Rewriting, Recapturing, Reenvisioning: Writing Assessment Revisited In The Hermeneutic Sphere

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REWRITING, RECAPTURING, REENVISIONING:

WRITING ASSESSMENT REVISITED IN THE HERMENEUTIC SPHERE

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REWITING, RECAPTURING, REENVISIONING:
WRITING ASSESSMENT REVISITED IN THE HERMENEUTIC SPHERE

by

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DISSERTATION

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Introduction

My interest in writing assessments and the ‘frame’ that surrounds it came about first, from a glimpse into how testing agencies function through my experience with training teachers to score certification essays, and second, through my exposure to the redesign of the second semester composition course that led to the redesign of an entire composition program. A lecturer in composition at the University of Texas at El Paso, I was invited to Austin to score teacher certification essays. Travel and accommodations were covered and the pay looked good. And that’s how this dissertation started. Educational Testing Services (ETS) developed the essays according to Texas Education Agency’s criteria. I participated as scorer, table leader and chief reader for approximately six years - until the scoring went online. Both as one of the trained and one of the trainers, I was able to observe standardized essay results and how inter-rater reliability was reached, as well as how it wasn’t reached.

Then, the University of Texas at El Paso, the 2007 redesign provided me with an example of the influence of and opportunities for Texas Tech University’s innovative assessment process. At the University of Texas at El Paso, the composition program’s second semester course experienced a complete three-point overhaul that included revamping the writing center, redesigning the composition courses and implementing an innovative assessment process. From the beginning some faculty were opposed, and even held a meeting off campus to discuss what could be done, and others were interested. But almost all the faculty members came together to recreate all aspects of the course, from the mission statement to the assignments and learning outcomes to the rubrics, as well as aligning the changes with the writing center to encourage students to seek and receive support. Looking to current scholarship concerning composition, specifically Beaufort’s 2007 College Writing and Beyond, faculty threw out the old and created a
new, standardized course designed to teach students to write for the audiences outside composition.

The creation of the class was a collaboration of lecturers getting together with the program director and the director of rhetoric and writing studies. The course became rhetorical to a degree that faculty, with over 30 years of combined experience, had never seen, and which then led faculty to create assignments they had to learn how to teach. A evaluative distribution program like Texas Tech University’s Raider Writer, (Raider Writer is part of this dissertation) was designed so students in all courses could upload assignments, and those assignments were distributed among graduate students who were earning the 18 hours of required coursework before entering the classroom as teachers. The traditional TA class was redesigned to focus on the rhetoric and pedagogy of composition and two training sessions were held before each assignment was scored. Training was also three-pronged. Two assignments had first drafts and training consisted of 1) recognizing writing aspects and developing formative and summative responses. Then 2) final draft trainings covered the same writing aspects in order to assign a rating score, and 3) both first and final draft training included methods for teaching these assignments. Here, I saw that what had happened between scorers, or graduate students, in the ETS environment of Austin, also happened in the less lofty confines of UTEP. And it was just as valuable in ways unanticipated.

Another impetus that led to this study of assessment practices came from an unlikely and seemingly distant rhetorical relative, Race Critical Theory. Thomas West’s work (2002) suggests that when minorities create shelters for themselves as a coping mechanism for handling the stress caused by the onslaught of discrimination received, they stop short before working together to create a “praxis of shelter” where the subjects in the group learn methods for addressing these
discriminations. By doing this, West moves beyond the examination of what discrimination looks like and he moves beyond how it works. Instead, West is suggesting a way to combat it by changing the behaviors of recipients and by finding methods for addressing the behaviors of those who commit acts of discrimination. West’s approach is designed to empower those at the receiving end of abuse by offering tools to address the issue instead of waiting for the abusers to change their behavior (pgs. 91-106). This is similar to the goal of this dissertation, which is to explore alternative methodologies for assessments that better address the myriad issues of writing assessment.

Overview of Dissertation

Before I can propose alternative methodologies to address the current story of writing assessment, this dissertation must travel backwards to trace the historical tendency toward dichotomous choices that began in ancient times. The ever-present and powerful choice stems from the power of Plato’s writing and fortunate survival of his writings in his argument for the dialectic used to seek Truth as opposed to philosophies such as those of Gorgias, who argued for a relative or situated truth. The similarities of some of Plato’s concepts to Christianity further enforced the dichotomy between absolutism and relativity – the choice between good/bad, right/wrong and true/false. The time between Plato and Harvard is “long,” and there are many considerations that wait for another article, but the influences of the ancient past have, I contend, a direct influence on the choices early American educational institutions made in the 19th century as the nation moved from a literary to scientific emphasis on education. These choices also divide writing into composition and writing assessment.

The consequence of these influences also creates a “frame” that encompasses testing agencies like the College Board and Educational Testing Services, as well as composition and
writing assessment. These different areas came about in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century with the development of entrance and placement exams. At this time, composition was came into being in order to teach incoming students to write, and the College Entrance Examination Board was created to assess that student writing as it was evidenced in the entrance exams. In part because assessments of subjective subjects is a difficult endeavor, the College was tasked with creating and then evaluating these assessments, claiming that the newly formed composition faculty was unable to do so. In this dissertation, a ‘frame,’ as described by Adler-Kassner and O’Neill (2007) is synonymous with ‘story.’

A frame is all the beliefs and values and reputations that go into making up the story of composition and writing assessment. It is the history of a product, other similar products, and the various audiences. It is the reputation of assessment and it is the commercial value - known factor, or brand (Rhodes, 2010) - of assessment. It is the general attitudes, understandings and beliefs concerning composition, writing assessments and testing agencies. A frame focuses and contains those attitudes and belief. Composition and composition scholars involved in writing assessment have been cast as the antagonists in the writing assessment story, and whereas the testing agencies have a ‘brand’- known products such as the SAT test, the GRE or the TOEFL - the field of composition was branded with a reputation of inadequacy, while writing assessment is often both inadequate by testing agencies and suspected of being a watchdog by composition.

Therefore, I propose a different theoretical framework for assessment methods that moves psychometrics from the main focus of all methods to an aspect of methods, and I argue that hermeneutics offers a methodology that can accommodate the various influences and issues that create writing assessments, so I trace the evolution of hermeneutics before suggesting that the circle might be better conceived as a \textit{sphere}. Hermeneutics is foremost a method of
interpretation or understanding that has a number of applications, from understanding words or phrases in Bible passages to understanding the influences of historical and cultural dichotomies that affect understanding of, in this case, writing assessment. Early hermeneutics suggested that words or phrases in a biblical passage could be understood by first understanding the passage. This gave precedence to the passage over the word or phrase.

Later, hermeneutics was seen to be recursive, or circular, which meant that just as the passage exerts influence on the interpretation of the word or phrase, so does the word or phrase exert influence on the passage. Then phenomenological hermeneutics is the interpretation of human experience and its value to this dissertation is that it incorporates the human response as a part of understanding; therefore, the individual beliefs and attitudes of students, faculty and assessors can be recognized as part of that understanding. My contention, however, is that the circular, or recursive aspect of hermeneutics is better viewed as a three-dimensional sphere where historical influences, human responses, large assessment issues and small assessment issues, as well as local and national issues are all equally and mutually influencing one another, and in order to make full use of the potentiality of the sphere, those involved in composition and assessment must re-examine and reinterpret current methodologies and personal positionality. Then, in order to understand the value of the hermeneutic sphere as an organizational framework, I chose to research two disparate institutions of higher education in order to highlight both differences and similarities, and to model the reflexive interpretative aspects of the sphere.

Composition courses are among the most important courses that students in any discipline can take. The ability to write is believed to require the ability to think critically and provides the ability to communicate with various audiences about various topics. But historically, writing assessment has not been viewed positively. In order to change writing
assessment’s brand or frame, we must move beyond scholarship that points out what is wrong, and we must move beyond designing assessments, that follow the same patterns of direct/indirect methods judged by issues of reliability and validity based on the same psychometric framework. We must move beyond scholarship concerned with discrete and disparate bits of information even though pointing out what does not work, has helped incite us to address the issues found in writing assessment. A hermeneutic *sphere* can provide a type of “praxis of shelter” where the concerns of faculty, the scholarship of scholars and the knowledge of testing agencies can create a composition profession that disseminates and develops the knowledges across the various fields or stakeholders and uses it to the advantage of the student. The College Board and Educational Testing Services wrote the writing assessment story. Further chapters are in the hands of publishing companies. Composition is, thus far, a footnote, the foil or catalyst to the story, and as such, can never be the hero of another’s story. We must write our own story, and in order to do that, we need our own “shelter for praxis” and a hermeneutic *sphere* can offer this.

To rhetoric, as both a philosophy and discipline, complicating, analyzing and deconstructing better concepts and issues define the world. And it is this accumulation of knowledge that allows us to make a world that departs from the world we investigate. The very act of understanding the mechanics of our social construct is a revelation that allows us to reconstruct whatever is under investigation. This is the guiding philosophy behind this dissertation.
Chapter I: Historical Influences, Past and Present

Rhetoric began as the ancient art of oratory and persuasion. Its ancestors are mainly Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Roman philosophers such as Cicero. But the discipline of Rhetoric and Writing Studies, also known as Rhetoric and Composition at some universities, is a discipline, which started practices such as teaching writing before a body of scholarship had evolved about teaching writing, which is an unusual trajectory for a discipline. When composition courses began, teachers were often spurred to theorize and research methods to improve writing. The spur is the difficulty of writing and teaching writing. Faculty’s concern for students’ success and the need for improvement has led to a rich body of knowledge that continues to grow and explore all aspects of human interaction. There is nothing connected to people that is immune from the rhetorician’s interest, and the discipline continues to grow and incorporate the knowledges of other disciplines such as sociology, psychology, linguistics and languages, biblical studies, politics, anthropology, communication, education and many others. Rhetoric and Composition Studies is not exclusive; it is inclusive, with myriad facets. This dissertation takes a look at one area of rhetoric and composition, writing assessment, the research and theories behind determining the quality of writing.

An investigation into an area of study is often served by an organizational framework that helps make sense of the various factors involved in assessment and shows their connections. Bourdieus’s social concepts are employed for this research because they offer an adaptable macro-organization for human interactions, which then help situate current writing assessments.
1.1 **Bourdieu’s Social Concepts as a Framework**

To begin, in order to understand the current position of writing and assessments and apply alternative philosophies and theories to writing assessment requires an unpacking of historical and social influences on writing assessment. There are at least two important social influences affecting writing assessment, and each is instrumental at creating both general and specific social dichotomies. One is historical, dating back through the ages, and has enormous ubiquitous power over social value and belief because it shapes the concepts of reality and knowledge. Understanding how this power shapes writing and writing assessment, and the relationship between writing and writing assessment also opens opportunities for those in writing and writing assessment to review and reframe the current reputation, or frame, of writing and writing assessment. The second set of social influences are more recent and include changes to social beliefs and values that engendered the widespread use of writing assessments in education. In order to situate the social values and influences surrounding writing assessment, and recognize the power of these influences, Pierre Bourdieu’s framework for social structure are useful for explaining how historically social influences work through current practices. Therefore, Chapter I will begin with an overview of Bourdieu’s concepts before considering different social influences that all but predicted the later course of writing assessments. The chapter ends with an overview of the dichotomous assessment methods that exist between the writing assessment community and testing agencies. These methods work to continue the dichotomies between the composition community and the testing agencies.

Pierre Bourdieu is, among other attributes, a social philosopher whose concepts offer an explanation of social constructs and behaviors. His terms, *field, habitus, capital, doxa, reflexivity* and *conatus* are but some of the terms that offer insights into social and cultural systems. These
fields are interdependent and artificially separated for the purposes of discussing them. Bourdieu’s first concept is field. Bourdieu (1993) says:

> each position … is subjectively defined by the system of distinctive properties by which it can be situated relative to other positions; that every position, even the dominant one, depends for its very existence, and for the determinations it imposes on its occupants, on the other positions constituting the field; and that the structure of the field, i.e. of the space of positions, is nothing other than the structure of the distribution of the capital of specific properties which governs success in the field and the winning of the external or specific profits … which are at stake in the field (p. 30)

Fields are the ‘where’ of action and agency. Like a club or clubhouse, group, discourse community, or classroom, for example, a field, or particular plane of existence or habitation, can be both physical and social, and determines the behaviors of those who inhabit a particular field. Patricia Thompson (2014) uses the metaphor of a football field where:

> a football field is a boundaried site where a game is played. In order to play the game, players have set positions marked by predetermined places. The game has specific rules which novice players must learn, together with basic skills, as they begin to play” (p. 66).

Social fields can layer physical fields like nesting dolls. Every course in every classroom creates a field upon which the habitus and capital both mirror the other rules and values of other classes in that same room, and change the rules and values of other or in any of the other 3000+ rooms. Each of these class fields sits upon the field of that discipline which sits upon the field of that college which sits upon the field of the university. The University of Texas at El Paso field sits on the field of El Paso.
Furthermore, “fields are shaped differently according to the game that is played on them. They have their own rules, histories, star players, legends and lore” (p. 67). An example of a physical field can be the valley and border of El Paso, Texas, and Cd. Juarez, Mexico, where the physical field consists of the mountains, the Chihuahuan desert, a nearly dry river that divides the two nations, the heat, the wind, the sunshine, and so on. Physical fields can shape towns such as El Paso, which must develop around the mountains and along the river and which is constrained by the New Mexican and Mexican borders. El Paso exists because it was a safe crossing point on the Rio Grande River. As such, El Paso, Texas, borders New Mexico and the country of Mexico and together, the cities of Cd. Juarez, Mexico and El Paso, Texas are sister cities with a combined population of over two million people. Fields can also be social as much as physical: politics, laws, clubs, organizations, universities, writing programs with their composition scholars, directors and faculty writing assessment scholars – each occupies a different field with behaviors that are in accordance with the rules of the particular game being played on that field. The physical field of Cd. Juarez, for example, mirrors the physical field of El Paso: but crossing the border means stepping onto a different national field where the language is different, foods taste different, business hours are different - so while the physical field may shape some aspects of social life, social life may shape a physical field.

The various fields that make up writing and writing assessment often overlap and are integrally interconnected, although they may display dramatically different and sometimes almost polar opposite habitus, develop vastly different doxa and generally have opposite qualities of capital, both social and economic because, “[a]ccording to Bourdieu, the game that occurs in social spaces or fields is competitive, with various agents [or individuals] using differing strategies to maintain or improve their position” (qtd. on p. 67).
This competitive nature of *capital* clearly evidences itself in the dichotomy of writing and writing assessment. *Habitus* is Bourdieu’s complex concept designed to address entrenched dichotomies concerning the way the social world is viewed (p. 48). *Habitus* is ‘how’ a goal is achieved on different *fields*. *Habitus* determines what actions and agency subjects can use to achieve success. Meant to reconcile social structure with individual agency, (p. 49) this concept refers to those behaviors that are practiced on any particular *field*, which are:

- both an experiential and a sociological …. Experientially, we often feel we are free agents, yet base everyday decision on assumptions about the predictable character, behaviour, and attitudes of others. Sociologically, social practices are characterized by regularities. (Maton, 2014, p. 49)

*Habitus* “focuses on our ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being. It captures how we carry within us our history; how we bring this history into our present circumstances, and how we make choices to act in certain ways and not others” (p. 51). Swartz (1997) says that:

- Habitus tends to shape individual action so that existing opportunity structures are perpetuated. Chances of success or failure are internalized and then transformed into individual aspirations or expectations; these are in turn externalized in action that tends to reproduce the objective structure of life chances. (p. 103)

Because decisions are based on sedimented behaviors and attitudes, we are both individually and socially born and live our lives in a continuing adjusting process between agency and social constraint. While this adjusting process is often a subtext to social life, there can be great tension in these negotiations. The various assessment practices in which writing assessment institutions engage can be said to exemplify the *habitus* of writing assessment where testing methods tend to be repeated because they have been shown to be successful. It is, in fact,
this *habitus*, which separate the *fields* of writing assessment and the writing *fields* and, so far, have created insurmountable differences between the two *fields*. One example of this is the divide caused by direct and indirect testing methods.

When a behavior or a series of behaviors become historically sedimented or entrenched, these behaviors evolve into *doxa*. For Bourdieu, *doxa* is “what is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying; … it relates to ‘what is taken for granted’” (Deer, 2014, p. 115) and reflects the basis of *habitus* on various *fields*. Doxa differs from *habitus* in that *habitus* are recognizable behaviors of individuals and *doxa* can be said to act below the level of consciousness. Nietzsche's description of conceptual truths being built one upon another also describes *doxa*: the “construction must be like one constructed of spider webs; delicate enough to be carried along by the waves, strong enough not to blown apart by every wind” (p. 1175). The spider webs represent the omnipresent influence with the strength to withstand the various waves of thought and belief that are present within specific social settings.

Whereas *habitus* reflects ‘how’ success is achieved, *doxa* is ‘why.’ *Habitus* refers to sedimented behaviors deemed successful, behaviors that have become so embedded and entangled in the *doxa* of a *field* that they have become accepted as fact. Although players on a *field* may believe themselves able to change, Bourdieu’s *habitus* refers to those behaviors that reproduce social *fields*; therefore, they do not change, or do not change easily. *Doxa* and *habitus* exemplify a staying power that borders on permanence since these *doxa* and *habitus* are ubiquitous, invisible and sedimented in all aspects of life. For example, a belief in the value of good grades is *doxa*, unquestioned belief that good grades have value. And because instructors have been grading papers for centuries, the idea of writing assessments that offer fair grades is embedded in practices of instructors at all levels - with the concept of fairness as another *doxa*.
In Bourdieu’s theory of doxa, a concept evolves through time and its various successful usages into that which becomes accepted reality or fact. Doxa is why people do anything; they believe it will be of benefit, and doxa is why writing assessment exists. The writing community inhabits writing community fields, and testing agencies inhabit testing agency fields while the field of writing assessment straddles these two contradictory fields, even though within each field of testing agencies, writing assessment and the writing community will be the similar. For example, the writing and writing assessment, as well as the testing agency fields share the same belief that grading is important (doxa), but the habitus that each field employs and reasoning behind this employment differs somewhat from the habitus and doxa on other fields. Doxa is power and it is everywhere, from philosophies that sediment beliefs and values, to writing pedagogies and writing assessment methodologies that unconsciously reflect those beliefs and values, and the power inherent in doxa comes from an unquestioning acceptance of the historical judgment that lays over the subject at hand.

Another critical concept to understanding Bourdieu’s conception of social structures is capital. Capital is the ‘what,’ or the goal that subjects on a field strive toward. In Hawaii, for example, being known as a surfer confers social capital with those who are like-minded. Being able to afford the surfboard and other accouterments of surfing is recognized a economic capital. In its more “general symbolic form,” capital is [usually] associated with the economic sphere and monetary exchange” (Moore, 2014, p. 98). For Bourdieu, and the purpose to be outlined here, capital “extend[s] the sense of the term ‘capital’ by employing it in a wider system of exchanges whereby assets of different kinds are transformed and exchanged within a complex networks or circuits within and across different fields” (p. 99). Capital, whether social, economic, or symbolic refers to what a people on a particular field engage in certain behaviors to
Social capital is a frame, a reputation. For example, an individual’s social capital, or reputation, is hard earned but easily lost. Social capital can also be found in a brand name of a product or the way a situation is presented. Depending on the particular behaviors and social beliefs of a particular field such as the field of writing assessment, individuals, groups and organizations can gain or lose capital. Economic capital is typically money and assets that can be gained or lost, which can also affect social capital. Symbolic capital represents a value that increases economic and/or social capital. The Purple Cross is an example of symbolic capital. Writing assessment has very little capital across the connecting fields of writing and writing assessment because of how writing assessment has been framed historically. To the composition community, writing assessment’s economic and social capital is deficit. Like taxes, the expense of writing assessments burdens composition programs, and since writing assessments are typically imposed on composition programs (top-down) instead of implemented by composition programs, writing assessment’s social capital is insufficient. On the other hand, most of the economic capital resides within the field of assessment agencies.

Finally, an important concept that Bourdieu used is hysteresis. Hysteresis describes what happens when two fields mingle because of close proximity or close interests. This also describes the tension in between both the composition community and the testing agencies. Hardy (008) describes hysteresis as “generational change, [a] dislocation of habitus” (p. 126), and a feeling of being ‘out of touch with the rest of society’ (p. 127). The concept refers to the tension often seen in relationship between the social being and the society. It can also be applied to the relationship between two fields that are connected by space or subject, value or belief. When the hysteresis occurs between two fields, many if not most subjects on a field will experience discomfort. In El Paso, hysteresis sometimes occurs over issues of language. There
are those who object to Spanish being spoken in El Paso grocery stores. Entering a store that
caters to Spanish speaking customers can cause serious discomfort, whereas the person whose
English is not stellar will feel a similar *hysteresis* in an all-English situation. Applying
Bourdieu’s concepts and historically rhetorical philosophies offer insights into the topics of
writing and writing assessment, two *fields* that are intrinsically connected, but now divided as a
result of the burgeoning *doxa* in the western world. Applying Bourdieu’s concepts – especially
those of *field, doxa* and *capital* - to writing assessment complicates this review. The concepts
cannot be separated from one another easily; they create, react and connect to one another in
ways that clarify social structure.

1.1.1 History of Rhetorical Dichotomies

An overview of the rhetorical histories offers insight into the influences that affect
writing assessment today. My goal is to provide an overview with enough depth to make the
influences of historicality recognizable. Then I show how these pervasive historical influences
have affected later evolutions in social values, and how those evolutions in value have affected
writing assessment. One of the most powerful dichotomies is found between absolutism and
relativism, and since there is no one starting point for a discussion concerning these concepts of
absolutism and relativism, the starting point here is arbitrary. This dichotomy is an early
influence on western concepts of the social world that determined beliefs and values. Writing
assessment’s current reputation, its frame, gained strength on the social and physical *field* during
the heyday of the Greeks, when philosophers concerned themselves with such ontological
questions as the nature of reality, truth and knowledge.

The historical influences of these philosophers evolved into a form of *doxa* that helped
establish western social beliefs and values, and these philosophical (social *fields*) often divided
themselves into either/or issues that created some of the earliest theoretical dichotomies that date back through the ages to robed orators. Payne (1986) contends, “that the contemporary discussion of rhetoric as epistemic is struggling with the subjective-objective dichotomy, and that both sides of the issue are trying to find a way to bridge the gulf created by the completely subjectivist and objectivist philosophical systems they use for grounding” (p. 188). These ancient philosophical dichotomies were the discussions of the day; now they are part of the _doxa_ of the western world. A dichotomy can only function in tension against its opposite. Noon and midnight are examples of dichotomous opposites in light, time, what people do during each, etc. Tensions occur when someone engages in activities at ‘inappropriate’ times. The closer to the “in-between” area of a dichotomy, like the gray areas of dusk or dawn in this example, the more blurred the states become, and the more opportunities and options for agency at blurred middles of dichotomies such as dusk and dawn. This is evident in areas such as true or false, right or wrong, valuable or valueless. Those who adhere to dichotomies without the recognition of “the other sides,” risk becoming ethnocentric in the case of values or customs. Or they may risk obstinacy, become didactic, in the case of right versus wrong.

On one side of the philosophical battlefield was ‘rhetoric,’ or _rhētorikós_, taught by the sophists, itinerant teachers and philosophers who coached litigants required to argue their own law cases before the Greek Council. Famous sophists include Protagoras, Gorgias, Antiphon, and Hippias. Yet, according to the _Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy_, a peer reviewed academic resource, the:

> historical and philological difficulties confronting an interpretation of the sophists are significant. Only a handful of sophistic texts have survived and most of what we know of
the sophists is drawn from second-hand testimony, fragments and the generally hostile depiction of them in Plato’s dialogues.

The sophist perspective is portrayed in *Gorgias* where Plato argues that Gorgias’ used rhetoric to construct truth, knowledge and reality. In *Gorgias* Plato rhetoric called rhetoric a “knack” or “cookery,” a form of deceitful discussion to be squashed by the search for Truth. Rhetoric exemplified the subjective because these ancient sophist philosophers approached truth as a relative state – in that what is true in one situation is not always true at all times or for all situations; sophists viewed the nature of knowledge and truth as contingent on time and place, culture and society much like future rhetorical theories such as postmodernism (Lyotard, 1985). According to Tatarkiewicz (1963), Plato believed the sophist philosophy “took account of human illusions, of the imperfections of human vision and the deformations of perspective, and correspondingly changed the proportions of things, distorted and falsified them” (p. 4), and it is Plato’s perspective that has shown itself to have more staying power than that of the subjectivist philosophy of the sophist.

On the other side of this epistemological battle was Plato who founded the dialectic – a form of questioning designed to lead to Truth. To Plato “every honest human undertaking [should] cling to the truth” (Tatarkiewicz, 1963, p. 4). In *Phaedrus*, Plato’s Socrates argues for the dialectic as a method of reaching these forms such as truth, *the* truth, and he argues this purpose has value whereas rhetoric has none. Plato’s dialectic aimed for the eternal and the absolute and his philosophy helped create a power structure that still directs the shape of truth, reality and knowledge. Plato argues that there are perfect Forms, forms which people only glimpse at birth but which contain the essence of what it means to be every particular thing such
as a table, a rock, or a truth. Everything around us is a transient replica, new and soon replaced, of the original or first Form. In *The Republic* Plato says:

> Whenever a number of individuals have a common name, we assume them to have also a corresponding idea or form. ... Let us take any common instance; there are beds and tables in the world --plenty of them.... But there are only two ideas or forms of them -- one the idea of a bed, the other of a table. And the maker of either of them makes a bed or he makes a table for our use, in accordance with the idea --that is our way of speaking in this and similar instances --but no artificer makes the ideas themselves. (Book III)

Therefore, the Forms are absolutes, unchanging and unchangeable - perfect. In 1888, Harris’ point sums up Plato: “The Platonic dialogues set forth everywhere are culminating doctrine the distinction between what is changing and variable, subject to growth and decay, and what is permanent and abiding, above the vicissitude of time and place” (Harris, 1888, p. 95). These forms also exemplify the acceptable habits that we embody. *Doxa* says they are good, right, proper, positive, and this is why we should aim for them; therefore, when we get them, we gain *capital*. As the original, the essence of everything, the Forms especially exemplify absolutism. They are unchanging and it is this concept of the unchanging that becomes a seminal aspect of science and a pivotal driving force behind testing agencies. This is the dichotomy of subjective versus objective, and it is this dichotomy that finds its way into rhetorical theory and philosophy concerning truth and knowledge, and right and wrong. And it is this dichotomy that, for the purposes of this dissertation, can be considered the ‘first’ dichotomy in that it has power over the way we shape reality and truth.

The dichotomies of Truth versus truth were also dichotomies of faith versus reason or science, and the subjective versus the objective. Plato’s philosophy gained strength with the rise
of Christianity. His emphasis on the absolute found itself compatible with many Christian tenets; for example, God is absolute. Plato also claims every “soul is immortal, because anything that is ever-moving is immortal” (p. 27) – another concept that aligns comfortably with Christianity. Christianity adds to and strengthens absolutism; failure to follow this doxa is punishable - for as long as the soul exists, and apparently, the soul is immortal.

Absolutes like Truth and Knowledge that mirror Plato’s forms, are found in the Judeo-Christian religion, and this focus on absolutes has determined the course of rhetorical theory ever since. What we chose to question and research, and how we choose to assess is influenced by the focus on the absolute and has assessed the value, the rightness or truthfulness of belief, custom, thought, science - everything. The writings of Augustine of Hippo, who lived between 354 and 430 AD – more than 700 years after Plato, provide an example of this absolutism at play. St. Augustine was a Christian theologian and philosopher whose writings provided the logic of faith. His exhortations also express the same either/or dichotomy of belief, saying “It is the duty, then, of the student and teacher of the Holy Scriptures, who is the defender of the true Faith, and the opponent of error, both to teach what is right, and to correct what is wrong” (p. 75), with ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ as absolutes. His exhortations to defend the true faith argue that “we, who are the children and the ministers of this wisdom, [are] under obligation to hold no other opinion” (p. 75) than that of the Church. God had decreed what was. God was the source of absolute.

*Doxa* may operate as an underlying control of behavior or belief, but *doxa* is not one belief, or value; even dichotomies can function as *doxa*. As early as the medieval period, religion is forced to make room for the influences of science. Barnes’ early 1924 treatise provides an overview of the glacially slow overturning of the eminence of faith, and the rise of science that gained momentum. The power of absolute power seen in religious *doxa* ever so slowly filtered
over to the ever-growing power of science. Barnes notes “The [early] Patristic age, profoundly influenced in its intellectual attitudes by Neo-Platonism, had eschewed reason and placed its reliance upon faith, revelation and authority” (p. 475), espousing the belief that “credulity was the mental attitude most befitting a Christian” (p. 476). This is a call for a habit of mind, handed down as command to the Christian world that solidifies itself into a doxa of faith in absolutes. Over time, though, the insistence on credulity made room for science with such suggestions as Barnes notes: “in certain cases reason might occupy an important place along with faith in unraveling the mysteries of theological verity” (p. 476). Barnes points out the connections between rhetoric, classical literature and religion saying that “the scope and purpose of medieval university instruction is well expressed in the famous medieval phrase that, "the sword of God's word is forged by grammar, sharpened by logic, and, burnished by rhetoric" (p. 477), and while there were universities that offered graduate instruction in law and medicine, theology still remained "the queen of the sciences" (pgs. 476–477). In this slow evolutionary change of eminence, theology never really loses ground. For centuries, in fact, the purpose of science was to explain and support theology.

Francis Bacon, for example, was a philosopher of faith with an interest in science. Since God’s word was infallible, philosophers and scientists such as Francis Bacon turned their science toward understanding why God’s word was so difficult to understand and follow. As Manzo (1999) says:

Bacon seems to believe that faith in Biblical truths should play a legitimizing and normative role in science, primarily in the sense of defining its general objective of restoring the dominion of man over nature, which had been lost with Adam's fall. (p. 115)
Furthermore, Bacon’s “Excerpt of The Advancement of Learning” says that the “invention of speech or argument is not properly an invention: for to invent is to discover that which we know not, and not to recover or resummons that which we already know” (p. 86). Since religion represented the eternal unchanging absolute truth and knowledge, and humans represented the transient, the problem had to lie with humankind. His reasons for these human failings are found in the “Excerpt of Novum Organum,” written in 1620, where Bacon argues that there are idols and false notions that beset human understanding so deeply that truth “can hardly find entrance” (p. 213, qtd in Bizzel and Herzog, p. 745).

Over time, other philosophers such as John Locke begin to apply science to argue that the problem was language, saying “the chief end of language in communication being to be understood, words serve not well for that end… when any word does not excite in the hearer the same idea which it stands for in the mind of the speaker” (p. 465) citing “the volumes of interpreters and commentators on the Old and New Testament … [as] manifest proof “ (p. 479). His separation between the fallacy of language and the absolute of religion argues

Though everything said in the text be infallibly true, yet the reader may be, nay, cannot choose but be, very fallible in the understanding of it. Nor it to be wondered, that the will of God, when clothed in words, should be liable to that doubt and uncertainty which unavoidably attends that sort of conveyance, when even his Son, whilst clothed in flesh, was subject to all the frailties and inconveniences of human nature, sin excepted. (p. 479)

For Locke, language is relative and it is this relativeness that explains an inability to see Truth or Knowledge. In a “An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,” Locke says that if “[t]he chief end of language in communication being to be understood, words serve not well for that end,
neither in civil nor philosophical discourse, when any word does not excite in the hearer the same idea which it stands for in the mind of the speaker” (p. 465).

Because of this, “all contests that follow thereupon are only about the meaning of a sound (p. 469). Words are not inherently related to that which they signify which explains why so many so often misunderstand or fail to recognize truth and knowledge. Names assigned to objects are not naturally or inherently connected. Philosophers like Bacon and Locke recognize that the dichotomy of absolute truth and knowledge depends largely on relative language to express itself. However, this recognition does not yet seem to challenge that absoluteness or recognize spaces where the dichotomies overlap.

The influence of science on religion, the influence of the absolute on relativity, and the influence of the objective on the subjective continue the evolutionary exchange of eminence. Religion makes way for religions. Nietzsche’s questioning of truth and reality questions the doxa that insinuates itself into all aspects of life. Furthermore, Nietzsche:

turns the implicit Christianism back on itself; extending the application of his discourse to interrogate the genesis of those Judeo-Christian values themselves. Unlike his contemporaries, Nietzsche does not regard only the fin de siècle itself as a period of decline; rather it is the apotheosis, the culmination of a long process of decay which he sees as beginning with the rise and eventual hegemony of Christianity” (Moore, 2000, p. 2.)

For Nietzsche, the end of the 19th century was both the end of the hegemony of Christianity as well as its pinnacle moment in time. Though considered a nihilist by many, what Nietzsche did was question reality. His quest provided permission to question the reality that shapes our very existence. Nietzsche’s inclusion here is part of the trace of the doxa that stems from the Christian
hegemony. For Nietzsche, much like for Locke, words are lies and we are all liars, which was a severe challenge of the absolute Truth versus relative truth dichotomy. Truth is not absolute for Nietzsche; in fact “Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusion,” (p. 1174). In fact, in his condemnation of truth, Nietzsche says “When someone hides something behind a bush and looks for it again in the same place and finds it there as well, there is not much to praise in such seeking and finding ‘truth’ within the realm of reason” (p. 1175).

In 1936, Richards said that “where the old Rhetoric treated ambiguity as a fault in language, and hoped to confine or eliminate it, the new Rhetoric sees it as an inevitable consequence of the powers of language and as the indispensable means of most of our most important utterances” (p. 1287) and, in 1945, Burke said that “[f]rom ambiguity is derived that irony of historical development whereby the very strength in the affirming of a given term may the better enable men to make a world that departs from it” (p. 1318). Thirty years later, Chaim Perelman followed with:

Instead of searching for a necessary and self-evident first truth from which all our knowledge would be suspended, let us recast our philosophy in terms of a vision in which people and human societies are in interaction and are solely responsible for their cultures, their institutions, and their future – a vision in which people try hard to elaborate reasonable systems, imperfect but perfectible. (p. 1382)

These scholars and their focus on ambiguity created an alternate option for reality - postmodern ‘reality.’ Postmodern theories can operate at spaces of tension and ambiguity that reside at the middle of dichotomies. Reality is neither absolute nor relative at the space; it is both at the same time. This conceptual space, like Nietzsche’s questioning of reality, offers composition teachers the opportunity and the permission to question current practices and explore alternatives to
assessment practices. The rules are suspended. The need for perfection in uniformity and clarity of mechanical usage in writing can make room for – indeed must make room for - potentially more powerful forms of assessment that view writing as more than words in a correct order.

These few historical examples of rhetorical philosophies impact everything, including writing assessment. In the late 20th century dichotomous philosophies again define reality, truth and knowledge as applied to education. The philosophers and rhetors discussed in this dissertation predate current writing assessments by centuries and lay the groundwork for views that become part of the social fabric. They are doxa. Like other fields, the prevailing doxa hangs over writing assessment, imbuing all its aspects. When writing assessment does arrive on the social scene, rhetoricians and composition instructors then find it at odds with their own values.

*History of Writing Assessment Dichotomies*

This section continues the story of how historical influences affect today’s writing assessment by tracing a more modern influence on writing assessment, and how the focus on absolutes evolves into the absolutes of science and the influence of this belief on writing assessment. After a historical overview, the chapter ends with examples of the habits - in this case testing methods - employed by various fields involved in writing assessment. Elliot (2008) says writing’s relationship with writing assessment “reflects the presence of power” (p. 349). This power is situated in the social and economic capital of the fields of writing assessment and testing agencies. Here the assessment practices of both the testing agencies and writing assessment fields engage in reflect a form of habitus, in that the testing methods used by testing agencies have changed very little over time. Therefore, the story of writing assessment is one of social, political and economical power; it is a story of the testing agencies’ quest for capital, as well as the lack of power or capital experienced by those most involved in writing assessment –
the writing community of program directors and the instructors they support. For the purposes of this dissertation, I begin writing assessment’s history in the mid 1800s and the shift toward scientific approaches toward knowledge that led to the inception of composition due to the implementation of entrance exams for college admittance. Therefore, I start at the 1874 Harvard entrance exam in order to “understand the historical roots that contribute to the frames” (Adler-Kassner, 2010, p. 141). This marks the beginning of modern writing assessment’s historical roots, and it is also during this time that writing assessment’s reputation, or frame, begins.

The most powerful modern-era influence on writing assessment structures began in the late 19th century as a response to the reinvention of an age-old dichotomy between the absolute and the relative that had been growing during the eons between Plato and 19th century America. Before this, the instructor typically graded writing assignments in the quiet solitude of the office or home, and most writing assessment issues remained unexamined, and the historical emphasis on the subjective reaction to the art of writing supported this form of assessment. Elliot (2008) examines the social history of the time, place and people surrounding writing assessment in American academe in order to contextualize issues surrounding the beginnings of writing assessment and reveal monumental power structures: “During the nineteenth century America witnessed a fundamental cultural change: the republic as a reflection of language was receding, and the nation as a construct of science was taking its place” (p.1). Shepard (2000) agrees: “in the early 1900s, the social efficiency movement grew out of the belief that science could be used to solve the problems of industrialization and urbanization” (p. 4). As seen, however, this social movement did not suddenly develop in the late 19th century; it had its inception as early as the Middle Ages with the rise of the university and the slow recognition of science as a driving force in the quest for absolute knowledge. This evolution proved a challenge to prevailing doxa - in
this case the eminence of the classics. The capital of education beginning and ending with an emphasis on literature was making its slow way toward a capital steeped in science, thereby reinforcing the dichotomy of subjective versus objective evidence such as literature versus science. The effect on education was profound. It was during the 1880s that the Wild West was being tamed and the education westerners wanted was scientific, not literary. Markers of this transition in the nation’s views on education include the founding of John Hopkins University in 1876, and Cornell University in 1865, both of “which stood as a symbol of American enterprise,” … reflected the decline of the classics, [as well as] the encouragement of scientific studies” (p. 3). The Morrill Act of 1862 is another example of the changing image of the nation. The Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 funded states with federal lands for public colleges that focused on technologies and agriculture. The Morrill Act allowed for the founding of sixty-nine colleges, known as land grant colleges like MIT, Purdue, Texas Tech University, and Cornell.

The shift toward sciences and also recreated another aspect of the absolute/relative dichotomy, seen as either a subjective/objective or qualitative/quantitative. As Elliot (2008) said, “science…tells us that subjectivity is to be avoided” (p. xvii), because any research on subjective studies can only be framed in terms of quality; therefore, qualitative is also out, and becomes, as Foucault claims, “knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity“(p. 82). The terms ‘qualitative’ and ‘subjective’ became negative terms with an intensity that had not been seen. For centuries the absolute/relative dichotomy had always been weighted toward the absolute. Then science appropriated concepts of absolutism, and objectivity became the rule of science. And science wants quantitative data. Accountability becomes an ever-growing norm, and assessment becomes a powerful tool of accountability.
Thus, writing falls on the side of subjectivity while writing assessment falls on the side of objectivity. This dichotomy has proven influential to all aspects of writing assessment.

It was during this time that the Harvard entrance exam of 1874 developed as a response to this changing American image under the tutelage of Charles Eliot, Harvard’s president. Public secondary institutions had already initiated entrance exams, and soon writing assessment became the standard method of qualifying a prospective student for admittance to college. However, different schools were implementing widely disparate forms of assessment. Secondary school educators, recognizing that these college standards determined public school curriculum, were at a loss regarding which test to follow. Secondary schools needed a curriculum that prepared students for colleges and universities. Therefore, the headmaster of Newark Academy called for a standardized test in his inaugural address as president of The Schoolmasters Association of New York and Vicinity, saying that, “After reviewing the entrance requirements for the four schools [Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Columbia] … [he] concluded that unreasonable diversity existed, that each college called ‘for its own particular little fad;” (Elliot, 2008, p. 23).

In response to this concern, twelve colleges and universities came together and formed the College Entrance Examination Board, commonly known as the College Board, in 1899 (Elliot, 2008, p. 25). The College Board’s purpose was to create and monitor standardized entrance exams in order to reduce discrepant entrance exams and better prepare America’s youth for the rigors of college. Thus, the College Board began at the behest and sanction of powerful forces that granted the College Board automatic ethos and capital. In doing so, they created a new field that quickly developed its own habits. Endowed by universities with both the necessary economic and social capital, the College Board became a strong determinant of a student’s future. That power rests on ability to accurately assess, though, and composition instructors came
to have serious questions concerning this ability. Nicholas Murray Butler, the first secretary and executive officer of the College Board said that the “work of the Board,” would:

promptly elevate the secondary-school work in English, in history, and in the natural sciences to a new plane of importance and of effectiveness. It will control the examination system in the interest of education, and resist the tendency to make it a mere machine-like performance. (qtd in Elliot, p. 29 italics mine)

This language removed the instructor from the assessment process with the accusation of implied imperfection and overzealousness, which also validates the existence of the College Board and begins the dichotomy between the composition community and testing agencies. This new testing field stood in stark contrast to the new field of composition instructors who were considered “slaves,” or “serfs” - cheap labor – that taught composition (Kytle 1971) and composition classes were designed to “enable the ordinary man to set forth such ideas as he has (or such facts as he needs to present) in an orderly and effective fashion, without mistakes in construction, grammar, punctuation, and spelling” (Cunliffe 1912, Savage 1921, Elliot 2008). From the beginning, composition instructors see assessment agencies as Goliaths to their Davids, but with reverse results. This time Goliath wins.

Along with disparate amounts and types of capital, these two newly created fields - the composition community and testing agencies - exhibited disparate habits. In 1948, the College Board created Educational Testing Services, or ETS, generally considered the strong arm of assessment and the administrator of numerous public school advancement tests and placement exams such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) for incoming college students. Their methods further widened the divide between the teacher in the classroom and assessment institutions that began with the College Board’s mission statement. Since then, the College Board has developed
a myriad of tests that have set standard for academic and professional achievement throughout the world; they are a technique “of power… invented to meet the demands of production” (Foucault, 1980, p. 161). Instantly, the College Board and ETS determined good, better and best, not the college teachers in the classroom teaching writing.

Psychometrics

One of the first, and most influential, frameworks for writing assessments is psychometrics, which has become a doxa for testing agencies, and it upon this framework that all assessments in education are developed. Psychometrics is the science of measuring mental capacities and processes. It begins in the field of testing agencies. According to In Gipps (1999) investigations into the socio-cultural aspects of assessment, she says “Psychometric theory developed originally from work on intelligence and intelligence testing. The underlying notion was that intelligence was innate and fixed:

in the way that other inherited characteristics are, such as skin color. Intelligence could therefore be measured (since, like other characteristics it was observable), and, on the basis of the outcome, individuals could be assigned to streams, groups, or schools that were appropriate to their intelligence (or "ability," as it came to be seen). (p. 367).

She points out that:

psychologists had been working on the theory of intelligence, and in 1904, a year before Binet's test appeared, Charles Spearman published a classic paper on general intelligence. Binet and Spearman were critical of each other's work, but the serendipitous timing of developments in the measurement and theory of intelligence gave IQ testing considerable
appeal in the eyes of those responsible for the efficient functioning of the state education system. (p. 358)

Instituted by the College Board, psychometrics is the quantitative measuring of psychological, or qualitative attributes such as aptitude tests, and writing tests that were believed to measure intelligence. The Psychometric Society, established in 1935, offers various definitions. For example, Henk Kekderman, with the Psychometric Society, from Leiden University in Amsterdam, describes the beginning of psychometrics:

In early modernity, the scientific revolution provided a firm scientific basis for physical measures like temperature, pressure, and so on. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a similar revolution took place in psychology with the measurement of intelligence and personality. A crucial role was played by Psychometrics, initially defined as the art of imposing measurement and number upon operations of the mind’ (Galton, 1879, p149).

Two early writing assessments, the direct and indirect methods, have an intrinsic connection to the psychometric measurements of reliability and validity. First, Stiggins (1982) summarizes direct and indirect assessment measures, saying that the direct method “relies on actual samples of student writing to judge writing proficiency” and the indirect method “relies on objective tests” (p. 101). An example of indirect tests is a multiple-choice exam concerning correct grammar, or an emphasis on grammar in an essay exam. For assessment agencies, indirect methods reflect what is being tested – the ability to write well - because the grammar reflects writing; therefore, testing agencies have adopted indirect methods of assessment. This method is also quick, inexpensive and reliable. Writing instructors prefer more direct measures
that can reveal more than the ability to be grammatically correct. An example of a direct test is an essay exam that measures the content.

Second, reliability deals with the extent to which a measure is repeatable or stable. Essentially reliability refers to the consistency of a measure, which is why the multiple-choice example continues to be popular with testing agencies. A reliable measure would return the same results time after time – as long as what is being measured stays consistent. The indirect multiple-choice test is without a doubt reliable. Reliability is said to be of particular importance because it establishes a ceiling for validity. Next, validity refers to the extent to which a study actually captures or measures what it purports to examine. This explains why the composition community prefers direct measures; the direct measure is valid – it measures the completeness and artistry of writing, while the indirect multiple-choice measure is invalid because it doesn’t represent actual writing; it only represents one aspect of writing. The direct assessment is not as reliable as multiple-choice, however, because of the many variables involved in writing. As such, different writing samples appeal to different people for different reasons – an issue that bring us back to the square peg in a round hole issue again.

Direct and indirect assessment concerns are also linked to concerns of reliability and validity. Direct methods assess student ability to respond to writing prompt via a written essay. However, reliability has always been a concern for essay scoring. It should be noted, however, that while psychometrics may be scientifically reliable and valid, its application may be suspect. Large scale testing began with the belief that “whatever exists does so in quantity and, thus, can be measured” (p. 58). Prompted by two articles in 1904 that demonstrated the power of assessment by connecting writing assessment to tests to intelligence were based on the premise that all knowledge was uniform (Elliot, p. 34), and the belief that uniform testing would not only
produce uniform results but that those results would indicate levels of intelligence were used in selective service tests for World War I and the Selective Immigration Act.

Thus intelligence testing began with a decidedly dark moment for writing assessment when the Selective Service Act was used as the “largest formal psychological experiment in history” (p. 58). Well known testing experts such as Brigham, Yerkes and Thorndyke proposed the assessment value suggested Negro and darker skinned ethnicities were less intelligent than the Nordic ethnic groups and could be used to begin Selective Immigration and Selective Service, both based on literacy tests in 1917. The lowest point of these tests came when eugenicist, Harry H. Laughlin, proposed that those who scored 10% or below on tests be euthanized (p. 71). Eventually these tests were proven invalid, Carl Brigham apologized, and the testing stopped (p. 77).

However, damage to countless thousands of people who were held back from immigrating to the United States or who were relegated to lower levels and duties in the armed forces was irreparable. Later research at Washington State University by Condon and Kelly-Riley (2004) showed no connection between writing quality and intelligence. The authors of the research concluded “Students deemed better prepared for the rigors of academic writing by the freshman level Placement Exam had lower critical thinking scores at a statistically significant level” (p. 61). Later, Condon and Kelly-Riley (2004) noted that attitudes at WSU concerning the relationship between writing and critical thinking changed during the 1990s when writing proficiency showed a 90% passing rate with juniors or more, while critical thinking remained less than adequate and this was not restricted to writing classes. They claimed that the “phenomenon in which writing deemed acceptable in quality despite lacking evidence of
analytical skills, was also discerned among other lower division General Education courses” (p. 58); therefore, writing skills are not the best indicators of intelligence.

**Examples of Dichotomous Testing**

The College Board found itself in new territory, and from the beginning there were problems that both challenged and prompted the College Board and ETS to engage in research concerning methods of writing assessment. Early examples of a problem testing agencies experienced were issues with validity where the test is an example of a direct testing method that would evaluate the sample as a whole. However, the focus on mechanical skills evidenced indirect measurements. The 1874, and exams administered between 1901 – 1905 entrance exams were written essay exams. The exam asked students to read a series of predetermined books of literature and then write an essay expounding on that knowledge. This directive suggests an assessment that focuses on content. However, the Definition of Requirements specifically admonishes students that “in every case knowledge of the books will be regarded as less important than the ability to write good English” (Elliot, 2008, p. 26). Therefore, a direct assessment method to assess writing became, in actuality, one thing only, an examination of good grammar. Since this time of what I call unintentionally ‘mixed’ writing assessments, the evolution of testing methods has led to the research and development of more dichotomies in testing – both by the testing agencies and the composition community. Separating these two measures led to problems concerning reliability and validity - assessment issues that are intricately entwined with all assessment methods - problems that are intricately entwined in any assessment method and they continue to spur both writing assessment agencies and instructors into continued research and development.
Testing agencies recognized the dichotomy between reliability and validity and their research to resolve concerns have been ongoing since writing assessment’s inception. For example, in the early 1900s, the creator of the SAT and a pioneer of psychometrics, Carl Brigham was unwilling “to sacrifice validity for reliability” and so established a process for reading essays (Elliot, p. 80) that continues to this day. He detailed his process, saying:

The unit of organization was the table consisting of about twelve readers under a table leader or supervisor. The readers were trained in a group conference, which was followed by a round-robin re-reading at each table for the first day. During the second and third days, each reader was paired with another reader at the table under the direction of the group leader. These reader-colleagues pairs were changed each day, or more frequently. By the fourth day readers were cross-paired from table to table and the pairs were changed daily to the end of the reading period. The group leaders also cross-paired themselves with other group leaders to check their own standards. Difficult cases were referred to a special re-read committee.

Each reader kept a tally sheet showing the separate marks assigned to each question, the tentative rating, the rating assigned by the colleague who re-read the script, and final rating reported to the college. (Brigham, qtd in Elliot, p. 80)

But, despite his efforts, Brigham had “bad news” because “From 1929 to 1932, the examinations failed to meet standards of reliability - readers disagreed, often wildly, on scores” (p. 80). His emphasis on validity was unreliable. So, while the preferred assessment of composition instructors of the time was shown to be unreliable but valid, indirect tests were reliable but invalid. Furthermore, the cost of assessing direct methods of testing is expensive whereas indirect methods are cost effective. The *habitus* of the two *fields* have since been
diametrically opposed, and, as Lynne (2004) has argued, the continued use of ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ perpetuates an intolerable incongruity between scientific methods and humanistic approaches” (p. 13). Unfortunately for the subjective side, power is found in validity so despite these concerns, assessment agencies continue to use this type of direct assessment.

1.1.2 Holistic Vs. Analytic Scoring

Following issues of direct and indirect testing methods as well as their correlating reliability/validity issues, research developed a new dichotomy in writing assessment - analytical scoring and holistic scoring. Vacc (1989) said that the:

emphasizes on the improvement of students’ writing skills has resulted in the widespread use of two methods to assess writing samples. The first, holistic scoring, involves reading a writing sample quickly and making an overall judgment about its quality through an evaluation of the sample as an entity without analyzing its specific features. The second method, analytical scoring, evaluates writing quality through an analysis of the separate components of writing. (p. 87)

Therefore, analytical scoring methods like rubrics are a way of making a valid assessment measure more reliable. It offers a statistical measurement that can be used to reflect a number of concerns raised by the composition community such as a desire to align learning outcomes. It is, therefore, a nod in both directions to both testing agencies and the composition community.

According to the CIRTL Network, or Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning which is engaged in the development of computer-based instruction, assessment and support, analytic scoring is the traditional approach to grading writing because it views writing as a demonstration of the various distinct skills that can be graded together to provide an overall assessment of the entire writing sample. The use of rubrics helps delineate skills such as
focus, development, and content – as well as writing mechanics. CIRTL argues that many instructors choose analytic scoring because it helps instructors keep the full range of writing features in mind as they score, which helps when an essay is poorly punctuated but has good analysis or is well developed, which keeps the punctuation from being a focus and allows for the various skills to be recognized. Analytical scoring, or rubrics, can also help students recognize their strengths and weaknesses. Testing agencies love analytics. They claim they have the ability to provide “a real-time evaluation and improve decision-making on the part of students, teachers, parents and administrators” (West and Bleiberg, 2013). Analytics can also offer “data mining,” which Lang and Baehr (2012) claim is “one of the key features that separates the process of data or text mining from other statistical methods. The calculation of descriptive or inferential is that the knowledge to be gained is implicit in the data” (p. 177). This aggregate data offers information about large populations of students, as well as information concerning the instructors who teach them - something that teachers already suspect of any programmatic assessment.

On the other hand, Maja Wilson (2006), argues against rubrics, saying “the rubrics grading mechanism depends on the laws of determinism, of simple linear cause and effect,” and the belief that if we just “get the factors and weighting right, teachers can plug in the numbers,” (p. 32). She also argues that rubrics emphasize a “search for mistakes,” which can cause us to “miss potential” (p. 30); therefore, we should shift our emphasis over to student successes, and help students explore meaning and see what isn’t yet in the writing (p. 30). Wilson also argues that “standardized rubrics create standardized writing” (p. 39). However, Turley and Gallagher (2008) state that “If the Great Rubric Debate remains focused on whether rubrics are ‘good’ or ‘bad,’ it will be useful only to the extent that it allows us to take sides – an emotionally satisfying result, perhaps, but not educationally meaningful” (p. 87).
On the other side of this dichotomy is holistic scoring where students are assessed by one exam, usually timed, scored by two trained independent scorers, and given a first-impression overall score. Holistic scoring usually assesses a timed, or classroom exam with a scoring guide against anchor papers that have been deemed representative of high, medium and low scores. Huot (1996) says that raters “are hired in groups of two to represent each of the courses in which students can be placed. These pairs of raters are chosen because their most immediate and extensive teaching experience is in a specific course” (p. 553). However, these are goals that are not always achieved. For example, the TeXes certification exam that educators must take to be certified includes a holistically scored essay. While, the goal is to invite scorers with the relevant experience, this is often a goal that is difficult to meet. The experienced educators in K - 12 are often unable to participate due to work and time constraints. Therefore, instructors from higher education who have little to no experience are included in the scoring process. Furthermore, the scoring guide designed for holistic scoring but scorers rarely offer first-impression scores.

Instead, they pour over the guidelines, consider and reconsider before assigning a score. Since more than one person usually grades student essays, using assessment criteria usually developed from the learning objectives for a writing assignment, holistic scoring mirrors Brigham’s model from the late 19th century. The use of two raters also allows for a statistical measurement of inter-rater reliability – what Brigham found to be wildly discrepant and which testing agencies have been trying to resolve ever since. An instructor selects several student essays that exhibit high, average, or low achievement, which become the standards used for a quick, first impression assessment. Holistic scoring has two advantages over other scoring methods. Holistic assessments of essay exams are popular with some of the composition community because they offer the student a comprehensive, consistent and reliable scoring
method and a guide to help instructors build their own scoring guides (Neal, 2011, pgs. 96 – 99). Added to this is the time factor; holistic scoring is supposed to be quick, something especially advantageous to testing agencies who claim it is advantageous to the composition community as well. Holistic scoring is expected to take less time so instructors can do much more. Each reader of a holistically scored essay reads the essay through quickly, matching its quality to that one of the model essays before it is handed off anonymously to another scorer. With the models firmly in mind, a holistic grader's first impressions of an essay are thought to be highly reliable. But some in the composition community are skeptical. Hamp-Lyons’ (1995) criticism of holistic scoring in her review of three texts echoes Williamson and Huot’s (1993) question about ‘whether getting readers to agree is any more than "a statistical repair procedure”’ (p. 17 qtd. on p. 448). And Englehard’s (1996) in-depth research of rater accuracy recommends “future research is also needed on how accuracy measures work with holistic scoring rather than the analytic scoring system’ (p. 69).

A main difference between the two methods of assessment lies in the lack of a rubric, and the use of a scoring guide. Holistic assessments more closely resemble instructor scoring, as is analytical scoring according to CIRTL, in that it uses a general scoring guide that provides direction and allows for more subjective scoring, whereas the analytical scoring uses a detailed, more prescriptive rubric that aims for objectivity. But the scoring guide directs assessment like a rubric, just more loosely, while the rubric is as subjective as the scoring guide, only tighter. The difference was that the expertise and experience of the composition instructor who knew that objective tests would not work were dismissed as the assessment ‘experts’ continued trying to fit the art of writing into the of assessment. The composition community points out that the lack of
contextual knowledge that raters work under questions validity. They voice concerns that a focus on reliability squashes expert opinion when different score continue to arise.

Current assessment methods continue the *habitus* of testing agencies. This was seen in the new entrance exam assessments at state institutions in Texas known as the Texas State Initiative (TSI) in 2013. This initiative attempts to marry direct assessments with indirect assessments in English. A direct, although short, assessment is a 300 - 600 word written response to a prompt is coupled with a longer indirect assessment which is multiple-choice. The multiple-choice assessment covers essay revision (tested by presenting a paragraph with issues and asking candidates to find the issues), subject-verb agreement recognition, sentence structure usage, and sentence logic. Approximately 200 college writing instructors were asked to Round Rock, Texas, to participate in the assessment of the TSI. Instructors were offered room and board in a high-end hotel for six days, and on the first day, Sunday; instructors came together for an introduction to the TSI. At this meeting, before any work began, instructors were told that their expertise was important to the new entrance exam and the purpose of instructors was to set cut scores for the various exams. However, instructors were also told that although their experience was important, final cut scores would be determined by those with different expertise, not in education, language clearly reminiscent of the College Board’s original declaration of purpose.

Writing instructors bitterly criticize these indirect measures due to a fear that students will not be well served by these tests, and because they minimize the value of writing, ignore writing’s audiences, its beauty and its artistic qualities, as well as its ability to disseminate knowledge, and instead place emphasis on the mechanics. Along the same theoretical concerns, validity and reliability both came into question. Reliability in assessment means that the same test will measure the same skills time after time and a test is deemed valid when it tests what it
was designed to test. Did the test measure what it said it would and could the assessment of the text respond consistently and reliably? The answer to the question of reliability is yes. Indirect tests were indeed reliable but, as composition instructors have claimed for years, they were not valid and could not measure an ability as complex as writing. Perhaps this explains why general discussions about reliability generally refer to inter-rater reliability only (Adler-Kassner and O’Neill, 2010, p. 77). Validity, a related value, on the other hand, means that a test measures what it says it measures and the issue for the composition instructor is whether recognizing mechanical errors in multiple-choice questions correlates to a student’s ability to write. Adler-Kassner and O’Neill (2010) use the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (2014) to describe the validation process as starting:

> With explicit statements about the conceptual framework, including the concepts or constructs being sampled; the knowledge, skills, abilities, processes, or characteristics being assessed; and how each construct is to be distinguished from other constructs and how it relates to other variables. (p. 76)

Another example of dichotomy in testing methods is found in the battle between the standardized exam preferred by testing agencies and the portfolio preferred by the composition community. This is actually the first dichotomy since the standardized exam is the first method of writing assessment to be used nationally. The composition community has rejected the standardized exam for a number of reasons. The exam is timed and one argument is that timed writing does not allow a student to exhibit her best work because she cannot engage in the process of writing.

Also, independent scorers who have no connection to the student or the course that the student is attempting to enter often score the standardized exam. Another reason the composition
community rejects the standardized essay is that it is “a type of discourse found nowhere in the natural world” (Anson, 2008, p. 114). Advantages to standardized exams are most recognized by testing agencies: they provide a level field upon which to discern a student’s ability. However, some researchers in composition recognize that the constraints of a standardized exam are not the only constraints and that all writing is constrained if only by the “rules of good writing” (Skolov, 2014, p. 133) and, suggesting that the standardized essay exam is an example of genre writing, and that “claim that writing exams are 'unnatural' does not entirely hold water: exams are a part of every student's life. Essay exams are not restricted to writing courses only but are an integral part of many other classes as well” (p. 141). In response to concerns about standardized essay exams, the portfolio has become an important placement tool and assessment method for writing instructors and their students. Since its introduction, the portfolio had been lauded as a vast improvement over standardized essay exam. The composition community finds that “Portfolios provide a mode of assessment that dovetails neatly with process theories about writing” (Roemer, Schultz & Durst, 1991, p. 455), and “fits nicely with the larger trend in education toward performance-based assessment” (Berhardt, 1992, p. 333). The portfolio consists of samples of a student’s work, work that the student has had the opportunity to revise for a final score.

Furthermore, the portfolio often contains a reflection piece that asks student to discuss their processes and evaluate them, a reflection that invites students into conversations about their writing (Camp, 1998). These two types of assessment exemplify another dichotomy. This dichotomy is a process versus product issue. Testing agencies prefer product while the composition community generally prefers the process. This debate, like others, has a long history of support and opposition and cannot be fully addressed here. Instead, it is the act of debating
and the divisions in *habitus* and *doxa* that exists between the players on the composition *field*, and between the *fields* of testing agencies and the composition community, as well as the testing methods each *field* employs.

Recently, with the advent of technology, testing agencies have taken on new *habitus* - a *habitus* that aims to take indirect testing into the digital world and blur the lines between direct and indirect testing with computer scored essay assessment and multiple-choice questions concerning passages of essays as seen in, for example, the new Texas State Initiative entrance exam where a short writing sample is computer scored and the multiple-choice questions test aspects of writing that go beyond mechanics. Although the multiple test questions used by TSI move beyond the simple recognition of writing conventions by asking prospective students to recognize themes, point out sentences that do not belong, or find key words in passages, these questions do not address the difficulty or intricacies of writing. The writing is done for the student. The answers are found in the exam. So, while these and other examples of multiple-choice questions are more complex, they continue to fall short of assessing writing itself. Then the use of computer scoring for an exam has been severely criticized by scholars.

However, technology has done much to revolutionize writing itself and the composition community’s reaction to technology has evolved dramatically. Neal (2011) said “we have this opportunity, while the texts and technologies are relatively new, to reframe our approaches to writing assessment so that they promote a rich and robust understanding of language and literacy” (p. 5). At the University of Texas at El Paso, technology became a focal point around which the redesign of the traditional composition classes revolved. The traditional modes and research paper of old were thrown out and new assignments that took the student and her writing out of the classroom into the world were adopted. Students now engage in writing that
recognizes larger and more varied audiences, and they learn to adapt their writing to those audiences through the use of various genres for various rhetorical situations. Students write analyses, and literature reviews before they take their research and apply it to documentary films that work the same way as research papers but with the requirement of additional skills needed to address a digital audience. The program also realized a number of advantages afforded by the redesign:

the digital assessment structure combined with the digitally infused curriculum provided the exigency for more scholarly informed professional development. The lines of inquiry we sought to address were: How do we help all instructors understand the roles of multimedia projects in a composition course? How can instructors prepare students to create projects with technologies they may not be comfortable with themselves? How can we prepare future instructors to recognize learning outcomes, address assignment goals, and provide effective and efficient feedback? (Brunk-Chavez and Fourzan-Rice, 2007)

Therefore, the redesign afforded us “the opportunity to improve instruction at the local level and provides a model for programs and compositionists to consider when evaluating writing programs” (Brunk-Chavez and Fourzan-Rice). Working to answer these questions provided opportunities for richer discussions and training methods than we had previously envisioned.

This redesign also incorporated a number of standardized assessment features as well as features that were proposed by the composition community in response to concerns about standardization. For example, some instructors had students redesign assignments at the end of the semester and used to construct and advocacy website while other instructors used the website construction assignment as an e-portfolio. Assessment was also non-traditional. Detailed rubrics were created by the instructors but were also used to train graduate students to score and teach
the assignments. During training, assignments were scored both holistically and analytically, and assignments were scored twice by graduate students with discrepant scores adjudicated by seasoned faculty. It is this experience, in fact, that led to the recognition that a marriage between the dichotomous fields of the composition community and testing agencies is possible. The redesign incorporated many of the values of both testing agencies and the composition community. It required students to write to an outside audience, and produce a final product to be scored by someone unfamiliar with the student, which reflected a real-world writing situation.

The redesign also required the consideration of genre and audience in the revision of assignments - either for the advocacy website or the e-portfolio which allowed for honoring of the writing process and the student’s individual approach to the assignments. Assignments were assessed by outside graders who were trained by classroom instructors. This experience also led to the understanding that such an undertaking required more than applying changes. It requires the recognition of the historical influences, both ancient and recent that hover above our values and beliefs concerning writing assessment in order to reconceptualize writing assessments so that the composition community recognizes writing assessment as writing - that writing cannot exist without assessment - and that the relationship between writing assessment and the composition community is a recursive one.

Chapter I offers an overview of the writing assessment field by providing an overview of cultural and social influences - first concerning dichotomies that deal with epistemological issues such as truth and knowledge that, second, concern more recent and concrete influences. After offering an overview of these influences in Chapter I, Chapter II begins with the current atmosphere surrounding writing assessment before suggesting a new theoretical framework upon
which to structure writing assessment in ways that are better suited to address the needs of our students - as well as those of the larger audiences whose influences we have often ignored.
Chapter II: Frame, Hermeneutics, Hermeneutic

Writing assessment is the amalgamation of historical, social and economic forces that have created the writing assessment “frame.” A frame is a somewhat nebulous term; here it refers to more than reputation; it also refers to “brand,” a marketing concept that instantly incorporates aspects of a product, including its reputation. Therefore, the first goal of this chapter is to explore what a frame is, the current writing assessment frame, and the ramifications of this current frame. Next this chapter explores hermeneutics as a theoretical framework upon which writing assessment and the composition community may hang concerns and issues with assessment and assessment practices. The terms ‘frame’ and ‘framework’ are not used interchangeably. Where a frame is used to indicate social and economic capital, a ‘framework’ indicates an organizational structure upon which theories, pedagogies and practices are placed.

Finally, Chapter II ends with the development of a hermeneutic sphere as an adaptation of the hermeneutic concept. This sphere is designed to accommodate various fields involved in writing assessments. So, having addressed the historical influences under which composition functions in Chapter I, it is time to address the resultant frame that haunts writing assessment, and the theoretical framework that can allow the composition community to redress its current situation.
Chapter I discussed the impact of the slowly evolving social attitudes toward education which moved the objective sciences into the forefront of educational imperatives and pushed the subjective to end of the imperative list. After examining the historical influences that have shaped the writing assessment field in Chapter I, it is also important to examine the results of those influences on the current frame under which writing assessment now functions. Therefore, Chapter II now considers writing assessment’s current ‘frame’ and brand as it evolved under these influences, and explores an alternative theoretical framework to support assessment. A frame is often an amalgamation of brand and reputation. For example, writing assessment has a negative frame but little to no brand, while testing agencies such as ETS have brands as part of their frames. For this reason, brand is an important aspect to consider in the discussion of writing assessments frame. Citing Bolman and Deal (2003, 12), Adler-Kassner and O’Neill (2010) say, “frames are like ‘windows, maps, tools, lenses, orientations, [or] perspectives’ – (p. 16), and they embody much more than just the concept of, for example, writing assessment; they also embody the influences at work in the evolution of the writing assessment frame. Once “frames become established and are built upon by additional stories and additional examples, the ideas they support become “common sense”– what Bourdieu would call doxa and Gramsci would call hegemony (p. 18), which then shapes “an individual’s or group’s perceptions of what is and is not plausible in the picture/focused/visible” (p. 16). Therefore, frames can be ubiquitous but invisible and unless frames are analyzed, their influences cannot be countered. Brands, on the other hand, are the visible emblems of the invisible frames.

On the other hand, reputation is what others believe to be true of someone or something. In marketing “Reputation is the sum total of your track record. It is the accumulation of your
actions and statements to date. So while you build brands in order to get the most return from them, you protect reputation in order to preserve credibility and trust” (Di Somma, 2015). From the marketing perspective, this definition serves, but even there, the waters muddy almost immediately when credibility and trust affect the return expected from a brand. The A on Hester’s chest in *The Scarlet Letter* brands her as a harlot and determines her reputation. The frame surrounding the story also includes religious and cultural beliefs of the time period. A brand focuses attention on one product, or one aspect about a topic out of many possibilities, which in turn affects reputation and adds to frame. The frame affects writing assessment, but any recognizable assessment brand belongs to testing agencies. A brand in the writing assessment world is ETS or the College Board, as well as publishing companies like Pearson who brand themselves as testing agencies with better, faster, more accurate assessments.

Therefore, one of the most important tasks associated with reimagining writing assessment as a critical part of writing itself, is to “investigate a brand’s history” (Rhodes, 2010, p.60). Products without known brands are not as successful, not as known as other products - even when the product is unfavorable. Rhodes uses the terminology of ‘brand’ almost interchangeably with the term frame, but with a focus on the instant recognition factor of a product, something not well explored in writing assessment. Instant recognition happens when the brand is substituted for the product as in Band Aid instead of bandage, Q-tip instead of cotton swab or Coke instead of cola, or Benedict Arnold instead of traitor. This part of the chapter will show how, in this case, writing assessment developed its current frame which may then help the composition community reframe writing assessment in terms that connect it more closely with the needs of writing programs. I have done so here with a rhetorical history of dichotomies, and the more recent historical influences and their effect on writing assessment in particular. As it
A brand is a marketing term and depicts the value of a product. In the marketing world, “a brand functions as a multiplier. It generates desire and differentiation and motivates buyers to pay more for your products than they might otherwise” (Di Somma 2015). In the world of testing agencies, buyers translate to administrators, grantors, and funding agencies, and the products sold translate to a belief in improved education, the belief in accurate economically feasible evaluations of student progress. In the world of composition, the product is nebulous. Composition has always provided students with an invaluable service - the ability to write and communicate clearly. And in the last half century, the Rhetoric and Composition has evolved as a discipline. But in the freshman classrooms, the work is different. Research moves more slowly as faculty balance classes, research and administrative duties. Accountability is iffy. Assessment is difficult to implement or maintain due to the lack of manpower. Teachers are often non-tenure track faculty, graduate students in the MA, MFA, or PhD programs, or they are adjunct faculty. Once graduate students become comfortable in the classroom, they move on to teach upper division classes in other institutions, which translates to the same caliber of instructor semester after semester.

For example, any brand that both writing assessment and the composition community have comes from testing agencies. More importantly, a brand is far more than a company, a name, or a product, such as University of Texas at El Paso, Alka-Seltzer, or Starbucks. Frames invoke social and cultural ethics. As an open-access institution, the University of Texas at El Paso, for example, represents opportunity for students who might not otherwise be admitted to
college. However, typically, universities would only admit those who could afford to attend college and those who could show ability by passing the entrance exam. Also, UTEP’s football teams typically lose games, which is also part of UTEP’s frame. UTEP’s frame, then, embodies the historical attitudes of the nation concerning both academics and sports, its past negative reputation, and its current recognition as a quality institution. And while the early negative reputation UTEP had remains part of the frame, the recognizable brand of UTEP now represents diversity and open admission. Thus, UTEP has begun to successfully market what was a distinctly negative reputation into a major part of UTEP’s positive brand. This is not that different from what manufacturers of productions do when they market themselves, and it is not that different than a person’s reputation. Alka-Seltzer’s reputation invokes hope for those who are peptic. Going to Starbucks promises us a comfortable and fashionable meeting area, as well as a good cup of coffee. Each example represents an attempt to create an elite image or brand that “brings others along.” For example, Rhodes points out that:

before there was Starbucks, most fast food and convenience stores offered indifferent coffee. Now better coffee in wider varieties has become a strong part of marketing campaigns for even ‘bargain’ vendors. We can start by distinguishing and branding a better version, them making that brand a market leader that brings others along. (p. 62)

Successful brands spread success to similar products by offering an example of success. Successful brands advertise successfully, which then teaches other brands to follow suit. Successful brands communicate and collaborate to provide the product most wanted by consumers. Successful brands write their own stories; consumers know who they are because they tell us. They don’t wait for us to figure it out, perhaps erroneously, on our own.
A nice example of a brand is Bayer Aspirin, a pain reliever that has been on the market for decades. The brand was solid; it was the touted as the best of many different brands of aspirin, and aspirin was the best medication for pain, swelling and fever. The yellow and brown bottle sat in countless medicine cabinets across the country. It had earned our respect and trust in that brown and yellow bottle represented reliance – people knew it would work; they trusted the manufacturer. However, in 1980, when the CDC cautioned the public concerning the connection of aspirin to Reye’s Syndrome if used to bring down fever in children, the use of and respect for Bayer and aspirin as a whole was severely damaged. Gone were all baby aspirin and children’s medications containing aspirin. The brand name Tylenol became the pain, swelling and fever reducing agent of choice (another brand that suffered an ethical dilemma when bottles of the product were poisoned in 1982). Luckily for Bayer, small doses of aspirin, used as a blood thinner, were found to reduce the risk of heart attacks. At that point, children’s aspirin, which had disappeared off the shelves was reframed by Bayer and other companies as a heart attack prevention measure. Once again, Bayer earned a reputation of respect and trust in that it offered a reliable support against heart attack. Lately, Bayer has begun to recapture some of its original frame/reputation by running commercials where people in pain were offered Bayer for relief. The commercials depict people who are suffering from back pains. They are offered Bayer and are told that Bayer is for more than heart problems; it’s also for pain. Hence, the brand survived the changes and has come full circle.

Just as a brand is critical to manufacturers of products, a brand is also critical to the composition community. Brands are not just good business. Brands are good advertising. A brand is ethos. Bayer has it. Composition communities, not so much, and forget writing assessment.
But brands can be created. The brand Bayer was created, and just as advertising agencies work with businesses to create and sustain a product’s brand, testing institutions regularly work to create and sustain their product’s brand; they advertise – or market - their wares to their audiences when they validate their purposes and value, both politically and educationally, and they do so through definitive statistical data, obtained from objective quantitative research. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter I, a major part of the frame/brand of testing agencies comes from the negative brand that the College Board imposed on the composition community by claiming that the College Board was better able to assess the work of students. In the same way that Bayer is a response to pain; the College Board is a response to the perceived failures of the composition community to adequately assess writing. On the fields of testing agencies, composition’s current frame is part of the testing agency’s story, or, our negative frame is part of their capital. This makes us the subtext of the College Board’s purpose, and that subtext has been appropriated by other testing agencies such as publishing companies; it validates their existence. Adler-Kassner and O’Neill (2010) agree:

the stories about education that run through reports like these (as well as news stories, and talk radio and other venues) are shaped through one (very, very dominant) frame currently surrounding the idea of ‘what education should be,’ a frame that also profoundly influences discussions about assessments intended to provide information about what students are learning as well as how and why they are learning it. (p. 15)

As White (1996) says the “dominant narrative about the exigency surrounding … discussions about education … is that students aren’t learning what they need to in order to be successful twenty-first century citizens in post secondary (or secondary) education” (p. 13).
The brand created by testing agencies encapsulates the dominant frame of writing assessments; it is the commonly known story about writing assessment and composition. And it is also the story that is the subtext of the composition community. Because the composition community has a negative frame, and no brand, the composition community has little to no capital, either social or economic. Worse, because the capital or brand of the testing agencies is so overwhelmingly pervasive, many composition faculty fear it is true.

For writing assessment, then, one of the most damaging results of the current frame is its effect on instructors. While scholars in composition and rhetoric may recognize opportunities to address or adapt assessments, the typical writing instructor (lecturer, graduate student or adjunct) lags behind. For example, faculty at UTEP were not trained to teach or assess composition at the University of Texas at El Paso until 2008. Furthermore, the assessment composition programs engage in tend to mirror those already in practice. Taylor (1994) says “although many [instructors are] dissatisfied with current standardized achievements tests, educators at all levels [have] been taught to distrust other indicators of student learning,” such as “qualitative judgments of student work, and to assess learning using objectively scorable tests. Many saw standardized multiple-choice achievement tests as the only way to ensure fair and reliable large-scale testing” (p. 234). Another effect of the current frame on instructors is that our lack of statistical knowledge and assessment terms such as psychometrics keeps people in the composition community from fully participating in the science and philosophy of assessment, which can lead to composition faculty’s “tendencies to fear and ignore writing assessment can change only if we first recognize the reasons for our apprehension” (Perry, 2010, p. 740). And White (1996) suggests English teachers react emotionally to writing assessment because they lack the power to shape the “criteria, instruments, or scoring,” and because they have “a general
ignorance of statistical thinking” (pp. 11–12). Statistics are flashed before the eyes of composition teachers in articles and psychometric terminology peppers the scholarship about assessments, both sure to disempower the composition program or instructor who views writing as something different, or who has no training in assessments, which is most of the community. This also created pervasive feelings of inadequacy. The outward focus of the composition community typically concerns what we do not agree with concerning assessments, while the connection to those global and national influences that were discussed in Chapter I remains unexplored in the ongoing and seemingly futile battle of assessments. Therefore, the composition community is not only inward; it is often unknown.

Battered by the current frame, writing programs and writing assessment scholars do not actively work to create their own brands. They do not advertise outside the composition community field. As Rhodes notes, “in the last half-century, professional scholars of writing have developed solid, reliable information about how students learn to write. Remarkably, almost nobody other than professional scholars of writing and their closest allies knows anything about it” (p. 58); in fact, outside of academia, the general public often believes the opposite of what the composition community knows to be true. Common comments from the general public suggest we only mark grammar mistakes. Programs inside the same English departments are not aware of our theories, research, or pedagogies. Composition publications such CCC, WPA, and JAC, only reach other members of the same community. But as Rhodes points out:

we do participate in a market, even if an unusual one. As rhetoricians, we should recognize that particular rhetorical methods arise to do particular kinds of work, and that the rhetorical methods of marketing are best suited to do the work of informing large
populations about the value of what we do. In simple terms, when your product is better than your consumers believe, you have a marketing problem. (p. 59)

We have a marketing problem.

This is why we need a brand. We are a high quality product that no one knows anything about. While composition scholars recognize that composition classes “cannot be everything to everyone, nor can they include everything that might justifiably fit within their scope and vision,” (Neal, 2011, p. 4), this recognition stops at the doors of composition programs. Failing to participate fully in our own frame by branding ourselves and advertising the value of writing allows other players on other fields like testing agencies to impose their frame onto composition. In order to reframe the writing assessment brand, the composition community needs to view writing assessment positively – as a useful tool in the composition toolbox of skills and strategies for teaching, and in order to achieve that, the community must recognize the influences discussed in Chapter I that have had a hand in the molding of the current frame. These influences often seem far removed from composition but are directly connected to the current composition frame, and the results of those influences, though unseen, are profound. Adler-Kassner and O’Neill (2008) note, “postsecondary writing instruction and writing assessment orbits are at the center of a very large galaxy that includes questions about the purpose of a college education, expectations of ‘productive’ citizens, and ultimately, the nation’s successful progress” (p. 13), but “once we understand the frames already in place, we can begin to develop ways to build on these structures, to reframe writing and writing assessment in a way that will support our values and beliefs” (p. 11). Adler-Kassner and O’Neill also argue that “what we must do to reframe writing assessment is create a new ‘story of us’ that brings together the interests and values of others and values and interests we hold as individuals and as writing professionals whose work is rooted in
research-based best practice” (p. 88); we must “write ourselves into the social text, and thereby the social text writes us” (Bazerman, 2004).

This new story is at the center of reframing writing assessment, and, since “writing assessment is a powerful form of communication” (Adler-Kassner and O’Neill, p. 10), “alliance building and communicating with others” (p. 11) are critical to building the new story and the creation of a new frame. White, Elliot and Peckham agree that “the more we communicate what we do, the better for all of us” (p. 5). The composition community has long recognized the need for alliance building and communicating. We have collaborated with other programs on campus with Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing in the Disciplines initiatives. And communication between programs at different campuses has developed thanks to the Council of Writing Program Administrators, which acts as a locus for research, ideas and concerns shared by writing program directors. In fact, the very existence of the Council of Writing Program Administrators, with WPA Outcomes Statement as a testament to the value of composition recognized by composition scholars and instructors, represents a measure of the capital to be had when writing programs, composition scholars and instructors come together. While the CWPA remains an internally focused institution made up of the composition community that advertises to itself, its influence (or capital) has grown to include faculty and institutions from across the country. White, Elliot and Peckham (2015) argue that “centralizing the writing program as integral to the fulfillment of an institution’s mission,” can help “end the too-often terrible isolation and disenfranchisement of individuals and the programs in which they serve (p. 3). They offer “new models, strategies, and language that will empower our profession through the unique lens of writing program assessment,” and, as participants in “a new era of assessment,” - or what I call the building of a long kairotic moment in time – we have the potential to define the
role and *capital* of writing assessment, the authors offer “new conceptualizations” (p. 3). Adler-Kassner and O’Neill remind us that and these discussions and the involvement of faculty and program directors in discussions are “currently not just important but [are] the most important discussions happening on our campuses (and even beyond them) today” (p. 4). Thus, the reframing of various assessment areas has begun, but there is much still to be done.

Finally, a pivotal character in reframing the composition and writing assessment story resides with the writing program administrator. The program director intersects with a number of *fields* as part of directing composition courses and instructors. For example, a program director works with various institutional departments and programs. She coordinates with the chair of the department within which composition resides, or the dean if the program is a separate department. She works with testing programs by scoring CLEP exams for students entering her composition courses. She works with publishers concerning the texts that her faculty will use. And most importantly, she regularly works with faculty, graduate students, adjuncts, lecturers, and on occasion, tenured faculty. First, with the inception of College Composition and Communication, and then with the Writing Program Administrators Council, she also communicates with other directors of other institutions. Citing Bender (1993) Adler-Kassner and O’Neill argue that “it is for educators, then, to determine what is important for students to learn, to invoke their expertise to assess whether those determinations are appropriate, and to ascertain whether and how the methods by which these instructional goals (and assessments) are being accomplished are effective” (p. 31). In doing so, however, the program director, the scholar and the instructor must have an understanding of the larger picture, the stories or *doxa* at work behind writing assessment’s frame. They must remember that *fields* do not exist in isolation and writing assessment is a field tied to larger and larger *fields*, each with its own *habitus* and *doxa* –
fields that only seem loosely tied to writing assessment, but which can have direct impact on how writing assessments are used and what they are used for. Finally, programs and directors must remember that we are all in this together; it need not be a competition between competing philosophies and pedagogies.
HERMENEUTICS

The world of assessment centers around psychometrics, the science of measuring mental capacities and processes, which attempts to apply objective measures to writing assessment. Therefore, in order to rewrite the story of writing assessment, a new framework is needed that allows for the recognition of the subjectiveness inherent in writing. Understanding that objective assessment is insufficient prompted the creation of the portfolio assessment — perhaps the only, and certainly the best - example of an assessment method that does acknowledge the subjective qualities of writing and that does not completely duplicate the processes that have gone before. Laverty (2003) begins her well-known article saying:

Historically, many areas of academic research have utilized quantitative or empirical methods. In general, the emphasis of this research is on what is observable and accessible, with researchers focusing primarily on those areas and questions that are amenable to the adherence of empirical methods of inquiry (Gergen, 1985; Balle, King, & Halling, 1989). While researchers continue to place strong emphasis on these methods, the use of qualitative research methodologies has been growing. (p. 2) Laverty targets one of the most serious results of the current writing assessment frame. Scholars who focus on areas and questions that are amenable to quantitative research methods often ignore or avoid those that do not. This has the potential of leaving vast areas of learning and knowledge unexplored in writing assessment because the dominant science does not allow for it. Hermeneutics can help address this concern.

Writing assessment scholars have already begun investigating hermeneutics as a method for addressing writing assessment issues. Yancey (1999) argues that the establishment of College Composition and Communication began a “narrative [with] the teacher-layperson (often
successfully) challenging the (psychometric) expert, developing and then applying both expertise and theory located not in psychometrics, but in rhetoric, in reading and hermeneutics, and, increasingly, in writing practice” (p. 484), and Moss (1996) proposes to analyze the “dialectic between two diverse approaches to [assessment] – one based in psychometrics and one in hermeneutics” where “hermeneutic philosophers share a holistic and integrative approach to interpretation of human phenomena that seeks to understand the whole in light of its parts (p. 86). Applied to inter-rater reliability in assessment, Moss says that unlike psychometrics, in hermeneutics, the scorers would not be “not trained to agree on a common set of criteria and standards; rather, it is expected that all will bring expertise to bear in evaluating candidates credentials” (p. 87).

Other members of the composition community recognize the need for a greater change in assessments, however. Huot (1996) proposes “that we design the complete assessment procedure upon the purpose and context of the specific writing ability to be described and evaluated,” and where “[t]he type of scoring would be identified by the genre of the text to be written, the discipline within which it was produced, and the type of decisions the raters are attempting to make” (p. 560). In the same vein, in her 1998 speech at CCCC, Liz Hamp-Lyons predicted that new writing assessments would “share many qualities with previous forms of assessment,” but claims that this new assessment will:

have different qualities [that] will expand, enrich and change our thinking not only about portfolios, but also about essay testing and even multiple-choice testing. The development of a powerful and encompassing explanatory and evaluative paradigm for thinking about how we ‘do’ writing assessment will benefit teachers, students—and
maybe even bureaucracies—by offering more solidly-grounded tools of critique for assessment systems and their uses (and abuses). (p. 4).

Hamp-Lyon’s predictions, and those of other assessment scholars, offer a number of possibilities for new writing assessments through the use of hermeneutics in some aspect of assessment, but little practical or theoretical study has been conducted concerning a writing/writing assessment theory as a whole through the use of hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics began as a simple method of interpretation applied to text, but this methodology was soon recognized as a valuable method adaptable to various theoretical inquiries. In hermeneutics, interpreting a text means applying an understanding of the surrounding text to the part of the text that is not understood. Basically, hermeneutics is a resolution, or an attempt at resolving a misunderstanding or a tension between two or more parts; it is an adjusting process between specific and general meaning. Hermeneutics has been used for centuries to interpret biblical texts, and as such is a respected method for explaining how a verse can be explained by passage, or how a passage can be explained by a chapter, and so on. Correct meanings will ‘fit’ in with the meaning of the surrounding text; incongruent meanings are typically discarded. Therefore, an unidentified word in a passage of scripture can be tentatively defined by considering what makes sense in the context of the passage. In other words, the key to understanding the part, lies in understanding the whole in biblical interpretations. In fact, this basic method of hermeneutics has been used across the country as a way of helping students understand unfamiliar words they encounter when reading.

Though hermeneutics was first used to interpret unknown words or phrases in biblical text, the basic methodology of hermeneutics rapidly evolved into into a method of interpretation for various other areas of inquiry. The use of hermeneutics for biblical interpretation sparked
more philosophical discussion with the recognition of the intervening eons between biblical
times and modern interpretations of those times, which meant that interpretation must recognize
“the distinction between what the text meant and what it now means” (Woodbridge, 1979, p. 124). Understanding that meaning making included more than recognizing the current understandings of words on a page then naturally evolved into applications of historical meanings, and other complex issues such as interpretations of human interaction and the various results or products of those actions. Since then, hermeneutics has evolved from the one-directional interpretation where biblical interpretation preferences the whole passage or chapter as the key to making meaning, and the incongruent word or phrase has meaning only as it fit within the overall meaning. There is little consideration of the impact or influence of the part on the whole. This created a linear conception of hermeneutics that scholars soon recognized as incomplete. Applying hermeneutics methodology to hermeneutics itself quickly revealed a recursiveness to the methodology, a hermeneutic circle. This understanding was expanded by Heidegger (1966) who first applied the term ‘hermeneutic circle’ in recognition of the circularity of understanding. Heidegger’s emphasis that “the circularity that can be discerned here does not prevent understanding, but instead makes it possible” (Malpas, 1992, p. 100); therefore, the “hermeneutic method is not linear in this sense; it is rather a circular method concerned to illuminate the foundation itself” (p. 103). Laverty says that for Heidegger:

all understanding is connected to a given set of fore-structures, including one’s historicality that cannot be eliminated. One, therefore, needs to become as aware as possible and account for these interpretive influences. This interpretive process is achieved through a hermeneutic circle which moves from the parts of experience, to the
whole of experience and back and forth again and again to increase the depth of engagement with and the understanding of texts. (p. 9)

Hence, hermeneutics is an “adjusting process between the sub-units and their more general meaning” (Brougham (1993). In his discussion of Bergson’s “ontological hermeneutics,” Brougham (1993) explains the circle thus:

What is important for us to realize is that Bergson (and, later, Whitehead) disclose a feature of the nature of things, which has been neglected by nearly all investigators. Metaphysicians who have taken ‘development’ seriously have either assumed an imposing ‘form’ (the ‘scheme’) as wholly dominant; or they have assumed a ‘welling up,’ an indicative summation of the given Concrete elements. To over simplify, they have acquiesced on one side or the other of the rationalist/empiricist (or, realist/nominalist) split.

Bergson’s interest in Darwin and theories of evolution led him to be one of the first to propose a quasi-hermeneutic adjusting between the form and its contents in addressing the nature of things, and where other philosophers noted the influence of part on whole and whole on part, Broughman notes the tension inherent in this adjusting process. This tension is negotiated in nature where niche and need affect species evolution. Tension spurs reaction and reaction spurs change. Bergson and Brougham’s focus on tensions can apply to writing assessments where negotiating the tensions caused by conflicting theories of assessment and writing such as, for example, assessing process writing as opposed to assessing finished products, or writing about writing as opposed to writing across the curriculum. Brougham tells us that Bergson’s hermeneutics is concerned:
with the ‘tension’ or perceived dissonance between the general understanding of some area of discourse, and the components of that discourse. The general ‘sense’ of a prolonged passage, a text, or even an entire culture is contrasted with the (distinguishable) sentences, statements, or sub-assertions that compromise the whole text, etc.

What makes Bergson’s theory valuable to writing assessment is that it offers a way to encompass assessment issues and accommodate both writing and writing assessment methods, especially those seemingly at odds with one another such as those in use by testing agencies and those used by the composition community. Foucault’s concept of power, where there is no starting point of power - that power “means relations, [and] a more-or-less organised, hierarchical, coordinated cluster of relations” (pgs. 198 - 199) mirrors the concept in Bergson’s hermeneutic circle where:

the ‘starting point’ of the ‘circle’ is open: the ‘intellectual effort’ can begin anywhere on the circle. It may begin with the ‘scheme’ … or is somewhere among the ‘pieces.’ Or, it may originate in the ‘interval’ – anywhere between the buzzing confusion and the tentative encapsulation. The mutual modification or reciprocal adjusting may be ‘sideways,’ or ‘up-and-down,’ or both. Once the ‘dynamism’ begins, an adjusting interplay between all components and the general pattern takes place, involving ‘concession,’ ‘negotiation,’ and ‘struggle.’

The circle so often referred to in hermeneutics is a “distinguishing feature,” and that this circularity is, in fact, fundamental to the hermeneutic theory. The circle is a circle of understanding (Malpas, 1992, pp. 95 – 96). The structure “expresses a holistic conception of the nature of meaning and of understanding according to which any whole (whether it be a set of
concepts, a text, a language, a set of actions, a set of beliefs or whatever) is only to be understood through its parts and vice versa” (p. 96).

Later, Husserl pushed the evolution of hermeneutics by applying it to concepts of lived experience. For Husserl, the term phenomenology applied to the interpretation of lived experiences, with a distinction made between the experience or perception, and the object being perceived. This is an important distinction that requires the a critical gaze to be cast both internally and externally. The two, hermeneutics and phenomenology, are counterpoints to one another. Ricoeur (1975) tells us that there exists:

between phenomenology and hermeneutics a mutual belonging which it is important to explicate. On the one hand, hermeneutics is built on the basis of phenomenology and thus preserves that from which it nevertheless differs: phenomenology remains the indispensible presupposition of hermeneutics. On the other hand, phenomenology is not able to establish itself without a hermeneutical presupposition. (p. 85)

Husserl’s work in phenomenology, the study of lived experience, brought new dimensions to hermeneutics and hermeneutics evolved into hermeneutic phenomenology, a method for interpreting those lived experiences. Hermeneutics’ relation to phenomenology also allows for the objective and the subjective interpretation to affect understanding, a critical aspect in that it also allows for the consideration of subjective assessment practices. Lately, hermeneutics has been applied to a number of disciplines and it is being applied here as a method for interpreting various aspects of writing assessment methods. Together, hermeneutic phenomenology allows for the interpretation of just about everything. Moving past the priority given to the whole as a way to interpret the part, hermeneutic phenomenology also interprets the influence of the part on the whole. Neither is dominant or has priority. Meaning, in fact, is circular as the part is
understood in context to the whole, but the whole is affected by the impact of the part on the whole. There are many ways that hermeneutics can be valuable to writing assessment. Hermeneutics recognizes the subjectiveness of both writing and writing assessment as well as that which is interpreted and the interpreter. Hermeneutics offers a way of re-interpreting psychometric methodologies without dismissing them as well as re-interpreting writing assessment methodologies and concerns in ways that address the audiences of both testing agencies and the composition community.

From the beginning, the simplicity of a hermeneutic methodology has belied the potential of hermeneutics to interpret various ‘texts’ in various contexts, a potential that has been applied to a number of different disciplines, but rarely if ever to writing assessments or composition. The circularity of hermeneutics, the reflexiveness and recursiveness of the hermeneutic circle, and the ability to apply both subjective and objective methodology to a subjective/objective discipline make phenomenological hermeneutics a strong candidate for the new story of writing assessment.

An aspect of phenomenological hermeneutics that is important to the new story of writing assessment is Heidegger’s argument that the circle turns in on itself and interprets the interpreter. Just as “Hermeneutic thinking aims to show the things themselves, rather than to provide deductions or reductions of them,” so do “Wittgenstein and Heidegger exhort us “to pay attention to our actual practices and our actual ways of going about things” (Malpas, p. 106). In a similar way, “post-hermeneutics” looks beyond the immediate to those influences that converge on the immediate. This reflexivity inherent in Bourdieu’s concept, conatus, is a critical component of the composition community’s quest for a new story, but it does not apply to the
players on the field. It applies to those who research the field. *Conatus* can also be applied to the hermeneutic sphere and writing assessment. Fuller (2008) defines *conatus* as:

a methodological concept in Bourdieu’s work … informed by a critical theoretical enquiry, which is itself driven by a phenomenological approach to knowledge creation: whether, how and to what extent a research process allows the subject of knowledge to grasp the essential part of the object he/she has chosen to study. (p. 196)

Fuller tells us that Bourdieu’s *conatus* is an epistemological approach that asks the researcher to both objectively examine and reflect upon the object of study, as well as “hold a mirror to the researcher’s own practice at least as much as the object of research” (p. 169). As Malpas says:

the idea is that our investigations should be addressed to the phenomena – that is, to the things as they show themselves. This does not mean that we should focus more minutely on the things before us – as if understanding them was a matter of seeing them more closely. Indeed, if something is individuated and identified only in relation to a wider whole of which it is a part, then, the more closely we look, the less we are likely to be illuminated about that thing. Understanding the thing as what it is will be a matter of standing back to let thing, together with the setting in which it presents itself, show forth” (p. 101).

A theory that can bring writing and writing assessment together under the same umbrella theory needs to incorporate both the macro view and the micro view, or both the parts and the whole of, in this case, writing and writing assessment because unless we examine our own history with its biases and opinions, Terwilliger (1997) says “there is a danger that perfectly useful and appropriate assessment methods will be discarded in a rush to adopt a variety of other techniques of unknown psychometric and educational quality” (p. 24). Scholars must reconsider
these beliefs and values in relation to each composition community’s individual perspective concerning the writing assessment practices of both other composition communities and testing agencies. The current atmosphere surrounding much of what writing assessors do is unacceptable and renders any changes impossible in the current frame and/or power held by composition communities and the program directors that must guide these practices through antagonistic waters.

Adopting and applying *conatus* to writing assessment offers a critical and more objective perspective of what we do, and why. We need to investigate the influences discussed in Chapter I, and consider how we have internalized and responded to these influences. And Strathausen’s 2003 discussion of ‘post-hermeneutics says that the goal of hermeneutics is not only concerned with making meaning of the subject itself; instead, the goal is also to investigate and make meaning of the influences that make meaning. This step-back from the immediacy of the subject (writing assessment here) offers a wider critical perspective concerning how outside influences affect what we know of a subject. Strathausen argues:

Post-hermeneutics … seeks to expose the socio-historical roots of this seemingly ‘natural’ ideal of (self-) understanding. Instead of ‘making sense,’ post-hermeneutics critically examines and exposes the historical and technological premises of ‘sense-production.’ Post-hermeneutics literally speaks a different language that operates from the *outside* rather than the *inside* of signification and hence is able to recognize the non-benevolent power of signs” (p. 420).

Applying the concepts of *conatus* and post-hermeneutics can also help us recognize that “[c]ompeting interests ... are probably [a] healthy and beneficial part of the political process that requires painful consensus building and slow progress” (White, 2005, p. 302), especially since
composition instructors and scholars are typically reluctant to turn a critical eye on the influences that went into creating a composition community and writing assessment.

This means that locally situated assessment practices must be viewed in the context of demographics, mission statements and values - the *capital* prized in the specific location. There must be acknowledgment that this practice or that, including those of testing agencies and publishing companies, does have some *capital*, and therefore some power, and has to have had some value in order to have been implemented. Each location or situation, therefore, exhibits a subjectivity that must be assimilated into other perspectives based on other locations.

The uses of writing assessment and assessment technologies are many though all seem to preference particular aspects. But in order to fully understand and/or argue a position concerning writing assessment, we must understand each location’s influence and connection to the others. But it is the very recognition and investigation of those influences, which sparks subjectivity. Each location or situation creates a subjectivity that must be assimilated in with other perspectives based on other locations. The uses of writing assessment and assessment technologies are many though all seem to preference some particular aspect of writing such as conventions or some aspect of assessment such as convenience. But even within the areas of agreement, there are a myriad of perspectives, each based on the necessary outcomes of that location. Again, in order to fully understand and/or argue a position concerning writing assessment, we must understand each location’s influence and connection to the others.

**Hermeneutic Sphere**

The concept of a hermeneutic *sphere* is based on the concept of a phenomenological post-hermeneutic hermeneutic circle in that it the *sphere* comprises many of the philosophical considerations evident in the evolution of hermeneutics. The *sphere* can incorporate a number of
writing assessment goals. Phenomenologically, the *sphere* can be used to interpret the social, human aspect of writing. This aspect of writing has been quietly missing from most assessment conversations. The *sphere* can also be reflexive, looking back on the historical influences that have affected the current frame of writing assessment, as well as those influences that affect the relationship between writing assessment and composition, and between the composition community and testing agencies. This is gray area for writing assessment and composition with reasons for the disconnect between the two *fields* - composition and testing agencies - rarely articulated.

This lack of articulation helps keep the composition community at odds with the writing assessment community, which includes both testing agencies and writing assessment methodologies used in composition programs. And the concept of the *sphere* recognizes the recursiveness of the hermeneutic circle where all parts are interdependent, interconnected, and constantly reinterpreting one another. Laverty warns us that phenomenology is a “movement rather than a discrete period of time,” an important point because “it reflects the view that phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology, and our understanding of them, are not stationary, but dynamic and evolving, even today” (p. 3). Thus, the concepts change and evolve over time, an aspect critical to the *sphere*. And a *sphere* is multi-directional instead of a circular concept, which can only move forward and backward. A *sphere*, however, moves in any direction necessary and can therefore connect multiple concepts and concerns, any and all of which may lead various players on assessment and composition community *fields* to collaborate in unforeseen ways. This gives the *sphere* a distinctly postmodern aspect, another value according to Foucault who says “the attempt to think in terms of a totality has in fact proved a hindrance to research” (p. 81). The idea of an absolute or a totality interferes with open
collaboration and communication and can cause us to miss the “essentially local character of criticism [that] indicates in reality ... an autonomous, non-centralised kind of theoretical production, one that is to say whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of thought” (p. 81). Most scholars ascribe to Foucault’s idea that totality; otherwise there would be no reason to continue to complicate and explore concepts and practices.

The hermeneutic *sphere* encourages the creation of new *doxa* through open-minded approaches to various methodologies, theories and philosophies, including those that are diametrically opposed. The goal of shaking the structures of power requires more than a microscopic lens on this assessment method or that; it requires a macroscopic lens on the social structures in place, the histories of both belief and behavior surrounding writing assessment, and knowledge of mission statements, student demographics, and economy – as well as the values held by each writing program. It is a call to reclaim the value of subjectivity while recognizing the importance of objective practices that have been found useful. It is another try at fitting the round peg into the square hole.

If we want to rewrite our story, we must pave the path toward communication and collaboration. This offers writing assessment the opportunity to examine and reexamine assessment methods. Thus, there are a number of reasons for a framework that serves as a structure for reframing assessment, and there have been many frameworks, or philosophies, applied to writing assessment, many of which reiterate traditional concerns and power structures, to the point that it seems writing assessment remains a “particular little fad,” where each framework is touted as better than the last – or – they are often philosophies cobbled together from previous researches and writings. Many of these frameworks can be accommodated by hermeneutics. Because we have solid, valuable scholarship surrounding many aspects of writing
assessment but we have no overriding theory that binds this scholarship, it is difficult to rewrite
the frame of writing assessment, and recognize the various forms of capital to be had. As
Foucault’s (1977) says of ineffective researches:

though these researches were very closely related to each other, they have failed to
develop into any continuous or coherent whole. They are fragmentary researches, none of
which in the last analysis can be said to have proved definitive, nor even to have led
anywhere. Diffused and at the same time repetitive, they have continually re-trod the
same ground, invoked the same themes, the same concepts, etc. (p. 78)

Hermeneutics, on the other hand, casts a wide net on interpretation, and the circular
nature of hermeneutics can be said to highlight previous concepts as well as the power structures.
Haswell and Wyche-Smith (1994) suggest “the real site of writing assessment is not so much a
battle zone or a contested economic sphere of influence as a territory open for venture, and that
writing teachers will do well neither to accept passively nor to react angrily—but simply to act” (p.
221). The implications of the hermeneutic sphere, then, is that a sphere also works much like
Foucault’s discussion of power: “In reality power means relations, a more-or-less organised,
hierarchical, coordinated cluster of relations” (p. 198), with no starting point, no location.
Instead, power is found in at the intersections of relations. Or, it works like hermeneutics where
meaning is not found in the parts, or the whole - or even the researcher but meaning and power
are found in the intersections in an ever-changing use of tensions. Hermeneutics can be said to
reside in the middle space between dichotomies - that metaphorical space where attributes of
each side of the dichotomy meet and mingle. The hermeneutic circle envisioned in this
dissertation is more properly a sphere than a circle; it has no starting point, and is less
hierarchical than Foucault argues, because each writing assessment theory, philosophy,
pedagogy and practice conceptually equi-distant apart and potentially connected by idea, purpose
and power to each and every other idea. Because writing, assessment and hermeneutics are all
ubiquitous, recursive and mutually adapting, there is no final definition of the ‘whole’ or of any
‘text.’ Ironically, although hermeneutics and the hermeneutic circle have been interpreted in
many ways, a clear concrete definition also remains elusive - therefore, the interpretation of
interpretation remains subject to interpretation. This is the nature of the sphere. It is not only to
be expected; it is to be embraced. It is this malleability/changeability that engenders
communication and collaboration at the points where dichotomous ideas meet.

If a field is like a board game with players following a particular set of behaviors on the
board, the sphere is more like a club where players from a variety of fields meet, each bringing
their own doxa into the clubhouse that then begins to create its own doxa, through applying
conatus and approaching other club members with open-mindedness and open-ended questions.
Although this ‘club’ analogy is nothing more than a larger field, the term captures the sought for
attitude of camaraderie, interest and mutual respect between the composition community and
writing assessment community that would allow for a re-examination of specific
concerns. Institutions such as NCTE, CCC and WPA have already begun the arduous work of
pulling together the composition community and embolden a great body of research, and though
they are also internal to the composition community, they provide a strong ethos upon which to
communicate to society at large. A hermeneutic sphere provides a space, metaphorically and
digitally, that pulls together the knowledge(s) – much like NCTE, CCC or WPA do now - and
offer a space for the composition community to meet and share. So, a hermeneutic sphere might
also be conceived as a giant online conference for writing and writing assessment. This concept
is far from unknown; programs across the country use wikis and websites to bring collaboration
to their programs, and offer graduates students ideas, assignments and rubrics. These spaces, though valuable to the program within which it resides, remain basically internal. Collaboration and communication is in-house whereas the *sphere* offers a framework upon which different program wikis can hang, for example.
Definitions and Benefits

The benefits of applying the conceptual framework of a sphere to writing assessment are several and apply to both the composition community and writing assessment. The list below offers samples of what those benefits might be.

1. A sphere is limitless because the potential research areas are limitless.

2. A sphere functions much like a hermeneutic circle but should be envisioned as multi-dimensional which allows more outside influences into the interpretation.

3. A sphere is a conceptual attitude - it requires that players adopt specific attitudes and behaviors before ‘entering’ the sphere similar to the hush of entering a church where attitudes and behaviors mirror the purpose of the place.
   a. There are no areas of discussion that are taboo. Taking Bahktin’s admonition that we can’t think outside the box into consideration, the required attitude for a sphere encourages the different, subjective, unusual or unheard of as potential insights for deeper understanding. The sphere asks that scholars challenge Bahktin.
   b. Program directors, researchers and faculty should adopt Bourdieu’s concept of conatus and examine the beliefs, values, knowledges brought to the research by researchers, as well as the research agenda itself.

4. A sphere can accommodate the psychometric framework that currently structures assessments at both testing agencies and composition/assessment communities, but the sphere replaces the psychometric framework. This can reduce the influence of psychometrics as an overriding framework while retaining the values of psychometric assessments.
5. A *sphere* is a conceptual space, that functions as both a ‘safe or free zone’ where composition and assessment scholars can entertain any number of questions and ideas, and which functions like a workshop environment where the goal is to create, test, and improve various assignments and assessments. While composition scholars are already hard at work on these issues, composition faculty are less so.

6. Examples of questions the research community can consider:

   a. What are the values represented in this assignment/assessment?
   b. How are these values seen?
   c. Who do these values serve best?
   d. How can this assignment be fairly assessed subjectively?
   e. How do these values complement or conflict with values evident in other assignments/assessments?
   f. What is the purpose of the assignment/assessment?
   g. What will the assignment/assessment teach the student? The instructor? The program?
   h. What would be lost in assessments with the inclusion of subjectivity in the assessments? What would be gained?
   i. What precedence may exist to ‘market’ a new assessment practices? How was it done with portfolio? Can this be mirrored?

The *sphere’s* potential to reframe writing assessment is also the potential to re-envision the concept of power. *Psychometric, for example, is a powerful doxa in the writing assessment field of testing agencies; it is a controlling philosophy. Psychometric theories become assessment methods, but in the hermeneutic sphere, psychometrics occupies a point of intersection that is roughly equal to other intersections. This does not deny the value of*
psychometrics; but it does replace its eminence as the overriding framework upon which all writing assessment practices rely. The negative repressiveness experienced by the composition community when faced with powerful writing assessments is the focus of the attention paid to writing assessment issues, but the hermeneutic sphere allows for a reinterpretation of power where power produces, where power is recognized as distributed among the various components of assessment and writing. This distribution equalizes assessment issues and institutional methods of addressing these issues.

Instead, power can lead to knowledge and knowledge can lead to power; therefore, “power and knowledge relations are superimposed on one another and make one another possible, without either being reducible or subordinate to the other” (p. 356), and that the treatment of knowledge with discourse cannot be separated from the operation of power,” leading to Foss, Foss and Trapp’s understanding that “knowledge and power are two sides of the same process” (p. 355) because “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (Foucault, 1978, p. 27). This superimposition is not static; there is tension, and it is at these points of tension or discomfort, these places where two distinct viewpoints meet that influence one another and “produce” dialogue which produces knowledge, which creates more points of intersection where more discomforts or questions can yield more insights, and create “a more-or-less organised, hierarchical, coordinated cluster of relations” (p. 198). In fact, Foucault sees the term “relations of power” where power is productive:

a creative force ... one that produces, and increases qualities and conditions. ... ‘What makes power holds good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only
weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse’ (p. 119).

Therefore, Foucault “advocates …[for] a view of power in which ‘the exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information’” (Foucault, 1977, pgs. 51 - 52). This is an energizing concept of power - a recognition of the activity of analysis and research that creates knowledge which creates more power, and ‘cause to emerge new objects of knowledge and new bodies of information.’ This is also hermeneutic interpretation of power, a power that is greater than the sum of all its parts and each part is greater than the sum of the total in an ongoing recursive activity.

Chapter II opened with the current reputation surrounding writing assessment before suggesting theoretical methodology upon which to hang writing assessment’s concerns. This methodology began with the discussion of what hermeneutics is and how it has evolved and then proposed a variation of the traditional hermeneutic circle: a hermeneutic sphere. In Chapter III, I will offer my research methodology and the results of having researched assessment practices at two disparate institutions of higher education, Spokane Falls Community College and Texas Tech University at Lubbock. Chapters IV and V will discuss the results of that research.
Chapter III Methodology

I began Chapter I with a wide overview or a macro-view that exposes the nebulose, ubiquitous, yet powerful historical influences (both ancient and more recent) surrounding writing assessment’s current frame, and the results of the psychometric framework that has structured that frame since its inception in the late 19th century. Chapter I also identified epistemological dichotomies evident in many historical influences on the composition community and writing assessment, and offered examples of more current epistemological dichotomies in writing assessment methods. Chapter II identified writing assessment’s current ‘frame,’ a result of these dichotomous influences, and then identified hermeneutics as a theory and practice that has value to writing assessment. The chapter ends with a discussion of the hermeneutic sphere as the theoretical framework that seems most beneficial to the composition and writing assessment communities. Chapter III now discusses the methodologies of the research designed to support the value of a hermeneutic sphere. Unlike the previous chapters, this chapter moves away from ubiquitous historical and social influences to explain the research methodology employed to examine the value of a hermeneutic sphere.

My positionality here developed from a number of surface connections to testing agencies as well as my position as a composition lecturer. My first exposure to testing agencies was very positive in that I was invited to become a consultant and trainer for one of their adult learning programs, Learning Plus, which was used to identify freshman college students who had not yet passed the Texas Academic Skills Program exam. Learning Plus and Accuplacer were both ETS programs and the company that invited me to consult was a subsidiary of Educational Testing Services and run by a former ETS employee. The experience was positive because the pay was excellent and I was able to travel, as well as continue my studies for a Master of Fine
Arts degree. I was also able to continue in my position as a coordinator of a computer lab in the University of Texas at El Paso’s Tutoring and Learning Center. After I was hired as a lecturer by the UTEP’s English department, I received an invitation to become part of a scoring committee for teacher certification essays. The company that hired me, Oakhill Technologies in Austin, Texas, contracted with ETS to handle the administration and scoring of teacher certification for the essay portion of the English Language Arts and Learning exam. I was trained and scored once and was invited back as a “table leader,” a position that involved working with other faculty from various parts of Texas. From this position, I was next invited to become the Chief Reader for the scoring, a position that involved training all the instructors and being responsible for the accuracy of the group’s scoring.

Working with Oakhill Technologies exposed me to instructors in elementary and secondary public schools, which illuminated some advantages to scorers that went beyond free rides and good pay. Typically, the same instructors were invited over and over. As part of the process of norming, discussions over qualities and interpretations of criteria taught me a great deal about what others valued as well as what I valued. When the scoring became computerized, I was repeatedly invited to continue scoring via computer from home. I declined. There was no joy in scoring; it was the learning from other faculty that brought me back.

When the first-year composition program at UTEP redesigned its two-semester composition sequence of courses, I volunteered to be involved in the scoring of student assignments. Part of the redesign involved having students upload assignments into a program called MinerWriter which then distributed assignments to graduate students who were not yet qualified to teach in the classroom. The scoring became part of the preparation for the classroom
and despite numerous complaints about the workload, there were numerous comments voicing appreciation for the training.

Working with Oakhill Technologies allowed me little exposure to the general relationship between testing agencies, especially ETS, and composition instructors. ETS was in charge of the scoring and kept close control of information. All scorers signed confidentiality forms, no one entered with materials and no one left with materials. A representative of ETS was on site during the scoring, although the representative was not always in the room while instructors scored because there were other certification exams being scored as the ETS representatives had to divide time monitoring the different scoring sessions. Oakhill Technologies was also charged with ensuring the control of information and ensuring the privacy of candidates who had taken the exam. Over time, as scorers, trainers, representatives, and Oakhill personnel grew accustomed to one another and the process, the strict control of information loosened.

I had no knowledge of the historical influences that went into the discord. I was blind. I then entered my involvement with UTEP’s first-year composition blind, a common position for lecturers, and therefore made a number of mistakes. For example, sensing that fellow lecturers did not agree with elements of the redesign and having little experience (though more than others involved in the scoring aspect of the redesign), I was very private about what was involved in the training and scoring of students. But again, I was able to see the value to graduate students, lecturers, the program and, in fact, the potential value to the university that was inherent in the scoring. Today, I am far more informed about the causes behind the discord.

My experience with standardized assessments and my experience as a lecturer both inform my positionality, which is that there are historical reasons for the discord between testing agencies and composition instructors but that this discord handicaps instructors. Furthermore,
there are important and valuable insights to be gained from testing agencies, and an understanding of the historical influences offers valuable insights into the positionality of many if not most of composition instructors. We work blind without this background knowledge and the awareness of its influences. My research into testing practices shows that composition instructors do not develop their own testing methods. Even the portfolio, a response to standardized assessments and indirect testing methods, was developed by those testing agencies. My hope is that the sphere will offer instructors a ‘safe zone’ of sorts in which knowledges can be shared, compared and used to re-develop new assessment methods that reflect the values of writing to instructors.

To that aim, I chose to survey composition faculty (appendix A) to understand how well composition faculty understood the assessment purposes and practices at their respective institutions. I also chose contrasting composition programs at two different institutions in order to make obvious how very different practices housed in very different institutional cultures can be examined through a hermeneutic sphere and deepen understanding of the goals and methods that support those assessments. I hope to show that deconstructing and analyzing both assessors and assessments, and by comparing assignments and assessment practices, or by connecting the values inherent in the assessments and assignments to social and cultural influences that historically determine those values, the sphere will offer different ways to envision assessments. I also hope to make clear that any analysis of any assessment practice should provide similar insights. The research methodology should allow me to showcase and analyze the value of a hermeneutic sphere to writing assessment, not critique the assessment practices used to test the sphere.
The two higher-education institutions selected for this study are Spokane Falls Community College located in the northwestern state of Washington and Texas Tech University located in the southwest panhandle of Texas. Spokane Falls is a two-year institution that serves about 9,000 students annually, 2,200 of whom are composition students. Texas Tech is a four-year research university that serves about 36,000 students annually, 5,000 of whom are composition students. The composition faculty at Spokane Falls hold masters and doctoral degrees whereas the faculty at Texas Tech typically hold masters degrees, or are either graduate assistants in master programs or graduate assistants in doctoral programs. Both university mission statements claim dedication to student success as their mission and both acknowledge the advantages to the states that house these institutions. As part of a district of community colleges, Spokane Falls Community College is dedicated to “develop[ing] human potential through relevant, quality, and affordable learning opportunities that result in improved social and economic well-being for our students and our state.” The mission statement of Texas Tech University is:

As a public research university, Texas Tech advances knowledge through innovative and creative teaching, research and scholarship. The university is dedicated to student success by preparing learners to be ethical leaders for a diverse and globally competitive workforce. The university is committed to enhancing the cultural and economic development of the state, nation and world. (https://www.ttu.edu/about/mission.php)

These two institutions were selected for this study not only because of their contrasting institutional profiles, but also because of the differences in assessments that might reflect dichotomous philosophies and practices. As will be discussed in depth in the chapters that follow, Spokane Falls Community College, or SFCC, follows what might be considered a more
traditional approach to writing assessment. At SFCC, instructors create their own assignments, but gather together to score these assignments in portfolios. All faculty meet for this scoring session at the end of each quarter and each student’s essay is scored twice. Teachers score portfolios using a pass/fail, or C-centered scoring guide. If the scores are discrepant, the essay is scored a third time. Texas Tech University’s assessment practice, however, takes a unique approach. At TTU, scoring instructors and classroom instructors handle two different jobs and do not necessarily need to meet one another. The scoring instructors receive student assignments, score them, and upload scores and comments into Raider Writer, Texas Tech’s program that replaces classroom platforms. The classroom instructor uses a standardized syllabus and standardized assignments and teaches the assignments that the scoring instructors score. Each student’s assignment is scored twice. If the scores are discrepant, an assignment is scored a third time. The only changes made by classroom instructors involve in-class assignments that the classroom instructor may choose to assign and grade.

To learn about these two institutions’ assessment practices, the first thing I did was contact the two program directors at the two chosen institutions. I heard from a friend and former colleague that Spokane Falls held regular norming sessions where instructors graded portfolios together, and I was intrigued by the added caveat that instructors created different assignments around common learning outcomes and the norming sessions were designed to assess the ability of instructors to score to these outcomes. Therefore, gaining entrance to the portfolio assessment was simple. I asked. However, I did not have a connection at Texas Tech University. Instead, I had heard of Texas Tech’s assessment system when UTEP redesigned its first-year composition program. Texas Tech served as an example of what the composition program at UTEP could and
did do. Therefore, access to assessments there proved impossible despite early favorable responses to my requests.

I collected survey responses from both sites, completed observations of an assessment session, interviewed people, and gathered artifacts such as assignments, rubrics, and syllabi. Artifacts from Spokane Falls came from the composition director, various faculty, and the Spokane Falls website. Everything gathered concerning Texas Tech University was found through internet and database searches. For example, information concerning the assignments for Texas Tech came from keyword searches that led to individual instructor websites. Information such as demographics, mission statements, and institutional history came from each institution’s official websites. Information concerning how assessment function at each school were taken from interviews with key players (for example, Fred Kemp), and from an article written by one of the associate directors. After contacting the directors, I sent the survey link to both directors. I looked forward to learning about these disparate practices and understanding what purpose these practices served and for whom, how the practices represented institutional brands and whether the composition programs recognize, understand and mirror those institutional brands. These are some of the areas of inquiry that can be accommodated by a hermeneutic sphere and that may provide insights into local assessments.
My original research agenda included surveying composition instructors, observing the program assessments at these two different institutions of higher education, and interviewing two program directors. My goal was to examine the practices at each school for similar and dissimilar purposes and practices in order to learn about the values that drive those assessment practices. Each institution’s processes and artifacts were chosen as examples of how diverse composition community practices can reveal the influences of tension - areas where disparate pedagogies and practices might cause discomfort when comparisons bring together different pedagogies, styles, assignments, and assessments. At those intersections where different assessment practices intermingle, the various philosophies, theories, methodologies and practices intermingle as well. It is at these points of intersection, with differing perspectives together, where the most agency exists. It is also here that a feeling of distress that Bourdieu would call *hysteresis* can occur. *Hysteresis* is brought on by the close exposure to another set of values and beliefs - some other *field’s doxa* and *capital*. Therefore, an examination of writing assessment practices at two institutions may yield any number of shared tensions, common practices, or areas of conflict. This would suggest that each institution’s artifacts, as well as those of any other institution, could offer opportunities for investigation of the various influences that went into the making of specific philosophies, pedagogies and practices. The chosen institutions also have comparable assignments despite dichotomous assessment processes. Between the polar opposites are spaces where the dichotomies intersect – where neither side of a dichotomy reigns and where conversation can start. These intersections are areas of tension and power, ripe with potentiality where a neutral researcher can maneuver through the various tensions, and where a hermeneutic
can situate these and other assessment practices and theories in order to interpret and reinterpret, invent and reinvent writing assessment methods that best suit local needs.

**Spokane Falls Community College (SFCC)**

I went to Spokane, Washington, in June of 2015. At this visit I met with five key faculty members of SFCC’s first-year composition program at a dinner one night arranged by the chair of the department. I was introduced as an assessment researcher, and I took notes during this dinner meeting which have helped to highlight a potentially important part of assessment on this campus: the relationships between faculty members. This dinner, attending by the chair of the department, the composition program director, and three tenured faculty members offered an opportunity to observe relations between chair, director and faculty, as well as attitudes toward their assessment practice. I was interested in the camaraderie between faculty and used semi-structured interview questions (Appendix B) to ask questions such as:

1. How long had each faculty member been with SFCC?
2. How often did faculty get together for non-work related events?
3. How close were offices to one another?
4. How staggered were classes in the schedule?
5. How many meetings were held per quarter?

Although there was a clear hierarchy in titles, the relationships between the five faculty members evidenced a leveling of authority that contradicted the titles. The evening discussions were light and the five faculty seemed friendly, bonded and proud of their work in their composition program. They knew about each other’s personal lives, shared offices or were all officed in one area of one floor of their building. One had just been awarded tenure, so there was also a celebratory note to the evening. The teachers had a combined 27 years of experience teaching at
SFCC and were brought together by familiarity, in this case with the portfolio assessment, and 3 of the 4 dinner guests had experienced the first years of the assessment’s implementation.

I returned to Spokane in mid May of 2015 when I was able to observe and note the processes of a one-day assessment process of portfolio essays that lasted from 8:30 – 3:30. This end of the quarter assessment occurs during the last week of classes and all classes are canceled so that faculty may attend the assessment. Actual grades are not part of this assessment; this is a pass/no pass assessment, and faculty are normed to a “hefty C” (“Assessing Portfolio”). My interests during this second observation centered around how the common learning outcomes were represented by different assignments, how often faculty reviewed the assignments, the outcomes, and how often faculty discussed scores among themselves. I also hoped to understand faculty responses and attitudes toward their assessment practice. I paid particular attention to the time spent on each essay, and instructor interaction because it related to inter-rater reliability, how often faculty members discussed essays as they normed, as well as the general atmosphere of the room and attitude of the participants.

Further information concerning both the portfolio review material and information about the Colleges of Spokane were taken from online sources. Additionally, I was invited to observe a district meeting with the chair of the Spokane Falls Community College English department. At this meeting, the interests of the district as they applied to both community colleges, were discussed. Those present at this meeting were the deans and chairs of different departments at both institutions, the district Board of Trustees and the district superintendent. The meeting was semi-open to the public in that anyone could attend but it was not well advertised to the general faculty. There were, however, three to four attendees who were either faculty or citizens of
Spokane, WA. From their questions and comments, it seemed that they were familiar with the meetings and that board members were familiar with them.

In order to supplement the observations, I also gathered these Spokane Falls Community College artifacts:

- “Assessing Portfolio Document,” historical internal document (Appendix C)
- The English 101 Essay Assignments 1 – 3 Samples from two instructors (Appendices D – I)
- The English 101 Evaluations for Essay Assignments 1 – 3 Samples from two instructors (Appendices J – O)
- The English 101 Faculty Norming Criteria - Standardized Assessment (Appendix P)
- “Portfolio Preview, 4th Edition “– Benchmark Samples
- “The English 102 Quilt,” internal document

The “Assessing Portfolio Document” provided the institutional memory and historical influences of the portfolio, the purpose of the assessment, and faculty response to the assessment. The 102 Quilt is a conversation between faculty who teach 102, with different faculty providing examples of what they do in their classrooms; this speaks to a strong attitude of collaboration at Spokane Falls Community College. The essay assignments and evaluation criteria are samples from one instructor for English 101 assignments. These samples do not imply a standard assignment that other instructors use; these assignments are specific to the classroom instructor. Instead, instructors at SFCC write assignments that reflect a standardized set of learning outcomes.
TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

The process for researching Texas Tech University’s first-year composition assessment program was very different from that at SFCC. During much of 2014, I engaged in sporadic email correspondence between the program director at Texas Tech University who agreed to meet at the College Communication and Composition Conference 2015 in Tampa, Florida and discuss the opportunity to observe the assessment practices at Texas Tech. The director of composition had said I should visit TTU in September or October, and the meeting in Tampa was to arrange a specific time. We met for the first time in the hotel lobby for about ten minutes, and she offered some information about the program, but was vague about a visit to observe her program later that following fall. Later, I discovered that the computer program upon which the first-year composition program depends had been “been taken away from the composition and rhetoric faculty and given to another person, who was given semi-autonomous status from the English department” (Kemp); however, according to the Texas Tech website, the program continues as the cornerstone of first-year composition at Texas Tech. Surprisingly, there was no assessment training to observe; the assessment program had never included training scoring instructors; they learned to score in line with the other scoring instructors because the program kicks scores that are discrepant back to administration. If this happens more than a few times, administration intervenes. There are no norming sessions or trainings in face-to-face environments. Scoring instructors are hired on full-time or part-time basis to score in an online environment, and were located across the country. Classroom instructors did not know scoring instructors.

Information about Texas Tech University’s first-year composition was obtained from publications such as Catherine Gouge’s “Conversation at a Crucial Moment: Hybrid
Courses and the Future of Writing Programs (2009), the response to Gouge by Susan Lang, the director of TTU’s first-year composition, entitled “Conversations at a Critical Moment: Hybrid Courses and the Future of Writing Programs” (2010), Fred Kemp’s “Computers, Innovation, and Resistance in First-Year Composition Programs” (2005) and Becky Rickley’s (2006) “Distributed Teaching, Distributed Learning: Integrating Technology and Criteria-Driven Assessment into the Delivery of First-Year Composition,” which proved important to my dissertation, and with email conversations with Fred Kemp, the former director of first-year composition at Texas Tech Dr. Rickley is a former assistant director of the composition program. Lang has been director for the past ten years. Kemp had directed the program for ten years and was instrumental in creating the software upon which the First-Year Writing program relies.

I also collected a number of artifacts concerning Texas Tech’s first-year composition assessment system from various publications and websites, official Texas Tech University websites, and individual instructor websites:

- Texas Tech University Artifacts:
- English 1301 “Considerations for Completing a Rhetorical Analysis”
- Mr. Blake Hatley’s English 1301 Blog
  - https://bhatley1301.wordpress.com/
- An English 1301 Flip Card
  - http://1301cc.blogspot.com/?view=flipcard
- Goldman, H. 1301 TTU website:
  - http://henriettagoodman1301.blogspot.com/
- Finseth, C. The Official Site for Carly Finseth’s English 1301 Classes (Syllabus and Assignments) https://ttu1301.wordpress.com/syllabus (Appendices R, S)
SURVEY

In order to compare the assessment practices at two disparate institutions of higher education, I chose to survey the first-year composition faculty and directors at Spokane Falls Community College and Texas Tech University at Lubbock. Although the survey was anonymous, some respondents self-disclosed their positions in the first-year composition programs at their institutions, and the Qualtrics survey program reported locations of respondents. The results of the survey yielded comments from a combination of program directors, faculty and graduate students. To begin, I developed a 25-question survey that asked composition faculty about their understanding of the purposes and practices of assessment practices at their institutions. I was interested in knowing how well members of the composition community recognized connections between local writing assessments and institutional goals. I was also interested in whether assessment practices affected pedagogy and practice. The survey was divided into four areas of inquiry - each designed to gain insight into assessment practices, faculty involvement with assessment practices and alignment of assessment practices with learning outcomes and institutional mission statements. The survey was designed using UTEP’s Qualtrics Survey, a web-based software. I next emailed the program directors at both institutions asking the program directors to send the to their faculty. The directors at both institutions agreed. However, when there were few responses, I also sent the survey to two listservs – the Writing Program Administration listserv, and the First-Year Assessment List. The results of the survey yielded comments from a combination of program directors, faculty and
graduate students. Although the survey was anonymous, some respondents self-disclosed their positions in the first-year composition programs at their institutions, and the Qualtrics survey program reported geographical locations of respondents.

**Limitations**

Although the goal was to use parallel syllabi, assignments and rubrics, as well as observe the assessment practices at each institution, the lack of response from Texas Tech University necessitated acquiring artifacts through Texas Tech University English instructor websites. At SFCC instructors shared documents for assignments and evaluations with me. So, while SFCC information was sanctioned by the director as accurate, the 101 syllabus and assignments are not standardized. Since assignments are not standardized at Spokane Falls Community College, the samples obtained do not represent the whole of the composition community’s work but rather those of the individual instructors who volunteered to share. And while the Texas Tech University information was not sanctioned by administration at Texas Tech University, the syllabi and assignments are standardized. I did not acquire learning outcomes, for example, from Texas Tech University and the syllabi and assignment examples for the first and second semester composition courses were obtained from the internet where instructors Carly Finseth and Sean Cleveland have uploaded a standardized syllabus and some assignments. Since all instructors at Texas Tech University use standardized syllabi and assignments, I am confident that the artifacts from the Internet are correct, if potentially incomplete, representations of the first-year composition program at TTU. But since assignments and syllabi are standardized at Texas Tech University for all composition classes, both 1301 and 1302, the samples I found online do represent the whole of the composition community’s work. Furthermore, because there was little interaction with the program director at Texas Tech University there is likelihood that valuable
program artifacts were not made available. Another limitation in the research methodology was the survey. Although there were 71 responses to the survey, only 14 surveys were completed. This very limited pool did not allow for accurate analysis, although it did supply interesting insights.

Chapters IV and V will explore each institution’s assessment practices and analyze them for areas that may intersect with the practices of other institutions as well as for areas that are unique to a particular institution for the purposes of examining what those practices might offer other programs. No final outcomes should be expected; that would not be the purpose of the sphere. Instead, the purpose will be to explore opportunities to become better teachers, better assessors, and better writers.
Chapter IV Processes and Procedures

In Chapter IV, I will detail the writing assessment processes and procedures adopted at both Spokane Falls Community College and Texas Tech University, and discuss the data gathered in order provide some analysis of these different processes and procedures in Chapter V. In order to contextualize the cultural settings of both institutions, I also provide an overview of these schools regarding location, demographics and institutional mission statements. Artifacts gathered are examined in preparation for analysis using the hermeneutic sphere. Some information is dated but remains relevant to the purposes of this dissertation because the sphere is designed to accommodate the influences, purposes, biases, and methods of both local and national writing assessment practices. Therefore, an analysis of practices between two schools can be accomplished between any two schools at any time, as they are used as examples only. This is the challenge of the hypothesis - to keep it general. Artifacts for both schools do not always match up, but the information that was made available is relevant to the dissertation.
Community Colleges of Spokane

According to their website, the Community Colleges of Spokane’s (CCS) was founded in 1963. The website speaks to an energetic community college district that serves some 38,600 students a year, and is spread across a 12,300-square-mile service district in eastern Washington. Alongside traditional college campuses like Spokane Community College and Spokane Falls Community College, CCS also delivers a variety of educational programs including rural outreach, business and community training, adult literacy services – and Spokane County’s Head Start. CCS’ mission is to “develop human potential through relevant, quality, and affordable learning opportunities that result in improved social and economic well-being for our students and our state.” According to their website, the vision of District 17, Community Colleges of Spokane, is to “transform lives and uplift humanity, inspiring students to lead communities, build the nation and enrich the world.” To this aim, the district Community Colleges of Spokane adopted their Academic Standards Policy to support students’ successful learning experiences where students enrolled in degree and certificate programs are expected to maintain a minimum quarterly 2.0 grade point average in order to earn a degree from Community Colleges of Spokane. In 2011, the CCS Board of Trustees approved the 2011-21 CCS strategic plan that included updated values, vision and mission statements and four new strategic priority areas with corresponding strategic initiatives:

- Student Success: Strengthening engagement
- Collaboration and Communication: Building productive communities
- Sustainability: Enhancing operational efficiency and effectiveness
- Innovation: Supporting a culture of continuous improvement
Community Colleges of Spokane envisioned a future best-case scenario for CCS, then collected and studied data about CCS students, employees and infrastructure, and the state and regional economies and workforce trends. These initiatives use assessments from a multitude of areas and in order to ensure plans stay aligned and remain on target, and over 300 faculty, staff, and administrators are trained to use a SPOLO (Strategic Planning Online software) that documents and tracks progress of these initiatives. They also heard perceptions of CCS strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) during focus groups and forums with students, faculty, staff, educators, business people, diverse community leaders and social service providers.
SFCC First-Year Composition Program

Spokane Falls, established in 1967, is a public community college with an average enrollment of almost 9000 students, 2200 of whom are enrolled in composition. The teacher to student ratio is approximately 18 – 1, and the student body is almost evenly divided between full (4500) and part-time (4300) enrollment, with approximately 60% female students and 40% male students. The student body is almost 70% white. Spokane Falls Community College offers open admission and credit for life experiences and an in-state tuition of $3500 or an out-of-state tuition of $8700. Spokane Falls Community College’s Composition teaching schedule uses the quarter system with faculty teaching three quarters a year. A full course load for full time faculty is three courses each quarter (fall, winter and spring), or nine courses per year. An adjunct’s full course load is eight courses per year, which usually consists of three classes in both fall and winter semesters and two in spring. Although SFCC does not offer bachelor degrees, they do offer 21 areas of pre-transfer study for students bound for a four-year institution, and 20 technical programs.

All faculty in the SFCC’s English Department teach composition because composition courses comprise almost all of the courses taught in the English department. There are typically about 50 English courses taught each quarter. This includes online and face-to-face classes. Of those 50 sections, approximately 32 are English Composition I (101). The capstone course is English 101; it is considered the anchor of the department as it is the only English course required for any associate’s degree. English 101 is also the prerequisite for the second quarter class, English 102. Students who plan to continue on for a four-year degree are urged to take English 102. There are also approximately 10 sections of English Composition II (102), an elective course for students who are not going on to a four-year institution. Most faculty also
teach literature classes, although typically there are only ten literature classes offered each quarter and only one creative writing course. Therefore, all faculty teach composition regularly. The current faculty breakdown of the writing program is seventeen full time faculty, thirteen of whom are tenured and four are ‘annualized,’ meaning that their contracts are negotiated each year. Six full time faculty have PhDs and eleven have Masters or Master of Fine Art degrees. There are also fourteen adjuncts at SFCC: two of whom hold PhDs and twelve of whom have Masters and Masters of Fine Art degrees, and because of union protection, adjunct faculty receive benefits equivalent to full time faculty. Adjuncts are restricted to three classes at either of the Community Colleges of Spokane district but can teach at other nearby institutions. Spokane Falls CC also offers a tenure-track position where tenure is achieved in three years with tenure weighted toward teaching skills.

In 1990, Spokane Falls Community College became one of the first community colleges in Washington state to use portfolio assessments as their standard assessment, and in the last ten years SFCC has used norming sessions to bring instructors “into clear grade value alignment, or what they call ‘assessing the assessment.’” According to the in-house document entitled “Assessment Portfolio Draft,” “Like many two-year institutions, SFCC’s Composition program engages in a locally situated system of assessments that recognizes the experiences of instructors and also “incorporates concepts of portfolio assessment.” This assessment was originally designed as a mixed method validation using a three-prong assessment of communal portfolio assessment, student surveys and instructor interviews. This allowed the program to review practices from the personal perspectives of students and faculty in light of the results of the assessment sessions. However, the surveys and interviews are no longer used.

SFCC’s “Assessment Portfolio Draft,” also says:
Every department has a mother force—a procedure, an assessment, a program, or a leadership role that subtly guides the pedagogical development of new and established instructors, effectively creating them as teachers on the job. In our department the mother force is our English 101 portfolio assessment, a nearly twenty-year-old assessment that guides our assignments, our standards, our relationships with students, and our collegial bonding. So powerful is this assessment in the collective consciousness of the department that we generally do not question its effectiveness. The portfolio is who we are as a department.

Bi-quarterly norming sessions are held at both midterm and at end of each quarter in order to allow students to revise throughout the quarter, and revise again at the end of the quarter if only one essay in the portfolio fails. All thirty-one current faculty members are required to participate in these norming sessions.
Portfolio Assessment at Spokane Falls Community College

Portfolio assessment at Spokane Falls Community College is a two-step process that faculty conduct each quarter. Faculty assess the narrative essay only at midterm in order to prepare students for the final portfolio assessment. This midterm “portfolio” also acts a refresher for faculty, both as a way to norm in preparation for the final portfolio assessment, and to ensure faculty provide accurate feedback and support to students. Three days before the classes end each quarter, faculty assess the final portfolio, which includes the revised narrative essay, a research based essay, and a reflective cover letter. Faculty use traditional assignments - the narrative and research-based - assignments, and they use standardized criteria and learning outcomes, but create their own prompts to assignments. The essays required for the portfolio assessment are the narrative, a research based essay with sources and a reflective cover letter.

In order to understand the assessment procedures and processes at SFCC, I conducted observations and interviews with both the chair, Connie Wasem-Scott, and director of FYC, Barbara Simmons. I also collected a number of artifacts. Background information was taken from the CCS website, the SFCC website and the SFCC composition program website. More specifically, however, I often relied on the internal historical document, the “Assessing Portfolio Draft,” in order to contextualize the assessment practices I observed and the interviews I conducted. Other artifacts concern the implementation of portfolio assessment at SFCC, three of which are found in the SFCC website - the Portfolio Review document that provides benchmark examples of the various grades a student can achieve, and the English 101 sample assignments and rubrics.

Spokane Falls Community College Artifacts:
• “Assessing Portfolio Document,” including
o Instructor Interview Script

o Student Survey (Appendix C)

• The English 101 Essay Assignments 1 – 3, Instructor Samples (Appendices D – I)
• The English 101 Evaluations for Final Persuasion Essay, Instructor Samples (Appendices K, L)
• The English 101 Faculty Norming Criteria (Appendix M)
  o Faculty Rating Sheet for Midterm and Final Portfolio
  o Garrison Description of Writing Quality
• “The English 102 Quilt” (Appendix O)

The 2010, 4th edition of the Portfolio Review is available on the Spokane Falls Community College website. The 2014 revised 5th edition of Portfolio Preview is more difficult to find, although a Google search by the same name yields a PDF filler site that allows a number of SFCC documents to be edited. Each edition provides benchmark samples of the various levels of essay quality. The 4th edition provides four benchmark samples for four criteria, and the fifth edition reduces criteria to align it with the scoring guide used during the assessments.

Benchmark samples are used in assessment to align, or norm, assessors, also known as graders, scorers, or raters. Benchmark samples typically reflect obvious examples of the score the sample earns. The 5th edition of the Portfolio Preview offers four benchmark samples that reflect “Exemplary,” and “Good,” which are both passing scores. There is one benchmark sample for the “Problematic” score, which is not passing.

Each sample includes a cover sheet with the Student Identification Number, and the Instructor Prefix Number. The cover letter introduces assessors to the assignments and asks
students to reflect on what was most successful about the paper, and to discuss their writing processes. The 4th edition evidences a number of discrepancies within the various value ratings which were addressed in the 5th edition. Both are offered in the appendices.

Spokane Falls offers a variety of evaluation forms that are used by either faculty, students, or both. In addition to benchmark samples, the Portfolio Preview offers a Description of Writing Quality, also called the Garrison Description of Writing Quality in the Portfolio Details, that details the Pass, Low Pass, and Not Passing ratings, as well as the criteria for each. The Description of Writing Quality, or Garrison Description of Writing Quality, which is a more detailed description of writing quality found at the end of the Portfolio Preview, also offers a slightly different rating for pass/fail, with different criteria for the mid-term portfolio and the final portfolio. For example, the score C or higher is a Pass that applies to both the midterm and final portfolio assessment. The C- score, however, is a low pass for the midterm and a no pass for the final, and the D or lower score is a not passing for both the midterm and the final.

Other information available to students include the “Final Collection Guidelines: 101,” which details how portfolios are expected to be assembled. The English Composition 101 Drafts and Portfolio Grading document provides an overview of the course requirements for the portfolio. This document informs students that they will be working in ‘revision groups,’ and that they will create and work with three different folders: the ‘working draft folder,’ the mid-term presentation folder, and the ‘final portfolio presentation folder.’ The document also discusses the writing process for major essays and revision, drafts and peer review, and portfolio grading. Furthermore, each essay has an accompanying evaluation form specific to that essay. Finally, the Faculty Rating Sheets used by faculty in the portfolio assessments are also available to students.
via the Portfolio Preview, but whether this is widely available or only found through the Google search drive on the SFCC website is unclear.
Spokane Falls Community College Faculty Evaluation Criteria

Students at SFCC have ample access to evaluation criteria. Assignments are accompanied by evaluation sheets, and portfolio instructions include evaluation criteria for both the midterm and final portfolio assessments. Faculty used the following evaluation criteria during the midterm and final portfolio norming. This same criteria for the portfolio assessment is posted on the Spokane Falls Community College website, and this is the criteria used when I observed the assessment process in June of 2015. They include:

1. Unclear focus/main point/thesis
2. Insufficient development of ideas or experience
3. Wording and sentence structure problems
4. Punctuation: too many mistakes
5. Spelling, proofreading: too many mistakes
6. Treatment of topic inappropriate for college audience
7. Inadequate response to the assignment

The language is negative for all seven scoring criteria. Three of the criteria focus on conventions of spelling, sentence structure problems, and punctuation. Three address focus, development, and audience. One, the inadequate response to the assignment, is unclear.

Below, Essays 1 - 3 work like stacked assignments in that the purposes lead one into the next with each essay exemplifying a marker on a learning curve. There are no outcomes on some assignments but ‘purpose’ seems to be a common component of assignments. The ‘purpose’ component is also process oriented in the sample assignments I collected. Here are samples from one instructor:

*Essay 1 - Purpose:*
• To re-acquaint you with the formal qualities of an essay.
• To give you practice at summary writing.
• To develop your own thoughts in response to what you learn.
• To get you to think about an issue related to human rights.

Essay II - Purpose:

• To get you to think about issues related to globalization.
• To give you the opportunity to practice summarizing and paraphrasing source material.
• Introduces paraphrasing
• To develop your own thoughts in response to what you read. Repeats

Essay III - Purpose:

• To learn more about a topic related to globalization or human rights.
• To refine your abilities of paraphrasing and summarizing source material.
• To learn how to integrate source material into a discussion lead by you in your paper.
• To give you further experience distinguishing your ideas from those of others in your writing.
• To refine your use of in-text citations and MLA formatting conventions and avoid plagiarism.

The SFCC instructor’s assignment above evidences the recursiveness of the writing process by repeating the language of purpose in each essay’s prompt, with each essay introducing a more difficult aspect of writing. To exemplify the similarities and differences in assignments, and the similar learning outcomes or purposes, the purposes of another instructor’s essays are below.

Whereas the first instructor’s terminology and emphasis on summary, paraphrasing, developing ideas and thinking are repeated, with strong expectations that the students will apply and develop what was learned in the early essay. The next instructor’s terminology seems more research based in the first essay, but in second essay, the purpose is process driven and students seem expected to demonstrate that. Again, the emphasis on process is evident in this instructor’s assignment purposes:

Essay I - Purpose:

In writing this paper, you will be working on several course outcomes, among them:
• **Brainstorm** varied ideas to support a claim of manageable scope for a given assignment.
• **Annotate** a text in order to effectively analyze and evaluate the ideas in that text.
• Communicate with an academic **audience** to illustrate, analyze, or persuade.
• **Organize** ideas in a purposeful and coherent manner.

**Essay II - Purpose:**

In writing this paper, you will be working on several course outcomes, among them:

• **Research, analyze, use, and document** information and ideas to develop a position.
• **Analyze, select, and record** relevant, valid details in light of particular rhetorical purposes to support claims.
• **Respond** thoughtfully, precisely, and ethically to texts.
• **Demonstrate writing that is a systematic process** requiring thoughtful reconsideration and revision.

**Essay III - Purpose:**

In writing this paper, you will be working on several course outcomes, among them:

• **Improve prose** through instructor, self, and peer feedback.
• Generate clear, **grammatically correct prose**.
• Apply conventions of a particular **documentation style**.
• **Independently create original work** meeting assignment requirements.

The second SFCC instructor’s language also focuses on process in the language by requiring pre-writing processes in the first essay, asking for writing processes in the second essay and requiring revision processes in the third essay.
Norming Observations:

My formal observation at Spokane Falls Community College occurred in June of 2015, three days before the end of the spring quarter, when Composition instructors gathered to norm their grading of student portfolios. At the norming session, all composition instructors sat in a horseshoe configuration that allowed everyone to see and interact with one another. There were twenty-seven people present. I later heard four were missing for different reasons. There were approximately 1,400 essays to score, which meant about six essays per hour per instructor for about seven hours, although instructors stopped to eat, some stepped outside to smoke a cigarette. The essays had already been scored by the instructor of record as part of a portfolio assessment. I browsed through the stacks of essays, and I scored a few - which provided me with the opportunity to see what types of assignments (descriptive/narrative, research, impromptu essay), and sometimes how instructors shaped the assignments. Assignment samples suggest a progression of writing skills from basic to competent; therefore, portfolio assessment would allow instructors to grade on process as well as product. However, the essays to be scored need to pass in order for the student to pass the class, which is why this 101 assessment is conducted in the last week of the semester, three days before the final class days. The last three days of the semester provide a window of opportunity for a student to revise a failing essay and still pass the course.

At the norming session, each faculty member brought their class’ portfolios, each in a manila folder and all portfolios were stacked along one wall. There were three types of essays – a descriptive or narrative essay, a researched essay, and a reflective cover letter. Each essay had a Faculty Rating Sheet stapled to each essay as well as a copy of the assignment. The rating sheet also had space for a Pass/Low Pass/No Pass score, an identifying number for student, and an
identifying number for the instructor. By leafing through the portfolios, I noted that one essay in
the portfolios had a score already assigned from the midterm portfolio assessment. Some had
Pass scores and others had No Pass scores.

Before beginning, the director of first-year composition went over the learning outcomes
that everyone was to use for scoring. There was little discussion concerning these learning
outcomes. Instructors appeared familiar with the purposes as they had been established years
before and they had participated in numerous norming sessions. There were signs of boredom
during this opening. People checked their phones, looked out windows, doodled on note pads.
After the introduction during which I was formally introduced to the group, instructors walked to
the stacks of essays and chose one or two at a time.

Instructors were not allowed to score their own students, and if a score did not match the
original score, the student paper was sent to another stack for a third score. However, while
instructors did not score essays written by their own students, they did engage in quiet
discussions – and sometimes mildly tense conversations concerning the qualities evidenced by
particular aspects of essays. Because of these quiet discussions, which were clearly a part of a
typical norming since no one objected to the discussion, the norming was often loosely
collaborative. Most of these low level conversations reflected attempts at clarifications.
However, other conversations focused on assignments’ prompts, not assessments, as faculty
discussed different prompts, and their students’ reception to these prompts. These low level
tensions mirrored discussions I had observed in my work with ETS and with graduate students at
the University of Texas at El Paso, and were, I believe, a reflection of the type of professionalism
that can be brought to the fore when faculty gather. In most conversations, faculty had to explain
why an assignment earned the score and the explanations went beyond the actual essay - faculty
had to explain in the context of the prompt - if a prompt called for environmental topics and the essay seemed loosely or unrelated to the topic, there were conversations that questioned how to assess the disconnection between prompt and response, or concerning how to revise the prompt.

However, there were a few conversations where the tension crackled. Without eavesdropping, I was still able to hear and see that some of these discussions concerned who was and was not right in her or his assessment, and other issues that surrounded qualitative concerns, such as whether the writing was graceful, or interesting, the quality of the research and whether the mechanical errors were serious enough to warrant a No Pass. The “Assessing Portfolio Draft” suggested this had been the case for some time:

After adopting the portfolio system, SFCC interviewed each teacher to see what s/he thought about the portfolio process for the article attached, and found a lot of discomfort during norming. Some instructors felt that there were some “posers” trying to impress others by sounding like more difficult readers than they really were in the general reading. Some were afraid to criticize others while others were afraid of criticism. People were reluctant to volunteer one of their students for the norming session because we might be harder on that paper than on the others. [Other people] also, however, expressed enjoying the camaraderie of the day.

I observed both.

**Texas Tech University Overview:**

The second institution chosen for analysis is Texas Tech University (TTU) because it engages in a highly technical and standardized writing program and system of assessment. Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas, is a land grant university and the flagship institution of the Texas Tech University System established February 10, 1923.
Enrollment at TTU is the sixth largest enrollment in a Texas university as of the Fall 2014 semester, with an enrollment of approximately 36,000 students, with more than 20,000 (64%) identifying as white. The gender difference is approximately 45% male and 55% female. Texas Tech’s in-state student body comprises 84% of all enrolled students. Tuition is $10,622 for in-state students and $22,862 for out of state tuition. The university offers degrees in more than 150 courses of study through 13 colleges and hosts 60 research centers and institutes. Texas Tech University has awarded over 200,000 degrees since 1927, including over 40,000 graduate and professional degrees. The Carnegie Foundation classifies Texas Tech as having the "highest research activity," with research projects in such fields as epidemiology, pulsed power, grid computing nanophotonics, wind energy and atmospheric sciences. Texas Tech has also been noted for possessing a public art collection among the ten best in the United States.

Texas Tech University is accredited by the Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges and offers 150 bachelors, 104 masters, and 59 doctoral degree programs. Texas Tech also offers programs that are fully online, hybrid/blended, and located at regional sites. The university offers bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees, as well as a graduate certification preparation program, at the regional sites of El Paso, Fredericksburg, Highland Lakes, Junction, and Waco.
Texas Tech First-Year Composition

A great deal of information in this section of the chapter is found on Texas Tech’s various web pages. Texas Tech’s First-Year composition program in Lubbock, Texas, serves approximately 5,000 students each year. While specific numbers for faculty in composition are unavailable, the English department boasts 50 faculty members, 150 graduate assistants either in masters or PhD programs, most of whom are likely to be instructors in composition. And Kemp estimated the teacher to student ratio to be 35-1 in composition with approximately 80 sections per semester (2005). Also, graduate assistants who teach in composition bring the various knowledges of their individual areas of study like Creative Writing, Literature, English Education and Rhetoric. Assistantships offer graduate students extra income and experiences in teaching, and they offer English departments a continuing group of instructors. At Texas Tech, graduate assistants are allowed to begin their assistantships slowly. Rickley (2006) says that “MA students who have never taught serve as ‘apprentices’ their first semester,” work with a mentor instructor and take a practicum of teaching methods (p. 183). This is because graduate students cannot teach before completing 18 hours of graduate coursework in a related field. This requirement is standard to universities that are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges Commission on Colleges. As they complete their required 18 hours, they “practice grading, teaching, and curriculum development” and read and discuss pedagogical articles. (p. 183). The TTU website tells us that graduate assistants also learn to “offer commentary and evaluation instead of immediately preparing lessons and managing classrooms,” and new instructors are placed into groups of 4-6 assistants so they can share the instruction of 6-8 classes.
Students who take one or both first-year composition courses (ENGL 1301 and 1302) at Texas Tech receive both face-to-face and online writing instruction, or they can take online classes. There are no traditional face-to-face classes in Texas Tech’s composition program. This hybrid, or blended, course sequence enables first-year students to reap the benefits of both types of instruction while offering students the most opportunities to practice and improve their writing skills. Students are in class, face to face, for ½ of the three-hour class week “to learn and discuss aspects of rhetorical theory, academic writing, and research skills and strategies,” and they meet online for ½ of the three-hour class week. Students apply their classroom knowledge by submitting a writing assignment for the online portion of each week. Texas Tech’s website says that:

the hybrid delivery of the course also enables a more efficient allocation of instructional responsibilities. Some instructors work primarily with students in the classroom and one-on-one during office hours while others focus their efforts on responding to and evaluating student writing. Small groups of 4 to 6 instructors work with 6 to 8 sections of 1301 or 1302 students.

The website also boasts the standardization of all assignments for both courses and all assignments (except in-class assignments) are turned into a “evaluation in a comprehensive, locally-designed, database-driven course management system” known as Raider Writer, where assignments are distributed among faculty known as “document instructors” who comment on drafts and score final assignments. The classroom instructor evaluates brief in-class assignments, while two scoring instructors evaluate major assignments with their two grades averaged. The program has three primary goals—

· creating quality instruction for first-year college students,
providing a training ground for graduate students as teachers of writing, and
developing an ongoing research environment for the teaching of writing.

Texas Tech Research Findings

Texas Tech’s original permission for me to visit did not lead to further opportunities to observe or examine any aspect of Texas Tech’s assessment practices. However, in an initial conversation at the CCCC conference in Tampa, Florida (2015), Dr. Lang did offer some information. For example, grading instructors do not meet at the same time so my observing their preparation to evaluate student work presented problems that were unexpected. Furthermore, the lack of response to requests for information after the meeting at CCCC were also puzzling, but email interviews with Fred Kemp, the previous director of composition revealed that:

The reason you didn’t get any response from TTU now is because the program has been taken away from the composition and rhetoric faculty and given to another person, and given semi-autonomous status from the English department. There are complex reasons for this dealing with tacky politics and, from my skeptical perspective, quid-pro-quo agreement to let technical communication grow and composition stagnate. The composition program is still, as far as I can tell, doing some version of group anonymous grading, but with some changes that I think compromise some, but not all, of its principal advantages.

Rickley’s article continues the story of TTU’s FYW program. Fred Kemp created TTOPIC, (Texas Tech Online Print-Integrated Curriculum), which offered functions similar to computer classroom platforms like Blackboard (p. 184), and evolved into the Raider Writer of today. Other concerns surrounded trained, qualified and contingent faculty, as well as the ability to offer a quick response to students’ drafts. To address these concerns, the FYC program moved
toward hybrid classes and the support of additional document scorers who supported the classroom instructor. Furthermore, to “make sure the students felt they were getting a fair deal” (p. 186) assignments were read twice. The first reader commented and scored the assignment while the second reader left a score only (p. 186). Interestingly, the second scorer is privy to the comments of the first reader, but not the score of the first reading. The two scores are also averaged by Raider Writer.

Also, according to Lang, document instructors can be employed as document instructors without being on campus or having a connection to the composition program or TTU. Instructors in the face-to-face portion of the hybrid classes are comprised of “tenure-line” faculty, lecturers and MA and PhD students. This same instructor make-up comprises the grading instructors. The student teachers are “paired with senior instructors,” which creates a training system for future teachers and provides enhanced support for first-year students. These instructors respond to randomly assigned student work with both formative and summative comments in order to more fully support students. Assignments are standardized and classroom and grading instructors alike are trained to understand the learning outcomes evidenced in assignments and both teach and respond accordingly. The distribution of grading also includes a second grader to ensure the accuracy of the grades.

*Texas Tech University Artifacts:*

- English 1301 “Considerations for Completing a Rhetorical Analysis”
- Mr. Blake Hatley’s English 1301 Blog
  - [https://bhatley1301.wordpress.com/](https://bhatley1301.wordpress.com/)
- An English 1301 Flip Card
  - [http://1301cc.blogspot.com/?view=flipcard](http://1301cc.blogspot.com/?view=flipcard)
These artifacts were chosen as examples of the common syllabus and assignments that instructors use to teach at Texas Tech. Since the program is completely standardized, from syllabi to assignments to how the assignments are assessed, examples found online should be fair and clear representatives of the assessment processes and learning outcomes valued by TTU. The only area where differences are to be found or allowed are classroom assignments that classroom instructors develop and grade. These examples of assignments and the information from Fred Kemp allow for a comparative analysis of the two assessment practices - Spokane Falls and Texas Tech - assessment practices that seem very disparate on the surface. Further information concerning Texas Tech’s first-year writing, however, was gleaned from publications by Dr. Lang, the director of TTU’s first-year program, such as “Conversations at a Critical Moment: Hybrid Courses and the Future of Writing Programs” (2010), Catherine Gouge’s “Conversation at a Crucial Moment: Hybrid Courses and the Future of Writing Programs” (2009), Fred Kemp’s “Computers, Innovation, and Resistance in First-Year Composition Programs” (2005) and “The User-Friendly Fallacy” (1987), along with discussions with Fred Kemp, as well as Dr. Becky Rickley’s (2006) “Distributed Teaching, Distributed Learning: Integrating
Technology and Criteria-Driven Assessment into the Delivery of First-Year Composition,” which proved instrumental to this research and upon which I have relied heavily. Rickley is a former assistant director of the composition program. Kemp had directed the program for ten years and was instrumental in creating the electronic program upon which the First-Year Writing program relies. Lang has been director for the past ten years. Further information was gathered by perusing Texas Tech’s faculty class websites, and an interview with a former graduate assistant.
Texas Tech Standardized Assessment Process

Where Spokane Falls’ “mother force” is the portfolio assessment, the electronic distributed evaluation/assessment system at TTU can be considered their program’s driving force. This force began when Texas Tech’s composition program redesigned it assessments by “electronic distributed evaluation/assessment” in 2002 in an effort to “merge postmodern principles of peer interaction and contextualist writing in the usually inhibitive environment of first-year composition” (Kemp, 2005, p. 106), and not because of administrative issues as had been rumored.

According Dr. Kemp, the program began in 2002 in response to three main problems that he identified as program director, problems that centered around generic problems with the field of rhetoric and composition, not just Texas Tech. The first problem Dr. Kemp identified was in a “read and discuss” pedagogy, “the sort of thing that our graduate students, who taught these courses grudgingly, had experienced in their literature classes.” For Kemp, this “pedagogy assumes that writing is a “knowledge” like literature. He says, “I have long claimed it is a skill and a set of habits, like playing sports or music” that must be practiced (Kemp, Email Interview).

The second problem Kemp identified stemmed from the fact that the instructors at TTU “were primarily literature students or, worse, creative writers,” and literature and creative writing majors “see writing as a kind of spiritual exposition, a heartfelt revelation of one’s inner something or other,” in part because, “as with almost all campuses at the time, the only thing lower on the totem pole in English departments than composition and rhetoric was tech comm.” For Kemp, “having literature and creative writing majors teach composition was like fielding a baseball team with tennis players.”
The last problem Kemp identified was that the instructors had a myriad of definitions as to what good writing was. He notes that “one person loved voice, another grammar and usage, another sincerity, another content, and a bunch more mishmash never really considered by the teachers at all since they were mostly products of literary study,” and as the program director, student complaints went to him, offering him a view into what teachers were doing – regularly.

Therefore, Kemp took the entire program hybrid (2002) and divided the instructors into Classroom Instructors and Document Instructors. Classroom Instructors handled the classrooms and Document Instructors graded online. All student graded writing went online in software called TOPIC (Texas Tech Online Pedagogy Interactive Composition). Students turned in their drafts to TOPIC and the “document instructors” grade the drafts online. Every draft receives at least 2 anonymous readers, and a 3rd if the first two didn’t agree. Grading was taken out of the hands of the classroom instructors. Kemp says it was anonymous and fair, because the graders had to ALL follow the same criteria. And that’s the point. TTOPIC, or ICON, required everybody to follow the same assessment criteria. When a grader went rogue and did the creative writer spooky stuff, the students themselves called the grader to task. (Email Interview 13 June 2016).

According to a former MA student at TTU, the spooky stuff had pretty much disappeared since MA and PhD students were pursuing Tech Comm (for the MA) or Tech Comm and Rhetoric (for the PhD) (Email interview 27, October 2016).
The structure of the First-Year program at TTU

1) **Hybrid**: Students meet one day a week for 80 minutes in a ‘face-to-face’ classroom setting, and submit “at least one substantial assignment each week” instead of meeting in the classroom for the rest of the 3-hour per week course. “These class meeting days are essential for students, and attendance is required and expected at all class meetings.”

2) **Centered in the ICON program**: Syllabi, attendance and assignments are uploaded to and available at for students and are, in turn, uploaded to ICON, or Raider Writer.

3) **Standardized syllabi and assignments**

4) **“Classroom instructors” versus “document instructors,”** provide both formative and summative assessments. For example, “courses meet once weekly for 80 minutes to provide students with more time to work on their writing. Instructors keep official grade and attendance information in Raider Writer, and students have access to this information 24/7 (TTU website get info).

5) When two grades do not match, the assignment is sent for a third and final score.

**Texas Tech Assignments and Objectives**

The English 1301 course at Texas Tech has a series of nine short assignments that are scaffolded, or build upon one another, and culminate in a Rhetorical Analysis assignment. Each assignment has readings that support the student as she/he works on the assignment, a learning objective for the assignment, a statement of purpose for the assignment, and instructions for writing it: Below I offer brief examples of these assignments, gathered from Carly Finseth’s 2011 1301 Class website:

- **Brief Assignment #1: Grammar Diagnostic and a Reflective essay.** Each brief assignment thereafter consists of some aspect of writing and is due weekly.
- **Brief Assignment #2: Summary and Paraphrase**
Objective: To demonstrate your ability to summarize and paraphrase portions of a text.

Part 1: Article Summary Assignment
To complete your article summary, choose from a list of articles provided.

Part 2: Paraphrase Assignment
After you've completed your summary, you will paraphrase a brief but complex passage from the same text (see the list of texts, above).

· Brief Assignment #3: Analysis of a Rhetorical Analysis
Purpose: To demonstrate your ability to understand what a rhetorical analysis is and to analyze its structure.
You should cite examples from the article to illustrate your points. Your essay should be in MLA format. You must also include the author and title of the article in your introduction.

· Brief Assignment #4: Developing Thesis Statements
Objective: To develop new strategies for writing a thesis statement.

· Brief Assignment #5: Integrating and Evaluating Quotations
Objective: To identify and evaluate quotations for use in your rhetorical analysis essay. Your analysis, not counting the quotations, should be 500-650 words.
NOTE: You may find that in identifying and evaluating your quotations, you modify and improve your original thesis statement.

· Pre-planning and Drafting - This is a reading assignment only.

· Draft 1.1 of the Rhetorical Analysis
Objective: To demonstrate your ability to rhetorically analyze texts.
The draft should be at least 1200 words.

· Peer Critique
Objective: To demonstrate your ability to write a critique based on a primary source (a peer’s essay).
Each critique will be 400-500 words in length.

· Brief Assignment #6: Global Revision assignment
Objective: To develop the ability to determine what revisions should be made to an early draft of a document.
The drafts are available here:
https://raiderwriter.engl.ttu.edu/SupplementalFiles/BA6DraftsForSpring.pdf

· Brief Assignment #7: Revision of Introduction
Objective: To develop new strategies for writing effective introductions for academic papers and to expand your understanding of what makes an effective introduction.
The total length of the analysis should be 350-500 words, NOT including the original and revised versions of your introduction.

· Brief Assignment #8: Revision of Conclusion

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Objective: To develop new strategies for writing effective conclusions for academic papers and to expand your understanding of what makes an effective conclusion. The total length of the analysis should be 350-500 words, NOT including the original and revised conclusions.

- Brief Assignment #9: Sentence Level Revision
  Objective: To demonstrate your ability to revise paragraphs at the sentence level. The total length of the analysis should be 350-500 words, NOT including the original and revised body paragraphs.

- NaNoWriMo Challenge (Optional Extra Credit Assignment) graded by classroom instructor
  This (optional) assignment celebrates November as National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo). Participating students will have the opportunity to write creatively while also making up a few extra credit points to be used toward their participation grade. To complete the assignment, students must write at least 5,000 words throughout the month of November. Writing can be in one of the following formats:
  - Fiction
  - Creative Non-Fiction, such as memoirs
  - Non-Fiction, such as a report or essay on a topic of interest to you
  - Poetry
  - Short Story Collection
  If you successfully complete the challenge, you will receive up to 3 points for every 1,000 words you complete (up to a maximum of 15 points), which will be added to your overall participation grade.

- Draft 1.2 Rhetorical Analysis
  Objective: To complete a final, polished draft of your analysis paper. Your revised draft should be 1200-1500 words.

- Free Write “Storytelling” Assignment graded by classroom instructor
  Although free writes are meant “for your eyes only,” they can be fantastic tools for brainstorming and journaling. This assignment asks you to reflect on the free writes you’ve done in class so far and then come up with one direction to flesh into more cohesive work(s).

- Writing Review
  Purpose: This assignment gives you a way to explore how free writing in your everyday life can help you with anything from school project brainstorming to personal reflection, to even storytelling.

  Full assignments are available in Appendix S.

Texas Tech Evaluation - (Finseth, 2011):

Considerations for Completing a Rhetorical Analysis
Context: What is the context of the piece? When was it written? What was taking place at that time, with regard to the culture and society of the author? In other words, why did the author write about the topic, and at that particular moment in time?

Audience: What kind of audience was it written for? Do you think that you’re a part of the intended audience? Why or why not?

Purpose: What is its intended purpose? What purpose or agenda do you think that the writer had when creating this piece?

Topic: What is the main thesis? What key terms or ideas do you see? What did you know about the subject matter before reading it? What personal biases, opinions, or agendas may you have brought to the table about the topic?

Organization: How did the author organize his/her ideas? Why do you think he/she has chosen to organize it in that way?

Title: What does the title indicate? After reading the article, does it meet any expectations you may have had from reading the title?

Genre and Medium: What do you know about the selected medium (online, in print, etc.) and the genre of the piece?

Design and Presentation: How is the text presented? Does it include visuals? Why or why not? What about the imagery and/or font choices? Are the choices appropriate for the genre?

Rhetorical Strategies: Has the author used any specific rhetorical strategies (e.g., definition, compare/contrast, example or illustration, classification, analogy, etc.) to make his or her point? For all of the above, ask: What clues in the piece lead you to those answers? Were they successful?

Chapter IV has offered the story of writing assessment practices at two seemingly different institutions. The assessment criteria at SFCC are uniform in that they are shared among all faculty and students while the assignments are unique to instructors - although the samples gathered show differences in wording more than differences in criteria. Since different faculty will score these essays, similarities are expected. TTU, on the other hand, has both assignments and assessments embedded in the Raider Writer system and even faculty websites that provide
assignments to students do not offer the scoring criteria. It seems possible that classroom faculty
do not have easy access to this criteria (that the criteria are discrete parts of the programming that
is Raider Writer, although Rickley’s article suggested that graduate students served as both
classroom and document instructors.) The assignments at TTU focus on particular writing skills
and culminate in one assignment. Chapter V will now analyze these practices using the concepts
of the hermeneutic sphere in order to understand the value these practices offer to students,
faculty and universities, both locally and nationally.
Chapter V In the Sphere

The purpose of this dissertation is to offer a framework that can help reinterpret writing assessment and support ongoing efforts of writing assessment and composition to forge new assessment practices. In order to consider composition in new ways, current practices need to be reflexively reinterpreted for what they do, why they do it and how they do it. Thus, exploring how the current story was written is a step into the sphere that asks members of the composition community to recognize the evolution of beliefs and values affecting basic perspectives. Although these historical issues may seem loosely connected to writing assessment’s current story, their influences are embedded in the fabric of society and, because they seem unchangeable, have been unchangeable. It is also important to note the evolution of thought that is the background setting of the story of composition and assessment because it is this evolution that brought assessment and composition into being. Also this evolution serves as an example that the values that drive current practices can change - have in fact changed from an educational emphasis on the classics to one steeped in science - albeit ever so slowly - based on societal needs and values.

The values and concerns over assessment methods explored here have also been well documented by writing assessment scholars, various composition community members, and by testing agencies, but within the traditional framework of psychometrics as the overriding guide. And this becomes the crux of this research - to explore the possibilities of a different framework, and the ways in which a different framework may support this reinterpretation of composition and assessment. Using the two institutions, Spokane Falls Community College and Texas Tech University as examples of the reflexive reinterpretation of practices offers examples of what the simplicity of a sphere can offer. The limitations encountered in methodology may both reduce
the quantifiable conclusions of this research but they may also serve to exemplify the qualitative aspects of assessment as well.

Together, macro and micro perspectives offer more opportunity to re-envision and reinterpret writing assessment. To this aim, Chapter V explores comparisons between SFCC and TTU as far as how assignments align with assessments, how each institution uses assessment practices, and what the impact is on faculty. Findings are not conclusive. They should not be conclusive. Instead, the findings serve as examples only. The hermeneutics of the sphere asks that both macro and micro issues be investigated to discover the influences of one upon the other. For example, survey responses suggest that the micro-view of assessment is better known to faculty than macro-view but that those who understand the macro-view as far as programmatic mission statements also understand the purposes behind their practices. Furthermore, this information may not be disseminated to graduate students - the group most in need of training and understanding of what they do and how they can best do it.

Using Spokane Falls Community College and Texas Tech University as examples, Chapter V situates their processes and procedures within the hermeneutic sphere in order to offer examples of how the aspects of a sphere may provide programs and faculty at both institutions with a stronger understanding of the power and purposes of these institutions, which may then allow scholars and faculty to tease out the opportunities that may lurk unexamined behind their particular writing assessment stories. More specifically, an open-minded and reflexive examination of the practices of each institution can reveal both positive and negative aspects of each and perhaps spark avenues for improvements. In order to do this, I offer examples from SFCC and TTU assessment practices. I also point to some areas that are suggested by the survey responses mentioned in Chapter III. There were not enough responses to be statistically
significant; however, there are interesting commonalities that are relevant to the assessment practices examined in this study.

**ASSessment Practices**

At SFCC, *assessment practice* means instructors meeting twice per quarter, examining hard copy portfolios, and engaging in discussions to come to consensus when necessary. The portfolio practice has been in place for over twenty years, so most faculty who participate today see it as a part of the job, not something that was added to their workload. Furthermore, the institutional history of SFCC showcases Washington State’s 1991 initiatives in assessment as an impetus that became further developed into “assessing the assessment” in 2009 where SFCC’s composition program institutions went beyond “the readily accessible and easily assessable” (Assessing Portfolio Draft). For much of that time, their portfolio practice underwent little change, but more recently the assessment has engendered discussions that revealed discrepancies in the portfolio assessment in that the assessment was designed to assess process but actually assesses product because the portfolio only includes three finished drafts. And as an indication of what assessment practices can engender, the faculty have begun an 87 page conversation called the 102 Quilt (Appendix #) designed to design assignments and assessments for the second quarter assessment. So, while SFCC may be considered traditional in assignments and assessment practice, what their assessment practices may have created was the potential for reflexive discussion and investigation into pedagogy and practice, assignment and assessment.

At Texas Tech, *assessment practice* means Raider Writer, the second generation program that replaced ICON, a program made possible in 2002 by “a confluence of factors, a perfect storm for change.” Kemp’s reputation, a TTU award for teaching, and a departmental grant of $120,000 from Apple “in order to develop an Apple version of Daedalus” all “fell together in a
way they probably would never again” (Kemp, email). Students use Raider Writer to upload assignments after which Raider Writer then distributes those assignments to document instructors, the first of whom comments on the drafts, while the second one grades them. An algorithm in Raider Writer then averages the grades if they are within ten points of one another before sending the assignment back to the student. If there is more than a ten-point discrepancy, Raider Writer sends the assignment to a third scorer. Everyone can see the first scorer’s comments and these first comments can be interpreted as a guide for following scorers. Presumably, half of the work of teaching is done by classroom instructors who neither create or score assignments, and the other half is done by document instructors who only score and comment on assignments. The assessment system can potentially offer a composition program enormous opportunity to rewrite and revise itself and also earn the goodwill of administration by freeing room space and streamlining assessment, but there appears to be enough pushback from graduate students to have the heart of the system, Raider Writer, removed from the composition program and run by an outsider.

ALIGNMENT BETWEEN ASSIGNMENT AND ASSESSMENT

The purpose of assessment is to improve writing; therefore, the purpose of a composition program’s investments in assessment is to disseminate scholarship and hone teaching skills in order to help students write well. They are not discrete concepts. They are mutually influential and if we develop, refine, or teach an assignment without assessment we shortchange both ourselves and our students. However, if we recreate assessments without making changes to assignments and teaching, we risk committing the same error.

At Spokane Falls Community College, assignments and assessments are both traditional and suggest traditional views of composition. There is little to no mention of rhetorical terms in
assignments, although there are rhetorical terms in some of the criteria for assessment. There are few learning outcomes, although faculty spoke of the WPA outcomes as a guide. From one perspective, SFCC represents one end of a dichotomy because this institution still uses many aspects from traditional composition classes where nothing has changed for decades. Also, at SFCC assignment options used individually by faculty include informative or expository essays, response essays, persuasive essays, rhetorical analyses, and narrative essays. The portfolio assessment consists of a narrative essay, a research or persuasive essay, and a reflective cover letter, however. Since narrative is one of the least defined form of writing, it is also the easiest to grade.

Furthermore, the portfolio assessment is designed to rate processes and progress, but not product. The Portfolio assessment is more progressive than faculty grading in their offices; in fact, it offers a strong avenue for collaboration and communication; however, other than sharing assignment prompts and creating an atmosphere of communication, the assessment practice doesn’t further assessment scholarship or assignment development. And although the rhetorical analysis is one of the most current of assignments in many writing programs, it is not a requirement of the portfolio assessment. So, the assignments do not line up exactly with the assessment practice, but this does not seem to concern faculty, nor does it challenge them to investigate what students need beyond college and how faculty can address those needs. This is surprising considering the educational level of faculty, almost half of whom hold PhDs in either Rhetoric and Composition or Literature because this group has the education and experience of scholarship to investigate the various aspects of composition in a modern world. The sphere is designed to address this. The atmosphere of open discussion evidenced in the assessment practice sets a stage for the communication required of a hermeneutic sphere, but there is little
investigation into the actual assignments, audiences that students are being taught to write for, or even why, with the research trained tenured faculty at SFCC, they continue teaching assignments shown to offer students little training for writing outside the composition course. Assessment offers more than a grade; it offers opportunities for growth for students and faculty. But assignments do not reflect clear recognition of rhetorical concepts, assignment development or the value of assessment practices outside of perception, and the faculty rating sheet used when I observed was insufficient for the one somewhat rigorous assignment of the research paper.

At TTU, however, neither assignments nor assessments are traditional, but neither do they line up with one another. At TTU, the writing intensive class consists of breaking down one assignment, a rhetorical analysis, into its disparate parts until each week students write small assignments on their hybrid day and these assignments are graded by document instructors through Raider Writer. This reflects Fred Kemp’s philosophy that writing improves through writing; however, the one assignment - the rhetorical analysis - has been broken into small parts to the point that students are not engaged in extensive writing. Instead, the course is diluted from the traditional four essay class with the modes that scholars argue is outdated, to a non-traditional course, with less rigorous writing agendas at TTU.

But although the assessment program is designed to handle enormous amounts of data but is, instead, working with paragraph sized assignments, so while the concept of Raider Writer is highly innovative with much to offer, the writing has been diluted to the point of seeming like a basic writing course instead of a first-semester composition course. On the other hand, what is being graded is a process of writing even though the writing is in discrete sections. Assignments still add up to one product, so while document instructors are grading assignments, they are also grading process in much the same way that faculty at SFCC are grading portfolio. A major
difference between the two institutions, then, is that faculty do not collaborate. A major similarity is that neither school takes advantage of their assessment practices to create an opportunity and focus for faculty to develop assignments, pedagogies and assessments as a composition community.

**TRANSPARENCY:**

An interesting dichotomy between SFCC and TTU is one of transparency. Transparency is a vital component of a hermeneutic *sphere*. At Spokane Falls Community College scoring criteria in different forms inundates students. Students are made aware of various expectations the program and faculty have for their essays - expectations that complement, but do not mirror each other. Faculty scoring guides for both the midterm and final portfolio assessments, evaluation forms for essays, and the Portfolio Preview with benchmarks are all available to students from faculty and can be found on the SFCC website, and while the assessments themselves are closed meetings, the process itself is transparent. At TTU, there is no transparency to speak of, and none that I was able to find outside of the program itself. One program syllabus was available online for the second semester course, but assignments and other information concerning assignments and assessments had to be gleaned from various personal websites developed by faculty. However, without transparency, there is no way a *sphere* can affect perceptions or afford faculty the necessary macro views of the work they do, or even help situate the ways they assess their students, their assignments, their teaching or their program. Issues of transparency appeared to lurk in survey responses as well, and like SFCC and TTU, transparency seemed somewhat connected to faculty knowledge and faculty satisfaction. For example, one respondent self-identified as a TA, or graduate student, whose knowledge of the composition course she/he taught is non-existent, saying “I took first-year composition in 1996
via AP English in high school and a comp class at a community college and transferred them. I haven't taught composition beyond compulsory education years,” which echoed an issue raised and addressed by Fred Kemp in the creation of ICON (email). In other questions this TA, or another respondent who also identified as a TA, wasn’t sure if there was an assessment process at her/his institution, suggesting that training and dissemination of knowledge may be lacking.

**ISSUES OF STANDARDIZATION**

Standardization historically reflects the standards and values of governance, a sort of panoptic view of education that infers lack of ability or lack of trust. Also, standardized assessments are often closed; they are not transparent. Since Nicholas Murray Butler, the first secretary and executive officer of the College Board proclaimed that the College Board’s purpose was to declare and enforce the standards of a ‘mature group’ over those of a zealous individual, composition faculty have felt the sting of inadequacy. This becomes especially evident to the composition instructor when standardization in classes is predominantly a composition concern, and isn’t generally applied to other disciplines or upper division courses. Perception can drive responses. For example, although it seems that assessment practices at Spokane Falls Community College appear to offer faculty a great deal of autonomy in their teaching practices, some of this autonomy is perception. At SFCC faculty create essay assignments that they appear to address with their own standardized evaluation criteria. And although the evaluation criteria differs in form, both assignments and assessments reflect a consistency of topics, values and criteria that is both uniform and standard. Faculty also create prompts for assignments that are standardized across the program because of the portfolio assessment.
Furthermore, they do not choose which assignments students must write for the portfolio assessment - all students will turn in a portfolio with a narrative essay, a research based essay, and a reflective cover letter. Yet faculty at SFCC seem more amenable to the assessment practices than what is reported about Texas Tech; their perception of autonomy drives their reactions to the assessment.

During the assessment portfolio, coming to consensus about what constitutes any particular score is reduced to pass, low pass and no pass, which simplifies the work of coming to agreement. Pass/low pass and no pass surround the average or C grade and there is no need to articulate gradations in scores. At Texas Tech, however, classroom faculty can only create and grade short, in-class assignments and any extra credit assignments they want to offer students. All shared assignments are completely standardized, as are syllabi, grading, due dates - everything.

At TTU it is the essay or assignment that is reduced, not the grading requirements. Assignments are short, approximately 400 words, and are discrete aspects of one essay written over the course of one semester. For example, assessment at TTU may involve the scoring of introductions. This is far more efficient in terms of fairness and provides a more quantifiable explanation because there are far fewer variables; document graders also become very familiar with the requirements of assignments, which facilitates the ability to discern one level from another. Students are also unknown to document instructors, which means that assignments are scored based solely on the quality of student responses, not student effort. Faculty at TTU create their own websites that list assignments, offer the link to Raider Writer, and have supplemental syllabi and extra credit work; within the composition program there is no personalization which may be the impetus for websites and extra work. The official syllabus, assignments, grades and
attendance are on Raider Writer. This does not allow for faculty to collaborate, communicate with or learn from one another, and the weekly meetings that discuss assignments do not include all involved since document instructors are not all located in Lubbock, Texas. And it removes autonomy from the program. So, although faculty appear to work less, they remain dissatisfied, both because they feel they have no agency and there is no communication - no community.

Another reason for the different responses to standardization may be a time factor. The department chair at SFCC reported issues in during the beginning of the assessment practice, where faculty were more antagonistic to the process of norming. However, the twenty year-plus time span has provided the program the perspective and the ability to engage faculty in what is often seen as a disagreeable enterprise, and to see some advantages to the practices. Faculty were assured that assessment would never be used to assess them and those who objected to the norming, left. The rest of faculty first came to see the assessments as part of the position of faculty, and later began to use the assessments as an opportunity to see the successes of various assignment prompts and discuss them with one another. Fred Kemp notes that time was an issue with Texas Tech as well, claiming that he and the program tried to do too much too fast, and that this was behind much of the pushback he experienced (Email). That program has been in place for over ten years now, about half the time of the SFCC assessment practices, but no feedback is available concerning faculty responses to the system today.

However, in 2005, after three years with the system, graduate students protested that they were working too hard even though Kemp had determined they worked 13 of the 19 hours they were expected to work (Email interview), students protested grades to teachers, and most faculty protested that they’d lost autonomy, and administration listened. Kemp argues that the six lecturers appreciated Raider Writer, but the approximately seventy graduate students who were
teaching complained despite having their workloads reduced. Today, the first-year program system, Raider Writer, is maintained by an outside programmer and is semi-autonomous. Faculty believe themselves capable of developing assignments that help students improve their writing, and they are capable of assessing how well students have learned what they teach; therefore, they dislike the system, but this belief exists whether they are or are not capable of doing so. At UTEP, for example, training sessions showed that graduate students were not able to recognize issues in assessments and could not make connections between learning outcomes and assignments, a problem for teachers who were scoring the certification exams as well. It took time, discussion, and a lot of practice to recognize nuances in writing that affect assessment, and it was this, in fact, that made them express appreciation when they entered the classroom. A great deal of time was spent identifying differences between development or analysis and summary,. Standardization overtly challenges faculty ability, and implies faculty cannot be trusted. Another effect on faculty response to standardization may be technology. At SFCC, essays are hard copy, handed in, written on, handed back and revised. There is a lot of tactile energy in the process and a sense of the tradition. At TTU, the classroom instructor doesn’t see student work; it is all uploaded into the Raider Writer system, where other document instructors who may or may not know the classroom teacher view it.

**Consensus as Training**

One of the more important aspects of writing assessment that can be discussed in the sphere is the topic of norming. Norming refers to the training scorers go through in order to score papers according to the standards of a particular system, something SFCC and TTU as well as any other institution that uses people to collectively score group or standardized assessments must use. For example, when I was hired to score Texas Education Agency’s certification exam
(contracted to and written by Education Testing Services) for the English Language Arts and Reading portion of the exam, I was normed to score in accordance to the standards set by TEA.

The Chief Reader of the assessment carried the responsibility of norming the room and keeping people aligned. Reports regularly informed the Chief Reader of how well the scorers in the room were doing as far as consensus. Those same reports also rated each scorer’s ability to score according to others – but not according to the TEA standards that were the purpose of the assessments. Discrepancies in scoring over 8% for the entire session were frowned upon and scorers who could not be normed did not get invited to return. Norming also included background information for context; for example, in the TEA script used to train the scorers in the room, the Chief Reader admonished the scorers to consider the responses to the exam and evaluate them as to whether the candidate has the qualifications necessary to begin teaching, and reminds the teachers in the room that when we first started teaching, we were inexperienced too.

But after six years of working as a Table Leader in charge of anywhere from 3 to 6 scorers, and being an alternate Chief Reader, I observed a number of factors that may have affected the norming. For example, the same people were invited back, time after time - ostensibly because they were good scorers and were able to make the time for this, but I also observed that our discrepancy rates dropped over time. The explanation was that we were well trained, but the job of a Table Leader and Chief Reader is to talk to scorers who are discrepant and what I saw was that we did not necessarily norm to the criteria set by TEA; we normed to one another and our interpretation of the ratings of the criteria were ratings that did not exactly match TEA requirements.

I noticed that the definition of beginning qualifications tightened over the years we worked together. The group became collectively more demanding. Our ability to discern
differences between summary and analysis became sharper as we discussed and shared our insights. We did become better at setting aside personal standard and adopting another standard, but that standard was also a collectively subjective one. Furthermore, although a representative from Educational Testing Services was present for much of the time, that representative did not get involved in discussions or concerns. And the one time I saw a representative asked for a decision, she was not able to do so. There was no effort made to keep the room in strict adherence to TEA standards. Efforts were geared toward reducing discrepancy.

I observed much of the same collusion or collaboration at SFCC where half of the faculty held doctorates, and all had worked together for years and had participated in the portfolio assessments at least four times each year. They were ‘in tune’ with one another, and I suspect that the Faculty Scoring Guide was more than a reminder of process than a guide for how to score. This is empowering for faculty as they grow to police themselves. Furthermore, the purpose of norming to a C grade, the easiest grade to come to, is also an empowering practice, as well as a traditional one. The C is the easiest grade to use as a default so it requires the least amount of training; it is a safe grade that passes but does not declare quality.

At TTU, however, norming is more watchdog than training with everyone involved scoring charged with rating everyone else. Kemp’s advice suggested a punitive aspect as well, saying “graders who were continuously ‘outliers’ in their grading were exposed by the software and got ‘advice’ … about how to moderate” their outlier status.” And a former graduate student at TTU described training as:

workshops [that] helped a little bit, and ‘grading pool[s]’ [where] we sometimes would meet to talk about our grading processes-- experienced graders would share their own tips and advice for new graders. It was fairly similar to the teaching prep. Experienced
teachers sort of coached new instructors on how to plan and present each day's curriculum. (Email interview)

This appears to be a minimal form of training or norming and does not invite collaboration. It is, however, important to note that TTU, like many universities, has significant turnover because most of the faculty are graduate assistants who move upon completion of their degrees, which makes the opportunity for norming them to one another difficult under any circumstances especially under the current circumstances at TTU. These norming issues at both schools, and the possibilities that norming concerns are less about standards and more about discrepancy percentages are opportunities to reinterpret what is done and what can be done in assessments; in a hermeneutic sphere discrepancies between what should happen and what does happen during scoring provide opportunities to interpret and reinterpret the pedagogies and practices, as well as the values and goals of different programs.

The need for this interpretation and reinterpretation is suggested in survey responses as well. These responses seemed to support concerns that date back to the College Board’s conception, and Brigham’s point that scorers’ responses to writing were all wildly disparate, and therefore incapable of assessing what they teach - something Fred Kemp also saw in the faculty’s scoring:

Our instructors were all over the board on what good writing was. I mean, really, all over the board. One person loved voice, another grammar and usage, another sincerity, another content, and a bunch more mishmash never really considered by the teachers at all since they were mostly products of literary study or literary wannabe. (Email June 14, 2016)

One survey response also suggested typical difficulties with consensus:
We try to, but as we are still deciding, this answer may change. We try to first discuss options as a department, and then will open a space online (like a Blackboard discussion board thread) where people can share ideas and discuss differing opinions. We then try to offer a vote, though full-time faculty have (historically) only been included in the vote. Other responses were, “We are told to grade ‘down’ more,” and “Consensus is not required. If it is not reached the participants discuss the different values they bring to the act of assessment” - an interesting response which may mean assessment provides opportunities for faculty development, but also a confusing response because it is unclear how the discussion relates to consensus. One response was clear that consensus and collaboration are not valued at that institution, saying “Since I do most of it, I build definitions and scales first so that I stay as consistent as possible through my reviews.” However, other responses provided interesting ways of reaching consensus, such as “The involved parties tend to be of the mindset that we're there to get work done for the benefit of the program and the students. With everyone on the same page, coming to a consensus is rather easy.” “We norm around two sample essays at the beginning of each portfolio reading. We discuss portfolios where there is not consensus,” said one response and another said, “Discussion of rubric criteria is the big way that we came to consensus.” These responses suggest that discussion and communication was an integral aspect of norming: “We worked from student samples and used our discussion to talk about the rubric's criteria and its gradation of success [which] worked both as a way to design the rubric and to create some early calibration,” which suggested respondents saw consensus as uniformity, which requires compliance more than consensus. Consensus is more work.
COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION

Although SFCC assignments and assessments seem rather traditional, the portfolio assessment addresses an important aspect of assessment - faculty are brought together, work together and seem to learn from one another. The Faculty Rating Sheet used when I observed, has been updated to reflect research criteria. Faculty has also recognized that the portfolio assessment is setup to assess process, but in fact assesses product, and they are working to address that concern. Most importantly, though, is their ability to peek into each other’s classes and learn. At SFCC, they are actively reinterpreting what they do in light of what they have done through assessment. Evidence of this is found in the conversation that faculty is engaged in called the English 102 Quilt, which is:

a draft … to help us continue our conversation about what it is we do in English 102, something a dean once told us we need a clearer vision of. … Jared, Ryan and I here boldly offer some of our course materials, categorized by type of assignment. We will refer to the quilt and to our various assignments as we continue our Information Literacy focus this year in the Winter and Spring Composition meetings. (English 102 Quilt)

The faculty at SFCC, though prompted by administration, has begun to standardize themselves for the second quarter course that students take to move on to four-year institutions.

At TTU, faculty interaction is very different. The composition program holds weekly meetings to discuss upcoming assignments, and new graduate students are put into groups of 4 - 6 and mentored by experienced teachers. This constitutes training at TTU, but it reflects a very limited form of training. Classroom instructors have little agency; Raider Writer and the Document instructors handle attendance, course syllabi, assignments, peer reviews and grades. Instead, to effect difference in their students, at least some TTU faculty create websites with
links to Raider Writer, explanations of the assignments, and any in-class or extra credit work that faculty develop on their own in what may be an attempt to personalize individual courses. There is limited face-to-face access to other faculty with whom to exchange ideas, although there is ample opportunity for faculty grade and be graded by one another and students. The first scorer’s comments are not only visible to the second grader, the second grader also rates the quality of those comments and students rate the quality of grades.

Instead of collaboration and communication, this seems to create a panopticon where everyone is judged and everyone judges, thus creating an atmosphere that is not conducive to collaboration or open communication. Also, students can appeal grades to the classroom instructor who can overturn grades, which can lead faculty to assume that the work they do has no meaning or that work increases because classroom faculty need to be aware of student work in order to know what the grade should be in an appeal.

Moreover, at TTU, meetings are top-down and document instructors can be located anywhere since they work online and are not required to have any knowledge of or access to classroom faculty, the composition program, or even the Texas Tech University, which also means the document instructors do not receive training, something Fred Kemp verified in his emails. From the perspective of the hermeneutic sphere, this may be ineffective as it does not take advantage of program history, institutional goals, and mission statement - all areas that may seem unrelated to assessment but which in fact can help faculty understand what and why particular methods are practiced at different institutions. Without this knowledge, the ability to understand the purposes and values behind the composition program is lost.

Furthermore, faculty cannot develop a cohesive collaboration of shared practices. They cannot review, revisit or revise pedagogy and practices because there is limited opportunity for
faculty to come together, which implies is that the opportunities for programmatic and faculty growth may also be limited. Although the assessment program can be considered state of the art at Texas Tech, the application leaves faculty at TTU with less agency and less opportunity to evolve than traditional practices at SFCC. Furthermore, the assignments at TTU are less challenging and do not represent extensive writing but do represent focus on different aspects of the writing process and essay, whereas the modes at SFCC also require students to write the different components of the essays in toto.

The *sphere* encourages, even demands, the collaboration experienced at SFCC, and more. However, it seems likely the program would not engage in the assessments and collaboration of today, without being required by administration. This is also top-down and can be a point of conflict for faculty and scholars - which addresses another dichotomy in the composition community; the divide between scholars and faculty when scholarship is not disseminated, and between administration and faculty. On the other hand, the *sphere* also requires questioning of that assumption as well as investigation into other potentially contributing factors to collaboration such as tenure and union protection at SFCC or the educational level at SFCC as opposed to the status, protection and education of faculty at TTU.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES OR SCORING CRITERIA**

The Faculty Scoring Guide at SFCC is an interesting example of scoring criteria represented as learning outcomes. Although no one argues the necessity of good writing, three out of the seven learning outcomes that focus on surface errors might reflect outdated standards for writing that are often evidenced in the traditional composition frame and which imply that all composition faculty are is grammarians. Only one criterion addressed development, or content, and one addressed the clarity of focus. Also the language in every scoring guide criteria displays
a surprisingly punitive focus on student failure with comments such “unclear,” “insufficient,” “too many mistakes,” “inappropriate,” and “inadequate” in light of SFCC’s twenty-year commitment to improving student success, as noted by their Assessment Portfolio Draft, and a widely held belief that negative comments and gatekeeping community college district mission statement factors that contribute to ‘good’ writing must all be addressed by these criteria.

However, two criteria do suggest audience awareness: both the appropriateness of the topic treatment, and the adequacy of the response to the assignment apply to audience, a clearly rhetorical recognition of the intricacies of writing and, while this movement is not new, it is the direction that Rhetoric and Composition scholars strives toward. Therefore, these outcomes suggest a path toward current writing assessments, but the path is not yet halfway trod. Almost one half of the learning outcomes address mechanics/writing/spelling/sentence structure issues. All are written as negative responses to student work. The negative responses also suggest a gatekeeping or penalizing purpose to assessment that does not encompass all that assessment can offer. The reliance on surface level scoring could dismiss content, development or focus.

Because the Faculty Scoring Guide is designed for faculty, it is possible that language is not as much an issue as it would be for a larger student-based audience. However, I did not come across learning outcomes listed for students on any assignments, from any faculty or on any artifacts for students and the scoring criteria is available to students as well as faculty. When I asked what learning outcomes guided the assessment, I was told that SFCC outcomes were based off of the WPA Outcomes Statement, but that has not been evidenced in the artifacts, only the scoring criteria. Interestingly, no learning outcomes were found in artifacts for TTU either. What both had listed on assignments was “purpose,” which might imply learning outcomes, although this cannot be verified.
The SFCC programmatic claim that faculty create their own assignments appears misleading. The assignments required for the portfolio are standardized, as are the various evaluation forms. So while faculty can assign any number or type of essay, for the Portfolio Assessment, what instructors individually create, then, are the prompts, not the assignments. And while this seems to afford a great deal of freedom, faculty are still limited by the length of the quarter so focus is still likely concentrated on portfolio assignments. This story of faculty freedom, however, seems satisfactory to the faculty I was able to observe; they can assign essays that are not included in the assessment, they can create prompts for the assessed assignments, and they can determine grades of A, B or C, leaving the task of failing students to the program. Furthermore, portfolio assessments do not, in fact, seem to assess process, which is the emphasis of portfolio assessments; they assess the end result of the process as there are no drafts included in the portfolio, only finished products. The norming sessions are also designed to norm faculty and assess their ability to score with others, something that is not always met a positive reception from faculty, but at SFCC the obvious is ignored. The Assessing Portfolio Document calls it “assessing the assessment.” However, it could more rightly be called assessing the assessors, as faculty are trained to recognize the difference between passing and failing essays, and historically, those that cannot have been moved to teach other courses or they leave - and, of course, the assessment does not happen without human intervention so assessing the assessment is assessing the assessors. Programmatically, there are sound reasons for assessing assessors since faculty who are not able to assess according to the norm may set up students for failure, a concern that is addressed by the midterm portfolio, and the fact that the final assessment is held three days before the last day of class so that students with only one failing essay score can revise one last time. It is possible the perceived success of this norming is due to the longevity of
faculty, which is guaranteed by tenure. Instructors who are not able to norm according to the criteria, leave. This method of standardization and norming, however, has caused few faculty members to leave the college.

**Qualitative Assessment in a Quantitative World**

One of the main assertions in this dissertation is that any and all aspects of assessment require interpretation in order for the composition community to more fully understand any and all other aspects of assessment, and one of the aspects embraced by faculty is the art of writing - that one aspect of writing that makes it difficult to assess, and the one aspect that is both the major cause of discord between the composition and testing agencies, and a major cause of inconsistency in assessments. To testing agencies, quality is found in accuracy of the measurement, and research into the validity and reliability of direct and indirect methods all reflect attempts to incorporate or eliminate the subjective from the test because it skews the consistency of assessments. Indirect assessment methods like the multiple-choice test that are most consistently reliable are the least valid because they only test a part of writing, not the whole of it. Direct methods like essays are valid but each essay must be scored with at least some subjectivity. However, testing agencies and composition actually *do* accommodate quality; it is found in all aspects of scoring guides, rubrics and grading criteria. The very inclusion of ratings from A to F, and even the C grade, are examples of qualitative analysis when an A implies a higher *quality* of writing than a B. Perhaps, using the reflexivity of the *sphere* and its encompassing focus on both macro and micro views, it may be found that qualitative aspects are already everywhere in assessment. Applying concepts from the *sphere* suggests that assessments methods at SFCC, for example, separate qualitative assessment from quantitative by applying the more general assessment of pass/fail to all students papers and reserving the more specific and
individualized assessment of quality to the instructor in the room, whereas TTU’s practices offer little if anything to the qualitative aspects of writing.

But there are other qualitative aspects inherent in writing assessments that may go unrecognized. Aspects such as the quality of inclusiveness, collaboration and the needs for communication are not always recognized concerns that may have a profound impact on the writing assessment story. At TTU, for example, the quality of the experience is stressful. New teachers do not seem to receive adequate training but experience an overwhelming amount of oversight. At SFCC, faculty are experienced, tenured, and given an appearance of autonomy that suggests a respect for that experience and knowledge. My experience with testing agencies suggests that they too are aware that the quality of the experience is important. ETS provided for some measure of physical comfort through snacks, beverages and lunches - something that is also part of the SFCC assessment experience and an acknowledged duty of the composition director position. But when ETS moved the scoring for English Language Arts and Reading exam online and scorers could work from the comfort of home, most quit despite the decent pay. What we discussed at that last meeting indicated quality. It was not the accommodations, the food, or the money per se that brought us back to ‘grade papers,’ that one thing many teachers dislike; it was the camaraderie, the sharing of practices and the discussions - the learning - that brought us back.

Some disciplines are quantifiably easy to assess, and others that rely in any way on taste and subjective responses are not. Therefore, the qualitative aspect is so subjective, it seems hidden away, glossed over and treated like an anomaly or error in the assessment process, so one potential of the sphere is found in the concepts of the sphere that should allow scholars and faculty to consider other concerns that have or may become assessment issues, such as the
subjective aspect of writing, and faculty’s perception that it is missing. Writing has historically been seen as an art form, something that is distinctly subjective. One does not dictate to the artist, tell the artist how to create; instead, one either approves or disapproves, buys or doesn’t buy the art. When composition came into being, the purpose of composition further separated art from form in part because the historical focus of composition was grammar, a traditional view that remains part of the old frame and which the composition community is working to change.

The effort of fitting the square peg of assessment into the round hole of an art form has proven near impossible. And this is also one reason that composition faculty resent assessments; standardized assessments seem to take the art out of writing, so although the historical push toward science with its objective and clear recognition that quantitative research has changed the world and provided it with a myriad of new knowledges and innovations that range from technology to science, in some fields the subjective still matters. Composition has grown into a discipline and its trajectory is slowly but solidly moving it frame forward. Therefore, the value of the objective view cannot be overstated; however, the subjective and qualitative aspects of writing must be taken into consideration - even by testing agencies - because quality remains the component that skews quantitative assessment. The question, then, becomes how to do so.

Chapter V touched on aspects of a hermeneutic sphere without preferring one institution or practice over another. Instead, both institutions have utilized assessment practices in ways that both offer positive and negative repercussions. SFCC is traditional in assignments and uses a somewhat confused portfolio assessment but the assessment practice is collaborative, an important component of the sphere, while TTU employs an innovative assessment practice, as well as assignment redesign, in less than effective ways that defeat collaboration, and appear to reduce writing to one essay. Chapter VI will conclude the dissertation by discussing possible
affordances of a hermeneutic sphere and by offering an example of how one composition program redesigned itself through the reflexive investigation of its practices.
Chapter VI Conclusion

Bergson (1907) said “all that we have felt, thought and willed from our earliest infancy is there, leaning over the present which is about to join it, pressing against the portals of consciousness that would fain leave it outside” (p. 5). This is true of people, institutions and disciplines. This dissertation has been an exploration into those concerns that are pressing against writing assessment and my hypothesis has been that the current ‘frame’ or story surrounding writing assessment is steeped in historical influences and attitudes that began in antiquity by focusing value and belief on an either/or dichotomy that continues to this day. Using the social concepts of Pierre Bourdieu to situate the various concepts and influences, I also contend that those ancient influences are an example of doxa, beliefs and values are so pervasive that they are taken as fact. This doxa has often taken the form of a dichotomy which provokes an either/or choice in most aspects of life, which can then be seen to affect, for example, later historical changes such as the movement away from valuing classical literature as the epitome of a good education to the current emphasis on the scientific breakthrough. This is not meant to suggest that other factors, such as the impact of American expansion and the changing demographics of college students did not influence values and beliefs, but that the dichotomous choice of preferring this method or that method as the only choice disallows alternative perspectives and squashes opportunities.

How Stories Started

Continuing Bourdieu’s concepts, I have situated the main fields or areas most involved - composition, writing assessment, and testing agencies such as the College Board, Educational Testing Services and publishing companies. These fields are interconnected; they developed at the same time and for the same reason, to address perceived concerns with student writing. These fields developed in different ways, however. They have different, though interconnected
‘stories.’ Testing agencies have the support and recognition of institutions and governments globally. Their story is one of successful guidance over the assessments required to determine student ability. They create the assessments that affect composition and writing assessors, and therefore, they evidence both economic and social *capital*. The success of their story depends on the quality of assessments and their ability to accurately determine the ability of students to succeed.

Composition also developed as a response to the perception that students were ill prepared to attend college, but composition is the subtext to the testing agency ‘frame,’ or ‘story.’ Without the perceived inability of composition faculty to accurately assess student writing, there would be no need for testing agencies, and composition and the general public is often reminded of this with tales of educational inadequacies. Composition’s story, then, is both part of the testing agency frame; and the impetus for the testing agency frame, which reduces the composition community to grammarians, and writing assessment to a red pen. Worse, composition faculty accept this judgment despite the ongoing work of scholars that shows otherwise.

Writing assessment, as part of composition, is in the middle. Writing assessment scholars do not develop tests; they assess the assessments. To composition faculty, this aligns them with testing agencies even though, thus far, only the testing agencies develop assessments. But because writing assessment scholars are not generally trained in test development, statistics, or psychometrics, testing agencies view writing assessment scholars as part of the composition *field* - that supposed collection of faculty whose inability to accurately assess gave rise to testing agencies. But to composition faculty, writing assessment scholars are part of testing agencies. It is not a comfortable position to be in.
Applying Bourdieu’s concepts, it becomes clear that the testing agency field is also steeped in economic and social capital, or reputation and funding in this case. Funded by institutions and governments, the College Board and Educational Testing Services only recently experience competition from other testing agencies like publishing companies, and it is a competition among giants, all following the same psychometric framework and with the same goals - to create solid “reliable” tests that are quick, cost-effective and efficient. Their operating budgets are in the tens of millions and research, development, and test administration are their purposes. Social and economic capital for composition programs cannot compare. Composition budgets are difficult to find. Regarding the two institutions in this study, for example, there are no records for a composition budget at Texas Tech University, and the chair at Spokane Falls Community College does not know what the budget is. Also, the purpose of composition faculty is to teach; research and development are not fully funded in most cases, and when it is, the funds rarely replace or accommodate teaching loads. When considered from this perspective, assessment can seem like an intrusive and time-consuming process.

**Assessment Values**

Assessments have a number of purposes, though. They support, encourage, and develop scholarship. They can support and encourage students. They can and do support administration. They can also develop and align learning outcomes, and programs can use assessment to grow. But faculty are not always aware of all the issues surrounding assessment practices and programs. At SFCC, assessment is loose and inconsistent, but when used for pass/fail standards, it provides an easy-to-assess measure of accountability for reporting purposes while also providing faculty with some perceived measure of autonomy in the classroom, where faculty are charged with assigning the final grade, a perceived value embraced by faculty and students alike.
almost everywhere. Intentionally or not, this may work to empower faculty and help create a more collaborative atmosphere that surrounds the assessment process. It is this perceived autonomy that engenders confidence, and which may allow for the transparency at SFCC. It is this transparency, as much as my connection to a former colleague who is the chair of English department that allowed me to observe, ask questions and gather information about their program.

It could be said that the assessment purposes at this institution may only provide lip service to accreditation agencies whereas at TTU data drives the assessment practices and allows the composition program to have a panopticon management of faculty and students. Both uses have value and both can be damaging. SFCC’s atmosphere of collaboration would allow for the intensive and reflexive investigation of the values and needs of writing students and considering the longevity and educational levels of faculty, provides much of what is needed for a hermeneutic sphere; what may be missing, however, is a stronger focus on the quantitative aspect, which seems to be the only focus at TTU. Considering that faculty at TTU are generally inexperienced at both teaching and composition and the turnover in faculty is constant, this micro-management has some merit. However, it does not encourage collaboration. Nor is it transparent. Admission to the inner workings of assessment at TTU never came to fruition, despite requests to do so and responses in the affirmative. Any scoring criteria used by faculty is embedded in the Raider Writer program and unavailable. It is also unlikely that training is welcome and if enough resentment is generated, training could even become counter-productive. And finally, the assessment practices at TTU do nothing to change the current composition story.

Both institutions offer examples that lead to insights, which prompts the question, how many other local practices offer insights? How might a collaborative and reflexive reinterpretation of
these and other practices inform one another and other institutional practices? And finally, how might we engage in this reflexive reinterpretation?

**HERMENEUTICS**

This dissertation offers a direction, hermeneutics. Hermeneutics has evolved from a linear understanding of a word or sentence in the context of a passage to the recognition that influence is actually circular, or mutually impacting - that the sentence or word also influences the passage which in turn influences the word or sentence in what can be a never ending exploration and discovery of knowledges concerning meaning. Hermeneutics further evolved through the recognition of historical influences on meanings, thereby widening the circle in influence where the word and passages, while both interpreting one another, also interpret and reinterpret historical influences that influences interpretation in the first place. Hermeneutics then came to be applied to concepts of phenomenology where interpretive methodologies are applied to the subjective experience - the human interaction to or about some object with which the subjective interacts in some form. And this moved hermeneutics from a “what does that word mean,” to a “what does everything mean” opportunity. Furthermore, the concept of interpretation is, in fact, always a concept of reinterpretation - something noted by Heidegger, who argued “the circle … arises out of the foresightedness of understanding” and that the “difficulty is rather that there is no way to understand without already possessing some prior understanding” (Malpas, p. 99).

From biblical interpretations to interpreting the motives of human interactions in phenomenology, a behavior, a concept, a sentence or an assessment already exists in some form. Instead, the task is to dig deeper and look further in order to further understand meaning and influence. In fact, the very evolution of hermeneutics stands as an example of the ways in which interpretation and reinterpretation can further knowledge and understanding, in that the
“interpretive process is achieved through a hermeneutic circle which moves from the parts of experience, to the whole of experience and back and forth again and again to increase the depth of engagement with and the understanding of texts” (p. 9).

**THE SPHERE**

The purpose of a hermeneutic *sphere* is to offer a conceptual space, a space with guidelines and reminders but few ‘rules’ where programs and their teachers can re-vise the writing assessment story. Therefore, hermeneutics is a good methodology to reinterpret assessment practices, the effect of historical influences in writing assessments, and the composition community’s reaction to writing assessments - in short, the current frame or story of writing assessment. A circle, however, is a flat metaphor or image and despite all the influences, suggests a forward and backward direction. On the other hand, a *sphere* accommodates a three dimensional, interactive, mutually influencing and mutually informing metaphor. It recognizes that many concepts in writing assessment can be found in dichotomous relation to other concepts and locates practice and pedagogy, local and national, current and historical influences at the intersections between those dichotomies. The *sphere* can reduce the all-powerful framework of psychometrics to a concept located at an intersection and replace psychometrics with a more flexible framework that can accept a variety of methodologies due to its postmodern bent. This then, also allows for the recognition of the qualitative in writing assessment, the importance of the perceptions of faculty, scholars, and testing agencies that affect how various groups react to assessment methodologies, and urges investigation into the historically dichotomous beliefs and values of social groups through time and their influence on the current writing assessment story.

*A sphere* is not a place and it is not focused on any particular movement or school of thought, although the predominant movement that served as an impetus for the *sphere’s*
conception is postmodern. It is almost impossible to examine the writing assessment practices at both Spokane Falls Community College and Texas Tech University without the context of their complementary writing practices because the goal of writing assessments in the composition community is to help faculty improve writing instruction and help writers improve writing. But a comparison of assessments or a comparison of assignments does not begin to exemplify the possibilities of the *sphere* anymore than one college represents all colleges. Instead, a comparison should spark more space.

The concept of the *sphere*, where scholars come together to share ideas, is not new. Organizations such as College Communication and Composition, Two-Year College English Association (both offshoots of the National Council of Teachers of English), and Writing Program Administrators, offer composition scholars access to numerous journals as well as national and local conferences. The Writing Program Administration organization engages in collaborative work to create learning outcomes that can be used by all composition programs. These organizations offer a place where ideas can be shared and faculty can find the support they need. These organizations and the calls of assessment scholars to utilize hermeneutics in various aspects of writing assessment make a *sphere* possible. I would argue, however, that the work of scholars cannot always trickle down to the classroom instructor, and therefore, doesn’t reach the student. This is another impact of the current story. For example, many faculty cannot go to conferences. The registration is expensive, airfare and hotels are cost prohibitive whereas the *sphere* can address general knowledges - that macro-view of composition and writing assessment or address specific concerns. It can be carried in the thoughts of any interested party, is wirelessly connected to the ideas and practices of others and can be opened instantly whenever two or more players from any field come together to interpret. It is, therefore more mobile than a
conference, requires no economic capital to join, and runs off an ever charging interpretation and reinterpretation of energy.

**Perception**

There are a number of areas that may be investigated in the *sphere*. For example, Spokane Falls Community College and Texas Tech University exhibited both similar and dissimilar assessment practices, as expected. There were surprises as well, though. What were not expected were the influence of perception on faculty at both institutions and the ramifications of that influence. SFCC engages in the traditional assessment practice of the portfolio, but they don’t use it as a means of assessing process as it was designed to do. TTU uses highly innovative programming that could help rewrite the composition community story, but the system is used in ineffective ways that actually work against the composition program, at least as far as perception is concerned. And perception, it seems, matters a great deal. Even though the work appears to be lighter for faculty at TTU because the weekly assignments were so brief, there seemed to be far less satisfaction than at SFCC.

At SFCC, satisfaction was higher, as was the level of work required of students. At SFCC, faculty taught, at least, three essays, worked on drafts, etc. At TTU, one essay was broken into pieces and spread out over the course of the semester, which was not graded by the classroom instructor. In fact, the classroom instructor did not need to write a syllabus, write assignments, review assignments or grade them, and the document instructors did not have to work with students; they only had to review and grade small assignments throughout the semester and then grade the final put together draft of the essay – a potentially promising method of teaching in that it offers students ample opportunity to refine the various aspects of writing and skills needed, but one which does not seem to satisfy faculty. Thus, although Fred Kemp’s
emails responses to my research questions spoke to graduate students’ complaints about workload, the problem may be more complex.

Other areas of interpretation I hope to apply to the concepts of the sphere include working with administration and testing agencies, developing methodologies with faculty to assess ourselves, both as programs and faculty, developing assessments that marry process to product and that incorporate subjectivity and testing theories concerning inter-rater reliability as far as how raters come to consensus and to whose standards they norm. The sphere is also 

**COLLABORATION**

Until Chapter V, the direction of my research may have suggested an antagonistic attitude toward testing agencies such as the College Board and ETS, or a conflicted relationship with scholarship that does not always reach those who need it most - the faculty. But this would be misdirection. The theoretical framework of the hermeneutic sphere requires collaboration and communication, and that collaboration and communication must include the interests and knowledge of all. Composition programs have begun training graduate students in a number of ways and one of the most valuable methods is exposure to the work of composition scholars. Also, the College Board and ETS have a solid brand, strong economic capital and solid social capital with institutions and governments around the world. They also have a long and detailed body of scholarship that should be analyzed alongside that which composition scholars have developed. I am not the only faculty member who has worked with ETS in some way, and I recommend the learning experience as a way to open perspective. Entrance to the inner workings of testing agencies is not impossible either. ETS has worked with composition on more than one occasion, as have testing agencies, and although the type of deep analysis that is necessary may be difficult to negotiate, psychometrics and the work done under its frame are important to the
writing frame. ETS offers an extensive list of articles detailing its research, but access must be requested for access. And while publishing companies hold their research more closely, there are sometimes opportunities that arise that allow members of the composition community to participate, and with an open and reflexive from composition, those small opportunities might grow. Many composition faculty are invited to test assessments or review texts, which offers an opportunity to In fact, the purpose of the sphere is to pull together all interested fields, large and small, and analyze the positive and negatives of everything. The two institutions that were the focus of my research, both Spokane Falls Community College and Texas Tech University, as well as the example at the University of Texas at El Paso all taught me a great deal, and all displayed areas that did not appear to work to maximum potential.

**WORKING WITH ENEMIES**

Like testing agencies, working with administrations seems somehow distasteful to many in composition. However, there are a number of affordances that arise from recognizing institutional needs. The structure of TTU’s FYW program came about, in part, as a response to concerns that increasing enrollment would require increases in class sizes because there was insufficient computer classroom space for both current and expected enrollments, but both Lang (2010) and Kemp (2005) are careful to minimize this, and highlight advantages to the program. Program design should probably not be dictated by administration for a number of reasons, but recognizing administrative needs can create mutually positive outcomes. UTEP, for example, had four computer classrooms and while composition and English had first access to them, that access was always in need of defense as other disciplines needed access as well. When the second semester composition course became blended, or hybrid, the program was able to put almost all 80 sections in computer rooms, leaving very few faculty and students without access
to technology, which kept composition from requesting more room space, and in fact opened room space by about forty sections. It also settled the questions of which program best utilized the computer spaces and kept administration from raising caps since each room has 25 computers. The hybrid design was a philosophical and pedagogical decision that eased the strain on an already tight budget for both administration and composition and brought composition favorable notice by providing one of the first examples of how hybrid classes would affect building space.

**STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENTS**

Another area that bears reflexive investigation in the sphere is the concern over standardized assessments. Most standardized assessments happen outside of the composition program as part of placement exams designed to assess where a student is best prepared to begin college classes. These are descendants of the 1874 exam at Harvard that launched the divide between testing agencies and composition and there appears to be a strong antagonism to standardized testing that bears reflexive investigation and analysis into the role played by historical animosities. The standardized placement exam is the one exam most attacked by composition even though entrance exams lie outside the domain of composition at many institutions. Concerns about standardized placement exams have become one end of another dichotomy that of standardized versus process, or product versus process.

Composition honors the process of writing. There is abundant scholarship detailing its value. But the goal of any discipline is to produce; there must be a cure, a medication, a philosophy, a surgical procedure – some new ‘thing’ or product that is presented to the world. No one knows who almost wrote a great novel or almost invented a better computer. But the world of composition faculty often claims to preference process over product and rail against the
testing agencies that employ product – as they all do – while the final grade is product no matter how much we claim to grade anything else. For example, the focus on process may lead to new ways help students master the art of writing and may help faculty find new ways to improve their mastery in the art of teaching. On the other hand, standardized assessments offer opportunities to assess whether the art has been mastered. Product matters. Examining the values of scoring process and product may be one of the more critical directions of interpretation in the sphere, allowing for the examination of internal drives that move composition toward one focus over another. There is no E for effort without a viable product.

**ASSESSING THE ASSESSORS**

Another concern that is likely to be important to address is the often unspoken question of what or who is really being assessed. According to SPCC’s “Assessing Portfolio Draft,” “There were other concerns noted in the interviews [with faculty] with which we continue to wrestle. The sense of instructors being evaluated based upon their students’ portfolio performance and/or the quality of their assignment prompts may never be entirely removed from the process. … [and the] composition director and department chair routinely need to remind faculty members that there is no mechanism in place for such evaluation” (p. 22). However, this is not exactly true. The mechanism is inherent in the assessment. This is a critical point in assessment acceptance; instructors recognize the mechanism and know that faculty assessment is always possible. And thanks to the pervasive story surrounding composition, faculty fear we either deserve it, or have somehow earned it. When a school adds standardized syllabi and assignments, the inference is strong. Denying the potential to assess faculty does not take away the possibility or the concern, but making the possibilities transparent takes some power from
them. Also charging faculty with the task of developing the methodology and outcomes for such assessment may offer a bridge to engagement.

**Consensus**

Early 20th century testing expert Carl Brigham’s insights into assessment and inter-rater reliability – these efforts to provide accurate assessments on direct assessments – continue today. However, in some testing environments, inter-rater reliability can be quite good instead of wildly different. As a person who has been involved in more than one testing environment, my limited experience suggests that the reason lurks right beneath the noses of testing agencies. In each example in this dissertation and in the two environments I experienced, there was a common denominator. In each case, the raters had worked together a number of times, sometimes an entire year, sometimes longer, and the longer we worked together, the more we were normed to one another. This happened through discussions over whether a passage in a response, or essay, was summary or analysis. It happened when samples described literary terms for the English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) exams, but did not use the terminology, forcing us to interpret the scoring guide point that required ‘knowledge of literary terms’ perhaps more stringently or more loosely than intended by Texas Education Agency. It especially happened when an ELAR response was on the cusp of pass or fail because the ratings ran from 1 - 4, so there was no middle, or default. A 2 score was not passing, and a 3 score was passing. This seemed very smart, however, as it sharpened the critical analysis skills of scorers who were rating the critical thinking skills of candidates. It was here, in these moments when I realized the potential of assessment. It was moments like this that made me return and help score up to 1500 hand written responses, in pencil. I did not learn anything from the responses except to be grateful for the word processor, but I learned so much from the others in the room, I looked
forward to the scoring sessions, something I could not explain to others who thought me crazy. Even though discussions were always a little tense, I learned more about writing there than in any other environment. And it is this, in fact, that prompted the dissertation’s direction because I learned that while testing agencies have statistics, scripts, scoring guides and rules, the group who works under these conditions creates its own ‘norming’ in that they norm to one another, not the standards of the institution. Therefore, they create an alternative discourse community than the one envisioned by institutional needs or testing agencies. This also suggests that they form a type of subversive and somewhat powerful discourse community.

**Subjectivity**

The issue of subjectivity in writing and writing assessment may seem like a step backward. The historical and social influences that surround writing assessment today are steeped in beliefs in quantifiable, objective absolutes. The scholarship we engage in already incorporates mixed methodologies that account for the subjective while also addressing the objective in research studies. This is not the case for writing assessments, however. The *doxa* of societal emphases on science and the emphases of objectivity born of that emphasis and appropriated by testing agencies has turned the term ‘subjective’ into a form of curse. To claim subjectivity is to announce oneself as less qualified, as allowing personal feelings to intrude, as a cry for a return to the days of classical literature, and to offer no proof for opinion. But despite sanitizing the language of assessment that reflects subjectivity, subjectivity is still everywhere from categories to ratings and raters coming to agreement. But this dissertation is not a call for the subjective. It is, instead, an invitation to pursue, peruse, and participate in Adler-Kassner and O’Neill’s call to rewrite the story of assessment. The *sphere* can incorporate the influences, values, and philosophies of both testing agencies and composition communities.
**Keeping it General**

The difficulty of this dissertation has been the requirement to remain basically general in a world and discipline of specifics. Mixed methodologies for research are hard to come by and admittance to the inner circles of composition programs is expected to remain difficult. I may have to focus on researching programs where colleagues will vouch for me. The survey designed as part of this research asked far reaching questions and garnered incomplete answers. And the sphere is too large for any dissertation to completely explore, but the sphere should always recognize the mutually influencing power and various forms of interplay between the macro and the micro, between various influences and between disparate programmatic practices because it is this type of interpretation that will reveal new insights and new areas to interpret. Instead of a comprehensive research analysis, then, this dissertation is an introduction to a theory with the potential to change the way writing assessment is viewed, with examples of how that may be accomplished, making the concept of a hermeneutic sphere a loose, relative interconnection of meaning making and creation that asks for a reflexive reinterpretation of any and all methods, beliefs, values and histories in order to determine other methods that may be more acceptable to faculty and students, more representative of what constitutes writing and which provide the means to a new story. Much of the work may, therefore, need to be theoretical and philosophical in order to further explore the macro-influences, and much of the work should investigate the purposes of local writing and assessment in order to understand, share and evolve practices. Furthermore, in the hermeneutic sphere testing agencies should be seen as collaborative colleagues and sources of information instead of adversaries, and so should administrations.

The intricacies and lack of precision inherent in philosophy makes pinning down any aspect of a philosophy extremely difficult, and while composition and rhetoric is steeped in
philosophy, it is also steeped in practicalities. And this leads to a second problem: trying to apply a theoretical concept to a practical concern. Still, the composition community has grappled with the lack of a positive frame and the lack of its most important tool - it’s ‘other side.’ Composition has struggled to get ahead of these concerns for decades, and though progress has been made, it has been dearly won and sparingly given. Therefore, efforts to negotiate the seemingly endless repartee philosophers engage in and to trace lines of thought applicable to this specific concern often seems insurmountable. The concept of the sphere, however, cannot preference any line of thought, and although the sphere has clear connections to postmodernism, this is unavoidable in order to accommodate the variety of perspectives.

I observed this again at UTEP. This group consisted of graduate students pursuing Master’s degrees in areas such as literature, creative writing, English Education and Rhetoric and Writing Studies. Other graduate students were pursuing PhDs in Rhetoric and Writing Studies. Until the graduate assistants earned the required 18 hours of graduate coursework necessary to teach, they worked scoring four different assignments for the second semester composition course: a Genre Analysis, a Literature Review, a Documentary Film, and an Op-Ed Opinion piece. Part of the support for faculty included providing feedback on drafts; therefore we met eight times per semester and provided students with approximately 70% of their final grades. It was critical to us that we were fair and accurate. We faced faculty who weren’t sure we could do the job as well as they.

Major differences between this group of scorers and those scoring certification exams was experience and the fact that they could not be dismissed for being poor scorers. And graduate students can be a feisty group. Every semester began with confusion and some tense sessions while the graduate assistants worked through their own beliefs and tried to align them to
what seemed unnatural criteria. With each group of new graduate students, the first assignment we scored revealed the most discrepancy, but as each semester continued, and either the training was more reinforced (maybe), or the groups began to become cohesive, discrepancies dropped. Conversations became thoughtful and norming became part of training for the classroom. Questions such as, “How will you teach this?” and “What will you use for your standard?” brought them back to their own, more informed criteria. I began implementing some of the tactics from my previous experience and put the graduate students into small groups that had to come to consensus, then putting groups together to come to consensus, until finally the room had come to consensus. The consensus that the group arrived at was never exactly how the teachers defined it through the rubric, nor how the program defined it in the training, but it was standardized by a group of people who had been trained in pedagogy. The ‘standards’ were thoughtfully considered and scores were fair. Furthermore, the graduate assistants, and those of us who worked with the graduate assistants learned a great deal. So while there was a great deal of good natured and not so good natured complaining about the work, most graduate assistants spoke to how well prepared they were for the classroom once they entered it.

The concerns addressed in this dissertation are the result of the research concerning the two institutions of higher education. Both the concerns and the institutions represent some of the potential. But there are many, many more areas of writing assessment into which the sphere may provide insights such as the fairness of assessment for L2 learners, fairness and racism in assessments prompts as well as other forms of discrimination such local assessments taken by students who are not local, as well as methods for easing portfolio entrance exams so that more institutions consider it. Assessments offer the opportunity to interpret and reinterpret more than
assessments. Because they are intimately connected to larger concerns, interpreting assessment is opportunity and the *sphere* offers direction.

In conclusion, current assessment practices are a mix of traditional standardized assessments and isolated localized practiced but little is known about these programmatic practices or what they can offer theories in writing or writing assessment. Despite the scholarship advocating new and improved practices, the climate surrounding writing assessment remains turbulent and negative, discouraging instructors and program directors to adventure into assessment practices and encouraging instructors and program directors to keep assessment practices close to the vest. But Ed White (2001) said that “we have come to understand that assessments are a powerful definition of curriculum; if we cede control over English assessment to those who are strangers to English, our discipline will be defined by those not well informed or deeply concerned about what we do or what we represent” (p. 307), and asked “how can we as college-level educators and scholars interact with them around other issues of writing assessment – issues, as we have indicated, that are related to considerably larger concerns and purposes, and about which there is sometimes considerable tension?” (White, 1996, p. 9).

We find another way. As rhetoricians, it behooves us to make use of such a powerful tool and to, in fact, increase its viability and power by embracing the tensions inherent in writing assessment, as we must embrace the tensions inherent in writing. In order to do this, composition must reframe writing assessment, re-envisioning it part of, instead opposed to, writing theory.
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Appendix A

August survey report
Reframing Writing Assessment through Bergsonian Hermeneutics
August 9th 2016, 2:59 pm MDT

You are being asked to participate in a research study being conducted by researchers at the University of Texas at El Paso. We are asking you to participate because we are trying to learn more about the purposes and processes of programmatic writing assessment as well as the experiences of program directors and FYC faculty. This study will take about 45 minutes of your time. If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a short survey. The survey will include questions about your experiences with writing assessment and your understanding of the assessment’s purpose(s). The results of the study may be used in presentations, reports or publications, but your name will not be known. You can choose not to participate. There will be no negative consequences if you decide not to participate or change your mind later. If you have questions about this study, please contact Judith Fourzan (915.747.6624) or email at jfourzan@utep.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Institutional Review Boards at your respective institution: UTEP: 915-747-8841 or IRB.ORSP@utep.edu To participate in this research, please click Next (this will be considered you consent to participate--note that you must be 18 or older to participate in this study).

Answer % Count
Click to NEXT to continue 100.00% 71
Total 100% 71
Q8 - Please describe first-year composition at your institution.

- ENGL 1100 is the first college-level writing course, consisting of four-five essays. Topics vary by instructor. ENGL 1101 fulfills the same requirements as 1100, but it is for students who just missed the cut-off for college level.
- There's more scaffolding of essays and help from a Writing Center tutor. The second-level writing course has four variations: traditional, Gender and Identity, Science and Technology, and American Working Class Identity.
- One required four-credit hour class

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Generally, most students take CO150, which is described as: "Students learn rhetorical approaches to writing, which enables them to become flexible and adaptable writers who can respond to varying audiences and purposes.

Students develop their critical reading abilities, engage in library and field research, develop revision and collaborative writing approaches, learn how to evaluate and integrate sources of information, and explore multimodal forms of composing/designing texts. Students examine the perspectives of stakeholders on topical issues relating to a course theme and then write a major researched argumentative academic paper. Students also construct additional arguments for varied public and professional audiences."

We have two sections of FYC. In the first, instructors are encouraged to help students explore the university through an experiential narrative, a report on an organization, and an art analysis. Students then create a multimodal project (a brochure or poster) based upon one of these papers. Finally, students create an eportfolio where they revise and reflect on their work. The second section of FYC is quite similar, but with more instructor flexibility. Instructors are encouraged to teach a summary assignment, a textual and visual rhetorical analysis, and a researched paper. This section also has an eportfolio assessment at the end.

It is a two-step required writing sequence (English 1101 and 1102) most commonly taken during a student's first year.

We do not have graduate students, so the classes are taught by tenure, tenure-track, and contingent faculty.

We have a director of FYC overseeing the classes.

shared LO's and assignment types but no common syllabus per se

I am a community college instructor who teaches a range of courses, from developmental English, to first year writing, to literature. I also recently became the chair of my department.

It is a two-semester sequence. The second semester focuses on persuasion.

At our school, we have a 2 semester sequence. In the first semester we introduce students to analysis, and review some punctuation and grammar as needed. We make sure students can use sources and have some understanding of MLA. The second course has more emphasis on research and continues analysis and critical
thinking skills.

- FYC is distributed through the Writing Program, an autonomous program within the Department of Writing and Language Studies. In addition to professors in the Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacies Studies program, Writing Program lecturers, graduate TA's (MA students in Linguistics, Rhetoric & Composition, and Literature, as well as MFA students of Creating Writing), lecturers and professors (assorted ranks) from the Department of Literature and Cultural Studies teach in the WP. There is a recommended curriculum that most instructors use (and all TAs are required to use), but not all of the instructors use the curriculum. Some classes are themed on topics like Environmentalism or Feminism, while others are disciplinarily focused, such as a new course sequence on Biomedical Sciences.
- Fairly typical fyc with focus on introduction to academic writing with digital writing component.
- Our program is pretty new. It was created from scratch in 2014. The program curriculum is a two-course sequence that uses a writing studies model for its pedagogical vision. We are also fairly lucky in that we have small class sizes (15), and nearly all sections (all except 1 or 2) are taught by full-time faculty, both TT and NTT.
- At Morningside, it is a relatively traditional approach. However, instructors come from departments across campus (biology, English, business, etc.). Students take part in a two course sequence.
- English Composition I is a semester long course and the outcomes are based on the teaching of rhetoric as it applies across genres. English Composition II is a semester long course and the outcomes are based on the teaching of characteristics of written genres. There are common textbooks (and alternate choice) for everyone, full-time and part-time.
- I don't know. I took first-year composition in 1996 via AP English in high school and a comp class at a community college and transferred them. I haven't taught composition beyond compulsory education years.
- First year composition is split between two courses. The first, essentials of college rhetoric, asks students to analyze rhetorical choices in a set of 3 preselected essays. The second asks students to research a problem and write an annotated bibliography and
research paper to solve it.

- The program that I run on our campus looks like this: First-year theme based writing seminars, writing across the curriculum/disciplines style. Instructors come from a range of disciplinary backgrounds. Sections are capped at 18 and are taught largely seminar style. Students take 2 of these 6-credit seminars in their first year, one each semester. Three credits are counted toward writing and the other toward general education each semester. Our other first year program is an integrated program that divides writing outcomes across different parts of the overall student program.

- We have two 12-week, quarter-long courses in first-year composition: ENGL& 101 — English Composition I (5 cr)
  - This course develops and sharpens the basic principles of writing college-level essays. Students work on a series of essays to improve their ability to write clear, detailed prose and to use texts to support their claims. Competence in mechanics and standard English usage is assumed of all students taking ENGL& 101. Prerequisite: Either completion of ENGL 099 with a P or a 2.0 or higher, or appropriate placement score(s). (SCC, SFCC)

- ENGL& 102 — Composition II (5 cr) This course teaches students research skills by emphasizing the development of critical reading habits, investigative proficiency, and the writing of expository and persuasive prose including documented research essays.

- Students work to understand academic audiences, increase their clarity and objectivity, and adhere to standard formats. Prerequisite: ENGL& 101 with a 2.0 or higher. (SCC, SFCC)

- xoxoxoox

**If you have common assignments for your courses, please list and briefly describe them.**

- If you have common assignments for your courses, please list and briefly de...

- Assignments vary according to instructor.

rhetorical analysis; evaluation; informational paper + annotated bibliography and prospectus; extended (8-10 page) argument; reflection

- Students write a rhetorical analysis of a text (analyzing its success in terms of whether the author achieves their purpose with their specific audience), a problem/solution argument for a stakeholder audience, an annotated bibliography that supports a researched
argumentative essay (specific genre requirements vary depending on instructor) and a fourth major assignment that also varies depending on the instructor but usually involves analysis.

• Please see the discussion above.
• None
• na
• Literacy narratives; summary; rhetorical analysis; reviews; researched argument essays; synthesis papers; film reviews; website evaluations.
• No.
• Our instructors do not usually coordinate assignments. I think all use some variants on textual and visual analysis. In the second semester everyone does a research paper.
• Most instructors include secondary research paper and public document (1301) and a primary research paper and research poster (1302), although these are not standardized across the program.
• Not sure if you common refers to common as adopted by all instructors or common to the classes I teach. Either way, I don't think so.
• Across the two-course sequence there are standard syllabi that lay out some general guidelines for assignments.
• Faculty adapt these general assignments as they see fit. Here's a list of the general assignments. 1. Comp. I: Literacy
• Narrative, rhetorical analysis, critical analysis, multimodal project. 2. Comp. II: Can't remember off the top of my head, Workplace Writing research, Another that I can't remember that makes use of primary and secondary research, Advocacy project.
• The common assignments are loosely connected around pre-disciplinary genres: narrative paper, process analysis, and argumentation in the first class along with researched argumentation and evaluation in the second. There are also requirements for low stakes writing.
• No common assignments.
• Both sections are heavily observed by one director. All assignments are the same. There are approximately 6 brief assignments in each class, one rhetorical analysis, one research paper, and an annotated bibliography.
• The first semester is focused on what we might call expository writing and students practice, summary, synthesis, and they write a personal narrative. In the second semester students focus on research.

• We don't have common assignments, but we do have portfolio guidelines. Students must write a 2-4 page reflective letter about their progress toward course learning objectives as represented in their writing samples. Students must turn in two other polished, revised essays, one of which must use at least two outside sources.

What is your program mission statement?

Answer % Count
We don't have one. 64.29% 9
Our mission statement is: 35.71% 5
Total 100% 14

Our mission statement is:

• The mission of the English Department . . . is to promote literacy by providing quality instruction in the areas of composition, creative, writing, and literature that meets the varied needs of the department’s student populations.

• too long to put here First, to address the changing nature of communication practice, ISUComm will integrate instruction in written, oral, visual, and electronic communication (or WOVE) and apply this integration to the variety of academic, professional and civic discourse. Second, to prepare all students for the diversity of contemporary communication, ISUComm will cultivate a full range of communication competencies: from critical reading practices to comprehensive research methods; from clear prose to effective oral presentation; from the systematic analysis of textual, verbal, and visual media to the development, design, and delivery of well-reasoned arguments. Third, to accommodate this broad and complex agenda, ISUComm will provide two, three-credit courses, taught in the first and second years, then build on this foundation by promoting regular communication instruction in advanced courses, including courses in the major.

• adapted from CWPA is committed to innovative teaching, intrepid research, and agile
learning. We are pioneers on the frontiers of the humanities, working at the intersections of literature, linguistics, creative writing, composition and rhetoric, and technical communication.

**How do your theories about writing and writing assessment reflect your mission statement?**

- How do your theories about writing and writing assessment reflect your mission statement?
- The mission statement is very broad; faculty are given leeway to espouse any theories available. Essays are graded using departmental rubrics, but they are also very broad. Students do a lot of writing and revision, with lots of feedback doesn’t do any good.
- Multimodal and disciplinary focused communication are central to our objectives, and our assignments and end-of-semester portfolios reflect these objectives.
- I think they line up.
- We don't have a program mission statement; only an institutional mission statement.
- NA
- I don't think we have an official mission statement, but the curriculum design was guided by concepts of process, assessment, and writing about writing.
- not sure
- Since we are new program, we are in the process of building assessment into practice.
- There is no programmatic mission statement, but what assessment we have done so far was modeled after the practice of GE assessment and has adapted the AAC&U Value Rubrics to fit our purposes. Because we only have loosely connected assignments, under general curriculum guidelines, we have tried to avoid the GE committee's call for making one of the previously listed assignments a "signature assignment" that everyone in the program assigns. My biggest problem with making one of assignments a signature assignment is that the GE director and associate provost who are calling for such assignments, don't seem to understand what exactly a signature assignment entails. So any such designation would be a signature assignment in name only. As one who has helped build the assessment, I've tried to work using Adler-Kassner and O'Neill's work on framing assessment as a guide. I've also put a bug in the ear of my colleagues that it
might be useful to do some Dynamic Criteria Mapping (Broad) as a program. Thus we could open up our evaluation tools to think more fully about what value as a program and to honestly share those values with students and the rest of the campus community.

- My department is in flux right now as they move away from rhetoric in 101 and literary genres in 102.

- N/A

- The TAs, who primarily teach first year composition, are from many degrees within the Department such as literature, creative writing, and rhetoric and technical communication.

- We are a WAC/WID style program so I would say that there are as many theories about teaching writing as there are teachers in the program. Big picture, passing grades, students served, and retention. A bit lower down, assessment is done via a program wide assessment rubric and semester-final portfolios. These highlight our shared program outcomes (from things like writing in multiple genres to constructing a bibliography).

**What learning outcomes has your program adopted?**

- WPA OS

- Our learning outcomes (for English courses) tend to focus on a student's success at four-year institutions and in careers attained after completing an associate's degree (successful writing in the work place). We focus on process, but also sophisticated and full completion of written products that reflect careful planning, a central focus, and control of mechanics.

- WPA Outcomes Statement

- Common outcomes. 1. Able to summarize, analyze, synthesize and evaluate ideas 2. Demonstrate fundamental awareness of documentation skills (stronger emphasis in second semester). 3. Understand genre and audience. 4. Able to utilize descriptive writing techniques, making use of metaphor and simile 5. Able to develop a central thesis, understand persuasive appeals and to use them in argument. Many syllabi include an emphasis on description,

- metaphor and simile and other stylistic choices. The following statements describe what
we want our students to know, think/value, and do when they finish the First-Year Writing Program and successfully complete 1302 with a "C" or better. The student improves his/her writing by engaging in processes of inventing, drafting, organizing, revising, editing, and presentation (corresponds with THECB Communication Objective #1). The student writes with a purpose and composes texts in genres appropriate to his/her purpose and audience (corresponds with THECB Communication Objectives #2 & 3) The student productively interacts with his/her peers, engaging in small group activities regularly and in which students give one another feedback on their writing (corresponds with THECB Communication Objective #4). The student thinks critically about his/her position in the context of a larger ongoing conversation about the issue he/she is investigating (corresponds with THECB Communication Objective #5). The student is aware of the choices that writers have to make and feels confident in his/her ability to use that awareness to engage in a variety of future writing tasks (corresponds with THECB Communication Objective #5). The student finds, evaluates, and uses appropriate sources for research (corresponds with THECB Communication Objective #6). The student meaningfully integrates and correctly documents information from sources (corresponds with THECB Communication Objective #6). The student is aware of the ways technology affects writing (corresponds with THECB Communication Objectives #1, 3, 5, & 6).

- Too many to name here, and I don't have access to them right now. Here's what I remember in a general sense.

These stretch across the two-course sequence. Writing Process Rhetorical Knowledge Critical Thinking Information Literacy, both primary and secondary research Foundational Knowledge (A GE Outcome) Practical Skills (A GE Outcome)

Comp I Writing: Students will demonstrate improvement in their writing skills through extensive and varied writing assignments. Students will show in essay assignments that they can develop good theses and support them well, using language that is clear, concise and correct. Reading: Students will demonstrate active reading skills. Students will comprehend, interpret and evaluate the readings. Technology: Students will demonstrate competence in Microsoft Word, turnitin.com, Moodle, email, email attachments, Google docs, and campus web. Students will demonstrate competence in the use of an internet browser via the Morningside College portal.
College Success Skills: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the essential skills for succeeding in college. Knowledge of the College: Students will demonstrate familiarity with the liberal arts tradition and the Morningside College Mission and Vision Statements. Comp 2 Course Objectives Upon completion of this course students should be able to: Show in essay and research writing that they can develop significant theses and support them well, using language that is clear, concise, and correct. Conduct effective and ethical research. Specifically, they will: Borrow information responsibly Use a recognized documentation style Assess the reliability of sources Search electronic and print sources thoroughly and effectively. Use appropriate technologies to enhance writing, speaking, and research.

- Demonstrate that they can deliver effective oral presentations.

101 1. Demonstrate understanding of rhetorical and literary elements and genre conventions that shape print and digital communication, across text-based and visual components. 2. Use rhetorical awareness and understanding of genre to annotate and analyze readings, select and evaluate sources, and construct their own effective texts. 3. Recursively engage in writing processes including invention, drafting, reviewing, revising, editing, and proofreading to standards appropriate to rhetorical context and genre conventions. 4. Select, evaluate, integrate and document support from primary and secondary sources as appropriate for rhetorical situation and genre. 5. Use feedback from instructors and peers to revise, provide feedback to peers, and reflect upon and assess their own processes and products. 6. Use technology to complete and enhance writing and research projects, with formatting appropriate to rhetorical situation and genre.

102 Demonstrate understanding of rhetorical and literary elements and genre conventions that shape print and digital communication, across text-based and visual components. Use rhetorical awareness and understanding of genre to annotate and analyze readings, select and evaluate sources, and construct their own effective texts. Recursively engage in writing processes including invention, drafting, reviewing, revising, editing, and proofreading to standards appropriate to rhetorical context and genre conventions. Select, evaluate, integrate and document support from primary and secondary sources as appropriate for rhetorical situation and genre. Use feedback from instructors and peers to revise, provide feedback to peers, and reflect upon and assess their own processes and products. Use technology to complete and enhance writing and research projects, with formatting appropriate to rhetorical situation and genre.
The syllabus the TAs are told to use does not include learning outcomes. Sorry, I'm not in the office and don't have the list in front of me. In the fall it includes writing in multiple genres and in the spring the outcomes are largely around research oriented skills.

English 101 CLOs 1. Brainstorm varied ideas to support a claim of manageable scope for a given assignment. 2. Annotate a text in order to effectively analyze and evaluate the ideas in that text. 3. Research, analyze, use, and document information and ideas to develop a position. 4. Analyze, select, and record relevant, valid details in light of particular rhetorical purposes to support claims. 5. Respond thoughtfully, precisely, and ethically to texts. 6. Communicate with an academic audience to illustrate, analyze, or persuade. 7. Organize ideas in a purposeful and coherent manner. 8. Demonstrate writing that is a systematic process requiring thoughtful reconsideration and revision. 9. Improve prose through instructor, self, and peer feedback. 10. Generate clear, grammatically correct prose. 11. Apply conventions of a particular documentation style. 12. Independently create original work meeting assignment requirements.

English 102 CLOs

1. Identify a claim of supportable scope for a given assignment. 2. Annotate a text in order to effectively analyze and evaluate the ideas in that text. 3. Research, evaluate, use, and document information to develop an argument. 4. Analyze and select appropriate primary and secondary sources in light of particular rhetorical purposes to support claims. 5. Create an inter-textual response that is thoughtful and ethical. 6. Communicate with an academic audience to illustrate, evaluate or persuade. 7. Organize ideas in a logical, purposeful, and coherent manner. 8. Engage in reconsideration and revision as an integral part of academic writing. 9. Improve prose through self, instructor and peer feedback. 10. Generate clear, grammatically correct prose. 11. Apply conventions of a particular documentation style.

2.

How were these outcomes adopted?

- How were these outcomes adopted?
- I decided on them
- These were adopted years ago via committees of English faculty discussing and articulating outcomes. They have been updated recently to reflect/stay current with other
English course outcomes in the state community college system.

- Consensus
- These are not really official. I simply have over my time here sifted through the syllabi to determine the commonalities.
- They were built off of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Exemplary Objectives for Communication
- The common syllabus was approved by department and university curriculum committees. It was also vetted by a committee that oversees courses as part of a state-wide articulation agreement.
- The overall outcomes were approved by the faculty as a whole and changes within the program are made by faculty teaching the course via the summer workshop.

Departmental Committee

- I am not sure.
- I coordinate the program and spent two years working with the faculty that teaches in the program to develop them.
- A task force created them years ago; we revised them for alignment in 2012 and are now planning to revise them to place them in alignment with WPA outcomes for first year composition.

**How do you assess these outcomes?**

- We do not
- This depends on the instructor evaluating these outcomes at the course level, and currently, we are developing a plan/model for how to evaluate at the English department level, as we do not yet have a systematic assessment model in place as a department.
- Students construct portfolios in which they demonstrate how and what they have learned.
- We really only assess our other English and Literature courses. The last assessment was of MLA and documentation.
- No documents were collected from the composition courses.
- Target objectives are identified at the start of each semester. At the end of each semester, samples of student work are collected and analyzed through a normed process by a
committee of instructors. In this way, each year, different assignments are assessed for how they meet the targeted objectives.

- It's in the process of development, as I've said. But to date, we have assessed the GE outcomes listed above. We selected one assignment from each course to assess, one for the two different outcomes (Rhetorical Analysis, Comp I, Foundational Knowledge; Research Writing, Comp II, Practical Skills). A quasi-random sample was obtained (equal number of essays selected randomly from each section across the entire program) and our Composition Steering Committee used rubrics we created to assess the sample. Two readers completed an initial reading. If there was disagreement, then a third reader assessed.

- We use portfolios and a communal scoring process.

- Portfolio

We use anonymous, distributed grading in which a random set of TAs grade the essays and brief assignments each week.

- Program wide via a portfolio, shared rubric. In the individual sections instructors do it as they wish. Teachers assess each individually. We also have a portfolio assessment measuring these items:

Assessment English 101 Assessment Faculty Rating Sheet Faculty Rating Sheet Instr’s prefix + full SID _____ -

____________________ Instr’s prefix + full SID _____ - ______________________ Reader's Initials

Reader’s Initials _________ FINAL PORTFOLIO FINAL PORTFOLIO Passing __________

Passing

____________ Not Passing (one essay) _________________ Not Passing (one essay)

________________ Not

Passing ______________ Issue(s) Issue(s) _____ focus / main point / thesis _____ focus / main point / thesis _____ organization / structure / paragraphing ___

organization /

structure / paragraphing _____ development of ideas or experiences _____ development of ideas or experiences

_____ wording or sentence syntax _____ wording or sentence syntax _____ audience awareness

_____ audience

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How are your learning outcomes reflected by your rubric, assignments or scores?

Please explain.

• How are your learning outcomes reflected by your rubric, assignments or scores?
  
each assignment has a rubric weighted and tied to the OS

• We do not evaluate student writing at a program level yet, so assessment of student writing is now completed at an instructor level. Every instructor has a different way of assessing written communication outcomes, and this is what we're currently trying to fix; we're trying to all get on the same page as a department that spans two very different campuses, in one very large community college system.

• They are reflected in the portfolio.

• These, again, are not held in common. I try to write specific categories for evaluation that focus on each as each assignment requires.

• Instructors are encouraged (again, not forced), in align program objectives with their assignment and rubric designs.

• The assignments were selected because they were reflective of the outcomes. The outcomes informed the creation of the rubric. For instance, the practical skills outcome fits with information literacy, "writing" (it's a GE outcome so it's pretty general and vague), and critical thinking. Based on this, we selected a research writing assignment that best reflected these three characteristics and designed a rubric in response, adapted from the AAC&U value rubrics for these three outcomes.

• All the rubrics and assignments are outcome driven. Part of the workshop is devoted to working with the outcomes and using them to shape the assignments.

• My rubric uses these direct outcomes. My assignments reflect various components throughout the semester.
• There isn't a rubric that the TAs use.
• They are in the shared syllabus template, the rubric, and the shared portfolio assignment.
• We now think they could be better aligned. One main difference is that many of our outcomes are process-based, while our portfolio assessment is product-based. Our portfolio assessment rubric (above) is a bit loose in mentioning so many parts of a piece of writing, and we are piloting this revised one, which will allow us to gather more data in line with our outcomes: Instructor Prefix and SID ____-_________________

Reader’s Initials _____ English 101

Final Portfolio Rubric Overall Rating: All three documents meet standards One document does not meet standards_________ Two or three documents do not meet standards -----------------------
------------------------------------------------------------------- Focus: Meets standard Does not meet standard

Reader’s Initials _____ English 101 Final Portfolio Rubric Overall Rating: All three documents meet standards One document does not meet standards_________ Two or three documents do not meet standards ----------------------- Focus: Meets standard Does not meet standard Development, Support, and Analysis: Meets standard Does not meet standard Organization: Meets standard Does not meet standard Language and Mechanics: Meets standard Does not meet standard Attribution of Sources and Documentation: Meets standard Does not meet standard Comments:

Please describe your program's writing assessment processes.
---
• We do not have one yet--we are trying to currently determine this as a department.
• We review portfolios.
• We are currently really building this team. They sampled writing from courses primarily from the courses our majors take, however, in the last year's assessment. We have not yet addressed how we will proceed to address their findings as a department.
• Individual students are prompted to submit capstone assignments for their 1301 & 1302
classes via an anonymous module on Blackboard. Instructors analyze these samples for how they meet target objectives according to normed rubrics designed by the assessment committee.

- This is what we have done previously. Since it's in process, I expect that the design will change in the future. Quasi random sample of a single assignment selected from across the program. Assignment chosen because it is supposed to reflect the outcome(s) being assessed. Two readers apply a rubric of our own creation. A third reader breaks ties.
- Each student completes a portfolio that is submitted to an online repository. A random sample is used by instructors that have taught and will teach in the following year. Portfolios are scored and the data is collected and analyzed as a whole. The portfolios are also used as part of the institutional assessment process to look at writing from all four years.
- Internally scored written assessment.
- I am not sure if there is one that the TAs are informed of.
- Review and compile info from all student rubrics. Review selected portfolio content. I create a set of definitions and scale for the assessment questions we want to answer and then I have been doing it by myself the last couple of years.
- All teachers of English 101 meet at midterm and end-of-quarter assessments to read portfolios of student work and determine if each portfolio is passing (C quality or higher) or not. We norm at these sessions, which has been helpful in establishing a clear C standard. At these readings (one paper at midterm; the same paper plus a research paper and reflective cover letter at final) we read each other's work blindly. Work is either passing, not passing for one essay, or not passing for the whole portfolio. In order for a student to receive a Not Passing for whole portfolio rating, two raters must blindly agree that the whole portfolio is not passing.

Who is involved in first, the creation of an assessment program and who is involved

- in the the process of assessment – lecturers, adjunct, tenured faculty?
-Who is involved in first, the creation of an assessment program and who is...
- As a department, full time faculty are most involved in creating an assessment program,
but we want all contingent

- English faculty to be involved in building an assessment program, as contingent faculty make up the bulk of our department, and because we value their diverse experience and insight in our department.
- The leadership team developed it. Everyone is involved in assessment.
- Faculty are involved, both tenured and tenure track. We do not include adjuncts in this process.
- Lecturers, adjuncts, tenured faculty, and graduate TAs are involved in the assessment process.
- Assessment processes were created by our composition steering committee, led by the WPA and me, a Rhet./Comp.scholar who will take over as WPA next year. The steering committee is comprised of lecturers and tenure-track/tenured faculty. It is representative of the program because only one or two sections a semester are assigned to adjuncts. No grad. students teach FYW. tenure track faculty for both
- All full-time faculty
- There is one tenured faculty who would be in charge of doing this action.
- The faculty directs the assessment overall and I do the leg work since I'm one of the only permanent faculty in the program (i.e., they are mostly adjunct instructors).
- We have full-time and adjunct faculty. A full-time faculty member created the program 20+ years ago, but the whole group participates in it. Adjuncts are paid for their time. Full timers are not.

Do you come to consensus during assessments?

Answer % Count
Yes 63.64% 7
No 36.36% 4
Total 100%

How do you come to consensus?

------
• We try to, but as we are still deciding, this answer may change. We try to first discuss options as a department, and then will open a space online (like a Blackboard discussion board thread) where people can share ideas and discuss differing opinions. We then try to offer a vote, though full-time faculty have (historically) only been included in the vote.
• We discuss portfolios where there is not consensus.
• The involved parties tend to be of the mindset that we're there to get work done for the benefit of the program and the students. With everyone on the same page, coming to a consensus is rather easy.
• Discussion of rubric criteria is the big way that we came to consensus. We worked from student samples and used our discussion to talk about the rubric's criteria and its gradation of success. It worked both as a way to design the rubric and to create some early calibration.
• Consensus is not required. If it is not reached the participants discuss the different values they bring to the act of assessment.
• Departmentally agreed system
• We are told to grade "down" more.
• Since I do most of it, I build definitions and scales first so that I stay as consistent as possible through my reviews.
• We norm around two sample essays at the beginning of each portfolio reading.

What types of data does your institution or program collect? For example, do you collect scores? Attrition rates?

• What types of data does your institution or program collect? For example, d...
• We will be looking at attrition rates, but we're also interested in final grades, and specifically tracking final grades from where students started (whether in developmental English or English 111, our first-semester, first-year writing course), to how they fare along the way, to where they end up.
• the university collects retention data
• We simply deal with one outcome at a time. No one is tracking attrition or those who retake the courses at any point.
• Scores, attrition and matriculation rates.
• Institutionally we collect GE outcomes scores, attrition rates, retention rates.
  Programmatically, our assessment design is in process. To date, we have done some ad
  hoc work with assessment scores and attrition rates.
• trait scores
• Student Learning Outcomes that are collegewide.
• I understand that the head of the program collects scores, instructor comments, student
  retention, and grades.
• Pass/fail rates, semester 1 to 2 and year 1 to 2 retention rates. Plus all of the things I've
  already described.
• Right now we collect only passing rates. We are beginning to look at attrition rates over
  the last few quarters.

How often does your program/institution collect this data?

• How often does your program/institution collect this data?
• We are in the process of establishing this, but we will most likely go back to the previous
  fall's incoming students, and then study their progression through one full year. We will
  then also begin tracking in real-time, falling a cohort of students in the upcoming fall for
  the next two years.
• Weekly.
• each year we collect documents.
• Not sure.
• Once a semester. Next year, I think the institution is going to make use of Starfish, which
  I've been told will create a real-time data collection process that can be accessed at any
  given point during a semester or year.
• Yearly
• Fall and Spring semesters
• I assume yearly.
• Bi-yearly.
• Twice per quarter.

How does your institution collect data - what is the process for doing so?

• We have a small department that does this, and they tend to look at attrition and retention rates. I am unsure beyond this.
• The university reviews enrollment.
• The institution does a similar process where teams of faculty meet to evaluate and rate the documents on rubrics.
• We have done this one and half times through our list of outcomes. This is all lead by an institutional assessment director.
• Not sure.
• Office of Institutional Research does most of the work, which is then sent out when requested/needed.
• The advising center, registrar, and program administrators collect institutional information. Summer assessment groups work through outcomes assessment.
• Instructors input SLO data through an online system
• The head of the program collects them from a learning content system she designed.
• Registrars office collects the institutional data and they do data pulls for me when I need it.
• Teachers report results on slips of paper that the composition director tallies and reports back in a post-portfolio memo.
• 25 - What does your department or institution do with the data collected?
• What does your department or institution do with the data collected?
• Well, we don't know yet. But my personal hope is that we will use that data to realign our courses with our outcomes; create more dialogue among all faculty in terms of how to best reach those outcomes; and perhaps standardize our practices/pedagogy a little more (but still appropriately) to collectively achieve those outcomes.
• We use it to focus our attention on retention efforts.
• They are going to use this data to determine better assessment methods and rubrics. After
each session, however, the findings and recommendations of the faculty committee are shared with the college.

- Used mostly to support claims of programmatic effectiveness.
- Talks about it, mostly. :) Since the program is so new, we haven't done much in terms of making use of the data. In the future, I think that it will be used for curriculum revision--the creation of a true signature assignment, e.g., revision of outcomes listed for the FYC courses--and for professional development--working with faculty on particular areas of concern that emerge from the data.
- We use it to shape future workshops and make programmatic decisions.
- Review every summer
- I am not sure.
- Once collected, I compile reports and store data.
- We look for trends over time. We are now looking for ways to get more information, because our pass rates are very stable.

Do you create reports and, if so, what is their purpose?

- We will, and they should be reports that anyone in the English department (full time or contingent) can pick up and understand, as well as reports that are substantive enough for higher administration.
- they are automatically generated by the system (PoepleSoft).
- The findings and recommendations of the faculty committee are shared with the college.
- Not sure.
- Yes. Reports created go to our GE committee. It's all so new that I'm not sure exactly what the committee does with those reports or how they will get used. Interestingly, our first report contained a funky sample (for local context reasons) and the GE committee responded that the report was basically useless. In a way, I see their point, but in a way I disagree with their critique. We learned some useful things from the process of looking at the data and from
- writing the report.
- Short reports are created for the curriculum committee and for accreditation
We create a departmental report every two years as part of accreditation process.

I have never read or seen a report containing this information.

Yes. I write an annuals report. To inform others about the program, to reflect on the program and development/revise the program in response, and in my mind to advocate for things we need to be successful.

Just a memo to the group on how it went. Our ALP (accelerated Learning Program) was able to use portfolio results as a baseline in s report on the success of our ALP program.

What influence does your writing assessment have on your writing theories and pedagogy?

What influence does your writing assessment have on your writing theories and pedagogy?

It should have a great deal of influence--otherwise, what's the point?

When students are not learning, we make adjustments in pedagogy.

As a group, no one seems to address this formally. I do know that many in my department are looking for ways to reshape or second semester courses to a STEM/Humanities approach so that we can help the science students see more relevance. We are also, on individual basis, looking at more ways to use process in our classrooms.

Quite a bit on the pedagogy, including rubric and assignment design. I wouldn't say it dictates it, though. In other words, if I know the target objectives for a semester, I don't modify my assignments to meet those objectives specifically.

Down the road, it's making me push for instituting an e-portfolio for FYC, which I believe will not only facilitate higher-quality assessment practices but will also be pedagogically valuable for students. I expect that the addition of an e-portfolio will help solidify some of the things that the courses are designed to teach students, will facilitate transfer, and will help integrate learning across the two courses and across the curriculum.

The assessment helps us see how are doing with the outcomes which then shapes how we teach toward those outcomes.

N/A

There doesn't appear to be any influence.
• It helps me think about how to get all program faculty on the same page in some simply ways--norms around assessment, amount of assigned work, etc.

• Teachers say it allows them to be a "guide on the side" helping students achieve an outside standards, rather than the main judge and only audience of the writing. Our assignments have become more text-based and difficult over the last 15 years. We gravitate toward good new assignments and try them out. This assures that all teachers remain revision-focused. We have a clear C standard, which is some extra work for all students and teachers to meet. Due to the addition of a reflective letter by a recent Comp/Rhet PhD comp director, we are more current in our use of reflective writing as a group.
Appendix B

Semi-Structured Observation/Interview Questions:

• Can you tell me what the mission statement at your institution is?
• How does assessment work at your school?
• Do you find it difficult to score someone else’s assignments?
• What happens when you don’t agree?
• Do you ever change your assignments or teaching because of something learned in assessments?
• Do you and/or your colleagues examine the assessment itself?
• Everyone seems positive concerning the portfolio assessments. Is this a correct reading of the room’s atmosphere?
• Aside from the portfolio assessments, do faculty engage in any training?
• How long had each faculty member been with SFCC?
• How often did faculty get together for non-work related events?
• How close were offices to one another?
• How staggered were classes in the schedule?
• How many meetings were held per quarter?
Appendix C

(Re)Assessing the Program: A Story of Retrospection and Reaffirmation

Every department has a mother force—a procedure, an assessment, a program, or a leadership role that subtly guides the pedagogical development of new and established instructors, effectively creating them as teachers on the job. This article asks about the mother force in your department. What is so established that no one questions it? What influences the assignments given, the standards upheld, the attitudes brought into the classroom every day? In our department the mother force is our English 101 portfolio assessment, a nearly twenty-year-old assessment that guides our assignments, our standards, our relationships with students, and our collegial bonding. So powerful is this assessment in the collective consciousness of the department that we generally do not question its effectiveness. The portfolio is who we are as a department.

Often assessment evokes faculty resentment because it’s generated by external forces rather than pedagogical needs. An administrator or accrediting body rears his, her, or its ugly head and generates paper work, real or virtual; faculty spend time in meetings, fill in little boxes on forms, kvetch about unpaid additional duties, and get it done. In 2009 our department faced what everyone’s does: the need to assess our assessment, that mother force. But this time, when we were asked to demonstrate progress toward our strategic objective of supporting students' improvement of their reading and writing skills, we decided to go beyond the readily accessible and easily assessable. We designed a mixed-method validation study of our 101 portfolio process that consisted of student surveys, instructor interviews, and outcomes analysis. We spent well over a year conducting the study, and a year later, we’re still responding to our findings. Including students and instructors in program assessment, as opposed to relying solely on outcomes data, certainly complicated the process, but the discoveries we made and the ongoing conversations we initiated have allowed us to learn more about how our mother force works and how we may be able to enhance its positive effects.

Background: Local History
Portfolio assessment at SFCC began shortly after the state legislature infused substantial funds to assess outcomes at all levels of higher education. The Higher Education Coordinating (HEC) Board, concerned about the quality of Washington’s college graduates, created a policy initiative in Resolution 89-1 directing all tertiary institutions to assess educational outcomes and allocating each community college $60,000 to begin that assessment work. As a result of that infusion, one faculty member traveled to New York for the National Testing Network in Writing meeting in November 1990, at which Pat Belanoff of SUNY-Stony Brook and Roberta Camp of ETS talked about writing portfolios. Belanoff and Elbow had already described their portfolio assessment work in *CCC*, but casual conversation about the practical concerns as well as the theoretical advantages of portfolio assessment was everywhere at that conference.

Academic departments provide curious collections of institutional history, exigency, and idiosyncrasy. This rich reality meant that institutionalizing competency portfolios in our first-year composition course would encounter resistance. First, SFCC had no exit assessment in place; thus portfolios would not improve upon an existing assessment. Second, many faculty had been teaching assistants at the regional state university where a department-wide impromptu exit essay was required, and they were decidedly averse to replicating that procedure. Third, a few faculty feared that portfolio assessment would use student writing to judge pedagogic performance. For these reasons, the political and rhetorical issue was to make portfolio assessment attractive to the department. We taught the only required class in the college, enrolled the highest number of students, relied on the largest cadre of adjunct faculty, and had adopted three senior faculty whose programs had folded. (As a consequence of the collective bargaining agreement, these teachers had B.A.’s in English and were qualified for a second RIF unit in English.) Because one of us had gone to a National Testing Network meeting and had practiced close listening in order to write an ethnographic dissertation, she spent time interviewing teachers of advanced composition to elicit the writing skills they deemed essential for first-year students to acquire to succeed in English 102. Listening and paraphrasing accurately, taking notes conspicuously, and reporting the conversations at department meetings allayed people’s fears. In spring quarter 1991, SFCC piloted portfolio assessment in five sections of English 101.

The Outcomes Assessment Committee funding portfolio assessment promulgated the fact that the assessment of students’ work would never be used as an indirect means of assessing
faculty performance. That assurance assuaged faculty fears; nevertheless, seeing colleagues’ expectations of students is a powerful change agent. During that pilot term, we discovered at the midterm reading that one instructor (transferred into the English when her department was dissolved) was teaching paragraph development halfway through English 101; she had yet to assign any essays even though they were the explicit focus of the course. That misunderstanding of the curriculum created a tense but important follow-up conversation about the department’s expectations for text production in 101. In addition, a fundamental orientation to student work was established: students would not be penalized for teachers’ errors. As a result, those paragraphs were assessed as though they were essays, and the students had essays in time for the final portfolio reading.

Although portfolios were new and hot in assessment circles in the early 1990’s, we had to feel our way toward institutionalization. We decided to include three documents: a descriptive or narrative essay, a researched essay, and an impromptu. Our closest model was [Washington] State University, which fairly mimicked what Elbow and Belanoff did at SUNY-Stony Brook. Sue McLeod, then Director of Composition, had phoned Peter Elbow and gotten copies of their rubric and replicated the fourteen traits assessed. We did not want to assess fourteen traits (one of them “truth”) because it seemed likely that a problematic portfolio would be read twice and failed for different reasons; students, then, would find it confusing if not irksome that faculty could not describe the problems consistently. For that reason, we initially settled on five traits (focus, development, organization, sentence issues/syntax, and mechanics) which a decade later grew to six when we included audience appeal. Our assessment options were Passing, Not Passing, or Revision Required in one essay. Another difference in our practice and [W]SU’s was that we made the reading experience, not just the discussion of local standards, a communal one. Instead of norming all 101 readers together and then grouping them into pods of four or five to assess on their own time, we normed together and read together, cancelling classes so that we could share the work. In addition, in those flush years, the Outcomes Assessment budget provided funds for lunch as well as a $150 stipend to each teacher; we had no wish to add to the teaching or financial burdens our adjuncts faced.

One could suggest in retrospect that those funds were wisely invested. First, the stipend for extra work and the camaraderie that accompanied reading and eating together made portfolios appealing; consequently, faculty gradually signed on to the process voluntarily. All
newly-hired adjuncts were told this assessment practice constituted part of their assignment. In addition, we all learned from our colleagues’ writing prompts and the student work they elicited, and we borrowed and adapted them to our own classes. We often found the new members of the department prompted fine writing, and the request for an assignment happened during a conversation that affirmed their value to our department. Another appeal was the knowledge that our college was at the front of the pack in the state and the nation. Second, we had administrative support for our efforts. Whether that support came from the dean’s desire for greater grading consistency or from his desire to assure that satellite classes were held to account as were on-campus classes matters little. Either way, within five years, the cost of stipends moved out of the Outcomes Assessment budget because the dean wanted its cost to be covered by his budget. Within ten years, however, a new dean decided that the full-time faculty would not receive the stipend because assessing 101 essays constituted normal, not additional, duties. Surprisingly, there was little grumbling from the full-time faculty, evidence that portfolios were fully institutionalized and serving a commonly shared purpose: helping students discern the rhetorical values of the academy, helping teachers learn from one another, and helping the community articulate its shared standards.

This is not to say that the portfolios in every instance brought sweetness and light to our department. We have occasionally had contentious discussions during norming. The faculty member who was distressed in the pilot quarter that his student was failed and another instructor argued that portfolio assessment violated their academic freedom. For several years, their first-year classes were exempted from portfolios. Eventually, the department chair quit assigning them 101, and the complaint dissolved, so they have moved to the margins of the writing program. Whereas some faculty saw portfolios as an assault on their teaching, others saw it as a support for their pedagogy. In our early years, the portfolio of a troublesome student failed. He started the grade-appeal process that landed him, his instructor, and the director of composition in the dean’s office. It was possible to look through the portfolio and paraphrase what the instructor had said on drafts and what the assessors had seen in the portfolio—which the dean and the comp director did. A practice that threatened one instructor had become the sword and buckler of another. And so it goes in the post-modern world of higher education.
Assessing the Assessment: Reliability and Validity

By 2009, the drama around portfolios seemed to have played itself out. There was still the occasional tiff during norming sessions, and the catered lunches had given way to potlucks, but the portfolio had proved itself, more or less, to everyone in the department. So when the English Department needed to come up with ways to assess its progress toward its strategic objectives—in particular, support students improving their reading and writing skills—the portfolio was an obvious choice. Not so obvious was how to measure the portfolio’s contributions toward that objective. We had quarterly statistics of how many students passed and how many didn’t pass the portfolio assessment going back for nearly two decades. But how would that help us determine whether or not the portfolio was helping our students improve their reading and writing skills?

A standard approach to assessing an assessment is to measure its reliability and its validity. Reliability of portfolio ratings was arguably irrelevant in this case because our process was designed with safeguards against rater unreliability causing negative consequences: Not Passing ratings require a second and sometimes third reader; and students are allowed to revise and resubmit Not Passing essays for another reading. This left us with the task of assessing the validity of the portfolio process.

In his essay in “Toward a New Theory of Writing Assessment,” Brian Huot extrapolates principles of more valid writing assessment from the various “site-based, locally-driven procedures for evaluating student writing” (561); he urges that “we must also develop procedures with which to document and validate such assessment” (561). He emphasizes the shift toward viewing validity in light of consequences that Moss had documented in the theoretical work of Messick and Cronbach: “emergent procedures will need to employ more qualitative and ethnographic validation procedures like interviews, observations, and thick descriptions to understand the role an assessment plays within a specific program or institution” (561-62). Our process is no longer based on emergent procedures, but the methods put forward for validating our use of this process are no less appropriate now than they were then.

Classical validity theory offered three interrelated and interchangeable varieties of test validity:

Criterion Validity – test scores correlate with external criteria
Content Validity – questions/activities represent relevant subject area content
Construct Validity – test measures what it claims to measure

Limiting ourselves to classical validity theory, we could have looked for criterion validity in correlations between portfolio ratings and course outcomes (particularly English 102 and possibly other writing-intensive courses). We could have surveyed faculty members to affirm content validity (asking, for example, are instructors assigning impoverished tasks to generate portfolio documents that they would not otherwise assign?). But when we turned to construct validity, we encountered the limitations of classical validity theory. Our portfolio assessment has intended consequences beyond the scope of measuring a particular student’s writing abilities. That is to say, the portfolio achieves what Huot asks: for an assessment to demonstrate validity, “the decisions made on its behalf must have a positive effect on the educational environment” (qtd. in Cosgrove 313).

Contemporary validity theory, as articulated most persuasively by Samuel Messick, views validity as a unified concept with facets that are interrelated but not interchangeable; we can’t argue that a test is valid just because it demonstrates criterion validity despite the existence of evidence that it has negative consequences for a particular demographic group, for example. Messick defines validity as “an integrated evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of inferences and actions based on test scores or other modes of assessment” (13). This definition shifts the focus to the consequences of an assessment; moreover, it shifts the burden onto assessment developers and users to construct a multifaceted validation argument for a particular use of an assessment rather than selectively present only the most readily available and flattering data as “proof” of test validity.

The two main threats to the validity of a particular use of an assessment are construct-irrelevant variance and construct underrepresentation. Construct-irrelevant variance is related to the idea of reliability, but it’s larger because it emphasizes consequences. Scores should not be affected by variables that are not central to the construct one tries to measure. Construct underrepresentation most directly corresponds to classical notions of construct validity. Passing a written driving examination does not confirm an ability to drive a car safely; thus issuing a driver’s license solely on the basis of a written driving exam would lead to negative consequences.
The two threats to validity focused our research questions, which are based on the intentions and the consequences of our policy: 1) Why did we initiate a portfolio process at SFCC, and is it having the beneficial effects we hoped for? 2) Are there negative effects, and can these be mitigated?

In *Portfolio Preview*, an introduction to the process with a letter from the director of composition and several annotated sample portfolios, we tell our students that “SFCC is committed to the idea that students must write clearly and effectively if they are to succeed in college and in the professional world” and “[f]or that reason, composition teachers engage in a department-wide form of student evaluation called *portfolio assessment*.” We go on to say, “This assessment allows students to satisfy SFCC’s writing requirement on the basis of their best writing, writing they’ve had a chance to think about and revise, and it helps English teachers to increase the consistency of their grading.” Based on these published intentions, we could say that the construct being measured is the ability to write clearly and effectively. Furthermore, we hope that using this assessment will support the following positive outcomes:

1. Completion of the writing requirement is based on authentic samples of best writing, which faculty define as that which results from thoughtful revision.
2. Intra- and inter-sectional consistency of grading in English 101.

There are two additional outcomes implied by the above statements:

3. There is a measure of inter-sectional consistency of assigned writing tasks in English 101.
4. Students perceive the fairness of English 101 grading and, by extension, the SFCC writing requirement.

From this perspective, criterion and content validity became largely irrelevant. They were only relevant if we added a fifth outcome regarding English 102 and/or writing-intensive course performance:

5. Students who successfully complete 101 portfolio will outperform students who do not in English 102 and in other writing-intensive (W) courses.

Construct underrepresentation was addressed by Outcome 1. Construct-irrelevant variance was addressed in Outcomes 2, 3, and 4. Classical validity concerns were addressed by Outcome 5.

We had established measurable and meaningful outcomes of our portfolio process. We proposed to the department a mixed-method approach to the construction of a validation
argument for our use of the English 101 portfolio process. Outcomes 1 and 4 would be measured via surveys of English 101 students. Outcomes 2 and 3 would be measured via interviews with English 101 instructors. And Outcome 5 would be measured via transcript analysis.

Students’ Assessment of Portfolios: Outcomes 1 and 4

The student survey (Appendix A) was administered in November 2009, and results were sent to English Department faculty members in December 2009. English 101 instructors distributed the survey to 124 students; 88 were collected, resulting in a response rate of 71%. The following findings suggested that the portfolio process does contribute substantially to Outcomes 1 and 4.

1. 53% of students made a deliberate selection about what to include in the portfolio based on their sense of their best writing.
2. 96% of students revised work for the portfolio, and 73% revised substantially.
3. 87% of students felt the portfolio was at least a pretty good representation of their writing abilities.
4. 93% of students believed 101 grading was fair, and 54% believed the portfolio helped instructors grade fairly.
5. 41% of students wrote additional comments on the survey instrument. One third of those comments consisted of praise for the process and/or the instructor; two thirds consisted of questions and complaints about the process and/or the instructor.

Based on these findings, we suggested to faculty members that it was important to explain to students the portfolio process, its intent, and its benefits early in the term. Because we had gone through the steps of constructing intended outcomes of the portfolio process and measuring for progress toward those outcomes, instructors had that information to share with their students. From a consequences perspective, the assessment of the assessment was already starting to pay off.

**Curricular Efficacy: Outcome 5**
The student survey results showed us we were progressing nicely toward Outcomes 1 and 4. Instructor interviews would give us information about Outcomes 2 and 3. At this point, we need to talk about Outcome 5 because some readers would find this to be the most pressing concern.

While on the face of it our English 101 portfolio process may appear to be oriented toward summative assessment (and indeed, it does serve as a sort of exit assessment since a student who does not pass portfolio cannot go on to English 102, the research-based writing course), we know that it is also very much about formative assessment. That is, we hope it’s an escalator at least as much as it’s a gate. Outcome 5—students who successfully complete 101 portfolio will outperform students who do not in English 102 and in other writing-intensive courses—gives us a way to measure the capacity of the portfolio process to fulfill both of these functions.

Most, but not all, students at SFCC participate in the English 101 portfolio. Students may transfer composition course credits from other institutions or earn credit via success on the Advanced Placement test and thereby go straight to English 102. Each summer, three sections of English 101 are offered, and those sections do not participate in the collective portfolio process. Each of these two groups represents a cohort whose performance in English 102 and other writing-intensive courses can be compared with the performance of the cohort that participates in the portfolio process. Also, since English 101 is not a prerequisite for courses designated as writing intensive (W), students who take W courses before taking 101 represent another cohort for comparison.

To determine progress toward Outcome 5, we looked at two measures of performance in English 102 and W courses: students’ grades in those courses and DFWI rate, which denotes the proportion of students who do not earn a grade of 2.0 or better (on a 4-point scale) in a given course. These measures were calculated for two full academic years (2008/2009 and 2009/2010) for our four cohorts:

1. students who took English 101 in the summer
2. students who took English 102 but did not take or pass English 101 with a 2.0+ grade
3. students who took W courses but did not take or pass English 101 with a 2.0+ grade prior to the W courses
4. students who passed a non-summer, SFCC English 101 section with a 2.0+ grade who had not previously taken a W course

We found that students who participated in and passed the English 101 portfolio before taking English 102 or a W course (that is, Cohort 4) averaged higher grades and had lower DFWI rates in English 102 and W courses than students who did not complete the portfolio before taking those other writing courses. These comparative gains were not always statistically significant (see Tables 1-4), but they followed the same trend: students do better in more advanced writing courses after they participate in the English 101 portfolio.

Table 1: GPA in English 102

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Student Count</th>
<th>Average Grade</th>
<th>Significant? (p&lt;.05)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cohort 2</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cohort 3</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>n/a (control)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: DFWI Rate in English 102

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Student Count</th>
<th>DFWI Rate</th>
<th>Significant? (p&lt;.05)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 2</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 3</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>n/a (control)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: GPA in W Courses
Table 4: DFWI Rate in W Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Student Count</th>
<th>DFWI Rate</th>
<th>Significant? (p&lt;.05)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 3</td>
<td>917</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 4</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>n/a (control)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We are English professors, not statisticians (our Office of Institutional Research conducted the tests for statistical significance), but we see more evidence in this quantitative analysis in support of Outcome 5 than against it. Looking through a classical validity lens at the portfolio as a gatekeeping exit assessment, the fact that students who pass portfolio tend to outperform students who do not in other writing-intensive courses indicates the assessment has content validity (that is, it measures relevant academic writing skills) and criterion validity (performance in portfolio correlates with performance in other writing courses). The failed tests of significance (arguably an artifact of small n more than anything else) impose limits on the generalizations we can make based on this evidence. But looking through a contemporary validity lens for consequences of the assessment, we see no evidence in these numbers that the English 101 portfolio process deters students from succeeding in later writing courses. Instead, the numbers are consistent with the notion that the process not only identifies those students who will succeed in other writing courses but may also somehow contribute to that success. However, in order to support that inferential leap, we had to learn more about how the portfolio process influenced the English 101 course across its various sections.

Faculty Experience: Outcomes 2 and 3
In the third part of our mixed-methods assessment, we interviewed instructors of English 101 to see whether we were meeting portfolio Outcomes 2 and 3: Did the portfolio increase the consistency of assignment and grading across sections of English 101? Because the process was about twenty years old and the staff was composed of old hands and new arrivals, we decided to ask everyone’s opinions about these outcomes.

One of the authors, a returning adjunct instructor, volunteered to conduct the interviews of faculty. She was the ideal candidate for this work, coupling familiarity with faculty and little authority. Interviewees were assured that their digitally recorded interviews would be transcribed anonymously before being sent *en masse* to the composition director for analysis. Every instructor of English 101—thirty-three in all—was interviewed. The interviewer met with each instructor alone in her office to conduct the interviews orally, using a standard interview script (Appendix B). Interviews ranged from 15 to 50 minutes, and two interviewees opted to answer their questions in writing.

Useful trends emerged in the interviews that informed us of how portfolio is meeting our goals for Outcomes 2 and 3, how it affects our pedagogy in other ways, and what concerns instructors have about the portfolio process that could be addressed.

**Outcome 2: Inter-and Intra-sectional Grading Consistency**

Portfolio does affect our grading. Most instructors stated that the process establishes our view of what “C” work is in a college writing class, the demarcation point between passing and not passing at portfolio reading. Some also thought that the portfolio system helped prevent grade inflation. As one instructor said, “I think it helps me be . . . harder in grading. And I think that I’m keeping to a more consistent standard, honestly. It helps me do that. I can certainly sort of fall in love with a piece of writing and be attracted by the creativity and imagination and tend to overlook some of the things that I know are lacking in what the student needs to succeed later on. I think the portfolio helps me stay on center better.” Another instructor agreed: “Portfolio keeps my grading standards in place. A bleeding heart, I would be tempted to grade on effort or industry more than I do with portfolio present. As it is, I am able to make a clear and useful boundary between process and product, and between the person and his or her writing. I can
communicate to the students: I like you and some of what you write and I want to help you make it better, while at the same time still holding a cold, objective standard of what is acceptable college-level writing and what is not. I can do both roles (good and bad parent) because of portfolio.” Both these instructors and others commonly view portfolio as a way to stay objective, to mitigate their subjective attachments to the students’ writing processes, and to allow an objective look at product.

Other instructors expressed concern that grading standards are not in fact normalized by the process since there is a wide divergence in the difficulty of the writing tasks instructors assign. One instructor laments, “We still have problems with grade inflation—you know, the nearly illiterate kid in one’s 102 class who earned a 3.8 in 101. That stuff persists, and as much as I had hoped portfolios would be a panacea, they have not proved to be.” There have been times when a paper that has received a “B” from the instructor is failed in portfolio by another instructor. Still, most instructors agreed that there was growing consensus about what a “C” grade is. “I don’t think that norming has made us magically consistent graders across sections, but I do think with the exception of a couple outliers that we have a strong departmental sense of the ‘C’ grade. We may vary wildly in what we consider an A and an F, but we have fairly strong agreement in the center of the scale.” This last comment echoes a sentiment often expressed publicly during portfolio norming sessions—that we are not attempting to evaluate whether an essay is A quality or not; our only goal is to identify and agree on what constitutes a C essay.

Instructors also expressed some anxiety about giving a grade to a piece of student writing and then later having that grade be contradicted by a reader in the portfolio reading. One instructor noted that she has stopped grading students’ papers before portfolio because “I don’t want to be undermined in my grading, here.” While some instructors felt that this sapped their authority in the classroom, it also shapes our pedagogy by further institutionalizing a portfolio-based, revision-centered process in the classroom. One instructor sums up this view: “My pedagogy has definitely been affected because where in some quarters I have chosen to grade each essay and grade a formal revision, over time I’ve become more of a portfolio-style grader, because of our portfolio system, delaying grading assignments until after the 101 portfolio assessments and going through several smaller revision steps.” Subjecting one’s grading to the
scrutiny of colleagues can be painful, but as these instructors suggest, it may actually improve practice.

**Outcome 3: Inter-sectional Consistency of Writing Tasks**

The types of assignments we give are affected by portfolio. Most teachers agreed that the portfolio readings have improved their own writing assignments over time by exposing them to new ideas and standards. They further agreed that sharing prompts each quarter has increased the overall quality of prompts, making them more creative, more challenging, and better designed to promote student success. As one faculty member explained, “Portfolio has a great influence on my curriculum. I know that my assignments will be under my peers’ scrutiny twice a quarter, so in the same way that portfolio forces our students to consider audience in the way they frame their papers, I put a great deal more consideration into my prompts than I would without portfolio. When I’ve developed a new assignment, I always ask whether it passes ‘portfolio muster,’ that is, would those I respect, respect this assignment.” Some are downright enthusiastic about the sharing of prompts: “Okay—this is absolutely my favorite part of portfolio. I love looking at everyone’s assignments and getting ideas and I love reading the student papers that come out of really interesting assignments, and my hope is that sometimes if someone has a weaker assignment that they’ve put through the portfolio, that that person will be able to identify the weaknesses of that assignment as a result.” Colleagues also feel that reading other teachers’ prompts in portfolio allows them to get a clear sense of what expectations are appropriate for a 101-level college course. “It’s really easy to see which [assignments] are too easy and which ones are over the head of a freshman, and so I think it has that same calibrating effect, to make sure that I’m not asking too much of . . . or asking too little of a freshman.” It seems that disclosure of what we are teaching in our 101 courses leads not only to norming of expectations, but also perhaps to increased quality of assignments in terms of innovative topics and approaches. We polish our own assignments for sharing and encounter a steady stream of new assignments each quarter.

However, the interviews also reflected some interdepartmental disagreement about assignment types. While at one time most assigned a narrative or descriptive essay as the first
assignment, now portfolio norms cause most to dive into text-based assignments immediately. Some instructors expressed incredulity that narrative and descriptive essays are still being assigned at all whereas others found it pedagogically suspect to require text-based assignments in the first weeks of the quarter. The latter group suggested the value of narrative essays in helping students find their writing voices. “I feel like sometimes my assignments are bound by the requirements of the portfolio and could be actually better if they weren’t. I, coming from a creative writing background, would like to do a little bit more narrative writing, develop voice, incorporate text not feeling like I had to incorporate text so quickly . . . that would be my preference, but I cannot go at that pace because of portfolio.” These restrictions on assignment type and pacing are worth reflecting on as a department as this attempt to normalize our products for assessment might reduce creative growth in other, less valued, types of writing pedagogy; nevertheless, this disagreement reveals intersectional consistency, albeit begrudged.

Instructors wondered if the discrepancies in our assignments don’t decrease the consistency in evaluating what is “C” level work in a portfolio. Members of both groups, those who value a narrative essay and those who prefer more text-based first assignments, expressed unhappiness at the resulting gap in expectations for students, wondering if students don’t suffer lower ratings for harder assignments in the portfolio assessment. Some feel that the discrepancy between assignments is unfair to students. One instructor said, “It doesn’t seem like a fair assessment when we all create our own prompt. Because one student is passing because they can do my little simplistic expository essay prompt, just for an example. And another student is asked to do something far more complicated like I see in some of these prompts. That doesn’t to me quite seem like a fair assessment. And yet a lot of instructors say ‘academic freedom.’ But I still say at least for that in-class portion, asking all students to write an essay on a particular topic that’s the same for everybody would create for us that fair, ‘Can this student do this?’ [task] And that I think would be better.” Some instructors suppress a desire to fail a student based on simple assignments that do not elicit college-level analytical work. One instructor says, “I do have one big concern: There are broad differences in the levels of assignments that come through, and on occasion, an essay does not really meet college-level academic standards, in my opinion; therefore, it should not pass.” Addressing this concern about the discrepant levels of cognition and analysis required by different assignments is an ongoing problem our department has yet to resolve.
In general, there is some chafing against the constraints of portfolio, which limits the types of assignments and course layouts that will work in a ten-week quarter, given the portfolio expectations. One teacher says, “The portfolio process is somewhat restrictive. The deadlines and required assignments can determine course content and how that content is presented to students. The result is a homogenization of the educational process which detracts from the creativity inherent in good teaching.” Another says the portfolio makes her “feel like I’m teaching to the WASL1. I feel like with portfolio that I’m just constantly teaching to the test rather than teaching to good writing.” While this analogy is a bit suspect, as our portfolio requirements certainly allow broader content range than the WASL, the concern about over-focusing teacher and student energy on products rather than on the writing process during the quarter is worth considering.

The pace of instruction is affected by portfolio. Most teachers take students through the first draft of a text-based essay early in the quarter to get it ready for the Week Five midterm portfolio reading. As a result, most assignments are limited to 3-5 pages, with short or long assignments impractical for the portfolio setup. One instructor notes that “Our portfolio process is kind of a pressure cooker to front load the course. So I make sure that by the second week I have an essay completed already, which is a little uncomfortable but jump-starts things.” In a less positive vein: “My course structure is of course affected by the timing of portfolio. Because the philosophy of portfolio is to have students select their best work, I have them write two of everything that could go in to portfolio, so they’re selecting between two essays: two midterms, two finals, two impromptus. . . . This is a negative for students in some respects; we focus a lot of time how to ready essays for portfolio or ‘C’ standards and so we have less time to polish essays to higher standards.” These comments represent two sides of a perceived coin: Portfolio pushes us to do more in a quarter, and portfolio rushes us too much for mastery. Because ideal course content and pacing exist only in teachers’ minds and because every choice made in a 10-11-week quarter means something else is lost, it seems important to continue negotiating our shared values.

Unexpected Outcomes
Despite these critiques, most instructors like the portfolio assessment, think it improves their teaching, and want to continue doing it. Overall assessment of the portfolio process was positive. 91% (30 out of 33) of the transcripts are primarily positive about the process. One instructor summed up this attitude succinctly: “I think it is again one of the few tools we have in place to make sure we’re all rowing the boat the same way . . . or similar enough to make sure that if you take a cross-section of 500 students, that generally they’re all getting the same skill set.” Another instructor noted, “The importance of portfolio is the conversations it forces us to have on a regular basis and the way in which it puts student writing, coupled with our practice of teaching, at the center of our department always.” Yet another: “While I have taught at other institutions, you could go so far as to say that the Falls mentored me into my teaching style through the portfolio process in those early years. Standards and attitudes are conveyed through norming, and the sharing of assignments spreads solid concepts that we can all use to tweak our own assignments.” Portfolios, then, would seem to offer instructors as well as students formative feedback that can improve their work.

Not only does the process provide instructors with feedback, but also it increases cohesiveness and collegiality. Most of the faculty spoke favorably of the opportunity to get together with colleagues to read 6-7 hours’ worth of student portfolios. They like the conviviality of it. As our offices are spread across four locations on campus and two satellite centers, this is a valuable chance for professional interaction. “I think the portfolio process is one of the few ways we have as a department to be cohesive. To share assignments, to see what other people are doing.” This sentiment echoed across the interviews: “Even just getting instructors together twice a quarter to exchange ideas and to norm, I think that’s a terrific thing—that’s helped a lot for building cohesiveness and also for being able to exchange pedagogy . . . different approaches.” The portfolio process was seen as more of a binding than a separating force. “I think that portfolio assessment is very good for our effectiveness and cohesiveness as a department. In fact, I think that’s probably the most important thing about the portfolio process ultimately.” Colleagues seemed in near agreement that coming together to share our work in this way was vastly better than not coming together at all.

Even when our portfolio norming leads to conflict among teachers, it may still increase our collegiality. One instructor observes that “with any large group of people, with any family, that
you bring together, there’s bound to be sort of scuffling and tuffling and rolling around and
going ‘Nyah’ and if there’s not that, I think that you have sterilized the environment and that’s a
bad thing. The center can hold even if everybody’s sort of going ‘Nyah nyah nyah.’
Because it means we’re engaged. Everybody’s not spinning off in their own universes.
That’s when it’s bad, when everybody’s sort of doing their own thing. That we come together
twice a quarter and snip at each other is a pretty good thing.” Naturally, not everyone is as
sanguine about disagreements. Some see the norming session at the start of portfolio reading as
an occasion for posturing if not intimidation. “For me sometimes it sets the day off on an
unpleasant note because there may be some kind of heated discussions during norming, and
so if that’s one of the only times you’re coming together as a department during the quarter, it
feels like some people are trying to show that they are the toughest teacher, and I don’t
really enjoy that. It just is discouraging to me. I want to share assignments, talk about
students, talk about pedagogy, how can we do this better, but it seems that there are too many
people—I don’t know ‘preen’ is just the word that came to me.” Our responses to the subtle
disagreements that arise in norming our assessment of a real student essay seem to affect faculty
quite personally. Some enjoy the chance to persuade or debate whereas others find the process
unpleasant or threatening. Ultimately, as long as we derive value from the process, we will
continue open discussions despite discomfort.

Many interviewees suggested that the portfolio system promotes a positive teacher-student
relationship. Most believed that the portfolio system allowed them to have a coaching
relationship with students, externalizing the “bad cop” a bit from the classroom. “You need to pass
the English 101 portfolio, so let me help you,” is a different teaching attitude than “Your
paper earns an F. Rewrite it.” As one instructor said, “We’re looking at their work in a more
objective and rigorous way because we’re talking about what our standards are. And they’re
looking at our standards and realizing that it’s just not mean old Mr. [name omitted] wanting to
give me a D today. And I also like the way that it changes my role as an instructor. I’m not at
the top looking down as an authority dictating to them. I’m more like a coach who is helping
them get over the bar.” This ability for teacher and student to stand side by side and focus on a
common outside goal, rather than the student fixating on “what the teacher wants,” was
commonly expressed. Said one instructor, “It’s such a clear goal to the students that has nothing
to do with the teacher. They have this outside audience that’s not the teacher. That changes the
nature of their focus. I think that’s a good thing.” This decreased focus on “what the teacher wants” has been a valuable side effect of our portfolio process. A larger, more authentic audience has been provided to students, and the individual classroom teacher has shifted slightly from the position of judge to that of assistant.

**Concerns about the Portfolio Process**

The interviews also revealed several aspects of our portfolio reading that we may consider improving. First, there is the concern about norming noted above. One common perception was that people were harder evaluators in norming than they were during the reading of students’ essays, out of a desire to avoid professional embarrassment or to appear smart and tough with more demanding colleagues. “Everything I teach in the back of my head is teaching to the portfolio assessment, profiling potential faculty, how they’re going to react to what my students are writing. So I really focus on audience awareness in the class maybe more so than I normally would. I say ‘You’re writing to a hostile audience’ because usually they are.” Another asks whether norming is always useful: “There are times when I wonder how necessary it is to [norm] every quarter, because I think when you’ve been here a long time, you really are getting familiar with the standards of the department.” We need to discover whether the perceptions are located mostly in faculty who fear the judgment of colleagues or faculty who feel our norming process is overdone and repetitive and perhaps adapt our norming accordingly.

Various concerns about our use of an impromptu as a third essay arose. Students each wrote for two fifty-minute periods on an impromptu prompt, producing an essay without instructor assistance. The practical assessment value and pedagogical value of this impromptu came into question in the portfolio interviews. Some felt that we were not actually evaluating these in portfolio, but letting them slide. Others felt that it is pedagogically suspect in a revision-focused class to put such emphasis on timed writing. Five interviewees suggested getting rid of the impromptu altogether.

While the department chair and the composition director both assure faculty that the portfolio assessment was never intended as a tool for instructor evaluation, there is a common belief among instructors that their students’ collective performance in portfolio reflects on the overall
quality of their teaching, in the eyes of their colleagues and the composition director, who collects tally sheets reporting portfolio results by section. Some new faculty were speaking of their current experience, and long-time faculty were speaking of past experience, but the feeling that the results of students’ portfolio performance would be used to evaluate teacher performance was prevalent. Faculty spoke of worrying about what “their” pass rate would be at each reading. One commented: “Even though we say it’s an assessment of the students, not the faculty, if you’re . . . if you have a lot of verdict sheets back on the failing table, I know newer faculty who have taken that hard before.” Another viewpoint: “I’ve never heard it discussed in the tenure process how have your students done in portfolio, that kind of thing, but I think it’s definitely an informal assessment tool . . . because it’s so important to what we do, it’s such a central part. If you’re going to teach 101 here and you’re not going to honor the portfolio process you probably shouldn’t teach 101 here. And if you see that people are expecting more of students than you do and you see people do it across the department then you should step up your expectations or maybe go teach somewhere else. So that’s kind of assessment and it’s not like we’re backing people up in the corners, but we have high expectations of students and if they don’t share them, they should.”

The portfolio process conveys our high standards for students in our department, and perhaps, as this interviewee suggests, it is only natural that the process creates high standards for faculty. It seems to be the presence of these visible collective standards that is making faculty feel assessed, rather than any formal commentary or action by department leadership, who do not scrutinize how any one teacher’s students fare in a portfolio reading. Here are the words of a faculty member who has accepted that natural assessment after years on the job: “I think that . . . you always walk away from it feeling somewhat assessed yourself. And in a way that might be good. Any instructor wants to always be thinking ‘How can I do this better?’”

Finally, there is a fair amount of concern that while the portfolio process was institutionally supported when it began, with full-timers as well as part-timers being paid for the hours spent reading portfolios, and with food catered by the college, now only part-timers are paid an hourly rate for portfolio reading, and food is provided by participants in the form of a potluck lunch. “What has become apparent in the last couple of years is that we need to be treated nicely on such days when we have these marathon reading sessions. Breakfast and lunch [are] important.
If we don’t feel like the college is coughing up a bit of money to support our nourishment in that process then we feel a bit neglected.”

Consequences

The instructor interviews provided us with evidence that the portfolio process was helping the department make progress toward Outcomes 2 and 3. Responses to the interview questions helped us see how and to what extent the 101 portfolio fostered consistency of assignments and grading across sections of English 101. This allowed us to construct plausible explanations for the correlations between portfolio performance and later writing course performance we uncovered in our quantitative transcript analysis. English 101 effectively prepares students for later academic writing challenges because it is an ever-evolving, collectively (re-)designed course. The impetus and development space for that ongoing evolution is provided by the portfolio process.

Interviewing 33 composition instructors, transcribing those interviews, and mining the transcripts for patterns of response were arduous, time-consuming labors. But it was an investment of resources that paid immediate dividends as well as, we hope, added long-term value to our portfolio process. In the category of immediate dividends, we would place the pedagogical reflection spurred by the interview questions and the collegiality of the department enhanced by the clear demonstration that everyone’s opinion is valued. In the category of long-term value added, we would place our responses to the patterns of concern identified in the instructor interview transcripts.

We suspect that anyone who has participated in collective assessment has encountered the phenomenon of reviewers finding it easier to find fault in the performances of other instructors’ students than in the performances of their own students. This habit/orientation/experience may be an inevitable corollary to the phenomenon of instructors taking on the role of coach or mentor when helping students prepare to meet the challenges of external assessment. While the latter is often lauded as a benefit of such assessment processes (and has indeed been lauded as such in our own portfolio process), the former can present itself as an unpleasant aspect of those processes. It’s true that the more objective perspective of a reviewer other than the student’s own instructor is largely what motivates the development of the coaching relationship, so it certainly is not an entirely negative aspect of collective assessment.
However, as we discovered through our interviews, some instructors suspect posturing during norming sessions, and that perception can diminish the usefulness of the norming conversations. To address this finding, we re-affirmed our commitment to a locally and collectively developed rubric as the codification of our shared standards. As a result, norming sessions at the beginning of collective reading days didn’t suddenly become kumbaya campfire moments, but several department members have expressed that they are less stressful and (possibly because they are) more grounded in agreed upon principles. This will continue to be a challenging aspect of the portfolio process. It’s not a fix it and forget it dynamic. But talking about it openly has helped the department address it more effectively.

We took a similar approach to the impromptu essay component of the portfolio, which had been identified through the instructor interviews as an object of substantial concern. In response, we passed around a copy of Ann Del Principe’s 2010 *TETYC* article, “Variations in Assessment, Variations in Philosophy: Unintended Consequences of Heterogeneous Portfolios” and held a salon to provide time and space to discuss the issues she raises and their relevance to our own portfolio process. Del Principe concludes that developmental writing programs should either drop the portfolio or drop the impromptu from the portfolio (19). She bases this decision on a problem created by heterogeneous portfolios, which cause readers to read very differently, calling the reliability of holistic ratings into question. At SFCC, we don’t employ holistic ratings; each component of the portfolio can be singled out as not meeting departmental standards. Nonetheless, discussing Del Principe’s article helped the department to articulate what was valued in the impromptu essay and what problems were created by using it in the assessment. It provided a hedge against too much assistance allowing a student who was not ready to move on prematurely. It was also seen as an opportunity to develop through practice important impromptu writing skills that would be useful in other timed writing situations (e.g., in-class essay exams). But it also seemed to contradict the emphasis on revision that is an integral aspect of the English 101 course (the first course learning outcome states that students will be able to “recognize that writing is a process requiring thoughtful reconsideration and revision”) and to steal class time away from that and other valued activities.

After extended conversation, the department decided to remove temporarily the impromptu essay from the portfolio. Instructors would still be free to assign impromptu writing tasks if they found value in them, but students would not be required to include impromptu
essays in their portfolios. After a few quarters of piloting this revised portfolio, the department decided to continue the pilot for another year in order to collect more data to support a more long-term decision. We may find that we have made the portfolio stronger, or we may find that we have “fixed” something that wasn’t broken. But it’s important to note that our approach to this concern demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement through ongoing measurement of consequences.

There were other concerns noted in the interviews with which we continue to wrestle. The sense of instructors being evaluated based upon their students’ portfolio performance and/or the quality of their assignment prompts may never be entirely removed from the process. The composition director and department chair routinely need to remind faculty members that there is no mechanism in place for such evaluation.

Another concern revolves around money. In the 1990’s, the state was sending money to the colleges for outcomes assessment, and that money funded stipends for portfolio readers and catered lunches at the readings. That revenue stream has dried up. But college administrators have affirmed their commitment to outcomes assessment by continuing to fund stipends for adjunct faculty members and more modest lunches. It’s not ideal, and it’s not necessarily something that can be fixed. But perhaps there was value in affirming instructors’ sense that things had changed, not always for the better.

A decade ago, James Slevin examined the faculty’s role in assessment, arguing not only that it must be “engaging intellectual work” but that composition itself is an important matter. “The first year course should not be foundational to but rather organic with the rest of the curriculum; it should not ground but enact the intellectual work of the university; it should not anticipate but begin the students’ education” (288). SFCC’s investigation of portfolios refreshed our understanding of our work, allowing us to see teaching as enacting the work of the college; it gave us a way to understand why we’ve inched away from narrative and descriptive writing and toward text-based writing: we are beginning the students’ higher education in a way that is organic with the rest of the curriculum. Slevin would have assessment pay attention to issues such as “intellect, intelligence, imagination, wonder, contemplation, truth, inquiry, and collegiality” (291)—terms notably absent from the 1999 AAHE assessment conference he
attended. It would be the purest self-flattery to say that we attended to all those issues by analyzing our 101 portfolio, but attend to collegiality we did—in spades—enough to modify procedures and continue to rethink our practice. Slevin would seem an unlikely bedfellow for the likes of Moore, O’Neill, and Huot, but not an impossible partner. In “Creating a Culture of Assessment in Writing Programs and Beyond,” they assert, “Because assessment is central to teaching and learning in general (Johnston; Moss, “Shifting”; Shepard) and to writing in particular (Huot, (Re)Articulating; White, Teaching), and because the stakes are so high for us and our students, WPAs and other writing faculty must find ways to participate, wisely and well, in this powerful activity” (W 110). We did our best to participate, wisely and well, in the assessment of our department’s long-standing and most powerful writing assessment. We discovered that our portfolio was having beneficial consequences, our assessment of it had beneficial consequences, and our response to that assessment was guided by our desire to bring about even more beneficial consequences. These benefits are what mixed-method validation study has to offer.
Note

1Washington Assessment of Student Learning, a test administered in grades 4, 8 and 11 to public school students.

Works Cited


Elbow, Peter and Pat Belanoff. “Portfolios as a Substitute for Proficiency Examinations.”


Appendix A – Student Survey

You have been selected to help the English Department evaluate its English 101 portfolio process. The selection process was arbitrary; the 5th, 10th, 15th, and 20th students on each class roster are being given surveys. Your responses will be completely anonymous. Please do not put your name or SID on this form. After completing the form, please deliver it to the English Department Office in Building 5, Room 119. Thank you very much.

1. How did you select which essays to include in your English 101 portfolio?
   a) I included everything I wrote for the class.
   b) I included what I consider to be my best writing.
   c) I included what my instructor told me to include.
   d) I consulted with my instructor and then made my decision.
   e) Other (please explain): ________________________________

2. How much did you revise the essays you included in your English 101 portfolio?
   a) I fixed typos and other errors marked by my instructor and/or classmates.
   b) I didn't revise the essays I included in my portfolio.
   c) In addition to fixing errors, I added, deleted, and/or moved content.
   d) Other (please explain): ________________________________

3. How do you feel about your portfolio as a representation of your writing abilities?
   a) My portfolio accurately represents the best I can do at this point in my development as an academic writer.
   b) My portfolio is a pretty good representation of the best writing I can do.
   c) My portfolio does not represent my best work (please explain why not):
      __________________________________________________________

4. How fair are English 101 grades?
   a) Grades are fair, but I don’t think the portfolio process has anything to do with it.
   b) Grades are fair, and the portfolio process helps English instructors grade fairly.
   c) The grade I receive for this course will not be fair (please explain why not):
      __________________________________________________________

Please feel free to share anything else you’d like us to consider on the back of this form.
Appendix B – Instructor Interview Script

Have you taught English 101 in a non-portfolio setting at another school?

a. If so, in what ways does our portfolio process affect your pedagogy, curriculum, and/or attitude about the course?

b. Overall, would you say portfolio has improved, undermined, or not affected our effectiveness and/or cohesiveness as a department?

2. If not, in what ways does the portfolio process influence your pedagogy, curriculum, and/or attitude about the course?

3. If you have taught English 101 during summer session, has the absence of portfolio affected your pedagogy, curriculum, and/or attitude about the course?

4. What effect, if any, do you think the portfolio process has on your grading?

5. What effect, if any, do you think the portfolio process has on grades across sections of English 101?

6. What effect, if any, do you think the portfolio process has upon the comparability of assignments across sections of English 101?

7. Is there anything about the portfolio process that should be changed?

8. Is there anything else we should consider as part of this assessment of the process?

9. What do you think new teachers experience as a result of the portfolio process? Is it helpful or does it feel like an assessment of them?
Appendix D

English Comp 101

Essay #1: A Summary/Response of a Video Clip about Globalization

Occasion: We know that our world is more interconnected today than ever before. “Globalization” is a word we hear often in the news and our college classes. For our Comp 101 class, we’re beginning our academic inquiry into this year’s Campus-Wide Theme – Human Rights: Dignity for All, a theme that will extend the reach of our studies into all parts of the globe. Therefore, it’ll be useful for us to understand what is meant by “globalization” as a foundation for future learning. We’ll watch several video clips on this topic (we have links to them on our class blog site). Then you will choose the one video that appeals to you most, later watching it again (and again?) with a more critical eye.

Writing Task: Write a 4 to 5-paragraph essay that is a summary of and response to the video you’ve chosen. Here’s a closer look at what each paragraph will need to achieve:

Intro paragraph: An intro paragraph has three primary jobs: to grab the reader’s interest, explain the issue at hand a bit, and end with a thesis that declares the essay’s focus and scope and what claim the writer makes of the subject. That first sentence, which we often call a “hook,” can take any form: you might relay a personal experience related to the essay’s focus, or start with a specific example of a news story that speaks to the subject, or you might start with a shocking statistic or two. The possibilities are limitless. Just say something with your own voice and “talk” directly to your reader. Add a sentence or two that says something further about the subject. For THIS essay, since you’re summarizing and responding to a video, you’ll next bring up the video that you watched, and you’ll give its title, the person or people who made it, and when it was produced. You might comment on any of these three things, pointing out something worth noting about them. All this will lead to your thesis, which, like all good thesis statements, will declare the focus of the essay – the claim you make about the video and your ultimate response to it.

Body paragraphs of summary: All body paragraphs start with a topic sentence, which for this paragraph needs to make a claim about the video to serve as a focal point for your summary. Is the video shocking? Informative? Annoying? Enlightening? Make your claim in the topic sentence (the first sentence) of the summary paragraph/s (1 or 2 paragraphs of summary). Develop the summary with plenty of details that prove your claim and make the video familiar to your readers. Be sure to detail both the visual and the textual components of the video—the video’s main ideas.

A body paragraph of your personal response: This paragraph also starts with a topic sentence that makes it clear that this paragraph is not a summary of the video, like the preceding one/s, but is a paragraph of your personal response to the video. What did this video make you think about? Make that claim in the topic sentence, then support it with examples from the video. Focus more on your IDEAS than on your FEELINGS. You can respond to the video’s content, or you can respond to the WAY it presents its message (does it communicate effectively with its images and text and audio track?).

Concluding paragraph: The final paragraph should do what all good conclusions do: it will present the main ideas you covered in the essay (this paragraph is like a mini-summary in its own right); it’ll restate your thesis/claim about the video, and it’ll finish with some final commentary from you that will leave a lasting impression on your reader.

Audience: Fellow classmates but also other English teachers who will not be familiar with the video. You’ll have to summarize the video effectively and give vivid descriptions of some details, which will also contextualize your response.
**Purpose:**
To re-acquaint you with the formal qualities of an essay.
To give you practice at summary writing.
To develop your own thoughts in response to what you learn.
To get you to think about an issue related to human rights.

**Essay Length:**
2-3 pages, double-spaced, using standard font (1 ½ pages is too short; 4 pages is too long)

Submit your essay in a flat pocket binder. Put outline, all drafts, and reader feedback in the left pocket. In the right pocket, put only your final draft to be graded and the evaluation sheet on top.
Appendix E

Paper 1: Definitional Analysis

Situation
Your boss has become concerned about “The Rise of the Millennials” and what Generational Theory means for her business. In order to be better informed, she has asked each of her employees to write an essay in which he/she places him/herself on the generational continuum. To do that, figure out what each generation values and where you fit.

Purpose
In writing this paper, you will be working on several course outcomes, among them
1. Brainstorm varied ideas to support a claim of manageable scope for a given assignment.
2. Annotate a text in order to effectively analyze and evaluate the ideas in that text.
6. Communicate with an academic audience to illustrate, analyze, or persuade.
7. Organize ideas in a purposeful and coherent manner.

What You Have To Do
Read the following two articles:


Based on the information presented in these articles, decide which generation you are. I’m not so much interested in where you should fit (in other words where your birthday puts you) but where you do fit. Do you fit primarily into the category Millennial/Gen Y? Or are you more Gen Xer or even Boomer? Then, once you have decided, use your own life to prove you belong to that category. Give evidence from what has happened to you, from the way you’ve interacted with others, from your personal experiences to prove to your audience that you are in fact what you say you are.

There are many categories that establish each generation, such as work/life balance, attention span, optimism/pessimism and so on. You may deal with any of those categories; however, one category that I want EVERYONE to deal with is how you relate to authority. Do you tend to challenge it? Be respectful of it? Understand the need for it? Buck against it? And how does that relationship with authority place you in one of the generational categories? This is the only aspect of generational theory you MUST address. Everything else is up to you.

Integrate at least two quotes from any of the articles listed on this assignment into your paper.

Format
The essay must be typed, double-spaced, 2.5-3 pages, in a readable 10-12 point font, with 1” margins and use two quotes from sources given to you. Format your paper using MLA style, including a Works Cited entry for the articles you chose. You will need to cite quotations in proper MLA format. We will be covering MLA extensively in the coming days.
Due Dates
Peer draft Tuesday, 1.13  Williamson draft Thursday, 1.15

Supplemental readings for further information if you want/need it—make sure you cite these if you use them.


Definitional Analysis Rubric

Focus: The introduction begins with a hook designed to attract the audience’s attention and introduces us to generational theory. The introduction points to why this might be important. The introduction contains a thesis sentence that clearly articulates which generation the writer believes he or she comes from, and the paper never strays from that thesis. The paper is tailored in its tone and language to your supervisor but avoid second person pronouns (you/your).

Development: The paper explores whichever generation is chosen thoroughly and convincingly; examples used are detailed and nuanced; examples are specific and generalities are avoided at all costs. Quotes from the article are appropriate and integrated smoothly, and accompanying analysis sheds light on why they are appropriate. The paper meets minimum length requirements.

Organization: The overall organization pattern of the body paragraphs is clear and easily understandable. Paragraph organization is determined by most effective placement and body paragraphs begin with transitions that logically connect the last reason discussed to the next reason. Paragraph integrity is consistent throughout. Sentence level organization avoids repetitious structure and makes logical connections from one sentence to the next. Quotes and paraphrases are integrated seamlessly into the text.

Ease of Reading: Clarity, gracefulfulness, and readability is evident. Prose is clear, avoids wordiness, chop, grammar tangles; reader doesn’t get lost and seldom has to slow down and reread. Excellence of editing and proofreading; no comma splices, run-ons, or fragments; no spelling errors or typos; no apostrophe, semi-colon, colon, or comma errors; no pronoun or subject-verb agreement errors; no usage errors; no parallelism errors; no verb tense errors; correct MLA page format, in-text citations, and Work(s) Cited page.
Appendix F

English Comp 101

Essay #2: A Formal Summary/Response of an Article

Occasion: As we continue our academic inquiry into this year’s Campus-Wide Theme, which focuses on human rights and dignity for all, your second essay assignment will give us the opportunity to read, summarize, and respond to a contemporary article that touches on the issue. You may choose either Roger De La Gaarde’s article “Americanization” or Anthony Giddens’ article “Globilization” in our International Views anthology for this essay assignment.

Writing Task: After reading the article and discussing it in class, write your own formal “Summary and Response” essay.

Intro paragraph: Your essay will need an intro paragraph that leads up to a thesis statement. Since this essay will have two primary parts (a summary and then your responses), your thesis will need to reflect those two parts: the first half will present the main idea of the article, and the second half will reflect your responses to it.

Body paragraphs:

The 1st two body paragraphs will contain your summary of De La Gaarde’s or Giddens’ article and your response to it. Be fair, accurate, and impartial as you present the article’s main ideas; do not add your own opinions or ideas in the summary (that comes later, to keep the two parts distinct). Be sure the topic sentences to the summary paragraphs make it clear that these paragraphs present the author’s ideas; include an acknowledgement phrase, mentioning the author by name, in these topic sentences.

The 2nd two body paragraphs will present two of your responses to the author’s ideas in the article. You might want to brainstorm a list of possible topics to respond to, then choose two from your list that you feel most strongly about or have the most ideas about. The topic sentences to these paragraphs should make it clear that these paragraphs present YOUR ideas in response to the article.

Concluding paragraph: Finish the essay with a concluding paragraph that sums up your main ideas (both the summary part and your response part) and restates your thesis/claim. Add some final commentary that indicates why this issue is important for us to be aware of and think about.

Audience: Fellow classmates but also other English teachers who will not have your familiarity with either of these two articles. Therefore, you’ll have to summarize De La Gaarde’s or Gidden’s essay effectively, which will also contextualize your responses. Both your classmates and your potential portfolio readers will be interested in what thoughts you have in response to published writer’s claims.

Purpose: To get you to think about issues related to globalization.
To give you the opportunity to practice summarizing and paraphrasing source material.
To develop your own thoughts in response to what you read.
To give you experience distinguishing your ideas from those of others in your writing.

Essay Length: 3-4 pages plus a Works Cited page, double-spaced, using 12-point font
**Due Dates:**
Mon 1/25: Outline – thesis and topic sentences (5 points)
Wed 1/27: Rough draft (10 points)
Fri 1/29: Revised draft (10 points)
Mon 2/1: Finished essay, submitted at the beginning of class

Turn in your essay in a flat pocket binder. Put all drafts and reader feedback in the left pocket. In the right pocket, put your final draft to be graded and the evaluation sheet.
Appendix G

Paper 2: Summary Response

Situation
The Associated Student Government of Spokane Falls Community College has recommended that in order to protect students, all applicable faculty syllabi include trigger warnings. Unwittingly, they have created a firestorm. Many people feel strongly on both sides of this issue, while others don’t know what the issue is about at all. In order to make sure this is something the students actually want, ASG have asked you to write an essay for The Communicator, the SFCC newspaper, in which you summarize two arguments, one on each side of the issue, and respond with your own opinion.

Purpose
In writing this paper, you will be working on several course outcomes, among them
3. Research, analyze, use, and document information and ideas to develop a position.
4. Analyze, select, and record relevant, valid details in light of particular rhetorical purposes to support claims.
5. Respond thoughtfully, precisely, and ethically to texts.
8. Demonstrate writing that is a systematic process requiring thoughtful reconsideration and revision.

What You Have To Do
Read the following two articles:


Summarize the arguments regarding trigger warnings. Then, form your own opinion based on what you’ve learned. Are trigger warnings a good thing or a bad one? Should those in authority protect college students from disturbing or offensive information, or should students’ rights to all information be protected? In your conclusion, consider the broader implications of your argument in different contexts. What does this mean outside the educational setting, such as for movie ratings systems, or helmet laws, or pornography laws? Essentially, how much should we be controlled? What is the best balance between having freedom from harm and the freedom to do/be?

Format

The essay must be typed, double-spaced, 3-4 pages, in a readable 10-12 point font, with 1” margins. Format your paper using MLA style, including a Works Cited entry for the articles you chose. You will need to cite quotations in proper MLA format. We will be covering MLA extensively in the coming days.

Due Dates
Peer draft Monday, 1.25  Williamson draft Thursday, 1.28

Supplemental Texts
You may use these texts to help form your response paragraph (and by may, I mean that it would be wise for you to read through them to get a better handle on this issue)


Appendix H

Essay #3: Informative Essay on a Controversial Issue

Occasion:
We’re now close to the mid-point of the quarter. You’ve had two experiences with essay writing to date; it’s now time to further develop your college-level writing abilities by learning how to incorporate source material into your essays. It’s also a good time for us to begin exploring in more depth some topics related to the complexities of globalization, human rights, and dignity for all. Be advised: This essay assignment does NOT ask you to write another summary-response paper. Rather, you’ll develop a few topics on your focused subject and develop each topic with material from a couple of sources.

Writing Task:
For your third essay, you’ll write an informative essay of 3 to 4 pages (plus a works cited page) on a topic related to globalization or human rights. Please choose a controversial topic that you can use for this objective report as well as for your persuasive argument, which you’ll write next on the same topic. Begin by locating at least 2 sources of information on this topic, through a search for articles in the ProQuest or Opposing Viewpoints database, an Internet search, and/or a search for a book using the electronic card catalog.

To accomplish this, you’ll need to focus on two goals: 1) to show your classmates and me that you have indeed learned about your chosen topic, and 2) to share your newfound knowledge with your readers—in other words, your job is to report on what those articles informed you about so you can teach us about it too. Therefore, your essay will need to have a narrowly focused thesis, so that you can develop your report with specific details and in the length limit of 4 pages. It is important that you treat both sides of the issue, remaining neutral as you report. Do not take sides (that’s for your next paper). Naturally, you’ll want to plot the subtopics of your paper clearly as you draft, so that each paragraph is well focused and developed and so contributes meaningfully to the discussion. Additionally, you’ll need to give credit to your sources by using acknowledgement phrases and in-text citations in the body of your paper and a works cited page at the end of your paper, following MLA formatting conventions.

Provide plenty of specific, well-detailed information—defined terms, studies, explanations, examples, expert testimony—and follow all we’ve studied this quarter about guiding your readers with an easy-to-follow essay structure and helpful guideposts within the paragraphs.

Audience:
Fellow classmates but also other English teachers who may not have your familiarity with the topic. Therefore, you’ll have to provide plenty of specific and detailed information. One way you can be informative is to let the information take center stage, and to not present any of your own opinions into the essay. It’ll be a challenge, but your audience wants your unbiased reporting. Present just the facts in this essay (you’ll get to be persuasive in the next one).

Purpose:
To learn more about a topic related to globalization or human rights.
To refine your abilities of paraphrasing and summarizing source material.
To learn how to integrate source material into a discussion lead by you in your paper.
To give you further experience distinguishing your ideas from those of others in your writing.
To refine your use of in-text citations and MLA formatting conventions and avoid plagiarism.

Essay Length: 3-4 pages plus a Works Cited page, double-spaced, using 12-point font

Due Dates:
Mon 5/10: Outline – thesis and topic sentences (5 points)
Wed 5/12: Rough draft (10 points)
Mon 5/17: Revised draft (10 points)
Wed 5/19: Finished essay, submitted at the beginning of class

Turn in your essay in a flat pocket binder. Put all drafts and reader feedback in the left pocket. In the right pocket, put your final draft to be graded and the evaluation sheet.
Appendix I

Paper 3: Persuasion

Situation
As a member of the Senatorial Election Team, 2010, it is your job to help get your candidate elected. Knowing that college students do not vote, the team has elected you, a college student, to write a paper in which you accomplish two tasks: convince your audience to vote, and convince your audience that when they vote, they should vote for your person. While such a task is somewhat daunting, it is also critical, as you know that a groundswell of support by the college-aged demographic will likely propel your candidate into one of the most powerful positions in the world. Thus, your decision about who to support could change the face of this planet.

Purpose
In writing this paper, you will develop many skills needed for further academic writing in this course and other courses:

• The ability to craft an argument that supports a thesis with carefully and gracefully integrated textual evidence
• The ability to integrate credible, academic research into your own argument
• The ability to thoroughly and thoughtfully analyze that evidence in a way that supports your thesis
• The ability to use analysis to support a persuasive claim.
• The ability to use counterargument to establish credibility.

What You Have To Do
Write a paper in which you convince college students to vote for the Senatorial candidate of your choice (that’s Murray or Rossi). To do this, you must simultaneously convince the most reluctant voters in our country to cast their ballots and convince them that your candidate is the best person for the job. You will need to research your candidate as well as his or her opponent, determine his or her stand on important issues, and convey that stand to your readers.

Format
The essay must be typed, double-spaced, 3-5 pages, in a readable 10-12 point font, with 1” margins. At least three credible, academic sources are required for this paper, integrated in proper MLA format. Make copies of all sources you use, highlighting the portions that make it into your paper, and submit those sources with your Williamson Draft. Williamson Drafts will not be accepted without these sources. You may count only one source from the candidate him or herself (the candidate’s web site or a commercial, for instance). Format your paper using MLA style, including Works Cited entries for any sources you use in your paper. You will need to cite quotations in proper MLA format. We will be covering MLA extensively in the coming days.

Due Dates
Peer draft (bring 4 typed copies of your paper draft):
Williamson draft:
Appendix J

Essay 4: Persuasive Argument on a Controversial Issue

Occasion: We’re now at the end of the quarter. It’s time to put all of the writing skills you’ve been developing into your final paper: clear and effective essay structure, integration of source material, the two-part documentation of in-text citations plus a Works Cited page….It’s also time for you to take a position on the narrowed topic related to globalization and human rights that you informed yourself about in the previous essay.

Writing Task: For your final essay, you will write a persuasive argument on the same topic you wrote your informative report on. This time, you will take a position on the issue and support your position with a persuasive argument. No more remaining neutral. Now that you have informed yourself on the topic of your choice, you can form and defend your opinion on the issue.

Of the 3 persuasive appeals of logos, pathos, and ethos, give most attention to developing the logos and ethos appeals in your argument. Use the information you gathered for your informative report to develop and support your reasons. Use credible sources to lend authority to your argument and to develop your own credibility. Maintain a reasonable tone throughout your paper, so as not to damage your own ethos.

Some of you will have a problem/solution method of development; if so, your thesis will state the problem and the solution you’re including in your discussion. Others of you have a topic that lends itself to a for-or-against discussion. If this is the case, be sure to develop your position thoroughly, and also address the opposing argument, which you will refute in your essay (refutation typically occurs at the end, after you support your own position). If this is the case, your thesis will be articulated as your opinion on the subject. Whichever of these two approaches you take, the topic sentences need to be stated as reasons in support of your opinion, and you’ll develop and support these topics with plenty of information and sound logic.

Be sure that your paper’s focus is narrow enough so that your argument can be made convincing in 3-4 pages (excluding the works cited page), and make use of at least 2 quality, reliable sources in your paper (the same ones you used for your informative report, and perhaps you’ll want to add another to help you develop your argument). Credit your sources by naming them in your paper AND by using in-text citations with a works cited page, following MLA conventions.

Audience: Your audience is your fellow classmates, your instructor, and other SFCC English faculty who may read your final portfolio, so your goal is both to generate interest in your subject and to persuade your audience that your opinion is valid and worthy of respect.

Purpose:
To give you an opportunity to practice persuasion using source material to back up your position.
To refine your abilities of integrating source material into a discussion lead by you in your paper.
To give you further experience distinguishing your ideas from those of others in your writing.
To refine your use of in-text citations and MLA formatting conventions – and avoid plagiarism.

Essay Length: 3-4 pages plus a Works Cited page, double-spaced

Due Dates:
Fri 2/26: Outline – thesis and topic sentences (10 points)
Mon 3/1: Polished draft (15 points)
Wed 3/3: Finished essay, due at the beginning of class
Turn in your essay in a flat pocket binder. Put all drafts and reader feedback in the left pocket. In the right pocket, put your final draft to be graded and the evaluation sheet. **NB: Submit your informative report (Essay 3) WITH your persuasive argument (Essay 4). Highlight the thesis and topic sentences in Essay 4 (as they will have changed) and any other changes you made in Essay 4 to build your argument.**
Appendix K

Assessment Sheet: Persuasion

Please staple this sheet to the back of your paper when it comes to me for Williamson Draft. You may also use this sheet as a guide to check your draft’s readiness for assessment. When I return this paper, areas that need revision will be underlined. Every time you turn in a revision of this paper to me, include all drafts on which I have previously commented and ALWAYS include this assessment sheet. Please put the revision packet together in a manila folder with the newest revision on top.

FOCUS:
The introduction begins with a hook designed to attract the audience’s attention, and the introduction also provides a clear sense of purpose for the essay. The introduction clearly contextualizes the importance of voting for college students and that sense of importance is carried throughout the essay. The introduction contains a thesis sentence that clearly states who we should vote for, and the paper never strays from that thesis. The paper is tailored in its tone and language for people currently earning their educations.

DEVELOPMENT:
There are clearly stated reasons given to support the thesis, and these reasons are persuasive for the intended audience. Each reason is supported by relevant evidence from a variety of credible, academic sources. Analysis of all the evidence explains how the evidence supports the topic sentences. Counterargument addresses other candidate without allowing that side to overwhelm the paper. The paper meets the minimum length requirement.

CRITICAL THINKING:
The paper demonstrates command of the argument being addressed as well as command of the sources used to support that argument. The writer has done a careful job selecting appropriate quotes and those quotes create a credible, persuasive discussion. The writer’s perspective controls the paper—there is clear, authoritative sense of the writer’s voice. The sources are intertwined within the paper and work with the author’s voice to present a cogent, compelling argument targeted to college students. The conclusion clearly states why this candidate should become our next senator, or addresses the importance of voting, particularly for the college-aged demographic, or both.

ORGANIZATION:
The overall organization pattern of the body paragraphs is clear and easily understandable. Paragraph organization is determined by most effective placement and body paragraphs begin with transitions that logically connect the last reason discussed to the next reason. Each topic sentence addresses a reason the thesis sentence is true, which the paragraph supports and which clearly supports the claim made in the thesis sentence. Paragraph integrity is consistent throughout. Each tie back sentence sums up how that paragraph supports the thesis sentence. Sentence level organization avoids repetitious structure and makes logical connections from one sentence to the next. Quotes and paraphrases are integrated seamlessly into the text.

EASE OF READING:
Clarity, gracefulness, and readability Prose is clear, avoids wordiness, chop, grammar tangles; reader doesn’t get lost and seldom has to slow down and reread.

Excellence of editing and proofreading No comma splices, run-ons, or fragments; no spelling errors or typos; no apostrophe, semi-colon, colon, or comma errors; no pronoun or subject-verb agreement errors; no usage errors; no parallelism errors; no verb tense errors; correct MLA page format, in-text citations, and Works Cited page.

+ ✔️ English Comp 101
Appendix L

English Comp 101  
Name: ______________________

Evaluation Form for the Final Persuasive Essay

1. INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH
   ___ The intro paragraph opens with an attempt to generate interest (a “hook”).
   ___ It presents a concise description / presentation of the issue you’ll address in the essay.
   ___ It ends with a clearly worded thesis that states your opinion/position on the issue.
   \[\text{2} \times \text{3} \times \text{4} \times \text{5} \times \text{6} \times \text{7} \times \text{8} \times \text{9} \times \text{10} \times \text{1} = \text{________} \text{(10)}\]

2. TOPIC SENTENCES: REASONS IN SUPPORT OF THE THESIS
   ___ Each body paragraph is focused on a single topic, expressed in a topic sentence.
   ___ Each topic sentence is expressed as a reason that connects to and supports the thesis.
   ___ All topics support the thesis and help build a persuasive argument.
   \[\text{2} \times \text{3} \times \text{4} \times \text{5} \times \text{6} \times \text{7} \times \text{8} \times \text{9} \times \text{10} \times \text{2} = \text{________} \text{(20)}\]

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARGUMENT / BODY PARAGRAPHS
   ___ The topics are supported and developed with plenty of specific information (definitions, studies, expert testimony, details, specific examples) from credible sources.
   ___ The details keep to the topic focus and don’t stray.
   ___ Sound logic is at work throughout the argument.
   ___ Transitional devices help the reader follow ideas and see how all parts connect.
   ___ Enough development is given to make the argument convincing.
   \[\text{2} \times \text{3} \times \text{4} \times \text{5} \times \text{6} \times \text{7} \times \text{8} \times \text{9} \times \text{10} \times \text{3} = \text{________} \text{(30)}\]

4. CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH
   ___ The final paragraph explains the importance of this issue.
   ___ It sums up the essay’s main reasons in support of the thesis.
   ___ Your opinion (thesis) is restated in fresh phrasing.
   ___ The essay is given a sense of closure.
   \[\text{2} \times \text{3} \times \text{4} \times \text{5} \times \text{6} \times \text{7} \times \text{8} \times \text{9} \times \text{10} \times \text{1} = \text{________} \text{(10)}\]

5. CITATION OF SOURCES THROUGH DOCUMENTATION
   Sources are credited through
   ___ acknowledgment phrases (where material from that source begins),
   ___ in-text citations (marking where material from that source ends),
   ___ and works cited page (alphabetized by the first word and in MLA format)
   ___ for all paraphrased, summarized, or quoted material.
   \[\text{2} \times \text{3} \times \text{4} \times \text{5} \times \text{6} \times \text{7} \times \text{8} \times \text{9} \times \text{10} \times \text{2} = \text{________} \text{(20)}\]

6. SENTENCE STRUCTURE, PUNCTUATION AND SPELLING
   ___ The writing at the sentence level has clarity of expression.
   ___ The writing is strong, college-level work, to include many examples of sophisticated, not just competent, construction.
   ___ The sentences are free of grammatical and mechanical errors.
   ___ Punctuation and spelling have been checked against a handbook and dictionary.

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Total points for this essay = ____ (100)

x 2 = ____ (200)
Appendix M

English 101 Assessment
Faculty Rating Sheet

Instr's prefix + full SID _____ - ______________________
Reader's Initials ________

FINAL PORTFOLIO

Passing __________

Not Passing __________

Not Passing (one essay) _________________

Issue(s)
_____ focus / main point / thesis
_____ organization / structure / paragraphing
_____ development of ideas or experiences
_____ wording or sentence syntax
_____ treatment inappropriate for college audience
_____ response to the assignment

_____ attribution of sources

_____ punctuation
_____ spelling / proofreading

_____ other: ____________________________

Additional Comment
Appendix N

Portfolio Preview
Fourth Edition

Information about and Samples of
English 101 Portfolios from Spokane Falls Community College
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Description of Writing Quality                                            | 68   |
Dear English 101 Student:

SFCC is committed to the idea that students must write clearly and effectively if they are to succeed in college and in the professional world. For that reason, composition instructors engage in a department-wide form of student evaluation called portfolio assessment. Since 1990, our English 101 students have assembled portfolios of their written work to demonstrate their mastery of collegiate writing. This assessment allows students to satisfy SFCC's writing requirement on the basis of their best writing, writing they've had a chance to think about and revise, and it helps English instructors to increase the consistency of their grading.

At midterm and quarter's end, your work will be read by other English instructors to determine whether your writing meets minimum standards for completing English 101 with a C. At midterm, we read a single essay as a "dry run" to inform you of the standards we apply. In the final portfolio, we read three essays: 1) a descriptive, narrative or explanatory essay; 2) an analytic or persuasive essay relying on sources documented in the MLA style; and 3) an impromptu essay to ensure your mastery of focus, organization, and the Standard English idiom of formal writing. Revised papers have a cover sheet describing the writing assignment, what you regard as successful in the essay, and your writing process.

When English faculty meet to read portfolios, they decide which ones meet the department's standards of competency. To earn a C (2.0) or higher in the course, your portfolio must pass. You may not enroll in an advanced composition class (English 102 or 105) with a C-. If your portfolio passes, you are not guaranteed a C; your grade is affected by other factors such as missing assignments, poor attendance, late or unsatisfactory work. It is therefore essential that you observe the policies your instructor outlines on the syllabus.

Although most of us dislike the sword of judgment hanging over our heads, many students have enjoyed receiving recognition for the papers they have created and polished during the quarter from a teacher who reads them with a fresh eye. Still, students are bound to be a bit nervous about their writing, so we have assembled this collection of SFCC portfolios and reader commentary on them. These anonymous portfolios are published exactly as they were submitted-mistakes and all-and with the writers' permission. We hope you find these examples instructive since they provide local rather than textbook examples of polished writing, a sense of the audience who reads your portfolio, and the criteria used to assess your writing.

We believe that department-wide evaluation benefits you. Students are well served when they learn to write for a particular audience and reflect on that achievement. Students are well served when faculty agree about what constitutes good college writing. The enterprise of higher education is well served when the participants talk openly about performance standards and when teachers help learners discover how to meet those standards for themselves. We are happy you share this learning enterprise with us!

Sincerely,

Jared Anthony, Ph.D. Director of Composition
Alexis Nelson, Ph.D. English Department Chair
Portfolio #1: Exemplary
What was the writing assignment?  (Use your teacher's words or attach the assignment.)

So far in class, we have studied and practiced active reading strategies, as well as the formulative aspects of essay writing, such as the importance of audience, topic, purpose, and effective thesis statements in essay arrangement. We have also learned some new strategies for descriptive writing, such as sensory detail and imagistic language. Choose one of the following prompts and narrow the subject to a specific topic about which you can write a detailed 3-6 page essay. Remember: try to challenge yourself with your topic; a writer who surprises herself often surprises the audience. In other words, your essay will be more interesting to read if it was interesting to write. (Each student chose his or her own topic from a list of prompts.)

The prompt I chose was:

Write an essay about an activity you find central to your state of being. It might be a hobby a service to others, or an athletic pursuit which gives you physical and emotional balance.

Please describe what you consider most successful in this paper.

I used careful word choices and sensory language to create vivid descriptions and word pictures. I also employed a lot of descriptive humor to keep the anecdotal format engaging. The dominant impression was intriguing because it offered an alternative, positive meaning for a common negative term.

Please describe your writing process. For example, what editorial help did you have, from whom, what changes did you make?

This essay was read and reviewed by a fellow student during our in-class peer revision session. I also received editorial advice from my husband and mother. I instituted several small changes based on advice from all three of them, but no large changes were suggested.
Drama Queen

Every woman alive has had the accusation hurled at her at least once. She probably felt it was an unjustly bestowed appellation, and resentfully stewed in her certainty that anyone else suffering her manic hormones and her treacherously difficult day would have behaved in the same manner that she did, and thus the title is hardly deserved. She sulks over the indignity of her perceived insult. But not I. No, I wear it proudly like a badge of honor when someone announces to me, "You are such a drama queen!"

I have been enthralled by the performing arts for longer than my memory can reach into my past. As a toddler, I dressed up in my mother's "old fashioned" clothes, reveling in the long, flowing dresses, and jewelry that was outdated but timeless. Of course, the dresses were so very long and flowing on my tiny frame that they had to be pinned and tied up all around, resulting in the impression of a dwarf in thrift store castoffs. That never mattered to me; I felt beautiful and sophisticated. I would entice my little sister with tempting images of fame and splendor until I gained her full cooperation, and she obediently trailed after me around the "stage" that was our bedroom, dutifully lisping the words with which I prompted her. After two or three rehearsals that inevitably turned out to all be completely different from each other, yet still wonderfully professional in my mind, I would run to my parents, beaming and announcing that we had a "play" to perform for them. They sat, bowed uncomfortably in half to fit onto the bottom bunk of our bunk beds, with an appearance of enjoyment as they watched our fumbled dialogue and attempts not to trip on our long skirts, and always offered up an enthusiastic round of applause and praise when we concluded with proud, sweeping bows. What can I say? They loved us.
As I grew older and my friends all developed the requisite crushes on gorgeous actors and actresses, all I could imagine was how divine it would feel to exist in the shoes of those marvelous beings and to live their enchanted lives. I fantasized about their lives and theatrical experiences rather than their faces and physiques, until my friends gave me up as a lost cause. Late nights were spent locked in the bathroom where one wall was covered by a large mirror, pacing back and forth and gesturing dramatically as I attempted to recreate scenes out of a movie I had just watched. I had long outgrown my dress up days, and my mother could once again claim sole ownership of her wardrobe; now my obsession was with the finer details of the craft. I devoured our small town library's entire selection of books on the performing arts. One week stage make up was my fixation, and my family charitably pretended not to notice the over eager application of powder and paint that made me look like more like an amateur clown than a stage diva. Another week I tried to learn the art of fake crying for my dramatic endeavors, and spent anxious hours peering hopefully into the mirror for any sign of moistness around my stubbornly arid eyes while I fervently thought as many sad thoughts as I could. I knew I had mastered it the day that I stunned a hapless lady in the grocery store by successfully bursting into a torrent of tears at no more provocation than an innocent stand of green peppers.

When I was sixteen years old, I happened upon something that thrilled every theatrical bone in my body: a small community theatre in a town near us that required more enthusiasm than talent, and thus was pleased to welcome me into the magical world that I had longingly worked toward for so many years. At last I would walk a real stage and feel the dizzying excitement of the bright lights shining right on me! It was almost the Christmas season, and as our theatre prepared a Christmas musical I drifted through my
days in a happy haze, hardly believing that I was finally living a piece of my dream, but eagerly embracing every experience.

I blissfully memorized lines, songs, and dances, practicing hours beyond what I needed just because I was in love with the process of rehearsing. Costume selections brought an agony of decisions, and dozens of times I posed for the mirror in concoctions that made my mother's "old fashioned" selections look stylish, considering everything that could possibly be impacted by my choice. Would this color look washed out under the lights? Would that outfit be too constrictive of my movements when I danced? I learned so much about stage make up from those who actually knew what they were doing, and my cheeks turned a very authentic pink under my applied blush when I examined the finished product in the mirror and remembered my ill educated attempts at home in previous years. Finally all exciting preparations were completed.

Opening night. Those words still send a thrill shooting down my spine, and the night that I experienced my very first opening I was enraptured by absolutely everything. I arrived at the theatre two full hours before curtain time, giddy with excitement over the prospect of performing before my first real audience. The backstage workers helped me into my first costume, and I sat with patient, restrained anticipation while my hair and make up were painstakingly completed. I vaguely enjoyed the backstage chatter of the other performers during the final few minutes of preparations, but my mind was elsewhere. I focused in on the image of a little girl with a beaming smile who was all dressed up in clothes far too big for her, chirping out made up conversations for her bunk bed audience. Moments later, as the lights blinked on and the heavy velvet curtain slowly rose, that little girl inside me rose as well, in joyful recognition that the moment she had been blindly reaching for all those years ago had finally arrived. The audience melded into one enormous pair of eyes for a brief
moment as my heart skipped a beat or two with sudden nerves, then smoothed back out into multiple shadowy faces that actually were not frightening at all as long as the blinding stage lights shone in my eyes. And quite miraculously, all those people were not crumpled into a bunk bed, but lounged comfortably in seats that they had purchased for the night, sitting on the other side of the lights and watching me! My fantasy took one giant leap that night and became fabulously real.

I still love the theatre and the performing arts. The more I learn about the wonderful and varied possibilities of the world of drama, the more infatuated I become. My experiences thus far have included singing, speaking, and dancing roles, including a lead role that required the mastery of an authentic British accent, which was a great and enjoyable challenge. I look forward to discovering what other dramatic adventures lie in wait for me, and hope to have endless opportunities still ahead of me to come alive beneath the blinding, beautiful lights of the stage. Other women may grumble and mutter to themselves when they are accused of being a "drama queen", but as far as I am concerned, to actually deserve to be labeled with that hard earned title is one of my greatest goals.
What was the writing assignment? (Use your teacher's words or attach the assignment.)

RESEARCH-AIDED ARGUMENTATIVE: For your next essay, you will choose a controversial debatable topic and write a 3-5 page argumentative essay. Be sure that you make use of inductive and/or deductive reasoning and that you avoid logical fallacies. You will need to formulate a thesis statement (statement of opinion) and supporting examples as well as conduct some minor research in order to find evidence for those supporting examples. You will be required to use at least five resources, at least two of which must be internet sources, two much be print sources, and one must represent "the other side" of the issue you are arguing. Be sure that your sources are credible and reliable. Your paper should be in MLA format (see your handbook for guidelines) and should contain proper citation, including a works cited list which should be attached as the last page of your essay (the works cited list does affect the total page count).

Please describe what you consider most successful in this paper.

I think I presented a lot of information very clearly, and strongly support my thesis. I take a strong and interesting position and do not fail it.

Please describe your writing process. For example, what editorial help did you have, from whom, what changes did you make?

This essay went through many stages of drafting and revision. I received help from classmates in 2 peer revision sessions, enlisted my husband's editorial assistance, and looked at it in my student/teacher conference. The biggest change I made was to reduce the intensity of my approach in my introduction, so I would not alienate my readers before providing back-up for my claims.
"Ashes, Ashes, We All Fall Down"

Everyone notices a pregnant woman. Our eyes are drawn by the gently swelling stomach, the slightly swaying walk...and increasingly likely these days, by the cigarette dangling shamelessly between her lips. Current statistics show that at least 11 percent of women in the United States smoke during pregnancy, and that despite increasing education and national awareness of the dangers associated with prenatal smoking, those numbers continue to rise ("March of Dimes"). This creates an unacceptable menace for unborn children who are incapable of protecting themselves from the effects of smoking on their developing bodies and minds. Due to the medically undeniable health hazards created for unborn babies when pregnant women smoke, smoking while pregnant should be viewed by society as a form of child abuse.

What exactly is physically harmful about cigarette smoke? Even a cursory examination of the components of cigarettes reveals that nearly every chemical and ingredient involved is dangerous and harmful to humans. The National Cancer Institute published a study in 2001 which detailed those components and their effects, though excluding the agricultural chemicals and pesticides often present in cigarettes "because of the many variations in the nature and amount of these agents in tobacco from country to country and from year to year". The rest of the list includes such ingredients as carbon monoxide, ammonia, cyanide, sulfide, and phenol, among dozens of others. Some of these components are more commonly recognized as the fumes from car exhaust and household cleaning chemicals. Irritation and obstruction of the respiratory tract, as well as promotion of cancerous tumors, are among the
main effects of these agents on humans. Cigarettes are recognized, even by those who smoke them, as the often deadly cause of lung cancer and serious respiratory problems.

For babies in utero, the results of their mothers smoking can be just as deadly for them. Their immune systems are attacked and compromised during their very formation by what amounts to secondhand smoke. Dr. Shonag McKenzie is a hospital consultant who works with pregnant women and specializes in this area. "Babies die because their mothers smoke," she explains. "That is a reality in my day-to-day life." Smoking during pregnancy is the largest preventable cause of miscarriages and stillbirths (Nelson). A recent study states that "babies of mothers who smoke during pregnancy may undergo withdrawal-like symptoms similar to those seen in babies of mothers who use...illicit drugs," and also that "babies whose mothers smoked during pregnancy are up to three times as likely to die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) as babies of nonsmokers...Smoking cigarettes [also] appears to double a woman's risk of developing placental problems. These include placenta previa (low-lying placenta that covers part or all of the opening of the uterus) and placental abruption (in which the placenta peels away, partially or almost completely, from the uterine wall before delivery). Both can result in heavy bleeding during delivery that can endanger mother and baby" ("March of Dimes"). Many babies of smoking moms are born prematurely, with underdeveloped lungs that are not able to handle life outside the womb. High percentages of these babies contract pneumonia in their weak lungs and subsequently spend weeks fighting for their lives — sometimes unsuccessfully — in pediatric intensive care units. Additionally, babies whose mothers smoke while they are pregnant usually have a low birth weight, which is defined as five pounds eight ounces or less. This can result in further complications during labor and delivery for both mother and baby.
For the newborns who do survive this harrowing array of possible bad outcomes, the negative effects of smoking during pregnancy continue to affect children well past birth. The March of Dimes study found that "premature and low-birth weight babies face an increased risk of serious health problems during the newborn period, chronic lifelong disabilities (such as cerebral palsy, mental retardation and learning problems) and even death." Those chronic lifelong disabilities listed are severe and devastating, not minor irritations like frequent colds. They also have serious economic consequences for all of society, as well as the obvious emotional and other painful consequences for the individual children and families involved.

Childhood asthma and other breathing problems are additional issues that are common in children whose mothers smoked while they were pregnant.

The simplest federal definition of child abuse is, "Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation, or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm" ("Child Welfare Information Gateway"). This definition clearly applies to smoking during pregnancy, in light of the extensive risks of physical harm inflicted on the babies that are subjected to it. The numerous deaths of infants through miscarriage, stillbirth, and SIDS as a result of their mothers' smoking should have every U.S. lawmaker racing to criminalize the act. The phrase "an act...which presents an imminent risk of serious harm, within the definition means that this is applicable to every woman who makes the choice to smoke during her pregnancy, whether or not her baby is one of the large numbers of those who do actually experience severe physical harm or death, because she is still exposing it to very high risks.
Pregnant women who smoke throughout their pregnancy may claim that any attempt to interfere with their smoking activity would be a violation of constitutional rights to privacy. Law professor John Banzhaf believes, however, that once than to abort, she has no constitutional right to endanger the fetus' health." Banzhaf further notes that "[a pregnant woman's] so-called privacy rights are inextricably bound up with the right of the child not to be subjected to dangerous unnecessary health risks, if not death itself" ("Action on Smoking and Health"). A woman who wishes to exercise her right to smoke as well as her right to have a child is morally free to do both at separate times in her life. But she crosses a clear line into child abuse if she attempts to do them simultaneously.

No responsible U.S. citizen would consider excusing a parent who smothered their child or baby with a pillow, starved or beat them, or otherwise caused them physical harm or death. Smoking during a pregnancy is in the same class as these actions, because it is clearly dangerous not only to a baby's health, but to its very life. Women who subject their unborn children to this form of abuse and its dire ramifications need to be prosecuted for their actions. It is imperative that this society, the U.S. government, and the criminal justice system immediately recognize this activity for the blatant and inexcusable child abuse that it is, and that they create and enforce the necessary legislation to eradicate it.
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Directions: This quarter we've been reading essays from the text *Holding Common Ground: The Inclz"vidual and Public Lands in the American Wesc* For your final impromptu essay, choose ONE of the following prompts. No matter which you choose, be sure to narrow your focus to a dear thesis statement, and write a well-supported, efficiently organized, articulate essay.

Circle the prompt you write from, and attach this sheet to your essay.

1. Entify and write an essay in which you explain the connection.

2. In *Holding Common Ground* many of the essays utilize tried and true structure and style techniques in order to make their points dear, with form or layout of the essay often matching the content. Identify one such technique, 2-4 essays which make use of it, and write an explication.

3. A few of you this quarter have mentioned being "turned off" by some of the essays in *Holding Common Ground* Identify a dear reason (for example, tone, subject, or use of political language), as well as a few essays in which it happens, and write a critical analysis.

4. *Holding Common Ground* ultimately proposes that we as humans need to find common ground in order to preserve our last wild spaces and protect this planet for our children's futures, whether that common ground be reached through indirect means, such as education, or more direct avenues, such as citizen activism. There are a plethora of ways we could affect change here in Spokane. Choose one essay from *HCG* which addresses this topic, and connect it to a solution you propose for our local community.
Environmentalism is a political issue. There is no denying this fact, as legislation is frequently put into place and laws are passed that are intended to monitor and govern people's interaction with the environment. Environmental activist groups speak on political platforms and their voices are influential in many government forums. In fact, environmentalism has become so interwoven with politics on so many levels that people often cringe when the topic is introduced in public for fear of the political debates that will almost inevitably follow. For some of us, however, the words "environmental awareness" could flash in neon color from every politician's lips, and they would still bring first to mind a simple friendship and appreciation that we first learned to share with the world around us when we were children. Many of the essays in Holding Common Ground pay homage to the sweet simplicity of this kind of awareness of our environment, and acknowledge the tremendous guiding power it can wield over our attitudes and actions.

"White Sands Missile Range" displays a beautifully graphic enjoyment of some of the earthiest aspects of the earth. "Smell this leaf. Listen to that bird. Fall in love" (page 16), it exhorts us. This is the approach of a pure hearted little child delighting in the great outdoors, the most enchanted play place available. Children playing outside become happily and intimately acquainted with dirt, with sticks and leaves, and with sand and streams. They swing like tail-less monkeys from the friendly branches of trees, roll madly down grassy hills until their breath comes in short happy spurts, and then fall back onto the ground to gaze up into the sky with wondering eyes that find elephants and ice cream cones in the clouds. In "White Sands Missile Range" we are encouraged to return to that
visceral connection that we had with the earth as children, and to revel in the oneness that we can then feel with nature. The author attempts a few times in the essay to address some political issues, and to explain away the depth of the described emotion by attributing it to the political cause of environmentalism. In conclusion, however, she acknowledges her helplessness to do anything but care deeply about the environment with the concession, "...maybe we have already fallen in love, and it is just that simple" (17).

Later in the book, "The Troubling Dawn" steps up to the political plate to rant and plead for action regarding uranium mines, one of so many decried threats to the environment. Yet before the author makes her political points, we discover that she, too, has fallen in that simple childlike love with the world around her, and it is that which drives her. It is with near reverence that she describes the charm and allure of the piece of land she is fighting to protect. "We drew our water from the ground and ate the bounty of the land," she reminisces. "[We lmew] the comforting crackle of a warming fire, the laugh of coyotes in snow-filled winter nights, the chatter of chipmunks, and the rhythm of woodpeckers pounding nearby trees" (104). Reading the words of this essay, our heartbeats relax back into the less harried pace of childhood and the snow-filled winter nights. Like children who are unafraid to throw themselves into the cold, wet snow to make snow angels, this author revels in the close corporeal connection she felt with the earth while she lived so in tune with nature.

Is this artless love of nature's gifts beautiful because of its simplicity, or is it actually simple because it is so beautiful? Whichever way each of our hearts answers that question, certainly it seems clear that the depth of emotion involved in this kind of ingenuous appreciation of nature can motivate and sustain far greater environmental activism than
can any elaborate political foundation. It is inspiring that *Holding Common Ground* highlights several authors who unabashedly depict their own intense childlike love of the environment, and credit that love with convincing them, as it can for all of us, that this earth is magical and worth preserving.
Faculty Comments on Portfolio #1

The portfolio readers felt that this collection of essays qualified as exemplary, for a variety of reasons. The major collective reason, though, was consistency. The writer has developed strong writing skills and has utilized them in all three papers presented.

Narrative Essay: One reader commented that she felt that the writer was initially dazzled by her own vocabulary, but her voice became more natural as the writing progressed. It was noted there are both style and content, as well as well-developed paragraphs. She really engages the reader with her story.

Documented Persuasive Essay: Facts are presented, and they are followed by analysis. The argument itself is convincing and well supported, though it was noted that one of the assignment requirements, that the counter-argument should be supported by research, is not followed. However, the writer does, indeed, present this argument. There is a strong controlling idea (thesis), paragraphs have identifiable topic sentences, and there is evidence that is logical and well integrated. MLA format is correct, as well.

Impromptu Essay: This is a well-developed essay, all the more striking because the writer chose a very challenging topic. She identifies an interesting theme and sticks to it. The thesis is clear and controls the paper. One of the portfolio readers called it "a delight to read." The title is appropriate, and that idea does appear in the paper. It was also noted that quotes are well integrated.

In all of these essays, readers noted that the writer's voice is fabulous, and they also remarked on her sophisticated sentences, meaning that there is a variety of language, punctuation, and sentence length. All of these essays have structure and controlling ideas. This writer picked challenging topics and became fully engaged with the issues.
Portfolio #2: Good
What was the writing assignment? (Use your teacher's words or attach the assignment.)

Essay #2 assignment:
Occasion: As we continue our academic inquiry into this year's Campus-Wide Theme, which is Sustainability: Promoting a Livable Future, your second essay assignment will give us the opportunity to read, discuss, and respond to a contemporary article that touches on many environmental issues, in particular, Darcy Frey's article, "How Green Is BP?" in our Listening to Earth anthology.
Writing Task: After reading Frey's article and discussing it in class, write your own "Summary and Response" essay.
- To accomplish the body of your essay, you'll first write a summary of Frey's article (which will take a couple of paragraphs) in which you fairly and impartially represent the significant ideas he presents in his essay. Do not add your own ideas to the summary; rather, present only Frey's ideas in this part of your essay. Be sure to use acknowledgement phrases to make it clear to the reader that the ideas you present are not your own but are those of Frey.
- In the second part of the body of your essay, develop and refine your ideas to some part or parts of what Frey discusses in his essay. Write at least two paragraphs in which you develop your own ideas in response to Frey's ideas.

Audience: Fellow classmates but also other English teachers who will not have your familiarity with Frey's essay. Therefore, you'll have to summarize Frey's essay effectively, which will contextualize your response. Both your classmates and your potential portfolio readers will be interested in what thoughts you have in response to Frey's claims.
Purpose:
To get you to think about issues related to sustainability.
To give you the opportunity to practice summarizing and paraphrasing source material. To develop your own thoughts in response to what you read.
To give you experience distinguishing your ideas from those of others in your writing. Essay Length: 3-4 pages plus a Works Cited page, double-spaced, using 12-point font

Please describe what you consider most successful in this paper.

I think my summary of Frey's article is the most successful element in my essay. My summary presents all of Frey's main ideas in a concise way. I feel I accurately presented Frey's opinions in my own words and in an interesting and expressive way.

Please describe your greatest challenge in writing this essay and what you did to overcome that challenge.

My greatest challenge in writing this essay was summarizing Frey's work in my own words. It is very easy for me to unconsciously use the author's words instead of my own. To overcome this, I read through Frey's essay several times, underlining the key points. I then put the book away and wrote the summary.
without looking at it. When I finished writing in my own words, I looked
back at Frey's article to make sure I hadn't copied his wording.
Green or Greed?

When was the last time you carpooled, recycled newspapers, or purchased organic food in an effort to help the environment? In recent years, we have become more aware of the delicate ecosystem of the earth we live on and are making great efforts to preserve it. With technically-advanced equipment that measures levels of chemicals in the air, ground, and water, alarming new discoveries are being made. Take, for example, the ozone hole or the issue of global warming. Perhaps one of the most controversial topics is that of oil production and consumption. In "How Green is BP?," Darcy Frey discusses British Petroleum's (BP) recent advertising campaign in an effort to show its environmental awareness. Frey explains the efforts BP has made toward creating a better environment, but he also points out inconsistencies in the company's claims; Frey's article makes me think about how dependent we are on oil and reminds me of other companies who market potentially harmful products in an appealing fashion.

Frey begins his article by describing how BP, one of the largest oil companies in the world, has tried to brighten its image by raising awareness about environmental issues. He explains that the company, led by chief executive Lord John Brown, began its quest toward environmental friendliness when it created the slogan "Beyond Petroleum" and began promoting renewable sources of energy. At a time when the world is more earth-conscience than ever, BP is risking an enormous advertising campaign on the pretense of global advancement. Frey lists some of BP's involvements, which include releasing bald eagles into the wild, supporting fuel-cell research, experimenting with alternative energy sources, and joining Claussen's Business Environmental Leadership Council. In 1998, BP publicly announced it would cut down its green-house emissions, immediately proceeded to work
towards this goal, and succeeded well ahead of schedule. BP bought Solarex in 1999, and Brown claims he has big plans for the future. But Frey goes on to point out that no matter how hard BP tries, it will always be an oil company, involved in an industry that "scars the earth, pollutes the air and eventually warms the planet" (152).

Frey then elaborates on some inconsistencies in BP's campaign. He remarks that the company seems to find it necessary to defend its status as an oil company by ending advertisements with "It's a Start" (151). Frey also points out that as oil sources continue to diminish, BP's production is dramatically reduced. Desperate times call for desperate measures, and the company is currently trying to obtain access to oil reserves in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The land is indeed rich in oil, but it is also home to thousands of arctic animals. Frey questions why BP is promoting what some would refer to as an "industrial rape of an unspoiled wilderness" if the company is for global enhancement (157). In Frey's opinion, BP has backed itself into a corner. Frey asks the question, "How can a company that digs big holes in the ground possibly advertise itself as a sensitive steward of the environment?" (152). He states that it is hypocritical to advocate new sources of energy and at the same time produce vast amounts of oil. In Frey's opinion, BP is no better than other companies, with or without its heroic efforts.

One topic Frey's article makes me think about is how dependent we are on oil as an energy source. Oil has been the main fuel source for heating and transportation for many years. In the past years we have become more aware of harmful CO₂ put out by the burning of oil. Judging from the price of gas, oil supplies are diminishing faster than we may realize. It is inevitable that the oil reserves will eventually be used up and alternative forms of
energy must then be utilized. Renewable energy sources include solar, wind, and nuclear power, fossil fuels, and natural gas. Great progress toward refining these raw materials has been made, but, as yet, none compare to oil in efficiency, price, and convenience. It may be decades before these various forms of energy can be refined to the point of being practical for daily use. The bottom line is that until a comparable form of energy is discovered, we will continue to rely on oil.

Frey's article also reminds me of other companies who have marketed potentially harmful products to make them appear more appealing. Take, for example, the tobacco industry. Companies like Marlboro use catchy phrases and ads that emphasize the "feel-good" effects of smoking to appeal to consumers. In reality, smoking creates a higher risk for heart attacks and cancer, both of which are leading causes of death in the United States. Another example is that of the alcohol industry. Budweiser is noted for its advertising endeavors that include elaborate billboards and humorous TV commercials. But 40% of traffic deaths in the United States are caused by drunk drivers. Some may conclude that these companies are evil for marketing harmful products in appealing ways. In my opinion, these companies are simply doing what they must to survive. If they openly advertised their products as harmful, disgusting products, they would get minimal business. I also think BP's embracement of a critical issue today is a smart move. I feel there is no reason to slam companies like these for their marketing tactics.

In "How Green is BP?" Darcy Frey does an excellent job of detailing BP's advertising campaign and pointing out some of the flaws. He was careful to portray both the positive and negative sides of BP, so the reader can form his own opinions about the company. But the question still remains—was BP's campaign really a selfless effort toward creating a cleaner
earth or was it simply a selfish act to increase business? Some people may feel that because BP's business endeavors were inconsistent with its "Beyond Petroleum" campaign, the company was simply out to make more money. In my opinion, the difference BP has made far outweighs any increase in profits. Unlike other oil companies, BP has made great efforts to clean up its act, and I respect that. I hope others will give BP the credit it deserves, instead of slandering the company. I believe BP's campaign was not simply a greedy, money-making scheme, but rather a crucial move at a time when efforts like these can make a difference.

Work Cited

What was the writing assignment? (Use your teacher's words or attach the assignment.)

Essay #4 (persuasive argument)

Writing Task: For your final essay, you will write a persuasive argument on the same topic you wrote your report on (related to sustainability), and this time you will take a stand on the issue and support it with a persuasive argument. No more remaining neutral. Now that you have informed yourself on the topic of your choice, you can form and defend your opinion on the issue. Your thesis will be articulated as your opinion on the subject, and your argument will include topic sentences stated as reasons in support of your opinion, and you'll support these topics with plenty of information and sound logic. Use the information you gathered for your informative report to develop and support your reasons.

Be sure that your paper's focus is narrow enough so that your argument can be made convincing in 3-4 pages (excluding the works cited page), and make use of at least 2 quality, reliable sources in your paper (the same ones you used for your informative report, and perhaps you'll want to add another to help you develop your argument). Credit your sources by naming them in your paper and by using in-text citations with a works cited page. Following MLA conventions.

Audience: Your audience is your group mates, your instructor, and other SFCC English faculty who may read your final portfolio, so your goal is both to generate interest in your subject and to persuade your audience that your opinion is valid and worthy of respect.

Essay Length: 3-4 pages plus a Works Cited page, double-spaced, using 12-point font

Please describe what you consider most successful in this paper.

I think my introduction paragraph is the most successful part of my essay. I attempted to generate interest with my hook, and I hope it will entice readers to continue reading.

Please describe your greatest challenge in writing this essay and what you did to overcome that challenge.

My greatest challenge in writing this essay was narrowing the focus of the paper. There was so much information that I wanted to include, but I had to condense it into a 4-page essay. To overcome this challenge, I tried to give an overall view of the topic without going into too much detail in any of the paragraphs.
The True Colors of Genetically Engineered Foods

Do you remember the beautiful, red, poisoned apple in "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs?" Just like this apple, much of the food we eat today has been genetically altered to make it last longer and look better. For the typical American, processed foods constitute a significant part of the diet. Some examples of foods that contain genetically altered products are pasta, margarine, canola oil, chips, peanut butter, biscuits, and ice cream. The same technology used in cloning is now producing wonder-foods that are virtually immune to insects and drought. Although genetically engineered (GE) foods are becoming increasingly popular, studies show that GE foods cause many health and environmental problems, and an effort should be made to establish guidelines and safeguards that minimize the risks.

One thing that makes GE foods risky is the fact that so many people are unaware of both the process of genetic engineering and the widespread growth of GE foods. The painstaking process of synthesizing GE foods is basically the same as that used in cloning. Jeffrey Smith, writer for Rachel's Democracy & Health News, explains the process of altering crop seeds. A gene that has been genetically altered in a laboratory to improve certain properties is inserted into a seed. The inserted gene is usually a bacteria cell that enhances certain properties of the seed. For example, a gene from Bacillus Thuringiensis might be inserted into a cotton seed to prevent insect damage (Smith). Carol Milano, contributor to Current Health 2, explains that corn, soybeans, cotton, and alfalfa are just a few of the many crops that are being genetically altered today. Although most people don't realize it, Milano says that about 700.4 of processed foods in the US have been genetically modified in some way (Milano). However, most products containing GE components are not labeled, so consumers do not know what they are eating (Smith). According to a recent study, only 26% of Americans are aware that they most
likely consume GE foods daily (Milano). Today, when genetically engineered foods are at the top of the game in the food-science industry, it is surprising how uniformed consumers are about GE foods.

Another danger is that the apparent benefits of GE foods make the products seem very safe and beneficial. Crop seeds can supposedly be safely modified to suit specific needs. Terri Teuber, a spokesperson for USDA, claims that "genetically engineered crops can tolerate drought conditions and herbicides, resist insects and viruses, and provide enhanced quality and nutrition for consumers" (Milano). If GE foods really are as beneficial as manufacturers make them out to be, much good could be done for our environment. For example, seeds modified to withstand frigid conditions would be very useful in regions that experience early freezing. Other seeds could be altered to grow in dry climates or less-than-ideal soil. Essential vitamins and proteins could be inserted into the seeds, which would be very beneficial in third-world countries where some vitamins are scarce and expensive. There are hopes that GE crops of the future will provide medicine and vaccines to people who are unable to afford health care.

Because many GE crops are modified to resist pests, the need to spray pesticides is reduced. Since most sprays are highly toxic, this could mean a cleaner, healthier environment. A decrease in insecticides and sprays also eliminates the need to plow crops under every year, which could reduce soil erosion immensely ("Genetically"). But in reality, the many benefits of GE foods present a false face that deceives many people.

The many health problems and safety concerns genetically engineered foods have raised are alarming. According to Kirk Azevedo, a former employee at Monsanto, the process of inserting genes into seeds causes mutations in the cell DNA which can sometimes be deadly. The genetic process forms extra proteins not normally seen in the plants. Azevedo states that
certain "folded proteins" can cause diseases like Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, which is closely related to mad cow disease. Although this phenomenon has not specifically been observed in GE seeds, researchers agree that it is a very likely possibility (Smith). Jane Rissler, director at the Union of Concerned Scientists in Washington, D.C., declares that "crops created to kill insects or resist weed killers have not been engineered to be healthier for people" (Milano). In several documented cases, livestock feeding on GE crops contracted strange diseases and died. Numerous farm workers and field laborers have suffered allergic reactions to GE crops, with some even being hospitalized. When one GE cotton variety was planted, acres of crops had problems like root deformities. Scientists have reported cases in which GE crops have cross-pollinated with other crops to contaminate them as well. Even more health problems are likely to show up in the future as some diseases can remain undetected for 10 to 30 years (Smith). These are just a few of the many concerns associated with GE foods.

It is clear that something should be done about the problem of the undisclosed prevalence of GE foods. Does it seem strange that the main entities behind the push for GE foods are the companies that are manufacturing the seeds? These companies claim to have great plans for the future, with goals to "reduce waste, decrease poverty, and help the world" (Smith). But are these companies really out for the greater good of the people or are they simply trying to make money? According to Gregory Jaffe, a director at the Center for Science in the Public Interest, the US should exercise more caution regarding the distribution of GE foods (Milano). Our country is essentially distributing potentially harmful products to unsuspecting civilians. The US is one of the few countries who even allow GE foods to be produced and marketed. Countries such as England and Japan have wisely banned GE foods until further research regarding the safety of the products has been conducted. Thankfully, similar efforts have begun
in the US. Individuals at the Institute for Responsible Technology and those involved in the Good Food Movement are just some of the many people who are working to put a stop to genetic engineering of food products (Smith). It is time for all of us to step in and fight for the health and safety of humankind.

In an age of discovery, GE foods are a breakthrough, and, given adequate safeguards and testing, great things could be accomplished. Many proclaim that GE foods have been very beneficial and can be used to help change the world. It is true that in our poverty-stricken world today a life-saving food is immensely welcome, but there is sadly much evidence that GE foods are not the lifesaver we are looking for. In my opinion, GE foods have the capability of doing much more harm than good. An epidemic is not what our country needs. Instead of continuing to manufacture and market products that are potentially harmful, I believe we should first focus on establishing guidelines and safeguards we can live with.

Works Cited


Choose one of the following options.

Option 1: We’re now close to the mid-point of the quarter—a good time for you to pause and consider all of the classes you’re taking at SFCC this quarter and identify for yourself 3 of the most important things that you’ve teemed so far. For this impromptu, write an essay in which you identify those 3 important things and explain in detail what you’ve teemed about them. You might also want to include why your newfound knowledge is personally significant to you. Perhaps you’ve finally mastered the equation for acceleration, or maybe you’re quite proud of being able to chart the progression of falling objects, or perhaps you’re personally satisfied that you’re able to incorporate source material into an essay without committing plagiarism. No matter what you choose to focus on, be sure to present your ideas in a 5-paragraph essay with a clear introductory paragraph with a thesis statement, 3 body paragraphs focused on one topic at a time, and a thoughtful concluding paragraph that sums up the ideas you presented. Write your essay for us, your instructors, and for other SFCC faculty, to help us appreciate the knowledge that you have gained so far from your studies at SFCC.

<Option 2> A hot topic among college teachers and administrators these days is "The First-Year Experience" of our college students. Not surprisingly, the experience a student has in his or her first year of college often determines whether that student will stay and succeed at college, or whether he or she will leave and never come back. The pieces of this puzzle range greatly and include such experiences as the application process, testing and placement, advising, financial aid, and, of course, the ease of registration, availability of classes, effective teaching, available technologies, the library, extra curricular events, and even the physical beauty of the campus. Please write an essay to SFCC’s Committee on the First Year Experience, and tell them about your first-year experience at SFCC. Ultimately, your thesis will declare whether your first-year experience has been {or was} positive or negative. Then, choose at least 3 topics (such as those listed) drawn from your own experience, and illustrate them with specific details or examples, to provide evidence in support of your thesis. Be sure to present your ideas in an essay of at least 5 paragraphs, with a clear introduction with thesis, focused body paragraphs, and a thoughtful concluding paragraph that sums up the ideas you presented.

Circle the option you chose, above, and staple this page to your finished (or nearly finished) draft. Also hand in the disk on which you saved your essay.
From Home to Homework

It was my first day at school. But unlike most on their first day of school, I was not an excited 6-year-old but a nervous young lady of 16. I had been home schooled from first through tenth grade, and I decided to participate in Running Start because I was ready for higher level courses. Having never been in a classroom atmosphere before, I was unsure of what to expect. Thankfully, I was pleasantly surprised. The opportunities of Running Start, extracurricular activities, and excellent teachers have all helped make my first year at college a positive experience.

The opportunities offered through Running Start have helped make my first-year experience an enjoyable one. I am able to simultaneously fulfill high school and college credits, enabling me to graduate from college earlier. By attending a community college, I will obtain an AST degree at the same time I receive my high school diploma. Another benefit is that my college tuition is paid for, allowing me to save money for when I transfer to a four-year university. Being home schooled, I had already fulfilled most of my high school requirements, so I was able to start right into the Engineering program. As a result, I will be able to transfer to UW as a Junior when I am only 18.

My first year at college was also exciting because extracurricular activities and study groups encouraged me to branch out. The clubs I am currently involved in are the Engineering Club and the Christian Club. I also recently became a member of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society. I have enjoyed participating in activities such as Bible studies, tower building competitions, and a hydroelectric dam tour. I have met many new people who share my same interests. When I was home schooled, I was quite shy and had
very few friends. Now, through participating in club activities, I have made new friends and become a more confident person. I have also acquired valuable team skills by learning to work and study in groups.

Having some excellent teachers has also made my first year a fulfilling experience. My very first quarter, I had an incredible math teacher for Calculus I. Through his excellent graphs and detailed explanations, he made difficult concepts seem easy. My Engineering teacher has also encouraged me to do my best. Although his courses are hard, I leave each class with a sense of achievement. In Computer Science, my teacher kept class light and enjoyable with his random stories and sense of humor. My English teacher makes class fun by encouraging group participation, and, for the first time, I am actually enjoying writing essays! I have discovered that all teachers are more than willing to answer questions and help students succeed.

I am very glad that I decided to participate in Running Start at SFCC because my college experience has been wonderful. Inspiring teachers, fun activities, and strict coursework have helped me discover my true potential. It has been quite an adjustment from being homeschooled, but I have learned and experienced many new things that have made me a more well-rounded person. Although I work very hard and study a lot, my rewards are good grades and a feeling of achievement. Having never attended a public high school, I cannot say that college is better, but I will say that my expectations of college were not only met, but exceeded.
Faculty Comments on Portfolio #2

This collection of essays, while quite good, wasn't seen by the group as being as strong as the first portfolio. However, this writer clearly also has mastered certain writing skills, and these are shown in these papers. All essays are clearly written and very readable.

Midterm Essay: In this essay, as in all of the essays in this portfolio, the writer shows focus and development. Quotes and paraphrasing are well integrated. She is also able to differentiate between summary and opinion, conforming to what the topic dictates, but also showing her ability to handle a college-level task. She shows a balanced approach to the topic. It was felt that she could use a bit more depth on this first essay, as some of her analogies are shallow or not even apt.

Documented Persuasive Essay: Again, focus and development were noted and applauded. Her facts are followed by analysis. Portfolio readers felt that they were able to learn something from reading this essay. The writer uses sophisticated sentences, with varied vocabulary, length, and punctuation. The image the writer uses in her opening sentence, "Do you remember the beautiful, red, poisoned apple in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs?" was mentioned as grabbing the readers' attention and immediately engaging them in the paper. The topic felt fresh and interesting.

Impromptu Essay: This paper is nicely organized, with focused paragraphs. Though not the writer's fault, she may have been limited by the assignment, fact, one reader felt that she didn't write on the topic at all, and that what she wrote in this essay isn't very convincing. However, this was a minority opinion. Most readers agree that the writing fulfills the strictures of the assignment.

In all of these essays, focus and development are key elements. It was felt that this portfolio was a pleasure to read, and one reader stated that she could "glide right through this."
Portfolio #3: Borderline
Please type or print.

What was the writing assignment? (Use your teacher's words or attach the assignment.)

Write a Descriptive-Narrative Essay, of 600..850 words, in which you show how and why a person, place, or experience made a significant impression on you or from which you learned something of importance. Use MLA style.

Please describe what you consider most successful in this paper.

My most successful part of the essay would be the description of Claude Monet's painting and how it made me feel. I wanted to convey the impact it had on me, along with the extraordinary beauty of the painting. I wanted the childhood to sound nostalgic and the present time positive. So I believe this is another successful part.

Please describe your writing process. For example, what editorial help did you have, from whom, what changes did you make?

The freewriting and enthusiastic lectures from our Instructor fueled my imagination to dig deep into my true feelings. I wrote most of it in one clip and then added the conclusion after it formatted in my mind. The words flowed easily, after writing my first draft I needed to structure the essay. That is where our reviews in grammar, sentence structure and essay outline helped me to form paragraphs. Readings from the anthology essays gave me good examples.
A Picture Is Worth a Lifetime of Dreams

Seeing a wonderful painting in my twenties planted a seed in my mind. Now much later in my life, it has started to sprout and grow. Deciding to return to school at an age when I should be thinking of retiring doing more charity work or just sipping Margaritas in the sun, sounds a little crazy to most of my friends but that is what I am attempting to do. Some of the credit for my college endeavor belongs to a man long dead, the master painter Claude Monet.

Growing up, I hardly ever had any exposure to the arts. I guess most of it was in church, you know, angels and stained glass, that kind of art. And I may have heard the arguments about whether or not abstract art was really art, on the radio, during breakfast, eating Frosted Flakes. This interested me. The name Jackson Pollack rang a bell, but my childhood and teenage years were more about reading, writing and arithmetic. Studying art then was more like becoming an actor, not a very viable career in the real world.

In my Catholic grammar school, St. Ladislaus, art consisted of gathering fall leaves or gluing holy pictures into our notebooks. Sometimes we would even color stained glass pictures, which was so very exciting, as you can imagine. Most of us weren't guided to be very creative, and these classes had a lot of sleepy kids with their heads on their desks. High school wasn't much better; it was the '60s and creative teaching wasn't what it is now either. Maybe it was just the crowd I hung around with and psychedelics hadn't arrived on the scene yet.

So I strolled along in my life, sometimes running, sometimes going in circles, sometimes even traipsing. I worked hard and didn't seem to have the energy or resources to start school again. It had been a good life, yet I felt these pangs in the center of my being when I was moved by a piece of artwork. Some type of a far away calling, if you will. My career...
was satisfying, yet when I exposed myself to arts, and crafts too, I had almost uncomfortable feelings. Little voices in my head were saying: You should be trying this; you might like it. Trips to Manhattan museums and Santa Fe galleries that were filled with fabulous works made me feel sad somehow.

Throughout the years I read art books, decorated with beauty and style in mind, and read the biographies of a few artists. Then one day, I remembered the thoughts and feelings I had in my twenties when I saw an original painting in the Denver Art Museum. The artist was Claude Monet; the painting was of the Rouen Cathedral. I remembered how it sky-rocketed my love of the Impressionist painters and my lifelong interest to learn more of these people and their works.

Here I was, face to face with the original work. The colors and brush strokes were magnificent, the paint thick, and the hues were of pastel pinks, gold and oranges. They seemed to twinkle and move, and so did I in response. Up close the painting was almost a blur of beautiful colors, a sea of pastels with the foggy feeling of a church on the canvas. Somehow, it wanted to pull me in like a lover might have, to swallow the viewer into a whirlpool of dizzying lights.

As I moved farther away, the painting came into a beautiful focus. The simple subject matter, church and sky, took on a regal quality; the cathedral was more pronounced and understandable to the eye, one viewpoint so dramatically different from the other. A small clear blue section of sky stood out in contrast to the main structure of the cathedral facade. It seemed to evidence nature in contrast to man by bringing the eye up, to the cool heavens, while the ground colors burned as if on fire. So much grandeur in this small painting, more than I ever expected, showed me why we call some painters Masters. Savoring these sights, I put them in a special place in my heart, the seed planted until now.
Again, life flowed on, taking me through more twists and turns than I would have liked after a lifetime of working. Some things weren't going very well. I felt sad and sorry for myself. Something had to change. I found little delights to lift my spirits, good books, films, photos and paintings. One day, sitting in the Indian Trail Library, I realized that just simple colors made me feel better. Strong bright colors, misty dreamy colors, all of them just made me feel good, changed my moods. That's when my seed burst open, and thank the fates, my opportunity to start doing what I love so much was fertilized by life.

It's funny how things can just click. The right people, places and things were there for me. I was able to enroll at SFCC and start classes. The tasks here really seem like play to me now, sometimes a bit of a chore, but mostly fun. A fun and challenging time in my life, as I head into my 60s. That is most likely when I'll get my first degree. Or I just might keep going and going. Thanks to Claude and my friend ue, be having all this fun right into the year 1020.
What was the writing assignment? (Use your teacher's words or attach the assignment.)

Write a documented argumentative essay (1,200 -1,500 words) on a controversial issue in which you try to convince the undecided reader of the merits of your position. This is not merely an informative essay; you are required to take a stand on the issue. If you are not sure where you stand, then arbitrarily pick a side, and argue it to the best of your ability (in much the same way as a lawyer must "argue for the dient," whether the lawyer believes said dient is guilty or not).

Your goal is to argue your position intelligibly and logically, avoiding simplistic reasoning and overgeneralization.

Use MLA style and documentation, including a Works Cited page. Use a minimum of three (3) different sources, one of which must be a non-internet source.

Please describe what you consider most successful in this paper.

I argued my issue strongly with clear facts and emphasis on these facts effecting our world. The paragraphs lead well into one another and I built my case clearly as they went on. Finally, I had a strong conclusion that summarized the entire paper and a diverse number of sources that I referred to in my Works Cited page.

Please describe your writing process. For example, what editorial help did you have, from whom, what changes did you make?

My research was extensive and I took a good deal of time reviewing the information and formulating a good argument. Rather than making many changes, I wrote the paper initially and added information for more detail and emphasis. Much of my editorial help came from consulting *Concise Wadsworth Handbook* many times. My instructor helped with punctuation along with great support and effective teaching of how to write a documented argumentative essay. I was challenged and enjoyed the process.
Let the Wolf Keep Balance in Nature

Wolf populations need time to grow before removing them from the protection they now receive under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This species deserves the chance to repopulate and again become a vital part of our ecosystem. Wolves have been a missing piece in the natural balance of wildlife here in the contiguous United States since early in the twentieth century; therefore, allow them to flourish in their habitat before removing them from the ESA. Then, all things considered, use sound conservation methods that serve both wolf and man. The future of these creatures is our responsibility and our legacy.

Canis Lupus migrated to the North American continent across the Bering Strait during the Ice Age, about 40 million years ago. For the last 20,000 years, the wolf we now know has hunted and survived in the harsh climate, keeping the balance of wildlife in order. This hunter preyed on the weak and sickly animals in order to allow healthy wildlife to thrive on the continent. Native Americans revere the wolf for its courage, cunning and family values; they resonate with these indigenous people. But, the new settlers of this land did not treat them fairly. Wolves have a complex social structure close to our own; they are a family animal. Both parents, along with the other members of the pack, care for the pups when they are born in the spring. They teach and carefully guide their young. The entire pack is one coherent unit and the leaders are the Alpha Pair. This alpha male and female keep the other members in order by teaching the younger pack members where, when, and what to hunt. Many times, wolves that kill livestock have lost the alpha pair and are inexperienced hunters. The alphas teach the pack to hunt wildlife not grazing herds. The wolf does know how to be mannerly to the world around it. They fit into their environment perfectly and were a healthy part of this country
when the white European migrations to America began. Full measures to completely eliminate
the wolf started in about 1800, the government stepped in to help, and the wolf was nearly
extinct by the 1960s (Lopez 63). Why is the white man so willing to kill them all and when
will the wolf finally be baptized from its perceived Original Sin?

Fear of the wolf can be traced back to the Dark Ages. Then, as well as now, fear was
used to control people. "Wolves are portrayed as evil, vicious, ravenous beasts with an
insatiable appetite for human flesh" (Jen). Entire populations were swayed to hate this animal,
and for what purpose? Werewolf and wolfman myths were used by the religious sectors to
control their people. Witch hunts served the same purpose, but that is another story. It was said
that "Wolves can at the right cycle of the moon possess a human soul" (2). A man or woman
could be accused of changing into a werewolf and having an alliance with evil forces. This
unlucky person, who usually did not agree with the doctrines of the church, would be tried,
convicted, tortured and put to death. This was a sad time in a sector of an
otherwise 'wholesome ideology and also a great detriment to the image of the wolf. This image
of fear and evil has lasted in the minds of men. Killing wolves is still illegally happening "even
though there is not one documented case of a healthy wild wolf killing a human being"(3).
Given this brutal manipulation, the wolf's reputation has suffered, and as a result, literally
millions have been killed.

The US was growing in the early 1800s and so were American businesses. Wolves
interfered with livestock industries and the new settlers' land use; demonizing them was good
propaganda. Wolf propaganda was wide spread and helped create jobs for bounty hunters and
blood lust in hunters. As many wolves as possible were hunted, poisoned, and trapped; others
died because of losing their habitat to the pioneer settlers. The last remaining wolf packs
were mortalized by swift aerial hunting. Again, in our history, as with buffalo, beaver and others, this was the sorrowful conclusion. I have every respect for the rancher and his products. I am a meat eater. But the need to kill every wolf to protect livestock is beyond reprehension. Many animals kill livestock besides wolves; cougars, coyotes, bears and foxes have all been guilty. Yet, the wolf was hated, and systematically and inhumanely killed nearly to extinction. "Here there might have been room for both human and animal predators to live their separate lives in peace; instead, North America became the scene of the human race's most successful killing campaign against the wolf ("Wolf"). Thus, the ancestors of our loyal dogs were nearly gone.

Now, something of a miracle is in our midst, yet it has caused much controversy. Ed Bangs of the US Fish and Wildlife Services says, "Just put the word wolf in anything related to wildlife and it causes controversy." This shows how little we have learned about the creatures we victimized. Still, they have been successfully reintroduced into parts of the US. The first wolves were released in Yellowstone in 1995. The wolf population is growing and becoming stronger and the wolves are restoring balance to an ecosystem that has suffered from their absence. Already in Yellowstone, the coyote population has been thinned, allowing more small animal prey for foxes, hawks, eagles and snakes. The same scenario helps the deer and elk fight disease and have a stronger herd. The wolf has come home, and they too are now flourishing (McNamee).

Subsequently, the wolf may soon be taken off, or delisted, from the ESA. Of course, laws will be enacted to conserve the animal, but despite our knowledge there are still some who would rid the world of these noble creatures. Their motivation is to protect the commodities they work so hard raising, and rightly so, they should protect their products. Not by taking
matters into their own hands and randomly killing wolves, but by communication with the professionals who work with this issue. Wolves will kill ranch animals when they are hungry, and the US Fish and Wildlife Services reimburse for the kills and relocate troublesome animals. The field specialists radio collar and track wolves, they keep strict control of them. Ranchers and wolves can live in peace when communication between them is active. Nonetheless, illegal killing of wolves still occurs.

Another possible injury to the prolific recovery of the wolf will be when delisting occurs and hunting would begin. This could be dangerous to their well being; "...there are concerns about how hunters may disrupt socialization patterns of the wolf packs, important to the animals' continued survival" (qtd in Morlin). We cannot keep repeating our past actions. Hunters and ranchers alike must manage their livelihoods with new technologies and information. A good example is when ranchers and biologists in Idaho worked together to control sheep depredations in the eastern Boulder Mountains. Some measures included arming sheep herders with radio equipment to monitor wolf movements. When wolves are near herds, additional guard dogs are brought in for more protection. Cracker shells, which resonate loudly, 'Can scare off wolves, as well as shotguns loaded with non-lethal rubber bullets. One method is to wait and sting the wolf with the rubber bullet when it sees the sheep; this, along with the other methods, conditions the wolves to react adversely to the sheep and hunt elsewhere. Electric night fences and other techniques are on trial now also (Kauffman). We can learn. Fear makes people do stupid things, but ignorance can be educated. There are better means of controlling predation than annihilation; professionals know how to conserve and control animals humanely. All things considered, let us not eradicate these canine mammals again. We need the willingness to see both sides.
In other words, be informed of the facts, incorporate new techniques for animal control and respect the laws. We need collaboration on these issues not controversy, and should "be willing to listen to opposing views and be willing to compromise and adjust viewpoints for the techniques to succeed" (qtd in Morlin). With all this in mind, we can learn much about conservation and learn about ourselves at the same time. In conclusion, respect both sides of the controversy of wolf management. The wolf deserves the right to live and hunt, while we all deserve consideration and respect. Let's show the moral excellence that our humanity does contain. We can oversee our world with a safe environment for its creatures. Indeed, this will benefit the human experience and, as a result, the wolf will take its rightful place again.
Works
Cited


Telephone interview. 13 Nov. 2007.


Choose one of the following topics to develop into an effective essay of at least 500 words of hand-written text. Read the topic carefully to make sure that you respond to it directly and fully. Establish a clear thesis that controls the entire essay. Provide plenty of evidence (concrete details, examples, personal observations, etc.) to support and develop your thesis.

Write in pen, not in pencil. Staple this page to the front of the essay and circle the topic number that you chose. Some corrections or stray marks are expected, but overall your paper should be easily read. Good luck!

1. Our possessions can possess us—and they frequently do, sometimes delightfully, sometime harmfully. Nearly everyone has felt that the essence of life was summed up for the moment by having a dog, a record collection, a pair of skis or earrings or special jeans. In an essay, define your past or present obsession with a special personal belonging that affects your life. (Another way to look at this: If your house were on fire and you could only save one object, what would you choose and why?)

2. Adolescents and their parents customarily go through a period of sustained bickering, which may last a few years, over simple issues such as household cleanliness, going out, studying, spending money, and so on. In your family, what were/are the recurrent themes or persistent issues during this period of mutual irritation? Were the differences ever resolved? Clarify both sides of the key issue in your own passage through the valley of family harassment.

Gwhat particular place has made you aware of your entire country? It might be a historical site, a busy city street, a wilderness area, a schoolyard, a game, a mall, or any place that at a specific moment epitomized America for you (or whatever your country may be)—for better or worse. Describe the place, giving the concrete details that affected you with their national symbolism.

4. Write a set of "Four Guidelines for Coping with the United States." Explain four things that a newcomer has to know and understand in order to recognize American realities. Address yourself to young adults who are as well educated as you. Discuss what may be unfamiliar to an outsider. Your guidelines may explain positive or negative features of society. (*If you come from a different country or culture, you can adapt this topic to deal with your own country or culture instead of America.)
Colorado Bound

Leaving my home in Central Jersey as a young woman, for a trip to Colorado was an exciting time for me. I had no way of knowing what lie ahead and I didn't care. I was nineteen years old and just wanted to go! Arriving in Colorado, I was in awe of the great expanse of this country. The "Star Spangled Banner" played in my head. This huge open country is real, not just pictures in a text book. My excitement had me running up mountains and deciding I had to learn more about our countries' History.

Growing up in Central Jersey was isolating in many ways. There was no need to go far for stimulation. Manhattan and most things needed were no more than a thirty-minute drive. Life was contained in a tri-state area. But one summer, my girlfriend and I headed to Colorado for camping and adventure. This is the summer I truly fell in love with this land we call the United States of America.

"Oh say can you see by the dawns early light..." and that is how it happened. Driving on I-70, I said to my friend "Look at those unusual clouds on the horizon." They weren't clouds they were the snow capped Rocky Mountains. Every geography and history class I've had flashed before my eyes. This is a big country. What do I know about all this? I asked myself. The wide open spaces of our country are real and I want to know about them, and how they became part of the US.

I was reminded of patriotic songs and "The Pledge of Allegiance" that I had said again and again. I read books that told me how the settlers crossed, farming began, our military, our Natl. Parks system. And by learning, I realized what a wonderful system of government keeps this very large country moving.

I discovered the open plains where the corn and wheat fields are. Realized how hard the farmer worked and really did get up at the crack of dawn. Saw the Harvest and old farm buildings.
The site of the US Airforce Academy built into the foot of the mountains made our military more real to me. I saw the young boys in uniform, tanks, and jets in Colorado Springs, all working as a well-oiled machine.

Colorado history opened my eyes to the life of the Native American also. It was not the happiest of learnings, but true. Many US treaties were signed with these people. This was also a part of our history.

Going to Rocky Mountain Park for the first time had me thanking our forefathers for the insight to put aside land that will always remain our beautiful country. I thanked Teddy Roosevelt very much. After being in the most densely populated region of our country, this was heaven. The US Parks service is a blessing.

I saw the Bald Eagle in person. Majestic, the symbol of our land. How lucky we are to live in a free land. The eagle flew from tree to tree, as we are free to come and go also.

Being in such a wonderful state helped me see the liberty and justice for all. We had a big 4th of July party that year. And for the first time, really, I felt in my heart what we were celebrating. Not just barbeque and fireworks. The Constitution, Bill of Rights, and all those before us who fought to keep this country beautiful and free.
Faculty Comments on Portfolio #3

This collection of essays garnered a great deal of discussion. While the portfolio did not ultimately fail, it was felt by the group at large that a "No Pass for One Essay" rating would be an appropriate grade. There were, however, readers who still felt the whole portfolio should fail.

Narrative Essay: It was felt that this was "breezy and readable." One reader stated that the first couple of sentences of this paper, which had been revised since midterm, were "awful," but the writing did improve. Some readers noted the nice style. There are good descriptions in the paper. This was seen as a passing essay.

Documented Persuasive Essay: The problems with this portfolio start with this essay and continue to the impromptu essay. While readers felt that there was some really nice description and lots of detailed information that comes from a variety of angles, there was concern about the thesis. The paper feels unbalanced; one reader said that there is too much history, and that the argument itself starts too late, meaning that history trumps argument. There is also the problem of "quotes from God," i.e., quotes that are not introduced and feel plunked into the paper. Citations are also faulty. There are focus and organization problems, due to the fact that the thesis doesn't control the paper. However, the writer seems enthusiastic about the topic, and the sentence structure was felt to be fme.

Impromptu Essay: This is the paper the majority of readers would have had the writer revise. The major issue is with paragraphing. The essay feels like a list, with paragraphs that aren't unified or developed. While there are some good descriptions, this paper has a bulleted quality. It was also felt that this is more narrative than descriptive, meaning that the writer isn't writing to the assignment.

The group believed that the writer, if given a chance to revise, could probably pass on a second reading, as there is a clear voice here. Readers had a sense that the writer is almost there. There is consideration of audience, and there is adequate sentence structure. As is, though, the writer needs to address some of the issues identified in order to meet college-level writing standards.
Portfolio #4: Problematic
What was the writing assignment? (Use your teacher's words or attach the assignment.)

Essay #2 Summary/Response
Occasion: Your second essay assignment will give you the opportunity to read, discuss, and respond to one of the articles in our anthology, 50 Essays.

Writing Task: You may select one of the following: Malcolm X, "Learning to Read"; Sherman Alexie, "The Joy of Reading and Writing"; Frederick Douglass, "Learning to Read and Write." After selecting one, write your own "Summary and Response" essay. Your essay will need an intro paragraph that leads up to a thesis statement in which you make a claim about the article. The body of the essay will contain your summary of the article and your response to it.

To accomplish the body of your essay, you'll first write a summary of the article (2 paragraphs min.) in which you impartially represent the significant ideas the author presents in the essay. Be sure to use acknowledgment phrases to make it clear to the reader that the ideas you present are not your own but are those of the author.

In the second part of the body of the essay, develop and refine your ideas to some part or parts of what the author discuss in the essay. Write at least two paragraphs. Choose a couple of topics and develop your thoughts about them in well focused and fully developed paragraphs.

Then add a concluding paragraph that sums up your essay's main ideas (include those of the summary and the response portions) and restates your thesis/claim.

Audience: Fellow classmates but also other English teachers who will not have your familiarity with the article. Therefore, you'll have to summarize effectively, your portfolio readers will be interested in the thoughts you have in response to the author's claims.

Please describe what you consider most successful in this paper.

Just having the paper done was enough for me. I have had difficulties turning papers in in the past. I've always managed to make an outline, rough draft, and revision, just never a final revision. This is probably one of the greatest "turn ins" I've ever had.

Please describe your writing process. For example, what editorial help did you have, from whom, what changes did you make?

For me I was spending more time on the outline and set up. I had spent two days figuring out what I wanted to write about. I wrote up a rough draft in a sinch, but when it came to peer review I felt like I was stiffed by my peers. All they said was "it's good" not really any help. But the teacher made up for that definitely.
October 9, 2007

Let's Meet Superman

Superman saves the world, but so does Sherman Alexie. In a piece called "Superman and Me" Sherman Alexie writes about his journey of learning to read and using his knowledge to inspire others to success. The greatness of Sherman Alexie comes from his self determination and the ability to influence others to be great as well. "Superman and Me" is a small testament to the power of reading.

Pushing himself to become something more than just another Indian, Alexie read constantly throughout his youth. "A smart Indian is a dangerous person, widely feared and ridiculed by Indians and non-Indians alike." (Sherman Alexie) This is a sentence of a paragraph that details the trials of facing his culture. He described how other Indian kids have problems with reading and interacting with non-Indian adults and children. Alexie detailed the submissiveness of other children towards non-Indians, but their ability to confront others of the same decent. "I refused to fail. I was smart. I was arrogant. I was lucky." Sherman Alexie even at a young age read books any chance he was given. He talked about reading at recess, basketball games, family powwows, and even the car rides home from school. Cereal boxes, books from the library, books from his father, books in a store, school bulletins, whatever he could get his hands on, Sherman Alexie would read. "I was trying to save my life." (Alexie) This quote taken from the second to last paragraph meant that Alexie was trying to become something more than just another Indian. He himself became educated through the love of books.

Shennan Alexie used the knowledge he gained to inspire children to read and to write. "I visit schools and teach creative writing to Indian kids." (Alexie) Alexie in the last paragraph stated that writing was "beyond Indians" that no one of importance visited schools.
He also stated that he visited schools as much as possible; teaching to children the importance of writing. He stated the learning environment he and Indian children of today have to encounter. He explained how the classrooms are overfilled, how there wasn't anyone who would come and speak at these schools. The other fact was the knowledge that other Indians wrote: books, poetry, essays and other forms. "Books.' I say to them. 'Books,' I say.' He gives the idea of reading, to everyone, as a way to save their lives. He means this, to say, that people need to become something more than mundane, uneducated, everyday nobody.

He sees the world that could only come from his ability to read. Sherman Alexie sees the world in such a way that everything is simple while remaining complicated. His third paragraph in this piece was dedicated to how he sees the world and the people in it. He views people as paragraphs; people are made up of different words and sentences (traits) that become one whole idea like a paragraph (person as a whole). This allows him to view people for more than just face value. Having the ability to organize people and ideas into a system like paragraphs shows his intelligence. Alexie can break down even the most complicated systems, and group most of the simplest ideas, people, places, objects, anything. This ability is amazing. If everyone had this system or something similar there would be more understanding in the world.
It is very altruistic of Alexie to use the knowledge he has gained for a greater good. Shennan Alexie had the ability to use what he has learned for several different uses. He could have purely been a writer and never teach. The fact that he goes to schools and speaks to children about writing and influences them to read more is truly an act of greatness. He shares his knowledge. He dedicates his writing of novels and papers to further educate others. Alexie also further educates himself by constantly reading so that he may be better at teaching others. His actions and words have inspired hundreds of children and he will continue to do so.

As long as Shennan Alexie reads he will further better himself and others. Through his self determination and perseverance he has made his life what it is today. He visits schools to inspire children to greatness. He sees the world in a way to better himself. Alexie is an altruistic person to continue to further inspire and educate others. Shennan Alexie is a modern day Superman.

Bibliography


Please type or print.

What was the written assignment? (Use your teacher's words or attach the assignment.)

Occasion: Speaking in Essay 4 as a concerned citizen rather than a member of a team of scholars briefing an official task force, as you were in Essay 3, you decide to persuade the task force to agree with your opinion on your important public issue. As an engaged citizen, you believe it is your duty to make your voice heard and so help shape the world you live in.

Writing Task: For Essay 4, you'll take a stand on the issue with opposing views you chose for Essay 3, and argue convincingly for your stance. Find at least one additional credible source (you will also want to reuse those sources you found for Essay 3), then write an essay that convinces the task force to consider your position.

Format: The essay must be typed, double-spaced, 3-S pages, in a readable 12-point font, with 1” margins. Document your sources using MIA Style. At least 4 secondary sources must be used. Three of these may be the sources you chose for Essay 3, but one must be an additional source. You may use up to two internet sources.

Please describe what you consider most successful in this paper.

Getting the information. The amount of information that I was able to find (and it was hard to find) was awesome. Things I never knew about India and their situation. I had to really search, which was surprising. I thought there would be more info on the topic, but there is really quite little. It's well-known, but really hasn't been discussed.

Please describe your writing process. For example, what editorial help did you have, from whom, what changes did you make?

For me this paper was about the facts -- how much I can back myself up. It seemed that I have friends that disagree with the entirety of this essay. It's strange how you find the feelings of others through these essays. Peer review actually helped. One of my peers was born in India and that's what started my in-depth research on the country.
Project Population

6,600,000,000 is the rough estimate of the population of the world today ("U.S. Population"). With the population so high, new problems have risen and others will rise. The world's population is growing ever higher, and we must understand that it will cause problems on many different fronts, from food supply, the environment, and even the economy.

Many people get confused when they think of overpopulation. Most would think of overpopulation as meaning that there are too many people in the world, but Paul Ehrlich and Anne Ehrlich explain that the problem is more complex: "The key to understanding overpopulation is not population density but the number of people in an area is relative to its resources and the capacity of the environment to sustain human activities; that is, to the area's carrying capacity." (Ehrlich and Ehrlich). What they mean by this is that the world is overpopulated because there are too few resources for the number of people.

India is a perfect example of the relationship of overpopulation to the available amount of resources. As of July 1st India's population has reached an estimated 1,129,900,000, or 1,129.9 million people per 2,973,190 square kilometers. To put this into perspective, India is slightly larger than one third the size of the United States, but it has almost 4 times as many people ("India"). With its steadily rising debt, limited resources, and inflation on a steep rise, India's population concerns have reached an all
time high. India, as well as many other countries, are raising concerns about population growth and its effects. Sixty percent of the jobs held in India are agriculture based. Yet astonishingly, India is a very poor and hungry nation. They do not produce enough food for their own nation.

Besides the overwhelming need to produce enough food for a larger population, overpopulation also impacts the environment. There are places already in the world that have felt the environmental sting of overpopulation. For example, in Mexico City where overpopulation is a large problem, "...the air people breathe in one day is equal to smoking two packs of cigarettes." ("Overpopulation"). Overpopulation also affects the quality of life. Though Mexico City is closed off by mountain ranges and is an enclosed ecosystem (where the air and water are not easily cycled from the outside) Mexico City is a perfect example of what the world may become if these issues are not met ("Overpopulation"). Carbon dioxide emissions are responsible for this dirty air. According to the Energy Information Administration, in 1980 there were 18,330 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions in the world. 25 years later in 2005 the number had increased to 28,193 million metric tons ("International"). With the world's population near 4.5 billion in 1980 and at 6.6 billion today, emissions will only get higher as the number of people continues to rise ("U.S. and World"). Not only will emissions get higher, the need for lumber will also increase, and this will be detrimental to forests, which produce most of the world's oxygen. "Nearly half of the world's original forest cover has been lost, and each year another 16 million hectares are cut..." (Hinrichsen, Robey). With diminishing natural landscapes the world's quality air supply will be too
toxic for people to stand. Hinrichsen and Robey point out that about 3 million people in the world die each year, because of air pollution (Hinrichsen, Robey).

While the environment of the planet worsens, the economy of each country is steadily weakening, making it difficult for countries to financially sustain their citizens. The unemployment percentage of the U.S. in the last ten years has ranged anywhere from 3.9% to 6.3%. The percentage is now at 4.7% and rising (Dept of Labor). The more people the fewer jobs, the fewer jobs, and the more homeless there are in the world. In a report done by MSNBC, in 2005 there were 754,000 people in the U.S. that were homeless ("Report"). That means that roughly 2.5% of the people living in the U.S. are homeless. The affordability and accessibility of homes in the U.S. will constantly be difficult for the rising population of the nation. With-limited jobs and the difficulty in buying or even renting a home, America's quality of life may become similar to a modern day India. Countries like India with 7.8% unemployment rate, less land area, and higher population have this issue destroying their economy ("India"). With a rise in population, the need for less expensive housing is a must. With high population, property values are most likely to increase. This effect causes inflation. Inflation is the general level of prices related to an increase in the volume of money and resulting in the loss of value of currency ("Inflation"). For a country with so many people having a stable economy is crucial. With a high inflation rate, a country's debt will grow, making a stable economy impossible. Overpopulation makes feeding all of a country's citizens, making decent living standards, and available jobs difficult to obtain.

People must take action. Some governments in the world have put limits on the number of children families can have, such as India and China. Debates for solutions are
constantly conducted by the United Nations, the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and many other world organizations. Every 13 years, the population of the world grows by about one billion (Hinrichsen, Robey). Contraceptives and planned family development are only recently becoming popular. Whatever the case may be, there needs to be a solution, or these and many unforeseen issues will occur. For some countries this is already a reality. Resources are limited and overpopulation will make it harder to achieve an acceptable standard of living. Carbon emissions are destroying the earth, and the levels of emissions are increasing. Major forests are constantly being cut down to supply the ever growing demand. Countries economies will drown in the number of people they are unable to support. The world's population is growing ever higher, and problems have already started.
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Impromptu Topics

You will have 50 minutes in class to pre-write and draft an essay that might be put in your final portfolio. Its length should be about 600-900 words (about 3-5 pages handwritten, skipping lines), and you should display what you know about good writing: developing a specific thesis sentence with specific examples in a logical order using transitions and committing few mechanical errors. At the end of the quarter, I will hand back both impromptu drafts, you will choose the one impromptu you feel is strongest, and you will have 50 minutes to revise and edit your draft, to be used in your final portfolio. Here are your topics for this impromptu:

1. College Expectations: So far has college been a disappointment to you? A pleasant surprise? Or just about what you expected? Whether you came to college straight out of high school or opted to continue your formal education after a twenty year hiatus, it’s likely that you had some beforehand image of what college going would be like, some set of expectations about the demands, pleasures, and general nature of college life. Now, of course, you’ve had some time to measure those earlier expectations against the reality of the college experience. In this essay, it’s your job to compare your pre-college assumptions about higher education with your actual experience as a college student. Is course work easier or more difficult than you expected it to be? Are instructors pretty much the folks you imagined they’d be, or are they different creatures entirely? How about your fellow students—are they more or less what you expected they’d be like, or are they significantly different than you figured they’d be? Make a claim about the level of accuracy of your pre-college assumptions and support that claim using lots of specific examples.

2. el-Creation: Defining One’s Self in a World of Info-Overload... is our college-wide theme this year, and here at SFCC we’d like to know which is most responsible for creating who we are: is it we ourselves, or is it the outside influences that surround us? Which is it? Use specific examples, from your own experience and the experience of those you know (as well as research if you’d like), to prove your thesis.

3. Super Power: You have been granted one super physical power (flight, invisibility, strength, etc.) for one day. Pick one super power and explain what you would do with it. Be sure your answer addresses not only what your power would benefit you or others. As the chances this scenario happening are fairly slim, in your conclusion you could address reality. While you cannot actually have super powers, what can you do in your life to at least approach the ideal you describe in your essay?

4. Summer 07: Which was the best summer film of 2007? One of the big sequels like Harry Potter, Pirates. Rush Hour. Die Hard, Oceans, or Bourne? Or more independent fare like Once, Interview, or Fido, or documentaries like Air Guitar Nation or Sicko? Or maybe a foreign film like Journey from the Fall, Paprika, or Falling? Make sure you define what “best” is and support your film claim with reasons (in your topic sentences) and lots of specific examples.
A Complaint about College

College is an experience worth taking the time, effort, and expenses for. Though college might be of great worth to a simpleton, college has been a tremendous disappointment to me. The difficulty of college is at a very low standard.

Every high school student is warned and prepared for the difficulties of college. Their teachers warnings of weekly ten page papers and homework stacked to their eyeballs struck fear into the hearts of every pre-college student. There was great anticipation about the homework load and about the proportions of time that would be spent. "Every single hour of class is two of homework," was a line repeated by every counselor and instructor both from college and high school. Come to find that two weeks worth of math class takes me less than an hour to accomplish. The proportion stands at eight hours of class to one hour of homework. Senior year of high school I had constant three to five page papers due every week. Four out of six classes in college I would be lucky to get just one paper, in one class, every two weeks. "Well, that means your grades must be slipping," a comment made by many college counselors after I personally complained about the lack of challenge. A counselor will help someone who thinks course work is too difficult, and refuse to help those who think course work too easy.

While a higher standard is not applicable to everyone it forces the more capable to a lower level of education. Running start, older people, and those that have prior commitments to children and work lower that lever of education. Running start students should not be allowed unless they match the maturity of college. I can't count the numerous times some immature running start student interrupted
the class by talking, passing notes, or refusal to pay attention. Their interruptions take away class time that the rest of us pay for. I respect a person well into their much older age that wants to learn, but it's their choice. They should accept the difficulty that should come with higher education. Those who miss class because of their children or work should not be given a chance to make up work or get extensions on papers. It was their choice to have prior commitments.

As for basic requirements that involve English or math's "refresher" courses, those should not be required. Placement test don't match the level of classes. The test for placement get much higher than that of class. Solution, raise the standards of education. The true difficulty in college doesn't come from material and course work; it comes from the distraction you get from having college be too easy. The fact that anyone can do college should not be an accomplishment for the institution but a failure to those whose potential is slowed.

The difficulty of college is at a very low standard. The worth of education is invaluable, but only if the quality can reflect upon it. Good things come easy; great things come with difficulty.
Faculty Comments on Portfolio #4

This collection of essays did not pass portfolio reading, despite the fact that many of the readers felt that the essays were revisable. The department rules state that if two or more essays don't meet minimum standards, the entire portfolio receives a "No Pass" rating, and the student will be encouraged to take English 101 again to gain additional practice and instruction in academic writing. The writer's narrative paper did pass at the midterm portfolio reading, at which the group felt that the writer has a strong voice and handles material deftly. However, after seeing the more representative sample that a complete portfolio provides, the problems are seen to exist in more than one paper, necessitating the "No Pass" rating.

Narrative Essay: There is a good opening line in the first essay. However, the writer doesn't meet assignment requirements. There is a lack of a controlling idea (thesis) and topic sentences. The writer doesn't distinguish between original ideas and those borrowed from another author. Basic directions aren't followed. This indicates a lack of audience awareness. This paper needs additional development.

Documented Persuasive Essay: There are good citations in this essay, though portfolio readers were put off by comments on the cover sheet that there was difficulty "getting the information." The writer states, "I thought there would be more info on the topic, but there is really quite little." Most readers know that the topic of overpopulation has received quite a bit of attention in recent decades. A lack of focus was noted, as well as the sense that this essay is too broad. Missing also is the analysis of factual information and of the argument itself. The facts used as examples indicate faulty logic. One reader noted that much of this seems unintentionally plagiarized.

Impromptu Essay: There is a lack of focus and development. While there are good examples given, there are sentence-level problems. The thesis is unclear. And audience awareness is absent.

This portfolio is interesting because at first glance it looks fine, but on further examination, problems appear. These problems are profound enough, and consistent enough, to earn a "No Pass" rating.
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**MIDTERM ESSAY**

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**Reason(s)**

- unclear focus / main point / thesis
- insufficient development of ideas or experiences
- organization / structure / paragraphing problems
- wording and sentence structure problems
- punctuation: too many mistakes
- spelling, proofreading: too many mistakes
- treatment of topic inappropriate for college audience / audience
- inadequate response to the assignment
  - other: ________________________________
  - ________________________________

**FINAL PORTFOLIO**

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**Reason(s)**

- unclear focus / main point / thesis
- insufficient development of ideas or experiences
- organization / structure / paragraphing problems
- wording and sentence structure problems
- punctuation: too many mistakes
- spelling, proofreading: too many mistakes
- treatment of topic inappropriate for college audience
- inadequate response to the assignment
  - other: ________________________________
  - ________________________________

**Additional Comment**
Garrison Description of Writing Quality

Pass (C or higher) for mid-term and final
- thesis is clear and controls paper yet lacks specificity, unification; the essay's digressions do not profoundly distract the reader
- evidence and analysis is adequate but thin, and some development is overly general or repetitive
- organization is occasionally not clear, compelling the reader to stop and re-read previous material to be sure of meaning
- while some sentence variety is attempted, diction is sometimes wordy or cliched
- grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors do not profoundly interfere with meaning

Low pass at midterm/No pass at final (C-)
- while a thesis may be present, it does not control the paper; it might be awkwardly worded or vague; the focus may digress in a manner distracting to the reader
- supporting information is inadequate; development lacks concrete detail or the detail is too general, inappropriate, or repetitive
- organization is often unclear or meandering; the flow of ideas within the paragraphs and transitions between the paragraphs lack coherence, compelling the reader to stop and re-read to be sure of meaning.
- diction is characterized by wordiness or cliches
- grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors interfere with meaning at times

Not passing (D or lower) for mid-term and final
- lack of focus-- due to the writer's haste, carelessness, lack of attention, or lack of ability--severely distracts the reader, and the controlling idea is absent
- inadequate development is characterized by details that are scanty, general, inappropriate, repetitive, and vague
- lack of organization compels the reader to struggle to find the sense, and the sense may never be found; the writer has infrequent control of the material.
- diction is characterized by wordiness, cliches, and grammar tangles that distract and interfere with meaning
- grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors severely interfere with meaning and add to a sloppy visual presentation
Appendix O

English 102
Quilt
Spokane Falls Community
College

This English 102 Quilt is a draft . . . to help us continue our conversation about what it is we do in English 102, something a dean once told us we need a clearer vision of. Jared, Ryan, and I here boldly offer some of our course materials, categorized by type of assignment. We hope more of you will share some of your English 102 assignments. We will refer to the quilt and to our various assignments as we continue our Information Literacy focus this year in the Winter and Spring Composition meetings, the Spring Composition Salon, and email communications like this one. By the end of the year, we will finalize this draft into the English 102 quilt describing our collective work in the course.

Our English 102 course learning outcomes are:

1. Identify a claim of supportable scope for a given assignment

2. Annotate a text in order to effectively analyze and evaluate the ideas in that text.

3. Research, evaluate, use, and document information to develop an argument.

4. Analyze and select appropriate primary and secondary sources in light of particular rhetorical purposes to support claims

5. Create an inter-textual response that is thoughtful and ethical

6. Communicate with an academic audience to illustrate, evaluate or persuade

7. Organize ideas in a logical, purposeful, and coherent manner

8. Engage in reconsideration and revision as an integral part of academic writing

9. Improve prose through self, instructor and peer feedback

10. Generate clear, grammatically correct prose

11. Apply conventions of a particular documentation style

Our department tradition is that English 102 students develop an extensive quarter-long research paper project resulting in a 10-15 page research paper with at least one primary source, building the paper all quarter through several smaller progressive paper assignments.
This quilt provides examples of Research Project Assignments for English 102, as well as possible short paper assignments made as part of the Research Project.
Sample Syllabi
Welcome to English 102, with your host, Jared Anthony!

Here's the course syllabus. Please read through it and let me know if you have any questions. I look forward to working with you this quarter!

Catalog Description

This course teaches students research skills by emphasizing the development of critical reading habits, investigative proficiency, and the writing of expository and persuasive prose including documented research essays. Students work to understand academic audiences, increase their clarity and objectivity, and adhere to standard formats. Prerequisite: 2.0 or better in English 101.

Course Learning Outcomes

A student who successfully completes this course will be able to

1. Identify a claim of supportable scope for a given assignment
2. Annotate a text in order to effectively analyze and evaluate the ideas in that text
3. Research, evaluate, use, and document information to develop an argument
4. Analyze and select appropriate primary and secondary sources in light of particular rhetorical purposes to support claims
5. Create an inter-textual response that is thoughtful and ethical
6. Communicate with an academic audience to illustrate, evaluate or persuade
7. Organize ideas in a logical, purposeful, and coherent manner
8. Engage in reconsideration and revision as an integral part of academic writing
9. Improve prose through self, instructor and peer feedback
10. Generate clear, grammatically correct prose
11. Apply conventions of a particular documentation style
**Late Work**

We all have many demands on our time. Success in college depends upon learning and practicing solid time-management skills. Of course, emergencies do emerge. Assignments submitted after the deadline on the day they are due, but within 24 hours, will be accepted with a late penalty of 25%. Assignments that are submitted between 24 and 48 hours late will be accepted with a late penalty of 50%. Assignments submitted more than 48 hours late will incur a 75% late penalty. Discussion board posts must be submitted before their deadlines; late discussion board posts will not earn points.

**Academic Honesty**

If you’re not sure how to do an assignment, or how to cite sources properly, please contact me. Plagiarism is a serious offense and not an option you should ever feel the need to pursue or one you engage in accidentally. Careless plagiarism will result in an F for the assignment; blatant plagiarism will result in an F for the course grade and a report to the vice president of student services, which may result in further disciplinary action.

**Services for Students with Disabilities**

If you have a health condition or disability that may require accommodations in order to fully participate in this class, please contact Disability Support Services in Building 17, Room 201, Phone 533-4166. Information about disability will be regarded as confidential.

**Grading**

The course grade is calculated by dividing total points earned by 25. For example, if you earn 50 of the 100 points available, your course grade will be 50/25=2.0.

- **Discussion Boards (ten worth two points each)**: 20 points
- **Research Proposal**: 10 points
- **Review of Research**: 25 points
- **Peer Reviews (two worth five points each)**: 10 points
- **Term Paper**: 35 points
### Schedule of Due Dates *(deadline is always midnight, end of day)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>9/21–9/25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion Board 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>9/28–10/2</td>
<td>Discussion Board 2</td>
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<td>Discussion Board 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>10/5–10/9</td>
<td>Discussion Board 4</td>
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<td>Discussion Board 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>10/12–10/16</td>
<td>Discussion Board 6</td>
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<td>Research Proposal</td>
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<td>Five</td>
<td>10/19–10/23</td>
<td>Discussion Board 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>10/26–10/30</td>
<td>Discussion Board 8</td>
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<td>Seven</td>
<td>11/2–11/6</td>
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<td>Eight</td>
<td>11/9–11/13</td>
<td>Discussion Board 9</td>
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<td>Veterans' Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>11/16–11/20</td>
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<td>Review of Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>11/23–11/27</td>
<td>Discussion Board 10</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eleven</td>
<td>11/30–12/4</td>
<td>Term Paper Working Draft</td>
<td>Peer Reviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Twelve</td>
<td>12/7–12/11</td>
<td>Study Day</td>
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<td>Term Paper Final Draft</td>
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English
102

English Composition
II

Spokane Falls Community
College

Fall 2015:
Online

Instructor: Ryan Simmons
E-mail: ryan.simmons@sfcc.spokane.edu
Phone: 533-3614
Office: 24-309
Office hours: Available weekdays via e-mail, or in office by appointment

Required Texts and Materials


• A small budget for photocopying and other resources ($10-25, give or take)

Course Description

This course builds on the skills practiced in English 101, with an emphasis on attaining the voice of an
expert. Toward this end, we will focus on locating useful materials through research; analyzing the
meaning and significance of data; and crafting polished, engaging prose. The goal will be to identify a
topic that you find fascinating, acquire a depth of knowledge about that topic, and convey to readers
what’s compelling about it. This quarter, each student will pursue a topic of interest drawn from popular
culture, analyzing how a particular film, program, musical performance, activity, artistic genre, or other
cultural phenomenon represents and influences the social world. This assignment will be completed in
several stages and will involve traditional library and Internet research as well as precise, thoughtful
analysis of primary documents and artifacts. The intended result is a specimen of your writing at its
best, demonstrating sustained focus, thoughtful analysis, and creativity.
Course Goals

By the end of this course, you should be able to

- Identify academic topics of personal interest;
- Create and carry out a research plan;
- Analyze information in an original and persuasive manner
- Incorporate varied types of information and analysis into a coherent whole;
- Practice strategies of effective prose writing;
- Revise effectively for coherence, clarity, and audience.

Course Requirements

Exercises (10 points each; 100 points total): Ten times throughout the quarter, you will complete one of the writing or editing exercises contained in *The Curious Researcher*.

Discussion Forums (10 points each; 100 points total): In comparison to the writing exercises mentioned above, the discussion forums ask you to think critically about a cultural phenomenon and advance your own ideas, usually in response to a reading. The forums are dialogic, meaning that you will have access to other students’ contributions and are expected to respond to them as part of an ongoing conversation about popular culture.

Quizzes (10 points each; 50 points total): Most Fridays when there is not a major writing assignment due, you will be expected to take an online quiz covering a topic relevant to a research writing class: avoiding plagiarism, grammar and punctuation, use of sources, etc.

Final (50 points): At the end of the quarter, there will be a more substantial quiz that reviews concepts from throughout the course; this will constitute the Final Exam.

Final Project (700 points): The main work of this course will culminate in a medium-sized (8-10 pages or so) essay on a topic having to do with popular culture. Leading up to the essay will be a series of shorter assignments emphasizing particular skills or types of knowledge. (Thorough descriptions of each assignment are provided as a separate handout.) The Final Project grade breaks down as follows:

- Assignment 1: Proposal (100 points)
- Assignment 2: Artifact Analysis (100 points)
- Assignment 3: Annotated Bibliography (100 points)
- Assignment 4: Research Essay (graded draft—100 points; final draft—250 points)
- Capstone (50 points)
Assignment Policies

1. Assignments must be typed and double-spaced and include a title (but not a title page) and page numbers. Essays are not graded on length, but rather on their ability to capture and persuade a reader. This ability arises from correctness of prose, and also from factors including clear expression, thoughtful organization, originality, completeness, and adequate support.

2. In order to receive a passing grade, an essay must articulate and support an original analysis, moving well beyond summary of other writers’ ideas and words.

3. Material from outside sources must be cited completely and correctly using academic conventions (such as MLA or APA citation style).

4. I am always willing to read and critique work in progress, and to answer questions about your writing. When you turn in an assignment to be graded you are expected to submit the best work you are capable of doing, given time constraints, as revisions will not be accepted after an essay has been graded (unless otherwise specified in the written assignment description).

5. Research Essay Revision: The draft due on June 5 will be graded by the same standard as the final draft. If you do not submit a revised draft of the Research Essay, your grade for the earlier draft will carry over.

6. Late assignments: 10 percent will be deducted for each 24-hour period an assignment from the Final Project group is submitted late. In contrast, forums and quizzes (including the final) will not be available after their due dates. IMPORTANT NOTE: Due to grading deadlines imposed by the college, December 9 is the final day on which you may submit any course materials; anything received after that date will receive no credit.

Academic Honesty

Any course work that is found to violate SFCC’s standards of academic honesty will be dealt with as laid out in the college’s posted “Standards of Conduct for Students,” which appear at this website: http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=132Q-30. Please read these standards, and the consequences for violating them, carefully, noting that the repercussions are always significant. In particular, be aware that plagiarism is a severe violation of both college policy and the policy of this course. You are responsible for understanding the rules governing plagiarism, and for asking the instructor prior to submitting course work if you have questions. Instances of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment. Repeated infractions of the rules on plagiarism, or egregious violations (such as major segments of an essay being copied), will lead to a failing course grade and will, in accordance with college policy, be reported to the chief student services officer.
Disability Accommodation

If you have a disability that may influence your ability to meet the requirements of this course, please contact Disability Support Services (Room 17-201, or phone 533-4166) as soon as possible. Any necessary accommodations, as arranged by Disability Support Services, will be made. All information concerning a disability or accommodation will remain confidential.

Statement on Learning and Mutual Respect

“In order for learning to take place, students must feel safe; this safety is due all students, not only those who share your values and beliefs. For this reason, courtesy, thoughtfulness, and acceptance are essential in our discussions in and out of the classroom. Acceptance should not be confused with agreement; one need not agree with a person to listen, and one must listen well in order to disagree respectfully. Every student in this course has a voice and so deserves the courtesy of attentive listening and the freedom to express diverse ideas.”
--Spokane Falls Community College
## Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>FRI</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 21</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to course;</td>
<td>READ: “Avoiding Plagiarism” (Purdue OWL); Ballenger, pp., 104-107; Holmes, “What Monkeys Eat: A Few Thoughts About Pop Culture Writing” FORUM 1: Does Pop Culture Matter?</td>
<td>QUIZ: Plagiarism 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit biography</td>
<td>DUE: Exercise 1.2, “The Myth of the Boring Topic” (see instructions on Canvas for modifications)</td>
<td>Oct. 2</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<td>READ: Ballenger, Introduction and Chapter 1; DUE: Exercise 1.1: “Building an Interest Inventory”</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>QUIZ: Punctuation 9</td>
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<td>DUE: Exercise 1.3: “Finding the Questions”</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>PROPOSAL DUE 16</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>READ: Ballenger, Chapters 2 and 3; DUE: Exercise 3.1, “Getting into a Conversation with a Fact”</td>
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<tr>
<td>READ: Silverman and Rader, “Reading Public Space: Starbucks” FORUM 2: Reading a Location</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>QUIZ: Grammar 21</td>
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<td>DUE: Exercise 3.5, “Dialogic Notetaking” (see instructions on Canvas for modification)</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>READ: Arnold, “Exile in Whinerville” FORUM 3: Reviewing a Review</td>
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<td>Nov. 2</td>
<td>DUE: Exercises 3.3/3.4, Paraphrase and Summary Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>READ: Yu, “Is It Okay to Laugh at South Park?” FORUM 6: Response to Questions Raised by Yu</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE 6</td>
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<td>MONDAY</td>
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<td>9: READ: Ballenger, Chapters 4-5;</td>
<td>11: NO CLASS – Veterans Day holiday</td>
<td>13: QUIZ: In-text Citation of Sources</td>
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<td>DUE: Exercise 4.3, “Three Ways In”</td>
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<td>Draft”</td>
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<td>Meat-Eaters: The Child as Advertising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Target”</td>
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<td>FORUM 7: Evaluating a Journal Article</td>
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<tr>
<td>30: READ: Capstone Examples (see Capstone</td>
<td>30: READ: Powers, “Top 40 in a Sea of Discontent”</td>
<td>4: CAPSTONE DUE</td>
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<tr>
<td>assignment guidelines on Canvas)</td>
<td>FORUM 9: Does Pop Culture Provide a Window into</td>
<td></td>
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<td>FORUM 8: Ranking the Examples</td>
<td>History?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7: FORUM 10: Responding to Capstones</td>
<td>7: FINAL EXAM; REVISION OF RESEARCH ESSAY</td>
<td>9: RESEARCH ESSAY DUE</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DUE</td>
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English 102
Spring 2011

Instructor: Barbara Simmons
Office: 24-210
Office Phone: 533-3318
Email: barbaras@spokanefalls.edu (or email me through Angel)
Office Hours: MTRF 8:00-10:00

Course Texts:

Class Structure:
The class is organized around a theme: Social Intelligence.
The class is organized around one large research project.
Smaller assignments that work to build the large project are due periodically.
We’ll begin and end the quarter applying our growing knowledge about social intelligence to two novels.

Course Requirements:
In Class Activities 120 pts
Summary/Response/Questions 18 x 10 pts = 180 pts
Seminars 5 x 20 pts = 100 pts
Proposal 50 pts
Extended Definition 100 pts
Annotated Bibliography 100 pts
Artifact Analysis or Interview 50 pts
Celebration of Student Writing 50 pts
Oral Presentation 50 pts
Career Research Project 200 pts

328
Total 1000 pts

**Grading Scale:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100 %</td>
<td>3.8-4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93 %</td>
<td>3.5-3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89 %</td>
<td>3.2-3.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86 %</td>
<td>2.9-3.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83 %</td>
<td>2.6-2.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79 %</td>
<td>2.3-2.5</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>74-76 %</td>
<td>2.0-2.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73 %</td>
<td>1.6-1.9</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69 %</td>
<td>1.3-1.5</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>64-66 %</td>
<td>1.0-1.2</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60-63 %</td>
<td>0.7-0.9</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>59- %</td>
<td>0.0-0.6</td>
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**English 102 Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:**

1. analyze and evaluate texts in light of particular audiences and rhetorical purposes
2. research, evaluate, use, and document information to develop a position
3. identify a topic of appropriate scope for a given assignment
4. communicate with an academic audience to analyze or persuade
5. use specific details to support claims
6. organize ideas in a purposeful manner
7. observe the conventions of standard edited American English
8. critically evaluate student writing
9. revise written work based on self-, peer-, and instructor- evaluation

**Attendance:**

Take this class if there is space in your life for it. In other words, you must commit to be in class 90% of the time to pass.

I am going to commit some serious life energy to you and I expect the same in return, just like a boss at work would. Instead of money, I am going to pay you in college credit—which is worth money and higher job quality in the long run. Take this class (and all your college classes) seriously, as they are worth money to you in 2-5 years.

I will report to your future employers that you have proven you have writing and analysis skills if indeed you have been present and proven you have writing and analysis skills. As in most of life, a large percentage of success is showing up.

You can be absent up to five times without any official penalty. On your sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth absences, I will drop your final grade 10 points per absence. Once you reach ten
absences, I accept your decision to drop the class.

I will accept on-time class work only from people who are present for the whole 60-minute hour. If you must miss class on the day something is due (and most days something is due), use one of your three late passes and turn it in the next day.

Coming to class late or leaving early is disrespectful. I reserve the right to count late arrivals and early departures as absences.

**Late Paper/Missed Work Policy:**

All work is due at the beginning of class on the due date. Everyone gets three free late passes for use in case of car or computer or body failure. You may use these late passes on any small or large assignment in the class (Summary/Response/Questions or Papers). If your work is late more than three times, the problem is with your planning skills, and your work will not be accepted.

This strict policy is for your benefit. Once you drop behind in an eleven-week course, all the rest of your work will suffer. So keep up with the group.

All work in this course must be submitted electronically into the appropriate Angel drop box. Never email me your work.

Remember: As this class allows revision of the formal essays up until June 14, you should turn papers in on time even if they aren't up to your ideal standards, as you can always fix them later.

**Plagiarism Policy:**

Plagiarism is taking someone else's ideas, information, or verbal expression and presenting it as your own. There are two forms of plagiarism.

The first form of plagiarism is unintentional and occurs when writers are unfamiliar with the rules of documenting and citing borrowed information. A writer borrowing an idea within his or her research paper must carefully document who that idea belongs to. One of the objectives of English 101 is to teach you documentation rules and procedures so that you can borrow ideas, information, and language from other sources in a fair manner. A paper with unintentional plagiarism must be rewritten to correct documentation errors.

The second form of plagiarism, intentional plagiarism, occurs when a student turns in someone else's paper, claiming that it is his or her own work. An intentionally plagiarized paper will earn a 0, and may involve further intervention by the college.
This class burns on your energy. I am accustomed to involved, excited, hearty groups who bring thoughtful ideas to class. English 102 is a lot of fun to teach and to take.
Main Research Projects
Assignment 4: Research Essay

Assignment: You will spend this quarter researching and analyzing an issue or topic related to the campus-wide theme of “Survival: Enduring Humanity.” In an essay of approximately 7-10 pages, present your findings. The essay may take a thesis-argument approach (leading to a conclusion that you hope to persuade your readers is correct), or a more exploratory and/or personal approach, making a case that your topic is worth readers’ interest. A successful essay will be both informative and interesting.

Guidelines: In keeping with this year’s college-wide theme, this quarter you will explore a research topic related to some aspect of survival. You might, for example, look into

Individuals who have survived traumatic events: We’ll read about the endurance of Viktor Frankl, who survived three World War II concentration camps, and that of Abdulrahman Zeitoun, who returned to New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina and was detained as a possible terrorist. Some survivors, like Aron Ralston, are well-known, while others—such as Darwin “Gus” Hallbourg—have stories that remain to be told, possibly by you.

A regional group, culture, or sub-culture: What is distinctive about Eastern Washington’s small towns, and what determines whether a town hangs in there—or ends up as a ghost town?
What motivates those who participate in the “survivalist” movement? For this option, you’ll identify a group of people who have something notable in common and explore how they attempt to work together to survive real or perceived threats.

A location: You might look into a specific place that either has disappeared, faces a threat to its survival, or has survived against the odds—such as, respectively, the Walk in the Wild Zoo, the Spokane River, and the Davenport Hotel (all in or near Spokane). Keep in mind that “location” means more than just a “place,” and that “survival” might mean other things besides “continued existence.”

A topical issue: When languages (such as the endangered Salishan languages) die out, who feels the loss? What does the term “survival of the fittest” actually mean in evolutionary studies, and how have misunderstandings of the term influenced the debate about evolution? What are pros and cons of the current methods of protecting endangered species? How can mom-and-pop stores survive in the Wal-Mart era? Select a topic that brings you passion, or simply something that you’d like to learn more about.
A successful essay will be the result of both thorough research and careful thinking. It must have a strong analytical component: simply thrusting facts in the reader’s direction is not enough. You must persuade the reader that your facts are reliable and balanced; present them in some reasonable order and shape; and provide synthesis, context, and evaluation of the facts you present. You must, in short, come across as an expert presenting credible findings.

**Components:** The essay should piece together material from Assignments 1-3, along with newly written material based on your research and ongoing thought, into a coherent whole. You are required to include, at a minimum (but not necessarily in the following order):

1. A compelling introduction;

2. Information from at least one interview;

3. Information from at least three written (published or archival) sources, including an appropriate mix of quotation and summary and/or paraphrase;

4. An analytical description of a relevant artifact;

5. At least some narration of your research process;

6. Your original, analytical perspective on the person, group, location, or issue at hand: your essay should demonstrate your ability to prioritize, analyze, and evaluate information. To succeed, it must be significantly more than a repository of facts and ideas on your topic. While your readers will likely stay with you as long as you take steps to make your topic interesting, by the end they should be able to grasp the significance of your topic without difficulty: why is it worth my time to read about this? How should I, or some other specific entity, respond to it?

**Alternative Approach**

This quarter we will be reading Emma Donoghue’s novel *Room*, which was the result of substantial research by the author on a variety of questions that fascinated her as a fiction writer. Consistent with the course theme of survival, you may—at your option—produce a creative work (fiction, poetry, visual art) that has been demonstrably and substantially shaped by research you’ve conducted. If you select this option, your grade for Assignment 4 will come almost entirely from an accompanying essay in which you explain, in detail (and with appropriate citations), what you learned through research and how your research influenced your creative piece. The components listed on this handout (items 1-6 on the list above) must still be included in your accompanying
write-up; furthermore, the guidelines and expectations of Assignments 1-3 remain intact if you choose this alternative.

If you select this option, please be aware that, taken together, your write-up and creative piece must fulfill the expectations expressed above for more traditional research essays: it “will be the result of both thorough research and careful thinking. It must have a strong analytical component: simply thrusting facts in the reader’s direction is not enough. You must persuade the reader that your facts are reliable and balanced; present them in some reasonable order and shape; and provide synthesis, context, and evaluation of the facts you present. You must, in short, come across as an expert presenting credible findings.” No less than the traditional research essay, the alternative approach should persuade readers that their time has been well spent.

Due: May 23-26 (presentation)
    Tuesday, May 31 (peer-editing draft) Thursday, June 2 (graded draft) Wednesday, June 15 (final draft)
Social Intelligence Research
Project

400 point

Write a 10-12 page exploratory paper on any one specific issue within the topic of Social Intelligence. Cite at least eight sources in the body of your paper.

Think of the paper as loosely argumentative, but also exploratory. We are after a rich, nuanced exploration of a specific subject, looked at through some interesting angle and delving into interesting questions.

The topic you choose must grip and fascinate you. You must be curious about it. You must care about it. Keep wrestling with ideas until you find a topic that fits these criteria. Choose something you can research with joy because you find it so darn interesting.

I suggest crossing the topic of Social Intelligence with another topic, such as your intended career or a personal or social or political problem that bothers you.

In addition, you will work with a research partner, whose topic is tied to yours in some clear thematic way.

This project will take all your attention in this class for the next seven weeks. 20% of your final grade comes from the Social Intelligence Research Paper. Another 40% of your final grade comes from smaller assignments directed at building the content of your Social Intelligence Research Paper. No pressure :) but choose a good topic! Talk to several loved ones about this assignment to generate a topic. Talk to people working within your intended career field, to find out what issues are hot. Surf the web, trolling for topics.

The goal is a very specific, narrow topic. Say you want to do something about parenting. A possible research topic might be: Is parenting easier for introverts or extroverts?

Say you’re interested in a large, vague topic, like “How are women still at a social disadvantage in college and the workplace?” Spend some time researching this general topic until a more specific one grabs you, such as “What specific negotiation skills are lacking in women in the business field, and how can we educate young girls so they do not lack these skills in ten years?”

Brainstorm of other possible Social Intelligence Topics:

Can you find an American-made film that portray characters as complex—good and bad? Do we always need our hero and villain?

How has the social structure of society influenced the architecture of the American home? Parlor, media rooms, unused rooms, etc.

What do schools and jails have in common architecturally, in terms of attempts to control
large numbers of people?

Read *Feed*, by M. T. Anderson, or *Neuromancer*, by William Gibson, and compare the novel’s vision of how social intelligence is affected by technology with how you see social intelligence and technology interacting today.

Much psychological research focuses on how women bond with their infants. What about men? How do they bond with their children?

How does generational poverty affect a student’s interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, which then affect college success? Further, what can be done to help these students succeed?

Are killers more extroverted or introverted?

What subtle family social interactions result in first- and only-borns achieving higher status career positions, in some cases?

Due Dates:

W May 11: Celebration of Student Writing

By this date you’ll need to have honed your topic and collected enough research to create a visual display on your topic, as well as converse about your topic intelligently.

T May 31: Career Research Project Due

T June 7: 10 Minute Classroom Oral Presentations Begin

Social Intelligence Research Project Grading

Criteria: Analysis

_____ Topic is sufficiently narrowed.

_____ Interesting questions about the topic are considered.

_____ Issue considered from more than one perspective.

Development

_____ Specific detailed examples of real people and places are used.

_____ Research is thorough and delves beyond the obvious or “Wikipedia-level” information.

_____ Topic is broken into useful chunks.
Paper is at least 10 pages

Long. Research

A wide variety of sources is used.

8 sources are used.

Many sources are peer-reviewed and considered authoritative within the field.

Sources represent a balancing of biases.

Borrowed info is all cited.

MLA Format is followed.

Writing Basics

Sentences are clear.

Grammar and mechanics are correct.

Paragraphs are unified.

A plan is developed and followed for organizing the paper.

An interesting hook and conclusion are used.
Smaller Assignments

Proposal Definition
Paper Artifact
Analysis Interview
Write Up
Celebration of Student Writing
Progress Report Evaluation of a Web source. Annotated Bibliography Discussion Board
Topics Peer Review
Instructions Seminar
Final Exam
Proposal
A major purpose of this assignment is to serve as a planning tool for you, something you can return to as needed to remain on track. The proposal does not have to be especially formal, and you will probably want to write in the first person. It should be clear and persuasive in articulating (1) that your proposed research project is worthwhile, and (2) that your plan for achieving it is reasonable. It will be graded primarily on your effectiveness at making a case for these two claims.

Due: Thursday, April 21
**Assignment 1: Proposal**

**Assignment:** In about 3-4 pages, describe the research project you will undertake this quarter, outlining (1) your goals for the project, and (2) your plan for achieving these goals, as they stand currently. As described in the attached assignment sheet for Assignment 4, the research project should focus on a local (Spokane, Eastern Washington, or North Idaho) issue; consult that assignment sheet for additional details.

**Guidelines:** By the time the proposal is submitted, you should have a general idea of what topic you would like to research, but do not need to know exactly where your research is going to take you. Instead, your proposal should outline what sorts of questions you hope to answer through research and thought, and make a case that pursuing the answers will be worthwhile.

The proposal should include, at a minimum:

- **Initial reflections on your topic:** What do you already know about the topic? What compelled you to select it?

- **Questions for research:** What do you hope to find out about your topic during the coming weeks?

- **Questions for analysis:** What are some questions that will not be answered through research, but only through sustained thought?

- **A research plan:** Where do you plan to look for information? Whom might you interview? What other resources, at this time, seem especially promising?

- **A schedule:** After consulting the schedule provided on the syllabus for relevant due dates, commit yourself to deadlines for the completion of the various parts of your Research Essay, including (as relevant) visiting the library or archives, conducting an interview, designing and completing a survey, reading useful texts, writing, and revising.

The categories above are meant only as a starting place; you do not have to adhere strictly to them, or be limited by them. Try to include whatever will help you plan your research process (a major purpose of this assignment is to serve as a planning tool for you, something you can return to as needed to remain on track) and persuade your reader that your project is workable. The proposal does not have to
be especially formal, and you will probably want to write in the first person. It should be clear and persuasive in articulating (1) that your proposed research project is worthwhile, and (2) that your plan for achieving it is reasonable. It will be graded primarily on your effectiveness at making a case for these two claims.

Due: Tuesday, January 20
Essay Three:

Proposal

As described in the assignment guidelines for Essay Five, the research project should focus on either an issue having to do directly with the art world or an issue that interests you and that can be “elucidated with reference to the visual arts”; consult the Essay Five guidelines for additional details. In the Proposal, describe the research project you will undertake this quarter, outlining (1) your goals for the project, and (2) your plan for achieving these goals, as they stand currently.

Guidelines

By the time the proposal is submitted, you should have a general idea of what topic you would like to research, but do not need to know exactly where your research is going to take you. Instead, your proposal should outline what sorts of questions you hope to answer through research and thought, and make a case that pursuing the answers will be worthwhile.

The proposal should include, at a minimum:

- **Initial reflections on your topic:** What do you already know about the topic? What compelled you to select it?

- **Questions for research:** What do you hope to find out about your topic during the coming weeks?

- **Questions for analysis:** What are some questions that will not be answered through research, but only through sustained thought?

- **A schedule:** After consulting the schedule provided on the syllabus for relevant due dates, commit yourself to deadlines for the completion of the various parts of your Research Essay, including (as relevant) visiting the library or archives, conducting an interview, reading useful texts, designing and completing your Capstone Project, writing, and revising.
A bibliography: List, using a standard citation form such as MLA or APA, at least five or six likely sources of information on your topic, including at least some scholarly sources.
(such as a journal article, a books published by a university press, or an interview with a scholar in a relevant field).

The categories above are meant only as a starting place; you do not have to adhere strictly to them, or be limited by them. Try to include whatever will help you plan your research process (a major purpose of this assignment is to serve as a planning tool for you, something you can return to as needed to remain on track) and persuade your reader that your project is workable. The proposal does not have to be especially formal, and you will probably want to write in the first person. It should be clear and persuasive in articulating (1) that your proposed research project is worthwhile, and (2) that your plan for achieving it is reasonable. It will be graded primarily on your effectiveness at making a case for these two claims.

Length: approximately 1000 words, plus bibliography
Deadline: Monday, February 10

Grading Criteria

**Attention to Project:** The essay identifies a significant topic in accordance with the assignment guidelines. The scope of the project seems reasonable given the time allotted, and the reason for wanting to pursue the topic comes across clearly.

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**Attention to Content:** The essay makes a persuasive case that the topic is worthwhile and that a reasonable research plan has been devised.

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**Attention to Usage and Mechanics:** Sentences are clear and grammatically correct, and you have proofread your work carefully for errors in clarity, usage, punctuation, spelling, and format.

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**Bibliography:** A list of sources is provided that seems credibly to represent the most useful material available on the topic given. Proper citation (using a standard academic form such as MLA or APA) has been used consistently.

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Write a 300-600 word proposal telling the following:

--The social intelligence issue you will write about
--How you will focus and narrow your exploration of the topic
--Some interesting questions you have about this topic
--Who you are pairing with, and what your topics have in common

**Grading Criteria**

___ Topic is firmly named.
___ Method for focusing and narrowing topic is explained.
___ Interesting questions are included.
___ Partner and commonality of projects are named.
___ Careful thought about topic is revealed in the writing.
___ Writing is clear and easy to understand.
___ Organization is clear and effective.
___ Mechanics (grammar, spelling, punctuation) are correct. An

“A” paper will meet all of the above criteria.

A “B” paper will meet all but one of the above criteria. A

“C” paper will meet most of the above criteria.
Definition Paper
Artifact Analysis
Assignment 2: Artifact Analysis

Assignment: Select an artifact—an object, place, or image—that provides some insight onto the topic you are researching. In about 3-4 pages, describe the artifact’s physical and symbolic qualities (what does it look/smell/sound/feel like, and what ideas or attitudes does it convey?) and articulate your interpretation of the artifact.

Guidelines:

The “artifact” for this assignment can be anything susceptible to interpretation: a document, photograph, artwork, news clipping, building, tool, etc. It is something that does not “tell” about your topic in the sense that a history book does, but rather reveals indirectly, through symbolic associations or other verbal and non-verbal codes. For example, if you are interested in the threatened survival of American Indian languages, you might choose as your artifact the Modern Language Association’s “Language Map,” available at http://www.mla.org/map_main. How does this online document/tool tell the story of the decline of ancient languages—and what parts of the story are left out? Or, if you want to know more about the “survivabilist” movement in the United States, you might examine a “get home bag” of the sort described at http://survivalcache.com/urban-survival/. What do the recommended contents of the bag suggest about the movement’s priorities? For which eventualities are those who gather such contents implicitly preparing? It’s important to remember that, although precise and detailed description is important, fundamentally your goal is to analyze the artifact you choose, which means addressing questions for which more than one answer is possible. The meaning of the artifact might be, to a degree, subjective as well as objective, although you should be able to convey your interpretation to others.

It is unlikely that you will start out knowing exactly what artifact to use for this assignment; rather, it will probably be something that arises from your ongoing research for the Final Project. My experience is that you know it when you see it. Thus, success in this assignment is less a matter of looking for something than it is of keeping your eyes open to what develops. It is a way of seeing rather than a way of looking.

In writing this assignment, specify what the item is: What is it composed of? Where did it come from? How does it work? What do you know, if anything, about its history? Be descriptive in conveying its physical qualities; help your reader use the senses to visualize the artifact clearly.

Then work through your analysis of the meaning of the document or artifact. Ask as many analytical questions as possible, especially “why” questions: why does the item look like it does, and not some
other way? How would it have been used, and who would use it? And propose reasonable, creative but also logically coherent, answers.

This is an exercise in careful, precise observation and in thoughtful analysis. I expect it to become an especially useful component of your Research Essay, helping your readers get not only knowledge but a “feel” for your topic: what happened, but also how the people involved may have experienced it.

Due: Thursday, May 5
Essay Two:
Description

Identify a specific work of art, one that falls within your Essay One definition, providing enough information that the reader could, if desired, locate the work. (For example, indicate the gallery where the artwork could be found—such as the Jundt Art Museum or the Art Institute of Chicago via the Google Art Project. This can simply be listed at the top of your essay, directly below the artwork’s title, the artist’s name, and the date of creation, if available.) Then describe the work of art so that the reader—even if s/he has not seen it—can picture it visually, and share in its effect, with only your words to go on.

Guidelines

This essay will most likely be less thesis-driven than the first one. It is less a matter of making an argument than of helping your reader see something that you want her or him to see. However, implicitly, you are making an argument: that the work of art you have chosen to describe is worth the reader’s time. The parts of the essay should work together to form a coherent whole.

Thus, it is advisable to select an artwork that you find compelling. Even though your primary task is not to explain what makes it compelling—but rather to describe it accurately and thoroughly—you will probably find it easier to create engaging and vigorous prose if you choose a work of art that you actually feel strongly about—one that you enjoy, or that makes you think, or that produces in you an emotional response.

Your task is to describe, but you should not interpret that narrowly to mean a detailed but inelegant catalogue of the artwork’s visible features. For example, you could presumably succeed at conveying these features by using mathematically precise language to depict every square inch of a painted canvas—but that would not be a good strategy, as it would almost certainly not produce effective writing. Instead, finds words that are vivid and colorful enough to express the most important features of the work. You don’t have to convey every single thing, but convey enough that a specific and—as far as possible—precise picture can emerge in the reader’s mind.

Do not hesitate to describe the artwork’s effect as well as its physical features. On the other hand, don’t restrict yourself to subjective, impressionistic impressions. If the work makes your heart beat faster, don’t just say so—try to convey why it does so; what about your encounter with the work, the information your senses take in as a viewer, causes that response? Try to make the reader’s heart beat faster, too.

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Length: approximately 1000 words

Deadline: Monday, January 27

Grading Criteria

Attention to Project: The essay identifies a specific work of art (including, where possible, the artist and the work’s location and year of creation), and provides an accurate, compelling, and well-written description of the work. As far as possible, the essay allows the reader to picture the artwork visually, to imagine him- or herself as a firsthand viewer of the work being described.

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Attention to Content: Specific and relevant details are employed. Words are well-chosen and represent an appropriate level of creativity for the task at hand. Details seem well-chosen and succeed at helping the reader formulate a clear and coherent picture. The essay’s language both conveys the artwork’s physical features and accounts for its significance—the response it creates in the viewer.

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Attention to Flow and Style: You have made clear attempts to engage your readers deeply, considering tone, audience, and coherence. There is a strong sense of direction and momentum in your writing, with judicious handling of transitions as well as the organization of ideas within the essay and within paragraphs. Your essay has a clear sense of introduction, development, and conclusion.

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Attention to Usage and Mechanics: Sentences are clear and grammatically correct, and you have proofread your work carefully for errors in clarity, usage, punctuation, spelling, and format.

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Assignment 2: Artifact Analysis

Assignment: Select an artifact—an object, place, or other tangible item—that provides some insight into the topic you are researching. In about 3-4 pages, describe the object’s physical and symbolic qualities (what does it look/smell/sound/feel like, and what ideas or attitudes does it convey?) and articulate your interpretation of the artifact.

Guidelines: The “artifact” for this assignment can be any tangible thing: a photograph, artwork, news clipping, building, natural object, souvenir, etc. It is something that does not “tell” about your topic in the sense that a history book does, but rather reveals indirectly, through symbolic associations or other non-verbal codes. An Expo ’74 souvenir purchased from the White Elephant, for example, contains both verbal information (the name of the event, and possibly minimal information such as when and where it occurred), and non-verbal information that can be understood only through analysis. Why, for example, did materials representing Expo use the colors blue and green?—what might that suggest about the aspirations of the event’s planners? The meaning of the artifact might be somewhat personal, subjective to a degree rather than objective, although you should be able to convey it to others.

While your main focus should be the artifact itself—its physical as well as symbolic qualities—you also can incorporate insights drawn from other knowledge. To continue with the example above, a legacy of Expo ’74 has been the use of the same shades of blue and green on city buses. One might infer that the use of this color, not at all arbitrary or random, conveys a sense of connectedness to an important event in the city’s past, and possibly a continuing commitment (symbolically, at least) to Expo’s environmental theme.

It is unlikely that you will start out knowing exactly what artifact to use for this assignment; rather, it will probably be something that arises from your ongoing research for the Final Project. My experience is that you know it when you see it. Thus, success in this assignment is less a matter of looking for something than it is of keeping your eyes open to what develops. It is a way of seeing rather than a way of looking.

In writing this assignment, specify what the item is: What is it made of? Where did it come from? What do you know, if anything, about its history? Be descriptive in conveying its physical qualities; help your reader use the senses to visualize the artifact clearly.

Then work through your analysis of the meaning of the artifact. Ask as many analytical questions as possible, especially “why” questions: why does the item look like it does, and not some other
way? How would it have been used, and who would use it? And propose reasonable, creative but also logically coherent, answers.
This is an exercise in careful, precise observation and in thoughtful analysis. I expect it to become an especially useful component of your Research Essay, helping your readers get not only knowledge but a “feel” for your topic: what happened, but also how the people involved may have experienced it.

**Due: Thursday, February 5**
Interview Write Up
Assignment 3:
Interview

**Assignment:** Interview an individual who, through study or personal experience, has expertise in some area of your topic. In 4-6 pages, using an appropriate balance of quotation and summary/paraphrase, describe what you learned from the interview, prioritizing main points.

**Guidelines:** “Expertise” in the above paragraph might mean several things: your interview subject may be someone (such as a professor or other expert) who has studied your topic intensively. Or it might be someone whose expertise comes from lived experience, such as an individual whose memories of an event round out the picture available through other research. Carefully select someone who offers information or insight that you will not easily find elsewhere. (NOTE: Please interview someone you do not presently know on a personal basis. Parents, grandparents, friends, etc., are not acceptable choices for this assignment.)

Be sure to schedule your interview well in advance and prepare carefully for it. Obviously, approach your interview subject professionally and politely, and accommodate the subject’s schedule. Explaining that you are working on a class project and that you will benefit from the individual’s authority on the subject will persuade most people to help you out. It is also crucial to know as much as possible about your topic before the interview, so that your questions are informed and you don’t waste time getting basic information you would easily have obtained anyway.

Come to the interview with a list of prepared questions, but during the interview try to be receptive to unexpected—though useful—directions the discussion may take. A mix of open-ended and specific questions (see Ballenger, pp. 102-104) is best. Ask follow-up questions.

It is advisable to tape-record the interview (after getting the subject’s permission) so that you can focus on the conversation itself. On the other hand, you will probably want to take at least some notes, partly as a back-up in case the recorder malfunctions and partly to refer to during the interview. You may wish to follow up with the subject to make sure the information and quotations you’ve gathered are accurate.

You may also conduct an interview via e-mail if the subject agrees. This approach lacks some of the spontaneity of a personal interview (and possibly some of its immediacy, since the subject can carefully choose his or her words), but does allow you to probe a topic in depth. It also allows you to consult with authorities who—due to limitations of time and/or location—are not otherwise available.
The report of the interview should not be a transcript. You can narrate the interview (“I met _

in her home on the South Hill...“), but think of the report as an essay with a thesis. Rather than
covering the questions and answers in chronological order, prioritize: start with the most important
finding, and develop points as they make sense in retrospect.

Due: Thursday, May 19
Assignment 3: Interview

**Assignment:** Interview an individual who, through study or personal experience, has expertise in some area of your topic. In 4-6 pages, using an appropriate balance of quotation and summary/paraphrase, describe what you learned from the interview, prioritizing main points.

**Guidelines:** “Expertise” in the above paragraph might mean several things: your interview subject may be someone (such as a professor or other expert) who has studied your topic intensively. Or it might be someone whose expertise comes from lived experience, such as an individual whose memories of an event round out the picture available through other research. Carefully select someone who offers information or insight that you will not easily find elsewhere. (NOTE: Please interview someone you do not presently know on a personal basis. Parents, grandparents, friends, etc., are not acceptable choices for this assignment.)

Be sure to schedule your interview well in advance, and prepare carefully for it. Obviously, approach your interview subject professionally and politely, and accommodate the subject’s schedule. Explaining that you are working on a class project and that you will benefit from the individual’s authority on the subject will persuade most people to help you out. It is also crucial to know as much as possible about your topic before the interview, so that your questions are informed and you don’t waste time getting basic information you would easily have gotten anyway.

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You may also conduct an interview via e-mail if the subject agrees. This approach lacks some of the spontaneity of a personal interview (and possibly some of its immediacy, since the subject can carefully choose his or her words), but does allow you to probe a topic in depth. It also allows you to consult with authorities who—due to limitations of time and/or location—are not otherwise available.
The report of the interview should not be a transcript. You can narrate the interview ("I met_ in her home on the South Hill..."), but think of the report as an essay with a thesis. Rather than covering the questions and answers in chronological order, prioritize: start with the most important finding, and develop points as they make sense in retrospect.

Due: Thursday, February 19
Celebration of Student Writing
On Wednesday, May 11 from 11:30 to 1 pm, in the SUB Lounges A, B, and C, all the students in English 102 at Spokane Falls will meet for a career or work-fair style celebration of the projects they are researching this quarter.

Most of you have no classes on Wednesdays at noon, because the college avoids scheduling them then for just this kind of purpose. If you do have a class Wednesdays at noon, please see me individually after class. You will need to seek permission to attend the Spring Celebration from your other teacher.

We will not have class at 10:30 on Wednesday May 11, but will meet around 11:15 in the SUB Lounges to set up.

Here are the parts that you must prepare:

A large freestanding tri-fold poster board about your large career research project, including visual aids and short bursts of well-chosen text.

Some kind of interactional device: it could be a survey for your visitors to respond to on slips of paper. It could be a game or quiz built into your poster board. This is a chance not only to teach about your topic, but also to solicit interviews and polls you could actually use in your paper.

Your Extended Definition and Proposal should be stapled and laid on the desk in front of you.

Optional Additions: A computer visual presentation on Power Point, or a short video for visitors to watch. There are plenty of outlets available in this room for all who want to bring laptops.

Candy or other treats—let’s face it; these make work fairs more fun.

Grading Criteria:

This presentation is worth 50 points. It will be graded as follows:

___ Care and thought have been given to visual presentation of the subject.
___ Text is thoughtfully chosen and used to convey meaning.
___ Some meaningful interactional device has been included in the presentation.
___ Extended Definition and Proposal present.
___ Student engages with others in conversation at the celebration.
Celebration of Student Writing Grading Criteria:

This presentation is worth 50 points. Please evaluate your own performance today after looking at classmates’ projects. Give yourself a score from 1-10 in each category.  
10/10 is an “A”; 8/10 is a “B”; 7/10 is a “C”; 6/10 would mean you didn’t quite meet the standard.

Then please describe on the back of this sheet how you interacted verbally with visitors to the fair today.

___ Care and thought have been given to visual presentation of the subject.

___ Text is thoughtfully chosen and used to convey meaning.

___ Some meaningful interactional device has been included in the presentation.

___ Extended Definition and Proposal present.

___ Student engages with others in conversation at the celebration.

___ Point Total out of 50 possible points.
Name ___________________________ Partner ______________

Celebration of Student Writing Self-Evaluation

Please rate yourself 1-10 (10 being highest) in the following categories.

_____ Care and thought have been given to visual presentation of the subject.

_____ Text is thoughtfully chosen and used to convey meaning.

_____ Some meaningful interactional device has been included in the presentation.

_____ Extended Definition and Proposal present.

_____ Student engages with others in conversation at the celebration.

Please describe your interactions with others at the celebration:
Progress Report
Employers who have hired you for a long project will want periodic progress reports. This week, you will give me a progress report and projected outline for the Final Project that is due next week. Whew! College quarters are like fast and intense roller-coaster rides, eh? We can do it.

Some words on writer’s block (or work block):

Just keep your expectations low and aim to produce something adequate (not spectacular) and you’ll surprise yourself by doing better than you expected. Expecting yourself to do great work on a project leads to paralysis.

Break the job down into tiny steps and do just one step, and your confidence and enthusiasm will increase.

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So for this week’s 100-point assignment, write me a memo or a business letter of 600-900 words telling appropriate information under the following headings.

**Introduction:** State the purpose of the memo or letter.

**Project Description:** Summarize your project as you see it right now. I know your general topic, but your focus will change as the project proceeds.

**Work Completed:** Summarize the steps of the project you have completed so far.

**Work Planned for Future Periods:** Tell your step-by-step goals (with deadlines when possible) for completing the project.

**Appraisal of Progress:** Evaluate your progress. Indicate where you are ahead of schedule and where you are behind.

**Outline:** Provide an outline of your Final Project, as best you can predict it right now. In creating the outline, use whatever graphic or organizational method you like best. Maybe you like flow charts. Maybe you like simple outlines. Many organizational schemas are available online if you google “graphic organizer.” Make the outline as detailed as you can. The more mental organization you do now, the easier your paper will be to write next week.
Evaluation of a Web Source
Website Analysis
Assignment

As you begin your research for the Final Project, you may scan web sites on various topics for ideas. The next step is to be able to determine which of the many web sources out there are going to be most useful to you in your Final Project.

Choose one web site on a research topic that interests you, and evaluate the web site according to the criteria presented in the reading: “Evaluating Internet Research Sources,” by Robert Harris. Note that to do well on this week’s assignment, you could use either a strong or a weak web site. In fact, as you demonstrate your ability to critique a web site, it might be easier if you have plenty of suggestions for improvement.

Harris suggests a “CARS Checklist for Information Quality.” Organize your report according to this checklist, using headings for each of the suggested sections:

Credibility

Accuracy

Reasonableness

Support

In each section, you will evaluate how well the website performs in that category, using Harris’s article for ideas on what to notice and comment on. **You should comment on many specific details on the web site and use many examples.**

Keep in mind that you are looking at a Web Site, not just one article. However, in showing credibility, accuracy, reasonableness, and support, you should refer to specific details contained in at least one article on the Web Site. Please avoid Wikipedia, general encyclopedias and ehow-type sources, which are not worth our time in a college course.

Include an introduction telling what kind of source this is and summarizing its contents. Include a conclusion summarizing your overall opinion of the usefulness of the site.

Use MLA, APA, or IEEE format. Write 600 to 900 words or more.

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Web Site Analysis Grading Criteria

Introduction

_____ Web site is introduced and summarized clearly

Credibility

_____ Evaluation includes many thoughtful points

Accuracy

_____ Evaluation includes many thoughtful points

Reasonableness

_____ Evaluation includes many thoughtful points

Support

_____ Evaluation includes many thoughtful points

Conclusion

_____ Tells overall usefulness and worth of web site

Overall Criteria

_____ Points are communicated clearly

_____ Writing is error-free

_____ MLA or APA or IEEE format is followed in citing the web site.

_____ Report is 600 to 900 words long or more.
Annotated Bibliography
English 102 Review of Research Instructions

Your review of research will take the form of an annotated bibliography. An annotated bibliography is a very useful tool in the research process. It gives you a place to record bibliographic (that is, citation) information about each source that you have looked at. This can prevent the frustrating situation of trying to track down a source at the last minute that you’ve already tracked down once. It also helps prevent careless plagiarism by giving you a format in which your notes on a source are attached to your citation of that source.

In this case, you will write three paragraphs immediately following each citation. The first paragraph will summarize the source using CAbIN criteria (see “The Art of Summarizing” handout below). The second paragraph will be an evidence-based rhetorical analysis of the source that describes the author’s intent, bias, and effectiveness. The third paragraph will discuss the source’s usefulness with regard to answering your research question. Everything you write for this bibliography has the potential of being recycled for your term paper.

Each entry begins with a full citation of the source, including author(s), title, and publication information. Then you skip a space and write the three paragraphs. Skip another space and do it all again for the next source. For this review, you should annotate a minimum of ten sources. They should cover a variety of perspectives on the issue and should represent a mix of types (primary/secondary, static/syndicated/dynamic, print/digital, edited/peer-reviewed/self-published). They should be organized alphabetically by author’s last name.

In addition to the ten annotated bibliographic entries, you need to have a title, an introduction, and a conclusion. The title should be your research question. The introduction should be a paragraph that describes the issue and outlines the various perspectives on it that you have discovered. The conclusion should be a paragraph that discusses your current thinking on the issue and reflects on your process. Has your perspective shifted since you wrote your research proposal? Are you running into any problems? Are there any gaps in your research that remain to be filled before you can draft your term paper?

The review of research is due on Tuesday, May 26th. It’s worth 25% of your course grade. It should be single spaced and very carefully proofread. Since you may decide to copy chunks of text from this review and paste them into your term paper, any time and energy you put into proofreading now may reap twice the rewards.
Discussion Board Topics
English 102 Discussion Board Prompts

Discussion Board 1

Each discussion board will have two distinct tasks. Both tasks must be completed on time in order to earn both points for each board. Please be sure to read the instructions for each board very carefully so that you don't miss any of the assigned steps. Also, please remember that late discussion board posts will not earn any points. The deadline will always be midnight, but that doesn't mean you have to wait until 11 pm to get started. Post early to avoid losing points to unforeseen complications, such as computer crashes, work shift changes, and illnesses.

Let's use this first discussion board to get to know each other a little better. Before midnight on Tuesday, April 7th, please post an introduction to yourself. Tell us where you grew up, what you hope to do after leaving SFCC, and at least one surprising thing about yourself. Then, on Wednesday (again, before midnight), please reply to at least two of your classmates' posts. Try to find someone with whom you have something in common and/or someone who said something you'd like to know more about. I'll get the ball rolling.

I'm Jared Anthony, and I grew up in Beaverton, Oregon. Beaverton is a suburb of Portland. It's also the global headquarters for Nike. My sister worked for them in the 1970s, before Michael Jordan made Nike a household name--or was it vice versa?

I started community college thinking I was going to be an accounting major. Then they made me take an English class, and I was hooked. I knew right then that I wanted to become a community college English professor. So I did!

It may surprise you to learn that there is a Professional Disc Golf Association. It may surprise you even more to learn that I used to be a professional disc golfer. I've never been particularly good at it. But I love it, and one year my English Department colleagues paid my PDGA membership dues so that I could call myself a professional disc golfer. I'm not trying to influence anyone's choice for a term project topic, but I do think there are far too few disc golf-related papers being written these days for college classes.

OK; now it's your turn!

Discussion Board 2

Let's start thinking and talking about potential term paper topics. Remember, this is a topic that you'll be spending ten weeks reading, thinking, and writing about. So it needs to be something you're really interested in. And since it's such a big project, it's worth our time to explore the possibilities fairly thoroughly before deciding.

Part 1 (due Thursday, 4/9)
Please make a list (the longer, the better) of all the groups of which you consider yourself to be a member (or future member). To give you a sense of what I'm looking for, here's a partial list of my group memberships; I hope yours will be much longer.

- humans
- men
- married people
- Americans
- Washingtonians
- WSU alumni
- professors
- English professors
- community college instructors
- SFCC employees
- state employees
- disc golfers
- citizens of Pullman
- Steely Dan fans
- football fans
- homeowners
- long-distance commuters
- pet owners
- cat servants

Of course, that's by no means an exhaustive list, but I hope you get the gist of the exercise. Think about the personal, academic, professional (including aspirational), and civic aspects of your life as you're generating your own list. Please complete this part of the exercise before midnight on Thursday night.

**Part 2 (due Friday, 4/10)**

Reply to at least two of your classmates' posts by suggesting potential topics of interest to people in one or more of the groups with which they identify. For example, if I saw that Jared was a football fan, I might suggest that he research the current conversations about head injuries, domestic violence prevention, or stipends for college players. Look for posts that list groups with which you are familiar so that you can offer useful, specific examples of issues currently debated within those groups.

**Discussion Board 3**

Let's use this discussion board to continue the exploration of potential term paper topics while getting familiar with a couple of very high-quality resources.

If you go to spokanefalls.edu, click on the Library link in the lower left under SERVICES, and then click the Article & Reference Databases link on the right, you get to a list of the most popular databases. These are subscription-only databases that provide easy access to well-organized and high-quality materials, many of which are not accessible from Google or other search engines. And the best part is
that you've already paid for your subscriptions as part of your tuition, so you may as well use them!

*Opposing Viewpoints* is a fantastic place to explore topics and to find naysayers to argue with. Here's a brief video tutorial for *Opposing Viewpoints*:

*CQ Researcher* covers fewer topics but delves even deeper into them than *Opposing Viewpoints* does. Here's a two-minute video that shows how to navigate this database:

For this discussion board, I would like you to explore topics from *Opposing Viewpoints* (OV), *CQ Researcher* (CQR), and your own educational experience (at least one each, please, for a minimum of three). On OV, start by clicking the Browse Issues button and then poke around until you find a Viewpoint that catches your imagination. On CQR, click on Browse Topics or on Browse Reports (and then by date) to find something that piques your interest. Regarding your own educational experience, think about projects you've done in school or topics you're learning about right now and about which you'd like to learn a lot more. From each source, tell us what the topic is and why you are interested in it. Please do this before midnight on Tuesday, 4/14.

Then, before midnight on Wednesday, reply to at least two classmates with questions you have about their three topics. We're trying to find productive research questions (that is, questions that don't have easy answers), so please give this some thought. If you find yourself struggling to think of good, generative questions related to someone's topics, just move on to a different post.

**Discussion Board 4**

You've been exploring your various identities and interests for a couple of weeks. You've seen lots of ideas for topics in the library's databases and on these discussion boards. It's time to commit--sort of.

Before midnight on Thursday, 4/16, please tell us what you've decided to research for your term project. I know this is a big decision, so I want to relieve some of the pressure and allow you to post more than one possibility if you need to. Whether it's one or more, for each topic tell us your tentative research question. I say tentative because you'll almost certainly revise the question as you begin researching the answer(s) in earnest.

Then, before midnight on Friday, please reply to at least two classmates with suggestions for narrowing the topic(s), revising the research question(s), and/or finding useful sources of relevant information.

**Discussion Board 5**

Your research proposal will begin with your working research question. Let's use this discussion board to help refine our research questions. There are different types of questions. Please bear with me for a moment while I run through a few examples to get to the type of question we're looking for.

A *reference* question can usually be answered by consulting a single, authoritative source. For example, suppose I asked, "How is Initiative 502 being implemented in Washington?" I could answer that question fairly easily by going to the Washington State Liquor Control Board website because that is
the organization that has been tasked with implementing I-502. I could spend a few minutes finding the right page, a few hours (at most) writing up a summary of that page, and be done with my research project. I hope it's obvious to you that this isn't the type of question we're aiming at.

A **report** question can usually be answered by consulting a few sources to arrive at a conclusion about what is generally known about the subject. An example of a report question could be, "How has the federal government responded to the passage of I-502 in Washington?" I could answer that question, without encountering anything particularly debatable, by consulting the Washington State Liquor Control Board website again, whitehouse.gov, and perhaps even Wikipedia. Again, the whole process might take me a couple of hours and result in a couple of pages of information summarized from the sources I consulted. And again, this isn't what we're looking for in English 102.

A **research** question is open ended, requires gathering information from a variety of sources, and usually can't be answered definitively. That is, the answer will always be debatable. Sticking with the same topic, I could ask, "How can I-502 be implemented in such a way as to maximize tax revenue without harming medical marijuana patients?" I would need to search for editorials that have been written about the potential impacts of I-502 on marijuana prices, concerns that have been expressed by representatives of the medical marijuana community, reports on the effects of implementation of similar laws in other jurisdictions, etc. I would need to do some speculation about how different possibilities might play out. I might interview a few people to get alternative perspectives and expert insights. I might survey more people to see how they would respond to different potential policies if they were enacted. But ultimately, whatever conclusion I reached would be a claim about what I think will happen, based on the information that I've collected, reviewed, and presented. This will take time to research. And it will take time (and pages) to explain how I arrived at my conclusion and why it's a more likely outcome than some other possibilities that someone else could argue for. This, then, is the type of question we're looking for.

Take some time to do some freewriting about potential research questions for your own term paper project. When you think you've arrived at a viable research question, post it to this discussion board. Please do so before midnight on Tuesday, 4/21. Then, before midnight on Wednesday, come back and give suggestions to at least two classmates about how they could revise their questions to make them better **research** questions for our term paper project.

**Discussion Board 6**

Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL) offers a good introduction to primary research. Please read through the nine pages in their **Conducting Primary Research** section. Then post to this discussion board your research question and at least one idea you have for using primary research to help answer that question. Please do that before midnight on Thursday, 4/23. Then on Friday, please come back and give at least two classmates suggestions about their ideas for primary research. If they are thinking of doing surveys or interviews, suggest some questions they could ask, some good places to collect data, and/or some pitfalls to watch out for.

*Note: You aren't promising that you'll do this primary research. At this point, you're just exploring*
possibilities.

**Discussion Board 7**

The second, third, and fourth course learning outcomes for English 102 at SFCC all refer to either evaluating or selecting material from other writers. And since selecting relies on first evaluating, it’s pretty clear that this course is supposed to give you opportunities to practice evaluating the quality and usefulness of what other authors have written in order to decide how (or if) their work can help you produce your own effective writing. Let’s use this discussion board to create a compendium of advice about evaluating sources.

The first task for this discussion board is to identify a source of good advice about evaluating source material and post a link to that advice. Be sure to explain why you believe the source you’ve chosen is a good one for people to consult about this topic of source evaluation. This step should be completed before midnight on Tuesday, May 5th.

The second task for this discussion board is to reply to at least two of your classmates' posts. In particular, please find one post whose source gives similar advice to the source you chose for your own post and one post whose source says something that contradicts, challenges, or expands upon the advice given by the source you chose. You don’t need to write a lot in these replies--just enough to explain the similarities or differences between what the two sources have to say about evaluating sources. Please complete this second task before midnight on Wednesday, May 6th.

I'll get the ball rolling with this brief video I found on YouTube. I like it because it quickly introduces the CRAAP test that many people use when trying to teach source evaluation. I found it by doing a Google search for "evaluating sources." Here's the video:

**Discussion Board 8**

On DB7, we've collected tons of advice about how to evaluate sources. Let's use DB8 to apply what we've learned.

Before midnight on Tuesday, May 12th, please post a link to a good source and a link to a more questionable source. These may be sources you're considering using in your own term project, but they don't have to be. Whether you'll be using them or not, be sure to explain whose criteria you are using in determining that one of the sources would be better to use than the other. That is, go back to DB7 and find some particular source evaluation advice and use that particular advice to explain why you find your first source more useful than your second source.

Then, before midnight on Wednesday night, please find one classmate's post you strongly agree with and one more you want to challenge, disagree with, or simply agree with less strongly. Again, be sure to explain why you agree and disagree with your two classmates' selections.
**Discussion Board 9**

I want to help potential procrastinators kick the habit. The Review of Research is due one week after this discussion board post, so it’s a good time to get started composing your annotations, if you haven’t already. Before midnight on Tuesday, 5/19, please post what you consider to be your best annotation so far. It should include an MLA-style bibliographic citation (see the Purdue OWL MLA Works Cited pages), a summary paragraph, an evaluation paragraph, and an application paragraph, as they are described in the review of research assignment instructions.

Then on Wednesday, please give feedback to at least two classmates on their annotations. If everything looks great, let that person know, but then please move on to another annotation that could use some work so that you end up giving constructive suggestions to at least two classmates. I thank you, and I’m sure your classmates will thank you.

**Discussion Board 10**

Most of us have unpleasant memories related to formal outlines. I remember being marked down for putting Roman numerals where Arabic numbers should be and making up random subtopics just to make sure I had more than an a) under each higher-level heading. Nonsense.

But we can actually access some of the intended value of constructing an outline without resorting to silly hierarchies or rigid labeling rules. An informal outline can help a writer start identifying what s/he already has and where there are some gaps that remain to be filled in. Let’s use this discussion board to try out this little theory of mine.

By the end of the day on Tuesday, June 2nd, please jot down a list of sections that you think your term paper might include. This isn’t carved in stone; instead, it will merely be posted on this discussion board with fleeting little traces of electrons. So there’s no pressure here. Just come up with a list of as many sections as you can think of and label them however you like. If you want to indent some sections to indicate that they will be subordinate to others, go for it. If you don’t, don’t!

Then, on Wednesday, come back here and give a few of your classmates a few suggestions on how they might add to and/or rearrange the sections they have tentatively mapped out. Now that’s not so difficult, is it?
Peer Review Instructions
English 102 Peer Review Instructions

This page is a placeholder. It gives me a place in the grade book to post the points you earn by reviewing your classmates' term paper drafts. But you'll actually find the papers you need to review and send your comments to the writers of those papers by going to the Term Paper assignment page. The drafts you need to review will appear after you have submitted your own draft to that assignment page. Here's a link to a help guide with screen shots showing where to look and what to do in order to find your assigned drafts and comment on them:

http://guides.instructure.com/m/4212/l/54363-how-do-i-submit-a-peer-review-to-an-assignment

At this point, don't waste your time (or the writers' time) commenting on sentence-level errors. Instead, focus on the strengths and opportunities for improvement in the focus, organization, and interaction with other authors that you're seeing in the drafts. Be sure to tell each writer what s/he is doing well and where the paper could be strengthened. If you're confused, try to identify where in the paper the confusion began. If you know of other sources the writer should consult, please share.

You will earn up to five points each for two reviews that you submit before midnight on Friday, June 12th.
Seminar
What’s a Seminar?

A seminar brings together an interested group of learners who have done preparation, including having read, thought about, and written about readings. This solitary preparation should include marking the text for interesting passages, reviewing those sections, organizing one’s thoughts on paper, and producing significant questions that need to be explored.

In the seminar, the group is responsible for exploring the text and probing the ideas people have brought from their individual reading of the text. It is a time to “mine” the text, to work it over as a group, to think aloud about it, and to test some ideas against the group. For example, the following might be overheard in a seminar: “I don’t know if this is valid, but it seems that the author is saying…” or “Here on page 15 at the bottom of the page there is this passage [read from text]. This seems to be an important passage because…” or “This part connects interestingly with this other part in this way…”

A seminar is not an arena for performance to show you’ve read the text or a reporting session to read your seminar papers. It’s more than a class discussion, and it definitely is not a time for a lecture from an expert who will tell the group what they should get from the book. There may be places for those activities but not in seminar. Seminar is special time for a unique intellectual activity. The exchange of ideas is focused on a source (a book, short stories, journal articles, poetry, or film) and is aimed at getting more deeply into the source.

A good way to keep focused on the text at hand is to respond to the following three questions:

**WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?** Point to the exact page and paragraph so that everyone can read along.

**WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?** Explain or interpret the passage in your own words.

**WHY IS THIS POINT IMPORTANT?** Agree or disagree, or compare it to other ideas.

Make sure you keep these three questions distinct because each question forces the group to discuss the text in different ways. The first one asks for the facts. The second searches for concepts or interpretations behind the exact words or inferences between the lines. The third seeks an evaluation or hypothesis—your own analysis, reaction, or evaluation.

Sometimes the seminar will be focused and free-flowing. Sometimes it will be searching, questioning, going deeper to understand ideas from a text, from others, or from within yourself. Sometimes the group will come to some conclusions. Sometimes it will seem like a series of disconnected activities, like a popcorn popper, with ideas jumping around the table without clear connections. In any of these cases, the seminar is a place to discover new ideas, to re-look at old ideas, or to develop insightful connections among ideas.

The teacher’s role in a seminar is, at best, to be a model of an experienced learner, not to be the focus of attention or the authority who will tell you what you should learn. Don’t let the instructor give a lecture in seminar! Everyone must take responsibility for co-leading and sharing ideas.
Participants must learn to actively listen to each other and speak openly to the whole group, not just to the leader. The group must learn to be sensitive to the needs of all. The natural talkers must maintain discipline to create a space for everyone to speak. The quiet people must learn to be more assertive and to share their insights, even if they are not comfortable doing that. Everyone should speak during each seminar.

Speak in turn and allow others to finish their thoughts. Do not interrupt one another. Silent periods are OK. Silence gives time to process thoughts, so try to become comfortable with it. Address an idea or argument by connecting it to what someone else has said. Summarize the point you are responding to, then provide your own idea.

Finally, if things are not going well, it is our responsibility individually and collectively to put things right. Keep taking the pulse of the group and make adjustments so that everyone can have the opportunity to have a meaningful intellectual experience in seminar. The best question to ask is not “how am I doing?” but rather “how is our seminar going?”

Leaving the seminar with more questions than you came with, or being somewhat confused and overwhelmed with new ideas, is a sign your seminar is working. You will come to realize in seminar that texts are not something you read once and then feel satisfied you have learned all you can learn from them. Rather, texts stimulate continuing intellectual curiosity and which demands from you a re-reading and a continuing discussion of it—maybe for the rest of your life.

--Jim Harnish, North Seattle Community College
Actions That Promote Effective Seminars

I. Prepare
Read material fully: highlighting, underlining, commenting in the margins, identifying key words, passages, etc. Take notes: identify significant passages in the text, summarize important ideas after you’ve read each section. Prepare your seminar paper: point to specifics in the text, commenting on why those quotes are important Formulate specific arguments, insights, problems, and questions the text raised for you.

II. Participate
Contribute your ideas.
Stay focused on the text—citing the page and paragraph—allowing others to find the place, and read the passage aloud.
 Explain what the passage means and how it relates to the discussion. Connect your point to the previous speaker’s point.
Listen carefully and actively, keeping your eyes on the speaker and questioning him or her so that you fully understand the point being made.
Allow quiet time for reflection—even several minutes, perhaps. Attend 100% and be on time.
Make a difference in your group, that is, the seminar should be more interesting because you were there. Venture to ask “stupid questions” because others are probably wanting to ask the same one but lack your courage.
Play the devil’s advocate—but sensitively.
Share ideas that you are uncertain about and ask others to help clarify them. Move eye contact around the group: speak to the whole group.
Be spontaneous and interested in exploring ideas: present arguments against a concept or interpretation presented by another.
Keep focused on one idea for a length of time in order to explore it more thoroughly and to allow transitions to new ideas.

III. Use Your Interpersonal Skills
Reinforce others’ ideas.
Compliment the value of others’ insights.
Be careful about negative non-verbal signals (the rolling eyeballs of disdain). Be sensitive and polite.
Encourage the quiet, timid folks—they are the group’s ears.
Be disciplined and don’t talk too much—keep the group’s mouths in check. Be open to new ideas and to ideas you don’t agree with.
Sometimes function as the leader of the group. Use inclusive language.
Help your group to resolve conflict by verbalizing any problems.

IV. Use Your Personal Skills
Ask for help from peers.
Identify personal habits that can cause problems (for example, study habits, poor time management, overbooked lives).
Take responsibility for your development and intellectual growth. 
Be spontaneous, involved, interested.

V. **Avoid**
  Reading/preparing at the last minute — or not completing the assignment. Put-downs.
Too much personalizing. 
Dominating the group—or allowing the mouths to dominate the group. BS—generalizing or offering extraneous material when you haven’t prepared. Side comments and private conversations.
Letting unexamined baggage get in the way of understanding the discussion. Interrupting.

--Students in a North Seattle Community College Coordinated Studies Program in Spring, 1987
Seminar Grading: How to Assess

We will be using three broad categories to assess your participation in seminar. At the beginning of the quarter, we will be evaluating you. As the quarter progresses, you will take on more responsibility in this area. By the end of the quarter, you should be able to accurately assess both yourself and your seminar group members.

QUALITY OF OBSERVATION:
- Does the student understand the texts at a variety of levels?
- Does the student ask insightful questions about the texts to clear up misunderstanding or deepen discussion?
- Does the student offer relevant and significant commentary on the text?
- Does the student bring his or her own ideas about the text to the discussion?

MANIPULATION OF TEXT:
- Does the student maintain textual focus?
- Does the student support his or her observation with references to the texts?
- Does the student support what others are saying with references to the texts?
- Does the student read passages out loud?
- Does the student make connections between passages?
- Does the student’s use of the texts reflect adequate preparation?

GROUP DYNAMICS:
- Does the student facilitate discussion?
- Does the student synthesize comments from other students?
- Does the student affirm and challenge other students?
- Does the student verbally and non-verbally participate?

Here is the form we will use to assess these behaviors. At the beginning of the quarter, as you get used to seminaring, they will be worth fewer points; the form as shown here reflects the point value at midterm and beyond, when you will be more comfortable using this learning format. Regardless of the points possible, the assessment form will be the same. To use the form, read down the list of performance benchmarks until you reach the one most descriptive of your participation for that seminar.
Seminar Grade Sheet

Showing up on time with a paper, staying the entire seminar, actively listening, but no verbal participation that furthers the conversation 13

Sporadically engaging in discussion or actively maintaining group dynamics 16

Sporadically engaging in discussion and actively maintaining group dynamics 19

Actively engaging in discussion and actively maintaining group dynamics, with

Demonstration that you have read and understood the text 21

Fulfilling all of the above conditions, plus showing excellent comprehension of the material 23

Fulfilling all of the above conditions plus contributing in some outstanding way in terms of leadership or originality 25
Preparing for Seminar 1

Come to class Thursday with both books and 150+ word answers to the three questions I have written below. Also add three of the best questions of your own that

a. We haven’t gotten to yet, or
b. You’d like to discuss more,

From what we’ve read so far: Social Intelligence 1-81 and Room 1-51.

1. In your opinion, which of the mother’s parenting behaviors in Room are strong ones? Weak ones? Why?
2. Goleman likes to make up his own terms, like low road, high road, neural wifi . . . and he gives careful definitions of other terms, like rapport. Choose one of his created or borrowed terms and write about how you have experienced it firsthand in a social encounter.
3. Please describe the person you know who has the best social intelligence. What specific traits or behaviors does the person exhibit?

In seminar, I’ll be taking notes, creating a list of traits of social intelligence you name, so try to be as specific as possible. For example, I have a colleague who habitually replies “Yeah yeah” to the things people say. My husband and I have noticed this has a really affirming affect. That is, she makes us feel as if she approves of us and the things we say, all through this one verbal tic.

I mention this to demonstrate how specific I’d like you to be in observing people and their social behaviors this quarter.

Seminar is one of the most powerful teaching tools popularized in the last ten years.

Here are the rules:

The teacher is silent.

The teacher takes notes and grades student participation.

Each student must participate in the discussion.

The discussion may progress through my questions or yours in any order, spending as much or as little time on a question as you collectively choose.

Students may only participate in seminar if they have completed the seminar written preparation above. Seminar written preparation is in effect a “ticket to class” on Thursdays.

The teacher grades the students in seminar on the following grading scale: 389
Several thoughtful points are made by the student. 18-20 pts
The student references the text at least once.
The student uses good conversational social skills.

Most of the above are accomplished 16-17 pts
Some of
the above are accomplished 14-15 pts
One of the
above is accomplished. 12-13 pts
Student

attends with written work done and up to 11 pts
shows attentive nonverbal behavior but does not participate verbally.
Final Exam
English 102
Final Exam

Read the accompanying essay on James E. Chase (from HistoryLink.org), and then read the sample page from a hypothetical research essay on African Americans in Spokane, before answering questions 1-3.

1. Does the research essay by “Pseudonymous” contain any evidence of plagiarism? (1 pt.) Circle one: yes no

If so, circle the offending passage, and briefly explain below what the plagiarism problem is. (3 pts.)

2. Identify up to five specific passages in the “Pseudonymous” essay that are incorrectly formatted or poorly written. Number the passages 2-6, and below provide a brief explanation of how each passage needs to be fixed or improved. (See sample, #1 below.) (10 pts.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PASSAGE</th>
<th>PROBLEM</th>
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</table>

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3. Based on the information on this sample page, evaluate how effectively the writer of the essay on Jim Chase has used data from his/her research sources. What advice would you give this writer about finding his/her voice? (4 pts.)

4. Define “common knowledge” as it pertains to citing research in a paper. Give a few examples of what would be “common knowledge.” What are the rules for citing common knowledge? (2 pts.)

5. Circle all of the spelling errors in the following passage. If you asked the author, “Why didn’t you use a spell-checker?,” how do you think he/she would respond? (3 pts.)

The conversion of Spokane Falls Community Collage from an institution of higher learning to a hospital has had various affects. Were as students were once excepted for admission, now its patience who come to the former school. The change has lead to various problems, such as confusion when students arrive to take there classes, only to end up being operated on. Weather or not the change was a good idea is still been debated; it depends on who’s opinion you listen too. On the hole it seems vary clear that there have been more benefits then costs.
6. Below are two very broad research topics. For each, come up with several sub-topics or questions that a writer might use to narrow down the topic. (2 pts. each)

U.S. – CANADA RELATIONS
THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

7. Suppose the writer of a book you are using for research has made a mistake (e.g., “The Declaration of Independence was signed in 1976”). If you wished to quote the passage that contains the mistake, how would you address the error in your paper? (1 pt.)


9. Evaluating competing claims: Consider the following two article excerpts as possible research sources for an essay on mandatory seat-belt laws:

In the early 1970s, a few challenges to the presumed safety benefits of increased auto safety regulations appeared in lightly read academic journals. In a 1970 issue of Applied Economics, L. B. Lave and W. W. Weber suggested that mandated safety devices (seat belts, better bumpers, collapsible steering wheels) might lead to faster driving that could offset the safety gains. In 1975, Sam Peltzman's "The Effects of Automobile Safety Regulations" in the Journal of Political Economy hypothesized that safer autos would lead to more aggressive driving that would endanger other users of the roads....

The plausibility of the aggressive driver hypothesis cries out for more research. For example, Hawaii, the state with the most rigorously enforced seat belt law and the highest compliance rate in the nation, has experienced an increase in traffic fatalities and fatality rates since its law went into effect in December 1985.

--John Semmens, The Freeman

“[W]e find consistent evidence that state mandatory seatbelt laws – particularly those permitting primary enforcement – significantly increased seatbelt use among high school age youths by 45–80%, primarily at the extensive margin. Unlike previous research for adults, however, we find evidence against the selective recruitment hypothesis: seatbelt laws had consistently larger effects on those most likely to be involved in traffic accidents (drinkers, alcohol-involved drivers). We also find that mandatory seatbelt laws significantly reduced
traffic fatalities and serious injuries resulting from fatal crashes by 8 and 9%, respectively. Our results suggest that if all states had primary enforcement seatbelt laws then regular youth seatbelt use would be nearly universal and youth fatalities would fall by about 120 per year.”

--Christopher S. Carpenter and Mark Stehr, *Journal of Health Economics*

Since the two sources do not entirely agree, how might you resolve the disagreement when writing a paper on this topic? What clues do the excerpts provide that might help you make a valid decision. What other questions would you want to know the answers to? (5 pts.)

10. Scan the accompanying web article “College Grades Don’t Matter.” How does it rate, in your opinion, as a research source? If you were writing a research essay on grading trends in college, how (if at all) might you use this source, and what (if any) limitations do you see? (5 points)

11. Short Essay: You have been asked to read the article “How (Not) to Find a Pirate in the Straits of Malacca” by Kelly McEvers. The essay is an account of the author’s research process. In your opinion, was the result a successful essay? Be as specific as possible, both in identifying successful (and/or unsuccessful) components of the essay, and in describing what you believe makes a research essay successful. What should such an essay accomplish? (10 pts.)
### Appendix P

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<th>What a sentence can do</th>
<th>Assignment for Mon. 11/23/15 - BA 9</th>
<th>Reminders</th>
<th>Assignments for Weds. 11/11/15</th>
<th>Assignment for Mon. 11/9/15</th>
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<td>Debate Prep</td>
<td>Grading - Points and Weights</td>
<td>MLA Citation</td>
<td>Assignment for Mon. 10/26 - DRAFT 1.1</td>
<td>Grammar &amp; Mechanics Quiz 2 - Answers</td>
<td>Example of Draft 1.1</td>
<td>Assignments for Weds. 10/21/15</td>
<td>Format for BA 6</td>
<td>Assignment for Mon. 10/19/15 - BA 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Revision</td>
<td>Format for the BA 5</td>
<td>Being more specific in thesis statements &amp; your writing in general...</td>
<td>Grammar &amp; Mechanics Quiz #2</td>
<td>Assignments for Wednesday 10/14/15</td>
<td>Assignment for Monday 10/12/15 - BA 5</td>
<td>Upcoming CW Readings</td>
<td>A poem by U.S. Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example of BA 4</td>
<td>Assignments for Weds. 10/7/15</td>
<td>Assignment for Mon. 10/5/15 - BA 4</td>
<td>A poem by Aracelis Girmay</td>
<td>Grammar &amp; Mechanics Quiz 1 - Answers</td>
<td>Example 2 of the BA 3</td>
<td>Example of BA 3</td>
<td>Assignments for Weds. 9/23/15</td>
<td>Assignment for Mon. 9/21/15 (BA 3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Q

Announcements

The online class can be found [here](#).

Extra Credit for those who did NOT do the Tinder study:
Create a visual (drawn or with design software) that explains how to use one of the following grammar/punctuation marks:
- a semicolon

Homework

Find full details on [Raider Writer](#)

Week 15

1. 1.2 Draft (Mon. April 27)
2. Online class (Work due May 4)
   - email me your free write and post your advice for next year's students to the [blog](#).
3. Writing Review (May 4)
Appendix R

Grade Appeals

Appeals for a grade change may be presented to me for consideration, providing that you follow the below grade appeal process.

You will have five days from the date of the stamped grade to request a review of your work and assigned grade. Grade appeals will not be accepted for consideration beyond five days.

To initiate the review process, you must write me a formal email (300-350 words) explaining which assignment you are appealing with a detailed appeal as to why a grade change is requested. Include a short summary of the criteria met for the assignment and a suggested grade you think the work should earn and why. Also, include a time you would like to meet to discuss the appeal in person.

A grade appeal does not guarantee an increase of the grade of the assignment; it simply guarantees that I will consider your assignment and take your argument under advisement.

You may appeal a maximum of three grades in this class. Grade Appeals can not be used to make up lost points for late assignments.
BRIEF ASSIGNMENT #1: GRAMMAR DIAGNOSTIC AND REFLECTIVE ESSAY

DUE DATE: Friday, September 2nd by 11:59pm. Turn in assignment via Raider Writer

THE READINGS

• First-Year Writing (FYW) Course Overviews: Syllabus and Class Policies (found online here) (NOTE: It is required to sign and bring the syllabus acknowledgment form – that was handed out in class – with you to our next class meeting, which will be Monday, September 12th.)

• St. Martin’s Handbook: “The Top Twenty: A Quick Guide to Troubleshooting Your Own Writing” (pp. 1-12; also in the online handbook)

THE ASSIGNMENT

Objective: To identify potential weaknesses in grammar and mechanics for further study this semester.

Purpose: Often, students realize that they have trouble with grammar and mechanics, but find it hard to learn to avoid those errors because they aren’t even sure what they are. This assignment requires you to take the pre-semester diagnostic and then to write a brief reflective essay about your score. You will also answer some additional questions about your writing experience prior to enrolling in English 1301.

Instructions: First, take the grammar diagnostic by clicking here. (NOTE: You may only take the diagnostic once, and you may not exit out and resume the diagnostic at a later time.)

Then, when writing your essay:

• Begin by telling readers what your score was on the diagnostic. (Note: You will receive an email with your diagnostic score. If it takes a few days to reach you, go ahead and start writing the other sections of the essay and then come back to this once you have your diagnostic results.)

• Then, write a minimum of a few sentences in which you tell us what problems you’ve had with grammar in the past and what questions about grammar you’d like answered. Also, please tell your readers whether or not the score was higher or lower than you expected. After reviewing your results, and based on your previous writing experiences, answer the question: Which particular grammar elements would you like to focus on this semester?

• Conclude this first assignment by telling readers about the writing you did in high school (and/or in other past venues). Answer questions such as: Roughly how many papers did you write? What kinds of papers were they? Were they research-based, argumentative, analytical, etc.? What do you think your strengths are as a writer? Your weaknesses?

Further Rhetorical Considerations:

• Please be as specific, detailed, and personal as possible while completing this assignment. Not only does it help you, as a self-diagnostic tool for this semester, but it will also help me – your instructor – to customize coursework, activities, and more based on your skill sets, past experiences, and interests.
BRIEF ASSIGNMENT #2: SUMMARY AND PARAPHRASE

DUE DATE: Friday, September 16th by 11:59pm. Turn in assignment via Raider Writer

THE READINGS

- St. Martin’s Handbook Chapter 1, Chapter 12f section 2, and Chapter 12f section 3 (pp. 14-22; pp. 268-273 found online here)
- DiYanni, “Developing a College Vocabulary” (found online, in the St. Martin’s Handbook. Look at the bottom of the left-hand menu for the reading, which should be in .pdf format)
- Hinton, “So You’ve Got a Writing Assignment. Now What?” (found online here)
- Your choice of one of the following (to read and then use for the assignment):
  o Christine Rosen: “Virtual Friendship and the New Narcissism.” First-Year Writing pp. 321-328
  o David Crystal: “Texting.” First-Year Writing pp. 333-338
  o Judith Keller: “Is PowerPoint the Devil?” First-Year Writing pp. 305-313

THE ASSIGNMENT

Objective: To demonstrate your ability to summarize and paraphrase portions of a text.

Purpose: Summarizing and paraphrasing are important skills for academic writers. You will need to be able to condense other writers’ ideas into your own words so that you can write research papers, analytical papers, argumentative papers, and other types of academic writing. In addition, summarizing and paraphrasing will help you prepare for the rhetorical analysis (the big upcoming paper), where you will need to be able to succinctly state an author’s purpose and discuss specific passages of an article. For this assignment, you will write both a summary and a paraphrase of a text. Use the discussion about summaries and paraphrases in Chapter 12 (pg. 271-273) of The St. Martin’s Handbook to assist you in doing so.

Instructions: This week’s assignment is a two-part assignment: a summary and a paraphrase. Make sure you follow all of the instructions; specifics on each part are listed below.

Part 1: Article Summary Assignment

To complete your article summary, select one of the articles from the list below. Your summary of an article should follow the summary writing guidelines discussed in St. Martin’s Handbook Chapter 12 [Chapter 14 in 6th edition].

Articles to summarize (choose one; all of them are located in Chapter 11 of your First-Year Writing textbook):

- David Crystal: “Texting.” First-Year Writing pp. 333-338
- Judith Keller: “Is PowerPoint the Devil?” First-Year Writing pp. 305-313

Part 2: Paraphrase Assignment

After you’ve completed your summary, you will paraphrase a brief but complex passage from the same text (see the list of texts, above). Your goal in this assignment is to restate the ideas of the passage in your own words and do so in a way that is readable and understandable.
To complete this assignment, choose a passage from the texts above and paraphrase that passage. Identify the page number and paragraph number of the original passage (e.g., p. 474, paragraph 1) above your paraphrase so that your instructor can easily see the changes you have made to express the ideas of the passage in your own words.

Further Rhetorical Considerations:

- A word of caution: for this assignment, you will need to carefully read your assigned readings, especially in the St. Martin’s Handbook and First-Year Writing texts, so that you can learn the difference between a summary and a paraphrase and how to successfully complete both. It is especially crucial when writing a summary or paraphrase that you understand what it is that you’re reading, so it’s a good idea to take several notes and annotations as you read. Re-read the selections, if necessary, to fully grasp the context, purpose, and intended audience of each piece.
- As always, grammar counts. Make sure that you double- or even triple-check your writing to ensure that it is error-free.

Additional Resources:

The Purdue OWL has some fantastic resources on writing summaries and paraphrases and understanding the difference. See: Differences Between Quoting, Summarizing, and Paraphrasing; Paraphrasing Exercises; and Example Exercise of Summaries and Paraphrasing.

BRIEF ASSIGNMENT #3: ANALYSIS OF A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

DUE DATE: Friday, September 23rd by 11:59pm. Turn in assignment via Raider Writer

THE READINGS

- “Reading and Writing about Text” (found online, in the St. Martin’s Handbook. Look at the bottom of the left-hand menu for the reading, which should be in .pdf format)
- St. Martin’s Handbook Chapter 7
- First-Year Writing Chapter 9, pp. 197-226
- “Backpacks and Briefcases: Steps Toward Rhetorical Analysis” by Laura Bolin Carroll; available online here
- Your choice of one of the following (to read and then use for the assignment):
  o “Obama Reviews Thanksgiving History, or Are You Ready for Some Football” (Alexis Teagarden; found online here)
  o “‘Who, li’l ol’ me?’: Sarah Palin on Naivete and Credibility” (Matt Zebrowski; found online here)
  o “You Know Twilight Isn’t Really about Vampires, Right?” (Doug Cloud; found online here)

THE ASSIGNMENT

Purpose: To demonstrate your ability to understand what a rhetorical analysis is and to analyze its structure. It also gives you the opportunity to analyze rhetorical moves that other authors make in their writing, so that you can make note of and learn how to use these tools yourself. This is especially handy as a way to build toward our big assignment later in the term, which will ask you to write your own rhetorical analysis.

Instructions: Many writers, in the academic setting and beyond, analyze other writers’ language to explore how effectively the language helps the writer make his or her point. This practice is called rhetorical analysis. Your task for this assignment is to analyze a rhetorical analysis in preparation for writing your own in draft 1.1 (the first draft of your first major essay assignment).
Your analysis should focus on the structure of the rhetorical analysis. To complete the assignment, write a 400-600 word essay in which you analyze the organization of one of the three articles below. Identify the author’s thesis, and then describe the organization of the essay. Describe how the paragraphs build the essay as well as how the sentences build the paragraph. Choose two examples of places where the author conducts close reading of quotations. What does the author say about the quotations, and how does the author’s analysis help him or her develop the paragraph’s topic sentence and the article’s thesis?

You should cite examples from the article to illustrate your points. Your essay should be in MLA format. You must also include the author and title of the article in your introduction.

Choose from one of the following articles:

- “Obama Reviews Thanksgiving History, or Are You Ready for Some Football” (Alexis Teagarden; found online [here](#))
- “‘Who, li’l ol’ me’?: Sarah Palin on Naivete and Credibility” (Matt Zebrowski; found online [here](#))
- “You Know Twilight Isn’t Really about Vampires, Right?” (Doug Cloud; found online [here](#))

Further Rhetorical Considerations

- An analysis is *not* a summary. It also isn’t a place for you to voice your personal opinions on a topic, such as whether or not you like Sarah Palin or how much you did or didn’t enjoy the *Twilight* books or movies. It should be an analysis that focuses less on *what* an author says and more on *how* they say it.
- Refer to the handout *Considerations for Completing a Rhetorical Analysis* for an in-depth look at the things you should consider when writing this assignment.

Additional Resources

This is the first assignment of the term that requires you to use MLA formatting in your work. Thus, you will want to make sure that you are familiar with proper MLA formatting and style. The Purdue OWL is a fantastic go-to resource for refreshing you on MLA; [click here](#) for an overview of the most current version of MLA formatting. The website also includes links to additional resources, such as example MLA papers, sample citations, and so on. Note that for this assignment you will need to do in-text citations *within* the text of your work, as well as a *Works Cited* list at the end of the assignment.

**BRIEF ASSIGNMENT #4: DEVELOPING THESIS STATEMENTS**

**DUE DATE:** Friday, September 30th by 11:59pm. Turn in assignment via [Raider Writer](#)

**THE READINGS**

- *St. Martin’s Handbook*, Chapter 3a-3c, Chapter 10h, and Chapter 15a ([e-handbook website](#))
- You’ll also need to read the text or texts you choose to use for this assignment. [Click here](#) to see your options; you must select your text(s) from the list provided.

**THE ASSIGNMENT**

**Objective:** To develop new strategies for writing a thesis statement.

**Purpose:** One key to writing a successful essay is to develop a focused thesis statement. This assignment will enable you to do so.
**Description:** For your **draft 1.1**, you will write a rhetorical analysis. See the description of Draft 1.1 for a discussion of what a rhetorical analysis is and what you will be expected to do.

To create your thesis, you need to have the following: 1) one **primary text (specified by your instructor)** that will serve as the object of your analysis, and 2) the results (annotations and so on) of your close reading of this text that you will use to formulate your thesis.

To complete this assignment, compose three thesis statements that you might use in your draft 1.1. You may write three statements which could be used in three different analytical papers, or try out three different thesis statements for a single paper. Either way, your assignment will consist of writing three different thesis statements.

**Further Rhetorical Considerations**

- Remember that a good thesis statement includes the topic, as well as a position or stance for the topic.
- It’s a good idea to let your audience (in this case, your grader) know **which text(s) you’re using for your thesis statement(s)**. For each one, put a heading at the top that indicates the title and author of the piece, as well as the URL (if found online) or the page numbers (if found in your First-Year Writing textbook). If you’re writing three different thesis statements for the same piece of writing, you only need to do this once – and then include your various thesis statements below.
- Word of caution: If you’re writing three different thesis statements on the same article, make sure that they vary greatly in their approach and language. You don’t want to get marked down for saying the same thing, three different times, without variety or without approaching each from a different angle.
- For more, see the handout: **Rhetorical Analysis Thesis Statements**, which includes examples of strong and weak statements, considerations for writing your own thesis statements, and even a handy worksheet to help you work through writing and revising your statements.

**BRIEF ASSIGNMENT #5: INTEGRATING AND EVALUATING QUOTATIONS**

**DUE DATE:** Friday, October 7th by 11:59pm. Turn in assignment via **Raider Writer**

**THE READINGS**

- *St. Martin’s Handbook* Part 2, Section 8: “Analyzing Arguments” (pp. 163 – 185); and
- *St. Martin’s Handbook* Part 3, Section 13, “Integrating Sources into Your Writing” (pp. 276 – 286)
- You’ll also need to read the text you choose to use for this assignment. **Click here** to see your options; you must select your text from the list provided.

**THE ASSIGNMENT**

**Objective:** To identify and evaluate quotations for use in your **rhetorical analysis essay**.

**Purpose:** Quotations pose several challenges for writers. The purpose of this assignment is for you to select quotations from sources you plan to use in your analysis essay, evaluate their usefulness, and discuss how and where you might use these in your upcoming **draft 1.1**.

**Description:** Begin by writing your working thesis at the top of your assignment. Then, select a minimum of five quotations from the article that you plan to incorporate into your draft as examples of particular rhetorical devices. Write a brief assessment of why each quotation would be useful to you in composing your draft. Your assessment of each quotation should include your answers to the following questions:

- Where will this quotation fit in your organization?
- How does it demonstrate the points you are trying to make about the author’s writing?
• Will you use it as a quotation or paraphrase the selection, and why?

Your analysis, not counting the quotations, should be 500-650 words.

NOTE: You may find that in identifying and evaluating your quotations, you modify and improve your original thesis statement.

Further Rhetorical Considerations

Just to be clear, what this assignment is asking of you is really two things: 1) state your working thesis; and 2) come up with five specific things – things that you can quote from your chosen article – that you might want to include in your paper, as supporting evidence for your thesis. Then, you simply provide an explanation for each selection (which they’re terming in the assignment as “quotation”) as to how and why you envision yourself using these selections in your complete draft. (Note: The quotations you select for this assignment don’t have to be used in your complete essay; it’s just a way to get you starting to think about specific evidence you can use to support your claim(s).)

READINGS FOR WEEK #6: PRE-PLANNING AND DRAFTING

This week, you don’t have an assignment to turn into Raider Writer; however, you’ll be expected to begin work pre-planning and drafting for the major paper, which is due Friday, October 21st. This week’s readings are designed to help you with the process.

DUE DATE: Friday, October 14th

THE READINGS

• St. Martin’s Handbook Part 1, Section 3f-3g, “Planning,” “Drafting,” (pp. 61 – 71)

DRAFT 1.1: RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

DUE DATE: Friday, October 21st by 11:59pm. Turn in assignment via Raider Writer

THE READINGS

• St. Martin’s Handbook Part 1, Section 2, “Rhetorical Situations” (pp. 23-43)
• You’ll also need to read the text you choose to use for this assignment. Click here to see your options; you must select your text from the list provided.

THE ASSIGNMENT

Objective: To demonstrate your ability to rhetorically analyze texts.

Purpose: In the first half of the course, you have been honing your writing skills so as to prepare you for college level writing. You will use all of these skills, (summarizing, paraphrasing, critical reading, constructing thesis statements, and using supporting material via quotations) throughout your writing of this assignment.
Description: To complete this assignment, you will begin by selecting a text to analyze. After selecting your text and critically reading it, you will determine the writer’s purpose and intended audience for the text. (Note: You must choose a text from the approved list.)

Once you have determined these elements, you will begin to analyze the text so as to determine the specific strategies the writer uses to achieve his or her purpose and to meet the needs of the audience. For example, you might choose to look at such elements as the types of evidence a writer puts forward and how he or she does so. Ask yourself if the writer uses evidence from sources, or if he or she tells stories from personal experience. Examine the sentence structures and word choice. How do these contribute to the author’s purpose? Evaluate the overall tone of the text, and determine how it does or does not contribute to the way in which it communicates to its audience. After you determine what these strategies are, consider how well these strategies actually work. As a result of this assignment, you should be able to take these skills and transfer them to any reading you are asked to do in college, and you should see an improvement in your ability to read and comprehend any text.

Although this is an initial draft, it should be carefully edited and written in a professional tone.

Please use MLA format for both your in-text citations and your Works Cited in this draft. (To double-check your work and/or to brush up on MLA formatting, visit the Purdue OWL.)

Your draft should be a minimum of 1200 words in length.

Further Rhetorical Considerations

- An analysis is not a summary. It also isn’t a place for you to voice your personal opinions on a topic, such as your feelings about racism or politics or the SEC football conference, or any of the other topics from our articles. Instead, it should be an analysis that focuses less on what an author says and more on how they say it.
- Refer to the handout Considerations for Completing a Rhetorical Analysis for an in-depth look at the things you should consider when writing this paper.
- This assignment requires that you use MLA formatting, including in-text citations and a Works Cited section at the end. Therefore, it’s imperative that you are comfortable with proper MLA formatting and style. The Purdue OWL is a fantastic go-to resource for refreshing you on MLA; click here for an overview of the most current version of MLA formatting. The website also includes links to additional resources, such as example MLA papers, sample citations, and so on.

PEER CRITIQUE 1.1A and 1.1B

DUE DATE: Friday, October 28th by 11:59pm. Complete and submit assignment via Raider Writer

THE READINGS

- St. Martin’s Handbook Chapter 4b
- You’ll also need to read the text(s) from the pieces that you’re critiquing. That is, check the Works Cited list from the essays you read to try and locate the article that the student is discussing. Read it first before completing your critique.

THE ASSIGNMENT

Objective: To demonstrate your ability to write a critique based on a primary source (a peer’s essay).

Purpose: Having others read your writing is a good way to find out if your document is reaching its intended audience. In this assignment, you will read the drafts of two of your peers and write a critique of each.
**Description:** To complete this assignment, use the guidelines from Chapter 4b of *The St. Martin’s Handbook* and compose a critique of your peers’ drafts. For each critique, you will introduce the draft, summarize its main points, assess and respond to the author’s presentation, and offer conclusions about the effectiveness of the analysis. Remember to speak as specifically as possible about the draft, quoting from it when necessary. Each critique will be 400-500 words in length.

The elements of the draft you should address include:

- **Text for Analysis/Thesis:** Identify the writer’s thesis and then evaluate it for effectiveness. Determine whether the writer has selected a particular text to analyze and whether or not the thesis indicates that the writer will complete a rhetorical analysis of the text. Discuss whether the thesis is specific enough and of appropriate scope for this analysis. For example, a thesis that states that an author uses ethos, pathos, and logos in their text is NOT specific enough for a rhetorical analysis. Explain why or why not, and provide suggestions for the writer to help improve the thesis, if necessary.

- **Quality and Specificity of Analysis:** Evaluate the writer’s analysis. Does the writer select specific quotations from the text to discuss? What are these quotations, and what does the writer have to say about them? Does the writer seem to effectively analyze, or does the draft read more as a summary or paraphrasing of parts of the text being analyzed, or does the writer end up arguing about the content, rather than the structure and presentation of the text?

- **Overall Essay Structure:** Comment on the overall structure of the essay. For example, explain in detail whether or not the paragraphs are presented in a logical and persuasive way. Does the writer provide a clear introduction, body and conclusion? Does each paragraph begin with a clear topic sentence and transition into the next paragraph? Provide examples that are particularly effective or areas that need more improvement.

**Further Rhetorical Considerations**

- To complete the critiques, log in to Raider Writer and click on “Turn In/Manage Writing.” Find the line items for Peer Critique 1.1A and Peer Critique 1.1B. Click “Submit Now” for each one in order to be randomly assigned an essay to critique. You will be completing two separate critiques of two separate peer essays.

- You will be critiquing peer drafts that aren’t necessarily from our class. Drafts are randomly assigned to each student for review, and are drawn from all sections of English 1301 (up to 2,500 students). Thus, it’s likely that you’ll be reading and critiquing work of students from other sections, who have written their essays from a different selection of essays than what we worked with. With that said, you need to read the source article in order to understand the essay; look at the author’s Works Cited list to find their article and then read it before completing the critique. (If you can’t find a citation to find the article, then that’s a talking point you can mention in your peer critique.)

- Critiques should be written in a professional and respectful manner. Be as courteous to your peers as you hope they will be to you. Try to find at least one positive thing to remark on in the essay and think of your criticism as being constructive; remember that the goal is to provide your peers with tools they can actually use for improvement and revision.

**BRIEF ASSIGNMENT #6: GLOBAL REVISION**

**DUE DATE:** Friday, November 4th by 11:59pm. Complete and submit assignment via [Raider Writer](#).

**THE READINGS**

- *St. Martin’s Handbook* Chapters 4a, 4c-e, 24, 25, 27
- You’ll also need to read these essays as part of your assignment (see below for details)

**THE ASSIGNMENT**
**Objective:** To develop the ability to determine what revisions should be made to an early draft of a document.

**Purpose:** Most inexperienced writers have trouble identifying, prioritizing, and executing appropriate large scale revisions to a draft. In this assignment, you’ll read both an initial draft and a subsequently revised version of this draft, evaluate the changes made, and make suggestions as to what else might be revised.

**Description:** To complete this assignment, first read the initial draft provided and then write a paragraph in which you discuss the problems that you see in the current draft. Next, read the revised draft and write another paragraph (or more) in which you discuss answers to the following questions: 1) whether the problems that you saw in the first draft were addressed; 2) whether the revisions fixed other issues that you hadn’t noticed in the draft; and 3) why the revisions are or are not an improvement over the first draft. If you believe other revisions should be made to the draft, conclude your assignment with an explanation of what those are and how the revisions should be made.

The drafts are available here: https://raiderwriter.engl.ttu.edu/SupplementalFiles/BA6DraftsForSpring.pdf

**Further Rhetorical Considerations**

- Make sure that you read the essays carefully. You may want to print them out and pretend as if you’re doing a peer critique, especially for the first draft provided, so that you can make sure you note areas where you’d recommend revision.
- There are no set word counts for this assignment; however, a good rule of thumb would be to plan on at least 350-500 words.

**BRIEF ASSIGNMENT #7: REVISION OF INTRODUCTION**

**DUE DATE:** Friday, November 11th by 11:59pm. Complete and submit assignment via Raider Writer

**THE READINGS**

- *St. Martin’s Handbook* Chapters 4f, 4h, and 5f1

**THE ASSIGNMENT**

**Objective:** To develop new strategies for writing effective introductions for academic papers and to expand your understanding of what makes an effective introduction.

**Purpose:** The introductory paragraph of a document plays a key role in how readers respond to the entire text. In this assignment, you will attempt a revision of your introduction to Draft 1.1. *Keep in mind that your original introduction may remain the better of your two efforts.*

**Description:** To complete this assignment, review your Draft 1.1.

Before writing, consider the following:

- Does the initial focus of your draft as expressed in your thesis statement need revision?
- Are your purpose for writing and target audience easily identified after reading your draft? If you need to revise your thesis (and thus, a substantial portion of your paper), or if you need to better focus your purpose and identify your audience, your revisions of your introduction might start with those areas. You may need to make sure that your main point(s) are restated clearly, and that your readers understand the implications of your analysis.
• If you are satisfied with your focus, purpose, and audience, study your introduction to determine how clearly it reads. You may need to revise for coherence, emphasis, or conciseness (see chapters 40 and 43 of your e-handbook), or you may need to work on sentence structure (chapters 34-39 of your e-handbook).

• If you need to work on specific grammatical and/or mechanical issues, consult the appropriate chapters in your e-handbook.

To begin your assignment, review the strategies for writing introductions in section 5f1 of The St. Martin’s Handbook. Then, copy and paste your original introduction from your 1.1 draft and re-read it. In a brief sentence or two, identify and explain which of the strategies from the textbook you used in composing this introduction. If you cannot identify one of these strategies in your introduction, then describe the strategy you had in mind.

Next, revise your introduction and copy and paste that into Raider Writer, below the first draft and your explanation.

Finally, write a short summary and evaluation of your revisions. Identify and explain what you revised and why and explain how changing the strategies used in your introduction will influence your readers’ response to your analysis. Also let readers know here which introduction, your original or the revision, is the strongest and why you believe that to be so.

The total length of the analysis should be 350-500 words, NOT including the original and revised versions of your introduction.

Further Rhetorical Considerations

• Your St. Martin’s Handbook will be invaluable this week, as you will need it to specifically describe and explain certain techniques you’ve used in revising your introduction. For example, in Chapter 5f1, the following techniques are described as ways in which you can open up your essay: 1) opening with a quotation; 2) opening with an anecdote; 3) opening with a question; and 4) opening with a strong opinion. You’ll want to read the examples for each and see if any of those techniques will work for you. Whether or not you use a strategy from the book, you’ll need to be prepared to discuss the method that you used when writing your introduction and the reasoning behind it.

• Subheadings are highly recommended for this assignment, to help the graders understand which portions of your assignment are which. I would recommend structuring your assignment with the following headings:
  o Original Introduction
    ▪ (This is where you will copy and paste your first introduction.)
  o Reflection on Original Introduction
    ▪ (This is where you will write a reflection discussing the specific methodologies you used to write that introduction, if appropriate, from those listed in The St. Martin’s Handbook, Chapter 5f1.)
  o Revised Introduction
    ▪ (This is where you will copy and paste your revised introduction, after you’ve written a new one.)
  o Summary of Revisions
    ▪ (This is where you will write a summary of the revisions you made, including a discussion as to how the changes will affect your intended audience, as well as an analysis of which version you think is stronger and why.)

BRIEF ASSIGNMENT #8: REVISION OF CONCLUSION

DUE DATE: Friday, November 18th by 11:59pm. Complete and submit assignment via Raider Writer.

THE READINGS

• St. Martin’s Handbook Chapter 5f2
THE ASSIGNMENT

Objective: To develop new strategies for writing effective conclusions for academic papers and to expand your understanding of what makes an effective conclusion.

Purpose: The concluding paragraph of a document plays a key role in how readers respond to the entire text. In this assignment, you will attempt a revision of your conclusion to Draft 1.1. Keep in mind that your original conclusion may remain the better of your two efforts.

Description: To complete this assignment, review your Draft 1.1.

Before writing, consider the following:

- Does the initial focus of your draft as expressed in your thesis statement need revision?
- Are your purpose for writing and target audience easily identified after reading your draft?

If you need to revise your thesis (and thus, a substantial portion of your paper), or if you need to better focus your purpose and identify your audience, your revisions of your conclusion might start with those areas. You may need to make sure that your main point(s) are restated clearly, and that your readers understand the implications of your analysis.

If you are satisfied with your focus, purpose, and audience, study your conclusion to determine how clearly it reads. You may need to revise for coherence, emphasis, or conciseness (see Chapters 40 and 43 of your e-handbook), or you may need to work on sentence structure (Chapters 34-39 of your e-handbook). If you need to work on specific grammatical and/or mechanical issues, consult the appropriate chapters in your e-handbook.

Next, review the strategies for writing conclusions in section 5f2 of The St. Martin’s Handbook. Then, copy and paste your original conclusion from your 1.1 draft and re-read it. In a brief sentence or two, identify and explain which of the strategies from the textbook you used in composing this conclusion. If you cannot identify one of these strategies in your conclusion, then describe the strategy you had in mind.

Next, revise your conclusion. You must incorporate a strategy from the textbook that is different from the structure your conclusion originally used.

Finally, write a short summary and evaluation of your revisions. Identify and explain which new strategy you used from the textbook and explain how changing the strategies used in your conclusion will influence your readers’ response to your analysis. Also let readers know here which conclusion, your original or the revision, is the strongest and why you believe that to be so.

The total length of the analysis should be 350-500 words, NOT including the original and revised conclusions.

Further Rhetorical Considerations

- This is very much the same as Brief Assignment #7: Revision of Introduction. You’ll want to follow much of the same strategies while completing this assignment.
- Your St. Martin’s Handbook will be invaluable this week, as you will need it to specifically describe and explain certain techniques you’ve used in revising your conclusion. You’ll need to read and understand the techniques from Chapter 5f2 of your text, choose one to implement for your revision, and then explain why and how you did it that way.
- Subheadings are highly recommended for this assignment, to help the graders understand which portions of your assignment are which. I would recommend structuring your assignment with the following headings:
  - Original Conclusion
BRIEF ASSIGNMENT #9: SENTENCE-LEVEL REVISION

DUE DATE: Monday, November 28th by 11:59pm. Complete and submit assignment via Raider Writer

THE READINGS

• St. Martin’s Handbook Chapters 4i, 4k-l, 5a-b, 5d-e, 40, 43

THE ASSIGNMENT

Objective: To demonstrate your ability to revise paragraphs at the sentence level.

Purpose: When you revise papers, you begin by reexamining content and organization of the paper overall before moving to more specific concerns such as the thesis, introduction, and conclusion. Usually, one of the final steps involves revising the body paragraphs to ensure that they reflect your intended purpose and reach your intended audience. This final brief assignment will help you accomplish that.

Description: To complete this assignment, review your Draft 1.1.

Before writing, consider the following:

• Does the initial focus of your draft as expressed in your thesis statement need revision?
• Are your purpose for writing and target audience easily identified after reading your draft? If you need to revise your thesis (and thus, a substantial portion of your paper), or if you need to better focus your purpose and identify your audience, your revisions of your body paragraph might start with those areas. You may need to make sure that your main point(s) are restated clearly, and that your readers understand the implications of your analysis.

For this assignment, use the guidelines from Chapters 4, 5, 40, and 43 in The St. Martin’s Handbook to revise a substantial body paragraph (i.e. at least 4 sentences in length) from your Draft 1.1.

To complete the assignment, first paste the original paragraph from your 1.1 draft into the assignment so that your instructor will be able to compare the original with your revision.

Then, copy and paste your revised paragraph into your assignment.

Finally, write a short summary and evaluation of your revisions. Identify and explain which new strategy you used from the textbook and explain how changing the strategies used in this paragraph will influence your readers’
response to your analysis. Also let readers know here which paragraph, your original or the revision, is the strongest and why you believe that to be so.

The total length of the analysis should be 350-500 words, NOT including the original and revised body paragraphs.

Further Rhetorical Considerations

• This assignment is once again quite similar to your previous two assignments: Brief Assignment #7: Revision of Introduction, and Brief Assignment #8: Revision of Conclusion.

• Subheadings are highly recommended for this assignment, to help the graders understand which portions of your assignment are which. I would recommend structuring your assignment with the following headings:
  o Original Paragraph
    ▪ (This is where you will copy and paste the first version of your chosen paragraph.)
  o Reflection on Original Paragraph (optional)
    ▪ (The assignment doesn’t explicitly ask for this, but since the previous two assignments expected it, you may want to add a brief discussion here as to how you approached the first draft of your paragraph.)
  o Revised Paragraph
    ▪ (This is where you will copy and paste your revised paragraph, after you’ve written a new one.)
  o Summary of Revisions
    ▪ (This is where you will write a summary of the revisions you made, including a discussion as to how the changes will affect your intended audience, as well as an analysis of which version you think is stronger and why.)

DRAFT 1.2: RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

DUE DATE: Friday, December 2nd by 11:59pm. Turn in assignment via Raider Writer

THE READINGS

• St. Martin’s Handbook Chapters 34-39 and 41-42

THE ASSIGNMENT

Objective: To complete a final, polished draft of your analysis paper.

Purpose: In the first half of the course, you honed your writing skills so as to prepare you for college level writing. You used all of these skills, (summarizing, paraphrasing, critical reading, constructing thesis statements, and using supporting material via quotations) throughout the writing of the initial draft of this assignment. Since completing Draft 1.1, you have written peer critiques and practiced revising various sections of the draft. This assignment asks you to put everything you’ve learned this semester together into writing a final draft of your rhetorical analysis.

Description: To complete this assignment, first evaluate your initial draft (Draft 1.1) by answering the following questions:

• Did you select a text to analyze from our class’s approved list of texts?

• Did you critically read your text to determine the writer’s purpose and intended audience for the text? Do you have a good understanding of those elements?
• Have you analyzed the text so as to determine the specific strategies the writer uses to achieve his or her purpose and to meet the needs of the audience. For example, you might have chosen to look at such elements as the types of evidence a writer puts forward and how he or she does so. Remember that you should have examined several strategies, including tone, word choice, and sentence structure.

• After you determined which of these strategies were used, did you consider and discuss how well these strategies actually worked?

If you have not completed any or all of the above, your revisions should start by addressing these concerns. If you did, your revisions might begin with adding additional discussion of the text, or they may begin with a close analysis of your own evidence, sentence structure, word choice, and tone. How could you improve the communication of your own points to your intended readers?

Your revised draft should be 1200-1500 words.

Given that this is a final draft, it should be proofread carefully to ensure that it is grammatically and mechanically correct. Please use MLA format for your Works Cited and your in-text citations.

Further Rhetorical Considerations

• An analysis is not a summary. It also isn’t a place for you to voice your personal opinions on a topic, such as how you feel about racism or politics or the SEC football conference, or any of the other topics from our articles. Instead, it should be an analysis that focuses less on what an author says and more on how they say it.

• Refer to the handout Considerations for Completing a Rhetorical Analysis for an in-depth look at the things you should consider when writing this paper.

• Your First-Year Writing textbook is another great resource; see pp. 207-209 for specific detail on the three rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos) as well as examples of each.

• This assignment requires that you use MLA formatting, including in-text citations and a Works Cited section at the end. Therefore, it’s imperative that you are comfortable with proper MLA formatting and style. The Purdue OWL is a fantastic go-to resource for refreshing you on MLA; click here for an overview of the most current version of MLA formatting. The website also includes links to additional resources, such as example MLA papers, sample citations, and so on.

• Although the assignment states a word count of 1200-1500, I would caution you to shoot for the higher end for this draft, closer to 1500 and above.

• Free Write Assignment

• Posted by Carly Finseth on November 14, 2011, Leave a comment

• Filed Under assignment sheets, assignments, free write, free writing, handouts, writing

• Here are the details of the Free Write “Storytelling” Assignment, which is due Friday, December 9th at 11:59:59 (midnight) via email to: carly.finseth@ttu.edu

• Download: Free Write Assignment

WRITING REVIEW

DUE DATE: Friday, December 9th by 11:59pm. Complete and submit assignment via Raider Writer

THE READINGS
THE ASSIGNMENT

Objective: To review the work you have completed in the course and to reflect on what you have learned from it.

Description: To complete this assignment, look back at your pre-semester grammar diagnostic results, all of your assignments and commentary, and class notes and in-class activities. Based on what you find when you examine these materials, write a 400 – 550 word reflection on what you have learned about academic writing, rhetoric, and so on and what you understand about it that wasn’t clear to you before.

Develop a thesis that helps your readers understand what you will focus on in the review. Then, give specific examples that help you illustrate your thesis. For example, you can discuss specifically what you have learned about summarizing and paraphrasing texts, about analyzing texts, as well as what kinds of challenges those tasks posed for you. You could also discuss what you have learned about grammar and mechanics that has helped you become a stronger writer in that respect. In addition, you could also talk about other learning experiences you’ve encountered during the course. Finally, you could discuss how the work you’ve done in 1301 has or has not transferred to the writing you have been asked to do in other courses this semester.

You may use first-person pronouns in this review, but keep in mind that the language and tone of the review should be professional.
Appendix T

Rhetorical Analysis

Introduction
1) Underline the thesis statement in the student’s paper. Where is the thesis statement located in the paper? Is the placement effective?
   - What are the rhetorical choices (techniques) listed in the thesis statement? Are they specific enough?
   - What evaluation does the student assert about the rhetorical techniques?
   - What does the student say the author’s purpose is? Does the student need to be more specific?
2) Who does the student identify as the intended audience of the article? Is the student being specific enough in the identification? Explain.
3) What is effective about the overall introduction?
4) How might the student improve the introduction?

Respond to Prompts 5-8 for Each Body Paragraph
5) Underline the topic sentence in the first body paragraph. Explain whether or not the topic sentence clearly focuses on a rhetorical choice listed in the thesis statement. (Remember that a topic sentence is the first sentence in a body paragraph. It should connect back to the thesis and inform the reader of what will be focused on in the paragraph.)

6) Does the student provide at least two examples from the article of the rhetorical choice?

7) For each example provided, does the student show how the rhetorical technique works to achieve the author’s purpose? Does the student show why the rhetorical technique would be effective for the intended audience? In other words, does the student explain what it is about the audience that would make the rhetorical choice persuasive to those specific readers? If so, explain how the student shows rather than tells. If the student does not show, provide some advice to the student as to how he or she might go about showing rather than just telling.

8) Provide an example of how the student integrates quotations. How effective is this integration? Provide advice for revision.
Appendix U

From: Fred Kemp <Fred.Kemp@utsa.edu>
Subject: Re: Request to open a dialogue
Date: June 16, 2016 at 6:17:08 PM MDT
To: "Fourzan, Judith" <jfourzan@utep.edu>

Well, Judith, I doubt if you’ll see a system like this again, even at Texas Tech. I was able to make this happen because of a confluence of factors, a perfect storm for change. I had a strong reputation nationally for several reasons, we had a new female chair who wanted to do something dramatic, we had a new dean of arts and sciences, who, also as a female, wanted to do something strong, and I had just won a TTU award for teaching, and some other things. I had just gotten the department a $120,000 grant of computers from Apple in order to develop an Apple version of Daedalus. All things, in 2002, fell together in a way they probably would never again.

I was able to engage the grading system I described before from administrators NOT because it was a much better way of creating a fair and consistent assessment — which it was — but ONLY because I took the entire composition program into hybrid. Classroom instructors only had to meet 1:20 minutes in class once a week, BUT the class size was allowed to rise to 35 from 25. Why? Because the classroom instructors didn’t have to grade anymore, the major problem with class size. The powers that be, really unconcerned with consistency and fairness and professionally delivered assignments, drooled over the economic idea of freeing up all that class space! Hybrid (or blended) was hardly known in 2002, but among some of the cognescenti, it was seen as the future for moving somewhat into online without losing some face-to-face contact. Especially with composition and tech comm we could argue that seat time (lecture) was unproductive, and it was a pretty good argument.

So the English department won another campus-wide award for our composition program not because we were delivering a better and more responsible pedagogy, which we were, but because we freed up classrooms. I wasn’t surprised or bitter: I had longed learned that sometimes you could make college administrators do the right thing if even for the wrong reasons.

From 2002-2008 I ran the program and it got progressively better, the bugs in both the software and the antipathy shrunk, and it was working. You can read a Chronicle article in 2006 at http://chronicle.com/article/A-New-Way-to-Grade/28153, if you have a chronicle subscription (check your library). Search on “A New Way to Grade.”

But the graduate students continued to resist it because the document instructors simply felt it was too much work, and a number of them didn’t do their jobs, had to be “counseled,” and that created problem with their advisors, mostly literature and creative writing faculty, who disliked composition and hated computers. We documented, as I mentioned in my previous email, that they were online grading for 13 hours a week: we had irrefutable data. The students had a 20
hour obligation for their appointment. The complaint about 13 hours being too much, as I argued, to much pushback, simply indicated that they had been working less before. But the argument was made across the board that 13 hours of grading was, like dog years, more than 20 hours obligation.

My wife got a great job (much more $$$ than me) at North Carolina State in 2008, so I moved and told the chair, dean, provost, president that I would be glad to continue to help the program as an adjunct or staff of some sort, but they allowed me to keep my tenured status, at a distance, even from North Carolina, since so much of what I did was online. I continued to be an employee of Texas while paying income taxes in North Carolina. I expected to find the FBI knocking on my door at any day.

The reason you didn’t get any response from TTU now is because the program has been taken away from the composition and rhetoric faculty and given to another person, and given semi-autonomous status from the English department. There are complex reasons for this dealing with tacky politics and, from my skeptical perspective, quid-pro-quo agreement to let technical communication grow and composition stagnate. The composition program is still, as far as I can tell, doing some version of group anonymous grading, but with some changes that I think compromise some, but not all, of its principal advantages.

“Raiderwriter” is a presumably improved version of TTOPIC. I am not a professional programmer, so it wouldn’t be hard to improve the look of my software, but it did its job pretty well for 6 years, and introduced a revolutionary and controversial process for ensuring fairness across a large composition program.

In the end, however, I tried to do too much, too soon, a problem of my idealism and the unusual administrative flux that, somehow, let me do what I did. I don’t regret the speed and radicalness of what we did, however, because it needed to be done quickly and under the general radar. Or else, as what eventually happened, the usual powers for the status quo will block things. It seems from a cursory review of what TTU is doing now (I don’t speak to the woman who runs it) things are still hybrid, there are still group readers, readers are still sort of anonymous, and it is mostly what I left, with some serious compromises that nevertheless don’t kill the whole idea.

So don’t bemoan that you aren’t doing this. There’s not chance in hell that you, or maybe anybody else for some time, will be able to change a composition program this quickly and radically. That’s my delicious memory, never to be taken away, that I got away with it. And it still exists in some fashion at TTU. You will know, if you don’t now, that the few and far-between victories of rationality in academia are each to be savored even into old age.

I wish you good fortune in your endeavors, Judith.

Fred
On Jun 15, 2016, at 8:05 PM, Fourzan, Judith <jfourzan@utep.edu> wrote:

Hi Fred,

I wish I’d met you before trying this with UTEP. What we had was pretty good but this is great. And I am both laughing and envious. I know too well some of the concerns you voice. I have a number of graduate students who think I’m greater than a chocolate bar but also a number who think I should be working at McDonald’s. As a lecturer, it was probably a stupid task to take on, but there it is. Things were going pretty well until I had to take my qualifying exams at the same time that I was trying to get a new and better program going (which actually was a disaster) and the director stepped down. These three things got me shunted off to teaching Children’s Lit, and since I’m not certified for the classroom, I am now an outlier. It was a change in philosophy.

Still, I think the process is a great teaching tool for graduate students and an equalizer for students. We too had our angels of death and destruction and the pity party from paradise - all lecturers and PhD students.

Thank you for this. I am learning so much and I really like the sense of humor behind all this.

Judith Fourzan, MFA
Senior Lecturer, RWS and MAT
Assessment Support, SACs
Doctoral Candidate, RWS
English
University of Texas at El Paso
Hudspeth Hall #122
915.747.6624

On Jun 15, 2016, at 5:37 PM, Fred Kemp <Fred.Kemp@utsa.edu> wrote:

Judith,

Not sure of what is going on, but my message copied below only contained about a 5th of what I wrote. Here is my message in its entirety. Let us hope it goes through complete.

Judith,

Always glad to talk about this stuff.
By going hybrid in 2002, we put all student submissions online to be graded by “Document Instructors” anonymously, with 2 readers of each essay draft. If the two readers were within 10 points of each other (say, 95 and 85), the system automatically took the average (90). If the spread was over 10 points, the system automatically presented the grading to a 3rd reader, again, anonymously. The third reader didn’t even know that he or she was a third reader. The software automatically averaged between the two closest grades.

This accomplished several things. First of all, the assignment structure and the grading criteria HAD to be consistent over the entire program, thus eliminating assignments coming out of my two problematic groups, the “nurturing angels,” who assigned very little writing and gave out mostly A’s, and the “avenging angels,” who were focused on defending western civilization and simply nailed student writing with all C’s and D’s using grading rubrics and checklists that were criminally prescriptive. The extremes were, in one fell swoop, eliminated — at least theoretically.

Second, graders who were continuously “outliers” in their grading were exposed by the software and got “advice” from me or Becky Rickly or Rich Rice about how to moderate their outlier status. Very very quickly the graders realized that how they were grading was fouling things up, and most complied. Remember, the second readers, and everybody was at times first, second, and even third readers, were reading the commentary of the first reader (the second and third readers could provide commentary, but weren’t required to). This actually created a dynamic of “good grading driving out bad grading.” We were requiring peer review among students, and this extended peer review to the graders. The skilled commenters were intuitively recognized as skillful and were emulated, even if the unpracticed readers couldn’t get into the technical weeds about what made good and bad grading. Also, each reader could review his or her grading record and see how many times he or she had been an outlier (had forced a third reading). Not everybody, but most did review these stats — just an ego or curiosity thing — and unconsciously, I’m presuming, moderated their grading and commentary to fall in line with those who were not forcing the third reader.

Grade norming sessions are good, and I’ve been participating in them for a number of years, but my teachers were mostly MA students who could not by law manage a class until they had acquired 18 hours of graduate credit, and so most of them we had in composition for only about a year until they graduated. The PhD students, who already had 18 hours, of course, taught for us about a year or a year and a half, and then were often bumped up to teach sophomore classes in lit, tech comm, or creative writing. SO, we only had most teachers in the classroom for a year or so. But with ICON, the under 18-hour MA students could enter this grading system right off the bat, and were seeing both the commentary and statistics of more experienced teachers. They were being “normed,” in other words, in their everyday grading, not in occasional norming sessions. And they gained a year’s worth of responding to the assignments and grading criteria, which were throughly defined and consistent, before they ever entered classroom instruction.

In addition, the student had the right of appeal to the Classroom Instructor, who could choose
to overturn the grading of the Document Instructors or not. This required the student to meet with the Classroom Instructor and defend a better grade, an excellent teachable moment. One of the many complaints about ICON was that it increased office hours participation, to which I felt “boo hoo.”

Also, the second or third reader could rate the first reader’s comment or grade on a one-to-five radio button likert scale. These evaluations resulted in numbers for the graders, and anything below an average 3.5 required some advising from our composition faculty. This again was pressure on the graders to conform to the grading criteria presented by the program. Very quickly the idiosyncrasies and sheer unfairness of the old system were moderated as the monitoring became obvious.

Of course, the graduate students hated it, while the lecturers tended to like it (we only had about 6 lecturers out of a teaching group of 70 or more). The lecturers who wanted out of the classroom could be document instructors from at home, and those who like the classroom didn’t have to grade anymore. But the big problem for the graduate students was that time online for the document instructors was recorded. The document instructors complained incessantly that they were being overworked. And they were, compared to the old system in which they determined the number of writing assignments to be graded and whose grading (much of it perfunctory) was not evaluated until after the semester was over when the composition faculty went through the papers. By then, many of them had moved on to something besides composition or had graduated, and only about 70% ever turned in their graded essays anyway. But ICON showed that the AVERAGE of time spent grading was 13 hours a week for a 20-hour-a-week commitment. Now, who wants to grade 13 hours a week? But the document instructors had no class prep requirement, did not have office hours, and no class time. I estimated that before ICON the slacker instructors, and there were too many of them, were in effect spending about 10 hours a week for a 20 hour commitment.

To sum this up, and not get into the many problems with ICON (we can do that later if you want), ICON created a system in which “norming” was part of the continual reading and grading process. Graders were reading, HAD to read, each other’s grading (anonymously) and were learning how to grade (good grading drives out bad) by reading the commentary of others and by seeing their own stats (evals by the second readers and their outlier status). Theoretically, the whole thing was beautiful. But human nature intruded.

More later.

Fred

On Jun 15, 2016, at 6:27 PM, Fourzan, Judith <jfourzan@utep.edu> wrote:

Judith Fourzan, MFA
Senior Lecturer, RWS and MAT
Assessment Support, SACs
On Jun 15, 2016, at 10:08 AM, Fred Kemp <Fred.Kemp@utsa.edu> wrote:

Judith,

Always glad to talk about this stuff.

By going hybrid in 2002, we put all student submissions online to be graded by “Document Instructors” anonymously, with 2 readers of each essay draft. If the two readers were within 10 points of each other (say, 95 and 85), the system automatically took the average (90). If the spread was over 10 points, the system automatically presented the grading to a 3rd reader, again, anonymously. The third reader didn’t even know that he or she was a third reader. The software automatically averaged between the two closest grades.

This accomplished several things. First of all, the assignment structure and the grading criteria HAD to be consistent over the entire program, thus eliminating assignments coming out of my two problematic groups, the “nurturing angels,” who assigned very little writing and gave out mostly A’s, and the “avenging angels,” who were focused on defending western civilization and simply nailed student writing with all C’s and D’s using grading rubrics and checklists that were criminally prescriptive. The extremes were, in one fell swoop, eliminated — at least theoretically.

More later.

Fred

On Jun 14, 2016, at 11:16 AM, Fourzan, Judith <jfourzan@utep.edu> wrote:

Hi Fred,

When you get a chance, can you tell me how instructors were taught to use the same criteria? Is there someone else I could ask that would answer? I initially got permission to research TTU but there have been no other responses.

At UTEP I gathered the grad students together and we used sample assignments to norm them
as far as to criteria. We met twice for each assignment before releasing them to work on their own. It wasn’t popular - although grad students mostly appreciated the training once they entered the classroom. I don’t think it was all that efficient either when I saw at least 1/3 that needed a third score.

I know you’re busy and I wish I’d contacted you sooner.

judith

Judith Fourzan, MFA
Senior Lecturer, RWS and MAT
Assessment Support, SACs
Doctoral Candidate, RWS
English

University of Texas at El Paso
Hudspeth Hall #122
915.747.6624

On Jun 13, 2016, at 4:32 PM, Fred Kemp <Fred.Kemp@utsa.edu> wrote:

Okay, Judith, this is well within my ball park.

If you see Evelyn Posey, say hi for me. We were good buddies back in the early days of computers and writing. She hosted the conference at UTEP two or three after I did in Austin.

There are lots I can say about writing assessment and the way that most institutions handle first-year composition, but I will try to keep the tedium at a low level (I’m not known for being able to do that well).

I directed composition at Tech for 10 years and was highly influential in the program for another 3. This earned me lots of enemies.

I identified 3 major problems in our program, and from what I heard in conferences and on WPA and the lists I moderated (MBU-L and ACW-L), these were generic problems in our field. I’m chiefly a rhetorician, so when I say “our field,” I mean composition and rhetoric. That was my doctorate at UT, one of a few at the time.

Problem 1: Students were engaged in a “read and discuss” pedagogy, the sort of thing that our graduate students, who taught these courses grudgingly, had experienced in their literature classes. You assign a chapter one day and talk about it the next, assign another chapter, talk about it, and so forth. This pedagogy assumes that writing is a “knowledge” like literature; I
have long claimed it is a skill and a set of habits, like playing sports or music. You learn by doing, over and over, and receiving feedback.

Problem 2: Our instructors were primarily literature students or, worse, creative writers. My masters was in creative writing so I am not against creative writers, but they make horrible composition instructors. Composition is (pace Peter Elbow) a matter of providing students with coherent and capable writing abilities, like getting a saxophonist to play a tune, so they can succeed in college. Creative writers, and to a lesser degree literature majors (of which I was one as an undergraduate), see writing as a kind of spiritual exposition, a heartfelt revelation of one’s inner something or other. Most of my literature and creative writing graduate students, which was most of my graduate instructors, disliked the positions of the New Rhetoric and the prescriptions of rhetoric altogether. As with almost all campuses at the time, the only thing lower on the totem pole in English departments than composition and rhetoric was tech comm. Things have shifted, considerably, and marvelously, since then.

Problem 3: Our instructors were all over the board on what good writing was. I mean, really, all over the board. One person loved voice, another grammar and usage, another sincerity, another content, and a bunch more mishmash never really considered by the teachers at all since they were mostly products of literary study or literary wannabe. As director of composition I was the complaint of first resort and I saw again and again students bringing me papers with instructor commentary that was either unreadable (margin scramble) or almost insane. These graduate students were not interested in teaching composition: they were at Tech to get great jobs in one way or another and mostly considered freshmen the way that college job dishwashers (which I was one) washed dishes. The English major freshmen CLEPPED out of freshman composition, so these guys were not teaching their own.

I always said, having literature and creative majors teach composition was like fielding a baseball team with tennis players.

So what to do?

It’s complicated, and I can’t handle it all today (I’m preparing online tech writing courses for UTSA), but I took the entire program hybrid (2002) and divided the instructors into Classroom Instructors and Document Instructors. Classroom Instructors handled the classrooms and Document Instructors graded online. All student graded writing went online in software I wrote (that’s a long story) long before “RaiderWriter). It was called TTOPIC (Texas Tech Online Pedagogy Interactive Composition ). Students turned in their drafts to TTOPIC and the “document instructors” graded it online, and every draft received at least 2 readers — all anonymously — and a 3rd if they didn’t agree. Grading was taken out of the hands of the classroom instructors. It was anonymous and fair, because the graders had to ALL follow the same criteria.

And that’s the point. TTOPIC, or ICON, required everybody to follow the same assessment criteria. When a grader went rogue and did the creative writer spooky stuff, the students
themselves called the grader to task.

I really have to get back to my own struggles here at UTSA. But this should give you enough of the situation to ask me questions. Don’t expect any glory from your inquiry. As I leaned at TTU, culture and prejudice almost always trump innovation, and nobody are more culturally bound and prejudicial than faculty.

Fred

On Jun 13, 2016, at 4:53 PM, Fourzan, Judith <jfourzan@utep.edu> wrote:

Hi Fred,

Thank you for responding. I’m looking at assessments of students and their writing in first-year composition classes. I’m really thinking about the way that programs and their instructors view assessments - sometimes of any kind of assessment at all.

When UTEP re-invented the FYC program, there was a LOT of push back from the instructors, all of whom were lecturers. I am also a lecturer but it was clear this was going to happen and I like my job. Also, I’d had a loose connection with ETS as a consultant for a program we were using for TASP and later I worked as a scorer, table leader and alternative chief reader for teacher certification essays. From these experiences, it seemed to me that there was a lot of suspicion about any form of assessment of student work that didn’t rest in the hands of the teacher, and there didn’t seem to be any form of assessment of student work that was palatable, perhaps even the portfolio.

The changes at UTEP were responses to increasing enrollments which may have led to increasing class sizes. I was the one who moved all the second semester sections to an 80 minute schedule and I got almost 80 sections into 4 computer rooms. What little I’ve seen of the program at TTU, however, is far advanced than what we did.

So I thought that a comparison between a type of portfolio assessment and TTU would yield some interesting information. About now, I wish I’d gone to work at McDonald’s. So, I guess what I’m hoping for is some of your insights about how teachers responded to ICON and RaiderWriter, how students responded - general reactions to the changes. I’ve read what i can find about TTU but I’m missing information.

If you have time, will you engage in conversation with me? The more I study, the less I know. I have a great director but I would very much appreciate any direction, information, advice, etc.

Again, thank you for your response!

judith
On Jun 13, 2016, at 2:24 PM, Fred Kemp <Fred.Kemp@utsa.edu> wrote:

Judith,

Before I enter a dialogue or even assume I’m qualified to do so, I need to know your understanding of “assessment.” In my years in the Tech Comm and Rhetoric program, I encountered about 5 important types of assessment: assessment of students and student writing, assessment of graduate students and lecturers teaching writing; assessment of tenure-line faculty (for merit and promotion); assessment of the first-year writing program, the TCR program, and English department itself; and assessment of colleges and the university itself internally in terms of the strategic plans we came up with and externally through the Southern Association accrediting body.

Over the years I had something to do will all of these in sometimes important and usually unimportant and minor ways. That which I was most involved with in my most productive years was assessment of student writing and assessment of first-year composition faculty, usually graduate students and lecturers. I designed some systems to objectify both as best I could to ameliorate what I considered highly inconsistent teaching and grading across the 2800 students in first-year composition.

Maybe you mean something else. And since I had been teaching at Tech by distance from 2004-2013 (from Raleigh, Beaumont, and then San Antonio), I have to admit my administrative engagement with the department (thank god!) was pretty minimal.

Still, I’m willing to help if I can.

Fred

On Jun 12, 2016, at 6:09 PM, Fourzan, Judith <jfourzan@utep.edu> wrote:

Dear Dr. Kemp,

I am writing to ask you if you can offer any information concerning the assessment practices at TTU. At UTEP, we patterned out assessment practices after TTU and I helped develop the assessment aspect of our redesign. This started my interest in different assessment practices which has become the topic of my dissertation. I have chosen two very different assessment practices - one from a two-year community college in the northwest and TTU.

Would you please consider a dialogue with me concerning TTU’s practices? I understand that you are now at UTSA, but your in-depth knowledge would be greatly appreciated and desperately needed.

Thank you, Dr. Kemp, for any support you are able to offer. I am expected to finish this dissertation within a month - two at most.
Sincerely,

Judith Fourzan

Judith Fourzan, MFA
Senior Lecturer, RWS and MAT
Assessment Support, SACs
Doctoral Candidate, RWS
English

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915.747.6624
Appendix V

From: Amelia Chesley <achesley@purdue.edu>
Subject: Re: thanks and question
Date: October 27, 2016 at 5:01:52 PM MDT
To: "Fourzan, Judith" <jfourzan@utep.edu>

Hello Judith,

I've done my best with the questions you sent. It's been a good three years now since I taught at TTU, so forgive my imperfect memory!

I haven't yet printed or filled out the consent form you sent, but option A would be my choice of the three options. If you need an actually signed copy, I will try to get around to that soon.

I also thought I would mention that I do still have my old copy of First-Year Writing that we taught from back in 2012-2013. It's just been sitting on a shelf in my office for three years! I don't really have much need of it now, so if it would be helpful I could send it to you for your research. Or I could at least describe its overall contents or answer more questions about it if you'd like. Let me know! I know the textbook did change every year (an anti-plagiarism mechanism), and I assume that's still the way they do things.

Here are the questions, with my answers:

What was your role at TTU? For example, were you a graduate student working on your masters degree?
Yes-- I was in the second year of my MA and joined the FY writing program as a classroom instructor and a "document instructor" (their term for graders)
Were you a TA?
They called us GPTIs (graduate part-time instructors), but essentially it was a TA-ship.

What was your area of study?
The MA at TTU is in Technical Communication, but we took the same courses as and were often lumped in with the PhD students in Tech Comm & Rhetoric. Both were under the English department.

If you were a TA, what was your duty? Did you teach? Did you score? I both taught and graded student work during the year that I was a GPTI.

If you taught, were you trained to teach? If so, can you offer an overview of what the training consisted of and how the training was conducted? For example, was there a class for graduate students? There was not a class for grad instructors, but there were weekly training meetings where the upcoming lesson plans and curriculum were discussed, along with strategies for teaching, grading, etc.

Can you offer any information concerning how the scoring instructors were trained, or did you have any contact with them? Training was the same for classroom instructors and document instructors--all of us went to the weekly training meetings. To be a classroom instructor, you were required to have taken so many credit hours as a graduate student, so most students spend 1 year as graders and then have the option to become classroom instructors.

Did graduate students have the opportunity to discuss experiences with the various assessment processes? The training meetings were fairly open--students brought up their concerns and experiences, shared what problems they were encountering with the grading process and with teaching the curriculum. More experienced instructors were able to share their techniques, administrators also offered advice, etc.
Can you offer any opinions as to the assessment procedures at TTU and Raider Writer?
The idea was to separate the roles of instructor and grader in order to strengthen both, but students were often frustrated with it. They often noticed inconsistencies in their grades and feedback, or inconsistencies between classroom instruction and graders' feedback. It was challenging at times.

In 1301, I see one large assignment and 9 scaffolding assignments, the rhetorical analysis. Is this correct?
I don't remember exactly, but that sounds vaguely familiar.

How long is the rhetorical analysis? That's another detail I can't exactly remember, but I'm going to make what feels like a good guess of 2500 words or so. I know it was a wordcount-based requirement, and it makes sense in my head that it would be around that number.

Do you have any rubrics that the document instructors would use to score either the rhetorical analysis or any of the brief assignments? I seem to remember the rubrics being built in to the Raider Writer software interface, but I could be wrong.

Are there other assignments I am missing?
I'm remembering a sequence of reading summaries, paraphrasing, synthesis, integrating quotations, writing/revising a thesis statement, and other brief assignments like that. I've just had a look through my old TTU files to get a sense of it, and those are the details I can remember. I don't know what details you may already have, so I'm not sure what else I might add.

If you are more familiar with the 1302 class, can you discuss that?
I did teach 2 sections of 1302 during Spring 2013, and that
course involved more research writing. We used the same textbook for that, and students chose a topic, worked on finding sources, drafting a literature review, and eventually composed a researched argument paper.

I hope that these answers are helpful for you. Do contact me again if you need to. I may be able to put you in touch with other current grad students or alumni from TTU, if you need a larger sample of us who taught in that system.

happy Thursday,

-Amelia

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Amelia Chesley
Assistant Director/Rhetoric and Composition
PhD student/Rhetoric and Composition
Purdue University
achesley@purdue.edu

From: Fourzan, Judith <jfourzan@utep.edu>
Sent: Sunday, October 23, 2016 9:01 PM
To: Amelia Chesley
Cc: Brunk-Chavez, Beth L.
Subject: Re: thanks and question
Hi Amelia,

Again, thank you! I have a few more questions that are actually more important than the earlier ones - those set the stage for your comments.

In 1301, I see one large assignment and 9 scaffolding assignments, the rhetorical analysis. Is this correct?
How long is the rhetorical analysis?
Do you have any rubrics that the document instructors would use to score either the rhetorical analysis or any of the brief assignments?
Are there other assignments I am missing?

If you are more familiar with the 1302 class, can you discuss that?

I am looking at the websites of faculty, both past and present, trying to get a clear picture of how the course works. I assume they are found in the *First Year Writing* textbook, but I am unable to acquire one.

Cheers!

Judith

On Oct 22, 2016, at 2:57 PM, Fourzan, Judith <jfourzan@utep.edu> wrote:
Hi Amelia,

Thank you for doing this! Beth suggested I provide a consent form as well so that you can comfortably decide whether you want to be mentioned in the dissertation. I’ve attached one below.
I am particularly interested in the assessment processes at Texas Tech. Here are some questions. I don’t think they’ll take much of your time. If you’d like, it might be simplest to respond directly on this email.

6. What was your role at TTU? For example, were you a graduate student working on your masters degree?
7. Were you a TA?
8. What was your area of study?
9. If you were a TA, what was your duty? Did you teach? Did you score?
10. If you taught, were you trained to teach? If so, can you offer an overview of what the training consisted of and how the training was conducted? For example, was there a class for graduate students?
11. Can you offer any information concerning how the scoring instructors were trained, or did you have any contact with them?
12. Did graduate students have the opportunity to discuss experiences with the various assessment processes?
13. Can you offer any opinions as to the assessment procedures at TTU and Raider Writer?

Again, I appreciate your help. May I contact you again if need be?

Cheers,

Judith

Judith Fourzan, MFA
Senior Lecturer, RWS and MAT
Assessment Support, SACs
On Oct 20, 2016, at 7:54 AM, Amelia Chesley <achesley@purdue.edu> wrote:
Hello Beth and Judith,

Thanks for thinking of me-- I'm definitely up for talking about my time at TTU if it would help. Question away!

happy Thursday,

-Amelia

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Amelia Chesley
Assistant Director/Rhetoric and Composition
PhD student/Rhetoric and Composition
Purdue University
achesley@purdue.edu
To: Amelia Chesley  
Cc: Fourzan, Judith  
Subject: thanks and question

Hi Amelia,

Thanks so much for your hospitality last week. I really enjoyed spending some time with you and your fellow graduate students last week!

I have a question/favor to ask of you. I am working with a student who is finishing up her dissertation this semester. She's writing on assessment and part of it includes Raider Writer and the assessment program at Tech. I remember that you said you got your master's degree at TTU. Judith is copied on this message; would you mind talking with her or answering a few email questions?

Thanks!
Take care,
beth
Vita

I earned my Bachelor of Art in Creative Writing with a Minor in Organization Communication from UTEP in 1995. I graduated with an Honors degree and University Honors. In 2000, I earned my Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing. Fourzan was also the recipient of numerous creative writing awards during my graduate school career and was one of the founders of the magazine *Border Senses*. I then went on to become a lecturer for the English department at UTEP. Soon after, I became the scheduler and eventually served the department as Associate Director and Assessment Advisor for Composition where I collaborated with Dr. Brunk-Chavez to showcase composition and win the College Communication and Composition award of excellence in 2012, and collaborated again on a book chapter with Dr. Brunk-Chavez entitled “The Evolution of Digital Writing Assessment in Action: Integrated Programmatic Assessment,” in the online book *Digital Writing: Assessment and Evaluation*. During this time I also worked with Educational Testing Services as a Chief Reader and Table Leader for the teacher certification essay exam, and presented at many, many conferences. Later, I was offered the opportunity to return to scholastic endeavors in 2010 by enrolling in the PhD program in Rhetoric and Writing Studies. I have taught composition, British Literature, American Fiction, Workplace Writing,

Upon graduation, I will continue to serve students to the best of my ability.

This thesis/dissertation was typed by Judith A. Fourzan.