long as you understand why you comment in the way you do and how you believe these comments will help students in the future.

Good comments usually include the following characteristics:

- A reflective and clear rationale for order and content of comments
- A positive orientation (i.e., a balance between advice and positive feedback)
- A style that directly addresses the writing rather than the writer (e.g., "the paper fails to connect short and long term goals," rather than "you forgot to connect short and long term goals.")
- A focus not on what is "wrong" but on what readers need for the paper to be effective (e.g., "readers need more supporting evidence for this claim.")

Marginal vs. End Comments

Marginal comments refer to those you write either in the margins or directly in the
text of a paper, whereas an end comment refers to the usually more lengthy comment at the end of the work. The physical positioning of each type of comment allows you to provide different types of feedback. That is, marginal comments are more suited to feedback on specific sections of the text, while end comments are usually saved for more global concerns affecting the entire essay.

**Marginal Comments**

Characteristics of good marginal comments include the following:

**Responding as a Reader**: You experience the reading as a person, not necessarily as a teacher. In other words, your primary concern is reading, not evaluating.

Examples:

- "You do a great job in this section of explaining hybridization in terms your audience will understand. Well done!"
- "I get a little lost right now. Tell how this information relates to what you just said about pesticide usage."
- "Here you seem to think it's important for the firm to invest in expansion and remodeling instead of securities. Explain why."

**Filling Gaps**: To help students revise and develop a critical sense, comments sometimes ask for further exploration and can refer to content, organization, or even grammar and word choice.

Examples:

- "The paper talks about rural societies on the last page and brings them up again here. If there is a reason for organizing it this way, make that reason more explicit for the reader."
- "Tell why."
- "Tell how you think this youth development program should be implemented and who would oversee it."
- "Define what you mean by 'digestive difficulty' here."

Note: All of the comments above can also be worded as questions. If overused or not worded carefully, however, questions can be interpreted as belittling (especially questions to which the writer surely knows the answer but failed to include it). Careful attention to tone can avoid this.

**Noting Patterns**: Although our first tendency as graders is to mark every error we see, this is overwhelming for the writer. It is more helpful to note patterns in organization or grammar. It is usually best to explain an error the first time it occurs and merely to note its recurrence at other points in the paper. Obviously, you can't do this for every
error. Note the one(s) that seem to intrude most on the reader's ability to read the paper smoothly. Students should know that you are not their proofreader and don't mark every error.

Examples:

- "Here ‘were,’ not ‘was,’ is the correct form because your subject, 'products,’ is plural. Look for other times where I've underlined your verbs."
- "Here there are two sentences joined by 'however.' When this occurs, you need a semicolon before the however and a comma after it. Look for other instances of this."

**End Comments**

Characteristics of good end comments include the following:

**Positive Comments:** First, identify the paper's strengths.

**Priorities:** Do not try to comment on everything negative. Limit your criticisms to a few key concerns so students aren't overwhelmed. Because your goal here is to give students enough guidance to apply their learning to revising both this paper (short-term goal) and other papers they write (long-term goal), focus on one or two main strengths and areas for improvement.

**Specific Suggestions:** Offer suggestions on how the student might address the concerns mentioned above.

**Notation of Patterns:** Note patterns here if you have not already done so in the margins.

**Suggestions about Resources:** Point out resources the student can refer to and/or invite him/her to come and see you if possible. Resources might include The LAIS Writing Center, peers, yourself, a grammar handbook, or a content-specific reference.

Examples:

**STRENGTHS:** Good work, Jim. You have gathered together a significant amount of evidence to show readers that nuclear energy can be much safer than they have been led to believe. Also, you have done a fine job of acknowledging the opposing arguments and of providing counter arguments in most cases. Overall, a fine essay — well organized, well researched, and thorough in many aspects.

**AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:** Readers will need additional explanation or evidence in certain sections of the paper, such as on (see marginal comments) p. 2, 4, and 5. Development of these sections would further assuage the common fears associated with nuclear energy production and storage. Overall, Jim, this is a fine essay, the strongest you've written all semester. Good work!
Negative Responding Strategies ("The Bad" and "The Ugly")

Negative responding strategies offer little concrete direction for the writer and may exist simply to justify a grade.

Characteristics of Negative Responding include the following:

- Vagueness
- A focus only on surface-level features of writing (i.e., grammar, syntax)
- A lack of advice for improvement
- Unexplained coding schemes (e.g., "awk," "ww," "frag")
- A tendency to mark every error
- Knee-jerk reactions to annoying features (e.g., typos)
- A lack of feedback on good papers
- A sarcastic or demeaning tone

Here are some one-line instructor end comments seen on actual papers:

- "There are way too many spelling mistakes in this paper."
- "You need more analysis."
- "Very good. A."
- "This isn't even English. You need to learn grammar."

Acknowledgment: This resource was adapted from materials developed by Donna LeCourt and Pam Antos for use in the Ohio State University Writing Center.
Evaluating
Student Writing
High Stakes and Low Stakes Evaluation of Writing

By Peter Elbow

In this essay I suggest two ways to make the grading of writing easier, fairer, and more helpful for students: the use of minimal grades or fewer levels of quality--not only for low stakes writing but also for high stakes writing; and the use of criteria in which we spell out the features of good writing that we are especially looking for in any given assignment.

No matter how well we write comments in words, in the end we are always stuck with the quantitative question: "But what grade did I get?" For students, the grade usually overshadows the comment. Even teachers tend to use the phrase "grade a set of papers," when really they will spend far more time on commenting than grading. I have always known that students were anxious about grades. I had not realized until recently how many teachers were anxious and full of misgivings about grades. I am relieved to discover I'm not the only one.

Till now I have tended to feel that the problem with grades is their quantitative or numerical nature. But my misgivings and perplexity have finally led me to roll up my sleeves and dive into the dangerous element itself and focus on exactly that dimension. My point in this essay then is that we need to think harder about grades in their nitty-gritty quantitativeness--to be more analytical, even algebraic about them. If my approach seems "hard" and literally calculating, I think you will see that my goals are nevertheless "soft": a more generative, supportive, and less adversarial atmosphere for learning and teaching.

High Stakes and Low Stakes Grading

I am assuming here (like most teachers, surely) that we need to demand high stakes writing in all college courses and take it seriously. We can't tell whether students really understand what we are teaching unless we see their writing (or have extended conferences with them), so their writing must play a significant part in determining their final grade. But then comes the grading of high stakes writing! It's so difficult. It causes such doubts and worries. We feel so bad when we think about students who may know the material but can't demonstrate it in writing because of their anxiety or lack of skill. And what about the ones who somehow "show" an undeniable understanding, yet their writing is undeniably awful? And in the back of our minds may lurk misgivings about our own writing skills. And how much do we grade down for awful writing? For lack of clarity? For mistakes in spelling and grammar? And since high stakes writing counts for a lot, students often argue with us about our grading of it--which is doubly hard to take when we don't feel so secure in making these fine-grained distinctions with pluses and minuses up and down the scale from A to F. In short, high stakes grading makes for perplexity and anxiety.
What can we do about it? Let's do what we usually do when things get hard in grading. Let's stop and get up and walk around and do something else. Maybe it'll be easier when we come back.

That, in fact, is my serious strategy here. I think I will be able to offer some help on high stakes grading if I drop it and circle around for a while and then come back.

Let's concentrate for a while on low stakes writing. The widespread use of low stakes writing in writing intensive courses has led to what I would call low stakes grading. Such grading is often the result of certain pragmatic pressures. That is, faculty who use writing for learning are often not writing teachers and they are often dealing with large classes that are not defined as writing courses. Thus, these faculty often feel they cannot grade the writing carefully or elaborately--and they don't feel obliged to do so since the pieces of writing don't count for so much. In this situation teachers have used a variety of what might seem like unconventional ways of grading:

- Sometimes teachers use a binary scale (pass/fail, satisfactory/no credit, check/minus).
- Sometimes they use three levels (excellent/ ok/ no credit or strong/ satisfactory/ weak)
- Sometimes they simply consider the assignment acceptable if it is turned in.
- Sometimes teachers don't even collect some of these pieces of writing-to-learn. That is, they often ask students to free write at the beginning of class about the homework reading for the day, or to write at the end of the class about the day's discussion or lecture, or to write in the middle of a class about an issue that has come up (especially when a discussion goes dead).
- And very often teachers don't make any comments at all on this writing.

The most obvious advantage of this low stakes grading--I call it "minimal grading"--is pragmatic: it makes life easier for us. It's much less onerous to read student writing when the grade is quick and easy to give and we don't have to comment on it. But there are also advantages for student learning.

A low stakes or minimal grading scheme may not give students an incentive to strive for an A for excellence (though we get a bit of this incentive if we use a three-level scale). But the tradeoff is that we get to ask students to write far more than if we had to grade everything carefully. We get to ask them to think actively about far more of the course material. They have to answer the questions, get their thoughts into writing--yet they don't have worry so much about whether they are getting it just right, or writing in the way that the teacher likes, or saying what the teacher agrees with.

Motivation. Grading is often defended as a source of motivation. But when students struggle for excellence only for the sake of a grade, what we see is not motivation but
the atrophy of motivation: the gradual decline of the ability to work or think or wonder under one's own steam. Low stakes grading, however, helps students gradually develop a bit of genuine or intrinsic motivation—to develop some of their own curiosity and standards. They get a time out from their habitual and understandable preoccupation with "What is my teacher looking for? What are my teachers' standards?" but rather, "What do I think? What am I looking for? What is interesting to me? What are my standards?" Of course students nurtured in a grading economy often need some extrinsic motivation to get them to work. But that's exactly what low stakes grading provides. Students have to do the writing and engage the material, but they have a lot of choice about how to do it. This provides small protected spaces for gradually developing small bits of intrinsic motivation. And of course they still have some high stakes assignments graded in a high stakes way—assignments where we provide most of the motivation. (I've written more in the introduction to this volume about the advantages of low stakes writing.)

Before going on, let me add an important point of strategy about introducing low stakes grading at the start of a course. For the first few low stakes pieces, I find it helpful to use a two-level scheme such as pass/fail or satisfactory/no credit. That is, I seek a middle ground between using three levels (with its possibility for distinction), and not grading at all (where I accept anything they turn in or don't even collect their writing). If I start with a three point grading scale, too many students become too preoccupied with getting that "strong" or "excellent" and thus with trying to figure out what I "want." They fall back into writing for the grade instead of writing for learning. If on the other hand I accept anything they write or don't even collecting their writing, I fall into the opposite problem: I exert no pressure at all on students to engage the issues and thereby tempt students who have never done this kind of writing not to try at all.

My strategic decision to start with two-level grading illustrates my overall goal in using low stakes grading. I am trying to teach students an important skill that is surprisingly hard for many of them: the ability to write about a topic with their mind focused entirely on the issues, and not on how their writing will be judged by a grader. Almost all students have a hard time focusing their attention wholeheartedly on an academic topic because they so naturally associate writing with high stakes grading, and thus are distracted by questions of how the teacher will grade ("What is s/he looking for?") and with questions of style and quality. As a result they are unable to focus all their attention on thinking and exploring a topic as they write. Consequently they have not experienced the satisfaction or even pleasure of writing seriously about an academic topic.

After they have done three to five pieces of low stakes writing graded on a two-level scheme—that is, with a great deal of leeway but still a threat of no credit for goofing off—I can move my low stakes grading in two directions if I want. I can start doing some low stakes writing in class that I don't even collect—and trust that they will make good academic use of the time. And I can start also using a three level scale and trying to
pushing them harder with the reward of excellence--without it just leading to clenching and hyper-attention to "what I want" and "style." In effect I can begin to have a spectrum of gradations from low to high stakes writing. But in fact I often stick with the simplicity of two-level grading.

A few students are confused at first by this dialectic between low stakes and high stakes grading. Despite my explanations and warnings, they are caught off balance the first time I use high stakes grading on a high stakes essay. They assume that because I started off with low stakes grading for a number of assignments, I was a "low stakes kind of a guy." They are used to pigeon holing teachers as either high or low stakes--either hard or soft. I find I have to be extremely explicit and even repetitive to help them realize that this whole approach enacts a dialectic. Indeed I like to bring in the word "dialectic" and talk about the psychological and intellectual benefits of unresolved contraries. But sometimes I do better with the bluntness of saying, "Perhaps you better think of my grading policy as schizophrenic."

Untangling Two Major Variables in Grading: Stakes and Levels

We tend to associate low stakes grading with the use of levels such as pass/fail. Thus if we want to raise the stakes and want students to strive harder, we assume we should grade on more levels: conventional A through F grades feel more serious and make the writing seem to matter more.

But these are mistaken assumptions. We can grade low stakes assignments with multiple levels; plenty of teachers use conventional A-through-F grades on low stakes pieces. And we can grade high stakes writing assignments with few levels. For example, at MIT for the last twenty years or so, faculty have given nothing but the final grades of "pass" and "fail" to all first year students in all their courses. The stakes are very high indeed and so are the standards, but only two levels are used.

The important strategic point here is that stakes and levels are quite different. We will have a much better time grading high stakes assignments if we untangle these two quite separate variables or dimensions of grading--two different questions:

. How much credit is at stake in this performance?
. How many levels or grades shall I use on my evaluation scale?

It is indeed true that if we add more levels we add more opportunity for the recording of excellence: more opportunity for students to distinguish themselves, to excel, to surpass others or be surpassed--more competition, more pecking-order. But giving students a chance to have excellence noted and recorded is not enough to make all students strive. The chance to get an A rather than a Pass will only make students work harder if a number of other conditions are satisfied:

. The stakes have to be high enough to make it worth trying. Why work hard for an "A" if it has very little effect on your final grade? (A few students work hard for a low
stakes A, but most of those are working because they are interested in the topic or want to learn a lot—not just because there is the possibility of an A rather than a Pass.)

. Even if the stakes are high students have to think it’s possible to get A’s and therefore worth their effort. Not a few students feel A’s out of their reach and so are too discouraged to try hard. Plenty of these students will feel more incentive to work hard if there are fewer levels in grading. That is, some discouraged students will work harder for a demanding "pass" or a "strong" than for the B-minuses or C-pluses they are accustomed to getting--grades which they experience as a put-down. Because a simplified 2- or 3-level grading scale is less invidious to less skilled students, it sometimes is better for coaxing effort out of them.

. Finally there are students who know they can get A’s, but they don’t care enough to work for them. I believe there are many more of these skilled nonstrivers than appearances might suggest. Many students settle for doing remarkably undistinguished work because of conditions in their lives or because of their feelings about the course. It's amazing what good work almost any student does when he or she really works hard under supportive conditions. (There are many cases of students wrongly accused of plagiarism because their teachers didn't think they were capable of such good work.)

In short, increasing the number of levels in our grading scale is an uncertain engine for making students work harder. But it is a certain engine for making us work harder. That is, more levels mean more decisions to make--decisions which are by the same token harder to make because they are more fine-grained and therefore more debatable. And by making more fine-grained decisions, we are by the same token providing students with more occasions to dispute and resent these very decisions that were hard to make ("What do you mean B-minus? That was a solid B!").

But if instead of assuming that we have to use a conventional A-through-F scale for any high stakes essay, we think more strategically about the use of both variables in grading--stakes and levels--we can make students strive harder for excellence yet not increase our work much or at all, and not create so many opportunities for students to resent or quarrel with our grade. This will help keep down the adversarial spirit around grading.

Thus we need to consider carefully the range of options we actually have at our disposal in grading high stakes assignments:

. While raising the stakes, we can keep the number of levels at a minimal two (e.g., satisfactory/unsatisfactory)--and at the same time raise the threshold between the levels. This higher demand feels natural and appropriate when the stakes are higher.

. While raising the stakes, we can raise the number of levels only to three (e.g.,
strong/satisfactory/weak). This will push students much harder, but increase our work only a little.

Some teachers go up to four levels (e.g., poor/fair/good/excellent). This gives us a lot more work than three levels--more occasions for disagreement or resentment by students. I wonder if the trade-off is worth it. But even four levels doesn't require nearly as much work from us--as many discriminations into levels--as using the conventional A-F grading scale (especially if we use pluses and minuses).

I'm suggesting then that when we have to grade high stakes essays, we put the emphasis on the fact that we have raised the stakes--and realize that we don't have to use the multiple levels of conventional grades. These pragmatic considerations are particularly important if we are teaching a large class. If we are looking at a big stack of papers, consider the difference between giving each one a conventional grade from A to F versus just having to pick out the ones that are notably strong or notably weak.

I imagine two quarrels with my line of thought. (1) "What you are suggesting isn't much different--or easier--than what we do now. Most of us only use a few out of the ten or so possible levels." But it is exactly this restricted use of the grading scale that has exacerbated two problems we see all around us: grade inflation and the fact that no one knows what conventional letter grades mean. A general principle from linguistics states what we already know: the more widely used a symbol is, the more widely divergent and ambiguous its meanings will be. B, for example, has become an almost empty term. In some teachers' hands it means "good strong competent work"--after all, B is an honors grade in most colleges and universities; in the hands of others it means "somewhat disappointing, second order work"; and for many students it means "unsatisfactory." (And even a restricted range of grades from A-minus to C-plus means having to choose among five levels.)

(2) "It sounds childish or amateur to use grade school words like weak, strong, poor, satisfactory, excellent. It isn't fitting for higher education." But I find these homely words a vast improvement because of their clearer meanings--instead of standard grades that lead to such misinterpretation.

Besides (and I have left until the end what is probably the biggest argument), why go to the trouble of trying to distinguish between a B and a B-minus--much less a B and a C--giving ourselves more work and our students more occasions for argument--when the resulting grades lack not just meaning but fairness. Careful research has demonstrated over and over again what common sense has told us and what our students have learned through experiments with submitting the same paper to different teachers: good teachers and evaluators routinely disagree widely with each other over levels of more than a full grade. Fine-grained evaluations of writing cannot be trusted. If we use only two or three levels, we vastly reduce the untrustworthiness simply by sorting performances into fewer boxes.
"How Can I Calculate a Regular Final Grade if I Have Nothing But Minimal Grades to Work With?"

This problem brings up a third important variable in grading: the number of assignments we grade. It is certainly true that if we only have two or three graded assignments, and they are graded on only two or three levels, then we are in trouble when we try to calculate the final grade for the course. But if we have lots of grades--which is easy with lots of low stakes assignments--then the final grade is no problem.

Take an extreme example. Suppose we have a course with weekly low-stakes writing assignments judged on a two level scale, two high-stakes essays judged on a three level scale, and a conventional final exam judged on three or four point scale. (It's not so hard or unreliable to use four levels for an exam if the exam contains multiple answers.) One easy way to calculate the final course grade here would be as follows: students who have a "satisfactory" on all the low-stakes pieces start off with a foundation of B. Then the two high stakes essays and the exam determine whether their B gets raised or lowered. In effect, students who keep up satisfactory work on the extensive weekly reflections on the course material start off with the presumption of a B and are pulled up if they manage to distinguish themselves on the high stakes pieces--or pulled down if they do badly. Students who have some unsatisfactory low-stakes pieces--who don't keep up with the weekly reflections on course material--start off from a lower foundation, and they are similarly pulled up or down by their high stakes work.

This formula gives quite a lot of emphasis to the low stakes assignments: individually, their weight is low, but in sum they count for a lot. I want my students to take these pieces seriously--that is, to work hard but not in a worrying way. Not everyone will agree with my priorities here, but there are obviously other formulas one could use for this situation--more sophisticated ones. I just want to illustrate in the simplest way my point for this section: we can easily derive a maximum-level final grade from minimum-level constituent grades. (Notice I didn't even talk about other factors which many of us feel are important ingredients in calculating a final grade: attendance, participation, effort, and improvement.) In short, using more writing assignments doesn't just help students learn the material, it also makes it easier for us to compute final grades.

Portfolios. Portfolios can be a big help in calculating a conventional final grade while still using minimal grading for individual performances. A portfolio system makes it natural to use minimal grades even on high stakes essays because those initial high-stakes grades are, in a sense, conditional. The essays will show up again in the portfolio at the end when it comes time to calculate the final course grade--this time using the conventional scale of grades. Portfolios thus permit us to wait until we have a rich collection of many pieces of writing before having to make our final judgment on the scale from A to F.

Portfolios are particularly useful for enhancing learning. They invite us to get students to look back over all their work for the course and reflect on what they have learned--
and even to analyze their learning process--because the most important piece in a portfolio is the reflective essay about the contents of the portfolio. Low stakes assignments create much more learning if you ask students to gather them all together at the end and articulate the most important insights they have gained--both about the course material and about their processes of learning, thinking, and writing. (See Fulwiler's suggestion in this volume for a portfolio of letters written throughout the course.) Low stakes writing provides students a good window for reflecting on their own habits of thinking and using language. Readers who want to open the door into the rich literature on portfolios can start with the Belanoff and Yancey collections. I love the way portfolios permit me to invite students to put some of their low stakes writing into the final high stakes pot--a satisfying thing to do since some of their low stakes writing is often very good.

Portfolios are probably not so feasible for very large classes. You can't even carry one hundred portfolios back to your office. But in a large class, it is perfectly feasible to ask students to write that final paper that articulates their most important learning and reflects on or analyzes all the writing they have done in the course. Many teachers find it helpful to ask students to suggest their final grade in this final essay of self-analysis.

Contracts for grading. I tend to use a grading contract ("If you do x, y, and z, you will get such and such a grade."). A contract makes it downright easy to come up with a conventional final grade--even though I give only the most minimal grades on their writing over the course of the semester. I think I can create more learning by trying to figure out what activities and behaviors will lead to learning and specifying them in a contract than by trying to make dubious, fine-grained judgments about the quality of student work. If I can make a good contract by figuring out things to ask for that get students to throw themselves into their work, I know I have promoted a lot of learning. On the other hand, even if I do a "good job" in giving conventional grades to a set of papers (and I'm not sure any more what that means), I'm not sure I have promoted much learning.

Notice, by the way, that conventional grading is an indirect way to try to get students to work hard: we hope they will work when we hold out rewards or punishments for the product of their work. But this doesn't always work; there are quite a few students that our grading doesn't coax hard work out of. A contract permits me to be direct about it and simply specify openly the work or behaviors that I think are important. (See the appendix for a sample contract.)

Criteria for Grading

When students ask the inevitable question, "What are you looking for on this paper?" I want to say, "Oh I don't know. Just surprise me with something wonderful." When students ask us why they got an unsatisfactory, I want to say (with Louis Armstrong), "If you've got to ask, you'll never know." But those answers don't work too well. If we grade, we have to try to articulate publicly the criteria behind our grades.
The criteria for low stakes assignments don't usually cause problems. But still we need some clarity. For low stakes assignments, teachers tend to look for criteria that are easy to apply—so that papers can be quickly graded with no head scratching—and in the case of large classes, even perfunctorily checked. Here is a typical handout of the criteria for weekly "think pieces." To be Acceptable the piece must be at least 750 words. You don't have to be right in everything you say about the course material, and you don't have to have a unified essay with a single point. But you must seriously wrestle with or engage the week's homework reading and the topic or issue that I specify. Informal, colloquial writing is fine, but it must be clear to me as reader. Handwriting is acceptable—even a few scratch-outs with new words or phrases written in—as long as the piece is neat enough to make it genuinely easy to read.

One could add other features to the criteria: for example, that students quote a passage from the reading and work with the quote; or that students be more or less right in what they say about the reading—or at least not badly wrong. (This criterion would require more careful reading by the teacher.) One could ask that pieces have a main point or be unified, but students often sacrifice genuine exploratory thinking when they are trying to make everything "fit a thesis."

In low stakes grading we can get away with some flexibility in criteria: we can slip the bar up and down a bit depending on the student. That is, we can easily insist that a skilled and well prepared student do a better job for Satisfactory than an unskilled student with a weak background who is trying hard and improving. When the stakes are low, students aren't likely to notice or to mind this kind of flexibility, as long as we make it possible for all students to get a Satisfactory without inordinate effort. (For I don't want to push students so hard on low stakes pieces that we lose the essential benefit: that we don't have to work too hard, and that students get to take chances, take risks, explore, do it their own way—yet do the work and engage the material.)

The criteria for high stakes assignments, however, can become a high stakes matter. That is, even though using fewer levels makes grading or sorting easier and more trustworthy—since the fewer the levels, the fewer the bars we have to set, the fewer the piles we have to sort papers into, and hence the fewer the occasions for uncertainty or argument or "wrong" decision—nevertheless, if the stakes are high there will be anxiety and potential argument around where we set those fewer bars or borderlines: between satisfactory and not satisfactory—or between satisfactory and excellent. So how do we decide how high to place the bar? How do we figure out exactly what we mean by "a satisfactory essay" or "an excellent essay"? What is good writing? Acceptable writing? This is where we get into head-scratching with ourselves, unpleasant arguments with students, and honest disagreement with colleagues.

Here's where we have to think hard about criteria. But this doesn't mean we have to make our lives impossible—especially if we are teaching a large class that doesn't center on writing. There is a traditional and crude distinction between Form and Content that actually works quite well (despite some criticism of it as old fashioned or even
theoretically suspect). For example one can explain one's criteria for a high stakes essay as follows: "I will grade on a three level scale, Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory, Excellent, and I will count roughly two thirds for content and one third for form. By "content" I mean saying valid and interesting things about the course material."

But we use more detail if we want. We can split Content into, say: -Accuracy with the material we are studying and -Good thinking or reasoning. We can also split Form into: -Clarity and -Mechanics. Or we can specify criteria that are more particular to the assignment-intellectual operations that are central for different assignments. Perhaps one essay centers on analysis, another on persuasion--or research, or applying course concepts to new instances.

Spelling out criteria doesn't mean we have to explain in a comment on each paper exactly why it got the grade it got. It's when we don't spell out criteria that we have the most obligation to spell out individual reasons for individual verdicts. If our criteria are complicated in any way, we explain and describe them in a handout. (Nor does this obligation to think about grading criteria mean that history or biology faculty have to talk like writing teachers. Students do better if we use simple everyday language about writing, using words like "clear" or "tangled," rather than technical "English teacher" terminology.)

Simply to spell out our criteria in public--in class or on a handout--is far better than what happens with most grading, namely leaving the criteria tacit and mysterious. When we spell out criteria in public, we usually grade more fairly. That is, when we articulate and think about our criteria, we are not so likely to be unduly swayed if one particular criterion or feature in the writing is terribly weak or strong. (Research shows that teachers tend to get annoyed by papers that are full of mistakes in usage and full of nonstandard dialect, and consequently overlook virtues in content or reasoning in such papers.)

But the principle of minimal levels comes to our rescue here to show us that it is not in fact so difficult to do what is really most valuable: to give students individual feedback on their high stakes essays in terms of the criteria we are using. For just as it isn't hard to read through papers and merely pick out ones that are notably weak or notably strong, so it isn't hard merely to note if an essay is notably weak or strong on the criteria we have named as important. Thus the "grade" on the high stakes paper might look like this: COURSE CONTENT: excellent; THINKING: excellent; CLARITY: satisfactory; MECHANICS: satisfactory; OVERALL: excellent.

When we give this kind of feedback (and let me stress that we can grade adequately without doing so--especially in a huge class), notice that we are not bound to calculate the final overall grade on the paper by pure arithmetic. Most of us, for example, will decide that the content criteria count more than the form ones. This approach is clearer and fairer because it tells students the basis of our grade. By noting strengths and weaknesses on a crude scale on multiple criteria, we give far more meaning and clarity
to three-level grades than students get from a ten-level conventional grades. Yet doing so is easier than trying to figure out that conventional grade—and it permits us if the class is very large to get away without writing a verbal comment. In fact, these crude notations on criteria are often more helpful than most verbal comments.

But perhaps even more valuable, students at last get some substantive feedback on what they did well or badly. Yes, most students will probably get Satisfactory, but these students benefit a great deal from knowing which dimensions of their paper were notably weak or strong. And the students with Unsatisfactory definitely benefit from more particular feedback—not just from having their most egregious sins named, but just as important, from getting some encouragement by seeing that not everything was unsatisfactory.

Notice a crucial principle here: criteria for grading really involve two dimensions. First, there is the vertical dimension: how high will we put the borderlines between pass and fail or between strong, satisfactory, and weak, or between the letters of conventional grades? And second, there is the horizontal dimension: what features are we going to count or evaluate (e.g., content, applying concepts to new instances, etc.)?

This distinction between the vertical and horizontal dimension of grading criteria may be the most productive thing to understand when it comes to high stakes grading. As with stakes and levels, these two dimensions are often tangled together, but they are different and can be manipulated separately. Most of the difficulties in grading occur in the vertical dimension. Everything works better for us and our students if we put less emphasis on it and instead emphasize the horizontal dimension. Conventional grading from A to F emphasizes the problematic vertical dimension: making fine-grained distinctions as to pure undifferentiated, unarticulated quality—and that's where all the disagreement and argument and unfairness come in. It's extremely difficult and problematic to describe levels of quality. (For an A, on this paper, "really good" is not good enough; it has to be "really really good"?) It's much easier and more educationally productive to describe the multiple features or dimensions that one is looking for in good writing (or any kind of learning) than to make simpler, cruder verdicts about quality.

In short when we really give a serious answer to the question of criteria—to "what we are looking for in quality"—we see that there is a clear choice in the evaluation process. We can emphasize the vertical dimension. This means making a single difficult evaluative verdict along a single undifferentiated scale that has multiple fine gradations. Or we can emphasize the horizontal. This means figuring out what one is looking for and then making multiple simpler, cruder evaluative verdicts on multiple criteria.

**The Killer Criterion: Mechanics or Grammar and Spelling**

In trying to deal with this disputed criterion, I find it helpful to distinguish between
correctness and clarity. My position is that we can and should insist that students achieve both, but in different ways. That is, if students are writing in a high stakes situation where they cannot take time or get help (such as on an exam), it seems to me nevertheless fair to demand that they be able to explain the concepts or operations of history or biology clearly and readably in writing, but not to demand that they be able to avoid grammatical and spelling mistakes in this writing. An exam essay can be clear and readable and still have awkward or ungainly or unidiomatic sentences and quite a few mistakes in grammar and spelling. If the essays or answers on an exam like that are excellent, I'd grade it Excellent. But if the language is so tangled as to be genuinely unclear, then that seems to me to hold the grade down. (And for low stakes pieces they write at home, I also insist on a certain minimal level of clarity but not correctness.)

But for high stakes assignments that they do at home--where they can get help--I believe it makes sense to ask not just for clarity but for correctness too. Even from students whose first language is something other than English or a dialect of English. The truth is that most writers get help in revising and copy editing when a piece of writing matters. Some get it from friends; some pay for it. I want to push my students to get this help. It's most obvious that ESL and dialect speakers need to learn how to get the help they need so as not to hand in writing that will put them at a disadvantage. But in fact these students tend to be aware of their need for help in copy editing. It's the native speakers of standard English who need to have the tough criterion strictly enforced--and often feel that it is unfair to do so.

(But let's not be fussy in our standards for correctness. Notice that the sentence italicized above is strictly speaking a "fragment"; it lacks a verb. But it's the kind of fragment that is pretty well accepted in published writing now.)

I'm making two distinctions here. First, I'm distinguishing between clarity and correctness. Clear writing, clear explanations: these are plenty hard to achieve. We will be more successful in demanding them if we don't get them mixed up with correctness.

Second, I'm distinguishing between achieving correctness with and without help. I don't think we can demand correctness without help, but surely we do want to insist vehemently that all students be able to get their writing correct with whatever kind of help they need. They have to do whatever is necessary to turn in clean copy, and they won't do it unless we make it a condition for credit.

But these are arguable matters and people take different approaches. For example, some teachers who take a more lenient stand say that you can get a satisfactory paper if there are lots of mistakes but not an excellent one.

**Conclusion**

There are two important principles I want to emphasize: (1) That there is a crucial difference between how high the stakes are on an assignment and how many levels one uses in grading. (2) That in spelling out criteria, we have a choice between emphasizing
vertical differentiation of quality and horizontal differentiation between features of
writing that we are looking for. I think that awareness of these principles can help a
teacher work more clearly and coherently toward any grading policy. But let me
summarize my own position more nakedly.

I think teaching and learning suffer from too much emphasis on numerical grading. At
times I would like to do away with it altogether. I taught for nine years at Evergreen
State College where the learning and teaching climate was vastly better than usual
because there were nothing but written evaluations- and still students did well in
getting into professional and graduate schools and getting jobs. (People don't much
trust standard grades.)

But we can make big improvements by making much smaller, less drastic changes:

- High stakes writing and grading will go much better if we have plenty of low stakes
  writing and grading along with it.
- We can raise the stakes and still keep the levels low--that is use only two, three, or at
  most four levels in our high stakes grading. This will make our life much easier,
  it will reduce the amount of argument and adversarialness around grading--and
  it will be much fairer since it avoids all those indefensible fine-grained
  judgments.
- Instead of emphasizing the vertical dimension of fine-grained judgments along one
  undifferentiated scale, we can emphasize the horizontal dimension and make
  multiple simpler judgments along multiple scales. This will make our grades
  more fair and meaningful, it will reduce our work in trying to write comments,
  and it will finally give students helpful feedback on strengths and weaknesses
  that they don't get from conventional grades.

My premise is that we don't need all those ten levels of distinction between F and A--
especially since no one knows what conventional grades actually mean and they are not
trustworthy. But we do probably need to be able to send the main messages and send
them explicitly in words: "this is definitely acceptable or satisfactory college level
work"; "this is unsatisfactory work"; "this is excellent or outstanding work." And unless
we have too many students, we need to point to features or dimensions in someone's
work that are notably strong or weak.

But we need to recognize that these "strongs" and "weaks" don't translate into fine-lined
gradations such as conventional grades give us between B-plus and B-minus. Which is a
better essay or better writing? Something clear and well organized but that just
summarizes the ideas in the textbook or something with lots of interesting thinking that
goes beyond the textbook but that thereby makes some genuine blunders? My point is
that there is no answer: it depends on what qualities you care most about. Under
conventional grading, some teachers give a higher grade to one essay, some to the
other; but no one knows anything about what these teachers actually mean or anything
about the actual strengths and weaknesses of the students.

Arguments about grading tend to bog down into fruitless either/or debates: yes or no, pro or con. I hope my analysis shows that we can get out of this binary realm. There are various kinds of "minimal" or "almost" or "sort of" grading—and a wide range of ways of deploying the elements that make up grading.

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Evaluating Student Writing

By David Fleming

The purpose of the first- and junior-year writing courses at UMass Amherst is to help students here grow as readers, writers, and thinkers: to acquire new discourse practices, increase their control over the English language, and develop the habits and dispositions needed for the complex literacies of their future lives. To facilitate such growth, students need time; they need the chance to work in linguistically rich environments, with authentic tasks and supportive partners; they need an atmosphere of respect for the diversity of individuals, cultures, and situations; and they need permission to take risks: to stretch their rhetorical muscles, struggle with difficult problems, even make mistakes.

Grading is often an obstacle to such things: it can cut short the learning process, make the motivation for student effort extrinsic rather than intrinsic, frustrate students who just need more practice in meeting the demands facing them, convince others that they no longer need to work very hard on their writing, and perpetuate pernicious social hierarchies. But grading is also an inescapable – and potentially useful – part of teaching: most importantly, it can help us establish targets for student work and give us powerful tools for communicating with stakeholders about how class members are doing in meeting those targets. The trick is to take advantage of the ways in which grading reinforces the goals of the course and avoid its liabilities.

The first principle is to do everything you can to encourage practice in your class. Students should write constantly, from the beginning of the semester to the end, both in class and out, in a variety of genres, about a variety of topics, for a multitude of audiences. And they should be encouraged to continually re-see, re-think, and revise their writing. This doesn’t mean that there shouldn’t be high expectations for quality –
far from it. But it does mean that we should keep our eyes on the prize: student growth. Everything else is secondary.

Consequently, sometimes our role as evaluators should be relatively **hands-off**. If we create an environment in which authentic writing is invited, encouraged, and modeled, we can occasionally leave our students alone: to experiment, struggle, and create meaning on their own. After all, teachers often **over**-respond to and **over**-mark student writing. Sometimes, the best kind of response to their work is no response at all: to count their journal pages but not read them, to check off their completion of assignments but not “correct” them, to have due dates but build in as much time as possible for students to work through their ideas and problems.

But there are limits to such a “hands-off” pedagogy. As more experienced writers than our students, and as members of disciplinary and professional communities they wish to join, we have much to offer them as responsive readers. **Response** here refers to the whole panoply of ways we can comment on our students’ writing. Response can be oral or written, marginal or terminal, minimal or substantive, purposive or unintended, beneficial or paralyzing. Sometimes the response students most need from us is simple **engagement** with what they’re writing about; they need for us, that is, to be **readers**, people genuinely interested in and predisposed to learn from the text in front of them. The appropriate response to a student’s draft, therefore, may not be criticism or error-detection but summary, say-back, or re-description: e.g., “So what you’re saying is X – that makes sense to me though I’d never thought of it that way before.” Or: “This is interesting – the way X and Y relate in this unexpected fashion.” Engagement can also be personal: “I remember once when I was in a similar situation . . .” And of course it can be oppositional, too, but ideally in a way that shows the paper is working because it’s provoking you to think: “I’m not sure I buy your argument here – doesn’t researcher X show us that . . ?”

Of course, there’s also a role for **evaluation** of student writing, explicit judgment about how the text stacks up according to the criteria of the assignment that prompted it. But remember that such evaluation need not always be negative. Research shows that the vast majority of teacher comments on student writing are negative (see Donald A. Daiker, “Learning to Praise” in *Writing and Response*, ed. Chris Anson [NCTE, 1989]). Thus, we should be in the habit of **praising** our students’ writing as much as we criticize it - and not just to keep them from getting discouraged but also to point out sincerely what they’re doing well in their writing because those are the strategies they need to repeat and the passages they should be elaborating.

**Critical** evaluation of students’ writing, meanwhile, should be predominantly **formative** rather than summative, oriented towards helping students **improve** their papers (whether present or future ones) rather than simply criticizing them. Such evaluation often works best by asking questions, posing alternatives, communicating honestly where, as a **reader**, you were confused or unpersuaded in a paper.

Finally, **summative evaluation** – when students are told, through a final grade, how their writing ultimately measures up – has a role in the writing class, but it should as much as possible be 1) **deferred** to the end of each unit or the semester as a whole, 2)
dispersed among a variety of evaluators other than the teacher, and 3) conducted in as humane a way as possible.

Before turning to a description of some actual grading systems for the writing classroom, here’s a few extra tips for evaluating your students’ work:

1. Embed opportunities for students to evaluate *themselves* in your course, to reflect on their work in cover letters and other reflective writing assignments.

2. Occasionally do your own assignments and see for *yourself* what it’s like to write under the conditions you set for your students.

3. As much as possible, separate response and grading; and conduct the former as a reader not an evaluator.

4. Make your grading as transparent as possible: talk with your students about grading and give them chances to read sample papers and discuss criteria.

5. For students who are upset or confused about a paper grade right after receiving it, I often ask them to wait 24 hours before I’ll talk to them – the goal is to get them to first calmly re-read and think carefully about the assignment, their paper, and your comments.
Rubrics

A rubric is a guide to grading student papers that consists of a scale with levels (A-F, 100-0, 5-0, etc.) along with a description of student performance corresponding to each level. The description includes the evaluative criteria used and standards indicating how well those criteria are met by grade level. Rubrics allow for holistic or impressionistic scoring of student texts, with multiple criteria considered but evaluation ultimately resulting in a single score or mark. At their best, rubrics promote uniformity, simplicity, and consensus in grading; they’re relatively accessible to students; and they can be developed for the course in general or for each assignment in it. They’re probably also the most text-based form of grading, with evaluation typically tied to predetermined textual qualities such as clarity and organization.

A rubric for Penn State’s first-year writing course can be found in the *St. Martin’s Guide to Teaching Writing*, 5th ed. The standards consist of four criteria – purpose, reasoning & content, organization, and expression – indexed to five grade levels. A preamble to the rubric cautions users that “every essay will not fit neatly into one grade category; some essays may . . . have some characteristics of B and some of C. The final grade the essay receives depends on the weight the instructor gives each criterion.” The standards for A and C papers are below.

The A Essay

1. The A essay fulfills the assignment—and does so in a fresh and mature manner, using purposeful language that leads to knowledge making. The essay effectively meets the needs of the rhetorical situation in terms of establishing the writer’s stance, attention to audience, purpose for writing, and sensitivity to context. Furthermore, the writer demonstrates expertise in employing the artistic appeals of ethos, logos, and pathos appropriately.

2. The topic itself is clearly defined, focused, and supported. The essay has a clear thesis that is supported with specific (and appropriate) evidence, examples, and details. Any outside sources of information are used carefully and cited appropriately. The valid reasoning within the essay demonstrates good judgment and an awareness of the topic’s complexities.

3. The organization—chronological, spatial, or emphatic—is appropriate for the purpose and subject of the essay. The introduction establishes a context, purpose, and audience for writing and contains a focused thesis statement. The following paragraphs are controlled by (explicit or implicit) topic sentences; they are well developed; and they progress logically from what precedes them. (If appropriate, headings and subheadings are used.) The conclusion moves beyond a mere restatement of the introduction, offering implications for or the significance of the topic.

4. The prose is clear, readable, and sometimes memorable. It contains few surface errors, none of which seriously undermines the overall effectiveness of the paper for educated readers. It demonstrates fluency in stylistic flourishes (subordination,
variation of sentence and paragraph lengths, interesting vocabulary).

The C Essay

1. The assignment has been followed, and the essay demonstrates a measure of response to the rhetorical situation, in so far as the essay demonstrates some sense of audience and purpose.
2. The topic is defined only generally; the thesis statement is also general. The supporting evidence, gathered honestly and used responsibly, is, nevertheless, often obvious and easily accessible. The writer demonstrates little awareness of the topic’s complexity or other points of view; therefore, the C essay usually exhibits minor imperfections or inconsistencies in development, organization, and reasoning.
3. The organization is fairly clear. The reader could outline the presentation, despite the occasional lack of topic sentences. Paragraphs have adequate development and are divided appropriately. Transitions may be mechanical, but they foster coherence.
4. The expression is competent. Sentence structure is relatively simple, relying on simple and compound sentences. The paper is generally free of sentence-level errors; word choice is correct though limited. The essay contains errors in spelling, usage, and punctuation that reveal an unfamiliarity with the conventions of Standardized American English discussed in class.

The full rubric can be found at http://www.courses.psu.edu/engl/engl015_cig6/.

UMass Amherst English Professor Haivan Hoang has used the rubric below for grading her College Writing students’ Unit II papers. (Note that such a rubric is only fully comprehensible in conjunction with the teacher’s assignment, in-class instructions, written comments, etc.)

A: A surprising and original take on at least two readings! The essay not only demonstrates meticulous development of ideas (practicing what we’ve discussed in class), but also takes risks with essay form (opening, structure, diction). Each draft reflects thorough revision and consideration of other readers’ suggestions. The essay demonstrates firm understanding of response strategies, response to the what and the how of the readings.

B: Essay is a critical response that not only thoroughly analyzes and synthesizes ideas from two essays, but also extends or enriches other writers’ ideas. The essay portfolio is complete and demonstrates your willingness to revise extensively. In the final draft, the essay is focused and develops ideas using methods we’ve discussed in class.

C: Essay portfolio is acceptable. Final draft demonstrates satisfactory understanding and summary of the readings. In the essay, your focus clearly asserts your perspective, but this focus may be somewhat broad. Or the essay and paragraph development may require greater in-depth attention and elaboration. Or the essay might need to work the balance between asserting your perspective or engaging the
reader; weighing too much on one or the other risks either hiding your own perspective or not fully respecting others’ ideas.

**D/F:** Essay portfolio may be incomplete and/or final draft does not satisfy the minimum requirements. That is, the essay does not address the assignment or does not articulate a clear purpose. The essay summarizes other writers but fails to demonstrate *your* perspective, your commentary.
Points

A more “analytic” way to grade student papers separates out individual criteria for students’ work and assigns points to each one. So, if the important criteria for a particular assignment are clarity and focus, development of ideas, organization, voice, and mechanics, you could give students 30 points, say, for clarity and focus, another 30 for development of ideas, 15 for organization, 15 for voice, and 10 for mechanics. Non-textual criteria can also be factored in, so points might be awarded for turning in all drafts on time, participating thoughtfully in peer review, etc.

UMass English Professor Anne Herrington describes her “point-credit” system to students this way:

I believe that all the work I ask you to do in this class is important. The point-credits are a way of showing that I give credit for all of that work. They also show you how I distribute that credit in determining the final course grade. They give you feedback on your work as you do it. For each essay, the point distribution, unlike a letter grade, shows how I evaluate specific aspects of your work: each draft and general traits of the final essay. They are a way of putting into the record what I say to you in words. My aim is that my written response and point evaluation will be useful feedback that will give you a perspective on your writing and help you work to improve as a writer.

For fellow teachers, she explains it this way:

I've always dreaded the end of the semester when I have to determine final course grades. In a writing course, we have worked so closely with our students that a host of personal feelings – some not relevant – play in our minds. A point-credit system makes that end-of-semester judgment easier for me – although still difficult – and, I believe, valid and fair for students [...] Most generally, it's a way of recording qualitative judgments that I'm making anyway, as I make them. Here are general principles that guide me. At the simplest level, we should record in some way and give credit for all the work that each student does. That's a descriptive task. Still, there is evaluation to do. Points, like letter grades or evaluations encoded in words, derive from our personal judgments. We make those judgments on the basis of good reasons, and we should make those reasons clear to our students; we should also be willing to reconsider our evaluations if a student or other additional information shows us we should.

In Anne’s system, the first three essays of a 6-paper semester are worth 10 points each:

4 points for drafting and revising
6 points for the final draft, consisting of
    2 points for Focus
    2 points for Development
    2 points for Style and Editing.
The final three essays are worth 14 points each:

- 6 points for drafting and revising
- 8 points for the final draft:
  - 2 points for Focus
  - 3 points for Development
  - 3 points for Style and Editing.

Anne gives written or oral feedback to in-process drafts. For the final drafts, she gives written feedback along with a point evaluation. She has found that students read her written responses and take them seriously; the point distribution becomes secondary.

For the final course grade, Anne’s points add up this way:

- Essays: 72 pts.
  - the first three (@ 10 pts. ea.) 30 pts.
  - the final three (@ 14 pts. ea.) 42 pts.
- Journals: 36 pts.
  - 1 point per page, 3 pages per week, for 12 weeks
- Classwork: 18 pts.
- Peer Reviews (as both giver and receiver): 15 pts.
- Final Portfolio:
  - review essay 10 pts.
  - revision of two essays of choice 12 pts.
- TOTAL: 163 pts.

She then converts that total to a final letter grade using the following formula:

151-163 = A (93-100%)
143-150 = A/B (88-92%)
135-142 = B (83-87%)
127-134 = B/C (78-82%)
118-126 = C (73-77%)
110-117 = C/D (68-72%)
102-109 = D (63-67%)
0-101 = F (0-62%)

(Note that the references to grading here are to an older scale that used A/B, B/C, and C/D rather than plus and minus grades.)

Many teachers use a grid as part of their analytic grading system; the one below (thanks to Peter Elbow) could be modified to allow for a 5-point system matching the university’s letter grades (with “excellent,” “good,” “average,” “poor,” and “failing” as the column headings) or for other kinds of point systems (20 points for ideas, 15 for organization, 10 for voice, etc.). With this system, you would attach a filled-out grid to each student’s final paper.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>weak</th>
<th>satisfactory</th>
<th>strong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ideas, insights, thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization, structure, guiding the reader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>voice</td>
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<tr>
<td>mechanics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>genuine revision, substantive changes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>overall</td>
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</tbody>
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Dynamic Criteria Mapping

Another method of evaluation eschews the use of general standards and asks teachers to be more scrupulously candid about how they judge students’ writing as they read it. The method begins with real student papers and asks groups of teachers and/or students to discuss together, as honestly as they can, how they actually read those papers and what they really value and don’t value in them. It doesn’t do away with normative criteria; rather, it builds them up inductively and collaboratively. The method is called “Dynamic Criteria Mapping” (DCM) and derives from Bob Broad’s *What We Really Value: Beyond Rubrics in Teaching and Assessing Writing* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2003).

In the classroom, the method entails reading diverse sample papers with students, talking openly together about them, and developing (under the teacher’s leadership) honest, rich, and specific criteria for evaluation. The idea is to give students more knowledge about the real challenges of writing well and information about how to succeed in meeting them. More than any other method examined here, DCM is a reader-based evaluation system.

DCM also has potential benefits for writing programs as a whole, whether first-year or junior-year, encouraging teachers to gather face to face with their colleagues, read student texts together, and debate their judgments of them. The resulting assessment is also likely to be more valid, drawing evaluative criteria directly from how teachers actually teach and assess students’ writing and thus “strengthening the links between what [they] tell students and the public . . . and what [they] really do” (122).

A program using Dynamic Criteria Mapping would undertake the following steps:

1. **Selection** of a diverse set of sample student papers, not shying away from ones productive of disagreement. Instructors then read the essays and make notes on what they value and do not value in each text.

2. **Articulation** in large groups: program-wide discussions meant to allow readers to share the criteria by which they were guided in evaluating each text, with the focus on listening to and understanding the full range of values at work.

3. **Trios** for “live” judgment, in which small groups of instructors read together actual papers from their own classes, keeping in mind the criteria developed above but now bringing in the special knowledge about students they possess.

4. **Dynamic Criteria Mapping**
   a. Collecting data: Scribes record readers’ criteria during the articulation sessions, writing down the full range referenced, along with the passages pointed to in the sample texts. They resist reducing comments to one-word, abstract criteria.
b. Analyzing data: Afterwards, program participants look back at all the criteria recorded and try to develop “findings”: clusters of criteria and their interrelations. But they need to be true to the data and avoid importing familiar schemes to arrange them. The whole idea is to move “beyond what we think about how we value students’ writing and to discover what and how we really value” (132).

c. Debating and negotiating evaluative differences: Now that participants know “how they do value students’ writing, they need to undertake high-powered professional discussions regarding how they should value that writing” (133). The focus shifts from the descriptive to the normative.

d. Publicizing the map: The program should next publish the results of the process along with the sample texts used, making the results as simple as possible but still maintain “texture, nuance, detail and complexity.”

e. Revising the map: To be truly dynamic, the results of DCM need to “grow and change organically over time.” They are works in progress.

5. Classroom application: teachers should include students in the construction of evaluative schemes: they should be asked, “what does this instructor value in your work?” in order to ascertain the truth about the evaluative topography of the classroom.

Below is a sample map from Broad’s book. This one is focused on “textual qualities,” and is oriented towards the reading experience of actual readers in the program studied. Other maps focus on “textual features” (elements of texts, like grammar, punctuation, etc.) and “contextual criteria” (the standards of the course, assignment expectations, etc.).
Contracts

A completely different approach to evaluation focuses less on the qualities of texts and the judgments of readers and more on students’ behavior as writers and students. Contract grading systems spell out all the work and activity that students need to do for a particular assignment and base evaluation primarily on completion of that work. Thus, the focus for the teacher becomes not making discriminations about the quality of different student texts but rewarding students’ practice and improvement.

Here’s a sample contract that Prof. Peter Elbow has used at UMass Amherst.

**A Contract for a Final Grade of B in First-Year Writing**

To students in my first year writing course,

Imagine that this weren't an official course for credit at UMass, but instead that you had all seen my advertisement in the paper and were freely coming to my home studio for a class in painting or cooking. We would have classes or workshops or lessons, but there would be no official grading. Of course I'd give you evaluative feedback now and then, pointing out where you've done well and where I could suggest an improvement. But I wouldn't put grades on your individual paintings or omelets or give you an official grade for the course.

I believe that a home-studio situation is more conducive to learning than the one we have in this course – where many of you are not here by choice and I am obliged to give an official University grade. Therefore, I will try to approximate the evaluative conditions of a home studio course. That is, I will try to create a culture of support: a culture where you and I function as allies rather than adversaries and where you cooperate with classmates rather than compete with them.

Conventional grading often leads students to think more about grades than about writing; to worry more about pleasing me or psyching me out than about figuring out what you really want to say or how you want to say it; to be reluctant to take risks with your writing; sometimes even to feel you are working against me or having to hide part of yourselves from me.

For these reasons, I am using a kind of contract for grading. I will give you plenty of feedback on much of your writing. But I will not put grades on your papers and my comments will have no effect on your final grade for the course – up to the grade of B.

**You are guaranteed a final grade of B if you:**

(1) attend class regularly and be in class on time. Don't miss more than one week's worth of classes. And don't be habitually late. (If you are late or miss a class, you are still responsible for finding out what assignments were made.)

(2) meet due dates. Don't have more than one late major assignment and one late smaller assignment.
(3) participate in all in-class exercises and activities and complete all informal, low stakes writing assignments. Keep up your journal writing.

(4) give thoughtful peer feedback during class workshops and work faithfully with your group on other collaborative tasks. Work cooperatively in groups. Be willing to share some of your writing, to listen supportively to the writing of others and, when called for, give full and thoughtful responses.

(5) attend required conferences with me to discuss your drafts.

(6) sustain effort and investment on each draft of all papers. Always include your process letter, all previous notes and drafts, and all feedback you got.

(7) make substantive revisions. When the assignment is to revise, don't just correct or touch up. Your revision needs to reshape or extend or complicate or substantially clarify your ideas—or relate your ideas to new things. Revisions don't have to be better, but they must be different.

(8) copy-edit all final revisions of main assignments until they conform to the conventions of edited, revised English. When the assignment is for the final publication draft, your paper must be well copy edited—that is, free from virtually all mistakes in spelling and grammar. It's fine to get help in copy editing. (Copy editing doesn’t count on early and mid-process drafts.)

(9) find some genuine question or perplexity for every paper. That is, don't just tell four obvious reasons why dishonesty is bad or why democracy is good. Root your paper in a felt question about honesty or democracy—a problem or an itch that itches you. (By the way, this is a crucial skill to learn for success in college: how to find a question that interests you—even in a boring assignment.)

(10) think. Having found a perplexity, then use your paper to do some figuring-out. Make some intellectual gears turn. Thus your paper needs to move or go somewhere—needs to have a line of thinking.

Don't let these last two conditions bother you. I don’t ask that your essays always be tidy, well organized, and perfectly unified. I care more about working through the question than about finding a neat answer. It's okay if your essays have some loose ends, some signs of struggle—especially in early drafts. But lack of unity or neatness needs to reflect effort, not lack of effort.

Getting an A/B or A: As you see, the grade of B depends on behaviors. Grades of A or A/B, however, depend on quality. Thus you earn a B if you put in good time and effort; I will push you all to get a B. But to get an A or A/B, you have to make your time and effort pay off into writing of genuine excellence (and also meet the conditions for a B). Notice that for grades up to B, you don't have to worry about my judgment or my standards of excellence; for higher grades you do. But we'll have class discussions about excellence in writing and usually we can reach fairly good agreement. Your mid-semester and final portfolios will play a big role in decisions about excellence.

Knowing where you stand: This system is better than regular grading for giving you a clear idea of what your final grade looks like at any moment. For whenever I give you feedback on any major assignment, I will tell you clearly if you have somehow failed to satisfy the contract for a B. I will also tell you if I judge your draft to be genuinely excellent and thus to
exceed the contract for a B. As for absences and lateness, you'll have to keep track of them, but you can check with me any time.

Grades lower than B: I hope no one will aim for lower grades. The quickest way to slide to a C, D, or F is to miss classes and show up without assignments. *This much is nonnegotiable: you are not eligible for a passing grade of D unless you have attended at least 11 of the 14 weeks worth of classes, and completed 90% of the assignments. And you can't just turn in all the late work at the end.* If you are missing classes and behind in work, please stay in touch with me about your chances of passing the course.

See also “A Unilateral Grading Contract to Improve Learning and Teaching” by Jane Danielewicz and Peter Elbow, forthcoming in CCC.
Portfolios

A portfolio is more a way for students to present their work than a system of grading it, but its use in the writing class has important implications for evaluation. At its simplest, a portfolio is a collection of student work; there are “process” portfolios (in which finished pieces of writing are accompanied by the drafts, peer reviews, cover sheets, etc., that went into their production) and “exemplary” or “best-work” portfolios that include only polished pieces. Some teachers use both kinds: they ask students at the end of each unit to hand in all (or most) of the writing they did for that unit, including generative writing and rough drafts; then, at the end of the semester, they ask students to reflect on and share with their classmates (and teacher) all their final papers as a group. Sometimes, by “portfolios,” teachers mean an evaluation system in which no grades or scores are ever (or rarely) put on individual “final” papers, reserving that kind of mark for the end-of-semester when the student submits a collection of his or her work for a final grade (alternately, some programs combine the final portfolio grade with a provisional mid-term grade to give students a sense of their progress so far).

One might see three key principles at work in portfolio grading. First, students should have all semester to revise their writing and explicit encouragement from us to re-see and re-work their papers without worrying about grades for as long as possible; after all, revision should be a central lesson of any writing class, and our hope should be that across the semester students are genuinely and continually stretching and strengthening their muscles as writers, readers, thinkers, and class participants. Second, students’ papers in a writing course can only be validly evaluated in the context of a whole semester’s worth of informal and formal writing, in response to a variety of assignments, for a diversity of purposes, with the assistance of many different readers, and in a multitude of genres. Third, students should have the chance, perhaps for the first time in their lives, to really own a body of their own writing: a collection of texts that, at the end of the semester, they have consciously re-read, reflected on, and intentionally selected for final presentation to a wider “public.” This last principle is the most important one for Nedra Reynolds and Rich Rice, who, in their book *Portfolio Teaching: A Guide for Instructors*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2006), talk about the importance of choice, variety, and reflection in the portfolios that students assemble.

Often, writing teachers will grade the final (and only the final) paper in each unit soon after that paper is turned in – in the belief that students benefit from some evaluation on their work at regular intervals in the course and in an effort not to leave all the grading in the course to the end. But the fact remains that a thorough-going process orientation means that we should defer grading students’ work for as long as possible, students should have more responsibility for evaluating and reflecting on their work themselves, and there should be more chances in their academic lives for them to proudly, but thoughtfully, assert ownership over their intellectual and creative work.
Teaching the Writing Process
Generative Writing/Pre-Writing

Most writers spend a good deal of time thinking out their topics on paper or even trying out several different topics or approaches before beginning to more formally draft an essay. Including time for this in a Junior-Year course can help students both make better choices and give you a chance to comment/discuss their ideas with them before too much work has gone into the process.

There are several ways to approach “generative writing,” so named to reflect the process of generating ideas that goes on at this stage. One is to assign fairly generic techniques to help students begin thinking (i.e. prewriting strategies); other instructors assign prewriting activities more specific to an assignment; still others use generative writing as a way to “scaffold” a longer assignment by engaging in low stakes writing (i.e., informal, ungraded tasks) to practice many of the skills needed in longer assignments.

General Prewriting Strategies

There are several prewriting strategies students may be familiar with from Englwr112 or other writing classes that are helpful in getting them to think through their options for topics and approaches or to begin generating material for an eventual draft.

- **Brainstorming**: A list of topic ideas or “everything I know” about a specific topic.
- **Freewriting**: Timed bursts of writing where no stopping or editing is allowed on a specific topic or several times on a variety of topics.
- **Clustering**: An associative technique where the student writes the main topic in a circle at the center of a page and then draws lines and subsequent circles for each idea generated, and continues a string for as long as he or she can. Typically, many lines will come off of the main circle and the sub-circles generated by the main topic.
- **Journal Responses**: For a few weeks, students write a page or two each class meeting, informally responding to a given reading, lab, or topic; they can then reflect back on these responses when choosing a paper topic.
- **Annotations**: Have students annotate sources they find related to different class topics where they define the purpose and scope of the work and offer an evaluative statement about the work in relation to the class project. Another way to use annotations would be to assign a certain number of articles on a topic not covered in the course for each student to annotate. Compile all the annotations into a handout for the class. The handout could serve as a resource for future paper assignments.
• **Problem-Creation**: While students frequently get practice at problem-solving, they are less adept at framing a problem. Have students search outside sources in the community that could be addressed by the course content and write up a frame for the problem that could be addressed by the class. Alternatively, such problem-statements could be developed from in-class reading.

**Specific Prewriting Strategies**

These kinds of prewriting strategies are more difficult to discuss in the abstract since they are typically closely linked to class content and other class activities. The rule of thumb here is to attempt to think through what a writer might need to ask herself before writing by considering how you might approach the topic yourself. Some strategies other instructors have found successful include the following:

- A series of **heuristic questions** designed specifically about the topic or course that students answer in writing.
- **Online discussions** in response to a specific prompt where students can read and respond to others’ ideas as a way of expanding their sense of what can be written about.
- **Rhetorical analyses** that ask students to read widely on their chosen topic and define what perspectives and debates already exist on their issue. Such assignments usually include a page on how they might contribute something to this ongoing conversation.
- **Devil’s Advocate** approaches that ask a student to write one-page on their own position on the topic and then one other page taking the opposition’s position and arguing that side.
- **Observation Journals** are especially useful for qualitative research assignments. Many instructors begin by assigning a site of observation where students record details and impressions without yet knowing how they will analyze a specific site or group.
Drafting and Revising

Many writing instructors recommend that students complete a first draft that focuses primarily on ideas and clarifying their purpose for writing. In later revisions, more attention can be given to audience, development, additional research, organization, and coherence. While this staging of “what to pay attention to” is by no means fixed, the wisdom behind such recommendations is that writers can only focus their attention in so many directions at once. Breaking down the task can help writers focus on one of the many issues writers need to consider. Thus, it can be useful to require an initial draft early on in the process, allowing writers more time to revise, and to devise revision activities that help them focus on the quality of their ideas, their writing, and their ability to communicate with a specified audience.

Revision Activities

Revising one’s writing is one of the most difficult things to do as it’s easy to think one’s first draft already hits the mark or that revising may involve more work with little better result. As all of us know from our own writing, sometimes the latter can be true as we return to an earlier version after substantial revision. But we also are more assured that we have considered other options and that our suspicion that the first draft (or more likely, a part of the first draft) was effective is the right one. Student writers, however, frequently choose the first draft for lack of other options, needing encouragement to “re-see” their writing in order to make it stronger. One way to encourage revision is to “scaffold” an assignment so that each new revision provides a new task. Another is to require students to take part in revision activities that will draw their attention to certain goals of the assignment, such as audience awareness or genre norms. The key with any revision activity is to help writers view their papers in a new light, either by analyzing an aspect that may have not received enough attention, evaluating the essay’s effectiveness, or reconsidering the content from a new perspective. A few, generic revision activities are included below, but the best activities are specific to a given assignment.

Descriptive Outlines

Frequently, when drafting, organization falls by the wayside as our own ideas and our content move the essay along rather than any logical choice about order. One way to get students to examine the logic behind their organization is to ask them to outline the essay after it’s drafted, which provides a new way of seeing their essay in microcosm.

Have students divide a piece of paper into three columns. Ask them to number each paragraph on their papers and describe, in the first column, what the paragraph “says”: i.e. the gist of the content. Once completed, ask them to write the thesis or purpose of their essay on the top of the sheet, then for each
paragraph, they should describe each paragraph’s content in relation to the purpose of the essay: i.e. what does the content do? Finally, in the third column, ask them to look at the relationship between paragraph 1 and 2, 2 and 3, and so on and describe the relationship in writing between each paragraph. Upon completion, ask students first to examine column 1: where are they discussing similar content? Do any paragraphs need to be moved? In column two, ask them to return to the paper to see if the relationship between a paragraph and the essay’s purpose is included for the reader. If not, ask them to rewrite topic sentences to help connect the paragraph to the paper’s overall purpose. Finally, with column three, ask them to consider the logic of the order. If there is no clear reason why one paragraph follows another, should it be moved? Is the reason apparent to readers? If not, would a better transition help?

**Audience Analysis**
Ask students to consider the needs of the audience they are writing for, perhaps in a class discussion. Brainstorm the audience’s expectations, what they already know on a topic, and what new information or perspective they are most likely to be receptive and opposed to. With this analysis in hand, students then read their own drafts (or each others’) and write a response (perhaps as a letter to the editor) that illustrates their reactions to, questions about, and objections to the paper’s content.

**Research Assessment**
Frequently students will include too much research in a paper, such that their own perspective gets lost, or too little research in the assumption that their ideas do not need support. One way to help writers examine their use of research is a simple exercise using different colored highlighters. They use one color to highlight all information they derived from sources (quotes, summaries, paraphrases) and another for everything they deem to be their own idea, interpretation, argument, or perspective. Once coded, it is often surprising how much of the paper is highlighted in only one color, giving writers an idea of whether revision is best focused on further research or making clearer how they want readers to interpret the research they are using.

**Altering the Perspective**
Many times writers are encouraged to consider other, perhaps more effective options for writing only if forced to do so. Some instructors assign a second draft written for an entirely different audience, in another genre, or with a different purpose to help students re-see the content of their piece. Many times, a portion of this experiment may find its way into the final revision as writers include new examples, argue against a perspective they hadn’t considered, or creatively incorporate some elements from another genre.
Revision and Feedback

As most of us have experienced with colleagues or editors, probably the most effective way to encourage revision is by having someone else read and respond to your work. Teacher feedback can be essential at this stage, but feedback strategies are quite different than when grading a piece of writing and should focus on options for what a student might do to improve a draft, questions about content, arguments with ideas, and reasons (in terms of purpose and audience) for suggestions. In short, the same type of response we might desire when a work is still in progress and not yet ready to be evaluated.

Many of us, however, do not have time to respond to every draft we require, thus peer response is a wonderful alternative, and frequently a more effective one as students are less likely to see response from peers as “directions” and are thus more likely to revise based on their own decisions about how to interpret feedback.

Revision and Reflection

Although not revising per se, another effective way to help students re-see their work is to ask them, in writing, to reflect on why they wrote a particular essay in the way they did, or why they made certain revisions between drafts in terms of their own assessment of their purpose in writing and their audience’s needs. Between drafts, it’s also helpful to ask students to list 2-3 other options for how they might have written the draft and why they rejected those options. Such reflective writing does two things:

1. it makes writers stop and consider their essays as something they deliberately crafted (and thus something that may be re-crafted), and
2. it helps writers consider that other options are available.

Finally, looking at these reflections as part of grading can also help you with commenting by providing a better sense of what the writer was thinking when constructing the essay, and thus what advice might be most useful.
Proofreading/Copyediting

Most writing instructors recommend that students leave proofreading *until last*. There are several reasons for this. First, it helps keep some students from becoming blocked as they fuss over a comma, losing their train of thought in their writing. Second, it is simply more time efficient. If students are doing a lot of revision, many of the sentences they might spend time cleaning up will simply not exist in the next version. Finally, it helps break up the cognitive task of writing. As many of us have experienced, when we write about a new or very complex topic, even the best writers may construct absolutely horrid sentences as their attention is given more to figuring out their own ideas than to sentence structure. While respecting the conventions of Edited American English is essential to how the quality of a final draft will be viewed, it is best dealt with as its own issue of focus at the most effective stage in drafting.

The other thing we know about “getting grammar and punctuation” right is that knowing a rule does not equate with employing it correctly in one’s own writing. As a result, teaching grammar rules or doing exercises on someone else’s sentences will usually not improve a student’s writing. The most effective site of instruction is with the students’ own texts and the errors they actually *commit* in their writing. As a result, we suggest several strategies below to help students become better proofreaders and editors of their own work.

*Individualized Proofreading Logs*

When analyzing student writing, teachers often feel that students have made numerous errors. However, many times a writer may have made the same type of error many times. For example, many students fail to put a comma before a conjunction in a compound sentence. What can seem like 10 comma errors may indeed be 10 instances of the same mistake. Thus, one of the most effective ways to help students develop better proofreading strategies is to read their papers for “error patterns,” point them out to students, and ask them to keep an ongoing list of their own patterns to use as a guide when proofreading their work. Recommend that they read for only one pattern at a time so that they can focus all their attention on one rule.

*How to Read for Error Patterns*

As you read through a paper, circle errors on the first page or two. On subsequent pages, look to see if any of those you marked initially recur in the ensuing pages. Once you’ve designated a few, look to see if there are any contextual factors that are similar where the error occurs: e.g., is a semi-colon *always* missing between two independent clauses or only when the first clause is very long, or only when the two clauses form a question? The more you can tell about when an error occurs the more specific you can be in recommending a proofreading strategy.
• What to Mark

1. Errors that occur most often and/or
2. Errors that disrupt communication the most (create some hierarchy of severity)

• How to Mark

1. Choose no more than 2-3 patterns per paper unless it's clearly an unknown rule rather than a misapplication of a rule.
2. Mark only the first few occurrences.
3. Provide a rule and/or suggest a proofreading strategy. Point out any contextual factors you notice when analyzing the pattern. Ask the student to include both the error, the correction, and the rule in their proofreading log.

How to Ensure Students are Using their Logs to Proofread

It is helpful if students know they will be accountable for gaining control over their own error patterns. Many instructors keep track of the 2-3 patterns they have commented on (frequently by a simple abbreviation next to a paper grade in their grade book) and then look specifically to see if that error recurs in the next, graded assignment. If it does, they warn students that the effect on their grade will be more severe for patterns already highlighted and in their logs than for any new ones. This accountability helps ensure students will use their logs and also provides a way of providing steady feedback that will eventually cover most of the patterns you see rather than commenting on all at once, which students frequently find too overwhelming (and frankly, it’s very time-consuming for you as well).

When is the Best Time to Comment on Error Patterns?

Some teachers begin to comment on patterns in later drafts, but most do not want students to equate proofreading with revision so they wait until the first, final draft. While this strategy frequently means not penalizing a student for their errors on the first, graded assignment, it sets up the context for a more severe penalty with the next paper. If you choose to look for patterns at the drafting stage, one of the best ways to do it is to require a draft where the students know you will be reading only for grammar and punctuation. A better option is frequently to teach students to do such pattern analysis to each others’ papers as part of a copyediting workshop.

Copyediting Workshops

Many instructors ask students to copyedit each others’ papers by circling the errors they find in a draft. While students are not always good proofreaders of their own work, they frequently can find errors in someone else’s writing that either they do not make
themselves and/or can more readily perceive because it is not their own text. Rather than correcting them for each other, though, the students simply mark what they deem to be an error; it is the writer’s responsibility to look up the rule in a handbook and determine what, if any, correction is needed.

Marginal Marking

Since the goal is to help students become better proofreaders of their own work, many teachers opt for a minimalist approach, simply putting a checkmark in the left margin next to a line that includes an error (or two checkmarks for two errors, etc.). It is then the writer’s responsibility to look at that line closely, find the error, and correct it. Some instructors do this during a drafting stage; others do it on a final draft and ask for the corrections separately and count it as a quiz or homework grade. Whatever approach taken, it is recommended that students keep track (in a proofreading log) of the errors they correct so that they can proofread specifically for that error next time.

Proofing for Common Errors

Just as there are individualized error patterns, there are common error patterns in student writing. Most handbooks provide a list of something like the “20 most common errors” based on research into student writing nationally. Constructing a proofreading workshop that provides strategies for finding and correcting these common errors can frequently help your students catch many of their mistakes. For instance, in the example of commas before coordinating conjunctions used earlier, teachers can recommend students use the “search” function of most word processing programs for all their conjunctions: and, but, for, or, yet. When highlighted, the student needs only look before the conjunction and after and ask if there is a complete sentence. If so, use a comma. Making up a “proofreading cheat sheet” that includes recommendations like this or pointing students to that section of the handbook can save a lot of time. Other instructors make their own list of common errors from what they’ve seen in drafts for a particular class to use in this way.
Teaching Grammar
Putting Grammar in its Place

By Linda LaDuc, School of Management, UMass/Amherst

As I typed up this article I recalled the management professor's face when he said to me, "Yes, I do want to participate in WAC [Writing Across the Curriculum] again this semester. Could you read one or two of the assignments to catch those things that drive me crazy -- that I obsess over even when I have other things to look for and grade? You know, you look for grammar so I can focus on content. In fact, how would you feel about giving them a grade for it?"

I sensed he was uncomfortable asking me to do this, but I agreed to work with him to find a way to give appropriate feedback to his students about grammar, without making it the focus on the course. After discussion we decided to meet again to devise criteria for evaluating the writing quality of his students' papers, and in the end, the WAC consultant assigned to his class read for a limited number of grammatical and syntactical problems, as well as basic argument construction. Despite having worked this situation out satisfactorily, I kept seeing that frustrated look on his face and knew that his frustration was shared by several management faculty, who were not participating in the WAC component of our JYW Program. As I have several times over the past three years, I wondered what else I could do to address grammar concerns, while at the same time realizing that I continued to struggle with this thorny problem in my own classes.

The Nature of Our Obsession

It continually surprises me that whether we are composition specialists, or chemical engineers, or forestry experts, or choreographers, many of us still obsess over grammar. We worry that if we don't correct each and every instance of mechanical imperfection that students will continue to make the same mistakes forever. We worry that we are not meeting others' expectations about correcting grammar and syntax in students' writing (whether those others are peers, parents, or students themselves). We worry that we are over-editing, or that we are spending too much class time teaching grammar when there is so much else to cover. And some of us worry that we don't know enough about grammar and syntax to teach these things effectively. After all, we're not all English teachers, right?

Fortunately, through our School of Management WAC project, part of our JYW program, I could help my frustrated colleague -- the WAC consultant would simply read one or two sets of his students' briefs, looking for specific grammar problems. Fortunately, however, during our discussion my colleague also came to the conclusion that grammar is not the real problem, but rather a symptom of students' lack of practice in constructing the kinds of arguments he expects. Because they are attempting to add new skills to their writing repertoires, they are fumbling with old ones -- in part because time to do the assignments is so limited that something has to flex, and that something
was grammar. Despite knowing this is a side effect, he still wants the students to pay attention to grammar. And so do I. And many of us find ourselves in this same position . . .

So, how do we address grammar, yet not get entangled in our obsessions about it -- obsessions that are often grounded in impossible and conflicting expectations? While teaching Business Writing, I've grappled with this problem and articulated a philosophy that works for me as well as a few tips for addressing the problem. One of the first steps I had to take was to admit that grammar and syntax matter -- a lot. Professionals must pay attention to the fundamentals of writing, and my colleagues expect me to address the problem. Yet, I believe that grammar and syntax problems indicate, like the proverbial canary in the mine, that students need more oxygen in the form of writing practice, and not necessarily more grammar-focused instruction. Students can't get all the grammar, syntax, and usage instruction they need in just two writing courses (First Year and Junior Year writing), and students who ordinarily write well may suddenly demonstrate poor grammar when grappling with new course material and concepts. So to what degree and at what times should we insist on correctness?

In my effort to negotiate between Scylla and Charybdis, I decided to limit scope, take a multi-tasking approach, broadcast my aims, and limit my evaluating/responding...

My new philosophy is that instruction for grammar and syntax should be limited in scope to that which is most prominent in each writing task or assignment. My method: Focus on one or two problems that seem, based on past experience, to be endemic to a particular assignment -- in the context of the specific audience, purpose, content requirements, and constraints of the situation. For example, my students are asked to write resumes and cover letters in an effort to build a job search portfolio. Parallel structure is essential for readable resumes (in short phrases, fragments, and/or sentences), but students frequently demonstrate difficulty conveying their skills, awards, etc., in parallel fashion under each category heading. So I ask them to participate in exercises in which they not only come up with material for writing, but also learn how to construct parallel lists and sentences with parallel phrases, and to respect parallelism as a powerful tool for making writing more forceful (and more logical). Perhaps this is best demonstrated by an example from my students' writing. The following example demonstrates how one student revised for parallel structure:

Original segment:

Night Manager, Big Y Market, Southampton, MA

I was responsible for inventory and reporting security problems.
Reconciled register accounts.
Reports to management about traffic.
Given 5 people to supervise.

From this list we get only a glimmer of the skills and attributes that make this person a potentially strong manager. Note how much better the skills are conveyed by the revision below:

Revised Segment:

Night Manager, Big Y Market, Southampton, MA

* Supervised inventory takers
* Reported security problems to management and to law enforcement personnel
* Reconciled register reports and produced inventory reports for management
* Recorded traffic and buyer preferences
* Managed 5 employees, including preparing their pay and promotion reports

It was actually exciting to see this student's face light up when she discovered herself through parallel structure -- after revising two faulty sentences to create parallelism, she was suddenly able to appear on paper as competent as she was in reality. Explaining the logical role of words and ideas in sentences, in grammatical form, made sense to her in ways that it never had before, because it was immediately relevant and useful. Of course not all grammar can be taught so efficiently, but we can do much to make the teaching we do more effective.

For example, resume-writing lends itself well to providing relevant instruction about capitalization, but also about the importance of overall mechanical correctness. Addressing problems with active and passive voice fits well with business letter-writing instruction; problems with style such as wordiness, jargon, and repetition are effectively addressed by asking students to write executive summaries of reports or abstracts of articles; and problems with semi-colons and colons seem to appear out of nowhere in issue or position papers and can be used to motivate discussions of how to write more complex sentences that are logical and readable.

The satisfaction that comes from infusing relevant grammar instruction when it is most needed - in these and other ways -- allows me to obsess a bit less about it, but there are additional, systemic ways to address grammar, too. Some of these include getting more faculty feedback on what matters to them, setting instructional objectives that incorporate feedback, specifying student responsibility while also providing students with necessary resources, deciding on achievable goals for reading and editing that limit scope, disclaiming, and setting criteria for grading that takes grammar and syntax into account. Let's take each of these in order . . .

Getting faculty feedback
I haven't yet tried this, but I think it would be a great idea to distribute a questionnaire to my colleagues asking them to list 3-5 specific problems that they see in student writing and then asking them to prioritize the problems: Which bother them the most, and which do they think are most important to address immediately? Then I imagine that I would collect the forms and summarize the results of this feedback and distribute them back to the faculty with the following text: "Thank you for your valuable feedback. Our instructional objectives for writing have been refined to focus more attention on these persistent problems. Some students simply need practice and gentle reminding; others may need additional instruction. You can help us to help them by pointing out these particularly resistant problems to students when you see them appear in their papers, asking them to either seek out instruction from the [Writing Program], or to work on eliminating the problem if they were merely being careless."

Note that my strategy provides text that indicates I will be providing instruction; the text also assumes that faculty will assign writing in their courses, and the text asks for their collegial assistance. So they know you are doing your job, and you can feel less defensive—and relax a bit in your obsession because you've created a team and spread the responsibility around.

Preparing instructional objectives

I have taken some real steps of course: I created a list of 4-5 macro-instructional (big picture) objectives for my writing course (worded so that results are measurable). My list of objectives includes "demonstrating improvement in grammar and syntax" as one objective, listing it at the end where it is visible, yet of lower priority than objectives that are discipline-specific (such as demonstrating critical thinking about issues in accounting or performing analysis of cultural differences in business letter writing). I include the objectives in the syllabus, and note that circulating the syllabus makes the grammar objective prominent to students and colleagues. Its presence says, "this matters."

Specifying student responsibility and providing resources

Instructors in the SOM 491 Business Writing course regularly point out the grammar and syntax-focused objective to students and discuss the fact that correctness is a mutual responsibility. They and I provide relevant instruction and opportunity for practice and targeted feedback; students should get and use a grammar handbook, spell-check their documents, seek out peer edits, and visit the writing center if one is available. Distributing copies of editors' mark-up symbols for them to use in self and peer editing is a good idea we use. And we also insist that students get peer edits on prior drafts for high-stakes writing, such as graded assignments that count more than 15% of a students' overall grade for a course. When peer editing is feasible, we require peer editors' signatures on accompanying drafts when final projects are handed in. Note that this step encourages a more professional approach to the peer editing process, placing responsibility on students not only for proofreading for mechanics, but for
getting feedback on their thinking-writing strategies.

**Limiting scope in reading and editing**

Before responding to student writing, I've discovered that it is very helpful to decide first on a reading-editing strategy. For example, upon assigning a paper, I tell students specifically that I'll be looking to see that they demonstrate one skill in particular: paragraph development, for example. Or I tell them that I'll be paying special attention to introductory clauses of sentences. Or I'll read an entire set of papers, pick out the most common grammatical error, and show ways to eliminate it next time. In each of these cases, I've found it helpful to limit my feedback to the one element only and limit the related instruction to 5 minutes or less. Over time, this strategy covers a lot of grammatical territory, and is less overwhelming to students than the results of obsessive editing: papers that are so marked up that students get discouraged at the results and the teacher is exhausted by the effort. Finally, I also remind myself that if I feel compelled to point out additional grammar or syntax problems on some papers, I can merely place checks or use wavy lines and ask students to find the problems themselves.

**Disclaiming:**

I try to let students know that it is neither possible nor desirable that I edit their papers for everything. I'd like to stamp a disclaimer on their papers that said: "This edit/response is not exhaustive. A check mark indicates that there are additional problems which affected your grade. You should find and correct these, and if recurring, see me for help." Maybe I'll order that stamp today!

**Setting criteria for grading:**

Peter Elbow has written about high stakes versus low stakes writing and makes a cogent case for setting reasonable yet clear criteria for grading. In my experience I've found that it is helpful to students if I decide in advance whether the writing I've assigned is high stakes or low stakes and what level of correctness is fair to ask them to achieve given the constraints of the particular assignment. Low stakes writing and preliminary drafts that must be written quickly may well be awkward and ungrammatical; I need to stress to myself that I am looking for ideas, for thinking, in such pieces. Alternatively, it is fair to stress correctness -- even impeccability -- on a heavily weighted, high-stakes paper, for which drafting and editing time have been allowed in the syllabus and for which I have had an opportunity to help students think through content and writing strategies in advance. In the latter case, I find it helpful to provide students with a grid that specifies the criteria by which they will be graded and often will ask them to contribute to the criteria listing, by asking: "What 4-5 elements are critical for evaluating the overall effectiveness of this assignment?" Almost always they will include correctness, at which point I can specify particular elements that are apt to be problematic in this assignment: run-on sentences, passive voice, parallel structure,
punctuation, etc. Or I could simply provide a grid that specifies 3-4 important items, such as: uses strong verbs, demonstrates coherent paragraph development, and so forth. Writing these so that they address a limited number of measurable elements makes my grading seem fairer, more accurate, and more helpful, but also limits me -- after all, it is my obsession that I am trying to manage, as I also try to teach writing.

**Conclusion**

I hope these ideas have provided you with some hope that our glorious but frustrating obsession with correctness can be managed in a lot of ways that make teaching writing not only more productive, but more fun. After all, Junior Year Writing is about much more than grammar, syntax, usage, and style, regardless of their acknowledged importance. The ideas I suggest may not work for everyone, but modifications of them may prove useful for some, and many of you may be prompted to come up with altogether new ideas of your own.
Teaching the Research Process
Information Literacy for Junior Year Writing

By Isabel Espinal, Librarian for Information Literacy, UMass Amherst

The What and Why of Information Literacy

Information literacy is a crucial set of abilities for successful academic and professional writing. Information literacy encompasses the ability to recognize when information is needed and how to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information in writing and other contexts.

There are various reasons for including library instruction/information literacy in Junior Year Writing:

1. Good writing is always informed by the literature of the field and by published evidence.
2. Students need to be introduced to how real practitioners and scholars in their chosen fields write – both how they write and what they write about. Students need to learn how to access and make effective use of this vast literature. They need to become familiar with the indexing databases and reference sources and search strategies in their majors and for their future professions.

The How: Work With the Librarian Assigned to Your Department

The Library has subject specialist librarians for each department who can help you teach information literacy to your students. To find your Subject Specialist, see www.library.umass.edu/reference/liaisons.html.

Your department liaison librarian can:

♦ Work with you to help you design assignments that teach students to use appropriate sources for their disciplines and future professions, and that help them learn research skills and tools in their fields of study.
♦ Conduct a library instruction session during either a lecture or discussion portion of your class. Library subject specialists offer subject-specific instructional sessions to assist students in gathering high-quality resources to complete academic assignments. Library classrooms allow for hands-on learning.
♦ Arrange for you to use a library classroom to conduct your own Junior Year Writing research session.
♦ Help you provide your students with access to subject-specific library resources.
♦ Work with you on creating a web page research guide specifically for students in your Junior Year Writing classes, with links to the most useful resources for your subject, discipline or course. For a list of existing Subject Guides see www.library.umass.edu/subject/.
♦ Integrate information literacy into your SPARK site, or course web page, or blog.
Help you develop links to catalog searches, online journals and full-text journal articles from a wide range of sources.

Some Ways to Incorporate Information Literacy into Junior Year Writing Classes

- **Work with your subject librarian.** See above.
- **Assign an annotated bibliography as a writing assignment.** Make sure to be specific about what should be included and give students an opportunity to comment critically on the information sources. Encourage students to use a citation manager like RefWorks, available on the library webpage. For collaborative work or for sharing of bibliographies, consider RefShare, a feature within RefWorks.
- **Assign a research log or a database searching log where students articulate the search and evaluation process.**
- **Have students do searches on the same topic, using different information sources or indexes and write a comparison of the results.** For example, they can compare the results from a general scholarly database like Academic Search Premier, a discipline-specific database like CINHAL, PsychInfo or Anthropology Plus, a current events database like Lexis-Nexis, Google, or Google Scholar. This assignment can also help them learn about writing by discerning different types of writing for different audiences.

Special Library Resources Available to Assist Student and Faculty with Research in Junior Year Writing

- **Department Liaison Librarians** Find out who your librarian is and start working together to promote information literacy for your Junior Year Writing students. [http://www.library.umass.edu/reference/liaisons.html](http://www.library.umass.edu/reference/liaisons.html)
- **Subject Research Guides** These guides are tailored to specific majors, subjects, and sometimes even courses. [http://www.library.umass.edu/subject/](http://www.library.umass.edu/subject/)
- **RefWorks Bibliography Manager** RefWorks collects, stores, and organizes citations from books, articles, web sites, and other sources. It automatically converts citations into properly formatted bibliographies in a multitude of styles appropriate for every major. The RefShare feature lets students and faculty share work. [http://www.library.umass.edu/reference/refworks/](http://www.library.umass.edu/reference/refworks/)
- **Plagiarism Prevention and Detection Services** The UMass Amherst Library partners with other campus offices to offer online plagiarism detection services for faculty support and student education. [http://www.library.umass.edu/tools/plagiarism/](http://www.library.umass.edu/tools/plagiarism/)
- **Information Literacy and Library Instruction** This webpage has other resources you can use in teaching. [http://www.library.umass.edu/instruction/](http://www.library.umass.edu/instruction/)
- **Reference and Research Assistance** Located in the Learning Commons and available anywhere, 24/7 through chat and IM, librarians help and teach students and faculty one-on-one. We welcome basic and complex questions! Encourage students to use the “Ask a Librarian Services” listed at [http://www.library.umass.edu/ask/](http://www.library.umass.edu/ask/)
Other Resources
All students in Englwrit 112, College Writing, are required to purchase the Penguin Handbook, custom edition (2007) (ISBN 0-536-21767-X). We encourage instructors in Junior-Year writing courses to adopt the same handbook since many of their students will own a copy of it and still have access to the handbook’s online materials.

Penguin Handbook

Custom Edition for University of Massachusetts Amherst
Encourage your students to use
The University Writing Center!

The University Writing Center offers free, non-credit help with writing to any UMass student. Visitors to the Writing Center, located in the Learning Commons of Du Bois Library, work one-on-one with trained tutors on any writing issue or project they bring, though students usually seek help with paper assignments. Students enrolled in Junior-Year Writing courses are welcome and encouraged to use the Writing Center!

Writing Center tutors will assist students at any point in the writing process: from brainstorming a topic to further developing a draft to proofreading and editing. The goal of every tutoring session is to sharpen students’ understanding of and facility with their own writing processes, enabling them to become better readers, critics, and editors of their work. By emphasizing commentary, reflection, and revision, our goal is to help students embrace the writing process that is at the heart of all First and Junior Year Writing courses at UMass.

Tutoring sessions typically last forty-five minutes. Each tutoring station is equipped with a computer, so it is important for students to bring both a hard and electronic copy of their work so they can take notes and make revisions directly on the text. Also, we encourage tutees to remain at the Learning Commons following the session to revise their papers based on what they learned during their visit.

The Writing Center is open Monday – Wednesday, 10:00am – 10:00pm; Thursdays, 10:00am – 7:00pm; Sundays, 2:00pm – 7:00 pm. Students are seen on a walk-in basis and may visit the Writing Center for a total of five hours a semester. If an instructor believes a student needs more extensive tutoring, he or she should contact Pat Zukowski, the Writing Center director (545-6240 or pez@acad.umass.edu). She will meet with the student, determine the kind and amount of help that will be most effective, and assign the tutee to appointments with a specific tutor.

Roughly 80% of our clients learn about the Writing Center from classroom instructors. Therefore we ask that you share information about this valuable service with your students, perhaps including information about it in your syllabus. It is equally important that students understand what the Writing Center does not offer. We do not provide page-by-page grammar corrections and copyediting, rewriting of any part of a paper, or interpretation of course readings. We will, however, help the tutee understand your assignment, so please encourage students to bring any handouts or written instructions you have given them regarding the paper.

Tutorials work best when students seek our services on their own. Thus we are happy to visit your classroom to provide your students with a brief introduction to the Writing Center, explaining the benefits of using our services and dispelling the notion that
tutoring from the Writing Center is a form of remediation. Remember: “Every Writer Needs a Reader.”

For additional information and updates on our workshops and services, visit our website: [http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/](http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/).
Selected Bibliography of Research
on Writing Across the Curriculum & Writing in the Disciplines
by UMass Amherst Faculty

(Please help us expand this list by sending research on writing that you’ve published!)


Contacts

*Junior Year Writing Program Staff*

Prof. Genevieve Chandler, Associate Director of the Junior-Year Writing Program: gec@nursing.umass.edu, Arnold House, Phone: (413) 545-5095.

Prof. David Fleming, Director of the Writing Program, dfleming@english.umass.edu, 305 Bartlett Hall, Phone: (413) 545-0610.

The University Writing Program: [http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/](http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/).

University Writing Committee: [http://www.umass.edu/senate/committees/univ_writing.html](http://www.umass.edu/senate/committees/univ_writing.html).

*Other UMass Amherst Resources*

The Writing Center: [http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/](http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/)

Center for Teaching: [http://www.umass.edu/cft/](http://www.umass.edu/cft/)

The University of Massachusetts Amherst Career Services at [http://www.umass.edu/careers/](http://www.umass.edu/careers/) offers to be your resource for the part of your curriculum that might address resume or cover letter writing. You can contact the advisor appropriate to your college to give a short presentation within the class period on these subjects, or you can send your students to any one of our regularly scheduled resume workshops that happen weekly. In any case, you and your students should know that all students are welcome to bring a resume, cover letter, or career concern to see the advisor-on-duty on a walk-in basis any weekday between 9 am and 4:30 pm in 511 Goodell.

*Off-campus Resources*

Many universities have a writing-across-the-curriculum requirement similar to our own and provide resources for faculty that can be easily adapted to a JYWP course. Below are links to some we think are most useful.

- Colorado State University provides a variety of online writing guides, resources for faculty, and sample courses and assignments used by their faculty: [http://writing.colostate.edu/](http://writing.colostate.edu/)
- Purdue University maintains one of the most visited Online Writing Labs in the nation and provides resources for both students and faculty. [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/)
- The WAC-Clearinghouse is a repository of articles, books, reviews, and
pedagogies maintained at: http://wac.colostate.edu/index.cfm

- University of Wisconsin-Madison’s WAC program:
  http://mendota.english.wisc.edu/~WAC/