Alexandria Lockett’s
Teaching Portfolio
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First-Year Composition

Teaching Philosophy

When students realize that the university is a hub of interdependent, diverse fields of study, administrations, and support services, they begin to recognize that the writing classroom is not a place to be validated for ‘getting it right.’ As the instructor, I define our discourse community as a hack space, one of the few comfortable and challenging places they will be able to experiment with expressing, exchanging, and revising their perceptions of reality.

Summer 2012. A black football player in my class asked me why I liked writing, and I answered honestly. “Writing makes life happen in fact and principle—jobs, break-ups, marriages, friendships, praise, admiration, blame, resistance, and imprisonment. In my life, writing is one of many ways I seize the world with determination and assert my will upon it.” He flashed me a toothy grin and extended his arms, stretching swirls of ink covering his muscular biceps. “That—well...hmmm...” He paused and flexed before finishing his sentence. “Writing and tattoos is the same thang. Painful, personal, and permanent.”

Many writing instructors grapple with the dual issue of teaching writing and persuading students to believe that they can teach them writing. However, my colored body and sometimes flamboyant personality intensifies this phenomenon, transforming it into a teachable moment such as the one with which I began. Whether I’m teaching first-year composition, revising an article manuscript during a tutoring session with a Chinese international student, or conducting a, “Principles of Academic Writing” workshop filled with first-generation students, my performance brings these issues into relief. My goal is for students to embrace wit and see themselves as writers—who choose to remember that they decide how to use or develop their ability to reflect, investigate, analyze, revise, and experiment with various technologies, genres, narratives, and words.

Spring 2010. Everyone stares at C, an intellectually precocious and attractive Caucasian male student, when he makes a passionate confession. "F*ck facebook! If I'm at a party and a girl tells me she'll Facebook me and I tell her I don't use it, she gives me a weird look like I'm a creepster and usually walks off. Whatever, dude. I refuse to give up my life to have folks in my business 24/7."

Teaching and learning new media is no longer a marginal phenomenon. Web 2.0 audiences, unlike passive pre-millennium consumers, participate in media, constructing profiles, editing wiki pages, commenting on articles, and producing interactive discussions on social networking sites. These opportunities to create directly contributes to the production of “publics,” or networked communities surviving on feedback. To highlight some of the political, psychological, and cultural factors influencing digital environments, I ask student writers, “Do you feel responsible for contributing to the information available on the Internet?” This discussion or free-write question often leads to deliberations about how the scaling of digitized information privileges an ethics of ‘information sharing.’ For instance, this question caused C to share his experience with ‘Facebook shaming.’ These conversations also reveal that most student writers narrowly define what it means to ‘write.’ Many students’ educational experiences are sanctioned by standardized testing such as state examinations and higher-education credentialing exams coordinated by private corporations. Given this highly disciplinary experience, I do not assume that students will feel comfortable experimenting with novel/emerging genres in ‘academic contexts.’

To address this issue, I scaffold students from print-oriented modes of thinking to hybrid epistemologies, which begins with their (re)evaluation of the five-paragraph essay during the first-week of classes. Since this organizational structure often dominates first-year writers’ institutional writing experiences, I encourage them to discuss their expectations of ‘traditional’ academic writing. For instance, they are allowed to use first-person perspective and narration, integrate photos and hyperlinks in their essays, compose collaborative annotated bibliographies, and create documentaries to support proposals. In addition, students participate in online discourse communities to gain experience writing in emerging genres. For example, they may compose product/service reviews on a site like Yelp.com or UrbanSpoon.com as part of an evaluation unit, write a set of instructions on eHow.com, or edit Wikipedia pages to observe and experience the promises and perils of online information management. Furthermore, I expose them to key differences between proprietary and open-source platforms. For example, discuss the concept of copyleft and the creative commons. We also experiment with materials in the public domain available via OpenLibrary.com or Snag Films, and tinker with a demo of a Linux desktop. After my course, students are more prepared to discover and decide whether or not certain graphic user interfaces or media platforms serve their organizational needs.

Indeed, a College Composition Course ought to value the production of new knowledge. We use this objective to root our pursuit of becoming excellent writers. Through our communication of personal experiences about coming to know our abilities, wishes, hopes, and fears, we develop trust for one another, freeing ourselves to comprehend how humans organize their experiences in language. Throughout this process, we modify these codes to create novel meanings capable of articulating our distinctiveness and connectedness, simultaneously. We get a style, we have attitude, and we remember great stories.
Course Management

I’ve had experience using both Desire2Learn and Blackboard’s Angel as course management systems (CMS). While many teachers prefer these platforms, I need a less hierarchical structure. Thus, I enjoy using wikis as an all-purpose writing space. The wiki is a living history of our course participation. Not only does it function as a course management system, but it’s an archived information trading hub where students practice writing and access important course information. Unlike most CMS’s, power can be more evenly distributed in the space. Students can author, edit, and even delete pages, as well as add comments. Of course, as site administrator I can revert their changes at my discretion. In such a rare occasion, the teaching moment is invaluable.

Although I prefer to use an open-source wiki, such as MediaWiki (which powers Wikipedia), I use PBWorks because it has a lower learning curve than MediaWiki, and doesn’t bombard my students with ads. Please feel free to explore my 2010-2012 Freshman Writing Courses at http://compschedule.pbworks.com with the following log-in:

Username: GuestUser
Password: Access
This wiki is ‘quasi-private.’ Writers decide whether or not they want the wiki to be “live” during their course semester. Former students are aware that the wiki’s privacy depends on active participants’ consensus. When the wiki isn’t active, an account is necessary for access.

Sample Syllabus

Please see Appendix 1

Assessment

First-Year Writers’ Goals and Expectations

This heading links to a typical spreadsheet of student’s responses to an information sheet distributed at the beginning of the semester via Google Documents. You will need to zoom and scroll to optimally view and navigate this document. Below is a screenshot of the form they receive and submit online via Google Drive. I utilize this information throughout the semester to connect students to their personal and professional motivations to improve their writing. This data also gives me the first real glimpse at their writing skills, and reminds them that they can write well when writing with a purpose.
Example of Grading for a Personal Narrative

Narrative Unit Feedback

Author’s Name: [Redacted]
Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]

Greatest Strengths

We’ve already talked at length during conferencing about your narrative’s power. In particular, it took courage and tenacity to accomplish the objective of narrating untimely death in an engaging, thorough manner. Not only would you need highly developed characters, but you would also need to produce stellar sequencing and reflection. Your descriptive ability is impressive. You take risks with writing that pay handsome rewards to both you and your readers. First, you exceeded expectations for this assignment. You played with language, delighted senses, and created an experience for readers that will keep them alive as long as you continue sharing your unique gift for evoking emotions with your audience. You seem so real and caring. Your penchant for making vulnerability and depth accessible to readers guarantees that you have the potential to become a respected author if this is a professional journey you should choose to take in life. Readers can’t help but develop a strong connection with you after reading such memorable narration and description. It would be a shame if society lacked access to your meaningful interpretations of human experience. Please consider becoming part of groups and organizations that give you a space that encourages you to freely tap into your creative abilities. For instance, poetry and short story clubs, journalism outlets, as well as volunteer work with social service organizations such as writing workshops with domestic violence victims, the elderly, or homeless children may enhance your academic and personal experiences at Penn State. Don’t hesitate to continue dialoguing with me about professional and extracurricular possibilities.

Areas of Improvement

As [Redacted] pointed out, fragments and run-on’s plagued certain moments of your story. Even if you want to show that breaking language is crucial for making the meaning you wish to convey, keep it to a minimum so you don’t disrupt the paper’s flow or compromise our positive experiences with your text.

Paper Grade: A

Mid-term Standing (including free-writes, homework, and participation): A

Note: You almost got an A- for class standing because I am missing a few homework responses from you. However, doing an extra peer review for [Redacted] did not go unrewarded. Additionally, your consistent class contributions and conferencing enabled you to match your final narrative grade. At this point of the semester, I’d be quite comfortable writing you a stellar letter of recommendation.

Example of Grading for a Position Paper

Please see Appendix 2.
Recommendations
Student Applying to Law School

Law School Admission Council

Dear Admissions Committee:

With great pleasure, I highly recommend [name] for the Pennsylvania State University Law Program. [Name] was enrolled in my Fall 2010 English 15: Rhetoric and Composition course. However, he began meeting with me to discuss his career objectives in Law a few semesters ago. Our most recent conversation took place last November, when I asked him several tough questions about his interest in going to law school. Not only was his decision colored by his long-standing passion for maritime issues, but [name] seemed genuinely motivated by the opportunity to strengthen his analytical and communication abilities.

[Name]'s dedication to meeting learning objectives and willingness to set challenging goals for himself reflects a commitment to problem-solving and intellectual growth that is among my most gifted first-year composition students. He is self-reflective, ambitious, passionate about stimulating academic subjects, and respectfully interacts with his peers. More importantly, he has impressive leadership and organizational abilities. For instance, [name] made numerous contributions to class discussion. During our discourse community analysis unit, we analyzed an ethnography entitled, “How to Ask for a Drink.” Each student contributed an inquiry question about the article on our class wiki. [Name] asked, “Where else can we find speech acts that display ‘male identity’?” In other words, what other places besides Brady’s Bar do we witness displays of ‘male identity’ through speech and dialogue? Would these places be primarily bars, or other settings?” I vividly recall how this question led to a long, vibrant discussion that enabled his peers to consider the ways in which spaces affect language use and identity formation related to gender, as well as race/ethnicity, religion, and age. Consequently, he played a key role in helping to create and nurture a sense of community with his peers.

Furthermore, his peers recognize him as a valuable partner. [Name] teamed up with another gifted student on two different occasions, and worked collaboratively on two of his major assignments. His passion for maritime matters strongly influenced his decision to evaluate the Penn State Sailing Club. His discourse community analysis about the significance of Regattas continues to stand out in my memory because of its depth and humor. Furthermore, his research paper on the Deepwater Oil Spill remains one of the strongest research papers I have ever received. [Name] and his partner met with me several times to communicate their findings and get feedback on their attempt to concisely narrate facts throughout their investigation of the accuracy of mainstream news coverage about this unprecedented environmental disaster. Their juxtaposition of competing sources, combined with strong causal reasoning enabled them to develop a sophisticated ethical argument that encouraged their reader to consider how breakdowns in communication flow between legislators, the press, executives, and advocacy groups diverted the public from being more involved in long-term legal, political, and social solutions that would prevent future spills. Both

College of the Liberal Arts

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papers have been used as models for my current students to observe successful pieces of collaborative academic writing.

Although I have lauded writing with peers, his individual compositions—a personal narrative and an evaluation paper—were equally strong. His organizational skills and communication abilities will be an ideal match for your program. You can count on him to complete his work in a timely manner, demonstrate good social skills, and be willing to go beyond the obvious. His passion for discovery and personal growth was evident in the fact that he was one of a very small number of students that took the time to regularly arrange meetings with me to dialogue about his writing process. Most people are very self-conscious about their writing because it takes a great deal of strength, time, patience, and contemplation to become a better writer. However, he gracefully handles feedback, can account for the decisions he makes, and even as a freshman was capable of maturely negotiating others’ perspectives and her own. Next, he scheduled follow-up appointments with me to ensure that he was responding to his writing tasks as thoroughly and accurately as possible. Since, completed all of his homework assignments and attended class every day, I was deeply impressed by the amount of time he spent outside of class to reach his maximum potential as a writer.

I urge you to strongly consider for the Penn State Law Program. The present set of academic, professional, and social skills are already advanced enough to make him stand apart from his peers in a global information economy. Therefore, this program will only refine his current abilities in such a way that he will have the capacity to make positive contributions to any environment he operates in. He is motivated, well-rounded, reliable, and hard-working. If he refused to do a mediocre job in his mandatory freshman writing course, he will surpass your expectations for students’ performance in this program. With this life-changing opportunity, he will be doing what he loves—learning about the roles and responsibilities of being a future law professional. Please don’t hesitate to contact me to further discuss qualifications. You may reach me at or email me at alexandrialockett@gmail.com

I appreciate your time and consideration in reading this recommendation.

Respectfully Yours,

Alexandria L. Lockett
ENG 015 Instructor, PhD Candidate in English: Rhetoric and Composition
Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness
Student Reflects on Course’s Impact on Personal Growth

Ms. Alexandria Lockett
ENGL 15
7 August 2014

Critical Reflection on Feedback

After reading over the feedback on my graded papers, I cannot find anything useless. Not only was there a balance between the comments on strengths and areas of improvement, there was also a portion of the Unit Grade Summaries that discussed suggested strategies. In my opinion, the grade summaries really justify why I received my grade marks while learning more about my own writing style, with my strengths and weaknesses. I have never received both positive and negative comments on my papers. The English class I took in my junior year of high school consisted of weekly essays. Each essay would be graded the next day, however, little to no comments would be written on our papers. If a comment was written, or a word or phrase was circled, it was always for the purpose of identifying an error in our grammar. Although I liked the teacher, and did improve my writing skills, this grading system was not helpful at all. My weaknesses and strengths were never identified, and if I wanted to know why I received a certain mark, then I was directed to the AP grading rubric. I never discovered which parts of my writing increased my score, and which sections needed improvement. This is why I really appreciate the time Ms. Alexandria Lockett invests in the grading of my English 15 classes’ papers. Not only does she type up all of her final thoughts about my work on a Grade Summary, but she also hand-marks the printed copy of our final product. I found that reading her thoughts along the margins of my paper, in context, was just as helpful as the Grade Summary. On the side of my papers, she described both positive and negative thoughts, as well as suggestions of ways to improve certain areas of content. I’ve identified many of my writing errors and strengths by reading Ms. Lockett’s feedback about my papers. But I’ve found that the most helpful area of her critique was the “Two Major Areas of Improvement” section. In my senior year of high school, my English teacher only ever placed
two comments on our papers, and they were always both positive. I learned absolutely nothing from that class. Without the acknowledgement of weaknesses, I have no ways to improve my writing. Not only that, but the positive comments actually decreased my confidence in my writing. I've been rather disheartened by receiving a poor mark on papers and only having two positive comments to justify it. When the instructors seem to not put forth effort in their grading styles, I find myself struggling to put forth effort into my work. I really appreciate the amount of time and effort that Ms. Lockett invests in the grading of papers. Not only do I feel motivated to draft my best possible writing, but based on the feedback she gives me on my work, I also have an incentive and the knowledge base to improve my writing as a whole.

Through the knowledge I have acquired from the feedback on my papers, I plan to create a final assignment with minimal weaknesses. Due to the collaborative nature of the paper, I plan to use both the identified strengths and weaknesses of every group member to my advantage. In an ideal situation, the four sets of eyes reading over and contributing to the paper would add their strengths to the paper while weaknesses are spotted and corrected. The collaborative work, I hope, will act like a serious of constant peer reviews, with each person looking over, adding ideas, and strengthening the arguments of all the other group members. In our first group meeting, I discussed one of my weaknesses when in writing: boring, repetitive syntax. I was happy to discover that have the opposite problem: being too wordy and complicated with their syntax. When reading over each other's work, our weaknesses will also be balanced and actually formed into a strength in our collaborative writing style. By recognizing each group member's strengths and weaknesses, I plan to help my group isolate and correct the weaknesses, while recognizing and expanding upon the strengths, established in the combination of writing styles learned through feedback.

Throughout the course, I have not only received feedback from my instructor, but also from my peers. Critical in-class discussion has been one of my most useful resources. The discussion process
reflects on one idea that is then expanded upon by the entire class. I feel that discussion is vital in the learning process because listening to others' ideas, experiences, and opinions not only helps to eliminate bias, but also helps expand knowledge. This collaborative technique also carries over into my final assignment group's discussion. I have discovered that our most successful meetings were when we collaboratively brainstormed and uncovered interesting thoughts and ideas concerning our rather uninteresting topic of the envelope. Another peer feedback moment that I found very helpful was when our group led the in-class discussion about our reading. Taking our group ideas and presenting them to the class to discover a wider range of thoughts really helped my group pinpoint key ideas that we needed to include in our paper. In our group discussions, we often bring up points that were stated in our group's led discussion. With the collaborative work that I have been introduced to throughout the course, I have realized the importance of and success involved with learning from others. Another key aspect of the peer feedback I received in my English 15 class was peer review sessions. I feel that the ability to assess the work of others plays a vital role in the developing the skill of assessing my own work. Recognizing key ideas, structure, strengths, and weaknesses in others' differing writing styles helps me learn to identify those same search techniques when reviewing my papers, a skill that I have always found to be difficult. Not only does the peer review process build my skills in that way, but the peer review process also allows me to recognize which parts of my assignments are being focused on by my instructor. After peer reviewing others' work, I often find myself re-reading my own draft to see if the areas of improvement that I pointed out in others' papers also need to be re-worked in my paper as well. The peer feedback that I've gotten in this course has really helped develop my writing alongside the feedback I have obtained from Ms. Lockett.

Despite the shortened length, I have acquired a vast amount of skills and abilities from my English 15 course. As previously explained, I have greatly improved my skill of recognizing the strengths and weaknesses in others' papers, as well as my own. However, this is only a small part of
what I have learned from this course. I have developed confidence on many levels. Through writing my personal narrative, user reviews, critical reflections, and even my final paper, I have developed confidence in writing in the first person point of view, a skill that was never addressed throughout my high school experience. As Ms. Lockett mentioned, many college papers will be written in first person, and because of this I am very pleased that this course allowed me to expand my knowledge in that realm of writing. I also gained confidence in critically reading and discussing scholarly material. Ms. Lockett provided many strategies and examples of how I can fully engage the information I am reading. I adopted my own version of these strategies when critically reading homework, and furthered my critical understandings through the in-class discussions of the pieces we critically read. One of the most important aspects of confidence I developed from this course was confidence in accessing information.

Because of the library day, not only did I realize the importance of keywords, but I also established a connection with a valuable resource that I will most likely use throughout my education at Penn State:

To be completely honest, this course’s interaction with Penn State library material presented me with the most success I have ever had when researching. This newly found confidence in accessing scholarly, credible information is something that I will use for years to come. The extensive research associated with the final project, I feel obligated to say, was truly one of the most important tools, I feel, that I gained from the course. Another key ability that I acquired from English 15 was a progression of confidence in myself through the development and recognition of my own identity. The personal narrative assignment allowed me step back and question who I am, what I have learned, and what I can teach to others. I am very pleased that identity was chosen as one of the class topics. Another skill that I acquired was the ability to work collaboratively with a group of people that did not necessarily carry their own weight. However, in a sense I realized an important, reoccurring instance in life; I will always have to work with individuals that may not carry their own weight, and I will be prepared for the next time that happens.
Something that I wished I had learned from the course was about all of the other topic possibilities that were not covered, especially if the different topics would have resulted in different writing activities. This course was the most helpful and engaging English class I have ever experienced, and I wish the course was longer so that I could have learned about the topics that the class didn’t cover. This class reached way beyond my expectations for an English class. I can’t describe how lucky I feel to have had the opportunity of taking an English class that I actually enjoyed, and from which I learned and developed as an individual.

Alex:

The only suggestions I have to offer focus on portions of your class that I feel were vital to my learning and should be continued in your future English 15 classes. The first is your interaction with your students on a personal level. I found that the ability to talk to you about problem situations, and your openness to e-mail and one-on-one talks, was something that really made the class run as smoothly for me. I have never had personal interactions with an instructor before, and I was terrified the first time I personally e-mailed you. I had no idea that you would be so understanding; perhaps that was just a thought that I developed about college educators in general. Also, I think that you should consider making office hours meetings for the collaborative projects a requirement. I don’t see why groups would not want to have a meeting with you, but I felt that your verbal feedback about our thoughts and ideas really helped in the process of developing and organizing our papers. Secondly, I can’t stress how much I truly valued the library day and the research techniques that you posted on the wiki. I feel like scheduled library days are very worthwhile, and successful library research is something that every student can use throughout their education. Lastly, I really appreciate both your handwritten comments, on our papers, journals, and free-writes, and your typed grade summaries. I felt that the e-mailed copies of your typed grade summaries were very useful. I actually ended up sending a copy of
my Unit 2 Evaluation grade summary to my mom, to show her my progress and your thoughts about my writing. However, please keep returning the papers with your hand-written comments. I found them very useful for connecting my “Areas of Improvement” and “Suggested Strategies” with contextual examples by comparing your grade summary comments with the comments and thoughts you hand-wrote on the papers.

Alex, I really can’t thank you enough. Before your class, I had no confidence in my writing and due to that I hated writing. I thought that English 15 would be the worst class I would ever have to take in college; but I was definitely wrong. I can honestly say that your class completely altered the way I think about writing, and it really means a lot to me.

Thank you for a great semester,
Ratings*

*Note: The Pennsylvania State University transitioned from mandatory paper Student Ratings for Teaching Effectiveness (SRTE) to electronic SRTE’s.¹ Although they notify instructors and students about the importance of completing these evaluations, no mechanism has been developed to ensure that all students will submit their feedback. Consequently, you will notice a drastic decrease of student responses after 2011. This consideration should be taken into account when reviewing these statistics because the ratings are skewed by lack of student participation. The maximum rating for overall course and instructor ratings is 7.00.

College of Liberal Arts, SRTE Means from Spring 2011-Fall 2012

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<th>Overall Instructor</th>
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First-Year Composition, SRTE Means from Fall 2009-Summer 2013

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Selected Comments from Teaching Evaluations**

**This commentary was made available by the electronic SRTE’s at Penn State University.


[http://www.srte.psu.edu/pdf/CollCampusSum_SRTE_Fall2011.pdf](http://www.srte.psu.edu/pdf/CollCampusSum_SRTE_Fall2011.pdf)
A Useful Writing Course...

Alex was a very different instructor from any English teacher I have had before; she was more demanding and encouraged original thought. I feel that she did an excellent job of introducing us to rhetoric and composition and showing us the various ways we can utilize the skills learned in this class throughout our lives, particularly in a web-connected world.

(Spring 2011, ENGL 30)

The lessons that she taught us are very easy to apply outside of class. Our first unit was on narration, in which we learned how to effectively engage our audience. This is a skill that everybody needs in everyday conversations. Our second unit was on evaluation. In this unit we discussed the power of user reviews and actually participated in producing some of our own. This in itself was a connection outside of class. Our final unit has also been relevant outside of class. We learned valuable social skills by working collaboratively on a long term paper. We also learned how to research and write based on that research. This type of writing will certainly come up in other courses we will all be required to take.

(Summer 2011, ENGL.219)

The ideas and techniques associated with writing will always have a purpose outside of class. To get scholarships, to apply for a job, to even write this SRTE requires a knowledge-base for writing. This class really improved my confidence in my writing skills, which will stick with me through the rest of my life.

(Summer 2012, ENGL.202)

She really focused on learning instead of memorizing and repeating. One of the most fulfilling classes I've ever taken.

(Spring 2011, ENGL 015)

A Student-Centered Teaching Approach...

Alex was a fantastic teacher. I wish there was a higher level than the highest rating for her. She was always willing to meet with students regarding their work or how to improve. I didn't realize this until half way through the semester, but I'm glad I did. She was very helpful to my improvement of my writing styles. I had a great experience taking her class.

(Spring 2011, ENGL.219)

Compared to others, my instructor actually wanted to take the time to get know everyone and understand each student's individual needs. She truly cared about the success of each student.

(Spring 2011, ENGL 30)

I feel that Alex was very passionate about teaching her English class. Rather than just teaching AT her students, she engaged them and encouraged us to fully participate in each class.

(Spring 2011, ENGL.219)

What really helped me learn in this course was the feedback from both the instructor and my peers. The instructor went above and beyond my expected standards of teaching by putting forth her best efforts to connect with her students about topics that they found interesting. Not only that, but she expanded upon the strengths, weaknesses, and possible areas of improvement in our papers. I never imagined that a college class would be taught with personal interactions (with peers and instructor) and cover topics catered to the interests of the students.

(Summer 2011, ENGL 15)

The Value of Writing Consultations...

I found the peer review sessions especially helpful, not only to improve my work, but also to work on networking skills. Alex's organization was such a relief, I always knew what was going on. I was a little overwhelmed with the amount of readings and writings we were assigned, but that is to be expected with a condensed semester. I wish we had more time to discuss the readings, because they were packed with interesting information.

(Spring 2012, ENGL.202)

I found her very helpful during our meetings. She helped us to express our ideas in ways that would make our paper more cohesive. She was very positive and supportive throughout the whole process as well, providing useful advice in an appealing way.

(Spring 2011, ENGL.219)
What really helped me learn in this course was the feedback from both the instructor and my peers. The instructor went above and beyond my expected standards of teaching by putting forth her best efforts to connect with her students about topics that they found interesting. Not only that, but she expanded upon the strengths, weaknesses, and possible areas of improvement in our papers. I never imagined that a college class would be taught with personal interactions (with peers and instructor) and cover topics catered to the interests of the students.
(Summer 2011, ENGL.219)

**Benefits of New Media Writing and Course Management...**

I thought the Wiki space she created was extremely helpful. It stated what we were doing each day and the assignments for the weeks to come. I accessed this site every single day.
(Summer 2011, ENGL.219)

Our class was very focused around the internet. Everything, including assignments, were on our class wiki page. Although it was very organized, I was confused for the first week or two just because I'm not the most tech-savvy person. I'm glad it was though because it helped me to become more comfortable with using the internet. (Summer 2011, ENGL 15.219)
October 14, 2010

Awards Committee
Department of English
107 Burrowes Building
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802

RE: Nomination of Alexandria Lockett for the Liberal Arts Outstanding Teaching Award for Graduate Students

Dear Members of the Awards Committee,

It is my great pleasure today to write in strong support of my colleague, Ms. Alexandria Lockett, for the Liberal Arts Outstanding Teaching Award for Graduate Students. Alex is a gifted teacher who artfully combines rigorous preparation and enlightened course management with creative applications of technology and a rare student’s passion for her students’ development as writers and communicators.

As Alex’s teaching mentor and colleague at Penn State in 2009-10, I had several opportunities to observe directly her teaching style and methods, and I have closely followed her development as a commenter and grader of students’ work. During my first visit to Alex’s classroom in October 2009, I marveled at the dexterity with which she balanced her students’ need for clarity and structure in their writing assignments with the flexibility to lead the class in a deep and rich discussion of the corporatization of American universities. Alex demonstrated profound respect for her students, and they, in turn, responded with a participation level that exceeded eighty percent. Such participation levels are indicative of the trust that Alex builds in a classroom, and they are a testament to her own skills as an educator.

Alex is an impressive classroom teacher, but to fully grasp the depth of her passion and the extent of her commitment, we need to look closely at the larger pedagogical package that Alex offers to her students and to the University. In more than fifteen years of collegiate teaching, I have never known a colleague who provides as much detailed feedback as Alex delivers to her students. In and out of the classroom, in student conferences and in her insightful comments on student work, she sees all opportunities to provide feedback and support to the young writers in her care. I am particularly impressed by the excellent use that Alex has made of her class wiki in the most recent summer term and during the present semester. Using these tools, Alex educates young writers about their responsibilities as content creators and as “neonites” in our technologically-connected and textually rich world. Such skills are vital, not only to our students’ development but also to our own evolution as humanities educators. Alex embraces technology as a way to connect and unite the writers of the world in communal endeavors and, by all measures, she succeeds.

I have been privileged to observe Alex professionally over the last year; she continues to bring credit to the department and to the profession. I am proud to call her my colleague and offer my strongest support to her nomination for the Liberal Arts Outstanding Teaching Award for Graduate Students.

Sincerely,

Robert R. Biehl, Ph.D.
Department of English
Salisbury University
Phone: 410-543-8106
Cell: 841-777-6854
mbiehl@salisbury.edu
Peer Observation from English 005***

*****This is a one-credit course that students are able to take alongside any English course. Students are assigned a tutor that they meet with once a week for approximately thirty-five minutes per session. Below is a peer observation from one of my sessions. I have copied and pasted her report from the original document. If the text needs verification, I am happy to forward the original email with the original document enclosed. The observation was part of a mandatory tutoring pedagogy course. Dr. Jon Olson, the Writing Center Director, selected these questions to guide our peer observations.

=====================================================================  
Observation Report by Nicolette Hylan
October 6, 2011
About the Tutor
I observed Alex Lockett on Tuesday, October 4, from 2:40 to 3:15. Alex's tutee [REDACTED] was brainstorming ideas for outlining two possible paper topics for his evaluation paper.

1. What signs do you notice of a productive relationship between writer and tutor? What can the tutor do to improve the relationship?

[REDACTED] and Alex seemed to have a very productive relationship, one that balances professionalism and friendliness. Throughout the session, their body language demonstrated mutual respect and engagement: they sat close to one another, their bodies were turned towards one another and they consistently made eye contact. In addition to attending to [REDACTED] needs as an English 15 student, Alex demonstrated concern for his broader well-being (she asked if he had been getting more sleep than usual). In turn, [REDACTED] felt comfortable discussing with Alex problems he was having with his contact lenses. These conversations were quite brief, as Alex and [REDACTED] remained focused almost exclusively on [REDACTED] English 15 work, but they suggested that Alex and [REDACTED] enjoy a relationship that is quite friendly (more friendly/personal than my relationships with my students). This isn't a critique at all, just a matter of personal tutoring style; I think that Alex was able to successfully balance friendliness with professionalism.

2. What opportunities are there for the writer to determine the direction of the session?

[REDACTED] did maintain quite a bit of control over the direction of the session. He came to his session with an agenda (to discuss two different ideas for his evaluation paper), and he and Alex met the goals that he had set. I was super impressed with [REDACTED] when he took the initiative to redirect the tutoring session, about half-way through, asking Alex if they could discuss a second option for his evaluation paper (about the AK47 as an ideal weapon for warfare). While [REDACTED] set the agenda, Alex did redirect his attention when he got distracted from the assignment at hand (for instance, when he was conducting a quick bit of research on his computer, he briefly succumbed to the temptation of somewhat aimless web-surfing).

3. In what ways is the help offered appropriate to the writer's needs?

By positioning herself as an objective sounding-board, Alex was able to offer [REDACTED] useful feedback on his ideas about AK47s. Although I can only imagine that this paper topic clashed with Alex's liberal politics (as it does with mine), she remained neutral throughout their discussion of this topic. Her body language and the tone of her voice demonstrated that she regarded this topic with less enthusiasm than she did the paper on Ben Affleck's film (I suspect that Alex secretly adores this director, despite her claims to the contrary). Nevertheless, she went so far as to encourage [REDACTED] to pick this topic over the one on The Town because, as she explained, [REDACTED] seemed more passionate about the paper on guns. I applaud Alex for honoring [REDACTED] interests in this regard.
4. What other strengths do you see in the tutor’s work?

I applaud the way in which Alex empowered Jonathon to balance his intellectual desires with his teacher's individual preferences. She explained that his teacher had expressed a preference for one of the two possible paper topics he had generated (I wasn't clear on which of the two topics his teacher preferred, the one of the AK47 or the one on The Town). Alex encouraged him to select the topic that he felt comfortable working on. She might have offered even a bit more advice on how to navigate teacher's demands in general (how to balance the desire to please the teacher with the desire to pursue a topic of genuine interest to the student); nevertheless, she made excellent use of a teachable moment.

Furthermore, Alex was very encouraging throughout the session. She responded to his ideas with enthusiasm. I can imagine that Jonathon found this support very encouraging and helpful. As we grad students know all too well, to write a paper is a daunting task, so every bit of support helps. Also, I really liked Alex's strategy of mirroring Jon's language as a brainstorming technique. For instance, at one point she said (and I paraphrase), “You used the word 'interesting' to describe The Town; in your opinion, what makes this movie interesting?” By using her tutee's own language to generate discussion, Alex pushed Jon to generate a list of categories and criteria while keeping the session largely student-centered.

5. How would you describe the overall productivity of the session?

The session was very productive; Jon left with two well-developed ideas for his evaluation paper and a clear understanding of the assignment.

6. What ideas can you suggest for making the tutorial more productive?

I'm hard-pressed to generate suggestions for improvement; however, Alex might encourage Jon to conduct simple online research at home. Although Jon didn't spend much time looking up actors on IMDB and Googling questions like when the Vietnam conflict began, this kind of research can be done at home.

About the Observer

1. To what extent—and why—did you identify with the (a) tutor and (b) the writer while observing the session?

I identified with Alex during the session insofar as I found the advice she gave and the tutoring strategies she employed to be quite solid; I imagine that I would have said many of the same things and made many of the same moves that she did. I identified with Jonathon insofar as he seemed like an incredibly diligent and charming young man, despite his somewhat troubling affinity for guns. It is rare to encounter a Penn State student who relish knowledge for the sake of knowledge in the way that Jonathon does; I imagine he is a pleasure to work with.

2. Do you think the writer was affected by your presence? Was this positive or negative?

Jonathon didn't seem phased by my presence. Even though I was diligently recording his and Alex's every move, he seemed quite relaxed. He even goofed off a bit, and Alex had to redirect his attention to the assignment at hand. Now that I think about it, though, it is possible he was trying to impress me by demonstrating remarkable intellectual curiosity (for instance, he asked Alex when the Vietnam war began, even though this question was not directly related to his topic).

3. Did you notice any difficulties in the tutoring session that you may have experienced in your own tutorials? If yes, can you see possible solutions to problems you have had after having witnessed them as an impartial observer?

At one point, Alex was confronted with the fact that she didn't agree with the teacher's stipulation that students select exactly four criteria. She expressed her disagreement with the teacher's rule through her facial expressions, but didn't dwell on the issue. Later in the session, she returned to the point by explaining how the student might claim some wiggle room despite this rule (she suggested that he could establish four main criteria and also establish sub-criteria for those four.) This seemed like a very reasonable suggestion.

While her reasons for disagreeing with the teacher's requirement was quite obvious to me (and probably were to Jon as well), Alex might have offered a slightly more explicit explanation of her position.
I, too, have been confronted with this problem, in different forms. For instance, there have been moments when I radically disagree with a teacher's grading standards. Often, we as tutors are incensed by instructional policies with which we disagree because we feel that our method is superior, yet we must forge ahead anyways and make due with the stipulations that the teacher has presented. In these situations, it's tempting to proverbially stamp our feet and huff and puff a bit (I admit that I have given it to these temptations at times), but I think that Alex has offered a useful model for how to deal with these situations. Briefly express your disagreement, explain why you disagree and then equip the student to actively and critically negotiate his teacher's requirements.

4. As a result of observing, what else did you learn about tutoring?

My experience observing Alex and [redacted] reminded me how important is to let students arrive at their own answers. During their brainstorming session, Alex asked [redacted] a lot of questions and made it clear when he was on the right track (and when he needed to think through his ideas further). However, she didn't offer too many answers (about, for instance, what makes an action movie captivating or interesting.) Instead, she gave [redacted] enough time to think through these questions on his own. Thus, she reminded me that I could afford to become slightly more non-directive in my tutoring style.

 Peer Observation from English 005***

Tutor: Alexandria Lockett
Observer: Denise Grollmus
When: 12:40-1:15 p.m., Wednesday, November 9, 2011

The tutoring session began promptly at 12:40. Alexandria allowed me to get situated, introduced me to her tutee, [redacted], and then she proceeded to inquire about his health (he’s been sick for weeks). Immediately, it was clear that [redacted] was extremely comfortable with Alexandria and they had a very good, open relationship in which Alexandria encouraged them to talk like equals. As they settled into talk about his work, [redacted] had his notebook open to a mind map that he drew with regard to a topic he was considering for his next argument paper. He jumped right in and began to talk about his assignment while Alexandria listened. He said that he still didn’t feel like he could make a strong argument on his chosen topic. He and Alexandria had a conversation about Classical vs Rogerian argumentation styles. Alexandria provided him with specific and clear examples of both and told him that it was an issue of audience whether to choose either style. [redacted] rephrased her ideas to show he understood. They sat side by side and had great, lively conversation for the entire session. Alexandria guided [redacted] thoughts and enthusiasm by asking good, specific questions and encouraged him to take notes as they talked. [redacted] wanted to write about the current situation at PSU regarding Sandusky. At one point, I interjected when I wanted to clarify my understanding of the facts. I felt bad for doing so, but Alexandria encouraged my participation and used my intervention as a chance to help [redacted] in coming up with ideas for his paper. She has a knack for improvisation. Alexandria offered lots of positive re-enforcement that was also meant to show [redacted] how his thinking was accomplishing specific rhetorical goals: “Good exigence” she said, “great way to develop pathos,” she remarked. As [redacted] asked questions about the situation, Alexandria wisely avoided offering answers and guided [redacted] to do research, offering good, legitimate sources he could use, suggesting he find an editorial to argue against using the grand jury report and his own experiences as evidence to back up his claims. He mentioned that he’d been out during the first night of protests and she told him how he could use his story in his paper. By the end of the session, the student had a great sense of direction for his paper. Before leaving, Alexandria wanted to make sure he understood everything they talked about. Unfortunately, I had to run to teach, so I left before the session was over. I think it ended just a few minutes after 1:15 so that Alexandria could make sure [redacted] was leaving on the best footing. [redacted] was engaged the entire time and he appeared to really be inspired by Alexandria’s guidance. It was an inspiring session!
Collaborative and New Media Writing

Revising Titles and Abstracts with Google Scholar

Sample Consultation with a Junior Writing Computer Science Research

Context: The following transcript developed during an individual consultation with a McNair scholar revising his title/abstract. Many students seemed to struggle with writing a 100 word abstract, and few (if any) considered the importance of titles. To accomplish this revision, we used new media research strategies. I recommended that the writer “tag” his project and develop a few search queries that he might use to find his own article through a search engine like Google or ScienceDirect. After experimenting with several queries, the student began to re-discover articles from his literature review. We chose a few articles and analyzed their title and abstract structure, observing key characteristics about the sequence: (1) the problem was described, followed by (2) its significance before the author (3) references to other studies and (4) comments on the limitations of previous studies. Next, the author tends to (5) introduce their own study, (6) briefly describe its methods, and (7) make claims about its utility. This method transformed the original to the revision. This writer composed his own work, occupying the desktop computer to perform the searches and revise his writing. I copied and pasted his document into a wiki entry for a transcription of our individual consultation.

Meeting Discussion: Revising Titles/Abstracts

Original Title: Novel method for real-time predictive state detection

Revised Title: Towards precise detection of brain states using real-time predictive algorithms

Original Abstract

For many researchers in a wide array of neuroscience disciplines, states of consciousness in the brain offer a metric for explaining and predicting behaviors. The analysis of these states of consciousness to provide meaningful data is often time-consuming and labor intensive using traditional methods of offline analysis. In these post-processing methods, data is analyzed after it has been collected in order to make its classifications of brain state. My research aims to create a novel method of online analysis where a determination of consciousness can occur rapidly and in real-time, eliminating the need to manually analyze data after it has been collected.

Revised Abstract

States of consciousness in the brain offer a metric for explaining and predicting behaviors. Unfortunately, traditional methods of offline analysis are time-consuming and labor intensive because all data must be collected before brain state classification. This approach uses algorithms that are incapable of processing real-time feedback, which affects the accuracy of brain state analyses. To resolve this problem, my project aims to create a novel method of online analysis using robust predictive algorithms designed to rapidly assess consciousness in real-time. This study has both clinical applications and will enable researchers to more efficiently acquire accurate data about brain states.
Collaborative Research Design

Please click on any of the following links to access assignments conducive to group writing. Note: Any of these assignments could be transformed into individual writing assignments with a reduced page and source requirement.

Evaluation Portfolio
Audience Analysis
Researched Proposal
Critical Annotation of a Technology

Sample New Media Assignments and Demos
Online User Reviewing: Evaluation 2.0
War on Drugs Position as a YouTube Video

Sample Papers

Please see appendix 3 and appendix 4.
Assessment
Example of Feedback for a User Review Assignment

Unit 2 Grade Summary

Student Name: Writer #1  Peer Reviewer: Writer #2

Biggest Strengths

Your critical reflection was compelling and intellectually rich. Not only did you draw on every single reading you were assigned for homework throughout the unit, but you used your personal experience as sources of valuable knowledge that could enable you to talk confidently about rules you feel should govern user-generated review sites. In particular, you argue that review writers should “include the whole truth of the situation.” Furthermore, you boldly claim that user review sites should be categorized as an example of collective intelligence. Your interpretation of this term enabled you to go beyond literal interpretations of “social and political implications.” In what ways does collective intelligence complement and/or conflict with the “needs” of other communities (both offline and online)? In other words, what purpose does collective intelligence serve and to what extent should it be considered a virtue worth pursuing? Another aspect of your reflection was your discussion of how user review sites may be lateralizing power distributions between consumers and businesses (e.g. diminished power of mass media advertising). I also appreciated that you seamlessly connected Netizenship to the concept of community. Overall, I was impressed by your critical reflection and urge you to continue to contemplate the relationship between ethics, collective intelligence, freedom of expression, feedback, and how we define community.

Your best review, in my opinion, was on Jitters. However, all three of your reviews were engaging and helpful. What stood out to me the most in your review of Jitters was how you described all the various ways in which a consumer could use this business. Each review was well-organized, balanced, and offered specific context and/or details that could make or break a potential consumers’ decision to want to try it.

Two Major Areas of Improvement

Both your reviews and your critical reflection were among the strongest in the class. Consequently suggestions for improvement are relatively minor. In your review of Jitters you mention that you “heard” the bagel sandwiches are good. This is superfluous information since you cannot prove, through your own experience, that this is the case. Simply letting readers know that this is an option available would have been consistent with the other details featured in the review. In addition, some of your word choice could have been stronger in your review of A&H detergent. You stated that you manage to “greatly dirty” your clothing. I’m not sure this adverb works well here, since dirty could be interpreted as functioning as an adjective also, instead of a verb—although it’s relatively clear that you mean for it to function as a verb in this case.

Suggested Strategies

In future papers, I think that you should feel confident pushing the significance of your arguments further. For instance, you began to explore the concept of collective intelligence, and I would like for you to consider how humans’ freedom of expression is limited in various communication contexts. In other words, how do you convince people that collective intelligence is in their best interest, or that it “serves their needs?” Your critical reflection shows that personal experience is persuasive, and user review sites’ clearly privilege users’ shared experiences. After reading your reflection, I’m interested in learning more about how offline communities value feedback and the degree to which user-generated content in digital environments influences offline “rules of communication” (and ethics).
Example of Feedback for a Crowdsourced Bibliography

Since our meeting, it seems that things are going well. Your outline was good and your thesis seems to be on point. I have two more suggestions:

1. Make sure you use a variety of sources, and use them strategically. Interesting facts do not retain a reader's interest unless the purposes for telling us those facts is clear. Also, you owe it to your readers to tell them when your sources were published when you use certain materials (e.g., the marriage study from 1961) so they don't have a skewed perception of your beliefs/assumptions about marriage.

2. Find a couple more contemporary sources on marriage and its role in Western society. I feel as if many of your sources are a bit dated, which is actually great for your topic! It's very important for you to draw connections between the history of your object and its contemporary uses. The key is not to take the "progress" angle, since Winner has warned us that it confuses more than it clarifies. You'll want to understand how that history continues to affect current uses of the object, as well as how certain social conventions change, so too does the function of the wedding ring.

I'll keep your Google Doc open, although I can't promise I'll always be responsive! Good luck drafting and don't hesitate to consult me if you need additional assistance.

*Each group member may not be receiving the same grade for this assignment. Individual grades depend on each member's submission of group evaluations.

Example of Feedback for a History of Technology Paper

Your paper on laundry detergent featured rich arguments about its cultural and political significance. After I read your paper, I wanted to know more about how people do laundry in other parts of the world. However, the fact that you did not focus as much on these practices in no way compromises the validity of what you featured in your paper. I recognize that there is only so much you can do in a 5-6 page paper, and you all drew on a wide variety of sources! Additional suggestions for improvement can be located throughout your draft.

The major critique I have of this paper is that the organization made it quite difficult to follow at times. In particular, your use of personal experience wasn’t always fully integrated with the points that preceded it, which made my experience reading the paper feel somewhat disruptive at times. More signposting in the form of transitions and linking sentences among paragraphs (e.g., strong topic and concluding sentences that let us know where we are going next in light of where we have been) would have helped this paper considerably.

Among your paper’s many strengths were the discussions of product design and usage vis-a-vis ad analysis. I appreciated your comparison/contrast of the various ways the technology has been marketed to appeal to audiences perception of hygiene. The elimination of odor was made visible through the bubbles, and your explicit claims about our associations between bubbles and cleanliness was strong. Discussing the environmental impact of the bubbles, explaining how consumer needs have altered our attitude towards the product design was good. Furthermore, the use of personal experience helped make your paper more relatable and interesting, as well. Finally, as I am sure you both know, I was very interested in how you wrote about gender and the ways in which this technology served to stratify and supposedly “empower” women.

Overall, you both have conducted a solid investigation of the hygiene technology. The paper does a great job of illustrating the importance of detergent and helps us better understand the ways in which certain cultures value cleanliness/hygiene.
Example of Feedback on Collaborative Position Paper

Excellent position paper. You all successfully revised the organization of your paper and it read smoothly as one voice. The final paper consists of an exhaustive amount of research that was strategically used throughout your draft. I only had a few minor critiques which involved word choice. At times, when you are discussing sustainability and savings for Wal-Mart, you all repetitively used the phrase, “passed on to the consumer.” Otherwise, your paper is analytical, engaging, and persuasive. Although the ending leaves me feeling somewhat powerless in my ability to change Wal-Mart’s business practices, the paper encourages readers to investigate Wal-Mart’s labor practices and consider whether or not they are as “sustainable” as the environmental pursuits that have benefited the company. When, if ever, will Wal-Mart finally provide its own employees with more lucrative salaries, wages, and benefits that can help them “live better?” I sent you all this recent article that is in timely correspondence with your paper: http://www.alternet.org/news/150770

Great job! It has been an absolute pleasure working with you all throughout the semester. The successful completion of your collaborative writing effort, the results of such hard work and dedication, is worth celebrating! Your paper displays extraordinarily writing and critical thinking abilities that will serve all of you ladies well throughout your academic experience at Pennsylvania State University and beyond. I urge you to stay in contact with each other as valuable peer reviewers for one another’s work. It is clear that you were able to bring out the best in each others’ learning and communication styles. Furthermore, as I have already mentioned. I am committed to remaining a resource for you. Don’t hesitate if you need to contact me for assistance in future professional and academic endeavors.

If you get a chance, if you could fill out group evaluations of one another so that I can share these experiences with future students, I would most appreciate it.

Example of Feedback for a Collaborative Proposal

Group 1:

My first impression of your final draft is that you strived to create a professional impression for your audience, and that many areas of your draft are well-researched. Among its strengths were the use of numerical comparisons to illustrate waste, good topic sentences, headings, and inclusion of fracking information to strengthen the point about the need for additional filling stations. Major areas of improvement include the need for tighter internal structure, consistent syntax, and stronger argumentation.

For example, developing a more comprehensive critique of what causes people to consume water bottles despite the availability of alternatives would have made your paper less predictable. At times, the group takes its arguments about waste too far, explicitly stating that they know that this will convince students to choose more environmentally friendly options. However, the group never addresses matters such as bottled water advertising, or the ways in which the convenience of recycling plastic ends up thwarting the efficacy of alternative modes of water consumption. How does consumerism affect the persuasiveness of waste claims? For additional suggestions for improvement, please see marginal comments.

In regards to the group-led discussion, your peers were especially impressed by your brochure and the feasibility of your solution. All group members spoke confidently and competently. The use of personal experience and primary research was a nice touch.
Online Community Service: Netizenship

Netizenship: Philosophy, Reflection, and Examples

In the words of a former student, A.Bianco, “Becoming a good “netizen”* to the world has become important considering all of the information that is already exposed on the web. Millions of people post accessible poems, reviews, or [other] data online that has the potential to affect thousands of minds. It is important to get your ideas out there, whether it is just six words or a few sentences on a Wikipedia page. Your couple of thoughts can inspire, encourage, or even alter lives. Sharing your personal experiences can better another’s well-being or save them time and money. It is impossible to know how greatly you can affect someone else without exposing your work first.” Therefore, I make online service learning, or netizenship, an essential feature of my courses. The burden of improving information quality—in terms of generating, organizing, and updating content that accurately represents the diversity of human taste—is now shared by any user of the global default information infrastructure. Indeed, the Internet introduces the need for us to participate in new ethical paradigms, and writing instructors should consider some of the ways in which students ought to be socialized as networked actors and producers of knowledge.

Campus Event Reviews

To expand student’s social networks and acclimate them to the resources of their institution, I encourage students to attend lectures, symphonies, museums, and other cultural events on-campus. Students may write about these events to replace a missing homework assignment, or to demonstrate goodwill to our classroom community. I have used these reviews as a strategy for teaching evaluation, discussing the importance of connecting over shared interests, and encourage a willingness to add spontaneity to one’s routine.
Research Writing Across Disciplines

McNair Writing Specialist Position

Schedule of Activities

To observe a living history of student meetings and feedback from 2013, please visit:
http://researchwritingworkshop.pbworks.com

This is a private wiki. To access the wiki as a ‘reader,’ please enter:
Username: guestuser
Password: access

Survey of Fields/Disciplines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2011 Cohort</th>
<th>2012 Cohort</th>
<th>2013 Cohort</th>
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<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Human Development and Family Studies/Public Relations</td>
<td>Engineering Science</td>
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Examples of Feedback for STEM Students

Examples of feedback for four different STEM Students—Immunology and Toxicology, Agricultural Science, Physics, and Computer Engineering are on the following pages.
Context: This feedback was offered to the writer at the beginning stages of the writing process. Before composing her research article for the McNair Summer Research Program, this writer submitted an annotated bibliography and outline for a research methods course. These papers were my introduction to the cohort’s writing skills. This was my first summer working for the McNair program, and you may notice slight variations in the commenting styles throughout this portfolio. However, I strive for readers to observe that my feedback always attempts to include three components: strengths, areas of improvement, and recommendations or strategies for improvement.

My first impression of your writing is detailed, but inert. You seem to hesitate making certain arguments but are quite bold in your expression of others. For instance, you seem almost bashful when you discuss the relationship between respondent truthfulness and the taboo nature of the subject matter. Why do you assume participants chosen for the study feel that these topics are “too sensitive” for them to discuss? I noticed that these participants are young drug users, and their geographic locations, genders, sexual orientations, income levels, and economic background are going to strongly influence what they consider to be sensitive subject matter. Next, near the end of your annotation you make claims about logic, opinion, evidence, and “true experimental procedure”? You take it for granted that the audience agrees with your characterization of these terms. In fact, many scholars are motivated to do research in order to make arguments about what those terms mean (e.g. Writing instructors who have to justify their use of anecdotal evidence as a form of valid evidence for the purposes of their studies). What’s a true experimental procedure? A false one? Words like logic, true, and real draw attention to your attitude, values, beliefs, and ways of seeing the world. These terms, used within the context of your critique, have the effect of proving that you aren’t objective although you are attempting to convey yourself in that way. They reveal more about your opinions than they do about the subject matter itself. These are terms you show rather than tell. If you feel your research approach will address the limitations of other studies, showing how it does through the way you compose your literature review, the manner in which you present your findings, and explanation of your method would enable you to establish credibility with your audience in a more powerful way.

I assume that this writing was composed as part of an annotated bibliography of some sort. I appreciated how you summarized the aspect of the article that stood out to you and your critiques of the article seemed sound. What was missing from your annotation was how this research connects to your own. What problem are you attempting to solve in your research project? In what ways will you use this article to help you demonstrate or justify your findings, method, or research purpose?

Recommendation: So far, it's clear that you are a talented writer with a passion for accuracy. Your major challenge will be presenting your arguments in such a way that this passion does not compromise the validity of other equally useful methods of gathering research. I would be interested in knowing how other researchers in your field grapple with the problems with qualitative research. Humans are complicated beings and researching the effectiveness of a particular treatment on their bodies and/or the cause of disease is even more complicated.
**Student Writing in Agriculture**

**Final Paper Title:** Impact of Endophytic *Fusarium verticillioides* on Corn Growth & Proteomic Composition

**Abstract:** Endophytic *Fusarium verticillioides* has become an emerging issue in crop and food safety. This study looks at the effects of various strains of endophytic *F. verticillioides* on the growth and proteomic makeup of corn (*Zea mays*). Ten plants were inoculated for three treatments, with height being measured every seven days. After approximately 21 days, samples were taken from each treatment to determine if endophytic colonization occurred. Samples were also used in a SDS-PAGE and silver stain to evaluate any differences in the apoplastic fluid of each treatment. This study hypothesizes that *F. verticillioides* likely inhibits corn growth.

*Context:* This feedback was composed during an Individual Consultation. I received a first draft of his Intro/Lit Review section before the meeting, and offered marginal comments. The “end comment” organically developed throughout our discussion of the writer’s goals and articulation of the project. This comment was included to illustrate the structural differences between feedback written as a “final” product of reading, and feedback driven by engaged parties interacting in real-time.

**Structure of Lit Review**

I. Introduction

- What is the problem?
- Why is this a problem?
- Who has addressed it?
- What is missing in their approach?
- What will you do?
- Why is it awesome?

II. Lit Review

1. What is FV?
   - How did researchers discover it? Where? When?
   - How do researchers TALK about it?

   Dispute about physiology of the corn, which is related to the perception of effects
   - Sometimes it enhances growth
   - Sometimes it suppresses growth

   **FB1, 2, 3 (effects of FV)**

   Since FV produces FB1, FB2, and FB3, its variability make it difficult to evaluate. Of the three FM’s, most contemporary research discusses FB1.

   Sample topic sentence: In 2012, research about FB1’s effects on animal and human populations significantly increased. Studies such as __________ illustrate a wide range of problems including ________.

2. How is FV detected?
   - Benefits and Limitations

   Why were their approaches valuable and flawed.
   What are YOU going to do to fill that gap?
   Be explicit about researcher’s accounting for variability in their experiments. [give examples]

   **Limits:**
   - Protein detection can be difficult
Studying cells and "isolating proteins"

3. Rationale for Subject Selection and Method

Given that your acknowledgement of the fact that FV (and its FMs) produce so much variability, how will your experiment be designed to enable us to better understand the specific contexts in which FV's interactions with Maize influences its behavior/effect.

Project is broken down into three parts.

Why Maize?

You should illustrate how the literature you read demonstrates the value of doing an experiment that tests the relationship between FV's and Maize.

1. FV will be injected
   - growth measured

2. Proteins will be extracted
   - complex to do

3. Inoculate the Seed
   - puncture vs. abrasions
   - Which one has a higher rate of fungus recognition

II. Concerns about Writing
- Writing instructors need to be articulate in commentary about improving writing.

General Tips

Writing is about relationships. SCOPE, SCALE, INFLUENCE

Scientific: Physical process and an attempt to account/create motion
Artistic: The human creator deliberately/purposefully seeks to materialize a desire or vision or perception or process.

How on earth is a technical writer supposed to be artistic???

Passive V. Active Voice

ACTIVE VOICE= WHO'S DOING WHAT?

Example: The Impact of Fusarium Verticiolioides Endophytes on the Growth and Apoplastic Proteins of Maize

Example: FV may impact the growth and maize's apoplastic region.

SUBJECT + VERB. An action verb is the difference between the simplest sentence and to be is what makes it not a sentence at all on the s/v level.

Patrick IS Versus Patrick walks.

[TRANSITION] [ADJ] {SUBJECT/specific or general} + [ADVERB] + VERB + [ID/D OBJECT] [PREPOSITION]

Ex. Yesterday, the tall boy quickly retrieves a letter from his mailbox.

Ex. Tomorrow, Patrick will feverishly write his intro/lit review section in our apartment.
Student Writing in Physics

Final Paper Title: Detecting Low Energy Muons with IceCube

Context: This student is a multilingual writer, struggling to both write ‘correctly,’ and learn the conventions of academic writing. Using inquiry, I focused on the sequence of questions to enable him to observe a useful organizational strategy for composing the Introduction/Lit Review section. Using the wiki, we documented our session in ‘real-time.’ Most of the entries under each question were actually composed by the student after I modeled the first few entries after we discussed the general purpose of a literature review.

Purpose of a Literature Review: Demonstrate that you understand how scholars/researchers have discussed your research subject.
- How have researchers debated about the meaning of a term or a method?
- How have researchers debated about the interpretation of results?

Introduction

Problem: Researchers are looking for more sources of neutrinos.
The recent discovery of neutrinos, a power-packed subatomic particle, is important because it has raised issues regarding the relationship between particles, matter, energy. These particles can tell us more about the sun since they are undeflected, or if you are tracking down a star, by modeling the path you can tell where it is. Tells us more about black holes, galaxy itself.

How are they doing this?
5000 detectors, the size of X, located in the South Pole are capable of detecting Chereknov Radiation. These detectors use photo-multipliers.

How does your research contribute to better calibration?
Calibration of detector. Depending on the type of energy a particle has, it will travel farther or less.

Why is examining the source of neutrinos important?
Contemporary research suggests that detecting muons enables us to better understand the ways certain cosmic phenomena. Stars and Black Holes. These studies are important because if we understand decay, we can then understand

Lit Review

Define the Particles
What is a muon? Byproduct of neurons experiencing weak interaction. Energy dispersal. Dispersal of particles which go in different paths? Muons enable researchers to detect neutrinos. Neutrinos give us information about the source, which helps us understand the nature of the source.

Discuss How Researchers have Attempted to Detect the Particles
A subatomic particle discovered by X in [year, location]. Doesn't last long. Byproduct of decay. Traditionally, researchers have used Light Emitting Diode technology enabled researchers to simulate the path of a muon. Difficult to synchronize the detector

What is Chereknov Radiation?
Utilized to detect muons, which decay from the neutrino. A charged particle, moving through a medium, is going at a velocity that is the speed of light. Hence, the bluish color. Discovered through the decay of uranium in water. This is useful because when something goes faster than the speed of light, you will now be able to detect it. Depending on how much light you get, researchers such as X, Y, and Z, concluded that you can detect the path of an object.

What are Photo-Multipliers? Other methods?
Acknowledge limits of detection or debates among researchers about detection when you discuss each type.

Researchers acknowledge that X, Y, and Z inhibits us from detecting sub-atomic particles.

MY STUDY WILL FILL THIS GAP BY DOING X.

As you proceed, remember: Writing always describes, proposes, or analyzes relationships through Scope, Scale, and Cause.
Example of Feedback for Humanities Students

Student Writing in Media Studies

Title: The Gendered Language of Sports Teams Names and Logos

➢ Access this article’s full-text: Penn State McNair Journal 2011

The last two pages of your draft were far stronger than the earlier parts of it, which suggests that you will probably need to make significant changes to the organization of your introduction. I have left extensive commentary throughout your literature review, but I would like to draw your attention to three major issues, that are in many ways reinforced by the presence of one another.

1. **Organization:** There are moments in your draft that don’t flow because what I read would have made sense if it was in another part of your paper.

2. **Definition of Key Terms:** All research, regardless of discipline, takes the time to define key terms in the literature review. You use terms such as *reserve of men, cultural ideology, typology,* etc., and don’t tell us what you mean by them. In the humanities, due to the increased recognition of Critical Theory, readers will expect you to define terms and not take it for granted that they share the same understanding of these words as you do. I have highlighted and commented on these terms throughout your draft.

3. **Strategic Use of Evidence:** You make a lot of very bold claims and don't provide the reader with any means of testing them—sometimes it is helpful to offer the reader with examples of complex concepts and arguments that could help us better understand why you are doing your research.

**Recommendation:** I know that you have been frustrated with this topic, and it shows. The first paragraph of your introduction should tell me specifically what you are doing, how you are doing it, and why it matters. In its current state, the introduction is very abstract and does not encourage me to want to continue reading. This is not because the quality of your ideas can’t be improved upon, it’s because of where they are located in your paper. Your introduction provides the frame by which I should be reading the rest of your work. If I have to wait until the second page of your draft to find out what you are researching and what your “main argument” is, the overall draft suffers from feeling fragmented and unfocused. It seems that you felt that beginning macro and then going micro would help clarify the aims of your research. Unfortunately, it has the opposite effect. Research is very specific, and part of your obligation as someone writing research, is that you provide us a context that helps us understand why you have chosen to examine a particular object. If the context is too broad, it inhibits us from seeing the uniqueness of your contribution.
Example of Feedback for Social Sciences Students

Student Writing in Psychology

Noteworthy Context and Reflection: This student’s educational history is unique because he is a first-generation Caucasian student from rural Kansas. His educational background was directed by parents with a conservative Christian background. In particular, this student was home-schooled until he came to the Pennsylvania State University. When I met him, he disclosed that he had recently come out as a homosexual, which was strongly affecting his academic performance. The McNair program offered this student a source of support and stability during his extremely difficult decision to come out. Furthermore, working with this student introduced me to the fact of educational background as a characteristic of ‘diversity’ that will strongly influence contexts for teaching and learning. Ironically, the same summer I met this student, I was teaching also teaching a first-year composition class with two homeschooled students enrolled. This particular student researcher, as well as the other two students, regularly discussed the challenges of being ‘formally’ educated outside of a family/religious context. He struggles with ‘catching up’ with students educated outside the home because he doesn’t share the same knowledge about history, literature, and government. Indeed, this student made me think more critically about what ‘the basics’ means in the 21st century. If educational experiences continue to diversify—through distance, charter, and home-based settings—how should writing teachers respond? Although the Council for Writing Program Administrators and the CCC regularly establishes and updates curricular objectives for Writing instructors, I worry about access. In what ways do these emerging ‘diverse’ populations, alongside other underserved groups like international, first-generation, and returning students, cause individual teachers and professional organizations to reconsider standardization? Should we be pushing for standardization to stabilize all this distributed education, or do we need to reform the idea of standards as part of an entirely new education paradigm to adapt to 21st century expansions (and limits) of teaching and learning?

Title: Mirror, Mirror, In the Eyes: Mental State Decoding Abilities in Pathological Narcissism

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Your lit review helped me better understand your rationale for studying NPD. Among its greatest strengths was your discussion about the discrepancies between diagnoses and diagnostic methods, as well as major gaps involved in updating this disorder.

My concerns with your draft up to this point involve three major issues:

1) **Coherency/organization**. Sometimes your topic sentences are buried in your paragraphs and it’s not always clear how your paragraphs fit together.

2) **Evidence**. You have several points in the paper where you’ve told yourself to cite, but at times it’s not necessary to cite what you are saying and you could put those efforts elsewhere. Utilizing various, specific examples from different threads of the literature would enable your research project’s purpose and significance to come through even stronger.

3) **Argumentation**. Sometimes it appears as if you feel that you have to carry the burden of accounting for why things are the way they are in regards to why someone did what they did. Providing intention is incredibly difficult and not something you have the burden of doing. It’s great if some event definitely contributed to the omission or neglect of vulnerable narcissists, but you can keep it at that and quickly introduce that information’s importance to your project.
Evidence of Consulting Effectiveness
Student Thank You E-Mails

A moment of gratitude

Good morning Alex, Gaby, Jen, Judy, and Teresal

As we come to the end of this summer program, I wanted to take you away from your busy mornings for a moment to extend my gratitude to the five of you. Thank you for being available and supportive throughout this summer learning experience. I have grown in more ways than I could have imagined this summer, and all of you have allowed that development to flourish.

My biggest goal for this summer was to see if cutting out all the noise—work, classes, and so on—and having a singular vision would be something that my ADHD-oriented brain could withstand. I have come to learn that I am simply head over heels in love with the prospect of graduate school and a life filled with learning, teaching, and evolving as a human being. I tend to have to ability to be overly wordy, so I'll stop here.

All of you have been highly impactful in my life thus far, and I encourage you all to continue to be models of excellence in all that you say and do.

Thank you!

Big Congrats, Thanks, and Final Notes

To: "Alexandria L." <alexandrialockett@gmail.com>

Hi Alex,

You have been an amazing influence on me as an African American Female. Your strong personality and fierceness truly inspires me to get a little more aggressive especially when articulating my thoughts. Thank you for the great mentorship during this summer, you challenged me and that has allowed me to think and analyze things at a higher level. I will continue to stay in contact with you and I look forward to working with you in the Future.

Best,
Graduate Student Writing

Graduate Writing Center Workshops

Writing Personal Statements/CVs

Writing the Teaching Philosophy

Interdisciplinary Approaches to Rhetoric Pedagogy & Curriculum

Pedagogy & Curriculum: Led by Alexandria Lockett & Rachel Johnson

This interactive session will provide you with the opportunity to design major assignments that meet your pedagogical goals. While pedagogical philosophies should guide our teaching, it is often difficult to convert learning objectives into concrete activities that accomplish those objectives. Through collaboration, group work, and open discussion, panel attendees will articulate justifications for why we teach, what we teach, and how we teach it. Thus, a portion of this panel will be devoted to developing course units and activities that fulfill the goals we set.

Additionally, one of the key questions guiding this workshop will be, "What pedagogical goals does English and Communication Arts and Sciences share?" We hope to draw on frameworks and assumptions that guide your teaching philosophy and practices in order to develop common and creative approaches that we can bring to our classrooms. Furthermore, we hope our assignments will offer us with even more "best" teaching practices we can use to uncover and define what seem to be some of the greatest pedagogical challenges that we face, as a community, in 21st century higher education institutions. Participants will leave this workshop with not only a better understanding of the philosophy that guides their teaching, but will also receive a compilation of possible activities that can be implemented in composition and speech communication classrooms.
Recommendations
Colleague Applying to M.F.A. in Visual Narrative Programs

NYU-Steinhardt
Office of Graduate Admissions
82 Washington Square East, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10003

January 31, 2013

Dear Graduate Admissions Committee:

With great pleasure, I write to recommend Nadia D. Wilson for admissions into NYU-Steinhardt’s Studio Art Master of Fine Arts program. As her close friend and colleague, I collaborated with Nadia extensively throughout the past several years on professional projects (including her website in-progress: www.nadiadelane.com/home). Few individuals have contributed to my personal and professional growth like Nadia DeLane Wilson. We’ve spent countless days and nights via e-mail, telephone, car ride, coffee shop, homemade dinner date, and evening tea reviewing one another’s writing, web design, paintings, lesson plans, and research agendas. We’ve also shared visions about the role of art/artists within the context of a global information economy. I admire Nadia for being a self-starter, a constructive critic, a witty conversationalist, a nurturing friend, and a dynamic artist. Her sensitivity to the spiritual and ethical dimensions of access to creativity and expression enables her to produce bold, memorable paintings, multimedia pieces, as well as academic, creative, and professional writing.

Nadia and I met during a graduate seminar, Ethnic Rhetorics, in which I learned more about her deep interest in the relationship between literary and cultural studies, anthropology, rhetoric, and visual art. In addition to composing compelling analyses about plays featuring multi-racial heroines, Nadia designed all of the advertising for Penn State’s prestigious annual African-American Novel Conference in 2010. Her art appeared on the program, tote bags, and the conference website. The vibrant image demonstrated the skill of a professional artist, and Nadia’s work was commissioned to be a book cover for Dr. Lovaceli King’s African American Culture and Legal Discourse. Several of her colleagues have also purchased her pieces. Indeed, her artistic accomplishments showed me that Nadia valued creating art beyond a hobby. Rather, she merges her literary and artistic passions, enabling her to create professional opportunities that make strong interdisciplinary connections.

We continued to take at least two other seminars together, which included Literacy and Social Movements and African-American Folklore. These courses led us to establish a relationship as peer reviewers and collaborative writers. Nadia’s class presentations and group-led discussions exemplified impressive leadership skills and tremendous intellectual prowess. In particular, she developed a comprehensive handout, delivered a presentation, and led an entire class discussion about the book Oreo. Her preparedness established a model for the entire class to emulate, as she flawlessly balanced engaging her audience and providing them crucial background information on the text. Weeks after Nadia gave her presentation, the class continued to draw on her insightful questions as an interpretive framework for other material we read.

College of the Liberal Arts
An Equal Opportunity University
for the class. Some examples demonstrating her ability to make complex works accessible and relevant to contemporary society included the following questions (excerpted from her handout):

- Consider the various kinds of artists in Oreo. Humor is obviously a privileged art form in this text. We spoke about the function of humor briefly in our previous discussions; what role does the offensive “joke” play in satirical folklore? Consider the milkman’s criteria for superiority (48-49), the fat jokes (33), racial jokes (35,65,102), and prank phone calls. Also, consider Helen’s artistry (22,31) and Samuel’s voice-over acting. What is Ross’s commentary regarding the arts and their function?
- Oreo is the visual “ideal beauty of legend and folklore” and a legendary “ball buster”(37,53). What do we make of the visual representations, equations, objects (140), symbols, lists (92), and menus Ross provides (68)?

As these questions suggest, Nadia’s critical contribution to African-American folklore relied strongly on her sensitivity to the interdependence of aesthetics, language practices, and cultural beliefs. In fact, we drew on her observations about depictions of artists in artistic works in future discussions about meta-cognitive features of folklore. In works such as The Salt Eaters, Crabcakes, and Visitation of Spirits we considered how storytellers represent storytellers in their texts, as well as argued about whether or not representations of meta-awareness serves as an effective criteria for defining folklore and mythology. In fact, Nadia and I continue to dialogue about the significance of Oreo. Not only did her presentation and subsequent discussion lead me to write my own seminar paper on the marginalized satiric novel, but we are drawing on our mutual interest in the text by developing a digital humanities project that will provide a historiography of black women’s humor. At least twice a month we consult about our research, drawn from black historical newspapers such as the Pittsburgh Courier and the Chicago Defender, as well as lesser known magazines, poetry, paintings, and music.

Nadia’s ability to cultivate her talents as an independent, professional artist while enrolled in a graduate English program truly demonstrates her passion and commitment to art, and human expression more broadly. She tirelessly works to bring the value of art to her local community, and people notice and appreciate her efforts. Nadia’s work found a home in the Penn State Vice President’s office, Penn State’s Student Health Center, Penn State’s Student Union Building, and Robert Wood Johnson Hospital in New Jersey. Additionally, Penn State’s student newspaper—the Daily Collegian—acknowledged Nadia’s success as a local artist unaffiliated with an institutional university Art program in at least two articles. Equipped with excellent writing and pedagogy skills acquired throughout her graduate training in English, Nadia’s desire to further develop her artistic expertise would be an asset to your program. If given the opportunity to network with a community of aspiring artists, Nadia’s willingness to share her art and collaborate with others would add vitality and depth to the culture of NYU-Steinhardt’s school of Culture, Education, and Human Development.

Please don’t hesitate to call me at 814-571-3563 or email me at AlexandriaLockett@gmail.com to further discuss Nadia’s qualifications. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Alexandria L. Lockett
PhD Candidate
www.alexandrialockett.com
Observations
First-Year Graduate Teaching Assistant

Teaching Observation for English 015.052

Summary: The Instructor’s class focused on the proposal unit and consisted of numerous procedural activities, one mini-lecture, and an icebreaker. Students were required to compose several free-writes, collaborate with peers in small groups to discuss their writing and the instructor's follow-up questions, and participate in class discussion about one Penn Statements’ essay.

Methods/Materials/Technologies: Board trace, Penn Statements, Desks arranged in a Circle, and Statistics

Strengths: The Instructor is an engaging, thoughtful instructor who has established a great rapport with his students. He artfully blended directive and non-directive methods, and used rhetorical concepts to illustrate meta-cognitive aspects of language. For example, before The Instructor modeled a proposal outline on the board, he wrote down the number 1275% on the board. He asked students what the number referred to and they guessed for about a minute before he told them that it was the price of movie popcorn mark-up. He let them discuss its significance for a couple of minutes before explaining the various parts of a proposal to students. What I appreciated about his proposal model was that he didn’t simply tell students what goes into the paper, he emphasized specificity and audience throughout his board trace. He also asked strong questions during his discussion about the Harry Potter proposal essay in Penn Statements. Specifically, students were asked to share their personal experiences with reading, as well as their suggestions for improving reading skills. Since they were asked both about the Penn Statements essay and their own literacy narratives, they began to utilize the article to reinforce or challenge their opinions. To illustrate, one student claimed that she thought Harry Potter books were ‘dumb,’ but the author’s use of ‘magical language,’ and passionate defense of the book’s benefit to her—in terms of learning and community persuaded her to reconsider her own literacy experiences. Another one of The Instructor’s strengths was free-write-on-the-fly! When the discussion seemed to be about how much reading ‘sucked,’ The Instructor spontaneously required them to do a free-write proposing a film in lieu of a book for an English class, in which they needed to be explicit about the benefit of watching the proposed suggestion. One of the most obvious benefits of this activity was that the students immediately began building a community over their shared preferences. Indeed, the discussion was powerful, and the entire class experience was stimulating, experiential, and student-centered.

Areas of Improvement: As I previously mentioned, this class was great! However, The Instructor used numerous free-writes followed immediately by partner-sharing without board tracing his questions. Although students were able to complete these tasks, they seemed confused about how long they were supposed to be working and often asked one another what the questions were. I also thought The Instructor could push student’s critical thinking skills even more. While I am impressed by how much text and discussion the instructor generated from his students, The Instructor may want to follow-up on their responses instead of moving to the next activity so quickly.

Suggested Strategies: The Instructor is a fantastic teacher! I recommend that he talk slower, and give students more cues for completing tasks. To be sure, he does this in some ways, but not others. I especially liked that he wrote down an agenda, but he may also consider composing free-writing and group work prompts on the board or display them on the screen, as well as let students know how much time they have to finish these activities. He may also try to push students to develop their ideas more (especially in regards to what they assume is normal). For example, at one point a student said Transformers was a good movie. He may have wanted to ask the student why, or ask others if they agree or disagree with the student’s criteria for ‘good.’
Professor Jon Olson

English 602

November 7, 2011

Observation #2: Summary of [redacted]

I observed [redacted] on November 7 at 12:00 p.m. I arrived exactly 1 minute after noon, but they had already started. I asked [redacted] to get me up to speed on what the student was working on, and at 12:03 p.m. I began to take observation notes. The student was writing a proposal argument in response to the State College Wal-Mart’s lack of ethnic foods. [redacted] approach to tutoring is very hands-on, and she uses a number of strategies to help encourage the student to be a more confident, independent writer. What stood out to me the most, was that the session was very process-oriented. She read the paper aloud, asked the student numerous inquiry questions, practiced writing topic sentences with the writer, and prompted her to pay attention to the recurrence of her errors. The keyword for their session was: consistency. [redacted] repeatedly asked the student to pay attention when she followed the rules and when she deviated from them. For instance, the student hyphenated the word “well-rounded,” in one sentence, but left out the hyphen in another. I was impressed by the number of issues [redacted] covered in 35 minutes. Comma placement, pluralization, spelling, word choice, repetition, verb tense, organization, plagiarism, and MLA citation rules were all given detailed attention throughout her session.

Although the student didn’t talk much during the session, she seemed very close to [redacted]—even mentioning her in her paper at one point to supply evidence that there is a growing Hispanic population in the State College area. She regularly asked [redacted] questions when she seemed unsure about how to edit her paper. Among this session’s many strengths was [redacted] ability to cover a wide range of issues that affect freshman writers, as well as her regular praise of the student’s work. [redacted] frequently gave the student positive feedback, especially in regards to the strength of her argument. I have few, if any, critiques of the session because I’m not sure how it could have been any more productive than it was. I could probably make a case for more student engagement, but within this particular context, it made sense for [redacted] to be as involved as she was since the student was working on a rough draft.

At the end of their session, the student’s works cited had some issues. It was obvious that she had used a citation generator, and [redacted] wanted her to learn how to manually cite sources. I thought that it would be useful if the student knew about alternative electronic citation generators such as EasyBib (just because they are SO much better than sonofacitationmachine, their generator of choice from high school). This was unfortunate because I believe that my suggestion could have been interpreted as undermining [redacted] attempt to get the student to be more self-sufficient. I wanted to give the student a better electronic resource, but [redacted] wanted the student to seize opportunities to learn how MLA style works. It was a great opportunity for me to re-examine some of the key differences between the sharp theoretical distinctions between traditional vs. digital approaches to composition pedagogy. Nevertheless, my faux pas irritated [redacted] and I apologized to her after the session (it is important to note that the suggestion came after I had perceived the session to have ended, or to be wrapping up). She admitted that she wished that I hadn’t have mentioned EasyBib because she wants students to be able to cite sources on their own (e.g. without the help of auto-citation generators). Within this context, of a tutor trying to help a freshman writer understand the importance of citation rules, my advice was inappropriate. In the future, I will not offer instructors unsolicited advice.
Evidence of Tutoring Effectiveness

Student Feedback from the Graduate Writing Center***

***Note: This feedback comes from an anonymous survey that we ask each student to complete after their session. The comments are from the one open-ended question on the survey for “additional comments.” If the student provided a date, I included it as part of the comment.

Alex is extremely helpful. I learned a lot about writing research paper in terms of structures and focusing on subjects. (9/16)

We were a good match. She was direct and expressive in a considerate and polite way. She helped me with choice of words and the flow of the paper, and how to express my ideas clearly. It was encouraging. Thank you! (8/29)

Yes. I’m glad I came. Reorganizing and composing small sections was the most helpful part. (8/29)

What I found helpful were the general explanations of how I could use better transitions and connectors in a sentence. (8/29)

I am very glad that I came today! Alex not only helped me correct confusing expressions, but also explained why this expression conveys the information better/clearer!! Thank you!

Thank you. I’m very glad that I came today. Alex listed so many great vocabularies about conclusion/experimentation. I can use them more often in my future writings. Thank you, Alex! (9/12)

I’m very glad that I came because the grammar tips are very helpful! I like this method: keep a separate list of grammar tips! Thank you!!

Getting an idea of what someone else thought of my ideas was good. Overall, a good session. (10/1)

Thank you, Alex! You helped make my powerpoint beautiful, clear, and professional! (10/25)

Alex gives a useful matrix of thought. It seems very useful for me to think about something before writing. (10/18)

Alexandria cleared some of my own misconceptions and habits that were holding me back. I will visit again. (10/24)

Alexandria is so sweet and really genius on reformatting sentences (10/23)

Alex did not simply edit my paper, but showed me what a good way to write an effective sentence is!! Thank you so much!! (10/9)

Alexandria is really great. A thoughtful and smart person! (10/4)

Great, I made my writing smooth and witty. Thank you!! (10/17)

I found our session very helpful. She encouraged me to do a kind of brainstorming and help me construct the essay. The most important point is she showed me the way to construct it, and did not construct it for me, which allows me to have my own voice. I think this is very useful! Thanks!

Alex is an excellent tutor. I appreciated the mentorship approach. (10/31)
Technical/Professional Writing

Philosophy: Writing with (Net)works

Although I have not taught technical/professional writing in a classroom context, my experience working with these genres spans high school to Ph.D. I began acquiring an education in workplace writing as early as fifteen, working an average of 35-40 hours per week (and sometimes more!) at a Subway/Baskin Robbins. I often performed inventory tasks for two almost (functionally) illiterate supervisors. On many Saturday mornings, I would put away heavy items that arrived from the truck and count boxes and boxes of food, cups/lids, napkins, bags, and detergent to project the store’s needs, fill out complicated forms, and compose summaries for the assistant manager. Despite my efforts, I received one raise for almost an entire year of employment. Frustrated by inventory writing, long hours, going to high school, taking care of my baby sister, traveling some weekends for debate tournaments, and helping my mother pay bills, I couldn’t visualize this being the rest of my life. A few days before I quit this job, curiosity caused me to start critically investigating the manager’s manual and hiring materials. My brother’s baby’s mother, who connected me to the job, informed me that she received a raise every three months. Indeed, I discovered a policy that suggested job evaluations, raise timetables, and state laws against minors working more than 30 hours/week. Imagine my chagrin when I quit this job making a whopping $5.30/per hour!

The next day, a gentleman in my sociology class referred me to his supervisor for a telemarketing job at the local newspaper. At the Texarkana Gazette, employment law was part of my training. My young blonde supervisor was a first-generation student majoring in accounting at a nearby college. She strongly advocated that Texarkana youth ‘get out,’ and expand their understanding of the world through college. As long as I met (or preferably, exceeded) my quota, she let me use the technology in the circulation area to complete my college applications. In 2001, many schools did not allow you to submit materials via the Internet. Working on these materials caused me to form a relationship with Dana Parks, another African-American girl who desired a college education. Weeknights during the fall millennium found me critiquing essays with Dana during breaks, fingers flying over buttons—on keyboards and contemporary typewriters, playing to the chorus of voices selling one of the crappiest local newspapers in the country. We pitched perfect to admissions committees with the power to take us far away from the dusty crevices of the circulation office and a poor, racially divided town with few opportunities to make the most with writing.

At Truman State University, I caught a glimpse of a sandwich board advertising for Career Assistant positions at the University Career Services. Intrigued by this method of advertising, my mind exploded thinking about all the possibilities this job offered for networking and empowering others. This is the only job I ever received without knowing anyone working at the place. As an in-center assistant and librarian, I critiqued hundreds of resumes, cover letters, personal statements, letters of inquiry, and gratitude correspondence such as thank you e-mails and cards. In addition, Facebook expanded its network to include more colleges and universities during this time, which influenced my relationship to web 2.0 technologies. As we observed increases in employers’ frenzied responses to ‘inappropriate’ behavior, my experience with social networking websites was inextricably tied to blurring lines between ‘private/personal’ and ‘public/workplace’ writing. The numerous resignations and firings of teachers and professionals continued to appeal to my interest in ‘fair uses of speech,’ and eventually inspired my dissertation project about information leaks.

Tutoring in writer centers throughout my graduate studies provided consistent training in various genres including article manuscripts, book reviews, lab reports, conference presentations, letters of application for higher-education employment, letters of recommendation, letters of complaint, letters of invitation and welcome, and letters of response. As I reflect on this experience, I wonder about the legitimacy of sharp distinctions between technical, academic, professional, and creative writing. Once the writing center becomes part of the writer’s learning context, academic writing loses one of its defining characteristics—a private document between student and instructor. With the mediation of a tutor, the writing becomes ‘technical’ because two people are trying to uncover the structural demands of the work. Given that writing is opening up, both online and within (expanding) academic support spaces, we may benefit from recognizing that technical/academic/creative writing are all potentially ‘useful.’ Texting my partner not to forget to buy fresh spinach on the way home from class, composing a status update on LinkedIn, editing an article for an open-access scholarly journal, and reflectively writing about my fears, hopes, and wishes count as epistemological exercises if I also practice rhetorical awareness. Equipped with this meta-cognitive framework, any writing potentially contributes to teaching and learning, without which we are none the wiser—technically.
Proposed Course Syllabus

[Course Bulletin Information]:

Reading and Writing the Web:
User Reviews and the Ethics of Collective Intelligence

Course Description

One of the characteristics of Web 2.0 is the growth of user-generated content. Most well-trafficked websites feature some sort of user feedback system as a fundamental component of the site's overall design. If we assume user feedback is just a given feature of a website, we may overlook the degree to which these communities influence the success or failure of products, services, elections, and policymaking. For instance, many consumers have come to depend on product or service reviews via the Internet, in addition to mass media advertising or friend/family recommendations (e.g. word of mouth). You can find reviews of almost anything. Foodies can go to www.urbanspoon.com to view restaurant reviews, but would want to go to www.allrecipes.com or www.foodnetwork.com if they wanted advice for making their own dishes. Additionally, www.yelp.com, and www.insiderpages.com enables users to search for and evaluate various businesses in a specific location. Anyone buying anything on www.amazon.com can find numerous reviews. Movie enthusiasts may visit www.metacritic.com or www.rottentomatoes.com to consult movie critics' reviews, or share their own at www.netflix.com. Meanwhile, www.newegg.com markets itself as a community space, in which users share a fundamental value of credible customer reviews. Similar to New Egg, the glamazon behemoth Sephora, markets itself as a community, in which members rely on each other’s reviews to help customize and enhance their shopping experience. As these examples demonstrate, there is no shortage of recommendations for prospective consumers. Meanwhile, sites such as www.ratemyprofessors.com show that user reviews can be tricky when we begin to apply the same expectations we have of corporations and businesses to people—especially those working in educational institutions, government, and non-profit organizations.

Course Objectives

This course will focus on ‘user reviews’ for the purpose of investigating inquiry paradigms and generating a meta-language about collective, networked intelligence. What types of criteria do users rely on to determine whether or not user feedback is useful? How can we be sure that their evaluations aren't simply a passionate response to a perceived slight, or an overly optimistic reaction to their favorite products and services? For every review we think is “good,” there are probably hundreds of reviews for the same product that we think are terrible. Although some of you have been writing feedback for years, this course focuses on user reviews. We will genuinely attempt to determine its conventions, limitations, and possibilities. We'll collaboratively analyze and develop a criteria for what constitutes ‘persuasive’ user reviews. In addition, we will draw on legal, historical, and rhetorical perspectives to identify and critique some of the social, political, and epistemological implications of user feedback. Thus, we will explore other speech acts that are similar to user reviews such as: commenting (Yahoo Comments!), instructing (eHow videos), and sharing (Facebook, Reddit, and Twitter feeds).

Note: You do not have to have be “tech-saavy” to take this course (e.g. no programming skills are required)! You will receive in-class instruction for any web applications we use, and you are welcome to share your expertise of technology you feel could benefit the members of our class. You should, however, be willing to play! Regardless of your level of ability with digital technologies, every member of the class should be interested in learning more about the nature, function, and consequences of the relationship between digital technology and rhetoric.

Course Utility

The knowledge we build throughout the course applies to most academic and professional contexts. These rhetorical situations are usually defined by audiences who expect us to clarify how and why stated assumptions, reasons, and evidence led us to make certain types of value judgments. Therefore, we will consider how to transfer our approach to online user reviews to other genres such as a literature reviews and feasibility reports.
**Course Texts**
*Free Culture*, Lawrence Lessig  
*Collective Intelligence*, Pierre Levy  
*Viral Spiral*, David Bollier

**Brief Selections**
*Democracy and Social Ethics*, Jane Addams  
*Public Opinion*, Walter Lippmann

**Articles (provided for you in .pdf format)**
*Listening to Feedback*, Steven Johnson  
*The Hive*, Marshall Poe

**Op-Ed/Editorials (Google or DuckDuckGo or Orbot it!)**
*Are Jobs Obsolete*, Douglas Rushkoff  
*Web 2.0*, Andrew Keen  
*When Computer Programming was Women’s Work*, Anna Lewis  
*Plagiarism or Poor Attribution*, Patrick B. Pexton

**Course Assignments and Assessment**

**Applications (40%)**
- User Reviews (10%)*
- Instructional Text (10%)*
- Collaborative Project (20%)*
  - Options: Crowdsourced Annotated Bibliography or one of the Proposed Digital Humanities Projects

**Critical Reflections (20%)**
- Personal Writing History (5%)
- User Review (5%)**
- Instructional Text (5%)**
- Creativity, Ethics, and Collective Intelligence (5%)**

**Social Networking (20%)**
- Professional Network Biography (5%)
- Make and Maintain Three New Online Connections (5%)
- Attend and Review Two Campus Events (10%)

**Peer Feedback (20%)**
- Writing Group Workshops (10%)
- Free-Writing and Group Discussion (10%)

*Materials will be posted to the web, you will choose an anonymous screen name of your choice for your “online persona.”

**These reflections will be about your experiences composing the applications. They will be ‘writing about writing.’
Project Leadership Skills

In 2011, I played a major role in the planning and coordination of Camp Rhetoric for the Penn State Arnold-Ebbitt Interdisciplinary Rhetoricians (AEIR). Camp Rhetoric presents a rare opportunity for both English and Communication Arts and Sciences Rhetoric graduate students and faculty to network about professional objectives, methodologies, and concerns. As the organization’s Social Chair, I wanted to create a pleasant and engaging experience for all. This year marked major changes for this event because we changed the venue from Centre Furnace Mansion to Toftrees Golf Course and Resort. Furthermore, we invited several participants from other institutions such as the Ohio State University and the University of Maryland. Finally, we expanded the event’s offerings from a few faculty lectures to collaborative workshops and a featured speaker. These major changes required extensive communication and strategic decision-making about logistics, which included charging participants a small registration fee. Establishing a new tradition of professional development required me to take risks, advocate graduate student needs, and negotiate with AEIR board members, faculty, and venue managers.

Centre Furnace was a fascinating location since it inaugurated the Pennsylvania State University as a land-grant agricultural institution. However, it was not ideal for occupying numerous inhabitants deliberating in various sessions throughout the day. Centre Furnace cost over $1000 to reserve for the entire day, and the building was a delicate cramped cold space with no catering and few parking spaces. With the generous assistance of a grant from the Rhetoric Society of America, our organization possessed exactly $1,000 to develop and host a special event. Given our budgetary limitations, I voiced my concerns early in the planning process, and other members seemed open to another venue. After the Vice President investigated possible on-campus sites, their cost far exceeded our budget. Everyone seemed content with Centre Furnace, but I mentioned that we should consider any and all off-campus possibilities. I recalled one of my good friends visiting Penn State for an Irish Studies Conference held at Toftrees Golf Resort and Conference Center. Although I thought this venue would probably exceed our budget, I decided to initiate a meeting with one of the managers—Christine Olbrich. We discussed various arrangements for dates, food options, and meeting rooms for approximately two months. She gave us options ranging from $900-$1300. The AEIR board was excited about this possibility, but I wanted the price to be even lower. Before Christine finalized the contract for the $900 budget, which included three break out rooms, one main room, breakfast, and lunch, I decided to meet with her with the AEIR president. We communicated our budgetary concerns with Christine, and she maintained that we were getting a good deal. However, I convinced her to reduce the price by almost $300 for two major reasons.

First, I drew her attention to the fact that Camp Rhetoric is an annual event. If the organization liked the location and amenities, they would be likely to continue choosing this venue for future events. Next, I pointed out that we would be expanding each year, which includes out of town guests. 2011 was the first time we invited participants from other institutions, and their memories of the venue could increase their visibility, which could possibly lead to unexpected business opportunities. Of course, I mentioned the fact that this exact context led me to contact her in the first place. Christine told us that she would talk to her supervisor and follow-up with a final contact. We were pleased when we saw that the final contact included three meeting rooms, a main break-out room, audio-visual accommodations, coffee and tea catering throughout the entire event, continental breakfast of various delicious pastries, a catered lunch, as well as discounted room rates for our out-of-town guests. Making this deal with Toftrees was incredibly fortunate for AEIR because the venue offers every single amenity one could ask for during a conference event—from its proximity to campus, parking availability, spacious meeting rooms, and hotel rooms to catering services and a restaurant with a full bar for ‘post-conference’ networking. Camp Rhetoric 2011 was well attended, and participants spoke highly of the event. Three years later, AEIR continues to have Camp Rhetoric at Toftrees and implement a collaborative workshop structure.

Camp Rhetoric 2011 (Details and Photos)

Camp Rhetoric 2011: Budget and Contract
**Consulting**

**Example of Mid-Semester Reports for Business Writing Students**

*Note: Both Progress Narratives are for students enrolled in an advanced writing course for their field. Both students are enrolled in English 202 for business majors.*

**English 005 Progress Narrative: Writer #1**

Writer 1’s greatest strengths include her passion for finding her ideal job and genuine desire to improve her writing. Our sessions have addressed both writing for this course, as well as job search documents. We’ve addressed numerous writing objectives for learning more about Generic conventions of professional writing (resumes, cover letters, proposals), in terms of:

- Formatting
- Tone
- Grammar (plurals, subject/verb agreement, articles)

Writer 1 has gained global experience working in supply chain management and she's positioned to be a fierce competitor in her chosen field. We’ve spent most of our time getting Writer 1 to match her expertise with the language needed to help her audience’s visualize her as an ideal candidate for their company. As such, I’ve modeled various expressions “formalities” common in business writing and emphasized the importance of action verbs and specific examples to demonstrate one’s capacity for leadership, goodwill, and trustworthiness.

**Challenges and Goals**

Writer 1 does a fantastic job researching companies and providing background information. She's always prepared, so each session we have lots of material to work with. Her work, however, requires more editing because she struggles with English grammar. Despite this challenge, Writer 1 is a fast learner, as her word choice and tone have consistently improved. We'll continue to work on proofreading strategies and genre heuristics throughout the rest of the term.

**English 005 Progress Narrative: Writer #2**

Writer 2’s greatest strength is his genuine interest in all sorts of professional communication. Although we've gone over study strategies for quizzes and a rough draft of his Kappa Alpha Phi collaborative proposal, the majority of our sessions have focused on expressing goodwill and etiquette. In particular, we seem to focus on email writing a lot. Here are some of the rhetorical situations/genres we've covered:

- Responding to a rejection
- Rejecting an offer you've already accepted
- Writing thank you notes

One of the most intriguing aspects of our meetings is the fact that we deal with real-world composing situations, in which there are real-world consequences. Two important emails we examined and revised, were Writer 2's response to Google's rejection and Writer 2's attempt to decline Johnson and Johnson's offer for Intel. We discussed ethical questions such as:

- If you've been given a better offer, how do you decline an offer you've accepted? What information should be included? Omitted? Should you mention the other offer at all? How do you create the impression of being a competent, valuable candidate without sacrificing prospective connections/networks?
- If you've been rejected, how do you gracefully respond? How do you balance between conveying your trust that the company has done the right thing for them and your own sense of insecurity and hurt feelings that you didn't get the job?

We also covered some grammatical concerns, which include but aren't limited to: sentence variety, rhetorical effects of action vs. linking verbs, and how to be concise and polite at the same time.

We'll continue to work on any major assignments for your course, as well as address any professional writing concerns Writer 2 desires to focus on. It's been great to have a student whose intellectual curiosity guides our meetings and provides him with sources of knowledge he can draw on throughout his ambitious career journey as a Network Specialist.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample Syllabus for First-Year Composition
Appendix 2: Sample First-Year Composition Position Paper
Appendix 3: A Freshman Writer Evaluates Emerging Genres
Appendix 4: Collaborative Technological History Analysis