Teaching the University Writing Seminar at Brandeis University

An Instructor Handbook
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Welcome to Instructors

Dear Instructors,

We would like to welcome you to the teaching handbook for University Writing Seminar. Here you will find many practical materials, ranging from tips on leading classroom discussions to sample syllabi from classes taught in the fields of History, English, Social Policy (Heller), Near Eastern and Judaic Studies (NEJS), and Music. Experienced instructors have developed these materials over the years, and you should feel free to use or adapt them to your classroom.

The UWS Handbook offers models for how the University Writing Seminar (UWS) can help Brandeis students achieve the “Core Skills” mandated by the University’s Learning Goals. Students learn “strong critical thinking skills” from the close reading essay, while the lens essay promotes intellectual flexibility by having students “apply different analytic lenses to understand complex issues.” Finally, the research essay teaches students to “analyze, interpret and synthesize ideas and information from diverse texts.” Overall, the UWS begins the process of training intellectually rigorous thinkers, and we thank you for your commitment to these ideals through your dedication and hard work.

Warmly,

Dawn Skorczewski  
Director of University Writing

Lisa Rourke  
Director of First Year Writing
# 1. Essentials

**CONTACTS**

**Important UWS Contacts**

Your first on-campus contact is always Lisa Rourke. Her email address is lrouke@brandeis.edu.

All on-campus numbers begin with 781-73X-XXXX. All email addresses are @brandeis.edu

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<td></td>
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<td>lhardej@</td>
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<td>jmani@</td>
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<td>6-3448</td>
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<td><strong>Erika Lamarre</strong></td>
<td><strong>6-5075</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Director of University Writing:</strong></td>
<td><strong>All issues!!</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dawn Skorczewski</strong></td>
<td><strong>6-2141</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Lisa Rourke</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Video equipment for recording your class</strong></td>
<td><strong>Matt Burton</strong></td>
<td><strong>6-4635</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>mburton@</strong></td>
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RESOURCES

Brandeis Policy: Academic Honesty

*From the Brandeis University Rights & Responsibilities Handbook:*

Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. A student shall not submit work that is falsified or is not the result of the student’s own effort. Infringement of academic honesty by a student subjects that student to serious penalties that may include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension from the University or other sanctions. A student who is in doubt regarding standards of academic honesty in a course or assignment should consult the faculty member responsible for that course or assignment before submitting the work. A student’s lack of understanding is not a valid defense to a charge of academic dishonesty.

If you suspect a student of plagiarism, consult with Dawn Skorczewski, Director of University Writing, to discuss the situation. Together, you will decide if you need to contact the Department of Student Rights and Community Standards, the university office responsible for dealing with cases of academic dishonesty. To find the current staff member in charge of cases of academic dishonesty, contact the Writing Program administrators or visit the webpage for the Department of Student Rights and Community Standards.
English Language Programs

English Language Programs at Brandeis support the academic success of students who are English language learners (ELLs). We serve undergraduates and graduate students through university-subsidized weekly tutorials focusing on critical thinking and academic writing skills. A major focus of the program is to support students in Composition, the University Writing Seminar, and other writing-intensive courses. Tutors help students understand academic writing conventions in the United States in general and at Brandeis in particular. In addition, tutors help students successfully navigate the transition to a new academic culture by teaching them about American academic and cultural norms.

Tutorials are tutor-led and student-centered: tutors plan tutorials based on the aspects of the critical thinking and academic writing that need immediate attention and systematically help students improve the accuracy of their sentence structure and grammar as they learn to express their ideas clearly and concisely. ELL tutors do not proofread papers—their goal, when they discuss sentence structure and grammar, is to help students improve the written presentation of their critical thinking, notice and address recurring language errors, and become more self-sufficient editors of their own work. Writing tutorials are offered on a case-by-case basis, so if students would like help from a tutor, and if they are prepared to make a weekly commitment for tutorials throughout the semester, they can apply for a tutor by contacting Elizabeth Field, the Program Administrator for ELP (efield@brandeis.edu; Office: Rabb 340; x63992).
Suggestions for Teaching Writing to English Language Learners

"Good writing has very long sentences, is difficult for readers to understand, uses lots of "big words" to impress the reader and what the author wants to say is at the end" --a Japanese student

Differences in cultural assumptions about good writing:

- **Thesis Placement:** Many cultures put the main argument at the end of the essay and use intervening paragraphs to mount evidence to reach that conclusion. We place our claim at the start as well as creating a map of where we are headed and what evidence will support it. For many language learners who come from other writing cultures, this "loaded" first paragraph feels like you give away the point too early.

- **Culture of Originality vs. Culture of Authority:** We value the individual voice, want the student to present his/her view, feel entitled to speak freely in class and discuss their views boldly, and comment on the views of experts. Often, elsewhere, the views of experts take precedence over one's own. Asian students in particular are taught to value the teacher, the scholar, the text above their own views. We also teach what is often confusing--be original, but borrow heavily from others.

- **Ownership of Ideas:** We emphasize the ownership of ideas and value intellectual property. Many cultures make no such distinctions and freely adapt the work of others. Concepts of plagiarism, therefore, are tricky to grasp. English language learners often use outside sources without attribution without grasping its seriousness.

- **Sense of Self:** Discourse practices construct and reflect our cultural and social identities. To change a discourse practice is to reinvent the self in a new, often uncomfortable, way. One Chinese writer, a grad student who became an English Ph.D., speaks of how he became an "I" in Western discourse, having always conceived of himself as a "we."

- **Diplomatic/Indirect Speech vs. Bold Claims/Direct Speech:** Some cultures teach writers to avoid taking a stand which could offend others, and to conceal one's own opinion. We tend to value the clear position, well defended. Some cultures value informative essays where both sides are presented without the writer taking a position on them. These essays are written in report-style, usually with a summary of current ideas without a driving argument.

- **Imitating the Experts:** English language learners often think that mimicking
the experts and employing the jargon of the writers they read is good practice. They may also feel that they should use complex, obscure, or archaic vocabulary to make their ideas seem more valuable. The discerning use of discipline-specific terms is important, but jargon, run-on sentences, and dense paragraphs, despite what the experts do, does not a paper make clear. Teach the difference.

What you can do:

- **Set limited goals.** Ask what the student wants to work on. A common error is to "correct" too much in one session - from grammar to structure to evidence. Research into how students learn indicates that less is more; only so much new material can be absorbed at a time. Choose a focus-a particular aspect of structure or grammar that will improve the essay substantially-but don't try to fix the whole thing.

- **Be accessible.** In other cultures, teachers are often unapproachable. Invite them to ask you questions, or come to your office hours for an extra conference. Appreciate the enormous task of adapting to a new culture. If an essay is incomprehensible, find out what the student understands through a discussion rather than returning it with comments. What kind of comprehension issue is it--of the material or of English?

- **Consider culture shock.** Students newly arrived are often physically and emotionally overwhelmed by the demands of a new language and culture. Speaking English requires constant effort and cultural differences assault the senses making early efforts at academic success non-representative of the student's capacity once adjusted.

- **Know that change is slow, and any improvement in conceptual sophistication may be written in a way that does not accurately reflect the quality of the ideas.**

- **Have the student read a paragraph aloud and try to summarize his/her main point.** Often, this is a useful technique to help students clarify their own ideas and attempt to explain them in a logical and coherent way.

- **Together, make a simple outline of the argument and the main evidence before reading the essay.** Rephrase for the student what he or she is trying to say in English that uses academic norms more accurately.

- **Working with grammar.**
  - Find patterns (prepositions, articles), correct two or three instances of the error, then ask students to read through their essay to identify new examples for them to correct.
  - Make your goal teaching self-correction, rather than correcting all their
mistakes explicitly. Students want a quick fix (or an editing service); you want them to acquire more advanced critical thinking and analytical writing skills to help them succeed long-term.
  o Encourage an appointment to work only with sentence structure and/or grammar.
  o Have students practice improving word choice and clarity using sample sentences in their essay.

- **Refer a student to available resources**—the ELP tutors, Writing Center staff, course instructors, and TAs.
Academic Services-Student Support Services Program (SSSP)

Student Support Services (SSSP) is a small, community-oriented program in Academic Services that is federally funded by TRIO grants for students who are the first in their families to attend college or have faced significant barriers to get to Brandeis. Nationwide, there are over 1000 Student Support Services Programs and Brandeis University is one of the few highly selective colleges chosen to have this program. At Brandeis, the 145 undergraduates who participate in the program represent a diverse cross-section of the student body. Our staff recognizes academic success and helps students to achieve their goals. SSSP provides services that are a valuable resource throughout the participants' college careers. We provide academic, career, and graduate school advising, peer tutoring and mentoring, cultural and academic enrichment activities, and a private computer lab. Eligible students must complete an application and interview to be part of our program.

For UWS Instructors, it is important to note that SSSP students have access to an SSSP Writing Skills Graduate Assistant for one-on-one writing assistance. These GA’s are well-versed in the UWS curriculum and support students with their writing skills development in conjunction with the University Writing Center. For more information about the SSSP Tutoring program, please contact the SSSP Staff:

Jennifer Morazes (jmorazes@brandeis.edu)
Director

Elena Lewis (ewilson@brandeis.edu)
Assistant Director

Katherine Julian (kjulian@brandeis.edu)
Program Advisor
Undergraduate Academic Performance Report

This Academic Performance Report allows faculty to partner with advisors in Academic Services to identify students who are performing poorly in a course. Our goal is to collaborate and provide support as needed, particularly if a student is experiencing difficulties in more than one course.

Please complete this form to share your concerns. You can expect an advisor from Academic Services will respond to the concern M-F within 12-48 hours of receiving information from you. If your concerns are more urgent, regarding a student's health and/or safety, please contact Public Safety/Campus Police 781-736-3333.

If you would like to speak with an Advisor today, please call us at 781-736-3470.

* Required

**Student name:**

**Student email or Sage ID:**

**Course #:**

**What are your concerns?**

- [ ] Late or missing assignments
- [ ] Frequent absences
- [ ] Performed poorly on tests
- [ ] Performed poorly on written work
- [ ] Currently in danger of failing course
- [ ] Level of work seems too difficult for student
- [ ] Classroom behavior (please use comments to specify)
- [ ] Other: 

**Have you attempted to reach the student about your concerns?**

[ ] If yes, how long have you been attempting to reach the student? Have you been able to connect with them?

**What steps would you like an advisor from Academic Services to take?**

- [ ] FYI - no action required
- [ ] Email outreach
- [ ] Meet with student
- [ ] Other: 

**Do you have any recommendations for the student?**
- Speak with professor
- Speak with TA
- Meet with Academic Advisor
- Attend Recitation/B.U.G.S. tutoring/Extra-help sessions
- Drop/withdraw from class
- Other: __________

Additional comments:
Add additional relevant information here.

- Send me a copy of my responses.

You can also access this form using the following online link:
http://tinyurl.com/BrandeisAcademicAlert
The University Writing Center

The Writing Center is a free service with huge benefits for the grading-weary UWS instructor. Our tutors work with your students on their first drafts to make your grading process less onerous. Students receive an intensive 45-minute, one-on-one consultation session with an advanced graduate student, many of whom have worked as UWS instructors previously (or currently) and are familiar with the course structure and assignment demands. Our tutors engage students in a detailed discussion of their overall writing strengths and weaknesses and work in conversation with them to revise their papers for clarity, argument, thesis and motive, and style. We provide students with unbeatable personalized writing assistance from a qualified writing instructor whenever they want.

If you would like to give your students added incentives to use the Writing Center, you can use the Writing Center Reward Form that entitles students who attend a tutorial session to a one-day extension on their paper. Your student must ask the tutor to fill out a form at the conclusion of the session and then give it to you as proof of attendance. Please remind your class to reserve sessions in advance. There are roughly twenty-five UWS courses with at least fifteen students in each course and papers often fall due at the same time during the course of the semester. We offer 112 individual tutorial sessions per week, and students can reserve one online up to two weeks in advance, so they should never be turned away if they plan ahead by two or three days.

We have also begun offering new drop-in hours starting at 6PM Monday through Thursday to deal with last-minute students, but it is best if you encourage your class to plan ahead and reserve sessions online.

If you would like a student in your class to receive more specialized assistance, you can contact the Co-Administrative Directors to arrange weekly tutorial sessions with a specific tutor. Please note that this option is reserved for students with demonstrated need and a determination to work on their writing. Many prefer the flexibility of scheduling sessions as needed because workloads are not consistent during the semester. If you would like to use this option, the director will speak to you about generating specific mini-assignments or a reading schedule that works with your course to ensure that the tutor and student have useful work to discuss during the session. Students can search “writing center” on the main Brandeis webpage or Google “Brandeis Writing Center” to find our site, and the URL is also listed on the basic info handout included in this book.
How to Use the Writing Center

- Sign up online through our website to reserve specific time slots or tutors.

- Search “Writing Center” on the Brandeis homepage to access our site, or use the web address below.

- Grammar Consultants offer a special set of appointments for students who want to concentrate on improving their English grammar. All are welcome to sign up.

- Please bring hard-copies of your paper or project with you. Tutors will NOT work from laptops or disks!

- We offer drop-in hours Mon-Thurs at 6PM. Please be aware that this shift is first-come, first-serve only and no reservations are required.

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<td>Friday</td>
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Our Staff:

Our tutors are advanced graduate students from various departments and academic fields with demonstrated writing ability and previous teaching and tutoring experience.

Our Services:

We can help you with every phase of the writing process, from brainstorming to the final edit. Our

Phone: 781-736-4885  
www.brandeis.edu/writingprogram/writingcenter/
Requirements for UWS Instructors

The University Writing Program is committed to your development as a teacher of writing. The requirements listed below have been created with the goal of both improving your teaching and creating an environment in which instructors actively share ideas with one another. We look forward to working closely with you throughout the year!

Requirements for UWS instructors include:

1. Attendance at Spring and Comp Camp teacher preparation sessions.

2. Attendance at monthly instructor meetings.

3. Submitting syllabus and all assignment sequences by August 1 for fall semester and December 1 for spring semester.

4. Participation in small group grading meetings for the close reading and research essays.

5. Observation of one of your classes for first two semesters by the Director of University Writing or the Assistant Director of University Writing and a follow-up meeting to discuss your teaching. See the following pages for sample observation materials.

6. Observing one UWS class per semester. Meeting to discuss class and submitting a write-up of that class to the Director of University Writing.
# Calendar of UWS Instructor Responsibilities

Mandatory UWS meetings will be held the first Thursday of each month from 2-3

## FALL SEMESTER

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<td>MAY/AUGUST</td>
<td>Comp camp for teacher preparation (3 days)</td>
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<td>Submit complete syllabus and assignment sequence</td>
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<td>Submit schedule of free hours</td>
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<td>SEPTEMBER</td>
<td>First day diagnostic, move students not prepared for the UWS to Basic Comp</td>
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<td>First UWS meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCTOBER</td>
<td>Grading groups to discuss grading standards for the close reading essay</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 copy strongest essay</td>
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<td>1 copy weakest essay</td>
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<td>1 copy problem essay</td>
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<td>3 copies average essay for discussion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Peer observation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Observe one or two instructors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Meet with observed instructors to discuss</td>
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<td>Email written observation to Director</td>
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<td>Observation by Director or Assistant Director (new instructors only)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Meet with Director/Asst Director to discuss</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Second UWS meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOVEMBER</td>
<td>Celebration of Student Writing to recognize winners of Write Now! contest</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Third UWS meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Research review board</td>
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<tr>
<td>DECEMBER</td>
<td>Classes end</td>
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<td>Fourth UWS meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Submit new or revised syllabus and assignment sequence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Submit schedule of office hours</td>
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## SPRING SEMESTER

| JANUARY          | Classes begin                                           |
|                 | First UWS meeting                                      |
| FEBRUARY         | Grading groups to discuss grading standards for the close reading essay |
|                 | 1 copy strongest essay                                  |
|                 | 1 copy weakest essay                                    |
|                 | 1 copy problem essay                                    |
|                 | 3 copies average essay for discussion                   |
|                 | Second UWS meeting                                      |
| MARCH            | Peer observation                                        |
|                 | Observe two instructors                                 |
|                 | Send written review of instructors to Dawn by email      |
|                 | Meet with instructors to discuss                        |

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| Observation by Director or Assistant Director (new instructors)  
| Meet with Director/Asst Director to discuss  
| Third UWS meeting  
| **APRIL** | Research review board  
| Fourth UWS meeting  
| **MAY** | Classes end  


# University Writing Seminar Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Semester</th>
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Rate the effectiveness of your UWS in helping you develop the following techniques and strategies of college-level writing:

1. Posing a problem worth writing about

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

2. Creating or refining a thesis

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

3. Structuring an argument

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

4. Using sources in an argument

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

5. Revising drafts

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

6. Writing clear sentences

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

7. Conducting research

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

8. Identifying strengths and weaknesses in the writing of others

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

9. Identifying strengths and weaknesses in your own writing

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

10. Rate your UWS overall in terms of providing you with techniques and strategies of argument

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

11. Rate these techniques and strategies in terms of their usefulness for writing in other courses

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

**Rate the quality of the following aspects of your UWS:**

12. Instructor’s ability to stimulate interest in seminar topic

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

13. Overall quality of the readings

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

14. Instructor’s ability to encourage student participation

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

15. Instructor’s ability to teach writing skills in class

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

16. Overall quality of writing assignments

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

17. Instructor’s written comments in drafts and revisions

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

18. Professor’s conferences to discuss your writing

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

19. Overall quality of the seminar

![1](1) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

**Please provide the following information:**

What is your expected major?

---

*Please provide any additional comments on the back of this sheet*
**Peer Observation**

**Preparing for Peer Observation**

Get in touch with the instructor you will be observing and talk about the following:

1. What are students supposed to be learning? What kind of intellectual work will they be doing?

2. How does this lesson/activity fit into the larger curriculum framework?

3. What is the sequence of activities?

4. Will the teacher be experimenting with any new strategies?

5. How do the teaching and learning activities promote the desired learning outcomes?

6. Does the teacher have any concerns about the lesson?

7. What kind of data would the teacher like the observer to collect?
UWS Peer Observation Sheet

Use the two-column format below (or another method if you prefer) while you observe a fellow instructor teach one UWS class session. In the left hand column, keep track of your observations of classroom events. In the right hand column, make notes to yourself about any questions, evaluations, and comments you have regarding teaching technique and pedagogical impact. Pay attention to both instructor and students, to what works and what doesn’t. Be specific in your observations/reflections; suggest changes that might improve situations that were less successful.

After you observe, type up a summary of your observations and email it to Dawn (dawnskor@brandeis.edu). Be sure to set up a follow-up meeting with the instructor you observed, to give them this summary along with any constructive feedback on their work in the classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Questions, Evaluations, Comments</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom Event</th>
<th>Pedagogical Impact</th>
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</table>
Discussing the Observation

Meet with the instructor you have observed to analyze the lesson using data you gathered, probing for specificity. Try to have discussion within a day or two after observation.

1. Share perceptions of lesson

2. What is the evidence of student learning?

3. Study data that the observer gathered. What light does the data shed on the focus or concern?

4. Possible modifications and reasons

5. Next steps
   - In planning
   - In teaching
   - In observing
Grading Groups

New instructors will participate in grading groups of three for each of the essays to ensure grading consistency across the classes. Together with the Director or Assistant Director of University Writing, instructors will discuss and compare a selection of their student essays and come to an agreement about the proper grade. They will use the grading rubric to assess how effectively the papers use different elements of the academic essay and strategize on best practices for delivering feedback, both written and oral.

Instructor Evaluations

The Director and Assistant Director of University Writing will review each instructor’s evaluations at the end of every semester. Instructors who receive less than a 4.0 on the “Overall Instructor Rating” will observe other experienced instructors and be observed by the Director or Assistant Director of University Writing. In addition, they will meet with the Director to discuss ways to improve the class and may require weekly meetings to discuss lesson plans. Instructors may not be asked to teach again if their scores do not show improvement.
GETTING STARTED WITH LATTE

New and Legacy LATTE

In the spring of 2014, Brandeis updated its online teaching tool (Learning and Teaching Technology Environment). LATTE is based on the Moodle open-source platform. To access LATTE, go to latte.brandeis.edu or moodle2.brandeis.edu. You are expected to create and maintain a course page on LATTE. University policy demands that you upload your syllabus before the semester begins. The Writing Program expects you to follow that policy, but you should also post your office hours, your assignments, and any readings or materials that students don’t have access to through a coursepack or the bookstore. LATTE can enrich your class in many ways; spend time exploring it before the semester begins.

If you want to access the older version of LATTE (which has been renamed “Legacy LATTE”), go to moodle.brandeis.edu.

The support material available for LATTE is too extensive to recreate here. For a comprehensive guide on using LATTE, please see LTS’s LATTE guide for faculty (http://lts.brandeis.edu/courses/newlatte/faculty/index.html). It includes help on topics such as:

- Logging in and editing your course
- Changing and assigning roles
- Uploading readings
- Creating assignments
- Adding a video to your course
- Using the LATTE Quickmail function
- Creating forums for online discussion
LTS regularly runs faculty workshops for LATTE. Visit their workshop sign-up page for more details about the content and timing of those events: http://lts.brandeis.edu/courses/newlatte/about/workshops.html
2. Course Overview

Course Overview

In the absence of definitive answers, the writer’s most important task is understanding complex issues and communicating this understanding to others. University Writing Seminars focus on strategies and techniques of college-level argument taught through the exploration of a subject. By the end of the course, students should be able to compose expository essays that reflect their own points of view and that demonstrate thoughtful engagement with complex readings of some length. The 400-500 pages of UWS course readings typically include books and articles as well as excerpts from longer works collected in source packets. In three papers of increasing complexity (25-30 pages total finished work), students learn to frame analytical questions, make original claims, structure complex ideas, integrate sources of various kinds, and revise for greater cogency and clarity. Each course assigns a close reading essay, a lens essay, and a research-based argument. Students prepare for each of the three major essays through short pre-draft assignments as well as drafts, which faculty comment on in writing and discuss with student writers in individual conferences. Students examine their own writing in draft workshops and in small groups. The course also teaches basic skills of research, from using the library to appropriate citation of sources.
UWS Outcomes

University Writing Seminars (UWS) are inquiry-based writing courses. In them, students should use writing and reading (primarily from non-fiction texts) to investigate issues that are significant for their development as writers and readers in an academic context. Through this work, students will develop habits of mind that are important for writers: assessing audience expectations; reading critically; engaging with others' ideas in analytic and research-based writing; developing control over surface features of writing; and discovering, cultivating, and being reflective about their writing processes. This development takes place recursively – that is, students master these strategies by practicing with them repeatedly through their work in this course and others at Brandeis. This work begins in UWS and continues through other required courses, by the end of which successful students will have achieved these outcomes.

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing

In the University Writing Seminar, students will practice with the following strategies. By the end of the UWS, students will:

- Use writing and discussion to work through and interpret complex ideas from readings and other texts (e.g., visual, musical, verbal)
- Critically analyze their own and others' choices regarding language and form (e.g., in student texts or formally published texts)
- Engage in multiple modes of inquiry using text (e.g., field research, library-based inquiry, web searching)
- Incorporate significant research (as above) into writing that engages a question and/or topic and uses it as a central theme for a substantive, research-based essay
- Use writing to support interpretations of text, and understand that there are multiple interpretations of text
- Consider and express the relationship of their own ideas to the ideas of others

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn:

- To use writing for critical thinking in their field
- To develop relationships among critical thinking, analytical reading, and writing in their field
- To find relationships among language, knowledge, and power in their field

Processes

In the UWS, students will practice with the following strategies. By the end of the UWS, students will:

- Use written, visual, and/or experience-based texts as tools to develop ideas for writing
• Understand that writing takes place through recurring processes of invention, revision, and editing
• Develop successful, flexible strategies for their own writing through the processes of invention, revision, and editing
• Experience and understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes
• Learn to critique their own and others' work
• Be reflective about their writing processes

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn:

• To build toward final products of writing in stages
• To review work-in-progress in collaborative peer groups for substantive revision and editing
• To save extensive editing for later parts of the writing process

Knowledge of Conventions

In the UWS, students will practice with the following strategies. By the end of the UWS, students will:

• Understand the conventions of particular genres of writing
• Use conventions associated with a range of dialects, particularly standardized written English (but not necessarily limited to it)
• Recognize and address patterns in their writing that unintentionally diverge from patterns expected by their audience/s
• Practice using academic citational systems (such as MLA or APA) for documenting work

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn:

• The conventions of usage, specialized vocabulary, format, and documentation in their fields
• Strategies through which better control of conventions can be achieved
UWS Terminology: Elements of the Academic Essay
(from Gordon Harvey, Harvard University)

1. **Thesis:** your main insight or idea about a text or topic, and the *main* proposition that your essay demonstrates. It should be true but arguable (not obviously or patently true, but one alternative among several), be limited enough in scope to be argued in a short composition and with available evidence, and get to the heart of the text or topic being analyzed (not be peripheral). It should be stated early in some form and at some point recast sharply (not just be implied), and it should govern the whole essay (not disappear in places).

2. **Motive:** the intellectual context that you establish for your topic and thesis at the start of your essay, in order to suggest why someone, besides your instructor, might want to read an essay on this topic or need to hear your particular thesis argued—why your thesis isn’t just obvious to all, why other people might hold *other* theses (that you think are wrong). Your motive should be aimed at your audience: it won’t necessarily be the reason you first got interested in the topic (which could be private and idiosyncratic) or the personal motivation behind your engagement with the topic. Indeed it’s where you suggest that your argument isn’t idiosyncratic, but rather is generally interesting. The motive you set up should be genuine: a misapprehension or puzzle that an intelligent reader (not a straw dummy) would really have, a point that such a reader would really overlook. Defining motive should be the main business of your introductory paragraphs, where it is usually introduced by a form of the complicating word “But.”

3. **Evidence:** the data—facts, examples, or details—that you refer to, quote, or summarize to support your thesis. There needs to be *enough* evidence to be persuasive; it needs to be the right *kind* of evidence to support the thesis (with no obvious pieces of evidence overlooked); it needs to be sufficiently *concrete* for the reader to trust it (e.g. in textual analysis, it often helps to find one or two key or representative passages to quote and focus on); and if summarized, it needs to be summarized *accurately* and fairly.

4. **Analysis:** the work of breaking down, interpreting, and commenting upon the data, of saying what can be inferred from the data such that it supports a thesis (is *evidence* for something). Analysis is what you do with data when you go beyond observing or summarizing it: you show how its parts contribute to a whole or how causes contribute to an effect; you draw out the significance or implication not apparent to a superficial view. Analysis is what makes the writer feel present, as a reasoning individual; so your essay should do more analyzing than summarizing or quoting.

5. **Keyterms:** the recurring terms or basic oppositions that an argument rests upon, usually literal but sometimes a ruling metaphor. These terms usually imply certain *assumptions*—unstated beliefs about life, history, literature, reasoning, etc. that the essayist doesn’t argue for but simply assumes to be true. An essay’s keyterms should be clear in their meaning and appear throughout (not be abandoned half-way); they should be appropriate for the subject at hand (not unfair or too simple—a false or constraining
opposition); and they should not be inert clichés or abstractions (e.g. “the evils of society”). The attendant assumptions should bear logical inspection, and if arguable they should be explicitly acknowledged.

6. Structure: the sequence of main sections or sub-topics, and the turning points between them. The sections should follow a logical order, and the links in that order should be apparent to the reader (see “stitching”). But it should also be a progressive order—should have a direction of development or complication, not be simply a list or a series of restatements of the thesis (“Macbeth is ambitious: he’s ambitious here; and he’s ambitious here; and he’s ambitions here, too; thus, Macbeth is ambitious”). And the order should be supple enough to allow the writer to explore the topic, not just hammer home a thesis. (If the essay is complex or long, its structure may be briefly announced or hinted at after the thesis, in a road-map or plan sentence.)

7. Stitching: words that tie together the parts of an argument, most commonly (a) by using transition (linking or turning) words as signposts to indicate how a new section, paragraph, or sentence follows from the one immediately previous; but also (b) by recollection of an earlier idea or part of the essay, referring back to it either by explicit statement or by echoing key words or resonant phrases quoted or stated earlier. The repeating of key or thesis concepts is especially helpful at points of transition from one section to another, to show how the new section fits in.

8. Sources: persons or documents, referred to, summarized, or quoted, that help a writer demonstrate the truth of his or her argument. They are typically sources of (a) factual information or data, (b) opinions or interpretation on your topic, (c) comparable versions of the thing you are discussing, or (d) applicable general concepts. Your sources need to be efficiently integrated and fairly acknowledged by citation.

9. Reflecting: when you pause in your demonstration to reflect on it, to raise or answer a question about it—as when you (1) consider a counter-argument—a possible objection, alternative, or problem that a skeptical or resistant reader might raise; (2) define your terms or assumptions (what do I mean by this term? or, what am I assuming here?); (3) handle a newly emergent concern (but if this is so, then how can X be?); (4) draw out an implication (so what? what might be the wider significance of the argument I have made? what might it lead to if I’m right? or, what does my argument about a single aspect of this suggest about the whole thing? or about the way people live and think?), and (5) consider a possible explanation for the phenomenon that has been demonstrated (why might this be so? what might cause or have caused it?); (6) offer a qualification or limitation to the case you have made (what you’re not saying). The first of these reflections can come anywhere in an essay; the second usually comes early; the last four often come late (they’re common moves of conclusion).

10. Orienting: bits of information, explanation, and summary that orient the reader who isn’t expert in the subject, enabling such a reader to follow the argument. The orienting question is, what does my reader need here? The answer can take many forms: necessary information about the text, author, or event (e.g. given in your introduction); a
summary of a text or passage about to be analyzed; pieces of information given along the way about passages, people, or events mentioned (including announcing or “set-up” phrases for quotations and sources). The trick is to orient briefly and gracefully.

11. **Stance**: the implied relationship of you, the writer, to your readers and subject: how and where you implicitly position yourself as an analyst. Stance is defined by such features as style and tone (e.g. familiar or formal); the presence or absence of specialized language and knowledge; the amount of time spent orienting a general, non-expert reader; the use of scholarly conventions of form and style. Your stance should be established within the first few paragraphs of your essay, and it should remain consistent.

12. **Style**: the choices you make of words and sentence structure. Your style should be exact and clear (should bring out main idea and action of each sentence, not bury it) and plain without being flat (should be graceful and a little interesting, not stuffy).

13. **Title**: It should both interest and inform. To inform—i.e. inform a general reader who might be browsing in an essay collection or bibliography—your title should give the subject and focus of the essay. To interest, your title might include a linguistic twist, paradox, sound pattern, or striking phrase taken from one of your sources (the aptness of which phrase the reader comes gradually to see). You can combine the interesting and informing functions in a single title or split them into title and subtitle. The interesting element shouldn’t be too cute; the informing element shouldn’t go so far as to state a thesis. Don’t underline your own title, except where it contains the title of another text.
Alternative UWS Terminology: A Writing Lexicon
(from Kerry Walk, Princeton University)

The approaches to reaching with writing described in this guide can be significantly enhanced when the language that writers and readers use to talk about writing is public and shared. Even if you don’t realize it, you already use a language for describing writing, whether you're a chemist presenting "results," a historian analyzing "primary documents," or some other type of scholar or scientist in conversation with others about writing. Humanists and some social scientists, whose writing is based primarily on texts, might include "evidence" and "analysis" in their writing lexicon. Scientists, engineers, and some other social scientists, whose writing is based primarily on quantitative data, might instead include "data" and "discussion" in theirs.

You can capitalize on your experiences as a scholarly or scientific writer by making your writing lexicon as explicit as possible for students. Some possibilities follow. But whatever language you use, you would be wise to avoid the false dichotomy between "writing" and "content." What's usually meant by "writing" in this context is "mechanics"—grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Yet writing, as we all know from experience, comprehends so much more: the establishment of a viewpoint in relation to others' viewpoints; the organization of complex ideas and arguments; the convincing analysis of evidence, and so on. Rather than limiting your writing lexicon to the two large, undifferentiated categories "writing" and "content," try using terms that can facilitate a more nuanced and meaningful discussion of everything that's on the page. When asked to describe academic writing in their fields, scholars and scientists use many of the terms defined in the writing lexicon below.

**Thesis**: A paper's central claim or promise.

In humanistic disciplines, the thesis is an arguable claim—i.e., an assertion someone could reasonably argue against; as such, it provides unexpected insight, goes beyond superficial interpretations, or challenges, corrects, or extends other arguments. In scientific disciplines, the thesis is a statement of purpose indicating that a particular investigation will be described and significant results presented—results that challenge standard opinions or methodology, or add to knowledge in the field.

**Motive**: Defined by Gordon Harvey as the "intellectual context" that's established at the beginning of a paper to suggest why the thesis is original or worthwhile.

In both humanistic and scientific disciplines, the motive is typically an incongruity, puzzle, or surprise in the primary sources or data; and/or holes, limitations, or disagreements in the secondary literature. All good academic papers have a well-defined motive, which, according to Harvey, is "usually defined by a form of the complicating word 'But.'"
Structure: A paper's line of reasoning, from beginning to end and also within and between paragraphs.

A successful structure is logical, coherent, and easy to follow. In humanistic disciplines, the structure allows for a dynamic development of ideas (is not merely a list of points or examples). In scientific disciplines, the overall structure is typically signaled with subheadings, such as Title, Abstract, Introduction, Literature Review, Methods, Results, Discussion, and References; within each section, the structure allows for a logical development of ideas.

Keywords: A paper's main terms or concepts.

Keywords usually appear in the title, are defined early on (often with the aid of sources), and could be used in a library or Web search to locate the paper if it were published.

Methodology: The methods and strategies used to make an argument or conduct an investigation.

In humanistic disciplines, scholars typically don’t discuss their methodology, except to describe an analytic framework, but social scientists and scientists always do, whether their projects are empirical or theoretical. One reason for the difference is that social scientists and scientists value reproducible results, which are dependent on methodology.

Evidence, or Data: Interpreted primary sources, empirical observations, or factual information.

In humanistic disciplines, evidence is usually quoted and analyzed. In scientific disciplines, data are visually summarized in labeled graphs and figures.

Analysis: The interpretation of sources.

In humanistic disciplines, analysis of primary sources is used to support claims, while analysis of other kinds of sources is used to advance the overall argument (for example, by providing a theoretical framework). In scientific disciplines, analysis of data leads to results (described in the Results section); the results are further analyzed for their larger implications (in the Discussion section).

Sources: The various materials used to develop an argument, including artifacts, information, and other people's ideas.

Primary sources are uninterpreted documents, artifacts, data, or information that, when analyzed, function as evidence. Secondary sources, also known as "the literature" or "the secondary literature," are texts that make direct claims about the topic and may be used to establish a problem or question worth addressing, the
standard opinion(s) on the topic, the standard way in which the problem or question is approached, or the current state of knowledge in the field. Other relevant sources are texts that relate indirectly to the topic and may be used to provide context or background information, keywords or concepts, or points of comparison.

Sources appear in any of several forms: they may be quoted (if the style of writing is special or significant), paraphrased (if the style of writing is complex or jargon-laden), summarized (if the source is long and complicated), or referenced (if the source is briefly mentioned). In humanistic disciplines, sources appear in each of these forms. In scientific disciplines, sources are usually referenced or summarized, almost never quoted or paraphrased.

**Orienting**: Defined by Gordon Harvey as "bits of information, explanation, and summary that orient the reader."

The amount of orienting, or context, a writer provides depends on readers' likely expertise in the subject. Even experts require some orienting; those with less expertise require more.

**Citations**: Bibliographic information that enables readers to crack down a paper's sources.

In academic writing, sources are always cited; the citation style employed (e.g., MLA, APA, CMS, CSE) depends on the discipline. A list of sources is called the Works Cited, Bibliography, or References, depending on purpose and discipline.

**Conventions**: The accepted standards of various elements of academic writing, such as paper format, voice, tone, diction, and citation style.

Academic writing in different disciplines follows distinctive conventions. Should a writer include a roadmap at the beginning of a paper or divide the paper up into conventional sections? Is the active or passive voice preferred? Maya writer refer to him- or herself in the first-person singular? Is there a specialized language, or jargon, that the writer should use? Which citation style is appropriate? Writers can infer answers to these and other questions of convention by glancing through the most widely read journals in the field—for example, *PMLA*, *Social Science Research*, and *Nature*—or by reading excellent papers (by students or professionals) distributed by the professor or graduate student instructor.

**Mechanics**: Grammar, punctuation, spelling, and citation format.

Writing guides that focus on mechanics are readily available online, as are guides to the citation styles used in various disciplines. For a searchable online resource with guidance on style, grammar, citation, and more, consider pointing students to the Purdue Online Writing Lab (Purdue OWL): [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/)
These are just a few of the terms that are widely used by scholars and scientists when discussing writing. By adopting these or other useful terms as you work with students on their writing, you'll make visible the practices—and values—of your discipline while giving students some of the critical tools they need to excel at Princeton and beyond.
Assignment Overview

Close-Reading Essay

The close-reading essay requires students to slow down and read their given text(s) carefully, whether those texts are a work of art, a public space, or another piece of writing. The goal is to recognize the move from observation to analysis in their writing process.

Lens Essay

With the lens essay, students will take a piece of critical or theoretical writing and use it to examine another text in order to create an analytical dialogue between the two texts.

Research Essay

The longest and most involved writing assignment is the research essay. Students choose a topic, use library resources to find primary and secondary sources, and craft a thesis and an argument. Using skills acquired in the previous essay assignments, including careful close-reading, analyzing texts through a given theoretical or critical lens, and crafting a strong argument, students integrate their researched sources to create a polished and thesis-driven final research essay.

For each assignment students complete three pre-draft exercises, a first and final draft. With each draft, students include a cover letter reflecting on their writing process. All assignments are collected by the student in a portfolio to be turned in at the end of the semester.
3. Syllabus Design

Syllabus Checklist and UWS Policies
(adapted from the Committee for the Support of Teaching)

Contact Details and Office Hours: instructor’s office telephone number, e-mail address, website, office address and office hours.

Course Description and Objectives: short description of the course and the context in which it is taught. This could address teaching methodology and general expectations of students. You also need to describe the knowledge, skills, and/or outlooks which you would like the students to learn or be able to demonstrate as a result of this course.

Course Plan: this is the heart of the syllabus—a detailed list of topics for the semester, perhaps accompanied by a statement that these topics may be amended with student input during the term. Consider including an entry for each class session with projected topics and readings. The Academic Calendar is online on the Registrar’s website; please remember “Brandeis Mondays,” etc. Some instructors also choose to include in this section brief objectives for sessions and/or questions for study and discussion. For UWS syllabi, this section should include an overview of the four assignments to be completed over the course of the semester with a brief statement of the assignment and learning objectives for each unit. This section often appears in the opening pages of the syllabus in addition to the more detailed schedule of assignments.

Course Objectives: a brief section outlining the knowledge and skills students are expected to gain through their work in the course. Many programs formally adopt learning outcomes for their classes. You can find the UWS Outcomes on page 23 in this handbook.

Evaluation: explanation of grading, including percentages allocated to elements such as class participation, exams, homework, papers, projects. Normally, these percentages should not change once the course starts. All students in a course must be evaluated the same way (this may include giving all students the same option, e.g., paper vs. exam). It is useful to also announce your policy for missed exams or deadlines (e.g., do you require documentation of the excuse?). If you are going to penalize students who do not attend a certain number of classes, this should be stated explicitly here.

Disabilities: every syllabus must contain the following paragraph:

“If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.”

Academic Integrity: every syllabus must contain a paragraph such as:

“You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University’s policies on academic integrity (see http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai). Faculty will refer any suspected instances of alleged dishonesty to the Office of Student Development and Conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty may result in sanctions including but not limited to failure in the course,
failure on the assignment in question, suspension from the University and/or educational programs."

**Communications:** details of class mailing lists, WebCT, class websites and other links, if appropriate. Explain how syllabus changes will be communicated and how students should keep themselves informed.

**Course Materials:** materials recommended for purchase, including textbooks, case packets and online materials.

**Critical Dates:** the plan should include dates for exams, homework assignments, papers, projects and presentations. It is important to identify the date of the final exam, if any, which should be in the time slot the University assigns for that block. Any mandatory exercises outside of scheduled times must also be listed. The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee recommends that in-class graded exercises not be scheduled during the last week of classes. Whenever possible, final exams should be held during the official examination period, and other exams, take-home exams or quizzes should be completed before the last week of classes begins. In planning dates, faculty should be sensitive to the religious obligations of their students.

**Additional Writing Program Requirements & Policies**

**Conferences:** every student must attend 3 twenty minute or 4 fifteen minute conferences. Missing a conference counts as an absence

**Writing Portfolio:** students must turn in a final writing portfolio at the end of the semester. The portfolio should include all writing submitted during the semester—graded essays, and pre-drafts—and a two to three page cover letter discussing the student’s work during the semester and his or her goals for continued improvement. You might require students to cite their own work as evidence for the claims they make about their development or tendencies as a writer.

**Attendance:** students lose 1/3 of a letter grade for every absence after their third absence. This works best if there are no excused absences (they can use their three for this). More than six absences will result in a failing grade. Your syllabus might include a paragraph like this:

> Attendance and class participation are mandatory. You have three free absences which you may use in case of sickness, scheduling conflicts, or religious observances. Further absences will reduce your final grade by 1/3 of letter grade, so an A will become an A-, an A- will become a B+, etc. Missing a conference is the same as missing a class. **After seven absences, you will fail the course.** You are responsible for getting notes or assignment changes from your classmates. Exceptions are not made for athletics; if your schedule requires you to miss more than three classes, you should find a class that meets at a different time. Please see me as soon as possible if you have any questions about this policy.

**Evaluation:** the three essay assignments should account for 70 to 75% of the students’ overall grades. Students should also receive grades for participation, pre-draft assignments, and the final portfolio. Peer review should be a part of pre-draft assignments or participation. Here’s one example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close Reading Essay</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lens Essay</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grading Late Papers: as grades are students’ primary motivation for turning papers in on time, your syllabus should be clear about how students will be penalized for turning in late work. For example:

Late drafts (midway or final) will result in a lower overall grade. I will deduct one third of a letter grade for each day a paper is late. Late midway drafts will also complicate peer reviews and, in turn, diminish the quality of the feedback you receive from your peers. If it is absolutely necessary to turn a paper in late, please see me as soon as possible to negotiate an extension.

If a paper is one day late, most instructors deduct the third of a letter grade that is indicated on the syllabus. Some instructors, however, only deduct half of what the syllabus indicates if the paper is two or more days late. This allows them to write this sort of comment on a paper turned in two days late: “Though I would normally deduct two thirds of a letter grade for a paper that is two days late, I will only deduct a third in this case because I know how much other work you had to do.” Such a comment generates good will while still emphasizing the importance of turning written work in on time.

Laptops in Class: we recommend that, unless you have experience running laptop-rich classrooms, you do not allow students to use laptops during class. Laptops are often sources of distraction for their users and the students around them. Unless you have a particular reason for wanting to use a laptop during class, the Director would prefer you did not do so. If you would like to use a laptop, please see the Director to make the case for how it will benefit your class and to explain how you will manage students’ laptop use to prevent distractions. You should not use laptops until you’ve spoken to the Director.

Email and Communication Etiquette (including peer and cover letters): the following statement is not a policy or requirement, but many instructors have found it useful.

Though electronic missives give the impression of informality, I understand all of our communications to be part of our professional relationship. As such, I expect your emails and letters to begin with a salutation (“Dear…”) and end with a valediction (e.g. “Sincerely”). I also expect you to be mindful of your tone: remember that though you may have grown up using electronic communication, many of your professors did not. They expect you to communicate respectfully—including proper grammar and an appropriate level of formality—we will practice this mode of communication in class.

Other policies to know but to not put on your syllabus

Passing the UWS Course: students only have to re-take UWS if they receive a failing grade; a D grade is passing.

Grading Papers that Do Not Meet the Page Requirement: the best way to avoid receiving papers that are too short is to remind your students before the paper is due that they will be penalized for failing to meet page requirements and formatting. If a paper is ¼ to ½ page short, we
recommend docking the final grade by a third a letter grade. If a paper is more than ½ page short, you should return the paper to the student without grading it and give them a 24-hr extension that comes with a third-of-a-letter-grade reduction.

**Grading Papers that Contain Significant ESL Interference:** for the close reading essay, you can give students a split grade—an overall grade and a grade for grammar/style. You can instruct students that they will receive the overall grade if they visit with their ESL tutor or a writing center tutor and resolve problems of grammar and style. You can apply the same model for the lens essay but offer the average of the two grades. By the research paper, you can then let students know that they are expected to turn in a polished essay and that no revisions will be allowed.
Preparing a Course Overview for the University Writing Seminar

Look at nearly any professor’s syllabus at Brandeis, and you’ll find a list of sources and/or relevant topics next to a series of dates. Writing seminar syllabi, which focus on writing, analytical skills, and the drafting and revision process, and which involve comparatively little reading, are quite different. Every unit in a writing seminar has three phases: the first phase is usually devoted to discussing the readings with the writing assignment in view; the second phase, to discussing writing skills (e.g. the formulation of a thesis) that students will need in order to complete the assignment; and the third phase, to discussing students’ drafts, an activity called “draft workshop.” The point of this design is to limit the readings and to place as much emphasis on writing—both writing principles and the drafting and revision process—as possible.

Writing seminar syllabus design is so different, in fact, that we usually don’t even think about the syllabus until the course’s armature is in place. We call this armature the “course overview.” It’s essentially the blueprint of your course. To create a course overview, we recommend that you begin by defining your topic and drafting the three major assignments. From there, you’ll be in a good position to produce a course description/blurb, a 200-word statement which indicates why the topic is a compelling one and what the main subtopics, texts, and/or authors are. We explain these elements of course design in more detail below. Please don’t be daunted by the length of this document; most of the space is taken up by examples.

The Topic

To provide students with a worthwhile occasion for writing, each seminar is based on an intellectually stimulating topic, chosen specifically to interest freshmen and to animate their writing with compelling questions, debates, and problems. Because students enroll in writing seminars through a bidding process, it’s crucial that each topic appeal to a broad cross-section of Brandeis freshmen, high-achieving students who want an intellectually rigorous experience but who may not see the attractions of topics that a professional scholar would likely find engaging. In 2014-2015, topics included:

- What is Wrong with American Healthcare?
- Arab-Jewish Culture and Literature in the 20th Century
- The Decay of the American City
- Founding Fathers, Mothers, Slaves and Soldiers
- The Sexual Politics of Western Fairy Tales
- Death, Dying and the Dead in Music
- American Protest Song
- The Impact of Glam Rock on Culture
- Dissecting Display: The Visual Politics of Museum Exhibition
- Where is Home? Mobile Identities in a Globalized World
- Ethics and Innovation
As can perhaps be inferred from these examples, topics must be approachable enough for readings to be kept to a minimum, they must provide students with opportunities to make their own arguments, and they must allow students to approach the material from several angles while giving them the chance to build up a base of knowledge.

**The Three Major Assignments**

At the heart of your course overview will be your three major assignments, which are generally of increasing complexity, reflecting essay types commonly assigned at Brandeis. The three assignments position students to engage the texts and subtopics of the course in interesting and original ways and also challenge students to develop strategies and techniques of college-level inquiry and argument. The common essay types these assignments cover may be defined by the number and kinds of texts involved, the analytical tasks performed, and (where relevant) the relationships between and among texts. The standard sequence of essay assignments in the UWS, which includes 3 units and a brief, review essay at semester’s end, is as follows:

1. **Close-reading** of a single text or, on rare occasions, two or three very short texts, using a guiding concept or question (which is sometimes drawn from a reading) to generate the argument (e.g. an interpretation of a “defining” text that stands out from others seemingly like it; an interpretation of a problematic, self-contradictory, or incongruous text)—5-6 pages/2-3 weeks

2. **Lens analysis** of a “case” text (usually not an argumentative text) using an idea or argument drawn from a “lens” text (often a theoretical text which does not offer an argument about the particular case text used for the assignment)—7-8 pages/3-4 weeks

3. **Research essay** in which students advance an original argument using many sources (e.g. a classic research project in which the writer brings multiple academic sources to bear on a problem, question, or issue; or a text-in-context essay, in which the writer supplies crucial context for understanding a focal text or set of texts)—10-15 pages/4-5 weeks

4. **Portfolio**, including an overview letter or review essay reflecting on the entirety of the student’s work for the term (~3 pages)

Students prepare for each of the essays by writing two or three pre-draft assignments as well as a draft. The pre-draft assignments ask students to work on key skills needed for the essays in question. For example, in the close reading unit, students might be asked to complete two tasks for one pre-draft assignment: (1) choose a passage from the text and annotate it in detail, defining ambiguous or potentially interesting words and phrases, noting patterns, pointing out moments pertaining to the course theme; and (2) freewriting on the passage for a few minutes to put their observations into something like a paragraph. Alternately, in a lens or research unit, they might be asked to write two letters to a text’s author, one in which they agree with her, the other in which they disagree.
(intellectual play often called “believing” and “doubting”). In each assignment sequence, students will likely produce several pages of incidental writing, including responses to their classmates’ drafts, in-class writing exercises, and reflections on their own writing.

The form taken by your major assignments (which yield about 30 finished pages of student writing) will depend on the topic of your course and the writing goals you have for your students. In designing your assignments, you’ll want to ask two sets of related questions: First, what types of assignments do you want to give, and what are the best texts for students to use in doing these assignments? And, second, will the overall sequence of reading and writing assignments make for a good narrative arc for the course and give students the chance to develop expertise on the topic? These are tough questions to answer, but with a draft of the course overview before us, we’ll be able to puzzle our way to answers together.

**The Course Description/Blurb**

A student’s choice of writing seminar will depend on how interesting they find the brief title and course description (as well as on their class schedule, of course). Our course descriptions, or blurbs, as we like to call them, are no more than 200 words and usually have two parts. The first part conveys why students would want to explore the topic: what makes it important and interesting and what the central questions, debates, or issues are. The second part details the sub-topics and texts of the seminar’s three major units and often describes the seminar’s writing assignments and overall intellectual and writing goals. Blurbs frequently open with a provocative hook, pose complicating questions, describe the seminar’s critical approach to its materials, and mention important authors and texts to be covered.

The primary purpose of the blurb is to advertise our seminars and get students excited about signing up. But blurbs do far more than this. For one thing, they give us our first chance to model clear writing and thinking for students who will soon be walking into our classrooms. Importantly, the blurbs also convey our shared values, as writers and writing teachers, to our colleagues across the University and to the hundreds of professors and Writing Program administrators around the country who read our materials via our web site. We want all of these readers to know, just by glancing through our blurbs, how much we value clarity, conciseness, and accessibility.

Your blurb is such an important document that you and the Director and/or Assistant Director will likely pass it back and forth a few times before it’s ready for publication. The role we play is that of editor; the catalog of seminar offerings is the publication that we edit. Like any editor, we ask our contributors for revisions, and at times we offer revisions of our own. For most instructors, we play another role as well—that of course consultant. The blurb provides us with a useful focus for important (and usually interesting!) conversations about seminar design.
Sample Blurbs

Crisis and the American Musical
Georgia Luikens

Since the advent of Stephen Sondheim and Leonard Bernstein’s 1957 musical ‘West Side Story,’ the themes and plots of the American Musical have diverged from traditional love stories to in-depth analyses of the human condition. This class will study three musicals which explore a level of crisis: ‘Company’ depicts an individual in crisis, ‘Rent’ a community, and ‘West Side Story’ a society. Through a close study of production history, characterizations, lyrics, music, movement, plot and script, this class will investigate the portrayal of ‘crisis’ in the modern American musical. This will also be achieved through a combination of close readings of critical, academic, and other artistic responses to the works studied, as well as by listening to relevant soundtracks and viewing production videos. Throughout this class, students will be required to develop thoughtful, well written responses in clear academic English. Over the course of the semester, researching, writing, and editing skills essential to the Brandeis undergraduate curriculum will be covered.

Technogenesis
Kurt Cavender

Ever since the first monkey used a stick to scoop delicious ants from an anthill, humans have lived in relationship with technology. From the wheel, to the internal combustion engine, to the iPhone, we build tools meant to help us master and reshape our environment. But as humanity’s technologies grow in complexity and power, what is happening to the human? Is “human nature” a static, unchanging condition, or does it evolve in tandem with the tools it produces? In this course we will consider the concept of technogenesis, the proposal that our tools create us as much as we create them, and attempt to use this concept to understand a variety of cultural anxieties and fantasies about the growing role of technology in our lives. We will begin by reading Ken Kalfus’ novel The Commissariat of Enlightenment and thinking about how the invention of film as a technology of memory has changed the way we think about history. We will follow this discussion by placing sections of Paul Auster’s novel Leviathan in relationship to Vilem Flusser’s arguments about the cultural power of photography. Students will ask how the novel links photographic art with radical politics, and why. Finally, we will use Stanley Kubrick’s 2001: A Space Odyssey as a starting place for researching new trends in futurism, attempting to predict which emerging technologies might provoke our next evolutionary step.

Depicting the Enemy: Soviet and U.S. Propaganda During the Cold War
Patrick Brown

In the post-WWII era, the “battle for hearts and minds” moved into the fore of American and Soviet strategy. In fact, it continues to dominate contemporary policy. An
understanding of the use of propaganda is crucial to comprehending political, military, diplomatic, and economic strategies. This course seeks to examine Soviet and US propaganda, which formed essentialist Cold War narratives, to excavate the complexities of historical and contemporary uses of propaganda. It will explore the dynamics, motives, intent, and reception of the various pieces of propaganda both domestically and abroad. Among other events, it will examine the Cuban Missile Crisis, the arms race, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. In doing so, it will rely on four distinct source bases: the press, propaganda posters, film and television, and literature.

This course is a University Writing Seminar and therefore, foregrounds instruction in college-level academic writing. As a result, the course will teach students to read critically, analyze instead of summarize, evaluate and engage with scholarly sources, and express one's ideas in a clear, concise, and functional manner. In order to do this the course will require students to write three essays: a close reading essay (on a Soviet and a US propaganda film), a lens essay, and a research paper on a topic of the students choosing.

The Political Zombie
Jodie Austin

The figure of the zombie has ostensibly captured the imagination of the modern audience, as graphic novels, films, TV shows, and even charity runs have sought to appeal to our fascination with the undead. However, less formal consideration has been given to the idea longstanding historical tradition of adopting “zombism” in Western cinema as a vehicle for satirical critique, articulating anxieties related to class struggle and militarization.

This course will examine the historical role of the zombie as a political figure in Western filmmaking, with particular attention being paid to the works of George A. Romero. Students will be asked to analyze the idea of the zombie-construct as one that commonly reflects the fear of the invasive/contagious foreign other and to produce three substantive papers based upon the texts discussed in class. Along the way, we discuss techniques related to film production and the horror genre; students will be required to refer to these conventions in their own written work and to participate consistently in class discussions.
Sample Course Overviews

Below are four course overviews, the armatures that we put in place before creating the full syllabus students will eventually see. Course overviews should include a fleshed out version of the blurb or seminar description, a brief description of the three major essay assignment sequences including pre-draft assignments, and a list of the writing lessons each unit is designed to teach. (These writing lessons may draw on but need not be limited to Gordon Harvey’s “Elements of the Academic Essay,” a document we commonly use to discuss writing technique with our students.) Once your course overview is in place, you can expand it into the full syllabus, which will additionally include your contact information, a list of required texts, a percentage breakdown of graded evaluation, a contract of classroom expectations and policies, and a week-by-week class schedule. The course overviews below do not include these pieces of the full syllabus, but lay the groundwork for expansion into the final document.

Authority and Authenticity
A Writing Seminar by Laura John

Anthropologists routinely struggle to represent their subjects objectively. Many acknowledge this as an unattainable goal, yet ethnography (defined as both the methodology of anthropological research and its product) remains a key way anthropologists describe and analyze their subjects and the documentary (which could be considered a kind of pop ethnography) maintains an aura of authenticity.

In order to delve deeper into the ever-present but often overlooked themes of authority, objectivity, and authorship in ethnography and documentary, this course will foster the development of incisive analysis and sophisticated academic writing. Structured assignments, class discussions, peer group workshops, and conferences will direct us as we explore different writing tasks and consider an array of ethnographic texts - some traditional, some not – and documentary styles.

Our goal in this course will not be simply to improve as thinkers and writers, but to open up our concept of writing to new possibilities. While the analytical and expressive skills you develop in this class will be critical to your success at Brandeis and beyond, ultimately, this course will provide you with an opportunity to discuss not only the topics of the course – authorship and its ethics - but the craft of writing as well.

Essay 1: Close Reading

Assignment: In a 5-6 page essay, you will conduct a close reading of Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s piece “The Power in the Story,” in which the author discusses the presentation and interpretation of history through narrative.
Pre-Draft Assignments: (1.1) Response to A Key Term, Single Image, or Sentence; (1.2) Developing a Thesis Statement


Essay 2: Lens Analysis

Assignment: For Essay 2, you will read and unpack Eric Hobsbawm’s discussion of the creation of practices and norms in “The Invention of Tradition”. In 6-7 pages, you will use Hobsbawm as a lens to comment on some other ‘invented’ tradition.

Pre-Draft Assignments: (2.1) Close Read a Sentence from the Lens; (2.2) Mini-Lens Reading; (2.3) Draft Introductory Paragraph

Writing Lessons: Same as above, plus introduction, opener, motive, critical engagement with and rhetorical use of sources, source documentation.

Essay 3: Research Paper

Assignment: For your final essay, you will research and contextualize either Werner Herzog’s Grizzly Man or Jon Krakauer’s Into the Wild, using a few key framing texts chosen by me as well as sources chosen by you, in order to explore some seminar themes in 10-12 pages.

Pre-Draft Assignments: (3.1) Research Proposal; (3.2) Annotated Bibliography

Writing Lessons: Same as above, plus introductions, conclusions, motive, asking a research question, doing independent research, using research to make an argument (not a report!), writing with sources, and style.

Getting Medieval in the 21st Century
A Writing Seminar by Andrew Albin

When we think of “the medieval,” we think of the dark ages, feudalism, theocracy, the black plague; we envision knights in armor, damsels in distress, peasants with pitchforks, bards strumming harps, monks chanting in Latin, white-bearded conjurers—everything we are not. Yet these images come to mind with surprising ease; they’re more than familiar to us, one might argue so familiar as to be part of our American cultural mythology. From this perspective, the Middle Ages might not be as foreign or as far from us as we like to think.

In this course, we will foster the development of incisive analysis and sophisticated academic writing as a way to probe the place of the medieval in our own historical moment, as well as in other epochs leading up to ours. Structured assignments, class
discussions, peer group workshops, and conferences will direct us as we explore different writing tasks and consider a wide array of texts. We will reflect on the ways we encounter cultures and the ways cultures encounter us, as we work out techniques to make these encounters visible and meaningful.

Our goal in this course will not be simply to improve as thinkers and writers, but to open up our concept of writing to new possibilities, and, centrally, to reconsider what it means to be a responsible thinker and a good writer. Not only will the analytical and expressive skills you develop in class be critical to your success at Brandeis and beyond, they also will offer new perspectives and strategies for experiencing and reading the world at large.

**Essay 1: Close Reading of the Quest for the Holy Grail**

**Essay assignment:** You will conduct a close reading of a short passage from Malory’s *Morte D’Arthur* in a 5-6 page essay. By locating and residing in a “strangeness” within the text, you will discover how that text works to produce meaning at the local level. Your analysis will focus on how and why the Quest for the Holy Grail makes problematic the conventional norms of chivalric romance.

**Pre-Draft Assignments:** (1.1) Reading notes on a 200 word passage; (1.2) Post two thesis statements and comment on other students’ theses on LATTE

**Writing Lessons:** Question/problem-posing theses, engaged reading habits, evidence, analysis, structure, orientation, source documentation, revision.

**Sources:** five chapters of Malory’s *Morte D’Arthur*
- Sidney Painter, *French Chivalry* (excerpt)
- Robert Burlin, “Middle English Romance”
- Brian Stone, “Models of Kingship”

**Essay 2: Lens Analysis of Orientalism in Narnia**

**Essay assignment:** With a strong grasp of argumentation and the location and synthesis of meaningful textual details, you will next consider how C. S. Lewis’ classic children’s story *The Horse and His Boy* engages in Orientalist discourse. In a 7-8 page essay, you will explore how Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism, a historical process by which the Arabian Orient is cast as the inferior and subject opposite of the West, does (or doesn’t) illuminate Lewis’ seemingly innocent tale.

**Pre-Draft Assignments:** (2.1) Reverse outline and reflection on lens; (2.2) Locating an obvious match, a non-obvious match, and a contradiction between lens and focal text; (2.3) Working with lens quotation

**Writing Lessons:** Same as above, plus introduction, motive, critical engagement with and rhetorical use of sources, source documentation.
Essay 3: Medievalism in Post 9-11 Hollywood Film

Essay assignment: You will select a medieval film released since 2001 and conduct research to establish a cultural context and interpretive framework around it, with the goal of revealing how contemporary film uses “the medieval” to reflect on our historical moment. Our classroom conversations will equip you with important terms and concepts for thinking about medievalism and film; you will also conduct independent research on primary, secondary, and contextual sources to help inform your critical thinking. Your 10-12 page paper will examine how and why the film you choose acts as a reflection and a shaping influence on post-9/11 America.

Pre-Draft Assignments: (3.1) Mini-lens: medievalism in your everyday experience; (3.2) Film viewing notes using filmic vocabulary; (3.3) Proposal and annotated bibliography

Writing Lessons: Same as above, plus asking a research question, conducting research, integrating multiple primary, secondary, and contextual sources, filmic analysis, conclusion, transition, paragraph structure, style.

Sources: Jonathan Markovitz, “Reel Terror Post 9/11”
Leon Calvert, “Ideology and the Modern Historical Epic”
Bruce Holsinger, Neomedievalism, Neoconservatism, and the War on Terror
Umberto Eco, “Return of the Middle Ages”
Arthur Lindley, “The Ahistoricism of Medieval Film”
Susan Aronstein and Nancy Coiner, “Twice Knightly”
Kevin Harty, “Introduction” to The Reel Middle Ages
Martha Driver, “Writing about Medieval Movies”
David Williams, “Looking at the Middle Ages in Cinema”
Susan Aronstein, “Chapter 6: Old Myths Are New Again”
Paul Halsall, “Thinking about Historical Film”
Timothy Corrigan, A Short Guide to Writing about Film (excerpt)

“Even Pines Rejoice at Your Fate: Enemy Oracles in the Bible
A Writing Seminar by Tina Sherman

Essay 1: Close Reading
Assignment: A 5–6 page argument-driven essay examining a metaphorical oracle that is informed by your own careful analysis of the assigned text. In this unit we will focus on analyzing evidence and developing arguments.
Draft due: Monday, February 2 Revision due: Monday, February 9

Essay 2: Lens Analysis

Sources: Edward Said, Orientalism (excerpt)
C.S. Lewis, The Horse and His Boy
Assignment: A 7–8 page essay discussing the propagandistic aspects of a metaphorical oracle that is shaped by critical sources. In this unit, we will focus on using sources and structuring arguments.
Draft due: Monday, March 9 Revision due: Monday, March 16

**Essay 3: Researched Argument**
Assignment: A 9–10 page essay on an “enemy oracle” topic of your choice that will be informed by your own critical research. In this unit, we will be focusing on conducting scholarly research in addition to refining the techniques introduced throughout the semester.
Draft due: Monday, April 20 Revision due: Monday, May 4

Modern Metropolis:  
The Transformation of Cities at the Turn of the Twentieth Century  
A Writing Seminar by Allison Lange

*Essay One: Close Reading*  
You will conduct a close analysis of the Chicago Vice Commission Report. You will choose a theme from the reading that intrigues you, analyze it, and develop an argument. Your paper will be between five and six pages.

*Essay Two: Lens Essay*  
Having developed the skills for analyzing documents and constructing arguments, you will next develop an argument with the aid of secondary, theoretical material. You will consider Jacob Riis’ photographs of the New York slums with and consider the relationship between this material and an excerpt from Bruno Latour’s *Pandora’s Hope*. This essay will be between seven and eight pages.

*Essay Three: Research Paper*  
Using the skills you developed in previous assignments, you will formulate and pursue a research project. You will choose a theme related to urban life at the turn of the century, construct an original argument, and use primary sources. Class sessions will help you hone in on a topic and develop your analysis. This essay will be between ten and twelve pages.
Designing Assignments and Writing Prompts

The Assignment

Specificity: Decisions about how broad or narrow to make your essay topics can be difficult. On the one hand, you want to provide first year students with the guidance of more specific questions. On the other, posing productive questions is an important college writing skill that students must learn to do on their own. A good practice is to pose more narrowly focused essay questions earlier in the semester, both to help students along and to model what a good college essay question looks like. Later in the semester, you can allow students more leeway in choosing their own writing questions. When you do allow students the freedom to choose their own topics—within clearly defined limits—be sure to give yourself an opportunity to look over each student’s topic so that you can troubleshoot problems before the essay gets written.

Assignment sequence: Your sequence of pre-draft assignments allows you to clarify your expectations for each essay before it is written. If you have devoted an entire assignment to developing a particular skill, students should understand (and will expect) that it will figure prominently in your grading of the essay. Be sure to design pre-draft assignments that develop the writing skills that you will value most on the upcoming essay.

Choice of texts: In choosing texts for students to write about, you will want to challenge their ability to interpret while still keeping things manageable for lower level students. The texts that work best tend to be ambiguous enough to allow for multiple plausible interpretations, but straightforward enough that producing an interpretation is within the reach of students at all levels.

The Writing Prompt

Function: Like your syllabus, your writing prompt is a contract between you and your students and should clearly outline what you will hold them accountable for. You will almost certainly refer back to the writing prompt both in student conferences and in your essay comments. Be sure that your writing prompt establishes clear expectations that will be useful when discussing essays both in class and one on one.

The question: Though writing prompts often contain several paragraphs, the actual question you are asking students to answer is rarely longer than a single sentence. This sentence should be as brief and straightforward as possible and easy for students to locate (you might even consider setting it in boldface or underlining it). Students are often confused and frustrated by long writing prompts when they cannot determine exactly what they are being asked to do. While it is generally helpful to offer suggestions or additional guidance in the writing prompt, be sure to clearly differentiate it from the specific question students are being asked to answer.

Be specific: Though we want to assume the best about students, every vagueness on your writing prompt leaves you open to students pleading ignorance when they have failed to fulfill your expectations. Your writing prompt should include specific formatting guidelines (e.g. “In 7-8 typed, double-spaced pages [12 point Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins], analyze…”) and all due dates (for rough drafts, revision cover letters, final drafts, &c.)
Sequencing Assignments
(from Kerry Walk, Princeton University)

A well-designed writing assignment can give students the chance to engage course material in a deep, sustained, and individual way, and to learn essential aspects of writing in a particular discipline. A well-designed assignment can also prepare students for the ultimate challenge—writing on a topic of their own choosing with sources they’ve collected themselves—by exemplifying how to formulate an appropriate question and think fruitfully about course texts and ideas.

This section contains ideas about how to choose readings strategically in order to create the conditions for good writing experiences, and how to sequence assignments that ramp up the intellectual work required of students. In the next section, you’ll find approaches for crafting individual assignments with precision and foresight.

USING READINGS TO "STAGE" WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

In many courses, even those with a significant writing requirement, the writing can seem added on-extra and inessential. In these courses, the writing assignments may even be designed in medias res rather than during the course conception stage; they’re like road signs along the journey (the reading experience) and as such function simply to ensure that students are on the right path (have read and understood the material). Good writing assignments, by contrast, are integral to course design: they're conceived simultaneous with the course itself as essential to its shape and its goals. Such assignments do more than test students' grasp of the material; they give students practice doing the intellectual work of the discipline, whether that's interpreting data, situating an empirical study in the secondary literature, or making informed policy recommendations. They're integral to the journey, and as such they typically allow for a variety of responses.

If you design your writing assignments in concert with your reading assignments, not after the fact, you'll be in a position to create the best conditions for particular kinds of intellectual work to take place. You might think of this as "staging" writing assignments, a strategy for course design involving the strategic selection of readings to create a particular writing experience. In practical terms, staging a writing experience might mean assigning some readings that you hadn't considered before in order to give students practice doing certain kinds of intellectual work, or it might mean not assigning some readings, because they "scoop" students—do too much of the work for them.

Let's say, for example, that you think it’s important for students to learn to read the scientific literature critically. So you go beyond the textbook and include a few relevant journal articles in your syllabus for students to critique as a writing assignment, but you suppress a review article that already does the critique magnificently. (In fact, a clever way to design writing assignments is to find articles you think are interesting, then to give students the sources cited in the article while withholding the article itself.) Or let’s say...
that early in your course you want students to learn how to apply a theory to a case—a typical analytical operation in the social sciences. So you move up a theoretical reading and also include a few extra cases, just to give students greater freedom of choice. In these examples, the reading and writing assignments are married; they work together to give students practice performing essential discipline-based work.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS AS SEQUENCED INTELLECTUAL WORK

Of course, different writing assignments require different intellectual work. In designing assignments, it’s therefore important to think about the different kinds of intellectual work you want your students to do and how you plan to sequence this work throughout the term.

While different disciplines require different kinds of intellectual work, we might usefully identify some of the most common types, as follows:

- **Critique a text**
  
  Anthropology: Critique either the majority or dissenting opinion in U.S. v. Guzman in terms of the concept of "cultural heritage."
  
  Sociology: Use a work of reportage about war to critique or refine one of the sociological theories of war that we've studied this semester.

- **Assess or evaluate a text**
  
  Biology: Evaluate a claim about a conservation issue made in an article intended for a popular audience.
  
  Psychology: Assess one of the models of attention we've encountered in the course.

- **Analyze or interpret a text**
  
  Literary Studies: Choose a speech from *Hamlet* of at least twenty-five lines and offer an interpretation that challenges or complicates the standard reading.
  
  Sociology: Analyze an inconsistency, tension, or problem with Kunstler's depiction of suburban community life in *The Geography of Nowhere*.

- **Define a concept**

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1 "Text" is used broadly, to refer to any object of analysis or interpretation, such as an artifact, data set, person, event, communication product (film, speech, website), and so on.
Biology: Make an argument about how a response to a problem in current medicine extends or redefines prevailing concepts of health and illness, medical ethics, or the role of medicine in society.

- Explain an event or phenomenon

Politics: Select a country that has chosen to develop nuclear weapons or that initially had a weapons program that it chose to end, and explain that country’s decisions with respect to nuclear weapons.

- Take a stand on an issue (or recommend a course of action)

Biology: Argue for or against the claim that speciation by sexual selection is responsible for the observed sterility patterns encompassed by Haldane's rule.

Sociology: Using course readings to help justify your argument, make a recommendation to the College Board that the category "African American" be retained, eliminated, or altered.

Writing assignments typically ask students to perform one (or more) of the above operations either (1) without the aid of other texts (without context) or (2) with the aid of other texts (with context). This may seem like a simple distinction, but in fact these two assignment types are realms apart when it comes to complexity. Each can be made more complex still when the focus of analysis is multiplied, as the examples below suggest.

SEQUENCING ASSIGNMENTS

The assignments in your sequence will depend on the level of the course you're reaching and the methodologies of your discipline. Sequences generally move from shorter, simpler, more circumscribed assignments that give students a chance to build skills and strategies, to longer, more complex, more open assignments that more closely resemble normative writing in the discipline. Sequences also generally include a strategic mix of low-stakes and high-stakes writing, to be discussed below.

In literary studies, for example, students are likely to begin the semester practicing "close reading." This assignment has a single focus (a text) and is performed without the aid of other exes; it’s the simplest of all assignments involving the interpretation of a text. Depending on the level of the course, students may build up to a more complex project by the end of the semester, such as interpreting several related texts in a larger context established with the aid of other sources. This is the most challenging of all assignments involving textual interpretation and, not surprisingly, is a good description of many Senior Theses in literary studies, to say nothing of articles and books by professional scholars. The leap between the first and last assignments is wide, so intermediate assignments would be necessary to bridge the gap. A sequence might look like this:

- Interpret a literary text (no context).
• Use a theory to re-interpret a literary text. Alternatively, interpret a literary text in the context of literary criticism—by disagreeing with or extending a critic's interpretation.
• Interpret a set of related literary texts within a rhetorical and/or critical context.

Or take another example: the Junior Paper in Economics. This JP, like most scientific and technical papers, asks students to explain a phenomenon with reference to other explanations. This is a more complicated assignment than may at first appear: students need to perform a sequence of tasks in order to accomplish it:

• Define a feasible research question or problem.
• Situate the question in the secondary literature.
• Propose a methodology for addressing the question or problem.
• Characterize and analyze the data.

So complex is this assignment that the sequence of assignments leading up to it corresponds to the main parts of the paper itself: Introduction, Literature Review, Methods, and Results. Add an "Abstract," "Conclusions," and "References," and the paper is finished.

THE ROLE OF "LOW-STAKES" WRITING IN ASSIGNMENT SEQUENCES

You can use in-class writing to help students make progress on a particular writing assignment. But such "low-stakes" writing need nor be confined to class time; it can be assigned as short take-home writing exercises, sometimes called "response papers." Low-stakes writing isn't graded; that's what makes it "low stakes" (though some instructors evaluate it on an informal scale of check marks: √+ [more than adequate], √ [adequate], or √− [inadequate]). Whether you should make written comments on low-stakes writing depends on how important the writing is to students' development in the course: you would probably not collect a two-minute freewrite in class meant to stimulate thought, whereas you would be likely to collect and comment on a proposal for a research paper.

Low-stakes writing intended to help students make progress on an assignment usually represents an actual step in the writing process and also gives students practice performing essential skills. As a lead-up to an assignment in Sociology asking students to choose a theory and then apply it to a particular case, students might do an exercise in which they choose their theory and summarize it. The summaries would give students a foundation for writing the paper as well as for class discussion.

Coming up with low-stakes writing assignments is relatively easy: all you have to do is think about the steps a writer would take, or the skills a writer would need, to do the "high-stakes" assignment, then turn one of those steps or skills into a low-stakes assignment. An obvious way to do this is to break the writing process into stages. For example, you could ask students to write a paper proposal, which might include a statement of the problem or question to be addressed, a description of the primary sources
or data to be analyzed, an overview of other sources to be used (if any), and even a preliminary structure for the paper.

But your low-stakes assignments need not be a prescribed stage in the writing process. Here are some other possibilities:

- Free-write in response to a text or topic.
- Describe a personal experience that bears on the topic.
- Locate and analyze a textual "hotspot"—a passage that seems important, striking, puzzling.
- Locate and define a tension, gap, or incongruity in a text.
- Critically summarize a text.
- Identify and define a key term or concept.
- Support and then challenge a key concept.
- Locate and define a conflict of opinion in a set of secondary sources.

THE DRAFT AS A LOW-STAKES ASSIGNMENT

Perhaps the most important low-stakes writing of all is the draft. Because so many demands are placed on students' time, many of them will wait until the last possible moment to produce a draft, and as a result may not have time to get feedback and revise. You can ensure that students begin the writing process well before the deadline by requiring a draft. In a perfect world, you would give students individual feedback on their drafts, but class size and time constraints often make doing so impossible. In these cases, you can simply leave it up to students to get feedback and revise, or you can actively organize students into writing groups for the purpose of exchanging papers and providing feedback (see Section 2, "Writing and the College Classroom," for more information). Alternatively, you can choose one or two drafts (or pans of drafts) for the entire class to read, and then run a writing workshop (see Section 3, "The Writing Workshop," for more information). Note that for either of these activities to work, the assignment must allow for multiple responses; if students are writing essentially the same papers, they'll find it difficult to maintain the integrity of their own work.

If you have time to comment on drafts, or if students come to your office hours with a draft and you can read it on the spot, remember that different writers use drafts in different ways, and none of these ways is bad or wrong. Some writers use drafts to dump information in a tidy but uninteresting pile, others to discover their ideas through an exciting but messy process, still others to tryout ideas they would never hazard in a high-stakes setting. It's important to read drafts for their promise and possibility, no matter how confusing, simplistic, boring, or zany they are, and not to get bogged down in the problems, which are likely to be numerous. Because drafts serve the writer's purpose (to create one's own ideas) rather than the reader's (to understand and engage another's ideas), it's not advisable to grade drafts, only to note whether a student has written one.
Crafting Assignments
(from Kerry Walk, Princeton University)

Once you've established your assignment sequences, as discussed in Section 4, you can work on crafting each assignment to position students to perform particular kinds of intellectual work. The way an assignment is formulated will have an enormous impact on student performance. If the assignment is unfocused or inexact, you're likely to see unfocused, inexact papers. If it calls for students to "discuss," you're likely to see descriptive answers rather than papers with an articulated viewpoint. So it's important to craft assignments with precision and foresight—the way an experienced writer crafts any important piece of writing.

Surprisingly, more than a few writing assignments lack the crucial ingredient: the assignment itself. These ineffective assignments, consisting of paragraphs full of background information, multiple directives, questions to ponder, and/or a list of topics, may never actually give a unified instruction as to the intellectual work required. Four useful strategies for crafting clear assignments are these:

1. Encapsulate the assignment in a single sentence, beginning with "Your assignment is to ..." and a strong verb, such as "analyze," "assess," or "explain," that signals the intellectual work required;
2. Minimize the amount of background information you provide so that instead of framing students' papers for them (and possibly stealing their thunder), you're requiring students to frame their papers for themselves;
3. Put any advice for approaching the assignment in an "Advice" section, separate from the assignment itself; and
4. Include logistical information about when and where the paper is due, how long will it probably be, what the formatting specifications are (margin width, font size, etc.), and which citation style should be used.

The first two strategies are the hardest to implement, but doing so will ensure that your assignment is clear and unified. Here are a few examples to inspire you:

Your assignment is to...

... Critique Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics using DeMott's work on contemporary "friendship orthodoxy."

... Assess emotivism or prescriptivism as an account of moral disagreement.

... Analyze the relationship between Ishi and the anthropologist Kroeber as portrayed in the film The Last of His Tribe.

... Test Richard Rorty's hypothesis that novels foster solidarity, using J. M. Coetzee's novel Disgrace as your test case.
... **Argue** why one Impressionist painter more accurately captures some aspect of nineteenth-century Parisian society than another painter from the same period.

... **Re-evaluate** a contemporary public policy issue through the lens of social class.

... **Agree** or disagree with realist theories that treat states as a unitary rational actor, supporting your argument with specific historical examples.

The exercise of encapsulating your assignment into a single, sharp-edged sentence will help you and your students alike identify with precision the intellectual work you're asking students to perform.

**THE READER TEST**

Having drafted the assignment, you should try reading it from your readers' point of view—in other words, you should submit it to the Reader Test. Will students read the assignment and know what's being asked of them? Will they think they're supposed to answer several questions instead of just one? Will they know to limit their topic and write a coherent paper? What are the likely responses you can imagine to the assignment, and are these in any way problematic?

A professor in a literature course drafted an assignment that asked students to do the following:

> Select a story by either Eudora Welty or Flannery O'Connor and make an argument for its being typified as Southern, concentrating on aspects such as characterization and setting, and dominant themes such as family relations and community.

In reviewing her assignment, the professor saw two main problems—first, that students were likely to provide flat or banal definitions of "Southern," thereby dooming their papers from the start, and, second, that they were likely to string together paragraphs on the topics mentioned in the assignment instead of narrowing their analysis. She also saw that the assignment would probably produce responses with no tension or interest in them; she could all too easily imagine a stack of papers "arguing" that Welty's or O'Connor's stories should, indeed, be "typified as Southern." A better assignment, she realized, would nudge students toward a more interesting or complex take on Welty's or O'Connor's "Southernness."

Once the professor read her assignment as a student might, and once she thought, too, about what the strongest papers in response would look like, she was able to produce a revision that addressed all the problems she saw:
Louis D. Rubin identifies six characteristics of Southern literature, all of which could be defended as general characteristics of what it means to be Southern: [six characteristics listed here]. Using a short story by either O'Connor or Welty, make an argument about how the author comments on, complicates, or critiques one of these characteristics of Southernness.

Note that the revised assignment is not only more straightforward but also more challenging than the original, asking students to regard the relationship between a Southern author and her depiction of Southernness as complicated—and therefore worthy of analysis.

A SAMPLE WRITING ASSIGNMENT

The draft of the assignment discussed above was clear enough, but a little reflection suggested that it would prompt students to write uninspired papers. Many assignments suffer far greater ills. A student responding to the following assignment felt totally at sea, with good reason:

Write an essay describing the various conceptions of property found in your readings and the different arguments for and against the distribution of property and the various justifications of, and attacks on, ownership. Which of these arguments has any merits? What is the role of property in the various political systems discussed? The essay should concentrate on Hobbes, Locke, and Marx.

"How am I supposed to structure the essay?" the Student asked. "Address the first question, comparing the three guys? Address the second question, doing the same, etc.? ... Do I talk about each author separately in terms of their conceptions of the nation, and then have a section that compares their arguments, or do I have a 4 part essay which is really 4 essays (two pages each) answering each question? What am I going to put in the intro, and the conclusion?" Given the tangle of ideas presented in the assignment, the student's panic and confusion are understandable.

A better formulated assignment poses significant challenges, but one of them is not wondering what the instructor secretly wants. Here's a possible revision, which follows the guidelines suggested above:

Logistics ➔

[Course Name and Title]
[Instructor's Name]
Paper #2
Due date: Thurs., February 21, 11:00am in precept
Length: 5-6pp. double-spaced

Assignment ➔

Limiting your reading to the source packet, choose two of the three theorists we've read—Hobbes, Locke, and Marx—and make an argument for the persuasiveness of one theorist's conception of property over the other's.
**Advice**

The best papers will focus on a single shared aspect of the theorists' respective political ideologies, such as how property is distributed, whether it should be owned, or what role it serves politically. The best papers will also state and argue for a thesis, and describe the theorists' viewpoints clearly and concisely.

Rather than asking students to do little more than demonstrate their reading comprehension, the assignment asks them to use their understanding of the reading in the service of their own argument—a higher-order skill than mere demonstration, certainly, and an entirely appropriate (and more engaging) one for college students to develop.
Developing Pre-Draft Assignments
(from Nick Van Kley)

The UWS course is a “process” oriented course insofar as it demands that students treat composition as a recursive project of exploration. Pre-Drafts are assignments that formalize this exploration by asking students to produce, share, and reflect on writing even before they get to the rough-draft stage. These assignments tend to be fairly short; they tend to have low grade values; but they also tend to serve as the groundwork for students’ drafts.

Timing & Quantity: In most cases, instructors assign two pre-drafts for both the close-reading and lens units and three pre-drafts for the research unit. Think of that as a minimum. Some instructors choose to increase those numbers.

Grade Values: See example syllabi from later in the Handbook to find a few models for incorporating these assignments into the grade structure for the course. They tend to be worth very little individually, but cumulatively they often account for 5-10% of the final grade. Many instructors use a “check/check +/check –” system. Others assign point values of between 2-10 points for each assignment. Still others offer letter or percentage grades.

Responding: Instructors typically use these pre-drafts as opportunities to highlight promising ideas students are generating, to ask challenging questions, or to help students see the thesis-level questions or claims that are emerging from their thinking. Most instructor comments on pre-drafts are far less robust than rough-draft comments.

Types of Assignments: Here are a few common pre-draft assignments in the Brandeis Writing Program (you can find examples of some of these later in the handbook):

Journal Entries

What: Some journal entries look like free-writing responses; some are three-column notebooks like that found in Writing in Response; some pair observation notes with semi-formal reflection; others pair thought maps with reflections. In each case, students do some initial, non-interpretive writing or sketching in order to begin generating analytical claims.

When: Journal-entry-type assignments are most commonly assigned during the early stages of the Close Reading Unit, although sometimes they also appear early in the other units as well.

Why: These note-taking or reflection assignments ask students to begin developing ideas, to explore the distinction between analysis and summary, to move from reaction to interpretation, or to clarify the textual foundations for the claims they want to make.

Mini-Essays
What: Mini-essay-type assignments ask students to practice a discrete part of a draft in advance. Some instructors assign introductory paragraphs; some assign a lens-text summary paragraph; some assign a two-paragraph close reading; some assign a conclusion. In each case, the student writes something that could conceivably go directly into a rough draft (although it almost certainly won’t).

When: These assignments appear all over the semester.

Why: Very obviously, these assignments get students to model essay-writing on a smaller scale by sub-dividing the essay-writing task. The danger of this kind of assignment is that students won’t approach it as an exploration and will think of it as merely time-gated work on the rough draft. Pushing students to think of these as initial attempts that require revision before the rough draft is advised.

Style Challenges

What: Style-challenge-type assignments ask students to explore stylistic variations or genres. They might ask students to employ a sarcastic tone during a summary of a critical position; they might ask them to imply an argument or point of view while describing visual evidence without actually stating the claim; they might ask students to write a robust descriptive paragraph without using a form of the “to be” verb. These assignments ask students to experiment with style in (often exaggerated) ways that could still be useful in academic writing.

When: These assignments usually appear after the first unit, a time when students are usually still working on figuring out what counts as a valid claim.

Why: Instructors usually assign these pre-drafts to remind students why style matters, to help them think of style as a feature of writing informed by the position or claim the writer wants to advance, and to help students begin to experiment with style.

Research Records

What: Research-record-type assignments offer accounts of information gathered through research. Annotated bibliographies are the most common, but primary research occasionally serves as the grounds for these assignments. Students might list a number of sources they’ve located and summarize their arguments. They might offer a transcription of an interview they’ve completed. They might offer a brief essay outlining two “camps” within a critical argument.

When: These assignments almost always appear early in the research unit.

Why: To some degree, these assignments arrive as reminders to students that completing work on time is vital during the research unit. A research project that doesn’t really start until the last 2 weeks of the semester is almost certainly headed for disaster. However, these assignments also get students to learn how to create supplementary materials that are vital for complex research projects. Without records of our research findings and/or our research processes, essay writing is far more challenging.

Revision “Pre”-Drafts

What: There are a few kinds of “pre”-drafts that are traditionally assigned after the rough draft is over. These assignments tend to ask students to formalize the revision process by creating an outline, creating a map of evidence that could be added to the
essay, writing a hypothetical rebuttal to their essay’s argument, or otherwise writing out the fruits of some of the vital thought processes that constitute revision.

**When:** Of course, these assignments take place between rough drafts and revisions. They usually occur in the research unit because that unit typically provides a bit more time between draft and revision.

**Why:** Instructors assign these “pre”-drafts to help students build their own apparatuses for executing the revision process. The cycle of drafting, conferencing, peer review, and revision won’t be reproduced by your students when they leave your course, but these kinds of tools will allow them to at least partially harness “process.”

**Argument Critiques**

**What:** Critique-type assignments ask students to understand, evaluate, and respond to the argumentative writing of others. These assignments might ask students to write one paragraph agreeing with a critical text and another disagreeing with the same text; they might ask for a letter written to the author of a critical essay; they might ask for a mini-essay making an argument about the success or failure of the rhetorical approach of a student essay.

**When:** These assignments usually appear in the lens or research unit.

**Why:** Part of our task as instructors is to help students learn how to evaluate the validity of the written arguments they encounter. We expect them to use those skills in the research unit as they engage with texts from diverse sources. These assignments can get students thinking about what kinds of questions they should be habitually asking about the arguments they read: What kind of evidence does this source use, and is it adequate? How does the author’s voice relate to the voices of the cited sources? How is the argument structured, and does that clarify or obfuscate the logic of the claim?

Of course, this list shouldn’t prevent you from experimenting outside of the recent UWS tradition. If you plan to develop radically new pre-draft assignments, start by asking yourself what new ideas or techniques your students will need to complete an assignment. If you come up with something you like, please share it with the Director or Assistant Director. Resource sharing makes our program successful.
Sample Assignments: Before and After

This handout from Kerry Walk at Princeton University shows how revising the language of an assignment can lead to the kind of essay you hope your students will produce and make it easier for your students to develop motivated arguments by building motive into the prompt.

**Humanities-Based Writing Seminar: Hamlet**

**Before:** Provide a close reading of one of Hamlet’s soliloquies and place your reading in a larger thematic context.

**After, version 1:** Choose a speech from *Hamlet* of at least twenty-five lines and offer an interpretation that focuses on something problematic about the speech—a contradiction, incongruity, obscurity, gap, tension, or some other feature that you deem worthy of exploration.

**After, version 2:** Choose a speech from *Hamlet* of at least twenty-five lines and offer an interpretation that challenges or complicates the standard reading.

**Humanities-Based Writing Seminar: Voices of the South**

**Before:** Select a story by either Eudora Welty or Flannery O’Connor and make an argument for its being typified as Southern, concentrating on aspects such as characterization and setting, and dominant themes such as family relations and community.

**After:** Louis D. Rubin identifies six characteristics of Southern literature, all of which could be defended as general characteristics of what it means to be Southern: “a distinctive awareness of the Past, a firm identification with a Place, a preoccupation with one’s membership in a community, a storytelling bent (as compared with a concern from Problems), a strong sense of family and an unusually vivid consciousness of caste and class, especially involving race.” Choose one short story by either O’Connor or Welty and demonstrate to what extent it exhibits any one of these characteristics—and how the author comments on, complicates, or critiques this aspect of Southernness.

**Art History**

**Before:** Compare and contrast two Impressionist or Post-Impressionist painters in terms of how they reflect Parisian society in the nineteenth century.

**After:** Argue why one Impressionist or Post-Impressionist painter more accurately captures some aspect of nineteenth-century Parisian society than another painter from the same period.

**Biology**
Before: Describe the predicted effects of global warming.

After: Evaluate a claim about global warming made in an article intended for a popular audience.

**Literary Studies**

Before: Richard Rorty argues that novels foster solidarity by teaching readers to diminish the difference they feel between *us* and *them*. Apply this theory to J. M. Coetzee’s novel *Disgrace*.

After: Use J. M. Coetzee’s novel *Disgrace* to test Richard Rorty’s theory that novels foster solidarity by teaching readers to diminish the difference they feel between *us* and *them*.

**Politics**

Before: what are the pros and cons of eliminating the category “African American” (or “black”) from official forms such as those used in university admissions and in the U.S. Census?

After: Make a recommendation to the Dean of Admissions that the category “African American” either be retained or eliminated from the application to the University, using course readings to help justify your argument.

**Psychology**

Before: Write a short (203 pp.) essay that summarizes the neurally-based model of attention.

After: Write a short grant proposal (2-3 pp.) in which you seek funding for an experiment to test the neurally-based model of attention.

**Sociology**

Before: Read a work of reportage about war (which you haven’t read Before), and then write a three-page paper about it.

After: Choose a work of reportage about war that you haven’t read Before, and make an argument about how the work can be used either to critique or refine one of the sociological theories of war that we’ve studied this semester.
Sample Cover Letter Assignments

Cover letters encourage your students to read their own work and take responsibility for their own revision process.

*Rough Draft Cover Letter (Byeongkee Yang)*

In addition to the rough draft of your essay, you are also required to write a draft cover letter, addressed to your readers, in which you answer the following questions and present any other concerns that you have.

1. What is the main point of your essay? Summarize the thesis of the essay in original language.

2. What patterns, images, tensions, or ideas in *Doctor Faustus* sparked your ideas for this draft?

3. If you could ask any question of your reader, what would it be? Is there a part of your essay on which you would particularly like advice?

*Rough Draft Cover Letter (Laura John)*

Please write a draft cover letter, addressed to your readers, in which you answer the following questions and present any other concerns that you have. This letter should be typed and should be about three-quarters to a full page long, single-spaced. Attach it to the front of your essay.

- What do you see as your motive and thesis? (Quote them from your draft.)

- What points from the Greenblatt and the museum make up the basis for this paper? (You need not be specific, but give a précis of what main ideas you use from our texts.)

- What are the biggest problems you’re having at this point in the writing process? What do you feel you’ve accomplished most successfully?

- What is your favorite sentence? What is your least favorite? Why? (Again, quote these directly from your draft.)

- What’s the number one concern about your essay — thesis, structure, use of evidence, persuasiveness, style, and so on — that you’d like your reader(s) to focus their comments on for you?

- When you revise, what’s the main thing on which you intend to focus? How will you go about that revision?
Revision Cover Letter (James Moore)

Answer the following questions in complete sentences and put the cover letter at the front of your essay:

- What is your thesis? In what ways, large and small, has it changed in this process from assignment 1.2 to now? A large example might be the refocusing of the problem to an entirely different point in the text. A small example might be the change of a word to a more precise synonym. Explain the evolution of your thesis and your motives behind each change.
- What was the most challenging part of writing this essay?
- What are you most surprised about in this process?
- How helpful were your peer’s evaluation? If you rejected any of your peer’s suggestions, explain which and why.
- What do you find was the most valuable part of this assignment? What was the least?
- What are you most proud of about your final draft?
- Is there anything else you want me to know?
Sample Portfolio Review Assignment
(Lisa Rourke)

Throughout the semester, we have tried to reconsider the ways we think about writing. We have also engaged with culturally significant questions that have ramifications for your academic career and, hopefully, for your personal thinking. You have produced three essays, which required you to respond to difficult questions about complex and subtle texts. You have, hopefully, experienced significant growth as a writer.

Your final writing task is to reflect briefly, but significantly and truthfully, on your work and its development in this course by producing a portfolio cover letter. In a minimum of 2 double-spaced pages, consider your growth as a writer, your engagement with the writing process, and your efforts in this class. Some questions you should answer are:

- Which is your best essay? Offer specific details on its merits.
- What are your weaknesses as a writer, and what work have you done this semester to overcome or reduce them?
- What writing discoveries have you made? What important concepts did you learn in this class?
- What frustrations did you encounter, and how did you handle them?
- What patterns do you see in your portfolio? Is there a consistent feature to your writing that you didn’t recognize before examining all of your work together?
- What does your portfolio illustrate about your development as a writer, student, or critical thinker?

Please email your portfolio to me by midnight on May 3. The portfolio should include the following things in chronological order and should be in one document. For each essay I ask you to include the peer review letters that you wrote to each peer—I don’t need to see the ones they sent to you.

- Portfolio cover letter
- Pre-Draft 1.1
- Pre-Draft 1.2
- Essay 1, Rough Draft w/ cover letter and peer review letters
- Essay 1, Revision w/ cover letter
- Pre-Draft 2.1
- Pre-Draft 2.2
- Pre-Draft 2.3
- Essay 2, Rough Draft w/ cover letter and peer review letters
- Essay 2, Revision w/ cover letter
- Pre-Draft 3.1
- Pre-Draft 3.2
- Pre-Draft 3.3
- Essay 3, Rough Draft w/ cover letter and peer review letters
- Essay 3, Revision w/ cover letter

Thank you for your hard work and your serious engagement with the assignments, course texts, and class exercises this semester.
UWS Syllabus Template

Unit 1: What is Close Reading?

Week 1

Class 1  • In-class: Intro to writing and to seminar topic; discussion of high school vs. college writing; diagnostic writing

Class 2  • Reading Assignment: Course Information; Unit #1 source(s)
         • Writing Assignment: none
         • In-Class: Essay #1 writing assignment; introduction to close reading and analysis

Week 2

Class 1  • Reading Assignment: Unit #1 source(s)
         • Writing Assignment: Pre-draft 1.1 (short close reading)
         • In-Class: Close reading of source(s); writing process; crafting an introductory paragraph; thesis exercise

Class 2  • Reading Assignment: Unit #1 source(s)
         • Writing Assignment: Pre-draft 1.2 (Introductory Paragraph)
         • In-Class: Class discussion of sample introductions, peer workshop of intro paragraphs, titles exercise

Week 3

Class 1  • Reading Assignment: “Elements of the Academic Essay,” close reading essay from Write Now!
         • Writing Assignment: Draft of Essay #1 due with Draft Cover Letter
         • In-Class: Workshop student essay from Write Now!, focusing on thesis, structure, evidence, and analysis

Class 2  • Reading Assignment: Workshop materials
         • Writing Assignment: Draft Responses to draft writers (2)
         • In-Class: Draft workshop focusing on thesis, structure, evidence, and analysis

Unit 2: How to Work with a Text as a Lens

Week 4
Class 1
• Reading Assignment: Unit #2 source(s)
• Writing Assignment: Revision of Essay #1 due with Revision Cover Letter
• In-Class: Discussion of Essay #2 writing assignment; introduction to lens analysis and lens text

Class 2
• Reading Assignment: Unit #2 source(s)
• Writing Assignment: none
• In-Class: Understanding and applying lens text; summary and paraphrase; working with quotations

Week 5

Class 1
• Reading Assignment: Unit #2 source(s)
• Writing Assignment: Pre-draft 2.1 (Mini-Lens)
• In-Class: Discussion of pre-draft 2.1; thesis and motive in lens essays

Class 2
• Reading Assignment: Unit #2 source(s)
• Writing Assignment: Pre-draft 2.2
• In-Class: Structure and analysis

Week 6

Class 1
• Reading Assignment: Lens Essay from Write Now!
• Writing Assignment: none
• In-Class: Discussion of sample student essay; revision strategies

Class 2
• Reading Assignment: none
• Writing Assignment: Draft of Essay #2 due with Draft Cover Letter
• In-Class: Style workshop: clarifying “to be” & spotting loser sentences in drafts

Week 7

Class 1
• Reading Assignment: Workshop materials
• Writing Assignment: Draft responses to draft writers (2)
• In-Class: Draft workshop focusing on thesis, motive, analysis, and revision strategies

Class 2
• Reading Assignment: None
• Writing Assignment: Revision of Essay #2 due with Revision Cover Letter
• In-Class: Essay #3 writing assignment; finding a topic; types of sources

Unit 3: The Argumentative Research Essay: Beyond the Book Report
**Week 8**

*Class 1*
- Reading Assignment: Unit #3 source(s)
- Writing Assignment: None
- In-Class: Framing a research question

*Class 2*
- Reading Assignment: Unit #3 source(s)
- Writing Assignment: None
- In-Class: Narrowing a research question, identifying analytical focus

**Week 9**

*Class 1*
- Reading Assignment: Unit #3 source(s)
- Writing Assignment: Pre-draft 3.1 (Research Proposal)
- In-Class: Brief oral reports on research topics; evaluating sources

*Class 2*
- Reading Assignment: FLIP Session: Meet in Feldberg lounge on mezzanine level of Goldfarb
- Writing Assignment: None
- In-Class: Library tutorial
- In-Class: Library session on available resources

**Week 10**

*Class 1*
- Reading Assignment: Research Essay from *Write Now!*
- Writing Assignment: Pre-draft 3.2 (Annotated Bibliography)
- In-Class: Research question, thesis, and motive in *Write Now!* essay; quotation and citation

*Class 2*
- Reading Assignment: Your research materials
- Writing Assignment: None
- In-Class: Research review board

**Week 11**

*Class 1*
- Reading Assignment: Your research materials
- Writing Assignment: None
- In-Class: Interweaving multiple sources in *Write Now!* essay; writing with sources; moving from topic to thesis

*Class 2*
- Reading Assignment: none
- Writing Assignment: Draft of Essay #3 due with Draft Cover Letter
- In-Class: Essay structure; paragraphing; audience and tone

**Week 12**
Class 1  • Reading Assignment: Workshop materials
• Writing Assignment: Draft response to draft writers (2)
• In-Class: Draft workshop focusing on evidence/analysis, structure, and integration of sources

Class 2  • Reading Assignment: Your research materials
• Writing Assignment: Pre-draft 3.3 (Reverse Outline)
• In-Class: Structure and stitching; conclusions

Week 13

Class 1  • Reading Assignment: none
• Writing Assignment: Revision of Essay #3 due with Revision Cover Letter
• In-Class: Brief reports on research essays; discussion of portfolio assignment and reflective writing

Class 2  • Reading Assignment: none
• Writing Assignment: Writing Portfolio due with Portfolio Cover Letter
• In-Class: Review of course; discussion of writing in future courses; course evaluations

After the Semester

Mid-Finals Week  • Pick up portfolios and final grades in my office

Notes

• Students have a piece of writing (either a pre-draft or an essay) due every week after week 1.

• Every class includes both exploration of the theme of the course and a writing lesson

• Templates for next year will be available on the UWS website
Sample Syllabus #1: Literature/Film
(from Nick Van Kley)

The New Old West
UWS 15B, Spring 2014

Instructor: Nick Van Kley
Office: Rabb 250
Phone: (781)736-2623
nvankley@brandeis.edu

Classroom: Mandel G10
Meeting Time: 9:00-9:50 (M, W, R)
Office Hours: Wed 9:00-9:50; Friday 2:00-4:00, or by appointment

In this class, we will examine a few pieces of recent American culture that make use of the stories, settings, and cultural forms of the Old West. We will ask why American culture continues to find the Old West—usually the West of the nineteenth century—an important site of meaning. We will ask, to what ends are contemporary writers, filmmakers, and other cultural producers returning to the commonplace features of the nineteenth-century American frontier? We will investigate fiction, TV, film, painting and other media for answers to that question, and we will ask, more specifically, if the New Old West is a way to articulate or redress anxieties about global environmental degradation or discomfort with changing national understandings of racial, gender, and class difference. By the end of the course, we will articulate what makes the New Old West new and identify some of its central social aims or questions.

This course is a University Writing Seminar. As such, its primary goal is to prepare students for college-level academic writing. Students will learn the standards of academic writing, practice those standards, cultivate vital skills for performing academic research, and develop a critical vocabulary for thinking about the process of composition and revision. At the same time, we will habitually reflect on the ways that academic standards for argumentative writing overlap with those found in other writing contexts.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Write Now!, collection of Brandeis student essays [Available at the bookstore. This volume also includes excerpts from Writing Analytically. If you see an assigned reading with “WN” next to it, check Write Now]

Writing in Response, Matthew Parfitt [Available at the bookstore. A new copy comes with access to Writer’s Help (a robust online resource that can help you with everything from citation formatting to understanding the rhetoric of evidence) so please grab a new copy.]

TEXTS AVAILABLE ON LATTE
Some of our readings will be available solely on LATTE. You will find them under “Course Texts” on the course homepage and linked in our online course schedule. On occasion, I will print off copies to pass out to students, but generally, I will leave it up to you whether or not you want to print out your own copy of these readings. Remember that reading is not a passive activity. You should be making notes and marking up your copy whether you read digitally or on paper.

Note Well: If you do not bring a copy of a LATTE text to class, I expect you to bring a laptop or tablet to class. With all readings, you should include marginal notes and highlighting or underlining. I expect you to participate in a detailed discussion about the class material each meeting, and you simply cannot do this consistently without some record of your reading experience available during the class session. You can access public printers on the main floor of the Goldfarb library.

EVALUATION (A copy of the Writing Program’s Grading Rubric is available on our LATTE page.)

10% Participation and Quizzes
65% Assignments
   Essay 1 17%
   Essay 2 21%
   Essay 3 27%
12% Pre-Drafts & LATTE Posts
8% Peer Reviews
5% Portfolio Review

GRADE SCALE

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>100-95 %</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>94-90 %</td>
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All grades will be calculated to two decimal points. If the final grade ends in .50 or higher, I will round up to the nearest whole number; if it ends in .49 or lower, I will round down.

UWS OUTCOMES

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing
- Use writing and discussion to work through and interpret complex ideas from readings and other texts (e.g., visual, musical, verbal)
- Critically analyze your own and others’ choices regarding language and form (e.g., in student texts or formally published texts)
• Engage in multiple modes of inquiry using texts (e.g., field research, library-based inquiry, web searching)
• Incorporate significant research (as above) into writing that engages a question and/or topic and uses it as a central theme for a substantive, research-based essay
• Use writing to support interpretations of text, and understand that there are multiple interpretations of text

Processes
• Understand that writing takes place through recurring processes of invention, revision, and editing
• Develop successful, flexible strategies for your own writing through the processes of invention, revision, and editing
• Experience and understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes
• Learn to critique your own and others’ work
• Be reflective about your writing processes

Knowledge of Conventions
• Understand the conventions of particular genres of writing
• Use conventions associated with a range of dialects, particularly standardized written English (but not necessarily limited to it)
• Recognize and address patterns in your writing that unintentionally diverge from patterns expected by their audience/s
• Practice using academic citation systems (MLA or APA) for documenting work

ASSIGNMENTS

ESSAY 1: CLOSE READING
For this assignment, you will create a close reading about one of the stories we read from Sherman Alexie’s book, The Toughest Indian in the World. Having discussed some common themes and features of classic westerns, we will consider how Alexie’s stories depart from or re-write some of those traditions. Your essay should make a motivated claim about one story of your choosing and cite detailed textual evidence to explain and support your argument. This essay will be between 5 and 7 pages long.

ESSAY 2: LENS ANALYSIS
Having developed skills for constructing arguments based on textual details, you will next develop an argument with the aid of secondary material. We will “read” the recent film Cowboys and Aliens alongside excerpts from a scholarly book on Indian captivity narratives. Your essay should make a motivated claim about your chosen song by deploying one or more ideas you encounter in the book by comparing the storytelling techniques of the film to those seen in pre-1900 captivity narratives. This essay will be between 7 and 9 pages long.

ESSAY 3: RESEARCHED ARGUMENT
Having spent the semester exploring a few adaptations of the Western genre, you will now have the opportunity to conduct your own research project surrounding a contemporary text of your choosing. You will engage in independent research to locate and integrate critical, theoretical,
and/or contextual sources that will make up the scholarly conversation in which you will intervene. If you choose, you may include any of the theoretical texts we have encountered this semester. The handful of theoretical readings in this unit may provide fresh ideas for your project. We will meet one-on-one several times to discuss your chosen topic. This essay will be between 10 and 12 pages long.

**PORTFOLIO REVIEW**

Finally, at the semesters end, you will collect the work you have completed during the course and consider your development as a writer. Creating a review of at least 4 pages, you will evaluate your own essays and describe the idiosyncratic critical vocabulary you have developed for thinking about writing and revision. I expect you to cite concrete evidence from your essays to support your account of your work and development.

**POLICIES**

**Laptop/tablet/cellphone policy:** As the note on the first page of the syllabus reveals, I’m perfectly willing to have you bring your computing device to class and use it to advance the project of the course. However, texting, talking on a cellphone, emailing, chatting, participating in social media, or otherwise using your device in a way that isn’t in direct service of the class project is unacceptable. Unsanctioned use of computing devices in class will result in a non-trivial penalty to your participation grade, and I may ask you to leave the classroom, as it can significantly disrupt others’ learning experiences and my own ability to teach effectively.

**Attendance:** Coming to class regularly is a basic expectation for this course. Your chances for success as a writer at Brandeis will improve if you are present every day, on time, and prepared to participate in discussions and activities. Our limited schedule demands that we move swiftly through the course material; we only rarely have time to revisit texts. The Brandeis Writing Program has a strict attendance policy by which this course must abide: **after three absences for any reason, your dean will be notified. Any absence after three will result in a full letter reduction of your semester grade.**

**Participation:** Contrary to many accounts of the writerly process, writers produce in community. Our class discussions constitute that supportive but challenging community where we can test new ideas and writing techniques. To facilitate this environment, you must come to class prepared to participate fully in class discussions and activities. Write in the margins of your assigned texts, or take notes when you bring them to class for discussion. Be prepared to offer your thoughts and/or questions about those texts. You may want to locate one or two sentences that constitute the crux of the piece, outline the author’s argument, note areas where you think the argument is faulty, and chose an interesting passage and explain what makes that passage interesting.

**Conferences:** Three times during the semester, we will meet in my office for 15-25 minute conferences. These will be one-on-one discussions of your work, and they will give you a chance to get detailed and personalized feedback from me on your writing and the directions your projects are taking. Sign-up sheets will be posted in advance on LATTE. Conference attendance is mandatory because these meetings replace a portion of our weekly class time. Any missed
conference will count as an absence. You should bring all relevant materials to your conference, including drafts, comments, revisions, outlines, and key sources. It is your responsibility to come to these conferences with a set of concerns that you want to deal with.

**Peer-Review Workshops:** Peer review constitutes a key part of the course trajectory. When you hand in your rough drafts, you will give one copy to each of two peer review partners and receive two classmates’ drafts in return. You should carefully and considerately read and mark these drafts and compose a peer-review letter for the following class session when you will share this feedback in small groups. These exercises are for the benefit of your essays. So, participate actively and intelligently for the sake of your colleagues, and demand the same from them. Your revisions will need to demonstrate significant changes, which may include addressing issues raised by your peers.

**Formatting Essays:** Each of your three essays will require several pre-drafts and one revision. **All assignments should be typed in 12-point, Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins (not 1.25 inch margins; check the page format) and standard paper size (8.5” x 11”).** Your last name and a page number should occupy the header each page after the first. All citations must be in either MLA format or Chicago Style format. Each final draft must be accompanied by a cover letter, in which you will explain the goals of your paper and reflect on your writing and revision process. Please write complete rough drafts; the more work you do for this rough draft, the better your revision will be.

**Submitting Final Drafts Electronically:** In an effort to reduce the paper used in this course, I will accept only electronic submissions for essay drafts and revisions. Hard copies will be necessary for most pre-draft assignments, and you will always need to bring hard copies of your rough draft for peer review. **All electronic essay submissions must be in .doc, .docx, or .rtf format.**

**Portfolio:** Collect all relevant course materials (workshop notes, exercises, drafts, feedback, revisions, etc.) for your portfolio. You may want to purchase a folder now, as I will expect you to cite these documents in the Portfolio Review at the end of the semester. Remember to keep track of your electronic files and to protect them by keeping back-up copies.

**Late Work:** Extensions will not be granted unless there are extreme, extenuating circumstances. Furthermore, requests for extensions will not be granted unless they come at least 48 hours before the beginning of class on the day the draft is due. Papers will lose 1/3 of a grade for every day they are late (i.e. a B paper will receive a B-). If you take advantage of the Writing Center, you may hand in a completed reward form in place of your final draft (and only the final draft) for a 24-hour extension. All other assignments, including pre-drafts and rough drafts should be completed on the scheduled due date. Failure to complete the pre-draft, rough drafts, and peer-review assignments will negatively affect your final grade.

**Writing Center:** Here at Brandeis, you have an excellent (and totally free) resource available to you. The Writing Center offers one-on-one writing tutorials with trained and experienced consultants, some of whom are teaching UWS themselves. Simply search for “Writing Center” from the Brandeis homepage for more information. When you visit the Writing Center, you may
have your consultant fill out a Consultation Overview Form, which will earn you a 24-hour extension on the final draft of that paper you discuss (only one extension may be used per paper; the consultation must be about the paper for which you are seeking an extension).

**Academic Integrity:** In the academic setting, it is critical that the work you present is original and that, when you use outside sources, you cite them appropriately. This course is no different. The Brandeis policy on academic integrity is available in section 3 of the Rights and Responsibilities Handbook (available at http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/rr/). Instances of alleged dishonesty will be forwarded to the Department of Student Development and Conduct for possible referral to the Student Judicial System, and may carry severe consequences. If you have any questions or concerns about citation, plagiarism, or academic standards of originality, please ask; I’m happy to discuss these standards.

**Note Well:** If you have special needs related to this course (a documented disability, for example), please contact me as soon as possible so we can make suitable arrangements. Information is available at the Disabilities Resources website (http://www.brandeis.edu/as/dis/).

**Note Well:** Please feel free to visit me during office hours or by appointment to talk about any aspect of the course, or other academic matters.

**Note Well:** If your Brandeis records do not correspond to your gender identity, or if you use a name other than that listed on Sage, please let me know.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:** See the class LATTE page for an accurate, detailed course schedule. You’ll find the link at the top of the course page, in the title block. The LATTE schedule will include links to assignment pages, digital texts, and more. The schedule posted here is subject to change.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

uws 15b - spring 2014

purple text = writing assignment | green text = reading assignment

| Jan 13 Monday Day 1 | Introduction to the course  
| Syllabus Review  
| Writing Diagnostic |

UNIT 1
Close Reading

Wednesday, Jan 15: **LATTE Forum Post** due on **High Noon** or **The Searchers** (by 11:59pm)

| Jan 16 Thursday Day 2 | Introduction to Essay 1 and Close Reading  
| Review of LATTE discussion on **High Noon** and **The Searchers**  
| Quiz on Syllabus & "Elements of the Academic Essay" |
- **Read**: "Elements of the Academic Essay" (Posted on LATTE)

### Monday, Jan 20: NO CLASS - MLK Jr. Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan 23 Thursday Day 3</th>
<th>Locating tensions and complexities</th>
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|                       | **Read**: *Writing Analytically*, "Pushing Observation to Conclusion" (in *Write Now!*)
|                       | **Read**: Sherman Alexie, "The Sin Eaters" and "Dear John Wayne"
|                       | **Pre-Draft 1.1** (bring hard copy to class) |

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan 27 Monday Day 4</th>
<th>Close Reading with a thesis</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>Declaring motive</td>
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|                       | **Read**: *Writing Analytically*, "Pushing Observation to Conclusion" (in *Write Now!*)
|                       | **Read**: *Writing Analytically*, "Linking Evidence and Claim" (in *Write Now!*)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan 30 Thursday Day 5</th>
<th>Thesis exercise</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Workshop on sample introductions</td>
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<td>Structuring essays with the &quot;evolving thesis&quot; in mind</td>
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</table>
|                       | **Read**: *Writing Analytically*, "Making a Thesis Evolve" (in *Write Now!*)
|                       | **Pre-Draft 1.2** (bring hard copy to class) |

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feb 3 Monday Day 6</th>
<th>Workshop of student essay</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Revision strategies</td>
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</table>
|                       | **Read**: "Reflections of Stella and Masculinity in Rear Window" in *Write Now!* (4-7)
|                       | DRAFT OF ESSAY 1 (bring 2 hard copies to class, and upload a copy in the appropriate LATTE drop box)
|                       | SIGN UP FOR CONFERENCES  |

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feb 6 Thursday Day 7</th>
<th>Peer Review Workshop focusing on thesis, evidence, and analysis</th>
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<td><strong>Peer Review Letters</strong> (bring 1 hard copy of each to class; upload a single document with all your letters to the LATTE drop box)</td>
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<td>SIGN UP FOR CONFERENCES</td>
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### UNIT 2
**Texts as Lenses**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feb 10 Monday Day 8</th>
<th>Cowboys and Aliens</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction to the Lens Essay</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Watch</strong>: <em>Cowboys and Aliens</em></td>
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**Wednesday, Feb 12**: REVISION OF ESSAY 1 with REVISION COVER LETTER (submit
both the essay and the cover letter as a single document via the appropriate LATTE drop box) by 11:59pm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 13</td>
<td>Derounian-Stodola and Levernier Summary and paraphrase strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Read: Excerpts from Kathryn Derounian-Stodola and James Levernier, The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1830-1900 (LATTE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 9</td>
<td>Pre-Draft 2.1 (bring hard copy to class)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Feb 17 - 21: NO CLASSES - Midterm Recess</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thesis and Motive in the Lens Essay Linking the primary text and the lens text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 24</td>
<td>Re-Read: Excerpts from Kathryn Derounian-Stodola and James Levernier, The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1830-1900 (LATTE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Read: Writing Analytically, &quot;What to Do with a Reading&quot; (in Write Now!)</td>
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<td>Day 10</td>
<td>Pre-Draft 2.2 (bring hard copies to class)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Feb 27</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Structure in the Lens Essay</td>
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<td>Day 11</td>
<td>Pre-Draft 2.2 (bring hard copies to class)</td>
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<td><strong>March 3</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Conclusions Seeking complexity with lens analysis</td>
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<td>Day 12</td>
<td>Read: Writing Analytically, &quot;The Function of Conclusions&quot; (in Write Now!)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>March 6</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Discussion of Student Essay</td>
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<td>Day 13</td>
<td>Read: Student essay: Vancea, &quot;Discipline Enforced on Two Levels&quot;</td>
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<td><strong>March 10</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Style Workshop: Choosing clearer verbs Aiming for precise, efficient language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 14</td>
<td>Brief introduction to Essay 3 and to the selection of primary texts</td>
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<td>SIGN UP FOR LENS-ESSAY CONFERENCES</td>
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<td>DRAFT OF ESSAY 2 (bring 2 hard copies to class, and upload a copy to the LATTE drop box)</td>
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<td><strong>March 13</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Peer Review Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 15</td>
<td>Peer Review Letters (bring 1 hard copy of each to class; upload a single document with all your letters to the LATTE drop box)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
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</table>
| March 17, Monday Day 16 | Full introduction to Essay 3: researching an argument and finding a critical conversation  
Source basics: what are primary and secondary sources? Why scholarly sources?  
Brief introduction to research techniques  
**Read**: David Stevens, *The World Rides Again* (Introduction) |
| March 18, Tuesday | **Preliminary Research Proposal** (by 11:59pm via LATTE drop box) |
| March 20 Thursday Day 17 | **LIBRARY SESSION**: Meet in Goldfarb (Vershbow Training Room)  
Discussion of Brandeis library resources  
**Read**: a primary source of your own choosing  
**Complete**: online tutorial before the Library Session (by Wednesday at 5:00pm)  
**REVISION OF ESSAY 2 with REVISION COVER LETTER** (submit both the essay and the cover letter as a single document via the appropriate LATTE drop box) |
| March 24 Monday Day 18 | More tips for formulating research questions and finding sources  
**Read**: Michael Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie* (Conclusion)  
**Work on Annotated Bibliographies**  
**Pre-Draft 3.1** (due via LATTE drop box before class begins) |
| March 27 Thursday Day 19 | Writing with sources  
Workshop of student essay focusing on the role of research in argument  
**Read**: Bring *Write Now!* to class & read the introductions to each of the research essays.  
**Read**: Cynthia Prescott, *Gender and Generation on the Far Western Frontier* (Introduction)  
**Work on Annotated Bibliographies** |
| March 31 Monday Day 20 | Revisiting standards of paragraphing  
Moving from topic to thesis  
**Pre-Draft 3.2** (Annotated Bibliography) (bring hard copy to class) |
| April 3 Thursday Day 21 | Structuring longer essays  
Brief oral reports on research projects  
**Read**: "Who Speaks for Me? Race and Representation in Stockett's *The Help*" (posted on LATTE in the ODDS & ENDS block)  
**Read**: *Writing Analytically*, "Plagiarism and the Logic of Citation" (in *Write Now!*). |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 7</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Introduction workshop focusing on thesis, motive, and the status of research in argument</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Concluding longer essays</td>
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<td>Brief oral reports on research essays (time permitting)</td>
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<td>• <strong>DRAFT OF ESSAY 3</strong> <em>(bring 2 hard copies to class, and upload to the LATTE drop box)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>April 10</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Peer Review Workshop focusing on thesis/motive, structure, and the integration of sources</td>
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<td>• <strong>Peer Review Letters</strong> <em>(bring 1 hard copy of each to class; upload a single document with all your letters to the LATTE drop box)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Stitching as a tool for clarifying structure</td>
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<td>Revising with an outline</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Brief oral reports on research projects (time permitting)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>April 15 - 22</strong>: NO CLASSES - Passover and Spring Recess</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 24</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Discussion of the Portfolio Review assignment</td>
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<td>Academic Writing and other “genres”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brief oral reports on research projects (time permitting)</td>
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<td>• <strong>Pre-Draft 3.3</strong> <em>(bring a hard copy to class)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>April 28</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Review of the course</td>
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<td>• <strong>REVISION OF ESSAY 3</strong> with <strong>REVISION COVER LETTER</strong> <em>(submit both the essay and the cover letter as a single document via the appropriate LATTE drop box)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>April 30 - May 1: Study Days</td>
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<td>May 2 - 9: Finals Period</td>
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<td>• <strong>May 2, Friday: PORTFOLIO REVIEW due via LATTE by 11:59pm</strong></td>
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Sample Syllabus #2: Music
(from Jeremy Spindler)

UNIVERSITY WRITING SEMINAR 8A Section 1:
Music and Noise
Spring 2010 – Syllabus

Instructor: Jeremy Spindler
Office: Rabb 222
Time: T. Th. 3:10 - 4:00 P.M.
Office Hours: Tue/Thur. 4:00 – 5:00 P.M.
Classroom: Shiffman 202
Mailbox: Slosberg Music Center Office
E-mail: jaspindl@brandeis.edu
Phone: 812-550-2927

**mu-sic** \(\text{\textipa{myu-zik}}\) n 1: the science or art of combining tones into a composition having structure and continuity; also: vocal or instrumental sounds having rhythm, melody, or harmony 2: an agreeable sound

**noise** \(\text{\textipa{noiz}}\) n [ME, fr. AF, disturbance, noise, fr. L *nausea* nausea} 1: loud, confused, or senseless shouting or outcry 2: SOUND; esp: one that lacks agreeable musical quality or is noticeably unpleasant 3: unwanted electronic signal or disturbance

**COURSE OBJECTIVE**
This writing seminar is designed to help you effectively compose college-level essays. Through discussions, writings, and workshops you will learn about establishing and developing a thesis, formulating a motive, using a lens, research techniques, and various other necessities in becoming an effective writer. These tools will be learned through writing about Music and Noise.

**Music and Noise**
What is music? For that matter, what is noise? Do these terms, music and noise, have an objective definition? To some music exists only within the genres of Heavy Metal, Easy Listening, or Classical, while to others music also exists in nature, devoid of any human production whatsoever. Still, others consider everything music: silence, the sounds of a construction site, the squeaking of a rubber duck. During the twentieth-century several artists forced people to think deeper about what defines music by introducing non-conventional instruments, highly complex structures, multitudes of unresolved dissonances, and new artistic concepts into their art. On a somewhat different note, some claim the music industry has turned music less into an art and more into a product, a commodity devoid of artistic meaning. Since these radical shifts in artistic thinking and the industrialization of music the phrase "one person's music is another person's noise" has evolved into a far more complex statement with significantly more interpretations than in previous centuries.

Through critical reading, writing, and peer review we will take a look at works that in some way deal with music and noise. Our writing will primarily concern the issues of music as torture, "Anti-Art", and the saturation of our environment with sound and music. The goal of this course will be to elevate your academic writing skills, learn to develop an argument, and become a more effective communicator with the written word. No prior study of music is required.
REQUIRED TEXTS and MATERIALS

2. *Write Now*: publication of Brandeis student essays
4. Three-Ring Binder – for end of the term portfolio
5. Highlighters and Post-Its (the smaller ones work well for margin notes), or whatever else helps you organize your readings.

UWS Outcomes

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing
- Use writing and discussion to work through and interpret complex ideas from readings and other texts (e.g., visual, musical, verbal)
- Critically analyze your own and others' choices regarding language and form (e.g., in student texts or formally published texts)
- Engage in multiple modes of inquiry using texts (e.g., field research, library-based inquiry, web searching)
- Incorporate significant research (as above) into writing that engages a question and/or topic and uses it as a central theme for a substantive, research-based essay
- Use writing to support interpretations of text, and understand that there are multiple interpretations of text

Processes
- Understand that writing takes place through recurring processes of invention, revision, and editing
- Develop successful, flexible strategies for your own writing through the processes of invention, revision, and editing
- Experience and understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes
- Learn to critique your own and others' work
- Be reflective about your writing processes

Knowledge of Conventions
- Understand the conventions of particular genres of writing
- Use conventions associated with a range of dialects, particularly standardized written English (but not necessarily limited to it)
- Recognize and address patterns in your writing that unintentionally diverge from patterns expected by their audience/s
- Practice using academic citation systems (MLA or APA) for documenting work

OVERVIEW OF ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS, PORTFOLIO, and CONFERENCES

*Close Reading Essay* (5-6 pages)
The Violence of Music

Through the close reading essay you will learn how to analyze a text to find deeper meaning. It is here that you will learn the difference between summary and analysis. In this and all other essays you must formulate a thesis and construct a strong argument in defense of your thesis. Unit 1 will use Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* as a focus of analysis in which you will develop an argument concerning the role of music in the novel.

**Lens Essay (7-9 pages)**

John Cage Through the Ideas of Dadaism

For this essay you will take a look at a work of composer John Cage *through* a second text: a lens. In a lens essay the lens text is used to shed a new light on a primary text and reveal something new about that work that could not have been seen without the lens. In a lens essay, the primary work may be virtually anything: a work of art, a book, or a piece of music. The close reading technique previously studied will carry into the lens assignment. The Lens for this essay will be Kenneth Coutts-Smith's book *Dada* and your task will be to analyze how the audience's view of *WaterWalk* as radical or traditional changes after reading *Dada*.

**Research Paper (8-10 pages)**

Music as Background Noise

The research essay will be written on an issue of your choice concerning music as background noise. The goals of this essay will be to continue strengthening your close reading and lens techniques, but also to teach you how to do scholarly research and incorporate many sources into one paper. This assignment will also give you experience working with multiple texts and writing an annotated bibliography. As always, you must construct and develop a thesis.

**Portfolio**

You must turn in a writing portfolio at the end of the semester. The portfolio will include all writings submitted during the semester including essays, pre-draft assignments, drafts with cover letters, and peer reviews. The portfolio will also include a cover letter regarding your work and development over the course of the semester. It should be well organized and preferably in a three-ring binder, however *do not* spend a lot of money on this – sheet protectors, leather bindings, etc. are not needed. Be sure to keep all of your assignments organized as you get them back during the semester to allow for easy assemblage of your portfolio. More detailed information on this project will be given to you later in the semester.

**Conferences**

You each must attend three twenty minute conferences over the course of the semester. These will be scheduled outside of class one-on-one and will be used to discuss your writing thus far and to answer any questions you may have about the class or your progress in the class. You
are more than welcome to meet with me during my office hours or to talk to me before or after class. If you have questions and cannot attend my office hours you may schedule an additional meeting with me to discuss your concerns.

**GRADING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close Reading Essay</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lens Essay</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Essay</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-draft assignments</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(group work, discussions, etc)</td>
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**Pre-Drafts and Drafts:** Graded via a check system:
- √+ = 4 points
- √ = 3 points
- √- = 2 points
- - = 1 point
- 0 = 0 points

**Final Drafts and Final Grades for the class are on a letter basis**
- A+ = 98 - 100
- A  = 94 - 97
- A-  = 90 - 93
- B+  = 88 - 89
- B  = 84 - 88
- B-  = 80 - 83
- C+  = 78 - 79
- C  = 74 - 77
- C-  = 70 - 73
- D+  = 68 - 69
- D  = 64 - 67
- D-  = 60 - 63
- F   = 59 and Below

**OTHER POLICIES**

**Attendance:** You will be allowed three absences for the course. Each subsequent absence will result in your final grade being lowered by one third of a letter grade (A becomes A-, D-becomes F, etc.). After three absences (for any reason) your dean will be notified. It is in your best interest to attend every class as material will not be revisited and we are on a rigid schedule. Missing even one class may put you far behind. If you will miss a class please notify me by e-mail or telephone. More than six absences will result in a failing grade for the class.

**Tardiness:** Class begins promptly at 3:10. I will mark you late so it is important that you get here on time. Three late arrivals to class will equal one absence. Also, arriving after 10 minutes is considered excessive and you will thus be marked absent for the day. Please note that tardiness is not only detrimental to your learning but also disruptive to everyone else in the class.

**Late Papers/Extensions:** Rough and pre-drafts will be marked down 1 grade (check becomes check minus) for each day that they are late. If you attend the writing center when finishing a final draft of a paper you may use a Writing Center Reward Form for a one day extension.
Hard Copies of Essays: All assignments must be typed and turned in via hardcopy. If you are absent from class please e-mail me your materials before the start of class or it will be late.

Page Requirements: All final essays must meet the minimum page requirement. NO EXCEPTIONS. Regardless of the quality of the essay if you do not meet the minimum page requirement your grade will be lowered by 1/3 of a letter grade. If you are having difficulties getting to the page requirement then you are not analyzing your source(s) in enough detail, or you are ignoring important points of discussion. Look at every angle and study the source(s) in depth. Dig deeper and complicate your argument or look at it from an additional point of view.

Formatting: I am a stickler for formatting. Essays turned in with incorrect margins, spacing, MLA formats, no page numbers, no headers, etc… will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade. Each assignment sequence will clearly lay out the guidelines for formatting. Learn them quickly and implement them in your writing.

THE WRITING CENTER

The writing center here at Brandeis (located on the first floor of the library near the CD collection) offers free one-on-one writing tutorials with experienced consultants, many of whom are teaching a UWS themselves. Visit http://www.brandeis.edu/programs/writing/writingcenter/ to learn more and set up an appointment. When you visit the Writing Center, have your consultant fill out a Writing Center Reward Form (available there). A completed form entitles you to a one-day extension on the final draft of any paper (only one Writing Center Extension per paper and it must be during the week leading up to the final draft).

DISABILITIES

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class please see me immediately after class.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University's policies on academic integrity (see http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai). Faculty will refer any suspected instances of alleged dishonesty to the Office of Student Development and Conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty may result in sanctions including but not limited to failure in the course, failure on the assignment in question, or suspension from the University.

LATTE: Learning And Teaching Technology Environment

LATTE is Brandeis University's online learning environment. LATTE will be used as a means of communication between the instructor and the class and vice versa. The syllabus, class assignments, some readings(recordings and other materials will be available to you through LATTE. It may also be used to facilitate discussion forums outside of class which you may feel free to generate yourself! It is a great place to ask questions to your instructor and your
classmates when there may not be time in class to do so. Login to LATTE at http://www.brandeis.edu/latte.

**UWS 8A Section 1: Music and Noise – Jeremy Spindler**

**Spring 2010 Class Schedule**

This schedule is a general guideline for the semester and is subject to change; however, due dates for Pre-Drafts and Papers will *not* be moved. Most classes will consist of discussions and workshops.

**Unit 1: Close Reading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Due</th>
<th>In Class</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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</table>
| Tue. Jan. 19 | N/A | Introduction to UWS, Discuss Syllabus, Listening List. | Get: All books and materials  
Read: A Clockwork Orange |
| Thu. Jan. 21 | N/A | Elements of the Academic Essay, What is Close Reading? | Read: Finish A Clockwork Orange  
Read: Unit 1: “Violence of Music” |

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<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Due</th>
<th>In Class</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tue. Jan. 26</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>Write: Pre-Draft 1.1 – Notes and Reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Thu. Jan. 28 | Pre-Draft 1.1 | Discuss A Clockwork Orange, Style Points, Summary vs. Analysis | Write: Pre-Draft 1.2 – Mini Close Reading  
Read: 255-412 in Hacker.  
Read: “Liberation Through Defecation” |

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<tr>
<th>Week 3:</th>
<th>Due</th>
<th>In Class</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tue. Feb. 2</td>
<td>Pre-Draft 1.2</td>
<td>Strong Thesis, Effective Body Paragraphs, Analyze “Liberation”</td>
<td>Write: Draft of Close Reading with Cover Letter (3 copies)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
| Thu. Feb. 4 | Draft of Close Reading with Cover Letter (3 copies) | Grading Rubric, Peer-Reviewing, Style Exercise | Write: Peer Reviews of Drafts  
Final Draft of Close Reading |

**Fri. Feb. 5** Conferences

**Sat. Feb. 6** Peer Review of Drafts due by 5:00 P.M. E-mail to peers and your instructor

**Mon. Feb. 8** Conferences

**Week 4:**
Tue. Feb. 9
- Due: N/A
- In Class: The Writing Center, Revising, Thesis Workshop
- Assignment: Continue working on Final Draft of Close Reading

Thu. Feb. 11
- Due: Final Draft of Close Reading
- Assignment: Read: Dada and begin working on Pre-Draft 2.1 – Reverse Outline

Week 5:
Tue. Feb. 16  Break – No Classes
Thu. Feb. 18  Break – No Classes

Unit 2: Lens Analysis

Week 6:
Tue. Feb. 23
- Due: N/A
- In Class: Motive, Effective Introductions
- Assignment: Write: Pre-Draft 2.1 – Reverse Outline

Thu. Feb. 25
- Due: Pre-Draft 2.1
- In Class: Cut-Up Exercise, Introductions, Quotations
- Assignment: Write: Pre-Draft 2.2 – Working with Quotations

Week 7:
Tue. Mar. 2
- Due: Pre-Draft 2.2
- In Class: Analyze Write Now intros, Viable Motives
- Assignment: Write: Pre-Draft 2.3 – Introductory Paragraphs

Thu. Mar. 4
- Due: Pre-Draft 2.3 (intro paragraph)
- In Class: Review Quotations, Discuss Dada and Cage
- Assignment: Write: Critique of Introductory Paragraphs
Write: Rough Draft of Essay

Week 8:
Tue. Mar. 9
- Due: Pre-Draft 2.3 (critiques)
- In Class: Citations for Lens, Titles, Development
- Assignment: Write: Rough Draft of Essay

Tue. Mar. 9
- Last day to drop without a “W” on transcript. Instructor permission required.

Thu. Mar. 11
- Due: Draft of Lens Essay (3 copies)
- In Class: Paragraph Function, Quote Critique, Counter Argument, Stitching
- Assignment: Write: Peer Reviews – due Saturday by 5:00 P.M.
Write: Final Draft of Lens Essay

Thu. Mar. 11  Conferences

Fri. Mar. 12  Conferences

Sat. Mar. 13  Peer Review of Drafts due by 5:00 P.M. E-mail to peers and your instructor
Unit 3: Research Essay

Week 9:
Tue. Mar. 16  - Due:  Final Draft of Lens Essay
               - In Class:  Discuss Research Essay and Brainstorm Topics
               - Assignment:  Write: Pre-Draft 3.1 – Research Proposal
               Research: Begin exploring potential topic

Thu. Mar. 18  - Due:  Pre-Draft 3.1
               - In Class:  FLIP Session in the Library (research training)
               - Assignment:  Research: Begin finding sources
               Think: Is your topic too broad or narrow? Adjust if necessary
               Write: Pre-Draft 3.2 – Annotated Bibliography

Week 10:
Tue. Mar. 23  - Due:  N/A
               - In Class:  Annotated Bibliography, Scholarly Sources
               - Assignment:  Write: Continue Annotated Bibliography
               Research: Continue finding sources

Thu. Mar. 25  - Due:  N/A
               - In Class:  Paragraph Function
               - Assignment:  Write: Pre-Draft 3.3 – Supplying a Motive, and Annotated Bib.
               Write: Begin thinking about and writing rough draft.

Week 11:
Tue. Mar. 30  Break – No Classes

Thu. Apr. 2   Break – No Classes

Week 12:
Tue. Apr. 6   Break – No Classes

Thu. Apr. 8   - Due:  Pre-Draft 3.2 and 3.3
               - In Class:  Supplying Motive Exercise, Transitions
               - Assignment:  Write: Pre-Draft 3.4 – Beginning of Essay (3 copies)

Week 13:
Tue. Apr. 13  - Due:  Pre-Draft 3.4 (3 copies)
               - In Class:  Giving Presentations, Conclusions
               - Assignment:  Write: Peer Review of 3.4

Wed. Apr. 14  - Last day to drop with a “W” on transcript. Instructor permission required.

Thu. Apr. 15  - Due:  Peer Reviews of 3.4
               - In Class:  Portfolios
               - Assignment:  Write: Draft of Essay
               Prepare: Presentations

Week 14:
Tue. Apr. 20 - 
- Due: N/A
- In Class: Presentations
- Assignment: Continue writing Draft of Essay

Thu. Apr. 22 - 
- Due: N/A
- In Class: Presentations
- Assignment: Continue writing Draft of Essay

Week 15:
- Due: Draft of Research Essay (3 copies)
- In Class: Presentations
- Assignment: Write: Peer Review of Drafts

Thu. Apr. 29 - 
- Due: Peer Review of Drafts
- In Class: Presentations
- Assignment: Write: Final Drafts

Mon. May 3 Conferences

Tue. May 4 Conferences

Week 16:
- Due: N/A
- In Class: Wrap up of Semester.
- Assignment: Write: Final Drafts

Wed. May 5 Last Day of Instruction

Thu. May 6 Final Draft and Portfolios Due – Study Day for Exams

Post-Term
- Due: Portfolio Pick Up

Note: There is no final exam for this class.
Sample Syllabus #3: Heller
(from Awo Osei-Anto)

What is Wrong with American Health Care?

Instructor: Henrietta Awo Osei-Anto          Class: Mondays & Wednesdays 5:00-5:50pm²
Email: hawo@brandeis.edu                     Additional mandatory conferences to be scheduled
Office: Heller-Brown                         Classroom: TBA
Office hours: Mondays 3:00 – 4:00pm and     Tuesdays 11:00am - 12:30pm and by appointment
       Tuesdays 11:00 – 12:30pm and by appointment

Course description

The US is undoubtedly the richest and most powerful nation in the world. However, health care outcomes in the US lag behind comparable countries. This phenomenon is even more baffling considering that the US also spends more, by far, on health care than other high-income countries. Over the years, several explanations have been proposed for this paradox. This course will explore several explanations and proposed solutions and attend to many perspectives, including those of patients, physicians the pharmaceutical industry and hospitals. We will also consider the relationship between the healthcare industry and social services.

This is a writing course, and as such, students will be asked through a series of three major essays to consider the evidence presented and the strengths of the case made by the authors. First, students will be asked to develop an argument in a Close Reading Essay about what is wrong with the US health care system. Next, students will have the opportunity to test ideas presented in a critical text in a piece of commentary on the health care system, testing its conclusions against the available evidence. The coursework will culminate in a final research essay which asks students to develop an original argument about some feature of the contemporary American health care system.

UWS goals

This course is a University Writing Seminar. As such, its primary goal is to prepare students for college-level academic writing. Students will learn the standards of academic writing, will practice those standards, and will develop a critical vocabulary for thinking about the process of composition and revision. Students will also learn critical skills for doing academic research. Research is not a common-sense procedure, and one of our aims will be to learn a few techniques for making the most of the research tools available at Brandeis. To accomplish these goals,

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² Our class is scheduled to meet Monday, Wednesday from 5:00 to 6:20 pm. Since the Brandeis Writing Program policy requires student-instructor conferences during each unit, these conferences count as class time for this course. As such, the regular class sessions will run from 5:00 – 5:50pm on Mondays and Wednesdays. You should avoid scheduling another class or work hours for the remainder of the scheduled class session since classes may periodically run the full session through 6:20pm to make up for any unforeseen cancellations due to winter weather conditions or other reasons.
students will need to read, understand, and construct critical arguments about the course material and engage in independent research outside of class. For a list of full expected outcomes for this course, please see the document on the course’s LATTE page.

In this class, your writing skills will develop as you practice

- assessing audience expectations;
- reading critically;
- engaging with others' ideas in analytic and research-based writing;
- developing control over surface features of writing;
- and discovering and cultivating your writing process.

This development takes place recursively – that is, you will master these strategies by practicing with them repeatedly through their work in this course and others at Brandeis. This work begins in UWS and continues through other required courses.

**Course texts**

**Required:**

Parfitt, Matthew. *Writing in Response.*


*Write Now!: Essays from the University Writing Seminars 2013-2014.*

Texts and research text available on course’s LATTE page

All other required readings will be placed on LATTE under the heading “Course Texts.” In the Course Schedule below, any reading with an asterisk (*) beside it indicates that it will be available on LATTE (usually one week in advance). When we are scheduled to discuss a text from LATTE, I require that you print it out, read it with a pencil or highlighter, and bring it to class. If you do not have your own printer, you can access public printers on the main floor of the Goldfarb library.

**Recommended:**

Notebook (or loose-leaf paper) for in-class writing exercises and class notes

Folder for LATTE readings

Large folder (or three-ring binder with sheet protectors) to keep all drafts and exercises

**Course Assignments**

This semester, you will write three formal essays, with at least two required drafts of each essay to be turned in with a cover letter. Revision is an essential component of our class. Between the first and final draft you need to reshape, extend, complicate or substantially clarify your ideas,
not just do superficial editing. Writing exercises, workshops, and conferences are designed to help you with the composing and revising process.

Essay 1: Close Reading

Assignment: For this assignment, you will perform a close reading of a text to develop a cogent 5- to 6-page argument-driven essay. In this unit, we will focus on analyzing evidence and developing arguments.
First draft due: Monday, September 22
Final draft due: Monday, September 29

Essay 2: Lens Analysis
Assignment: A 7-8 page argument-driven essay about the representation of the Theory of Individualism in the Affordable Care Act. In this unit, we will focus on using sources and structuring arguments.
First draft due: Monday, October 20
Final draft due: Wednesday, October 29

Essay 3: Argumentative Research Essay
Assignment: A 10- to 12-page research essay that uses relevant sources to critically assess an aspect of U.S. health care system, comparing and contrasting with one other health care system from around the world. In this unit, we will focus on conducting scholarly research and on refining the techniques introduced throughout the semester.
First draft due: Wednesday, November 19
Final draft due: Monday, December 8

Final Portfolio
This portfolio will contain all of your work from the semester along with a 3-page reflective cover letter concerning your progress and evolution as a writer. Please save all your writing throughout the semester including pre-draft assignments, essay drafts, and cover letters for inclusion in your final portfolio.
Portfolio due: Thursday, December 11

I will provide separate, detailed assignment instructions on LATTE for each of the essay-unit assignments listed above. These will include details and due dates for additional “pre-draft assignments” and “peer reviews.” You are responsible for keeping track of all due dates for assignments not already listed above.

Grading

| Attendance, Conferences, Participation | 10% |
| Peer Reviews, Exercises               | 5%  |
| Essays                                | 75% |
| Close Reading Essay                   | 20% |
| Lens Essay                            | 25% |
| Research Essay                        | 30% |

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<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-Draft Assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Portfolio</td>
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Final Draft and Final Grades for the class are on a letter basis:

A+ 98-100  
A  94-97  
A- 90-93  
B+ 88-89  
B  84-87  
B- 80-83  
C+ 78-79  
C  74-77  
C- 70-73  
D+ 68-69  
D  64-67  
D- 60-63  
F  59 and below

A copy of the Writing Program’s Essay Grading Rubric is available on our LATTE page. Please familiarize yourself with it.

Course Policies & Expectations

**Personal Technology:** Cell phones, laptops, or any other electronic device are not permitted for use during class time. This policy will be strictly enforced. For in-class writing exercises and class notes, you will need a notebook or loose-leaf paper. Exceptions will be made for any student with a documented disability that makes it necessary to use a laptop in class.

**Instructional Technology:** Our course has a LATTE site where you will find a copy of this syllabus, readings, assignments, and useful links. You will also submit your papers electronically via this course site. Please familiarize yourself with the site and let me know if you need help navigating it.

**Attendance/lateness:** Coming to class regularly is a basic expectation for this course. It is in your best interest to attend class, on time and ready to participate. Our limited schedule demands that we move swiftly through the course material; we only rarely have time to revisit texts. In accordance with Brandeis University policy, after three absences for any reason, your dean will be notified, and you will lose 1/3 letter grade for each absence thereafter (for example, a B+ would become a B). **Six or more absences may result in a failing grade.** If you are late to class three times, it will count as one absence. Note that skipping a conference appointment with me counts as an absence. I am only allowed to excuse an absence if I have discussed it with your advisor at the department of Academic Services.
If you must miss class, please have the courtesy to e-mail me before class. You are responsible for all material covered in your absence. If you are absent on a day when an assignment is due, you must arrange to deliver it to me before class begins that day.

Conferences: Over the course of the semester you will have to attend three twenty-minute individual conferences in my office. These will be scheduled outside of class time and will be used to discuss of your writing, answer questions and examine progress. Sign-up sheets will be posted in advance on our course’s LATTE site. Conference attendance is mandatory, because these meetings replace a portion of our weekly class time. Any missed conference will count as an absence. You should bring all relevant materials to your conference, including drafts, comments, revisions, outlines, and key sources. It is your responsibility to come to these conferences with a set of concerns or questions that you want to discuss. Outside of conferences, you are welcome to drop in during my office hours to discuss any concerns/questions.

Participation: You must come to class prepared to participate fully in class discussions and activities (with your printed texts in hand). Write in the margins of your assigned texts or take notes, bring the texts to class for discussion, and be prepared to offer your thoughts and/or questions about those texts. You may want to locate one or two sentences that constitute the crux of the piece, outline the author’s argument, note areas where you think the argument is faulty, and/or choose a passage and explain what makes it interesting. If you have difficulty participating in class discussions, please speak to me about other possible ways to contribute.

Assignments: Each of your three essays will require at least two pre-draft assignments and at least one early draft and one revision. All assignments should be double spaced and typed in 12 point Times New Roman font with one-inch margins (not 1.25-inch margins). Your last name and a page number should be in the header on each page. Your full name and the date should be at the top of the first page. All citations must be in Chicago Style format. Each final draft must be accompanied by a cover letter, in which you will explain the goals of your paper and reflect upon your writing and revision process. Please write complete rough drafts; the more work you do for this rough draft, the better your revision will be. Throughout the semester, you will submit final revisions via LATTE. All electronic essay submissions must be in .doc or .docx format (i.e., NOT in .pdf format, please).

Extensions: All assignments must be turned in on time. Extensions will only be granted in cases of genuine need, such as illness. If you foresee needing an extension, please see me as early as possible. Late papers will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade per day late. For example, a paper that would have received a B, if handed in one day late, will receive a B-; after two days, it will receive a C+; et cetera. See below for exception.

Writing Center: You are encouraged to use the Writing Center as you work through the process of conceiving, organizing, drafting and revising your papers. Located on the first floor of the library, the Writing Center is open from 10:30am to 9:00pm Monday through Thursday and 10:30am to 6pm on Friday. The Center offers free writing tutorial services and will be happy to work with you at any stage to make your paper stronger. For more information or to make an appointment, please visit the Center’s website at http://www.brandeis.edu/writingprogram/center/.
If you use the Writing Center for a final draft, I will grant a 24-hour extension. When you are at the Writing Center, ask your consultant to fill out a slip showing that you have been there. Please TELL ME if you are planning on using this extension. You should submit all other assignments, including pre-drafts and rough drafts, on the scheduled due date. Failure to complete the pre-draft, rough drafts, and peer-review assignments on time will negatively affect your final grade. **Peer-Review Workshops:** Peer review constitutes a key part of the course. When you hand in your rough drafts, you will give one copy each to two peer review partners. At that time, you will receive two classmates’ drafts in return. You should carefully and considerately read and mark these drafts and compose a peer-review letter (following directions provided in that particular unit’s assignment sheet). During the following class session, you will share this feedback in small groups. These exercises are for your mutual benefit and will provide helpful insights into ways you can strengthen your final revised drafts. You must therefore participate actively and intelligently for your colleagues’ benefit.

**Academic Integrity:**
In the academic setting it is critical that the work you present is original and that when you use outside sources you cite them appropriately. This course is no different. The Brandeis policy on academic integrity is available in section 3 of the Rights and Responsibilities Handbook (available at [http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/rr/](http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/rr/)). Instances of alleged dishonesty will be forwarded to the Department of Student Development and Conduct for possible referral to the Student Judicial System and may carry severe consequences. If you have any questions or concerns about citation, plagiarism, or academic standards of originality, please ask; I’m happy to discuss these standards. Basically, don’t cheat.

**Documented Disabilities:** If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to discuss possible measures of accommodation please see me after class or in my office as soon as possible.

**Course Schedule**

**Introduction**

**Week 1**

Sept 3 (W)  • In Class: Intro to writing and to seminar topic; diagnostic writing; discussion of high school vs. college writing; what is good writing?

**Unit 1: What is Close Reading?**

**Week 2**

Sept 8 (M)  • Reading Assignment: Course syllabus; **Parfitt: Introduction, Chapter 1**

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3 This schedule is subject to change. Any changes made will be reflected in the online schedule, a document regularly updated and posted in the top section of our LATTE page. Consult the LATTE page, rather than the syllabus, for the most up-to-date and reliable copy of the schedule.
• Writing Assignment: Introduction (post written response to question on LATTE)
• In Class: Essay #1 writing assignment; introduction to close reading and analysis

Sept 10 (W) • Reading Assignment: Write Now!: introduction plus first close reading essay from WN (pp. vii-9);
Susan Starr Sered and Rushika Fernandopulle, Uninsured in America: life and death in the land of opportunity (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2005), 1-20*
• Writing Assignment: Pre-draft 1.1 (notes on source text)
• In Class: Close reading of source(s); writing process; crafting an introductory paragraph

Week 3

Sept 15 (M) • Reading Assignment: Parfitt: Chapters 2, 3;
Elizabeth Bradley and Lauren Taylor, The American health care paradox: why spending more is getting us less (New York: PublicAffairs, 2013), 1-20*;
Harvey: Elements of an Academic Essay*
• Writing Assignment: Pre-Draft 1.2 (introductory paragraph)
• In-Class: Harvey article; writing process; locating tensions and complexities

Sept 17 (W) • Reading Assignment: Write Now!: Writing Analytically: “Pushing Observations to conclusions” (p. 95) and “Making a Thesis evolve” (pp.107-119)
• Writing Assignment: none (work on first draft of Essay #1)
• In-Class: peer workshop of intro paragraphs; preparing to write first draft; transitions; discussion of readings

Week 4

One-on-One Conferences to discuss drafts of Essay 1 this week and next (Sept 24 & 30)

Sept 22 (M) • Reading Assignment: none
• Writing Assignment: Draft of Essay #1 due with Draft Cover Letter (3 copies)
• In Class: Workshop student essay from Write Now! focusing on thesis, structure, evidence, and analysis

Sept 24 (W) • Reading Assignment: Workshop materials; Parfitt Chapter 6
• Writing Assignment: Draft Responses to draft writer(s)
• In Class: Draft workshop focusing on thesis, structure, evidence, analysis; discussion of readings

Unit 2: How to Work with a Text as a Lens

Week 5
Sept 29 (M)  • Reading Assignment: none
  • Writing Assignment: Revision of Essay #1 due with Revision Cover Letter
  • In Class: Discussion of unit 1 sources—what did you learn from writing your essay? Essay #2 writing assignment; introduction to lens analysis and lens text

Oct 1 (W)  • Reading Assignment: Nick J. Tate. Obamacare survival guide (West Palm Beach, Fl: Humanix Books, 2013), 3-15*;
  Elizabeth Bradley and Lauren Taylor, The American health care paradox: why spending more is getting us less (New York: PublicAffairs, 2013), 81-120*
  • Writing Assignment: none
  • In Class: Discussion of unit 2 source(s); establishing a baseline reading; applying a lens text

Week 6

Oct 6 (M)  • Reading Assignment: Atul Gawande, “The Cost Conundrum – What a Texas town can teach us about health care.” The New Yorker: June 1, 2009
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/06/01/the-cost-conundrum?currentPage=all*;
Write Now!: Writing Analytically “What to do with a reading (pp. 124 - 128);
Writing Analytically “Moving from description to interpretation (pp. 101 - 106)
  • Writing Assignment: Pre-draft 2.1 (Reflection on the Lens Text)
  • In Class: Discussion of unit 2 source(s); Understanding and applying lens text; summary, paraphrase and quotations

Oct 8 (W)  • Reading Assignment: Lens Essay from Write Now!: Brandon Sousa (pp. 18-27):
Write Now!: Writing Analytically “Making a thesis evolve” (pp. 107-119)
  • Writing Assignment: none
  • In Class: Discussion of pre-draft 2.1; thesis and motive in lens essays

Week 7

Oct 13(M)  No Class: Brandeis Thursday

Oct 15 (W)  • Reading Assignment: Lens Essay from Write Now!: Shane Weitzman (pp. 28-35); Writing Analytically: The Function of Conclusions (pp. 120 – 123)
  • Writing Assignment: Pre-draft 2.2
  • In Class: working with quotations; working with lens; Discussion of sample student essay; drafting strategies

Week 8

One-on-One Conferences to discuss drafts of essay 2 end of this week (Oct 23 & 24)

Oct 20(M)  • Reading Assignment: none
  • Writing Assignment: Draft of Essay #2 due with Draft Cover Letter (3 copies)
• In Class: Style workshop: clarifying “to be” & spotting loser sentences in drafts

Oct 22 (W)  
• Reading Assignment: Workshop materials, Parfitt Chapter 7  
• Writing Assignment: Draft responses to draft writer(s)  
• In Class: Draft workshop focusing on thesis, motive, analysis, revision strategies; crafting sentences

Unit 3: The Argumentative Research Essay: Beyond the Book Report

Week 9

Oct 27 (M)  
• Writing Assignment: none  
• In Class: Essay #3 writing assignment; finding a topic; types of sources

Oct 29(W)  
• Reading Assignment: Strunk & White, Elements of Style, pp. 7-17  
• Writing Assignment: Revision of Essay #2 due with Revision Cover Letter  
• In Class: Framing and narrowing a research question

Week 10

Nov 3 (M)  
• Reading Assignment: T. R. Reid, The healing of America: a global quest for better, cheaper, and fairer health care (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 16-45*; Write Now!: first research essay (pp.38-47)  
• Writing Assignment: none  
• In Class: Narrowing a research question, identifying analytical focus using Write Now! Readings; prep for FLIP

Nov 5 (W)  
FLIP Session: Meet in Library  
• Reading Assignment: Library research guide  
• Writing Assignment: Pre-draft 3.1 (Research Proposal)  
• In Class: Library session on available resources

Week 11

Nov 10 (M)  
• Reading Assignment: Write Now!: second research essay (pp.49-59); Parfitt Chapter 9
Writing Assignment: none
In Class: Evaluating and interweaving multiple sources; What is an annotated bibliography?

Nov 12 (W)
- Reading Assignment: Parfitt Chapter 10; Write Now!: Plagiarism and the Logic of Citation (pp. 133-135)
- Writing Assignment: Pre-draft 3.2 (Annotated Bibliography)
- In Class: Quotation and citation

Week 12
One-on-One conferences to discuss drafts of essay 3 end of this week/next week (Nov 21 & 24)

Nov 17 (M)
- Reading Assignment: Your research materials; Student essays
- Writing Assignment: none
- In Class: Research question, thesis, and motive in student essays; Introductory paragraph

Nov 19 (W)
- Reading Assignment: none
- Writing Assignment: Draft of Essay #3 due with Draft Cover Letter (3 copies)
- In Class: Essay structure; paragraphing; audience and tone; title workshop

Week 13

Nov 24 (M)
- Reading Assignment: Workshop materials; Write Now!: Linking Evidence and Claims (pp. 96-100)
- Writing Assignment: Draft response to draft writer(s)
- In Class: Draft workshop focusing on evidence/analysis, structure, and integration of sources

Nov 26 – Nov 28: No Class: Thanksgiving Break

Week 14

Dec 1 (M)
- Write Now!: Drafting and Revision (62-89)
- Writing Assignment: Pre-draft 3.3 (Reverse Outline)
- In Class: Structure and stitching; conclusions; strategies for clarifying revisions

Dec 3 (W)
- Reading Assignment: none
- Writing Assignment: none
- In Class: Review of course; discussion of writing in future courses; course evaluations; discussion of portfolio assignment and reflective writing

Week 15
Dec 8 (M)  • Reading Assignment: none
• Writing Assignment: Revision of Essay #3 due with Revision Cover Letter
• In Class: Brief reports on research essays

LAST DAY OF CLASS

Dec 11 (Th):  No Class: Writing Portfolio due with Portfolio Cover Letter

After the Semester

Dec 11-Dec 18  Finals Period

Mid-Finals Period  • Pick up portfolios and final grades in my office
The era of the American Revolution is arguably the most important epoch in our nation’s history, and with good reason: rising from the edges of Britain’s colonial empire, thirteen small colonies defeated the greatest imperial power in the world and not only established an independent nation but crafted a national government unique in the annals of history. The creation of this new nation – dedicated to the promise of individual liberty and republican equality -- represented the culmination of a true revolutionary movement in America.

In this course, we will challenge this triumphalist definition of the American Revolution through the eyes of those frequently missing from the traditional historical narrative. We will examine the writings of women, slaves, soldiers, and loyalists to interrogate the causes, course, and consequences of the Revolution in the lives of our subjects. We will use these sources to paint a broad picture of the Revolution outside the government centers of London and Philadelphia and focus instead on life in the small towns, army encampments, and wild frontiers of North America. By the end of the course, we will develop a better understanding of the Revolution not as a single event characterizable in black-and-white terms but as a complicated historical process with multiple meanings to multiple individuals.

This course is a University Writing Seminar. Its primary goal is to prepare students for college-level academic writing. Students will learn the standards of academic writing, practice those standards, and develop a critical vocabulary for thinking about the process of composition and revision. The seminar’s secondary goal is to improve upon the critical skills necessary for academic research. As such, students will learn to make good use of the research tools available through Brandeis University. Above all, students will need to read, understand, and construct critical arguments about the course material, discuss these materials in the classroom, and engage in independent research outside of class.

**Required Texts**

All required readings and other assigned materials will be posted on our course LATTE page. It is your responsibility to check the LATTE page to obtain the assigned readings for each class.
session. You are welcome to bring a laptop or tablet with you to class to read materials; however, you may find it easier to print out the assigned readings in order to make notes.

In addition, all students enrolled in the University Writing Program are required to obtain the following materials from the campus bookstore:

*Write Now!,* collection of Brandeis Student Essays
*Writing in Response*,

**Course Assignments and Evaluation**

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<td>Close-reading essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lens essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research essay</td>
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<td>Portfolio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation and Conferences</td>
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**Essay Assignments:** This course challenges the traditional understanding of the American Revolution as a simple matter of exchanging kings for presidents, tyranny for liberty. Our investigation will force you to engage with the two most basic forms of scholarly learning: reading and writing. As such, you will read documents written by people who experienced the American Revolution firsthand as well as the work of historians who have interpreted those experiences. And you will write three of your own interpretive essays grounded in your understanding of our primary and secondary readings. These essays are:

1. A close-reading essay, a 5-6 page essay interpreting a historical text. (15% of your grade)
2. A lens essay, a 7-8 page essay applying and engaging with a historian’s argument about a primary source text. (20% of your grade)
3. A research essay, a 10 page essay based on your own research into both primary and secondary sources. (30% of your grade)

All of your essays should be typed in Times New Roman 12-point font on numbered, double-spaced pages with one inch margins. Each essay must include a cover letter. Papers that fail to meet these simple requirements will not be accepted.

**Peer Review Workshops:** Each paper you write will undergo peer review. The day your rough drafts of an assignment are due, you must bring three copies to class. One is for me, and the other two are for your peers. Carefully read and mark up the drafts and write a 1-2 page response to each essay for the following class. You will share your feedback in small groups. You are expected to participate respectfully and intelligently during these workshops, not just providing constructive comments but receiving and acting on them as well. I will be looking at your final drafts for significant revisions that address my comments and those of your peers.
Portfolio: At the end of the semester, you will be asked to collect the work that you produced in this course. After assembling this material, you will write a three-page reflection on the development you made as a writer over the course of the semester. Note that in order to complete this assignment, you will need to SAVE every piece of writing you do in this class.

Course Policies

Academic Honesty: Presenting your own original work and appropriately citing outside sources are crucial elements of an academic classroom. As such, you are expected to know and respect University policies regarding academic integrity. I take this policy very seriously. For more information about these policies, you can consult the University’s Rights and Responsibilities handbook, available at the following website: http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srcs/rr/

Accommodations: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please speak to me immediately. Accommodations cannot be provided retroactively.

Assignments: Students must satisfactorily complete all assignments in order to pass this course. Due dates and assignments are subject to change but I will always give plenty of advance warning. Extensions will not be granted except under extreme circumstances and only well in advance of a paper’s due date (ie, not the night before.) For every day or part of a day an assignment is late, I will deduct one letter grade. If you take advantage of the University Writing Center, I will accept a writing center certificate for a 24-hour extension. Please note that syllabus confusion and printer malfunctions are not valid excuses for handing in a late assignment.

Attendance Classroom attendance is expected every day without exception. You should complete all assignments before class and expect to hand in written work and discuss assigned readings during our meetings. The Brandeis Writing Program has a strict attendance policy: After three absences, your dean will be notified. Any subsequent absences will lower your overall grade for the course by a third of a letter grade. After six absences, you will receive a failing grade for the course. Note that conferences are a required part of this course, and missing a conference meeting will count as an absence.

Communication: All official course communications will be sent to your Brandeis e-mail address, which you should check on a regular basis. I am always happy to discuss questions about the course through e-mail, but I will only discuss grades in person.

Conferences: Every student is required to meet with me in my office (Rabb ***) for three 15 minute conferences, or one meeting per essay assignment. Sign-up sheets will be posted in advance on the course LATTE page. You must come prepared to discuss the essay assignment to receive credit for the conference. These conferences count towards both your participation grade and your classroom attendance. Missing a conference is the same a missing a day of class.

Electronic Devices: Since much of our course reading will be done in electronic format, you will be permitted to bring a laptop or tablet to class each day. However, when we take time to discuss assigned materials, practice writing, and share ideas, all electronic devices should be turned off.
or put away. Cell phones are never permitted either for talking/texting or as platforms to read assigned materials.

**LATTE:** Much of our course work will be conducted within Brandeis University’s electronic classroom, the Learning and Teaching Technology Environment or LATTE. It is your responsibility to check the course LATTE page on a regular basis to stay up-to-date with readings, assignments, and course discussion notes.

**Participation:** Student participation is crucial in a small classroom environment. Every student is expected to participate by listening, questioning, and speaking during each session. You must be actively engaged with both the course material and you’re your peers. Remaining silent during class meetings will have a negative effect on your final grade.

**The Writing Center:** Students are encouraged to use the assistance of the University Writing Center located in the Goldfarb Library. When you visit the writing center, you may have a tutor fill out a Consultation Overview Form. This form will earn you a 24-hour extension on your assignment. Visit the Writing Center website at: [www.brandeis.edu/programs/writing/writingcenter](http://www.brandeis.edu/programs/writing/writingcenter) for more information and to schedule an appointment with a writing tutor.

**Course Calendar**

**Week 1**

August 28 (Th)  Discussion  Introduction to University Writing; Writing Diagnostic

**Unit 1: The Close Reading Essay**

**Week 2**

September 1 (M)  -- LABOR DAY -- NO CLASS --

September 3 (W)  Reading  Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*

Writing  --

Discussion  The American Revolution; Intro to Close Reading

**Week 3**

September 8 (M)  Reading  “Peter Oliver,” from *American National Biography*

Oliver, *Origins and Progress*…, pp. 43-59

Writing  Pre-Draft 1.1: Notes on a Source Text

Discussion  Writing History in the 18th Century; Active Reading

September 10 (W)  Reading  “Mercy Otis Warren,” from *American National Biography*

[Selection from *Write Now!*]

Writing Pre-Draft 1.2: Reverse Outline
Discussion Building a Strong Thesis

**Week 4**

September 15 (M)  
Reading “Elements of the Academic Essay”  
Zinsser, “The Transaction”
Writing Work on First Draft of Close Reading Essay
Discussion Elements of Academic Essay; Peer Review Expectations

September 17 (W)  
Reading *Write Now! Essay*  
Stephen King, “What is Writing?”
Writing First Draft of Close Reading Essay Due by 4PM Via E-Mail (3 Copies)
Discussion Workshop on *Write Now! Essay?*

**Week 5**

September 22 (M)  
Reading Your peer-group letters (2)
Writing Peer-group response letters (2 copies)
Discussion Peer Review Workshop

*Unit 2: The Lens Essay*

September 24 (W)  
Reading Martin, *Ordinary Courage*, Introduction  
Martin, *Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier*, …
Writing Work on Revisions to Close Reading Essay
Discussion Intro to Lens Analysis; Academic Honesty

September 26 (F)  
Revision of Close Reading Essay due by 4PM

**Week 6**

September 29 (M)  
Reading Papenfuse & Stiverson, “General Smallwood’s Recruits”  
Martin, *Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier*, …
Discussion Understanding and Using Theory; Chicago-style Citation

October 1 (W)  
Reading Martin, *Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier*, …  
Lepore, “How to Write a Paper for This Class”
Writing Pre-Draft 2.1: Reflections on the Lens Text
Discussion Organizing an Argument; Passive and Weak Voice

**Week 7**
October 6 (M)  Reading  Martin, *Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier,*…
          Writing                                Tuchman, “History by the Ounce”
          Discussion                             Pre-Draft 2.2: Peer Review of Introductory Paragraphs
          Discussion                             Counter-evidence, Quotations, & Paraphrasing

October 8 (W)  Reading  Clive, “The Most Disgusting of Pronouns”
          Writing                                Work on First Draft of Lens Essay
          Discussion                             Organizing an Argument, Punctuation and Grammar

October 11 (F) Draft of Lens Analysis Essay due via E-mail by 4PM

**Week 8**

October 13 (M) – BRANDEIS THURSDAY – NO CLASS – 

October 15 (W)  Reading  Your peer-group letters (2)
          Writing                                Peer-group response letters (2 copies)
          Discussion                             Peer Review Workshop

**Week 9**

October 20 (M)  Reading  [A Lens Essay from *Write Now!*]
          Writing                                Work on Revisions to Lens Essay
          Discussion                             Workshop *Write Now!* essay; Working on Tone and Style

*Unit 3: The Research Essay*

October 22 (W)  Reading
          Writing                                Work on Revisions to Lens Essay
          Discussion                             Introduction to the Research Assignment

October 24 (F)  Revision of Close Reading Essay due by 4PM

**Week 10**

October 27 (M)  Reading  Berkin, *Revolutionary Mothers*
          Writing  Holton, *Black Americans*
          Writing                                --
          Discussion                             Devising a Research Questions; Research Techniques

October 29 (W)  Reading  *Write Now!* Essay?
          Writing                                Pre-Draft 3.1: Crafting a Research Proposal
          Discussion                             Discussion of *Write Now!* essay

**Week 11**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 3 (M)</td>
<td>Library Session – Meet in Goldfarb Library</td>
<td>Complete Library Session prep tutorial</td>
<td>Finding sources in the Brandeis Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 5 (W)</td>
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<td>Pre-Draft 3.2—Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>Structuring Long Papers</td>
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**Week 12**

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<th>Date</th>
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<th>Writing</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 10 (M)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Draft of Research Essay (3 copies)</td>
<td>Building Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 12 (W)</td>
<td>Your peer-group letters (2)</td>
<td>Peer-group response letters (2 copies)</td>
<td>Peer Review Workshop</td>
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**Week 13**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 17 (M)</td>
<td>[An excerpt from <em>The Footnote</em>?] Writing in Response, “The Function of Citations in a Scholarly Conversation”</td>
<td>Pre-Draft 3.3—Follow the Footnote</td>
<td>Fine-Tuning, Style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 19 (W)</td>
<td>White, “The Death of a Pig”</td>
<td>None, work on revisions</td>
<td>Strengthening Conclusions; Eliminating “To-Be”</td>
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**Week 14**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
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<td>November 24 (M)</td>
<td>Updike, “Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu”</td>
<td>Revision of Research Essay due by 4PM</td>
<td>Discussion of Portfolio Assignment</td>
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<td>November 26 (W)</td>
<td>– THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS –</td>
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**Week 15**

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<td>December 1 (M)</td>
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<td>December 3 (W)</td>
<td>Reading</td>
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<td>Writing</td>
<td>Portfolio of Written Work</td>
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<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Presentations of Research and Course Review</td>
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Sample Syllabus #5: NEJS  
(from Aviv Ben-Or)

**Arab-Jewish Culture and Literature in the 20th Century**  
UWS 5A1, Fall 2014

**Instructor:** Aviv Ben-Or (aviv@brandeis.edu)  
**Office:** Mandel Center, Schusterman Center (3rd Floor)  
**Classroom:**  
**Meeting Time:** 1:00-1:50 (MW)  
**Office Hours:** Mon 10-11, Thur 2-3

This course will investigate the different forms of Arab-Jewish identity as it is expressed in 20th century literatures. We will begin by questioning basic assumptions about identity in the contexts of colonialism, the Arab world, and the state of Israel, and will then turn to focus on short stories, excerpts from novels, and poems written by Jews from the Arab world; we will think about and analyze how their experiences have shaped the sense of self, the Other, and the nation as expressed in these works. While the focus of the course will be on literary texts, we will also be including brief readings that will provide historical background as well as critical insights that will equip us with the necessary tools to analyze, question, and interpret our texts.

Emphasis will be placed on Jewish authors who immigrated to Israel and write in Hebrew, though we will also include those who write in other languages as well. All texts will be read in English translation. By the end of the course, we will be able to articulate more clearly how Jewish identity has evolved in the Middle East during the 20th century, particularly in terms of contact with Arab culture and through the lens of diverse political, cultural and social forces.

**Required Texts**
* A Trumpet in the Wadi by Sammy Michael  
* Write Now!  
* Writing in Response by Matthew Parfitt

**Texts Available on LATTE**

The majority of our readings will be available on LATTE. You will find them listed according to the date for which each item should be read.

**Please Note:** You may either print out LATTE readings or bring a laptop/tablet to class (you may NOT use a smart phone to access readings). I will require that you have access to the readings for each class in order to facilitate a detailed and meaningful discussion. I will expect you to annotate the readings in some way. If you are using a computer, please take notes and/or highlight within the PDF. If you bring print copies, I expect that you will have taken notes on those as well. Failure to bring relevant texts to class will negatively impact your participation grade.

***If you do choose to bring your laptop/tablet, I expect that you will only use it for course
related reasons, i.e. there is to be no use made of social media during class***

**Evaluation**

10% Pre-draft assignments
70% Major Assignments
   - Essay 1: 19%
   - Essay 2: 23%
   - Essay 3: 28%
10% Class Participation, Conferences
5% Peer Review, Workshops
5% Portfolio Review

**Assignments**

**Essay 1: CLOSE READING**
The close reading assignment asks that you write a 5-7 page essay about the short story *This is My Father*, by Sammy Michael.

**Essay 2: LENS ANALYSIS**
Building on what we have learned for formulating arguments based on the details of a text, you will now craft an argument using a secondary text as a lens through which to read a primary text. You will be reading Stuart Hall's essay on identity as "positioning" and will use it to make an argument about Shimon Ballas' short story "Iyya" that illuminates an element of the text that would not be immediately accessible without the aid of the Hall's theoretical paradigm. The essay will be 7-9 pages.

**Essay 3: RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT**
For the final assignment you will be reading the novel *A Trumpet in the Wadi* by Sammy Michael; you will then identity a theme, context, or critical discourse through which you will analyze an element of the novel. Some possible contexts will be suggested, though you will also be encouraged to explore other directions that are relevant to our discussions of identity and conflicting national narratives in the context of the Middle East in general, and Israel in particular. This essay will be 10-12 pages and will require the incorporation of 4-6 scholarly sources.

**Portfolio Review**
At the end of the semester you will gather all of your work and consider your development as a writer. In at least 4 pages, you will evaluate your own work and describe the ways in which you have improved and the new vocabulary and critical tools you have obtained as writers.

**UWS Outcomes**

**Policies**

**Attendance:** You will be expected to attend class regularly. Participating regularly in our ongoing
discussions will be crucial a full understanding of the ideas and content with which we engage, as well as for your development and improvement as a writer. If you must miss class, please let me know beforehand. The Brandeis Writing Program has a strict attendance policy that this course will follow: you are allowed three absences, after which your dean will be notified. Any additional absence after the first three will result in a 1/3 letter reduction of your grade. More than six absences will result in a failing grade.

Participation: Our class discussion will be crucial for understanding course material as well as for cultivating a conversation with your peers from which everyone will benefit. Writing is an organic process that is different for everyone, as is the ways in which we all respond to and interpret literary texts. In order to facilitate a productive environment in which we can accomplish this, it is imperative that you come prepared to participate and discuss the readings for each class session.

Conferences: During the course of the semester we will meet three times in my office for 15 minute conferences. These will consist of one-on-one discussions of your work and will provide you with an opportunity to get personalized feedback from me on your writing and overall development throughout the semester. Sign-up sheets will be posted in advance on LATTE. Conference attendance is mandatory because it replaces the third weekly hour of class. Any missed conference will count as an absence. You should bring all relevant materials to each conference, including drafts, comments, revisions, outlines, and key sources. You must come to the conference with a set of questions or concerns that you want to address.

Peer Review Workshops: Peer review is a key aspect of our course. When you hand in rough drafts you will give one copy each to two classmates and receive two classmates' drafts in return. You should carefully and attentively read and make notes on these drafts, as well as compose a peer-review letter for the following class when you will share your feedback in small groups. These exercises will benefit your essays and your writing overall; please participate actively and engagingly to help your colleagues, and expect the same from them. Your revisions of papers need to demonstrate significant changes, particularly those raised by me as well as those addressed by your peers.

Essays: Each essay will be preceded by several pre-draft assignments as well as a revision. All assignments are to be in 12 point Time New Roman font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins. All citations must follow either MLA or Chicago formats. All assignments are to be handed in on paper, no electronic submissions.

Late Work: Extensions will not be granted except in extenuating circumstances. Any such request must come at least 48 hours prior to the due date of any given draft or paper. Failure to complete pre-draft and rough draft assignments will affect your final grade as well.

Writing Center: Brandeis offers an excellent (and free) resource: The Writing Center provides one-on-one tutorial sessions from trained consultants. Visit http://www.brandeis.edu/writingprogram/writingcenter/index.html to find out what the center has to offer and how to make an appointment. I highly recommend that you take advantage of this resource throughout the semester as you work toward improving your essays. When you visit the
Writing Center, you may have your consultant fill out the Consultant Overview Form, which will earn you a 24-hour extension on the final draft of any paper (only one extension per paper; the consultation must be about the paper for which you are seeking an extension).

**Academic Integrity:** You are expected to be familiar with and to follow Brandeis University's policies on academic integrity (see the following site: http://www.brandeis.edu/registrar/bulletin/provisional/college/regulations/index.html). I will refer any suspected cases of alleged dishonesty to the Office of Student Development and Conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty may result in sanctions including but not limited to failure in the course, failure on the assignment in questions, suspension from the University and/or educational programs. Please see me if you have any questions whatsoever regarding these policies.

**Please Note:** If you have special needs related to this course (such as a documented disability), please see me as soon as possible in order to make the proper arrangements. Information is available at the Disabilities Resources site: http://www.brandeis.edu/acserv/disabilities/undergradstudents.html

**And finally:** Please feel free to speak to me any time during my office hours or by appointment if you have any questions about the course, materials, assignments, or policies. My desk is located in the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, which is on the top floor of the Mandel Center for the Humanities.

**Course Schedule**

**Unit 1 - Close Reading: Jews, Arabs, and the Hyphen**

**Week 1**

Aug 28 (R) Intro to writing and seminar topic; diagnostic writing

**Week 2**

Sept 3 (W) **Reading** Parfitt: Intro, Chapter 1
Stilman: *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times* Chapter 7 (LATTE)
**In Class** What is good writing? Course logistics and grading; Continued Discussion of Middle Eastern Jewry in the 20th century

**Week 3**

Sept 8 (M) **Reading** Shohat: "Reflections By an Arab Jew" (LATTE)
Mikhael (Marid): "The Wall" (LATTE)
**In Class** Key terms and concepts in the discourse about Arab-Jews in Israel; Essay #1 assignment; Intro to Close Reading and Analysis
Sept 10 (W) **Reading** Parfitt: Chapters 2 & 3  
**Writing** Pre-draft assignment 1.A: (mini close reading)  
**In Class** Conducting a close reading of a literary text; deriving a thesis from evidence; developing an introductory paragraph

**Week 4**

Sept 15 (M) **Reading** "Elements of the Academic Essay" (LATTE); close reading essay from Write Now!  
**Writing** Pre-draft assignment 1.B (Introductory Paragraph)  
**In Class** Peer Workshop: Introductory Paragraphs; Preparing for first drafts, Thesis Exercise

Sept 17 (W) **No Reading Assignment**  
**Writing** Draft of Essay #1 due with Cover Letter  
**In Class** Workshop Student Essay from Write Now! Focus on thesis, evidence, and analysis

**Week 5**

Sept 22 (M) **Reading** Workshop Materials, Parfitt Chapter 6  
**Writing** Draft Response (2 copies of each)  
**In Class** Peer Review Workshop, focusing on thesis, evidence, and analysis

**Unit 2 - Texts as Lenses: Exile in the Homeland and "Positioning" Arab-Jewish Identity**

Sept 24 (W) **No Reading Assignment**  
**Writing** Revision of Essay #1 due with Revision Cover Letter  
**In Class** Discussion of Unit 1 sources; Intro to lens analysis and Essay #2

Sept 29 (M) **Reading** Shohat: "The Invention of the Mizrahim"  
**In Class** Understanding a Lens Text

Oct 1 (W) **Reading** Hall: "Cultural Identity and Diaspora"  
**Writing** Pre-draft 2.A (lens text summary)  
**In Class** How to strategically read a complicated, argumentative text

Oct 6 (M) **Reading** Ballas: "Iyya" (short story)  
**Writing** None  
**In Class** Discussion of pre-draft 2.A; thesis/motive in lens essay; incorporating quotations effectively

Oct 8 (W) **Reading**: Lens essay from Write Now!
Writing Pre-draft 2.B (mini lens analysis)  
In Class Structure and Analysis

Oct 13 (M)  NO CLASS: BRANDEIS THURSDAY

Oct 15 (W)  Reading Essay from Write Now!  
Writing None  
In Class Style workshop: choosing clear, active verbs; crafting academic titles

Oct 20 (M)  Draft of Essay #2 due with Cover Letter  
In Class Style workshop: avoiding passive voice and clarifying the verb "to be"

Oct 22 (W)  Reading Parfitt: Chapter 7  
Writing Draft Response (2 copies of each)  
In Class Peer Review workshop, key terms to stitch an essay

Unit 3 - Argumentative Research Essays: Engaging the Broader Discourse

Oct 27 (M)  Revision of Essay #2 due with Revision Cover Letter  
In Class Essay #3; source basics and engaging with a critical conversation

Oct 29 (W)  Reading Behar and Ben-Dor Benite: Intro to Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought  
In Class Developing a research question

Nov 3 (M)  Reading Selection TBA from Modern Middle Eastern Thought  
Writing Pre-draft 3.A (research proposal)  
In Class Annotated bibliography; difference between scholarly and non-scholarly sources

Nov 5 (W)  Reading Bhabha: TBA  
In Class How to strategically read a complicated, argumentative text

Nov 10 (M)  Reading Parfitt: Chapter 9; Your Research Materials  
In Class Library session on available sources

Nov 12 (W)  Reading Research Essay from Write Now!; Your Research Materials  
Writing Pre-draft 3.B (annotated bib.)  
In Class Incorporating secondary sources

Nov 17 (M)  Reading Parfitt: Chapter 10; Your Research Materials  
In Class Essay structure; discussion of plagiarism and how to avoid it

Nov 19 (W)  Writing Draft of Essay #3 due with Cover Letter
In Class Conclusions; style and tone in longer research papers

Nov 24 (M)  Writing Draft Response (2 copies of each)
             Pre-draft 3.C (reverse outline)
           In Class Peer review workshop focusing on evidence and analysis as well as logical integration of sources

Nov 26 (W)  NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK

Dec 1 (M)   In Class Review of course; course evaluations; discussion of portfolio assignment and reflective writing

Dec 3 (W)   Revision of Essay #3 due with Revision Cover Letter
            Writing Portfolio due with Cover Letter
4. The Close Reading Essay

Guidelines

The close reading essay—generally 5-7 pages long—requires students to carefully examine a single text (or occasionally two or three very short texts) and to defend an original thesis about it. Students should not write a summary essay. Both because it is the simplest of the three essays and because close reading skills are essential for both the lens and research essays, the close reading unit is taught first. In addition to teaching the practice of close reading, the classes leading up to this essay should introduce the basic skills of college essay writing: thesis, motive, evidence, and analysis.

Goals
- Teaching students how to derive meaning from the smallest parts of a text
- Encouraging students to link smaller elements in a text back to a larger thesis about that text
- Focusing straightforwardly on a single text in order to emphasize the elements of the academic essay
- Setting up the lens and research essays which require the use of close reading techniques but complicate them by adding additional components

Tips
- Type of text: You should ask your students to close read a text that has some clear meaning but also contains enough ambiguity to allow students to formulate original and contestable theses. Texts that make for good close reading assignments include: short stories, poems, novels, advertisements, plays, songs, films, television programs, and art works. Texts in which the author is clearly expressing a point of view or in which the meaning is very straightforward do not usually work well for close reading essays. Such texts include: articles (both academic and popular), editorials, pieces of critical theory, and certain kinds of documentaries. Instructors do occasionally create close reading assignments that focus on argumentative texts (like speeches or documentary films), but these assignments always ask students to make a claim about a text that uncovers something about the text that is hidden upon first reading. These assignments are not merely a chance for the student to agree or disagree with the text. Unless you’ve spoken with the Director, please avoid using an argumentative piece as the primary site of analysis for the close reading unit.
- Topic: In addition to assigning students a particular text (or type of text) to close read, it is usually beneficial to require students to focus on a particular topic. This relieves them of the burden of finding a worthwhile topic and allows them to focus on the task of close reading. For example, students might examine representations of gender in a Shakespeare sonnet or the satiric treatment of race in a Dorothy Parker short story.
- **Length of text**: Short stories are generally of ideal length for close reading. However, it might benefit your students to challenge them by asking them to close read something very short (e.g. a sonnet or an advertisement) or something very long (e.g. a novel). Close reading a short text will give students practice expanding their ideas to fill five or six pages. This is a task young students often struggle with, and forcing them to rise to this challenge often produces stronger essays. Close reading a long text will give students practice in narrowing and refining their ideas to an appropriate length for a short essay. Some instructors use a short common text for class discussion (say, a music video) and ask students to choose a similar text (perhaps another music video from the same genre) to write about. Please remember that you have limited time in the close reading unit; so, longer texts will be more challenging.

- **Pre-draft assignments**: You will need at least two pre-draft assignments in your close reading unit. It is generally ideal for one of the assignments to focus on an element of the academic essay—thesis/motive or evidence/analysis are common choices—and for the other assignment to focus on techniques of close reading. See the following page for a few examples of potential pre-drafts for the close reading unit.
Pre-Draft Assignments

UWS instructors are required to assign at least two pre-drafts for the close reading essay. It is recommended that one pre-draft assignment focus primarily on close reading techniques and another focus on a specific “element of the academic essay,” in this case, constructing a thesis. Though I offer potential variations on these assignments in a few cases, they have been left somewhat vague in order to allow instructors to creatively adapt them to their own courses in more specific ways.

Pre-draft assignments should not be self-contained. In addition to using them as building blocks for the close reading essay, instructors are encouraged to use pre-draft assignments as foundations for in class exercises. In most cases, I relate these assignments to exercises that can be performed either in class or on Webct message boards (or both).

Assignment #1: Notes on a Source Text (with Reflection)

Ask students to take a page or two of notes while reading or viewing the text (or a portion of the text) they will be using for their close reading essay. Once they have taken their notes students should read them over looking for patterns, tensions, or questions that emerged in what they noticed. Ask them to write a one page reflection addressing an issue of significance that emerged in their note taking. This assignment provides students with a technique for practicing close reading while encouraging them to take notes on course texts and to reflect on their own note-taking strategies.

Assignment #2: Mini-Close Reading Assignment

Choose several difficult passages in the text(s) you will use for your close reading assignment (possibly moments that generated puzzlement or disagreement in class discussion) and ask students to write a 1-2 page close reading that takes a position on the meaning of one of those passages. You might choose five or six passages and assign groups of three or four students to each passage, a foundation for group work in the following class.

Another possibility would be to ask students to locate a puzzling or meaningful passage for themselves. Like the assignment above, the goal of this assignment is to provide students with a hands-on strategy for approaching close reading. If you decide to ask students to choose a passage on their own, be sure to provide some guidelines for what makes a good passage for close reading. I recommend asking them to identify a question or tension in the text—the technique most likely to produce strong thesis statements—that they identify explicitly at the beginning of their pre-draft assignment and explore in 1-2 pages of focused writing.
Assignment #3: Thesis Writing Exercise

After reviewing Gordon Harvey’s criteria for a strong thesis statement in class, ask students to compose two thesis statements that adhere to Harvey’s criteria, meaning that they 1) get at the heart of the text, 2) are limited enough in scope to be arguable within page limits and with available evidence, and 3) are true but contestable. You can then use some of these thesis statements as examples that further your initial thesis lesson during group discussion in the following class. You may even want to ask students to submit their thesis statements to you electronically beforehand or post them on Webct so that you can pick the most useful ones (good, bad, and middling). Though you should choose a variety of examples, I often find that most useful student theses to present for class discussion are those that are potentially very strong, but currently very weak.

Assignment #4: Peer Critique of Introductory Paragraph (Thesis)

After reviewing Gordon Harvey’s criteria for a strong thesis statement in class (see Assignment #3, above), ask students to write an introductory paragraph for their close reading essay and bring several copies to class. In small groups, students should 1) identify the thesis in the intro and 2) assess how well it fulfills Harvey’s three criteria. In order to save class time, this assignment can also be done on Webct (especially good for classes that meet only once a week). Have students post their introductory paragraphs and assign two students to respond to each post in the same manner they would in small groups in class. In addition to emphasizing the importance of peer feedback, this assignment allows the instructor access to each student’s thesis before the close reading essay is written, allowing him or her to troubleshoot off track assignments before the student composes an entire draft.
Sample Close Reading Questions

1. Write an essay that explores a contradiction, misperception, or other question about prostitution in the past using the archaeological record of brothels in the 19th century. Use specific archaeological evidence from Seifert et al. and Costello to support your argument.

2. Develop an argument about the way in which the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo are an example of how memory is used in political activism, as depicted in the film Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo. Support your argument with a close reading of the film.

3. Identify and make an argument about a tension in the way one of the films (Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind or Memento) represents memory. You must base your analysis on two key scenes from the film you choose.

4. Identify and interpret a problem, tension, inconsistency or ambiguity in the depiction of the Metropolis in Fritz Lang’s film. For example, you may choose to write about authority, class relationships, gender, the organization of spaces, the role of technology.

5. Marcel Mauss’s influential Essai sur le don (The Gift), originally published in France in 1950, challenges many of our accepted notions of what a gift is or what conditions define the act of gift giving. For your first essay, critique and refine Mauss's theory of gift exchange by evaluating the theory's ability to explain gift giving practices in contemporary America.

6. Choose a scene from The Importance of Being Earnest and offer an analysis of it that challenges or complicates the standard reading (i.e., the status quo).

7. The readings for Unit #1 reveal the extent to which Americans met the enormous changes after World War II with redoubled efforts to map the boundaries of permissible behavior and shore up the social categories that defined groups and individuals across the country. Magazine articles, public speeches, bestsellers, and other sources from the period brim with carefully drawn prescriptions for postwar Americans—instructions for how to act, what to want, and who to be. Your assignment is to pick one concept, rule, or ideal and make an argument that focuses on something problematic about its use. In other words, you should make an argument based on a close analysis of a paradox, ambiguity, tension, or other perplexing feature you deem worthy of exploration. Potential topics range widely from political principles like “democracy” or “freedom,” social categories like “Western man” or “teenager,” to cultural judgments like “subversive” or “square.”

8. Write an essay about one story from In Our Time, showing how it critiques, challenges, or complicates a conventional definition of “the lost generation.” In order to write such an essay, you will need to specify how you are defining the phrase, and from which sources your definition comes.
Sample assignment #1: Close Reading a Treaty
(from Josh Cracraft)

Unit I Close Reading Essay Assignment
A close reading is a very careful analysis of the particular language, style, and content of a text. We usually perform close readings in order to help us interpret the text and draw conclusions about its significance. This is an extremely important skill used in all academic disciplines, from analyzing a novel in a literature course, to closely reading a painting in an art history class, to drawing broader conclusions from a data set in the social or natural sciences. In this class, we’ve closely read an Iroquois creation story and a treaty between the United States and the Sauk/Fox peoples to get accustomed to analyzing texts and to hone your close reading skills. Use those same critical analysis skills to complete this first paper assignment.

For your first paper assignment, you will perform a close reading of 4 early nineteenth century treaties:

One between the United States and the Sauk/Fox (which you’ve already read):
http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Kappler/Vol2/treaties/sau0074.htm

One between the United States and the Kaskaskias:
http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Kappler/Vol2/treaties/kas0067.htm

One between the United States and the Delawares:
http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Kappler/Vol2/treaties/del0070.htm

And another between the United States and the Osages:
http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Kappler/Vol2/treaties/osa0095.htm

The same people in the U.S. government wrote these treaties at roughly the same time, so you can draw evidence from one, two, three, or all four of them to make a single interpretive argument. Keep in mind that your paper will be relatively short, which means you probably won’t want to write about everything you find interesting in the treaties. Instead, keep your paper focused by writing about a particular theme or problem in the treaties. Then, explore it using the information and evidence that you have. All of your evidence should come from these four treaties only. You may draw from the excerpt from Utley to help put the treaties in context in your paper, but no other additional sources or treaties or any other outside research is allowed.

Your close reading essay should be no fewer than 5 full pages and no more than 6 pages in length (12-point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced 1-inch margins). Of course, please proofread your essay before handing it in, and please follow the requirements for papers outlined in the syllabus. Do not forget to write and attach your cover letters!

Pre-draft 1.1: Notes on a Treaty
Due: Thursday September 3 at the beginning of class

Read the 1804 treaty between the Sauk/Fox Indians and the United States here, and take detailed notes. Read it critically, just as you read the Iroquois creation story. Pay attention to the language of the treaty, the particular terms of the treaty, and the objectives of the Sauk/Fox (you can think of them as belonging to the same tribe) and the United States. When you’re finished reading, review your notes and answer these questions to help you think about the treaty even more critically. Be as thorough and specific as possible in answering the questions. Some answers will require a sentence or two, while others may require more.

Step 1: What patterns do you notice in the text? Are there parts of the treaty where there are unusual amounts of tension? If you were to use a single adjective to describe the treaty, what would it be and why?

Step 2: What questions did you have when you finished reading the document? Write these questions down. Was there anything you felt the treaty left unresolved? What was it, and why might it have been left unresolved? Be specific.
Step 3: Take a particularly tense, confusing, or troublesome segment or theme of the treaty, and write a 2-paragraph reflection on the problem. Make sure your reflections answers the following:

- What exactly is the problem you’ve identified? Why did you choose this particular part of the treaty? What made it stand out to you? What’s puzzling about it?
- Why is it important that we better understand this part or theme in the treaty? What’s the significance? In other words, so what?
- What do you think the answer might be to this problem? What is your interpretation?
- Find some evidence in the text that supports your interpretation.

Pre-draft 1.2: Reverse Outline
Due: Tuesday September 8 at the beginning of class

Read “Liberation through Defecation: The Grotesque in Jonathan Swift’s ‘The Lady’s Dressing Room’” by Jamie Cattanach—it’s the first essay in Write Now! After you finish reading the essay, go back through it again to identify the key elements of its construction. Then answer the following questions. (Hint: You may want to use a highlighter and/or write notes in the margin of the essay to help you answer some of the questions.). Type your answers directly into this Word document, PRINT it, and bring it to class with you on Tuesday the 8th along with your Write Now! booklet. Some answers will require only a sentence; others will require more. Always be as thorough and as specific as possible in answering each question.

1. What is the text that is being read closely?

2. What is the thesis of the essay? Write it down here. Where is the thesis located in the essay (Paragraph # and Sentence #)?

3. What kind of evidence does Jamie use from the text? Be as specific as possible.


5. For each of the body paragraphs, identify what Jamie is trying to accomplish and whether she succeeded or failed and why:
   - The 2nd paragraph
   - The 3rd paragraph
   - The 4th paragraph
   - The 5th paragraph
   - The 6th paragraph
   - The 7th paragraph

6. If you had written this essay, what would you have done differently? What parts would you have changed and why?
Sample Assignment: Close Reading a Treaty (cont.)

First Draft Cover Letter: Close Reading Essay

After you finish writing the first draft of your paper, reread your essay, and take a moment to reflect. Draft a cover letter that answers the questions below. Then staple it to the top of your paper before handing it in.

1. What is the thesis of your paper? Is the thesis sentence toward the end of the first paragraph where it belongs?

2. Does the thesis make an argument? Does it go beyond stating the obvious? If not, how would you rewrite it for the final draft?

3. What kind of evidence do you use to prove your argument?

4. Do you use quotations? How many quotations do you use (count them!)? Do you think this number is too few or too many? Are the quotations relevant, and do they actually help support your argument, or are they just there to fill up space?

5. Do you use argumentative topic sentences? Or do the topic sentences merely restate facts? Which topic sentences would you change and why?

6. Which paragraph are you most satisfied with and why? Be specific—don’t just say it looks good.

7. Which paragraph are you least satisfied with and why? Again, be as specific as possible.

8. Are you convinced by your own argument?

Final Draft Cover Letter: Close Reading Essay

After you finish writing the final draft of your paper, reread your essay, and take a moment to reflect. Draft a page-long, single-spaced cover letter in paragraph form that answers the questions below. Then staple it to the top of your paper before handing it in.

- Is your thesis in the final draft different from your thesis in the first draft? If so, how is it different? Why did you change it?

- What are the three most significant changes you made in the final draft? Why did you make them? Were they successful?

- What did you gain most from the peer review letters and exercises? Be very specific and explain why it was helpful.

- Did your classmates recommend any changes during the peer review that you decided not to make in the final draft? If so, why did you keep things the same?

- If you were to make any changes to this final draft, what would they be? Why would you make these changes, and why didn’t you make them before handing the paper in?
Peer Review Letters: Close Reading Essay
Due: Tuesday September 15 at the beginning of class

When writing a peer review letter, you want to make your comments as specific as possible so as to be of concrete use to the author when she or he revises the essay. Please type your responses into the space below, PRINT it, and bring it to class with you on Tuesday September 15th. Keep in mind that your classmate put in a lot of hard work and energy into writing her or his essay, so always remember to be courteous, respectful, and supportive. Please answer the following questions as thoroughly as possible:

1. What is the author’s thesis? Rewrite the author’s thesis sentence here, and then paraphrase it in your own words so that the author can compare his or her intentions with what you actually understood. Is the thesis sentence toward the end of the first paragraph where it belongs? If you cannot find the thesis sentence, take your best guess as to what the author is trying to argue.

2. Does the thesis make an argument? Does it go beyond stating the obvious? If not, how and why would you recommend improving it?

3. What kind of evidence does the author use to prove his or her argument? Be specific.

4. Does the author use quotations? Does he or she use too many or too few quotations? Are the quotations relevant, and do they actually help support the author’s argument? Or are they just there to fill up space?

5. Do the paragraphs in the essay flow in a logical fashion? Are they in order? Might there be a better arrangement? If so, how would you recommend reordering the essay?

6. Does the reader use argumentative topic sentences? Or do the topic sentences merely restate facts?

7. Was there plenty of analysis and explanation? Or did the essay seem to restate facts and simply paraphrase the treaty? If so, how could more analysis be added to make the paper more argumentative?

8. What do you really like about this essay and why? Be specific.

9. What aspect of the essay do you feel requires the most revision and why? Be specific.
Sample assignment #2: Close Reading a Music Video
(from Robbie Pearson)

Close Reading Essay

Draft 1 Due: Tuesday, September 16
Final Draft Due: Tuesday, September 23

In this first unit, we will begin a semester-long discussion about how to perform “close reading”—locating and contemplating a tension within a text, and making an argument about its interpretation that is supported with detailed, thought provoking analysis. In this class the “texts” we will focus on will generally center on Latin-American music, but they will not necessarily be “written word.” On the contrary, close reading can be performed on virtually anything: novels, magazines, music, movies, neighborhoods, clothing, poetry etc. etc. etc. It is a mode of thinking and writing that you will begin to cultivate now, and that you will continue to refine throughout the semester.

In 5-7 pages, you will perform a close reading of Thalía’s music video “Amor a la Mexicana” (banda version) You will create an argument about Thalía’s use of gender and masculinity in the video. You must refine this broad topic, however, to a specific and arguable viewpoint. It is not enough to merely point out ways in which Thalía represents herself: you must articulate what aspects of identity the video portrays, and how this is accomplished specifically. Your argument must rely on careful and detailed readings of specific visual and musical details from the video.

You should not be afraid of details that seem to contradict your thesis. Use these moments of contradiction to generate analysis, and to further refine or modify your thesis. You do not want a debate-style thesis that forcefully argues a one-sided viewpoint. Instead, you want a subtle, refined thesis that accounts for all the messy contradictions and complications within the video. Your thesis should present an argument, but the argument should not shy away from subtlety and depth.

GOALS OF THE ESSAY

Identify a strangeness in the text—a feature that engages you, perplexes you, makes you think—and formulate a thesis that explains how this feature shapes the representation of Mexican identity in Thalía’s music video. Your thesis should be original, non-obvious, non-impressionistic, and genuinely interesting; it must take an arguable stance with real stakes, one that is not plainly factual but that requires a defense against other points of view. Look back to your notes from when you first watched the video—this is always a good place to begin locating an idea that can fuel an essay. While your initial reaction to a word, line, or set of lines may not be immediately paper-worthy, it can be the springboard to an excellent thesis. Here are some questions to get you started:

- How does Thalía define “macho,” according to the song’s lyrics? How does this definition relate to the portrayal of “machismo” in the video?
- How does this video employ the “Myth of the Revolution?” What is the function of the images from revolutionary times?
Sample Assignment Sequence: Close Reading a Music Video (cont.)

- How does Thalía’s wardrobe contribute to the construction of Mexican identity? Machismo? The Revolution?
- What is the overall message of the song? What about the video?

Use evidence for your interpretations. Use analysis for your evidence. Be absolutely clear on the distinction between evidence (concrete facts, examples, and details—data) and analysis (explanation of how that data is meaningful and contributes to your overall interpretation). Your evidence must be drawn from Thalía’s video; you may not refer to any research not distributed in class. Please note that it is only rarely that a piece of evidence can be fully analyzed in a single sentence.

Structure the essay according to an argument. Avoid structuring your essay like a play-by-play (i.e. first this happens, then this happens, then this happens etc.) On the other hand, avoid “five-paragraph form,” in which a series of evidences are used to relate to the same central thesis of the paper. While analysis should always tie back to the thesis, a paper should always develop logically. Ever step in the essay should be presented, analyzed, and connected to the steps before and after.

Consider your reader. Assume that you are addressing a good-natured but skeptical reader who has only a general knowledge of the video. Be precise about which details you are discussing—you may even want to include the time the detail occurs (i.e. 2:15). Never assume that your reader will automatically see things the same way that you do, or inevitably draw the same conclusions as you. Your goal with respect to your readers should be to convince them that your argument is plausible, and your conclusions are logical.

Use consistent and appropriate citation. You will only be referencing one work this time around. Nevertheless, it is important to clearly identify the places in the video to which you pay specific attention, or from which you quote directly. All citation should be consistent with MLA guidelines (see the Writer’s Reference).

Make the most of the variety and nuance of the English language. Try to avoid excessive repetitions and frequent use of “to be.” Use active verbs from the list we develop in class. Sentence subjects such as “the music” or “the beat” can almost always be described in more precise terms.
Pre-Draft Assignment 1.1  
**Notes on a Source Text with Reflection**  

**DUE: Thursday, September 4**

The first step in a close reading is to be sure that you have a clear understanding of the text you are evaluating. To that end, your first assignment will be to examine the music video from 1997 “Amor a la mexicana” by Thalía, and take a page or two of notes on what you are watching. Be sure to think about the following questions as you watch:

- How is music used in relation to the visual element of the video?
- How is Thalía’s body portrayed as feminine? Masculine?
- How does Thalía seem to react to the chaos of the bar?
- Who appears to be the intended audience of this clip?
- How do the words of the song relate to Thalía’s interaction with the men at the bar?
- What is the role of the mechanical bull?

…but do not feel limited to only these questions! Your task is to notice and think about all available details!

Once you have collected your notes, look over them for patterns, tensions, or questions that emerged from what your observations. Write a one page reflection addressing an issue of significance that emerged in your note taking. Be sure to think this through carefully. The issue you choose to discuss in your reflection may become central to your paper.

Pre-Draft Assignment 1.2  
**Introductory Paragraph Peer Review Workshop**  

**DUE: Thursday, September 11**

Now that you’ve had some time to reflect on “Amor a la Mexicana” and have hopefully settled on a thesis, your next assignment is to write an introductory paragraph for your essay.

Write an introduction, using an effective thesis and motive. (Refer to Gordon Harvey’s “Elements of the Academic Essay.”) In groups, you will share and critique your introductions in a workshop on the date due.
Unit #1: Close Reading (Political Candidates: What They Say and How They Say It)

Nonverbal communication plays a critical role in the shaping of first impressions. Nonverbal communication was critical in the first televised presidential debate, giving voters a chance to not only hear each candidate's stance, but also see how they acted and reacted when the spotlight was on them. For this assignment, you will watch a portion of a 2008 presidential debate between John McCain and Barack Obama. In a 5-6 page essay, students will write about their first impressions of either McCain or Obama, noting important details such as clothing and appearance, verbal and nonverbal signals (e.g., eye contact, touching, tie signs, content of speech) and how these details contribute to your gestalt (overall) impression of the candidate. How did you come to this impression? What was most salient to you when you were forming your impression of the candidate? Who “won” the debate? Why? Use your impressions to support your stance. Please cite specific verbal and nonverbal behaviors to support your position.

Your Goals:

You must formulate a thesis that argues persuasively and coherently for your first impression and you must support your thesis with evidence from the video. You can argue that either candidate “won,” therefore, it is important that your argument not only include evidence that supports your position, but also acknowledges examples that do not align with your case. Basically, you are trying to explain your position and the impressions that it is based on to a skeptical reader with an argument that is arguable, well-reasoned, and fairly considers any likely objections.

You must support your thesis with concrete examples drawn from the video. The key to success in any close reading is in the strength of the explication of specific moments within the text. Take a careful look at places in the video that seem especially important and explain what makes them so. What is being said and how do you know? Of what importance is this specific moment to the whole debate? How does this point build upon what has come before, and how do subsequent moments relate to it? You will want to draw a reader’s attention to specific points in the video through selective quotation and citation, but remember that evidence cannot explain itself. You must explain why the evidence is significant.

You must structure your argument in a way that makes sense and helps make your case. Give some thought to the way that your major points fit together to make a whole. Does each successive point in your essay build upon the last? Can a reader follow the progression of your argument from beginning to end and understand why it looks the way it does? Remember that a successful argument is able to incorporate a variety of different points and examples into the framework of a larger claim in a way that is logical and persuasive. Make sure each example in your argument adds something to the whole and has a place in the whole that makes sense.
**Consider your reader.** Assume that you are addressing a good-natured but skeptical reader who has a general knowledge of your text but is lacking in specific knowledge. Remember to provide brief moments in your argument to remind your reader of what is going on more generally in the video when discussing a specific example, and never assume that your reader will automatically see things the same way that you do or inevitably draw the same conclusions as you. Your relationship with your readers should be one where you demonstrate to them that your argument has merit and one where you show them how you reached your conclusions.

**Use consistent and appropriate citation.** You will only be referencing one work this time and need not concern yourself when citing the video in a references section. Nevertheless, it is important to identify the places in the text to which you pay specific attention. All citations should be consistent with APA standards. DOES THIS MAKE SENSE?

**Make the most of the inherent variety and nuance of the English language.** Nothing bogs down a promising argument faster than endlessly repeated terms and frequent conjugation of “to be.” Do your best to find fresh, active verbs and dazzle your readers with your expansive vocabulary. Note: This does not mean that you should use a thesaurus to replace every common word – variety with readability is the key to success!
Establishing a Vocabulary for Close Reading
(from Nick Van Kley)

There are a lot of tasks to perform as an instructor in the early weeks of an introductory college writing course. You begin establishing a shared vocabulary for evaluating and theorizing writing, perhaps defining and discussing concepts like thesis, motive, evidence, analysis, structure, counterargument, introduction, and keyterms. You familiarize your students with the way you want your classroom to run by establishing classroom patterns, perhaps implementing habitual in-class writing or using small-group techniques to ensure everyone talks every day. You give your students some basic footing within your chosen topic, perhaps by discussing a shared reading or giving a brief lecture.

But the structure of the Brandeis UWS class also demands that you use your early days to define "close reading." We're considering the analytical moves students perform in this first unit foundational techniques that will continue to drive their writing in later units, so it's worth taking the time to ensure that students come away from this unit with a clear sense of what it means to closely read something.

The Brandeis Writing Program fosters many different approaches to defining and teaching close reading techniques, I think—which is to say, what I offer here is hardly to be considered definitive. Still, I think these tips work in many contexts. They are very obviously adapted from Jill Stephens and David Rosenwasser’s book, *Writing Analytically*. Whether or not you find these useful, you might benefit from producing your own terms or theories of close reading and discuss those explicitly with your class.

Here are four ways to think and talk about "close reading" with your students:

1. **Suspend Judgment.** We often talk of writing as a tool for thinking. It is a way to arrive at firmer argumentative ground, discover new ideas, cultivate sensitivity for opposing positions, or find a more nuanced position. Offering the suspension of judgment as a foundational element of responsible close reading is one way to get students to think of their writing projects in the UWS along these lines. Encourage a willingness to test rather than to merely argue a claim, ask them to stake positions early on as hypotheses or initial claims, and demand that they think of those claims as provisional, subject to complication or revision in the face of new evidence.

2. **Locate Patterns.** This seems a bit simplistic, but I've found that students respond well to this kind of directive. When they confront an unfamiliar text, they often don't know where to start. This simple move gives them a clear goal. Ask them to make a list of all the repeated concepts, words, images, arguments, sounds, phrases, or whatever else seems relevant for your material. Tell them not to be afraid of excessive lists in the early stages. What might not seem important now could turn out to be important later.

3. **Seek Contradictions & Anomalies.** Students often over-commit to an argument too early in the process. They're goal oriented, after all, and want to be finished with your assignments as soon as they can. So, it's worth reminding them that contradictory evidence is not something to
be feared. If they find a detail that calls their initial claims into question, they shouldn't despair and abandon their idea. Rather, they should experiment with their initial claims and see if they can find a way to adapt them to accommodate the new evidence. On rare occasions, the very presence of contradicting evidence will be surprising enough that their recognition constitutes a viable thesis claim. The uncovering of contradictory or anomalous evidence almost always provides the germ of a motivated thesis claim for my students.

4. **Find and Unpack Implicit Categories/Meaning.** If students are having a hard time finding contradictions, they often make progress by asking what the content of their chosen text implies. Ask them to read a specific passage, look at a visual form, or otherwise consume a limited portion of their material. Have them come up with one or two ideas or arguments that think are either evoked or logically assumed by the material. Or ask them to describe one or two categories--perhaps a binary opposition--that are being deployed without a clear definition. This kind of interpretation can sometimes go spectacularly wrong (you might have students tell you that Mark Twain's travel writing implies that the US should use racial profiling to protect its citizens in the post-9/11 world, for example...). But I think it's valuable that students have the space to make mistakes on this front. It can lead to some innovative close reading.
5. The Lens Essay

Guidelines

The lens essay—usually 7-9 pages long—uses one text to shed light on another in order to show readers something they would not have been able to see if they had examined the texts in isolation. Very often, instructors select a theoretical or critical text as a “lens” and ask students to apply the ideas or arguments from that lens text to the evidence they see in a “case” text that is not argumentative. Almost always, the lens text does not explicitly address the case text or only does so cursorily. While there are exceptions to that trend, the benefits of using that model include guiding students away from a simple compare-and-contrast essay, in which they merely present two sides to an argument. It also guides them away from a simple rebuttal essay, in which they merely explain that the lens text is wrong. Please avoid selecting two argumentative texts for the lens unit unless you’ve discussed it with the Director.

Goals

- The primary goal of the lens essay is for students to be able to achieve a baseline reading of some piece of culture using a lens text. In other words, students should be able to defend some central claim about the text they are examining by linking moments in that text to categories or ideas in the lens text.

- Students should continue to use and improve the close reading skills they employed in the first essay.

- In some cases, and for some students, the goals of the essay should include complicating their baseline reading generated by pairing the lens. Students generally accomplish this by locating complicating evidence in the case text in order to reflect critically back on the lens text itself.

Guidelines

- **Type of texts:** The lens essay typically employs a theoretical text as the lens and uses it to examine a piece of art or culture (the same type of text used in the close reading essay). It is possible to use a non-theoretical text as a lens if you employ it in a theoretical way. For example, you could use Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal” as an example of one genre of satire that you would then use to analyze a more modern transformation of the genre.

- **Two types of lens essays:** Your expectations for the lens essay will differ depending on the complexity of the text you assign your students to examine through the lens. You may choose to ask students to analyze a relatively straightforward piece of popular culture or a complex piece of art. If examining a piece of pop culture, the goal in applying the lens will be to develop a thesis about the deeper meaning or cultural significance of a text that
may have initially seemed to be pure entertainment. For example, the application of a Foucauldian lens could turn *The 40 Year Old Virgin* from a gratuitous sequence of crass jokes into a film about overcoming the pathologization of sex in Western culture. If you are examining a more complex piece of art, the goal in applying the lens will typically be to establish new connections and, in turn, new meanings, within the work of art. For example, a piece of Freudian dream theory could be used to explore Poe’s world in “The Tell-Tale Heart.”

- **Pre-draft assignments**: The lens essay assignment sequence should require at least two pre-draft assignments. It is recommended that one assignment focus on applying a lens and another should emphasize an element of the academic essay (a different one that the close reading assignment sequence).
Advice on Teaching the Lens
(from Andrew Albin)

What order is best to teach the components of the lens unit?
The lens unit might be seen to have three important teaching moves:

1. introducing the concept of lens analysis
2. helping students get a grip on the lens text
3. getting students to perform lens analysis

Some people prefer to teach the lens before introducing the case text so students can attack it with as strong a theoretical knowledge as possible; some prefer to get students close reading their case text and developing ideas about it before bringing in the lens. Many have found it very helpful for students to have an idea of what lens analysis looks like before they dive into the lens text itself, so that as they read they can begin to strategically imagine how they’d apply it as a lens down the line.

How to approach the concept of lens analysis?
One successful strategy for introducing the concept of lens analysis is to first get students doing it in a common sense, everyday setting and then showing them how they already know how to perform lens analysis, and what we’re doing is simply formalizing it as an analytical process. Some have found that it’s best to avoid using the terms “lens analysis” or “lens text” immediately, since the unfamiliar terminology can scare the students into a panic. Getting students to think about what a “lens” is, generally, can be a helpful first step.

How to teach lens structure?
It’s important to stress the difference between analysis that simply notices the good fit between lens and case, what some call the “baseline” reading, and analysis that recognizes how the case exceeds the theory of the lens and how this is the real site of interest from which an original point of view may be developed. Students need to be encouraged to not forget their own voice, since the voice of the lens seems so strong and authoritative to them. This is one reason why the lens essay makes motive a more palpable concept for the students – to a degree it’s already built into the structure of the essay type.

How to deal with hostility to the lens text?
This seems to result from the academically opaque rhetorical style as much as the difficulty and sophistication of the lens text. Get students to pay attention to and do exercises in the classroom that demystify both of these aspects, and help your students relate these aspects both to the case text and to their own writing. One of the most frustrating things for students is to get a lens essay rough draft back that needs to be entirely rewritten because they have misinterpreted the lens. You might consider writing your own outline of the lens text for your the students that you make available after they’ve first had a chance to grapple with it on their own.
Three Kinds of Lens Assignments; Three Kinds of Motive
(from Nick Van Kley)

I think that the Brandeis Writing Program has typically produced three different kinds of lens-essay assignments. My distinctions below are a bit simplistic, of course, as many assignments fall somewhere in between these categories, but I think they still offer useful ways of understanding how we do things in this unit and how we discuss motive in the lens essay. Each kind of assignment asks students to use the lens to explain something about a “case” text that isn't already obvious. That’s essentially what we mean by “motive”—that feature of the thesis claim that makes it controversial, debatable, or in some way surprising. Each assignment asks students to notice the non-obvious in different ways. As you begin generating a lens assignment, think a bit about where you think your students can find the room to generate motivated claims. Where do they get to perform an act of revelation?

**Type A: Testing a Critical Definition**

Steve Plunkett used to assign an excellent version of this type of lens assignment in a class on defining satire a year or two ago. Students got a critical account of two kinds of satire—generative and degenerative satire from a literary critic named Steven Weisenburger. They then tested whether or Weisenburger’s account of satire was sufficient to explain what was going on in a particular text that was clearly satirical in some way. The challenge for the students was to notice the ways in which the definitional distinction didn't quite match up with the primary text. Their thesis claims were motivated because they did more than simply put their primary text into one of the two categories. If students were to simply assign one definition to the primary text, they would fail to offer a motivated argument because they would be merely confirming the Weisenburger's account.

**Type B: Understanding a Challenging Concept to Reveal a Hidden Aspect of a Text**

You could imagine an assignment that asked students to read and understand Michel Foucault's account of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon in order to interpret the way power works in a college writing classroom. The virtue of the lens in this instance is that it would reveal otherwise hidden details. Students could argue that the obvious power mechanism (grading, penalties for late assignments, and strict attendance policies, for example) were insufficient for explaining the way power worked in the writing classroom. Using Foucault's account of self-surveillance, they could explain our cover letter assignments, our peer review assignments, and our pervasive rhetoric about the writing process as a way to become a better thinker as the real channels of pedagogical power.

Students' thesis claims are motivated in these kinds of situations only if the thing that the lens text helps them reveal isn't already obvious. If the match between the lens ideas and the primary text is too easy, your students will struggle to articulate motives and to sustain complex analysis over the course of the essay. In those instances where you worry that the match is too simple, you'll have to encourage your students to reflect on the lens text to revise or complicate its ideas in some way.
Type C: Making a Superficially Unrelated Concept Relevant to a Text in Order to Gain a New Perspective

My current lens assignment asked students to read a historical account of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Indian captivity narratives from the American context. They then used their understanding of that narrative tradition to make sense of the way that the recent (terrible) film *Cowboys and Aliens* uses captivity narrative motifs in idiosyncratic ways to re-tell the story of the American West. Because the film does not dramatize a white settler's kidnapping at the hands of a native group, the link is not initially obvious. Over the last few weeks, students noticed that film uses a captivity narrative. However, they also noticed that it replaces Indian captors with alien captors and aligns native and white communities as allies in an attempt to neutralize a colonizing threat. The virtue of the lens essay there was that its awkward alignment with the lens text led to many sites of motive for the students. They had many opportunities to reveal points of disjunction. Provided they found a way to unify their accounts of disjunction under a single thesis claim that explained what the film is trying to do with its adaptation of the captivity narrative, they had a coherent and motivated paper.
Pre-Draft Assignments

UWS instructors are required to assign at least two pre-drafts for the lens essay. It is recommended that one pre-draft assignment focus primarily on using the lens and another focus on a specific “element of the academic essay,” in this case, defining the motive. Though I offer potential variations on these assignments in a few cases, they have been left somewhat vague in order to allow instructors to creatively adapt them to their own courses in more specific ways.

Pre-draft assignments should not be self-contained. In addition to using them as building blocks for the lens essay, instructors are encouraged to use pre-draft assignments as foundations for in class exercises. In most cases, I relate these assignments to exercises that can be performed either in class or on Webct message boards (or both).

Assignment #1: Reflection on the Lens Text

The most crucial element in any successful lens essay is a clear and nuanced understanding of the lens text itself. In order to allow students to grapple with the lens text—and especially its language, which they will be using in their essays—ask them to apply their newly acquired close reading skills to the lens text by exploring a difficult passage or concept in 1-2 pages of writing. You may choose the passages/concepts you would like students to write about, or you may leave it up to their choice. I would recommend assigning passages to students that might be most helpful in writing their lens essays. This assignment is especially helpful if the lens text is particularly complex or challenging.

Assignment #2: Mini Lens Reading

Though you may perform numerous lens readings during class discussion, it is helpful for students to practice applying a theoretical lens in writing before they begin composing their lens essays. One method for doing this is to ask students to read an object or event outside of class through the lens text in 1-2 pages of writing. It is usually advisable to have students focus on the everyday—a Freudian analysis of a dream they had last night or two ways they were “hailed” à la Althusser on their walk back to their dorm room. Students will often provide simple baseline readings that you can then use to demonstrate how to complicate and add complexity to a lens reading in subsequent class discussions.

Courses that offer students a choice between two or more lens texts allow for a more sophisticated version of this assignment. Using a single object or event (chosen by either the instructor or the student), assign students to write 1-2 pages that place the two sources in dialogue. The students should first describe one author’s reading of the object or event and then propose a reading that the other lens author would offer in response. If possible, students may continue with a series of responses and counter-responses.

Assignment #3: Quotation Exercise
Ask students to choose one quotation from the lens text and use it to provide a deeper understanding of a scene from a film or novel that you are reading in class. In addition to teaching lens reading skills, you can use this assignment to focus on the mechanics of quotation. The assignment should require that every quotation have three parts: 1) the lead-in, 2) a parenthetical citation, and 3) substantial analysis.

**Assignment #4: Supplying a Motive**

After discussing Kerry Walk’s eight “motivating moves,” ask students to bring to class a thesis and motive for their lens essays printed on separate sheets of paper. In groups of three, students should pass the sheets of paper with their thesis statements on them to their partners while keeping the motives to themselves. Each member of the group should formulate a motive—writing it beneath the thesis on the sheet of paper—that conforms to one of Walk’s “motivating moves.” After each member of the group has supplied a motive for the other members, the authors can reveal the motives they have chosen one at a time, discussing differences in opinion with the other members of the group. At the end of group work, you may choose a few examples to model during class discussion.

**Assignment #5: Peer Critique of Introductory Paragraph (Motive)**

After discussing Kerry Walk’s eight motivating moves, ask students to draft the introductory paragraphs for their lens essays and bring several copies to class. In small groups, students should 1) identify the motive in each introductory paragraph and 2) identify the “motivating move” that the author has chosen. Students should then discuss how that motive could be strengthened or supply a possible motive if one is found to be nonexistent. In order to save class time, this assignment can also be done on Webct (especially good for classes that meet only once a week). Have students post their introductory paragraphs and assign two students to respond to each post in the same manner they would in small groups in class. In addition to exposing students to the writing of their peers and emphasizing the importance of peer feedback, this assignment allows the instructor access to each student’s thesis and motive before the lens essay is written, allowing him or her to troubleshoot off-track assignments before the student composes an entire draft.

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4 Kerry Walk’s motivating moves are:

1. The truth isn’t what one would expect, or what it might appear to be on first reading.
2. The knowledge on the topic has heretofore been limited.
3. There’s a mystery or puzzle or question here that needs answering.
4. Published views of the matter conflict.
5. We can learn about a larger phenomenon by studying this smaller one.
6. This seemingly tangential or insignificant matter is actually important or interesting.
7. There’s an inconsistency, contradiction, or tension here that needs explaining.
8. The standard opinion(s) need challenging or qualifying.
Sample Lens Essay Questions

1. Develop an argument about three episodes of *I Love Lucy* as seen through the lens of Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* and the work of Judith Butler. In what ways does *Lucy* conform to and/or resist mid-century and post modernist ideals of gender, domesticity, or sexuality?

2. Choose one of the major figures from the “Heroic Age” of Antarctic exploration: Scott, Shackleton, Amundsen, Mawson, or Byrd. Using at least one of our critical sources, develop an argument about how ideologies of empire influenced your chosen explorer’s expedition. How have new ways of viewing the past reshaped the legacies of Antarctic explorers and exploration? What is at stake in the way explorers are represented?

3. Using primary texts in literature, art, and law (Nella Larsen’s *Passing*, Kara Walker’s silhouette museum installations, and the transcript of an important Supreme Court decision), along with a richly evidenced secondary text by critic Randall Kennedy, understand some implications and problems surrounding the social practice of “passing,” the feigning of membership in a dominant racial group. Locate problems, arguments, and questions—both stated and implied—in both the primary and secondary sources. Then, building on the practice you gained in discovering an argument in Essay #1, and using the cases most pertinent to your purpose, formulate and pursue a question of your own. The question will not have been fully highlighted or analyzed in the readings, giving you and your reader the motivation to address it.

4. Bearing in mind the concerns we raised about biological determinism (nature not nurture) in biotechnology and the genome project, develop an argument on the ethical consequences of designing humans through genetic engineering or cloning technologies using either Charles Darwin, Richard Lewontin, or Stephen Jay Gould and Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*.

5. Using the primary source documents on the blackouts, make an argument that extends, complicates, and/or contradicts Jane Jacobs’s thesis in “The Uses of the Sidewalk: Safety” or the thesis of James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in “Broken Windows.”

6. Chose a key “mad” scene from one of the musician biopics listed below. Use the theories of Susan Sontag or Albert Rothenberg to critique the director’s dramatization of madness and its relationship to musical creativity.

7. For the essay assignment, you will choose a particular contemporary practice of friendship as it is represented in popular culture or scholarly literature. Using the sources from this unit, you will make an argument about the ethical and/or political foundations and implications of your chosen friendship practice.

8. Like Hobbes and Rousseau, the American Framers believed they were promoting liberty when they drafted the US Constitution; unlike Hobbes and Rousseau, the Framers came
away with a limited government. Compare the US Constitution to either *Leviathan* or the *Social Contract*. Measure the Framers’ success in establishing the type of liberty they cared about against their theoretical predecessor’s. How did suppressing the power of government affect their level of success?

9. Venus figurines have been recovered in multiple sites in Europe and the Middle East, yet archaeologists remain uncertain about their true meaning. Offer a new interpretation of the Venus figurines based on your understanding of hunter-gatherer society. Use the assigned articles as sources of evidence and to provide a theoretical context for the understanding of iconography.
Sample assignment #1: Lens Analysis of Television Episode
(from Lisa Rourke)

Essay 2: Lens Analysis

Now that you have a solid grounding in the analytical technique of close reading, we can begin to apply that knowledge to other texts. For the primary text of the lens essay we will view an episode from the television series *House* titled “The Tyrant.” In this episode, Dr. Chase and Dr. Cameron are conflicted about treating the patient, a renowned dictator named Dibala from an unnamed African country. For the lens text, we will read excerpts from John Stewart Mill’s essay on Utilitarianism, which argues that the goal of every society should be to maximize the collective happiness. You can approach the essay from the perspectives of Dr. Chase, Dibala, Dr. Foreman and Dr. Cameron (or any combination thereof) to see how the episode adds to, challenges or complicates Mill’s ideals of maximizing the collecting welfare. Your aim is to synthesize your understanding of Mill’s theory with your interpretation of “The Tyrant” in order to construct an argument that you could not have made through close reading alone. You should seek to inform your readers, to open up this television episode in new ways for them by exploring in what ways the episode complicates Mill’s ideas and in what ways Mill’s ideas complicate the episode.

Essay length: 7-8 pages

The first draft of the essay must be submitted electronically to your peers and me no later than 5:00 PM on Wednesday, October 22. Essays must use 1-inch margins and 12 point Times New Roman font. Do not enlarge your punctuation—I can tell. Essays must have a title, be double-spaced and have page numbers. Pre-drafts will be submitted in hard copy in class and must be typed and stapled.

This assignment presents you with a number of new challenges:

1. You will be transferring your close reading skills from one text to another.

2. Mill’s writing is at once accessible and complex. You will encounter many difficult texts during your career at Brandeis, and it is essential that you learn how to make sense of them effectively. Part of your task for this paper is to let your readers know what Mill is trying to say and do, and why.

3. You will be offering an interpretation of “The Tyrant” informed by a Utilitarian philosophy that will help you investigate what the text has to say, how it constructs its meanings, and what the implications of those meanings are. As a result, you will be able to reflect back on philosophical ideas with a refined and even critical perspective.
Goals of the Essay

1. **Open with an engaging introduction that makes your motive clear.** Recall Gordon Harvey’s description of motive as “the intellectual context that you establish for your topic and thesis at the start of your essay, in order to suggest why someone besides your instructor might want to read an essay on this topic or need to hear your particular thesis argued—why your thesis isn’t just obvious to all, why other people might hold other theses that you think are wrong.” Ask of your thesis, “So what? Why would someone care? What’s unexpected here? How is this interesting?” until you can respond with a satisfying answer. The answer will lead you to your motive. Underline your motive in all drafts and revision of this paper so it can be quickly identified.

2. **Create a dialogue between two texts.** Don’t settle for a baseline reading of the points of connection between “The Tyrant” and the lens. Rather, devise a thesis that identifies how (and how well) Utilitarianism as a lens explains the form and function in “The Tyrant.” You will also want to identify a “twist,” a place where your case and the lens don’t match up. This is your opportunity to revise, refine, or even critique the lens—you need not agree with him wholeheartedly, just remember to explain why you disagree and to examine the merits and faults of his argument logically. Essentially, you are being asked to interpret the story and reflect on your lens. As always, close readings of specific passages are required to support and/or complicate your argument.

3. **Grapple with the theory’s central ideas, rather than taking isolated passages out of context to support your ideas.** Whenever you are called on to bring a critical text into an assignment, your essay will not only be judged on the merit of your original ideas but also on how accurately you represent and make use of the critical text. Even when you disagree with the author, you must explain why you disagree, and that requires you to fully understand the author’s position. When you refer to Mill, be sure you engage his main ideas and not a side detail of those ideas.

4. **Document quotations using MLA in-text citation method.** This citation method requires that you cite your sources parenthetically in the text of your essay (as opposed to using footnotes or endnotes). See examples from the close reading assignment sequence.
Pre-Draft 2.1: Understanding the Lens

One method that helps to grasp challenging texts like Mill’s theory of Utilitarianism is called “reverse outlining.” To do this, you create an outline that maps out Mill’s ideas by using the format below. A reverse outline forces you to boil that text down to its constituent ideas, decide for yourself which ideas are the most important, and arrange those ideas in an organized hierarchy. At some level, it is reductive, but as a technique for working out complex ideas, it can be very useful.

Once you have actively read and marked up the essay, produce a reverse outline of the text. Use the following format for your outline, define the concepts and answer the questions in your own words. In addition, cite the page number(s) on which you find your evidence.

I. Utilitarianism
   A. Happiness
   B. Unhappiness

II. According to Mill, what makes something desirable?

III. Why does Mill think that some people will dislike Utilitarianism?

IV. According to Mill, what makes one kind of pleasure more desirable than others?
   What does he say about quantity vs. quality of pleasures?

V. Utilitarian standard

VI. Besides promoting happiness and avoiding pain, what are the bigger goals of Utilitarianism?

PRE-DRAFT 2.1 DUE IN CLASS ON MON., SEP. 29
Pre-Draft 2.2: Mini Lens Analysis

Lens analysis asks you to put two or more texts in conversation in order to produce a reading you couldn’t have made through close reading alone. After reading and considering Mill’s theory of Utilitarianism in relation to “The Tyrant” in detail, choose one character and one scene from the episode and make a mini-argument (two paragraphs) using one of the ideas in the essay to analyze the character’s decisions. Be sure to cite at least one piece of dialogue from the episode in your analysis. This exercise offers a microcosm of the lens essay, and you should be able to use your reading for this pre-draft in the final essay.

PRE-DRAFT 2.2 DUE IN CLASS ON MON., OCTOBER 6
PRE-DRAFT 2.3: Outline For Your Rough Draft

A comprehensive outline will ensure that your paper has a logical structure and evidence that is relevant to your argument. Each paragraph should have a separate claim that supports the thesis, as well as evidence and analysis. In order to organize your paragraphs you will have to select and analyze quotations. The argument should develop as the paper unfolds. In other words, paragraphs should not be interchangeable. The outline should follow the format below:

I. Introduction: Tell me how you’re going to open the essay, your motive and thesis.

II. Body paragraph #1: This should summarize Mill
   A. Topic sentence
   B. Evidence you’re planning to use from Mill (give the quotations and page number)
   C. Restate what Mill says in your own words

III. Body paragraph #2
   A. Topic sentence
   B. Evidence you’re planning to use: I want the specific quotation and a brief explanation of the scene it comes from.
   C. A brief statement of how you will analyze the evidence.
   D. A brief explanation of how your evidence ties to your thesis.

IV. Body paragraph #3
   A. Topic sentence
   B. Evidence you’re planning to use: I want the specific quotation and a brief explanation of the scene it comes from.
   C. A brief statement of how you will analyze the evidence.
   D. A brief explanation of how your evidence ties to your thesis.

Etc… for ALL of the body paragraphs. You should have a minimum of seven body paragraphs, including Mill.

DUE IN CLASS ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 20
Essay 2 Rough Draft Cover Letter

Please write a draft cover letter, addressed to your readers, in which you answer the following questions and present any other concerns that you have. This letter should be typed and should be about three-quarters to a full page long, single-spaced. Attach it to the front of your essay.

1. What do you see as your thesis or main idea? How does this thesis engage both “The Tyrant” and lens and texts?

2. Select your motivating idea from the worksheet distributed in class and report it in your letter. What is your motive? Underline it in your rough draft.

3. How well do you feel you have represented and engaged with Mill?

4. How well do you feel you have performed a close reading of “The Tyrant”?

5. What are the biggest problems you’re having at this point in the writing process? What have you accomplished most successfully?

6. What’s the number one concern about your essay—thesis, structure, use of evidence, persuasiveness, style, and so on—that you’d like your reader(s) to focus their comments on for you?

7. When you revise, what’s the one biggest thing you intend to focus on? How?

DRAFT OF ESSAY #2 PLUS COVER LETTER DUE ELECTRONICALLY BY 5:00 PM ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22 TO ME AND YOUR PEERS
Essay 2 Peer Review

Your goal during peer review is to offer the writer constructive comments that will help him or her revise, literally to “see again,” from a fresh perspective. This is an opportunity to help your partner become a better writer by pushing for true revision, rather than cosmetic tweaking. As you carefully read each essay you have been given:

- Draw a line under awkwardly expressed sentences and phrases whose meanings are unclear.
- Write marginal notes to the writer on anything that puzzles you, explaining why.
- Label the topic of each paragraph; if you cannot determine the topic, put a question mark.

After you have marked it up, read the essay one more time and then write a letter in which you address the following questions:

1. **Thesis and motive**: What is the essay’s thesis or controlling idea? How compelling is the thesis? How arguable is it? What motivating idea from the list distributed in class do you feel the essay adopts, if any? What is the essay’s motive? Restate these in your own words. Don’t assume the writer knows what his or her own essay is about!

2. **Introduction**: Does the essay invite you in with an effective opener? Are context, motive and thesis clear and effective? What could the writer do to improve the introduction?

3. **Lens**: Are theory’s ideas represented accurately? Are they engaged with in a full and meaningful way? Are they put in a productive interpretive conversation with “The Dictator,” or are they simply inserted for the sake of the assignment? Could the lens be removed from the essay without much injury?

4. **Case**: How well does the essay close read specific details from “The Dictator”? Are textual details tagged to the lens’s concepts in laundry list format, or are they analyzed in a thoughtful, unexpected way (i.e., is this just a baseline reading)? Can you identify the “twist”? How effectively is it explored?

5. **Quotation and Citation**: How has the writer incorporated material from their sources into the flow of the paper? Are all three components of a quotation (lead-in, citation, analysis) present? How well are quotations explained and analyzed? Any MLA citation mistakes?

6. The writer has asked you one or more questions in their cover letter. What answers do you have to offer?

Bring a copy of each peer review letter to class on Mon, October 27. Email your peers’ marked up letters and papers to them no later than midnight on Sun., October 26.
Essay 2 Revision and Cover Letter

Each time you hand in a revision, you’ll hand in a cover letter (1/2 to 1 page single-spaced) along with it and your peer reviews. For Essay 2, please answer the following questions and discuss any other concerns you have.

1. What is your thesis? How has it changed from draft to revision?

2. What other changes have you made? Why?

3. What are you most pleased about in this revision?

4. What would you work on, if you had the chance to keep revising?

5. What was the most challenging in your drafting and revision process? How did you approach those challenges?

6. Choose two “Elements of the Academic Essay” (Gordon Harvey)—one that you think works well, and one that feels less successful—and describe, in each case, why.

Be sure to re-read the information on grading criteria to make sure your paper fulfills the requirements.

REVISION OF ESSAY #2 PLUS COVER LETTER AND PEER REVIEW LETTERS THAT YOU WROTE DUE ELECTRONICALLY BY 5:00 PM ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3.
Sample Assignment #2: Lens Analysis of a Cultural Practice
(from Laura John)

UWS7a
ESSAY 2: LENS ANALYSIS
Due Thursday, March 26

For this essay, you will use Eric Hobsbawm’s “The Invention of Tradition” as a critical lens through which you will examine and (re)interpret some cultural practice or space that might usefully be considered an ‘invented tradition’. Read Hobsbawm carefully, but apply him broadly: as he says, any “set of practices … which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” represents an invented tradition (1).

Remember that your aim is to synthesize your understanding of Hobsbawm with your interpretation of an invented tradition in order to create an argument you could not have made through close reading alone. (In other words, you will offer an interpretation of one text (here, we read a tradition) informed by the theoretical claims of another text.)

Your essay should be 6–7 pages long, and should follow the formatting guidelines in the Classroom Expectations of our syllabus.

GOALS OF THE ESSAY:

In addition to continuing work on the goals of Essay 1, this assignment presents you with a number of new challenges, including:

Create a dialogue between two texts. Do not catalogue all of the points of connection between concepts or bodies of evidence. Rather, use relevant concepts to interpret both the lens reading and the subject under scrutiny and to structure your argument. Your thesis should explain how you employ Hobsbawm as a lens to analyze your tradition. You need not agree with the author wholeheartedly; feel free to differ in part or entirely with his theories. Just remember you will need to explain why you agree/disagree and logically examine merits and faults. As always, close readings of specific passages/concepts are required to support and/or complicate your argument.

Grapple with an author’s central ideas, not peripheral passages to support your ideas. Whenever you are called on to bring a critical text into an assignment, your essay will not only be judged on the merit of your original ideas but also on how accurately you represent and make use of the critical text. Even when you disagree with the author, you must explain why you disagree, and that requires you to fully understand the author’s position to begin with. When you refer to Hobsbawm, be sure you engage his main ideas.

Document quotations using MLA (or comparable) in-text citation method. Please note: discussion or lecture in the classroom is not considered a quotable/citable source unless your instructor/professor says otherwise. (I do not say otherwise.)
Pre-Draft 2.1: UNDERSTANDING HOBSBAWM

Due Monday, March 2

The most crucial element in any successful lens essay is a clear and nuanced understanding of the lens text itself. For this exercise, I want you to grapple with our lens text—especially its language, which you will use in your essay—by applying your newly acquired close reading skills.

In one to two double-spaced pages, explore one of the following passages:

- “It is the contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant, that makes the ‘invention of tradition’ so interesting” (2).
- “‘Tradition’ in this sense must be distinguished clearly from ‘custom’ which dominates so-called ‘traditions’ societies” (2).
- “We should not be mislead by a curious, but understandable, paradox: modern nations and all their impedimenta generally claim to be the opposite of novel, namely rooted in the in the remotest antiquity, and the opposite of constructed, namely human communities so ‘natural’ as to require no definition other than self-assertion” (14).

Pre-Draft 2.2: MINI LENS READING

or, “What Would Hobsbawm Say?”

Due Thursday, March 5

For this assignment, you will read an ‘invented tradition’ other than those we’ve discussed in class through our lens text in 1-2 pages. Make connections between Hobsbawm and the object of your analysis—don’t be afraid to take risks in your application of the lens and interpretation of the tradition, but do stick to your source material (avoiding anecdotal evidence, using quotations, citing sources, etc.).

You may find the tradition you choose for this exercise rich enough to use for Essay 2; then again, you may not.

Be prepared to discuss your application of the lens in class. (If it will further your explanation, bring in any related visual aids.)

Pre-Draft 2.3: INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPHS

Due Monday, March 9

For this assignment, I want you to draft the introductory paragraph for your lens essay and bring two copies to class. We will then divide into groups of three and identify both the motive in the introductory paragraph and the “motivating move” that the author uses.
ESSAY 2 ROUGH DRAFT

Please write a draft cover letter, addressed to your readers, in which you answer the following questions and present any other concerns that you have. This letter should be typed and should be about three-quarters to a full page long, single-spaced. Attach it to the front of your essay.

- What do you see as your thesis? Your motive?
- What do you use as your lens?
- What are the biggest problems you’re having at this point in the writing process? What have you accomplished most successfully?
- Tell us one comment you received on Essay 1 (either on your draft or your revision) that you feel you’ve addressed in this draft.
- What’s the number one concern about your essay – thesis, structure, use of evidence, persuasiveness, style, and so on – that you’d like your reader(s) to focus their comments on for you?

Please bring three (3) copies to class
(for workshop and the members of your peer review group)

ESSAY 2 PEER REVIEW

Your goal during peer review is to offer the writer constructive comments that will help them revise, literally to “see again,” from a fresh perspective. This is an opportunity to help your partner become a better writer by pushing for true revision, rather than cosmetic tweaking. As you carefully read each essay you have been given:

- Draw a line under awkwardly expressed sentences and phrases whose meanings are unclear.
- Write marginal notes to the writer on anything that puzzles you, explaining why.
- Also feel free to note things that are done particularly well!

After you have marked it up, read the essay one more time and then write a letter (1-2 pages long) in which you address the following questions:

- **Thesis**: What is the essay’s thesis? How compelling (original and non-obvious) is the thesis? How arguable is it (could another author disagree and offer a different take; does it require evidence for support)? Don’t assume the writer knows what her own essay is about – mistrust that the stated thesis (if there is one) guides the rest of the paper and comment on that as well.

- **Motive**: What is the stated motive? If the motive is nonexistent or unclear, try to offer suggestions as to how it could be improved (perhaps suggest a motivating move).
Sample Assignment: Lens Analysis of a Cultural Practice (cont.)

- **Evidence and Analysis**: Are specific passages from the reading clearly cited/drawn on? Is each instance of textual evidence sufficiently explored? Does the author clearly explain their interpretation? Does analysis clearly connect back to the thesis statement?

- **Structure**: Can you easily identify the important “steps” in the author’s argument? Do they follow one to the next in a logical order? Do they progressively develop, or simply restate the thesis in slightly different terms? (As in, are they getting away form the five-paragraph essay?)

- **Citation**: Are all quotations and paraphrases cited? Are there any citation mistakes?

- If the writer asked any specific questions in their cover letter, please offer answers.

Please bring two (2) copies of each review letter to class
(for me and for the author)

**ESSAY 2 REVISION COVER LETTER**

For Essay 2, please answer the following questions and discuss any other concerns you have.

- What is your thesis? How has it changed from draft to revision?

- How has the way you structure your argument changed from draft to revision?

- What did you find most challenging in the drafting and revision processes? How did you approach those challenges/how did that work out for you?

- Discuss three things mentioned in either peer reviews, conference, or draft comments that you implemented in this revision.

- What are you most pleased about in this revision?

As always, feel free to include any other thoughts or concerns you have about this essay in your letter.
Sample Assignment #3: Lens Analysis of a Film  
(from Vinodini Murugesan)

LENS ASSIGNMENT SEQUENCE

According to a well-known Oscar Wilde aphorism, “Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life”. This is an allusion to what is generally accepted as the Ovidian concept of Nature imitating Art instead of, as we would commonly expect, Art imitating Nature. A good example of Life imitating Art is in the film that we will use as our case in the lens assignment. In Alfred Hitchcock’s Rope, two young intellectuals plan and carry out the murder of their friend as a form of high art. In conjunction with Rope, we will be using French philosopher Michel Foucault’s “Panopticism” – which is a social theory developed and presented in his book Discipline and Punish – as a lens through which to examine it. The idea of the panopticon can be applied to constructs of society that exercise power and control by means of the psychological threat of surveillance. This threat results in an internalized self-surveillance, which makes the panopticon function automatically by making the subjects of observation police themselves because they believe that they are constantly being watched.

For this assignment, you will analyze specific scenes from Rope through a theoretical lens drawn from Foucault’s ‘Panopticism’ to make an original argument about the role of one of these things in the film: the dichotomy between the planning mind and the executing hand, the forms of social surveillance that seem to influence the urge to commit an ‘artistic’ murder, or the intellectual value of Art over (literally) Life. Much like the close-reading paper, the lens essay will identify a central question that your reading of the film will illuminate through original interpretations of specific scenes. Unlike the close-reading assignment, however, your central question in Rope will be framed through Foucault’s ‘Panopticism’, and the insights in it will inform your own. Your aim is to synthesize your understanding of Foucault’s concepts with specific scenes in Rope in order to create an argument you could not have made through close reading alone.

This assignment presents you with a number of new challenges:

- You will be transferring your close reading skills from a text to a film. Close reading scenes from a film will involve not only analyzing the scene and dialogue between the characters, but paying attention to visual cues and filming techniques that cause certain effects to be apparent.

- Foucault’s ‘Panopticism’ is a complex and challenging text, which you will need to understand thoroughly in order to use it effectively as a lens for Rope. You must know what Foucault is trying to say, and why. Take a stance on his ideas; say why you do or do not agree with specific parts of his argument, and do so in a measured and analytical way.

- You will be offering an interpretation of Rope informed by Foucault’s ‘Panopticism’ that will help you investigate what the film’s message could be, how meaning is constructed in the film, and what the implications of those meanings are. As a result, you will be able to reflect on Foucault’s ideas with a refined and even critical perspective.

Your essay should be 7-8 pages long, double-spaced in 12pt.Times New Roman font with one-inch margins.

Goals of the Essay
Continuing the work we began with Essay 1, this assignment asks you to:

- **Open with an engaging introduction that makes clear your motive.** Recall Gordon Harvey’s description of motive as “the intellectual context that you establish for your topic and thesis at the start of your essay, in order to suggest why someone besides your instructor might want to read...
an essay on this topic or need to hear your particular thesis argued – why your thesis isn’t just obvious to all, why other people might hold other theses that you think are wrong.” Ask of your thesis “So what? Why is this important? What is unexpected here? How is this interesting?” Your answer will lead you to your motive. Underline your motive in all drafts and revisions of your paper so that it can be quickly identified.

- **Create a dialogue between two texts.** Try not to settle for a baseline reading of the points of connection between Hitchcock’s *Rope* and Foucault’s ‘Panopticism’. Rather, devise a thesis that identifies how (and how well) Foucault’s idea of the panopticon works as a lens to explain the form and function of institutionalized behavior and self-surveillance in *Rope*. You will also want to identify a ‘twist’, a place where your case and your lens don’t quite match up. This is your opportunity to revise, refine or even critique Foucault – you need not agree with his ideas wholeheartedly, but be sure to explain why you disagree and make sure you *logically examine the merits and faults of the argument*. Essentially, you are asked to both interpret the film and reflect on the lens. As always, close readings of specific scenes in the film are required to support and/or complicate your argument.

- **Grapple with Foucault’s central ideas in ‘Panopticism’ instead of taking isolated passages out of context to support your ideas.** Whenever you bring a critical text into an assignment, your essay will not only be evaluated on the merits of your original ideas, but also on how accurately you represent and make use of the critical text. Even when you disagree with the theorist, you must explain why you disagree, and this requires a full understanding of the theorist’s position to begin with. When you refer to Foucault’s ‘Panopticism’, be sure you engage with his main ideas and not a peripheral detail of those ideas.

- **Document quotations using the MLA in-text citation method.** This citation method requires that you cite your sources parenthetically in the text of your essay (as opposed to using footnotes or endnotes) and that you attach a correctly formatted list of Works Cited to your essay. Please note that discussion and lecture sessions in the classroom are not a quotable/citable source.

**Pre-Draft 2.1: Understanding Foucault**
**Due:**

One method that can help you grasp a difficult text like ‘Panopticism’ is called *reverse outlining*. You may already be using outlines to map out your own essays before you write them. By reversing this process and producing an outline for a text that is already written, you are forced to boil that text down into its constituent ideas, decide for yourself which ideas are the most important, and arrange those ideas in an organized hierarchy. This technique may seem reductive, but it actually is a very useful technique for working out complex ideas and how they are presented as an argument in a text.

Once you have actively read and marked up your copy of Foucault’s ‘Panopticism’, please produce a reverse outline of the text, rephrasing difficult concepts/passages in your own words and noting any keywords that Foucault introduces. Try to break the essay up into just a few major sections, then subdivide these into a few smaller points, then subdivide again into examples and evidence, and so on. Your outline should look something like this:

I. First major section
   a. first point
Sample Assignment: Lens Analysis of a Film (cont.)

i. second point
   1. case study
   2. evidence
   3. example

ii. third point

II. Second major section
   i.
   ii.
   iii.

Once you have completed your outline, stand back from it and consider why Foucault might have chosen to organize his essay in this way. What rhetorical effect was he aiming for? Why do you think so? How successful do you think he was in your opinion? Record your thoughts on the structure of Foucault’s ‘Panopticism’ in a short paragraph.

Pre-Draft 2.2: Locating Panopticism in *Rope*: Drafting a Thesis

Due: ______________________

Lens analysis asks you to put two texts in ‘dialogue’ with each other in order to produce a reading that you could not have made through close reading alone. After considering your two texts – the case (Hitchcock’s *Rope*) and the lens (Foucault’s ‘Panopticism’) - in detail, you will need to find points of conversation between them that will open up new and original insights.

The logic of the lens analysis paper suggests that these points of conversation can vary in kind. Baseline readings catalogue one-to-one matches between lens and case, while readings ‘with a twist’ notice more nuanced and complex interactions; similarly, points of conversation can be relatively straightforward or more subtle and provocative.

- Before you start this pre-draft exercise, work in small groups to brainstorm as many examples of panopticism in modern society that you can think of. (Hint: any institution of social discipline, any technology that promotes self-surveillance and automatic behavior.) Then pick one of these examples, and explain how it functions using the central ideas in ‘Panopticism’.

For this pre-draft, you will locate three kinds of points of conversation between *Rope* and Foucault’s ‘Panopticism’.

1) **Obvious baseline match.** Find one scene or incident in *Rope* that is an obvious example of a panoptic representation, what Foucault would call a ‘mechanism of power’. (Notice that a baseline match functions in some ways as an intentional misreading since it strips away the more complex aspects of Foucault’s argument.)

2) **Non-obvious baseline match.** Find one scene or incident in *Rope* that responds to a more sophisticated version of Foucault’s theory of social control, and which you can use to represent his complex argument more accurately. This example might be less obvious than a baseline match but yield exciting insights about the film through a careful and nuanced analysis.

3) **Mismatch ‘with a twist’.** Find one scene or incident in *Rope* that Foucault’s ‘Panopticism’ cannot account for. In other words, you are looking for a mismatch between the lens and the case which could point you towards your own original reading which will ultimately reflect back on the lens.
Use our LATTE forum for this exercise. Indicate the scene or incident from *Rope* and type out the quotation from Foucault’s ‘Panopticism’ that you are using for each of the three kinds of points of conversation detailed above. Reflect briefly on why each point of conversation qualifies as such. Post your three points of conversation on LATTE by _________________________________.

**Pre-Draft 2.3: Using Quotations and Citations**

**Due: __________________**

Using quotations effectively requires three components to be most effective: lead-in, citation and analysis.

- **The Lead-in.** The lead-in prepares your reader for the source material you are about to reproduce. Give the author’s full name in your first quotation, unless it is a very famous author (e.g. Shakespeare, Foucault, Freud etc.) where it is sufficient to simply use the surname. After this first quotation, use the surname only. When necessary, give some background to your quotations to help orient your reader and to set the scene for the point you want to make. Fit quotations into the grammatical structure of your sentence by:
  - changing your sentence structure to fit the quotation
  - using only part of the quotation
  - deleting words that impede the grammar with ellipses
  - adding words to aid the grammar with square brackets

Finally, identify and introduce quotations with one of the following methods:
  - *Introduction and colon:* In fact, Foucault’s idea of the school as a social institution takes on an ominous tone when one considers that it is Brandon’s sense of intellectual superiority that leads him to think that his ‘artistic murder’ is above the law: “How is power to be strengthened in such a way that, far from impeding progress, far from weighing upon it with its rules and regulations, it actually facilitates such progress?” (208)
  - *Introductory phrase:* According to Foucault, the Panopticon could also be used as “a machine to carry out experiments, to alter behaviour, to train or correct individuals.” (203)
  - *Subordination using ‘that’:* The school, a social institution focused on the training of thought and behavior, is where intellectuals like Brandon Shaw learn that “it gives ‘power of mind over mind.”’ (206)
  - *Interrupted quotation* (less common): “Is it surprising,” Foucault asks, “that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?” (228)

- **Citation.** Punctuate your citations correctly, and use the correct MLA in-text citation format. Refer to *A Writer’s Reference* or *The MLA Handbook* for formatting guidelines.

- **Analysis.** Remember the distinction between evidence and analysis you learned while working on your close-reading essay. This applies to your lens essay as well. Here, the citation is your evidence; you need to provide the analysis. A good rule of thumb is this: however long your citation is, your analysis should be at least one and a half times that length.

For this assignment, choose one quotation from Foucault’s ‘Panopticism’ and one scene from *Rope*. Write 1-2 pages about that scene, incorporating Foucault in quotation as a lens to explain the scene’s form and function. Make sure you use close reading to stay attuned to the ways the text, at the local level, makes impressions on you; use Foucault to make sense of those impressions and the ideas of social discipline and self-surveillance they support. Make sure that all three components of the quotation – lead-in, citation, and analysis – are present.
ESSAY 2: FIRST DRAFT & COVER LETTER
Due: ______________________

Please write a draft cover letter, addressed to your readers, to go with your first draft. Your cover letter should be comprehensive and about 1 single-spaced page long. In this letter, you should answer the following questions and present any other concerns you might have at this stage of your paper. Attach the cover letter to the front of your paper.

1. What do you see as your thesis?
2. Does this thesis engage both Rope and Foucault’s ‘Panopticism’? In what ways does your thesis use ideas from ‘Panopticism’ to enrich, alter or complicate the film?
3. What is your motive? Underline it in your first draft.
4. How well do you think you have represented and engaged with Foucault’s ‘Panopticism’?
5. Which scenes of the film have you performed close-readings of in order to make your argument?
6. What difficulties do you face at this point in the writing process?
7. What are your most significant accomplishments thus far in the writing process?
8. What paragraph, sentence or turn of phrase are you proudest of in this draft? Which idea are you proudest of? Is there an area you are unhappy about in this draft? Why?
9. Indicate two elements of your essay – thesis, structure, use of evidence, persuasiveness, style, etc. – that would you be most interested in having your respondents focus on in their comments.
10. What do you intend to focus on most heavily when you revise your essay? How do you intend to do this?

Please bring 3 copies of your first draft to class:
one for me, and two for the members of your peer review.

ESSAY 2: PEER REVIEW
Due: ______________________

Your goal during the peer review is to offer constructive comments that will help the writer revise his/her work, literally, to ‘see again’ from a fresh perspective. You help your partner become a better writer by pushing for true revision instead of cosmetic tweaking. As you carefully read each essay you have been given:

- Underline any sentences or phrases which are unclear or awkwardly expressed.
- Write marginal notes to the writer on anything that puzzles you, explaining why.
- Label the topic of each paragraph; if the topic is difficult to pinpoint, mark this by putting a question mark next to the paragraph.

After you have marked it up, read the essay one more time. Then, write a letter in which you address the following questions:

- Thesis and motive: What is the thesis, or controlling idea, of the essay? How compelling is it? How arguable is it? What is the essay’s motive? Restate the thesis and motive in your own words.
- Introduction: Does the essay invite you in with an effective opener? Does the writer make the context, motive, and thesis clear in the introductory paragraphs? What could the writer do to improve the introduction?
- Lens: Are Foucault’s ideas represented accurately? Are they engaged with in a full and meaningful way? Are they put in a productive, interpretive conversation with the film, or are they simply inserted for the sake of the assignment? Could Foucault be removed from the essay without much injury?
Sample Assignment: Lens Analysis of a Film (cont.)

- **Case:** How well does the essay close-read specific scenes from *Rope*? Are these close-readings tagged to Foucault’s concepts in laundry list format, or are they analyzed in an engaged way (i.e. is this just a baseline reading?) Can you identify the ‘twist’? How effective is it?
- **Quotation and Citation:** How has the writer incorporated material from their sources into the argument of the paper? Are all three components of a quote (lead-in, citation and analysis) present? How well are quotations explained and analyzed? Are there any MLA citation mistakes?
- In his/her cover letter, the writer has asked you to give focused feedback on specific issues. What answers or insights are you able to offer on these issues?

**Be prepared to review your feedback with the author in class and discuss concrete revision possibilities. Please bring a copy of each review letter to hand back to each author.**

**ESSAY 2: REVISION COVER LETTER**

**Due: __________________**

Each time you hand in a revision, you will hand in a cover letter and all your peer reviews. Please write a comprehensive cover letter, addressed to your readers, to go with your revision. Your cover letter should be about 1 single-spaced page long. In this letter, you should answer the following questions and present any other concerns you might have at this stage of your paper.

- What is your thesis? How has it changed from draft to revision?
- What is your motive? Underline it in your revision. How has it changed from draft to revision?
- What are you most satisfied with in this revision?
- What would you target, if you had a chance to continue revising?
- What were the most challenging aspects of your drafting and revision process? How did you tackle these challenges?

**Attach the cover letter to the front of your paper.**
Sample Assignment #4: Lens Analysis of a Myth
(from Melanie Kingsley)

Lens Essay-Assignment Sequence

Essay Two Overview:

In this second assignment, you will analyze the Quiché Maya Creation Myth, “The Popol Vuh,” through the lens of structuralism and the analytical work of a French anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss. The aim of this assignment is to learn to engage both theoretical scholarship and your subject of analysis with equal vigor and understanding. Your goal is to write a 6-7 page essay where you begin to grapple with the role of myth in culture by exploring the following ideas:

How would Levi-Strauss analyze the Popol Vuh? What might he say about the structure and content of the myth? Is his form of analysis useful? What can it help us learn about the Popol Vuh and creation myths in general? What is it missing or where does it fall short?

As the guidelines in the syllabus state, your essay should be 6-7 pages long with 12 point Times New Roman Font with 1” margins on each side (please change the default on your word processors if it is not), black ink (colored ink will not be accepted), with pages numbered and your name (whether as a footer or a header).

Goals of the Essay: In addition to those goals from the Close Reading (Argumentation, Analysis, Interpretation, and Audience), please keep in mind the following

1. **Maintaining a Voice**-any purely theoretical text tends to present the world as black and white. The reality is much more subtle however. The point of this essay is to try and not only understand the object of analysis through the lens but also to find the subtleties of both the texts so as to create your own argument. As a result, it is important to engage both texts equally. You do not have to simply agree with what Levi Strauss would have thought of the Popol Vuh. In fact, if you can find a place where you think Levi Strauss’s argument is faulty or missing something even better as it allows you a place for your own voice.

2. **Presentation of another’s argument**-it will be important here to have a handle and to be able to present Levi Strauss’s main arguments. The point is not to take a single line or peripheral passage and focus solely on that, but rather to understand the entirety of Levi Strauss’s ideas and how they can be utilized in the analysis of a secondary text.

3. **Citation**-while handling multiple texts and presenting ideas that are not your own, it is very important in academic writing to be able to present your reader with the information necessary to see on their own how you came to your conclusions. As such, proper citation of your sources, in this case we will be using MLA style or the American Anthropological Association style citation (a form of CMS), is an imperative.
Pre-draft Assignment 2.1: Reverse Outline of Levi Strauss’s Structural Study of Myth
Due Tuesday, March 2, at the beginning of class

In order to use any theoretical text to analyze any other object, it is important to fully understand the analytical position of the text and the subtleties of the argument. In that vein, I am asking you to carefully read Structural Study of Myth and write a 3-page, double-spaced, outline of the main arguments presented in the text. This is your opportunity to not only pull out some interesting quotations of the text but also being to think about what the text means. The outline should have the following format:

A. General Summary of Structural Study of Myth
   a. 3-4 sentences summarizing the main ideas of book
   b. Key terms - please pick out and define any key terms that are presented in the article

B. Section 1
   a. 3-4 sentences summarizing the main ideas of the passages
   b. Quotations/General thoughts about specific passages with page numbers indicated which you find important to think about
   c. For every quotation please follow it up with 1-2 sentences explaining what about the quote is important or what the quote means

C. Section 2…
   Etc. Each section should follow the same format as the first

Print out 2 copies of your outline and bring it to class. In addition, upload the assignment to Latte before class.

Pre-draft Assignment 2.2:
Application of Levi Strauss’s ideas to the 1st Creation in the Popol Vuh
Due Thursday, March 4 at the beginning of class

For this part of the assignment, you will pick out a single passage (chapter) from the 1st creation of the Popol Vuh to analyze through the lens of Levi-Strauss. Using the outline you made of his work, try and find connections and applications between the passage you picked and Levi Strauss’s ideas. In your write up, please indicate which passage you have chosen and write a 3-4 sentence paragraph summarizing what events took place. Then write an additional page, double-spaced, applying the lens and giving your own interpretation. Remember to include citations in your discussion.

Print out 2 copies of your assignment and bring them to class on Thursday.

Pre-draft Assignment 2.3: Thesis and Motive Development
Part 1-Due Sat. March 6 at 12 pm on Latte; Part 2-Due Mon. March 8 at 12 pm on Latte

A strong essay begins with a strong thesis statement. The goal of this assignment is to help you develop a thesis statement for your lens essay. Before you begin, like in the close reading, first review Gordon Harvey’s criteria for a strong thesis statement in “Elements of the Academic Essay”. Second, review your review outline of Structural Study of Myth and your notes of the Popol Vuh. Next, compose a thesis statement for your essay that, as Harvey’s criteria indicates, is arguable but true, focuses on the texts and can be discussed within the relatively short space of 6-7 pages. In addition, considering our discussion of motives, please write a motive for your thesis. Together, your motive and thesis should comprise at minimum 2-3 sentences and will be the basis of your introduction. Post these sentences on Latte by 12 pm on Saturday March 6. Next, read the two statements from your other group members and give them your thoughts to be posted on Latte by 12 pm on Monday March 8.
Sample Assignment Sequence: Lens Analysis of a Myth (cont.)

Draft of Essay and Draft Cover Letter
Due Thursday, March 11, at the beginning of class
Bring in to class your rough draft of your Lens Essay. It must be at minimum 5 pages in length with a working title, 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced, 1” margins, page numbered and have your name.

In addition, please attach a cover letter for your peer reviewer in which you address the following:
1. What are you trying to communicate with your reader? What is the main idea in this essay that you are trying to address?
2. What are you having the most difficulty with at this stage of the writing process? Be specific in which sections or aspects of the paper you are struggling and would like to address with them (this could be your thesis, introduction, use of evidence, general structure, or the like).
3. What do you think is the best part of your essay? Which part or sentence do you just adore?

NOTE that this should be written in the form of an actual LETTER! Print 3 copies of the Draft Essay and Cover letter in BLACK ink and drink them to class on Thursday, March 11.

In addition, BEFORE class, upload your draft and cover letter to Latte in the link provided.

Peer Review Response Letter
Due Tuesday, March 16, at the beginning of class
Write a 2-page, double-spaced, letter to each of your peer group members as a response to their draft essays. The goal is to provide constructive comments and criticisms to the writer in order to help them with the revision process. Having others read your work is one of the best ways to see it in a new light and continue to make progress in developing your academic writing.

The first step is to read and mark the essay. In it, please underline what you believe to be the thesis statement. In addition, mark any phrases or vocabulary choices that you do not understand, find confusing or awkward. Write short commentary in the margins on anything that you find puzzling or good and explain why.

The second step is to draft a written response to the author in which you address the following:
1. What is the thesis? Is it a strong thesis (according to Harvey’s and our in-class discussion of what makes a good thesis)? If yes, how is it strong and if no, how can it be improved?
2. Is the introduction effective in setting up the rest of the essay? Does it draw the reader to reading the paper? Do you know why you should care about reading it (the answer to this should not be because it is an assignment)?
3. Is there evidence to support the claims being made and if so, is it used effectively and with interpretation? Is there evidence lacking?
4. Is the conclusion satisfactory? Why or why not?

NOTE that this should be written in the form of an actual LETTER! Print 2 copies of your response letters as well as the marked drafts with you to class on Tuesday, March 16.

In addition, BEFORE class, upload your responses to Latte.

Final Draft of Close Reading Essay and Revision Cover Letter
Due Tuesday, March 23 at the beginning of class
After discussions with your peers and conferences with me, you should revise your paper. It should be about 6-8 pages in length, double-spaced, with 12 point Times New Roman font, 1” margins, and a works cited. In addition, you should write a revision cover letter in which you address the following:
1. What is your thesis? Has it, and if so, how has it, changed from the draft?
2. What were the major challenges you had during the drafting and revision of this essay?
3. What are you most proud of having accomplished with this revision?

NOTE that this should be written in the form of an actual LETTER! A single copy of both documents should be printed and brought into class on Tuesday, March 23, to be handed in to me.
Sample Assignment #5: Being the Lens

(Jacques Dupuis)

This exercise is intended to introduce students to the activity of applying a lens before tackling the task in a formal essay.

Before the class, find an object of scrutiny—a short YouTube clip (<10 seconds, often referred to as “YouTube haiku”) is good, preferably one with some unexpected humor. The trick to a good object of scrutiny is that it be open to many types of interpretation (psychological, metaphorical, engineering problem, economic, etc.). The clip I use shows someone attempting to scooping ice cream into a bowl—the ice cream unexpectedly flips onto the table. This is the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xfZ_u4qIhU

The second preparatory step is to write various roles on slips of paper for students to take on when looking at the object—these could range from vocations and careers (engineer, physicist, psychologist) to specific individuals (Isaac Newton, Freud, even the instructor!). Either each individual student will be given a unique role, or pairs of students will share a role and work together.

Begin the activity in class by having the students draw a role from a hat without revealing it to anyone else. Then, show the object of scrutiny with minimal explanation. Finally, have the students—one-by-one or group-by-group—interpret or describe the object as their assigned role might. It is the job of the rest of the class to guess what the describer’s assigned role is. By having the other students guess in a charades-style game, this forces all students to become comfortable with understanding the object of scrutiny from various points of view, handling a lens from both a creator’s perspective (in UWS, the writer) and from a consumer’s perspective (the reader).
6. The Research Essay

Guidelines

The research essay requires students to use multiple sources in order to establish a context within which they will situate their original thesis. It is both the longest and most complex essay of the semester and, therefore, requires a carefully considered sequence of pre-draft assignments that encourage students to develop their original idea, build a researched context for their argument, and structure their essay effectively. Because it uses skills from both lens and close reading skills, the research essay assignment sequence is typically the third of the course’s three units. The typical length of a research essay is between ten and twelve pages.

Goals

- Teaching students to take part in academic dialogue by situating their own ideas in a researched context
- Familiarizing students with the skills and resources used in college level research
- Continuing to apply and develop both the writing and reasoning skills emphasized in the close reading and lens assignment sequences

Guidelines

- **Texts:** Because it is a research essay, students will choose most of their own texts. However, it is often beneficial to give students one or two texts to structure their work. These texts can serve as the topic of the assignment (e.g. everyone does research on the same film) or as a theoretical grounding for their research (e.g. everyone researches around the same theoretical foundation).
- **The research question:** Since they will be responsible for supplying most of the texts for this assignment, students should be given a bit more freedom to choose their own topics. It is possible to do this while still keeping the focus on the assignment very specific (e.g. “explore the film Rebecca from an anthropological perspective” or “analyze the historical transformation of satire as a genre using a contemporary example”). Because students are given freedom to pursue their own interests, you will want to be able to give them feedback and make sure they are on track before they write their essays. Be sure to assign some sort of research proposal so that you can troubleshoot problems early in the writing process.
- **The writing prompt:** In addition to the usual formatting specifications (see the writing prompt guidelines), be sure to clearly articulate 1. the number of sources students are required to use on the assignment (typically at least five), 2. the types of sources students are and aren’t allowed to use, and 3. the requirement that students directly engage with the central idea of each of each source (i.e. they may not just quote a peripheral idea). Placing these requirements up front will provide clear guidelines to refer back to when encouraging revision and explaining your grades.
- **Pre-draft assignments:** The research essay assignment sequence should require at least three pre-draft assignments. It is recommended that two assignments focus on developing and researching the essay’s central claim and another should emphasize an element of the academic essay (most likely evidence, analysis, or structure, since these are especially important in the research essay). Model pre-draft assignments for the research essay are listed on the following page.
Advice on Crafting the Research Unit
(from Kerry Walk, Princeton University)

Almost every paper students write at Brandeis will draw on written sources—usually primary, sometimes also secondary. Who supplies the sources? In most cases, the professor, who orders textbooks and/or assembles a course packet. In less frequent but important cases, students either supplement the readings assigned by the professor or do all of the research themselves; the JP and Senior Thesis most obviously fit this category, but students write research papers in many courses, including the Writing Seminar freshman year.

There are many ways to prepare undergraduates for this most challenging of assignments, but one of them is not to give students plenty of advance notice and leaving the rest up to them. Even seniors rarely have enough experience (or discipline) to take a research project from beginning to end without assistance. Following are ideas for helping students produce research papers that are worth writing—and worth reading.

- **Define the project.** Many students think a research paper is a report on a topic rather than a unique contribution to or viewpoint on a field of knowledge. Let students know which kind of "research paper" you want: a report or an argument. (You might even distribute model papers either by students or by scholars.) And instead of telling students, "Write on anything you'd like that has to do with this course," consider carving out a broad yet delimited area for the research paper. Doing so will provide structure (and thus discourage plagiarism) as well as stimulate students' interest in each other's projects. In a course on foreign policy, for example, you might limit the area to U.S. foreign policy in Iraq; in a course on developmental psychology, to disorders affecting children and adolescents.

- **Sequence the research paper:** Whether it's 10 pages long or 80, a research paper is a major undertaking. You can assist students by breaking down the process into a sequence of assignments—for example, proposal, literature review (or annotated bibliography), draft—and provide students with feedback on each. If you're working with students on independent research projects, you can ask them to submit a research plan that includes assignments and deadlines of their own.

- **Involve students in each other’s research and writing process.** By breaking down the process into stages, you create opportunities for students to give each other feedback on their research and writing. Students can workshop each others' proposals in class, give research presentations, and exchange drafts in small groups. See Section 2, "Writing and the College Classroom," and Section 3, "The Writing Workshop."

- **Formally introduce students to source-based research methods in your field or discipline.** By definition, undergraduates are generalists; even seniors are unlikely to be familiar with the major journals, indexes, and special tools (such as Stata) in your field. The simplest way to introduce students to source-based research is to ask a Subject Specialist from the University library to reach part of a class or an extra session on discipline-based research. The librarian can even make this session a hands-on workshop in an electronic classroom followed by one-on-one research conferences.
Helping Students Narrow Their Topics
(from Andrew Albin)

How can we help students narrow down too-broad research topics?

- Get students to differentiate between the object of analysis (the text/event/practice/film/song they’re interrogating) and the research they’re conducting (which yields sources that make up the object of analysis as well as the critical methodology used to examine that object).
- Ask your students who, what, where, when to narrow down abstract fields of research topics. Demand concrete answers: Who does your topic concern? What are your research questions? What’s the scholarly context? What issues does your topic address? Where is your topic discussed? Where does your topic take place? When does your topic take place?
- Once these are decided, asking how and why, two questions that generate analytical thought, will usually lead students to the argument of their paper.
- As students develop their topics and get more specific, you can fire off “so what?” provocations to help them gain a sense of motive.

We might say there are two types of motive for the research essay: (1) a textual tension/question/problem that needs to be resolved (the basic motive we teach students for close reading and lens analysis) and (2) an aporia in the discourse surrounding the object of analysis that can’t be talked about until it’s been researched. Note that, especially for a research paper, motive can be difficult to reduce to a single sentence, such that the answer to “so what, why should I care?” develops over the course of an argument.

- An in-class trick: go to the library and check out a stack of books relevant to the wide range of issues a sample, broadly-focused research paper would need to cover. Bring the stack to class, pile it in the center of the room, and ask them how they’d account for all of them? A visual trick that can have an impact.

How to avoid giving them their research topic/thesis during conference?

- Don’t hold their hand until they’re genuinely lost; they need to try and fail before you give them direction. The more hands off you are, the better in the long run—otherwise you end up with a bunch of papers representing your point of view, not the student’s.
- Pick their brain as a “buddy” rather than as an “instructor” during conferences. Don’t be afraid to admit you don’t know everything about their topic—it’s part of their job to educate you on their research topic, so ask them for that. Play dumb.
- Sometimes just asking “why did you choose this topic?” can be insightful.
• They’re learning how to ask the right questions to do research, so they need to be able to identify what went wrong in their process. Ask them, “What is not working here?” They’re smart, they can answer you.

How to foster connection-making among sources?

• Remind them that close reading and lens analysis are two tools they’ve learned to be used in the research essay, that the semester has been building up to the research essay where they get to write about what they want, what many of them enrolled in your course to do.

• Students often fall in the trap of saying there’s no research out there because they’re looking for the “perfect source.” If you hear complaints that they can’t find such a source, or if you see such a source on their annotated bibliography, ask them, “Why do I need to read your paper, then?” Remind them that we’re interested in their ideas, their voice, and we need to always hear that above the voices of their sources.

• Explain to students that they need to develop regions of expertise in order to answer questions they have about their object of analysis. One way to help them do this is to forbid them in their searches from including the title of the “text” they’re writing about. Force them to separate that text from relevant areas of critical focus.

• Two annotated bibliography to beware
  1. a pile of sources whose annotations don’t dialogue at all (i.e., a book report, a habit they import from high school)
  2. a pile of sources whose annotations all say the same thing (this usually means the student hasn’t read their sources)
Pre-Draft Assignments

UWS instructors are required to assign at least two pre-drafts for the research essay. It is recommended that one pre-draft assignment focus primarily on the research process and another focus on a specific “element of the academic essay.” Because the research essay will be the longest piece of writing most UWS students have ever composed, it is often helpful to focus on structure. Though I offer potential variations on these assignments in a few cases, they have been left somewhat vague in order to allow instructors to creatively adapt them to their own courses in more specific ways.

Pre-draft assignments should not be self-contained. In addition to using them as building blocks for the lens essay, instructors are encouraged to use pre-draft assignments as foundations for in class exercises. In most cases, I relate these assignments to exercises that can be performed either in class or on Webct message boards (or both). Because the research essay unit is usually the longest, you might consider assigning more the two required pre-drafts.

Assignment #1: Research Proposal

Ask students to write a 1-2 page research proposal. The proposal is students’ first step in the research paper writing. Its function is to provide space to begin brainstorming and narrowing down the research topic, generate ideas relating to the research topic and the essays read in class, and formulate questions they may wish to consider when writing. The research proposal is an essential step in making sure your students formulate topics that will be viable research papers. Many instructors hold short five to ten minute conferences with each student after receiving the research proposal to troubleshoot any potential issues. As you read through the many examples of research proposals, you will notice that some require students to know more about their proposed topic than others. The information you request of your students will determine whether this assignment should be due before or after the library session.

Assignment #2: Source Analysis

Ask students to write 1-2 pages complicating and analyzing the argument of one of the sources for their research essay (this usually works best with secondary sources). This assignment allows students to practice their analytical skills—an important “element of the academic essay”—while beginning to define their own position in relation to the broader discourse on their research topic. Because of its narrow focus, this assignment has the potential to lead to over reliance on one source in the research essay. It is important to remind students that this essay is meant to model the kind of analysis they should be doing less formally for every secondary source their will use in their paper.

Assignment #3: Annotated Bibliography

In addition to motivating students to think critically about their sources, this assignment allows instructors to check for deficiencies and biases in the collection of texts students have chosen to use in their research essays. Guidelines for both the composition of the bibliography and the contents of the annotations should be clearly defined by the instructor. The instructor should specify what kinds of sources primary/secondary, academic/non-academic,
print/electronic, &c. students are required to gather. Each annotation should include: 1) a brief description of the author’s thesis, 2) a sentence or two describing how this thesis relates to the broader discourse on the topic, and 3) a description of how the student will use the source in his or her paper.

Assignment #4: Literature Review

This assignment can take the place of an annotated bibliography, or it can be written after it (possibly for extra credit). The literature review places the sources (usually only the secondary sources) for the research essay in dialogue, outlining a few of the major topics of debate and the major critical positions on each topic. A literature review is not thesis driven; it merely describes the context within which the student will situate the thesis of his or her research essay.

Assignment #5: Peer Critique of Introductory Paragraph (Roadmap)

After discussing the roadmap sentence as a common component of introductions in longer essays, ask students to draft the introductory paragraphs for their research essays and bring several copies to class. In small groups, students should discuss 1) the construction of the road map sentence and 2) the effectiveness of the structure the sentence proposes for the essay. I find that requiring a road map sentence in longer essays is important not only in making student writing easier for a reader to understand, but also in keeping students focused in the structure of their essays. In order to save class time, this assignment can also be done on Webct (especially good for classes that meet only once a week). Have students post their introductory paragraphs online and assign two students to respond to each post in the same manner they would in small groups in class. In addition to serving as a sort of mini peer review, this assignment allows the instructor access to each student’s thesis, motive, and essay structure before the lens essay is written, allowing him or her to troubleshoot off track assignments before the student composes an entire draft.

Assignment #6: Reverse Outline

Because research essays often require a bit more time for revision, you might consider assigning a written exercise after the initial draft has been turned in. In addition to highlighting a specific skill, the placement of this assignment will make students more focused on the revision process as a whole. The best assignment for teaching structure is a reverse outline. Ask each student to go through his or her research essay writing down the central claim of each paragraph in the form of a formal outline. In addition to emphasizing basic skills—such as the idea that every paragraph must have a central claim—this assignment gets students to reflect on the structure of their own work. Though it is possible to turn this into an in class exercise, I have found that the reverse outline often makes hidden redundancies, logical gaps, and structural indirection more obvious to the author, thus reducing the need for peer feedback. In addition to the reverse outline itself, you might ask each student to write a brief reflection detailing the revision ideas they have come up with during the process of writing the outline.
Sample Research Questions

1. Select a performer, composer, performance practice, or musical genre to research. Using a variety of sources, discuss how your chosen topic sheds light on the connection between music and madness.

2. In this essay, you’ll interrogate a paradox, contradiction, tension or gap in an apocalyptic film of your choosing; drawing on Catherine Keller’s theory of the “apocalypse pattern” or René Girard’s theory of sacrifice, and other sources that you locate, you’ll develop an argument about the significance of the way the film employs apocalypse.

3. Research one feature of university life. In a 10-12 page essay, analyze what it reveals about the university’s “civilizing process,” and about how members of the university community have both endorsed and resisted that process.

4. Drawing on our discussions of the possible risks of biocolonialism, biopiracy, and bioinformatics within bioengineering and the social effects of interactive machines and cultural interfaces, locate an instance in the realm of art, televisual media, computer technology, business, science, and/or the law where machines replace humans or create a new type of human interaction. Make an argument about the effects such changes could have on a specific context of your choosing, and discuss how justifiable they are in either ethical, economic, and/or scientific terms. Inform your argument with relevant research.

5. Choose a film to evaluate, test, explore, or critique the assigned critical theories. Locate sources about the film to help you make your case.

6. Choose one text and discuss how Antarctic fact and fantasy conflict, play off each other, or become confused. How does the tension between fact and fiction produce a problem, insight, or set of contested meanings around Antarctica? What does this dialectic say about the process of exploration itself? About Antarctica as a distinct place in history?

7. Choose any Shakespeare play and research its treatment of a particular aspect or element of love (such as courtship, marriage, sexuality, or gender roles) to argue for how this representation reflects Shakespeare's commentary on Renaissance notions of love and relationships. You may also choose to consider how Shakespeare adapts his source texts in order to present his critique.

8. Choose an apocalyptic text (or set of texts) that fascinates and puzzles you—and illuminates something about the role of the apocalyptic pattern in contemporary U.S. culture. Appropriate selections might range from television commercials to music to scholarly books. Develop an argument about your core text or set of texts by situating it in a social or historical context and drawing on at least one critical framework.
Annotated Syllabus: An Argument Requiring Research
(from Kerry Walk, Princeton University)

Week 7

Class 1
• writing assignment*, finding a topic and moving from topic to question/problem
  ➔ We discuss the sources students have read with a view to coming up with topics. Students do a series of freewriting exercises as part of the discussion. They leave with a strong interest.

Class 2
• Library session on available resources, evaluating sources
  ➔ We introduce students via an electronic treasure hunt to the Main Catalog and some other electronic databases. Students get familiar with Firestone through a fetch-it exercise. The skim and report on the print sources they’ve found, and we discuss the principles they’ve used to evaluate the sources.

Week 8—Proposal Conferences

About Proposal Conferences: At the end of this week, we’ll discuss your ideas for your essay. Come to conference prepared to present your ideas. You should, of course, have identified the cartoons you plan to focus on and at least a few other sources you plan to use.

Class 1
• Reading Assignment: Your research materials
• Writing Assignment: Primary source analysis
• In-class: Moving from topic to question; workshop on structure and stitching
  ➔ Students do a freewrite comparing their current and their previous experiences writing research papers; we discuss, focusing on current challenges. Students fill in the following sentence, and we discuss: “I am research _______ because I
• want to know _______ in order to understand how/why _________. We read and discuss an excellent student essay in terms of research problem/question; source use (we look at the reference list; also, pairs do the form/function exercise, and we discuss); and stitching (different pairs look at boxed transition points, and we discuss principles).

Class 2
• Reading Assignment: Your research materials
• Writing Assignment: Paper proposal
• In-class: Workshop paper proposals; workshop on paragraphing; discussion of oral presentations
  ➔ We workshop 3 paper proposals as a large group, then small groups workshop the rest. We try to help the writer refine the question or problem, make stronger connections with the sources, and expand the range of sources. For the
paragraphing workshop, we do the paragraph puzzle in pairs, generate the 4 Fs (focus, flow, form, and function), look at a paragraph from some excellent student writing, then look at some problematic paragraphs and advise the writer. We finish by discussing the oral presentation; if time, we generate categories for evaluating the presentations.

**Week 9—Research Presentations**

**About Research Presentations:** Prepare a 3-minute presentation on an interesting aspect of your research. The best way to go is to use a problem/solution structure: make your audience aware of a question, problem, or issue in the materials you’re examining, then suggest how you’ve addressed or worked through it. Visual aids are essential!

**Classes 1 & 2**
• In-class: Research Presentations
  → I usually do this in two classes. Three-minute presentations. No A/V (takes up too much time). One question (perhaps pre-assigned?) after each presentation.

**Week 10—Group Conferences**

**About Group Conferences:** We’ll be having group conferences on your drafts this time around. You will need to read the drafts of the other members of your Writing Group before your conference and be prepared for discussion. While you need not write out your Draft Responses*, you should make copious notes to speak from.

**Class 1**
• **Draft of Essay #3** due with Draft Cover Letter*
• In-class: Workshop on structure (line of argument)
  → We do my lesson on line of argument, but I precede this by walking students through two “befores” and “afters.”

**Class 2**
• Reading Assignment: Workshop materials
• Writing Assignment: Draft Response* to draft writers
• In-class: Draft workshop, focusing on thesis, structure, sources
  → Self-explanatory, but we really do focus on structure and source use a lot. I want to see a dynamic structure, a strong line of argument, and a broad repertoire of source use, to say nothing of proper source integration and citation.

**Week 11**

**Class 1**
• Reading Assignment: Workshop materials
• Writing Assignment: Draft responses to draft writers*
• In-class: Draft workshop and some other needed workshop
Self-explanatory, but the student on the hot seat pre-circulates his or her own draft this time. We want to workshop the latest version. We also do another workshop on whatever’s needed by the most number of students.

Class 2
- Reading Assignment: Workshop materials
- Writing Assignment: Draft responses to draft writers*; also, bring 3 copies of your latest draft for your writing group
- In-class: Draft workshop and some other needed workshop
  - Self-explanatory, but the student on the hot seat pre-circulates his or her own draft this time. We want to workshop the latest version. Writing groups meet to look at introductions and/or some other aspect of their drafts. They set up a time to continue their meeting outside of class.

Week 12

Revision of Essay #3 due with Revision Cover Letter*
Sample Research Proposal Assignments

Sample Research Proposal Assignment #1

The proposal is your first step in your research paper writing. Its function is to provide space to begin brainstorming and narrowing down your research topic, generate ideas relating to the research topic and the essays read in class, and formulate questions you may wish to consider when writing your paper.

The proposal is also an excellent medium for you to consider what main ideas you are going to have in order for you to begin writing your paper. It is also important for you to start considering what frame you will be placing around your topic. Another way to say it: consider what ideas you will use in to discuss your topic. Instead of an outline, which assumes that you are already have some idea of the structure of your paper, this assignment discusses what your paper might be about. As a result, you should see the proposal as an exploration of your topic, your ideas on the topic, your reasons for choosing the topic, and what you will need to do in order to complete your essay. Students often find that creating a research question is helpful because in-depth questions by definition, demand explorative answers. Within those answers, you may find that your topic narrowing itself, or you may find a new topic that is more interesting to you.

You may approach your proposal any way you feel, but please make sure you address at the very least the following: Indicate your topic, problem, or idea you will be exploring.

- Why does this topic interest you personally? (It is very important that you a topic that interest you because if you aren't interested, you will not do a good job.)
- What questions do you want to address in your paper?
- How do those questions or ideas intersect with what we have been discussing in class?
- How focused is your topic? Have you picked a specific theme, idea, author?
- Do you have any ideas on how you think the paper will be structured?
- If you have a preliminary position in relation to your topic and research question, indicate what that position is.
Sample Research Proposal Assignment #2

The purpose of the proposal is to help you to formulate a topic so that you may begin your research with a definite but flexible goal in mind. Try to be as specific as possible in thinking through your proposal, but be open to revising it as you do research and receive feedback. For your proposal, you will need two research sources and at least one theoretical “framing” concept from the works we read in class. Base your proposal on the work you began in Paper 2, adding one more scholarly secondary or primary source. You may also consider the usefulness of other concepts in the texts we have read and discussed in class. Scholarly sources usually include a bibliography, citations, and footnotes, are often published by university presses, and place arguments in conversation with other scholarly sources. Please address the following questions in your proposal in paragraph form.

- What is the topic that you plan to investigate? Remember that your topic should be suited to a 10-page essay, not a book.
- What is the research question that you want to ask?
- Which of the texts that we have discussed in class will you use to build a conceptual frame for discussing your topic, or research material? What theoretical material (i.e., terms and concepts) might be helpful? How could you go about using them?
- List the bibliographical information for your new sources. What kind of source is it ¾ scholarly or popular, print or electronic, book or article? Why did you choose it? How do you think it will help you to limit or direct your topic?
- What other kinds of sources will you be looking for?
- What related questions do you have that may help to focus your topic?
- What is your tentative hypothesis or argument?

No draft of the research paper will be read until the proposal and the bibliography have been received and approved.
Sample Research Proposal Assignment #3

- Two entries due Thursday, February 26, 2004, with final pre-proposal essay
- Four entries due Thursday, March 11, 2004 (two revised and two more)
- Final version with at least 6 entries due Thursday, March 25, with the first draft of your research paper.

Over the next six weeks, you will develop an annotated bibliography, or a list of texts consulted with remarks on their scope and use for your project. The completed annotated bibliography must include no fewer than six substantial sources, of which at least one should be a book-length source, at least one should be an article from a scholarly journal, and at least one should be an internet source. Each of the entries must have two parts: the bibliographic information (use MLA style, found in the Prentice Hall Reference Guide to Grammar and Usage) and a short (1-3 paragraph) summary of the author’s central argument, his or her objective and audience, the broad debates engaged by the text, and its usefulness to your own project. It is important that you phrase your annotations as summaries of arguments rather than summaries of information. When you are writing, use phrases like, “According to so-and-so…,” and “So-and-so argues that…” Sometimes your sources will present themselves as informative or objective rather than argumentative, but this just means that you will have to read more closely – read “between the lines” – in order to ascertain the author’s perspective on the topic. Feel free to use direct quotations in your summaries. The best annotated bibliographies will also discuss how the argument you are summarizing relates to your other sources. You will be developing the annotated bibliography over time, as you pursue your research. You are responsible to produce a two-entry bibliography to turn in with your pre-proposal essay on February 26; you should add a third and fourth entry, as well as revising the first two, for March 11, and on April 5 you will turn in a complete six-entry annotated bibliography with your proposal. Note that your bibliography should not include the texts we have read in class; it is a separate assignment that reflects your ongoing research. The annotated bibliography will be graded pass/fail; a bibliography that is not passing will have to be resubmitted until it earns a passing grade.
Sample Research Proposal Assignment #4

Your research proposal should include:
1) A brief description of your “case” topic, problem, controversy, event or text your paper will investigate. Try to be as specific as possible in your description without summarizing the whole text, event, debate, etc... . Try to show how your “case” intersects with themes discussed in class by using some of the language you’ve learned in class (about “Urban Life,” about “The Family,” about “The Self”) to give shape to your description of your “case”.

2) An assessment of existing scholarship on your topic. Briefly relate what others say about your particular “case” and the issues at stake in it. This is where you put secondary texts, texts that you have found in your research or have been provided in class, in conversation with one another. Cite the scholars and texts you have read and begin putting them in debate/dialogue about your “case” and the issues at stake in it, using their language and your own to give shape to these debates. Remember to use parenthetical citations—(Roberts 35)—for all quoted text and put quotation marks around words and phrases that are not your own.

3) Begin to lay out your own preliminary position on your “case” text, using the appropriate framing terms/ideas from the texts assigned in class for your particular position, once again putting quotation marks around words or phrases that are not your own. As you briefly lay out your own position, you may want to think about these questions: Does your position extend or challenge existing scholarship? Does it combine old ideas with new texts in order to complicate or challenge those ideas? Some instructors may not ask you to know the answers to these questions yet, others will. But what you want to impart in this section of your proposal and what you want to think about as you are working on your research assignment is, “What do I expect my particular paper to contribute to the existing body of scholarship on my subject or how will it help scholars make sense of new texts [as in the “reality-based” television scenario] that have not yet been thoroughly researched and theorized?” Do these new texts extend or complicate some of the existing ideas about your subject in ways that change the terms of debate about your subject?

4) What still needs to be answered? Sometimes, depending on when it is assigned, instructors ask you to write a fourth section of your proposal in which they ask you to formulate questions that still need to be answered and to think about the areas you still need to research in order to get your paper off the ground. Refer to “Stage Four” of this tutorial to help you consider the kinds of questions you might want to pose in this section. But these questions should rise out of what you have already presented in the proposal and how you have presented it. Look carefully at the first three sections or paragraphs—what’s missing.
Sample Annotated Bibliography Assignments

Sample Annotated Bibliography Assignment #1

The annotated bibliography must include four substantial sources that you plan to use in your research paper. Of the four sources, at least one should be a book-length source, and at least one should be an article from a scholarly journal. You must let me know in advance if your annotated bibliography will not conform to these guidelines. Each of the four entries must have two parts: the bibliographic information and a short (1-3 paragraph) summary of the author's central argument. It is important that you phrase your annotations as summaries of arguments rather than summaries of information. When you are writing, use phrases like, "According to so-and-so…," and "So-and-so argues that…" Sometimes your sources will present themselves as informative or objective rather than argumentative, but this just means that you will have to read more closely-read "between the lines"-in order to ascertain where the author is coming from and what his or her perspective on the topic is. Feel free to use direct quotations in your summaries. The best annotated bibliographies will also discuss how the argument you are summarizing relates to your other sources. For the bibliographical format, use the "The Humanities: MLA Style" format that begins on page 83 of Diana Hacker's Research and Documentation in the Electronic Age. Read through this section(pp.83-111) to familiarize yourself with the MLA bibliographical format. Since most of you right now, will cite either books, or journal articles, pp.90 and 99 are particularly useful. Please note:

1. No late annotated bibliographies will be accepted.
2. You must earn a passing grade on your research paper in order to pass the course.

Sample entry:
Williams, Eric. *Capitalism and Slavery*. 1944. New York: Perigree, 1980. A ground breaking study that provides a materialist analysis of slavery in the British empire. According to Williams, his book "is strictly an economic study of the role of Negro slavery and the slave trade in providing the capital which financed the Industrial Revolution in England, and of mature industrial capitalism in destroying the slave system." (1) In Williams's account, the value of the tobacco colonies of southeastern North America and the sugar islands of the Caribbean in producing staple articles for the export market laid the foundation for the rise of the West India Interest. By 1832, however, the British West Indies had become "socially an inferno... (and) economically, what was worse, an anachronism" (133). The rising capitalist class in England opposed the West India Interest not on humanitarian ground, argues Williams, but rather because it was unprofitable, fundamentally monopolistic, and required protectionist trade policies. Paradoxically, Williams writes, "the Negroes had been stimulated to freedom by the development of the very wealth which their labor had created" (208). This book is helpful to my project in that Williams provides an historical overview of the economics of slavery before the Industrial Revolution.
Sample Annotated Bibliography Assignment #2

A bibliography lists in alphabetical order the texts that a writer has read or cited during his research. An annotated bibliography follows each bibliographic entry with a brief evaluative summary called an annotation. The annotation describes the topic of the text, the author’s purpose in writing it, and the intended audience, whether scholarly or non-scholarly; it evaluates the usefulness and reliability of the text, and describes the scope of the author’s point of view, objective, assumptions, and political agenda. Annotated bibliographies record citation information for the sources consulted so that plagiarism may be avoided, and provide a basis for deciding whether or not the text will be useful for the project.

For the Annotated Bibliography, you need FIVE sources from your research, including 1) a scholarly book, 2) a scholarly article, and 3) an Internet source. Scholarly sources usually include a bibliography, citations, and footnotes, are often published by university presses, and refer to other scholarly sources. The texts we read in class should not appear on the AB. Since textbooks and encyclopedias are not acceptable research sources, they should not be included on the AB.

You should use the following format:

I. General introduction . A paragraph explaining your research topic.

II. Five annotated entries, in alphabetical order by the author’s last name, bibliographic information in MLA style, and call number. Each entry should be followed by an annotation in paragraph form that gives the following information:

1) what kind of source it is ¾ book or article, scholarly or popular, print or electronic,
2) the specific subject the author is writing about,
3) what the author seeks to discover, prove, or challenge,
4) the broad debates the author engages in, and how he uses other sources, and
5) how the source will contribute to your research.
Sample Annotated Bibliography Assignment #3

A bibliography lists in alphabetical order the texts that a writer has read or cited during his research. An annotated bibliography follows each bibliographic entry with a brief evaluative summary called an annotation. The annotation describes the topic of the text, the author’s purpose in writing it, and the intended audience, whether scholarly or non-scholarly; it evaluates the usefulness and reliability of the text, and describes the scope of the author’s point of view, objective, assumptions, and political agenda. Annotated bibliographies record citation information for the sources consulted so that plagiarism may be avoided, and provide a basis for deciding whether or not the text will be useful for the project.

For the Annotated Bibliography, you need FIVE sources from your research, including 1) a scholarly book, 2) a scholarly article, and 3) an Internet source. Scholarly sources usually include a bibliography, citations, and footnotes, are often published by university presses, and refer to other scholarly sources. The texts we read in class should not appear on the AB. Since textbooks and encyclopedias are not acceptable research sources, they should not be included on the AB.

You should use the following format:

I. General introduction. A paragraph explaining your research topic.

II. Five annotated entries, in alphabetical order by the author’s last name, bibliographic information in MLA style, and call number. Each entry should be followed by an annotation in paragraph form that gives the following information:

1) what kind of source it is book or article, scholarly or popular, print or electronic, 2) the specific subject the author is writing about, 3) what the author seeks to discover, prove, or challenge, 4) the broad debates the author engages in, and how he uses other sources, and 5) how the source will contribute to your research.
Sample Assignment #1: Research Essay on Film
(from Rachel Kapelle)

UWS, Fantasy Literature, Spring 2009
Essay 3, Researched Argument

Fantasy is a genre which looks to the past. It takes its inspiration from myth and folklore, and it often depicts an idealized (or not?) version of the medieval period. Some fantasies glorify warfare and/or the life of a warrior, and some reinforce gender stereotypes, aligning physical prowess with masculinity and assigning women a more passive role. Heredity often plays an important role in a character’s fate, and fate itself—or destiny—is a strong force, sometimes overruling a character’s attempts to shape his/her life as he/she wishes. Many a fantasy ends with the (re)instatement of a traditional form of autocratic authority.

For these reasons, some critics have raised concerns that the genre as a whole is atavistic and overly conservative. At the beginning of this unit you will read two lenses. In her book *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, Rosemary Jackson argues that fantasy of the Tolkien variety is inherently traditionalist. It supports existing social structures and conventional morality. Even worse, it encourages readers to “escape” the real world, instead of engage with it. Opposed to Jackson’s views is Brian Attebery. He explains in his article, “The Politics (If Any) of Fantasy,” that genre fantasy is subversive in a number of ways—it critiques commercialism and reminds us that our sense of reality and our way of life are culturally determined, rather than natural.

For this assignment, I would like you to pick a “case”—a fantasy novel or film—and consider it in terms of this debate. (You cannot use the film version of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, (as we will be discussing it in class) but you could consider this film together with the other two LOTR films if you wished. Or consider one of the second two by itself). Which critic (if either) seems to be more accurate in relation to your chosen case? Does the case betray signs of authoritarianism or atavism? If so, how? Or does it challenge the status quo? If so, how? Maybe the case seems conservative in some respects and radical in others? Do elements of its form or style subvert convention? How does the novel/film present issues of control and authority? Gender roles? The significance of heredity and/or destiny?

As this is a research assignment, I would like you to bring four other scholars into your paper, besides your case, Jackson, and Attebery.

- You might want to look up further discussion of this debate. Other writers who have considered relevant issues include Farah Mendlesohn and John Clute.
- You might look up scholarly writing on your particular case and find arguments you can relate to your own.
- You might also look up the issues that your case raises. For example, a student discussing *The Dark is Rising* might be interested in the novel’s treatment of colonialism, and might research the status of British imperialism at the time when the novel was written.

Other options: I am open to other possibilities, but you must check them out with me.

Length: 10-11 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins (top, bottom, right, left).
Sources:
- I will be evaluating your use of source material in this paper. I expect you to use at least 4 sources for your essay, in addition to your case, Jackson, and Attebery. They should be scholarly journals and books available in our library (or via interlibrary loan), or through our library’s databases. You may also use websites if they are affiliated with a university or reputable research institution or publication.
- “Using” a source, as we will discuss in class, means addressing a text’s main ideas, not simply quoting a useful sentence or two (tempting as it may be). Make sure, therefore, that you select sources which you can engage with meaningfully.

Citation:
I will also be paying special attention to citation in this paper. Please adhere to MLA citation style and include a works cited page. Errors in your citations or works cited page will harm your grade.

Cover letter—To be submitted with your final draft
Please answer the following questions in 3-4 paragraphs, total:
- What is your thesis? How has it changed from draft to revision?
- How has the way you argue your main idea changed from draft to revision?
- What are you most pleased about in this revision?
- What would you work on, if you had the chance to keep revising?
- What was the most challenging in your drafting and revision process? How did you approach those challenges?

Requirements. I will not accept the paper
- If it is not accompanied by a cover letter
- If it is not at least ten full pages long
- If it does not have a works cited page in MLA format and parenthetical citations
- If it does not have a title
- If its pages are not numbered
- If it does not contain the required 4 sources, in addition to the lenses and the case

Due dates:
Predraft 3.1 due Wed March 25 over email (to me) by 4:00 p.m.
Predraft 3.2 due Mon March 30
Final draft due with cover letter, rough draft, and peer review sheets Wed Apr 29.
Sample Assignment: Research Essay on Film (cont.)

**Predraft 3.1: Research Proposal.**

The proposal is your first step in your research paper writing. Its function is to provide space for you to begin brainstorming and narrowing down your research topic, generate ideas relating to the research topic and the works read in class, and formulate questions you may wish to consider when writing your paper.

Instead of an outline, which assumes that you are already have some idea of the structure of your paper, this assignment discusses what your paper might be about. As a result, you should see the proposal as an exploration of your topic, your ideas on the topic, your reasons for choosing the topic, and what you will need to do in order to complete your essay. Students often find that creating a research question is helpful because in-depth questions, by definition, demand explorative answers. As you answer these questions, your topic may become narrower, or you may find a new topic that is more interesting to you.

Please make sure you address at the very least the following: Indicate your topic, problem, or idea you will be exploring. Then consider questions such as:

- Why does this topic interest you personally? (It is very important that you a topic that interests you because if you aren't interested, you will not do a good job.)
- What questions do you want to address in your paper?
- How do those questions or ideas intersect with what we have been discussing in class?
- How focused is your topic? Have you picked a specific theme, idea, or author?
- Do you have any ideas on how you think the paper will be structured?
- If you have a preliminary position in relation to your topic and research question, indicate what that position is.

**Predraft 3.2: Annotated Bibliography.**

A bibliography lists in alphabetical order the texts that a writer has read or cited during his/her research. An annotated bibliography follows each bibliographic entry with a brief evaluative summary called an annotation. The annotation describes the topic of the text, the author’s purpose in writing it, and the intended audience, whether scholarly or non-scholarly; it evaluates the usefulness and reliability of the text, and describes the scope of the author’s point of view, objective, assumptions, and political agenda. Annotated bibliographies record citation information for the sources consulted so that plagiarism may be avoided, and provide a basis for deciding whether or not the text will be useful for the project.

For the Annotated Bibliography, you need four sources from your research, including a scholarly book and a scholarly article. Scholarly sources usually include a bibliography, citations, and footnotes, are often published by university presses, and refer to other scholarly sources.

You should use the following format:

Four entries, in alphabetical order by the author’s last name, bibliographic information in MLA style. Each entry should be followed by an annotation in paragraph form that gives the following information:
Sample Assignment: Research Essay on Film

1. what kind of source it is a book or article, scholarly or popular, print or electronic,
2. the specific subject the author is writing about,
3. what the author seeks to discover, prove, or challenge,
4. the broad debates the author engages in, and how he uses other sources, and
5. how the source will contribute to your research.

Research essay peer review
Please answer each of these questions **fully** for each paper you read. (You should read two papers total, even if you are in a group of 4). Bring 2 copies of your answers for each paper to class on peer review day (Mon Apr 26).

Your name:  
Your partner’s name:

-What are some strengths of the essay?

-Does the writer explain ideas from his/her sources clearly? If so, where? If not, which ideas need clarification? Does the writer give some information about his/her sources? If not, where could the writer add this information?

-Which uses of evidence work well? Are there any places in the essay where the writer does not have evidence—either examples from a novel/movie or a critic’s views—to back up his/her points?

-Does the structure make sense to you? If so, why? If not, what is confusing to you?

-Does the essay have a motive? If so, what is it? If not, do you have a suggestion? Comment on the thesis as well.

Research tips

General advice:
- Many of you are working on topics which include a close-reading component. In this situation, it is often a good idea to do some writing/thinking/note taking **before** reading your sources. Assemble some of the evidence and examples from the books/films that you plan to use and start thinking about how you might interpret it. **THEN** begin your research. When you reverse the order, you run the risk of letting your sources determine your main points. The process of collecting evidence and brainstorming first is also useful because it will give you ideas for additional search terms.

  Example: Say you are writing a paper which compares Harry and Frodo as heroes. After brainstorming and free-writing, you realize that you are interested in the issue of whether these characters are “fated” to be heroes or not. When you start your research, you will now know to not only look up “heroes” but also “fate” and “destiny.”
Be creative with search terms. Do not try to find only books/articles on your precise topic.

Example: Say you are working on a paper comparing primary/secondary world relations in Harry Potter and *The Lord of the Rings*. For a topic like this, you would try searches such as: “secondary world,” “secondary world + Tolkien,” “secondary world + Harry Potter,” “world + Tolkien,” “world + Harry Potter,” “Muggles,” “Shire,” “Harry Potter + Lord of the Rings,” “primary world,” “secondary world,” and “world + fantasy.” You would also spend some time looking at books in the library about fantasy, HP, and LotR (on reserve and on the shelf)—searching their tables of contents and indexes to see if you could find anything useful.

Procedures:

- I have placed a number of books on reserve which you may find useful. To see a list of the reserve items, go into LOUIS (via the library’s webpage), click on “Course Reserves,” and search under my name or our course number. To access reserve items, write down the call number and take it to the circulation desk.
- I have also placed a number of articles on LATTE which might be interesting to you.

Places to look:

- The LOUIS catalogue finds books in our library.
- Brandeis Scholar finds journal articles by searching multiple databases at once. When you find an article in Brandeis Scholar (or an individual database, such as the MLA International Bibliography) that interests you, click the “Get it” button to see your options:
  - You can access full-text articles from many journals.
  - Certain journals we only have in hard copy. If we do not have electronic access to a particular journal, the “Get it” button will search for it in the LOUIS catalogue. If the library subscribes to the journal, you can click on its call number to see which issues we have. Write down the call number and find the journal in the stacks.
  - Some journal articles you will need to order through Interlibrary loan. Follow the “Get it” button to the ILL website. You will need to register with them the first time you use their services.
- When you go to the stacks to find a book, make sure you look at the books near it on the shelf. You can often find useful items this way.
- Take advantage of the research others have already performed. When you find a good article or book, pay attention to the sources it cites and/or mentions in the text and in the notes. Track anything down that looks promising. You often find very useful sources this way.
- On rare occasions, Google books or amazon.com has a searchable version of a text you want to use. This is a nice situation, as you can search the text for key terms.
- John Clute’s *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* is often a good place to start for basic info on the fantasy genre. We have it in the library.
Sample Assignment #2: Research Essay on a Historical Moment  
(from Joshua Cracraft)

Unit 3: Research Essay  
A research paper is an argumentative essay in which you interpret evidence to draw broader conclusions about the significance of your topic. Research papers should always be argumentative—they are not merely book reports in which you tell us everything you know or learned about a particular subject. Rather, they offer an interpretation. Of course, not everyone may agree with your interpretation, which is why it is your job to convince us that your interpretation is the most accurate and better than other possible interpretations. Learning how to write a great research paper will be essential for success at Brandeis no matter your major because in every academic discipline you will be required to gather evidence, analyze it, and draw conclusions.

In your final major essay, you will choose a specific event from the nineteenth century and find primary sources—anything written by the people who witnessed and participated in the event—to make an original argument about the role Indians played in making or shaping that event. In addition, you may also select one or two secondary sources—books you’ve found written by other historians on your topic—to either support your argument or help give you a better understanding of the event. You may choose an event commonly associated with “Indian history,” such as the Ghost Dance Movement or the Battle of Tippecanoe, or an event that is not commonly associated with Native Americans, such as the California Gold Rush or the expansion of the railroads. Choose a topic you find really exciting because you’re going to be working on it for the next 5 weeks!

Your final research essay must be no fewer than 10 full pages and no more than 12 pages in length (12-point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins). In addition to this, you must also include a bibliography on a separate page. You must also use at least 7 primary sources (size does not matter—they can be very short!) and 1 secondary source. Of course, please proofread your essay before handing it in.

Important Dates for Your Calendar
Thursday Oct. 22: Pre-draft 3.1 due at the beginning of class  
Tuesday Nov. 3: Pre-draft 3.2 due at the beginning of class  
Thursday Nov 12: Pre-draft 3.3 due at the beginning of class  
Tuesday Nov. 17: First draft of the research paper due at the beginning of class (3 copies)  
Research Review Board presentations begin  
Thursday Nov. 19: Peer review letters due  
Tuesday Nov. 24: More Research Review Board presentations  
Tuesday Dec. 1: Final draft of research paper due at the beginning of class (1 copy)  
Final Research Review Board presentations

Your Goals
The grade you receive for this essay will reflect how well you accomplish the following goals for this unit. In addition to formulating a thesis, using evidence from your primary sources to support your argument, organizing your thoughts logically, and knowing your reader (all of the goals you accomplished in the close reading and lens essays), you should also:

Know the difference between a primary source and a secondary source. I’ll give you a freebie: A primary source is a source that was written by people who participated and/or witnessed a particular historical event (see the list of great types of primary sources that’s listed below). A secondary source is a book or scholarly article written by a historian who did not witness or participate in the event. Goal accomplished!

Choose a topic and formulate a good research question. Before you can start writing a research paper or even begin looking for sources, you first need a topic. A good research topic isn’t pulled out of the ether, but is grounded in a specific question or puzzle or problem. Good research questions—in history or any other discipline—are usually why or sometimes how questions, which go beyond the mere facts of who, what, when and where, and require you to come up with an arguable interpretation.
Tell us why the answer to your research question is actually important. No one is going to want to read your essay or be interested in your topic unless you tell us why it’s important. This goes back to your research question: Why is it important that we answer it? So what? Who cares? You picked the topic, and you came up with the question—so tell us why the answer matters.

Write a research proposal. Before you begin researching or writing, you have to come up with a plan. This is not only for my benefit to make sure you’re on the right track, but also to help you focus and clarify your own thinking. A good research proposal should briefly introduce the topic, present the problem or research question, and then tell us how what kinds of source you’re going to look at as evidence to help answer the question.

Know how to find primary and secondary sources in the library. All the sources you need can be found in the library—it’s just a matter of knowing where to find them! We’ll work together as a class, one-on-one, and with a research librarian to help teach you these skills.

Perform a close reading of your sources. Once you gather your evidence, you’ll need to read them closely, just as we read the Indian creation story, images, and treaties at the beginning of the semester. What do the sources say? What do they imply? What are the author’s assumptions? How do you know what the author is really thinking and saying?

Find patterns and trends in the evidence. A pile of the best evidence is worthless unless you can put it all together. Look for patterns of repetition. Is there a common theme you notice? Do the various authors convey similar thoughts? Or is there something that they are all conspicuously silent about?

Draw your conclusions about the evidence. Once you’ve found some specific patterns in the evidence, tell us what those patterns mean. What do they suggest? What conclusions can we draw? The answer to this question will form the main component of your thesis.

Compare your conclusions with those of another historian. If your conclusions differ from those of the historian who wrote the secondary source you read, tell us what might explain those differences. Do your findings suggest that the other historian was completely wrong? Or completely right? (Hint: The other historian probably won’t be completely wrong or completely right—look for ways you could modify his or her interpretation to best account for the evidence you found).

Address the most obvious counterarguments. This goes hand-in-hand with the previous goal. Evidence can usually be interpreted in lots of different ways, so what would be the most obvious alternative to your interpretation? Once you identify this alternative—the counterargument—tell us why it fails to adequately explain the evidence that you found.

Present your project to the Research Review Board. Public speaking skills are also key to success at Brandeis and in any career you choose. Toward the very end of the semester you will present your research project to the class and the Research Review Board in 5 to 10 minutes, making sure to cover the historical problem you chose, your evidence and conclusions, and why your findings are important.

Possible Primary Sources

Primary sources—sources written by people who participated in and/or witnessed historical events—come in a variety of forms. Some of the best and easiest-to-find primary sources include:

- Newspaper articles
- Magazine articles
- Letters
- Diaries
- Paintings and other images
- Government records
- Military records
- Statistical data
- Memoirs
- Autobiographies
- Travel narratives
- Speeches
- Treaties
- Court cases
- Laws
Pre-Draft 3.1: The Research Proposal

Before you can start writing a research paper or even begin looking for sources, you must first have a topic. A good research topic isn’t pulled out of the ether, but is grounded in a specific question or puzzle or problem. For example, good questions for a 10-12-page research paper might be, *If Indians lived in California before white gold miners arrived in 1849, how did Indians shape the California Gold Rush?* Or, another good question might be *How did Christianity influence Tecumseh and his brother Tenskwatawa in their attempt to unite all the Indians in the Midwest?* Good research questions—in history or any other discipline—are usually why or sometimes how questions, which go beyond the mere facts of who, what, when, and where, and require you to come up with an arguable interpretation. Not everyone may agree with your interpretation of the evidence—which is why you have to prove your position!

To help get you thinking about possible research topics and come up with a solid, workable proposal, answer the following questions (in order) by writing a few sentences for each:

1) Thinking broadly, what part of the nineteenth century (1800-1899)—whether it’s obviously related to Indians or not—interests you the most? Is it a person? An event? A particular place? A general trend? Why?

2) In what ways might Indians have been involved in this particular interest of yours? Might it have affected them directly? Indirectly? How so? Be very specific in your brainstorming. (I’ll give you a hint: odds are, there were Indians involved!)

3) Now, combine steps one and two to come up with a research question that interests you. For example, if you are generally interested in the Civil War and thought that Indians might have served as soldiers in the war, you could come up with a couple great research questions, such as *How did Indian soldiers influence the outcome of the Civil War?* or even *Why did some Indians fight for the North and some fight for the South?*

4) How would you go about answering your research question? What kinds of sources would best help you answer this question?

5) When you’ve completed steps one through five, condense all that information into a concise paragraph. Start by briefly explaining your general interest in a particular subject matter and why and how Indians may have been involved. Then state your specific research question. And finally, tell us what kind of sources you predict might help you answer your question.

Note: The one thing you do NOT want to do in a research proposal is tell us what you’re going to prove or argue. Why? Because you always have to look at what the evidence says before you can tell us an answer. You can include a prediction or hypothesis in your proposal if you’d like, but remember that nothing is set in stone at this point. Be open-minded!

Pre-draft 3.2: Annotated Bibliography

After you’ve spent time identifying primary and secondary sources, you can begin putting together your bibliography. For this paper, you will need to collect at least 7 primary sources and either 1 or 2 secondary sources. When putting together your bibliography, it is important to identify your sources as primary our secondary and then briefly describe how this source will serve as evidence to support your thesis.

**What is a Primary Source?**

Recall that a primary source is a source that was written or made by people who participated in, witnessed, or were somehow involved with the topic you are writing about. You can probably find many primary sources in online collections through Brandeis Scholar, reprinted in readers, and even published in their entirety online.
Sample Assignment : Research Essay on a Historical Moment (cont.)

What is a Secondary Source?
A secondary source, on the other hand, is a scholarly book or article written by an historian who did not participate or witness the event but wrote about it many years later. Encyclopedias, wikipedia, blogs, and other random websites do not count as secondary sources.

Before you begin to write your annotated bibliography, you should first answer the following questions:

Primary Sources
List all of the primary sources you plan to use in your paper (remember: at least 7 different primary sources, though more are encouraged!). Be sure to include the title of the source (if available), author of the source, the year it was written or published, and where you found it. Then write a couple detailed sentences that explain what this source is and how it will help you.

Secondary Sources
Now list the 1 or 2 secondary sources you plan to use. Be sure to include the title and author of each source, the year it was published, and where you found it. Then write a detailed sentence or two that summarizes the author’s argument.

Pre-draft 3.3: Arguments and Counterarguments
When making an argument—any argument, whether it’s about Indians in American history, why England is better than France, or why you and your friends should watch a movie instead of playing video games—you need to prove that your position or interpretation is correct AND that the alternative solution(s) is incorrect. For example, you could tell us how succulent the burgers at In ‘N’ Out are until you’re blue in the face, but we’re not going to really believe you until you tell us why the burgers at Burger King and McDonald’s don’t stack up. Likewise, in a research paper, you not only have to use evidence from your sources to prove your own argument, but also use that evidence to tell us why the counterarguments—alternative interpretations and arguments—are inaccurate or, at the very least, less accurate than your own. Making your argument well AND addressing the counterarguments well will make your research paper extremely convincing.

Before you start writing a draft of your research paper, you need to have a pretty clear idea of your own argument as well as the main counterarguments. This exercise will help you identify and start addressing some of those counterarguments. Answer the following questions as thoroughly as you can with at least a few sentences each.

1)  What is your main argument? (i.e. your thesis?)
2) What is the evidence you will use to support this argument?
3) What is the most obvious weakness of your argument?
4) How else can your evidence be interpreted? Do you know if other historians have made this argument?
5) If you were running for president and your opponent challenged your interpretation of the historical evidence during a televised debate (since we all know this will probably happen one day), how would you respond? What specifically would you say to rebut his or her critique of your analysis?
6) Is there some evidence you’ve found that doesn’t seem to fit your argument or fit perfectly? If so, how do you account for it?
First Draft Cover Letter: Research Essay

After you finish writing the first draft of your paper, reread your essay, and take a moment to reflect. Draft a cover letter that answers the questions below. Then staple it to the top of your paper before handing it in.

1. What historical problem are you trying to solve? In other words, why in the world did you write this essay?

2. What is the thesis of your paper? Is the thesis sentence toward the end of the first or second paragraph where it belongs?

3. Does the thesis make an argument? Does it go beyond stating the obvious? If not, how would you rewrite it for the final draft?

4. Why is the interpretation in your argument important? What do you tell us about your topic that we didn’t know before? In other words, So what?

5. What kind of primary source evidence do you use to prove your argument? Why did you choose these sources?

6. Does the primary source evidence included in your paper (i.e. quotations) support your argument? Or is it used mostly as filler?

7. Does each paragraph begin with a strong topic sentence? Or do some topic sentences merely state facts without offering any interpretation? How could you go about fixing them?

8. Do you address at least one counterargument? Are you satisfied with your rebuttal?

9. What is the single most important change you could make to improve the quality of this essay? Be very specific!

Peer Review Letters: Research Essay

Due: Tuesday Oct. 13 at the beginning of class

1. What historical problem is the author trying to solve? In other words, why in the world did he or she write this essay?

2. What is the thesis of the paper? Is the thesis sentence toward the end of the first or second paragraph where it belongs? Does is make an argument and go beyond merely stating the obvious? If not, how would you recommend strengthening it to make it more argumentative?

3. Why is the interpretation in the author’s argument important? What does he or she tell us about the topic that we didn’t know before? In other words, So what?

4. Does the primary source evidence included in the paper (i.e. quotations) support the author’s argument in his or her thesis? Or are the quotations used mostly as filler?

5. Do the paragraphs in the essay flow in a logical fashion? Are they in order or might there be a better arrangement? If so, how would you recommend reordering the essay?
6. Take a look at a couple of the body paragraphs in the middle of the paper. How many sentences summarize the evidence, and how many sentences analyze it and explain what that evidence means?

7. Overall, do you find this paper convincing? What specific steps could the author take to make his or her argument even more convincing? Be as specific as possible.

Final Draft Cover Letter: Research Essay

After you finish writing the final draft of your paper, reread your essay, and take a moment to reflect. Draft a cover letter in paragraph form that answers the questions below. Then staple it to the top of your paper before handing it in.

1. Is your thesis in the final draft different from your thesis in the first draft? If so, how is it different? Why did you change it?

2. What is the motive of this paper? Did it change from the first draft to the final draft? Why did you change it?

3. What are the three most significant changes you made in the final draft? List the 3 changes, and tell me why you made them.

4. What did you gain most from the peer review letters and exercises? Be very specific, and explain why it was helpful.

5. Did your classmates recommend any changes during the peer review that you decided not to make in the final draft? If so, why did you keep things the same?

6. If you were to make any changes to this final draft, what would they be? Why would you make these changes?
Sample Assignment #3: Research Essay on Music
(from Christian Gentry)

**The Thesis-Driven Research Essay**

The goal of this final assignment is to help you take part in academic dialogue by situating your own ideas in a researched context. Also, this is a great opportunity to familiarize you with the skills and resources used in college level research and a chance to continually develop your critical thinking and writing skills.

For your final assignment, **choose an album, or artist project that interests you.** **Through your own critical analysis and interpretation you are to formulate and explore an original argument about your chosen ‘text’ in a 11-13 page research paper.** This will be done by looking at all components that are in the album (art work, lyrics, producers, release date, concerts/tours/events surrounding the release, etc.) You will be required to engage your album and your close reading of such with one or more of the following questions:

1) **To what extent does the album deal with the question of authenticity?**
   *Does this artist create the impression of an authentic voice? How does s/he, why does s/he, does s/he succeed? Why is this important?*

2) **How have critics wrongly or rightly categorized your topic?**

3) **To what extent does historical popular music influence the album?**
   *Does the album relate to other historical works? In what ways? Why would this be important? How significant is the influence of other artists? How much does this play into the album? How does the album work within the existing artist’s body of work?*

4) **In what ways does the album engage ideas about race, class or gender?** (This is very broad, you should probably choose between these subjects).

5) **In what ways does your topic engage in the commercialistic aspects of popular music?**
   *Is it a product for commercial consumption? Or, rather does it exist as an artistic entity that defies the paradigm of commercial consumption? Furthermore, does the album exist both as commercial product and an aesthetic statement?*

These are but a few of several questions you can ask yourself as you work with your topic. What should be important in this last, and more heavily weighted assignment, is that **this is not a book report about the awesomeness of your favorite band or album.** In the past, research papers were maybe seen more along these lines. But for this project

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(and a lot of your college writing experience) you are not simply writing an expository, persuasive essay about the album. You are engaging the album and your interpretation of the album with some important questions that show the discursive relationship between popular music and society. Inherent to this assignment is a propensity to formulate original, thought-provoking argument, rather than a book report. Lastly, one of the most important and critical steps of your research process is developing your own interpretations of the chosen text. So, you should have the music with you everywhere (iPod, Zune, computer, car, cd player, etc.) and take the time to jot down notes and thoughts that come to you in this process. This is also a great opportunity to analyze and interpret the existing body of scholarship and criticism.

In conducting your research you will be required to find your own sources and data to support your own argument (thesis and motive). You can use the readings from the course for your paper, in addition to several outside sources. Refrain from using Wikipedia as a source. You can use webzines, blogs, newspapers and magazines—but with the qualifier that such sources are not peer-reviewed and may lack the rigor of academic journals and won’t be counted towards the number of required academic sources.

Pre-Draft Assignment 3.1 Research Proposal
DUE: 24 Mar

The proposal is your first step in your research paper writing. Its function is to provide space to begin brainstorming and narrowing down your research topic, generate ideas relating to the topic and the texts read in class, and formulate questions you may wish to consider when writing your paper.

The proposal is also an excellent medium for you to consider what main ideas you are going to discuss in the paper. What is it that initially drew you in to the topic? Something there is interesting to you. So, you should see the proposal as an exploration of your topic, your ideas on the topic, your reasons for choosing the topic, and what you will need to do in order to complete your essay. You will find that creating a research question is helpful because in-depth questions by definition demand explorative answers. Within those answers, you may find your topic narrowing itself, or you may find a new topic that is more interesting to you.

The way you approach your proposal is up to you, but please try to address the following:
• Indicate the topic/idea you will be exploring beyond a simple statement of aesthetic preference (this can be clarified in class).
• Why do you have a personal interest in this topic? (it better be something fun and exciting to you—–it is either that or…DRUDGERY! No one likes drudgery)
• What questions do you want to address in your paper?
• How do those questions or ideas intersect with what class discussions and previous essays?
• How focused is your topic? Does it need to be flattened out? Broadened?
• Ideas about paper structure?
• If you have a preliminary position in relation to your topic and research question, indicate what that position is.

Please hand in one copy of your 1-2 page research proposal to me and post it on LATTE.

Pre-Draft Assignment 3.2 Annotated Bibliography
DUE: 31 Mar

A bibliography lists in alphabetical order the texts you have read or cited during your research. Each bibliographic entry has a brief evaluative summary called an annotation. Think of it as a super-organized way of note-taking. The annotation describes the topic of the text, the author’s purpose in writing it, and the intended audience, whether scholarly or non-scholarly. It also evaluates the usefulness and reliability of the text, and describes the scope of the author’s point of view, stylistic biases, objective, assumptions, and political/cultural/social agenda. Annotated bibliographies record citation information for the sources consulted so that plagiarism may be avoided, and provide a basis for deciding whether or not the text will be useful for the project.

Your annotated bibliography will have five sources that include at least one scholarly book and two scholarly articles but excluding in-class texts (although such may be used in your paper) and should follow this suggested format:
• General introduction: a brief explanation of research topic
• Five annotated entries, in alphabetical order by the author’s last name, with citation information in MLA. Each entry should be followed by an annotation in paragraph form that gives the following information:
  o Type of source (journal, book, article, web—of course indicating whether they are scholarly or non-scholarly)
  o The subject about which the author is speaking.
  o What the author is trying to prove or challenge.
Sample Assignment: Research Essay on Music (cont.)

- The broad debates the author engages in, and how other sources are used to further the analysis.
- How the source contributes to your research.

**Pre-Draft Assignment 3.3 Reverse Outline**
**DUE: 2 Apr**

A reverse outline is a technique you can use to see your paper in a different light. It allows you to closely analyze what you have already done. Take what you have done with your draft and make an outline out of it. Use the central claims of each paragraph as points in your outline, with the supporting evidence as subpoints. This will show you where particular claims are weak, or simply lack rigorously analyzed and supportive evidence. It can also give you the confidence that you are headed on the right track. This is very helpful to see how the content is working, or not, on a micro and macro level. Post this on LATTE by 8:00 pm.

**Rough Draft and Cover Letter**
**DUE: 7 Apr**

In your cover letter, please address the following questions:
- What do you see as the main point or idea of your research essay?
- What are the biggest problems you are having at this stage in the writing process?
- What are your biggest successes so far (favorite sentence or paragraph)
- Which ideas seem to be weaker than others?
- What’s the most important question --thesis, structure, use of evidence, persuasiveness, style, and so on-- that you would like your reader(s) to answer for you?

**Essay 3 Peer Review**
**DUE: 21 Apr**

Your goal during peer review is to offer the writer constructive comments that will help with the revision process. An objective and fresh perspective is one of the best tool in helping your peers improve their writing. Try to follow these common editorial practices in your review of the work:
- Draw a line under awkwardly expressed sentences and phrases whose meanings are unclear
- Write marginal notes to the write on anything that puzzles you, explaining why.
- Label the topic or each paragraph; if you cannot determine the topic, put a question mark.

After you have marked up the document, read the essay one more time and then write a brief letter in which you address the following questions:
1) What is the essay’s thesis or main idea? How compelling is it? What is the essay’s motive? What motivating idea from the list distributed in class do you feel best explains the motive?

2) In what ways does the introduction bring you into the conversation effectively? Are motive and thesis clear and effective? How could the writer improve the introduction?

3) In what ways is the conclusion satisfactory/dissatisfactory? Is the overarching argument clear? How could the writer improve the conclusion?

Presentations
22 Apr and 23 Apr

Be prepared to give a 3-5 minute presentation in class about your research project. How your present it is up to you, just be creative and engaging.

Final Draft and Cover Letter
DUE: 28 Apr

In your cover letter, please address the following questions:
- What is your thesis? How has it changed from draft to revision?
- What pleases you the most about this revision?
- What was the most challenging moment in your drafting and revision process?
7. In the Classroom

Class Discussion
Since this class is a seminar, much of our time in class will be spent leading discussion. Good discussions generally require a strong rapport between the members of your class. Here are a few ways to develop a sense of community in your classroom:

1. Know each other’s names. You learn your students’ names, but they should learn each other’s names too. Students should introduce themselves on the first day of class. You can ask them to interview each other and then introduce their partner to the class. Continue this process after the first class. Have students put name cards in front of them or ask them to recall as many students’ names as possible from the last class. You can also have students take attendance until they are familiar with each others’ names.

2. Arrange the classroom for discussion. We have some funky seating arrangements in our classrooms that require reorganization to allow all students to see each other. Although some seats are arranged in rows, tell your students you expect the first people who arrive to rearrange them into a circle or square. Some rooms have conference tables and chairs around the outside. Sometimes you can pull enough desks up to the conference table so everyone can fit. If you can’t, make sure students don’t hide in the outside ring. One way of doing this is by having students outside the conference table be “on.” That means you’ll turn to them first to answer questions. Or make a policy that anyone who sat in the outside ring last class has to move to the head of the table this class so that they rotate through the positions in the class.

3. Break the ice. The beginning of class can be awkward, especially early in the semester. Prepare students to talk by engaging them in conversation before class. Ask about their other classes, what they thought of the reading for your class, etc. Make them participate in the attendance process by asking them to remember each other’s names. When it’s time to start class, make clear that you’re beginning the day’s lesson plan. Remind your students of where you ended last class. You can ease your students into discussion by starting with a 5-10 minute mini-lecture, asking them to write on a question for a few minutes, or having them discuss something in small groups before coming together as a whole group. If students are writing or working in small groups, give someone a heads up that you’re planning to ask them to start the discussion. This works especially well with getting quiet students to participate. Start with low stakes questions—something anyone can answer. For example, “What stood out to you in today’s reading?” “What did(n’t) you like?” After asking a question, give students a moment to think of an answer before calling on someone.

4. Ending the discussion. Keep track of time so that you can end class constructively. Summarize the major ideas that emerged in the discussion or gesture towards how you will pick up on the discussion in the next class. Ask your students to write for a few minutes to either summarize what they got out of the discussion or add any questions or comments that didn’t get addressed during the discussion. Always end class on time.
Some Tips for Leading Class Discussion
(from Ryan Wepler)

Many instructors have a conversation with their students about what constitutes good writing. You might also have a conversation about what makes a good discussion. This is a good way to address some common issues that come up in discussions: what happens when discussion is dominated by just a few students? How could shy students find a way to contribute? Who should students be talking to (you or each other)? How do we disagree with each other?

1. Ask follow-up questions – In order to ensure that students engage fully with both the material and one another, you will want to push them to expand upon or clarify their answers. The difficulty of your follow-up questions will vary with each student, as you don’t want to frighten timid students away from participating. You can also direct your follow up questions to other students. This works especially well if the student has trouble answering. Avoid engaging in an extended back and forth between yourself and one student. Good follow up questions will usually do one (or more) of the following:
   a. Challenge a student to elaborate on his or her answer
   b. Ask a student to relate a comment back to previous ideas in the discussion
   c. Ask a student to respond to a potential counterargument
   d. Request a clarification for a vague or unclear idea

2. Make the conversation flow – Some instructors will feel more comfortable if the conversation flows through them. Making yourself the center of discussion will allow you to clarify students’ answers and summarize the progress of ideas (often by writing them on the board). It also keeps the conversation flowing smoothly and gives students a sense of what to expect in each discussion. But you might also want your students to talk to each other. You can facilitate that kind of discussion in several ways. Tell your students you want them to talk to each other. After a student makes a comment, wait a moment to see if someone else will respond. Look at other students in the class (rather than the student speaking) as someone makes a comment to prevent students from talking directly to you rather than to the class. Turn a student’s comment into a question and address the question to another student in the class (a low stakes question would be “do you agree with ____?”). To encourage students to answer questions, don’t ask a lot of rhetorical questions or answer your own questions. Students will have trouble telling when you are asking a question you actually want answered. Don’t reformulate your question before waiting for a response. We often ask several questions in a row because we’re trying to clarify the question or suggest that the students could answer in a variety of ways. But asking too many questions leaves students unsure which to answer. Ask one question at a time, pause, and then rephrase if necessary.

3. Try to get everyone to participate – Though the burden to participate is ultimately on the students (they are, after all, adults), you should do your best to welcome everyone into the class discussion. Often just letting students hear their own voices in class will give them the confidence to participate. Tips for getting timid students involved include:
a. Get everyone to speak at the beginning of class, even if they just have to answer yes or no to a question.
b. Ask easier questions to shy students
c. Ask non-talkers to read passages to the class
d. Make the least participatory student report the results of group work back to the class
e. Ask the quiet student to be the observer/notetaker and ask them to report their observations on the discussion at the end of class.

4. **Ask focused questions** – Though it may summarize most clearly what you want to cover, a broad question like “How does Shakespeare construct the nature of suffering in *King Lear*?” is unlikely to produce a productive response (if it produces any response at all). A more productive way to approach this topic is with a series of focused questions about specific moments, lines, or scenes in the play.

5. **Move on when student interest wanes or a topic becomes exhausted** – Though it can be difficult to cut students off, nothing is more boring for students than watching a few students continue to debate an issue that they feel has already been resolved. Use your position as the discussion leader to introduce the next topic. Occasionally, you will have to cut off a productive discussion simply because of time constraints.

6. **Do not ignore doubtful or incorrect answers** – While we may feel like we are putting students on the spot when we correct their wrong answers, it is important to make sure both the student and the class understand that the answer is incorrect or, at least, doubtful. Gentle ways of correcting wrong answers include asking the student to respond to an objection or to ask the class how they would respond to that student’s answer.

7. **Display enthusiasm and interest in the material** – Enthusiasm moves easily from one person to another. If you do not seem interested in the material, students will wonder why they should be. Occasionally, students will even criticize the usefulness of a course text in class discussion. It is important that you not agree with the student and that you clearly articulate the usefulness of the text.

8. **When no one is participating** – Students fail to participate for a variety of reasons: fatigue, befuddlement, lack of interest, &c. Here are some tips for days when students don’t seem to want to participate:
   a. Wait it out. Students will often produce answers if given time.
   b. Give your initial question a more specific focus
   c. Shift to an in class writing assignment. Once students have written their ideas down, they will have more to say when the discussion reconvenes.
   d. Get students to move around. Switch seats, work in groups, wake up.
Verbal Tags to Encourage Class Discussion
(from Andrew Albin)

- **Clarifying a student’s contribution:** “It sounds like what you’re saying is… is that right?” [instructor doesn’t assume they’ve got it right or put words in student’s mouth, gives student authority to say it their way]

- **Asking the class to apply the lens to a text discussed last class:** “I’m kind of putting you on the spot, but let’s try it…” [recognizes a challenging task and gives students permission to not have immediate perfect answers]

- **Responding to an unexpected reading:** “I hadn’t thought of that moment that way, that’s interesting! Tell me more.” [works when you genuinely do find the reading interesting and unexpected, and that’s audible in your voice]

- **Opening a question out to the class:** “You’re not the only one with this question so let’s throw it out…” [instead of you being the authority who answers all questions, you let them figure it out with you guiding them]

- **After stumbling over your own words explaining the lens:** “Hopefully you can see how my difficulty in articulating this idea is a productive one!” [instead of brushing it under the rug, acknowledges that you may have confused them, or may be confused yourself, and still make it teachable]

- **Responding to a vaguely remembered example:** “That’s a good example, do you want to say something more about that? [to the class] Let’s go to that example.” [decenters you as the voice of authority and gives them agency to explore an idea]

  After rereading that example: “Now that we’ve reread, how can we rearticulate the idea?” [follows up the decentering by giving them a concrete opportunity to express their agency and have a voice]

- **Encouraging dialogue between one student who corrected another student’s inaccurate explanation:** “That’s a helpful clarification.” [instead of brushing a student’s contribution under the rug or declaring him/her wrong, acknowledges that the first student wasn’t accurate but in a way that affirms both students’ contributions]

- **Clarifying the author’s voice:** “So, in the reading you’ve just offered, and I think Cosuto would support you in this, it’s…” [places authority in the author instead of you, so it’s the author’s voice that’s clarifying an imprecise student articulation]

- **Signposting:** “I think we’ve got the idea? But I don’t want to assume, tell me.” [alternative to the “Does anyone have a question?” which puts them on the spot]

- **Working through an idea the students are having difficulty with:** “Let’s pull out the steps of Cosuto’s process of objectification; can we rearticulate them for ourselves?” [models a step-wise thought process, gives them intellectual agency, allows them to repeat/rephrase important ideas in their own terms]
• **Distinguishing between the author and the narrator’s voice:** “Isn’t that a problem for the example’s author?” [makes it so the text/author challenges the student’s imprecise reading, instead of you, the instructor who’s an expert, challenging them]

• **Reassuring a student whose earlier contribution has been corrected by another student (the contribution was left written on the board but struck through, not erased):** “Maybe ‘wholesome’ wasn’t the word you were looking for, but ‘authentic’ or…” [instead of removing/rejecting the earlier student’s contribution on the board, it keeps it in circulation and allows that student to revise their contribution with your assistance]

• **Creating dialogue between students:** “… which I think gets back to what XXX was saying…” [referring to the student by name and making connections this way affirms them as intelligent contributors to the conversation, as local experts in that day’s classroom]

• **Juxtaposing two students’ contributions to synthesize something new:** “Let’s put these two observations together and see where it can lead us.” [instructor uses good observations to demonstrate synthesis and application.]

• **Asking one student to respond to an idea from another student:** “Brian, you wrote a LATTE post that had something related to say about the text, how would you respond to Alix’s idea? [promotes a student-centered class; one student can apply his thoughts to another student’s idea, showing that all students in class embody resources for each other to tap]

• **Stop and take stock:** “What we’ve figured out so far is…” [roadmap of where class has been can both acknowledge student contributions (use names) and clarify for students having difficulty following]

• **Cold calling:** “XXX, is that a hand up? It looks like you have something to add.” [a way for quiet students reluctant to speak up to enter into the conversation, without forcing him/her to produce an answer; can break up disruptive chatter]

  **Another method:** “XXX, what do you think about that?” [can rope in disconnected students]

• **Volleying:** “XXX? [student contribution] OK [in an approving tone]. XXX?” [acknowledges student viewpoint and validates the usefulness of their voice to the class as a whole, levels the playing field so both bright and struggling students are treated as worthy of inclusion in the conversation]

• **Observing student reaction:** “XXX, you’re looking pretty pensive over there. Tell me about some of your thoughts on this passage” or “I see a lot of confused faces here. Tell me a little bit about why this passage is leaving everyone perplexed.” [gives students permission to have an opinion, to voice frustration, to object to a text or to the reading of a text currently in the air]

• **Casting a poll/vote:** “Can I get a quick show of hands of people who found this text easy? Hard? Medium? Utterly confusing?” [encourages active thinking on the fly, gives you a general sense of class reactions to ideas/passages, livens stagnant class atmospheres, esp. in mornings]
Another method: “We’ve identified these passages as key. Who wants to cover XXX first? Who wants to cover YYY first? … ” [gives students agency over the direction of the conversation and allows students to indicate where they need attention paid]
Using Class Time Effectively

(Amy Easton-Flake)

Although UWS is a three-credit course, we only meet with our students for two hours a week; consequently, we must use those two hours in the most effective way possible. I always remind myself that students need to learn more about writing than I have time to teach them, so I need to use every minute wisely. I recommend thinking about the following as you plan each class:

- **How is what I am teaching today going to make my students a better writer?** When you plan each activity, think about what you hope your students will learn. Then assess how useful is that skill at this stage in the writing process. For instance, if you want your students to peer review each other’s introductions, think about what specifically they should gain from this process. Is it simply to make sure they have a thesis & a motive? Or is there something more? If you want your students to work on their sentence style, think about when they will be most likely to care about that aspect. (Most likely the class or two right before they turn in their first draft, not at the beginning of the research unit.)

- **Make the purpose of each assignment and activity explicit to your students.** Students will be more interested when they understand the purpose behind an activity. For instance, explain to them why they need to introduce a source and how this activity you are asking them to do will help them to do so.

- **We are to be a guide on the side, not a sage on the stage.** This class is a workshop class, so your students should always be actively participating. In contrast to many other classes, lecturing for most of the class period is inappropriate. We need to engage them always in discussions and hands-on activities.

- **Have at least two different things planned for each class period** (most often you will have three or four). **You want to create a sense of momentum in your class.** Your students will enjoy class more and find it much more worthwhile if they know they always have to be doing and thinking about things in your course. You want them to know there is never a dull moment, and this comes from having multiple activities and keeping up the pace. For example, you discuss the readings for fifteen or twenty minutes, then you look at a couple of intro paragraphs in write now as a group for five to ten minutes, then you break them into groups of two to assess each other’s intros for five minutes, then you come back together as a class and have a couple of people share a strong motive & thesis and another couple share a strong grabber/contextual setup, and then you workshop one intro as a class. (Yes, I know I just wrote a long run-on sentence, but sometimes a run-on catches the energy we want to have in our classroom.)

- **Keep workshop time brief, be explicit about what they are to do, and be aware of when each group completes the assignment.** Most of us will be asking our students to workshop something almost everyday; therefore, we must learn to be very aware of who finishes first and who finishes last. Walk around the class to make sure they are still on target. Knowing how much time to give is often tricky because some students will always finish before others. To help alleviate this I would recommend having a follow up question/assignment to give the groups who finish early. Also, now that you know who generally finishes fast or slow mix up the groups with people of different paces. Overall though be careful not to allow them too much time to workshop any one thing. Keep the class moving and suggest that they continue work shopping their paper using the techniques you teach after class.
Approaches to Peer Review Workshops
(From Cara Crandall)

Purpose of the Peer Review
Spend at least one class period on peer review goals and strategies before the first peer review session. Use a whole class workshop to model how to read and respond to a paper before the first session.

Evaluate how the classroom culture and group dynamics help or hinder the peer review process. While you can’t always respond to social-emotional issues, be aware of and pay attention to how students work with one another, the mood of the class, time of the semester, and other contexts that might affect the peer review session.

Consider what you are asking the students to do during peer review. Be clear about what you want students to get out of the process during a sequence and throughout the course. Be clear about what you want students to do and why these activities are important.

Give some thought to how groups will be constructed including number of participants, choosing the students, changing groups for each paper, and playing a role in the groups.

Process for Peer Review
Variety in peer review materials allows students to experiment with different strategies and discover those strategies that work best for them.

Include ongoing self-reflection in all aspects of peer review process. The more students reflect on their processes, the more they can learn and use successful strategies and change those strategies that are not working.

Have a specific assignment - with clear criteria and goals - for each peer review. Include a peer review process, an assignment connected to peer review, and a writing exercise that follows up on some of the major issues discussed in the peer review.

Create criteria that are focused and brief. Focus on 4 to 6 issues per paper rather than overwhelming the students with many. Make sure that the questions reflect the criteria and priorities of the sequence including content and writing issues.

Be sure that students have an opportunity to follow up peer review sessions with brainstorming sessions for specific revision strategies and in-class or homework exercises on applying such strategies.

Ask peers to evaluate one another’s participation and feedback in peer review sessions. Define clearly how you will evaluate and grade peer review comments.

Strategies for Peer Reviewing
When you peer review another writer’s work, you evaluate it, criticize it, suggest improvements, and then communicate all of these ideas to the writer. As a peer reviewer, you might be a bit uneasy about criticizing someone else’s work. For example, how do you offer constructive criticism on what’s not effective and positive insights on what is? In the tasks outlined here, you’ll find advice and guidelines on doing peer reviews and communicating peer review comments.
Tasks and Objectives for the Reviewer

Every time you read a draft of a paper in this class, I will provide a sheet with questions so you can focus your reading of the draft. The following checklist includes the main focus on any peer reading:

• Assess if the paper is reader based rather than writer based.
• Locate and analyze the thesis and motive.
• Review the organization of the paper.
• Review the topic sentences in the paper.
• Review the use of transitions between paragraphs.
• Analyze the conclusion and if it restates and re-asserts the thesis.
• Analyze the document for sentence style and clarity.
• Check format and citation details. Has the writers used MLA correctly?
• Check for grammar, punctuation, usage, and spelling problems.

Read the paper in its entirety before you make any comments or responses for the writer. You must assess what the writer is attempting to do in the paper before you make any suggestions for improvement.

You will make comments directly on the paper, suggesting line edits or global revisions that need to be done. You will also complete a one-page response letter for the writer with your overall impressions of the paper. You must provide a copy of this letter for the writer and a copy of this letter for me.

When you begin to make comments, your review must comprehensive and constructively critical.

Be sure to offer criticism, or feedback, that the writer can use constructively.

Be careful about making comments or criticisms that are based on your own personal style. Base your criticisms and suggestions for improvements on generally accepted guidelines. For example, every paper must have a thesis but telling a writer his thesis is wrong isn’t effective criticism. Telling a writer that the thesis is not supported by evidence and the development of his ideas in the paper is constructive and specific.

Explain the problems you find fully and offer possible solutions. Don’t just say a paper “seems disorganized.” Explain what is disorganized about it. Use specific details from the document to demonstrate your case by noting them in your letter and marking them on the draft.

Include some brief statement of guidelines, rules, examples, or common sense. It’s not enough to tell a writer that two paragraphs ought to be switched, for example. State the reason why.

Find positive, encouraging things to say about the document you’re reviewing. Compliments, even small ones, are usually appreciated. Read through the document at least once looking for things that were done well, and then let the writer know about them. Again, be specific.
On a separate sheet of paper evaluate the student essay at hand. Write your name and the name of the student you are editing on your editing sheet. Please answer all questions in complete, and full, sentences.

1. Does the paper offer the reader a clear position regarding the principle of exclusion that we have seen in some of the texts we’ve read in class? Do not simply answer this question with a yes or no, but—in a few sentences—summarize the writer’s position.

2. Does the paper have a thesis statement that succinctly states the overall argument of the essay? If so, underline it in double lines and write it down on your peer editing sheet. If you cannot find one, think about what the writer has written and suggest one. Write your suggested thesis on your peer editing sheet as well.

3. What are the two (or three, if applicable) texts used by the author to develop his or her position? How is the author using these frameworks? Provide a brief (3 sentences or so per example) summary of the way in which you think the writer is using each of these texts.

4. In addition to your analysis of 2 two texts, I had also asked that you use an example of a personal experience of a public space to support your position regarding the principle of exclusion that we have seen organizing many of the texts on city life. What experience does the author provide? Evaluate its overall effectiveness (in other words, does the author clearly describe both the public space and its significance?)

5. Evaluate the writer’s use of paragraph structure. In general, are they paragraphs coherent: that is, do they stick to one point or do they wander from point to point? Furthermore, do they have good topic sentences which explain to the reader, at the beginning of the paragraph, the direction the paragraph will take? Choose one example of what you think is a focused paragraph and another of an unfocused one and, in the margins of the writer’s essay, explain in detail why the paragraph is coherent or incoherent.

6. Look carefully at the movement from paragraph to paragraph throughout the essay. Does the writer provide transitions between paragraphs to clarify the direction the essay is taking? Go back to each paragraph and, in the margins, evaluate the transitions. For example, look closely at the connections between each paragraph and tell the writer if they are effective, or if the relations between paragraphs are too abrupt and need more effective transitions.

7. Suggest a few concrete revisions for the paper? In other words, what would you do to improve it? Again, be specific in your comments.
Sample Peer Review Assignment #2

Follow the directions so that you can provide honest feedback on your partner’s paper. Be sure to mark the text as appropriate and answer the questions on this sheet for the draft. Be honest and be specific.

Is there a thesis? Wherever you find it….underline it! What is the motive? Circle it.

What is the main argument of this paper?

Read each paragraph and come up with its main idea. List each main idea in the margin. If there are multiple main ideas, say that, as that is a problem.

In each paragraph find the sentence that you think is the strongest topic sentence: it introduces and sign posts the ideas of the paragraph, but also reflects the thesis.

Underline the topic sentence wherever you find it.

For each major point, do you see a CLEAR relation to the thesis and has the author. EXPLICITLY shown how the paper’s ideas relates to the thesis

Essay One Peer Workshop (example 2)

Read your partner’s paper once in its entirety.

Now go back and assess the draft for the following. Mark the paper as appropriate and prepare a TWO page, DOUBLE-SPACED letter for your peer. Bring TWO copies to class on Wednesday: one for your partner and one for me.

Underline the thesis.

Circle the motive.

Are all three texts introduced in the introduction with clear reference point as to the focus of this paper? When the texts are introduced are the title and author included?

Write the main idea of each paragraph in the margin.
Look at this list and compare it to the thesis. Do the ideas of this paper connect to and develop this thesis?

For each major point, has the author used material from each text?

Does the author explore not just what he believes to be true but also how and why it is true?

Does the conclusion draw the major points together and re-assert the thesis in a fresh, compelling way?

Use of MLA?

Any major grammar or mechanics issues that you found problematic?

For each major point, are a variety of sources brought in to discuss it?

Look at the MLA:
- are the in-text citations correct?
- is the works cited page correct? Check the citation formats.
- does the author have 8 sources used; are 5 scholarly?

List 5 questions or issues you want to know more about that the author introduces or has neglected to address.

**Sample Peer Review Assignment #3**

You will review the Grading Criteria that I handed out to you earlier in the semester. Pay careful attention to the descriptions of what defines each letter grade.

Read the paper through in its entirety and grade the report.

In a two-page, double-spaced letter, explain why you graded the report as you did using specific examples from the report to support your grade.

**Focus on the following areas:**

*Argument:*

*Working with Texts, including the case and multiple frames*

*Organization/Structure*

*Grammar and Mechanics*

*Language/Voice*

**The research paper meets all of the minimum requirements as outline on the assignment sheet provided in the course pack. Any paper that does not meet all of the stated requirements cannot receive a passing grade.**
Using Student Writing in the Classroom
(from Andrew Albin)

Bringing student writing into the classroom can prove an effective way to help your students feel more comfortable with the challenging writing tasks many of them are encountering for the first time in UWS. During high school, they are thoroughly trained in how to write rigid five-paragraph essays; now, you are asking them to step far outside of their comfort zone and to learn an entirely different approach to essay writing. This can be very intimidating, especially when you consider that they’re also encountering college classrooms, assignments, and evaluation for the first time!

As a pedagogical tool, student writing is useful in this regard because, at some level, it reassures students that our assignments are, in fact, doable—that the academic essay we teach can be written and has been written by students just like them. By incorporating this kind of writing into the classroom conversation, students get an opportunity talk to you and to each other about their writerly concerns and anxieties, and you get an opportunity to work hands-on with the tools and techniques you’ve talked about all semester.

Here are some suggestions on how to incorporate student writing into your classroom:

Sample student essays. This is perhaps the most basic and most essential form of student writing to introduce. Setting aside class time to look at and work through student essays from a rhetoric and composition perspective can be amazingly beneficial for both you and your students. You get to illustrate what you’re looking for in an academic essay, they get to reason out on the spot why one introduction paragraph works, why another doesn’t, and how the one that doesn’t could be improved, for example. Opinions vary on how relevant the sample essays you discuss as a class should be to the assignment your students are working on. There are a couple of options for what kind of sample essay to choose:

- Well-written essays from outside the classroom. Write Now! can be a good resource for these, but there are also published collections of student essays and compilations from other universities to draw from. If your assignment is close reading, it’s probably best to choose a close reading sample essay; if lens analysis, choose a lens analysis essay, etc. Working with these sample essays helps you to ground abstract writing techniques and essay elements in concrete examples, and it give students something to model their own writing after (which can be a drawback, as well).

- Really horrible essays from outside the classroom. A bit more difficult to find—best bet is to browse through student essay mills on the Internet—but these can be a lot of fun to work with. Students get to trash the essay, but also identify rhet/comp problems using the language you’ve developed in the classroom. These can also allow you to vary your teaching style—they’re a great way to work freewriting exercises in. You’ll want to be very clear that you do not intend these essays to be imitated.
• Leftover essays from last semester’s UWS. You’ll most likely teach your UWS course more than once, and you are guaranteed to have portfolios from the previous semester that were never reclaimed. Rather than let all that writing go to waste, bring in an essay or two written for the same assignment last semester for discussion this semester. Be sure to present the essays anonymously, and encourage respectful discourse in the classroom—remind them they are discussing the work of one of their peers. [Ryan, this is something I’ve been meaning to ask Dawn about, in terms of ethical usage.]

• Anonymous volunteer essays from within the classroom. This can be challenging to pull off, since it requires a certain level of trust and respect between you and your students that takes time to establish. It is absolutely essential that the essay be presented anonymously, and that you keep the author’s anonymity secure. It also rests on you to keep the classroom conversation as constructive and supportive as possible—volunteers are especially vulnerable and can take criticism to heart. Thankfully, those brave souls who do volunteer receive constructive feedback from sixteen sympathetic readers, a huge boon to their revision process!

Peer feedback. In addition to written feedback on rough drafts and verbal feedback during conferences, peer feedback helps students see their own thinking and writing process from different angles. Sometimes, having those new perspectives come from their peers has a different impact than it does coming from you, with positive results. It also helps peer reviewers develop fluency in the critical concepts and vocabulary you are bringing to bear on the writing process. While the students do much of the talking during peer review, it is essential for you to actively float around the room, keep peer review groups on task, and hold students accountable by bringing the conversations within peer groups back to the table at the end of class. Peer review is usually a new concept to students, so you’ll need to walk them through the process the first time; you’ll want to keep an eye on the clock to be sure that everyone has their fair share of feedback. If you dynamically facilitate their small group conversations and help them grasp their potential for detailed and constructive feedback, they will be able to fully sustain the review session.

Presentations. In-class presentations are a great way to foster community in the classroom and offer students a creative means to explore ideas and make connections. Presentations constructively de-center the classroom, empowering students as instructors while you observe and comment from the sidelines, and they work especially well if the themes of your UWS have resonance with performance. These usually occur at the very end of the semester when students are working on their final essay. Be clear with your instructions—how long should presentations be? can they read directly from their paper? will there be time for an open Q&A or a peer respondent?—and remember to have options for students less comfortable with creativity. Encourage them to use technology and multimedia; many of them already know PowerPoint, they’ll be able to get across their ideas more clearly and concisely, and they’ll better manage performance anxiety when they are not the dead center of attention.

Journals. Journals can be a great way to keep your students constantly writing and thinking about an idea over the course of a semester. It is important to establish the function and the focus of the journal early on—journals work best if they have a practical role to play in your assignment sequence (more likely than not, they’ll tie in to the last essay, so students have the
whole semester for journaling). Have a different student read from his/her journal at the beginning of each class; it keeps them honest, creates an intellectual community, sparks conversation, and lets them hear their own voices (instead of yours) as each class begins.

Latte. Similar to journals, Latte can be a great place to prompt and collect informal student writing. There are creative ways to use Latte beyond reading responses—have each of your students post a paragraph from his/her rough draft, and then have one of their peers offer rewrite suggestions. Ask them to post a sentence with passive voice problems they can’t fix, then bring those sentences into the classroom and work them out together. Have each student post a position statement, then have another rewrite from a different point of view. Be sure to bring these online interactions back to the classroom!
Using *Write Now!* in Class
(from Brian Chalk)

My primary objective in using *Write Now!* in class is to provide the students with an example of a solidly written, reasonably successful college level essay that fulfills the specific demands of a given assignment. I usually incorporate *WN* into my lesson plan in the class directly before they do peer review for the first time to give them the experience of commenting on student writing critically and constructively. The exercises described below can be easily combined with readings from *Writing Analytically* and/or the in class exercises on the Writing Program webpage.

**Close Reading Essay:** Students should read the essay prior to class. Divide students into groups and allow them 3-5 minutes to find and label the essay’s motive and thesis statement. Ask students to assess each one in terms of the criteria set forth by Gordon Harvey. Questions to consider: Does the writer clearly establish an intellectual context in which to situate her discussion? Is the thesis clearly defined and compellingly expressed? Next allow the students 3-5 minutes to find solid examples of evidence and analysis. Questions to consider: Does the essay make effective use of its primary text? Does the evidence provided advance the central argument or does the essay feel loosely structured? I then normally ask the students to assess the essay’s strengths and weaknesses with reference to Gordon Harvey’s terminology.

**Lens Essay:** In my experience teaching thus far I have found that the students find the Lens Essay the most challenging assignment of the semester. This is largely because they find it difficult to discern what the assignment demands. The example from *WN* is therefore very useful for making sure that students are on the right page conceptually. First, I divide the students into groups and ask them to label the essay’s thesis, motive, and where the writer clearly establishes how the lens text they are working with functions in their argument. Questions to consider: Do the opening paragraphs effectively develop a dialogue between the lens text and the primary text? Does the writer clearly introduce the theoretical framework that the lens provides? Next, allow students 3-5 minutes to find 2-3 examples where the lens either works for or against the writer’s argument.

**Research Essay:** For this longer essay, divide the students into 3 or 4 groups and assign each group a section to examine closely. Allow students 3-5 minutes to underline the topic sentence and the transitional sentence of each paragraph. Questions to consider: Is the organizational structure of this essay clear and logical? Does the central argument sustain itself from one paragraph to the next? Next allow students 3-5 minutes locate and label examples where the writer makes effective use of source material. Questions to consider: How successfully does the writer integrate source material into her text? Does the evidence provided act in service of the paper’s central argument? Finally, have each group summarize their respective sections and discuss how well the argument coheres.
Challenging Student Scenarios: How Would You Respond?
(from Lauren Holm)

Here are some difficult scenarios instructors have experienced with students in the past. How would you respond to them?

Scenario 1
A student “forgets” to bring his writing assignment to class. He says he’ll put it in your mailbox, but doesn’t. When you ask him about it, he claims he did put it in your mailbox and doesn’t understand why you didn’t get it. His writing is ok, in the B range, but he always has trouble getting assignments in and is constantly making excuses.

How do you deal with the situation?

Scenario 2
A very earnest and hard-working student always raises her hand when you ask a question. Often hers is the only hand up even when you pause to allow others a chance to respond. When you do call on her, she talks for several minutes but her comments are often superficial or unproductive.

How do you encourage others to participate in the conversation? When she responds, how do you push her to complicate her comments? Once she starts talking, how do you cut her off to rein in the discussion?

Scenario 3
Your class plan requires looking closely at various passages of the assigned reading and discussing them in relation to the larger argument of the article. Your students are generally well-prepared and engaged, but for some reason they all come to class on this day without having done the reading and almost no one brought it with them.

What do you do?

Scenario 4
A student is doing very poorly in the first half of the semester and comes dangerously close to failing. However, at the last possible point at which salvaging a passing grade is still possible, she tries to pull herself together. While she doesn’t turn in exemplary work for the rest of the semester, she completes everything satisfactorily and on time. You give her a final grade of D. When she gets her final grade, she comes to your office in tears. She never outright asks you to change her grade, but explains that she is on academic probation and will probably not be able to continue at Brandeis if she gets below a C. She says she is averaging Bs in her other classes and feels that her work in the second half of the semester in your class shows she’s capable of succeeding as a student at Brandeis.

How do you handle this situation?
**Scenario 5**

During the first few weeks of the semester, 1 or 2 students are chronically late to class. As you get near mid-semester, more and more students start coming late. Soon students who are on time are the minority.

What do you do late in the semester to reverse the tardiness trend? What might you do early in the semester to prevent students from thinking tardiness is ok?

**Scenario 6**

Early in the semester, you ask the students to complete an in-class writing assignment. You notice that one student spends the time looking around the room instead of writing. After class you have a chance to speak to the student and tell him you notice he didn’t participate in the exercise. He says he has trouble writing on the spot like that. When you try to suggest other ways he can do in-class writing (on a laptop?) or get some benefit from the exercise, he tells you not to worry about it, he’ll just do the in-class writing. He seems like he doesn’t want to talk about it any more. The next time you assign in-class writing he makes it look like he’s writing but you can tell he’s not.

What do you do with students who don’t have documented disabilities but for some reason are reluctant to write in class? How do you make accommodations for students who really can’t complete in-class writing activities?

**Scenario 7**

An observant Jewish student asks for an extension on a draft that is due the week after Rosh Hashana. After consulting with other faculty who state you have no such obligation, you decline, stating that with such an extension he will miss out on the week’s peer reviews. A bit later in the semester, when the student has been struggling somewhat, he writes a long email attributing this to the lack of an extension during the holidays, and accusing you of being insensitive to his religious practice.

How would you respond to this situation?

**Scenario 8**

One of your students seems to be having a great deal of difficulty. She has come to meet with you several times, and seems to be making a real effort in the class, but her written work continues to be weak relative to the other students in the class. During a meeting in your office, she informs you that she is currently a student in the Transitional Year Program. She also shares with you that she got straight A’s in her public high school, while working full-time to support her family because an illness prevented her mother from working.

How would you go about helping this student? Would you hold her to the same standard as the other students in your class?

**Scenario 9**
A student has been doing well in your class all semester, missed 3 classes but turned in all her assignments and gotten Bs and B+s on all assignments. In the second to last week of classes, she stops coming to class and doesn’t turn in her final portfolio.

What do you do?

**Scenario 10**

You have a class that includes a few extremely bright students who are incredibly diligent and invested in your class, a few students who turn in the bare minimum, miss class and prefer to talk about their weekend during group work sessions, and a middle range of students who could either be motivated by the top students or dragged down by the slackers.

How do you assign these students in peer review groups? How do you create a cohesive classroom community?
Fixing the Little Problems in the Classroom
(from James Lang’s On Course)

Q: How do I handle rude student behavior in my classroom—talking, laughing, getting up and down during class?

"No experience of new faculty as teachers," writes Robert Boice, "is so dramatic and traumatizing as facing unruly, uninvolved students—especially in the large, introductory courses traditionally assigned to newcomers" (81). Undoubtedly true; equally troublesome, with the omnipresence of laptops and wireless-enabled classrooms, are students spending class time shopping for shoes online, rather than taking notes (see following question).

Two major points here. First, rude student behavior often comes about because of what's happening at the front of the classroom. If students are talking and reading the student newspaper during the lecture, sending e-mails, or IMing their friends, your lectures may be boring. If students are chit-chatting with each other during the discussion, you may not be asking interesting questions. A well-taught class is the best preventive measure you can take to counter what Boice calls "student incivilities." His research on this issue suggests that newcomers face student incivilities at much higher rates than highly rated teachers with years of classroom experience (81-98). Fortunately for you, you are doing the work right now to become a highly rated teacher, and preparing thoroughly for your first semester will be the best measure you can take against poor behavior.

However, students, like the rest of the population, can be just rude idiots, so sometimes your best teaching efforts won't be enough to eliminate such behaviors. You won't know always know about students surfing the internet in class, but you will certainly know about noisy and rude students. When that happens, you can either shame such students by calling them on the behavior in front of their peers, or you can find ways to discuss their behavior with them in private. My non-confrontational personality, coupled with a dozen years of teaching and raising children, have convinced me that the latter route is the better one for correcting poor behavior. When identifiable students are acting uncivilly in your classroom (however you may define such activity), you can stop them after class and give them the standard lines you would expect to give—that such behavior makes it difficult for you and other students to concentrate, and so on. You can also ask them to come see you in your office, and discuss it there, if you think they require a more serious dressing down. A third method that I have used is to append a P.S. to one of my final comments on their papers, addressing the behavior and asking them to improve it or to come see me in my office. Calling them on the behavior privately like this has always worked for me. If you try this and it doesn't have the desired effect, check with your chair; seriously persistent and disruptive behavior should be observed by a senior faculty or administrator so that you won't suffer for it in your teaching evaluations (and they may be able to intervene with the students).

Q: Students have their laptops, cell phones, PDAs, and what-have-you on in my classroom, and whenever I step out into the seats I can see that half of them are shopping for shoes or downloading music or text messaging their friends. Some students have cell phones going
off in class. What can I do about this?

A: This is probably the most annoying problem we will all face in the future, so best to consider it now and decide how you want to handle it. The solutions seem to me different for different sized-classes. In small classes, twenty or thirty or less, you need to have a strong physical presence in the classroom. You should be using interactive teaching methods in classes that size, of course, and such methods give you an opportunity to move out into the seats, work your way around the classroom, and let students know that at any given moment you will be standing behind them, seeing whatever they have on their desk or laptop. Do not isolate yourself in the front of the classroom; you command the entire space of the classroom, and you need to make yourself felt at every desk. You don't need to be in constant motion, of course; student awareness of your mobility will go a long way towards keeping them on task.

In larger lecture classrooms and auditoria, you can still do some of this, but the problems will be worse here. So you have two choices, and neither of them are ideal: learn to live with a certain amount of technological distraction, or ban the technologies that are disrupting your classroom. If you choose option one, it doesn't mean you should do nothing. At the very least, you should discuss the inappropriate use of technology in the classroom at the beginning of the semester, and perhaps even include on the syllabus a technology warning like the one cited by Michael Bujega in a Chronicle essay on this subject:

If your cellular phone is heard by the class you are responsible for completing one of two options: 1. Before the end of the class period you will sing a verse and chorus of any song of your choice or, 2. You will lead the next class period through a 10-minute discussion on a topic to be determined by the end of the class. (To the extent that there are multiple individuals in violation, duets will be accepted).

Whether you use humor in such a warning or not, including an admonition on the syllabus gives you an excuse to discuss the use of technology with students in the classroom, and to help the conscientious (but perhaps clueless) students see how to comport themselves more appropriately.

However, if you are teaching in a large wireless classroom, facing a sea of laptops, and you are convinced that the vast majority of the students are not listening to your scintillating words, then don't hesitate to ban laptops, either outright or for specific parts of the session. No student has a constitutional right to bring a laptop to class, so you have every right to forbid them (you might announce that you will make special provisions for students with disabilities, however). Don't feel bad about it; students have been taking notes with pencil and paper for many hundreds of years; it won't kill them. A less stringent option would be to allow or encourage laptops for specific activities in class—asking students to join you in reviewing a website or program you have scouted for them in advance, or working with them on a program or problem—but then asking them to close the laptops for the fifteen-minute lecture module you have planned for the end of the class, when you will be summarizing the main idea of the day.

Remember—you are in charge. As Bujega concludes at the end of his essay on inappropriate technology in the classroom, "despite digital distractions, large classes, decreased budgets, and fewer tenured colleagues, professors still are responsible for turning students on to learning. To
Q: Students are not coming to class, or they come late. Do I leave those choices up to them, since they are adults, or do I become an enforcer and start each class with a daily quiz?

An article on poor attendance in college and university courses, which appeared in the spring of 2007 on insidehighered.com and provoked a massive outpouring of responses, offered a bleak picture of this issue. The article included the following statistics on attendance and tardiness patterns: A 2005 survey of first-year undergraduate students by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles showed that while a majority of college students spend 11 or more hours in class per week, 33 percent reported skipping class and 63 percent said they come to class late "occasionally" or "frequently." A similar survey showed that the proportion of students who report coming late to class has jumped from 48 percent in 1966 to 61 percent in 2006 - evidence, one could argue, of a growing indifference to class in general.

I'm going to start sounding like a bit of a skipping CD here, but the first principle is to ensure that you are creating a classroom experience which students could not duplicate by copying someone else's lecture notes, or by listening to a recording of your lecture. Students, in other words, should play a role in the classroom. If you are giving students a role to play—through discussions, group work, in-class writing, problem-solving, and so on—then you have every right to say that the success of the course depends upon the presence of the students, and to require that presence. If you are standing in front of a podium and lecturing for fifty minutes, then I'm with the tardy and missing students on this one—why should they come to class, when they can get the same material more efficiently, and in the comfort of their dorm rooms, from other means?

As long as you are offering a class worth attending, which depends upon students for its success, then you should not hesitate to drop the hammer on late and absent students. Take whatever measures seem appropriate to you, from locking the door at the start of class to giving daily quizzes at the opening of class, from calling tardy students to the carpet as they walk in the door to penalizing students who miss more than three classes on their final grade. Consult the article on insidehighered.com for more ideas on combating this problem, and especially the responses that follow.

Q: I have trouble remembering the names of my own family; the prospect of remembering the names of several sets of twenty or thirty or forty undergraduates each year just seems impossible. Can I call on them as "red baseball cap" or "kid who plagiarized" or "crewcut" just to keep things simple for me?

A: I did know a teacher who managed this successfully, actually. At the beginning of the semester he hit upon some aspect of a student's appearance or mannerisms, gave them a nickname linked to it, and then referred to him or her in that manner in class. He pulled it off because he was eccentric and had a great sense of humor, and did not use offensive or embarrassing nicknames (i.e., no one was nicknamed "baldie" or anything). The potential ways in which this practice could go bad are so numerous, though, that I really wouldn't recommend it.
Mary McKinney, a clinical psychologist who counsels academics on career issues, addressed this problem in an essay for the online academic news site insidehighered.com, and described there more than a dozen techniques for learning the names of students—her list is worth consulting, and is available online for free (see citation below). The one that I like best, number twelve, may be the simplest. Every time a student asks a question or speaks in class, ask them for their name; repeat the name somehow in the answer—"Jane asks an important question here..."—and if that question or your response to it comes up in class again, associate it once again with her name: "You'll remember that Jane asked us this question last week..." The more times you repeat the name, the more likely you will be to remember it. This technique has the bonus benefit of affirming the importance of student contributions in your classroom, making visible to them how their ideas are woven into the fabric of the lectures and discussions. Classes of fifty or more obviously do not require you to learn everyone's name, but don't abandon names altogether. Learn any names you can, but don't fret about not having comprehensive coverage.

Q: I have a student who flirts with me, or who asked me out for coffee, and I find him/her attractive, and we're only a few years apart in age. Can we date, either now or when the semester is over? Or does finding my students attractive make me a horrible person?

A: I doubt anyone will get through thirty years of teaching 18-22-year olds without finding at least some of them attractive, and finding a smaller few both attractive and interesting and worth a few hours of idle daydreaming about. So no one should feel bad about this; we are sexual beings, and so are they, and they are young and like to wear skimpy clothes to attract their fellow students—and occasionally we might get snared in webs that were not intended for us. Sometimes, though, those webs are intended for us, which makes the situation especially difficult.

While you have no reason to feel guilty about sexual attraction to a student, you also should follow a clear policy on this: no sexual relationships with any student, including a graduate student, who is enrolled at an institution at which you are teaching. Not just enrolled in your class—enrolled in the college, even three years after you have taught that student. Is such a relationship ethically wrong? I believe it is, for a variety of reasons, but I know thoughtful people who disagree, and my recommendation here is not based on ethical concerns. It's very practical, and I have said it once before: as a graduate student, adjunct, or tenure-track faculty member, you are vulnerable. Do not do anything that will jeopardize your career, and sleeping with students, however far removed from your classroom, will jeopardize your career. You may not see anything wrong with sleeping with a graduating senior, but plenty of your colleagues might, and those colleagues will make decisions about your career. You also will be amazed at how quickly word of a sexual relationship between a student and a teacher can spread around campus. A rumor like that one has the potential to follow you for the remainder of your career. So steer far clear of acting on any normal sexual impulses you have for your students; sublimate them into wholesome activities like painting Civil War figurines or learning to play the recorder.

Q: I tend to get stage fright with public speaking, and so I am massively nervous about the first day. Like, going to have a nervous breakdown kind of nervous. I'm afraid my hands will shake, or I'll faint, or my heart will explode, or something terrible, and students will lose all respect for me.
A: I had these kinds of nerves going into my first interview on a morning news program, after my first book came out, and what really helped me was a technique I recommend to everyone: spend the evening before your first day watching the comedy *What About Bob?*, in which Bill Murray plays a man paralyzed by every fear you can imagine. Watching him "baby step" his way into self-confidence by the end of the movie did wonders for my own confidence.

If, however, this doesn't seem like an adequate strategy for you, the best thing you can do is to ease your way into the first class, so that the moment of initial exposure to the students is a muted or more gradual one. For months before the class begins you will be building up in your mind to that moment when the students are tiered before you, rows of unfamiliar faces, and you open your mouth to begin the long adventure of the semester. The prospect of that moment is what terrifies you. So, prepare to eliminate that moment. Get to class early and dissipate the unfamiliarity of the students by walking around and handing out the syllabus, greeting the students by name. Or begin the class simply by handing out the information sheets, and asking them to fill one out. You may even begin with a group activity, like the exercise that Michael Gennert recommends on having students work in groups to read the syllabus and ask questions about it. The ten to fifteen minutes that this exercise will buy you, or the time that students spend filling out information sheets, will enable you to settle more easily into your first day of teaching and will tone down your anxiety considerably.

Q: You keep telling me to consult my chair about this or that, but I've discovered that my chair is insane/out to get me/incompetent/a potential serial killer. I've learned this from a colleague/all of my colleagues/my amateur sleuthing, the techniques for which I picked up while watching reruns of Murder, She Wrote. I love Angela Lansbury!

A: Me too! The possible causes and responses to this situation are endlessly variable, so following any advice I might give here could actually turn the situation worse. Just remember the following general principles:

1) If your own observations and/or a chorus of your colleagues agree that the chair is a problem, remember this: You have no power. Unless your chair is doing anything illegal, or borderline illegal (such as inappropriate sexual comments or subtle harassment), you won't be able to do much to stop him or her, and you have to remain on the chair's good side, or you will end up teaching all 8:00 am classes in a windowless basement. You also will have a hard time getting tenure. Fortunately, chairs come and go (in my department, we elect or re-elect them every three years), so patience and martyrdom are your best bets. For advice and consultation, you can sometimes find a reliable chair-substitute in a senior faculty member who has held the position of chair in the past. Walk around the hallways looking sad and pathetic, and a former chair might take pity on you. As Jay Parini argues in *The Art of Teaching*, if you can get your hands on an emeritus faculty member, they can prove excellent mentors as well—folks who have long institutional memory, and plenty of wisdom, but who will not sit in judgment on your tenure case (96-104).

2) One person complaining about another person, including a faculty member complaining about the chair, does not tell you anything you can trust about either of them. For all you know, the
complainer is the insane serial killer, and the chair is handling this person the best way she knows how. So be careful of becoming the person to whom a disgruntled faculty member likes to vent, whether it's about the chair or anyone else. Smile and nod, and don't be committal about anything until you figure out what's really going on. Anyone that buttonholes you continuously to complain about other faculty members, or about anything at all, should be avoided as much as possible (this holds true in life as well).

3) If you get into a situation in which it seems as if the entire department is against you, and are not treating you fairly, and you find you have been in this situation before... well, I'm going to be the one to be honest with you here. The problem, my friend, may be you. Consider a major personality overhaul.

Q: Any final advice for me?

A: Hand lotion. Nothing dries out your hands like chalk, especially during the wintertime. Keep some lotion in your desk, and apply it liberally. My departmental assistant would be much grateful, I'm sure, if I followed this advice myself, and stopped borrowing hers all the time.

An excellent resource for getting and giving advice on just about any teaching question you can imagine is the Forum section of the online version of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, which you can find here: [http://chronicle.com/forums](http://chronicle.com/forums). Look in particular at the thread "In the Classroom," but you will find advice and discussion about teaching in lots of places. This particular forum has its share of idiots, like every place in the world, but many thoughtful and interesting people post messages seeking and dispensing advice on the boards, and you will find a thread there—or you can start one of your own—on every vexing problem you are likely to encounter in and out of the classroom.

**Resources**


McKinney's article is followed by an interesting discussion among readers about the
importance of learning names, and offering other techniques for doing so.

argument about the respect we should give to our emeritus/a faculty members.

and tardiness, with a long following thread of debate and advice.

Reis, Richard. Tomorrow's Professor: Preparing for Careers in Science and Engineering. New
Reis went on to write a column for the Chronicle of Higher Education on this same topic
for a few years, and then founded the Tomorrow's Professor listserv.
8. Responding to Student Writing

Notes on Responding to Student Writing
(from Kerry Walk, Princeton University)

Comments and grades on student writing arguably constitute the most serious, sustained teaching intervention you can make in a student’s writing career. Responding to a student’s paper involves (1) reading it carefully while making marginal comments, (2) writing a final comment in which you sum up the paper’s strengths and weaknesses, then (3) deciding on a grade. Below are suggestions for accomplishing each of these tasks.

1. Before Reading the Papers. This is perhaps the most crucial step in responding to student writing: before even looking at the stack, you need to think about your criteria for evaluating the papers before you. By making your grading criteria explicit, you’ll be better able to assess each paper’s strengths and weaknesses efficiently and fairly.

So—re-read the assignment. What do you expect will be the characteristics of the best responses? (For example, if the assignment asks students to take a side on an issue, you would expect papers with clearly stated positions.) Also think about the qualities you value most in student writing. Below is a list of qualities that most faculty and AIs would agree on:

• **Thesis**: Is there one main argument in the paper? Does it fulfill the assignment? Is the thesis clearly stated near the beginning of the paper? Is it interesting, complex? Is it argued throughout?

• **Structure**: Is the paper clearly organized? Is it easy to understand the main point of each paragraph? Does the order of the overall argument make sense, and is it easy to follow?

• **Evidence and Analysis**: Does the paper offer supporting evidence for each of its points? Does the evidence suggest the writer’s knowledge of the subject matter? Has the paper overlooked any obvious or important pieces of evidence? Is there enough analysis of evidence? Is the evidence properly attributed, and is the bibliographical information correct?

• **Sources**: If appropriate or required, are sources used besides the main text(s) under consideration? Are they introduced in an understandable way? Is their purpose in the argument clear? Do they do more than affirm the writer’s viewpoint or represent a “straw person” for knocking down? Are responsible inferences drawn from them? Are they properly attributed, and is the bibliographical information correct?

• **Style**: Is the style appropriate for its audience? Is the paper concise and to the point? Are sentences clear and grammatically correct? Are there spelling or proofreading errors?

In establishing your grading criteria, you should resist making a distinction between “content” and “writing”—and certainly don’t assign separate “content” and “writing” grades. This is a tough one,
but, when you think about it, there is no content in a paper without the writing to convey it, and writing is meaningless without any content to inform it. When you identify a paper as having “good ideas” but “poor writing,” it’s likely that you’re just guessing at the ideas the paper has and imagining what the writer meant. Don’t give the writer so much credit! Likewise, a “well-written paper” without “substance” is probably well written only in terms of sentence-level mechanics. In terms of every other element of academic argument—thesis, structure, use of evidence, and so on—the paper is likely not to be “well written.” Content and writing are so intertwined as not to be easily distinguishable, so don’t even bother.

2. Reading the Papers and Making Marginal Comments. You may want to skim through four or five papers to get a sense of the pile before reading and grading any single paper. Having selected a paper to respond to, you might read it through quickly to grasp the overall argument before making any marks.

While reading a paper more carefully, you should make comments in the margins. These comments have two main purposes: to show students that you attentively read the paper and to help students understand the connection between the paper and your final comments. If you tell a student in the final comment that he or she needs more analysis, for example, the student should be able to locate one or more specific sites in the text that you think are lacking.

- **Make some positive comments.** “Good point” and “great move here” mean a lot to students, as do fuller indications of your engagement with their writing. Students need to know what works in their writing if they’re to repeat successful strategies and make them a permanent part of their repertoire as writers. They’re also more likely to work hard to improve when given some positive feedback.

- **Comment primarily on patterns—representative strengths and weaknesses.** Noting patterns (and marking these only once or twice) helps instructors strike a balance between making students wonder whether anyone actually read their essay and overwhelming them with ink. The “pattern” principle applies to grammar and other sentence-level problems, too. Resist the temptation to copy-edit!

- **Write in complete, detailed sentences.** Cryptic comments—e.g. “weak thesis,” “more analysis needed,” and “evidence?”—will be incompletely understood by most students, who will wonder, What makes the thesis weak? What does my preceptor mean by “analysis”? What about my evidence? Symbols and abbreviations—e.g. “awk” and “?”—are likewise confusing. The more specific and concrete your comments, the more helpful they’ll be to student writers.

- **Ask questions.** Asking questions in the margins promotes a useful analytical technique while helping students anticipate future readers’ queries.

- **Use a respectful tone.** Even in the face of fatigue and frustration, it’s important to address students respectfully, as the junior colleagues they are.

- **Write legibly (in any ink but red).** If students have to struggle to decipher a comment, they probably won’t bother. Red ink will make them feel as if their paper is being corrected rather than responded to.

3. Writing a Final Comment. Your final comment is your chance not only to critique the paper at hand but also to communicate your expectations about writing and to teach students how to write more effective papers in the future. The following simple structure will help you present your
comments in an organized way:

- **Open with a salutation.** By addressing the student directly (“Dear Pat”), you make a personal connection and indicate that you have a stake in his or her intellectual welfare.

- **Reflect back the paper’s main point.** By reflecting back your understanding of the paper’s main point, you let the student see that you took him or her seriously. A restatement in your own words will also help you ground your comment.

- **Discuss the paper’s strengths.** Even very good writers need to know what they’re doing well so that they can do it again in the future. Remember to give specific examples.

- **Discuss the paper’s weaknesses, focusing on large problems first.** You don’t have to comment on every little thing that went wrong in a paper. Instead, choose two or three of the most important areas in which the student needs to improve, and present these in order of descending importance. You may find it useful to key these weaknesses to your grading criteria. Give specific examples to show the student what you’re seeing. If possible, suggest practical solutions so that the student writer can address the problems in the next paper.

- **Type your final comments if possible.** If you handwrite them, write in a straight line (not on an angle or up the side of a page), and avoid writing on the reverse side; instead, append extra sheets as needed. The more readable your comments are, the more seriously your students are likely to take them.

4. **Grading the Paper.** If you wait to decide on the grade until after you’ve written your final comment, the grade you assign is likely to be more accurate and fair than would otherwise be true, and the decision-making process will be less agonizing. To determine the grade, try these three steps:

- **Re-read your final comment.** As you do this, think about the extent to which the paper has met your grading criteria. You might even compose, in your notes or in your mind, a brief description of the paper in terms of these criteria—for example, “Good research question, obvious enthusiasm for the topic, and clear writing, but driven by an observation, not a thesis; use of a listing structure; lack of evidence to ground generalizations; over-reliance on the opinions of secondary sources.”

- **Determine whether a paper falls above or below “the line.”** It’s useful to think of papers as falling above or below an imaginary line in the grading scale—for example, B-/C+. A line set higher on the grading scale (say, at A-/B+) will result in higher grades. Whether a paper falls above or below the line most often depends on how effective the paper’s thesis and structure are: a readable paper with a clear argument will usually receive an above-the-line grade; a paper that’s difficult to read and doesn’t have a clear argument will usually receive a below-the-line grade. The paper described above would most certainly fall below the line, no matter where the line is set.

- **Make fine distinctions.** Having determined whether a paper is above or below the line, consider why it should receive a particular grade, not something slightly higher or slightly lower. If the line is set at B-/C+, then the paper described above would probably earn a C, because its weaknesses make a C+ too generous, and its strengths make a C- or lower too harsh. If the line is set at A-/B+, the paper would probably get a B. As you can infer, disagreements over grades are often actually disagreements over where the line is set.
Tips for Reading Essays by English Language Learners

Tip #1: Read for Content First Not Grammar

Because you are first and foremost trying to develop students’ thinking, read for content first. While tempting, it is not your job to fix every grammar mistake, so pick out just a few issues as a secondary goal of your reading.

Remember: International students are absorbing a great deal of cultural knowledge about conventions for speaking and writing in your classroom; they only can absorb so much. Language acquisition takes time—do not expect your students to be able to give you a perfect error-free essay, even by the end of the semester.

• Look for the Student’s Ideas: No matter how intimidating the grammar, read for the ideas that are there. International students, like others, learn from having their thoughts taken seriously, no matter how unformed. But, you say, I cannot see any ideas because of the grammar issues. If the ideas are weak, that’s a different teaching issue—even then, the grammar is a separate focus. Once you find “lurking” ideas, to use Elbow’s word, bring those out without attending to grammar at first.

• Look for Engagement and Understanding: Although word choice and style can impede your understanding of a paper, reading for content first can help you determine if the student is not only engaged in the ideas of the class but has some sort of understanding of it. Is there an attempt to engage at any level the task you’ve set out? What understanding your class does the essay reflect, if any? Because of the challenge of reading “through” unconventional or simply incomprehensible work, it’s easy to give up too early. Does the essay reflect even a rudimentary reception of the text?

• Don’t Overrun the Student’s Voice: The impulse to rewrite student sentences that are problematic is a strong one; after all, they’re annoying! However, plastering an essay with cross-outs and reconstructing whole sentences can overwhelm students and stifle future idea creation.

• Choose your Battle: When you are specific in identifying 3-4 issues it allows your students to improve in a concrete manner and to be more alert in the future. They will internalize the abstract concept rather than blindly accepting your rewrite and making the same mistake over again. Circle or underline the problem and identify it in the margins. These problems fall into 2 categories:
  a. Style-
     i. Non-native expression
     ii. Direct translation/idiomatic expression
     iii. Cultural metaphor
  b. Grammar (typical ESL grammar problems are in the following rules)-
     i. Articles
     ii. Tense agreements
iii. Plurals
Below are a few phrases you can use to signal the student (and their tutor) what the problems are:
   c. Word Choice
d. Awkward Phrasing
e. Non-Native
f. Repetitive
g. Grammar (then list out no more than 3 grammar difficulties within your commentary at
   the end but indicate to the student the hierarchy and the most important one for you for
   this unit)

- **Grading:** Strict identification allows you to better see if the mistakes present are purely first
  language interference or a lack of understanding of the material itself. When dealing with the
  above problems, give a split grade for the essay (content/grammar) rather than using the
  grammar or style as the main lens with which you judge the work in its entirety.

- **Giving a Heads Up:** You should feel free to list on the rough drafts things to work on with
  their ESL tutors or the Writing Center—if you send them in that direction. This allows sessions
  to be as productive as possible and targeted to your specific concerns.
Dear X,

This has the potential to be a very strong essay! You really have some moments of strong analysis. For these fine analytical moments to come together as an excellent essay, you will need to add a more focused thesis that gives them a larger meaning and direction. Also, your paper radiates with idealistic language. To the extent that you derive this idealism from Lazarus, this is fine. However, you need to make it clear that you are deriving these ideas from her. When you are analyzing, your language should carry a more objective tone.

**Thesis** - Your intro gets overly caught up in this idealistic language. I like your idea that you will unite your analysis under the theme of hope. However, you need to organize your thesis, your intro, and your essay on what, specifically, these essays have to say about hope. In other words, your thesis needs to express some position of your own about what these two essays, in combination, have to say about hope.

**Motive** - A thesis that is contestable (i.e. you can argue against it) makes the best motive. I think giving your thesis a bit more focus will allow you to forge a clearer motive. The fact that someone could think the opposite of your thesis will allow you to write a motive (in your intro) of the form: “While we might be tempted to believe_____, an analysis of _____ will show that _____ is actually the case.”

**Structure** - You have a two part structure. You analyze one text and then the other. I think you need to add a third part in which you bring the two texts together at the end. You need to provide more of a justification for including Lazarus and the Oath together in the same essay. Right now you largely analyze the two works in isolation. What can we learn by bringing them together in one essay?

**Analysis** - As I point out in the margins, you have some really strong moments of analysis. However, these moments would be stronger if your essay had a bit more overall direction. Having a clear and focused thesis pushing these ideas will turn these moments local insight into ideas that influence the direction of your entire essay.

Good luck!

Ryan

PS. Be sure to title your paper and number each page.
Dear X,

This is a very strong start and has the potential to be an excellent final draft. You do an excellent job of drawing out the tensions between Streisand and the Oath, including looking at minor resolutions within this overall tension. You manage to maintain a high level of clarity despite a great deal of complex thought. My major comment is that your essay needs to come to a bit of a clearer resolution in the end. You do an excellent job of exploring a dilemma in the definition of citizenship, but don’t resolve it very completely. I think it is okay to interject a bit of your own thought at this point in the essay.

**Thesis** – I think the somewhat unresolved tension in your essay is reflected a bit in the vagueness of your thesis. It is written very beautifully, but “the fluid nature of the definition of citizenship” doesn’t really make clear what our citizenship responsibilities are or how citizenship even works. I would work on resolving these issues in your essay and then specifying them more clearly in your introduction.

**Motive** – Your motive that “our own perception of citizenship...gives it meaning” is more a of restatement of your thesis than a motivating move. You need to show a bit more clearly how we might not have seen the things that you are going to show us. You might, for example, suggest that based on one text (or both of the texts) we might have a particular view of citizenship that your essay will complicate and revise.

**Structure** – You do an excellent job of exploring the tensions between the two texts. As I state above, I think you need to expand your final section in order to being this tension to more of a resolution.

**Analysis** – Strong analysis throughout. You do a great job of sticking close to the texts and placing them in dialogue. In a few spots you might bring in issues that aren’t all that relevant to your overall argument, but these moments are minor.

Good luck!

Ryan

PS. Be sure to add parenthetical citations after every quotation.
Dear X,

You have a nice start here. I think this has the potential to be a really excellent paper. To bring it to its full potential, I think you are going to have to significantly shift the question you are pursuing (though not necessarily the answer you provide). It is unclear, throughout, why someone might disagree with you. In order to raise the stakes of your essay, I think you need to create an adversary that will allow your essay to pursue more of a tension (see my motive comments below).

**Thesis** – Though your written thesis in your introduction is a bit confusing, I think you are off to a good start. The idea that individuals must gain acceptance into a culture—rather than just a legal entity—in order to fully achieve citizenship is a good start. I think you need to state this idea a bit more clearly, keep it present throughout your essay, and possibly extend it a bit to suggest how one might gain entrance into the culture (using King and Streisand, of course).

**Motive** – As you suggest in your cover letter, your motive is a bit weak. You need to suggest both what is at issue here and why someone might disagree with you (or King/Streisand). Both King and Streisand’s essays are reacting to what they would consider an unnecessary use of power (or even an abuse of power) on the part of the government. Therefore, you could say that “although the government seeks to impose _____ model of citizenship, King and Streisand show that this model is _____ because______.”

**Analysis** – You stray from your evidence at times (or seem to). You need to show exactly how the claims you make following your quotations and derived from the content of those quotations. Also, not everything you say is essential to proving your overall point. Try to clarify exactly what you are trying to prove and analyze only those pieces of evidence in depth.

**Structure** – You have a two part structure. You analyze one text and then the other. I think you need to add a third part in which you bring the two texts together at the end. You need to provide more of a justification for including Streisand and King together in the same essay. What do their discussions of artists and language laws have in common that justifies placing them in the same essay? What does the combination of these two topics show us about citizenship?

Good luck!

Ryan

PS. Remember to add page numbers and parenthetical citations after every quotation.

PPS. Your draft is a bit short. In future drafts, your essay must meet the minimum page requirement of the assignment. In this case, 5 pages.
Jeremy,

Your paper is off to a great start. You have good evidence and analysis to support your thesis. The paper is hampered, however, by your sentence structure. In some cases your sentences are so long and complex that the reader gets completely lost. In other cases, your sentences are only fragments. If you read the paper out loud, you will easily spot these errors. For example, one of the last sentences on p. 1 (by the way, PLEASE put page numbers on the essay) reads: “He is described by Nathan Zuckerman, the narrator who Roth often uses as a stand-in or alter ego for himself, identifies with a classmate of the Swede’s brother, Jerry, to have ‘starred as end in football, center in basketball, and first baseman in baseball.’” An example of a fragment occurs on p. 6 when you write, “This time, when he ignores the psychiatrist’s warning that ‘the benefits of stuttering may far outweigh the penalties.” Anyhow, you get the picture. You have a lot of great insights, but they are obscured by your words.

Regarding content, you sometimes make leaps that need explanation. For example, you claim on p. 2 that the assimilated Swede helps push Merry towards violence but you don’t explicitly make the connection between assimilation and violence. Similarly, on p. 3 you write that there is more to the Swede’s name and appearance that causes Merry to become a terrorist, but how are the name and appearance connected to her violence in the first place? Is this all part of her rebellion against the American dream? If it is, say so. Just be sure to tie everything back to the thesis. For instance, you claim that Dawn’s religious status adds problem—I assume you mean it contributes to Merry’s violence, but how? Finally, you need a motive for your introduction.

On a stylistic note, avoid constructions that claim to lay things out for the reader. For example, on p. 8 you write, “To completely understand how the Swede felt…” Instead, open with a sentence like, “Perhaps the most critical event in Merry’s life occurs when her father kisses her passionately on the beach.” Your next sentence beginning “Merry is eleven” follows naturally. Assume that the reader can infer that what you’re saying is important. Also, be sure to write in the present tense—you go back and forth a lot from past to present. For the final essay, include a bibliography and cover letter.

After you clean up the wording and clarify some of the points, you’ll have a really strong and compelling essay. Merry is a great case study, and you do a nice job analyzing what went wrong in her life.

Lisa
One on One Essay Conferences
(from Ryan Wepler, Rebecca Olson, and Rachel Kapelle)

Objective

The temptation in the office conference is to provide the student with a list of improvements that must be made—improve transitions, cut this passage, solidify the argument here, &c.—to improve the overall grade of the essay. Two major problems with this methodology are: 1) it does not emphasize writing as an evolving process; and 2) it doesn’t take into account the student’s interests, motivations, and goals for the essay. The other important thing to recognize is that these more cosmetic suggestions can (and should) be written as marginal or end comments on any essay. The purpose of the office conference is to provide students with a unique experience that could not be reproduced as a set of written instructions. With this goal in mind, the office conference should be viewed (by both instructor and students) as a collaborative effort that will provide a new set of objectives for a particular essay. The student should leave the conference with a clear understanding of the direction in which he or she wants to push the ideas of an essay.

Scheduling Conferences

This is best done by passing a sign-up sheet around in class with a series of fifteen or twenty minutes time slots listed on it or by using the choice function in Latte. Schedule in breaks for yourself every 4 or 5 conferences. Your syllabus should make clear the conferencing requirements for the course, including the penalty for failing to sign-up/show up for a conference. This penalty should be similar to that of a missed class. Students are forgetful. In addition to posting the sign-up sheet on your office door, it is a good idea to send an email to the class reminding everyone of their conference time and your office location.

Beginning the Conference

Students come into conferences not knowing what to expect. The tone you set at the beginning of the conference will influence not only the initial conference, but the student’s expectations for all future conferences. Pay close attention to how you set up each conference. Here are a few ideas:

- Start with a non-academic question: “How is your semester going?” “How are you enjoying Brandeis so far?” Of course you never want to get derailed on this type of conversation, but these types of questions help to establish an even dynamic between you and the student. The student will automatically respect your authority. The kind of authority you don’t want to set up is that of telling the student what to do with his or her paper (and, in most cases, they are all too willing to listen). Starting the conference more conversationally emphasizes that it will be collaborative by both taking the initial focus off of you, the instructor, as an academic authority and forcing the student to talk from the outset.
Ask the student what he or she feels is the best part of the paper, the place where it really gets going. This approach both reinforces that the student’s ideas (not the instructor’s) will be what determine the direction of the conference and gets the student talking about his or her own writing.

If the paper has been peer reviewed before the conference, ask the student what his or her peer group had to say about both its strong and weak points. Not only does this bring additional perspectives on the paper into your conference, but it reemphasizes the importance that you, the instructor, place on peer review. Because they consider you more "authoritative," students tend to privilege your comments and ignore those of their peers. Discussing peer comments with students subtly highlights their importance. In addition to being a useful conferencing tool, asking students about peer comments will help you to assess the strengths and weaknesses of your class's peer reviews.

The Middle of the Conference

Ideally you'll be able to use the student's ideas to discuss the evolution of the paper and form a clear objective for the revisions. Conferences rarely work out this neatly. Here are some ideas for maintaining a high level of energy and intellectual productivity in conferences:

- Discuss the passage or idea in a paper that the student points to as the most promising or exciting. How did the student come to that idea? What makes it so exciting? Is there a way to expand that section? To make that idea more central in the paper? To organize an entire paper around that one idea?

- Offer positive feedback of your own that mirrors what you are asking the student to provide: "I find myself becoming really excited in this passage because..." or "It seems like you are really onto something here." These types of comments are especially important because first year students are often unsure about what counts as a good idea (which, in college writing, should be both controversial and consequential). Organizing your conference around the presence of these elements in a students' own writing gives them confidence that they have good college level ideas. Discussing why these ideas are strong ideas will help your students to recognize (and internalize) when they have stumbled on a promising idea. This approach to conferencing has the additional benefit of making it unnecessary to dwell on the sections of a student's paper that are weak. Focusing the discussion on identifying the strongest and most promising ideas in a paper and then reorganizing the next draft around those ideas will cause the weaker sections to fall away naturally.

- As an idea for a new paper begins to emerge from your discussion of the strongest elements in the old one, discuss the elements of composition in the new paper. What is the motive? How will the new version be structured? Then compare these elements in the new paper to the way they were done in the draft. Framing the discussion in this way allows you to critique the student's writing in a way that is constructive rather than purely negative. Instead of simply telling the student that the draft lacks a motive or contains
structural problems, you can show how these problems can be remedied using the new set of ideas as a useful example.

Wrapping up the Conference

A student should leave a conference with a clear idea of how he or she is going to revise the essay and excited about getting to work on these revisions. This excitement should derive from a sense of personal investment in the new ideas that will be expressed in the revised essay. It is important to do two things at the end of a conference:

- You should ask the student to summarize the new vision that your meeting has established for his or her essay. Be sure to fill in any additional ideas that the student fails to mention. This step clarifies these ideas for both the instructor and the student and confirms that the two of you are on the same page. It also reinforces for the student that the meeting was productive.

- Ask the student if he or she has any questions. Students often come to conferences with very specific questions about punctuation or essay structure. You want the student to leave the meeting feeling like all questions have been answered.

A Final Note

Though they are often mentally draining, student conferences are always one of the most satisfying parts of teaching writing. It is important to recognize that this satisfaction goes both ways. For first year students, the writing course is often the only one in which the professor even knows their name. The one on one attention they are given in peer conferences stands out to them, and Brandeis students consistently note on course evaluations that the conferences were the best element of the course.
Timing Student Conferences
(from Andrew Albin)

This first point is pretty obvious: you want to conference with your students after they've handed in their rough draft and you've had a chance to at least read through and get a sense of what's going on with each student's paper. This is a good time to comment on the rough draft, but sometimes it’s more important that your students conference with you as soon as possible and you won’t have the time to comment thoroughly. You at least want to go into each conference with some notes to yourself, some familiarity with the specific writing problems you want to discuss with each student. (The one time when you might conference before the rough draft is on the research paper, to talk over starting ideas and guide students towards the most fruitful research topic.)

Usually, peer review happens right around the time when you're conferencing with students. There are good arguments for holding conferences both before and after peer review. If you schedule the conference before, they can go into the peer review session with your specific recommendations for revision in mind and take a more active role in directing the conversation when they are receiving feedback from their peers. If you go this route, you should hold onto rough drafts until after the peer review session is over, though; give it to them before, and they'll be obsessing over your specific comments instead of listening to and encouraging their peers.

If you schedule the conference after peer review, you can open each conference by asking the student what kind of feedback she/he got from her/his peers – tell your students in class during the peer review session that you will be asking them this during conference, and that they should have a list of two or three concrete critiques/suggestions that were made by their peers to open the conversation with. This works nicely in that they have a more active role during the conference; it becomes more of a dialogue than a critique session.

Deciding on when to hold your conferences could also depend on when your revisions are due – you want to give them a bit of time to work your feedback and peer review feedback into the revised essay.

Conferencing is hugely influential in a students’ writing process. It’s common to hear in course evaluations that conferences are one of the most helpful elements of the UWS program – it’s your chance to work with each student individually and nudge them in productive directions for thinking and revision. Those who miss their conference end up suffering in their grades; many instructors count a missed conference as if it were a missed class, even when they demand that the careless student reschedule.
9. Grading Student Writing

Grading Philosophy

Before you begin grading in your UWS, it is worth thinking about how you would like to employ grades in your course. In addition to being signifiers of student achievement, grades can also be an effective motivational tool. The UWS differs from a conventional courses requiring writing by emphasizing writing as a process and guiding students through prewriting, outlining, drafting, and revision. In UWS you have the opportunity to grade students not only on their finished products, but on the amount of work and thought they have put into the revisions of their essays. This can lead to a conundrum. On the one hand, you may feel that you are lying to a student by rewarding his extensive effort on a paper with a higher grade than the finished product would receive were it submitted by itself in a different course. On the other hand, rewarding students for attempting thorough revisions of their first drafts is a way of encouraging the very thing UWS aims to teach: writing as a process. Often you will find yourself in an office conference with a student who is hesitant about heavily revising her paper not because she is lazy, but because she is afraid of making it worse or of obscuring her original point. Telling this student that the effort she puts into her revision will be reflected in her final grade may be the key factor that gets her to leave her compositional comfort zone and motivates her to explore new ways of writing.

While it is your job as a UWS instructor to motivate students to expand their writing in this way, you are also obligated to give them some idea of where they stand in terms of being able to write an effective college essay. For this reason, you should provide students with some grade incentive to put in the extra effort required to push their writing in new directions, but you should be clear in your final comments about why students received the grades they did. If a student receives a B+ for heavily revising a draft and producing a final paper that only satisfies the requirements for a B, your comments should outline the major weaknesses in the paper and make clear to the student that his grade was significantly enhanced by the effort that he put into revising the draft.

You might also consider how hard you will grade your students at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. Though your initial inclination might be to maintain consistency throughout, there can be great practical value to grading more severely at the beginning of the semester and more leniently at the end. The cynical take on this practice is that it gives students a false sense of improvement. However, what it really gives students is a sense that you mean to get down to business at the beginning of the semester and that you don’t pass out As (or even B pluses) for work that could be significantly improved. One way to lessen the student anxiety caused by this practice is to weight the writing assignments at the beginning of the semester significantly lower than the assignments later in the semester. Though they may be dismayed about getting a C+ on their first essay assignment, students will be thankful that it is only worth 15-20 percent of their overall grade, and they will work hard and pay extra close attention to your comments in order not to repeat the same blunders on the later papers that are worth 25 and 30 percent of their grade.
UWS Grading Rubric
The A Essay makes an interesting, complex—even surprising—argument and is thoroughly
well-executed. While an A essay is the result of serious effort, the grade is based on the essay’s
content and presentation.
The major claim of the essay is complex, insightful, and unexpected. The thesis
responds to a true question, tension or problem. It is stated clearly at the outset
Thesis &
and evolves throughout the paper. The introduction has a clear motive that
Motive
outlines the stakes of the argument and demonstrates a meaningful context for the
author’s claims.
The best available evidence is introduced not only to support but also to
challenge and complicate the claims and stakes of the essay. It is often drawn
Evidence
from unexpected places, and its nuances are insightfully explored. The argument
& Analysis
is sufficiently complex to require an explanation of how the evidence supports the
essay’s claims, and evidence is used to develop new claims.
Ideas develop over the course of the essay so that the foundations established
Structure early on push the argument toward a more complex conclusion. The structure is
both logical and suspenseful or engaging.
The writing is clear and concise, yet sophisticated, demonstrating sentence
Style
variety and appropriate vocabulary. The essay is a pleasure to read.
The essay does not simply address the comments of the instructor and peer
Revision reviewers, but altogether transforms its ideas or use of evidence from the draft. It
is meticulously proofread.
The high B Essay either aims at making an engaging, complex argument but is hindered by a
few local problems with structure, analysis, or style, or else it has a simpler argument that is
thoroughly well-executed.
Either the major claim is clear, arguable, and complex but misses opportunities
for nuance or subtlety, or else it set out to explore an ambitious idea whose
Thesis &
complexity leads to minor errors in articulation. The introduction suggests some
Motive
context or stakes for the argument but does not offer strong motivation, or a
convincing motive is gestured at but remains implicit.
All claims are supported with evidence that is integral to the development of the
argument, but in a few places the link between claim and evidence may be
Evidence
unconvincing, unnuanced, or insufficiently explained. The analysis demonstrates
& Analysis
several moments of keen insight but also includes arguments that lack subtlety or
are insufficiently explained elsewhere in the essay.
The argument follows a clear logical arc, but small gaps, digressions, or a lack of
Structure
transitional language interrupt the flow of ideas in a few places.
The writing is mostly clear but may contain a few confusing sentences or
Style
mechanical problems. It is mostly engaging.
Revision The essay has mostly resolved the major concerns of the reviewers, though a few
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minor issues remain. It has clearly been proofread.

The **B Essay** addresses the assignment and demonstrates effort to produce a complex argument. However, the essay is hindered by either a lack of nuance in the thesis or by structural, analytical, or stylistic problems in the execution of its ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thesis &amp; Motive</th>
<th>Either the major claim is clear and arguable but lacks complexity or else sets out to explore an intriguing idea that has not developed into a specific claim. The introduction either unsuccessfully motivates an unexpected claim or weakly and artificially motivates a claim that does not constitute a significant revision of the <em>status quo</em>.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence &amp; Analysis</td>
<td>Most ideas are supported with well-chosen evidence that is sometimes explored in an insightful way, although nuances are often neglected. The evidence is often integral to the development of the argument, although there may be gaps in the explanation of how the evidence supports the essay’s claims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>The argument is interesting and logical, but the structure of the essay is, at times, confusing. The essay’s claims, while complex, are executed in a confusing sequence, or they seem related to the thesis but have a confusing relationship to one another. Transitional language may be present but is unsuccessful or inconsistent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>The writing is straightforward, mostly clear, and often engaging, but it contains occasional mechanical problems, confusing sentences, or moments of vagueness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision</td>
<td>The essay attempts to address reviewers concerns but only does so in parts of the essay. The changes in the essay are improvements but may not be global changes. There may be a few lapses in proofreading.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The **low B Essay** demonstrates an effort to address the assignment, but the argument is ultimately too obvious, undeveloped, or obscured by significant structural, analytical, or stylistic problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thesis &amp; Motive</th>
<th>The major claim is logical and would require some evidence to prove, but the stakes are not as high as they should be. The essay’s major claims are somewhat unclear, unspecific or uninteresting. The introduction lacks a clear motive or contains an unspecific or weak motive.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence &amp; Analysis</td>
<td>Evidence is usually relevant, but the essay often does not consider the most important evidence or will present multiple examples to demonstrate the same idea. The essay makes some effort to explore the subtleties of the evidence and may be occasionally insightful, but it rarely uses evidence to complicate the argument and develop new claims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>The argument mostly makes logical sense, but the structure of the essay is confusing—jumping around, missing transitions, or taking on too many ideas at once. Or, the argument itself may be presented simplistically, leading to a predictable structure and unnecessary transitional language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Style | Though the writing generally makes sense and there may be moments where the diction is appropriate and elegant, it is weak enough in places to obscure the author’s ideas, often as a result of vagueness, verbosity, awkwardness, or a
recurrent mechanical problem.

**Revision**  
The essay is either a C paper (or lower) that has been revised to a low B, or it shows no significant revision.

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The **C Essay** has significant problems with argumentation and/or presentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Thesis &amp; Motive</strong></th>
<th>The major claim of the essay is weak—vague, simple, or obvious. The essay does not respond to a true question, tension, or problem. The introduction usually has no motive.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence &amp; Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Evidence may be lacking or irrelevant. Instead of using evidence to develop the argument, examples remain undigested and unexplored. The author may simply summarize and simplify evidence, or present it in a confusing or unhelpful way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>The argument may be too simple and so does not develop over the course of the essay. Or the argument may be incoherent or too broad, without any clear organization or transitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Style</strong></td>
<td>The writing is generally confusing, awkward, or too verbose, and probably exhibits numerous mechanical problems. Its diction may be inappropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revision</strong></td>
<td>The essay did not change significantly from the first draft to the final draft. Either the essay does not adequately address the criticism of peers and instructor, or the author missed opportunities for response.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Not Passing.** An essay will not pass if it does not meet the minimum page requirement, does not address the assignment, plagiarizes, or does not meet standards for academic writing or argumentation for UWS.
Assignment-Specific Guidelines

In addition to the general qualities outlined in the rubric, instructors may want to keep the following criteria in mind when designing essay prompts for each assignment.

A successful close reading should accomplish the following:

· Present a reading of the text that is coherent, non-obvious, and important to our understanding of that text. The close reading uses close attention to particular moments in a text in order to uncover something strange or counterintuitive that complicates a standard or incautious reading.

· Use particular moments within a text in order to make a larger claim about that text as a whole. Discussion of each piece of textual evidence must be clear and satisfactory, but must also work with the discussions given to every other piece of evidence in order to prove the essay's larger thesis.

· Carefully consider all textual evidence that complicates its thesis and address the strongest possible counterargument a reasonable reader might raise. All successful arguments must address the other side of their claims, but close readings must remain particularly attentive to the possibility of complication because there is a much smaller range of potential arguments and a relatively small body of evidence from which to draw.

A successful lens analysis should accomplish the following:

· Present an argument that engages both the lens text and the focus text (the thing to which you apply the lens) in a meaningful way. The argument should not appear to be mostly about one text or the other with a few tossed-off references to the other. Rather, the argument should demonstrate what an understanding of one text can bring to a reading of another.

· Create an argument that not only applies the theoretical framework of a lens text to another text, but also uses the text being examined as a means of reflecting critically upon the theories of the lens itself. Whatever its insights, no theory can ever fully account for the totality of human existence: a responsible application of any theory must remain aware of that theory's shortcomings and oversights, and should use them as a means of critical reflection. Beyond simply looking for a counterargument, a lens analysis should use its texts to gesture toward some new ground that the lens cannot describe and that the text suggests in some way. (I'm trying to suggest that the students must try to revise the lens's theory, but I'm having trouble being clear.)

· Demonstrate a clear understanding of both texts through the careful analysis of well-chosen evidence. A successful lens analysis must not fall into the trap of merely summarizing either text, but must perform a close-reading of them both. This means doing more than simply putting Freud, Mulvey, or Foucault in one's own words, necessary as that might be in first attempts to understand them.

A successful researched argument should accomplish the following:

· Present an argument that is as much of an argument as the close reading and the lens analysis: students must resist the urge to compose encyclopedia articles or compilations of fascinating trivia. The sources uncovered must serve as tool of argumentation as
directly as the textual evidence used in a close reading.

. Integrate the arguments of others into a clear and coherent original argument. Just as the successful lens analysis uses a theory to say something original about that theory, so too should the sources here serve an original claim and not simply agree in an uncritical way. It may not be possible to build a researched argument around the complication of some other theory, but any researched argument must clearly distinguish its own position from the others it employs.

. Develop in a manner that pushes forward an original thesis, justifying not only the choice of evidence but also the order in which it presents that evidence. A strongly motivated and evolving thesis is an absolute necessity when dealing with research, as arguments can disappear into context quite easily if not especially clear, motivated, and consistent. (I'm not sure about this last one, but I'm running out of time and I want to get this to you soon.)
Sample Draft Checklist for Research Essay
(from Nat Hodes)

Sources and Citations:
  Incorporates one of the provided secondary sources (Bordwell, Mulvey, or Horkheimer).
  Uses at least three additional secondary sources.
  At least two sources are from peer-reviewed journals or scholarly books.
  Parenthetical in-text citations are correctly formatted.
  "Works Cited" page is correctly formatted.
  Book and film titles are italicized or underlined; essay titles are in quotation marks.
  All quotations are properly introduced by naming the author and title of the source.
  Quotations are not simply left to speak for themselves but briefly paraphrased, if need be,
  analyzed, and finally connected back to the discussion.

General Formatting:
  Meets the minimum page-length requirement of 10 pages.
  Margins, indents, or spacing of the paper are correctly formatted.
  Pages are numbered.
  Cover page is attached.
  Paper has a catchy and informative title.

Style and Mechanics:
  Avoids passive tense and excessive use of "to be" verbs.
  Avoids run-on sentences and sentence fragments.
  Uses the semi-colon, colon, and comma correctly.
  Has few awkwardly constructed sentences.
  Condenses its language; isn't overly wordy, repetitious, or redundant.
  Noun and verb forms agree (no singular nouns with plural verbs, e.g.).
  Does not inappropriately shift in and out of present or past tense.
  Consistent use of formal diction.

Introduction:
  Has a stylish or engaging opening.
  Has a motive that contextualizes the argument, that enters into debate with the sources, or
  that suggests why the argument will interest a general audience.
  Thesis is stated in the introductory paragraph; it is specific and non-obvious.

Structure and Evidence:
  The argument progresses logically and transitions well.
  Each paragraph is devoted to proving a single claim (ideally stated as a "topic
sentence"). Each claim is supported with evidence from the research or from close-reading. At least one scene or moment of the film is extensively close-read. Avoids plot summary. Defines key terms.
**Grading Tips**

**Grading Late Papers**

- As grades are students’ primary motivation for turning papers in on time, your syllabus should be clear about how students will be penalized for turning in late work. For example:

  **Late Paper Policy:**

  Late drafts (midway or final) will result in a lower overall grade. I will deduct one third of a letter grade for each day a paper is late. Late midway drafts will also complicate peer reviews and, in turn, diminish the quality of the feedback you receive from your peers. If it is absolutely necessary to turn a paper in late, please see me as soon as possible to negotiate an extension.

- If a paper is one day late, I will usually deduct the third of a letter grade that is indicated on the syllabus. For papers over one day late, I usually only deduct half of what my syllabus indicates. This allows you to write this sort of comment on a paper turned in two days late: “Though I would normally deduct two thirds of a letter grade for a paper that is two days late, I will only deduct a third in this case because I know how much other work you had to do.” This allows you to look kind and considerate while still emphasizing the importance of turning written work in on time.

**For Students Who Contest their Grades**

- It is generally a bad practice to change the grades of students who contest their grades. This sets a bad precedent and undermines your authority which, sad though it may be, is heavily tied to your position as the sole arbiter of students’ grades. You might tell an especially persistent student that you will take his or her points into account when grading the next paper. Though you shouldn’t shy away from discussing the reasons why the student received the grade he or she did, try to deflect the conversation toward how to improve these issues on the upcoming paper.

**Organizing your Syllabus**

- In addition to a section that describes each of the essay assignments in detail, your syllabus should contain a percentage breakdown of the students’ overall grades. For example:

  **Grading**

  - Close Reading Essay 20%
  - Lens Essay 25%
  - Research Essay 30%
  - Pre-Draft Assignments 15%
  - Class participation (including conferences, peer reviews, & attendance) 10%

**Participation Grades**

- Because UWS is a discussion-oriented seminar (and how to participate effectively in a college seminar is an important skill for first-year students to learn), you should figure class participation into students’ overall grades. It is important to make clear to students that they will not receive credit for simply showing up to class. They should understand
that a high participation grade requires thoughtful contribution to the class discussion in nearly every class. Students may need reminded of this later in the semester.

**Attendance**

- As grades are pretty much your only leverage over students who fail to attend class, it is important to be clear about how absence will affect their grades. For example:

  **Attendance Policy**

  Attendance and class participation are mandatory. You have three free absences which you may use in case of sickness, scheduling conflict, or religious observances. Further absences will reduce your final grade by 1/3 of letter grade, so an A will become an A-, an A- will become a B+, etc. **After six absences you may fail the course.** You are responsible for getting notes or assignment changes from your classmates. Exceptions are not made for athletics; if your schedule requires you to miss more than three classes, you should find a class that meets at a different time.
Strategies for Responding to Drafts with Margin and In-Text Comments
(from Nat Hodes)

Marginal Comments

- If there is a consistent mechanical or stylistic problem with the paper, rewrite a few of the student's sentences (change passive to active verbs, cross out redundant phrases, rewrite wordy sentences, etc.) in the first couple of pages, and then clarify (in your comments or in conference) what the problem is and that you've rewritten a few sentences as an example—but that the problem persists throughout all the writing.

- Try using only the left margin of the paper for comments on the paper's style/mechanics, and the right margin for commenting on the paper's ideas/analysis, as a way of ensuring balance.

- Offer a printed key to any phrases or symbols you use in your markups (let them know, for instance, that "awk" or a squiggle underneath a sentence means that it is awkwardly phrased).

- Students will often find your comments more helpful (and provocative) if you phrase them as questions. Instead of writing "transition" or "rough transition!" at the start of a paragraph, try asking, "what is the connection to the previous paragraph?"

Formatting end comments

No matter what format you use, type up your final comments to the student. If you have to repeat comments among different student papers (e.g., "Your thesis is too vague..."), you can cut and paste, but more importantly, it will help you track your students' recurrent problems. Try phrasing your final comments in terms of "What I would like to see you work on for your revision/future papers"—and hold them accountable.

Some formats you might consider using:

- Prose paragraphs allow you respond more fluidly to the student's ideas, but make it harder for the student to parse specific demands you are placing on him/her. When writing prose paragraphs, the typical format is: say something positive, say something negative, and end with something positive (i.e., strengths-weaknesses-overall view of the essay's potential and what to work on in the future).

- Fill out a table where each row is a different "element of the academic essay."

- Offer a bullet-point list of things that worked and things that didn't.

In addition to these formats, a checklist of goals and issues you expect of all students will ease the burden of responding to every detail (and offered as a midprocess checklist will guide the students as they revise their own work).
Responding to Ideological Bias in Drafts
(from Andrew Albin)

When you start reading through rough drafts, you may come across a student who is passionately committed to an interpretation of the text that you disagree with. Students who write these papers often have ideological investments in the position that they take, and that position is often near and dear to their hearts and identities. On paper and in person, they sometimes express overconfidence in their logic and writing ability. This, of course, makes talking to this kind of student more difficult – criticism of their paper can feel like criticism of their person.

A few ideas on how to address these kinds of papers:

- In general, always direct back to the text, close reading, and argument. Put pressure on these and the cracks will show, for both you and your student.

- Meet with these students one-on-one during office hours. Do this before your conferences; that way, you can let them know they're headed in an unhelpful direction and give them time to prepare for peer review and conference taking your recommendations into account.

- Avoid sitting the student down and telling her/him, "You've got this, this, and this wrong." This will always come across as a critique of the student, not her/his writing, and the student can become resistant, create problems in the classroom, or even check out of the class for the rest of the semester.

- Acknowledge the student's passionate engagement and encourage her/his enthusiasm. During the course of your conversation, try to direct that passion and enthusiasm away from the ideological investment and into the text itself.

- Acknowledge that we're always still learning how to write, and that we've all got places needing work and improvement.

- Go back to the text, together in the moment -- find a passage that the student has ignored or misconstrued to fit into their reading, and close read together. Guide your student to discover the contradictions in her/his own reasoning. If s/he feel like s/he has discovered the flaws to her/his own argument or a more nuanced version of her/his argument, s/he is more likely to get invested in rewrites.

- Resist the temptation to offer a new reading that's more in line with your point of view. Ask questions and return to moments in the text to help the student find her/his own new reading, after s/he has realized the contradictions of his/her original one.
If it becomes necessary to address the ideology head on (a tough conversation, but sometimes needed), one approach is to acknowledge that we all have our social, political, and ethical values that mean a lot to us, and it's natural to want to represent these values in our writing, but then to note that we must be careful not to put our personal values before clear, expressive writing and convincing argumentation. The UWS classroom becomes a space where we develop techniques so that we can represent our values as effectively as possible, so our focus should be on developing technique. In UWS, we're not writing position papers; rather than trying to convince our reader, debate-style, to agree with us, we're trying to pose the best questions we can in order to get our reader to explore an idea with us. This is difficult when you, as author, have already decided those questions based on your personal values, instead of on the merits of the text.

Finally, do a little self-examination, to make sure you're not holding onto a singular reading of the text and shutting out other possible interpretations yourself.
Sample Final Comments
(from Kerry Walk, Lisa Rourke, Danielle Corialle, Amy Easton-Flake)

Dear Pat—

You argue with conviction that Murray’s argument is wrong. The paper’s impassioned tone is what I like best about it. I also think you have moments of analytical insight—for example, when you uncover Murray’s assumptions about welfare on p. 2. But the paper has some problems that detract from its persuasiveness. I’ve outlined these below:

(1) The paper is full of arguments against Murray, but instead of just listing complaints, you need to come up with a focused argument. On p. 1 alone, you refer to Murray’s reactionary misogyny, his indifference to children, his simplistic assumptions and misrepresentations, the primary burden of childrearing falling to women, and the underfunding of the AFDC. The focus you suggest in your title—Murray’s misogyny—would work well if you gave a coherent summary of Murray’s article early on and then attacked what you see as his misogyny. Don’t get sidetracked.

(2) The paragraph on orphanages (p. 3) gives the best analysis in the paper. Elsewhere—for example, the shotgun marriages paragraph on the same page—your evidence is way under-analyzed. You need to analyze Murray’s arguments more using some of the tools and concepts we’ve discussed in class.

(3) You obviously have the ability to write clear prose, but mechanical errors obscure your meaning and reduce your credibility. Proofread more carefully next time.

Let’s talk about your next paper before you write it. Once you learn how to sustain a single focus and make sound economic arguments, you’ll be able to write much stronger papers. —D.J.

Dear Celeste:

You’re at your best in this essay on cultural convergence when you analyze the various historical documents, as on p. 3 where you intelligently discuss the Declaration. I was also impressed by this essay’s “flow”: as a reader, I moved easily from one idea to the next.

• Thesis. Despite your confident use of sources, smooth style, and improved transitions, the essay still suffers from a lack of focus. You ask five questions in the opening section, each one of which, as a reader, I took to be the central focus. You could have solved this confusion by asking only the one or two questions you wanted to explore. You might also have re-read the assignment, which asks you to concentrate on Greene.

• Keyterms. I found one of your keyterms—“the common man”—to be confusing, since
the Common Man is the “average” man, the man on the streets, Anybody, a meaning that
conflicts with your use of the term. Do you mean to be discussing common ideals rather
than the common man? In the future, think about how many keyterms you have and
whether they’re precisely defined. If you have either no keyterms or several, and they’re
not well-defined, you should revisit your argument.

- Orienting Your Reader. Throughout, you need to give your reader more bits of context
so he or she can follow your argument more easily. For example, at the bottom of p. 1,
you need to add phrases such as “according to Greene” or “in Greene’s view” to indicate
who owns the ideas you use in your characterization of the American economy.

I hope these comments will be useful as you think about the next essay.

Jeremy,

Your paper has improved a lot from the rough draft. I really like the Lincoln quotation
you’ve chosen—one possibility is to re-introduce the quotation in the conclusion in order
to bring the essay together. The biggest challenge facing the paper is tying the evidence
and analysis back to your thesis, which is that man fundamentally has two natures, good
and evil. For example, you do a good job proving that Jekyll is respectable but never
specifically make the connection between respectability and goodness (remember, you
cannot expect the reader to do this—it's the job of the author). On a related note, I got lost
in your analysis of Jekyll’s character. For example, your observations about Jekyll’s
transgressions seem to undermine rather than strengthen your argument if you are
showing that Jekyll is purely good. On p. 5 you claim that Jekyll has no qualms about
describing Hyde’s experiences in positive terms, implying that Jekyll is not altogether
“just, logical and reasonable.” Finally, the essay discusses Freud’s theories for the first
two and a half pages and doesn’t begin addressing the thesis until the bottom of page 3.

**Thesis and motive:** The thesis is clear although not always well supported (see
comments above). Motive is clear.

**Evidence and analysis:** You need to work on telling the reader at what point in the text
your evidence appears (i.e. contextualize the evidence). Be careful to use full sentences
and not fragments of quotations or, if you do use fragments, explain them (see p. 5). The
analysis is generally good, but it won’t help if you don’t tie back to the thesis.

**Structure:** The introduction could still be more specific. Try to avoid generalizations like
“Throughout the modem era…” The thesis and name of the text don’t appear until three
quarters of the way down the page—that’s much too late. Use the quotation from the
introduction again in the conclusion as a means of tying the essay together.

**Style:** For in-text citations with multiple sources, give the author and page (Freud 17).
Also, it isn’t necessary to be explicit about the structure of the essay. Many of your paragraphs begin “Next in the discussion” or “Now that such and such has been discussed.” If your paper is logical, the reader will be able to follow your argument.

**Revision:** You've incorporated a lot of the comments from the rough draft, which I know isn’t easy.

**Comments for an “A” Paper**

Dear X,

Your essay offers a compelling and convincing argument! Your thesis has a wonderful tension because it addresses itself to a strange ambiguity you found in Victor’s speech to Walton’s crew at the end of the novel. Your essay is exemplary because it very successfully locates a strangeness in the novel that is worthy of a good close reading. Nice work. You selected great evidence to use and integrated it into your essay very nicely. The structure is good because it allows the argument to flow well. I particularly liked how you handled the conclusion: it is suggestive rather than definitive, which is really great way to conclude a provocative argument. Your style is good, smooth throughout. I offer a few stylistic suggestions throughout, but overall a well-written and nicely argued essay.

Shanny,

*Thesis & Motive A-
Nice job. You have an insightful and unexpected thesis that you follow throughout your paper. Your whole introduction works well as you begin with an interesting grabber and then move smoothly into incorporating both Mulvey and *Rear Window*; however, I am a little unclear about what is your motive.*

*Evidence & Analysis A-
You have many astute observations throughout and you do a nice job of pulling out details to make your argument. See comments throughout. To improve offer more concrete evidence to back up your argument. You are making a fairly complex argument, and you do it well, but in your desire to move from one point to the next you don’t always give as much detail and analysis as would be useful. This is particularly true in the case of Lisa. Also work on your conclusion, as you wrote yourself in your cover letter it feels stagnant.*

*Structure A-
Overall your structure works well as you clearly move from one point to the next and you have well thought out topic sentences. To improve your structure you want to continue to work on transitioning and stitching. Remember that you want to signal to your reader through your word choice where exactly you are going in the paper.*
Style A-/A
Overall your writing is clear and concise and a pleasure to read. You have many well stated phrases. To make your writing stronger I want you to work on combining some of your sentences to cut out repetition or to add more sentence variety.

Great Job. A-

Comments for a “B” Paper

Dear X,

Your essay offers a good, complex thesis: you argue that Shelley encourages our sympathy for the creature so that she can expose her readers to the responsibility that people should feel. I think you might have refined the thesis even more by specifying what you mean by ‘responsibility’—what, in other words, is Shelley trying to expose about responsibility (i.e. that people/society should be responsible in what ways?). You did use evidence well in the essay, but you can work on forging a close connection between the details from the text and the claims you make about them. That is, you can tie your claims and your evidence together more closely by really discussing the details you have so carefully drawn from the text rather than just letting the details of the novel speak for themselves. Your essay is well structured, but you do tend to drift away from the argument at times. As we focus more closely on structure in the following weeks, you might want to think about how paragraphs can be ordered to best suit your argument (i.e. each paragraph should address a claim, which is a crucial piece of the argument). The weakest part of the essay was the style: you use the passive voice throughout (keep working on that!), some issues with diction, and unnecessarily complex sentences (see margins).

You are off to a good start!

Shana
Thesis & Motive A-
You have a great thesis and motive. I am impressed with your engaging thesis. To improve your overall introduction though on your next paper I want you to work on making your introduction more engaging and succinct. It currently lacks a strong motive and becomes a little repetitive as you are trying to get to your main point.

Evidence & Analysis B+/B
You have some great moments of analysis in your paper. Many of your comments about Ida and Mildred are quite insightful. To improve your level of analysis though you need to give more analysis to go along with your details and claims. For instance, your section on Veda lacks much analysis. One of your best observations is how Mildred resembles at one point a traditionally masculine laborer but you want to do more with it.

Structure B-/C+
For your next paper, I want you to really focus on structure as it is currently the weakest part of your writing. You have great ideas but you do not present them in the best way possible. Your section on Mildred jumps from one idea to the next and I had a very difficult time discerning why you put certain paragraphs where you did. Remember that your job is to guide your reader from one idea to the next and make it perfectly clear how one idea connects to the next. You also need to make sure that you have strong topic sentences and transitions. Structure was also an issue within your paragraphs as you would sometimes move back and forth between ideas rather than completing one idea and then moving to the next (see page 4). You have an argument about Mildred being both masculine and feminine but your topic sentences do not highlight this and as a result this idea is buried.

Style B
Style feeds into structure so make sure that on a paragraph level that you move logically from one idea to the next. You have many well turned phrases that show a clever mind and insightful thinking. Watch out, however, for run-on sentences.

Your writing shows significant improvement from your first paper. Keep it up. B

Comments for a “C” Paper

Dear X,

Your essay offers an interesting thesis with a good inner tension: you argue that that which we think is most hideous or monstrous in the novel is really the most human. Though I like this argument, your essay doesn’t fully bear it out. That is, you include good evidence from the novel in your essay, but you don’t forge a strong connection between those details and the claims you make about them. You can tie your claims and your evidence together more closely by really discussing the details you have so carefully drawn from the text rather than just letting the details of the novel speak for themselves. As we focus more closely on structure in the following weeks, you might want to think about how paragraphs can be ordered to best suit your argument (i.e. each paragraph should address a claim, which is a crucial piece of the argument). The weakest part of the essay was the style: you use the passive voice throughout (keep working on that!), colloquialisms, and needless errors throughout (see margins).

You’re off to a good start, but remember that it is crucial you don’t miss any further conferences and that you go through one more round of revisions to clean up simple errors before turning in final drafts.

Jordana,
Thesis & Motive B
You have a great title and a very compelling thesis; however, you do not carry your thesis throughout your paper. Your paper also lacks a strong motive.
Evidence & Analysis B-/C+
You start with a compelling idea and you make many good claims throughout; however, to make your case compelling you have to offer more concrete examples that you can then analyze to make your point. You also need to give a little bit of context so your reader knows what scene or moment you are referring to. You often jump from one point to the next rather than devoting each paragraph to making a claim and then providing evidence to back you up. One moment I want to address specifically is your paragraph on Wally stopping the plot as an erotic object. This is a great idea and you give a couple of good points to support your argument; however, you then get sidetracked into explaining how Mulvey applies and you never go back to looking at Wally and explaining how he stops the plot. Your best paragraph is looking at Mildred and Monte at the beach house because here you give more specific details and analysis. You want to also work on integrating your quotes better.

Structure C
For your next paper I want you to concentrate on having topic sentences that clearly establish what the main claim of the paragraph will be. Currently your topic sentences do not get at the essence of your paragraph and are merely another sentence. Your topic sentences should also offer a clear roadmap as to why you are moving from one point to the next. Currently you have many good ideas, but they are often mixed together and not presented in a way that does them justice.

Style C+
For your next paper I want you to read over your paper out loud a few times to catch your grammar errors and I would recommend visiting with the grammar consultant at the writing center. You have good ideas, but they often get lost in your syntax as you leave out words or mix verb tenses. Also work on transitioning from one idea to the next.

Conclusion
In terms of your conclusion remember that you don’t want to summarize your whole argument. You should briefly restate your thesis in a different way and then move on. See the handout I gave in class for suggestions.

Your writing shows improvement. Keep it up.  C+/B-
10. Letters of Recommendation

Tips for Writing Letters of Recommendation
(from Ryan Wepler)

When the student asks
1. Figure out if you are the best person to write the letter. Students often turn to UWS instructors for letters because they are one of only a few teachers who have gotten to know their work closely. One-on-one conferences and the intimacy of the UWS classroom typically place UWS instructors in a great position to write recommendation letters because they are able to relate specific details about the student. In most cases, recommendation letters only call for general knowledge of the student’s character, academic ability, and work ethic. UWS instructors are ideally suited to write these types of letters. However, in cases such as competitive internships in specialized fields a letter by a faculty member would carry more weight than one by a writing instructor.

2. Determine whether or not you can honestly recommend the student. In most cases, students know when they have not met your expectations and will not ask for a recommendation. In a case in which you don’t feel you can recommend a student for what he or she is applying for, the gentlest approach is to tell the student that, if you do write the letter, you will be able to say certain positive things about him or her (state what these are), but that you are obligated to be honest and would also have to include your reservations about the students’ application (again, state these specifically). Then ask the student whether or not he or she still wants you to write the letter. Of course, you can also take the less gentle approach of simply telling the student that you are unable to recommend him or her.

Once You’ve Agreed
1. Meet with the student to discuss:
   a. What, specifically, you are writing the recommendation for. This will tell you who to address in your greeting and give you a clearer idea of what types of skills you will need to describe in the letter.
   b. Why the student feels you are a good instructor to recommend him or her. This will give you some idea of what skills the student would like you to emphasize in the letter and possibly help you recall details about the student you might have forgotten.
   c. Your submission strategy. Make sure you know when the deadline is and how you are expected to submit the letter. Some letters—especially study abroad letters—can be submitted online. If the student would like you to mail the letter yourself, make sure he or she provides a stamped and addressed envelope. If the student wants the letter returned to him or her, determine whether or not it needs to be in a closed envelope with your
signature across the seal. Because they carry more weight, I always return letters to students in signed, sealed envelopes and leave it up to them whether or not they want to open them before submitting the letters. If you need to fill out additional forms, make sure the student has signed them in all of the appropriate places.

2. Ask the student to e-mail or bring you copies of the work he or she did for your course. You needn’t read them all again, but this will give you something to refer back to for specific information. If you type your comments on student essays, you may want to refer to these instead.

**Writing the Letter**

1. Some general guidelines for writing recommendation letters include:
   a. Write the name of the company, study abroad program, award committee, &c. in the greeting.
   b. Write formally.
   c. Explain how you know the student and for how long.
   d. Relate your comments about the student to the specific requirements of the program or award.
   e. Be as specific as you can about the student.
   f. Do not exceed a single-spaced page.
   g. Print the letter on university letterhead (to increase its authority).

2. Even if you are very invested in the student’s application being accepted, do not devote a major portion of your time to writing the letter. Remember that recommendation letters are only one part of the student’s application and all the admissions committee wants from you is a sense of the student’s character from someone other than the student.

**Recommendation Letters in General**

1. Over time you will want to develop a strategy of your own for formatting and writing letters. This will ensure that your letters are succinct and save the amount of time you spend writing them. I have settled on a three paragraph letter. In the first paragraph I briefly explain how I know the student and the types of assignments we worked on in my class. In the second paragraph, I write one or two short anecdotes about the student that offer some indication of his or her academic ability. In the third paragraph, I briefly discuss the student’s character based on class discussion, extracurricular activities, personality outside of class, &c.
Recommendation: Jane X
Humanities and Medicine Program
Mt. Sinai School of Medicine
(Early Acceptance)

20 October 2004

Dear Selection Committee:

Jane X was a student in my University Writing Seminar in the spring of 2004. She proved to be one of the most consistent and diligent students I have worked with, and her commitment to self-improvement was impressive. My course is designed not only to help students hone their academic writing, but also to improve their overall analytic skills. Ms. X was highly dedicated and met challenges with optimism and maturity.

Ms. X was encouraging of her peers and gracefully accepted suggestions. I found her to be admirably responsive to criticism; in revising a research paper on poverty, for example, she diligently addressed questions left hanging in an early draft without sacrificing her own style or thesis. Although she admitted early in the semester to feeling somewhat unsure of her analytic ability, Ms. X approached each assignment with increasing thoroughness, often expanding her initial ideas into quite sophisticated formulations. I believe her deep interest in art history will only continue to develop her methods of analysis, and that humanities courses in general will provide excellent opportunities for Ms. X to increase confidence in her own considerable abilities while expanding her point of view.

What I appreciate and admire most about Ms. X is her refreshing honesty and practicality. She is both easy and enjoyable to work with, compassionate and motivated. Throughout last semester and even in recent weeks, she has spoken to me about her future plans and the difficulties she anticipates as a young woman seeking to balance her interest in both medicine and art history and, at the same time, her career with a satisfying personal life. Already she has felt the pull of her interests as she's organized her time and energy between volunteer work, school activities, and a demanding academic schedule. Her awareness of the challenges ahead, along her positive and enthusiastic attitude toward these challenges, sets her apart from most of her peers and are qualities that make her particularly well-suited to a course of study that is comprehensive and rigorous.

I highly recommend Jane X for the Humanities and Medicine Program.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Olson
Dear SIT Study Abroad Selection Committee:

I had the pleasure of teaching Jill Y in a University Writing Seminar (a freshman writing course) in the fall of 2004. During that time I was struck by her maturity, intellectual vigor, passion for learning, and capacity for sustained hard work. Hers is a keen and probing mind capable of asking searching and difficult questions, and always receptive to constructive criticism. I was impressed by her willingness to push an argument, as well as her ability to see both sides of an issue without compromising her own values and integrity. Jill’s energy and vitality is infectious, and she was always ready to participate in class discussions. Indeed, her intelligent observations and cheerful demeanor often helped stimulate her peers, and I believe she was a vital contributor to the lively intellectual atmosphere that prevailed in that class.

After the semester ended Jill and I continued to keep in touch, occasionally meeting up for lunch or coffee. I have always been impressed with her ability to converse intelligently on a wide variety of topics, and I have particularly enjoyed our many discussions on globalization and its effects on race and class. Her own mixed cultural background (second generation American of Indian origin) has made her sensitive to the complexity of race relations, and her service with the Waltham Group (a community service organization) has trained her to interact with people from all walks of life. I have no doubt that Jill Y is fully equipped to handle the intellectual and practical rigors of SIT Study Abroad and that she will be an asset to your program.

Sincerely,

Vanita Neelakanta, ABD
Doctoral Candidate, Department of English and American Lit.
Brandeis University
Dear Brandeis Achievement Award Selection Committee,

I am writing to recommend Joe Z for a 2007 Brandeis Achievement Award. Joe was a student in my University Writing Seminar in the spring of 2006 which focused on the way in which males and females are normalized into gender categories during the course of everyday life. In my course Joe wrote diverse and exemplary essays on such topics as Jeffrey Eugenides’ novel *Middlesex*, gender specific social practices, and a research essay analyzing the power structures of secretarial culture. As Joe wrote all of his essays in my course not with the attitude of a student, but that of a scholar, he has my highest recommendation for this award.

My description of Joe as a scholar rather than a student reflects his attitude toward his education in general. Though Joe has consistently maintained exemplary grades in all of his courses, it is not as a result of pursuing high grades for their own sake. Joe’s educational motivations derive from a deeper passion for knowledge itself, and I have no doubt that he would accept lower grades for more knowledge if given the choice. In the final assignment of my UWS, students were free to write research essays on topics of their own choice that related to the social production of gender. Joe chose to write on the power structures inherent in secretarial culture. Where other students often researched the bare minimum number of sources simply to satisfy the requirements of the essay, Joe consistently displayed a hunger for more knowledge and a desire to perform more research in order to understand his topic more thoroughly. Beyond simply examining a large number of sources, Joe chose to read and incorporate some of the most difficult theorists of social power structures—Marcuse, Althusser, Foucault—into his paper despite my warning that these ideas would be difficult to process and incorporate in such a short period of time. Joe managed to exceed my expectations and incorporated several of these ideas, some quite brilliantly, in his final essay. Joe is, therefore, the ideal student for this award not simply because he achieves high grades, but because he achieves them out of a deep passion for knowledge and understanding.

Joe’s truly exemplary list of commitments to social justice organizations—particularly his status as founder or co-founder of both the Student Peace Alliance and Democracy for America—only serve to confirm that Joe’s academic achievement is driven by his passion and sincere personal investment in all he pursues. Having gotten to know Joe through meetings in my office and discussions outside of class, his personality matches the sincerity of his commitments to social justice. Joe is a warm, vibrant, engaging, and thoughtful person, a passionate public speaker, and an incredible contributor to the exchange of ideas on Brandeis’ campus, both inside and outside of the classroom. For all these reasons, he has my highest recommendation for Brandeis Achievement Award. I hope you will give him your full consideration.

Sincerely,

Ryan Wepler
Department of English and American Literature
Instructor, University Writing Program

May 4, 2007