RESOURCE WORKBOOK 2016–2017

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT
FIRST-YEAR WRITING PROGRAM
Contents

PART I: COURSE OVERVIEW AND DESCRIPTION
Curricular Context 4
Course Philosophy 5
Course Components 8
Typical Activities in FYW Seminars 9
Administrative Concretes 10
Two Sample Course Ecologies 12
Conclusion 17

PART II: THE SYLLABUS
The Academic Work of the Course 18
Syllabus Components Checklist 18
Reading/Writing/Rendering/Mapping 20
Sample Syllabus with Annotations 23
An Additional Sample Syllabus 31

PART III: ASSIGNMENTS
Shaping the Assignment 39
Assignment Architecture 44
Taking Your Course Inquiry to New Places 52
Assignments Accompanying Sample Syllabi 58

PART IV: IN-CLASS WORK
Student Writing in the Classroom 69
The Ethics of Scholarship 71
The Translingual Classroom 78
Safe Spaces for Instructors and Their Teaching 84
Safe Spaces for Students and Their Writing 87

PART V: REFLECTIVE RESEARCH AND WRITING
Networks of Knowledge 88
Metawriting and Self-Reflection 91

PART VI: RESPONDING TO STUDENT WRITING
Feedback and Grades 94
Written and Oral Feedback 95
Grading and Evaluation 97
Dear Instructors,

Welcome. This Resource Workbook serves as a guide to working as an instructor in the University of Connecticut’s First-Year Writing Program. These texts and resources were compiled by a team of graduate students in coordination with the Directors of FYW. They also draw from the hard work of many graduate students and instructors from previous years.

Because a first principle of our courses is that a writing seminar works best as a reciprocal, collaborative learning environment, we do not here provide a strict methodology or an exact set of practices that all instructors must follow. Rather, our goal is to stimulate thought and creativity about these courses and what they can accomplish. Each seminar will reflect the diverse energies and motivations of its members, and the texts that follow might be best thought of as a collection of current ways of constructing the course rather than a complete map.

Nevertheless, there are some important shared course objectives and some parameters to the courses that provide consistency between the various seminars and classroom sites. In short form:

The FYW seminars are a first component of a student’s general education at UConn, and they therefore engage with the University’s general education requirements, preparing students for writing-intensive (W) courses and providing a first stage of the University’s Information Literacy competency, including attention to university research and digital literacy. These courses also engage with and reflect a commitment to the ongoing national (and international) conversation on First-Year Writing within the field of rhetoric and composition.

FYW seminars are invitations into academic work and especially its emphasis on writing as the primary site of inquiry and exchange of ideas. In this way, successful student work in FYW exhibits close contact with texts, a sense of project that advances the conversation (or explores new ways to configure questions), and an address to an audience that stands to benefit from (or be influenced by) this work.

Sincerely,

Scott Campbell
Lisa Blansett
Ruth Book
Sarah Moon
Erick Piller
Melissa Bugdal
Meghan Burns
Alex Gatten
Anna Ziering

The two Seminars in Academic Writing at UConn (ENGL 1010 and 1011) introduce students to the work of the university through cross-disciplinary reading and writing. In either course, students engage in inquiry-driven cycles of reading, dialogue, drafting, and revision to produce thirty pages (about 9,000 words) of academic prose. Each seminar has reflective writing and information literacy components.
Part I: Course Overview and Description

In this first part of the Resource Workbook, we provide a quick sketch of the First-Year Writing courses, which includes discussing, briefly, how these courses fit into the UConn curriculum, some elements of the philosophy that drives these courses, and a quick topography of a typical course. Each of these topics is more thoroughly addressed in the sections that follow.

Curricular Context

The First-Year Writing Requirement

Course Description. Students fulfill the University of Connecticut’s First-Year Writing (FYW) requirement by passing either ENGL 1010 or ENGL 1011 (with a grade of C or above for ECE students). Both ENGL 1010 and ENGL 1011 are seminars in academic writing. Both provide students with practice and instruction in academic writing through project-based, cross-disciplinary reading and writing. ENGL 1010 and 1011 include an emphasis on revision of formal assignments with also information literacy and reflective writing components. Although there is considerable overlap in assigned readings between the two courses, ENGL 1011: Writing Through Literature gives more attention to literary texts as significant resources for advancing student inquiry. In both courses, the student writing that emerges from these engagements takes precedence over mastery of a body of readings. The goal of a First-Year Writing seminar is to provide a site for students to do the intellectual work of academic writing, including reading, drafting, revising, and reflecting on this work.

FYW in General Education. UConn’s FYW courses are designed as key components of a student’s general education. This means that the FYW courses play an important role in a student’s overall curricular trajectory and are engaged with the University’s General Education Requirements. Although FYW courses are housed within the English department, they are not introductions to the field of English. Rather, they are designed to help students practice and reflect on academic work and especially writing that can serve a diverse array of academic and personal goals. Specifically, FYW courses address General Education goals by providing:

---

General education courses are not directed primarily at mastering a body of information or developing professional expertise. Any system of general education should provide all university undergraduate students with the foundations for learning throughout their years at the university and their entire lives; enable them to understand, appreciate, and enjoy both the past and present diversity of human achievement and perspectives at the levels of individuals, groups, and cultures and in relation to the natural world; prepare them for responsible citizenship; and give them the flexibility and skills necessary to face the changes and challenges of the future.

—University of Connecticut General Education Guidelines
Course Description and Overview

- Preparation for writing-intensive (“W”) courses;
- A first component of the University’s Gen Ed Information Literacy Competency;
- Attention to digital literacy including use of the University’s online course management tools.

FYW in National Contexts. The UConn FYW courses have a character that is specific to the tradition and history of this university, but they are also engaged with ongoing developments in the teaching of First-Year Writing courses throughout the nation, work that is supported by research and activity in the field of rhetoric and composition (known, too, as composition studies or writing studies). The WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition and Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing are two important articulations of the values and practices of First-Year Writing courses that that are informed by this research.

The WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition

Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing

ENGL 1003 and 1004. In addition to ENGL 1010 and 1011, the FYW Program also offers two courses that precede these seminars. ENGL 1003 introduces international students and non-native English speakers to American university discourse by emphasizing classroom participation, discussion, and writing to help develop facility with English in the academy while ENGL 1004 is designed to guide students in developing their writing practices and to introduce them to meaningful participation in critical conversations. More information about ENGL 1003 and ENGL 1004 are available on the Program website.

Course Philosophy

First-Year Writing: An Overview of Terms

ENGL 1010 and ENGL 1011. The boundary between ENGL 1010 and 1011 is porous. Despite the two course names and numbers, both ENGL 1010 and 1011 are designed to meet the very same general education requirements; they are both, equally, seminars in academic writing. Traditionally, the 1011 courses use the reading of literary texts as occasions for writing whereas 1010 courses use non-fiction texts, but even this distinction breaks down quite readily. Most 1010 courses have a “literary” component, even if this means only that they assign essays and/or examine texts from a wide cultural context. And most 1011 sections include argument-driven texts that complement or inform the reading of literary texts in various ways, often in the form of historical or critical texts. Because all FYW courses are seminars in academic writing, then, we might begin an exploration of the courses through a closer examination of what these terms mean in the FYW context.

Seminar. Although we often see higher education depicted as a space where experts deliver knowledge to novices, UConn’s FYW courses are seminars, which means that they are collaborative and open-ended spaces where the inquiry is driven by the students...
themselves. The instructor’s role in a seminar is to get the conversation started and to provide contexts (with readings, feedback, central questions, and directed discussion) for this ongoing work. A seminar needs a territory for inquiry, a point of focus for the discussion that follows. The instructor helps to curate and oversee the cycles of writing and reflection that culminate in each graded essay. In turn, students pursue writing projects that enable them to select and define places where they might add to or develop the discussion at hand. The learning in a seminar comes, then, from the experience of making and doing rather than from “lessons” provided by an expert. The seminar setting, with its shared, participatory activity, situates the writing that happens in the course as a communication between seminar members.

**Academic.** First-year students may have only very limited experience with “the academy,” but, as participants in our courses, they are indeed academic writers. Whereas students have often been asked to reproduce the knowledge of the academy, they have had little experience generating questions, formulating lines of inquiry, and developing projects. Yet the work of the academy is devoted to making sense of the world and communicating that to others; these endeavors are built around the work they have probably had the least experience with. The FYW courses are cross-disciplinary and multivalent, and they are explicitly designed to invite students into the practices and purposes of academic writing. Because there is no universal model for the academic essay or paper and no linear, orderly method for learning and practicing writing, we present the courses as places to explore provisional formulations and practice intellectual work that is common to all fields. This work includes engaging with established formulations, working with and through evidence, and circulating one’s own thinking with others engaged in related inquiries. The FYW courses, then, serve as sites of trial and negotiation. By semester’s end, the class itself functions something like a mini-discipline, with a cohesive, if also disparate, collection of projects developed around a common set of questions and texts.

**Writing.** The content of a First-Year Writing seminar is threefold. There is an area of inquiry, provided by the assigned readings and whatever ancillary materials are uncovered in a student’s research process. The second content includes the various insights, terms, and formulations the class develops (with the instructor’s help) regarding academic writing, including considerations of genre, audience, writing process, and so forth. We might describe this as the rhetorical content of the course. But the most vital content of the course, and the bridge between the first two, is the students’ writing itself, which should serve as a primary text for the work of the course and feature prominently in most class sessions. The core activities of the FYW seminars are writing and reflection on writing. In producing individual writing projects with particular emphases and goals, a student gains experience in the local, specific contingencies and pressures of academic writing. In reflecting on and working with other students’ writing, a student has opportunities to consider more widely the problems and possibilities inherent in the choices writers make to communicate their ideas.
Writing Through Literature. The title of the ENGL 1011 course, “Writing Through Literature,” means much more than writing about literature. ENGL 1011 is not a traditional literature course, nor is it an introduction to literary analysis. Whereas writing about literature makes the literary text the object of study, in 1011, the literary texts (and the work of coming to terms with them) foster an outwardly directed energy. Reading through literature means making use of literary texts to generate and support projects that extend beyond the occasion of this particular literary text. In a 1011 course, it is never enough to merely demonstrate productive reading of literary texts (although close, careful reading and exploration of texts is essential). Student essays should be directed toward a more specific contribution to a problem or question set up by the course readings. As in ENGL 1010, the writing projects in ENGL 1011 connect and extend texts toward new ends. In both courses, the readings provide, too, occasions for considering how writers use language and genre.

Diversity and Academic Writing. We might describe the work of academic writing as a commitment to making meaning within diversity—making connections among disparate things. Academic writing, in this sense, is an offering to a reader of a particular insight or material that will complicate or extend that reader’s understanding of a topic. Diversity is, then, less a topic to be covered in FYW than an essential, constituting component of the course, something that is always active when writers thoughtfully engage with other writers.

A writer does not engage with a source to neutralize its impact or duplicate its contribution; writers instead seek productive engagements with other ways of seeing. In preparing the courses, we might ask how readings, including the work of all the students in the class, can serve as informing but not prescriptive resources for the ongoing work of each class member. How might writing be understood and used less as a mechanism of “solving” or controlling a topic than one that can enable better connections between and deeper understanding of class members? Our approach focuses on thoughtfulness, exploration, learning, and transformation—all the qualities (and methods) of a writer who understands the diversity of human experience.

FYW as Research. The University of Connecticut is a research site, and in this spirit we encourage instructors to experiment and try out various ways to enact the principles described here. In building the courses around inquiry, we ask students to pursue questions that do not have ready-made answers. In tandem with the freedom that instructors have to develop sites of inquiry for their students’ explorations, we have some common ground—namely, shared expectations and practices regarding the shape and progress of the course. In the next section, we look at some of the guidelines and practical considerations for building a FYW seminar, and we explore some specific models or examples of the 1010 and 1011 seminars.
Course Components

Now that you have a good sense of the course goals and philosophy, what follows will provide you with an overview of the concrete components that make up the work of the course and, after this, some examples of the kinds of reading and writing assignments occur in FYW seminars. Depending on your method of putting together a course, any of these parts can be a useful starting point for envisioning the structure of your FYW seminar. We provide fuller descriptions and examples of all of these elements throughout the Resource Book.

In the most basic terms, every FYW seminar can be described as working out of the required components of ENGL 1010 and 1011 provided in the list below.

Every FYW seminar includes the following components:

- A requirement of thirty pages of revised, formal prose in total (or about 8,500-9,000 words), usually met through the assigning of four to six major assignments
- Additional short and informal writing both in and out of class
- Cycles of feedback and revision (including various forms of conferencing and workshopping) with each project
- Information Literacy (a Gen Ed requirement)
- Reflective writing

Thirty Pages of Revised Writing

Although expressed as a minimum page requirement, the impetus for this element is a desire to have all students in FYW seminars share the experience of composing and revising several major writing projects throughout the course. The nature and genre of the writing may shift and develop across multiple assignments, and some instructors may use a wider notion of project or composition (e.g., multimodal) that includes something more than just a quantity of pages.

Additional Short and Informal Writing

Not all writing in FYW seminars need be high stakes (graded). Writing should be a significant part of each week’s work both in and out of class.

Cycles of Feedback with Each Project

Because writing is emergent—its qualities arising from a process of trial and reflection—much of the most significant work of a FYW seminar happens in revision, once students have taken the first steps of drafting a specific writing project. Feedback includes the comments an instructor makes on each draft but includes, too, the various ways that student work circulates beyond the instructor-student dyad. Class time and homework can be directed toward this reflection on the work that students have done as peer review, various forms of conferencing, the workshopping of specific examples, and so on. However, students may also provide feedback as out-of-class assigned work.
Information Literacy

Information Literacy, an explicit component of UConn’s General Education requirements, addresses making, not just receiving, knowledge and includes direct instruction in some elements of library research. In addition, we ask that FYW instructors utilize HuskyCT (or some other course management software) as a mode for storing and distributing course materials, circulate at least one cycle of papers digitally, and explore the potential for composition beyond typewritten text, including image, media, and other digital design elements. More detailed information can be found elsewhere in this Resource Workbook and on our website.

Reflective Writing

Reflective writing, which includes characterizing, reconsidering, or qualifying one’s work, fosters awareness and metacognition about writing (and not just writing processes). Reflective writing in FYW seminars is an ongoing activity that need not be graded or end-of-term. Reflective forms include: process notes, in-class reflections on (or presentations of) one’s project, other kinds of metatexts, including placing of one’s work within the context of others’ work, introductory texts, and more.

Typical Activities in FYW Seminars

- Working with assigned readings, either in preparation for a writing assignment, as part of revising drafts, or to illustrate rhetorical principles and generic features
- Working with student essays for similar purposes
- Writing brief, exploratory in-class essays: for example, a 15-20 minute focused free-write in preparation for discussion of a reading assignment
- Revising, individually and in groups
- Participating in writing groups and conferences during the drafting process
- Meeting with the instructor for individual conferences.
Administrative Concretes

This checklist focuses on nuts and bolts and is meant to complement the more substantive FYW course goals documented elsewhere in this section.

Over the course of the semester, you should:

- Assign at least 30 pages (or 8,500–9,000 words) of revised, polished prose over the course of (usually) four major essays.
- For each draft of a major essay, guide students through substantial revisions for each major draft, using class workshops, individual conference, writing group conferences, peer conferencing, or other model.
- Assign the type and amount of reading appropriate to the course goals. For one-semester courses, this is usually no more than 300 pages of reading. Most instructors assign far less reading in order to keep the focus on the students’ own writing.
- Include an explicit Information Literacy component in at least one written assignment (often but not always one of the four major projects).
- Include opportunities for reflection on the work done (could be a stand-alone assignment or could be built into other assignments).
- Ask that at least one cycle of drafts and final essays be submitted via HuskyCT or comparable course management software (e.g., Google Classroom).
- Regularly engage with student writing during class time.
- Provide written assignment guidelines for each writing assignment.
- Provide written feedback for each student essay. Keep in mind that students cannot pass this course without submitting all major assignments.
- Assign a letter grade for each revised major essay. (Grades should not be provided for drafts.)
- Schedule and attend at least one office hour per course per week.
- Offer some kind of course evaluation opportunity at midterm time (can be informal).
- Remind students to complete the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) during the penultimate and last week classes. You and your students will receive a link for course evaluations two weeks (exactly) before the final day of classes. Set aside class time for those evaluations, as students are more likely to complete evaluations in class than when left to do so on their own outside of class.
- Distribute and work on the “Ethics of Scholarship” documents during the work cycle for the first essay.

In the first week or so of class, you should:

- Not allow students to overenroll in your course (students must attend the course before/by the 4th class; be aware that the University add/drop deadline corre-
sponds with the 5th class on a MW schedule, which falls first day of week 3).

- Administer and evaluate an in-class writing assessment on the first day of class that asks students to do the same kind of work they’ll be expected to do in the course. Come talk to us in FYW if you notice any anomalies or have any questions. This is the final check on whether or not your students have been placed in the appropriate FYW course.
Two Sample Course Ecologies

In the pages that follow, we introduce two condensed sample course descriptions that put more attention on the intellectual work of a typical FYW seminar and less on specific policies or procedures. We call these “course ecologies” because we see the instructor’s role as one of bringing together a context for writing and an occasion to write. The instructor in effect designs an environment for writing that includes readings, assignment prompts, and various processes for the development and exchange of writing projects. Although attention to writing is paramount in FYW courses, the decisions that students make as writers will be in response to the material that animates this particular section of 1010 or 1011. Although the samples are fairly representative of the breadth and focus of a FYW seminar, these are just two examples of how an instructor might match a set of readings and topics to a sequence of writing assignments with cycles of conferencing and revision. The range of possible topics in a 1010 and 1011 course is essentially limitless.
Sample English 1010 Course Ecology: Bots and Bodies: Writing in a Posthuman Era

Course Inquiry: What is the impact of technology on our understanding (or experience) of identity? Where do we see this impact and why does it matter?

These are questions most students will have given thought to already; the course provides a context for developing these lines of inquiry into sustained, specific academic projects. Also, I am genuinely interested in how FYW students answer these questions. I expect to learn from them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assigned Readings</th>
<th>Example Student-Selected Texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Katherine Hayles, <em>How We Became Posthuman</em> (selections)</td>
<td><em>Her</em> (film)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna Haraway, “Crittercam: Compounding Eyes in Naturecultures”</td>
<td><em>Black Mirror</em> (TV series)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Orlean, “Man and Machine: Playing Games on the Internet”</td>
<td>Various videogames</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua Foer, “The End of Remembering”</td>
<td>Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian Hodder, “The Entanglements of Things: A Long-Term View”</td>
<td><em>Ex Machina</em> (film)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Thompson, Stratechery (blog selections)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, “Race and/as Technology; or, How to Do Things to Race”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Cederberg and Walter Woodman, <em>Noah</em> (short film)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expectations from student work include:

- Drawing out of concepts and critical vocabulary from readings
  - For testing and potential use
  - For revision or refinement
  - For combination with other texts
- Drawing out of examples, instances, and sites from readings
  - To illustrate and explore propositions and claims
  - For use with other texts
- Development of new concepts or critical vocabulary
- Discovery and development of fresh sites of inquiry, including new readings and additional contexts
- Writing that is in dialogue with other students and addressed to readers who may benefit from the project
• Writing that engages with academic conventions (including attention to genre)

**Writing Assignments:** The range of assignments in this course would include some that ask students to interrogate and make use of critical terms (e.g., “distributed cognition,” “zoon,” or “enchainment” from Hayles, Haraway, and Hodder, respectively) and some that ask students to develop a very specific test case of a technology impinging on identity (students have looked at ski helmets, fishing technology, Facebook pages, videogames, etc.). They might also read a cultural text (e.g., the film *Her*) through the lens of this developing critical vocabulary. Other assignments might ask students to develop a fresh term that might be used in addressing these texts and questions. InfoLit work would help students trace networks and locate sources; reflective work would ask students to describe and document their movement through a writing project. Also, in a Google Doc, we will build a shared course bibliography, gathering together (and annotating) all the texts we used throughout the semester.

**Outcomes:** If things go well, students will join their existing knowledge and experience (with language, identity, and technology) to terms, sites, and questions that circulate within and beyond the course readings. By the end of the course, students will have familiarity with a range of resources (both textual and rhetorical) for addressing the course questions, and they will be encouraged to develop approaches that come out of their interests. In this section, for example, students could pursue projects using legal, historical, psychological, biological, economic, cultural, or even philosophical terms and frameworks. In drafting, sharing, workshopping, and revising their writing, students will gain experience in developing academic projects that are specific, purposeful, and engaged in a shared discourse.
Sample English 1011 Course Ecology: Living on the Boundary: Transformations and Transgressions

Course Inquiry: To what extent do we invent or inherit our identity? Who writes our “scripts” and what options do we have? How does one’s movement between roles enact (and confound) existing maps of the social world?

These are questions most students will have given thought to already; the course provides a context for developing these lines of inquiry into sustained, specific academic projects. Also, I am genuinely interested in how FYW students answer these questions. I expect to learn from them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assigned Readings</th>
<th>Example Student-Selected Texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christina Rossetti, “Goblin Market”</td>
<td>Juno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven Millhauser, “Mermaid Fever”</td>
<td>Breaking Bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nella Larsen, Passing, and W. E. B. Du Bois, Souls of Black Folk (selections)</td>
<td>Anne Carson poems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria Anzaldúa, “Chicana Artists: Exploring Nepantla, el Lugar de la Frontera”</td>
<td>Iron Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy Walker, Waste Land (documentary film to be screened in class)</td>
<td>American Psycho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Solnit, “The Solitary Stroller and the City”</td>
<td>The Alchemist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iain Borden, “Driving”</td>
<td>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Haddon, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time</td>
<td>Claudia Rankine, Citizen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expectations from student work include:

- Drawing out of examples, instances, and sites from readings
  » To illustrate and explore propositions and claims
  » For use with other texts
- Drawing out of concepts and critical vocabulary from readings
  » For testing and potential use
  » For revision or refinement
  » For combination with other texts
- Discovery and development of fresh sites of inquiry, including new readings and additional contexts
- Development of new concepts or critical vocabulary
- Writing that is in dialogue with other students and addressed to readers who may benefit from the project
Writing that engages with academic conventions (including attention to genre)

**Writing Assignments:** The assignments in this course build on close work with fictional worlds but not as mere “readings” of literary texts. Students write *through* literature by connecting and extending work on one text to other contexts and questions. Texts like *Waste Land* or “Goblin Market” become occasions for consideration of the boundaries and limits of human (and, with goblins and mermaids, non-human) action, test cases for thinking about our potential for transformation. Some assignments ask students to interrogate and make use of critical terms (e.g., “nepantla,” from Anzaldúa, or “passing” from Larsen). Other assignments might ask students to develop a fresh term or discover a text that might be used in addressing these questions. InfoLit work includes development of a proposal for further research (with bibliography); reflective work asks students to describe and document their movement through a writing project.

**Outcomes:** Students in this course will join their existing knowledge and experience with categories and social systems to terms, sites, and questions that circulate within and beyond the course readings. By the end of the course, students will have familiarity with a range of resources (both textual and rhetorical) for addressing the course questions, and they will be encouraged to develop writing projects that come out of their interests. In this section, for example, students could explore issues of disability, race, sexuality, or place—topics that cross disciplines and continue to demand new thinking and frameworks. In drafting, sharing, workshopping, and revising their writing, students will gain experience in developing academic projects that are specific, purposeful, and engaged in a shared discourse.
Conclusion

The remainder of this resource workbook provides more extensive examples and policies for the teaching of First-Year Writing. Excluding this introduction, we have divided the workbook into five parts, each of which describes and offers useful reflection on some important aspect of the course: the syllabus, assignments, in-class work, reflective writing and research practices, and responses to students’ work. We have organized the workbook this way for the sake of convenience; however, as you proceed from chapter to chapter, you should not lose sight of the interrelatedness of all of these sections. The syllabus, for example, establishes the context for the assignments that you draft for your students, and students’ work—the product of their engagement with these assignments—occasions your response as well as students’ own reflective writing. And this, of course, is only one partial expression of the thickly woven interrelationships among the various aspects of the course.

That said, Part II of this resource workbook addresses the syllabus. In addition to listing some required and recommended syllabus components, and considering text selection and the place that reading should occupy in your First-Year Writing course, we have provided some baseline materials that you can borrow—or simply use as models—as you put together your own syllabus. Part III works similarly, offering example assignment sequences and architectures, while also speaking more broadly about assignment construction in FYW. Possibly because it does not center on some particular textual “genre” of First-Year Writing—e.g., the syllabus, the assignment sheet—Part IV covers wider ground and relies less heavily on example. In this section, you will find some considerations of best practices regarding classroom community, activities, and translationalism. Part V focuses on reflective writing as well as reflective research practices, or a set of habits and dispositions commonly known as information literacy. Finally, Part VI, on responses to student work, encompasses grading and other formal means of evaluation in addition to written and oral feedback.

The appendix supplies a set of keywords and other relevant materials for teaching this course; you can access further materials online at the First-Year Writing Program’s website.
Part II: The Syllabus

The Academic Work of the Course

The First-Year Writing Program at the University of Connecticut aims to cultivate student writing driven by projects rather than mere thesis statements. But what does this really mean? In short, student projects—indeed, most academic projects in the humanities—may be developed by establishing and articulating four key aspects of academic writing: the area of inquiry, the approach, the reading, and the contribution.

Although instructors may find other ways to voice and describe the work of the course, we describe them here in these four terms. We also find that outlining these different components helps to demystify the process of academic writing for many students. While students often find choosing a “topic” or “theme” to be quite simple, many struggle to turn this topic or theme into a piece of productive inquiry that expresses both their ideas and why they matter. Rather than encouraging general or abstract speculative thinking, prompting students to focus on the four categories below can provide some ways to pursue ideas without wandering too far from direct, purposeful thinking.

The Area of Inquiry

Projects have a clearly defined field of inquiry that explains the scope of the essay and the motivations behind it. Some like to formulate this as a question, but it doesn’t have to be; it does, however, locate the discussion of what is in question. It addresses what drives the essay, what the student is writing to discover or work out.

The Approach

Projects usually are framed, in one way or another, by a larger conversation. Is the author using a specific framework or applying an important theory? Is the relevance of the angle, or “lens,” being used clearly expressed? Does the author note what is gained and what is lost when the textual/visual material is viewed in the chosen way?

The Reading

How does the author work with the textual/visual material? Is the author offering a slow and careful reading of specific moments or images? Does the author demonstrate a sincere engagement with the material being investigated?

The Contribution

To what end is this work being done? What does this project add that is not already here? What is fresh or new about this discussion? What are the stakes involved in this work?

Syllabus Components Checklist

The table on the following pages indicates which syllabus components are required, as well as others that the FYW Program recommends that you include—
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components and Considerations</th>
<th>Required?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Information</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Location and Hours</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Number and Section</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year and Term</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Name</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1003: English for Multilingual Writers</td>
<td>Select Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1004: Introduction to Academic Writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1010: Seminar in Academic Writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1011: Seminar in Writing through Literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Course</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview (the UConn FYW Course)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Rationale (or Inquiry)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Education Requirement</td>
<td>Recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habits of Mind</td>
<td>Strongly Recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals/Outcomes (consider a variation on the WPA list)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texts and Materials</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Components</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences/Peer Review</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Literacy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation/Engagement</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation/Grading</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Policies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity and Respect</td>
<td>Strongly Recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilingual Scholarship</td>
<td>Strongly Recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>Strongly Recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Papers</td>
<td>Recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronics in Class</td>
<td>Recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Relationships/Sexual Harassment</td>
<td>Recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snow Days and Other Emergencies</td>
<td>Recommended</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resources (with contact information)
- Center for Students with Disabilities
- Writing Center
- Dean of Students
- Center for Mental Health and Counseling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources (with contact information)</th>
<th>Required?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Center for Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Center</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean of Students</td>
<td>Recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Mental Health and Counseling</td>
<td>Recommended</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grievance or “Concerns” Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grievance or “Concerns” Policy</th>
<th>Required?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course Calendar

“Subject to Revision in Response to Exigencies”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Calendar</th>
<th>Required?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All Due Dates for Readings and Essays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Due Dates for Readings and Essays</th>
<th>Required?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Method of Submission for Essays (e.g., HuskyCT, paper copy, email, Google Docs; if not on syllabus must be on each assignment sheet)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Submission for Essays (e.g., HuskyCT, paper copy, email, Google Docs; if not on syllabus must be on each assignment sheet)</th>
<th>Recommended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Reading/Writing/Rendering/Mapping**

Choosing and Using Texts in English 1010/1011

In your teaching, you will also have free reign over what texts you choose to assign—and there are options! Current and previous instructors have used everything from critical essays to pop songs, graphic novels to Middle English poems, blog posts to scholarly chapters, Renaissance plays to The Wire, Chaucer to Buffy. There are few limits to the kinds of texts you select to work with in your course; what matters is what you do with those texts.

One of the most significant features of UConn’s First-Year Writing Program is the philosophy of writing through texts. This means that, rather than writing about texts, we ask our students to use course readings as bases for discussion, analysis, and exploration.

Your course should never be a “literature course,” focused primarily on a specific genre or period or type of content. It should also not be a course in which “readings” happen, and writing happens, but never the twain meet. Rather, it should be a course focused on writing, using texts as the place to ground and begin that writing. Students need to see their writing as occurring within a larger, ongoing network of information and communication, and the texts they read or study in your course are part of that network. Having materials that inspire weighty conversation and call students to problematize their thinking will create the space needed for dynamic and complex writing.

What you want, then, are texts—whether literary, interdisciplinary, or otherwise—that challenge students’ preconceived notions about the world, that ask more questions than they answer, that don’t necessarily lead to easy “black and white” responses, and that work with each other to present complex ways...
of seeing or responding to the world through writing. It can help, too, to have at least one text that frames or presents terms for consideration and potential use. *Ways of Reading* texts are especially good at providing both problematizing material but also clarifying, organizing terms.

Usually choosing one or two main texts per major essay works best; additional (often shorter) texts can supplement and complicate the main text. Too many texts per major essay can overwhelm your students and cloud the conversation. Ideally, the texts in each unit or major project will speak to each other across the semester, so students find themselves not only responding to the material they have just read but also to their own evolving thinking as the weeks and drafts progress.

So, how do you choose the texts you want to teach? Here are some ideas about assembling course texts:

- Create a theme or area of inquiry. Many instructors organize their courses around a set of related texts. Your theme might be a broad topic such as education or human rights, a motif such as detection or villains, or a more focused social issue such as countercultural movements or food and culture. Anthologies like *Ways of Reading* (and there are countless others available in the FYW Office) offer examples of themed sequences, which you can use as is, adapt, or discard entirely to create your own.
- Don’t create an explicit theme, but notice how one (or many) emerges throughout the term. The texts in anthologies are flexible and complex; it’s easy to find connections among any combination of them. Some crafty instructors will choose texts, imply all semester that the theme is hidden, and ask students to determine one as the semester progresses. (Theme or no theme, all essay assignments should be sequenced or build off one another.)
- Ask experienced instructors for suggestions. If you find a text in one of the anthologies that appeals to you, find out who has taught that text before and ask which other texts might work well with it. They might also give you suggestions of assignments or activities. The Assistant Directors can help connect you with others who have taught certain texts if you ask them.
- Build the course around texts that you’re interested in working with. Some instructors choose texts they enjoy and think their students will enjoy as well. Others incorporate texts they find troubling or distasteful in order to show multiple perspectives and stimulate discussion.
- Don’t be afraid to teach texts that you don’t know well or that are outside your areas of academic interest. You’re not expected to be an expert in the course texts, and the course functions better when you are learning alongside your students.
- *Skim* the anthologies thoughtfully. You can often tell within a few paragraphs whether a text’s content will relate well to the rest of your course.
• Use some texts as the “main course” and others as “side dishes.” Often, instructors will use a longer or more challenging text as the focus of a unit of study and then supplement it with shorter pieces that enrich or complicate the main text. Placing chapters or portions of books into electronic course reserve (available to students as PDFs) is a fairly easy process. If you want to show a film, you can reserve a film viewing room in the Babbidge Library. Or maybe you want to use a YouTube clip, a song, or a poem projected in your classroom.

• Don’t be afraid to use literary texts in 1010 or nonfiction texts in 1011. Most instructors have done both at some point. Using a variety of genres can keep students engaged, and texts that explore similar themes in different ways can illuminate one another.

• See everything as a text. Personal experiences, observed settings and people, artifacts, and student-produced texts (such as photographs, poems, case studies, and their own essays) can generate enthusiastic discussion and analysis.
Sample Syllabus with Annotations

ENGLISH 1010: SEMINAR IN ACADEMIC WRITING

BORDERLANDS, CONTACT ZONES, COMMONS: WRITING (ABOUT) DIFFERENCE

Instructor: —
Classroom/Hours: —
Office: —
Office Hours: —
Email: —@uconn.edu

Course Overview

This course is rooted in the lived practice of academic writing. In it, we will explore how reading and writing transform ways of thinking about and engaging with communities and the world. As a way of engaging in academic work, you will put your experiences and ideas into conversation with texts, your peers, and broader contexts through language. This course is a seminar—consequently, we will be spending the semester collaboratively inquiring about and discovering new locations for thinking, discussion, and writing. You will be contributing to the intellectual work of the university, and in doing so, you will have the opportunity to investigate your own interests through shared readings and materials.

Specifically, our course will examine the place and function of difference in language and writing, along with the ways in which power dynamics can suppress (or produce or expose) difference. A text, we will find, is composed of many voices—but rather than coexisting harmoniously, these different voices often struggle with one another, with some marginalized, or even submerged, and others dominant. Moreover, these power differentials within a text tend to reflect social and cultural practices. To better understand the heterogeneity of language, we will attend throughout this semester to those silenced or otherwise less authoritative voices, as well as to marginalized writers’ strategies of resistance—for example, their creative appropriation and use of dominant discourses for expressive and exploratory ends. In a sense, then, this seminar will involve a great deal of writing about writing, but also about culture, identity, and creativity.

Texts

The following readings are available in the 10th edition of Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers, edited by David Bartholomae, Anthony Petrosky, and Stacey Waite (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2014).

1 The course overview provides a first description of the course for students and is therefore crucial for setting up expectations and priorities. Notice how the second paragraph introduces the line of inquiry or thematic focus of this particular section.
Resource Workbook

- Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone”
- Gloria Anzaldúa, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue”
- Jonathan Lethem, “The Ecstasy of Influence”
- Judith Halberstam, “Animating Revolt and Revolting Animation”

Course Rationale

All UConn First-Year Writing courses are a part of a larger curricular ecosystem. The FYW courses provide a key component of UConn’s general education requirements, preparing you for your writing-intensive (“W”) courses and other academic work, and reflect goals and practices common to national standards for college writing. You can learn more about UConn’s FYW courses at the program website and read the program’s letter on our HuskyCT page.

Habits of Mind

A publication called the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing, written and adopted by three national organizations dedicated to the teaching of writing, suggests that the following habits of mind are “critical for college success”:

- Curiosity – the desire to know about the world.
- Openness – the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world.
- Engagement – a sense of investment and involvement in learning.
- Creativity – the ability to use novel approaches for generating, investigating, and representing ideas.
- Persistence – the ability to sustain interest in and attention to short- and long-term projects.
- Responsibility – the ability to take ownership of one’s actions and understand the consequences of those actions for oneself and others.
- Flexibility – the ability to adapt to situations, expectations, or demands.
- Metacognition – the ability to reflect on one’s own thinking as well as on the individual and cultural processes used to structure knowledge.

Our English 1010 course is designed to foster these habits of mind through what the document describes as “writing, reading, and critical analysis experiences.”

This is a representation for students of a national context informing the course. Its inclusion in the syllabus is optional.
Course Outcomes

By the conclusion of this course, you should be able to:

• Practice writing as an act of inquiry and discovery.
• See yourself as a writer who can enter and contribute to an academic conversation.
• Discover, inhabit, and use the writing of others in ethical and enriching ways.
• Plan your writing as an act of communication to an anticipated reading audience.
• Reflect on and practice various writing processes (including drafting and revision) and genres.
• Demonstrate basic competency with Information Literacy.

Course Components

Participation: This is a seminar rather than a lecture course. Therefore, the class is driven by and centered on your work. Thoughtful discourse is an essential part of this class, and you will frequently work in groups of various sizes, which means you will need to be considerate of and attentive to others. It is your responsibility to keep up with the reading, to contribute to class conversation in the form of analytical comments or questions, to participate thoughtfully in peer review activities, and to attend class regularly and on time (see attendance policy below). You should also expect that your work, along with your peers’, will be circulated and shared regularly in class.

Reading: Although English 1010 is a writing course, the writing you do here has a very close relationship to reading. In fact, the process of writing begins with careful reading of a situation, a written text, or other media. You will be reading to find ways into the conversation in which an author or text is participating. Many of these texts are multi-layered and complex. You should expect to read most texts more than once. You will need to read carefully, reread often, and take careful notes. Come to class prepared to share your thoughts and questions.

Writing: You will complete four major written projects (totaling 30 pages) in this course. In order to accomplish this, you will be doing ample writing along the way, including in-class writing, homework assignments, and drafts of these major projects. Only the final projects will be assigned individual grades, but all of your written work matters here.

3 Be sure to include some statement of outcomes on your syllabus. We recommend this set or some variation of it.
4 Feel free to use these descriptions or to devise your own.
5 It is useful for your participation section to help students see that the course depends on their spoken and written contributions.
Revision: Each major writing project will go through a drafting process in which you shape your ideas and experiment with ways to best communicate this work. You should expect to put significant time and effort into the revision process and for projects to shift, change, and develop as you revise. An essay must go through a drafting and revision process in order to be considered for a grade.

Conferences and Peer Review: Conferences and peer review are integral to the goals of this course. Through the drafting process of each major writing project, we will use small group or individual conferences during, in addition to, or in place of regular class meetings. The quality of your involvement in these processes is a crucial factor in your participation, and thus final grade, in this course.

Information Literacy: English 1010 provides the first stage of the University's Information Literacy Competency, including attention to university research and digital literacy. You should expect to use outside sources and scholarly research to inform your work throughout the semester. While all assignments will provide opportunities for developing Information Literacy skills, we will have at least one assignment built with this specific purpose in mind.

Reflective Component: The reflective portion of the course includes any time spent on characterizing, reconsidering, or qualifying one's work. Often less evaluative than descriptive, reflective writing turns the critical, analytical activity that typifies academic writing back on the writing project itself, addressing questions such as:

- How does this project work?
- What characterizes the approach of this project and the “moves” that it makes?
- What work was entailed in getting to this point?

We will practice reflective writing (and reflective work more generally) throughout the semester, usually in ways that complement formal writing projects by providing opportunities for you to imagine alternatives or trace lines of thought or activity.

HuskyCT: HuskyCT is UConn’s online platform for communication and the distribution of class materials. This class will make use of HuskyCT for sharing all types of writing and collaborating with each other. It is your responsibility to be familiar with and literate in HuskyCT. You can find support at https://lms.uconn.edu/; under “Students,” click on “Chat with a Support Representative.” This will bring you to a home page of HuskyCT support and contact information.6

6Alterately, you might use Google Classroom or another school-provided tool, but it is a General Education requirement that at least one cycle of papers be collected digitally.
Grading and Evaluation

Your final grade will depend on two things: your successful completion of the day-to-day work of the course (including drafts of all major writing assignments) and the quality of your work.

As for the first—your successful completion of the day-to-day work of the course—you will be awarded credit for your contributions to class, your submissions of essay drafts and other work that is satisfactory, on time, and complete, as well as your regular engagement with others’ work. If you submit passing-level and on-time work throughout the semester, you will receive at least a B for the course. If there is missing or insufficient work, your grade may fall below a B. Substantial amounts of missing work—or simply a failure to turn in all major essays—will result in a failure of the course.

The second component is entirely about the quality of your completed major writing projects. Every major assignment will be given a grade, though later assignments will have a greater influence on your grade for the semester. Each assignment prompt will clarify priorities for high-quality work, but generally an A paper will

- respond energetically and creatively to the readings and the assignment;
- engage meaningfully with texts in a sustained manner;
- form a cohesive final project;
- contribute new formulations that successfully enter into conversation with others’ work; and
- demonstrate rhetorical awareness, including knowledge of and facility with genre conventions.

In short, while your consistent and successful completion of the day-to-day work of the course will suffice for a B, it is through the quality of your writing projects that you will be able to raise your grade above the B level. If at any point you have questions or concerns about how you’re doing in the course, please don’t hesitate to ask.

\footnote{The grading policy described here offers a significant challenge to more traditional points-based grading models. We believe that a course built on sustained collaborative work and practice in a kind of writing that may be initially unfamiliar to students requires a grading model that reflects these factors. Alternative models for grading are available on our program website.}
Resource Workbook

Course Policies

Integrity and Respect: In this class you may come into contact, and perhaps conflict, with communities whose ideals and perspectives differ radically from your own. This will be interesting and productive, but it may also be uncomfortable, and we will seek to find meaning in those uncomfortable moments. As a class, we will maintain a sympathetic and compassionate outlook and keep an open mind throughout the course.

In accordance with UConn policies and Title IX, this course is a designated safe space for all students, regardless of background, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, socioeconomic status, race, or ethnicity. If you feel you have experienced discrimination or harassment at UConn, you can find support and resources at the UConn Office of Diversity and Equity. You may also contact Health Services, Counseling & Mental Health Services, and/or the Women's Center. Please note that I am a mandatory reporter to the Office of Diversity & Equity if I become aware of issues that may pose a danger to a student's health or safety. Our conversations can be private, but some information cannot be kept confidential.

Disabilities: The First-Year Writing Program is committed to making educational opportunities available to all students. If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact the Center for Students with Disabilities (Wilbur Cross 204, 860-486-2020). They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate, and provide me with a letter describing those accommodations. All information and documentation is confidential. Please speak with me if you have any concerns.

The Writing Center: The Writing Center employs tutors who work with students on their papers at any stage of the writing process—from brainstorming to reviewing final drafts to helping with specific difficulties. This service is free, and highly recommended for all students. You can sign up for an appointment on the Writing Center website.

Ethical Scholarship: While it is central to our work to study and make use of the ideas and texts of others, this must be done in an ethical and appropriate way. Please review and

---

8 In this example, some of these policies are more particular to the Storrs campus, but each element bears discussion in a FYW seminar, whatever its location.
9 Consider appending the following note: “I will post trigger warnings about any upcoming texts, but if at any time you feel triggered by course content or discussion, please alert me and we will work out an alternative.”
10 Note that many high schools do not have a writing center. For questions about the availability of writing center tutoring for ECE students, please contact the Writing Center at Storrs.
abide by the University’s code on academic misconduct (including plagiarism and misuse of sources), which can be found on the UConn Community Standards website; you will be held responsible for understanding these materials. Plagiarizing the work of others—passing off someone else’s work as your own—is a very serious offense, and anyone found plagiarizing will fail the essay or the course. Please let me know if you have questions about what constitutes appropriate use and citation of other people’s work.\(^\text{11}\)

**Multilingual Scholarship:** This classroom is a multilingual and translingual space, and we speak and write across languages. I encourage you to speak to me about any concerns you have with language use (reading, speaking, and/or writing) in this course, and I encourage you to be respectful of your colleagues in this multilingual space.\(^\text{12}\)

**Attendance, Tardiness:** Class attendance is important and can affect your grade. You are responsible for work missed as a result of an absence. Excessive or habitual lateness will be counted as absences. Allowances will be made for religious observances, medical or family emergencies, and mandatory athletic commitments with advanced notice.

**Late Papers:** It is crucial that you turn assignments in on time. Failing to do so will affect your grade and limit your ability to participate in class. All formal and informal assignments must be ready to turn in at the beginning of the class they are due [and/or uploaded to HuskyCT no later than the stated deadline]. If you have a serious need for an extension, you must contact me and receive approval at least 48 hours before the due date. There are no retroactive extensions. In the event of a crisis, contact me as soon as possible, and we will work out a solution.

**Digital and Paper Copies:** You are expected to back up your digital documents. Late papers due to computer crashes or other electronic issues will not be accepted. Google Drive, Dropbox, Microsoft OneDrive, or an external hard drive are all excellent options for saving your work.\(^\text{13}\)

If you encounter technical difficulties in the writing process, or if you would like to take advantage of some of the complementary software provided by the university, please visit the Information Technology Department online.\(^\text{14}\)

**Phones, Tablets, and Other Electronics:** Please do not use electronic devices in class unless they are in the service of your note taking or in-class writing. Let’s do our best to speak directly to one another and maintain a collegial environment.

\(^{11}\) See more on ethical scholarship at the program website pages located [here].

\(^{12}\) See program website materials [here].

\(^{13}\) These guidelines can be tweaked to account for the technology used, but students should become accustomed to dropping the excuse “my computer ate my essay.”

\(^{14}\) These services may not be available to ECE students.
Course Concerns: If you have any questions about the course or your final course grade, please see me as soon as possible. If that conversation is not productive, please see or contact an Assistant Director of First-Year Writing to further discuss the issues.15

15 Students participating in an ECE course should contact the Early College Experience faculty coordinator for English. The directory of faculty coordinators is available here.
An Additional Sample Syllabus

**ENGLISH 1010: SEMINAR IN ACADEMIC WRITING**

**NEGOTIATING IDENTITY THROUGH LANGUAGE**

Instructor: —
Classroom/Hours: —
Office: —
Office Hours: —
Email: —@uconn.edu

**Course Overview**

This course is rooted in the lived practice of academic writing. In it, we will explore how reading and writing transform ways of thinking about and engaging with communities and the world. As a way of engaging in academic work, you will put your experiences and ideas into conversation with texts, your peers, and broader contexts through language. This course is a seminar—consequently, we will be spending the semester collaboratively inquiring about and discovering new locations for thinking, discussion, and writing. You will be contributing to the intellectual work of the university, and in doing so, you will have the opportunity to investigate your own interests through shared readings and materials.

As a seminar, we will have a particular inquiry that the course will explore for potential new locations of discovery and as a location to engage in academic work. We will be exploring and troubling the role of writing, language and media in shaping identities—both personal and collective. We will make use of critical and scholarly texts, popular sources, digital media, and our own writing as locations for exploring the complex processes of identity formation and categorization. Ultimately, we will seek to challenge the way we define and understand our own identity and those of others through language, and in doing so.

**Course Rationale**

All UConn First-Year Writing courses are a part of a larger curricular ecosystem. The FYW courses provide a key component of UConn’s general education requirements, preparing you for your writing-intensive (“W”) courses and other academic work, and reflect goals and practices common to national standards for college writing. You can learn more about UConn’s FYW courses at the program website and read the program’s letter on our HuskyCT page.
HABITS OF MIND

A publication called the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, written and adopted by three national organizations dedicated to the teaching of writing, suggests that the following habits of mind are “critical for college success”:

**Curiosity** — the desire to know about the world.

**Openness** — the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world.

**Engagement** — a sense of investment and involvement in learning.

**Creativity** — the ability to use novel approaches for generating, investigating, and representing ideas.

**Persistence** — the ability to sustain interest in and attention to short- and long-term projects.

**Responsibility** — the ability to take ownership of one’s actions and understand the consequences of those actions for oneself and others.

**Flexibility** — the ability to adapt to situations, expectations, or demands.

**Metacognition** — the ability to reflect on one’s own thinking as well as on the individual and cultural processes used to structure knowledge.

Our ENGL 1010 course is designed to foster these habits of mind through what this document describes as “writing, reading, and critical analysis experiences.”

**Course Outcomes**

By the conclusion of this course, you should be able to:

- See yourself as a writer who can enter an academic conversation.
- Discover, inhabit, and use the writing of others in ethical and enriching ways.
- Plan your writing as an act of communication to an anticipated reading audience.
- Practice writing as an act of inquiry and discovery.
- Reflect on and practice various writing processes (including drafting and revision) and genres.
- Demonstrate basic competency with Information Literacy.
Texts

The following readings are available in the 10th edition of *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers*, edited by David Bartholomae, Anthony Petrovsky, and Stacy Waite (Boston, Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2014).

- Richard Rodriguez, “The Achievement of Desire”
- Gloria Anzaldúa, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue”
- Alison Bechdel, “The Ordinary Devoted Mother”
- Errol Morris, “Will the Real Hooded Man Please Stand Up?”
- Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Racial Identities”

Course Components

**Participation:** This is a seminar rather than a lecture course. Therefore, the class is driven by and centered on your work. Thoughtful discourse is an essential part of this class, and you will frequently work in groups of various sizes, which means you will need to be considerate of and attentive to others. It is your responsibility to keep up with the reading, to contribute to class conversation in the form of analytical comments or questions, and to attend class regularly and on time. See attendance policy below.

**Reading:** Although ENGL 1010 is described as a writing course, the writing you do here has a very close relationship to reading. In fact, the process of writing begins with careful reading of a situation, written text, or various media. You will be reading to find ways into the conversation in which an author or text is participating. Many of these texts are multi-layered and complex. You should expect to read most texts more than once. You will need to read carefully, reread often, and take careful notes. Come to class prepared to share your thoughts and questions.

**Writing:** You will write four major essays (totaling 30 pages) in this course. In order to accomplish this, you will be doing ample writing along the way, including in-class writing, homework assignments, and drafts of these major papers. Only the final papers will be assigned a grade, but all of your written work will contribute to your final grade in the course.

**Revision:** Each major writing project will go through a drafting process in which you shape your ideas and experiment with ways to best communicate this work. You should expect to put significant time and effort into the revision process and for projects to shift, change, and develop as you revise.

**Conferences and Peer Review:** Conferences and peer review are integral to the goals of this course. Through the drafting process of each major essay, we will use small group or
individual conferences during, in addition to, or in place of regular class meetings. The quality of your involvement in these processes is a crucial factor in your participation, and thus final grade, in this course.

**Information Literacy**: English 1010 provides the first stage of the University’s Information Literacy competency, including attention to university research and digital literacy. You should expect to use outside sources and scholarly research to inform your work throughout the semester. While all assignments will provide opportunities for developing Information Literacy skills, we will have at least one assignment that will be built with this specific purpose in mind.

**Reflective Component**: The reflective portion of the course includes any time spent on characterizing, reconsidering, or qualifying one’s work. Often less evaluative than descriptive, reflective writing turns the critical, analytical activity that typifies academic writing back on the writing project itself, addressing questions such as:

- How does this project work?
- What characterizes the approach of this project and the “moves” that it makes?
- What work was entailed in getting to this point?

Reflective writing (and reflective work more generally) happens throughout the semester, usually in ways that complement formal writing projects by providing opportunities for a writer to imagine alternatives or trace lines of thought or activity.

**HuskyCT**: HuskyCT is UConn’s online platform for communication and the distribution of class materials. This class will make use of HuskyCT for sharing all types of writing and collaborating with each other. Please ask if you have any questions about how to use HuskyCT or any difficulty navigating its tools.

**Grading and Evaluation**

Your final grade will depend on two things: your successful completion of the day-to-day work of the course (including drafts of all major writing assignments) and the quality of that work.

As for the first—your successful completion of the day-to-day work of the course—you will be awarded credit for your contributions to class, your submissions of essay drafts and other work that is satisfactory, on time, and complete, as well as your regular engagement with others’ work. **If you submit satisfactory and on-time work throughout the semester, you will receive at least a B for this component of evaluation.** If there is missing or insufficient work, this grade will fall below a B. Substantial amounts of missing work will result in a failure of the course.
The Syllabus

The second component is entirely about the quality of your completed major writing projects. Every major assignment will be given a grade, though later assignments will have a greater influence on your grade for the semester. Each assignment prompt will clarify priorities for high-quality work, but generally an A paper will

- respond energetically and creatively to the readings and the assignment;
- engage meaningfully with texts in a sustained manner;
- form a cohesive final project;
- contribute new ideas or formulations that successfully enter into conversation with others’ work;
- demonstrate rhetorical awareness, including knowledge of and facility with genre conventions.

In short, while your consistent and successful completion of the day-to-day work of the course will suffice for a B, it is through the quality of your writing projects that you will be able to raise your grade above the B level. If at any point you have questions or concerns about how you’re doing in the course, please don’t hesitate to ask.

Class Policies

Integrity and Respect: In this class, you may come into contact, and perhaps conflict, with communities whose ideals and perspectives may differ radically from your own. This will be a topic of discussion and interest, but it may also be uncomfortable, and we will seek to find meaning in those uncomfortable moments. As a class, we will maintain a sympathetic and compassionate outlook and keep an open mind throughout the course. [I will post trigger warnings about any upcoming texts, but if at any time you feel triggered by course content or discussion, please alert me and we will work out an alternative.]

Additionally, in accordance with UCONN policies and Title IX, this course will be a designated safe space for all students, regardless of background, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, socioeconomic status, race, or ethnicity. If you feel you have experienced discrimination or harassment at UCONN, you can find support and resources at the UCONN Office of Diversity and Equity. You may also contact Health Services, Counseling & Mental Health Services, and/or the Women’s Center. Please note that I am a mandatory reporter to the Office of Diversity & Equity if I become aware of issues that may pose a danger to a student’s health or safety.

Disabilities: The First-Year Writing program is committed to making educational opportunities available to all students. If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact the Center for Students with Disabilities (Wilbur Cross 2013, 860-486-2020). They will determine with you what ac-
commodations are necessary and appropriate and provide me with a letter describing those accommodations. All information and documentation is confidential. Please speak with me if you have any concerns.

The Writing Center: The Writing Center employs tutors who work with students on their papers at any stage of the writing process—from brainstorming to reviewing final drafts to helping with specific difficulties you may have. This service is free, and highly recommended for all students. You can sign up for an appointment on the Writing Center website.

Academic Conduct: While it is central to the writing we will be doing to study and make use of the ideas and texts of others, this must be done in an ethical and appropriate way. I ask you to review and abide by the University’s code on academic misconduct (plagiarism and misuse of sources), which will be distributed in class and can also be found on the UConn Community Standards website; you will be held responsible for understanding these materials. Plagiarizing the work of others—passing off someone else’s work as your own—is a very serious offense, and anyone found plagiarizing will fail the essay or the course. Please let me know if you have questions about what constitutes appropriate use and citation of other people’s work.

Multilingual Scholarship: This classroom is a multilingual and translingual space, and we speak and write across languages. I encourage you to speak to me about any concerns you have with language use (reading, speaking, and/or writing) in this course, and I encourage you to be respectful of your colleagues in this multilingual space.

Attendance/Tardiness: Class attendance is important and affects your participation grade. You are responsible for work missed as a result of an absence. Excessive or habitual lateness will be counted as absences. Allowances will be made for religious observances, medical or family emergencies, and mandatory athletic commitments with advanced notice.

Late Papers: It is crucial that you turn assignments in on time. Failing to do so will affect your grade and limit your ability to participate in class. All formal and informal assignments must be ready to turn in at the beginning of the class they are due and/or uploaded to HuskyCT no later than the stated deadline. If you have a serious need for an extension, you must contact me and receive approval at least 48 hours before the due date. There are no retroactive extensions. In the event of a crisis, contact me as soon as possible, and we will work out a solution.

Digital and Paper Copies: As responsible students, you are expected to back up your digital documents. Late papers due to computer crashes or other electronic issues will not be accepted. Google Drive, Dropbox, Microsoft OneDrive, or an external hard drive are all excellent options for saving your work.
If you encounter technical difficulties in the writing process, or if you would like to take advantage of some of the complementary software provided by the university, please visit the Information Technology Department online.

**Phones, Tablets, and Other Electronics**: Please do not use electronic devices in class unless they are in the service of your note taking or in-class writing. Let’s do our best to speak directly to one another and support a collegial environment.

**Course Concerns**: If you have any questions about the course or your final course grade, please see your instructor as soon as possible. If that conversation is not productive, please see or contact an Assistant Director of First-Year Writing to further discuss the issues.
Part III: Assignments

The work of the university involves finding something to work on, making sense of it, and communicating the sense you made of it. Students may be used to the kind of writing in which they convey what they’ve learned ("discuss three causes of World War II") or in which they stake a claim someone else has already articulated ("I support gun control as a socially, ethically, and politically feasible goal"). They are unaccustomed to the kind of writing that fits the word “essay,” from the French word “essayer,” which translates both as “to try” and “to wander.” We’ve found many students see “argument” solely as polemic (the argument of moral superiority).

In practice, many seem to believe that writing requires that they report meaning or find and communicate someone else’s meaning, but they are not so well practiced with creating meaning.

In our own reading experiences, writing produced by scholars tends to do four things:

1. Pinpoint a problem, uncover a conundrum, question accepted truths, and pose new questions.

2. Situate the problem, conundrum, accepted truths, and new questions in the work others have done that might ground, inform, counter, and stimulate the new work.

3. Develop new lines of thought, using writing and reflection on writing.

4. Communicate the processes, speculations, and outcomes of the new work.

These are the kinds of moves we want our students to do in response to our writing assignment prompts. To do that work in our courses, students will need to practice developing new lines of inquiry, learn to read others’ work differently, and learn to engage with others’ ideas rather than just use them to validate or to serve as foil for others’ ideas. They’ll need to practice the kind of curiosity that can lead to a higher-order literacy, to work on being open and flexible, to push beyond the surfaces of ideas because they’re used to just grabbing the facts to report, to imagine how it is they can write differently, and to allow themselves to see critical writing as creative.

In addition to what follows in this section, you will find useful suggestions about assignments on the FYW website under “For Instructors,” once at that tab, select “Course Development” and then “Assignments” to review those points.

As you read through the assignments in our Resource Workbook, notice how each sequence builds on the intellectual work of the previous assignment, giving students an opportunity to use the “Habits of Mind” we delineate on each syllabus and encouraging them to develop their own writing practices as they work through the various assignments. Students should also become more accustomed to writing not as a report of other people’s knowledge but as a way of making sense of things, of thinking new thoughts and communicating them. As part of the effect of their work, they will develop some

---

1 These are taken from essays students have submitted at other institutions.
agility in reading the aims, methods, materials, and conventions each assignment requires. By taking time to reflect on and assess the effects of those aims, methods, materials, and conventions, they should begin to see how the work they do in this writing class is also the work they will do in other classes.

At the end of this section, we’ve provided something that we are calling an “architecture” of assignments. The architecture serves as a kind of staging you can use to build your own assignments.

You’ll see a suggested order of assignments (“pathway”) that shows how a sequence of assignments might build into a semester-long inquiry for students. Then, you’ll find the individual architectural descriptions of each assignment. These architectures outline what the “deliverable” is (meaning essay, or reflection, or response piece, and so on), what practices students will need to work on in the assignment (e.g., finding keywords, looking at how another writer pursues a question), what “intellectual” outcomes the students will work toward (e.g., ways of pursuing questions through reading), how the individual assignment fits into the arc of the semester, some of the issues we’ve seen come up when teaching these texts in class, and so on. By the end of the first term, you’ll want to be able to try crafting your own architecture to be able to see the relationships between the deliverable outcomes and the intellectual writing tasks as the term unfolds (for new graduate instructors, this a requirement for ENGL 5100, too).

**Shaping the Assignment**

An assignment prompt for a First-Year Writing course locates a point of entry for student writing, defines a goal or set of goals (as well as parameters) for the intellectual work of that writing assignment, provides explicit information about how that writing project will be evaluated, and fits into the overarching line of inquiry of the course.

There are other things an assignment prompt might do, but we would like to emphasize these three: context, intellectual/writing task, and evaluative criteria. As you draft and review your own assignment prompts, please take these three aspects into consideration. You might not use these exact terms, but we’d like your prompt to be consistent with these elements.

1. **Context.** Context includes the familiar statements of where the class conversation and writing has led or what questions or problems have been set up by the readings. Context might introduce key vocabulary or concepts, and it might remind students of materials that could be looked at or explored. But context can also include suggestions about what is at stake in addressing these questions and where the inquiry may lead. Contexts may quote the readings directly as a way into the text(s) and assignment and provide a brief example of the writer’s project.

2. **Intellectual/writing task.** The intellectual task of an assignment prompt should provide specific, feasible goals for a writing project, and it must be framed as a writing assignment. That is, in addition to spelling out a chief goal for the thinking required of
students (e.g., examine race as a factor of identity), the prompt should make explicit mention of how writing will serve that goal (e.g., introduce and defend a term that Appiah doesn’t use but that you think belongs in this conversation). This component likely includes some discussion of genre, audience, or other rhetorical considerations, and should avoid language that may be vague to a student audience without contextual clues on how the students will accomplish the writing work. For example, if we ask students to “analyze Bechdel in order to make an argument about memory,” we should be sure that we have addressed the question of what analyzing or making an argument entails.

3. **Evaluative criteria.** While we discourage you from using a rigid, scaled rubric, we ask that you provide a description of what you will be looking for in student writing and how you will be defining success. This might be a useful place to address the questions of *why* you’re asking for this work, *who* the intended audience is, and *what* components are required. *In our review of assignments used in FYW courses, we noticed that it was evaluative criteria that was most likely to be missing from assignment prompts.*

Finally, we’ve found that strong assignment prompts are usually about one page long. Some instructors provide more context or additional details about process, calendar, or options that take the assignment onto additional pages, which is fine. Nevertheless, do what you can to outline the gist of the project as succinctly and clearly as possible.

**Assignments Should Also:**
- Include the instructor’s name and the course information
- Include a title for the assignment that indicates some of the intellectual work students will be asked to do
- Include a limited number of questions to prompt students’ thinking, but be clear that they are not a prescription for the process of writing or the structure of the essay
- Include dates, paper length, and submission information (will papers be submitted through Google Docs? HuskyCT?)
- Avoid overwhelming students with large blocks of texts

**FURTHER ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES AND SUGGESTIONS**

Strong First-Year Writing assignments often ask for projects with an emphasis on purposeful process and development. They articulate the instructor’s priorities while remaining open to a range of responses and ideas. Such assignments establish a context for the assigned writing and make expectations explicit. In doing so, strong assignments ask students to address their purpose for writing.

First-Year Writing courses are academic writing courses that emphasize how academic writers work creatively with the texts of others in order to engage in various forms of academic inquiry. This work is driven by writing that seeks to open up a site for further engagement and analysis. “Texts” in this
context includes not only written documents, but also anything that can be read and interpreted, including visual documents, objects, people, or places. The governing assumption of these courses is that we write academic prose to investigate aspects of the world that we wish to better understand. Effective assignments require that students do something with their reading beyond basic persuasion or literary criticism.

**Sequencing Assignments**

We describe a series of assignments that build on one another as an assignment sequence. When designing the assignment sequence and individual assignments for the course, consider how each individual assignment will build on both the previous assignment(s) and how it will contribute to and potentially trouble the larger question that the course is exploring. Instructors should choose and develop a larger inquiry that they do not have a predetermined answer to and individual assignments for which they are not expecting particular answers. Instead, instructors and students will explore and complicate the conversation together, with the instructor and the assignments opening up possibility rather than foreclosing it.

Consequently, students’ major assignments will be written as part of a larger academic community that posits themselves, their class, and the texts as part of a conversation. Often, writing assignments ask students to see fellow class members as potential readers. In other cases, assignments ask students to address an audience beyond the class context. Either way, assignment prompts should make clear the audience(s) of the project so that the writing can be purposeful and directed toward a specific end. Furthermore, students should be asked to reflect upon their work throughout the course (in the form of process notes, revision plans, etc.), not just as part of a final assignment. There are several ways to develop a sequence that will leave room for critical inquiry.

When considering the sequence of assignments, instructors may ask:

- **What is the main inquiry the course will explore?** How will that inquiry relate to writing and/or language and allow students to begin thinking about reading and writing in new ways?
  
  » For example, one of the baseline syllabi asks how we negotiate personal and collective identities through language and various modes of communicating.

- **How do I expect students to contribute to that inquiry?** Is there room for them to draw on their own interests and experiences?
  
  » Do my assignments and text selections allow for students to explore a diversity of experiences? Do my assignments foreclose certain experiences or backgrounds? (e.g., do my assignments allow for contributions from international students?)

- **How do I want to shape the course?** Should students begin with a critical (theoretical or conceptual) text that will function as a frame for the work they will be doing, or might we begin with
more local, student-driven inquiries that come back to (or into) critical texts?

- How will each assignment build on the previous one? Will students be able to develop and engage with ideas they developed previously, while still working on the new assignment?

Characterizing Assignments

Part of the work First-Year Writing assignments do is present students with the opportunity to develop individual, complex projects that resist formulaic or summary writing (e.g., the “compare/contrast paper” or the “position paper”). To do this, First-Year Writing assignments typically ask students to write papers that respond to “why” or “how” questions, rather than “what” or “whether.” They also tend to ask that students situate literary and critical texts historically, culturally, etc., so students write through rather than about texts.

We’ve identified several ways to characterize academic writing where scholars and authors write through rather than about texts. Though these ways of writing often overlap and coexist (for instance, students may “come to terms” in every assignment), they offer a starting point for considering what academic writing can do. This list is not meant to be exhaustive or prescriptive, but rather descriptive of the kinds of work we and our students tend to do.

- Coming to terms (See assignment 1 in the Assignment Architecture)
- Frame and case/Lens and artifact
- Developing a term
- Developing a site
- Tracing a network
- Testing a way of seeing
- Examining limits & possibilities
- Creating an account (theorizing) of
- Working and writing with more than alphabetic texts (multimodal)
  - e.g., films, graphic novels, songs, music videos, etc.
- Developing multimodal projects
  - e.g., Presentations, blog posts, videos, sketchnotes, etc.
- Reflection
  - Students may have a tendency to view reflective assignments as an opportunity to demonstrate learned knowledge (e.g., what their writing is saying), rather than reflect on their writing more holistically (e.g., what their writing is doing). To have students reflect on their writing in more critical ways, instructors may assign portfolios with an introduction or reflective assignments that ask students to analyze their writing through/with the course inquiry in order to develop that inquiry further.
This list of assignments shouldn’t become set in stone; in fact, every project should ask students to articulate and work through the “moves” they make in their writing and how those moves may cohere into forms and formulations. And, of course, many of the texts they encounter in the seminar—including those of their fellow students—will provide examples of the choices writers make to advance their own projects. A chief goal of writing assignments is to build in this meta-cognitive element of attending to the kind of writing that is possible within academic contexts.

Information Literacy and Research

Student research and engagement with information literacy may take a variety of forms. Students may research by critically engaging with a common text in the course, and they also may research student-selected scholarly texts in order to contribute to the course inquiry. When doing research, students may not know how to develop a line of inquiry. Instructor guidance and/or scaffolding when necessary may help students select an inquiry to work through. Assignments emphasizing student research should ask students to use critical sources to develop their own projects that complicate or extend critics’ arguments, rather than simply summarizing them as moments of authorization or producing agree/disagree papers.

Information Literacy may include:
- Understanding what academic scholarship is, including how it differs from what one might find with just a Google search. This means helping students understand what journals, academic presses, and databases are, and, generally, how knowledge circulates within the academy.
- Understanding how the library website (and other resources) can help students find and work with the materials.
- Understanding that sources do not merely provide “information” but might be understood to also offer methods, concepts, terms, and thinking constructs.

Further explanation and guidelines about the University’s Information Literacy requirements are available in the Syllabus section.
Assignment Architecture

In the sample “Assignment Architecture” that follows, we attempt to represent the values and goals of our courses while also furthering our value of an openness to possibility, practiced by all our instructors. The structures aim to clarify the type of work to be done, to pose some questions one might consider during the process of planning a course arc as well as in preparation for meeting a class of students on any one day of class.

This architecture exists as an example of, rather than a definitive method of, imagining the written work of the course. Architectures may develop and change as instructors consider the particular texts and inquiries their classes will explore over the course of the semester. Each assignment architecture contains “feeder” assignments (e.g., 2a, 3a, 3b, etc.) that will build into and be troubled by longer projects (e.g., 1, 2, 3, etc.). This first page contains the general framework, and subsequent pages contain more detailed accounts of how instructors might imagine the written work. Instructors may also consult the assignment guidelines for what assignments might do or point toward.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Schematic View</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a. Critical Reaction—introducing conversation (i.e., reacting to <em>Ways of Reading</em> introduction or relevant news article)—600 words (2 pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Coming to terms assignment with critical text</strong> [+ <em>Ways of Reading</em> introduction or other text in 1a.]—900–1200 words (3–4 pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a. Application of second critical text to an artifact/site—900 words (3 pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Frame and case/extend and trouble</strong>—1500–2100 words (5–7 pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a. Writing about an issue/topic that was of interest to students in the third critical text/develop an inquiry to pursue (in-class potentially)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b. Students write a research proposal about the inquiry they would like to pursue (potential revised assignment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3c. Students research the issue in the library and create an archive of quotes from library sources and the third critical text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3d. Literature review (conversation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Furthering the conversation and developing an inquiry</strong> (“researched” assignment)—2100–2700 words (7–9 pages) + 900 words (3 pages) revised from some combination of 3a–3d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a. Habits of Mind Terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b. Modeling an Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Reflective assignment</strong> (potentially a portfolio)—1500–1800 words (5–6 pages)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assignment 1 Architecture

“Deliverables” (Things to Be Reviewed and Evaluated)

Critical Reaction (600 words/2 pages)—Students turn in a 600-word typed reaction to an initial, student-driven reading that would be readily accessible to students (e.g., newspaper articles relating to the course inquiry). They identify particular words or phrases that the author has used that evoke their reaction, and they also consider what questions or points of tension they may wish to pursue further.

Coming to Terms (900–1200 words/3–4 pages in at least two drafts)—Students “come to terms” (à la Joseph Harris, Rewriting) with a text and reframe/recontextualize their initial reaction to the text(s) in order to suggest what work could be done with the text beyond its own aims.

Joseph Harris defines coming to terms with a text as a series of three moves:

• Note the keywords or passages in the text (which the students have begun to do in the Critical Reaction)
• Identify the aims, methods, and materials and the ways those interact to shape the project (define the project of the writer in your own terms).
• Assess the uses and limits of this approach. (15)

To which we (FYW) add:

• Begin to suggest some work that might be done with the text.

Task Overview

The focus for this assignment is learning to read and work on difficult texts in new ways and to new ends. While the Introduction to Ways of Reading can be a good lead-in to this assignment, there’s much that could be done with learning to think in multi-modal terms and new ways of approaching Information Literacy.

General Outcomes

• To see the difference in reading for information and reading for use, in order to expand critical reading practices
• To see the ways meaning through writing/language is socially produced
• To practice working from notes and assembled pieces of [their] already generated writing toward “making something” of an author’s work
Where Does This Fit in the Project Sequence?

To offer local, student-driven inquiries as points of entry to the work of the course and develop a vocabulary for critical reading as well as for the relationship between reading, thinking, and writing.

Framing Questions

How do we develop the practices necessary for reading complex texts? How does academic reading develop from and contribute to larger inquiries and conversations? How do we both identify the aims of a text while also gesturing to further work or inquiries the text could be useful for?

Some Points to Make Visible Along the Way

• Discuss the differences in writing between reporting on an idea and engaging with what another writer has argued.

• Discuss moving beyond binary ways of thinking, and look for nuances in an author’s arguments by beginning to consider what uses the text has in addition to its potential shortcomings or oversights.

• Discuss how to invoke personal experience or use personal reactions to a text without the essay becoming either simply an agree/disagree (“position”) paper or a memoir.

Assignment 2 Architecture

“Deliverables” (Things to Be Reviewed and Evaluated)

Applying a Frame to a Case (900 words/3 pages)—Students identify one key term or phrase from a (new) critical text and apply it to a particular case or artifact (selected either by the instructor or the students) and begin to consider what that application will show them about the larger course inquiry.

Frame and Case (1500–2100 words/5–7 pages)—Students use the work they did with their application essay to decide what they want to “make visible” in the author’s work and in the artifact. The essay itself shouldn’t be just an application of the key words and phrases of the critical text to the artifact, which was the purpose of the first deliverable; instead, the student should develop a line of thought to pursue, test the particular key terms and/or passages on the artifact, and the student should account for those features that the critical text cannot account for.
Assignments

Task Overview

Given the work of coming to terms with texts in new ways, students should consider what uses the text has as a frame in addition to its potential shortcomings or oversights as they work through and grapple with the implications of a text in the process of examining an artifact.

General Outcomes

- To use another author’s work to consider a new location of inquiry that will prove useful for a larger question the class/course is exploring
- To extend or trouble the framework by acknowledging moments of tension or incoherence and working through them
- To identify specific moments of interest in a critical text for further use rather than attempting to provide a total overview of the text

Where Does This Fit in the Project Sequence?

Students will need to further expand the critical reading, thinking, and writing methods they developed in the first assignment in order to continue considering the active, intellectual work of texts and contribute to that work. This project also asks students to make a common move in academic writing—that is, to consider existing conversations and contribute new insights through the analysis of artifacts previously not analyzed in the context of a given framework.

Framing Questions

How do we adapt ideas from one text to an artifact in purposeful, non-binary ways? How do we determine what moments or terms from a critical text will be useful for what we notice in an artifact? How do we account for the larger aims of a critical text while also focusing on these specific moments or terms?

Some Points to Make Visible Along the Way

- Discuss the differences between application of a frame and extending/troubling a frame.
- Discuss how frames necessarily bracket out or look over inquiries that may arise in different cases.
- Discuss ways or methods for adapting terms or ideas for a new artifact or for new cases.
Assignment 3 Architecture

“Deliverables” (Things to Be Reviewed and Evaluated)

There are several nested assignments that may all be possibilities for scaffolding for the longer project in this assignment. Instructors need not do all of these assignments, but they are offered as potential models for how one might imagine incorporating Information Literacy into a longer project. In order to meet the First-Year Writing page minimum, these shorter assignments should amount to about 900 words or 3 pages of revised prose.

Develop an Inquiry (brief informal assignment, potentially in class)—Students respond to a new critical text that has multiple points of entry and raises several issues. They briefly point to one issue or question the text is raising related to the larger inquiry that they would be interested in exploring, and describe what stake they have in exploring that issue—why is it important to them? Why might it be important for someone else to understand the student’s stake?

Research Proposal—Students write a proposal of 1–3 possible topics of interest they may wish to pursue for this project. These proposals should receive some type of feedback from peers and the instructor on the depth and breadth of the topic in order to help students avoid overly broad or general claims.

Quote Archive (done alongside Information Literacy session)—Students should know what topic or inquiry they will be pursuing prior to the class’s Information Literacy session. In that session, they research the topic according to the Information Literacy lesson the instructor has planned, and then they create an archive of quotes from the sources that they have found. This archive could take a variety of forms, but ultimately, students should be tracing a network of conversations about their inquiry across the critical text and their other sources by isolating specific quotes of interest.

Literature Review—This work could serve as a standalone assignment or be built into the larger project. Students should be asked to locate a particular number and type of sources (i.e., popular, scholarly) and engage in a close examination of both the information the authors communicate as well as how these ideas might be used to forward or counter their own ideas on their research topic/question.

Developing a Site (2100–2700 words/7–9 pages)—Students use whatever shorter assignments they’ve worked on in order to develop a site of inquiry about their topic that shows their reader how or why that issue may be valuable to explore. The students make a contribution to the existing conversations about the larger course inquiry while also developing a new site related to that inquiry.
Assignments

Task Overview

Students consider ways to extend their practices of coming to terms and examining artifacts as they work through and grapple with developing new sites of inquiry through sustained, thoughtful research that will negotiate between critical texts and various artifacts. Additionally, their projects focus on using their research to open up a new location for inquiry rather than simply reporting their findings to their reader.

General Outcomes

- To use another author’s work to consider a new location of inquiry that will prove useful for a larger question the class/course is exploring
- To use research in ways that go beyond authorization or reporting of facts in order to contribute to a conversation
- To become familiar with multiple types of sources and how to navigate and evaluate the usefulness of digital and physical sources

Where Does This Fit in the Project Sequence?

Students will need to learn to locate and evaluate various sources in order to come to terms with new, student-selected critical texts and artifacts and examine those texts and artifacts in order to determine what sites would be useful and interesting to develop.

Framing Questions

How do we locate and evaluate sources based on their usefulness for a particular project? How do we select an inquiry we would like to develop and ensure that the inquiry fits the depth and scope of the assignment? What does it mean to have a personal stake in a topic, and how do we imagine that stake as being useful for a specific audience (such as the class, a particular community, a field of study, etc.)?

Some Points to Make Visible Along the Way

- Discuss narrowing one’s topic while also leaving room for exploration, so students are not attempting to provide a total overview of a very broad topic (e.g., the Civil Rights Movement).
- Discuss the difference between reporting information and responding to or further developing ideas.
- Discuss as a class what final projects might look like in terms of negotiating the balance between incorporating and building upon researched material.
Assignment 4 Architecture

“Deliverables” (Things to Be Reviewed and Evaluated)

For the fourth assignment, we imagine several possibilities how instructors might incorporate a reflective assignment into their course.

**Habits of Mind Terms** (informal assignment)—Students examine the habits of mind and either arrange them into visual networks to trace how the terms are connected, or they select particular terms that would be of interest to them. This network and/or selection would then be used for framing and analyzing their own writing.

**Modeling an Introduction** (informal assignment)—Students read through and come to terms with introductions from scholarly anthologies or journals in order to foster a class discourse about what introductions to anthologies might do, and how introductions might function differently than writing they’ve been doing previously.

**Reflective Assignment** (1500–1800 words/5–6 pages)—Students examine their own writing through the work and inquiry of the course in order to see how the course inquiry appears or affects their own use of language and their own writing. This assignment gestures more broadly to how the course inquiry interacts with language.

**Portfolio Introduction** (1500 words/5–6 pages)—Students gather their work into a portfolio (either revised or not) and write an introduction that traces their arguments, moves, and inquiries over the course of the class. They may assemble the portfolio as a collection of their best work, or as a collection of all the work they have done over the semester.

**Editorial Board Portfolio** (1500–1800 words/5–6 pages)—Students work in small groups that function as editorial boards for curating a portfolio of student work taken from the group as a whole (e.g., one text from each student). Students discuss what works to include and why, and possibilities for what the anthology might do. Each student writes their own 5–6 page introduction about the texts that makes visible a question that this particular collection of texts is raising.

**Task Overview**

Reflection runs deeper than simply reporting on what one learned in a class, so regardless of which assignment approach the instructor selects for this project, students should consider the throughlines and connections across their body of work emerging from the course and the course’s larger inquiry.
General Outcomes

- To revisit one’s own body of work across a semester in order to examine the relationship between the students’ writing and the course inquiry
- To become aware of one’s own thinking and writing practices

Where Does This Fit in the Project Sequence?

Students will engage in reflection of their own writing in relation to the course content, exploring specific instances in their own writing that raise new questions and gesture to new sites about what the course has been exploring (drafts, informal writing, formal assignments, etc.). Additionally, they consider how they moves they’ve made throughout the papers (e.g., coming to terms) have emerged out of the course inquiry.

Framing Questions

What are the common themes, ideas, and arguments students have explored in their work throughout the course? What are the moves students have made in order to engage with, extend, and explore the inquiry of the course? How has each student approached the inquiries, and what might that signal about the relationship between that student’s work and the issues the course has explored?

Some Points to Make Visible Along the Way

- Discuss the difference between providing a narrative of one’s “progress” over the semester and investigating an inquiry that arises out of the examination of one’s own writing.
- Discuss how to re-imagine one’s work upon re-encountering it beyond simply making surface level changes, particularly if students will be revising.
- Discuss/model analyzing and working with student work as a text, rather than simply making surface-level or overly general claims about each one.
Taking Your Course Inquiry to New Places

The sample assignment prompts in this section offer ways to take the inquiry of your course in different directions. If you decide to use one or more of the prompts in the section, you will have to reconsider and rearticulate the overall direction in which your course inquiry will move. Assignments can’t simply be swapped in or out; students should be building and refining projects over the entire term.

Ideas for an Inquiry around Language

*A place belongs forever to whoever claims it hardest, remembers it most obsessively, wrenches it from itself, shapes it, renders it, loves it so radically that he remakes it in his own image.*

—Joan Didion

Language takes us places, but it can also bar us from places, depending on the identity it confers on us as travelers. Knowing the language that defines a given place is a way of gaining access to it, but that language can also constrict our ability to fully experience a place for ourselves. In this course, we’ll work with the metaphor of language as passport to help us see the ways that language allows us to move and enter new spaces and also define those spaces.

Prewriting Assignment No. 1

Texts

- David Foster Wallace, “Authority and American Usage”

Coming to Terms

For this response paper assignment, please do the following things:

1. Locate a passage (not longer than 2–3 sentences) in David Foster Wallace’s “Authority and American Usage” that you found interesting, engaging, difficult, or problematic.

2. Type out your chosen passage.

3. Annotate the passage (mark and define unfamiliar words, mark aspects of the text that stood out to you and make notes on why these parts of the passage caught your attention).

4. In response to your reading of Wallace, write one page considering some of the following questions (but you don’t have to address all of these):

- What thoughts or ideas were new to you?
Assignments

• What words, if any, were particularly difficult for you?
• How do you think the passage you’ve picked out works in aid of Wallace’s larger project?
• What is he bringing in from external sources, and what does he make of those other voices, texts, and facts?
• How do those voices, texts, and facts further his thinking about language and authority?

5. Bring a hard copy of this assignment to class. We’ll be using it in class to generate discussion (be prepared to discuss your work), and then you’ll be handing it in to me at the end of class.

Length: About 1 page (300 words), double-spaced. Times New Roman font. 1-inch margins.

Essay No. 1: Language Usage and Group Membership

Texts

• David Foster Wallace, “Authority and American Usage”
• Richard Rodriguez, “The Achievement of Desire”

Goals

Work closely with both the larger ideas and more specific points of Wallace and Rodriguez to make a sustained argument about language usage and group membership.

Focus

In this essay, you will put David Foster Wallace’s “Authority and American Usage” in conversation with Richard Rodriguez’s “The Achievement of Desire” in order to make a claim about the issues they address surrounding language usage and group membership. In “Authority and American Usage,” Foster Wallace pushes against elitist notions of language proficiency and pits Standard Written English against cultural/geographical dialects of American English, asserting that “many of these non-SWE-type dialects have their own highly developed and internally consistent grammars, and that some … actually make more linguistic/aesthetic sense than do their Standard counterparts” (408). He writes that divergences from SWE in the form of dialect and slang serve as signals of “affinity and inclusion,” helping their speakers gain and maintain belonging to certain groups. In Rodriguez’s “The Achievement of Desire,” the author pits his home language (and culture) against the academic culture and language he appropriates as a student. Consider Wallace’s argument about language in light of Rodriguez’s autoethnographic account of schooling and the way it affects his familial and social relationships. Where do you see Rodriguez’s perspective on language
aligning with Foster Wallace? In what ways might Rodriguez’s account challenge or oppose some of Foster Wallace’s points and vice versa? Use your inquiry to support your own argument about language usage and acceptance into specific groups.

Evaluation

I will evaluate essays by looking at their specific and sustained arguments about the relationship between language and group membership. Successful essays will carefully represent and respond to specific textual passages and details working to extend and support the claims you make. As such, your project should be built around three primary, related contributions:

- your specific observations about Wallace’s and Rodriguez’s texts
- the implications of those observations
- and an explicit articulation of why this matters to your readers.

Don’t be afraid to take some risks in this first major assignment, especially in your rough draft. It’s better that you fall off a cliff in the effort to reach for tantalizing fruit than never reach at all. My job, if you fall, is to understand, at least, what you were reaching for and help you find a surer way to get there. I’d rather see clumsily articulated original ideas than perfectly articulated but bland statements. When you re-read your drafts, ask yourself and be able to answer: “What in here is mine, emerging from my analysis of the reading and my thinking about this subject?”

Length: 6–7 pages (1,800–2,100 words), double-spaced. Times New Roman font. 1-inch margins.

Prewriting Assignment No. 2

Now the sightseer measures his satisfaction by the degree to which the canyon conforms to the pre-formed complex.

—Walker Percy, “The Loss of the Creature”

Image and Text

First, find an image of a famous tourist destination that you have visited. Then consider this image in light of what Walker Percy writes about the Grand Canyon, that it is almost impossible to see because it “has been appropriated by the symbolic complex which has already been formed in the sightseers mind” (298). Percy writes that when we encounter such sites “under approved circumstances,” we are seeing what has already been formulated “by picture postcard, geography book, tourist folders, and the words [of the site’s name]” and,
we might add, by websites, film and videos. Once you’ve selected your image, explain the preformed complex, as you understand it, that exists around the site it depicts and analyze the image in order to explain how it plays into that complex.

Select an image (and write a critique) that you will be able to incorporate into your next major essay assignment.

**Length:** About 2 pages (600 words), double-spaced. Times New Roman font. 1-inch margins.

**Essay No. 2: Responding to the Preformed Complex**

*If you’re fond of sand dunes and salty air*  
*Quaint little villages here and there*  
*You’re sure to fall in love with old Cape Cod*  

—“Old Cape Cod”

*But to those of us who came from places where no one had heard of Lester Lanin and Grand Central Station was a Saturday radio program, where Wall Street and Fifth Avenue and Madison Avenue were not places at all but abstractions … New York was no mere city. It was instead an infinitely romantic notion, the mysterious nexus of all love and money and power, the shining and perishable dream itself.*

—“Goodbye to All That”

**Texts**

- Walker Percy, “The Loss of the Creature”
- Joan Didion, “Goodbye to All That”
- Images and text representing a popularly rendered attraction, place, or city that you’ve visited
- Your account of your visit

**Goals and Writing Task**

By closely engaging with Percy, Didion, your image and personal account, you will develop an essay that engages with Percy’s claim about the way language and images work to codify the experience of a particular place, foreclosing the potential of the individual to experience a new place as truly new and unknown. Didion complicates this argument by showing how time and experience work to de-romanticize our sense of a place. Explore the ways that your chosen place is represented in popular images and text. Engaging with Percy, Didion
and your own exploration, advance an argument about preformed complexes and personal experience with place.

**Evaluation**

I will evaluate essays by looking at their specific and sustained arguments about responding to preformed complexes when encountering a place. Successful essays will carefully represent and respond to specific textual passages and images working to extend and support the claims you make. As such, your project should be built around three primary, related contributions:

- your specific engagements with Percy’s and Didion’s texts
- your explanation of the preformed complex around your chosen place
- your argument about preformed complexes and personal experience with a place.

**Length:** 6–7 pages (1,800–2,100 words), double-spaced.

**Potential Assignment No. 3 (InfoLit Emphasis)**

Students read Emerson’s “The American Scholar” and draw connections between Percy’s more general discussion of culturally-constructed complexes and Emerson’s more specific focus on the authority of books. Students will embark on a research project that takes inspiration from Emerson’s critique of considering books: that when it is settled the book is perfect, it becomes “a tyrant.” Students will choose a text considered authoritative/influential with which they already have some familiarity (for example, Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* or Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*). Instructors might consider creating a class library of authoritative texts from a variety of disciplines in which students are taking courses now. Students research their chosen text’s author, its creation, conflicts and debates surrounding its writing, its reception at the time of publication and what contributes to the way it is understood today. Through this, students should gain material for responding to Emerson. The final assignment will be an argument that engages with Percy and Emerson to make a claim about books, learning and authority.

**Length:** 8–10 pgs. (2,400–3,000 words), double-spaced.

**Potential Assignment No. 4 (Reflective Assignment)**

Students review their own writing in Assignments 1–3 to look for answers to the big questions of the course. What do they view in their own writing that could have the potential to become authoritative on a place and why? How and to what extent have they resisted an
author’s absolute authority? That is, where have they productively challenged the ideas and points of the authors with whom they’ve entered into conversation? What thoughts do they have about language as passport as they come to the course’s end, both the movement that language opens up and the limits it imposes? If they had the opportunity to revise something they wrote, what would it be?

**Length:** 5–6 pgs. (1,500–1,800 words), double-spaced.
Assignments Accompanying Sample Syllabi

Borderlands, Contact Zones, Commons: Writing (about) Difference

Assignment 1a: Mapping “The Contact Zone”

Reading: Pratt

Any text, but especially one as complex as Mary Louise Pratt’s “The Arts of the Contact Zone,” has many “moving parts”: ideas, threads, themes, metaphors, etc., brought together into relation with one another to create the possibility of meaning. To help you to come to a fuller understanding of Pratt’s text, we will, as a class, separate out and map the connections between some of these moving parts. In other words, we’re going to “open up” Pratt’s text. I will assign each of you a term from (or related to) “The Arts of the Contact Zone.” Your assignment is to research this term and try to figure out its function in (or in relation to) the text—and, later, to deliver a five-minute presentation on your findings. Ultimately, we will work together as a class to create a visual and textual mapping of the text, including the texts and contexts that influenced it and its influence on other texts and contexts.²

Evaluation: Your contribution, including your presentation, should demonstrate that you have thoroughly and thoughtfully researched your assigned term and considered its relation to Pratt’s text.

Assignment 1b: Composing Autoethnography

Readings: Pratt, a text of your choosing

Part 1:

Locate three texts representing some setting or context in which some aspect of your identity marks you as the “other,” the one who speaks from outside rather than inside the dominant discourse. Some examples of texts that you may choose include short stories, news or magazine articles, poems, novels, films, posters, blog posts, and so on—we are defining “text” very broadly for this assignment.

It is important for you to be aware that this project will culminate in your writing an autoethnography that will be available to your classmates to read and respond to in a later essay, so the aspects of your identity represented—that is to say, “othered”—by the texts that you select need not be your race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, class, religion, or any

² All assignments should articulate a clear task that asks students to put the words of others into use, rather than just using quotations from the assigned reading as validation or foil.
other part of your identity that you might feel uncomfortable writing about and sharing with your peers. Though you may explore these identities in your autoethnography if you’d like, I also encourage you to be creative in coming up with other possibilities. One First-Year Writing instructor born on the Gulf Coast suggested that he might write an autoethnography about Southerners, for example, rather than about lapsed Catholics, a part of his identity that he would be less comfortable bringing into classroom conversations.

Bring your three texts to class. We will gather into small groups and discuss which of your chosen texts might be best suited for the purposes of writing an autoethnography.

Part 2:

In “Arts of the Contact Zone,” Pratt defines an autoethnographic text as “a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them” (319). You have already selected a text representing some setting or context in which you are the other, a cultural and/or linguistic outsider; now you should work with and respond to that text in order to produce an autoethnography rooted in your own experiences.

Pratt says that the position of the outside is marked not only by differences of language and ways of thinking and speaking but also by differences in power, authority, status. In a sense, she argues, the only way those in power can understand you is in their terms. These are the terms that you will need to use to tell your story, but your goal is to describe your position in ways that “engage with representations others have made of [you]” without giving in or giving up or disappearing in their already formed sense of who you are.

Evaluation: In your writing for this project, you should thoughtfully engage with the genre of autoethnography, demonstrating your understanding of and facility for this type of writing. Of course, “engagement” with autoethnography may consist in subverting or going beyond the genre in some sense, though you may also choose to hew closely to Pratt’s description of autoethnography. In either case, you should work with language used to represent you as “other” in some respect. In doing so, you should carefully analyze the texts that you have selected for examination, bringing to light their undercurrents and implications. Your autoethnography should, above all, consider the interrelations of language, identity, and power.

Assignment 1c: Reading Autoethnography (or, Representations of Representations of Representations)

Readings: Pratt, Anzaldúa, a classmate’s autoethnography
Write an essay in which you present a reading of both Anzaldúa’s “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” and a text of your choosing from the class anthology as examples of autoethnographic and/or transcultural texts. You should imagine that you are writing to an audience unfamiliar with these texts. Part of your work, then, is to come to terms with the texts and to explore how they relate to one another and how your understanding of each text causes you to revise your understanding of the others. You have the example of Pratt’s reading of Guaman Poma’s New Chronicle and Good Government. And you have her discussion of the literate arts of the contact zone. Think about how Anzaldúa and your classmate’s texts might be similarly read and about how these texts do and do not fit Pratt’s description. Your goal should be to add examples to Pratt’s discussion and to qualify it, to alter or reframe what she has said now that you have looked at additional examples.

Evaluation: At minimum, your essay should respond to and consider carefully Anzaldúa’s piece and your classmate’s autoethnography, using concepts from Pratt’s “Arts of the Contact Zone.” The strongest essays, however, will not merely apply Pratt’s ideas to the two texts; rather, they will explore the relationships between the autoethnographies in such a way as to speak back to Pratt’s essay, leading to revised understandings of Pratt’s “Arts of the Contact Zone,” autoethnography, and concepts such as language, identity, and power.

Assignment 2a: What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Plagiarism?

Readings: Lethem, Pratt, First-Year Writing Program’s Statement on Ethical Scholarship and Plagiarism

Option 1:
Read the FYW Program's Statement on Ethical Scholarship and Plagiarism carefully and consider it from the institution’s point of view. Then write an essay that analyzes and responds to the Program Statement, using Lethem’s ideas as a conceptual frame.

Option 2:
Find a paper (or an excerpt of a paper) on Pratt’s “Arts of the Contact Zone” that is offered online for the purposes of plagiarism. Then write an essay that analyzes and responds to what you've found, using Lethem’s ideas as a conceptual frame. Does what you're examining force you to qualify Lethem’s argument in any way?

Bonus irony: Instead of an online paper on Pratt’s “Arts of the Contact Zone,” find one on Lethem’s “The Ecstasy of Influence.”

Evaluation: Every essay should place Lethem’s ideas in conversation with the source texts (e.g., the FYW Program’s Statement on Ethical Scholarship and Plagiarism, or a plagiarized essay on Pratt). But a successful essay will analyze the concepts of plagiarism, imitation,
etc., thoroughly—discarding preconceived notions of these terms and reading source texts generously though, if necessary, selectively to arrive at thoughtful redefinitions and a compelling sense of the connections between these newly redefined concepts.

**Assignment 2b: Borderlands, Contact Zones, Commons**

**Readings:** Pratt, Anzaldúa, Lethem

“The world of art and culture is a vast commons. . . . The closest resemblance is to the commons of a language: altered by every contributor, expanded by even the most passive user. That language is a commons doesn’t mean that the community owns it; rather it belongs between people, possessed by no one, not even society as a whole.” —Jonathan Lethem

Where Lethem speaks of a commons, Pratt speaks of contact zones and Anzaldúa borderlands. Find a site in which diverse kinds of language meet. How do these different kinds of language work with or against one another? In what ways are Lethem, Pratt, and Anzaldúa’s conceptualizations of language and texts useful to you in coming to a new, productive understanding of your object of study? How does the text or space that you have chosen require you to rethink or revise Lethem, Pratt, and Anzaldúa’s frames?

**Evaluation:** My evaluation of this project will consider the extent to which your essay demonstrates the linguistic heterogeneity of your chosen site of analysis and how effectively you employ the notions of commons, contact zones, and borderlands to make sense of this linguistic heterogeneity. Again, however, you should not only apply these concepts or treat them as tools, but also show how your site speaks back to these concepts and demands a renewed understanding of the concepts and the relationships among them.

**Assignment 3: Rearticulating Revolt**

**Readings:** Pratt, Anzaldúa, Lethem, Halberstam, a text or context of your choosing

Halberstam reads a number of familiar texts (popular animated films, for example) against the grain, suggesting that they are sites of otherness, or “non-normativity,” that often go unacknowledged by dominant discourses. Sometimes, in fact, discourse frames these popular texts as normative, as supportive of traditional ideas about how things are and should be, even if in many ways they are not (another example from Halberstam: the mating practices of emperor penguins). With Halberstam’s piece in mind, locate a text or context in which language is used to cover over difference, otherness, non-normativity. Then, in the spirit of Halberstam’s critique of The March of the Penguins, write an essay that makes this otherness visible and brings it to the forefront. The best papers will also draw from this site of otherness in order to offer a new, potentially “utopian” view of how society at large could
be organized. (The values of your vision for society do not necessarily have to coincide with Halberstam’s!) You should also think about how the concepts you’ve encountered in Pratt, Anzaldúa, and perhaps Lethem may be used to advance the project of your essay.

**Evaluation**: Even if it does not acknowledge Halberstam’s piece overtly, your essay should perform intellectual work similar to that of “Animating Revolt and Revolting Animation”: namely, by locating a site in which language is used to conceal otherness, identifying or explaining the nature of this otherness, and discussing how language is used to conceal it—and, if possible, why. An “A” paper will do so energetically and creatively, while also working with the ideas of Pratt, Anzaldúa, Lethem, and/or Halberstam and drawing from the otherness of your chosen site in order to articulate some “utopia.” To put it another way, this essay should represent a sort of capstone of the semester, a cumulative project in which you bring together much of what you have learned and developed throughout the seminar.

**Assignment 4: Semester Portfolio Project**

**Readings**: Revised drafts of your essays for Assignment 1c, Assignment 2b, and Assignment 3

Collect your essays for Assignments 1c, 2b, and 3 into a short book on the readings and ideas of our seminar. The document should consist of (1) a title page, with an original title for your book, (2) an introduction to your book, and (3) your three major essays, revised so as to function as “chapters.” Your introduction should address the following questions, though not necessarily in this order. It should take the form of a coherent essay, not simply a series of answers to the questions.

- What conclusions should the reader draw from the collection as a whole? What does your central project seem to have been throughout the semester? What ideas do you emphasize or consistently return to?
- What important insights or approaches do your essays contribute to the class’s discussion of language, writing, and difference?
- Which ideas or approaches do you overlook? (That is, what are the blind spots of your work?) If another writer sought to respond to your work and expand on your ideas, how might he or she do so?

**Evaluation**: A successful project will articulate your work throughout the semester as elements of a coherent line of inquiry, one that connects in useful ways to the seminar’s line of inquiry. (That is to say, how is your own intellectual work rooted in the intellectual work of the class?)
NEGOTIATING IDENTITY THROUGH LANGUAGE

PRE-WRITING ASSIGNMENT 1A: CRITICAL REACTION

Working Texts
- One of the four identity-focused texts that we read as a class

Intellectual/Writing Work: Did any particular words or phrasings of identity categories in your selected text make you react a certain way and why? Do these descriptions or definitions reflect your own expectation(s) for these particular experiences? What questions are you left with after reading and considering this text?

Submission Information
- 2 pages (Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins)

ASSIGNMENT 1: COMING TO TERMS

Working Texts
- Richard Rodriguez, “The Achievement of Desire”
- The text you used for Assignment 1A

Context: Both of these texts contribute to our understanding of identity categories and language, but they do so in very different ways. For instance, Rodriguez juggles the value of the label “scholarship boy” with the restrictions it places upon him but ultimately decides to accept it. Your second text most likely presents an identity as fixed and factual, without considering its dangers or limitations.

Intellectual/Writing Work: Make an argument about the ways in which Rodriguez and the other text, despite their formal differences, work to produce, define, or engage identity. How do they define or understand identity as a concept? What do they consider to be part of “identity”? What does that suggest about the way that writing helps us experience, reflect on, and understand identity?

Guiding Questions: What is Rodriguez’s aim and the context of his work? How is Rodriguez constructing an individual identity category, and how is that individual identity category responding to or working against other categories or definitions? If your second text considers one of your own identities, what does Rodriguez help you see about the way that identity is used to represent you or affect your life? How might his essay provide a context
for the issues surrounding this other identity? How are these texts characterizing identity? What goes into how we think of and present ourselves?

**Submission Information**

- Rough draft: 3–4 pgs. (Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins)
- Final draft: 4 pgs. (Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins)

**Evaluation**: Successful papers will respond energetically and creatively to the readings and the assignment; engage meaningfully with texts in a sustained manner; form a cohesive final project; contribute new ideas or formulations that successfully enter into conversation with others’ work; demonstrate rhetorical awareness, including knowledge of and facility with genre conventions; and correctly handle citations.

**Pre-Writing Assignment 2a: Frame and Case**

**Working Texts**

- Errol Morris, “Will the Real Hooded Man Please Stand Up?”
- Alison Bechdel, “The Ordinary Devoted Mother”
- Gloria Anzaldúa, “How to Tame A Wild Tongue”

**Intellectual/Writing Work**: What concepts from Morris do you find helpful for thinking about what Bechdel and/or Anzaldúa are accomplishing in their texts? Why? Where do you see his ideas appearing specifically? Select one particular quote from Morris and explain how that quote illuminates something specific occurring in Bechdel/Anzaldúa. What does this specific moment show you about how different media, in addition to or distinct from writing, affect the way we think about identity?

**Submission Information**

- 2–3 pages (Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins)

**Assignment 2: Extend and Trouble**

**Working Texts**

- Errol Morris, “Will the Real Hooded Man Please Stand Up?”
- Alison Bechdel, “The Ordinary Devoted Mother”
- Gloria Anzaldúa, “How To Tame A Wild Tongue”
Context: [Instructors should write this section to reflect the focus and context of their course as it progresses.]

Intellectual/Writing Work: Using Morris as a frame for Bechdel and/or Anzaldúa and a third text/location of your choosing, make an argument about how using multiple media/modes of expression (such as using both language and images) furthers and/or limits our understanding of identity for ourselves or others. Your paper should use Morris as a way to consider how Bechdel/Anzaldúa and your selected text are constructing identity through various media.

Guiding Questions: Morris is making several claims throughout his piece; what are the claims that strike you as significant or useful for working through the other texts and constructing your own argument? What are the terms he’s working with and how can you work with and expand on them in order to show your reader something about different modes of media? What do Bechdel/Anzaldúa and your selected text add or show that Morris may not have addressed? What can the use of multiple media/modes of expression do to further our understanding of an identity (someone else’s, or our own?) In what ways can such media/modes limit understanding?

Submission Information

- Rough draft: 4–5 pgs. (Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins)
- Final draft: 5–7 pgs. (Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins)

Evaluation: Successful papers will respond energetically and creatively to the readings and the assignment; engage meaningfully with texts in a sustained manner; form a cohesive final project; contribute new ideas or formulations that successfully enter into conversation with others’ work; demonstrate rhetorical awareness, including knowledge of and facility with genre conventions; and correctly handle citations.

Pre-Writing Assignment 3a: Selecting Sites

Working Texts

- Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Racial Identities”

Intellectual/Writing Work: Select three different sites in history or in the present day that may be interesting locations for considering the tensions between individual and collective identity. These sites can either be something you are personally engaged in or something that has personal significance for you. What questions does Appiah raise that you would like to consider further, using this site?
Submission Information
- 2–3 pgs. (Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins)

Pre-Writing Assignment 3b: Preliminary Proposal

Working Texts
- Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Racial Identities”
- Your selected site

Intellectual/Writing Work: Write a proposal describing the site you would like to explore and why or how that site may be useful for exploring the tensions between individual and collective identities. How do you anticipate this site usefully engaging with, troubling, or extending the way(s) in which Appiah addresses the tensions between individual and collective identities? What types of sources or keywords will assist you in gathering information about your chosen site or location?

Submission Information
- 2 pgs. (Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins)

Pre-Writing Assignment 3c: Revised Proposal

Working Texts
- Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Racial Identities”
- Your selected site
- Your research texts and materials

Intellectual/Writing Work: Revise and expand your original proposal. Characterize the current scholarly conversation, identifying major areas of inquiry and ongoing tensions. Then define your own inquiry, positioning it in relation to the current scholarly conversation.

Submission Information
- 3–4 pgs. (Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins)
Assignment 3: Original Paper

Working Texts
- Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Racial Identities”
- Your selected site
- Your research texts and materials

Context: [Instructors should write this section to reflect the focus and context of their course as it progresses.]

Intellectual/Writing Work: Write the paper that you have proposed. Be sure to stay focused on individual and collective identity in your specific site, and to quote productively from Appiah and your scholarly sources.

Submission Information
- Rough draft: 7–8 pgs. (Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins)
- Final draft: 8–9 pgs. (Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins)

Evaluation: Successful papers will respond energetically and creatively to the readings and the assignment; engage meaningfully with texts in a sustained manner; form a cohesive final project; contribute new ideas or formulations that successfully enter into conversation with others’ work; demonstrate rhetorical awareness, including knowledge of and facility with genre conventions; and correctly handle citations.

Assignment 4: Reflective Assignment

Working Texts
- Richard Rodriguez, “The Achievement of Desire”
- Errol Morris, “Will the Real Hooded Man Please Stand Up?”
- Alison Bechdel, “The Ordinary Devoted Mother”
- Gloria Anzaldúa, “How To Tame A Wild Tongue”
- Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Racial Identities”
- All other course readings for this class
- All outside research done for this class
- All student writing from this class
Context: [Instructors should write this section to reflect the focus and context of their course as it progresses.]

Intellectual/Writing Task: In this final project, reflect upon your identity as a writer who exists in and writes for multiple collectives. Consider the ways in which that identity has shifted over the course of this class and what role it may play beyond it.

Guiding Questions: How does personal identity come across in writing? How has your identity as a writer informed your work within the academic conversation? Has your work in this class affected your sense of your own identity a writer? What do you see as your individual contribution to the larger collection of writing in this course? Consider your personal identity within at least one of the collectives in which you operate as a writer—the group that is this class, UConn’s academic student body, or even college students at large.

Submission Information
- Rough draft: 4–5 pgs.
- Final draft: 5–6 pgs. (Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins)

Evaluation: Successful papers will respond energetically and creatively to the readings and the assignment; engage meaningfully with texts in a sustained manner; form a cohesive final project; contribute new ideas or formulations that successfully enter into conversation with others’ work; demonstrate rhetorical awareness, including knowledge of and facility with genre conventions; and correctly handle citations.
Part IV: In-Class Work

Student Writing in the Classroom

When you and your students are together in class, you have the opportunity to collaborate, render/map texts, ask questions, and, of course, write. Student writing is, in fact, integral to the work of the class. How, then, might student writing be generated in and circulated throughout the class and the semester? Below are a few general ideas for class that can be tailored to a variety of texts and assignments. This is only a starting point; often the best classroom practices evolve organically from your class’s needs and interests and the texts and projects assigned. Your colleagues, your own experiences, and the FYW office and website are all additional resources for more specific ideas to work with student writing during class time. The following ideas for class time are loosely divided into reading and writing tasks, but many could be used for either task or combined, as reading and writing always overlap in the FYW classroom.

Collaborating with Texts

Questions for classroom conversation: Assign students to bring three questions emerging from the reading to class. For each question, ask them to quote three separate passages, phrases, or keywords from the text to interrogate and explore. Then you can use these as prompts for individual in-class writing. Alternatively, develop your own reading questions to generate conversation and/or act as a prompt for written response. For small-group collaboration, consider having students write their answers or thoughts on the board, or upload written group work to HuskyCT. By requiring written response, the conversation about texts can be grounded in writing.

Focused free-writing as a prelude to group response: You can ask students to write in class as a way to explore readings and get students thinking independently, as part of a write/pair/share activity, etc.

Unpacking difficult passages: Prepare a handout with difficult passages from the text and assign them to different groups, or ask students to select difficult passages from the reading. After discussing the passages in groups, ask students to present their discoveries to the rest of the class.

Reverse outline: Ask students to create a reverse outline of the reading, using questions like: Where is the agenda, the method, and the evidence? Is it linear? Does the text present a compelling argument, or an interesting idea? You could do this individually, in groups, or together as a class.

“One-minute papers”: At the end of a class session, you can ask your students to write short responses to questions like: What is the one big idea or new insight you’ve taken away today? What is still confusing for you?

Acting as scribe: In any class situation, your converting of in-class comments to writing on the board or on a screen registers students’ verbal contributions as important course material to be explored and mined by the group.
Working with Student Writing

**Project work on the board or projector:** At the rough draft stage, the entire class collaborates to strengthen the projects of two or three volunteers by considering how the project might be supported with class texts, how it contributes new knowledge, and how the writer might move forward in the essay.

**Anonymous project statement feedback:** At the rough draft stage, have your students type or write out a description of what makes their current project matter (anywhere between one sentence and one paragraph, depending on the stage in the writing process) in a blank Word document or at the top of a blank sheet of paper. What is it about the project that makes a contribution to our course question or theme? Have students circulate their work and anonymously write at least one question or suggestion under their classmate’s project statement.

**Writing about their own writing:** At any stage in the writing process, you can ask your students to reflect on the writing they have done so far, using the following prompts for in-class, informal, ungraded writing: What counter-interpretations might work against your emerging claims? What personal investment do you have in this issue? Why does your argument matter? What are you struggling with most as you approach the draft? How does how you are writing aid (or complicate) your answers to these first questions? You can discuss these essays as a class or in small groups (or not).

**Paired read-alouds:** Pair students and have them read each other’s papers aloud. Paired read-alouds can be used at different points in the drafting process for different purposes. With a rough draft, you can ask: Does the new set of eyes see more places to push the project further? Places where the evidence is unclear? Where more textual support is needed? At a more polished stage, read-alouds can highlight fluency, sentence structure, and grammatical errors.

**Working with other voices:** Have students highlight all the material borrowed or quoted from another source (including their own previous projects) in their essays in one color, and in a different color highlight all the places where they respond to or analyze those passages. Then ask them to evaluate their own use of other voices or switch and discuss with a partner. Are the passages adequately unpacked, explained, and analyzed? Is the reader left hanging? Are there more quotations than the students’ own words? How does the student build on and revise or drop things he or she wrote about in the previous assignment?
The Ethics of Scholarship

Any text is woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages, which cut across it through and through in a vast stereophony. The citations that go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet already read; they are quotations without inverted commas. The kernel, the soul — let us go further and say the substance, the bulk, the actual and valuable material of all human utterances — is plagiarism. For substantially all ideas are secondhand, consciously and unconsciously drawn from a million outside sources, and daily used by the garnerer with a pride and satisfaction born of the superstition that he originated them; whereas there is not a rag of originality about them anywhere except the little discoloration they get from his mental and moral caliber and temperament, and which is revealed in characteristics of phrasing. Old and new make the warp and woof of every moment. There is no thread that is not a twist of these two strands. By necessity, by proclivity, and by delight, we all quote. Neurological study has lately shown that memory, imagination, and consciousness itself are stitched, quilted, pastiched. If we cut-and-paste ourselves, might we not forgive it of our artworks?

—Jonathan Lethem, “The Ecstasy of Influence”

The practices of ethical scholarship are essential to entering the Burkean parlor and contributing to an ongoing conversation about ideas through other written texts.

M. M. Bakhtin, a theorist whose work is deeply embedded in the UConn First-Year Writing program, argues that in real life people talk most of all about what others talk about—they transmit, recall, weigh and pass judgment on other people’s words, opinions, assertions, information … Every conversation is full of transmissions and interpretations of other people’s words … of all words uttered in everyday life, no less than half belong to someone else.

With that in mind, it’s more difficult to draw a hard line between which words are authentically our own, and those that belong to others. That said, Bakhtin isn’t an apologist for the unethical use of sources. His words should be seen instead as a description of how we might render the words of others, showing what we can make visible in the text and the work to be done with it. Quoted material is neither a substitute for a writer’s ideas nor should it serve as mere validation (using it to say, in effect, “see? Someone with more authority than I said so”) or as an over-simplified foil to counter (as in “I’m acknowledging this position because that’s what you’re supposed to do in an argument, but I’m doing so to prove the writer’s position wrong”).

We’ve found that some students are boggled by the prospect of really engaging with writers and doing something with those other writers’ texts (beyond the moves just described above). They’ve not seen other authors as interlocutors in a line of inquiry they’ve formulated. And sometimes, that fear of putting one’s own ideas out there on equal
footing with what they’ve been taught to revere as experts can short-circuit their own writing. They may not feel confident in their ability to craft an inquiry and they may not know how to engage substantively with others’ writing. Or they may not understand what they are being asked to do or how to handle the critical vocabulary another writer has developed. These sorts of situations can lead to misunderstandings, misuse of sources, and academic misconduct.\(^1\)

Typically, the misuse of sources is attributed to students’

- not feeling like they have anything to say
- not understanding why one would want/need to quote, document, and cite materials;
- not feeling like they understand what the writing prompt asks of them;
- not feeling in control of the ideas and/or vocabulary they are being asked to deploy;
- not feeling like they have enough to say (or, sometimes, that they’ve said it well enough, so why do they need to say more?);
- not caring about the issue or topic or course (the reasoning: why put in so much work when they don’t care?)
- and the certainty that their unacknowledged use of others’ works won’t be discovered, or that their readers don’t care, or that their readers are naïve or not very well read.

In practice, this may mean

**Minor issues:**

- A student uses a sentence or two of the Wikipedia biography of a woman scientist. She thought the “facts” were “common knowledge” and therefore didn’t need quoting.
- A student glossed a film-theory word (“jump cut”) using a sentence from Wikipedia.

**Much more problematic:**

- Baffled by an essay by Judith Butler, the student used a blog written by a scholar to “patchwrite” a section of an essay.\(^2\)
- A student hired a tutor to write his essays, claiming that the ideas were his, so having someone else write up his ideas in “correct English” shouldn’t be a problem.

\(^1\) All sorts of meanings are packed into an uncritical use of the word “sources” as it buys into myths of origins and a genealogical model of knowledge. We’ve moved away from seeing sources in this way by re-casting the source in the role of interlocutor in a line of inquiry the student has formulated.

\(^2\) In “patchwriting,” the student takes an original text and then either uses small pieces of it to incorporate into their own prose or rewrites the original text using, mostly, a thesaurus to change the wording enough that a Google search of the section won’t turn up any matches.
In-Class Work

- Feeling overwhelmed, a student “double-dipped” an essay, using work done for another class in the FYW course.
- The student self-plagiarized, using either old work or cribbing passages from a former essay (when not authorized to revive or use work from class work).
- A student purchased an essay from a paper mill (that wasn’t even a very good match for the assignment).

While many of these reasons might apply to any instance of writing—that is not their writing, there’s more to the problems of how we represent our own ideas in relation to those of others. Those problems boil down to how one approaches what one reads, what one has been told one is supposed to convey in one’s writing, and why one writes at all.

Novice writers have usually been asked to report on what others have said, synthesize other (presumably “authoritative”) ideas and words, or, to interpret others’ work. Because asking students for a variation on reiteration may be a familiar mode in previous writing assignment prompts, you may well find that students are not accustomed to deep engagement with others’ work. When we speak of “deep engagement,” we mean making use of others’ work to ground and further the student writer’s own take on the issue. This “making use” may well be very different from what students are accustomed to if they relied on others to serve as expert validation in their writing.

Example

In this excerpt from a student essay, the student has quoted, and then explained the quote, restating it and then asserting disagreement.

In his essay, Joshua Foer states that Socrates believed that writing was a negative asset. Foer records Socrates saying that “They will cease to use their memory and become forgetful; they will rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves but by means of external marks.” He believed that writing things down would not help one expand knowledge. He believed that using external cues for memory would have a negative impact on one’s internal memory … He stated that writing is only a memory cue and nothing more than that … I strongly disagreed with what Socrates claimed.

Making use, substantive engagement:

Foer brings Socrates into the conversation about memory to establish an origin for an idea he later develops on the role of “external memory.” To Socrates, the “external marks” of writing force a man away from self-reliance, causing such a man to “become forgetful … calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves by means of external marks” (Foer 161). In this way, Socrates seems to think writing will cause men to stop using their own strengths. Foer offers a counter-argument about the technological superiority of writing because it “allows our memories to be pulled out of the wetware of the brain and secured on the less fallible page” (161). I wonder if this really plays out, though. Once, when my computer crashed just before I was able to print out my paper, I tried and tried to rewrite
it. I couldn’t get it to be like the old paper no matter how hard I tried (how late I stayed up trying) to rewrite it. So it’s true that the “wetware of the brain” isn’t a smoothly working machine. When I turned it in, I knew better than to say that “my computer ate it,” because my teacher believed that meant we just hadn’t done it and that the computer crash was a lame excuse. So although the first version was written down, that “less fallible page” was pretty fallible after all: there was nothing left of it because the technology IS totally fallible. I don’t think that I would have just “remembered” the paper the way that Socrates seems to think I would have if I didn’t make “external marks,” but the technology of writing without limits either.

When students are asked to report, present, restate, and then agree or disagree, there can be far less incentive to think about a problem. In the second example (a draft), the student is sorting through possibilities and showing the reader how a mind works on these questions. The student has developed a stake in the ideas and the process, made visible in how much more the student had to say. Students are, perhaps surprisingly, quite efficient in their use of time and energy, and will invest little when they believe they have no stake in a project beyond agreeing or disagreeing with an already stated position. (And in some cases, they are just unaccustomed to having to think much beyond the binaries of yes and no, pro and con.) You may also see whether students have a stake in a line of thought by how heavily they rely on what other writers have said, and how they present the words of others.

By developing questions, writing prompts, and activities that move students away from the binaries of “yes/no” and “agree or disagree,” you’ll offer them more places to find a stake in the work at hand. Of course, students have often been taught to see the world in black-and-white terms, so sometimes even the best writing prompts are met with a response in which the students resort to the writing they are most practiced in, often the polemic argument. The work in class, then, can include reviewing a student essay (“live” writing: from the work of that section of the course) that addresses the prompt as though the text must be agreed with or dismissed. In the classroom, you won’t want to simply dismiss a student’s draft, either; rather, work with what the essay is trying to achieve, and coax students into a discussion about what the author of the reading (in this case, Joshua Foer, “The End of Remembering”) in terms of how the student is using it. The Socrates example is but one point in survey of the history of memory that leads to a consideration about how we think of and represent the self and its relationship to technologies. The “discussion of the reading” comes directly from its use in student work.

Ethical scholarship, then, begins with an understanding of the relationship between/among the authors (student and the assigned reading) and the stake the student develops in and through engagement with the reading(s). How are you guiding students’ development of an ethos?

We don’t explicitly teach Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, or his “modes of persuasion” (aka “rhetorical appeals”) in part because his categories are
Most problems will emerge during the drafting process and identifying the misstep should be used as “teaching moments” for students. The student should revise the work, which usually means they have to stop seeing these texts (even Wikipedia) as “experts” who will substitute much more interesting (and authoritative) ideas for their own. In other cases, working with the student on ways of using an idea or section of an assigned essay (e.g., Judith Butler’s work in *Ways of Reading*) helps them feel more in control of the other text. When the student can revise the draft, and the misuse is limited on that draft, and the student reworks the essay so that the work is original, using the work of others to move their own ideas along, then we leave the lesson there. Some instructors ask for a short reflective piece to accompany the final draft of an essay that has sloppy scholarship and documentation. (Just refrain from the purely punitive reflective essay on “how I committed a felony writing offence and will never ever do it again”). In all cases, we do make sure that students read the *Student Code* (available on the Community Standards site; link embedded), particularly *Appendix A*, which we also suggest you read because it contains information directed to instructors.

On occasion, a student will panic after working on a draft or two and submit a final essay that has more than a sentence or two pulled verbatim from another text, or will be a patch-written version of another work, or will have a different voice or style from what you are used to reading in their informal writing for class. In these cases, we generally follow this protocol:

- Prepare to speak to the student by assembling copies of the original text they’ve used and be prepared to compare the two for the student. This evidence isn’t part of your opening gambit, but it will be necessary as the conversation about the writing moves along.

- Schedule a time to talk to the student, beginning the conversation with questions about how the line of inquiry was developed, how the writing process went, how the student made use of sources by putting them into conversation with [their] own writing, and where they had trouble with the writing. More often than not, the student will tell you the whole sad story of the situation that led to their over-reliance. Then show the comparison texts you’ve prepared and, especially if the student hasn’t seen the issue (or denies using other texts), ask that student to account for the issue.

In rare instances, when speaking to a student face-to-face is impossible, then send the student an email asking about the essay and the processes of writing it; ask to schedule a meeting to discuss concerns about the essay. If the student doesn’t respond at that point to set up...
If the plagiarism is egregious (more than a brief phrase or two), and students used sources to substitute for their own ideas on a final draft submitted for a grade, the student should receive “F” on that essay (after you’ve conferred with the student). You then have a couple of options: the student can write another essay (not revise the old one) entirely, and the grade for the new piece can be averaged with the “F” as the grade for that unit. Or, you can just fail the essay. We prefer the “learning” approach, but the consequence with or without rehabilitation is your call. Whatever option you choose, you should keep us in the loop before you file a letter with Community Standards. We serve as advisors for cases that go to Community Standards, and CS has asked that we metaphorically sign-off on any cases to be forwarded to them.

- Prepare the letter for the student that covers what you discussed in your meeting, the details of the findings, and the statement of students rights and responsibilities. You will find a sample letter on the FYW website in the Ethical Scholarship section and an email version in the Workbook appendices.

- Send the letter via email and cc Community Standards (or use the Community Standards online form). For the online form, you’ll need the PeopleSoft numbers for the student(s) involved (on your course roster, the seven-digit number in the far left column), a summary statement, and electronic copies of the documents that demonstrate the parallels between the source and student work (they are uploaded using the online form). Note that your final email to the student must include mention of the students’ rights to appeals and hearings. You will find a sample letter on the FYW website in the Ethical Scholarship section.

- Please make sure we receive a copy of your letter and (forward a copy to fyw.uconn@gmail.com with “Academic Misconduct” in the subject line).
Overall, we follow the WPA Guidelines on misuse of sources and plagiarism, along with other resources, which you can access through our website, under “Ethical Scholarship.” In the appendices for this Workbook, you will find class activities to use with students. These activities are meant to prevent misunderstandings, misuse, and misconduct, and they meant to encourage an understanding of the ethics involved and the value of students’ own ideas.

We don’t want to run a writing class as a penitentiary in which we assume all the inmates will cheat; we’re not interested in an ethics based on fear. We want students to see themselves as valuable, contributing members of a group of like-minded individuals in pursuit of new ideas and new ways to communicate those ideas for others. To foster an environment like this, we believe the best approach to misuse of source material and academic misconduct is prevention that focuses on how students might situate themselves in a conversation (rather than report on others), how they might make use of others’ work, and why their ideas are valuable to readers (and by extension, others’ ideas are valuable, too). We have provided a set of activities and prompts for further discussion in the appendices for this Workbook. These activities include prompts for reflective responses on how their writing used others’ work in their previous experience, some “myth-busting” research about research to be worked on collaboratively, some opportunities to consider new ways of using the words and ideas others have formed, and some work that will help them develop some skepticism (critical reading skills) about the works they read (to reduce the chances they will resort to “revered and reproduce”).
The Translingual Classroom

Translingual Teaching

One view of university writing courses focuses on “fixing” the writing first-year students do so they will be able to write legible essays in future coursework. This emphasis is largely on legibility (primarily correctness) with some glances directed toward “knowing the writing conventions of discipline X.” Most compositionists know that instructors of first-year writing do not and cannot send students to future classes with an affidavit ensuring they will produce readable prose; nor can they bestow upon students the knowledge of a discipline and all the writing conventions that go along with it.

The emphasis on readable prose looms larger for multilingual students, and they are often preoccupied with whether their prose “sounds like” it was written by an American student experienced in writing “Edited English.” The approach many students have to erasing any traces of difference has larger political implications, of course, not the least of which is visible in Americanization of multinational brands (it’s “always” McDonald’s, regardless of the geo-coordinates). “Capital-E” English is held up as a model.

Yet, these assumptions misunderstand writing and conventions entirely. First, “all writing always involves rewriting and translation, inevitably engaging the labor of recontextualizing (and renewing) language, language practices, users, conventions, and contexts” (Horner & Lu 586). If also we accept that conventions are repetitions, but that no repetition can be an exact copy, then an apparent act of repetition is the moment that a writer’s agency emerges, producing difference at the same time that it reproduces the con-

From this premise, we argue that every student is negotiating this dynamic, working out a mix of mimicry and agency, in effect translating what has gone before to make something new. Thus, each student is always engaging in translation, and all divergences are the norm. The multilingual writer engages in the same acts, encounters challenges, resolves problems, and produces meaning, as does every student.

**The Takeaway**
- Language is not stable and is always subject to negotiation.
- We are all writing in translation.
- The use the multiple languages in a classroom are resources, not liabilities.

**Critical Vocabulary**

As an example of language’s instability and how language produces and negotiates asymmetrical power relationships, the vocabulary that has cohered around teaching multilingual students to write has changed frequently and is fraught with significant traces of colonialism and American exceptionalism.

Currently, we’ve chosen to use “Second-Language Writing” (SLW) because a field of composition studies has developed around this term and because it focuses on the practice of writing rather than the subjectivity of the student.

Other terms you might encounter:
- **ESL**: English as a Second Language usually invokes basic language acquisition rather than the practices of multilingual writers and is ontological, suggesting the boundedness of languages.
- **ELL**: English Language Learners focuses on the subject position of the student; although it does suggest that language acquisition is a process, it also sounds elementary.
- **L2**: Shorthand for “second language—language #2,” this term is used most frequently by linguists to suggest a status (ranking) and fixity (languages bleed into one another—and who decides what counts as L1?).
- **NNSE**: Non-Native Speaker of English doesn’t recognize many English speakers around the world who grew up learning both an indigenous language and English; invokes an erasure of the subject through “non.”

To address issues like this one, we have adopted a system proposed by Suresh Canagarajah, in which the language used in communities “that traditionally claimed ownership over the language” is referred to as “Metropolitan English,” and the English spoken by “everyone else” is labeled “World English.”
English.” (There’s also the nice effect of ME and WE; Metropolitan English becomes very self-centered in that formulation.) Those categories don’t support ordinal or negative identifications, so one might classify speakers of any language as “novice” or “expert” when differentiating levels of fluency, as Canagarajah does. By using “novice” or “expert,” however, a final destination in language acquisition is marked, a point at which one might be finished with learning. For a writing class especially, we want to suggest the ongoing nature of “learning” to write rather than hold out the assurance of any sort of mastery.

**Challenges for Students and Instructors**

You may find that students not used to American institutions encounter the following:

- **Relative (un)familiarity with American culture compared to the rest of the class.** Globalization is closing some of the gaps in cultural knowledge, but be aware that not everyone has seen lots of American television or film and not everyone tweets or reblogs pop culture icons on Tumblr. You should try not to rely exclusively on American popular culture references, but you certainly shouldn’t drop all opportunities to read American culture. Just make sure that the knowledge needed can be acquired during the semester.

- **Lack of shared memories with their American peers.** As an instructor, you most likely share a similar high school experience with your American instructors. You also share the collective memory of 9/11, grew up with the same TV shows, etc. Be aware that while you have a lot in common with your American students, it’s easy to exclude international students by referring to these things.

- **Perceived and actual difficulty reading course materials.** If you have a class read texts American students struggle with (e.g., feminist theory), your SLW students will do so at a much higher rate, and it will take them more time to get through the readings. Some students may grow discouraged and give up or not finish readings. Others may develop anxiety about their ability to get through the texts, while in fact their abilities are much better than they give themselves credit for. Be prepared to support your translingual students when they come to you with these concerns outside of class, and be sensitive to the difficulties they face.

- **Shyness in class discussions.** Translingual students may not feel confident enough about their reading or speaking abilities to volunteer in class discussions. Do your best to create a supportive environment and encourage them to feel comfortable without putting them on the spot. You might also ask students to prepare some written work to bring to class—whether that’s questions about the text or summaries of passages “translated” into an English they are more adept at using. Sometimes, students who aren’t working in their home language
can find it very difficult to summarize on the fly in class, so it’s important to build in opportunities for advanced preparation.

- **Lexicon.** Building up a vocabulary takes time and effort, and if students know one meaning of a word, it doesn’t mean that they know other meanings as well (e.g., train as transportation vs. train as part of a wedding gown).

- **Concern about grades.** Depending on their country of origin, international students may be very concerned about grades because the stakes are often particularly high for them. They may come to your office after the first couple of essays wondering how they can achieve their target grade in the course. Be supportive and clear about your expectations, and the results will most likely be very good; they tend to be very hard workers.

- **A tendency to be clustered**—both as “they” in language, in discussions, and in terms of the space of the classroom.

  » Students may see the comfort of their compatriots or may find themselves grouped together by student movement or instructor direction. This is done sometimes with the intention of allowing the comfort of sameness as a bridge to the so-called dominant culture (enacted by both students and instructors). The effect, however, is simply segregation. Instructors will need to control group composition both in class and for their writing groups.

  » The students from other countries in the room are not the representatives of that culture. They may contribute cultural knowledge, so focus on asking all students about cultural experiences rather than asking any one student “what is it like in …?” This goes for students from other countries, but also students from situations culturally classified as “different”: e.g., “what is it like in your urban neighborhood?” or “to grow up in a Mexican family?” or what have you.

- **Less familiarity with academic terms.** Commonplaces deployed in academic writing can make reading torturous business for a student not reading in their home language. Set up the workflow for reading and writing so students have to gloss terms and translate phrases. An example of a “scaffolding” exercise is included in the “Resources” section of this Workbook.

**A Note on Ethical Scholarship**

Presenting another person’s ideas and words as one’s own in academic work crosses all cultures, classes, genders, and ethnic groups. When a student misuses sources, it’s usually a sign that the student did not feel in control of something—time, the topic, the readings, vocabulary you asked that they use, writing skills. A myth circulates that multilingual writers plagiarize—consciously and unconsciously—because in “their” culture, using other people’s words and ideas is the norm. While it may be true that different cultures have different writing relationships with
Instead, don’t ask students to memorize, for example, film studies terms; rather, have them generate a vocabulary in class for talking about film. Work with all students on how to engage with other people’s words, drive them away from reiterating the ideas of others and toward situating themselves in a conversation in which they can produce new knowledge. (Every paper on gun control and capital punishment is the same paper written in somewhat different prose—I’d argue that every polemic paper on those topics is always already an act of plagiarism, and students have been taught to plagiarize because they’ve been told to re-present the stands others have already articulated. /end rant)

Still, be aware that in their pursuit of learning the language, students may hire tutors. While we certainly support all students’ use of tutors, sometimes the private tutors are not clear on the boundaries between support and substantive revision of an essay. Let all students know that their writing must be their own, and that they should limit their support to the Writing Center in most cases. Students should never allow tutors to revise their work for fluency and correctness. The section on Ethical Scholarship in this workbook discusses the conventions of academic work.

**Responding to Student Writing and Sentence-Level Editing**

Many students are concerned about the sentence-level correctness of their writing, in part because they’ve been taught that correctness is the primary measure of fluency, particularly in writing. Our writing instructors discuss presentation and correctness in the context of meaning, rather than as a discrete set of skills or intrinsic knowledge (subject-verb agreement, article use). Of course, because correctness does affect a reader’s judgment of writing, we note these sorts of errors, but—again—we do so as part of a larger project of responding to the work students have done.

While responding to student writing in the drafting stage, you have a number of options for addressing presentation in the context of your response to the essay. Multilingual students usually have difficulties with English that do not follow patterns based on the way their first language works. You can find a table of language groups and their typical difficulties and examples of documents such as error logs in the FYW office (and in the “Resources” section of this Workbook).

You’ll discover conflicting research about whether direct error feedback (marking and correcting the error) or indirect error feedback (marking only, directing students to figure out the problem and correct) improves multilingual student writing. In fact, there’s debate on whether any sort of sentence-level feedback improves writing. Many who argue against sentence-level editing suggest that students should spend their time reading and writing more, where they will encounter (and produce) a wider range of words and “lexical phrases.” Offering no sentence-level feedback makes some students very nervous, however. Our most important advice, then, is to try out some methods with the student.
and find a method that works for individuals. Not everyone learns the same way. The following are some typical strategies for addressing linguistic errors; this isn’t a comprehensive list of what you must do with each student’s essay at each stage. Keep in mind there’s plenty of evidence to suggest that the efficacy of sentence-level (grammar, syntax, lexicon) feedback is questionable at best.

• Ask the student which two types of errors they’d like to work on during the term. Hold the student accountable for attending to just those types of errors.

• Note difficulties with word order, syntax, lexicon, and morphology with examples of solutions/corrections in a single paragraph. Suggest the student use the example you provide in that one paragraph as a model for editing their own work.

• Show students how to use an error log. These are tables of three columns: one for the error, one for naming the error (and perhaps citing the chapter and verse of the resource consulted), and one for the edited and rewritten attempt. You can demonstrate how to make and use one in your first conference with a student by asking them to write down the error (usually a whole sentence), look it up in something like the *Pocket Style Manual* (any handbook will do), note the page and some details about how one might make the correction (for future reference), and generate a corrected version. Then ask the student to submit one with the final draft if you are so inclined.

• Direct the student toward working more often with you and with the Writing Center.

• Let go of errors in articles. Mark them if you must, but don’t linger. Incorporating English articles into prose is one of the most frequent fault lines in second-language writing and affects most non-European language users. The error is very difficult to erase, and even advanced scholars ask colleagues to read and note missing articles in their prose.

In any case, on a final draft, don’t spend all your time marking errors; simply note in an end comment what you see as the patterns and direct the student to update their error log. Keep in mind, too, that errors are meaningful in themselves. Errors can point toward a loss of agency, but they may also suggest an alternate reading of a text, make visible a well-masked assumption everyone else missed, or provide an unwittingly unique presentation of an idea. It’s in these gaps that great conversations about language, meaning, conventions, and the new can emerge in class. Therefore, instructors should learn to read the errors as meaningful signifiers.
None of us is fully bounded, utterly separate, but, rather, we are in our skins, given over, in each other’s hands, at each other’s mercy.

—Judith Butler, Giving an Account of Oneself

The writing classroom is a space of shared vulnerability: we share a version of ourselves in our writing and in our encounters with the writing of others. The self we share is always in the process of revision, always stretching tenuously beyond the space of certainty and into the territory of risk. And creativity often springs from the gaps that emerge between what we are able to say and what we want to say—both in our writing and our teaching. But this space also requires recognizing the ethical demands of our shared vulnerability as writers and students.

As instructors, how can we feel at ease in our classrooms? How can we use the knowledge that we are “in each other’s hands” to help us grow and develop as instructors? What happens when a member of our classroom community fails or refuses to recognize their responsibility to the other members of the classroom community?

Constructing Comfortable Spaces in the Classroom

On a basic, physical level, one of the first things you can do to help yourself feel at ease is to get to know your new environment and how you will operate within it:

- **Dress comfortably.** You know your own personality, so start by thinking about the sorts of contexts and scenarios you feel most comfortable in. (Do you feel most comfortable dressed in a “professional” way, or are you more comfortable with a more relaxed look?) You might ask:
  - “Would I feel comfortable meeting new people in these clothes?”
  - “Would I feel comfortable sitting on a desk in these clothes, or navigating between desks as students do group work?”
- **Check out the classroom in advance.** You only teach twice a week. Settle on a “look,” or multiple “looks,” and then forget about it. You don’t really need to be thinking about your clothes when you’re teaching. Besides, your students probably care less than you think they do.
- **Think about how you’ll sit or stand … and then forget it.** Standing in front of group is different than standing in front of an individual. There’s a bunch of space around you, so it’s easy to look awkward if you’re doing a lot of shuffling in place. But it’s also easy to look comfortable—
just find postures that you feel comfortable maintaining:

» **Try sitting or leaning on the desk.** It anchors you, and you can kind of do it and forget it.

» **Or put the chairs in a circle and just sit in the circle like one of the students.** It breaks that whole “I’m the teacher and you’re not” business, and it gives the whole class a relaxed feeling.

» **Try moving around and using the space.** Some teachers feel comfortable walking around a lot—writing on the board, crossing the whole classroom space and talking in a really animated way, moving slightly closer to students to listen and then away to make a larger point. If you feel comfortable with this, do it.

» **Or stand completely still.** Remember, the focus is on them. If you plant your feet shoulder length apart and ask a lot of questions, they will not notice how you’re standing. This is especially useful when making an important announcement.

- **Figure out what you’d like students to call you and make this clear on day one.** Students don’t take you more or less seriously in relation to what they call you. Rather, they take you seriously when you seem relaxed and prepared. So, don’t stress too much about this decision: Miss Smith, Ms. Smith, Jackie, or J$, whatever.

- **Listen.** This is, ultimately, the goal: **Listen to your students and respond honestly.** A lot of the anxieties related to self-presentation—Am I funny enough? Am I tough enough? Do they take me seriously? Do they take me too seriously?—just get in the way of this. Your goal is to be comfortable enough in the classroom that you’re thinking about what students are saying when they’re talking to you.

» **Prepare and forget it.** Have a plan for the class session, but feel free to toss it overboard to accommodate student needs. This way, you won’t be worrying about what comes next. Worst-case scenario: You just move on to the next thing on your course outline.

» **If you’re going to arrive at class early, think about having a couple conversation starters.** The five minutes before class actually starts can be really awkward, especially if you’re one of those people who doesn’t do small talk well. You might try thinking of a couple things to say or ask on your walk over—the goal being to get the class talking before class actually starts. (And you can always use that old standby: “So, we’ll get started here in a minute, but I’m just curious—how was the reading?”)

» **Feel free to say “I don’t know.”** Students do recognize when you’re full of it and trying to make something up. So, why bother? Admit when you don’t know something and figure out a plan to answer the question: “I’ll email you,”
“You could try looking that up in the library’s databases,” “Let me look that up and we’ll talk about it next class,” “You should try looking that up and we can talk about it next class,” “Does anybody know the answer to that?”

Creating Connections from Vulnerability

Whatever happens in the classroom, please know that you are never alone. We have all felt the highs and lows that inevitably go along with teaching. So, if you do come across a difficult situation or a problematic student, remember to do the following:

• **Debrief.** Always feel comfortable seeking out a member of the FYW community to talk through the situation. Lisa, Ruth, Erick, the Introduction Week staff, your practicum group: please come to any of us if you’re facing a troubling situation. Chances are, we’ve been there too, and we can help you brainstorm and locate helpful resources.

• **Show Compassion … for Yourself!** When I first started teaching, I felt completely inadequate: if something didn’t go smoothly, I blamed myself; when I had difficult students, I felt sheepish talking about it. I was worried that showing any uncertainty would make me seem “unprofessional” or “unprepared.” Eventually, I realized that, when my colleagues came to me with concerns or worries, I never judged them harshly, I always recognized that they were excellent, committed teachers who were just dealing with a tough situation. In other words, I was always much kinder to others than I was to myself. So, I would encourage you all to be kind to yourselves and remember that you’re part of a community that genuinely cares about you, your teaching, and your wellbeing.

And, most importantly of all, just know that, no matter what those first weeks bring, you’ll be fine.
Safe Spaces for Students and Their Writing

Our courses often ask students to confront difficult subjects: institutionalized racism, privilege, genocide, suicide, rape, and other issues. We must make our classroom accessible and safe for all students, who are bringing with them histories and assumptions of all kinds. The following document is meant to provide a few strategies in developing a space where students can take risks, explore difficult subjects, and make writing that makes sense of often-upsetting moments. We suggest being attentive to how the course and assignments are framed and providing opportunities for decompressive and empathetic writing built into the drafting and reading processes.

Framing the Course

From the first day, think about what tone and atmosphere you will be creating. The syllabus, introductions, and first-day writing prompt all do important work for making safe spaces.

- What language for safe spaces is in your syllabus? Instructors sometimes put warnings about difficult texts early in the syllabus for transparency and clarity. Example from Hayley Stefan’s syllabus: “Because of the tragic violence of the September 11th attacks, our class will involve exploring contentious and upsetting artifacts. While I think it is important for us to ‘bear witness’ to the obscene, traumatic, and subversive, I know that to do so is not always easy. Be considerate of others whose experiences may render them particularly sensitive to such topics. Please come speak with me if at any point you feel overburdened by the nature of our texts or discussions so that we can work out a way to alleviate or redirect your anxieties. Please also be aware of the wide variety of resources available to you here at UConn, including Counseling and Mental Health Services at (860) 486-4705 and Veteran Affairs and Military Programs at (860) 486-2442.”

- Consider providing confidential note cards on the first day that you’ll collect. Ask things such as preferred name, preferred pronouns, anything that they feel comfortable disclosing that might be a factor in their course participation.

Empathetic Student Writing

We suggest building in moments for reflective writing that will allow for decompressing after difficult texts and can take a productive turn toward inquiry (i.e., using initial emotional engagement to lead toward research questions). This type of writing can be done

- through online forum posts or in a Google Docs file, with students responding to each other’s work;
- through uncollected response writing in class;
- through post-reading reflective writing.
Part V: Reflective Research and Writing

Networks of Knowledge

Information Literacy Guidelines

First-Year Writing is designed to be students’ first point of contact with the university’s Information Literacy (InfoLit) component (a general education requirement). Generally, our instructors introduce InfoLit with small tasks interspersed throughout the semester, emphasizing it as process-oriented instead of product-oriented. In small incremental steps, beginning with these FYW experiences, students develop the habits of mind needed to develop interesting questions, explore what others are writing, evaluate sources, make decisions on authority, purposefully select what sources they choose to engage with, and be able to tell you why.

With the goal of creating lifelong learners, InfoLit can be taught and learned in all possible venues using myriad sources. The energetic involvement of students and ownership of their own learning is the key to success. In the past, text-based resources were accepted as the given source of scholarship. Today, the information world is more expansive, and scholarship occurs in virtual communities, in collaborative groups, and in online conversation and debates, while also still discovered through solo active reading. Therefore, information literacy in FYW and beyond increasingly encourages collaboration, creativity, and the use of digital tools and digital literacies.

Defining the Aims of Information Literacy

The University of Connecticut Libraries’ InfoLit program, based on the current draft of the Association of College & Research Libraries’ (ACRL) Framework for Information Literacy, defines the term as follows: “Information literacy is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.”

The Framework for Information Literacy establishes several concepts, which consist of knowledge practices and dispositions that are designed to enable members of the University to:

- Engage in scholarship as a conversation that occurs through deep reading and thoughtful consideration of discourse between and among individuals and groups over time.
- Develop new insights and discoveries in response to divergent or competing perspectives and interpretations.
- Search for information strategically but with an openness to following up on the extraordinary that requires continual revision and refining.
- Understand that research is an iterative process that depends upon asking increasingly complex questions whose answers develop new questions or lines of inquiry.
Reflective Research and Writing

• Be aware that underlying questions about the value of information and its potential use may be more significant than the physical packaging of the information.
• See how other writers’ construct arguments and engage with sources.
• Describe how authority is constructed and contextual.

What Does This Look Like in a First-Year Writing Classroom?

All new FYW Instructors can incorporate activities that meet the goals of the InfoLit requirement in their classrooms regularly. Still, all instructors should schedule at least one session in a hands-on classroom for students to experience university level academic research and to introduce students to the research databases available to them, keeping in mind the wide variety of fields of study the students will be moving into. The session should provide a general overview of the main sections of the library website, indicating how to find and/or request materials in many disciplines. Touching on terminology used and services (e.g., Interlibrary Loan) will be very helpful for most students. Remember, we are not creating librarians or English majors but rather opening doors for exploration.

We encourage all instructors to use the Homer Babbidge Library’s Undergraduate Research Classroom (Level 1) for these sessions. The URC includes a projection system and computers for all students. In addition, you should include elements of information literacy throughout the semester, because it is impossible to cover all the important aspects in a single session.

For New FYW Instructors: How Do I Build InfoLit into My Course?

Librarians will provide a training session on Information Literacy for all new and any interested FYW instructors early in the fall semester. This session will cover information literacy in more depth and provide examples of assignments and activities for in-class and out-of-class engagement as well as suggest the best resources for use with first-year students.

The InfoLit team is available to help new instructors throughout the semester individually to analyze their syllabus for the best opportunities to introduce InfoLit concepts and provide in-depth collaboration on any assignment. Librarians can also come to your InfoLit session for support and to provide feedback as you develop your skills in this area. Contact the librarians at infolit@uconn.edu.

Can I Have More Than One Session with My Class in the Library?

Yes! You can sign up for additional sessions at any point after the fourth week of classes (using the same room-reservation process). Keep in mind that if you have a classroom with tech (and students bring a laptop or tablet) much can also be done from there during any class meeting (ask students to bring their laptops or tablets on those days; don’t just expect students to have computers with them).
What Can or Should I Do in the Hands-on Session?

There are many different activities you can do in your hands-on sessions. The hands-on session is particularly useful for showing students where to find and how to do things. You can use the time looking at physical resources and assigning low-level tasks (finding books, checking them out, using the scanners, setting up a RefWorks account, etc.) as well as retrieving computer-based resources and tasks (using databases, finding an article, emailing it, etc.). These preliminary activities lead to the more challenging, substantive work of following leads and finding new avenues and forming new questions, while also paving the way for students to work collaboratively on future projects in your course and beyond.

Does This Mean I Have to Assign a Research Paper?

For many students, “research paper” has come to mean “a report,” whereas our emphasis is on working with sources as part of a critical conversation. At least one graded assignment should require students to find and engage with source(s) beyond the course texts, but it need not be an essay. There are so many ways to incorporate information literacy into the work of the classroom, building on students already considerable strengths with “Googling” for information. While we all use Google regularly, we, as experienced users, can also determine the credibility of what we’ve found, and in academic work might only use Google as a first step toward more research. The same holds true for Wikipedia, which does in fact open a portal to knowledge and information that students are very familiar with. But, like any encyclopedia, Wikipedia offers most facts. We want students to move away from just collecting facts and instead toward developing questions that would frame such information, leading to more meaningful questions. And unlike any other encyclopedia, Wikipedia is crowdsourced and dynamic, so one needs a healthy skepticism about where the knowledge comes from and how credible it is. We live in a time when we have more information immediately available to us than we could ever hope to process in our lifetimes.

We also believe that the certitude of a more manageable information set led to practices like the five-paragraph essay. With the many avenues any seeker can take, we like to think of our essays as explorations into unknown territories, organized by thought and word in writing. The research should be exploratory, too. Students can easily search an author’s name via Google (try Google Scholar), and you can offer student opportunities to do the kind of research they know best. Then, students can go to some of the source material that author has written and read it with the goal of filling in a picture of the author, to see how the author’s own conversations have developed over time and across essays, “drilling down” into the author’s works and how that author incorporates and uses other sources. You might also ask students to Google a phrase or an apparently off-hand comment in a writer’s work, and then begin to drill down into where else one might find the phrase or reference, and how it was used by other writers, and so on.
Which Types of Sources Should I Ask My Students to Locate and Engage with?

While articles and web-based sources such as web sites, blogs, and wikis play a vital role in providing current information and perspectives, books are also often useful for getting the bigger picture or a deeper understanding of an event, concept, or idea.

Help students understand that:

- Research at the university level is not a quest for facts that confirm findings; rather, research should lead to surprises that push the writer toward asking new questions.
- The information resource they need is determined by their research question: the most current information may not yet be in books.
- Identifying and retrieving books go hand-in-hand with subject headings and their respective call numbers.
- eBooks and physical books can be identified within databases, and some include the table of contents.
- Working with physical books may create some delays since libraries can’t always have everything all the time—this offers the opportunity of learning how to use Interlibrary Loan services and thinking about time management.

What If I Don’t Understand How to Do All This?

Don’t be afraid to ask your friendly librarian for help. No one expects you to know your way around UConn’s library system yet, so please ask librarians for help with anything (First-Year Writing–related or not). Librarians are available in person, via email or phone, and through online chat help. The librarians are also happy to provide assistance with your own research.

More Resources

Library Guides for FYW Instructors: On the Class Guides page, click on First-Year Writing to find “First-Year Writing TAs & Adjuncts: This Guide’s for You!” This guide links to useful videos on using databases, etc.—and also has information and videos on booking the Undergraduate Research Classroom.

ACRL Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education

Head, Alison J. Learning the Ropes: How Freshmen Conduct Course Research Once They Enter College, Project Information Literacy Report, 2013.

See also the “Ethical Scholarship” section in this Workbook for more research-based activities.

Metawriting and Self-Reflection

The First-Year Program requires that all instructors carry out some form of reflective writing in their course. The best results often come from engaging students in reflective work that asks them to reconsider, characterize, or qualify what they see in the writing they have done within the contexts already set up throughout the semester. Try to keep the intellectual work of the semester (course
themes, key concepts, etc.) active even in reflective work; academic writing is not merely a set of formal characteristics to be commented on. Reflection can (and should) include reflection on the content of the semester’s work and the ideas and questions that drive that work. Often this is best done in the context of the other course readings. Even when discussing “writing” in a more formal way, consider the following: rather than compare one’s work to “good” academic writing, one might simply consider one’s work as “just” academic writing. How does it work? What characterizes this writer’s approach and the “moves” that she makes?

Our program recommends two ways of handling reflective writing:

- **Low-Stakes Self-Reflection (Ungraded):** This is writing about one’s own writing, the process and the product, in precise and local ways. Such writing is low-stakes, ungraded writing. One common approach is assigning cover letters for drafts/final papers, either turned in with the assignment, or written upon arrival in class on the day an assignment is due. Other examples include process notes (which might explicitly examine the writer’s process for producing the draft), in-class reflections on (or presentations of) one’s project, or even a “final exam.”

- **“Textualizing” Student Writing (Graded):** This is using the students’ own writing as “texts” in a later writing assignment. This allows students to use a framework or critical vocabulary they have been working with throughout the semester to consider the genre, form, function, etc., of academic writing, helping them work through how genre is constructed as much as anything else is. For example, if other assignments have been examining education through the lens of Paulo Freire, they might turn that lens on their own writing to examine Freire’s concepts and questions in action.

**Best Practices**

In a 2013 study of the reflective writing produced in our department, we found that the best graded reflective projects did the following:

- Gave space for a project of genuine “dialogic inquiry,” allowing students to create new knowledge about academic writing, about the course theme, etc.
  - Facilitated a discussion in opposition to that of skills-based mastery
  - Required critical engagement with materials (e.g., ask students how their writing problematizes or complicates institutional standards, not measures up to them)
  - Engaged with opinionated or provocative texts (e.g., Bartholomae, Freire, Sommers, Elbow) as opposed to prescriptive ones (e.g., Hacker, course descriptions)
  - Avoided questions about strengths/weaknesses, telos, skills mastery, etc.
  - Did not students to write a *Künstlerroman* (developmental narrative)
» Did not posit the First-Year Writing course as a requirement to be skipped, or required students to muster a “defense” of their own work

» Asked students to characterize their work rather than simply recount it, deemphasizing process and emphasizing language use

• Provided contexts for the work of the assignment

» Indicated how students can put their own writing in dialogue with other texts (as in “normal” papers, students can default to talking about each text in its own isolated paragraph)

» Maintained an intellectual connection with the course theme

» Indicated audience and discourse community

• Defamiliarized students’ own work by putting them in a discourse they might otherwise be familiar with (e.g., taking the texts out of chronological order, treating texts as objects instead of experiences, shifting into a new genre)

» Modeled generic shifts (e.g., when asking students to write reviews or their own assignment prompts, have students read instances and discuss them as a class)

• Gave a clear route for the process of the assignment

• Required precision (i.e., quotation or paraphrasing of very specific moments in both student writing and assigned texts). No First-Year Writing paper should have no citations

» Didn’t ask students to talk themselves “as writers,” but to talk about their writing

» Didn’t ask students to perform disparate tasks (e.g., talk about both your experience as a writer and what you thought of the course texts)

• Were mindful of the relationship between task and page length.
Part VI: Responding to Student Writing

Feedback and Grades

Teacher Responsibility and the Shared Work of the Seminar

What roles do we play when responding to student work? Are we the editor? The final arbiter of correctness? The experienced writer who shares that experience? Who are we as readers and instructors? While it is often our default as instructors to inhabit the role of writing authority and judge, Thomas Newkirk argues that we must “act as the fallible, sometimes confused, sometimes puzzled readers that we are.” 1 David Fuller also suggests we respond as readers, rather than as “critics of classroom performances.” 2 In this way, we model a reader/responder role that peer reviewers too can inhabit while responding to their classmates’ work. Fuller writes that in doing so “we can dispel the notion that [students] need to decipher our commentary in order to learn how to play the game for us.” 3 What’s more, responding to written work is part of the shared work of the seminar. While we serve as leaders, we want everyone to feel that this is a part of their work in the course.

We are not the only or even the final authority; we are reader-responders.

Our goal should be to always project an attitude of respect and a sense of responsibility toward student work. One of the simplest ways to project respect and responsibility is by returning student papers quickly so that the feedback is relevant to the work they have underway. We recommend that instructors return student drafts within one week, otherwise they won’t be able to use it as they revise. In case of extenuating circumstances, place the same expectations on yourself as you would place on students. Return feedback on drafts promptly so that it is useful during the revision process; return graded essays within a week or so, but never longer than three weeks (and three weeks should be the exception, not the rule). If you find yourself in a bind on returning work on time, let us know as soon as you can so we can work out some alternatives with you.

Along with timeliness, we project our attitude toward student work is in the language we use to comment on that work. It is important to be aware of both the roles we inhabit when we comment and the contextual criteria we bring (or sometimes invent), that influences our attitude toward the work. David Fuller reports on an experiment in which one group of teachers was given a sample of student writing that was typed and the other was given the same piece of writing written in “penmanship resembling that of a young writer.” 4 The groups were asked to write feedback on their samples and then discuss them. Although the actual content of the samples was

3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 88.
Responding to Student Writing

the same, instructors responded differently to the handwritten versus the typed sample. Both groups attempted praise, but praise for the typed response was “more sincere and confidently phrased.”\(^5\) Suggestions for revision from those working with the typed passage were polite, while suggestions for the handwritten passage used “imperative constructions” and a more “evaluative tone.”\(^6\) This experiment shows that instructors were inventing contextual criteria about the writing and its author that influenced their manner of response. Fuller’s study corroborates what Bob Broad found in his dynamic criteria mapping assessment of first-year writing, that responses to student work are influenced by more than textual criteria.\(^7\) Contextual criteria also play a major role. In addition to contextual criteria that originate with course discussions, assignment guidelines and small group and individual conferences, an important piece of contextual criteria for instructor grading is what Broad terms “teacher’s special knowledge” (TSK). TSK arises out of assumptions that instructors make based on the way students write (and speak). While it is impossible to erase TSK entirely from the process of responding to and grading student work, it is important to be aware of and responsible about it. The extremes of TSK are often called favoritism and discrimination, and no teacher wants to be guilty of either. Instructors should be self-aware about the ways their assumptions and imagined contexts may influence their responses.

The following sections provide specific best practices for responding to student work both in written form, in marginal comments and endnotes on papers, and in verbal feedback in individual conferences.

Written and Oral Feedback

Best Practices for Written Feedback: Comments and Endnotes

Most importantly, we provide feedback on drafts that will help guide students toward rethinking their work, and thus toward substantive revisions rather than line edits. Although it may be easier to mark primarily surface-level or textual features (like grammar, punctuation, word choices, and citation), keep in mind that what really matters in academic writing is how the text develops and advances a meaningful project. You read and comment most productively when you note what you see, as a reader, to be the student’s project, and then provide feedback in ways that push the project forward through questions and occasional suggestions. Be mindful, however, of appropriating students’ essays with directives that would lead to any student’s writing the paper you would want them to write. Our job is not to direct students to write our ideal essays. Because students will be making large-scale revisions, it doesn’t make sense to note sentence-level problems. Presumably, those sentences will be entirely reimagined.

- Ground your feedback in what student’s writing is already doing, and read with

\(^5\) Ibid., 89.

\(^6\) Ibid.

an eye toward a student’s developing project. Encouraging the development of this project may mean that they will need to remove or completely rethink large portions of the rough draft; emphasize that a first draft is an “invention draft,” or prototype, rather than a completed essay that will just need to be polished. You can reinforce this by reminding students that they had to write a lot in order to find out where they want to take the project. At the same time, don’t make feedback on an invention draft “evaluative” when its meant to help the student reshape the work, rethink the problems, redraw lines of thought.

- Establish and maintain a clear vocabulary (on the syllabus, assignments, and class discussions) of your expectations and how you will evaluate student work, and use that vocabulary to comment on in ways that will help students revise their drafts. Be aware of the choices you make in this vocabulary, though, because it is easy to slip into some familiar terms that nevertheless assume a privileged audience (see Valerie Balester, “How Writing Rubrics Fail”). Once you have established a vocabulary that represents what you value in student work, refer to this language on each assignment prompt as you provide feedback. You might consider asking students to develop a Wiki (tool available in HuskyCT) for these terms; divide the work among groups and set up accountability for regular contributions.

- Don’t be so directive as to take over the essay you believe the student should have written. If students need more direction, try to ask questions and offer multiple strategies or suggestions for revision so they can take responsibility for making active choices.

**Ethos of the Reader**

Offer feedback as a reader of their work. Point out where you see a line of thought taking shape and articulate what you see. If the student’s work contains seeming contradictions, then point that out not as something to be resolved and unified, but as the substance of a section or an entire essay that would examine the contradictions. Articulate, too, the effects that certain sections of their project have on an audience, and ask questions to push your understanding of their text forward (as well as point them toward places to expand and further develop where a reader might not yet be able to follow their argument). Engaging with specific moments in their text, as a reader, ensures that comments are not interchangeable, but carefully contextualized.

**Reflection**

What do you remember about feedback you received on your writing? What types of commentary did you receive? What did you find most helpful? Least helpful? You may not be surprised to discover that when telling tales of instructor responses to one’s own writing “the horror stories,” as Dana Ferris writes, “outnumber the good ones by at least five to one.”
Oral Feedback: Individual Conferences

When meeting with students one-on-one, have students first articulate their project to you orally (maybe even take some notes for them the first time, and always suggest that they take notes). You can then discuss how this project was articulated in the draft and how they might revise with that project in mind.

Keep in mind that individual conferences with students should have different goals and somewhat different outcomes from writing-group conferences. In neither situation should you provide the “last word” on a student paper, and in an individual conference, you should allow the student to speak as much as possible (especially if you’ve already provided written feedback). Focus on opening up questions for the student, suggesting lines of thought they might develop, or helping them unpack something they’ve glossed over.

When you finish speaking about a student draft, ask that student to rearticulate their understanding of your feedback as well as how they plan to revise the draft. You might want to take notes for yourself as reference.

Individual conferences can be valuable for discussing a final draft and the grade the student earned. Ask the student to take notes on your conversation, and take this opportunity to talk through the essay and point to what worked well, what didn’t, and what could be carried on in the next essay. Such a conversation will help situate an essay grade in the larger context of written and verbal feedback.

An example of feedback on a draft will be provided.

Grading and Evaluation Philosophy

Grading can be a delicate subject, especially in a course such as ours, in part because inexperienced writers often see criticism of their writing as evaluations of their abilities. They also tend to equate labor with quality, meaning that if they put in what they perceive to be a lot of work, they believe the grade should be commensurate to the effort. Still, in FYW, it is possible to think of most grading as occurring at one of two distinct levels: the grade for the essay and the grade for the semester.

An essay grade evaluates the quality of intellectual and written work observable in a student’s essay. Below, we have included brief descriptions of essays that would earn an A, B, C, and F, respectively. While no student’s work will fit these criteria exactly—and your values as an evaluator may differ somewhat from those expressed in the criteria—you can use this set of descriptions as a starting point for assigning grades.

Although grading the essay is an inherently subjective activity, there are some points of convergence on which most instructors agree. In FYW courses we emphasize exploration, complex thinking, rendering and mapping of texts, contribution, and collaboration within a larger academic conversation. Thus, rather than focusing on local issues of
grammar, diction, and syntax, we encourage instructors to privilege global issues such as the student’s development of ideas, engagement with class texts, and adoption of an academic style. Ultimately, most instructors look at papers holistically and measure their quality by their overall success in using writing to advance a conversation.

We have included a similar set of descriptions for semester grades. Once again, the grade descriptions supplied below should be regarded as starting points for determining students’ semester grades, not as fixed, inflexible criteria. Note, though, that the underlying philosophy of semester grades is necessarily somewhat more complex, particularly since as a program we hope to avoid over-quantification. You should not, for instance, feel confined by the quirks—including the masked arbitrariness—of a point-based system; you should base semester grade decisions on the student’s level of achievement. (This is, after all, what a point-based system, at its best, is supposed to measure.)

Determining semester grades in FYW courses need not be all that tortuous if we allow that it is not that hard to get a B in this course (a seemingly neutral grade) but fairly demanding to achieve an A. If B connotes the meeting of obligations, the completion of course objectives, then A can be reserved for recognizable and substantial contributions to the greater course work. That is, the B connotes personal achievements and success, but the A recognizes the far more vital academic goal of impact, influence, mattering. In both daily activity and in the larger assignments, the border between these two levels is fairly discernible. Is a student prepared, attentive, competent? Is a paper legible, thoughtful, active? These are characteristics of B-level work and they are to be commended. But some students introduce new material, raise fresh questions, find new avenues through texts, formulate new concepts, and just generally contribute, both in larger essays but also in daily work, to others’ understanding of the course questions and work. This is A-level work.

C work is common enough, but a C grade connotes a problem of some sort (understanding, execution, etc.) and should be addressed with concrete suggestions for addressing this or these problems. Some students may miss work and fall off from the B standard through neglect or lack of attention, and, especially early in the semester, some students may receive C grades for work that is not yet achieving the intellectual goals of assignments. But C work is passing, which suggests that the student has met the assignment or course requirements, despite the persistence of one or two significant issues.

We discourage you from using the D grade, which can connote a paradoxical mix of both passing and not passing. On papers, non-passing grades (F or “NP”) should be addressed with a clear statement of potential consequences of this grade (e.g., “you risk failing the course”) and, usually, a concrete plan for addressing these consequences. Students who do not pass your course should know of this possibility well in advance and should have been given some opportunities along the way to address this possibility. A revision policy
can help you provide parameters for addressing poor performance on one or two papers.

**Communicating with Students about Grades**

Clarify your expectations—in your syllabus, on assignment sheets, and in verbal discussions with your class. And if a student is struggling or failing, it is only fair to communicate this early and often.

Students do not instinctively understand what grades signify in your course. Therefore, it is essential that instructors pair grades with clarifying comments. Without comments, grades reduce writing assignments to hoops to jump through, rather than opportunities for learning. Good comments reinforce grades by both drawing attention to the strongest parts of the paper and providing suggestions for development. And good comments draw on the language established in the course (including the syllabus, assignments, previous comments, and in-class conversations).

Be sure to submit grades at three points in the semester. At the end of Week 6, you must submit DFUN grades via PeopleSoft. These grades serve as fair warning to students in danger of failing the course and alert their advisors to the issue as well. After grading the second major essay, you should give students their midterm grades and submit a copy to the FYW office. Last but not least, you will need to submit grades via PeopleSoft at the end of the semester, no later than the Registrar’s deadline (you’ll receive a reminder in our FYW Weekly Digests.

If at any point in a semester you begin to think that it is likely that a student will fail the course, be sure to communicate this directly to the student, ideally in a face-to-face conversation, and let us know (via email).

**What Essay Grades Mean in FYW: A Starting Point**

A. Responds energetically and creatively to the readings and the assignment. Engages meaningfully with texts in a sustained manner. Contributes new ideas or formulations that successfully enter into conversation with others’ work. Demonstrates rhetorical awareness including knowledge of and facility with genre conventions. Correctly handles in-text citations and includes a properly formatted works cited page.

B. Responds with intention to the assignment. Engages meaningfully with outside texts in most parts of the paper. Attempts a contribution to the ongoing conversations of other authors. Shows some degree of rhetorical awareness. Makes use of in-text citations and includes a works cited page.

C. Engages with but may also diverge from the assignment. Uses outside texts, but does not make or attempt a contribution to the ongoing conversations of other authors. Exhibits inconsistent levels of rhetorical awareness. Citations may be faulty or missing.

F. Does not make a good faith effort to respond to the assignment and/or falls well short of the minimum page requirement. Misrepresents or leaves out sources entirely.

---

8 DFUN grades consist of the following: “D,” “F,” “U” (unsatisfactory), and “N” (the student has never been present in class).
Shows little to no rhetorical awareness. In-text citations and works cited are incorrectly handled or missing.

**What Semester Grades Mean in FYW: A Starting Point**

**A.** Students will receive an A for the course if they have (1) regularly submitted writing of exceptional quality that has positively contributed to the ongoing conversations of the seminar; (2) actively participated in discussion, peer review, and other aspects of the seminar, including having consistently and punctually attended class; and (3) completed all major essays and all or nearly all of the other assignments for the course in a timely manner.

**B.** Students will receive a B for the course if, in addition to meeting criteria 2–4 above, they have submitted work that seeks to respond in good faith to the assignments as well as to the ongoing conversation of the seminar.

**C.** Students will receive a C for the course if they have fallen short of fully meeting the criteria above but nevertheless have engaged in significant intellectual work during the semester.

**F.** Students will receive a failing grade for the course if they have failed to meet most or all of the above criteria.