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Introduction

The writing program is undergoing significant changes, from the development of program-wide goals, to course learning outcomes, to specific changes to our courses and the design of our writing projects. Once these foundational changes are complete, our focus on innovation and experimentation will offer ongoing opportunities to adapt our program as we research teaching and writing practices. As a result, this guide will be important for both new and returning instructors, as changes to the program will be reflected in updated versions of the guide.

The Writing Program Overview

The specific mission of the ISU writing program is to support the instruction of ENG 101 and ENG 145 courses. This includes both training instructors in techniques for successful teaching generally, and helping instructors understand the course and program goals. Our mission also includes the production of course materials and resources for instructors.

The Writing Program at ISU administers two general education writing courses. The ENG 101 series courses, which include ENG 101 and ENG 101.10, and the ENG 145 series course, including ENG 145 and ENG 145.13. The ENG 101 course is part of the university’s core curriculum. With COMM 110 (a speech communication course), it is part of a two-semester sequence designed to foster specific skills and knowledge.

The brief course description for ENG 101 is as follows:

Course Overview

“Composition as Critical Inquiry” (ENG 101) challenges students to develop a range of rhetorical and intellectual abilities. Students learn how to analyze the multiple dimensions and meet the multiple demands of a variety of written rhetorical situations. Students also develop an array of strategies to help them navigate different genres and writing situations. These strategies include: reading, brainstorming, writing to learn and think, drafting, research (both textual and empirical), giving and receiving helpful responses, revision, editing and proofreading, publication, and techniques for researching writing processes, including their own.

English 101 is taught both as a 3 credit hour course that meets 2 or 3 times per week and as an extended course (ENG 101.10) which meets 5 days a week.

The ENG 145 series courses fulfill an advanced writing requirement for students in a wide range of majors across campus. The brief course description for ENG 145 is as follows:

Course Overview

Students in ENG 145 will study the relationship between the conventions that govern writing in various broadly defined disciplinary groups; they will learn to recognize distinctions and affinities between groups of disciplines, and they will learn to analyze discourse conventions and use that knowledge in their writing. Building on both their existing knowledge of writing situations, and research into specific writing situations and tasks, they will develop techniques for writing flexibly and effectively for different audiences, forums, and purposes. Through research and practice in a range of writing genres and situations, they will develop their ability to address the discursive conventions of genres in their discipline.

ENG 145.13 is a specialized course that addresses disciplinary writing for majors who wish to focus on business writing.
Currently, these courses are undergoing significant changes, as we move from a generalized rhetorical activity approach to a genre studies/activity theory approach, specifically designed to encourage the interactive formative assessment of learning in progress. Additionally, we hope to foster a more robust community of writing researchers at ISU (beginning with our undergraduate students), writers who are able to research and critique their writing practices and share their knowledge with other members of the community. As a result, one of the key changes in the program involves a focus on writers’ abilities to learn about how writing works in various situations, to then apply that knowledge to practice in specific types of both real-world and school writing, and to assess both their learning-in-progress and their goals for future learning. This focus shifts attention away from a “production of perfection” model, in which instructors attempt to help students to accurately and without error produce a particular genre (usually a school genre like an argumentative essay, an analytical essay, etc). Instead, our goals are focused on “the generation and documentation of learning,” in which we design projects and activities (as well as ongoing assessments of those activities) that we, as a community of writers, believe are efficacious in addressing skills and concepts that can be transferred to a variety of writing situations. This new focus defines the space of the writing program as deeply and interactively experimental—as members of the community work to document their learning and to design activities and experiments that encourage new knowledge-making about writing practices.

As we work through the complicated issues in achieving our program and course goals, we expect that all members of the community (administrators, instructors, students, interested university faculty, and members of the Bloomington-Normal community) will share information, ideas, strategies, and research about the best practices for constructing successful writing identities through the acquisition of both specific skills and knowledge and a research-based approach to new writing situations.

This text is specifically designed to assist instructors in understanding the design of these courses, and the options, opportunities, and obligations they may encounter as they conduct experiments in writing with their students. Materials for this text will be undergoing regular revision, as we work to create the ISU writing research community.

The Role of Instructors in the Writing Program

As instructors in the program, your task is to join the conversation (as Kenneth Burke might say) “in progress”: to learn about your own writing practices, about the research and study of writing practices, and about how you might teach a research-oriented perspective towards writing practice. As instructors we need to not only design effective learning environments for our students, but also consider complicated issues related to how learning happens and how we might document that learning in an effort to facilitate it.

ISU Undergraduate Students: A Profile

Illinois State University keeps excellent records that we can use to understand the undergraduate students who enroll in our courses. In general, the incoming student class each year is approximately 85% white, and about 1/2 are from the Chicago area. Most of our students have had a parent or sibling attend college (so they are not first-generation college students). The overall census information is available on the ISU website: http://www.pir.ilstu.edu/enrollment-reports/. The 2010 spring census day on-campus .xls document provides a fairly detailed overview of ISU undergraduate students.
Goals & Commitments for the Program, the Instructors, and the Students

The Commitments of the Writing Program to ENG 101 Students and Instructors:

- To maintain organizational structures that allow for the free exploration of genres, modes, and media choices for composing.
- To provide for teachers a system of mentoring and support that promotes collegiality within the community, confidence in daily practices, and a spirit of inquiry and experimentation.
- To continually evaluate the practices, quality of teaching, and learning opportunities that the Writing Program offers.
- To offer diverse spaces for student and instructor interaction.
- To encourage movement of ideas between sections of our courses and between our community and the larger university, regional, and national communities.
- To provide instructors with non-biased resources (both written & electronic) that can transfer to a range of teaching scenarios and writing projects.
- To encourage the inclusion of global writing practices into our research and writing projects.

The Commitments and Goals that Teachers Bring to the Learning Space:

- An effort to provide specific, identifiable tools and strategies for analyzing and understanding writing in different situations.
- An effort to offer terms and definitions of concepts that can be used to analyze writing in different situations.
- An effort to specifically address the transfer of skills from one writing situation to another.
- An effort to offer writing situations (i.e., projects and assignments) that are: (1) interesting and that motivate students to apply their problem-solving skills rather than their “do it this way” school writing skills and that (2) move beyond the walls of our classrooms and the interaction of teacher-to-student as the primary relationship for textual production in school situations.
- A display of our passion for language and for researching ways to make writing work in different genres, and to encourage students’ passion for the same.
- Clear assessment criteria for projects and for the course, so students can understand what is at stake and how they are being evaluated.
- Promotion of classroom structures and activities that prevent students from “falling out of attention” through productive types of disruption and juxtaposition.
- Respect for the knowledge and understanding that students bring to the writing space.
- Encouragement of students to enter into the assessment process through dialogue, feedback, and commenting practices--to enact assessment as a co-constructed activity that includes all members of the writing community.
- A willingness to reflect on one’s own history and future as a writer.
The facilitation and innovation that entails exploration of writing activities and learning spaces that accommodate different kinds of learning skills and styles--e.g., visual versus auditory versus kinesthetic learners.

Skills and strategies for effectively reflecting on (and learning from) one's own writing practices and the practices of other writers.

What Students Bring to this Learning Space (Note: we refer here to students in writing program courses, but also, in a larger sense, to the fact that all writers are--or can be--“students” of the genres they produce):

- A willingness to re-think their writing practices and the things they have learned about what “good” writing or “correct” writing is.
- The ability to analyze and discuss their own writing--to examine it closely at both the sentence-level and its appropriateness for a specific writing situation, and to identify the genres and writing experiences that have shaped/are shaping their knowledge and writing practices.
- The willingness to bridge the gap between writing-for-school and just plain writing.
- The ability to identify areas of strength and weakness in one's own writing and the willingness to devote time to improvement.
- The willingness to reflect on one's own history and future as a writer.
- An attempt to refrain from viewing our program and our instructors as simply links in a long-chain of “forced” school writing that is not helpful or interesting.
- The willingness to share one's knowledge about writing--including the areas where one's knowledge is lacking or sketchy.
- An openness to new ways of producing meaning in text, including multiple modes and media.
- The willingness to rethink assumptions about how writing is shaped and influenced by cultural practices.
- The willingness to think about writing as a complicated activity that takes place in multiple locations (e.g., inside and outside of classrooms).
- A willingness to apply concepts and practices learned in ENG 101 to the other kinds of writing they do (inside and outside of the academy).

What we want to avoid (perspectives and/or activities that we think may be harmful to our community or to members of the community):

- Reifying ideas about writing that interfere with the transfer of writing skills to new writing situations.
- Teaching style, grammar, punctuation, citation, (etc.) as skills or rules with overly consistent “right/wrong” answers that never vary in different situations.
- Reifying the idea that writing in school is done primarily for a single teacher, with a grade as the reward.
- Limiting course writing to ambiguous “school genres,” that don’t require us to investigate the boundaries, limitations and potentials of specific writing situations.
- Promoting or prescribing political/social lenses for “looking at texts” that alienate or exclude students from the ongoing discussion of writing as a social, networked activity.
The Center for Writing Research and Pedagogy

The Center for Writing Research and Pedagogy was established in 2010. The center is closely affiliated with the Writing Program, but its ongoing mission is slightly different: The Center was established to promote and facilitate research into various writing practices and productions (both within and outside of ISU) and to facilitate and promote teaching excellence in writing instruction. The Center sponsors a range of projects, including several ongoing research projects connected to the Writing Program, as well as the establishment and maintenance of a research archive and sponsorship of activities for the National Writing Project. Instructors in the Writing Program can expect to benefit from research generated by the Center, and may be asked to encourage writing-research projects among the undergraduates they teach.
Writing Program Philosophy & Concepts

Changing Writing Instruction at Illinois State University

Beginning in Fall 2010, the writing program at Illinois State University departed in some significant ways from the traditional approach to teaching composition that has been evolving (with variations) within American higher education since the late 1800s. In the ENG 401 seminar, new instructors will read about and discuss this history (and participate in the development of our program) more explicitly, but the following brief summary offers an introduction to our pedagogy:

During the mid-to-late 19th century, significant changes occurred in the concept of “writing” at American universities. The university education system (at Harvard University and several other select institutions) began to move away from a focus on training the sons of gentlemen to enter a narrow range of socially appropriate professions. In the main, the training of these students in “communication skills” consisted of translating passages from Latin and Greek, and producing orations—the idea being to produce what Cicero has been quoted as naming, “a good man, speaking well.” Partly as a result of the emergence of land grant institutions and normal schools, this traditional education system (which infused the student's entire education with discussions of rhetoric but did not spend much time in any kind of explicit writing instruction, at least not as we would recognize it) began to evolve into a system in which students spent more time creating written compositions as well as orations. The focus of these first introductory composition courses was specifically to help students write well and to “fix” problems with their writing that may have occurred as the result of prior teaching (or a lack of it).

The evolution of writing courses continued as universities began to incorporate a more discipline-specific structure for student education, as the rise of various scientific and mechanic professions required more specialized instruction than the humanities-based programs in religion, law, philosophy, etc., had previously provided. As institutions of higher learning shifted away from the practice of having students study the same subjects, together, throughout their college years—thus, also studying composition as part of their general experience—to a system of disciplinary instruction where students were separated into specialized groups without a common course experience, the teaching of composition skills became increasingly problematic. However, the focus on introductory composition as a location which “taught students how to write” or “fixed student writing problems” remained a strong narrative, both within the academy and outside of it, and these narratives of error and expectations have continued to influence both perceptions of First Year Writing and the pedagogies practiced in programs designed to provide writing instruction.

Since the early 1900s, a wide range of philosophies and pedagogies have been developed to address the problem of producing coherent, competent writers at the university level, most notably a system of Generalized Composition Instruction or Introductory Writing courses at the college and university level, and more recently Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing in the Disciplines programs. However, most of these pedagogies have incorporated the same problematic attitudes that have shaped the entire history of organized writing instruction at American institutions of higher education. The writing program at ISU has been, in part, designed to resist and overcome these attitudes. The following list includes many (although probably not all) of the important false premises that continue to remain embedded in traditional approaches to writing instruction:

• The idea that writing instruction can be divorced from content.
• The idea that instruction in grammar and sentence-level skills will translate to an overall improvement in writing ability.
• The idea that instruction in generalized genres of school writing will allow writers to access and master a wide range of real-world genres.
• The idea that students must learn basic skills before encountering and struggling with the larger issues of making meaning through writing.
• The idea that there exist certain generalizable writing skills that can easily be transferred from introductory courses to more advanced or complicated writing situations.
• The idea that any competent writer can instruct others in writing skills. (A slightly modified version of this belief would be that the more a writer has gained skill in a particular genre, the better able she is to understand and make explicit the writing practices involved in producing that genre.)
• The paradoxical belief that introductory writing courses must both nurture writing ability and the self-esteem of writers while also positioning the instructor as the gatekeeper of the values and specific knowledge-making practices of the academy (i.e., as instructors of first-year writing, it is often up to us to decide if a student "has what it takes" to write at the college level).²

The Nature of our Difference

In redesigning the Writing Program courses at ISU, we seek to directly address these long-enduring attitudes regarding writing; with the knowledge that these attitudes are often based on misinformed perceptions of how writing knowledge is actually learned and applied, we hope to work together to re-think both our goals as students and teachers to create an enduring infrastructure in which the investigation of and research into writing practices is the center of our teaching and learning. The following areas of research and theory impact our work:

• Rhetorical Genre Studies
• Systemic Functional Linguistics
• English for Specific Purposes
• Activity theory, Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, and Actor-Network Theory
• Theories of Community and Identity
• Writing and Cognition

The Tools of our Work

Instructors who teach in the writing program at ISU will study these theories in an effort to re-think and re-frame writing instruction at this institution. Some of these concepts, theories, and terms may seem overly-complicated as the foundation of a discussion regarding a task (studying writing) over which we all, as English Studies scholars, have achieved a certain level of mastery. Why not simply teach what we know? Because the above theories offer us a way to move beyond a simple "mastery" perspective and towards a much more complicated understanding of how writing works, how we can learn about how it works, and how we can learn to do it in ways that might transfer between very different kinds of writing situations.

² David Smit, in his text, *The End of Composition Studies*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004) discusses some of these same issues. While this list is not drawn directly from his work, it is informed by his arguments.
Our efforts to grapple with these theories, terms, and concepts are, in fact, central to our project. Without them, it becomes much too easy to return to an understanding of the teaching of writing as, at its core, a simple project of "improving student's ability to write," or "teaching students to pay attention to their writing," or even "imbuing students with the love of texts and writing," all of which are among the traditional goals of writing instructors. Those of us with teaching experience know that teaching is a difficult art -- the process of deciding what to do and how to do it is a never-ending process of learning. But there exists also a prevailing attitude toward university-level writing instruction (one that often influences our teaching more than we realize) "teaching writing" is fairly simple: since "everyone writes" (it is thought), little research is required for instructors to understand how to teach writing. Our focus on writing research, and on uncovering and studying how learning about writing happens for individual writers and groups of writers, is an effort to combat these commonsense narratives, and in doing so to develop strategies that offer students a sustainable knowledge-base for adapting and learning about writing as they encounter new and unfamiliar writing situations.

As we evolve as a program, we will make decisions about how writing skill acquisition works, and we'll primarily use a set of genre studies and activity theory concepts to begin our research. We must work to consider the kinds of practices, activities, research, and writing projects that might best help us to teach and learn about writing in the most productive ways. This effort continues to prove both enormously exciting and enormously difficult. The effort to stop and think, to reformulate our ideas and practices, to interrupt our performance of familiar communications (as both teachers and students) in order to evaluate their efficacy, and even the effort to act as a group (both students and instructors) to work at these tasks is not without risk, although I believe that it will lead to some very successful projects, collaborations, and reformulations. As an example of the kinds of questions and ideas we will be considering, I've provided a brief list of some important ongoing conversations that relate to our work:

- How can theoretical concepts related to activity theory, genre theory, and other theories about literacy acquisition and knowledge-making be not only applied to our pedagogy, but become central to the thinking and learning we accomplish in ENG 101 and ENG 145? In other words – How do we turn “big theory” into “practical pedagogy?”
- How can we describe our goals (Learning Outcomes) for these courses in ways that are both usefully concrete and usefully flexible, and how can we learn to assess whether these goals are being learned in the course and whether they are useful as ways to look at and learn about ”writing in the world”?
- How can teaching practices such as commenting on student work, peer review, grammar instruction, and the design and evaluation of writing projects be reconsidered to better match with and achieve our goals for the course?
- How can the process of learning and doing research be considered as part of the overall goals for the course --and how can instruction in these processes be tied more closely to the kind of complicated literacy acquisition we wish to illuminate for and practice with our students?
- How can we best create a community identity for writers at ISU (all of us) through our efforts, both as instructors and administrators of the writing program, and in our work as part of the Center for Writing Research and Pedagogy?
- How can we design and implement interactive assessment measures that allow us to investigate learning-in-progress in ways that all members of the community can agree upon and share.

**Theoretical Concepts**

Although we will, as a program, be developing a list of terms and concepts to guide us and to help us remain coherent in our goals and focus, we can begin with the following list, which explains some terms/concepts that we might find useful as a starting point. Because they are so brief, the following sections may not offer the necessary depth for instructors to understand the connections between these theories and the practices of the writing program. While it is not strictly
necessary for all instructors in the program to study these terms in depth (although we have included a bibliography of readings for those interested), these concepts (taken together) help to illustrate the complexity of writing as an area of research. They directly combat the idea of writing as a fairly simple task that folks just learn how to do at some point and then keep doing, or as a set of rules about sentence-level grammar and understanding of tone that, once learned, apply to all writing situations equally. The writing program makes use of these terms to work with instructors to create specific, practical, pedagogies. So reading through the following text (even if the terms don’t seem all that intelligible at first) is useful, because it can help instructors to understand why we want to take a research approach to the teaching of writing, and why we want to change for focus of our course to one that assesses students’ abilities to research and learn about writing, rather than to approach perfection in any particular writing task.

Genre Studies

The concept of genre studies is complicated, and there are a range of areas of study in which the use of “genre” as a tool for either understanding how people live, work and produce, or understanding how we might explicitly teach writing skills. Anis Bawarshi & Mary Jo Reiff, in their text, Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research and Pedagogy, offer more than 10 separate areas of study, from disciplines such as literary studies, historical studies, linguistics, and rhetoric. Because of the widespread use and diverse definitions of the term “genre,” the word (by itself) doesn’t really help to define our goals with much specificity. However, the concept of “genre” can work for us as a guideline for understanding how the texts we produce are part of the different range of discourse communities to which we might belong (or want to belong).

We use the term “genre” to define what we study as writers and researchers, meaning that we study specific kinds of texts that are produced in specific locations, in response to specific conditions. **We do not use the term genre to close off discussion of what a text is (or might be); rather, we use the concept of genre to indicate a complicated, always-in-motion relationship of a specific text to ways in which that text can be identified, defined, and used.** Any textual production can be studied as a genre, through working to understand the boundaries within which it can be produced, distributed, and used. When I use the word “email” for example, most technologically savvy writers immediately envision a range of identifiers, including the digital locations in which emails are composed, the relationship of emails to other types of related texts (texts, letters, memos); this immediate understanding can lead to a sense of expertise: “I’ve written an email. I know how to do this.” But a study of the complexities and shifting boundaries of genre can allow us to acknowledge that a “professional email” might be different from a “personal email,” or that the conventions of email writing in an English Department might be different from those that govern email writing in the U.S. Department of Defense.

We do study these genres with the aim of learning about them and producing them, but we also want to study how they work to shape certain kinds of communicative exchanges and ways of thinking and being in the world. So an “email” produces a different relationship between writers and readers than a letter, or a text message, or a short story. In the program at ISU, learning how to identify and recognize the complexity of genre relationships (which are cultural, social, and political as well as material), is a step in the process of learning how to research and evaluate one’s own textual productions as specific responses to a set of evolving genre conventions. We need to understand that our ability to produce texts in specific situations is governed by our knowledge and understanding of genre conventions; but also that our knowledge and understanding are never complete because varying contextual circumstances can change how the genre will be understood and used by readers.
With this in mind, we do NOT want to engage in activities where we explicitly teach (or even imply) that genres are uncomplicated. For example, we want to avoid implying (through the way we talk about writing assignments) that something like a "literary analysis essay" can be taken for granted as a particular "genre." In fact, literary analysis is a specific type of *activity* that can exist in very different kinds of texts, such as a published scholarly essay (in one of several related fields -- which all have their own genre variants), or an undergraduate student essay (with different variants in different majors), or even as a multimodal/multimedia genre such as web-based book reviews and book clubs where reading can share their analyses of different texts. Even genres that (at first glance) seem fairly stable and clear can spawn hybrid genres, or brand new genres, and can morph over time in ways that change our expectations of what a genre will look like or do. We want to include this kind of complexity in our activities and in the writing projects we assign to students.

So genre theory can be used to develop some practical goals for our program:

- to create courses where the writing activities are specific and can be identified as participating in a specific set of genre conditions--which means we don’t want to take for granted that students will write “an essay” and that somehow calling it an essay is enough information. The idea of genre can help us to be more specific in the kinds of writing we study, the care with which we examine different writing situations, and how we explain and research this writing with our students.
- to engage in the study of genre--not just practicing it but developing tools for understanding and investigating it.
- to use our research into genre to define learning goals--both related to the kinds of writing we want to learn how to do and the kinds of skills we need to learn about new genres.

**Cultural-Historical Activity Theory**

*Activity theory, actor-network theory, and cultural-historical activity theory* are all slightly different but related theoretical frameworks that can help us to unpack and research writing activities and enrich our understanding of how “writing” happens in the world. Specifically, for our Writing Program, we can use cultural-historical activity theory to: (1) create complex, dynamic mapping processes (through research we do as instructors, students, and writers) that help us to see exactly what a particular text might be doing; (2) see how a text is interacting with its various, related genre-categories; (3) look at the complex temporal-material trajectory of a text (how it interacts with people, objects, genres, other texts) as it is produced and used; and (4) help us better understand how our relationship to a text is never as simple as “knowing how to do it,” but is instead a complicated social/cognitive process in which we learn to recognize and produce a certain kind of writing.

According to David Russell,\(^3\) one of the most important aspects of activity theory is that it moves away from a text/context metaphor for understanding how writing happens.\(^4\) Russell offers the following explanation for the difference between activity theory and a rhetorical context perspective:

> ...instead of using metaphors of context and contents or conversation dialog, activity theory develops the metaphor of interlocking, dynamic systems or networks, embracing both human agents and their material tools,

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\(^4\) This is a common aspect of “rhetorical” views of writing. In this view, a text is understood to be shaped by the “context” of its production.
including writing and speaking. The system or network metaphor can perhaps facilitate analysis of writing and learning (socialization/acquisition/appropriation) by allowing us to theorize and trace the interactions among people and the inscriptions called texts (and other materials) without separating either from collective ongoing directed action over time (online).

Perhaps a key benefit of including activity theory in our approach to writing instruction design is that we can begin to think about all writing (all textual production) as occurring within a web of relationships between people, other texts, cultural practices, modes of communication, and non-human actors. For a lot of people, this kind of complicatedness might seem out of place in a general education writing program. How can acknowledging and studying writing as such a complicated activity help folks who just need to learn how to “write well”?

The answer to this question is that many of the strategies that author’s use to “write well” in one situation don’t transfer very well to new situations, and for many writers they don’t translate at all. In other words, what they “know” about writing and language doesn’t actually help them much (or at all) as they move into various writing situations. Because activity theory (combined with attention to genre) can help us to “unpack” or make explicit the dynamic processes through which we gain knowledge about writing situations, it may also be able to help us to develop practical strategies for encountering new writing situations. Not every author needs to do this kind of deep analysis for every writing situation, but knowing how to do it can help us to see nuances and complications that we couldn’t previously see, even in situations where we thought we already “knew how to do it.”

It’s not necessary for writers (students or instructors) in our program to become scholars in activity theory research. But it is important for us to develop strategies for incorporating a complex understanding of the interlocking networks of knowledge and activity that shape even the most (deceptively) simple kinds of writing.

**Genre and Systemic Functional Linguistics**

Systemic Functional Linguistics is an area of study that has strongly influenced rhetorical theories on genre. As a very brief overview, the following excerpt from Anis Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff’s text *Genre: An introduction to History, Theory, Research and Pedagogy* offers a basic understanding of SFL and its impact on rhetorical theories:

Systemic Functional approaches to genre have contributed richly to how genre is understood and applied in textual analysis and language teaching over the last twenty-five years. Influenced in large part by the work of Michael Halliday (Halliday; Halliday and Hasan) at the University of Sydney, and applied to genre particularly in the work of J.R. Martin, Frances Christie, Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis, Gunther Kree, Brian Paltridge, Joan Rothery, Eija Ventola, and others, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) operates from the premise that language structure is integrally related to social function and context. Language is organized the way it is within a culture because such organization serves a social purpose within that culture. “Functional” thus refers to the work that language does within particular contexts. “Systemic” refers to the structure or organization of language so that it can be used to get things done within those contexts. “Systemic,” then, refers to “systems of choices available to language users for the realization of meaning” (Christie, “Genre Theory” 759; emphasis added). The concept of “realization” is especially important within SFL, for it describes the dynamic way that

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5 Russell's ball theory article

6 Bawarshi and Reiff’s book is a wonderful resource, because it provides an overview of theories that inform a genre studies approach to writing and also explains current, ongoing research into writing practices that are influenced by these theories. The text (free, online at: [wac.colostate.edu/books/bawarshi_reiff/genre.pdf](http://wac.colostate.edu/books/bawarshi_reiff/genre.pdf)) offers examples of the kind of approach to writing research that we want to encourage in our program.
language realizes social purposes and context and specific linguistic interactions, at the same time as social purposes and contexts realize language as specific social actions and meanings.

A great deal of the work in SFL can be traced to Halliday’s *Language as Social Semiotic*, in which Halliday describes how “the network of meanings” that constitute any culture, what he calls the “social semiotic,” is to a large extent encoded in and maintained by its discourse-semantic system, which represents a culture’s “meaning potential” (100, 13).

According to Bawarshi and Reiff, this is why Halliday argues that language is a form of socialization, playing a role in how individuals become socialized and perform meaningful actions within what he calls “contexts of situation.” Halliday explains that contexts of situation are not isolated and unique but often reoccur as “situation types,” a set of typified semiotic and semantic relations that make up “a scenario . . . of persons and actions and events from which the things which are said derive their meaning” (28-30). Examples of situation types include: “players instructing novices in a game,” “mother reading a bedtime story to a child,” and “customers ordering goods over the phone” (29). Because contexts of situation reoccur as situation types, those who participate in these situation types develop typified ways of linguistically interacting with them. As these situation types become conventionalized over time, they begin to “specify the semantic configurations that the speaker will typically fashion” (110), (qtd. in Bawarshi & Reiff 29-30).

SFL, then, is a set of studies that connect closely to activity theory models for understanding how texts evolve, and, more particularly, how genres evolve in ways that authors and users learn to recognize, and which can impact the way we teach students to understand and produce genres.

### Cognition and Transfer

The concept of “transfer” is related to the knowledge that, as literate individuals, we approach writing situations with prior knowledge of other writing situations, and this knowledge impacts the choices (conscious and unconscious) that we make. A key issue in Writing Studies theory currently, transfer has serious implications for all aspects of developing and teaching in an introductory writing course. Thinking about transfer asks us to question whether the things we actually teach students about writing in such a course are useful for writing activities outside of that course. Surprisingly--at least surprising if one is working with commonsense knowledge about writing instruction--research in several fields (Writing Studies, Socio-Linguistics, English for Specific Purposes) has indicated that we can't assume that transfer occurs. That is, we can't assume that if we teach students how to write an “academic essay” with a thesis statement, that the same students would be able to understand how a lead works in a newspaper article, or even that they would recognize the lead and the thesis as corresponding elements in different genres. David Russell’s article “Activity Theory and Its Implications for Writing Instruction” is one of the first texts in writing studies that makes this point clearly. As Russell states, “to try to teach students to improve their writing by taking a generalized writing instruction course is something

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7. A recent article that discusses the differences (and points of connection) between SFL and Rhetorical perspectives on genre is: Side-stepping our “scare words”: Genre as a possible bridge between L1 and L2 compositionists. Kimberly A. Costino, Sunny Hyon *Journal of Second Language Writing* 20 (2011) 24–44

like trying to teach people to improve their ping-pong, jacks, volleyball, basketball, field hockey and so on by attending a course in general ball using” (58).

As Rounsaville, Goldberg, and Bawarshi note in their article, “From Incomes to Outcomes: FYW Students’ Prior Genre Knowledge, Meta-Cognition, and the Question of Transfer,” the possibility that we might teach students in introductory writing classes skills that they might use in a wide range of writing situations requires us to think about the kinds of activities and assignments that might facilitate high road transfer. They explain this type of transfer in the following way:

In their research on knowledge transfer, D.N. Perkins and Gavriel Salomon distinguish between what they call “low road” and “high road” transfer. Low road transfer “reflects the automatic triggering of well-practiced routines in circumstances where there is considerable perceptual similarity to the original learning context,” for example, how learning to drive a car prepares one to drive a truck (25). High road transfer, on the other hand, “depends on deliberate, mindful abstraction of skill or knowledge from one context for application to another” (25). Because knowledge and skills do not automatically transfer across dissimilar contexts, high road transfer requires “reflective thought in abstracting from one context and seeking connections with others” (26). The ability to seek and reflect on connections between contexts, to abstract from skills and knowledge, to know what prior resources to draw on and what new resources to seek, and to be rhetorically astute and agile are all hallmark strategies that effective writers bring with them to any new writing context (98).

Rounsaville et. al offer some clear guidelines for how writing research can increase our understanding of transfer by carefully studying students acquired knowledge and skills—and how they apply these skills in the writing classroom. That is, if we can incorporate teaching practices that encourage authors to consider carefully the knowledge they are using when they work in a new writing setting, we may be able to help them understand how to use (or not) that knowledge effectively.

Community and Identity

The concepts of community and identity that shape our work in the writing program are not specifically focused on creating an affective bond between a writer and his/her writing or among writers working together in a writing course, although we don’t exclude these important goals from our work as instructors and facilitators. Indeed, we understand the importance of these goals, and the range of ways that a positive affective response to writing can be generated within individual classrooms. However, we are also aware that this type of affective response does not necessarily aid transfer of writing skills into new genres and situations (i.e., the fact that a writer likes to create short stories does not necessarily make him/her more skilled at creating business reports). As a result our focus on community is not so much about liking writing as about creating situations in which writers can uncover and examine their knowledge about different kinds of writing situations and genres. However, affect (emotion) is a critical aspect of this work, because we believe that creating this kind of knowledge and awareness can impact writing anxiety (which numerous studies have indicated significantly impacts writing self-efficacy). ⁹

A somewhat more difficult and complex concept of identity and community, which we also want to incorporate into writing program development is the connection between affect and cognition and transfer, as well as to theories about the value and impact of social environments. We are interested in developing a writing program that serves as a location where authors (collectively) can build robust identities as writer/researchers, because we believe that there are affective components to the high road transfer of writing skills. At its core, our efforts to create a community of writers are based on the concept that in order to develop the ability to abstract knowledge and skills from one environment to another, an

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individual must have a clear sense of identity, one that authorizes him/her to make such distinctions and abstractions. In other words, for writers to think about writing/research in robust ways, they must have an identity as an individual who already knows something about writing/research.

The individual writing classroom can be a location where such identities are constructed, but research indicates that writing in situations beyond the classroom may be more likely to produce such robust identities. As a result, although teaching students in individual classrooms (with a single, or at most two instructors) remains an important aspect of our understanding of writing instruction, it is critical for us to move beyond these walled-in spaces to create interconnections and opportunities to produce and share writing and research (and especially research on writing practices and genres) as part of a larger community.

We take this goal to mean that all actors within our particular community – and whatever types of communities they can build or interact with that move beyond the borders of the writing program as community – should feel responsible for the project of creating and sharing knowledge about writing practices, and using these practices to shape their own productions. Our pedagogical goals and our goals for assessment, then, take shape within this framework as activities that are designed to increase the potential for agency, and decrease opportunities for interventionist stances towards literacy acquisition. At the classroom level, this model of community connects to student-driven genre investigations and student-driven assessment of learning (for both individual and collective members of a class). At the program level, results can include community member research as the focus of programmatic change, as well as a tool for instructor professional development.

**Making Change through Ongoing Community Research.**

Our focus on "community writing research" clearly connected our interest in community, since a focus on research (by individuals and groups, students and instructors) is foundational for the communities we would like to form. Although a great many writing programs focus on "academic research," and increasing numbers of programs focus on "research about writing," our focus on a particular kind of "grassroots" community-building means that we are interested in research that builds and shares knowledge about writing practices, and using these practices to shape their own productions. Our pedagogical goals and our goals for assessment, then, take shape within this framework as activities that are designed to increase the potential for agency, and decrease opportunities for interventionist stances towards literacy acquisition. At the classroom level, this model of community connects to student-driven genre investigations and student-driven assessment of learning (for both individual and collective members of a class). At the program level, results can include community member research as the focus of programmatic change, as well as a tool for instructor professional development.

**Assessment and Evaluation of Writing Productions**

As we shift the focus of our teaching towards developing strategies for learning about writing, this shift radically alters the focus of our courses: both in the work we seek to accomplish, and the ways we then need to think about grading and assessing. However, when we began to examine our grading activities more closely, we discovered a tendency to sidestep our awareness of this shift and remain within a paradigm in which it is our job to assess the ultimate "quality" of the written product.

So we start with the following propositions:

1. a course in introductory English does not equal how to write well

   And

2. introductory composition does equal learning how to learn how to write in new
genres and situations

However, if we accept the validity of these propositions, then we need to ask ourselves – how do our grading/commenting/assessing activities accomplish proposition #2?

The key problem with current/traditional models of response is that, ultimately, they reinforce the instructor-as-arbiter model. Even the most kind, considered, non-invasive, collaborative styles of commenting have the effect of creating a classroom genre in which the instructor's comments are considered as guides to understanding what is "right" to do. It's true that if we refuse to offer direct instruction, (e.g., if we refuse to make grammar/style comments or we offer feedback "as a reader" rather than as an instructor) we can side-step the familiar proposition that

\[
\text{instructor + writing product + comments = what to do next}
\]

But although such practices can serve to mediate or mitigate instructor authority, they do not address the fundamental shift that our propositions demand: that is, we are in search of direct, demonstrable evidence of learning-in-progress related to the complex activity of writing in different situations. While the process of reviewing and commenting on multiple drafts does allow “progress” of a sort to be observed, it does not illuminate the specific information we wish to uncover about student learning and knowledge:

• Are students learning specific, repeatable skills for understanding a genre?
• Are students learning to work with genres in a way that helps them to consciously make note of their particular skills and knowledge and to observe and negotiate differences between their productions and existing examples of the genre in the world?
• Can they identify genres they “know” about and how their understanding of these genres is specifically impacting their productions?
• Can they identify specific gaps (or continuities) between their specific productions and example texts in the genre?
• Can they identify specific skills, techniques, or concepts that give them trouble within the genre (using existing examples as a comparison)?

If this is the information that will allow us to accurately assess student performance (under proposition #2), then student productions cannot be the final object of assessment (either for the students or for us). Instead, the following becomes true:

\[
\text{Productions (that is, writing assignments) = experiments}
\]

Such experiments can yield a wealth of data (for the students) about their learning-in-progress. The students can use the processes of production -- which include researching the genre, creating versions of the genre, and assessing their own and others mastery of the genre (keeping in mind that genre requirements are never completely static) -- to generate data, which they can use to document their learning. On the surface, this may not seem all that radical. The real paradigm shift comes when we realize that if productions are experiments, then the material/activity that we should be grading and assessing becomes the analysis and assessment of the production rather than the production itself. This doesn’t merely mean that we should “consider” student analysis as part of the grade (such as activities like having students write author notes and then taking these into account as part of the final grade). It means that the production of an analysis and assessment (by the student) of the learning that has occurred should be the primary artifact used for grading. Documentation of rigorous learning becomes the goal of the course, and any activities involved in the production experiment (drafts, class notes, group discussions, etc.) are useful primarily as evidence of that learning. The student can use these materials as “sources” (citing them properly, of course) in the “proof-of-learning” documentation that constitutes the primary grade in the course.
Abandoning the “final draft” as the primary artifact has been a cause of real anxiety for us as instructors, since our understanding of rigor often remains embedded in the “nearly-perfect text” as the measure of both effort and skill. However, the production of text as an experiment-in-learning is equally rigorous, as it requires that authors make every effort to not only produce a text that works as an example of the genre, but also that they are able to map the activities that went into the production in a way that demonstrates learning. A poorly executed experiment will not yield the necessary data for the author to demonstrate that learning has occurred, and lack of attention to composing will mean that the author will not be able to thoughtfully demonstrate where learning occurred. However, the formula of production = experiment means that our goals as instructors need to shift significantly, away from evaluation of drafts as our primary task, and towards the following:

1. Designing production activities that can be mapped as learning-in-progress. This means designing projects that provide a good field for specific experiments in working with different genres in different ways, and helping students understand how to map learning through specific kind of activities that accompany the production experiment.

2. Grading the analysis and assessment that students produce. This does not mean that the production itself counts for nothing. Rather, we specifically evaluate how the student has used the activity of composing to learn certain things about the genre (and about learning about genres) that may or may not be explicitly visible in the production itself.

In the spring of 2011, a small group of our program instructors (11 out of more than 60 instructors) worked to enact these pedagogies in their writing classrooms. We’ll be presenting on some of our informal findings at NCTE this coming fall in Chicago, but we don’t have time here to present their varying materials. Instead, we’d like to offer you a short list of some of the most interesting outcomes of our experiments.

Firstly, it’s important to note that students (and sometimes instructors) often do have strong reservations about the approach to writing mastery that this kind of assessment underscores. Our informal work this spring has shown us that while we can dramatically reshape how learning occurs through these approaches to instruction and assessment, doing so is not as simple as instituting an “across-the-board” pedagogy or a specific syllabus that teaches writing in a particular way. Instead, we are working to develop a set of “best practices” that includes certain types of assignments, and practices of assessment. Among the lessons we’ve learned are the following:

- The “genres” of writing we teach don’t seem to matter. Different instructors in our program taught a wide range of different genres, and their success didn’t seem to hinge on which genres they taught. Instead, we’ve learned that the “genres of assessment” [the practices through which students document learning] are perhaps the most important genres in this kind of pedagogy. Whether we are creating brochures or writing research reports or making valentines, the critical aspect of this work is to help participants understand the complicated nature of the genre and their relationship to it. So we need to spend a great deal of time in our classes analyzing and researching not only the particular genre(s) we’re creating, but the processes through which we document our learning-in-progress. Too often, we want to move directly to the writing assignment – discussing the genre how it can be done. However, since, in our model, the activities of learning (rather than the finished text) are the primary gradable artifact, we also need to spend quite a bit of time establishing what “learning” actually is and what learning might look like if one were to attempt to capture it.

- Participants often had difficulty with the concept that assessing what one “doesn’t know” can be a pathway to a high final grade. This is a problematic concept for both students and instructors. This is another reason why time spent on the activities of documenting knowledge (known and unknown) becomes critical for the success of class participants. Learning to articulate “what you don’t know” is (we think) a critical aspect of working in unfamiliar writing situations, but it is not a skill with which many writers – even very accomplished ones – have much familiarity.

- The ability of class participants to incorporate and adopt these pedagogies greatly varies. Students who have had positive experiences with writing in previous writing classes seemed more likely to experience anxiety about this model – specifically because articulating what they know and don’t know has not been foregrounded in their other classes, while “being able to do it” has been the measure of their success. On the
other hand, ESL, EFL, and students whose classroom experiences with writing had been less positive were more likely to perceive the benefits of this pedagogy for their improvement as writers.

• The most successful instructors in our group have found that participating authors (even those who might have been initially resistant) became more adept at assessing their writing accurately and descriptively. This led, in many cases, to grading practices in which students not only worked successfully to assess their own writing, but also to assess the writing of their peers. In our future work, we plan to focus on techniques for encouraging student-led assessment as an important pedagogical tool.¹⁰

All in all, our work has thus far shown us that it may be possible to significantly impact an author’s ability to work with different genres – not in the realm of “mastery” (if mastery means only “doing it right”) -- but in the realm of identifying features, tracing changes in genre requirements as well as techniques that may transfer, and accurately assessing example texts (their own and others) for how well they conform (and how interestingly they may subvert) the expectations of writing in different genres and situations. Our program goals for the next year include conducting more formal assessments to measure how these pedagogies specifically impact student learning in these ways.

Keywords for Pedagogy Discussions

As we work to create a shared vocabulary for discussing these theories and concepts (both among instructors and for the community at large) we’ve begun to create a list of keywords that we are using to “tag” our pedagogies (helping us to define what we are specifically focussing on teaching in particular situations and with particular assignments). We will be creating an online “wiki” space for these terms to evolve, but the current (summer 2011) list is as follows:

Active & Inscribed Genres: It the most basic level, the difference between active and inscribed genres is simply that active genres are “in progress” while inscribed genres have been produced as an artifact (literally, “inscribed” as in marked/carved/printed). However, these terms are used differently by different scholars -- some use active/inscribed to describe the difference between genres that are spoken and performed (greetings would be an example of this kind of genre or asking someone on a date, perhaps) and genres that are somehow written down or captured. This can be useful when considered in combination with CHAT theory, which notes how “texts” can move fluidly between these two states. Other scholars tend to use the terms active/inscribed to describe genres that are in flux and genres that are “set or stable-for-now,” but this is a metaphorical rather than literal use of these terms.

CHAT: Cultural-Historical Activity Theory is developed from the work of Paul Prior (see the CHAT article in the GWRJ archive for more of a description). In our program, we use CHAT to help us think about and study the genres that we encounter in ways that are more complex. In traditional rhetorical models, one describes the author, the audience, and perhaps some of the features of the genre. Getting more complex, one might also describe the “scene/setting” for the genre’s production. But CHAT allows us to focus on any aspect of the myriad elements of textual production, so it’s more robust that these other methods for investigating texts. The key terms in CHAT are: Representation/Distribution/Reception/Socialization/Activity/Ecology.

Citation: In our program, we talk about citation in broad terms -- starting with the general idea that in many

¹⁰One particular instructor experienced a great deal of success with a model for assessment that left grading entirely to the student. Anjanette Riley’s website can be found at: http://genrebasedinstruction.wikispaces.com
different genres "citation" (defined as "saying where your information comes from) is important. However, we stress that in many genres, citation doesn't mean "academic citation" (MLA, APA, etc.). We do teach academic citation, but when we do we engage in conversation about the politics and genre requirements that shape how different academic citation styles work.

**Civic Engagement:** Many of our teachers use this term as a way to describe conversations with our student about how we (as individuals and groups of writer/communicators) engage with the culture and with our society (in terms of social interactions/politics, etc.). This concept is covered within CHAT, but teachers use this term sometimes when they want to particularly focus on the social/political ramifications of our writing activities.

**Cultural Influences and Implications:** While we focus on the practical investigation of genres, we also often ask writers to consider the larger implications of how a particular genre works (how it is produced and used). Some projects (or parts of projects) can focus very specifically on this kind of genre analysis – rather than on practical/production types of genre analysis. However, often these two types of analysis are often blended.

**Design Elements:** Many of our teachers work with multimodal genres -- and many of these genres are aural or visual rather than textual. Therefore, the concept of "design" becomes important to us, because we need to be able to talk about things like space, layout, visual organization, etc. However, design elements actually can be used to refer to any aspect of the any text (whether it's image based, alphabetical, or some combination of modalities) that contributes to or shapes content in physical/material ways. So discussions of "proximity and alignment" might be important design elements for an image-based textual production (like an advertisement or a brochure), while "margins, and paragraph spacing" might be design elements to consider when producing a print-based essay.

**Ethics:** Ethics is a term that is tied (in many ways) to the term "civic engagement" because it introduces the idea that acting ethically as producers of texts is valuable to our participation as citizens in civic activities. However, the concept of “ethical production” can also be used for discussions of specific areas of textual production, like considering design elements or thinking about citation.

**Genre Analysis:** When we use this term we are referring to all the wide range of activities involved in investigating and understanding genres – what they are, what their boundaries are, how they inter-relate, how they can be used, how they alter over time, etc. Essentially, this activity covers pretty much everything we do in our courses! However, we often use this term to describe particular projects and/or activities that are designed to facilitate these kinds of investigations. So, for example, teaching students how to use CHAT to investigate a genre would be a type of genre analysis. This term is often used to differentiate activities where the focus is understanding (taking genres apart and working to see what/how they are made), from activities that are focused on actually producing genres. So the activity of analysis often precedes production (although not always!).

**Genre Features:** We use this term to describe aspects of genres that can be identified and used (usually as part of the process of producing a genre). That is, we might do a genre analysis that is particularly focused on the textual/rhetorical/physical aspects of a genre (including things like specific kinds of language use or grammatical patterns as well as physical/conceptual design features). Then we use these features as guidelines when creating a text in that genre.

**Genre Reversion:** We use this term (that we invented) to describe the cognitive process through which an author makes use (often problematically) of genres with which they are familiar when producing a text in a new genre. So, for example, one might use the “thesis statement” form from a traditional school essay when writing a brochure. The term is particularly useful for describing these kinds of behaviors when they are done unconsciously and when they then inhibit the writer's uptake of the new genre.
Genre Samples: We use this term to describe examples of genres that we might use as the “base texts” for a genre analysis. We call them “samples” rather than templates, because examples of a genre are often quite diverse and can’t productively be used as a “template” for producing a new text in the genre.

Juxtaposition: We use this term to specifically describe activities where authors deliberately “mash-up” or move between two distinct genres. The purpose of such activities is to bring to the foreground the ways that genre features work to define what we understand a genre to be. For example, if we take a grocery list and make a poem out of it, this challenges our tacit understanding of these two genres and can illustrate the importance of understanding fully the parameters of genres.

Language Elements: This term is our way of working around the amorphous and less-than-clear terms like “style, tone, form.” What we mean when we use this term are those aspects of a text that are specific to language use (so not visual or design oriented). So particular grammatical structures, spelling, tonality through vocabulary, etc. When investigating genres we try to get as close as possible to how these elements are used within different genres in interesting or unique ways.

Multimodal: We use this term to specifically describe “modalities” that can be used to produce and distribute text: Aural, Oral, Visual, imagistic, Alphabetic. Multimodal texts are those that use more than one modality.

Public Writing: In some way, Public Writing might be considered a subset of civic engagement -- it refers to activities that are designed to use writing to engage with others in meaningful ways. Often public writing has an “artistic” ethos -- that is, in many cases these types of activities involve using creative or artistic expression as a means of engagement.

Research: Research is a term that, like citation, can mean many different things and can be part of nearly every activity in our writing courses. However, some kinds of projects and activities are specifically designed to incorporate a certain kind of research activity (e.g., using database or web-searches to find information or creating and distributing surveys) So while all writing might be said to include “research” we use this term to describe types of writing where authors must look beyond what they already know – to either locate or produce additional knowledge and then document that knowledge as part of the production process. So research reports and articles, lab reports, newspaper articles, biographical essays are all examples of texts that explicitly require research.

Rhetorical Strategies: Our instructor's guide offers a list of rhetorical strategies (like narration, description, etc.) that we use when we want to discuss how specific rhetorical techniques can often be paramount in a particular genre. For example, a fiction novel would almost always contain narration, but it might also include other elements (description, dialogue); on the other hand, instructions on how to put together a cabinet would be unlikely to include narrative. One key thing to remember is that we don’t conflate these terms with genres. “Narration” is not a genre – it’s a rhetorical strategy that can be used in different ways in particular genres.

Scene/setting/Situation: Scene/Setting/Situation are often used interchangeably to describe both the physical and conceptual environment within which a genre is produced (similar to “ecologies” in CHAT). For example, Situation is a term used by M.A.K. Halliday to describe scenarios in which particular texts might reoccur. So a “bedtime story” is a genre that occurs in a particular situation – going to bed. It’s usually read by an adult to a child (although not necessarily). So “going to bed” is the situation that both produces and defines the genre of “bedtime story.” Scene is used by Bawarshi in much the same way, although he seems to focus more on the idea of “scenes” as a physical/material setting (classroom scenes) in which multiple genres or genre sets might be used.

Technology: We use the term technology in sometimes complicated ways, because when we are speaking of “writing technologies” we don’t just mean computer or digital technologies. Rather, we mean all the different kinds of tools that humans interact with in the production of texts. So the printing press and the pencil are both technologies that we use when we produce writing, but so are chairs and tables. Some of our projects and activities
are designed specifically to explore our relationship to technologies, and while these activities usually do include
digital production technologies, we don’t limit ourselves to these types of tools.

**Trajectory**: We use this term to describe the ways that texts move – this means both how a text might move
through a process of production, but even more importantly how texts move through institutions and spaces and in
relationships to different people. We often look at trajectory in terms of the shifts and changes that occur in a genre
as it gets used over time, and we also look at trajectories of specific texts as they are produced and distributed.

## A Bibliography for Further Reading

This list of readings includes a range of texts (articles and books) that discuss in more detail some of the issues we
present in this textbook. It isn’t necessarily a representative list—and it’s certainly not a complete one. These particular
texts, however, have influenced our thinking about these issues.

Barton, David; Hamilton, Mary; and Ivanic Roz, Eds. (2000). Situated literacies: reading and writing in context. London:
Routledge.

Davis, Robert L. and Shadle, Mark F. (2007). *Teaching multiwriting*: Researching and composing with multiple genres,
media, disciplines, and cultures. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.


(20:3), 341–367.

of resistance: Negotiation of identities for first-year composition. *College Composition and Communication*, (58.2), 213–
235.


and David Russell (Eds.), *Writing Selves, Writing Societies: Research from Activity Perspectives*. (pp. 180–238). Fort

Prior, Paul and Bazerman, Charles, Eds. (2004). *What Writing Does and How It Does It: An Introduction to Analysis of

Prior, Paul; Solberg, Janine; Berry, Patrick; Bellowar, Hannah; Chewning, Bill; Lunsford, Karen; Rohan, Liz; Roozen,
Rabideau, Mary P.; Shipka, Jody; Van Ittersum, Derek; and Walker, Joyce R. (2007). Restituating and re-mediating the
canons: A cultural-historical remapping of rhetorical activity (A collaborative webtext) Kairos, 11.3. Available June, 2008:


writing, rethinking writing instruction. (pp. 51–78). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

(57.2) (Dec 2005), 277–306.


Goals & Techniques for Teaching in the Writing Program

General Tenets for all Writing Program Courses

Each sequence in the writing program (101/101.10 and 145/145.13) has its own section that outlines specific innovations and requirements, and offers information about course materials and student profiles. However, in this section we outline the goals and teaching strategies that guide all the courses that we teach. In this section, we offer a short list of basic strategies/goals to which each instructor teaching in the program should seek to adhere:

Innovation/Documentation

The first and primary tenet is innovation. We encourage our instructors to innovate and to share their ideas with the program and with their colleagues. Innovation does not necessarily mean doing “crazy” or radical stuff. It can mean something as simple as working through the concepts for the program and then adapting a current teaching practice in some way to bring it more in line with program goals: for example, re-designing an assignment so that it pays more attention to production genres or enlists students in the development of more specific criteria for success would be a form of innovation that we specifically encourage. We also encourage instructors (through various kinds of professional development opportunities) to document their learning and share it with other members of the program.

Gathering Data

As a program, we gather data on our students and their writing and on our teaching practices. Participating in certain activities related to data collection are required for instructors in the writing program.

- **Classroom Ethnographic Observations** are conducted by new instructors and by the WPA team each semester. These ethnographies are not teaching evaluations, but represent our efforts to uncover and examine effective our collective teaching strategies to identify best practices. Instructors should be willing to open their classrooms for these observations (instructors will always be given a record of the observation).

- **Digital Portfolios**: Each instructor should collect a digital version of all major assignments from his/her students. Currently, we are asking instructors to collect this data through the ENG250 digital folder system (instructors are not required to use the system for classroom work, but you should at least have students post final versions of each project into the 250 folders). Collecting this data will be critical in the spring of 2012, when we will be conducting a program-wide assessment to examine our students’ articulations of their learning about genre & writing situations.

- Each semester the Writing Program also sponsors an **Experimental Teaching** group, which works to collect more explicit data about teaching methods and pedagogies. In the Spring of 2011, this group collecting information on alternative assessment and grading techniques, and we’ll be sharing this information in the fall of 2011 for all instructors. For Fall 2011 the focus of our experimental group will be conducting program-wide assessments.
The Planned-But-Open-Syllabus Concept

Because we are interested in teaching innovation, the ISU writing program has an open syllabus policy. That is, instructors are encouraged to produce a unique, custom-designed syllabus rather than following a set syllabus. We are in the process of developing a range of “sample” syllabi, which articulate clearly a connection between our learning goals and our learning outcomes. Since fall 2010, we have been working to develop strategies for sharing and reviewing syllabi within the program. Currently, at the beginning of each semester, instructors are asked to participate in a Syllabus Exchange, where they review with peers their plans for major projects for the semester. In addition, each year we invite instructors to apply for one of our “Innovative Course Plan” grants, which provides a 300.00 stipend for instructors to document their course activities for our online archive.

The Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes for each course are an important way we ensure cohesiveness in the program. While the instructor creates and controls his/her course plan, each course plan must address the learning outcomes as an integral part of the course. Each course sequence (101/101.10 & 145/145.13) has its own set of learning outcomes (see course sections for more information). In spring 2012, we will be conducting a program-wide assessment of these learning outcomes, so discussions of these outcomes—as well as ways to connect them to specific projects—will be a significant topic of discussion in Fall 2011.

Articulating Goals, Tasks, & Criteria for Writing Projects

Because our program is working to focus on demonstrated learning, rather than writing mastery, the process of creating and evaluating criteria for writing projects is currently under close review. We feel it is critical that all instructors are able to identify (often in collaboration with student authors) the specific criteria in use for the evaluation of writing projects. For example, if the genre of production is an article for the GWRJ, instructors and students should work together to review and articulate the criteria they will be using to identify successful writing productions. In some cases this means that an instructor must work to have an extremely clear (and clearly articulated) set of criteria for students to follow, but in many cases it’s even more productive if students are encouraged to develop (and debate) criteria, and then to review and assess how well they understand the required skills & concepts, and how much mastery they have over the techniques they are attempting. This means that instructors should carefully consider each project, not only for the way it might fit into our program learning outcomes, but for the specific ways each assigned genre can be assessed.

Involve Students in the Articulation and Assessment of Goals and Criteria

As mentioned in the previous tenet, many of our best instructors develop project criteria in collaboration with students, working to define both group and individual learning goals based on the exigencies of the project. We specifically focus on training instructors to do this kind of work as part of our professional development efforts. As an instructor in the program you should be working to increase your ability to define and articulate what your writing projects are designed to teach, but you should also work to develop projects and activities that ask students to work with genres in ways that help them articulate the boundaries of particular kinds of writing situations. Some of our instructors have taken the further
step of initiating “peer grading,” where class participants grade each other according the the criteria the entire class has developed and agreed upon (see the “techniques” section on Grading Methods for more information).

Assess Learning, Not Mastery

Our program’s focus is to encourage authors to learn techniques for researching writing tasks and then to assess their skills and mastery of these tasks. Clear articulation of tasks and criteria is a large part of this shift, but another aspect of it is to build into the class a process of assessment. So if a student is aware that “creating an effective opening” or “teaser” is a critical aspect of writing a magazine article, then he/she should have multiple opportunities to assess this practice during the project. Can he/she recognize a good opening, and identify the particular type of opening that he/she feels are effective? Can he/she produce an appropriate opening? Can he/she evaluate the openings created by peers? We encourage instructors to develop innovative ways to include this kind of assessment in their writing projects and use these assessments in determining grades.

Attention to Genres

Sometimes an instructor has a concept or idea or skill he/she wants to teach, and the best way to do that is to use an existing “school genre” like a documented research paper, argument paper, literary analysis. At other times, a “made-up” genre that doesn’t actually exist in the real world might most aptly meet this assessment need. Consequently, a core tenet of our program is inclusion. We believe that not only “real-world” genres should be used in ENG 101 and ENG 145--particularly, as in the above example, if a particular unorthodox genre is necessary in developing a specific writing skill--but that the kinds of writing we assign should be understood in the context of genre. So an instructor assigning a film analysis would want to think carefully about what genres might be used to discuss film. These might include the kind of quick responses one would find on a website, where folks are talking about a movie; or an internet-based review on a blog or online movie site with more official “critics” as authors; or a review that one might find in key sites--places where many, many people go to find out what to see or not see; or a critique (different from a review) in which a critic is comparing one or more films or discussing a work of film in the context of an actor or director’s entire body of work; or a scholarly article about film. Then the instructor would want to ask questions like, “Is the type of assignment I envision like any of these genres? Or is it something else? What feature would the film review I want have in common with these genres? Might it have attributes of more than one of them? Does the kind of film review I envision exist anywhere in the real world, or am I making it up? The instructor would then try to follow the earlier tenet of helping students to share in the articulation of what this particular film review might require, what they know about the various genres used for talking about film, and how this knowledge might help (or cause problems) with their efforts to write in this particular genre of talking about film. While using “real world” genres is useful because it can offer multiple examples of types of related genres, “made up” or “hybrid” genres can also be useful in illustrating the ways that texts can respond to the content-needs of the author(s) and to the constraints of particular writing situations.

Public Writing/Civic Engagement Opportunities

Although all different kinds of genres can be used in both ENG 101 and ENG 145, we do want instructors to have at least some assignments that have a trajectory of response (that is, some other person or group takes up the text and uses it and responds to it) beyond the classroom. There is more information in the ENG 101 section of this guide on
public writing, and we do have resources instructors can use to think about how to effectively build such assignments. It can be tricky to figure out ways for student-writing to move beyond the walls of the classroom in ways that actually generate response (i.e., not simply a text that is hypothetically for an outside audience but doesn’t actually go there), but which also respects students’ rights as authors. But as a program we are dedicated to creating environments where students can step outside of the classroom and yet retain that collaborative/collegial sense of comradeship that can be created in an effective writing classroom.

Engaging In Writing Research

As an instructor in the program, you should be thinking about how to engage with your student in research, not just about interesting topics in the world, but about how the acts of writing within the classroom (and out in the world) are shaped and negotiated. Further, as a program we need to be thinking about how to link our students’ research across sections of our courses in new and innovative ways. Following are several specific areas where instructors will be expected to participate:

The Grassroots Writing Research Journal: Throughout this guide you will find information about ongoing projects that seek to develop our roles as writing researchers for all the members of the community. Working with the Grassroots Writing Research Journal is one important avenue for both students and instructors to showcase their knowledge-making about literate activity. Currently, all ENG 101 and ENG 101.10 instructors should be incorporating at least one assignment into their course plans that includes producing work that could be submitted to the GWRJ. This will become a requirement for ENG 145 instructors beginning in Fall 2012. Instructors can be innovative with regards to the kinds of writing research they ask their students to complete -- so be sure to tell us about ideas you have for projects (print-based or multimodal) that you feel could potentially expand the content of the GWRJ to make it more useful for our students.

The Undergraduate Writing Research Scholars Program: The Center for Writing Research and Pedagogy is also developing several programs (including the Undergraduate Writing Research Scholars program and the Mobile Genres project) that work to create community interactions related to writing research. In addition, we are currently linking with the Theatre program at ISU to develop writing research on the genres particular to that field. Participation in these programs is open to instructors in the writing program (although not required).

Working with the Milner Library: Each course sequence (101/101.10 & 145/145/13) will be working with the library to develop outcomes that help us to be more specific about what we think students ought to know about doing research. We are working to develop better interactions between our instructors and librarians, in order to help us with this effort. Writing Program instructors may be asked to participate in particular kinds of assessments or activities with their students, as well working with the library staff.

Teaching With Technolog(ies)

All ENG 101 and ENG 145 courses are taught in computer-mediated classrooms. The computers are PC-based, running Windows 7. There are some great advantages, as well as some challenges, for teaching in these environments.
We are in the process of creating an archive of resources for teachers teaching with technology, particularly in the following areas:

**Course Management Systems:** Currently, the College of Arts and Sciences maintains a system of folders (one for each course taught in the writing program). An instructor can store files and create sub-folders for student work. Instructors can also sign up (through the Center for Teaching and Learning with Technology) for a Blackboard Course Management Site for their courses.

**Reading and Responding to Writing:** *CompClass* course management system has a very interesting tool for peer review, but instructors have also used products such as *Google Docs* or *Ning* to create interactive environments for reviewing or responding to texts. Some instructors also make use of a product called *Jing*, which is installed on the computers in our classrooms and has a free version that users can install on their home computers. It allows a reader to make voice-comments as they are reading a text. Our technology resource site will provide a list of these types of resources for instructors to test, as well as examples of projects that make use of this kind of technology.

**Managing Spatial Relationships in the Computer Classrooms:** One of the primary interests of our program is to provide instructors with ideas/software/assignments that help them to take advantage (rather than be hampered by) the technology available to them in the computer classrooms. We have continued adding to our website materials that deal with this issue.

**Writing Program/Center for Writing Research and Pedagogy Technologies:** Since fall 2010, a list of technologies (multimedia authoring, cameras, audio recorders, microphones, etc.) has been available for instructors teaching in the Writing Program. Materials can be checked out through the Writing Program Secretary, Martha Frieburg.

**Non-Digital Materials:** The Writing Program maintains a cabinet with non-digital materials that instructors may want to use for their classrooms--white board markers, regular markers, paper, glue, magazines that can be used for cutouts, etc. The cabinet is in our Internet Lounge and can be accessed by instructors during Center hours. Keep in mind these materials are for the use of everyone, so please return supplies to the cabinet when you are finished with them.

**Writing Program Non-Tech Classroom Space:** The Writing Program has a space that is part of our 133 Suite, where instructors teaching in the computer classrooms can hold class. Because the computer classrooms do have limitations, some instructors like to have some sessions in this space (especially if you are using non-digital technologies like crayons and markers, or creating collages, etc.). Reservations of the room can be made through Martha Frieburg, the writing program secretary. Instructors can have one reservation per semester, with the potential for more if the room remains un-scheduled later in the semester.

**Writing Program/Center for Writing Research and Pedagogy Internet Lounge:** Beginning in Fall 2011, the Center will open it’s wireless internet lounge for teachers and their students. Primarily, we see this space as a location where instructors can meet with groups of students, or where students working in writing program courses can have group meetings. There are multiple tables and lounge areas available, but users should remember that, as a public space, the area may at times be somewhat noisy (this hasn’t happened much yet, but we’re hoping :-). Instructors who want a more quiet space can reserve our classroom.
Professional Development Requirements and Opportunities

The Writing Program encourages all of its instructors to invest in continuous professional development—activities and projects that allow them to critically examine and reflect on the teaching philosophies and strategies, theories and praxes, that guide their work as professional teachers. This encouragement is contextualized, however, by our belief that demanding participation is largely unsuccessful in motivating teachers to truly seek out professional development; that is, demanding attendance to specific meetings, events, or activities often leads to disaffected teachers and a frustrated program. Thus we seek to provide opportunities and support for teachers to invest in professional development in diverse ways that serve individual goals and politics of location, while only requiring a very specific, limited amount of work that must be done by all instructors in our program. We hope this program design encourages teachers in the Writing Program to understand themselves as professionals, and we suggest that instructors who invest in professional development will be both better able to teach within our program as well as better prepared to move on to other teaching opportunities (both within ISU and in their future professional lives).

The following document, then, provides guidance for how instructors should plan to participate in professional development (that is, what they are required to do in this program) as well as many options for how they can participate in professional development. To track their participation, all instructors should plan to fill out the Professional Development Participation form (a copy of which is at the end of this section of the Instructor's Guide, but which will also be emailed to all instructors at the end of each semester). This form is be used by the Writing Program in two primary ways:

1. to assess how the program should spend its resources to support the professional development needs of its instructors;
2. to reward instructors who participate each semester by entering their names into a raffle for prizes.

The form can, of course, also be used by instructors to document the activities that they may want to include on their professional resumes. Rather than a type of policing, then, this system is designed to be a form of communication—one that will tell us what kinds of activities instructors find useful, what kinds of resources they tend to use, and (roughly) the level of overall engagement of instructors in the program with various aspects of program development. The various types of professional development will also increase the amount of resources we have available to share—both with members of our program and with other programs who may be interested in our methods. Participating in professional development activities is the way for instructors to communicate not only what they know, but how they understand and make use of (perhaps disagree with) the various aspects of our Writing Program.

Required Professional Activities

1. **Attend Orientation**
   Orientation is one of our key professional development events. It takes place twice a year, and lasts for 7 days (for new instructors) and 2 days for returning instructors in the fall and 2 days for all instructors in the spring. Orientation gives us a chance to discuss the program as an entire community, changes to course policies, new opportunities for course projects and activities, and new professional development opportunities for the year. It also includes a mandatory syllabus exchange where instructors present their general course syllabus and explicit descriptions of their writing projects and review them in relation to the program's learning outcomes.

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11 More specifically, we encourage instructors to include their professional development practices on their CVs. Future employers will expect evidence of investment in professional development.
Further, your syllabus exchange materials should be electronically submitted to the Writing Program (as a record of your participation) by the second week of class: isuwriting@gmail.com.

2. **Create at least one Assignment suitable for the Grassroots Writing Research Journal**
   All instructors should include at least one project in their course plans that could potentially be submitted by students to Grassroots Writing Research Journal. While your students will ultimately, and individually, decide whether or not they contribute these projects to the journal, it is your responsibility to design one project capable of such contribution. We encourage you to think about this project/contribution as creatively as possible. That is, you are definitely not limited to modeling your course projects after those you see reflected in the current iteration of the journal (see the section on the GWRJ for more information).

3. **Collect Student Work Electronically (for archiving)**
   Keeping and assessing student work allows the program to develop and grow, and thus we require all teachers to save student work electronically. While eventually these files will end up in an internal archive linked to the public Writing Program archive, in the meantime please ask students to use the STV 250 folders [note: you don’t have to use these to organize your class, but we do ask that all students in the fall 2011 eventually save their work in a folder in the STV 250 server space].

4. **Allow Writing Program Instructors to Observe Your Classroom**
   Because the Writing Program encourages collaboration and peer-to-peer mentoring, we advocate opening our classrooms for the benefit of other teachers in the program. That said, instructors who visit your class should ask your permission (ahead of time). And, of course, you can limit the number and amount of observations in your classroom so that they don’t interfere with your ability to manage your classroom.

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**Professional Development Opportunities Sponsored by the Writing Program**

**Coffee Klatches**
All instructors are invited to participate in our coffee klatches, get-togethers where instructors share research or practices they think other instructors might be interested in. Participation in these meetings can range from organizing, sharing, or presenting material to simply attending. We hope that the knowledge, expertise, and inquiries of our instructors will guide each meeting. A calendar with specific dates and topics for these klatches will be passed out at the beginning of each semester. Oh… and there will be snacks! For more information on hosting, participating in, or contributing materials to these klatches, please contact Kellie Sharp-Hoskins: kcsharp@ilstu.edu.

**Technology Initiatives**
All instructors are invited to participate in our Technology Initiative sessions where our technology liaison in the Writing Program introduces hardware, software, and other technologies that instructors may want to use in their teaching. For more information on attending or contributing to these meetings, please contact Erin Frost: eaclar4@ilstu.edu.

**Contributing to the Writing Program Archive**
This is an ongoing practice instigated by the Writing Program to collect and share materials that represent the theoretical and practical values of the Program. Possible contributions might include:

- Research summaries (of articles or books relevant to the program)
- Individual projects or activities
- Annotated course plans
- Genre description packets

In order to make the archive searchable and usable, sample documents are available (starting fall 2011) that should guide the format, quality, and quantity of information necessary for contributing to the archive. For more information on contributing to this archive, please contact Kellie Sharp-Hoskins: kcsharp@ilstu.edu.

**Peer-to-Peer Mentoring**
While many, if not most, of our instructors find themselves participating in some form of mentoring while at ISU, (especially new) instructors do not always know which teachers they can turn to for sound pedagogical advice or which can take the time to do so. The peer-to-peer mentoring project, then, identifies the (self-selecting) instructors who are willing to mentor and makes that information available to all instructors. Any instructors who are interested in becoming a peer mentor should contact Emily Johnston: erjohns@ilstu.edu.

**Experimental Teaching Groups**
Each semester, instructors who choose to may participate in a group whose purpose is to research and track an innovative teaching strategy or practice that attempts to better meet the needs of students in the program. For more information on participating in these meetings, please contact Joyce Walker: reenste@gmail.com.

**Grassroots Writing Research Journal**
Beyond creating an assignment for your students that would allow them to contribute to the journal, instructors are also encouraged to submit their own work. Instructors can also work as volunteer editors for the journal. For more information on contributing, please contact Kristi McDuffie: kmcduff@ilstu.edu.

**The Good Day Archive**
The Good-Day Archive is an ongoing project that instructors can contribute to during any of the Writing Program’s open hours. Instructors are invited to sit down in front of one of our computers with camera and microphone and record a short (10 minutes or less) narrative about a particular class session that went really well. The idea behind this archive is that we often try small innovations in our classes—we use a new activity to teach a concept, or we come up with an effective way to spark discussion, or we start out in a certain place, and are then completely by surprise by how the students take up a term or concept. These archives will be stored in an online location, but access will be restricted to program instructors. Archive contributions will be accompanied by a brief, written report that outlines the special event, and should be accompanied by any relevant handouts or materials (if applicable). Stop by the Writing Program to set up a session!

**Additional Professional Development Opportunities**
While the above category represents the projects already conceptualized and organized by the Writing Program, instructors should not feel limited to professional development activities listed there. Indeed, we are interested in offering time, space, technology, or other resources to all innovative projects that allow instructors to think through, research, and even complicate the tenets, learning outcomes, and practices of the program. All instructors, then, are welcomed to propose research projects, events, or activities to the Writing Program. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Conceptualizing and contributing to a new category of documents for the program archive
- Organizing, leading, or participating in an instructor group that studies the teaching of a specific learning outcome
- Researching writing practices outside of a Writing Program classroom
- Researching classroom management in relation to the specific tenets of our Writing Program

Interested instructors should write a brief (<1 page) proposal that outlines a project, event, or activity they would like to develop and then schedule a meeting with the program assistant in charge of professional development (Kellie Sharp Hoskins: kcsharp@ilstu.edu) to determine what resources (like money, people, space, etc.) or authorization (like IRB approval) you will need to proceed with the project and how to go about obtaining them.
Sample of the Professional Development Form

The Professional Development Report Form
Fill out your form to win stuff – including cash money and other cool prizes!

**Category I Activities (1 point each):** Activities in this category are the basic, **required** elements for all instructors in the Writing Program.

- ✔ Attending orientation (spring or fall semester): completing the Syllabus/Course Plan Review and submitting course materials electronically.
- ✔ Participating in the Grassroots Writing Research Journal project by announcing it and creating at least one assignment that could lead to an article.
- ✔ Collecting student work electronically, for archive purposes.
- ✔ Allowing WP instructors who request access to observe your classroom.

**Total Points for Category I:** (Up to 4 Points): ____

**Category II Activities (1 point each):** Activities in this category include attending voluntary professional development events and training and contributing to the archives. Obviously, any events sponsored by the Writing Program could be included, but CTLT or other training that focuses specifically on issues related to the teaching of writing could be included.

- ✔ Attending Coffee Klatches, Technology Initiative meetings, or other professional development events sponsored by the Writing Program.
- ✔ Contributing resources to the Writing Program Archives.
- ✔ Attending other conferences or professional development events that are specifically related to writing instruction.

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**Total Points for Category II:** (Up to 7 Points): ____

**Category III Activities (5 points each):** Activities in this category require a significant investment of time on the part of the instructor beyond attendance; each should be written up and attached to this form.

- ✔ Contributing an article to and/or acting as a volunteer editor for the GRWJ.
- ✔ Completing class ethnographies for ENG 101 or ENG 145 (can count up to 2 per semester).
- ✔ Participating in an experimental teaching group.
Presenting at a Coffee Klatch, orientation, or other Writing Program events (with documentation for the archives).

Presenting at a writing-instruction oriented conference or event outside of the Writing Program events (with documentation for the archives).

Course Redesign and Development work (instructors may be invited to collaborate with the Writing Program, but instructors can also make proposals).

**Total Points for Category III:** (unlimited): _____

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**Category IV (15 points each):** Activities in this category represent a substantial investment of time on the part of the instructor and are directed specifically towards improving the quality of the Writing Program. Each category IV project should be written up and attached to this form.

Category IV projects must be undertaken with the approval of the Writing Program; however, large-scale projects can be proposed by instructors. These might include (but are not limited to) working on major course development projects, conducting formal teacher research, creating and managing an experimental teaching group, etc.

**Total Points for Category IV:** (unlimited) _____

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**Total Points for all Categories:** _______

4 Points: Basic Level
5-20 Points: Intermediate Level
21-30 Points: Advanced Level
31 and above Points: Pure Awesomeness

**Instructor Signature:** ___________________________  **Date:** __________
The Grassroots Writing Research Journal

The GWRJ is the only “required” text for Writing Program courses. Currently, it is required only for ENG 101/101.10 courses, but we are working towards an evolution of the GWRJ that can be required also for ENG 145/145.13 courses. As we’ve noted previously in this section of the guide, all instructors in 101/101.10 are required to provide students with at least one assignment where the students’ written productions could be submitted for the GWRJ. In addition, instructors can earn professional development points (and potentially collect consulting fees) for work in other areas of the GWRJ. The complete list of required/optional activities related to the GWRJ is as follows:

1. Each semester, we create a “Call for Proposals” for the GWRJ. As part of your professional work with the writing program, instructors are required to Announce and discuss the GWRJ CFP with students.

2. Create (at least) one assignment that students could develop into a GWRJ article. For example, assignments that ask students to research particular genres can lead to articles where the students then write about their genre research for the journal. In addition to creating this assignment, instructors should use samples of the GWRJ articles (in the current volume or the archive) to discuss this genre with their students. That is, the projects should not just be “related” to writing research, but should be crafted with the GWRJ in mind. That said, we are extremely open to publishing new forms and genres of writing research in the GWRJ -- so feel free to innovate with your students.

3. Contributing an article to the GWRJ. In their first semester at ISU, new instructors taking ENG 402 will create an article for the GWRJ as part of the work for that course. However, WP instructors are always encouraged to create additional articles for the GWRJ during their time at ISU (and beyond). Contributors are paid $50.00 if their article is published in our print version of the journal.

4. Working closely with one (or more) of your students as a volunteer editor as they create an article suitable for the WRA.

5. Working as an Editor/consultant through the Writing Center or for the Writing Program. Since we produce a volume of the GWRJ each semester, we are always looking for editors to work with the journal -- especially with undergraduate authors. The Writing Program has a certain limited budget to pay editors each semester. Contact Joyce Walker to apply. In addition, we will be working with the Writing Center in Fall 2011/Spring 2012 to provide writing consultants for undergraduate authors. MA graduate students are eligible for work as writing consultants at the Visor Center -- contact Josh Reid at the Julia N. Visor Center for more information about applications (jsreid@ilstu.edu).

Almost any type of genre/writing research assignment could evolve in the direction of articles that would be appropriate for the GWRJ (see the following section on types of writing projects for more ideas). In addition, instructors might want to simply assign the genre of the “GWRJ article” to their students.

In general we GRWJ editors are seeking articles from writers and researchers that document how the author (or others they’ve observed) have learned to write in a particular genre or writing situation. We aren’t crazy about “school writing” genres (like 5 paragraph essays or “literary analysis”) -- unless the articles are very specific in defining the genre and situation (see Meghan Meeusen’s article on writing articles for graduate school, “Taking the High Road: Why Learning to Write Isn’t Easy and What We Can Do About It”); however, we have a great deal of interest in all kinds of other genres that exist “out there” and “in here -- making a grocery list, for example? a Valentine? A text message? a Tatoo? Generally, writing research projects that are appropriate for the GWRJ will ask the following kinds of questions:

- What is the process through which I (or others) learned how to work with (produce/distribute/use) a particular genre in practical way?
What are the social, cultural, environmental forces that shape how I (or others) learn to use a genre?

What might readers need to know about a genre in order to begin the work of producing it?

The articles we are seeking might be personal narratives about learning a genre, but they might also be guides designed to help others understand a genre better, or even whimsical parodies that explore how genres constrain and shape our communications. Potential GRWJ articles might include only the author’s story, or might investigate how another person or group has learned to produce a genre. Usually GRWJ articles include some kind of direct observation -- often with examples of texts “in-progress.”

**Reviewing / Remixing the GWRJ Project**

Another possibility for GRWJ projects would be to engage students in reviewing or remixing existing GRWJ articles. All of the articles in the Journal open up conversations about genre studies and writing research. These are conversations we want to continue, and in order to do so, we encourage instructors to assign their students to review or remix articles from any current or previous volumes of the journal. You may choose to write a more traditional review or to remix the original articles.

**Traditional Review.** The length of these texts may vary; they might range from several paragraphs to several pages. They would probably include the following elements: bibliographic information of the article; brief summary of the article you are reviewing; statement of the author's purpose and a discussion of how the author achieves that purpose; your evaluation of the article, which might discuss any of the following questions:

- Who would find the article especially useful?
- What is especially valuable about the article?
- How can you further explore the issues the article raises?
- What possibilities does the article suggest?
- What has the author omitted or what issues or problems need to be brought into the conversation?
- What might you want to complicate about the article?

**Remix.** These articles may also have varying lengths, and there are no standard elements the articles need to include. These types of articles would rearrange, revise, and/or riff off the original articles. In the fall 2011 issue, Scott Sands created a “remix” article (We Meet Again? How a Playwright’s Knowledge of an Antecedent Genre Made Learning Screenwriting Possible (But Difficult)) that addresses an article from the 2010 edition by Pankaj Challa, “Hate Papers? Then Do a Screenplay, You’ll Love It!”.

**Alternative Assessment Practices**

**How it might work in practice: Key Elements in the Paradigm Shift**

In the Theoretical Concepts section of this Guide (beginning on P.17) we discuss some of the basic concepts of alternative assessment that our program advocates. Because we are focused on assessing learning rather than mastery, we must then consider some fundamental changes in the way we assign writing and organize writing projects. The following
A hand-drawn map illustrates the differences we see between traditional grading practices and grading in our writing program.
Using this diagram as a starting point, it becomes clear that both different activities and different tools for documenting those activities are needed. While there are many ways to organize our course activities to encourage alternative kinds of learning and assessment, the following can serve as an example of a writing activity we might assign:

**Activities for an Assigned Genre (Writing Project)**

The project might be a single genre, or a juxtaposition of two genres, or a project where students discover a genre to fit a certain content.

1. Students begin by doing research to understand the genre(s) involved. They document this work and use it to create parameters for the genre. These should involve specific features related to production, but could also include investigation of cultural/political/social issues related to the genre. So for example, a discussion of access if the idea is to produce content in a way that can be accessed by people whose access is limited, or a discussion of how genre conventions are experienced by reader/users from different cultures, etc.

2. Using this research, students design the experiment (create criteria for the production) and then write up a plan that indicates their hypothesis regarding what the experiment will achieve. They may not have a clear idea yet, about where the problems and challenges will occur, but they can at least map out clearly their current understanding of how a successful experiment in the genre might look.

3. Students create productions. Depending on the whether they are all working on the same genre or on different genres, the work proceeds slightly differently, but the main goal is to use both peer review and self-assessment (BEFORE INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK) to create a clear analysis of how the production experiment went – in what ways was it successful or unsuccessful? How can the student document success through examination of the data (the research on the genre, examples of the genre, and the production experiment).

4. Students may use self-assessment to document that while they understand a concept, they are not able to produce it. This is an important aspect of grading, because grading is based on LEARNING, not on perfect production. [Note: multiple drafts could be possible at this point – but it might be advisable to wait until after step 5 to offer opportunity for a repetition of the production experiment].

5. Once peer and individual analysis is complete, instructor can offer feedback – but in many cases the work of peer review and self-assessment have already determined the grade to a large extent. Therefore, instructors can focus on assessing what skills, concepts student seems to have learned, which ones seems to be causing difficulty, etc., with an aim toward the design of future activities and assignments. Grading (as an instructor activity) is based on the “quality” of the analysis of the production – not on the quality of the production. Potentially, grading could also be based on the quality of the production – but only as a match between the production goals and criteria and the final product. This makes it more a process of examining the student and peer assessments for a match between expressed goals and production. The instructor’s role as arbiter only becomes critical in a situation where there is mis-match between claims for learning and demonstration of it through both the analysis and the actual production text. Peer grading or self-assessment can work really well in such scenarios, but even if the instructor is retaining the right to “grade,” his/her work is NOT to examine the draft for perfectness but to assess whether the student seems to have learned what he/she claims to have learned, and whether they are learning things that may not be manifested (yet) in the writing. The goal is to design an activity through which students would be able to recognize their own ability vis-à-vis the genre. However, their grade is not based on a perfect ability to reproduce the genre, but on their ability to document what they know, what they need to know, and how much they’ve learned.

Commenting and grading become very different under this system. The true paradigm shift may be in the ability of the instructor to provide detailed assistance in learning about the genre (and in helping each student to explore what they already know and what they need to learn) but then to step back and allow the students to document what they are able to.

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12 This example doesn’t begin to cover the complexities of designing an effective genre activity. It simply serves as an outline to how the work of studying and producing genres might occur.
to learn, rather than to provide a “rightness guide” through draft feedback. The real and challenging work of the instructor will be in the following areas rather than spent minutely commenting on student texts:

(1) Coming up with project ideas that teach concepts of learning about genres in significant ways.
(2) Learning and understanding the techniques necessary to “learn a genre in context” and helping students to concentrate on those skills.
(3) Developing resource materials for studying genres that students will be using.
(4) Doing analyses to understand (as the instructor) the features of a genre, in order to be ready to aid students as they research and experiment.
(5) Organizing methods for fruitful peer review and self-assessment
(6) Maintaining ongoing meetings with students who have specific questions about the genres they are working in, or about problems they are having mastering aspects of the genre. This might include anything from discussion of their existing experiences with writing to discussions of particular grammatical issues that students recognize as impeding their progress with a genre.

A Final Note: It’s possible that, with this method of grading, an instructor might spend the same amount of time working with the student texts as in a traditional model. But the work will be different in quality. It’s also possible, that with really effective methods for designing peer interactions and self-assessment, the amount of time spent “commenting” on student drafts would be radically reduced, without a perceived lessening of “quality-of-instruction” on the part of the students. This is what we are aiming for.

A Sample Course Plan (including alternative assessment activities)

During a regular 15-week semester, some program instructors have suggested that offering students information about and instruction in the “genres of documentation” needed for the course would be a critical step in helping them to understand how the grades and assessment for the course are going to happen – and to avoid a type of resistant that might take the form of demands of traditional style comments and grading.

So the following brief description of a week-to-week schedule includes several weeks spent on this discussion.

Week One: Introductions, discussion of course goals, introduction to first sample genre and documentation practices.

Genre Activity: Campus Crime Alerts. Work to read and interpret the genre.
Discussion of Documentation: Introduction to Laboratory Notes as a genre (perhaps have students do either online or in book form – but must be available in class each class period. What information should be contained in lab notes?

• Research about the genre, examples of the genre, discussion of features of the genre (including social/political/material/distribution issues that impact the genre).
• Research about the individual’s knowledge base (what do they know that they might use to produce this genre – what do they know that might impact their production in negative ways (i.e., knowledge of genres that are similar-but-different in important ways).
• Also specific discussions (with samples comparisons) of attempt to produce genre, with notes about similarities and differences, authorial choices, and problems in production (where author understands but cannot reproduce the genre).
• Discussion of reviews or workshops, or tutoring assistance that were useful (with SPECIFIC REFERENCE) to work on the actual text.
• Genre Facility – Discussion of author’s understanding of and facility with the genre. What can s/he do? What can’t S/he do? How can s/he document the learning that has occurred? (this is critical for grade).
• Include, whenever appropriate, discussion of SENTENCE-LEVEL issues with language as they relate to the genre being practiced.
• Include, whenever appropriate social/contextual difficulties in understanding or accessing the genre (i.e., how does who you are impact how you write in a particular situation).
**Production of Lab Report** (as a class, work on adapting a lab report basic format for use as a documentation tool for writing experiments).

**Week Two:** Produce genre, review lab notes, produce Lab Report, using discussion and activities from week one. Assign New Genres.

**Group Work:** Review Lab notes, discuss genre, have groups report on their lab notes, with other groups adding/sharing/refuting information from their own notes.

Lab Report On Crime Alerts Due (group work in class)

Genre Selection: Students select a “simple” genre to work on individually during week three. They will need to have completed a writing experiment and produced adequate lab notes by the Monday class.

**Key Issue for Learning:** Have students learned to keep adequate lab notes? What terms (keep terms list) have students learned for discussing genres? How well are they using them?

**Week Three:** Producing a Lab Report on an individually selected genre.

(Monday) **Group Review:** Use groups to review Lab Notes on individual genres, group members can fill out assessments that review experiment – including research, notes of genre features, and experimental production of the genre.

(Wednesday) **Produce Lab Reports.** This would happen in time for Wednesday’s class. Reports turned in for group review on Wednesday – out of class work to review lab reports for group members (groups of 3-4).

(Friday) **Group Review:** Groups Review Lab Reports (for quality of analysis and missing research, as well as for genre match in the experiment). Both Group and individual recommendations for grading should be produced and turned in with completed Lab Reports (note: group recommendations could be anonymous or could be done through group negotiation – where three members review and assess a 4th member’s work, working from their individual assessments to come to a “group conclusion” about the work).

(Weekend) **Instructor Review:** Lab Notes and Lab Reports on individual genre. Note that grading is not on the quality of the genre production, but on the documentation of the experiment of writing in the genre. Use grading recommendations in grading. Comments should focus on discrepancies in analysis, or on missing research in the lab notes. Make extensive notes only on those reports where a significant discrepancy is noted.

**Key issue for Learning:** Which students seem to be having trouble with the lab notes and lab report genres? How can you help? How well are group and individual assessments matching your assessment of work quality?

**Week Four:** Beginning the Genre Juxtaposition project (moving content from one genre to another).

(Monday) **Review Lab Report Genre** Day to review aspects of the lab reports that seem problematic. Have students review the genre criteria sheet for lab notes and lab reports. Changes? Questions?

(Wednesday) **Juxtaposition Exercises:** Discussion of genres that lend themselves to juxtaposition and those that don’t.

(Friday) **Class Generation of Potential Genres:** In class work to generate genre pairs. Authors will select and research genre pairs over the weekend.

Key Issues for Learning: are students able to select appropriate pairs? Who is having trouble finding a genre(s)? Can several genres be selected for everyone to work on, or should folks select them themselves?

**Week Five:** Individual/small group selection of genres. Review Lab notes.

(Monday): **Discussion of genre pairs.** Surprise grading of lab notes (to check to see if research has been done). Discussion of learning difficulties for this project. What are they? How can they be overcome? Final selections of genre pairs made (Note: could limit class to only the “best” selections, or allow individuals to select their own).

(Wednesday): **Group review of genre pair research and preliminary writing experiments.** In-
structor should be available for out-of-class meetings with authors having trouble with research or preliminary writing experiment. Could have work day on Friday to allow for conferences. (Friday): Conferences/work day.

Key Issues for Learning: Review Learning Difficulties. See where folks seem to be confused. Review/compare a few genre pairs with the preliminary writing – just to see how it’s going.

Week Six: Review Genre Experiments and Lab Notes. Create Assessment sheets for grading.

(Monday): Genre experiment and accompanying lab notes reviewed in groups during class. Discussion of learning-in-progress (making sure to add information about this to lab notes).
(Wednesday): Assessment (group and individual) of Writing experiment and subsequent lab report.
(Friday): class discussion of genre juxtaposition as a learning activity. Create class report that discusses related learning (or lack of it). Discuss genre facility (how did juxtaposition help author’s to reconsider genre?). Discuss how these skills may be connected to the next writing experiment.

Key Issues for Learning: How are individual assessments matching up with instructor evaluation? Where is learning not happening?

Week Seven: Begin “So you Think you Know about XXX” writing experiment.

(Monday): Discussion of doing research – how to do it – what is it? How does it relate to writing in the academy. Students work on “research history” for Wednesday.
(Wednesday): Discussion of Research Histories. Each student will produce a “history” that details his/her relationship to doing research. Where have they done it? How has their research related to writing?
(Friday): Discussion of research strategies. Research activities in class that relate to finding information effectively.

Key Issues for Learning: What do authors know about doing research? Where can class activities help?

Week Eight: Using Research Resources and connecting these to writing activities.

(Monday): Library Day Activity -- actual research activity that uses library resources in an interesting way.
(Wednesday): Mapping Library Day Activity – in class work to map how research is done – Create a class report on this activity.
(Friday): Creating Bibliographies (class activity to create personal bibliographies of knowledge on a topic they would like to know more about). Work over weekend to consider “what I don’t know but would like to” use these ideas to generate a preliminary bibliography list on this topic over the weekend.

Key Issues for Learning: Topic selection successful? Research strategies? Where are things breaking down?

Week Nine: Selecting Research Topics and Creating Research Activity Maps for Lab Notes

(Monday): Discuss research topics. Surprise check of Lab Notes to review working bibliographies. Assessment/planning for projects – what do authors feel they know and don’t know how to do that will impact this project?
(Wednesday): Argument and Analysis (two rhetorical strategies for research genres)
(Friday): Argument vs. analysis activities (discussing differences between the two and how they play out in a range of “research-intensive” genres – examples provided by the instructor). Weekend homework to relate argument/analysis to research topic by noting (in lab notes) how argument/analysis is used in the sources he/she is finding for selected topic.

Key Issues for Learning: Making sure authors know how to document their bibliographical findings is a reliable way. Make sure to offer pointers on keeping track of data (Zotero demo?)
**Week Ten:** Review Lab Notes on Research Writing Experiment. Discuss and practice Citation, argument 
& Analysis strategies.

(Monday): **Discuss Citation in reference to research-intensive genres** (journalism, academic writing, 
business reports).

(Wednesday): **Testing Skills – Argument and Analysis.** Identifying it in research-intensive genres, 
practicing it in “flash-research activity.” (writing two paragraph project proposals (class genre not “real 
world”) for research that are primarily argumentative or analytical in their focus).

(Friday): **Group Review of Proposals.** How are they doing in identifying and producing “analysis” and 
“argument” as rhetorical strategies? Comparison of their paragraphs to the argument and analysis 
examples found in the genres that author/s have found in creating their working bibliographies 
(whether these are websites, powerpoints, movies, print texts – including newspapers, blogs, scholarly 
articles, etc.) For Monday: **Create Annotated Bibliographies** that discuss sources in regards to their 
content, and their focus on analysis or argumentation.

**Key Issues for Learning:** are authors seeming to “get” the difference between analysis and argu-
ment? Does is matter?

**Week Eleven:** Selecting a media/genre for research.

(Monday): **Review Annotated Bibliographies** in groups. Lab Notes check – self assessment of 
learning on (1) topic for research, and (2) Argument and analysis strategies. Instructor will review Bibli-
ographies and check sources, as well as self-analysis.

(Wednesday): **Discussion of Production Genres.** How can this research be presented? To whom? 
For What purpose? The genre MUST have trajectory (that is, it must move outside of the classroom in 
some way).

(Friday): **Selection of Production genres.** Form groups of related genres. For Monday, produce 
(Note: Genres could be “school genres” is author is willing to investigate school genres related to his/
her area of study – but no generalized “research papers”).

**Key Issues for Learning:** selecting appropriate genres? Should instructor provide list of good ideas 
for genres?

**Week Twelve:** Create Lab notes for production genres.

(Monday): **Research genres**, create lab notes for genre requirements. Use small groups to discuss 
relationships between these genres.

(Wednesday): **Work day for conferences** – who needs help with genres? Instructor can meet with 
groups that have questions about or problems with the genres they’ve selected. Genre research is 
occurring during this time.

(Friday): **In Class work on master genres** – working with example genres to discuss features. 
Key Issues for Learning: who is having trouble with genres? What do master genres look like? What 
are they learning from review of Master genres?

**Week Thirteen:** Finish Research Projects.

(Monday): **Group Discussion of Writing Experiments and Research Notes.** Reviews/ 
assessments should be completed outside of class for Wednesday.

(Wednesday): **Group Discussion of Reviews/Assessments.** Individual Reviews should be com-
pleted by Friday.

(Friday): **Group Discussion of Research Reports on Writing Experiments.** Research Notes, ex-
periments, and Research Reports due to Instructor. Instructor comments extensively only on those 
projects where the research reports claims don’t match up with the experimental production. Author 
must be able to support claims about learning-in-progress.

**Key Issues for Learning:** What do research reports reflect? How did research find its way into the production genres?
Week Fourteen: Group Presentations of Research Genres.

(Monday): Groups create a presentation that discusses their related genres -- similarities and differences, genre requirements, tricky aspects of genres in relation to other genres. Group members will then work to create a “transfer” presentation, which discusses the skills that seem move between their different genres. Each group will have time to create and present

(Wednesday-Friday): Group presentations. Assessment will be done through audience quizzes of learning. Each group must develop a way to assess audience learning (through a quiz or other feedback).

Key Issues for Learning: What did folks learn about their genres and how are they connecting that with the idea of “research?” Did folks seem to learn enough about citation? Did they pick up on the different ways that analysis and argument work in different genres?

Week Fifteen: Group Presentations (cont.) and Final Analyses of Learning-in-Progress. Groups will review their audience learning assessment and submit group assessment of the presentation for grade. Instructor will assess the assessment (in case it isn’t done well). And concur or dispute suggested grade. Finally, each student will complete an overall course assessment, in which they use documentation from their lab notes, writing experiments, lab reports and other materials to discuss their learning-in-progress. These final assessments will be graded for completeness of analysis.

Formative vs. Summative Assessment Techniques

ISU’s Writing Program strongly encourages experimentation that is based on careful reflection of pedagogical theories and practices. In terms of assessment, we privilege progressive and innovative techniques that resonate with current assessment theories, and we are excited to learn how your experiences with such practices might contribute to our understanding of effective assessment strategies. Additionally, we hope to influence your assessment practices in some basic-yet-fundamental ways, and are committed to ensuring quality assessment by proffering the following precepts:

Consistent Feedback and Communication Regarding Student Work

While we do not require that you grade/respond to each draft nor each writing exercise that you assign, it is important to give feedback often—this can occur in many styles and through various media. This precept underscores the fact that assessment does not always include a grade. In fact, grading drastically alters the important dialogue that occurs between instructors and students, as “[t]he very mode of discourse we employ is shifted from exposition to persuasion. In some not very pleasant ways, we are forced out of dialogue with our students and into argument. But dialogue is crucial to the learning process in composition classes and must be maintained” (Veit 433).

Interactive/dialogic Formative Assessment

We are using the concept of “interactive” or “dialogic” formative assessment, to refer to a process of assessment that is practiced by all members of the group, and which generates data about learning-in-progress that can be used by all members of the group to assess the learning that is occurring (and how it can be improved).

Both descriptive feedback (from the instructor) and student peer and self-assessment could be considered examples of formative assessment activities. The first goes from the instructor to the student, while the second is created by students
and might go to the instructor. However, one problem with traditional notions of assessment is that they identify the instructor/student conduit as the bi-directional -- certain kinds of information flow from the student to the instructor, while other kinds of information (grades, directions, suggestions) flow from instructor to the student.

**Dispersed/collective Assessment Practices:** What we are looking for (in terms of “best practices” for assessment) is a set of activities -- related to a certain kind of writing or a certain writing project -- which create data that the entire group can agree refers to the learning task at hand, and which can be used by all members of the group to identify and point to both areas of learning and areas where learning is not occurring. For example, if an instructor is assigning readings and weekly responses to the readings as a way for students to demonstrate engagement, analysis skills, and knowledge about important concepts, then an interactive assessment process would allow the individual student, the instructor, and the class as a whole to document what this kind of learning looks like. So, rather than students “guessing” what a weekly reading response ought to look like, or even using only instructor feedback (grades or comments) to assess whether he/she is “doing it right,” the topic of “creating effective weekly responses” would be at the center of one or more class discussions. Using these discussions (and perhaps criteria developed from them) students could then assess whether their responses are “on genre” or not -- they can also assess each others texts, share resources for creating more effective texts (if they wish) and discuss ways that the genre might be improved or even circumvented.

These kinds of collective formative assessments can be used for major projects as well as for smaller types of writing that are ultimately graded (summative assessments). For example, once the instructor has worked with the class to discover the salient components of a particular genre of writing; then, using these collaborative discoveries, the instructor may facilitate a student-authored rubric featuring assessment criteria that overtly represents the students’ new understanding of the genre they are studying). He/she might even have students use such a rubric to grade each other’s work or to argue for their own grades. Finally, in the case of “public writing” projects (where the writing has a trajectory outside of the classroom), these types of assessments might happen between classes, or between the author in a particular class and outside readers.

Developing tools and strategies for incorporating interactive/collective formative assessment into our writing classrooms is a key goal for our program.
Learning not Mastery

Similar to the distinction between formative and summative assessment, learning, as opposed to mastery, is what ISU’s Writing Program emphasizes within the composition classroom. In “Writing Students Need Coaches, Not Judges,” Lynn Holaday offers a conceptual metaphor (coaches vs. judges) for considering how an instructor can privilege learning over mastery: “Coaches,” she writes, “want you to do well; judges don’t care. Coaches believe you can do well and show you how; judges lecture you on what you should be and are not. Coaches offer encouragement; judges offer--judgment” (41). As writing coaches, our priority is to aid the student’s improvement--an on-going process--rather than judge her work as an ultimate, unmalleable product.
Grading Methods

A summary of basic policies for grading in Writing Program course is available in the “policies” section of the guide. The following information offers a more detailed discussion of options related to grading methods for WP course.

Writing Course Activities

In general, the list of elements that most instructors grade over the course of the semester include the following (not all instructors use all of these materials, but most use some combination of them):

- **Major Projects** usually take from 2-5 weeks to complete and are often worth a significant portion of the total course grade. Major project usually have multiple components which may be graded separately or collectively.
- **Project Components** are smaller parts (“building blocks”) for the large project. They can be graded individually or as part of the project.
- **Daily Activities** could be grades for specific work or could be part of a participation grade.
- **Homework** can be graded as part of a specific projects, but some instructors assess this work as a separate category.
- **Reading Responses or Reading Quizzes** can serve as tests of homework completion, but if possible instructors should try to find other methods of motivating students to read, keeping quizzes to a minimum.
- **Other Quizzes** may assess research skills or students ability to articulate concepts that a particular project has covered.
- **Participation** may be used to grade for participation, which is based on attendance as well as the ability to participate in class discussions and activities--sometimes peer review is graded as part of participation, and sometimes it is graded separately.
- **Peer Review** is critical to our writing program pedagogy. Through working with each others’ texts, students can learn to more accurately describe and evaluate their own written productions.
- **Portfolios** are generally graded for the revision of several--or all--the major projects. They can be added as a grade at the end of the semester or can replace grades for individual projects. (More on that below.)
- **Student Conferences** can occupy up to a week of class periods twice during the semester for individual student conferences--you can grade conferences as part of attendance, or build a conference grade into the overall grading system.

*Instructors can combine any of the above elements to establish grades.

General Notes on Grading Methods

**Portfolios.** There are many different systems of proportioning grades for different activities in the writing classroom. The following list is not exhaustive. There are certainly variations you could consider that aren’t covered here. Instructors are not required to use any one particular system, but all students should produce some type of digital portfolio of their work for the course--this can be a combination of individual projects, project packets, etc. and should include all major assignments. However, all major assignments do **NOT** have to be revised for the portfolio. Students can do a major

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13 Eventually, portfolios will be a major part of our assessment of student work (and of our own teaching) in ENG 101. So developing a course design that includes the assembling of and reflection on a portfolio of each student’s work is important. The department will collect each portfolio to add to our archive. We will instruct you as to how we would like them submitted.
revision of one, several or all the assignments, and some portfolios may be specifically designed to help students assess the work they’ve completed (documenting what they’ve learned) rather than as a vehicle for major revision of previously completed course work.

**Lab Notes.** Our focus on “learning not mastery” means that some techniques for documenting learning-in-progress are an essential part of the grading process. Many of our experimental instructors (who worked with alternative assessment practices in Spring 2011, called this kind of documentation “Lab Notes,” while others used the term “Learning Logs.” See the section on “alternative assessments” for more information about how to incorporate this kind of work into your grading methods.

## Sample Grading Methods

### 1. Grading By Individual Project

Individual project grading simply offers a separate grade for each project, and often a separate grade for the rough draft, as well as for other project activities.

**Advantages:** Some instructors work better with this as-you-go kind of grading, as do some students. It allows instructors to identify specific elements they want to weight differently.

**Potential Problems:** Grading effectively in this way can require a great deal of record keeping, as all individual parts of the project (daily activities, rough drafts, etc.) must be graded and recorded separately. Instructors who choose to do this should be able to stay very organized. Falling behind in grading under such a system can cause all kind of problems, as students often can’t progress to the next activity without grades from the current work. Additionally, this kind of separating out of each activity can encourage a “step-model” of the writing process, where each task is seen as a separate assignment rather than as part of a complete process. Finally, it can be difficult in this kind of process to figure out a motivation for students to create a comprehensive portfolio.

**Variations:** Instructors can reference the Writing Program archives for numerous variations on project packets.

**NOTE:** Instructors must make sure that students get a chance to create substantive drafts and revise. Major project grades should never be based on a document that the instructor is seeing for the first time, as this can invite plagiarism and, perhaps more importantly, does not adequately model the complexity of the writing process.

### Sample Grading Breakdown for Individual Projects

- 05% Reading Responses
- 05% Participation
- 05% Quizzes (grammar and reading)
- 15% Homework, Activities, & Peer Review
- 20% Project One
  - 05% Rough Draft
  - 15% Final Draft
- 20% Project Two
  - 05% Rough Draft
  - 15% Final Draft
- 20% Project Three
2. Grading by Project Packet

In this style of grading, each "project sequence" or "project cycle" is graded at one time. Students are expected to save all required materials from the project sequence (instructors can provide a project packet checklist for each project, and remind students to keep everything they do). The grade is based on all the materials (including the rough draft and other materials) as well as on the final project. Usually I provide a breakdown (see below) of how the packets are graded.

Advantages: It has some of the immediacy of the individual project grading, and some of the more holistic qualities of the portfolio. The instructor is able to see the work as complete effort, and judge where students have not participated or have been absent. It also provides more immediate feedback to the student (since they get a significant grade in week 3 or 4, rather than waiting until week 7).

Potential Problems: Students need to keep track of all of their materials. Instructors have to figure out what to do if students lose materials (either hard copy or digital). This sort of project may favor students who work really hard and do all the work (although I don’t see this as a problem).

Variations: Instructors can choose to grade certain elements of the project separately (homework, quizzes, peer review, etc.). Many variations are acceptable as long as the instructor provides a clear checklist for all the materials for each project packet.

Sample Grading Breakdown for Project Packets

- 10% Reading Responses & Discussion Group Work
- 10% Quizzes (grammar and reading)
- 15% Project One (this includes all homework, peer review, activities, and drafts for the project)
  - 70% Final Project Draft
  - 30% Other Materials
- 20% Project Two (this includes all homework, peer review, activities, and drafts for the project)
  - 70% Final Project Draft
  - 30% Other Materials
- 20% Project Three (this includes all homework, peer review, activities, and drafts for the project)
  - 60% Final Project Draft
  - 40% Other Materials (higher percentage—you’ll be creating an annotated bibliography as part of this project)
- 15% Project Four--Transladiaption (this includes all homework, peer review, activities, and drafts for the project)
  - 80% Final Project Draft
  - 20% Other Materials (lower percentage because you’ll be selecting one of the first three projects as the starting point for this project)

05% Take Home Final Exam using collected portfolio materials.
05% Participation

3. Grading by Final Portfolio

A Final Portfolio grading system gives students grades for individual projects, but also offers a grade for a final "revised" version of several (or all) projects. This kind of grading can also be used to ask students to write a reflection of their work—essentially researching and commenting on their writing practices (which would fit well into our assessment plan).
**Advantages:** Allows the instructor to give students the longest possible time to make revisions to some (or all) projects. Allows the instructor to assign, as part of the course grade, a research project that asks each student to investigate his/her writing process throughout the semester.

**Potential Problems:** Students can see this kind of final work as “make-work” or a “blow off,” so the key is to figure out ways to highlight the importance (and rigor) of revision.

**Variations:** One important variation can be to have students do some kind of “Project Juxtaposition” instead of a final portfolio; here, they can take elements of one or more projects and revise dramatically to consider new genres and rhetorical situations.

**Sample Grading Breakdown for Final Portfolio**

(Note: Notice how this kind of grading emphasizes the final portfolio, while in the project packet style, projects are weighted more equally).

- 05% Reading Responses
- 15% Homework, Activities, & Peer Review
- 10% Project One
- 10% Project Two
- 10% Project Three
- 10% Project Four
- 40% Final Portfolio (will include detailed revision plans, copies of all drafts of the projects, substantive revisions of three of the four major projects, as well as lab notes for your activities throughout the entire semester).

**4. The Provisional Grade Portfolio:**

Many instructors who use a portfolio method for grading use a system in which students receive a “provisional” grade on each separate project, with a final portfolio grade that takes into account the revision of each of the projects.

**Advantages:** This method can be a good way to encourage revision, since students usually receive a lower grade on the project than they would like for a final grade, and thus are encouraged to revise. It also allows students to receive ongoing feedback.

**Potential Problems:** It’s possible that the “provisional grade” system may be deeply flawed because the grading process mimics the grading process of other courses, where grades are not provisional. Students may be unduly upset when they receive a poor grade, because they can’t adequately imagine the revision process that will/can result in a higher final grade. Additionally, if an instructor has a rigid system of requiring materials for projects, students can receive low grades on individual projects and be told they will “revise,” but their final grade may not actually be improved beyond a certain point. In other words, it introduces uncertainties and complexities into the grading process that are often problematic and can cause students to become disaffected from the actual work of writing (which should be the primary focus). Therefore, instructors who select this form need to make sure that substantive revision is a central focus of the course, and that students clearly understand the progression required to move from a low grade to an improved one. Instructors also need to ensure that student grades on “provisional drafts” are not harshly judged for completeness in ways that can’t be recovered through the revision process. An instructor can still have fairly strict policies about completeness of materials and due dates, but these policies should be applied to final drafts and not intermediate/provisional work. If you aren’t comfortable with holding back on these policies through an extended draft process, then another form of grading might be best.
Sample Grading Breakdown for Final Portfolio

- **05%** Reading Responses
- **10%** Homework, Activities, & Peer Review
- **10%** Participation (particularly significant for the participation grade will be daily participation, including peer review attendance and conference attendance)
- **20%** Mid-Term Portfolio (includes all materials for projects one and two)
- **50%** Final Portfolio (includes all materials for all three projects, including rough and final drafts of project three)
- **05%** Portfolio Reflection

**Note:** To keep us on track throughout the semester, there will be separate due dates for each of the three projects; at those times, participants will receive a “provisional grade” that is NOT NECESSARILY an indicator of the final grade for the project. The provisional grade is simply designed to allow participants to understand how the project would be evaluated if it was the version included in the final portfolio. Provisional grades are therefore usually quite low—it is unlikely that a provisional grade would be higher than a C. Provisional grades may be influenced by incomplete or late work, but these issues can be resolved through work for the portfolio. If projects are turned in as part of the portfolio without substantive revision (which I don’t expect), then provisional grade will stand.

5. **Classic Portfolio Grading**

The classic portfolio grading system usually includes two major grades—one for a mid-term portfolio and one for a final portfolio.

**Advantages:** The instructor is able to look at a range of student work and make note of various things like the writer’s development, the level of consistency, etc. Portfolios can be a great way to collect many materials that help an instructor judge whether the student is doing work appropriately (i.e., plagiarism).

**Potential Problems:** Students can get frustrated if they are not getting grades on their work until after the mid-term. Variations: Modified portfolios can include a range of materials—from just multiple drafts of the projects, to research materials, small assignments, etc. If grading many different elements, it’s best to create a portfolio checklist for both the mid-term and final portfolio, so students can be sure they have all materials.

**Quick Advice:** If using a portfolio grading system, you’ll want to make sure to consider how much weight to give non-project work (quizzes, participation, etc., and how to encourage students to complete rough drafts, which is sometimes difficult if there is no explicit grade). It’s also important to make saving and compiling the portfolio an explicit part of class work.

Sample Grading Breakdown for Final Portfolio

- **05%** Reading Responses
- **10%** Homework, Activities, & Peer Review
- **10%** Participation (particularly significant for the participation grade will be daily participation, including peer review attendance and conference attendance)
- **20%** Mid-Term Portfolio (includes 1st & 2nd drafts of projects one and two)
- **50%** Final Portfolio (include all drafts of all projects and Lab Notes)
- **05%** Portfolio Reflection (meets requirements for 2008 program assessment)

6. **Student-Grading**

Beginning in Fall 2010, one of our instructors, Anjanette Riley, began to experiment with a genre-based writing course that uses “peer-grading” (where students assess each other course grades). Since then, several other instructors have
taken up this from of grading. Anjanette created a website that outlines her practices more fully, which you can access at http://genrebasedinstruction.wikispaces.com/

**Peer Grading Description (excerpt from ENG 101 course syllabus by Anjanette Riley)**

You as a writing community, as individuals and as a whole, will be responsible for identifying criteria for what would demonstrate that you as a community and individuals have learned and upheld the features of your individual genres in your writing. You as a class will also be responsible for grading each others’ works. In groups of 4-5, you will evaluate and grade fellow students’ packets at the end of each project. You will be expected to evaluate each packet according to group and individually-generated “rubrics” that will be turned in as part of the packet. Each project will be evaluated as a packet and will be given one single grade, meaning that any of the individual texts it is comprised of can either improve or hurt your score. Along with a grade, peer groups will generate a grading memo explaining to the author and the instructor how the text did or did not meet the criteria in the rubrics. More information about grading a packet will be given when the project is introduced.

Grades given by peer groups on any project should not be seen as “set-in-stone.” It is assumed that you will take advantage of the opportunity to make revisions to your work as you develop as a writer throughout the semester. If you feel the grade you were given by your peers is invalid, you may appeal your grade to the instructor. The appeal process will require you to demonstrate during a conference with the instructor how your packet shows you have met the goals of the project and the course. The instructor will respond by either leaving the grade as it is or raising it. A grade given by your peers cannot be lowered by the instructor.

The instructor will also comment on your drafts (in whichever stage you desire). Comments are not intended as demands for change. Instructor comments are designed to be descriptive in nature, outlining what the text does and how it does it. These comments are useful to you in as far as they provide you with another person’s approach to your work, which can help you determine whether your text is being interpreted in the way you intend and to make changes accordingly.

Any revisions to your packets you make will be graded solely by the instructor. Your final presentation will also be graded by the instructor.

The final grade you receive on your four packets will be averaged at the end of the semester. This average will make up 90 percent of your overall grade (or about 22 percent per packet). The remaining 10 percent is for participation and your final presentation. Any deductions to your grade as the result of excessive absences will be applied at the very end.

**A Note on Revision for All Grading Methods**

It's important to remember that students should receive feedback on their writing throughout the semester. Peer Review can help give students a different perspective on their writing, and individual conferences can provide a better location for one-on-one conversations about the student’s goals and ideas. However, significant written feedback is important for any successful, rigorous writing class. This means that you will want to think about how to build both opportunities and rewards for rough drafts into your syllabus. This can be done in any number of ways--through grades for project components, through a grade for an entire project packet, or as part of a portfolio grade. But if using a portfolio grading system, make sure to distribute opportunities for significant feedback throughout the semester--not just at mid-term and final.
Evaluating Student Work Using the Learning Outcomes

Beginning in Fall 2010, the evaluation of student work should be tailored specifically to learning goals for each type of writing/project students completed, and these learning goals should connect directly to the Course Learning Outcomes. Grading criteria for specific projects should reflect a clear sense of the skills and concepts students should be exploring or mastering as part of their work on that project, but should also reflect the goals of the Learning Outcomes for the entire course. Student-led criteria creation or other variants in criteria creation are encouraged; however, the instructor must make sure to (a) offer students a specific way to understand what the project is designed to teach, and (b) offer students a specific and clear way to understand what they did and didn’t do well. It is important that the instructor be able to clearly define both his/her own learning goals for the project, and how these goals tie into the larger learning outcomes for the course.

Communicating Effectively With Students

The following examples illustrate only a few of the “bad news” communications familiar to many writing instructors. Our students are a sensitive population – sometimes unsure of the expectations of a university level writing course (or a university course of any kind), and often inexperienced in communicating one-on-one with instructors about course content, or about problems that may arise. Consequently, instructors must be very clear in their communications, but also sensitive to the rhetorical situation (in other words, communications to students is a specific genre, one that often requires a great deal of planning and forethought). Students can become anxious and/or defensive quickly, and it is important to avoid, whenever possible, making the student feel as if he/she either can’t trust your judgment, or that the only way to get a fair hearing is to “go over your head.”

The following list summarizes some of the particular categories into which we can organize difficult communications that may be necessary in writing program courses:

1. “You might as well drop” (situations where the student is statistically failing the course before the end of the semester).
2. Potential plagiarism situation (there is a range of levels of this kind of problem).
3. Failure to attend (student who has had no – or spotty – attendance from the beginning of the semester).
4. “You were just hanging on, but…” (students who have been performing at an acceptable level, but begin to have serious attendance or work issues at the very end of the semester)
5. Computer crashes and other ambiguous problems (disasters, real or invented, that occur and disrupt a student’s performance).

Student is Failing the Course (you might as well drop)

The majority of students in ENGL 101 are 1st year students (you will, however, often have a few advanced undergraduates and/or non-traditional students, who are older when they begin university study in each of your sections). The inexperience of some of our students is, however, only one of the reasons students do poorly in the course. Certainly, writing inexperience and writing anxiety issues can play a large part in poor student performance, but students can also have health issues, family problems, academic problems in other courses, and a wide range of other legitimate concerns that affect their ability to participate and succeed in the course. Because both ENG 101 and ENG 145 have a strict attendance policy, and most instructors also have a late-paper policy (which either refuses to accept or penalizes late papers),

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14 The Learning Outcomes for ENG 101 can be found in the ENG101 section (p.5).

15 Examples of project criteria development will be available in our course plan archives.
students can (relatively quickly) find themselves in no-win situations during the course of the semester. They may have attendance penalties or late papers that make it unlikely for them to pass the course, sometimes even before the midterm, but often well before the final week of class. The following letters discuss such a situation – advising students that they will not be able to pass the course.

The first letter has a very personal tone – note how it establishes the instructor as someone “rooting” for the student’s success and as perhaps even more unhappy than the student regarding the unsuccessful outcome. The second letter is slightly less personal, but also establishes a very specific tone, one which makes it clear that the rules and guidelines of the course are the central reason the student is failing (or may fail) and not any emotional response on the part of the instructor.

**Failing Student Sample #1**

Dear Kevin:

My heart is heavy to have to send you this email, but in reviewing the situation, I need to inform you that the chance to succeed in my class has now expired. With you on the edge, as we discussed at our conferences, I felt we had a clear understanding that you could not afford to miss even one more day of class. Now you have missed two, and also a couple more point-bearing assignments. Just doing the math on what your absences have done to erode your already-suffering grade makes the outcome clear that passing this course is not in the cards for you this semester.

Kevin, I know you have had success in other areas of your first semester here at WMU, including that trumpet solo with the marching band. For this, I applaud you. I wish things were turning out differently for you in terms of your English 1050 results. However, I need to say that, as sad as it makes me, there’s really no point in you coming to class any more. Maybe you could use the time in other productive ways. If you want to come to class, of course, that is your right, but I will expect you to arrive with the day’s work in hand, ready to be a productive member of the group if you do choose to come. Otherwise, please expect to be asked to leave.

I know English 1050 is a required course, and when you’re ready to engage with the academic requirement it represents, you will do well. Your failing grade from this class will then be superseded by whatever grade you get next time you take the class -- so that’s a saving grace.

Kevin, I wish things were turning out differently. However, I have full confidence that you’ll go on and achieve good things in spite of this result. Please don’t be discouraged. And, of course, if you’d like to talk to me about this email (or anything else), I hope you know you’re welcome to contact me.

Either way, I’d be grateful for a reply, so I know you received this. Thanks, and all best to you.

Be in touch,

Sarah Blackthorn

**Failing Student Sample #2**

Elishia:

I’m really sorry -- I know summer can be a difficult time to be trying to take a class -- things get away from you quickly and the days goes by so fast.

I’ve looked through your work for the course so far, and (because we’re more than 1/2 the way through, and because you haven’t completed 2 of the 4 projects) I just don’t think that you’ll be able to finish up the work this semester and get a passing grade -- even if I were to remove the penalty for late papers, I just don’t think you’d have time to finish everything.
I can't give incompletes for this class, because the entire site will shut down (along with your access to materials) when the semester ends - that's because it's an online class.

You could try to do a late withdrawal, but I don't think the registrar would refund tuition money back at this point.

However, you COULD sign up to take the class again (this time with Stephen Grady) in the fall. I know he is teaching an online section, and I know it still has room for students, and it will be all the same material. So you could take the course with him... then, if you are able to complete the work, your GPA would then reflect ONLY the grade you get with Stephen - it wouldn't reflect the failing grade in this course. If you take it in the fall, then you'll only have the failing grade on your GPA for one semester.

This is really the only solution I can think of that might work for you - since an incomplete is not an option -- however, you could contact the registrar (Here is the phone number: (xxx) xxx-xxxx) to see if you could get a late withdrawal. Let me know what they say.

Best,

Jeremy

Potential Plagiarism

Academic honesty is an enormously important issues for the Writing Program, as it is for all of the courses at the university. The stickiness of this issue is not simply based on the difficulty of identifying plagiarism, or even the difficulty of determining whether students have plagiarized knowingly or not. The central issue is really for the instructor to understand the various levels of citation problems, and how to determine an appropriate response -- one which considers the complicated nature of citation practices.

While our Policies Section provides policy information about dealing with plagiarism, the letter below illustrates one instructor's technique for handling some types of issues. The email below is written to several students whose papers exhibited citation problems. Citation problems can differ widely:

1. A student might be obviously using quoted material (and trying to use them appropriately) but failing to cite because of a lack of knowledge about citation formats.
2. A student might be paraphrasing material, but in a way that (because of failure to cite properly) looks as if it could be plagiarism.
3. A student might be dropping blocks of text into his/her paper without citing them. This can be a deliberate effort to plagiarize, but it can also be a lack of understanding about citation rules.
4. A student might have lifted entire portions of some other text (or an entire text), with a clear effort to hide that this material has not been individually produced.

Notice how the letter below does not, before talking to the student, indicate which kind of citation issue might be involved. It also makes it clear what will happen in the meeting, and what the student's obligation will be. Making this policy clear before a project cycle begins, and then using this as a way to deal with citation problems, allows for this range of error, while also leaving room for more serious treatment of actual plagiarism cases.

Plagiarism Sample

Dear _____.


This is a message going out to all the students whose papers require a meeting with me, so it does not contain specifics about your individual case. Contact me as soon as possible to arrange a meeting, and for more information.

Because of problems with the text and/or sources of your Documented Research Essay, you are receiving a provisional 0 (zero) for the assignment. You’ll need to let me know when you can meet with me outside of class to go over the specifics of these problems and what you will need to do to correct them. If you have used sources that I don’t have access to (things that aren’t online, or things that aren’t listed in your Works Cited page), you will need to bring me these sources so that I can look them over. If you haven’t looked closely at the turnitin.com report generated for your paper, you will want to look at it now, to see any possible problems.

I will be very explicit about how to go about correcting the problems I’ve found in your paper, and it will be your job to be certain you understand what I am telling you to do - and why this is necessary, and it will be your job to do these things. You’ll have one full week from the time of our meeting to turn in a corrected draft - and you will not be revising anything in the paper except the problems we have discussed.

Then, if the problems have been corrected, I will grade your paper. One letter grade will be deducted from the final calculated grade. I understand that this hurts, but it should hurt less than receiving a zero.

If the problems have not been corrected or if I don’t receive the correction within the week allowed, then if plagiarism or a similar issue of ethics is one of those problems, appropriate reports will be made to the Office of Student Conduct, and the provisional zero will become a permanent zero.

Some of the problems I found were relatively minor - though no less serious - and easy to fix; others were more involved.

Through trial and error, this is the method I have determined allows students to learn from their mistakes while giving the appropriate weight to mistakes which are potentially quite damaging and damning. If it is alarming to receive this message, frankly, it should be at least a little bit alarming.

If you use that energy to make sure the problem gets corrected and doesn’t recur, then all will be well. That’s what I want and hope for, and that is what’s now up to you.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Walter

**Failure to Attend**

In almost every section of ENG 101 and 145, there will be a student or two who does not attend the course – these students will sometimes drop within a few weeks, will sometimes never attend the course, and will sometimes (and this is the most difficult to handle) appear in week four (or week eight!) and, with profuse apologies, ask you to allow them to continue to do the work in the course. In these situations, the student has usually completed none of the writing assignments. I mention week four specifically, because this is generally the last possible moment at which an instructor might choose to try to help the student join the course. Beyond this week, a simple “it’s not possible” communication is usually the best choice. To avoid problems, it is usually best to send non-attending students a message is the second week – making sure they understand that their non-attendance in not acceptable. A follow-up email in week 4-6 can be sent to indicate when the student’s non-attendance passes the statistical threshold for failure in the class. Notice that the samples provided here are more formal than the earlier samples, written for a student the instructor knows (the “you should drop” letters).

**Sample #1: Student has not attended by week two**
Dear James:

In looking at my records, I see that you are still officially enrolled in the ENGL 101 course I am teaching. However, you’ve not yet attended class. Since this is the end of week two of the semester, I felt I should email to let you know that your non-attendance is currently affecting your grade in the course. Students in ENGL 101 are allowed three absences without penalty, but beyond that, every absence results in the subtraction of 1/2 of a letter grade from your final grade in the course. So it’s really important that you begin to attend class if you are planning to remain enrolled. If you attend, please make sure to leave a few minutes at the end of class to speak with me – so I can help you catch up with the work we’ve done so far. If you’re planning to drop the course, you should remember that the amount of your tuition refund is based on the date you withdraw – so the sooner you withdraw, the larger percentage you’ll be able to recoup.

If you have questions or concerns about the course, please don’t hesitate to contact me via email (jeremy@gmail.com).

I hope to see you at our next class meeting.

Best,

Jeremy

Sample #2: Student has statistically failed the course

[This type of email should be sent before the final drop date, or whenever the student’s non-attendance results in a statistical failure. If the student has been attending the course, and is known to the instructor, then Sarah’s letter (in the “you might as well drop” section) would be a better example to use]

Dear James:

I wanted to send this email to you, because we are reaching the final date (Oct. 24, 2008) that you’d be able to withdraw from the course and still get a partial (25%) refund. At this point in the semester, you’ve missed 10 classes, which means you won’t be able to pass the course, because the penalties for absences have reduced the highest possible grade you can achieve in the course to 77%. In addition, you’ve missed two full writing projects, worth 30% of your total grade, which reduces your possible grade to 47%.

I’m sorry that you weren’t able to make time for the course this semester, but hopefully you’ll still be able to get a refund for part of your tuition, and then re-take the course at another time.

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me via email (jeremy@gmail.com).

Regards,

Jeremy

Sample #3: Student sends an email asking to be reinstated in the class

[Note: This situation usually happens at some point when it is slightly ambiguous whether the student would be able to make up the work or not, and has more than 3 absences, but not enough to fail him/her. As the instructor, you are free to make allowances for students if you wish – letting them complete past assignments, or allowing them to have extra time to finish a current project. However, if you decide to do this, you’ll want to create a message that makes your concessions clear – and gives them a clear understanding that this is the final concession you will be able to make. As you’ll see, I often frame this kind of email with an explanation that I don’t want to penalize the students in the course who have]
been attending all along and doing the work by allowing another student to pass the course who has not maintained this kind of professional attitude).

Dear James:

I received your email asking me to allow you to join the course, even though you’ve now missed 8 classes and the first writing project, which was worth 15% of your final grade. I am really sympathetic to the problems you’ve been having [perhaps add more detail related to specific issues the student has raised here], but I am also constrained by the rules and guidelines of the course. I would like to be able to help you, but I must also think of the students who have been attending the course and completing all of the assignments – I don’t want to, in effect, penalize them by allowing other students to bypass these guidelines.

However, I think it’s possible that you might still be able to catch up to the rest of the course and succeed in the class. I will not reduce the absence penalties, but I will allow you to complete the first project, which you missed, and will allow you to receive full credit.

I do need you to understand that this opportunity to make up for lost time is the last one that I can offer you this semester – you must begin to attend class, and have no further absences, and you must both complete the first project and keep up with the rest of the class as they finish the 2nd project.

Should this plan not work out, please remember that ISU will allow you to retake the course, and replace your failing grade with whatever grade you earn in that new semester. So, hopefully, whether in this semester, or in a future one, you’ll be able to complete the course successfully.

If you have questions about what I’ve offered here, or would like to discuss this matter further, please don’t hesitate to email me (jeremy@gmail.com) . We can also arrange for a face-to-face meeting as well, if you feel that would be better.

Regards,

Jeremy

NOTE: Other options might be to allow the student to complete the “missed paper” with a penalty, to allow the student to complete the paper, but give it a “provisional zero” until the student has reestablished a consistent attendance record, or allow a student to “make up” missed class work through extra credit, but only at the end of the semester, provided he/she has maintained consistent attendance and passing work.

You were just hanging on, but….

It’s pretty common in writing program courses to have students who have been attending and working at a satisfactory level, but who, late in the semester, have some serious problems completing work or attending class. If the student has had really stellar attendance and work, or has a health issue that is well-documented, it can be fairly easy for an instructor to decide how to help this student complete the course successfully. However, in situations where attendance has been spotty, or the student has had serious problems completing work in a timely and appropriate manner, these sudden crises (whether facilitated by the student’s behavior or created by a real emergency) can mean failure for the student.

It is exactly these kinds of situations that most often result in the student feeling that the instructor has been “unfair” in his/her willingness to make allowances.\textsuperscript{16} Therefore, a method of decision-making and communication that outlines

\textsuperscript{16} It’s true that often the student is really more angry at himself (or herself) then at the instructor, but it often manifests as resentment against the instructor – of course the instructor doesn’t deserve this anger, but the most important issue is to prevent this resentment from having any legitimate avenue for complaint.
boundaries clearly, and makes sure to situate the instructor as an ally (rather than "the enemy") can be really crucial. The examples below show the effort to do three of the following things:

1. Make the rules and guidelines for the course the central factor in whatever decision you make.
2. Don’t allow your own negative emotions to establish the rhetorical position of the communication.
3. If at all possible, find an answer which allows the student to have the best possible chance to succeed – Quite often in this situation the student will be unable meet the criteria you’ve established for success. If you allow the student to make these attempts and choices, you will be much less likely to create a confrontational situation (and when/if you ultimately have to communicate the student’s failure, you’ll be less likely to meet with resistance or aggression).

The chain of emails below is an example of a situation where a student had this kind of a “breakdown” in ability to complete the work at the end of the semester. A computer failure was the originally-stated problem, but the following events included the student turning in a paper that was on a completely different topic and in a different format from the final project she had been working on (i.e., she had been working on a draft of a research project, but then made a switch – apparently overnight – and turned in a completely different project). This was unacceptable, and the instructor was forced to send an email communicating the student’s failure.

This series of emails between the program director, the instructor, and the student (and the conversations and decisions it represents) is a positive example – The instructor has attempted to give the student opportunities to “make good” – at least to pass this final project. She spent time communicating her rules to the students. When it became clear that the student had not met the criteria for success, her final email was brief and clear, but nevertheless avoided expressing the understandable frustration she felt at the failure of her efforts to help the student succeed. While each situation an instructor may encounter will be different, the process is similar: (1) trying to find a way to help, (2) making sure the student understands what is possible, and (3) making sure that your own frustration does not become the center of the communication.

Email From the Instructor to the Program Director, Outlining the problem:

Hi Joyce,

I have a student who turned her final portfolio into me incomplete. Her revised research paper was missing because of "computer problems." She came rushing to me 15 minutes late, and perhaps she really did have some kind of computer problem. I told her it was okay to email me the paper that day asap. It turns out that she wasn’t able to retrieve the paper and she needed to redo it. I gave her a 30-hour extension, and she never got the paper into me. I emailed her yesterday, giving her one more chance. She emailed me a totally different paper, on a totally different topic last night around midnight. I’m attaching the paper to you. I have very good reason to believe that she did not write this paper, but I’m not sure how to go about it. What a pain. Can you give me some direction?

Thanks,
------

Email From the Program Director, to the Instructor, suggesting options:

You are right. What a pain.
If you don’t believe that the sources could have been located and used in 30 hours, you can decide whether you want to bring the student in and discuss the possibility of plagiarism with her, or if you perhaps just want to refuse the paper on the grounds that the project was to complete a research project and to show the process, which a topic-change at the last minute does not allow. You could also add that the lack of process in this substituted paper means you have no way of knowing if this paper is the student’s own work (letting the student know that you "could" make an accusation of plagiarism, but you are choosing to simply disallow the paper instead). That way, if
the student did plagiarize, she will most likely not oppose your decision. I confess that if it were me I might simply disallow the paper, letting the student know that one of the reasons for this is that I can’t know it’s her work and I don’t feel at all certain that it’s even possible that it could be her work (esp. if sources look like they would have taken longer than one day to collect and read). But that, rather than getting into disciplinary action, I was going to simply disallow the paper.

If you’d like to talk further, just phone me!

Joyce

Email to Student explaining instructor’s decision:

Dear Jane:

I am unable to accept this paper because I never saw a draft of it, and it is a different research paper than the one you addressed in your final portfolio analysis. It might have been possible to switch topics, but not without discussing it with me or working with me on your new topic at your final portfolio conference (which you didn’t attend). Unfortunately, the failure of this project means you weren’t able to pass the class.

Your film review and literary analysis, the two essays you included in your final portfolio, need a bit more work.

Below is the breakdown of your final grade:

Final Portfolio xxxxx
Midterm xxxx
Reading Quizzes xxxx
Participation xxxx
Absences= xxxx

If you add all the numbers up, your final grade is a xxx which is a D. However, I have to subtract 6% due to your absences, which puts your grade at a xxxx which equals xx%, a failing grade.

Student Responds:

Professor--

I had emailed you that day, and said that I had absolutely nothing on my laptop dealing with that research paper, all I could do was redo a research paper that had an easier topic so I could get it to you that Friday before 5pm. It would have taken my days to find the resources that I used for my old research paper. Is there anyway possible that you could accept it or please just take my evaluated paper and take that as my final draft. Do you have any office hours tomorrow or is there anywhere I could meet with you? I would really like to discuss if there is anyway to get credit for the work that I did do. Could you please email me back or call me anytime today or tomorrow, I am supposed to leave around 2pm tomorrow but I will stay around until I hear back from you. Thanks.

Instructor’s Final Response:
Dear Jane:

Below is the email you sent with your computer problem. I have no record of you asking to switch topics. You didn’t ask me in person or by email.

I gave you a 30-hour extension to finish your research paper and you never turned anything in. The supreme court paper arrived only after I offered you a second extension (four days later). When I emailed you and offered a second extension you emailed me a paper that I had never before seen or heard of. I’m really sorry, but under the circumstances, I cannot make anymore allowances. Your grade stands as I calculated. If you retake the course, however, your F will can be replaced with your new grade.

Computer Crashes and Other ambiguous problems

Students can have a range of emergencies (which can range from actual emergencies to situations created by a lack of organization or the inability to adjust to the responsibilities of college work). For the instructor, one very good way to keep these problems from becoming a chronic issue throughout the semester is to have a clear policy on late work, computer issues, etc. (for example, explaining that students should save work in multiple places and email it to themselves to avoid computer-related late work). However, even when using a clear set of rules, most instructors will occasionally encounter situations in which they must decide on-the-spot whether to make allowances for a student. The email above shows the instructor making several allowances, and then becoming firm when student fails to meet criteria. The three sample emails below illustrate different appropriate responses to a “computer-crash” situation. Keep in mind that any of these responses could be correct, but that the tone of the email can affect whether the student willingly accepts your decision. Also remember that if you make exceptions in one situation for a student, you would want to make a similar exception for other students if a similar situation were to occur.

Computer-Crash Allowance Email (no penalty)

Dear Rashid:

What a horrible thing to have happen just before finishing your draft – although of course there is never a good time for a computer crash! I’m so pleased that you at had at least saved a pretty current draft on your flash drive, although you’ll have to work on the works cited page again. I’m happy to allow you an extra 12 hours to finish the work, without penalty. Just make sure you get it to me within the extended time allowed!

Best,

Joyce

Computer-Crash Late Paper with Penalty

Dear Rashid:

Although I don’t generally accept late papers, I’m willing to give you an extra day to complete the paper – I certainly have sympathy for your computer problems. However, I’ll have to apply a late-paper penalty of 5% -- the syllabus is clear about the need to save copies of your paper in multiple locations (even using email can be great), and although I know I’ve been guilty of not saving properly myself (which is the reason, actually that I’m allowing you to turn the paper in for credit), I feel it would be unfair those people who took the necessary time and care to save properly if I were to allow you to submit the paper late without penalty.

I hope this is an acceptable compromise for you, but if you have problems or questions, feel free to email me (reenste@gmail.com).
Best,

Joyce

Computer-Crash “Can’t help you” Email

Kyra:

I’m certainly sympathetic to your computer issue. However, the syllabus explains clearly that computer-related problems are not an acceptable reason for a late paper. We also covered this issue in class, early in the semester, several times, and I gave the class multiple opportunities to save drafts digitally (via email), even allowing you to send your rough draft digitally (so I’d have a copy). Since you chose not to email me a copy of your draft, I was unable to help by re-sending your draft to you when your computer crashed.

I feel badly that you weren’t able to complete this project. It’s really a shame. But part of the work of this class was specifically learning how to save and organize digital versions of your work to make sure you are never left with a blank slate when the inevitably ill-timed computer crash occurs.

I’m very sorry, but I cannot allow you an extension for the project. You’ll receive zero points for the project, although your quiz and class participation projects for this portion of the class won’t be affected.

Regards,

Joyce
ENG 101: Specific Information

ENG 101 is the introductory writing course that almost all ISU students take. Transfer students to ISU also take the course, although some students take an introductory course at the community college level, and some students have AP English credit that allows them to skip our course. So we’ve got students from all majors and from different high school systems, and even students who’ve been studying at a community college for a couple of years.

ISU also has a speech course, COMM 110, and most new students take both COMM 110 and ENG 101 in their first year at ISU. So they either take our course in fall and COMM 110 in spring, or the inverse. Students who register earliest tend to want to sign up for ENG 101 in the fall, and ENG 101 course sections tend to fill up faster during summer registration (for what that’s worth).

Our Key Learning Goals

As we noted in the “Theoretical Concepts” section of this Guide, our goals for ENG 101 start with the assumption that there is currently NO clear consensus among writing studies scholars regarding how to create “transferable” writing skills, but one very important discovery is that teaching writers to “do research” into writing situations and genres so that they can clearly articulate what they know and don’t know, and then do specific work to practice the tasks/skills/concepts they need in order to produce writing that is successful (including a vocabulary with which to discuss what they are learning) is a potentially powerful tool to help writers situate themselves in new and unfamiliar writing situations. (This technique has been referred to in the Philosophy section as “high road transfer skills.”) Our program focuses on teacher research—we try different kinds of assignments and classroom activities—in order to discover and implement successful methods for teaching students the following:

- To research writing situations and genres and to practice producing different kinds of texts in response to that research.
- To assess their knowledge and skills for each particular situation/writing task, with the assumption that their “basic” skill set will need to be altered slightly for each new situation.
- To learn terms, concepts, and techniques that help them develop the capacity for addressing particular writing issues they may be having, both in terms of specific writing tasks and in terms of larger scale issues they (or we) may identify.
- To assess the ongoing progress of their own learning.

We want to avoid thinking that we can “teach students how to write” or “prepare them to write in the ways that they’ll need to write in other classes.” This is firstly because a genre studies approach to writing instruction shows that each specific writing situation we encounter has nuances that can often dramatically change what the reader expects when they read. Even if we could claim (which we can’t) that we can teach them to write a “perfect paper,” (or even a “good” paper) the style, format, focus, content organization, arguments, etc. would not be identical to other papers they might write. Therefore our goal needs to be focused on something else.

Also, research in acquisition of writing skills shows that mastery over a particular genre or set of genres takes place over sometimes long periods of time, and mastery over unfamiliar techniques (grammar or style issues) also can kind of fade in and out, depending on the kinds of writing the author is engaged in. So we can’t claim (or even attempt!) to “teach students how to write” in our one-semester class.
Finally, we can’t assume that school genres (like the argument essay or the analytical essay) are teaching any “generalized skills” that can be transferred to other writing situations. This is a really difficult concept to incorporate because it’s a very common myth related to writing instruction. Authors may spend all of junior high and high school and maybe college writing “essays” that are all classified as the same kind of thing (i.e., “the research paper” or the “analytical essay”), and the assumption is that this makes you a better writer generally, and also that if an instructor assigns “an essay” you know what to do. But in fact, while writing repeatedly in the same genre can help you to write in that genre (sort of), there is no proof that this is a useful tool for any kind of “across-the-board” writing improvement. And since an “essay” is not remotely descriptive enough to be considered a genre, the writing skills that authors learn in their different writing experiences in schools are not particularly transferable.

Categories of Knowledge Important to Teaching Introductory Writing Courses

- **Genres**: When we use the word “genre” we don’t mean that we teach a specific set of genres in ENG 101. Instead, we try to introduce the concept of “genre” as complex, showing how the kinds of texts we produce in any situation are mediated by context in interesting ways. One can’t, for example, produce a comic book without images or an academic paper without citations. We try to include a whole range of different genres in our ENG 101 classes and give students a chance to research and compose in different genres so that they can see how “genres-in-context” shape the kind of content we produce.

- **Rhetorical Strategies**: (These are ways of organizing or shaping texts, many of which have been named over the years. They are often called “rhetorical modes,” but that phrase can be confused with production/composition modes like aural, print text, digital text, imagistic, so we use the term, “Rhetorical Strategies.”) These strategies aren’t really genres of texts--there isn’t any such thing as an “argument genre,” for example; instead, they are techniques that can shape the nature of the text an author produces. For example, “Narration” is a rhetorical strategy that uses a “storytelling” kind of emphasis (good detail, descriptive language, and attention to temporality are often aspects of narration). However, techniques of narration can be used in a wide range of genres, from magazine articles to scholarly papers, to poems, to graphic novels. Learning to use these techniques is important, but it’s equally important that the qualities of these techniques may change as they are actively used in different genres. (Note: see the List of Rhetorical Strategies for a more extensive discussion of various strategies.) Instructors should avoid teaching these strategies as genres, but they are still useful terms for talking about tools for writing.

- **Modes, Media, & Tools for Production**: “Modes” refers to aspects of of the presentation of a particular composition that can determine how a reader will use it--aural, visual, digital, alphabetical, etc. Modes can overlap (for example, a website is located in a digital space and it can use alphabetic, visual texts and can also be aural [include sound]). Together, these terms are important because they help us to consider all the various elements that are involved--physically and conceptually--when we compose. We don’t want to get caught up in thinking about textual production in one dimension. So our discussion of “texts” in ENG 101 might include: 2-D pictures that could be painted or drawn with crayon; print texts that are printed out on 8 1/2” x 11 white paper; print texts that are written with crayon; sound essays composed for the web, hypertext or multimedia composed for the web or for distribution on DVDs, etc. Often modes of production are determined (at least in part) by genres (one composes email electronically, usually using alphabetic characters, because that’s what an email is) although perceptions about the mode of production can change over time (for example, we now produce and read essays electronically, and this changes how we understand the modes of production that can be used to compose an essay).

- **Mechanical Skills** (grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation): ENG 101 is a particular place in which we can learn about and discuss these issues. We don’t pretend to teach “right ways” of structuring sentences. Instead, we try to discuss the ways that different texts can be structured (so visual texts use a “visual grammar” that refers to the way we generally tend to look at and use images, while alphabetic English grammar includes a whole range of knowledge about how to structure sentences, paragraphs, sections, stanzas, etc.). We work to help authors identify the “grammar kinds of things” that they need to know in order to compose in particular genres and writing situations.
• **Practical, General, Problem-Solving Skills for Writing**: These skills can include: editing texts for concision; expanding and revising to make them more colorful and descriptive; using organizational tools—paragraphs, headers, bulleted lists—for clarity; signaling progression with transition sentences, etc. The skills needed for different kinds of compositions vary, but we try to identify the practical skills that are related to the different kinds of genres that we teach.

• **Tools for Researching Information**: We encourage a range of discussions about and training for finding, evaluating, and using source materials in creative (and appropriate) ways.

• **Tools for Researching Writing Genres & Practices**: Through both writing assignments and different kinds of class activities, we actively try to provide students with tools they can use to analyze genre and writing practices, including their own composing practices.

• **Tools for Evaluating and Revising Writing**: Through different kinds of activities and assignments we try to provide tools that help authors/readers to examine the writing of others and to look carefully at their own writing—which is really a process of making the writing strange—so that we can examine it clearly. We use these tools as a way to analyze performance and as a way to better understand how we learn to compose.

### Learning Outcomes for ENG 101 & 101.10

1. **Identifying Genres:**

   • Students should be able to identify the features of multiple genres and articulate (through verbal or written communication) the differences that separate these genres (this ability to include both academic and non-academic genres).

   • Students should be able to document (through verbal or written communication) how the features of a particular genre work to shape the genre’s content, style, and structure through visual, conceptual, stylistic constraints, as well as through the expectations of the reader/user.

   • Students should be able to document (through verbal or written communication) how choices in their own writing either conform (or don’t) to the established features of the genre in which they are working.

   • Students should be able to compare how the features of different genres shape content (and knowledge-making) in different ways.

2. **Creating Content:**

   • Students should be able to create content in multiple genres.

   **NOTE**: Although students may not necessarily be able to create flawless versions of an unfamiliar genre, they should at least be able to create content and shape it according to the features of a genre, and discuss/reflect on how well their work fits or doesn’t fit the framework of the genre. This learning outcome highlights the goal that students in ENG101 learn more than the ability to mimic specific (or generalized) academic genres, but that they instead develop a clear understanding of the complex factors that shape texts and their production. Students in ENGL 101 should learn that each text/genre they encounter will have a range of requirements based on technology, media, genre history, etc. Students also need to increase their awareness of the ways that a text or genre is shaped, not only through compliance with established features, but in response to the history of its use; the ways it is envisioned, produced, and distributed; and the unique ways it may be taken up by readers/users.

   • Students should be able to employ cognitive/conceptual skills related to argument and analysis in their textual productions, and be able to identify the use of these strategies in their own productions.

   **NOTE**: We highlight these rhetorical strategies specifically, because they often come up as terms used to discuss writing in the academy. Students should be familiar with these terms, and be able to identify how they might work differently in different genre situations. Projects in the course will certainly discuss and
practice other rhetorical strategies, but these should specifically be included as a primary component of at least one of the genres in the class.

• Students should be able to employ a range of other skills (rhetorical strategies, mechanics, style, etc.) and defend these choices as thoughtful response to specific writing and genre situations.

3. Organizing Information in Multiple Genres:

• Students should be able to identify the organizational structures that govern different kinds of writing genres.

  NOTE: While this knowledge can be based on different academic and non-academic genres, learning should definitely include the ability to organize traditional-style writing genres using features such as: clearly delineated topics for paragraphs, creating effective thesis statements, integrating transition statements to create logical flow, etc. Students should also be able to identify and articulate the differences in organizational technique that apply to various writing genres.

4. Technology/Media:

• Students should be able to identify the technologies (print or digital) and tools necessary to produce a text in a given genre.

• Students should be able to decide on and use appropriate digital and print technologies to produce a genre (based on the genre's required features).

• Students should be able to demonstrate (through written or verbal communication) how a given text is affected by the use of different technologies or media (in terms of its conception, production, and distribution, as well as the potential ways the text may be taken up by users).

5. The Trajectories of Literate Activity:

• Students should be able to trace the trajectories of a text (the path a text takes in its production, distribution, and use) in reference to the context and history that shape the given genre. This includes the way a particular instance of text is shaped by interactions with people, materials, and technologies; the social and cultural forces that shape how a genre is understood and identified; and the potential uses (both intended and unintended) that reader/users may devise for the text and its content.

6. Flexible Research Skills:

• Students should be able to demonstrate knowledge of how to find a variety of source materials for research purposes. This should include using digital databases, print material, and archival resources.

• Students should demonstrate an awareness of the various methods which can be used to collect data (e.g., experiment, observation, various kinds of survey, and interview methods).

7. Using Citation Formats and Citing Source Material in Multiple Genres:

• Students should be able to cite sources correctly according to one or more academic citation formats (MLA, APA, CBE, Chicago Manual of Style).17

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17 At least one project in ENGL 101 should incorporate the use of source material consistent with a particular academic citation format (MLA, APA, Chicago Manual of Style, CBE, etc.).
Students should be able to integrate source material into their written projects in ways appropriate to a project's genre(s). This includes the ability to cite material correctly; to quote and paraphrase source material; and to effectively integrate source material to support an argument, persuasive goal, or analysis.\textsuperscript{18}

Students should be able to investigate and demonstrate how different methods of citing source material (including academic and non-academic attribution) are shaped by the goals and intentions embedded in the citation style.

8. Grammatical Usage and Sentence Structure:

- Students should be able to identify how specific genres are defined, in part through the use of sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary.
- Students should demonstrate the ability to make informed decisions regarding the appropriate sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary in their own writing (based on an assessment of the various genre features required in a particular writing situation).
- Students should be able to identify the match between an example of a genre that they’ve produced and a representative example of that same genre (in terms of grammar, usage, and style).
- Students should be able to identify in their own writing projects the aspects of sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary which require improvement, and demonstrate through multiple revisions the ability to address these problem areas.

9. Cultural & Social Contexts:

- Students should be able to identify cultural, political and social interactions that shape or influence how writing happens in a particular genre or situation. These might be local interactions within a particular group that specifically constrain how a particular text is produced, or interactions that take place at a national or international level and impact texts and genres more generally.
- Students should be able to identify (within their own writing and the writing of others) specific examples of how content/form/genre/style respond to cultural, political and social influences and pressures.

\textsuperscript{18} The key skill of this outcome is not for students to be able to cite sources flawlessly in MLA, APA, or other formats—rather, students should be able to recognize when and how to use source material in their writing, and be able to recognize that the use of source material is in ways dependent on genre (i.e., a news article, a press release, and a literary analysis paper may all use source materials, but the ways in which source material is integrated—and cited—differs in these different writing situations). Instructors need to make sure (if using primarily MLA) that students understand the complexity of academic citation.
Types of Writing Projects and Activities Appropriate for ENG 101 & 101.10

Creating writing projects for your class, centered on a genre studies approach, simply means making sure that there is a focus not only on creating content and studying various rhetorical modes (narration, argument, reporting), but also a focus on thinking specifically about the genre being produced--finding and understanding the boundaries (material, stylistic, social, historic) that make a certain kind of writing distinct and deciding how to best produce content within (and sometimes outside of) these boundaries. However, this concept is often easier to understand than to practice because most of us have gained our experience in "school writing" in settings where the writing produced fits into a very generalized set of "school writing" genres, which do not match particularly well with any "real world" genre or with many of the kinds of disciplinary writing that happen in the university (i.e., writing a generic lab report is not the same as learning exactly how your first year Chemistry professor expects lab reports to be produced, and it's certainly not like creating an actual report on an experiment--say in an attempt to receive a grant--in a real-world situation).

So, in planning our activities and projects in ENG 101, we don't just say, "Well, we'll study these four genres in ENG 101 this semester, and that's it." Instead, we try to come up with assignments that get students to see the big picture--to understand that any genre, even one you think you know really well, is going to need to be produced in a specific situation, and that to write well one must learn to carefully consider not only what a genre is, but what it isn't. This also ties into our goals for interactive formative assessment, which focuses on teaching authors how to analyze their own learning process as they work through the experience of a new writing situation. Focusing on generalized "school writing" can make this difficult because it can be hard to analyze one's own writing in a situation where we think, "Oh, I already know how to do this." So part of our work as instructors is to come up with assignments that surprise or challenge student-writers, demanding that they shift their focus from what they think they "already know" to a process in which they prove (to themselves, their peers, and the instructor) what they know and what they are able to learn. Often, this kind of teaching requires that the instructor also "shift his/her focus," moving into genres and writing activities where they learn along with the students.

That's why we try to think about genre from an activity theory approach. This means creating projects that allow students to explore and examine and practice a genre--not just to try to imitate it successfully as classroom writing, but to try to understand what makes a certain kind of writing (in a certain situation) distinct. We try to get students to ask how the kind of writing they are producing might actually be useful in a certain writing situation, and how we might analyze and evaluate the difference between our understanding of what the genre requires and what we’ve produced. We also include a lot of projects that ask students not just to “produce” a genre, but to research, analyze, or report on various genres. Sometimes we do this as a prelude to actually producing a genre, and sometimes we have them just study genres and report on them without actually producing them (for example, they might write a “report genre” paper on the genre of fairy tales). But we try to plan the projects that make up a semester so that there is a blend of activities characterized by: “thinking about,” “practicing,” and “analyzing our own practices and products.” This kind of analyzing is generally much more extensive than the fairly common practice of having students write “reflections” at the end of a project. Rather, it puts the research practices and learning goals at the center of (and integrated with) the writing process.

We’ve come up with the following categories of writing projects that might be assigned. This is not a comprehensive list--it’s really just an organizational tool based on the range of writing projects that ENG 101 instructors have developed.
Hopefully, these categories will help you as you browse the different syllabi—allowing you to think about how these kinds of projects can be connected and sequenced, and how they might help to achieve the program’s learning outcomes. As you read, you’ll notice that we often mention “content goals,” “production goals,” and “skills/techniques” for various types of projects. **Content Goals** refer to the content (ideas, concepts, research) that you want students to be working with during the project. **Production Goals** refer to the specific kinds of genre(s) they might be producing, or the technologies or media they might be using to produce them. **Skills/Techniques** refers to specific things authors need to acquire to produce a particular genre—these might be grammatical structures, stylistic techniques, issues of voice or tone, or techniques specific to the genre, such as a “lead” in a newspaper article, a “thesis” in a research essay, or a “teaser” in a magazine piece.

**I. Researching Genres:**

These are projects that focus on students completing research about a particular genre— the goal of such projects is to have students move away from understanding writing assignments for school as various “essays” that they write, and to move into a better understanding of how complex genres can be. The **content goal** of such projects is to do significant research and/or a close reading of a genre. However, it’s important to remember that such projects must also consider the **production genre** (i.e., how will the student translate his/her knowledge into a form that would be useful, appropriate and interesting to a specific audience). As a result, when considering “genre research” projects, it’s important to think also about the kind of specific texts students will produce. For example, will they write a report about the genre? Or will they write a proposal for a genre they hope to produce in the following project sequence? If, for example, the instructor chooses to have students write a proposal, then consideration of the **skill/techniques** for that production genre are important. Obviously, some different skills and techniques are required for a report than for a proposal, although some sentence level mechanical skills might cross genre boundaries. There are a couple of distinct categories of genre research projects:

1) **Finding and describing genres:** The **content goal** of such a project would be to go out and do specific research to better understand a genre. Many instructors select several related genres and have students do group research for such a project, or have each student search out individual genres, but with a central theme. Such themes might include “work-based genres” or “contemporary social genres.”

   The **production genre** for such a text is negotiable, of course, but usually some kind of **descriptive report** genre or **proposal** genre would be appropriate, allowing students to provide information, rather than focusing on making an argument. Note: A specific genre that is extremely useful for our program would be to have students create “genre reports” that are designed to provide information for future ENG 101 students who might be writing in that genre. We might then collect these and use them as a resource for the entire program. If students are writing research reports for use in the ISU writing program, then the **skills/concepts** that are necessary for the finished product would be connected closely to writing for an audience of authors, between the range of 18-24, who might (hopefully) be interested in the results of the research. Additionally, genre research projects could be specifically targeted at the “We Do it This Way” research project currently in progress at the Center for Writing Research and Pedagogy (see Teacher & Students p.2 for more information).

   Another possible idea for a **production genre** would be to have students create an **idiot’s guide**—writing about the genre they are researching in the form of the ubiquitous “idiot’s guides” available. This gives them both content goals (to describe the genre in a practical way) and production genre (an “idiot’s guide”). The **skills/concepts** necessary for the idiot’s guide could be developed from group research into the genre.

2) **Historical Research into Genres** (The evolution of genres over time, or archival work to understand a genre at
a particular moment in historical time).

The content goal of this kind of project is to study the history of a genre--to understand how the genre was developed or how the significance of the genre was based on particular social and political situations. This type of genre is more likely to contain analysis or argument as a central rhetorical strategy, but it also has an element of reporting. In many ways, the content goal of such a text is closest to the kind of writing that scholars in History would produce.

There are, of course, many production genres that could be used for this type of research project; for example, a documentary would allow students to research the genre and then report on its history for a general audience--thinking about how the material conditions of the documentary genre shape how the information reaches an audience. A Documentary Collection would be another genre appropriate to this topic. This would be similar archival documentary work, in which the author's goal is to provide examples of a particular genre as historic artifacts. Another genre might be an Argumentative History Paper--a scholarly paper that argues for a certain evolution or historical significance of a genre. The required skills/concepts for these various production genres would, of course, need to be appropriate to the production genre.

3) Analyzing (and making arguments about) genres: Using “analysis” as a primary rhetorical strategy for both understanding and producing text, the content goal of a genre analysis project would be to analyze some aspect or aspects of a genre. Example content for an analysis/argument project might include the following:

- Comparing and contrasting two genres and making an argument about why they should be considered separate genres or a single genre.
- Engaging in close reading of feature articles in a particular magazine, and then making an argument that certain features are the most important tools to use when identifying and describing the genre.
- Doing an ethnographic analysis to research and discuss how a particular genre “works” in a social setting to make meaning.

Production genres for these kinds of analysis/argument projects might be an ethnographic research paper--where the researcher actually studies a particular culture/environment where writing is being produced. Such a product might follow as closely as possible, a sociological or cultural studies type of research method and writing style, which would mean it would be a formal research paper as much as possible like those produced in certain specific disciplines, like Anthropology or Cultural Studies. Another version of this would be to have students produce, study, and observe a genre's use and then create “ethnographic research notes,” which would follow as closely as possible published resources that discuss what ethnographic research notes should look like and contain.

Another production genre would be a traditional analytical essay (written specifically in the style of the Humanities/English Studies). This would mean that “close reading” and “rhetorical analysis” would be the tools for the project, just like “observation” and “extrapolation” are key tools for the ethnographic genres.

II. Understanding Writing In Context:

These projects are focused on what we’ve been calling “the trajectories of literate activity.”

[NOTE: Dan Toronto’s article on trajectories (from the 2008 Western Michigan University ENGL 1050 Reader) and the article by Joyce Walker on CHAT (from the ISU Grassroots Writing Research Journal) are both helpful for understanding the concept of trajectory. They will be available in the ENG 101 Instructors web space].
In these kinds of projects we ask questions about where texts go, what they do, and who uses them. We ask students how texts are changed by their interactions with the world and how texts change the people with whom they interact—not just through content but through structures and forms that produce meaning and relationships.

**Content Goals** for this kind of project are to understand a phrase like “writing is complex” on a material and not just an intellectual level. To experience, through various activities of production, the ways that writing moves through the world, and to look closely at the range of choices that writers make as they produce texts. These kinds of projects might also be useful for connecting to Learning Outcome #9 (Cultural and Social Contexts).

**Production genres** for this kind of work could be any kind of Report Genre (students observing and analyzing a particular writing context and then reporting on their findings).

Additionally, analytical or argumentative writing, in the form of an academic essay written in the field of writing studies would also be a genre that would work well for this kind of content.

Multimodal productions (see below) can be good for this kind of project—where students create texts using different kinds of media and production modes to showcase the diversity of ways that a particular content could be produced (this would be using the Material and Multimodal type of project, but in the service of projects that seek to specifically understand writing in context).

**III. Genre Production:**

This is a pretty straightforward kind of writing project. The instructor or student selects a genre (or several genres) and students produce content in that genre—taking care to seek to understand the parameters of the genre while getting practical experience at producing it. This kind of project should always include some really intensive study of the genre, even if that research won’t make its way into the actual genre they produce. Students should consider what the genre looks like, how it is organized, what it’s history and social context is. This kind of activity could be built into project components (students do this work at the same time they are drafting projects in the genre)—this could be done as group work (i.e., the group producing a set of genre criteria) or individually. Many instructors like to assign several related genres and have different groups (of 3-5 students) work in these genres, reporting back to the larger group about their findings. In this way, groups can act as readers for each other—discussing how well they feel another group has identified important genre elements and produced them. So **skills/concepts** for these types of projects might include various aspects of group work, peer editing, etc.

**IV. Juxtaposing/Disrupting Genre and/or Modal Boundaries:**

The idea of juxtaposition & disruption is that it is often most productive to sharply shift an author’s focus about the ways that meaning can be produced. An instructor could achieve this kind of juxtaposition by having students switch genres (often keeping content/topic the same) in different projects. However, juxtaposition and disruption can also be made the content goal of a specific project, meaning that the goal is to do some genre switching and then produce a text that analyzes the results of these experiments. For example, an instructor might choose a series of short, relatively simple genres (e.g., a set of instructions, a text message, brochure) and ask the students to place a certain topical content into these different genres and analyze the rhetorical effects—is meaning changed? Are different audiences reached? What structural/material/stylistic boundaries does each genre place on the content? Can the writer discover compositional strengths and weaknesses by analyzing his/her performance in each genre? The **production genres** would obviously be
the genres the students write in, but an analytical project reflection or report could also be a genre for this project. **Skills/concepts** for the productions could be fairly broad but should be drawn initially from the production genre selected, and then modified to fit the goals for the project.

**V. Materiality & Multimodal Projects:**

The concept of rhetorical modes has been with us at least since Aristotle, but more recently writing studies scholars have begun discussing the concept of material and production modes (moving away from a view that “composition” is just the writing of papers and towards the idea that students need to be aware that meaning is made through the use of a wide range of particular kinds of tools and activities. Digital technologies have a lot to do with this interest in production modes because scholars have become aware that using these tools changed both what authors needed to know to produce meaning and the kinds of meanings they were able to produce. The **content goal** of a multimodal project is to explore and reflect on how the use of different composition tools produces different kinds of meaning. In terms of **production genres**, the multimodal project (as it is taught by our instructors and by many others) has really become a genre in itself. The idea is to produce some kind of material artifact that represents the content in a range of different ways. Elena Adkins has written a great article on doing multimodal projects (in the *Writing Beyond the Rules* Reader for 2008, which is available on our ENG 101 instructors site). While often the point behind producing a multimodal project is to produce content on a topic in a range of modes, these kinds of projects can also involve asking students to select the particular genre that best represents their content. Many of the “choose your own research project” assignments you’ll see in the samples fall into this category. When working with multimodal/material projects in this way, it is really important to ask students to **prove** that the genre they’ve selected is the best genre to reach both their writing/research goals and to the audience that they’ve selected. Otherwise instructors might end up with ten power point presentations in a class of twenty people (i.e., authors tend to compose using technologies with which they are already familiar, regardless of that technology’s efficacy for the topic or the text’s distribution to an audience).

**VI. Public Writing:**

Public writing has a lot in common with modal/material kind of projects, but the specific **content goal** of a public writing project is to actually reach a real-world audience with content in some way, and also to track, record and analyze the effectiveness of the textual production. These projects can get really wild—ranging from practical texts with clearly articulated goals to texts that are closer to performance art. So **production genres** and necessary **skills/concepts** can vary widely for these types of projects. As noted earlier, instructors must include one project that could lead to an article in *The Grassroots Writing Research Journal*.

**VII. Linguistic/Language Research:**

Our program doesn’t yet have documentation on a whole lot of these kinds of projects, but a discussion I had in 2008 with some instructors about etymology made me think about how useful it might be for our program goals. The **content goal** for this kind of project would be to research and experiment with the ways that different genres use language—one idea that came to me during last year’s orientation session would be a project where students look at what a term like *descriptive language* means in a range of genres. Another idea would be to look at the structure of argument (for folks who like that!) and then analyze specifically how argument works in different genres—does the structure hold together (i.e., are there ways that argument always works) across genres and in different writing contexts? Or…how do the

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general principles of argumentation play out as they move from genre to genre? I think we could also consider how “language use” works in a genre studies way.

Rhetorical Strategies

Note: The following article is excerpted from Kristin Denslow’s article in the Western Michigan University reader, Writing Beyond the Rules, 2009. It was edited lightly for use here, with Kristin’s permission.

Many First-Year Writing programs pay a lot of attention to the “Rhetorical Modes,” a term used to describe several classical modes of discourse. Essentially, the rhetorical modes describe types and techniques of writing. Although the original four modes included only narration, description, exposition, and argument, this list can be expanded to include several other more diverse forms of writing. Our program uses these concepts to describe the various types of writing that different genres may employ; a particular genre may include several types of writing from this list of categories.

Examining genres carefully allows us to discuss these types of writing modes, noting the overlap between types, or ways that the type of writing changes when it moves into different genres. For example, persuasive writing may be a mode of writing, but a persuasive documentary film does not use persuasive techniques in exactly the same way a commercial or a brochure for a vacation spot might.

What is important to remember is that any act of writing may combine two or more of the modes outlined in the following list. The way that these modes fit together and are used is one of the elements that helps to determine genre. Thus, our list is a launching point to help us begin to think about the techniques we use every day in our writing.

To find out further information about rhetorical modes, visit this website: http://faculty.ccc.edu/khope/The%20rhetorical%20modes.pdf.

Analysis: Analytic skills are an important part of many writing acts. They involve looking at an artifact or a text and breaking down its parts. Analysis and other strategies (like argument or classification/division) can be often be found sharing space in a single text.

Argument: Argumentation means just that—to argue a position. The key to arguing a position is having a clear stance on what you are arguing about, and then proving that point through the use of evidence. Considering the opposing point of view and offering a rebuttal are also important elements of many genres that use argumentative techniques. The Purdue Owl offers an overview of what they term “the argument essay” which outlines a type of text that is commonly produced in school settings that uses argument as its primary rhetorical strategy (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/685/05/). However, argumentative strategies and techniques can be found in many, many, different types of genres.

Cause-Effect: Cause and effect explores the reason something happens and the consequences of that action. Cause-effect strategies are often connected to analysis and argument as techniques.

Classification/Division: To classify is to categorize, and to divide is to break a larger category into smaller pieces. Classification is a process that authors use in all kinds of genres—and it is often used in the service of other rhetorical strategies. For example, one might classify elements of an analysis, or use classification to break down the elements of an opposing argument.
Comparison/Contrast: Comparison and contrast explores the ways things are similar and the ways they are different. Often these skills appear in the “school” genre of comparative analyses, but they also can be seen in opinion articles comparing/contrasting political candidates or reviews about local restaurants.

Definition: In writing, to define does not simply mean to provide the dictionary definition of a term. Instead, it means to define how you intend to use the word. Sometimes this can mean defining by explaining what the term is not. In “Making Memoir,” Eileen Wiedbrauk (which can be found in the 2010 ISU Grassroots Writing Research Journal) begins by defining what the term “memoir” can mean and how she intends to use it in this particular situation.

Description: Writers often describe physical characteristics and sensory details in order to create a picture with words. Description is widely used as a technique in many genres, but the nature of descriptive text may vary from simple and concise to rich and complex, depending on the expectations that shape the genre in which is it located.

Entertainment: Entertaining is the slipperiest of the rhetorical modes we've found in our research. It can mean something different depending on the genre you are writing in. Humor, suspense, titillation, or horror could all be elements of a text that is meant to entertain. These elements are often used for their own sake (i.e., “I just want to entertain my readers”), to make people feel good, or to help them pass their free time. But entertaining elements can also be used in genres that are designed to inform, argue, persuade, etc. To use the skills of entertainment, the writer must seriously consider the audience and judge how to incorporate entertainment into the genre.

Exemplification: Exemplification is the use of example to support or back up a claim. Exemplification is less often the primary technique in a genre. It is more often used as a technique in the service of other techniques, such as persuasion, analysis, or argument.

Narration: Quite simply, to narrate is to tell a story using details that evoke both time and place. Narration is particularly crucial for personal writing genres, such as the memoir. See Eileen Wiedbrauk's article, “Making Memoir,” for more detail.

Persuasion: Persuasion means convincing the audience of something. This can be through the use of: emotion (indirect persuasion); reason (direct persuasion); or through a knowledge of what the reader wants (personal persuasion). Persuasion can be used in the service of other rhetorical strategies (for example, argument and persuasion can be difficult to tell apart because they are often used to complement each other), but persuasion can also be the primary goal in some genres.

Process: Explaining a process offers the reader a step-by-step explanation of how to do something. It is a technique often used in practical genres such as product instructions, cookbooks, or manuals.

*Note: We don't feel that the current wikipedia.org articles on rhetorical modes are as accurate as they could be, so be careful if using Wikipedia to explore these terms.

A Note on Sequencing and Thematic Relationships

When thinking about how to organize project topics, it's possible to consider various “thematic” connections that help students understand relationships between the different projects in the course. Obviously, there are myriad ways to make these connections throughout the semester, but I'll just briefly list several here:

- Students keep a single topic across different kinds of papers.
- Students move from more intimate, personal writing to more public writing.
• Students work in several different genres, then culminate with either a genre research project or some kind of project that asks them to compare & contrast or categorize the different genres they’ve worked in during the semester.

• Students complete various projects, each of which allows them to consider a different aspect of how texts work in the world (so a genre research description project, and genre ethnography, and then a project where they apply these theories to a specific genre).

• Students work with various modes over the semester. (Note that this kind of sequencing should make sure to apply these modes to specific concepts.)

• Students use different kind of material tools and spaces to produce meaning (on either a consistent topic or different topics).

Textbooks, Materials and Resources

There is only one current “required” text for ENG 101, the ISU Grassroots Writing Research Journal. The text really serves as more of a sample of the kinds of work we’d like to encourage than a systematic treatment of writing research. However, there are many ways that instructors could use these texts. In general, each of these texts could be useful as part of assignments from the categories described above, but here are some specific examples from selections in past editions. (Through the archives, you and your students will have access to these and other previously published articles.):

• Several of the texts include author's discussing specific genres (like a memoir, or a film review). These texts could be very useful as examples for genre research projects.

• Irene Taylor’s article on personal writing could be an example for a genre production assignment (understanding how a particular type of genre can demand certain things of authors and readers or for an assignment that might seek to compare/juxtapose personal writing with another kind of genre [like a report]).

• Sarah Lushia and Patrick Donlan’s pieces, combined, might be a useful reading for folks who are interested in working on the Milner Library’s audio description project (interested instructors can contact Joyce Walker for more information on that project). But they might also be useful as an introduction to an assignment for producing a new genre.

• Gina Cooke’s Nomenclature article could serve as a great introduction for a Linguistics/Language Research project.

Other Texts: Instructors can select other texts for ENG 101. The ISU Grassroots Writing Research Journal cost is about $25.00, so we ask that instructors do not select texts that cost more than an additional $30.00. Instructors should not use a rhetoric or reader that is not compatible with our program goals, tenets, and learning outcomes.

Instructor Resources for Additional Texts: Instructors can also use supplemental articles and readings. Because sometimes these texts can relate to copyright issues, and because it can be difficult for instructors to find texts they want to use, we have begun work on an archive where we will categorize and create access for texts that our library has legal access to. In other words, we are not in copyright violation if we use texts that our library gives us access to (as students and teachers), and we are not in copyright violation if we maintain a list of such texts. We’ll also maintain a set of print copies of everything in our resource archive so instructors can easily make photocopies for their students if they need to,
ENG 101.10: Specific Information

Introduction

ENG 101.10 is a course that is designed to provide a more structured writing experience for students who decide they can benefit from daily writing. Students self-place into sections of ENG 101.10, which meets 5 days per week. The regular class sessions meet three days a week (M-W-F), and are taught by a single instructor. For the instructor of the course, 101.10 is the same content as teaching 101. The difference lies in the added writing lab consultant, who holds “lab” sessions on T-R. The instructor must meet with the consultant face-to-face prior to the start of the semester, before each new unit begins, and must be in contact with the consultant in some fashion on a weekly basis. The instructor will share his/her syllabus with the consultant and send updates about class activities to the consultant after each class. However, the instructor of 101.10 can save significant time in out-of-class meetings with students, since the consultant can do this work regularly, and he/she can also use the 101.10 opportunity to articulate a clear teaching pedagogy and to refine his/her teaching portfolio materials. Thus, we work to assign every instructor in the program to 101.10 at least once during his/her time at ISU because the interaction with a writing consultant can have significant benefits for the instructor.

Description of the new 101.10 Course Structure

The Course Meetings: ENG 101.10 is separated into a 3-day-a-week class with a 2-day-a-week lab. Responsibilities are divided so that an “instructor” is in charge of a 3-day-a-week writing course, and a “writing consultant” is in charge of the 2-day-a-week lab. Students are required to attend all 5 days each week, as the labs are not optional.

The 3-day-a-week Course: The primary goals for the 101.10 instructors are the same as for regular 101 instructors. No special experience is required to hold the position, but during the semester, that instructor will be required to share materials and potentially may need to explain his/her practices to the consultant. It is also recommended that the instructor at some point in the semester shares his/her grading practices with the consultant. This does not mean that the consultant grades student work, but rather the instructor grades student work with the consultant present so as to share the grading experience with the consultant. Experienced instructors will be rotated through this course so that each instructor can have a chance to both review his/her practice and to have his/her practice documented for our archive. Instructors teaching 101.10 can look to the 101 instructor guide for more information about structuring the course.

Lab Sessions: The 2-day a week lab sessions, in many ways, resemble more the kind of work that goes on in a writing center setting or writing tutoring/coaching session, rather than a traditional classroom. The Writing Consultant is an advocate/coach/partner/consultant. Not an instructor. His/her relationship is as a consultant with authors who are trying to complete writing work – and since they will all be working on the same projects, the lab days can be considered, effectively, “group tutoring” sessions.
Activities in the Writing Lab Sessions: The 2-day labs are specifically time for writing practice - different kinds of close analysis, writing, learning to review the work of others, etc. Activities should be focused clearly on writing-in-action (rather than lecture or Q&A), and they should be in-class activities. The lab sessions will not generally include out-of-class writing assignments. The writing consultant will plan activities that are specifically designed to help with the kinds of writing required for whatever project students are working on – and many of these activities can be student-led, since students will often be able to identify the areas where they are having trouble. When they can’t, the goal of the consultant is to help them identify what they understand and don’t understand, and then to help students understand better. He/she will be “learning” the assignment from the student’s perspective, while at the same time trying to help them with the knowledge he/she is gaining from analysis of the assignment. Students will be learning specific strategies in the lab sessions, which they can use in different writing situations, including (but not limited to):

- Strategies for “re-seeing” their texts and the texts of others (revision and peer review).
- Strategies for understanding writing assignments/situations and identifying what needs to be learned for successful completion.
- Strategies for conducting research and citing information.
- Strategies for understanding genres and working to create texts in an unfamiliar genre.

Grading: The consultant will not grade papers or provide “grading” types of assessment on the writing students produce. He/she may work to help the instructor understand where students might be having difficulties, but in the role as an advocate for the students rather than as a helper to the instructor. The consultant should, however, take the opportunity to observe how the instructor grades student work in order to gain a perspective on assessment and one possible way to handle assessment.

Class Observations: During the first week of the semester, the ENG 101.10 consultant can choose not to meet with students (the regular 3-day-a-week will still meet). During this period, the consultant will sit in on the regular class periods to observe the instructor and the students, and the consultant will complete an ethnography from the class observations, share it with the instructor and then submit the ethnography to the ENG 101.10 Coordinator. Lab sessions must begin by the second week of class.

The Relationship between the Course Instructor and the Consultant: Although these are somewhat autonomous positions, they must contain a collaborative nature in order for the lab sessions and the consultant’s interactions with the students to be effective. The relationship between the two should be informative and collegial, with the following guidelines:

- The instructor and the consultant should exchange information regularly. Prior to the start of the semester, they should spend time face-to-face in order for the instructor to explain his/her course plan thoroughly. They should share (1) a face-to-face meeting prior to each new unit in order to discuss the overall project, (2) a weekly “Plan” for their sessions for the upcoming week, and (3) a narrative or notation regarding the activities that have taken place in each class session they run. These meetings can take place in-person or digitally (we recommend in-person at the beginning of the semester).

- The instructor should provide the consultant with a list of key terms, concepts and skills for each major writing project because these may be useful to the consultant as she plans her lab sessions. However, the consultant’s primary audience is the students in the course. Because we want consultants to develop a writing-center style rapport with students, they may find that students have writing issues and concerns that don’t map directly onto the instructor’s assignments; therefore, while an instructor should offer the consultant specific information about what is being covered in class, and what he/she thinks could be useful topics for lab sessions, the instructor should not expect to dictate to the consultant specific topics to be covered. That
said, an effective instructor/consultant relationship would be one in which an open dialogue regarding both important skills/concepts and student concerns will help each member of the team to design effective class discussions and activities.

• The instructor should not ask the consultant to conduct specific activities or to “cover” material or information that should be part of the regular ENG 101 course.

• The consultant can request information from the instructor about the assignment (particularly information about grading criteria or a rationale for assessment of student work) in order to better help students understand the assignment and their own work. The instructor should respond promptly to such requests.

• The instructor and the consultant can discuss student performance when they feel it is necessary, but should not share information the student has asked to be kept private. The exception to this would be in cases where either the consultant or instructor feels the student (or other students) might be in danger, or might pose a danger to other members of the class.

• Students can choose whether or not to discuss grade information with the consultant, but the consultant should have access to this information if he/she needs it. In general, the instructor can respect the student’s desire to share or not share information with the consultant, but should share information about the student’s overall performance if the consultant requires the information in order to assist/understand/work with the student.

• The instructor should obtain access for the consultant to any online space he/she may be using for the course. For example, if the instructor is using Blackboard, he/she needs to make sure that the consultant also has access to this online class space.

Consultant Activities in Addition to Class Time

Consultants are expected to spend 9-10 hours per week on their course assignment. This time can be divided in different ways from week to week, but the following list provides an overview of activities:

• Holding lab sessions will take 2 hours per week (they are T/TR sections that meet at the same time as the regular MWF sessions).

• In addition to lab sessions, consultants will spend individual time with each student throughout the semester (Total time for class and individual meetings, approximately 3-5 hours per week).

• As part of their teacher training, consultants will also spend time each week visiting and documenting the practices of their colleague 101 instructor, and of other writing consultants (1.5 hours per week).

• Consultants will also spend 1.5 hours per week working as a cohort (including weekly meetings) to develop best practices and support learning.

• Consultants will spend 2-4 hours per week working to write up archival documentation of class practices for consultants to add to our program teaching archives.

The 101.10 Coordinator will provide supervision of consultants, make sure they are prepared each week to run their lab sessions, and create new materials for them to use in the lab sessions.

Orientation and Preparation

• We administer a “preparedness assessment” at the beginning of each semester for new consultants and then re-run it at the end of the semester to see if our training is covering what consultants feel they need. We also administer a brief assessment at mid-term of their first solo semester as instructors to see if they perceive a

20 Please note that these hours are part of the 101 consultant’s work assignment, and not part of the class ethnographies they will be completing for ENG 402.
good match (or not) between the preparation we provide and their experience in the classroom. Using this assessment, we can modify and improve both our version of the ENG 101.10 course and our instructor training.

- During new instructor orientation, we'll provide sessions specifically for 101.10 consultants in which the structure of the course is discussed, and consultants receive specific training on managing the lab sessions successfully.

- During the returning instructor orientation, we'll provide time for discussions between the instructor and the consultant.

- There is a writing program assistant who is specifically assigned to mentor 101.10 consultants through their first semester of work. During the 2011/2012 academic year, Amy Magnafichi Lucas will serve in this role. She will work with new consultants on a weekly basis, arrange class visits, and help to create new materials for consultants to use in their lab sessions.

### 101.10 Instructor Role At A Glance

- In charge of a three-day-a-week 101 writing course, with a Consultant in charge of a two-day-a-week lab
- During the first week of class, the 101.10 labs will not meet, and the Consultant will observe the M-W-F classes and create an ethnography of your classroom.
- Meet face to face before semester begins, meet face to face prior to the start of each new project, discuss the class weekly as needed
- Identifying and explore your own teaching practices so as to articulate to Consultants these practices.
- You should not have the Consultant cover curriculum during lab sessions.
- Handle all grading and assessment of students work and should allow Consultant to observe this process at least once
- Instructors should promptly answer any questions Consultants may have regarding assignments, projects, and classroom practices so the Consultant may better serve students.

### 101.10 Consultant Role At A Glance

- In charge of a two-day-a-week lab, with Instructor in charge of three-day-a-week 101 writing course
- During the first week of class, the 101.10 labs will not meet, and the Consultant will observe the M-W-F classes and create an ethnography of the classroom.
- A Consultant will implement writing lab sessions that will help students with the assignments and projects they are working on
- Meet face to face before semester begins, meet face to face prior to the start of each new project, discuss the class weekly as needed
- You should not cover or present NEW curriculum during lab sessions
- Consultants should keep track of student attendance during lab sessions and share this information with the Instructor
- Consultants will not engage in the grading or assessment of student work, but should observe the instructor grading at least once
- Consultants will meet individually with students throughout the semester

### Accounts of Consultant Experiences

My experience as an ENG 101.10 Consultant has been an interesting and useful experience so far. The instructor I work with, Amy Magnafichi Lucas, has taught at the high school and college level for several years, and our discussions while planning out the course schedule have proven to be very instructive. Although I have some previous experience teaching composition, it’s helpful to be able to see how Amy plans, prepares, and executes a class across an entire semester. Our relationship is relaxed and professional because we’ve dis-
discussed what our roles are in relation to one another. This is of key importance because the students can become very worried if they aren’t sure both of us have the same priorities and goals.

To help keep everything running smoothly, I meet with Amy at the start of each unit so that we can work together to get each day of the project planned. Part of the reason I think we’ve been successful so far is because we allow for leeway in our plans and don’t attempt to create a rigid, second by second set of frameworks for the class. We both know that sometimes class doesn’t necessarily go as planned and that although you may plan on certain topics being covered that doesn’t mean they have to be covered. This kind of flexibility takes a lot of stress out of planning. As a further means of insuring we both remain on the same track, I try to check in with Amy after class is finished on her days so that I know what did or didn’t go well. While this is due mostly to our schedules being (miraculously) overlapping, I think it could work well if we e-mailed back and forth on a regular basis. Keeping up open and honest conversation allows both of us to be better prepared on those days we are working with the students.

As to actual class time, I’ve found that students are receptive to the instructor/consultant set-up and that it can have a beneficial effect on how the class proceeds. The students are generally more relaxed around me because they know I’m not grading them on anything they do and are often quite honest with me when they feel frustrated with some aspect of class. The consultant gives both students and teachers a kind of buffer space, a way to help the class work through difficulties without complete breakdown. We haven’t had any problems that were especially severe so far, but there have been a few moments where I’ve gotten feedback from students that they likely would not have given to Amy. Though I don’t get control over content or grading as a consultant, I do get a time and space to practice a lot of the one-on-one skills that are important for anyone who wants to teach writing. I get to spend a lot of time troubleshooting problems and presenting simple lessons that can help students work more effectively and efficiently. And to a great extent, it’s a fun process to help students figure out, research, and write on an individual basis. It gives you a very different perspective on what goes on in the classroom, and it lets you get some extra experience in fundamental teaching skills that you wouldn’t get otherwise.

Overall, I’ve found my experience as a consultant to be a consistently positive and enjoyable part of my semester. I think it’s given me some important time to hone my teaching skills and consider my own course plans for next semester. While it may not be full time teaching, it is good experience that I can and will use in the future to both my own and my students’ benefit.

--Rob Koehler, consultant to Amy Magnafichi Lucas’ 101.10 class

Emily and I arranged a meeting as soon as we found out that we’d be working together. Before the semester even began, we sat down together and each went over our visions for the class, as well as our teaching styles, organizational styles, managerial styles, and grading approaches. This was useful to set out early, before entering the classroom. We tossed around some ideas, but Emily made it clear to me that while she would offer some suggestions for my consultant hours, I would have liberty to arrange activities and set up those days as I saw fit. The first meeting was also especially helpful because, luckily, I saw that our teaching and organizational styles would mesh well. Knowing that we work together comfortably has created a positive atmosphere in the classroom and for the students. We agreed during that first meeting to share class materials. Though Emily had taught 101 before, she explained to me that she wanted to be flexible each semester and was not going to stick to the same old syllabus. As I had a pilot syllabus made up for ENG 402, Teaching Composition, I sent it and all of my project materials to Emily. It was nice to see that she valued those contributions; she took some of my ideas and adapted them into the class syllabus and projects.

First Week

The class met only on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday the first week. From the start on Monday, Emily included spaces in the class for me to provide input, direct some activities, take attendance, and so on. This worked out much better than having me simply sit in the corner and observe because it made students see us as a team and see me as having equal authority in the classroom. I think there’s an underground idea of 101.10 that the consultant classes are not as serious as the class days with the instructor, and this format during the first week helped dispel that myth among students. During that week I was able to see Emily’s notion of the class and of the genre approach to teaching composition in action. I also took notes during that first week on instructional techniques and student reactions, in order to get a better sense of what would work in the classroom for me.
The Blog

One of the aspects of the syllabus and the class that I think is a great idea is the concept of a class blog. The blog has been especially useful, both for the students and for the instructor and me. Every day, either Emily or I write a short entry highlighting “What We Did Today” and “Homework.” As we explained to the students, the blog is a space in which they can keep up on the progress of the class, see what happened in case of any absences, and comment, ask questions, and start conversations with each other. It also serves a great purpose for Emily and me, though: it allows us to show each other where we are at with the class and what needs to be done. For example, if students indicate in one of Emily’s sessions that they’d like to review MLA citation guidelines, she’ll put something in the blog like “We’ll have more time to go over the details of MLA citing on Thursday,” indicating to me that I should hit on that topic. Because Emily and I have meetings for every project and communicate via email with any unique concerns, there is never a big surprise in these types of blog posts; they just allow us to point out to each other what the students have asked for. The students also keep blogs, which serve various purposes in the class, including reflections, note-taking, reading responses, reactions to activities, and freewrites. On occasion, they also have had to comment on each others’ blogs. Having the students maintain their own has been important in helping them remember the purpose and usefulness of the class blog.

The class blog has also given Emily a chance to give me feedback on the activities I use in class without having to observe me. We each post links to materials that we’ve used in classes and upload notes or our own documents to Google Docs so that we and students can reference them again. While we set out the basic ideas of what we’ll be doing throughout the projects during our occasional meetings, the blog has given us a space to keep up on the day-to-day work.

Meetings

Through the first few weeks, Emily and I met various times to finalize some details of the class and for her to offer me support and share ideas. After a couple of weeks, though, we determined that it would be most useful to meet at the end of each project, in order to reflect on the details, the grading process, and any particular issues that may come up. We also use that time to block out and talk about the next project. Emily usually has some sense of what she’d like my consulting classes to accomplish during that time, but it’s usually pretty general (e.g. “They need more practice with transitions in analytical writing” or “They need to be reminded what kairos is”). She’ll allow me to come up with my own ideas, but I have also asked her advice on particular activities, and she’s willingly shared it. The meetings used to last around 45 minutes or an hour, but as the semester progressed, they’ve been a bit shorter, around a half an hour.

Caveats and Things to Work Around in 101.10

One of the hardest aspects of being a consultant, in my opinion, is the fact that I am not the instructor and do not share a mind with her. Often, during consultant classes, I’ll get questions from students on small details that matter to the grading but are not universal, such as “Does this have to be double spaced or should it be formatted like a memo?” As a teacher, I tend to ask students to give me information anyway (beginning each day by asking them to tell me what we’ve done this week, what we’re doing, and what’s due), so I usually ask the whole class or some students “What did Emily say about this?” or “How are you supposed to set this up?”—a memory recall for them and a sneaky way for me to find out if there was actually some rule or stipulation set out in the Monday, Wednesday, and Friday sessions of the class. There have been moments, though, where it’s been necessary to say, “We’ll have to check with Emily.” That balance of power between the instructor and the consultant, from the students’ views, can be confusing at times. I’ve noticed this especially with differences in what we tell the students about a layout, a style (like MLA), or how to use sources. As much as we could, Emily and I made it clear from the beginning to the students that she’d be the one grading their projects, and that if I ever seemed to contradict something she’d said, they’d better double-check with her. However, because Emily has been open with me, knowing that I can email her or call her with any major questions is a relief.

--Autumn Jackson, consultant to Emily Woster’s 101.10 class
ENG 145 & 145.13: Specific Information

Introduction

English 145 and 145.13 are general education writing courses which are required or chosen as one of several electives for most undergraduate majors. The official course title of English 145 and English 145.13 is: Writing in the Academic Disciplines. Both 145 and 145.13 have the same learning outcomes, use a genre-studies approach to writing instruction and share the same ISU Writing Program tenets and goals. The only significant difference between the two sections is that English 145.13 is recommended for Business and Government majors; whereas English 145 is intended for all other majors.

Although once seen as a continuation of English 101 and English 101.10, English 145 and 145.13 are not viewed by the Writing Program as follow-up courses to the first-year writing composition course. Even though both sections of English 145 share similar program-wide goals and course learning outcomes as English 101 and 101.10, they are standalone courses. In fact, quite a few English 145 students are transfer students who have not taken English 101 at ISU. Therefore, instructors are not to assume that English 145 students are familiar with genre-studies writing instruction, cultural-historical-activity-network theory, or have experience writing outside designated “school genres” such as the “research paper,” “argumentative essay” and “analysis essay.” As a result, instructors of English 145 and 145.13 are expected to introduce these concepts and practices to their students.

English 145 and 145.13 have being undergoing revisions. However, we have managed to put together new course goals for these classes as well as new learning outcomes. We also will be introducing a new “text” which will be piloted for Fall 2011 and Spring 2012. This new “text” is the Emerging Scholars Compendium; it will replace the traditional Emerging Scholars student-writing textbook previously used in both sections. The compendium will be a resource for both students and teachers. It will also be digital and free of charge to our students. Changes will be made to the “text” the following year (and will be sold) after a thorough assessment of its effectiveness.

Student Demographics

English 145: Students in ENG 145 are drawn predominantly from majors such as Psychology, Criminal Justice, Nursing, Education and Economics. The remaining students are generally majors in Art/Design, Theater, Finance, and Health Information Management. The class is limited to eighteen students and regularly attracts juniors and seniors. Depending on where the students are in their major, they come in with varying degrees of knowledge in their discipline. One of the revision goals for English 145 is for students to take the course earlier in their college career; preferably as sophomores and juniors in order to benefit more from the course. In addition, we would like all Business majors (including those in Finance and Health Information Sciences) to register for 145.13 sections.
English 145.13: Students are for the most part Business majors. However, there are some Criminal Justice majors who are mistakenly placed into this section. The class also is comprised of eighteen students who are predominately sophomores and a few juniors.

Course Overview

Previous Course Overview

Currently the course overview that appears in the undergraduate course catalog for 145 & 145.13 is as follows:

“Students in 145 will study the relationships between the conventions that govern writing in various broadly defined disciplinary groups; they will learn to recognize distinctions and affinities between groups of disciplines, and they will learn how to analyze discourse conventions and use that knowledge in their writing. Building on both their existing knowledge of writing situations; and research into specific writing situations and tasks, they will develop techniques for writing flexibly and effectively for different audiences, forums and purposes. Through research and practice in a range of writing situations, they will develop their ability to master the discursive conventions of genres in their disciplines.”

Revised Course Overview

The Writing Program no longer feels that the above course overview adequately expresses the robust writer researchers we wish our students of 145 and 145.13 to become. In addition, this course overview does not reflect the genre-studies-model our Writing Program has adopted nor does it promote a complex understanding of scholarly research writing and the many facets of business and government writing. Therefore, we have created the following 145 and 145.13 course overview to express the new vision of the ISU Writing Program. Please refer to this course overview when creating your syllabi. The course overview can be modified to fit the needs of 145.13.

“Students in English 145 will learn how to research, analyze, and write in their chosen academic disciplines. They will identify the conventions of their discourse communities and use these conventions in their own writing. While students in English 145 will learn the differences and similarities between their disciplines and other academic disciplines, most of the work in this course will be devoted to the study of their own disciplinary groups and chosen fields. Through flexible and rigorous research, students will be able to locate and define various genres of writing in their disciplines and gain the skills necessary to produce them. The overall goal of this course is to enable students to be successful writers and scholars in the academy and to help students produce genres of writing used in their professions.”

Note: The evaluation of student work will focus on the “generation and documentation of learning” rather than the “production of perfection” or “Mastery” model.

The revised course overview shifts student focus away from mastering the discourse communities of all academic disciplines to researching, analyzing and writing in their own discipline. However, students are still expected to learn the major similarities and differences between Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Applied Sciences. Since many English 145 students are seniors and juniors and have already chosen their majors and are near the end of their undergraduate studies, it seems more useful for these students to concentrate on research and writing in their own disciplines. However if the course starts to attract more sophomores, then researching and writing across the disciplines would prove more beneficial.
**Course Content:**

**Background:**

For the last ten years, the content taught in English 145 and 145.13 has seen little change. Students in English 145 were expected to write six research or researched papers, one paper in each of the following disciplines: Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences and Applied Sciences. The last paper was commonly referred to as the Professional/Career Paper which gave students the opportunity to write in their own disciplines. The structure of the class used a writing process model of writing instruction in which students were expected to complete multiple drafts of each paper, peer review, conference, and then revise papers for a final portfolio. English 145 was conceived as part of the Writing Across the Curriculum initiative. English 145.13 has seen more flexibility. Although most instructors taught similar business genres approved by the Business College, themes and course structure differed according to the instructor and his or her business background and experiences. Even though English 145.13 is categorized as Business and Government Writing, few instructors included government genres in their courses because there was little to no enrollment in the course by Government or Political Science majors.

**Where We Are Now:**

We are beginning a new and exciting chapter of English 145 and English 145.13. Course content includes producing scholarly papers instead of research papers and allows students to research and analyze genres in their discourse communities. Students are also learning how to produce texts in their disciplines by first engaging in genre analyses. Students are also given the opportunity to research and write professional texts that live outside of the academy. By doing so, English 145 and English 145.13 students can see the trajectory of their texts in and beyond the classroom. Instructors of English 145.13 are having their students learn traditional business genres such as Executive Summaries, Resumes, and Proposals, as well as more varied genres, such as Video Advertisements, Business Websites, and Promotional Flyers. As end of the semester projects, English 145 and 145.13 instructors have students producing multimodal projects and/or conference presentations.

**Learning Outcomes (Working Draft)**

We are in the process of developing and finalizing the ENG 145/145.13 Learning Outcomes. The following is a working draft.

1. **Identifying Genres**

   - Students should be able to identify, articulate, and produce genres in their academic discipline.
   - Students should be able to demonstrate knowledge of genre expectations and produce genres that adhere to these expectations.
   - Students should be able to articulate the differences and similarities between academic genres in their discipline and workplace genres in their field.
   - Students should be able to explain the ways in which individual fields are distinctive from one another in their use of oral and written genres.
   - Students should be able to communicate how audience affects the rhetorical choices and strategies used to create workplace and academic genres in their discipline.
2. Flexible Research Skills:

- Students should be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the research practices used in their academic discipline.
- Students should be familiar with the varieties of methods to collect data (print material, digital databases, archival resources, observations, interviews, and various kinds of surveys) in their discipline.
- Students should be able to identify library databases and scholarly journals used most frequently in their academic discipline.

3. Discourse Communities:

- Students should demonstrate understanding of how written and oral communication is shaped by their discipline’s discourse community.
- Students should contribute (or be active participants in) one or more discourse communities already established within their discipline/field. These might include professional associations, scholarly listservs, twitter streams, etc.
- Students should demonstrate an understanding of how and why experts produce research-driven scholarly texts in their discipline/field, as well and the context in which these texts are created.

4. Using Citation Formats and Citing Source Materials:

- Students should have a general understanding of the different types of citation styles used in academic disciplines (MLA, APA, Chicago Manual of Style) and the reasons for their use.
- Students should be familiar with the citation style used in their discipline and know how to use the citation style in various genres across their discipline.
- Integrate source material into writing projects in ways appropriate to the project’s genre in terms of research, citation and style.
- Students should be able to demonstrate how different methods of source material are shaped by the contexts and features of a particular genre.

5. The Trajectories of Literate Activity:

- Students should be able to trace the trajectories of texts within particular academic fields, considering how technology, context and history shape a genre in particular ways.

6. Globalization:

- Students should be able to discuss how international settings can impact and shape the way different genres are composed and received by reader/users.
- Students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of how to produce genres in ways that take international settings/cultures/ideologies into consideration.
Textbooks, Materials and Resources

**Required Texts:** ENG 145 and 145.13 do not have a “required” text for 2011/2012. However, we are moving forward in the evolution of the Grassroots Writing Research Journal, and by fall 2012 it will be the required text for all Writing Program Courses. We have, however, created a compilation of resources for the course, which will be available free of charge (as a digital text) for our 145 instructors and students.

**Other Texts:** Instructors can select other texts for ENG 145. The ISU Grassroots Writing Research Journal is not currently required, but when it is, it will cost is about $25.00. Consequently, we ask that instructors do not select texts that cost more than an additional $30.00. Instructors should not use a rhetoric or reader that is not compatible with our program goals, tenets, and learning outcomes.

**Instructor Resources for Additional Texts:** Instructors can also use supplemental articles and readings. Because sometimes these texts can relate to copyright issues, and because it can be difficult for instructors to find texts they want to use, we have begun work on an archive where we will categorize and create access for texts that our library has legal access to. In other words, we are not in copyright violation if we use texts that our library gives us access to (as students and teachers), and we are not in copyright violation if we maintain a list of such texts. We’ll also maintain a set of print copies of everything in our resource archive so instructors can easily make photocopies for their students if they need to.

Sample Assignments

The guide to ENG 145 that we have developed as an online text will be available for instructors and students in fall 2011. During the 2011/2012 school year, we will continue to collect assignments and activities to add to the archive. Following are several samples of ENG 145 assignments that are consistent with the new course learning outcomes.

Discourse Analysis Assignment:

For this project, you will need to examine a specific academic discourse community. The discipline you pick to research should be related to your field of study. You will have to analyze the kind of writing being done by scholars and professionals in your discipline, the kinds of work published, the relevant journals, and genres both written and multimodal. At the end of this project you will create a series of documents that represent the research you have collected. Although you will have some class time to work on this project, you will need to do work on your own outside of class. The following is a list of requirements for this project:

- **List of Scholarly Journals:** You will need to make a comprehensive list of the scholarly journals and other academic sites that publish scholarly research in your discipline. 1 page

- **Text Collection:** You will need to find at least five genres used in your discipline. They can be academic texts or workplace texts. You will be expected to print out these samples (if you have a long article you might be able to just print out part of the text). You will need to write a two page summary of how these texts represent your discipline. What conventions are being used? What type of discourse? If there are differences between the texts you can mention them as well. Consider how all of them can be seen as a unit of discourse in your profession. 2-3 pages

- **Professional Organizations:** Students will need to compile a list of at least three professional organizations in their field and what services do they offer and how do they work as an organization. 1 full page
• **Professions:** Compile a list of possible professions in your discipline and field and what requirements are needed for those positions. 1-2 pages

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**Multimodal Remix Project:**

**English 145, Kristi McDuffie**

**Overview**

The purpose of this third project is to remix one of your two completed projects into a multimedia form.

**Why a multimodal project?**

- This project expands critical thinking and creativity by asking us to think in different ways. It is also the chance to make use of skills you have beyond your awesome writing skills.
- Other modes, such as image and sound, have a different and sometimes larger impact on our audience members. We can invoke emotion and cognitive reasoning in a way not possible with linear text.
- Digital texts and presentations can allow us to reach new and alternative venues.
- Making decisions about the tools available for us to compose with meets the learning outcome of this class that asks us to consider what technologies and tools are the best for composing in a specific genre for a specific audience and purpose.

**What might this look like?**

You could make a video or a webpage where you explain your discipline to first-year students considering the major. In the spirit of the first project, you would explain the genres of writing that you investigated. You could mix different components to do this, such as taping yourself talking, recording an audio track, showing clips from videos you pull from the web, showing clips of the people you interviewed, showing screen shots of the genres of writing that you found, and so forth.

Alternately, you could use photographs and add an audio track or create a comic strip to make the argument that you made in Project #2, to illustrate the issue that you investigated in Project #2, and so forth.

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**Professional Poster Presentation:**

**English 145, Meghann Meeusen**

After completing the professional language and culture study and discourse/publication projects, students should have a strong idea of a variety of genres present in their disciplinary field. Students will use this information to produce a visually based professional display. There will a relative amount of freedom about how to approach this assignment, with students able to present as if they were at an academic or professional conference, a job fair, or other related public events in which they use their understanding of genre, text production, and trajectory to share something they have discovered with their colleagues. These posters will be presented in a conference style event, where all students set up and share their displays simultaneously, visited by other students, colleagues and hopefully professionals in their fields to discuss and further their own ideas and discourses.
You are the marketing team for a large company who has just introduced a product to the public.

- You are to create an advertising campaign for this product.
- Upper management expects that you establish and/or reinforce brand recognition with this product.
- You are to conceive of three advertisements in three different media.
- Keep in mind the target market for the company/product.
- Keep in mind what it is that you want to reinforce about the meaning of the brand.
- Keep in mind that you must continuously come up with different ways to reach the target market because of the changing taste and preferences of the consumers as well as their changing attitudes.

Once you have created your three ads, you will present your campaign to upper management (the class) with hopes that they will give you the green light to move forward with the campaign [See Presentation Criteria].

Accompanying the presentation your team will write an internal proposal to Marketing Manager (me) that explains and defends the choices that you made creating the advertising campaign as you did.

This proposal will follow the traditional format of having an intro, body and conclusion.

The Intro should:

- Give an overview of the situation
- Give an overview of the different sections of the report.

The Body should:

- Give explicit details about the target market for the product
- Give support for why it is important to tap that market
- Explain whether or not your advertising campaign will be exclusive to that target market
- Give an overview of the tastes and preferences of that market
- Support for why you are proposing what you are proposing with references to previous ad campaigns regardless if they had positive or negative outcomes

Solutions section should:

- Detail briefly how you plan on grabbing the attention of the proposed market for this product

Conclusion and Recommendation section should:

- Provide an in depth description of what you plan to do
- Highlight the benefits of your plan
Practical Guidelines and Policies for Instructors & Students in The Writing Program

The following list of policies is focused on those elements of ENG 101/101.10 courses that should be coherent across sections of the course. This does not mean that policies will be identical, since each instructor will be free to modify these policies in various ways. Please read the following policies carefully, noting both the basic, standard policies and the various ways instructors might modify them.

Course Design

There is no standardized course design that restricts instructor choice about course projects, grading and evaluation, or other classroom practices. Instead, instructors will be asked to share their course materials at the beginning of each semester, and to justify/explicate their choices, using the program learning outcomes as a foundation. What this will mean, in practical terms, is that instructors will need to do work prior to each semester in which they consider how their projects achieve the specific goals of the program. They will then share their course plans with both their peer teachers and the writing program team. We will provide a template that instructors can use to explicate their course plans in order to streamline the process, these course plan explications will be due during orientation²¹, and should be followed by copies of your course plan/syllabus (with descriptions of the major writing projects) by the 2nd week of the semester. The clear benefit of this process will be to allow instructors more freedom to develop innovative ideas and techniques, and allow us to share ideas so that the entire program (not just a single instructor’s students) can benefit from good ideas.

Textbook Selection

The ISU Grassroots Writing Research Journal (a text which will include materials from students and instructors at ISU), is a required text for ENG 101/101.10 and will be required in 2012 for ENG 145/145.13. In addition, our online archives will include a range of articles, sample texts, genre descriptions, and definitions of terms and concepts etc. that instructors can use for their courses. In addition, Instructors may include a supplemental text (one that retails for $25.00 or less) but should not use a separate textbook. If you have excerpts of texts that you regularly use, please let us know, and we can arrange to have scanned versions of these texts (or links to library sources for the text) available in our online resources.

²¹ Instructors who cannot attend the course plan exchange during orientation will be expected to meet during the 1st week of the semester to complete their course plan review.
Program Learning Outcomes

We have developed a specific set of learning outcomes for ENG 101, and we are working on Learning outcomes for ENG 145. These outcomes articulate the skills and concepts we want students to be learning, and they also connect the course to the University Learning Goals for inner core general education courses. These learning outcomes will be used to guide course development, and to assess student learning and instructor efficacy. We ask that all instructors take both the writing program and university learning outcomes and goals into account as they design their ENG 101 and 145 courses. Instructors should feel confident that the projects they are assigning will (with student investment) result in students leaving the course having successfully gained the skills and experiences outlined in the learning outcomes.  

Grading

Our grading policies are designed to offer students feedback about the overall quality of their work in the course. While instructors will have a great deal of flexibility in how they design and enact grading policies, there will be certain basic policies that should be followed by everyone. While grades can be affected by extra-course issues such as attendance, tardiness, incomplete work, etc., here are the key points we want to remember at all times:

- Grades should be primarily based on students’ ability to learn and to showcase their learning processes related to both producing textual artifacts and understanding how such artifacts are produced -- this means that our goal is not to grade the quality of final productions, but the quality of learning as exemplified by students’ abilities to demonstrate/articulate what they know (and don’t know) about a how to write in a particular genre/situation. This learning can (and should) be incorporated into their written productions, but grades should (as much as possible) be based on the authors ability to identify/articulate what he/she has done (because in some cases the ability to know how to do it is not directly tied to the ability to articulate what one has done (our ought to be doing -- but can’t yet).

- We do want students to attend class, so penalties for attendance/missed work are acceptable (see attendance policy below). However, we also want to make sure that we offer, in each class period, information and activities that lead in obvious ways toward the needed knowledge to produce the assigned work (and assessment/articulation of that work). So if you find yourself saying, “she got a B because she missed class, but all her writing was really A quality,” you may want to rethink either your grading practices or your classroom activities (or both).

- A student who: attends the course without excessive absences, participates in daily activities, completes original work in a timely manner, and does not turn in work that is drastically incomplete (i.e., it might be missing an element or two of the activities for the project, but enough is there to show that he/she definitely did the work), should NOT FAIL THE COURSE. If you have a syllabus that results in this kind of failure, then you should carefully review and change your grading policies.

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22 As of Fall 2011, we require instructors to be able to explicitly identify how their course design fulfills the Learning Outcomes. In preparing their syllabi, instructors should review the Learning Outcomes and consider how their course design connects to these outcomes. There will be a series of model course designs (paragon syllabi) available for instructors to view online, and our fall orientation will include a workshop on these issues.
Students should be able to understand the criteria being used to assess grades. From our genre perspective, this means that (whether you use student-grading or you assess grades) genre discussions are a critical means of creating the criteria through which student work is graded.

We ask that all instructors have students create a portfolio of their work for our assessment and data-collection purposes. However, instructors need not engage in portfolio-style grading (see “Goals & Techniques” section on grading for more information about grading methods).

It is not acceptable for a course design to give final grades for significant projects that students have not had a chance to revise (with feedback). In addition, the program does not support a semester-based portfolio method in which students receive no grades until the end of the semester.

Course grades should reflect (as a whole) the Learning Outcomes appropriate to that course (101/145).

The Grading Scale

The ISU Writing Program uses the following grading scale (without – or + grades)

- 90-100 = A
- 80-89 = B
- 70-79 = C
- 60-69 = D
- 0-59 = F

Instructors are not required to offer numeric scores for grades on either projects or portfolios, but offering numerical grades can be a good way to clarify achievement for students. If you are quantifying other aspects of course activities (class participation, in-class writing, etc.), then you should also quantify project/portfolio grades.

However, if you are using a portfolio system (see more on portfolio vs. project-based grading in the “Goals and Techniques section) with provisional grades, letter grades for provisional grades are often more appropriate than numerical grades because they represent a loosely defined assessment that is subject to significant change. In this case, assigning numerical value can create more rigidity than the instructor might want.

Attendance Policies (101 & 145)

Starting in Fall 2010, the ISU Writing Program instituted a standard, program-wide policy for attendance. Instructors still have flexibility in assessing penalties for attendance, but the basic policy should be the same for each course. The basic policy is as follows:

For a MWF course: Three absences are unpenalized. Each absence beginning with four receives a penalty of 1/3 of a letter grade. This means that whatever the FINAL letter grade in the course, it is reduced by the accrued absences. Ten absences is just slightly over 20% of the classes for the course, and thus results in an automatic failing grade for the course.

Penalties for work missed during absences can still be assessed, as can participation points.

See “Policy Flexibility” section for more information on this.
For a TR course: Two absences are **unpenalized**. Each absence after this results in a ½ letter grade reduction. This means that whatever the FINAL letter grade in the course, it is reduced by the accrued absences. Eight absences is just slightly over 20% of the classes for the course, and thus results in an automatic failing grade for the course.

For a five-day per week course **(ENG 101.10)**: 20% of this course would equal 15 classes. However, since many of these students can greatly benefit from extra assistance provided by the 5-days per week instruction, we do not allow 20% absences before assessing a failing grade. For ENG 101.10, students should be allowed 3 absences (unpenalized) from class, with an additional 2 absences from the 2-day a week writing lab. After that absences should be assessed at 1/2 a letter grade for each subsequent absence.

**First Day Attendance:** Since students often do not have their schedules completely fixed by the first day of class, it makes sense for instructors to exclude this day from their calculation of student attendance. Some instructors may even exclude the first two class periods if they choose. ISU policy does not allow students to add ENG 101 (in most cases) after the first week, thus excuses for non-registration are not valid after the first week.

**Attendance Policy Flexibility**

This basic policy should be the same for every course in the writing program. However, instructors can institute policies in other areas, which may also affect course grades. The spectrum of attendance-related policies and instructor uses should be designed to help students understand what their obligations are, and encourage them to attend regularly and turn in work in a timely manner. Instructors need to make sure that policies are reasonable and enforceable, and that a focus on attendance does not take precedence over the value of the content of class activities and assignments.

Policy areas are as follows:

**Class Participation and In-Class Work:** Instructors may include participation grades that are also affected by attendance. Instructors can also institute policies about credit for in-class work that are affected by absences (i.e., students can’t get credit for work on days when they miss class). In addition, instructors may assess penalties for late work on major assignments. Class Participation and In-Class Work may be weighted in various ways. However, the total value of these two categories should not exceed 20% of the student’s final grade.

**Late Work Penalties:** Instructors can have policies that penalize students for late work and these policies do not need to be identical across sections of the course. It is permissible to have a policy that indicates that late work is not accepted, but the language of the policy should indicate that exceptions can be made in extreme circumstances, especially if the student notifies the instructor in advance or has a documented medical emergency, for instance. If the policy states that penalties will be assessed for late work, the penalty should be clearly stated and reasonable, for example: one letter grade for each day the project is late. Remember, though, that a “day” might mean a class period to the student and a weekday to you. With that in mind, be sure to clarify such terms.

**Excessive Tardiness:** Instructors can also institute policies about excessive tardiness, but penalties should be assessed only for students who miss ½ of the class or more. Penalties for tardiness should not be assessed for students who are
less than 10 minutes late, unless their lateness is habitual. Students who are habitually late should be warned before the instructor begins to assess absences for tardiness less than \( \frac{1}{2} \) a class period.

**A Note On Overall Attendance Policies:** An instructor’s overall policies should never be designed to fail a student who is participating in class, has a positive attitude, and is completing the majority of the course work at an above-average level. In other words, asking students to attend regularly is designed to help make sure they receive the information and practice they need to do the work well, and to make sure that they offer their expertise as writers to their fellow students. An attendance policy that routinely “catches” students who are otherwise performing well and penalizes them to the point where they are in danger of failing the course is not appropriate.

**Working with Students:** Instructors have some flexibility in working with students on late work/attendance issues. In other words, we expect that teachers will sometimes use their own judgment in deciding whether to allow students to do “make up” work or turn in work late. In general, only students who are in good standing at the time their attendance issues began, and who are frank and timely in bringing the matter to the instructor’s attention should be eligible as exceptions to the instructor or program policy. Students who have missed more than 20% of classes cannot be exempted from course failure unless the circumstances are truly exceptional. Writing program team members are always available to discuss these kinds of student issues with instructors.

**Working with Student Athletes (and other school-sponsored activities):** Student athletes will sometimes provide instructors with a letter indicating the dates they may be forced to miss class. Because we wish to treat fairly all students who are engaged in university sponsored activities, we encourage instructors to work to assist students who notify you in advance and in writing about school sponsored activities that require them to miss class. These absences can be assessed as part of the “unpenalized absences” allowed for the course, but school-sponsor absences beyond the 3-5 unpenalized absences allowed) can be negotiated so that students’ grades are not adversely affected -- the instructor should use his/her discretion in negotiating make-up or additional work to replaced missed classes.

**Academic Honesty & Plagiarism**

Essentially, our primary goal when faced with issues of potential academic misconduct are two-fold. Instructors must first assess the produced text to identify the type of problem they believe is occurring, and then decide what type of action is appropriate.

A document developed by the National Association of Writing Program Administrators can be useful to help in this first step: [http://www.wpacouncil.org/node/9](http://www.wpacouncil.org/node/9)

If the instructor feels that the issue does not need to move forward for official review (because they feel that the student may be, at least in part, mis-citing rather than deliberately plagiarizing), they can handle the situation by requiring a re-write which both highlights the student’s new understanding of citation (i.e. having the student explain his/her mistakes) and then revises the project to reflect accurate citations practices. An excellent procedure in such a case is to notify the student, indicating that he/she is receiving an email because the instructor has found problems with the citation procedures in the student’s text. The student can be required to attend a face-to-face meeting. At the meeting, the student can be required to sign a document that indicates that he/she understands fully the problems the instructor has found, and is able to revise the text appropriately. In such situations, the instructor has the option of lowering the final letter grade for that project by 1 full letter grade (but no more).
If the instructor feels that the penalty for the inappropriate activity should be more severe, then he/she must go through ISU's Community Rights and Responsibilities office (which is under the Dean of Students). Their website [http://www.deanofstudents.ilstu.edu/about_us/crr.shtml](http://www.deanofstudents.ilstu.edu/about_us/crr.shtml) offers an explanation of the process and provides forms that both the instructor and student must sign. The procedure for assessing this kind of penalty varies, depending on whether the student admits he/she has plagiarized or wishes to contest the instructor’s assertion. If the student admits he/she has plagiarized, then the instructor must decide what penalty he/she will assess. Students can fail the project or fail the course. The Writing Program administration team is happy to help in situations of plagiarism--whether with general advice or meetings with the student--but please familiarize yourself with both the ISU policy on academic dishonesty and the procedures for reporting breaches of conduct to the CCR:

**ISU's Code of Conduct / Academic Dishonesty.**

Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. A student’s placement of his or her name on any academic exercise shall be regarded as assurance that the work is the result of the student’s own thought, effort, and study. Violations include but are not limited to:

- possessing or utilizing any means of assistance (books, notes, papers, articles, etc.) in an attempt to succeed at any quiz or examination unless specifically authorized by the instructor.
- taking any action with intent to deceive the person in charge as to the student’s acting without honesty to complete an assignment, such as falsifying data or sources, providing false information, etc. Students are prohibited from conversation or other communication in examinations except as authorized by the instructor.
- appropriating without acknowledgement and authorization another’s computer program, or the results of the program (in whole or part) for a computer-related exercise or assignment.
- plagiarizing. For the purpose of this policy, plagiarism is the unacknowledged appropriation of another’s work, words, or ideas in any themes, outlines, papers, reports, speeches, or other academic work. Students must ascertain from the instructor in each course the appropriate means of documentation.
- submitting the same paper for more than one University course without the prior approval of the instructors.
- willfully giving or receiving unauthorized or unacknowledged assistance on any assignment. This may include the reproduction and/or dissemination of test materials. Both parties to such collusion are considered responsible.
- substituting for another student in any quiz or examination.
- being involved in the unauthorized collection, distribution advertisement, solicitation, or sale of term papers, research papers, or other academic materials completed by a third party.

**NOTE:** This excerpt on academic dishonesty can be found in the Student Code of Conduct: [http://www.deanofstudents.ilstu.edu/about_us/crr.shtml](http://www.deanofstudents.ilstu.edu/about_us/crr.shtml). Instructors should include this excerpt in their course syllabi.

**Behavioral Issues**

Student behavioral issues are also covered in the Student Code of Conduct. There are two main categories that can become important for instructors who are dealing with student behavioral issues in the classroom. The first is under the section of the Code that deals with the university’s expectations for students:

2. **Disruption.** This policy is not intended to hinder organized, peaceful and orderly protests. Violations include but are not limited to:
a. disrupting or obstructing teaching, research, administrative, or other University functions, including its public service functions on or off campus, or other authorized non-University activities when these activities occur on University property.

b. leading or inciting others to disrupt scheduled and/or normal non-academic activities associated with the operation of the University.

c. creating an intentional obstruction which unreasonably interferes with freedom of movement, either pedestrian or vehicular (p.9)

The second involves the threat of bodily harm:

6. Misconduct. Engaging in conduct that threatens or endangers the health or safety of any person, or creates in such person a reasonable fear that such a result will occur, including but not limited to:

   a. threatening to subject another person to physical harm or unwanted physical contact.

   b. engaging in any action which is unwanted and results in a reasonable fear for imminent bodily harm and/or the emotional/mental disruption of a person's daily life or educational environment.

   c. following another person in or about a public place or places such that it creates in such person a reasonable fear for their health or safety.

   d. inflicting bodily harm or unwanted physical contact upon any person.

   e. taking any action for the purpose of inflicting harm upon any person.

Instructors can list these excerpts specifically in their syllabi or simply refer to expectations for student behavior in the classroom and then refer students to the Conduct Code.

Sample Syllabus Statement for Classroom Behavior (provided by CR&R):

Students are expected to behave in a manner consistent with being in a professional environment. Open hostility, rudeness, and incivility are discouraged and will result in appropriate action. Mechanical disruptions (cell phones, pagers, electronic toys, music players, etc.) are also strongly discouraged.

Students acting in a disruptive or uncivil manner may be dismissed from the class for the remainder of the class period. If necessary, referrals may also be made to Community Rights & Responsibilities for violations of the Code of Student Conduct.

If you feel you may have a serious behavioral issue, you should (a) document carefully your interactions with the student, referring to the specific behavior and your requirements for change; and (b) contact the Writing Program administration team immediately (even if just to give us a heads up that something may be going on). If you feel you can handle the issue on your own, that's fine, but please do let us know so that we can be available to assist you should you need us.

A Note on Less Serious Behavioral Issues

Instructors can institute course policies dealing with more minor behavioral issues, such as inappropriate use of the internet, inattention, cell phone or mobile devices, etc. However, a student's course grade should not be lowered as the
result of misbehaviors that fall into this category unless they are egregious. For example, it’s inappropriate to fail a student, or even to give a student a zero for the day’s work unless the student has been warned and has failed to respond. However, if the student has repeatedly been asked to refrain from this behavior and he/she becomes belligerent, abusive, or refuses to refrain, the misconduct then shifts to the more serious category. Penalizing student grades should not be the primary way that an instructor controls his/her classroom, and yet instructors sometimes do need to deal with serious issues of misconduct. Use your judgment, but let us know if a situation arises where you feel the student’s grade will potentially be affected, or if you feel that you or any of the other class members are in danger, and/or you feel the other students in the class are being hampered in their ability to learn.

Please keep in mind: You do NOT need to get permission from us for the way you deal with students in your class, although you should take care to stay within our general guidelines. We simply ask that if you encounter a situation in which potential grade penalties or even removal from the class might be an issue, you document the situation with an explanatory email to use as soon as possible. This is for your protection, and not because we feel you necessarily need our oversight. However, please feel free to call on us if you need advice about a situation, or just want to talk things over. That’s what we’re here for.

Contacting Students with Failing Grades

In keeping with university policies, we ask instructors to contact all students in their course who are receiving a failing grade during the week prior to the final drop date for the course. Instructors can use email to notify the student that they are currently on track to fail the course and explain that the drop date is approaching. In addition, instructors in may want (but are not strictly required) to notify students when their absences have begun to impact their course grade. We recognize that it can be difficult and time-consuming to offer students constant updates on their status -- so the frequency of these updates should be at the instructor’s discretion. See the section on “communicating bad news to students” for a more detailed discussion of the rhetorical complexities of these types of communications.

Student Questions and Complaints

although we work very hard to protect and support the instructors working for the Writing Program, we do take student questions and complaints seriously. We find that complaints fall into several categories (see below) When we receive a complaint from a student, we can proceed in several ways, depending on the nature of the complaint/question. Our options include asking the student to come to meet with either the program director or assistant director, or sending and email with a more detailed description of the problem. When complaints are made, we will contact the instructor and (generally) ask him/her to clarify the issue with any necessary details. Our goal is to work with both students and instructors to resolve issues any issues that occur.

Categories of complaints/questions:

- Grade complaints: We have a standard policy for grade complaints which asks the students to send detailed information regarding the nature of his/her complaint, along with all the relevant course materials. Once the student has done this, either the director or the assistant director will review the materials, and then contact the instructor to get his/her feedback regarding the grade. Although it is possible for a student complaint to result in a changed grade, this is a rare occurrence, and generally received the support of the instructor for the change.
• **Complaints about clarity and/or feedback**: We do receive occasional complaints about the clarity of assignments or the clarity/comprehensiveness of instructor feedback. In these situations our first goal is to help resolve the issue through mediation with both the instructor and the student.

• **Complaints about professional behavior**: Complaints about professional behavior can include demeanor, abusive language in the classroom, failure to hold regular classes, among others. These complaints are (fortunately) very rare. When we receive such a complaint from a student we’ll contact the instructor immediately. Complaints of this nature can often be diffused by the instructor who has kept records of difficult or disruptive students, which is why documenting disruptive behavior (see above) can be critical.

### Cancelled/Alternative Class Meetings

There are a variety of purposes for which an instructor might decide to hold an alternate class period. The following are pre-approved alternative class periods:

**Library Work**: This can include an official library visit in collaboration with an instructional librarian, or a work day in which the class meets at the library to complete research or to learn researching skills. In general, instructors should have no more than three (approximately) library days, and instructors should “lead” (be present) on those days. In plain language: Don’t cancel a significant number of classes to go to the library, and don’t cancel class and send students to the library without your supervision. If you wish to use the library as a tool/location for class work, that’s great (within reason).

**Work Days**: Instructors will occasionally wish to provide a work day for students to complete a major project or portfolio. In general, the policy for such a day is that the instructor should arrange to be available to work one-on-one with students on that day. In other words, the class should “meet” but attendance is not required. This is a bit of a grey area, as instructors should certainly not make a policy of optional attendance without a very good cause. If the instructor has had to have other absences (for illness, family issues, or attendance) then, in general, work days should not be used.

**Conferences**: Instructors can cancel up to two weeks of class (maximum) throughout the semester for student conferences, although we recommend only one week if you are combining conferences with other alternative days. If you have a course plan that calls for more conference days than this, you should specifically clear it with program administration.

**Field Trips/Outside Days**: Instructors may sometimes choose to meet in alternative locations (a different room, or to meet outside) or move the class to another location during the class. This is not really a problem unless it results in confused students who don’t know where the class is meeting. Instructors should always make sure that all students know about alternative meetings, and they should send a note to the WPA-notify listserv to alert the writing program that they are meeting in an alternative location. Instructors do not have to receive prior approval for alternative class meetings (as long as these are reasonable in number), but they should notify the listserv as a precautionary measure. Again, we don’t feel the need to directly supervise instructors in these situations, but in an emergency situation, we should be able to find you and your class.

**Off-Campus Field Trips**: Off-campus field trips or course meetings are possible, but they do need prior approval from both the department and the university. Don’t plan an off-campus class field trip without approval. You can start by
notifying the Writing Program Administration (Nancy McKinney or Joyce Walker) and we’ll help you through the process of getting approval.

Conferences/Social Gatherings Off Campus: Sometimes instructors like to have a final class meeting in a different location, or meet students for conferences off campus (at the Coffee Hound, etc.). In general, this is OK… but you MUST make sure that students will not have a problem getting to the location. If you have students with mobility issues, moving the class to any distance from the original class is not a good idea, and in general, it’s best when conferencing off-campus to allow students the opportunity to indicate that they would rather meet on-campus. Instructors should not penalize students for being unable/unwilling to attend an off-campus meeting, unless it is a pre-approved field trip. In the case of conferences, the option for on-campus meeting should be given, and students can then be penalized for non-attendance, of course.

Instructor Absences/Cancelled Classes

Occasionally an instructor must be absent from or cancel a class period as the result of illness, family emergency, or professional development (conferences, job visits, etc.). This is acceptable, as long as it is reasonable. In general, (excepting serious emergency situations) an instructor should not have to cancel class more than 1-3 times a semester. The following procedures should be followed in relation to canceling classes.

Advance Absences: If you know about the absence in advance (for a conference presentation, for example) and you can design an alternative day that incorporates work for the writing project in progress, simply alert the writing program by contacting Nancy McKinney via email -- Let her know the date of the cancelled class, the reason for your absence, and the activity you’ve asked students to complete.

Emergency Absences: If you are ill or have an personal or family emergency and time is short (i.e., you only have several hours before your class meets), you should do the following:
1. Contact Jan Ballowe (department secretary) immediately by both phone and email <jrballo@ilstu.edu>, to ask her to inform students about the cancelled class.
2. Call and/or email Nancy McKinney directly.

PLEASE NOTE: Contacting Jan Ballowe by phone and email is the only way to ensure that a physical note will be placed on your classroom door when you have an emergency cancellation of your class. If you reach Nancy or one of the other WPA folks, we can contact the department for you, but it’s best to contact the department directly as well.

Emergency Absence Contact for Students: Whenever possible, students should be notified via email about a cancelled class. The Writing Program cannot do this for you, and we recognize that in some special emergency situations this may not be possible. But whenever possible, please make sure to use email to notify your students.

Substitutions (informal): Sometimes when instructors must be absent from class, he/she will arrange for a colleague (peer instructor) to handle the class. Simply send an email to Nancy McKinney to notify her of your plans.

Substitutions (formal): If you would like the Writing Program to help you to find a substitute for your course, you can send a request to Nancy Mckinney, and she will send out a call for a volunteer. We will always attempt to find an
instructor to handle your class, but it's not always possible. Last-minute emergencies may be difficult to cover, but with advance notice we can usually find someone to help.

**A Final Note on Absences, Class Trips, and Alternate Classes:** The procedures we've designed here are intended to protect both instructors and students. In the event of an emergency, we may need to quickly discover if a class is meeting or not, or where it is meeting. And although we expect instructors will act in a professional manner to discharge their duties as graduate teaching assistants, we also need to be aware of how often instructors are absent or are holding alternative classes. Ultimately, failure to hold classes regularly can be grounds for dismissal, so helping us to keep track of what you are doing protects you.