ASSESSMENT NEWS

Department of English, Literature + Reading | Wilbur Wright College

A Tale of Two Surveys: Assessing the Digital Literacy of Faculty + Students

This semester both the department **and** the college are focusing upon assessing digital literacy competencies.

I. **Department Faculty Survey:** In support of the college's 2016-2017 focus on digital literacy within the General Education Common Core (GECC) curriculum, the department's assessment committee is exploring the levels and kinds of digital literacies of its instructors as well as assessing the instructional technology needs most needed to support effective teaching and student learning within the department's curriculum. This faculty survey may also correlate with data aggregated from the college's assessment of student digital literacy and technological competency.

Please complete this survey in one of three ways:
1. Go to the link below:
    1. **HERE** or **https://wilburwright.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5op4bRbKCXLtWyV** ;
2. **Or**, complete the printed copy of the survey placed in your box on 11/28 and submit it to the department box of H. Doss;
3. **Or**, print the survey attached to the email with the newsletter or that was sent to you on 11/28; complete it and submit it to the department box of H. Doss.

II. **College Student Survey:** Professor Vincent Bruckert, the chair of the college's Assessment Committee, and the Office of Instruction have developed a survey, which is correlated with the CCSSE (Community College Survey of Student Engagement), a standardized survey in which some of your classes may have participated during the last few years. This student survey will help the college's Assessment Committee understand the digital literacy competencies of our students.

Please make this survey available to your students:
Instructions for faculty: Please place the survey link on all of your classes' Blackboard Announcements pages.

Share the link below with your students:
https://wilburwright.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_eXlfoABDZLuqR7f

Instructions for students: Please respond to the 12 questions by only considering this class, and your work for this class. If you are in another class that has asked you to take this survey, you should still take the survey for our class now since your responses for that other class should only refer to your work in that course. So if you have four classes, for instance, you may be asked to take this survey four separate times, and each time you should record different answers.

Thank you, in advance, for your support and participation.

Assessment, Approaches + Assignments: Embracing Diversity

Continuing with the trope of "assessing in the borderlands," this issue of *AN* explores the diversity of pedagogical, structural and thematic approaches to English 101 and 102 among members of the department; conceiving of and teaching first-year composition as "writing studies"; and, the variety of current and planned activities of the ELR assessment (ELR-AC), English 101 Cohorts and English 101-102 committees.

ELR-AC is refining interventions, which will support effective teaching and student learning achievement, from sample English 101 assignments and support on addressing ethical researching to rubrics and documents, which focus on formative assessment and encourage differentiated instructional approaches to teaching college composition as well as the development of a diagnostic essay for English 101 in order to measure learning gains achievement at the end of the course. Additionally, both ELR-AC and the college-wide assessment committee have developed and deployed brief surveys to ascertain instructor and student digital literacy (see column to the left and pp. 6).

Moreover, English 101 Cohorts introduced innovations this semester, e.g., three meetings in order to support iterative professional development and collegial bonding as well as user experience surveys/focus groups and interviews. Additionally, based upon feedback gathered from cohort chairs and members as well as observations of the benefits and challenges of the current cohort structure, in spring 2017, five to seven lecturers will have an opportunity to serve as compensated cohort chairs (see pp. 6).

Additionally, the English 101/102 committee will continue exploring the relationship between the two college-level composition courses; the kinds of assessments used in each course; and, the specific skills and competencies students should have gained at the conclusion of each course in order to improve alignment, teaching/learning/transfer experiences, and retention and success rates between/in both courses. It will continue its work, reviewing carefully research-based best practices. The committee will also include within its scope the best means by which to assure equitable access and opportunities for learning and success to all students within the first-year composition sequence (see pp. 6 and 14).

Furthermore, this issue of *AN* explores multiple approaches to teaching first-year composition. To ground this pursuit, Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle, in their *CCC* article, "Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning "First-year Composition" as "Introduction to Writing Studies" provide a novel and provocative narrative about the impact of pedagogy and the meaning of "academic discourse." In their article, they "propose, theorize, demonstrate, and report early results from a course that approaches first-year composition as Introduction to Writing Studies. This pedagogy explicitly recognizes the impossibility of teaching a universal academic discourse and rejects that as a goal for first-year composition. It seeks instead to improve students' understanding of writing, rhetoric, language, and literacy in a course that is topically oriented to reading and writing as scholarly inquiry and that encourages more realistic conceptions of writing" (see pp. 3-4, 8 and 10-11).

Finally, continuing the tradition begun in fall 2015 with articles that privilege instructors' experiences in the context of informal professional development, this issue features five texts by members of our department. Professors Teahan and Marsh share approaches to teaching English 101, both of which demonstrate the utility of selecting topical, engaging texts that encourage students to interrogate received knowledge; work methodically and collaboratively toward knowledge generation; and, include. within limits, personal experiences and reading reflections in their compositions meaningfully (see pp. 9 and 12). Professors Schupack, Brand and Cooper-McGhee reflect on approaches to English 102. Using the "themes" of creativity, the zombie apocalypse and Chicago corruption, these authors provide profound reminders of the value of play and liberatory practices in curriculum design and instruction; pacing and nuanced critical readings of social context as well as "popular" culture; and, experiential and inter-generational learning experiences to students' intellectual development, well-being and progress (see pp. 2, 4-5, 7 and 13). All authors provide useful insights into approaches to teaching first-year composition as a culturally embedded and socially-situated pursuit. Robust, thoughtful and adoption-worthy, all.

I hope you enjoy this issue. Please let me know -- your feedback has been invaluable.

Kind regards,
Helen Doss, PhD
Associate Professor, English | Assessment Coordinator, ELR
Check out the ELR-AC webpage: ELR-Assessment Committee Webpage

Note to Self

by Sara Schupack, PhD |
Director, Developmental Education + Lecturer, English

Is a paper like a painting or a piece of music…? Instead of a flat image that is mapped out in pieces that add up to a whole, can it develops through time, building upon itself towards a climax? Could lesson and course design do the same?

I write reminders to myself and share them here, in case there are resonances or overlaps for a reader.

I tell myself that I am committed to creativity and the organic interrelationship between form and content. That is what I want my students to experience. That is core to what matters with writing, yet why do I still squeeze in the more creative activities for 'when there is time'? The other day, past midterm, I asked students to review short literature we had read, connecting the pieces to our course theme through creative lenses. They had choices (something else I am a firm believer in), including the following: create a 'found poem' from favorite lines from each work, using repetition for effect. Or: create a dialogue between two characters or voices from two of the pieces. The other two choices I realize now were not playful enough. At least one should have offered a visual interpretation. Why did it take me so long to offer this way into the readings? The students became quite animated and engaged. Some chose to take the assignment in different and innovative directions.

One answer to my own question is that I get caught up in the linear trajectory of coursework. The same rigid, stifling structures that I want to free my students from I also struggle to free myself from: binary thinking (see Tannen), inflexible linearity, and the five paragraph essay.

I recall a presentation on the power and logic behind backwards curriculum design. Students in the lowest level of English should not receive dumbed-down curriculum that treats them in a patronizing or uninspired way. The presenter critiqued earlier curricula which went down from an essay to a paragraph, then the sentence, and then a lower level was deemed necessary, so what would that focus on, the word? I chuckled along. Gone are the days of grammar drills and write-by-numbers! Certainly students should be exposed to college-level and exciting texts right from the start, and writing should be approached holistically. Our students have a lot to say, and should be supported in saying it, whether or not the subjects agree with the verbs or there are paragraphs breaks at first try. But simply offering students more paragraphs than five, while expecting an introduction with a thesis statement and paragraphs with topic sentences isn't moving very far off the beaten path.

Is a paper like a painting or a piece of music (see Elbow)? Instead of a flat image that is mapped out in pieces that add up to a whole, can it develops through time, building upon itself towards a climax? Could lesson and course design do the same?

Reminder: Updated English 101 Critical Essay Rubric + New Guide Document
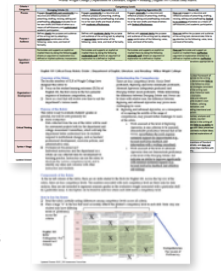
For those teaching English 101 this semester, please remember to use the most updated copy of the English 101 Critical Essay Rubric. It was updated in fall 2015 and is accompanied by a guide document, which provides information on the objectives, purpose, and components of the rubric, as well as key information on differentiating the competency levels and using the rubric effectively. *Printed copies are located in the rear of the ELR department office, L323; digital copies are available from English 101 Cohort Chairs or from the department's assessment coordinator at* hdoss@ccc.edu.

Zombie Apocalypse: Economic Plague-Monsters at the End of Capitalism

by Mark R. Brand, PhD Candidate | Lecturer, English

In English 102…[w]e will interrogate the long-running economic subtext of zombies, including at least some examination of its origin as a slave-narrative from 19th century Haiti, and the ongoing and inexhaustible popularity of the subgenre during our era of austerity.

Deleuze and Guatari have written that the only modern myth is the zombie myth, and that it is a work myth. The Great Recession, and its aftermath in the form of an era of austerity, have thrust the zombie figure to the forefront of contemporary disaster narrative. Indeed, Marquette University's Gerry Canavan describes the zombie apocalypse in economic terms: a "final nightmare of consumption… not so much threatening life as delineating the exact moment in a capitalist-consumer model when life ceases to be worth living." One astute web journalist (Michael Moffa) pointed out that the zombies in *The Walking Dead* behave recognizably like a large cohort of unemployed formerly-middle-class workers enduring austerity measures. They are not merely unemployed, but fundamentally unemployable, they create more of themselves in a Keynesian model as capital and small businesses fail under the weight of decreased consumer spending. They exhibit swarm-like behavior, sending thousands of applications for a single good job opening, and they claw, money-starved at sales bins and at each other in Wal-Mart on Black Friday trying to find a discount to slake their hunger for commercial consumption. The slogans "the new normal" and "surviving is thriving" resonate just as interchangeably in the widespread austerity of a protracted global economic downturn as they might in a zombie apocalypse. The plucky, young, traumatized survivors often confront overwhelming dystopian realities, and do so with a variant of protective magical thinking akin to a sunk costs fallacy: *there's nowhere to go but forward because the world behind us has ended*. This might interchangeably be the sentiment of a young person who continues to gamely take on staggering loan debt and navigate the nightmarishly underfunded and crumbling public university (or, community college), despite his or her own grave misgivings about the future of adequately remunerative work, and the value of education in the new neoliberal economy.

Assessment Geeks, Wanted: *Do you daydream about assignment redesign? After a particularly successful or gnarly class session are you compelled to think about the reason it did or did not work?*

If you answered "yes" to one or both of the above questions, ***ELR Assessment needs you!*** In 2016-2017, the Department of English, Literature & Reading Assessment Committee will work on multiple interventions to support teaching and learning in English 101-102.

Interested? Please send an email to hdoss@ccc.edu with your day/time availability in fall 2016 and spring 2017. Part-time faculty are welcome to join!

Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning "First-Year Composition" as "Introduction to Writing Studies"| by Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle, in *College Composition and Communication*, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), 2007

Adapted from the original article, which is available [here](#).

First-year composition (FYC) is usually asked to prepare students to write across the college; this request assumes the existence of a "universal eduated discourse" (Russell, "Activity Theory") that can be transferred from one writing situation to another. Yet more than twenty years of research and theory have repeatedly demonstrated that such a unified academic discourse does not exist and have seriously questioned what students can and do transfer from one context to another (Ackerman, Berkenkotter and Huckin, Carter, Diller and Oates, Kaufer and Young, MacDonald, Petraglia, Russell "Activity Theory"). However, for all practical purposes, writing studies as a field has largely ignored the implications of this research and theory and continued to assure its publics (faculty, administrators, parents, industry) that FYC can do what nonspecialists have always assumed it can: teach, in one or two early courses, "college writing" as a set of basic, fundamental skills that will apply in other college courses and in business and public spheres after college. In making these unsupportable assurances to stakeholders, our field reinforces cultural misconceptions of writing instead of attempting to educate students and publics out of those misconceptions. When we continue to pursue the goal of teaching students "how to write in college" in one or two semesters—despite the fact that our own scholarship extensively calls this possibility into question—we silently support the misconceptions that writing is not a real subject, that writing courses do not require expert instructors, and that rhetoric and composition are not genuine research areas or legitimate intellectual pursuits. We are, thus, complicit in reinforcing outsiders' views of writing studies as a trivial, skill-teaching non-discipline.

Though we complain about public misconceptions of writing and of our discipline, our field has not seriously considered radically reimagining the mission of the very course where misconceptions are born and/or reinforced; we have not yet imagined moving first-year composition from teaching "how to write in college" to teaching about writing—from acting as if writing is a basic, universal skill to acting as if writing studies is a discipline with content knowledge to which students should be introduced, thereby changing their understandings about writing and thus changing the ways they write. Here we champion such a radical move by proposing, theorizing, demonstrating, and reporting early results from an "Intro to Writing Studies" FYC pedagogy. This pedagogy explicitly recognizes the impossibility of teaching a universal academic discourse and rejects that as a goal for FYC. It seeks instead to improve students' understanding of writing, rhetoric, language, and literacy in a course that is topically oriented to reading and writing as scholarly inquiry and encouraging more realistic understandings of writing.

> *When we continue to pursue the goal of teaching students "how to write in college" in one or two semesters—despite the fact that our own scholarship extensively calls this possibility into question—we silently support the misconceptions that writing is not a real subject, that writing courses do not require expert instructors, and that rhetoric and composition are not genuine research areas or legitimate intellectual pursuits.*

In this article, we explore and theorize the connection between writing studies' standing in the academy and what it teaches in the courses it accepts as its *raison d'être*, first-year composition. Despite the progress our field has made over the years at erasing theory/practice oppositions, it is still too easy to imagine pedagogy as "practice," removed from the realm of serious theory or research about the work or direction of writing studies as a discipline. Resisting the notion that talk about pedagogy is merely talk about "practice" is especially important to writing studies because our field is conceived—by those who fund it, those who experience it, and most of those who work in it—as primarily pedagogical. Part of our purpose here is to insist on the deep disciplinary implications of FYC pedagogy; a pedagogical move whose intention is to help re-situate an entire field within the academy demonstrates that pedagogy has impact beyond the daily teaching to-do list. For example, reimagining FYC as "Intro to Writing Studies" might create more natural gateways to WAC and WID programs than FYC typically does now. Further, the "Intro to Writing Studies" course would be akin to the introductory courses offered in all other disciplines (i.e., Intro to Chemistry or Intro to Philosophy) and would potentially serve as a cornerstone course for writing studies majors beginning to take root across the country. (Having a major, of course, dramatically changes a field's standing in the academy.) While we use the bulk of this article to help readers envision the Intro to Writing Studies pedagogy, our concern is not simply to improve writing instruction but also to improve the position of writing studies in the academy and change common misconceptions about writing.

We begin by establishing the grounds on which we question the traditional "teaching college writing" goal of FYC and theorize a more pedagogically successful alternative. We examine several important misconceptions about writing and writing skills transfer that suffuse expectations for FYC: that academic writing is generally universal, that writing is a basic skill independent of content or context, and that writing abilities automatically transfer from FYC to other courses and contexts. We then describe the introductory pedagogy of a writing course whose content is writing theory and research. We conclude by addressing some critiques of the intro pedagogy, showing how they in fact reinforce the case for reimagining FYC both to improve writing instruction and to improve the standing of writing studies in the academy.

> *If writing studies as a discipline is to have any authority over its own courses, our cornerstone course must resist conventional but inaccurate models of writing…Instead of teaching situational skills often incorrectly imagined to be generalizable, FYC could teach about the ways writing works in the world and how the "tool" of writing is used to mediate various activities.*

Systemic Misconception and Misdirection of Mainstream FYC

A number of assumptions inform the premise that academic writing is somehow universal: writing can be considered independent of content; writing consists primarily of syntactic and mechanical concerns; and academic writing skills can be taught in a one or two introductory general writing skills courses and transferred easily to other courses. These assumptions are reflected in public policy reports such as *Standards for Success by the Center for Educational Policy Research*,

Continued on p. 4.

"Note to Self," Schupack cont.

Someone asked me an important question the other day: "Is it elitist to teach writing formulaically, if the students seem to need that help?" With that question comes its opposite "is it elitist not to?"

When I think about terms such as "design thinking" (see Wiggins and McTighe) or "reverse engineering," I cringe. These approaches seem too mechanistic and spiritless for my taste. If everything is planned, where is the room for whimsy, spontaneity, and inspiration? I participate in and approve of a system carefully crafted to start at the end point and calibrate what each step towards that will look like, how it will manifest and be assessed. Then I get stuck and only see the linearity. I focus perhaps too much on worrying about students leaving one level "ready" for the next. What exactly are they ready for?

Someone asked me an important question the other day: "Is it elitist to teach writing formulaically, if the students seem to need that help?" With that question comes its opposite "is it elitist not to?" Finding one answer today isn't the point. I need to keep revisiting these questions. When do scaffolding and guidance and modeling become limiting? I used to withhold the "punch line" of a lesson, thinking that was the way to lure students to the end point. It was also a way of maintaining control, I later realized. Certainly I want to make my expectations clear and invite students to see the steps forward, but circularity or spiraling and even detours can enrich the journey, particularly detours that students suggest.

Because I can't know which of my students will pause from their educational journeys or when, I would like to be able to offer them the whole contained within the parts. I think about a popular term, "21st Century Skills", which includes adaptability. People these days tend to change jobs several times in a lifetime and need transferable skills. In all of this effort to move students along and get them prepared, I worry that I forget about another crucial component: Fun. If a person is going to move around a lot, shouldn't she enjoy the ride? If I think about a liberal arts education, I think about curiosity, creativity, always learning, yearning for more, and in order for any of that to matter, taking pleasure in the discoveries, enjoying the process.

Reading Corner: Digital Literacy + Critical Thinking

Below, please find a text that engages in and continues the conversation about connection between digital literacy and critical thinking in the "information age." If you review this text or have read it previously, please send me a quick note about its value and limitations.
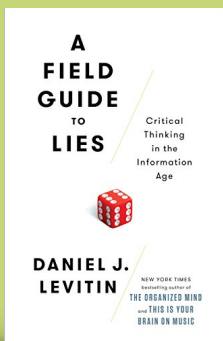
A Field Guide to Lies: Critical thinking in the Information Age (Dutton, 2016) by Daniel Levitin. *From Amazon*: "Levitin shows how to recognize misleading announcements, statistics, graphs, and written reports revealing the ways lying weasels can use them…Levitin groups his field guide into two categories– statistical information and faulty arguments– ultimately showing how science is the bedrock of critical thinking. Infoliteracy means understanding that there are hierarchies of source quality and bias that variously distort our information feeds via every media channel, including social media.

"Teaching about Writing," Downs and Wardle cont.

…"academic writing" is constituted by and in the diversity of activities and genres that mediate a wide variety of activities within higher education; its use as an umbrella term is dangerously misleading.

which focuses primarily on the need for grammar instruction—even sentence diagramming—in writing instruction. The "blue ribbon" National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges has produced two reports, *The Neglected R* and *Writing: A Ticket to Work . . . Or a Ticket Out*, both of which favor college professors' and business professionals' impressions of students' writing over actual data developed by writing studies scholarship. Not surprisingly, those impressions focus on syntactic and mechanical concerns and assume that "writing is writing," involving "learn- once/write-many" basic skills. The content-versus-form misconception—as old as FYC itself—appears in standardized testing, with the SAT "writing" test giving better scores to longer essays and completely discounting factual errors. It also finds its way into *New York Times* editorials, where no less a public intellectual than Stanley Fish argues that it is possible to, and therefore that FYC should, focus strictly on writing's grammatical forms and disavow interest in its content.

The field of writing studies has made part of its business for the last forty years testing these assumptions and articulating more complex, realistic, and useful ways of thinking about writing. We understand writing as inseparable from content (CCCC; Crowley; Reither) and as more than collections of grammatical and syntactical constructions (Broad; Diller and Oates; Haswell, *Gaining Ground*). Despite research demonstrating the complexity of writing, misconceptions persist and inform FYC courses around the country that attempt to teach "academic discourse." We next review several of the most intransigent problems that stem from misconceptions about writing.

Academic Discourse as a Category Mistake

The *WPA Outcomes Statement* adopted by the Council of Writing Program Administrators in April 2000 (http://wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html) highlights four major outcomes for writing instruction: rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading, and writing; processes;

If writing cannot be separated from content, then scholarly writing cannot be separated from reading.

and knowledge of conventions. These outcomes, which reflect an ideology of access to the academy and a desire to prepare students for academic writing, are increasingly being adopted nationwide (Ericsson). But can FYC fulfill these expectations?

Studies suggest that students write for various communities within the academy, each of which uses writing in specialized ways that mediate the activities of the people involved (Bazerman, "Life," Shaping; Bazerman and Paradis; Berkenkotter, et al.; Hyland; Miller; Russell, "Activity," "Rethinking"; Smit). While some general features of writing are shared across disciplines (e.g., a view of research writing as disciplinary conversation; writing strategies such as the "moves" made in most research introductions; specialized terminology and explicit citation—see Hyland or Swales, for example), these shared features are realized differently within different academic disciplines, courses, and even assignments (Howard; Hull; Russell, "Looking"; Shamoon). As a result, "academic writing" is constituted by and in the diversity of activities and genres that mediate a wide variety of activities within higher education; its use as an umbrella term is dangerously misleading. In this sense, positing "academic writing" as the object upon which first-year students and teachers can act creates what philosopher Gilbert Ryle labeled a category mistake, "committed when, in seeking to give an account of some concept, one says that it is of one logical type or category when in fact it is of another" (Lyons 44). Ryle's example is mistaking a single building on a university campus for the university itself (Lyons 44–45).

"Zombie Apocalypse," Brand cont.

The slogans "the new normal" and "surviving is thriving" resonate just as interchangeably in the widespread austerity of a protracted global economic downturn as they might in a zombie apocalypse… This might interchangeably be the sentiment of a young person who continues to gamely take on staggering loan debt and navigate the nightmarishly underfunded and crumbling public university, despite his or her own grave misgivings about the future of adequately remunerative work, and the value of education in the new neoliberal economy.

Families, homes, and things are central to the zombie narrative. Zombie stories almost invariably involve children in peril, and the terror of heightened parental vigilance. Single-family homes, apartment buildings, and hospitals are nests of the living dead, while gas stations, churches, and department stores are at best precarious temporary shelters. These places represent long-sublimated fears of urban overcrowding and demographic shifts, and the impermanence of mid-century American institutions in an age of commercially-apocalyptic austerity, recalling Detroit-style subprime real-estate blight, a fraying healthcare system, and the decline of commercial spaces like malls. The only real protection comes in the form of a new type of home—the fortress home—a rugged, rigidly-meritocratic proletarian fiefdom where white-collar credentials have no value, and infrastructure, mechanical, and military personnel are at the top of the professional food chain. Walled towns that seem "safe" inside are a brittle comment on where the soft everyman or everywoman of the 21st century knowledge economy stands in pursuit of the American Dream. Survivors (now synonymous with thrivers) are as trapped as they are protected by the homes they fight so hard to defend, either from desperate friends and extended family who may siphon off their resources, or from zombie-like collection agents at robo-signing mortgage companies.

The zombies, by comparison, uselessly inhabit public spaces, clogging recovery efforts and preventing access to needed infrastructure. Their home is the crowd, and their appearance, in grotesque parody of the so-called *precariat*, is angry, hungry, unhealthy, desperate,

Two 8-week term-paper cycles is manageable from a teaching standpoint, and repetitive practice of a very common assignment on that time scale reinforces much needed confidence and realistic expectations for all types of writing in later classes.

confused, and anonymous. The zombies are recognizable not by their former human-ness and disheveled popular hairstyles, but by the detritus of capitalism that adorns them: designer jeans, diamond wedding rings, Oakley sunglasses, and other ephemera that decay and disintegrate right along with the zombies themselves. Theirs is the anonymity of an abyssal, nightmare underclass whose stories cease to be individual in their hordes. If the survivors are underemployed, struggling Recession-era Americans trapped by negative equity in unhomely homes at best, and under threat of foreclosure at worst; the zombies are the unknown millions of unemployed, bankrupted, desperate strangers who have already succumbed to this same struggle in an economic plague-model.

In this class, English 102, I plan to take students from the inception of the so-called "postmodern zombie" in George Romero's films (inspired by the first plague-model zombie narrative, Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*) up to present-day iterations including AMC's *The Walking Dead* and Colson Whitehead's *Zone One*. We will interrogate the long-running economic subtext of zombies, including at least some examination of its origin as a slave-narrative from 19th century Haiti, and the ongoing and inexhaustible popularity of the subgenre during our era of austerity.

Syllabus Overview:

My English 102 courses all follow the same general pattern, irrespective of the texts I choose in any given semester:

Weeks 1-2: Read the first novel of the course (in this case, Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*)
Weeks 3-5: Work through idea-generation and research phases, including identifying themes and conflicts in the narrative, finding, reading, and annotating academic sources from a pre-prepared list of approved criticism, and creating an outline-level draft.
Weeks 6-8: Drafting in stages to complete all of the components of the first paper (introduction, directed summary, evidence and argument, conclusion, citations).

The midterm marks the halfway point of the class, at which point we read a second novel (in this case Colson Whitehead's *Zone* One) and we start the process all over again, with the following changes: The second time through the novel is longer, more complex, and typically written in a more elevated and literary prose, and this time students must locate their own sources using library resources and each other.

I also screen anywhere from 2-4 films over the course of the semester, depending on if the books have been adapted and if films exist with strong thematic tie-ins that students could use to build interesting comparative arguments. The two major papers receive 0-100 numerical grades and are revise-able in the event of an unsatisfactory grade, and the remainder of the scaffolding assignments (of which there are approximately 14-16) are graded holistically for completion. I also curve generously based on perfect or near-perfect attendance and exemplary participation to help diligent novice writers match hard-earned skills with a satisfying grade.

Pedagogical Rationale:

In course feedback, my students frequently praise this syllabus for de-emphasizing grades and overly-complicated busywork and instead providing a rich, extended practice of assembling essays about a unifying, relevant topic, with plenty of help along the way. Most have never written anything in the 2500-word range before, and the prospect of doing that twice is daunting. I leave ample room in the course calendar for the idea-generation phase of these papers, which my students report is their favorite part of the process, and the part that usually gets short-shrift. If it takes an extra week to finish a novel, read more academic articles, or to narrow down their paper topic, this is time very well spent. Once they're comfortable with the steps of longer paper-writing, which simply repeat in the second half of the class, I focus on learning how to trust the drafting process, use time wisely, engage more deeply with the texts, and seek out feedback during revision.

While a course topic like zombies certainly lends itself well to alternate digital and multimedia composition projects in place of the traditional research essay, I confess I strongly favor very conventional writing assignments in my syllabi. I don't allow substitution of papers for web or video projects, for example, and students print and hand in their assignments in hard-copy. I make this trade-off because what I'm teaching by doubling up the standard ENG 102 full-length research paper is the all-important element of time-management. Two 8-week term-paper cycles is manageable from a teaching standpoint, and repetitive practice of a very common assignment on that time scale reinforces much needed confidence and realistic expectations for all types of writing in later classes. I certainly would love to explore options to diversify my larger project types, especially with popular favorite topics like zombies, but in reflective essays at the end of class, my students routinely report gratefulness and overall satisfaction with the focus on systematic, unhurried, and straightforward writing practice, so that's what I'm sticking with for now.

For more details about the ideas, texts and the strategies featured here, please contact Professor Brand at mbrand3@ccc.edu.

ELR Assessment Committee, English 101 Cohorts + English 101-102 Committee | 2016-2017 Updates

ELR Assessment Committee will:

1. Begin the process of revising and updating the Critical Essay Rubric (CER) based upon user feedback from the spring 2016 English 101 cohorts and analysis of existing holistic rubrics designed for use in first-year composition.
2. Compile sample diagnostic essays for use during the first week of the semester in English 101 in order to better assess the learning occurring between the beginning and end of the semester.
3. In spring 2017, discuss data collected from the ELR Faculty Digital Literacy Survey regarding instructor use of technology and digital literacy skills across our composition sequence — ARC, English 101 + English 102.
4. In spring 2017, launch a department Dropbox folder, which will contain resources for instructors teaching English 101, first, then English 102 in order to better share the aforementioned tools and information with the department faculty and staff. The following will be available via the Dropbox folder:
   1. Critical Essay Rubric and Guide Document;
   2. English 101 Assessment and Cohort materials;
   3. A document that defines and discusses the multiple types of and motivations for plagiarism with strategies for addressing them;
   4. A rubric designed to support instructors as they parse the individual skills associated with each of the criteria assessed in the CER. The intention is to help instructors identify and track specific skills achievement over the entire course;
   5. Three modules and introductory (contextualizing) essays for English 101 as well as a document aligning the work in each of those modules with the CER; and,
   6. Research articles and reports about *suggested* best practices in teaching English 101 + 102.

English 101 Cohorts will:

1. Discuss strengths and challenges of current English 101 process as well as the characteristics necessary to be effective as a cohort chair.
2. Collect (fall 2016) and review (spring 2017) survey data regarding instructor experience with the CER.
3. Update the existing cohort chair process in the following manner:
   1. English 101 Cohort Chair positions will be staffed by **five to seven part-time faculty members**, each of whom will be mentored by one full-time faculty member with previous experience as a cohort chair and/or teaching English 101. Each cohort chair will lead one to two cohorts of two to four members each. These positions are compensated.
   2. Cohorts will be organized according to need, e.g., those faculty who are newer to Wright and/or teaching English 101 will be grouped together in order to offer more targeted and frequent support; whereas, those faculty members who have taught English 101 regularly and successfully will be grouped together and offered support commensurate with their needs and experience levels. Also, cohorts will be organized according to schedules/availability, e.g., the Wilbur Wright College teaching schedules of part-time faculty is only one factor in a complex set of other factors that determine availability.
   3. Qualifications for these positions include: Two or more semesters of teaching English 101 at Wright College (having taught other courses in the composition sequence, i.e., FS, 98, 100, ARC and 102, is a plus); participated actively in previous English 101 cohorts; teaching philosophy, which is succinct and clear and focused on teaching practices in first-year composition; strong desire to innovate in order to support student learning and teaching effectiveness; ability and desire to collaborate with colleagues/peers (experience having done so is a plus); and, broad availability across multiple times/days.
   4. All adjuncts are invited to apply via an online application: **https://goo.gl/forms/gC1EQLZo1ASg2MUB3** by 10:00 PM on 11 December; and,
   5. Decisions regarding new cohort chairs will be announced by 16 December. The schedule for mentors will be announced on that date as well.
4. Shift or balance work in cohorts to that which focuses beyond administrative work related to the CER and benchmarking to professional development, which entails sharing teaching strategies and experiences as well as researched best practices.

English 101-102 Committee will:

1. Continue to benchmarking FYC curriculum; conducting syllabi analyses via surveys and focus groups; and, exploring best practices in teaching FYC.
2. Include a new focus on equitable access to and opportunity for engagement with course content via instructional strategies (i.e., academic interventions and/or those interventions, which bridge the gap between the academic and social spheres).
3. Conduct more focused and intensive research in the aforementioned areas using a digital library of 70+ published/completed peer-reviewed critical articles, reports, presentations and theses/dissertations (1995-2016) on approaches to and best practices in FYC curriculum and teaching. The committee will also make use of 10+ texts, purchased under the auspices of Title V funds, which will be housed in the CTL faculty lending library. The texts are:
   1. *Intellectual Creativity in First-Year Composition Classes: Building a Case for the Multi-genre Research Project* (2016); *A Rhetoric for Writing Program Administrators* (2016); *First-year Composition: From Theory to Practice* (2014); *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* (2013); *After Pedagogy: The Experience of Teaching* (2013); *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing* (2013); *Exploring College Writing: Reading, Writing and Researching Across the Curriculum* (2011); *The Community College Writer: Exceeding Expectations* (2010); *Wiki Writing: Collaborative Learning in the College Classroom* (2009); *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures: Refiguring College English Studies* (2003); and, *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing* (1979).

"Note to Self" Schupack cont.

> *What would playing in the materials look like in an English class? The materials are words… I don't want to build discrete skills in a lock-step march from word to sentence to paragraph to paper. I can pay lip-service to the term 'spiraling curriculum', but I have to ask myself how large each spiral is, how many circles sweep across one class session, and what do the larger arcs look like that loop through multiple course levels?*

Creative exercises allow students multiple ways to access material and can engage individuals who might have strengths and sensitivities that do not easily emerge in academic thinking and writing. We talk about empowering students and helping them develop and express their own voices, but how can I say choose your own content but you must sing it to this particular tune? I think of a subtle difference between creating a debate type of activity, where students present different writers' views on a particular topic, and asking the students to become the writer and embody her or his voice. Role-playing is a way to embody the idea. I find some of the most innovative teaching in elementary classrooms, where interdisciplinary, integrated curriculum is a given. Much of the STEAM conversations are in K-12 settings. Something simple like acting out a tableau or designing a magazine cover for a piece of writing or collection of writings (see Gidcumb) can engender refreshing metaphorical thinking. Whenever my students or I switch modes and then articulate the translation across forms, we activate different parts of the brain and engage with ideas differently.

Creative activities allow students to live *in* the material, not just *with* it. I borrow a different, more appealing idea from design thinking. An acquaintance shared with me an article about Bauhaus educational design for the K-12 setting, where students are expected to leave all preconceptions behind them. They then play with the materials and determine the qualities and potential of the materials experientially. The focus is on trial and error, process, feedback loop, and constantly revisiting the connection between concept and design, which in composition, might be equivalent to the interrelationship between form and content.

What would playing in the materials look like in an English class? The materials are words. I developed a project that I loved in a middle school classroom and never found enough reason to bring it to college. Maybe there isn't enough reason. It is a word collage. Choose one word that you particularly like – you like the sound of it, the look of it and its meaning. Create a collage with images that get at the essence of the word. Write a poem that does the same and that does not use the actual word, and incorporate the poem into the collage.

I don't want to build discrete skills in a lock-step march from word to sentence to paragraph to paper. I can pay lip-service to the term 'spiraling curriculum', but I have to ask myself how large each spiral is, how many circles sweep across one class session, and what do the larger arcs look like, which loop through multiple course levels? Don't I want to spiral back to the word? I think of George Saunders or Richard Brautigan, the way they switch up parts of speech. And also the sentence, the image, the paragraph, and connected paragraphs as materials like clay or notes to play with and rearrange and experience rhythmically. What would it look like to start with ideas, and see where they lead us (a poem? a play? a creative nonfiction piece?) and then see how the message is shaped by the form and how the form shapes the message?

Sample English 102 Assignment

Instructions to Students: Prepare arguments for an informal debate. I randomly assigned groups (1-4, in alphabetical order). Find specific details to support your side of the debate. Please do not simply find ideas that your assigned person thinks; prepare to speak as if you are that person. (Don't worry about gender. If you are a male Barbara Ehrenreich, for example, speak in her intellectual voice, not her gendered voice). Prepare also a general statement that could be used as an opening for the debate.

Pro= Happiness is a worthwhile pursuit

Con = Happiness is not a worthwhile pursuit

1= Haidt, Pro

2 = Ehrenreich, Con:

3 = David, Pro

4 = Katie, Con:

[Note: David and Katie are the two main characters of a novel]

…………………………..

The options are:

A. Create a short dialogue between two (or three) characters or voices from the short works of literature (six total).

B. Rank in order (1= most persuasive, 6 = least) the happiness messages of the six works of literature. Be prepared to explain your decisions.

C. Find one detail from each of the six works that overlap in some way and discuss (they could all relate to one happiness message. They could conflict.)

D. Create a poem with your favorite line (could be a phrase or a few words) from each of the six works. You can repeat certain lines or words and play around in other ways to make your work 'poetic'.

Sources of Interest:

Elbow, Peter. "The Music of Form." *English Department Faculty Publication Series. Paper 2.* http://scholarworks.umass.edu/eng_faculty_pubs/2, 2006.

Gidcumb, Brianne. "Show Your Smarts! Strategies for Hands-On Literacy," *EducationCloset*, May 14, 2016, Web. Nov 17, 2016.

Tannen, Deborah. *The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue*. Random House, 1998.

Wiggins, Grant and McTighe, Jay. *Understanding by Design, Expanded 2nd Edition*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2005.

For more details about the ideas, texts and the strategies featured here, please contact Dr. Schupack at schupack1@ccc.edu.

"Teaching about Writing," Downs and Wardle cont.

In a similar fashion, asking teachers to teach "academic writing" begs the question: which academic writing—what content, what genre, for what activity, context, and audience? FYC teachers are thus forced to define academic discourse for themselves (usually unconsciously) before they can teach it. FYC teachers trained in English studies and working in English departments realize academic writing as the genres and content mediating English studies—for example, literary and rhetorical analyses (MacDonald; Wardle, "Cross- Disciplinary" and "Mutt Genres"). These instructors are unlikely to be involved in, familiar with, or able to teach the specialized discourses used to mediate other activities within disciplinary systems across the college. In effect, the flavor of the purportedly universal academic discourse taught in FYC is typically humanities-based and more specifically English studies-based.

The Open Question of Transfer

Even when FYC courses do attempt to directly address the complexity of "academic discourse," they tend to operate on the assumption that writing instruction easily transfers to other writing situations —a deeply ingrained assumption with little empirical verification. Our field does not know what genres and tasks will help students in the myriad writing situations they will later find themselves. We do not know how writing in the major develops. We do not know if writing essays on biology in an English course helps students write lab reports in biology courses. We do not know which genres or rhetorical strategies truly are universal in the academy, nor how to help FYC students recognize such universality. According to David Smit's summary of what we know about transfer, assumptions of direct and automatic transfer from one writing situation to another are unfounded. With scant research-based information about how to best help students write successfully in other courses, FYC teachers do not know whether choosing genre A over genre B will be of service to students who must write genre B or genre C later on. In "academic discourse" FYC, then, instructors must hope that any writing instruction will help students in some way and/or limit their teaching to basic scribal and syntactic skills. The limited research on writing transfer (e.g., Beaufort; McCarthy; Walvoord; Walvoord and McCarthy) mirrors the larger body of research on educational transfer (Perkins and Salomon, "Teaching" and "Transfer") in suggesting that neither choice may serve students adequately. We are not arguing that transfer of writing knowledge cannot happen; rather, we are arguing that "far transfer" is difficult (Perkins and Salomon, "Teaching" and "Transfer") and that most current incarnations of FYC do not teach for it as explicitly as is necessary.

Resisting Misconceptions

The range of theoretical and practical problems associated with teaching and transferring "universal educated discourse" (Russell, "Activity Theory") or "general writing skills instruction" (Petraglia, "Introduction" and "Writing") forces us to ask what FYC can actually do to prepare students for academic writing, particularly as it is currently constituted: taught in English departments mostly by adjuncts and graduate students and enrolling students from a variety of majors. By enacting the assumption of the larger academic culture that academic writing can be taught in one or two introductory writing skills courses, FYC effectively reinforces the misconceptions about the nature of writing on which that assumption is based.

If writing studies as a discipline is to have any authority over its own courses, our cornerstone course must resist conventional but inaccurate models of writing. A re-envisioned FYC shifts the central goal from teaching "academic writing" to teaching realistic and useful conceptions of writing—perhaps the most significant of which would be that writing is neither basic nor universal but content- and context-contingent and irreducibly complex. Keith Hjortshoj's juxtaposition of two master narratives about writing illustrates this shift. A common narrative pre- scribes that "all good writing should have a thesis, clearly stated in the introduction. Following paragraphs should each present a point that supports this thesis, and the essay should end with a logical conclusion. Writing throughout the essay should be clear, concise, and correct" (33). A more realistic narrative recognizes that:

> features of good writing vary from one situation to another. These variations depend, for example, on the subject of the writing, its purpose, and the reader's expectations. The form of writing used in a field of study often structures those expectations. As a consequence, the features of good writing in a literature course will differ greatly from the features of good writing in business or astronomy, and what seems clear to one audience might not be clear to another. (33)

> *A re-envisioned FYC shifts the central goal from teaching "academic writing" to teaching realistic and useful conceptions of writing—perhaps the most significant of which would be that writing is neither basic nor universal but content- and context-contingent and irreducibly complex.*

By teaching the more realistic writing narrative itself, we have a theoretically greater chance of making students "better writers" than we do by assuming the one or two genres we can teach them will automatically transfer to other writing situations. Instead of teaching situational skills often incorrectly imagined to be generalizable, FYC could teach about the ways writing works in the world and how the "tool" of writing is used to mediate variousMaterial in readings is centered on issues with which students have first-hand experience—for example, problems students are prone to experience throughout the writing process, from conceptual activities.

Writing about Writing: Rationale and Description

In light of what we know as a field about the subject of writing, we propose a radically reimagined FYC as an Introduction to Writing Studies—a course about how to understand and think about writing in school and society (Russell, "ActivityTheory").The course includes many of the same activities as current FYC courses: researching, reading, and writing arguments. However, the course content explores reading and writing: How does writing work? How do people use writing? What are problems related to writing and reading and how can they be solved? Students read writing research, conduct reading and writing auto-ethnographies, identify writing-related problems that interest them, write reviews of the existing literature on their chosen problems, and conduct their own primary research, which they report both orally and in writing. This course would serve as a gateway to WAC and WID programs better able to address issues of specialized discourse within specific academic disciplines.

Downs has taught writing-about-writing courses in second-semester composition classes at the University of Utah, a Research-I university, and at Utah Valley State College, a regional teaching college, both of approximately 25,000 students. Between spring 2003 and spring 2005, he taught the curriculum in three sections totaling about sixty students, and formally evaluated the course alongside a traditional "academic writing" version of an FYC course in a semester-length study involving forty students. Wardle has implemented a similar curriculum at the University of Dayton, a private liberal arts school of over 10,000. In the fall semesters of 2004 and 2005, she taught the curriculum in a first-year writing course of twenty-four honors and engineering students. At the end of each semester, the students

Preparing for the English 101 Critical Essay: An Example Using a Contemporary Topic, Prioritizing Education

by Elizabeth Teahan, MA | Lecturer, English

> Is Mrs. Obama correct that students, in general, have deprioritized education, and is this why enrollment continues to drop? Or, are there other factors involved? In our discussion, some students will heartily agree with our First Lady, citing their own personal experience with lack of motivation or that of friends'. Others will bring up the continued increase in college tuition, the recent recession, massive student debt, and various other social and economic factors that could be contributing to the decline in college enrollment.

A prompt that I often like to assign my ENG 101 classes in preparation for the Critical Essay asks my students to respond to a quote from Michelle Obama's 2013 commencement speech at Bowie State University. The First Lady's speech was fiery and passionate and called for young people to take up the mantle to prioritize education and inspire future generations to do the same. The reason she felt this to be a necessary call to action is because in her view (as she states in her speech), "When it comes to getting an education, young people just can't be bothered." She goes on to bolster this claim by citing Ruby Bridges and the Little Rock Nine, who illustrated a passion for education so fierce that they were willing to endure racially charged attacks in order to be able to learn, a passion for education that Mrs. Obama thinks has now been lost and must be restored.

The argument is a compelling one, especially given that college enrollment continues to steadily decline, a fact I'm sure we're all well aware of here at Wright. However, I ask my students: Is Mrs. Obama correct that students, in general, have deprioritized education, and is this why enrollment continues to drop? Or, are there other factors involved? In our discussion, some students will heartily agree with our First Lady, citing their own personal experience with lack of motivation or that of friends'. Others will bring up the continued increase in college tuition, the recent recession, massive student debt, and various other social and economic factors that could be contributing to the decline in college enrollment.

After broaching this topic, I then introduce some visual literacy to the students: various political cartoons and some data-driven images as well. We are then able to dissect the visual literacy as a class and compare the many ways in which analyzing an image is at once similar to analyzing a text—there is a point of view, a specific audience targeted using rhetorical appeals, a clear message, etc.—but also different in the mere fact that words are not the only tools the audience can use to decipher the artist's message. I usually also take this opportunity to show Mrs. Obama's commencement speech in full during class. After having digested and analyzed the speech both in print and visually, the students are oftentimes surprised to see that the speech was delivered somewhat differently than how they had imagined. (I sometimes integrate a separate, smaller writing assignment into the curriculum which students always seem to enjoy: I ask students to revise the speech as if they are the narrator describing Mrs. Obama delivering the speech, providing sensory description and imaginings of what Mrs. Obama and/or the crowd might feel like at various moments as a way to help the audience interpret the speech more closely to the way it was actually delivered—a feat which my students found can prove challenging when you only have access to the words of the speech and nothing else.) This is all done as preparation for their essay assignment.

I usually use this essay prompt (see below) as a pre-cursor to the Critical Essay (though it could potentially be used as the Critical Essay as well). I like it for many reasons. For one, the students are usually invested in this topic, as it relates directly to their lives. I allow them to use personal experience as evidence in this essay in combination with *logos* pulled from both Mrs. Obama's speech and the visual literacy we looked at as a class. The fact that I allow them to pull from personal experience, I think, oftentimes elicits some implicit self-reflection as well (many talk about whether they personally prioritize learning), which serves as preparation for their future self-reflection essay. Additionally, in analyzing *how* both the visual lit. pieces and Mrs. Obama effectively make their arguments, we can also discuss how the students might copy some of these techniques when presenting their own argument in an essay. Finally, this assignment emphasizes to students that writing does not happen in a bubble; a writer doesn't simply have a "lightbulb" moment, but rather responds to others' cultivated ideas (this teaching moment pairs well with the reading of the "Introduction" of *They Say, I Say*). It is like the oft-repeated notion that as a writer, you are entering a cocktail party and are being asked to join a conversation already in progress. In this case, my students are walking up to the First Lady and engaging her in direct conversation about her ideas — and I often remind them of this. This gives them a sense of importance in their own voice—and as a bonus, the thought of engaging the First Lady in an argument sometimes works to scare them into going to the Writing Center too.

Sample Visual Literacy Sites:

1. https://studentloancrisis.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/student-debt.jpg
2. https://abbydav.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/93554_unemployment-graduation-by-gary-mccoy-cagle-cartoons-2-515x429.jpg

Instructions:

Answer the following writing prompt in a 2-3 page essay:

First Lady Michelle Obama states that "when it comes to getting an education, young people just can't be bothered." Do you agree or disagree? If you agree, what can be done to get young people to care about education again? If you disagree, what might be other obstacles that are preventing young people from pursuing a higher education?"

Make sure your essay includes:
- A minimum of 5 paragraphs
- At least one piece of evidence per body paragraph
     Potential Evidence:
     - Direct quotes from Michelle Obama's speech
     - Data/description of Visual Lit.
     - Personal experience/anecdotes
- MLA citations

As always, remember to:

- Focus each body paragraph on a specific point
- Include plentiful analysis of evidence (including a link to thesis)
- Use academic language, including minimal spelling and grammatical errors
- Write in 3rd person (no "I" or "you" statements)

For more details about the ideas, texts and the strategies featured here, please contact Professor Teahan at eteahan@ccc.edu

"Teaching about Writing," Downs and Wardle cont.

evaluated the course both anonymously and in portfolio reflections.

Grounding Principles and Goals

Though there are a number of ways to institute an Intro to Writing Studies course, our iterations of the course were designed according to shared core beliefs and a desire to resist and alter students' misconceptions about writing. The first of our shared beliefs corresponds with James Reither's assertion that writing cannot be taught independent of content. It follows that the more an instructor can say about a writing's content, the more she can say about the writing itself; this is another way of saying that writing instructors should be expert readers. When the course content is writing studies, writing instructors are concretely enabled to fill that expert reader role. This change directly contravenes the typical assumption that first-year writing can be about any- thing, that somehow the content is irrelevant to an instructor's ability to respond to the writing.

Second, the course is forthcoming about what writing instruction can and cannot accomplish; it does not purport to "teach students to write" in general nor does it purport to do all that is necessary to prepare students to write in college. Rather, it promises to help students understand some activities related to written scholarly inquiry by demonstrating the conversational and subjective nature of scholarly texts. In this course, students are taught that writing is conventional and context-specific rather than governed by universal rules—thus they learn that within each new disciplinary course they will need to pay close attention to what counts as appropriate for that discourse community. Taking the research community of writing studies as our example not only allows writing instructors to bring their own expertise to the course, but also heightens students' awareness that writing itself is a subject of scholarly inquiry. Students leave the course with increased awareness of writing studies as a discipline, as well as a new outlook on writing as a researchable activity rather than a mysterious talent.

> *In this course, students are taught that writing is conventional and context-specific rather than governed by universal rules—thus they learn that within each new disciplinary course they will need to pay close attention to what counts as appropriate for that discourse community.*

Third, the course respects students by refusing to create double standards or different rules for student writers than for expert writers. For example, students learn to recognize the need for expert opinion and cite it where necessary, but they also learn to claim their own situational expertise and write from it as expert writers do. This respect for students is in accord with the field's *ethos*, thus blending a pedagogical advantage with a disciplinary one. In addition, creating high expectations for students aligns well with current learning theory: students can accomplish far more than we typically give them credit for being able to, if only we will ask them to do it.

> *…students learn to recognize the need for expert opinion and cite it where necessary, but they also learn to claim their own situational expertise and write from it as expert writers do. This respect for students is in accord with the field's ethos…In addition, creating high expectations for students aligns well with current learning theory: students can accomplish far more than we typically give them credit for being able to, if only we will ask them to do it.*

In sum, then, the course does not teach from principles that contravene writing studies research. Instead, it draws on research from the field and principles and ethics that shape the field to help students understand the nature of writing and to explore their own writing practices. Unlike pedagogies that are so detached from writing studies' specialized knowledge as to deny it, the Intro pedagogy emerges from that knowledge and ethos.

Readings

In the writing studies course, we use readings that report research about writing and theorize ways of thinking about writing to raise important questions and to provide examples of various textual moves related to scholarly writing based on primary research. The articles we assign vary, as do the ideas on which we focus; thus, we do not prescribe an "ideal" set of readings here. However, the common denominators among our readings are these:

- Material in readings is centered on issues with which students have first-hand experience—for example, problems students are prone to experience throughout the writing process, from conceptual questions of purpose, to procedural questions of drafting and revision, to issues surrounding critical reading.

- Data-driven, research-focused readings seem more useful than highly theoretical pieces. The former tend to be both more readable and more concrete, making them more accessible and relevant to students.

Studies by Berkenkotter, Sommers, Perl, Flower and Hayes, Murray, Swales, Dawkins, Beason, and Berkenkotter and Huckin encourage students' thinking about invention, introductions, drafting, revision, punctuation and mechanics, error, and conventions of science-reporting articles. Articles that focus on critical reading, notably Haas and Flower's "Rhetorical Reading Strategies" and Margaret Kantz's "Helping Students Use Textual Sources Persuasively," explicitly critique typical student reading strategies and compare them to more effective reading strategies. Readings from Lakoff and Johnson on metaphor and James Gee on cultural discourses explicitly explore situated, motivated discourse; critique notions such as "objective information" and "disembodied text"; and help students demystify the myth of the isolated, inspired writer.

While we are sensitive to concerns about writing courses based on readings, research writing generally entails thoughtful responses to other writing. If writing cannot be separated from content, then scholarly writing cannot be separated from reading.

To center the course on student writing and avoid merely banking information, students discuss, write about, and test every reading in light of their own experiences; they discuss why they are reading a piece and how it might influence their understanding of writing. Rick Evans' "Learning Schooled Literacy," for example, helps students reflect on how their past reading and writing experiences shaped them, while Lucille McCarthy's "A Stranger in Strange Lands" explains why students might feel frustration about writing in new classrooms.

Reflective Assignments

Class time spent on readings focuses more on students' reactions to them than on the readings themselves; thus, our students write about issues raised by readings by responding to prompts such as, "How are your experiences with research writing like and unlike Shirlie's as Kantz describes them? What would you do differently if you could?" We find that students' responses initiate excellent class discussions, and that throughout the course students come back to ideas in the readings they write about to frame discussions about their writ- ing experiences.

We also assign literacy narratives or auto-ethnographies in which students take stock of their literacy educations, experiences, and habits. We encourage students to think historically and to identify sources of their current attitudes and approaches to literacy, and we help students clarify their open questions, problems, and skepticisms regarding writing. What do they like and dislike about writing? What problems do they have with writing? What do they sense they do not know that they would like to? Recognizing dissonances and gaps from their own experiences helps students identify research questions for the course's research focus.

Research Assignments

The most noteworthy feature of the course is that students conduct primary research, however limited, on issues of interest to both themselves and the field of writing studies. Conducting primary research helps students shift their orientation to research from one of compiling facts to one of generating knowledge (e.g., Greene, "Mining;" Kantz; Nelson, "Constructing," "Research"; Spivey). Primary research projects also clarify for students the nature of scholarly writing processes that the course is tasked with teaching and empowers them to write with legitimate originality and conviction. Perhaps most importantly, conducting first-hand research on writing allows students to take control of problem areas in their own writing when they focus on those problems directly in their research projects.

"Teaching about Writing," Downs and Wardle cont.

Consequently, the course about writing be- comes a writing course in which students study writing to learn more about it and potentially improve their own.

The research project is tightly scaffolded. Students begin by conducting library research about the topics of their research questions and learn enough about primary research to suggest methods for studying their questions. They write formal research proposals that articulate their research questions and outline the methods they plan to use in their studies. The questions students develop can be fascinating indeed, as these examples from our courses illustrate:

- Do college freshmen and seniors use rhetorical strategies at all or in similar ways?
- How useful is Microsoft Word's grammar checker?
- What makes a classic literary work a "classic"?
- How does music (or lighting, or other environmental factors) affect writing and revision?

We assign activities throughout the research project that help students become more proficient at writing with sources, including interpretive summaries in which students practice reading rhetorically and contributively by constructing arguments about what a given article says and what the author may mean by writing it. Annotated bibliographies help students organize their library research and negotiate with instructors about issues such as the number of sources, which we teach is contingent, like so much else, on the project in question. A stand-alone literature review moves students toward understanding various studies and statements on an issue as positions in a three-dimensional space rather than as simple binaries. Developing a "community map" of opinion helps students envision research and argument as community inquiry and identify gaps that their primary research can address. Students' primary research methods include surveys and interviews, read aloud/think aloud protocols, close observations of actual writing processes, or discourse analyses of various documents. Through primary research, students begin to learn that careful observation and empirical data-gathering techniques bolster their authority and reduce their reliance on other experts' pronouncements.

It bears emphasizing that we maintain reasonable expectations for students. Circumstances—particularly the sixteen-week timetable to which no scholar is held—and limited knowledge and experience do not allow for highly ambitious and rigorous projects; students are practicing moves rather than acting as paragons. However, we find that students are able to accomplish discourse analysis of small corpuses, interviews and surveys of manageable numbers of subjects, and small-scale ethnographies and case studies that emphasize quality over quantity in sites, observations, field notes, and coding.

Presentation Assignments

One conception of writing we strive to help students shift is imagining "writing" essentially as merely drafting a paper. The course design helps us show students that most scholarly researched writing in fact begins with becoming curious and establishing a question and moves through research. What students traditionally imagine as writing is actually only the final move in a much larger series of events. However, in our courses, students do arrive at this final move, presenting their research in both a significant written report and an oral presentation.

The final three weeks of our course are devoted to presentations and revision workshops. Students prepare ten-minute presentations of their research and participate on panels organized to create conversation among panelists. Students tend to be genuinely interested in comparing findings and learning from each other the outcomes of their arduous but useful projects. We have rarely seen better student presentations in terms of generating student interest, discussion, and ideas for further research. In fact, throughout the course, as students exchange research tales, data, and questions, it is clear that the writing studies pedagogy answers Reither's and Kleine's calls for communities of inquiry.

Conclusion

Those of us working in writing studies find ourselves today confronted by the fact that our own research and theory calls our cornerstone course—and the underlying assumptions upon which it is based—into question. Added to this difficulty is the fact that few outside our own discipline know we exist; if they do know we exist, they know little or nothing about what we do as writing scholars. Certainly, our own research and theory about the nature of writing has done little to influence public conceptions of writing. These two problems—teaching at odds with our research, and lack of public awareness—can be remedied together through a writing studies pedagogy. While this pedagogy has its drawbacks, we feel those are far outweighed by its benefits.

> *Certainly, our own research and theory about the nature of writing has done little to influence public conceptions of writing. These two problems—teaching at odds with our research, and lack of public awareness—can be remedied together through a writing studies pedagogy. While this pedagogy has its drawbacks, we feel those are far outweighed by its benefits.*

First, this pedagogy overcomes the problem of contradictory research and practice: rather than purporting to teach students "academic writing" and claiming to prepare them for writing in their disciplines, the course teaches students what we as a field have learned about writing as an object of study. Thus, the course acquires an attainable goal and a clear content while continuing to help students understand how writing works in the academy so that they can succeed there. Its content does not distract from writing (the perennial difficulty of writing-course content), since the content is writing.

Second, the pedagogy teaches potentially transferable conceptions of the activity of writing rather than "basic" writing skills that are in fact highly specialized and contextualized. This content and the overall project of the course create intellectual rigor and resist characterization of writing instruction as remedial, basic, or inexpert; in doing so, the course professionalizes writing instruction, as Dew demonstrates in a similar program at University of Colorado-Colorado Springs. In addition, this course tells our field's stories, conceptions, and questions by rendering its teaching, researching, and scholarly practices visible.

As we teach such courses across the country, we will raise awareness not only about the existence of our discipline, but about what we do as a discipline—what we study and think about. Making this change, introducing first-year students to the knowledge of our discipline, will, we believe, lead us further toward full disciplinarity, a fulfillment marked by courses that come from our research and theory, pedagogy that emerges from our common knowledge, and a public awareness of what we do. This realization of disciplinary praxis is one that we look forward to with excitement and optimism.

Read, Write, Revise + Research: A 'Social Issue' Critical Essay Assignment Sequence for English 101

by Bill Marsh, PhD | Assistant Professor, English

The following assignment sequence suggests one way to integrate basic research (specifically database research) into English 101 without assigning a research essay *per se*. The sequence begins with an 'article dropbox' assignment and ends with a revision assignment integrating 'light' academic research. Students play an integral part in defining course content (materials, discussion, essay topics), and the research component emerges as a necessary (somewhat organic) outgrowth of student writing and revising.

From start to finish the sequence takes about eight weeks, with some parts overlapping.

Step 1: Article Dropbox (3 weeks)

- Use class time to discuss current social issues; generate an 'issues list,' narrow the list based on student interest (by vote, etc.).

- Form groups around five-six different topics based on student interest.

- In a computer lab, groups search (using Google) for issue-specific articles using predefined criteria (length, difficulty, credibility, etc.); each group contributes two-three short articles.

- Create a reading packet combining all approved articles = class readings for the next two weeks.

- Groups/teams assume some responsibility for article 'foster care' (discussion participation, coming up with questions, locating companion media, etc.). Blackboard "groups" can be used to facilitate this brainstorming work.

Step 2: Critical Essay 1.0 (2 weeks)

- Now write about one of the issues [or two or more related issues] covered in the reading packet; no additional outside research allowed, use only the articles provided in the packet.

- Fun side assignment: Generate a Works Cited page listing *all* readings in the packet. Use CitationMachine, EasyBib, or any other citation engine.

- Feedback on Critical Essay targets areas that could be developed, expanded, clarified with additional, more academic research.

Step 3: Academic Research & Source Annotation (1-2 weeks)

- Back in the lab, use the library database (Academic Search Complete) to find at least one academic article (based on predefined criteria) specific to your Critical Essay issue.

- Students can work with others in their respective 'issue cluster' to find useful, appropriate articles.

- Limit search to "scholarly journals" and "PDF available."

- Students briefly introduce articles in class; generate a class 'source list' of all titles upload PDFs to create a secondary academic article dropbox that all students can access and use, as necessary.

- Assign some kind of 'source annotation' where students summarize their academic articles and clarify use value.

Step 4: Critical Essay 2.0 (1-2 weeks)

- A revised (and expanded) Critical Essay integrates one or more of the articles now collected in the class academic article dropbox (in addition to articles already used for version 1.0).

- Students can 'borrow' materials from the class source list/dropbox library, using articles contributed by others working on the same topic.

Advantages to using this sequence:

- Students find surprising material (news articles, academic articles) on a wide range of topics.

- Essays tend to be fresh, topical; students care about issues they write about.

- Difficult to cheat/plagiarize (limited materials to draw from, but not too limiting).

- Students demonstrate (or seem to) a greater sense of ownership (topics and process).

- Professor can never be accused of assigning topics/readings the class isn't interested in, since they choose.

- Research is need-based, localized, internal to revision process.

- Provides a little practice for English 102.

- Relatively low-stakes 'steps' along the way add up to a rewarding, productive experience (and better essays).

Challenges, caveats:

- Takes time to brainstorm issues, generate list, set up lab time, build reading set.

- Not ideal if teaching more than one 101 section (but also no reason the issues list and dropbox materials can't extend beyond section borders).

- Some articles inherently better than others (so it helps to have more than one article on any issue, plus having companion materials on hand, e.g. supplemental videos, can help round out the content).

- Absences can affect group cohesion.

For more details about the ideas, texts and the strategies featured here, please contact Professor Marsh at wmarsh1@ccc.edu

> *Students play an integral part in defining course content (materials, discussion, essay topics), and the research component emerges as a necessary (somewhat organic) outgrowth of student writing and revising.*

A News Media Approach to English 102: Chicago Journalism

by Ramycia Cooper-McGhee, EdD | Lecturer, English

> *The theme of this class allowed students to choose from pre-select sub-topics under specific themes such as political corruption, homicides, social movements, public corruption, sports, and riots…[they] were able to interview…working and retired journalists who…provide[d] deeper insight into the stories they chose and also served as a primary source for them as well. Lastly, the students had the opportunity to visit the Museum of Broadcast Communications to further explore how stories like the ones they chose actually "come to life."*

In the spring 2016 semester, I taught an English 102 for the first time in a very long time. I wanted to do something exciting, fresh, new and of course interesting for the students. Since I was a journalist before coming to teach for the City Colleges of Chicago, I decided to center my English 102 class on the city's major journalism stories. The theme of this class allowed students to choose from pre-selected sub-topics under specific themes such as political corruption, homicides, social movements, public corruption, sports, and riots. In addition, students were able to interview a couple of actual working and retired journalists, who were able to provide deeper insight into the stories they chose and to serve as a primary sources for them as well. Lastly, the students had the opportunity to visit the Museum of Broadcast Communications to further explore how stories like the ones they chose actually "come to life."

During this course, students were also introduced to the traditional newspaper/newsroom staff set up. From there, I was able to play the role of Editor-in-Chief. This allowed the students to see me not only as their instructor, but someone who would be critiquing their ability to research the origin of their specific journalism story. One of my students was an older gentleman, and a few of the younger students interviewed him since he was alive for certain events such as the 1968 Chicago Riots and the Assassination of Fred Hampton the president of the Black Panthers-Chicago Chapter. This was an invaluable experience for both me and the students. He was able to paint a picture of what it was like to be alive during that time and what the news was reporting and what the newspapers printed.

Moreover, a few of the students' chosen stories occurred during the same timeframe, which made it even easier to pair them for their peer review workshops. I noticed they became accountability partners and often worked together during class to conduct research, compare notes, and paper status updates. This was very gratifying to see. The class, to a certain extent, became a newsroom with all moving parts in position. At the end of the course, the students had to present a 3-5 minute PowerPoint presentation on their topics. These topics included Gov. Rod Blagojevich, which was under the theme of "political corruption"; Bronzeville, the new "Chicago Renaissance," which was under the theme of "social movements"; and, the Schuessler-Peterson Murders, which was under the "homicide" theme.

As a former journalist and now English professor this was an incredible experience. I was able to have the best of both worlds at one time in one class. I am excited to teach this course again and challenge both myself and the students with new ideas, themes, topics, and of course, expose my students the wonderful world of journalism and research.

List of Topics from which Students Selected

English 102 | Spring 2016

Class Theme: Chicago Journalism-Researching Major Stories covered by Chicago Media

Political Corruption
- Gov. Rod Blagojevich
- Jon Burge
- Jessie Jackson Jr.
- Sandy Jackson
- Mel Reynolds
- George Ryan

Homicides
- John Wayne Gacy
- Robert "Yummy" Sandifer
- The Schuessler-Peterson Murders
- Drew Peterson
- Nathan Leopold & Richard Loeb

Politics
- Harold Washington
- Jane Byrne
- The Chicago Machine
    - Richard J. Daley Sr.
    - Richard J. Daley Jr.

Public Corruption
- Jeff Boyle
- Barbara Byrd Bennett
- John "Quarters" Boyle

Social Movements
- Black Panther Party
- Jane Addams
- Bronzeville-This new "Chicago Renaissance"
- The Chicago Freedom Movement
- Double V Campaign
- Black History Movement
- Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) union founded

Sports:
- 1991, 92, 93, 96, 97, 98 Bulls
- 1985 Bears
- 2005 White Sox
- 2010, 2013, 2015 Black Hawks

Riots
- 1968 Chicago Riots
- The Chicago Race Riot of 1919
- Haymarket Riot

English 102: In class Short Research Proposal

Assignment: You are to complete a short research proposal based on the topic you have chosen.

The research proposal should include the following.

1. The specific title and the purpose of the paper (Explain, Analyze, and or Argue)

2. The intended audience (general or specialized)

3. Your voice as the writer (informer or advocate)

Tip: In your proposal, be sure to include the topic, the rationale for the importance of the topic and a few websites/books/articles that you will use to begin learning more about your topic. Don't worry about your thesis statement; we will work on that next week.

Purpose/Goals: The goal of the research paper proposal is to present and justify the idea/topic on which you want to write your research paper. You will need to include the topic of your paper (not too broad or too specific) as well as ideas of where you are going to find/complete your research. The proposal can also work as a way to entice your audience into wanting to read the full paper, when it is finished.

For more details about the ideas, texts and the strategies featured here, please contact Professor Cooper-McGhee at rcooper18@ccc.edu.

Future-focus: In addition to the progress noted on page 6, ELR Assessment will continue to:

1. Assess our faculty and students facility and fluency with technology because the college has shifted its focus to the third General Education student learning outcome (SLO), i.e., *demonstrate quantitative and technological literacy, especially computer literacy, for interpreting data, reasoning, and problem solving;*

2. Revisit and refocus the work of the English 101 cohorts in order to better support professional development of instructors teaching English 101;

3. Shift our attention to English 102, subjecting it to the same kind of thoughtful and rigorous exploration via assessment as 101 with the intention of supporting evidence-based improvements in teaching and learning. This will coincide with and support the work of the English 101/102 committee;

4. Rethink the structure, content and purpose of the existing assessment tool (the CER) with the intention of increasing its alignment with contemporary approaches to teaching academic writing in English 101 and the second semester of first-year composition, English 102; and,

5. Conceive of our work as a committee as a process for learning more about what/how we are teaching and developing ways to continue to improve/transform our teaching, i.e., assessment is *not* a science, but it is a valuable tool for talking among ourselves about what we do and how/why we do what we do.

Special thanks to the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 Assessment Committee members for their exemplary work _and_ outstanding collaboration:

Professors Bill Marsh, Bridget Roche, Elizabeth Teahan, Julia Cohen, Ramycia McGhee, Suzanne Sanders, Tara Whitehair, Tatiana Uhoch, Valerie Pell, and Vini Bruckert.

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Professors Bridget Roche, Julia Cohen, Mike Petersen, Patti Renda, Phillip Virgen, Suzanne Sanders, Tim Doherty, Vini Bruckert and Yolanda Nieves.

Special thanks to the English 101-102 Committee members for their enthusiasm _and_ willingness to work collaboratively:

Professors Bill Marsh, Bridget Roche, Daniel Borzutzky, Jan Knapp-Caporale, Julia Cohen, Mike Petersen, Patti Renda, Suzanne Sanders, and Valerie Pell.

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Assessment News (*AN*) publishes two or more faculty-written articles each issue. Generally, they will reflect the following foci: articles that are practical, reflective and of specific-immediate use; and articles that are meditative, conceptual and critical (and a bit reflective) of broad-deferred use.

Interested in writing for *Assessment News?* Haven't seen your perspectives on teaching and learning represented in *AN*? Would you like to share an assignment and/or a reflection on your teaching praxis? Have a new research interest, which connects to and enriches your teaching praxis? Read a text about or connected to teaching and learning composition, reading and/or literature and you would like to share your thoughts on it with your colleagues?

Please send an email to hdoss@ccc.edu with your interest and ideas. All ideas are welcomed and considered, even those critical or uncertain of "assessment" as a process and persistent theme in higher education, especially free, public and urban colleges and universities.

Assessment Geeks, Wanted: *Do you daydream about assignment redesign? After a particularly successful or disappointing class session are you compelled to think about the reason it did or did not work?*

If you answered "yes" to one or both of the above questions, ***ELR Assessment needs you!*** In 2016-2017, the Department of English, Literature & Reading Assessment Committee will work on multiple interventions to support teaching and learning in English 101-102.

Interested? Please send an email to hdoss@ccc.edu with your day/time availability in fall 2016 and/or spring 2017. Part-time faculty are welcome and encouraged to join!