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PART 1:
Introducing First-Year Writing

GREETINGS TO YOU, TEACHERS of First-Year Writing @ UConn!

Let’s make a start! It’s exciting to be beginning another new year with you. We’re looking forward to the many conversations we hope we’ll be sharing over your teaching—as it happens out there in all of your individual courses across campus—as well as our community and collaborative conversations carried out as a program together.

NUMBERS, PLEASE?

We enroll more than 3,000 students in FYW courses every year at the Storrs campus alone. More students also take the FYW course at UConn’s regional campuses (Avery Point, Hartford, Stamford, Waterbury) and around 3,400 students complete the course through our ECE English (“Dual Enrollment”) courses in just over 90 Connecticut high schools. It is a robust program you are participating in!

WHAT ARE THE COURSE GOALS, IN A NUTSHELL?

We seek to have UConn students learn to read and write with (alongside, against) challenging texts not simply to absorb information but to take up an engagement with a larger, ongoing conversation as they make broader meanings and connections from their reading and writing.

We aim to offer first-year college writers opportunities to contribute—through oral and written expression—to larger issues and conversations (globally, nationally, regionally, locally, personally) as we are also then encouraging and illustrating ways for them to:

- find their stake and ground in an issue;
- move the conversation productively forward;
- challenge the terms of ongoing conversations;
- make new connections among ideas and exhibits;
- begin new research;
- extend arguments to new ground;
- reveal the uses and limitations of others’ arguments; and, most importantly,
- explore different positions and practice new ways of writing.

We believe in “projects” over papers—rooted in inquiry-based writing—that asks students to develop, revisit, and revise their work continuously over the semester (and not by repeating the same question over and over, but by working through, for example, who they are in their community before examining how their community views outsiders).
HABITS OF MIND WE HOPE TO FOSTER

Through the work of our FYW courses, we ask students to practice eight habits of mind, as advanced by the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing:

- **Curiosity**: the desire to know more 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.

CONFIDENCE IN OUR STUDENTS’ ABILITIES

We’ve seen repeatedly that students can do sophisticated work: we’ve seen students compose theories conjecturing about how assimilation may be performed through singing the “Star-Spangled Banner” at a baseball game; or argue that a Kentucky Fried Chicken commercial in Beijing mimics but also undermines the persistent orientalism of Western media; or trace the “problematics of place” on a contemporary beach near the ruins of docks built to capitalize on the Triangle Trade. Through compositions such as these, our students make sophisticated moves and unpack complex ideas that will not only make them valuable members of the academic community but also invaluable citizens of the world.

THE MULTIMEDIA OF COMPOSITION ... OR WAT’S THIS ALL ABOUT?

Writing has changed over time, and the teaching of writing needs to keep pace with our multiplying means of communicating. We certainly don’t write on clay tablets any longer, but even our newest word processing programs use the image of “paper” as we write on the screen. While writers have found audiences across media, many of our writing practices as instructors haven’t changed since the desktop computer was introduced commercially in 1981.
THE TEACHER AS LEARNER TOO

We also believe it is important that the teacher/instructor of a FYW course at UConn engage the course as a space of their own learning as well. In fact, we encourage you to write with your students.

CURRICULAR CONTEXT

Course Description, English 1010 and 1011

Students fulfill the University of Connecticut’s FYW requirement by passing either English 1010 or English 1011 (with a grade of C or above for ECE students). Both English 1010 and English 1011 are seminars in academic writing. Both provide students with practice and instruction in academic writing through project-based, cross-disciplinary reading and writing. English 1010 and 1011 include an emphasis on revision of formal assignments with information literacy, multimodal, and reflective writing components. Although there is considerable overlap in assigned readings between the two courses, English 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.

More About English 1011, Writing Through Literature

The title of the English 1011 course, “Writing Through Literature,” means much more than writing about literature. English 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 English 1010, the writing projects in English 1011 connect and extend texts toward new ends. In both courses, the readings provide, too, occasions for considering how writers use language and genre.

English 1003 and 1004

In addition to English 1010 and 1011, the FYW Program also offers two courses that precede these seminars. English 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 English 1004 is designed to guide students in developing their writing practices and to introduce
them to meaningful participation in critical conversations. More information about English 1003 and 1004 is available on the Program website.

**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:

- preparation for writing-intensive (“W”) courses;
- a first component of the University’s Gen Ed Information Literacy Competency;
- attention to digital literacy, including multimodal composition and use of the university’s online course management tools.

This coming academic year (2017–2018), the General Education Oversight Committee is beginning the process of addressing a considerable revision to UConn’s overall general education requirements and the processes and products students take up in GenEd work; FYW will be playing a considerable role in this revision and the conversations around it.

**FYW in National Contexts**

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 FYW courses throughout the nation, work 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 FYW courses that are informed by this research.

**COURSE COMPONENTS**

Depending on your method of putting together a course, any of these components can be a useful starting point for envisioning the structure of your FYW course. We provide fuller descriptions and examples of these elements throughout the Resource Book.

Every FYW seminar includes the following components:

- The equivalent of 8,500–9,000 words of revised writing, usually met through the assigning of four to six major assignments.
- Additional short and informal writing both in and out of class.

Not all writing in FYW courses needs to be high stakes (graded). Writing should be a significant part of each week’s work both in and out of class.
• Cycles of feedback and revision (including various forms of conferencing and workshopping) with each project.

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 as well as the various ways that student work circulates beyond the interaction between instructor and student. 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. 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 and circulate at least one cycle of papers digitally. More detailed information can be found elsewhere in this Resource Book (under “Information Literacy and Intertextual Writing”) and on our website.

• Writing Across Technology (WAT)

This initiative and new component of UConn’s FYW’s pedagogy recognizes both functional digital literacy (knowing how to do things with certain technologies) but also, importantly, composing in multiple modes (e.g., with combinations of images, sound, text, etc.) across diverse technologies as ways of writing, which have become increasingly important. FYW courses strive to encourage critical digital literacy skills and rhetorical strategies for composing through a variety of means besides traditional alphabetic text. We want students to be the makers of digital and social texts … not just the consumers.

• 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.

• Revised Writing

Although expressed as a minimum word 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.
SOME ADMINISTRATIVE CONCRETES

This checklist of administrative necessities (oh, those bare necessities of life!) focuses more on concrete details and is meant to complement the more substantive and narrated FYW course goals documented elsewhere in this Resource Book.

- Assign the equivalent of 8,500–9,000 words of revised writing over the course of (usually) four major projects.
- 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 another 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 Information Literacy component in at least one written assignment (often but not always one of the four major projects).
- Include attention to WAT (Writing Across Technology)—both multimodal composition and writing technologies—in the course work. Instructors are strongly encouraged to assign at least one major multimodal project during the semester.
- Include opportunities for reflection on the work done (could be a standalone 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 project. 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/or last week of 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 fourth class; be aware that the university add/drop deadline corresponds with the fifth class on a MW schedule, which falls on the first day of Week Three).

- 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.

We wish you a great teaching/writing experience here at UConn!
PART 2: Building Classroom Communities

Students in First-Year Writing classes will have diverse backgrounds, abilities, and viewpoints. This diversity can create exciting spaces where people can learn from one another, but instructors also need to consider how they foster community in the classroom thoughtfully, compassionately, and ethically so this space can be a safe and inclusive environment for learning.

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 and universally inclusive communities. Think not only about the policies and language you have in your syllabus, but also how you choose to present this content early in your course.

Consider providing confidential note cards on the first day that you’ll collect. Ask things such as name, pronouns, accessibility concerns, preferred methods of learning, language fluency, access to technology to bring to class, or anything that they feel comfortable disclosing that might be a factor in their course participation.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Universal design (UD) is an approach to designing environments to be “as accessible as possible from the outset, to as many people as possible.” That is, UD attempts to consider the diversity of people who may occupy or need to access a given space as it is designed, so the space won’t need to be “retrofitted.” Universal design can manifest in the built environment (for instance, curb ramps that make sidewalks accessible not only to wheelchair users but also bikers and strollers) or in social environments (such as by allowing students to come to “virtual office hours” via online chat). UD seeks to avoid making exceptions when conflicts arise concerning a space’s accessibility/inclusivity by imagining a space that is already accessible to all.

Adopting a UD approach to learning can improve access and inclusion for all students. While it is not possible for anything to be truly universally accessible, a UD approach to learning tries to anticipate access issues students may experience by providing multiple ways for students to access the course and its materials/practices. UD favors flexible negotiation of learning spaces over rigid standards. Taking a UD approach sometimes means rethinking our paradigms or teaching practices. Rather than merely “accommodating” difference as we encounter it and making limited adjustments when students ask, UD invites us to revise how we do things in the first place so that nobody needs to be singled out or forced into uncomfortable situations that are detrimental to learning and fostering inclusive communities. Above all, a UD approach to learning means recognizing that, no

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matter how thoughtful we are, we will always encounter situations we are not prepared for. It is necessary to listen, welcome suggestions, and remain flexible as we strive to continue to make the spaces we inhabit inclusive.

**Disability and Accessibility**

Universal design for learning is an important model for making courses accessible, particularly to students with disabilities. It is very likely that students with disabilities will be among the students you teach in any given class, even if some of these disabilities are not necessarily “visible” to you. Try to be aware of the ways that students may or may not have equal access to the materials, practices, or spaces of your class. This includes considering the ways that certain ideas about writing can be disabling and inaccessible to students. For example, a pedagogy that solely privileges standardized, logical, and correct written English excludes, for example, students who are blind or who aren’t neurotypical (such as students with dyslexia or attention-deficit disorders). And remember that even among those students who do not identify as disabled, there will always be diversity in abilities, personalities, and experiences. Everyone learns differently, and all students benefit when instructors encourage a culture of access in the classroom that allows students to negotiate different ways of engaging with the course.

You need not be an “expert” in access to make your course more accessible. One very basic place to start is by being intentional about the way you bring up disability and access in your syllabus. Try to indicate in the language of the syllabus that you are open to conversations about disability and accessibility, and don’t gloss over this section when you go over the syllabus. It is usually best to avoid making the first discussion of disability a legalistic one—most students will find it easier to have a dialogue about their access needs if you invite that conversation without demanding paperwork up front. Make it clear that you recognize that everyone learns differently, and you would like to help students to learn in the ways they are best able to.

Other ways to make your course more accessible include:

- **Creating multiple channels for students to participate.** Many students find it more than just uncomfortable to verbally participate in an open, full-class discussion. Consider allowing students to participate in small groups, through electronic “backchannel” communication (e.g., Twitter), on asynchronous discussion boards, through writing, and through active listening.

- **Making materials accessible.** In general, manipulable digital copies of materials allow for greater ease of access. (See Tips on Designing for Web Accessibility for pointers on ensuring that your digital content is accessible.) When presenting multimodal materials (film, podcasts, etc.), consider how students with disabilities will access these. Providing transcripts, captions, and image descriptions will make these materials more accessible.

- **Giving options for peer review.** Many students find peer review, especially when it’s new, stressful. Providing clear instructions and giving students time to read and comment on drafts on their own outside of class can help cut down on this stress. Consider allowing students to engage in the work of peer review in differ-
ent ways. For example, you could give students the choice of working in verbal peer review groups or written peer review groups during in-class sessions, or even completely online with software like Google Docs.

- **Being flexible.** Make it clear to students that you welcome conversations about access, and be prepared to change your plans or restructure activities based on students’ needs.

- **Considering the space of your class.** See “Built Pedagogy and Space” on page 66 for more on negotiating access in the physical space of the classroom.

**THE TRANSLINGUAL CLASSROOM**

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 and correctness, with some glances directed toward “knowing the writing conventions of discipline X.” Most compositionists know that instructors of FYW 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 a student experienced in writing “Standard Written English” (SWE). 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 the Americanization of multinational brands (it’s “always” McDonald’s, regardless of the geo-coordinates). “Capital-E” English is held up as a model.

Despite worldwide corporate signage, English has not stabilized as it has globalized. Rather, English is used all over the world in a variety of ways; deviations from SWE are, in fact, the norm. When using English, we are all working in dialects or “englishes.” In FYW, we try to account for the many englishes and to foreground the malleability of language by approaching writing translingually. “Translingualism” is an approach to language difference that challenges English-only monolingualism and assumes students’ languages are not liabilities but resources. As Bruce Horner and Min-Zhan Lu define it, translingualism is “best understood as a disposition of openness and inquiry toward language and language differences.”

Multilingual writers are often marked by the ways their texts might diverge from SWE, while “the rest of the students” are seen as generally competent monolingual users of that same English. The students whose first language is not English are socially and culturally subordinated to the other, presumably stronger users of English in the classroom. Such categories situate writers whose first language is not English as lacking, their use of English infelicitously aberrant, their understanding of conventions weak.

Yet these assumptions misunderstand writing and conventions entirely. First, “all writing always involves rewriting and translation, inevitably engaging the labor of recontextual-

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izing (and renewing) language, language practices, users, conventions, and contexts.” If we also 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 conventional. 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.

In short:

- Language is not stable and is always subject to negotiation.
- We are all writing in translation.
- The use of multiple languages in a classroom is a resource, not a liability.

**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.”

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3 Ibid.

We resist using the language of “novices” and “experts,” which suggests a final destination in language acquisition, 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**

Not all second-language writers are international students. Many are, however. 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 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 multilingual students when they come to you with these concerns outside of class, and be sensitive to the difficulties they face.

- **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).

- **A tendency to be clustered**—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 should carefully consider composition of groups both in class and for writing groups.
  - 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?”

- **Less familiarity with academic terms.** Commonplaces deployed in academic writing can make reading challenging 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.

### 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, instructors have a number of options for addressing presentation in the context of their 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'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.

Consider the following ways you may communicate with students about sentence-level revision:

- 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 a handbook (something like the *Pocket Style Manual*), 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 (*a*, *an*, and *the*). 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 that 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.

**THE ETHICS OF SCHOLARSHIP**

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.5

With this passage in mind, it’s more difficult to draw a hard line between words that 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 emphasizing the centrality of citation and intertextuality to our speaking and writing. 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”).

**Causes for Students’ Misuse of Sources**

We’ve found that some students are challenged by the prospect of really engaging with writers and doing something with those other writers’ texts (beyond the moves just described

above). Sometimes, the 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 writing. Students may not feel confident in their ability to conduct 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.

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?);
- or believing 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 result in minor issues such as the following:

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

Or it may lead to more problematic situations:

- Baffled by an essay by Judith Butler, the student uses a blog written by a scholar to “patchwrite” a section of an essay.\(^6\)
- A student hires 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.
- Feeling overwhelmed, a student “double-dips” an essay, using work done for another class in the FYW course.
- A student self-plagiarizes, using either old work or cribbing passages from a former essay (when not authorized to revise or use previous writing).
- A student purchases an essay from a paper mill (that isn’t even a very good match for the assignment).

\(^6\) 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.
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.

A Note on Second-Language Writing and 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 authority, we're primitivizing cultures by suggesting “they” don’t know any better.

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.

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 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.

Authority and Engagement

Novice writers have usually been asked to report on what others have said, synthesize other (presumably “authoritative”) ideas and words, or 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.

For example, in this excerpt from a student essay, the student quotes from a source, explains the quote, restates it, and asserts 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.

By contrast, this revised excerpt makes use of and demonstrates substantive engagement with the source material:

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 isn’t 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, 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 has to say. Students can be quite efficient in their use of time and energy, and may 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/no,” “pro/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/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. In-class work, then, can include reviewing a student essay 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 is doing and how the student is using the source.

**Addressing Possible Issues of Academic Integrity**

Most issues with academic integrity emerge during the drafting process. Identifying a misstep should be treated as a “teaching moment” for a student. The student should revise the work, which usually means they have to stop seeing sources (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 helps them feel more in control of the other text. When the student can revise the draft, using the work of others ethically and effectively, 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 offense and will never ever do it again.”) In all cases, we do make sure that students read the Student Code, particularly Appendix A, which 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 significantly 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 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, 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 a meeting (give them ample time to do that), then you can send a detailed analysis of the problems you found with the essay, using an email template you’ll find on our website. Because the second email is more along the lines of articulating a clear suspicion and leveling a charge of misconduct, you must include text that informs them of their rights to appeal and to a hearing. Note that all email to students on “official business” (grades, course concerns, academic misconduct) must go through the UConn system, not through your or
the students’ personal email accounts. The UConn email system is the only secure system that conforms to the privacy requirements of FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act).

- 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 Community Standards 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.

- 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.

- Please make sure we receive a copy of your letter (forward a copy to FYW 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.” 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. 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 why, by extension, others’ ideas are valuable, too).

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 bring with them histories and assumptions of all kinds. The following section is meant to provide a few strategies for developing a space where
students can take risks, explore difficult subjects, and compose writing that makes sense of difficult 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.

In the classroom, instructors should avoid viewing vulnerable or marginalized students as representatives of their communities or those communities’ experiences, and remember that various communities often consist of highly diversified experiences, beliefs, and backgrounds. Space should be given, however, for students to bring their individual experiences in.

**Reflective Writing**

Building in moments for reflective writing will allow for decompressing after difficult texts and can take a productive turn toward inquiry (e.g., 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.

**Navigating Conflict in the Classroom**

The seminar is a community that includes students of a variety of backgrounds and beliefs. Because this space involves negotiating difficult topics, discussion in class may become heated or lead to conflict between students, between students and the instructor, or between students and the text. While some conflict is a natural and productive result of the seminar community, instructors are responsible for ensuring that students feel safe and respected. Consider the following approaches to navigating classroom conflict:

- Open the conversation to the rest of the class or return the conversation to a course text. Disagreements can be opportunities to highlight a useful place of difficulty, explore the complexities of audience, or consider the nuances of a site of inquiry.
- Contemporary politics or political issues may find their way into the classroom, whether students or instructors introduce the topic. Some students may vehemently express their opinions while others feel uncomfortable discussing such issues in class. If the discussion becomes clearly partisan or heated, consider moving from the issues at hand to the *rhetoric* that undergirds some of these issues.
- If a student is being openly disrespectful to another student, it is important for the instructor to step in and address the issue directly to ensure the targeted student feels safe and supported in class. In doing so, be sure not to make assumptions about that student’s experiences. Point the student or the class to the “Respect” clause of your syllabus and/or conversations you had early in the semester about the type of community you are trying to build in the classroom.
• In the case that one student makes another student or the instructor feel unsafe, instructors may ask students to leave the classroom. Instructors do not have to tolerate hate speech or other violent language in their classroom. Call Campus Security at 911 in cases of physical violence or if you have any concerns about the safety of you or your students.

**SAFE SPACES FOR INSTRUCTORS AND THEIR TEACHING**

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.

How do we, as instructors, feel at ease in our classrooms? 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:

• **Check out the classroom in advance.** You don’t want to spend the first day worrying about where the class is, whether you’ll need chalk or dry erase markers, or where you’ll sit, stand, or move when class time comes. Take a few minutes to find the classroom and get a feel for the space before you actually have to teach there. You can also check the room on classrooms.uconn.edu.

• **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?” Pick out a few outfits in advance. You only teach twice a week, so try to settle on a “look,” or multiple “looks” that work for you.

• **Think about how you’ll sit or stand—and then try not to worry about it.** Standing in front of group is different than standing in front of an individual.
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 with your students.** It breaks that whole “I’m the teacher and you’re not” business, and it gives the whole class a relaxed feeling.

- See “Built Pedagogy and Space” on page 66 for more on negotiating teaching spaces.

- **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 for class, but know that you may have to adapt.** 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?”

- **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, don’t hesitate to seek out the FYW directors and assistant directors to talk it through. Please come to any of us if you’re facing a troubling situation. You can also turn to other instructors in our community, in your office, the hallways, or in the EGSA lounge—chances are, they’ve been there too and can help you brainstorm and locate helpful resources. And, most importantly of all, know that, no matter what those first weeks bring, you’ll be fine.

**FURTHER RESOURCES**

- [Academic Integrity Reporting Form](#). Office of Community Standards, University of Connecticut.
- [African American Cultural Center Newsletter, The Vision](#)
- [Asian American Cultural Center Library](#)
- [Counseling and Mental Health Services](#). University of Connecticut.
- [MLA Commons Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities Guidelines for Accessible Composing](#)
- [National Center on Universal Design for Learning](#)
- [Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center Newsletter, El Pulso](#)
- [Rainbow Center Resource on Creating LGBTQ+ Inclusive Curriculum and Classroom Spaces](#)
- [Rainbow Center Resource on Gender Diversity in the Classroom](#)
- [UConn Native American Cultural Programs](#)
- [Women’s Center Newsletter, Voices](#)
PART 3:
Writing Across Technology, Information Literacy, and Reflective Writing

Students practice various kinds of writing for various purposes in UConn’s FYW courses. Multimodal writing, information literacy, and reflective writing are part of all FYW seminars and are described in more detail below.

WRITING ACROSS TECHNOLOGY AND MULTIMODAL COMPOSITION

Writing Across Technology (WAT) at UConn is an initiative designed to teach rhetorical composition practices with a diverse range of technologies and communicative modes. Composition that uses more than one mode of communication is called multimodal. The New London Group (1996) describes “five modes through which meaning is made: linguistic, aural, visual, gestural, and spatial. Any combination of modes makes a multimodal text, and all texts—every piece of communication a human composes—use more than one mode. Thus, all writing is multimodal.”

While teaching and evaluating this kind of writing might seem like a big shift from the primarily linguistic, alphabetic texts most of us are used to reading and writing, it is helpful to remember that even the academic essay in the humanities is already multimodal—it makes use of linguistic (words), visual (font, color), and spatial (arrangement, layout) modes, even though we may not always consider these choices as intentional or rhetorical. Of course, some texts privilege certain modes (academic essays tend to privilege the linguistic mode), and sometimes genre conventions tightly constrain the use of other modes. But we live in a world where it is increasingly common to encounter and produce writing that is multimodal and mediated by diverse technologies. Consider, for example, the proliferation of multimedia sharing through social media, blogging, and other online platforms. It is important for teachers of writing to help students strategize and think critically about the synergy that is created when they compose through multiple modes as well as the technologies they use to compose.

Technology, however, need not mean digital necessarily. Alphabetic writing with a pencil and paper is still a technology, one that has diverse applications and uses multiple modes. Writing Across Technology invites students and instructors to consider the rhetorical implications of composing with a variety of other technologies: video, audio recording, oral speeches, photographs, body language, captioning, sculpture, hypertext, interactive

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games, comics, etc. Multimodal composition technologies have changed the ways we write, the way we read, and the way we access texts, and it is important for students to become aware of these changes through the practice of composing.

**WAT in the Classroom**

FYW Instructors should make multimodal Writing Across Technology a part of the course throughout the semester. Besides using texts that are multimodal as readings, instructors should ask students to produce multimodal texts with a variety of technologies. The NCTE Position Statement on Multimodal Literacies points out several principles that highlight the importance of writing across technologies and modes. Some of these are paraphrased below, along with implications for teaching WAT in an FYW course:

- Communicative modes and composing technologies are *rhetorically significant*, not just complementary enhancements to texts.
- Students often already have picked up a variety of skills for composing multimodal texts and are often capable of learning new skills on their own; though it may be useful to teach certain technical proficiencies, FYW courses should primarily focus on the rhetorical dimensions of multimodal compositions.
- Different modes and technologies provide different points of access for students; accessibility, students’ abilities, and audience should be considered when teaching students to compose in diverse ways.
- Multimodal projects, especially when students are using technologies that are new to them, can demand a significant investment of time; it may be helpful to encourage collaboration on such projects and adjust their expectations and time frames.

See also sections in Assignments and Facilitating In-Class Work for more information on how to integrate WAT in the classroom. See Responding to Student Writing for more on how to assess students’ multimodal projects. The FYW website provides ideas, sample assignments, and resources for WAT.

**INFORMATION LITERACY AND INTERTEXTUAL WRITING**

FYW is designed to be students’ first point of contact with the university’s Information Literacy (InfoLit) component, a general education requirement. Generally, instructors introduce InfoLit throughout the entire semester, emphasizing it as process-oriented instead of product-oriented. In 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, intentionally select sources to engage with, and develop metacognitive skills about these processes.

With the goal of creating lifelong learners, InfoLit can be taught and learned in all possible venues using myriad sources. In the past, alphabetic text-based works were assumed to be the primary resources for writing. Today, the information world is more expansive, and scholarship occurs in virtual communities, in collaborative groups, and through
multimodal genres in addition to more traditional literacy activities. Therefore, information literacy in FYW and beyond increasingly encourages collaboration, creativity, and the use of digital tools and multimodal literacies.

**Defining the Aims of Information Literacy**

The University of Connecticut Libraries’ InfoLit program, based on the current draft of the Association of College and 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 threshold 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.
- 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.

**A Note on “the 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 the assignment need not be an essay. There are many ways to incorporate information literacy into the work of the classroom, building on students’ already considerable strengths with “Googling” for information.

Some of the functional information literacy skills students possess (Googling, using Wikipedia, etc.) have drawbacks, and their usefulness depends heavily on context. FYW instructors should strive to foster critical information and digital literacy skills so students become more aware of the affordances and contexts of the resources they draw on during
research. 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.

**Information Literacy in the Classroom**

FYW instructors should incorporate activities that meet the goals of the InfoLit requirement in their classrooms regularly. Instructors should schedule at least one session of hands-on information literacy work so that students experience university-level academic research and are introduced 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.

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.). Touching on terminology used and services (e.g., Interlibrary Loan) will be very helpful for most students. The goal of the information literacy components is not to create librarians or English majors but to help students begin to obtain critical skills for reading and handling sources. 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.

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. Note that at any point after the fourth week of classes, you can sign up for additional sessions in this classroom if you would like to have a space for you and your students to work together in the library.

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 InfoLit 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.

If you are using *The Academic Writer*, consider framing part of your InfoLit work around this text. Chapter 7, for example, details strategies for academic research framed around “habits of mind” and specific research tools.

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. Contact the librarians at infoLit@uconn.edu.
REFLECTIVE WRITING AND METACOGNITION

FYW requires that all instructors incorporate some form of reflective writing in their courses. In particular, reflective writing should ask students to consider what their writing does rhetorically, describing and examining the choices they made and the effects these choices have in their writing. Students should also be invited to reflect on the process of writing. Reflection can (and should) be related to the course inquiry and the ideas and questions that drive that work. Often this is best done in the context of the other course readings.

We recommend 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 an informal reflection journal.

- **“Textualizing” Student Writing (Graded):** This means using the students’ own writing as “texts” in a later writing assignment. In a 2013 study of the reflective writing produced in our program, we found that the best graded reflective projects engaged with the work that students have been doing throughout the rest of the semester. 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. These assignment prompts emphasized the rhetorical nature of the students’ reflective writing (i.e., they provided or helped students develop a sense of appropriate audience, context, genre, and mode) and provided a space for genuine inquiry, in response to other texts, rather than simply showing mastery or development across the course.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Multimodal Writing

- NCTE’s Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Media Literacy Education.
- NCTE Position Statement on Multimodal Literacies
Information Literacy

- ACRL Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education
- FYW Guide for Scheduling the Undergraduate Research Classroom
- Library Guides for FYW Instructors

Reflective Writing

- 2013 Study of Reflective Writing at UConn
- Best Practices for Graded Reflective Writing
Part 4: Shaping the Syllabus

THE ACADEMIC WORK OF THE COURSE

UConn’s First-Year Writing Program aims to cultivate student writing through projects, critical writing processes that foster discussion, challenge thinking, and create new sites for inquiry. Each assignment may be considered a project, and the course itself can be viewed as a semester-long project aimed towards a specific area of inquiry. Inquiry refers to the specific focus of a semester-long course, which includes a rounded exploration of a particular topic or idea using various texts, sources, and methods. For example, one baseline syllabus class is focused on questions concerning the use of the adjective “post-truth” in contemporary discourse. Rather than learning to master a discourse or subject, students in this class engage with critical inquiry—how do audiences negotiate logos (and pathos and ethos) in political discourse?—through writing, reading, reflection, and multimodality. While these inquiries drive the academic work of FYW, these courses do not function as spaces in which students learn particular content. Instead, courses should be designed to engage students in the work of academic inquiry through sustained exploration and engagement. For information on developing a course inquiry and assignment sequence, see “Crafting Assignments” on page 39.

While each FYW class features a distinct site of inquiry, all FYW classes are oriented around a shared set of course outcomes for students:

- Practice composing and writing as acts of inquiry and discovery through written, aural, visual, and video texts.
- Identify yourself as a writer who can contribute to others’ knowledge and understanding.
- Discover, analyze, and engage with others’ ideas in productive ways through readings of complex texts.
- Use others’ work responsibly and in a variety of ways, including as motivation for writing, as context to your own ideas, as a frame or method for analysis, as a way of moving your ideas forward, and as exhibits for analysis and interpretation.
- Extend your ideas to new ground in the context of others’ work.
- Develop methods and strategies for the conceptual, practical, and reflective work of writing.
- Determine and analyze conventions of the discipline; decide how to address the genre expectations of a discipline’s work, including how knowledge is created and how evidence is used to forward work in the discipline; includes the functional components of format, organization, document design, and citation.
- Use the principles of universal design to make your work accessible to the widest possible audience.
Instead of understanding these outcomes as discrete products, instructors are encouraged to foster these outcomes continuously through engagement with reading, writing, reflection, and multimodality.

Alongside these outcomes, instructors should design their course in such a way that develops what the Council of Writing Program Administrators calls “Habits of Mind,” which include curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition. According to the CWPA, these habits of mind are fostered by reading, writing, and reflection experiences that work toward:

- **Rhetorical knowledge**: the ability to analyze and act on understandings of audiences, purposes, and contexts in creating and comprehending texts
- **Critical thinking**: the ability to analyze a situation or text and make thoughtful decisions based on that analysis, through writing, reading, and research
- **Writing processes**: multiple strategies to approach and undertake writing and research
- **Knowledge of conventions**: the formal and informal guidelines that define what is considered to be correct and appropriate, or incorrect and inappropriate, in a piece of writing
- **Ability to compose in multiple environments**: Rhetorical flexibility while composing, regardless of medium or mode—from traditional pen and paper to electronic technologies.

This section of the resource book considers how to facilitate these outcomes and habits of mind with your course arc and inquiry. On our website, we have also provided baseline syllabi for instructors to revise and adopt in their courses.

**WORKING WITH TEXTS**

**Using *The Academic Writer***

Instructors are encouraged to assign the program’s textbook, *The Academic Writer*, by Lisa Ede. This text acts as a guide to discussion, inquiry, and reflection rather than a prescriptive textbook. As such, students and instructors are encouraged to engage critically with this text as they would with other assigned readings. Ideally, *The Academic Writer* would work in tandem with other assigned readings that form your course inquiry, and students and instructors would make connections between this book and other readings.

Instructors may approach *The Academic Writer* with attention to the ways in which it may be used to facilitate FYW’s course outcomes. Some benefits and methods for using this textbook include:

- **Key terms.** *The Academic Writer* introduces students to key terms that foster a shared vocabulary within the classroom and in assignments, provide methodolog-

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ical continuity to all FYW classes, and engage students within a larger disciplinary discourse.

- **Process.** *The Academic Writer* focuses on process rather than product, and this rhetoric allows students and instructors to engage with the writing process through guided reflection and discussion.

- **Writing, reflection, and discussion.** *The Academic Writer* provides students with opportunities to respond to the text through writing. At the end of chapter, Ede includes questions “for thought, discussion, and writing” that students may respond to through reflective writing or in-class discussions. This text also features student writing, providing models for engaging with the genre of academic writing.

- **Multimodality.** *The Academic Writer* theorizes writing as “design” and includes a short section on multimodal composition. Along with the textbook, we integrate multimodal processes into our classrooms.

See “Working with *The Academic Writer*” on page 64 for more information about using this text within the space of a seminar.

### Reading: Choosing and Using Texts

The assigned readings will be the site through which students engage with the course inquiry, but the focus of our courses is always writing, and in particular, student writing. Current and previous instructors have assigned everything from critical essays to pop songs, graphic novels to Middle English poems, blog posts to scholarly chapters, graffiti art to student-produced photographs, James Baldwin to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, as well as student writing. Instructors may find that they enjoy teaching texts with which they are familiar; however, this is not required. Some instructors prefer to teach texts outside of their academic discipline or texts with which they are not familiar. Some instructors also choose to incorporate multimodal texts (such as videos or magazine advertisements) into their courses. Such texts can be valuable contributions to a course, though it is important that students understand how these texts fit into the larger context of writing instruction and multimodal composition. There are few limits to the kinds of texts instructors may select; what matters is how instructors engage with these texts.

One significant feature of UConn’s First-Year Writing Program is the philosophy of writing through texts. Rather than writing about texts, students are encouraged to use course readings as bases for discussion, analysis, exploration, and writing. FYW courses are not “literature courses,” focused primarily on a specific genre or period or type of content. Instead, they should be courses focused on writing, using texts as the place to ground and begin that writing as a way to explore or engage with the main inquiry of the course. Consequently, instructors are encouraged to avoid selecting texts that they simply agree with and want students to agree with as well; rather, texts should present complexities related to the course inquiry that have no easy solution or answer.

Texts should be used to help students understand and practice writing processes. It can be helpful to analyze the way writing functions in course texts (how they achieve their rhetorical purpose or make arguments). This can be particularly important for multimodal texts—especially if students are expected to compose multimodal projects for your
course. You can use assigned texts as examples of projects students might produce or you might consider what makes for effective composition across genres and technologies. This is valuable when students may not have been asked to compose or critically examine such texts in the past.

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. Ideally, assigned texts will challenge students’ preconceived notions about the world, ask more questions than they answer, and elicit complicated responses. 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.

**FURTHER RESOURCES**

- [Database of Possible Anthologies and Readers](#)
- UConn Academic Calendar: [Fall/Spring](#).
### SYLLABUS COMPONENTS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Information</th>
<th>Required?</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1003: English for Multilingual Writers</td>
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<td>1004: Introduction to Academic Writing</td>
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<td>1010: Seminar in Academic Writing</td>
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<td>Reflection</td>
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<td>Participation/Engagement</td>
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| Evaluation/Grading                                      | Yes       |

See the baseline syllabi and assignments [here](#).
### Class Policies to Include in Syllabus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Remind students that the work of a seminar requires participation, which means that attendance is an important part of their participation grade. (Based on university policy, you cannot grade students strictly on attendance, however.)</th>
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| Project Submission | Detail the submission process for essays. Many instructors accept submissions as hard copies or digital copies through Husky CT, email, or Google Classroom.  
At least one assignment must be submitted digitally. |
| Late Projects    | Write a clear late policy for assignments to foster transparency on the subject early in the semester. You may also consider writing an extension policy. |
| Incomplete Work  | Clarify the importance of the FYW requirement of at least four projects, including a total of 7,500 to 9,000 words of revised writing. Instructors should be explicit about what constitutes a complete project.  
Major assignments must include more than one draft to be considered revised.  
Incomplete projects technically do not meet this requirement and should not be accepted. Be prepared to detail what steps you will take should you receive an incomplete assignment. |
| Electronics in Class | Explain how and when technology is appropriate in your classroom. Some instructors do not allow students to use technology in the classroom; others have a “bring your own technology” policy. |
| Sexual Harassment | Include information about resources, including the Office of Diversity and Equity, Health Services, Counseling and Mental Health Services, and the Women’s Center. Inform students that you are a mandatory reporter for issues that may pose a danger to a student’s health or safety. |
| Snow Days and Emergencies | Especially in spring semesters, expect inclement weather. Use this space to detail how you will respond to class cancelations.  
See the university’s official policy on make-up classes. |
| Email            | Some instructors include email policies that include how and when the instructor will respond to student emails.  
If you communicate with your students via email and/or HuskyCT, remind them to check these platforms often for important updates. |
| Food and Drink   | Depending on when your class is scheduled, you may want to include a policy on eating and drinking in the classroom. |
| HuskyCT/Google Classroom | If you class utilizes a digital meeting space, outline your expectations for use of that space. |
INTRODUCTION

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.” For example, many students see “argument” solely as polemic—the argument of moral or logical superiority.

In practice, FYW offers an opportunity for students to explore ways of creating and sharing meaning in ways they may be unfamiliar with. Students may initially believe that writing requires that they find and communicate someone else’s meaning.

FYW has noted that writing produced by scholars tends to do four things:

- Pinpoint a problem, uncover a conundrum, question accepted truths, and pose new questions.
- 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.
- Develop new lines of thought, using writing and reflection on writing.
- Communicate the processes, speculations, and outcomes of the new work.

These are the kinds of moves FYW asks students to do in response to writing assignment prompts. To do that work in FYW 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 ways that will transfer to a variety of disciplines and classes.

This section will first provide suggested guidelines for crafting and sequencing assignments. In addition to general best practices in writing assignments, this section will provide hyperlinks to prewritten assignments that accompany the baseline syllabi linked to in the section on the syllabus.

Included at the end of this section is an “architecture” of assignments. The architecture serves as a potential blueprint that instructors may use to build their own assignments, but it need not function prescriptively. It is a suggested resource for considering broadly how the writing goals of the semester will take shape. 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 commonly seen when teaching these texts in class, and so on. By the end of the first term, instructors should attempt crafting their 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).

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

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 FYW would like to emphasize these three: context, the writing project, and evaluative criteria. Instructors are encouraged to take these three components into consideration while drafting assignments. However, instructors need not use the exact language provided here—how one might imagine an assignment’s contextual background, writing task or objective, and evaluative criteria taking shape may vary.

1. **Context** includes the familiar statements of where the class conversation and writing has led or what questions or problems have been proposed by the readings. Context might introduce key vocabulary or concepts, and it might remind students of materials that could be engaged with or explored. But context can also include suggestions about what is at stake in addressing the larger questions of the course and where an inquiry into them 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. The **writing project** of an assignment prompt should provide specific, feasible goals for the development of an inquiry related to the larger course inquiry of the syllabus. The writing project often has two components—an analytical goal asking students to reflect on or respond to the rhetorical moves of texts and/or sociocultural contexts, as well as a specific indication of how writing or writing strategies might help them in that reflection. 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 an author doesn’t use in discussing racial identity but that you think belongs in this conversation and why”).

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 ex-
ample, if instructors ask students to “analyze a graphic novel in order to make an argument about memory,” they should be sure that they have addressed the question of what “analyzing” and “making an argument” entail, and further, that students are guided to raise interesting new questions or explore new territory about memory through that analysis.

3. **Evaluative criteria.** While FYW discourages rigid, scaled rubrics, instructors should provide a description of what will be looked for in student writing and how the assignment will be defining success. This might be a useful place to address the questions of why the instructor is asking for this work, who the intended audience is, and what components are required. *In a review of assignments used in FYW courses, FYW noticed that it was evaluative criteria that was most likely to be missing from assignment prompts.*

Assignments should also:

- describe the project in approximately one page. Some instructors provide more context or additional details about process, calendar, or options that take the assignment onto additional pages, which is fine. Nevertheless, FYW encourages instructors to do what they can to outline the gist of the project as succinctly and clearly as possible;
- 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;
- avoid overwhelming students with large blocks of texts.

**SEQUENCING ASSIGNMENTS**

An “assignment sequence” describes a series of assignments that build on one another in exploration of a larger course inquiry. When designing the assignment sequence and individual assignments for the course, instructors should 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. 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 writing and reading in new ways?

- How do I expect students to contribute to that inquiry? Is there room for them to draw on their own interests and experiences and connect the course to their wider sociocultural context?

- 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 further in the semester?

- How will each assignment build on the previous one? What is the learning goal of each assignment, and how does it lead logically to the next assignment’s learning goals and ultimately the outcomes for the course? Will students be able to develop and engage with ideas they developed previously, while still working on a new/distinct assignment?

**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.

**MULTIMODAL PROJECTS**

FYW understands both “text” and “writing” to include composition through a broad range of modes and technologies. FYW courses should incorporate attention to diverse composing practice throughout the semester, in addition to more traditional forms of academic writing. Instructors may incorporate chances to practice and discuss the rhetorical affordances of multimodal composing and writing technologies through in-class activities. Instructors are also strongly encouraged to assign at least one major multimodal project during the semester (see examples in the sections below).

Here are some guidelines for developing multimodal assignments:
• New ways of writing should not be seen merely as “enhancements” or add-ons to more conventional texts. Students may require extra guidance on how to navigate new technologies.

• Multimodal projects can be very complex, and it may be necessary to devote a significant amount of in-class time to practicing and discussing principles of composing through alternative modalities (for example, by giving opportunities to learn visual design skills through activities or by rhetorically analyzing audio texts).

• Collaboration may also be important for certain multimodal projects, and instructors will need to consider how to facilitate this.

• Multimodal projects need to have clear instructions and goals; there is often no “tacit script” that students have internalized from other writing experiences for what they need to do.

• Instructors should have realistic expectations for the work multimodal projects require, and this should be communicated to students. (Students do not always have realistic perceptions of how long such projects will take.) A 60-second video could well be more demanding to produce than six pages of written text.

• Depending on how open-ended the assignment is, it may be useful to ask students to write a proposal for their projects, so you can preview and advise them on their projects as they develop. Sometimes it may be easier to respond to a detailed proposal as a draft, or to workshop proposals during peer review, since diverse multimodal projects tend to develop at different rates.

• Multimodal assignments should always consider how the use of diverse modes or technologies contributes to students’ rhetorical awareness and abilities; they should go beyond “functional” use of technologies as tools.

**REFLECTIVE PROJECTS**

FYW courses at UConn incorporate a reflective component into the general work of the course. Reflective writing allows students to practice metacognition and to consider the process and rhetorical moves of their own writing. In some cases, instructors choose to incorporate reflective writing in the day-to-day work of the class as in-class writing or activities. In other cases, instructors incorporate reflective writing as an assignment toward the end of the course. Students may tend to view reflective assignments as an opportunity to demonstrate learned knowledge rather than reflect on their writing more holistically. To have students reflect on their writing in more critical ways, instructors sometimes assign portfolios with an introduction or other reflective assignments that ask students to analyze their writing through/with the course inquiry in order to develop that inquiry further.
BASELINE ASSIGNMENTS

In conjunction with the provided baseline syllabi, FYW offers baseline assignments for instructor use and adaptation. Instructors should feel free to change or alter these assignments, or design their own.

ASSIGNMENT ARCHITECTURE

The sample assignment architecture that follows attempts to represent the values and goals of the course while also furthering our program's value of openness to possibility. Where “assignment sequence” refers to a collection of ordered assignments crafted by an instructor, the assignment architecture is the framework that supports and surrounds individual assignment prompts, including the desired outcomes, the theoretical underpinnings, and the context surrounding the assignment. Instructors can use assignment architectures to build a course section’s assignment sequence. The structures aim to clarify the type of written work to be done, to pose some questions one might consider during the process of planning a course arc, and to prepare for any given 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. Further, instructors are encouraged to imagine ways various assignments may be adapted into multimodal projects.

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.). Included first is an outline of the architecture, distilled only to the written projects to be assigned. The feeder assignments have been grouped with the major writing projects they develop into in bold borders. Multimodal examples have been provided — but these just serve as ideas; any assignment, including “feeder” assignments, could potentially ask students to work with multimodal elements and composing technologies. After the outline, you will find a detailed architecture of each grouping of feeder and major assignments, including not only the deliverable, written projects, but also indications of learning and/or writing goals for students and brainstorming questions. Instructors may also consult the assignment guidelines found above for what assignments might do or point toward.
OVERVIEW—MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS IN BOLD

1a. Critical reaction—introducing conversation (e.g., reacting to a relevant news article)—600 words (2 pages)

1. **Coming to terms assignment with critical text** [+ secondary text in 1a.]—900–1,200 words (3–4 pages)

2a. Application of second critical text to an artifact/site—900 words (3 pages)

2. **Frame and case/Extend and trouble**—1,500–2,100 words (5–7 pages)

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)

3b. Writing a research proposal about the inquiry they would like to pursue (potential revised assignment)

3c. Researching the issue in the library and creating an archive of quotes from library sources and the third critical text

3d. Literature review (conversation)

3. **Furthering the conversation and developing an inquiry** ("researched" assignment)—2,100–2,700 words (7–9 pages) + 900 words (3 pages) revised from some combination of 3a–3d

4a. Habits of Mind terms

4b. Modeling an introduction

4. **Reflective assignment** (potentially a portfolio)—1,500–1,800 words (5–6 pages)

### Assignment 1 Architecture

**Task Overview**

The focus for this assignment is learning to read and work on difficult texts in new ways and for new ends. Instructors might direct their students’ attention to brief texts such as newspaper articles, videos, songs, and so on, or ask students to find their own text to respond to.

**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 already generated writing toward “making something” of an author’s work.

**Where Does This Fit in the Project Sequence?**

This offers local, student-driven inquiries as points of entry to the work of the course and develops 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 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 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.

Example “Deliverables” (Things to Be Reviewed and Evaluated)

1a. Critical reaction (600 words/2 pages)—Students turn in a 600-word 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.

1. Concept in 60 (60-second video and 250-plus words process writing)—Students produce a 60-second video that responds to a text and situates it within their own lived experience. For example, students could compose a literacy narrative video after reading another literacy narrative text. Often, it is valuable for students to write or outline their video through a feeder assignment. Students should produce at least a page of process writing that documents the rhetorical choices they made in composing the video and what they learned from the process.

or

1. Coming to Terms (900–1,200 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 further 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.
To which FYW adds:

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

**Assignment 2 Architecture**

**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 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 continue to develop the critical reading, thinking, and writing methods they began working on 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.
Example “Deliverables” (Things to Be Reviewed and Evaluated)

2a. Straightforward Application of 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, event, 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.

2. Frame and Case (1,500–2,100 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 account for those features that the critical text cannot account for.

or

2. Image + Text (image + text project and 300–600 words of process writing)—Students remix their application of a frame to a case by adding another resource: images. Students use juxtaposition (see Ede, The Academic Writer) to create a parallel narrative with visual resonances and connections to the written text. Examples might include a brief comic, an essay overlaying a map or collage of images, a collection of memes or posters, or annotated/captioned photographs. Images should do more than serve as simple illustrations of the text—they should ideally say something new that is not communicated through the linguistic mode and that problematizes, reframes, or adds to the frame and case.

Assignment 3 Architecture

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.

Example “Deliverables” (Things to Be Reviewed and Evaluated)

There are several feeder assignments that may all be possibilities for scaffolding 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 FYW page minimum, these shorter assignments should amount to about 900 words or 3 pages of revised prose.

3a. 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?

3b. 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.

3c. 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.

3d. 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 (e.g., 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.

3. Developing a Site (2,100–2,700 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 contribute to the existing conversations about the larger course inquiry while also developing a new site related to that inquiry.

or

3. Audio Documentary (Podcast, transcript, and 500–750 words of process writing)—Students choose a space (which could be literal or more metaphorical) and use theoretical texts from the course to develop a research inquiry about that space. They then interview people in their space and record audio assets from this space, which they will use, edit, and add to in order to craft a brief (3–5 minutes) podcast that responds to some aspect of the course’s inquiry. Students will then work to transcribe the podcast in written form and produce 2–3 pages of process writing to describe and reflect on the interviewing, synthesis, revision, and remixing that went into creating the podcast.

Assignment 4 Architecture

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 engage in reflection of their own writing in relation to the course content, exploring specific instances in their own writing that raise new questions about and gesture to new sites for what the course has been exploring (drafts, informal writing, formal as-
signments, etc.). Additionally, they consider how the 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 in-
quiries, 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 reimagine 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.

**“Deliverables” (Things to Be Reviewed and Evaluated)**

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

4a. **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 
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.

4b. **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.

4. **Reflective Assignment** (1,500–1,800 words/5–6 pages)—Students examine their own 
writing through the work and inquiry of the course in order to see how the course inqui-
ry 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.

  or

4. **Portfolio Introduction** (1,500 words/5–6 pages)—Students gather their own 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.
or

4. Digital Portfolio (Website hosting body of work from the semester, including 1,000-word introduction to this work)—Students select and organize the work they created throughout the semester and present it as a digital portfolio through a platform such as WordPress, Wix, Weebly, or Google Sites. Similar to the above assignment, students will write an introduction that reflects on this work, but there will also be an emphasis on the rhetorical design and presentation of the work, including attention to site navigation, images, and other multimedia.

or

4. Editorial Board Portfolio (1,500–1,800 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. Then, either students write a collaborative introduction (instructors should guide this process to avoid some common pitfalls of “stitched together” collaborative writing) or each student writes their own 5- to 6-page introduction about the texts that makes visible a question that this particular collection of texts is raising.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Past Sample Assignments and Assignment Sequences
- Using Film in Class and in Assignments
**PART 6: Facilitating In-Class Work**

**As the instructor of a First-Year Writing seminar, your role is to facilitate writing and discussion activities that foster habits of mind and develop course goals.** Because student writing is integral to the work of the class, students should be doing some form of writing in every class period. Writing and reading are social, conversational, and collaborative acts, so students should be interacting with their peers and their peers’ writing during class sessions. In addition, because students develop digital and information literacy in FYW courses, instructors should provide students with opportunities to practice critical writing, reading, and research across technologies in class.

**DEVELOPING LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Instructors should determine what their learning outcomes will be for each class session. These learning outcomes should work toward meeting the overarching course goals, in a broad sense, and should also help students develop their writing critically as they move through each assignment.

To determine learning outcomes for a given class session, instructors might consider the following:

- What is the course inquiry and how does the inquiry map onto the course outcomes? How will students expand their sites of inquiry and their writing by the end of the semester?
- How do the readings provide students locations to develop sites of inquiry through writing? How do they address broad reading, writing, and critical goals (such as those seen in the section on “Assignment Architecture” on page 44)?
- What will students need to consider before addressing the next assignment? Will they need to, for instance, be able to assess the usefulness of a text? Will they need to think about the rhetoric of visual design? Will they need to consider larger social contexts?
- What issues or difficulties have you noticed in students’ writing? Rather than “correcting” it, what might such difficulties productively demonstrate about the work of writing? For instance, if students write papers that are lists of presented facts to prove a pro/con point, how might an instructor explore the uses/limits of such a writing strategy in relation to the course inquiry?
- What technologies does the activity require? What technologies will students have access to? (See “Considering Technology in the Classroom” on page 54.)
- Is this activity accessible to students with differing abilities, personalities, and backgrounds? Are there multiple ways for students to participate in this activity?

Learning outcomes for a given class session should allow students to develop their own critical approach to writing. Readings should help students develop ways into existing
conversations, but they should be approached in a way that allows students to think about their own writing practices and interests. In other words, learning outcomes should be ways to encourage students to pursue inquiries through writing.

Later in this section, there are a number of examples of in-class work instructors might choose to incorporate into their courses. However, these are not intended to be chosen randomly just to fill time, without considering how they fit into the overall inquiry and arc of the course. As suggested above, class activities, like assignment sequences, should be scaffolded—they should develop or lead toward a learning outcome, which in turn should be sequenced to fit within the larger learning outcomes for the course. In other words, instructors should determine what students should leave the class knowing how to do and then choose activities that will build sequentially toward that outcome.

**UTILIZING CLASS TIME EFFECTIVELY**

FYW courses are four-credit courses, and consequently FYW class sessions last longer than others. They typically run for 1 hour and 45 minutes, twice per week. To most effectively use this time, instructors have a variety of strategies at their disposal.

- Some instructors break their lesson plans into minute-by-minute increments so they know precisely how much time they have for each portion of class. Instructors are encouraged, however, to acknowledge and prepare for the fact that some activities may take more or less time than anticipated. It may be better to deviate from the lesson plan than to end a useful discussion prematurely.
- Some instructors come prepared with a sequence of planned in-class work and a more general grasp of how long each of those activities will take.
- Some instructors come to class with several class activities prepared and the assumption that they will not be able to complete all of them in a given class. During the class session, they decide which activities they will do based on the time remaining and students’ needs.
- Some instructors prepare a general plan for what goals they have for the session. They draw from a repertoire of in-class activities to meet students’ emerging needs and immediate concerns.

**CONSIDERING TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM**

Using technology in your classroom activities can help serve several purposes. It can help students learn the rhetorical affordances of technology, provide multiple points of access for students, and allow for new kinds of classroom dynamics and spaces. Diverse technologies are increasingly becoming more important in students’ writing lives, and it can be useful to address what this means by making technology a part of classroom activities.

There are, however, several practical considerations to take into account when using technology in the classroom. Below are some guidelines for using technology in class and workarounds for when some technologies aren’t available.
• If your classroom does not have a projector, the FYW office has two projectors and sets of speakers available for checkout. However, you should consider points of access no matter what technology you’re using (see point below).

• If your classroom has limited audio or projection technologies, it will be important to bring in hard copies of PowerPoints, pictures, articles or notes you were going to project in class OR bring in copies of transcripts for videos or any audio recordings that will be used in class (you may want to do this regardless of your classroom’s capabilities). Be sure that videos have captioning. It’s also a great idea to host these materials online via your course management system.

• Are there computers in the classroom? If not, what will students bring to class? It is a good idea to anonymously (without singling students out) survey what bring-your-own technologies your students have access to so as to determine whether you will be able to rely on students using this technology in class. Even if all students have access to a portable device, plan for how students will participate when they forget their technology or when that technology fails to work.

• If students don’t have access to personal technology and the room isn’t furnished with computers, consider structuring any activities that rely on tech to be group activities. Another approach might be to make the technology aspects of an activity optional so that there are ways to participate using analog methods.

• Always have a Plan B in case technology doesn’t work. (This you can pretty much depend on: Sometimes it won’t!)

EXAMPLES OF IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Below is a list of in-class activities that instructors use in classes. As stated earlier, these activities are not meant to be picked to “fill time.” They should be chosen to facilitate writing and group work and to meet that day’s specific learning outcomes. These are not the only activities you could or should do in class, but they should help instructors conceptualize the work of a single class period.

When students do individual or group work in class, be sure to have time afterward for the whole class to come together to reflect on and/or discuss the work that has been done. To avoid having students simply list what they discussed or found, it may be useful to structure that time as informal presentations, or to have groups upload their findings/work to a common HuskyCT or Google Drive area. Some instructors also have groups write what they’ve done on the board or large-sized paper if a classroom is not tech-enabled.

The following examples are organized by generalized types of activities.

**Working with Difficult Texts**

**Unpacking Difficult Passages**

Prepare a handout with difficult passages from the text, or have students identify difficult passages in the reading. Assign students to different groups based on a particular passage.
In groups, have students trace how a term or concept is used in a particular passage and in the text as a whole. They should pull specific quotes that help them back up their understanding. Groups should use the textual evidence as a means to begin “translating” the passages. Afterward, they should go back to the text and reflect on why the author(s) used a specific term or concept in the text.

**Visually Mapping a Text**

A variation of this activity is to have students map the key terms visually. Together in groups, students should map and link key terms used by the author. Maps might not (and perhaps should not) be linear—students are encouraged to see the many ways the terms seem to interact in the text. Afterward, groups can compare maps to add lines or connections that they may not have noticed previously.

**Exploring the Uses of a Text**

**Current, Past, or Future Contexts**

Depending on your course inquiry and assignments, you may want students to consider how class readings can apply to and work in relation to different contexts, especially in the beginning stages of a larger assignment. Your specific learning goals will help determine which context will make most sense for your class to explore.

**Current Context**: Choose a current issue or have students work together to find a current issue that relates to your course inquiry and the text. Choose yourself or have students select key terms or concepts from the reading to help them examine or analyze the issue. Students will need to conduct research on the issue in groups. Then, on their own, in writing, students should draw connections between the text and issue.

**Past Context**: Ask students to bring a laptop or tablet to class, or divide them into groups (at least one student in each group should have a laptop). Using their devices, students should explore the sociohistorical context of the reading in order to consider how it might have affected the text’s rhetoric (or vice versa).

**Future Contexts**: Have students consider how the text might be useful for future conflicts, issues, or developments in society or academia. The future context may be best paired with either the current or past contexts to demonstrate the development of ideas or movements over time. Students should explore self- or group-generated questions through individual writing, then discuss or otherwise share their ideas.

**What’s Missing?**

In small groups, students brainstorm for situations or concepts that the reading doesn’t seem to account for and why or how that situation or concept might be important to include or discuss in the conversation. The class makes a list of these various missing pieces, and then students individually reflect on how these choices reflect the priorities and rhetorical strategies of the author. What do their choices reveal about their aims?
What Is This Text? Who Is This Author?

Any assigned text can be accompanied with a small research component designed to help students place the text in a larger context. If you assign a text by Judith Butler, for example, students could be assigned roles to establish this context. One set of students could research Butler the person; another set could say more about what her influential writings are (and what they seek to do); a third set of students could trace the reception and influence of these texts. Based on this research, have students reflect in writing on the significance of these contexts and what these findings demonstrate about academic writing and this specific conversation. Next, use the contexts explored as a jumping-off point for students to begin exploring their next assignment.

Information Literacy and Handling Sources

Citation Trail

One way to begin the conversation about Information Literacy (InfoLit) and how to use sources effectively is to ask students to explore how other writers use sources. Working with the texts used in class, invite students to choose, in groups, one of the works that the author has cited. Have students locate that source, read it (in its entirety if it’s short or just the relevant section if it’s long).

After reading the source, ask students to freewrite on the source’s main idea, what kind of source it is, and why the author used it. Then, in groups, have students discuss how the author of the class text used the source and how the source is contributing to the class text’s author’s main claims.

After facilitating a brief class discussion of the groups’ findings, have students reflect, individually in writing, on the different ways a writer can use sources and how such choices can inform their own writing.

InfoLit Through Terms, Search Engines, and Databases

As a class, have students brainstorm a research question that engages with the next essay prompt. Afterward, have students brainstorm the kind of sources that may be useful for exploring said question, the fields that may already discussing or provide insight on the topic (like specific news sources or subject specific databases). Then, for each kind of source or each discipline, have students brainstorm key terms and discuss why certain terms are more useful than others in certain searches. After the list has been made, have students determine where to look for this information. From this point, you can decide whether to proceed with the search as a class or to have students to break into groups to explore different terms, search engines, and databases.

You may want to engage your students in a conversation about research questions before this activity or in a prior class period. Students will likely not be sure how to craft meaningful research questions. Be sure that you build in moments for students to reflect in writing on what the activity means for their own research processes.
Documenting the Research Process

As a take-home assignment, have students take screenshots of their research process for a larger project (including pictures of the key terms they use, the search results, the articles they select, etc.) or record their research process. Students can either save the images on their computer or print them (whichever is more convenient). If they took a video, ask them to bring in their computer with the video. In class, have students map out the process—from where they began to where they ended. It may be best to do this on large sheets of paper, index cards, or construction paper. As they map out the process, have students make connections through a freewrite between the choices they made (e.g., how one term led to a new term, how they followed several hyperlinks and where that led them). Once they have finished their map/web and their freewrite, have students pair up and talk through their process and connections. In pairs, students should help each other identify gaps in their research and brainstorm new terms, websites, databases, etc., to explore. At the end, have students write out a research plan for the next portion of their assignment.

Annotated Bibliography

Have students bring an annotated bibliography and the original sources to class. It's important to stress that this research often includes a lot of excess—simply choosing the first hit is often not the right match for a research project. Have students write about the choices they made in selecting their sources and reflect on how these sources contribute to their developing projects.

An alternative or add-on to this activity is to make students’ in-class work multimodal. With their annotated bibliographies, have students use either Prezi or construction paper and string to create a web that represents connections between sources. Students can address these questions: How do the sources talk to each other? How do they agree or disagree or qualify each other’s discussions? After students create their webs, have them reflect on the gaps that seem to exist in their web or identify the outlying sources that no longer work in their developing projects.

Depending on your course, you may want to make the annotated bibliography a collaborative project, where students contribute the sources they have found to a class archive that other students are encouraged to draw on in their writing projects. Google Docs (or a similar technology) can enable your class to create a “living” bibliography that each student can alter, add to, and improve throughout the semester.

Using Sources

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 use of other voices—or trade papers 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 they wrote about in the previous assignment?

This activity could work well alongside a discussion of the difference between summary and analysis.

**Outside View**

Have students pass their essays around in groups. Each student should choose at least one quotation in their peer's paper and answer the following questions: Do you know where the quote is from? Does the writer describe how or why the quote is useful for considering something interesting or troubling about their project? Is the quote integrated into the discussion of the paragraph? Afterward, students can return their papers to the original writer, and students can spend five to ten minutes revising their use of that quote.

**Exploring Essay Structure**

**Reverse Outline**

Have students create a reverse outline of a reading, thinking about questions like: Where is the agenda, the method, and the evidence? Is the argument linear? Does the reading present a compelling argument or an interesting idea? Students can do this work individually, in groups, or together as a class. They can also identify what work each paragraph of a challenging section is doing in the author's argument (beyond what each paragraph is saying). For instance, is a paragraph introducing a key term or idea? Illustrating a key point of evidence?

Be sure to give students time to reflect on what they have discovered through the reverse outline and how it can apply to their own writing. You may want to give them an in-class writing activity that asks them to take their own draft and model it after the essay and reflect on how the new structure influences the content and purpose of their draft.

**Mapping the Text**

Using the whiteboard, blank paper, or colored construction paper, have students, in groups, create a visual map of the text that they read for class. Encourage them to make design choices that reflect the author's purpose in the text. Students can then discuss the choices the writer made in response to a specific audience or conversation.

**Introduction Workshop**

Project (or copy and distribute) a student's introduction to the class and have students write what in the introduction is helpful for them as readers and what they might still need information on (for instance, if the required texts for the assignment haven't been introduced). Have them restate the author's project in their own words. Afterward, students
should gather in groups to discuss various strategies for addressing potential issues that may have arisen, and then the whole class can discuss approaches to revision.

Also, before looking at student writing, you might have students consider introductions from the assigned readings, especially if you’re asking students to write in a similar genre. Discussing the readings can then serve as a jumping-off point for looking at student work.

**Revising**

**Collaborative Revision**

Revision can be one of the toughest aspects of writing for students to fully grasp and take advantage of. Extensively working with revising in class to demonstrate what effective revision can look like helps students to understand that revision is more than simply correcting grammar and word choice. At any stage in the drafting process, working on revision with the entire class can help students conceptualize how revising can be done effectively. Depending on your class and its needs, you may either want to pre-select students whose essays best exemplify an issue the majority of the class is grappling with or have students volunteer their work themselves. If you pre-select students, you're most likely going to gear your discussion toward a particular issue that the sample drafts exemplify. Self-volunteered drafts may engage several different issues. As students look at the samples, have them think about how the project might be supported with texts from the class, how it contributes new knowledge, and how the writer might move forward in the essay. It may be helpful to have the student identify a specific location where they’re having trouble. As you go about your discussion, you will be modeling ways of responding to texts in peer review. Be sure to make that explicit to the students.

**Topic-Specific Workshop**

After reading a round of student drafts, you may find that there are common challenges that students are working through. These common issues can be the basis of in-class workshops to help students navigate these particular challenges. Below are two examples, but there are many other writing challenges to work with in class.

**Transitions:** Some students may be listing their major points in the body of the paper rather than developing a project; consequently, you might call on a student volunteer, or project two anonymous paragraphs from a student paper, to examine how one paragraph moves to the next. Ask students how the two paragraphs might be related and, in groups, have them rewrite the ends and beginnings of the two paragraphs so as to make explicit how the ideas in the paragraphs build on and relate to one another. Have each group present their revisions and discuss their strategies.

**In-Text Citations/Using Sources:** Using sources effectively in a text is a challenge for many students. Students must not only cite information correctly, but also integrate the quote into their own language and consider how the quote is working with their argument. You may first want to examine an assigned text and, as a whole class or in smaller groups, analyze the author’s use of quotations and other outside sources. Try to push students to
decipher the different ways that sources can be used to support a point (using a text like Joseph Harris’s or FYW’s webpage Why Quote? can give students a vocabulary or starting point for discussion). From here, get a volunteer from class (or choose a student ahead of time) and project or distribute a paragraph from their essay. As a class, discuss how the writer could revise their quotations and citations. Then, have students turn to their own texts and work on the way that they use sources in their projects.

**Paired Read-Alouds**

Pair students and have them read each other’s paper 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? Are there places where the evidence is unclear? Where might more textual support be needed? At a more polished stage, read-alouds can highlight fluency, sentence structure, and grammatical errors.

**Reverse Outline**

Useful for working through difficult readings, reverse outlines are also beneficial to students during drafting. Have students reverse outline their own papers, identifying the individual aims and rhetorical moves of each paragraph, and then have them reflect on what they have noticed. Or have students swap papers and reverse outline their peers’ papers, and then return the papers to their original authors. The students could also reflect on what they notice from their peers’ rendering of their projects. In any case, at the end of the activity, give students time to write about and reflect on what the reverse outline has revealed to them about their work and how they’ll use it to move forward with their draft.

For a more multimodal approach, students can create their reverse outlines using Prezi, construction paper, or the like.

**Creating Revision Plans from Feedback**

Students don’t always know what to do with comments after they receive your feedback or feedback from peers, so it might be useful to build in time for them to prioritize and plan. Have students look at a sample paper with comments first; then engage them in a discussion of how to prioritize and use feedback. Afterward, give them the opportunity to reflect on their own feedback and write a revision plan.

If you’re doing a portfolio in your course or wish for students to document their writing process, you may want to collect and respond to their revision plans or stress that they keep track of these documents.
Reflection

Writing About Their Own Writing

At any stage in the writing process, ask your students to reflect on the writing that they have done so far, using the following prompts for in-class, informal, ungraded writing:
What personal investment do you have in this issue? Why does your argument matter?
What counter-interpretations might work against your emerging claims? 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? If you choose to, you can discuss these writings as a class or in small groups.

Representing the Writing Process

Have students use markers, pencils, Play-Doh, pipe cleaners—check out the art cart in the FYW office—to draw, make, or sculpt a representation of a certain part of the writing process (perhaps right after students have completed an assignment). Afterward, give them a few minutes to write about their representation. In small groups, students can share their various processes. Doing so allows students to unpack what approaches and strategies worked—it also gives them a chance to see how others approached a similar task.

Creative Synthesis

Near the end of the semester, have students read over their major essays and extract one or two “keywords” or important themes from each. (For instance, if a student wrote an essay about capitalist values in *Maus*, one keyword from that essay might be “capitalism,” or “homo economicus.”) In a new document, have students write their lists of keywords at the top of the page. They should then write a brief story in class that in some way touches on each of these themes.

It’s not necessary to use the word itself—so, if one keyword is “masculinity,” the student doesn’t actually have to say “masculinity” somewhere in the story, so long as the idea is present. For example, if a student’s keywords were “capitalism,” “dystopia,” and “masculinity,” the student might write a story about a young man in a dystopian society who, in order to prove his masculinity and support his paralyzed father, has to engage in gladiatorial combat. Maybe this gladiatorial combat is televised, with pauses in the fighting for advertisements for men’s deodorant, etc.

“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 from today’s class? What is still confusing for you? This will help students practice metacognition by allowing them to consider what in their thinking has changed and what remains a challenge for them moving forward.
Writing Across Technology

This section provides several examples of how to use technology and different modes of writing for in-class activities. These activities can help students work through their traditional essays and multimodal projects and consider how meaning is influenced by different modes of communication. This last point, in particular, will be important for you to bring up with your students as you explain why they are about to engage in a particular activity.

When designing a multimodal activity, remember to consider what kinds of technology will be required and what your students have access to. If all of your students have access to laptops and smartphones, be sure to inform them ahead of time that they will need their technology for class.

Remember that technology doesn’t necessarily mean computers or phones. There are many other materials that you can bring to class for your activities. You can find some materials (construction paper, scissors, glue, markers, index cards, and so forth) in the FYW office. Please be sure to return all materials after your class has ended so that other instructors can use the supplies as well.

Key Terms and Infographics

Students can mine a text for key terms and concepts in groups. After discussing the terms and concepts in a larger group, the small groups can then use Piktochart or Canva to create an infographic to help explain how a specific term is being used in a text. This exercise can be framed with the following question: Assuming that your audience is future students in this class, how can you visually explain how the author is using [a particular key term]?

Critical and Creative Captioning

Practice using captioning software for videos, such as with YouTube or Amara. Students can consider how captioning functions rhetorically and depends on concepts of audience, context, and purpose. This activity can be used as students work on their own videos (such as a Concept in 60 video), or students can work in groups to caption sections of a short video in class. (Movie trailers often work pretty well here.)

Cover Design

Ask students to use the design concepts from The Academic Writer to analyze the design of a visual text—a book cover works well. After evaluating the effectiveness of the design choices in the text, let students work in groups to propose alternative covers. This can be done on computers (using software like Word, PowerPoint, GIMP, or Illustrator) or with paper and markers. Students can then present their designs (explaining why these designs are effective) and vote on the elements they’d like to include in a reprint of the text.
**Electronic Discussion**

If all students have access to bring-your-own personal technology (laptops, smartphones, or other mobile devices with internet access), discussions can become hybrid spaces with the use of platforms like Twitter, Padlet, and Socrative. Allowing students to participate in discussions through technology can help second-language writers, students who are shy, and students with disabilities—and can, in fact, help all students contribute in more thoughtful ways, because writing an answer allows for more time to think. The platform being used can be projected, giving everyone easy access to responses. The instructor can choose to read these responses aloud to focus and direct the discussion or ask students to take a couple of moments to quietly compose responses to spark new avenues of inquiry.

**Screencasting the Writing Process**

Have students use a program like Kaltura or PowerPoint to screencast their writing as they work through a draft at home. Once they have turned in the essay, have students bring the video to class to watch individually. As they watch their videos, have them describe what’s happening and take notes on what they’re noticing about how they write. Afterward, have them discuss in groups what they noticed. After the discussion, have students review their notes and reflect on what went well and what could be worked on as they proceed in their next assignment.

**Recorded Elevator Pitches**

Sometimes students work through ideas best when they talk about them aloud. When they’re early in the writing or research process, have them pitch their developing ideas to each other in a minute or less and use their smartphones to record their pitch. At the end of the pitch, peers should provide feedback. As students move on to the next partner, they should incorporate the previous partner’s feedback (or make revisions based on their own observations). At the end, have students listen to their pitches and reflect on what changed from one pitch to the next.

**WORKING WITH THE ACADEMIC WRITER**

*The Academic Writer* can be utilized within the classroom as a way into discussion, writing, reflection, and multimodal work. This textbook is not a prescriptive guide to writing, but rather a text with which students are encouraged to actively engage. If you assign *The Academic Writer* for your class, you should work with this book thoughtfully and meaningfully within the space of the classroom and alongside other course texts.

The Instructor Resources section of the book is helpful for thinking about ways to use the book in your course and features some sample lesson plans and activities. If you don’t have an instructor’s edition of the textbook, the Instructor Resources are available here.

- **Practice.** After assigning a section from *The Academic Writer*, you may consider asking students to practice the theoretical work of that section. For example, if students read Ede’s work on “reading visual texts,” you might bring some visual texts to read in small or large groups during class time. Instructors may also have
students practice various “strategies for invention,” such as looping and clustering, after reading Ede’s descriptions of these methods.

- **Synthesis.** If you assign a section from *The Academic Writer* alongside another text, consider making connections between the two texts during class. Doing so highlights the relationship between reading and writing while also providing an entry point into the discussion of a potentially complex or difficult text. For example, if your class has read Chapter 6 from *The Academic Writer*, “Making and Supporting Claims,” you may ask students to apply the “questions for evaluating evidence” to a recent reading.

- **“Guidelines.”** *The Academic Writer* includes “guideline” tables that may act as opportunities for students to reflect on their writing process in the form of writing or discussion.

- **“For Exploration” and “For Thought, Discussion, and Writing.”** These short sections could be adapted into in-class discussions or activities.

- **Vocabulary.** While students may be used to using textbooks as a way to study “vocabulary words,” you can take a more nuanced approach by considering how *The Academic Writer* fosters a common language in your classroom. Have students approach these terms critically and consider how these terms may be adapted and adopted by your classroom community.

**TROUBLESHOOTING IN-CLASS WORK AND CHALLENGES**

**Improvising in Class**

Often, students will have unexpected reactions to in-class work and to assigned texts. It can be difficult to predict how long a discussion will take or how much time an in-class activity will run (even if an instructor has done that activity before). While instructors may have different levels of comfort with how much improvisation they would like to rely on in their classes, some improvisation is often necessary.

Strategies for improvisation include:

- **Attend to students’ needs in class.** An unanticipated difficulty might arise, or a conflict, or a point of interest. You might adjust a planned activity accordingly.

- **If an activity is running too long, you might wait to do the whole-class “synthesis” portion until a later day, or reduce the requirements for part of the activity.**

- **Gauge students’ interest.** Sometimes it is difficult to accurately assess students’ level of engagement during class. Students often arrive tired from their other courses, and instructors are often surprised to later learn that students they’d assumed were uninterested in a topic were actually very interested in it. If students seem particularly quiet, however, you might bring in a popular example that relates to your given topic, such as a song, film, or TV show. You might also have students participate in an involved group-based activity. Finally, students can freewrite about their personal reactions, feelings, or relationships to the concepts under discussion.
Always have a backup plan (or several) on days when you rely on technology—sometimes things glitch out or break down unexpectedly!

Have five- to ten-minute writing prompts prepared in case students complete all the planned work more quickly than anticipated.

**Fostering In-Class Participation**

Because the course is a seminar, it relies heavily on student participation, whether in the form of written work, small-group or peer participation, or participation in whole-class discussions. Different students will have different levels of comfort with different modes of participation. Some may want to participate, but may be uncertain about how to do so.

It is often helpful to give students a few minutes to freewrite about a particular point of interest or complexity that you would like to highlight prior to asking for students to verbally discuss these things in groups or as a class. Some students may also feel more comfortable contributing to small-group or peer discussions rather than to whole-group discussions. In that case, instructors may wish to designate a student in each group as the “scribe,” so someone in each group ensures everyone’s contributions will become legible later in whole-class discussion. Be sure that the scribe’s notes are made available on HuskyCT or Google Classroom so students can look at those notes later on their own.

When facilitating whole-class discussions, it is important not to get too stuck in the pattern of posing a question (particularly ones that are information-based), waiting for students to raise their hands, and calling on a student to respond. This pattern of discussion may become monotonous and rely too heavily on the contributions of only a few students.

It is also important to recognize that some students will feel very nervous about speaking in front of the class. Calling on students who aren't raising their hands should be approached with caution. Some instructors ask students at the beginning of the course to note on an index card if they are comfortable being called on without having raised their hand. Additionally, if students freewrite prior to discussion (or come to class with assigned writing), instructors may feel more comfortable calling on various students, since every student will have already prepared some thoughts.

Finally, it is important to validate students’ work and contributions. Instructors might highlight a student’s contribution during class discussion as demonstrating something unique or interesting that might be worth dwelling on in group or individual work. Or instructors might gesture to something a student has written in the past and draw the student into the conversation by having them elaborate on and explore their work as it relates to the current day’s inquiries. Further, instructors might gesture to things students have contributed in class discussions previously as ways to engage students in the current discussion.

**Built Pedagogy and Space**

*Built Pedagogy* is term used by Torin Monahan to refer to how physical and technological space is embedded with pedagogical or ideological assumptions—and not always helpful
or accessible ones. For example, a traditional lecture hall embodies a certain ideology: the seats are fixed (immovable), facing the front, where the instructor is positioned to stand and fill the students with knowledge. There is no space for collaboration or discussion, and the room’s layout physically points to a single source of authority.

Instructors have limited control over the physical space in which they teach, but it is important to consider the pedagogy and ideology that your classroom is enacting in order to make necessary changes or accommodations. Consider the bodies that will be working in the space. It’s impossible to know what the needs of students will be before the first day of class, so be flexible. Some questions to consider when thinking about how to work in the classroom space include:

- How does the classroom encourage or limit interaction between students and instructors?
- If your classroom does not have movable seating, in-class group work may be a challenge. You may want to put together a digital collaborative space in order for students to work with others without having to move. Depending on the dynamic of your students, you may want to consider using large-group discussions in place of small-group work.
- Classrooms with awkward layouts can sometimes make it difficult for students to work together or for the instructor to navigate the room to interact with students. Depending on the source of the room’s awkwardness (like a pole in the center of the room or a narrow layout), you may want to ask students to congregate in a certain part of the room or you may need to be the one to move more frequently so students can easily access you.
- Classrooms with tables enact a pedagogy more conducive to group work than individual desks. They invoke more of a “lab” model for a classroom. Use this to your advantage by encouraging students to sit around the table so they face each other when working. If you encourage students to use their computers in class, be mindful of where the tables are positioned in relation to outlets.
- If your classroom has individual desks, you have the advantage of having the most flexibility for group work and discussion; however, these desks are not always the most conducive for some laptops or even tablets.
- Some classrooms are more well-equipped or tech-friendly than others. There are always benefits and drawbacks to classroom technology, so you’ll want to weigh whether the space will make your use of technology productive and practical for certain purposes. You should also consider students’ technology needs and how the use (or absence) of technology affects their perceptions of class dynamics.

**FURTHER RESOURCES**

- [Centering Student Writing in the Classroom](#)
- [Using Film in Class and in Assignments](#)
Part 7: Responding to Student Writing

Teacher Responsibility and the Shared Work of the Seminar

What roles do we play when responding to student work? 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.” 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.” 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 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 the feedback is relevant to the work they have underway. In case of extenuating circumstances, place the same expectations on yourself as you would place on students. Return feedback on drafts promptly so it is useful during the revision process; plan to return graded essays within a week or so, but never longer than two weeks (and two weeks should be the exception, not the rule). If you find yourself in a bind on returning work on time, consult with the FYW office as soon as possible to discuss alternatives and strategies for responding to student work.

Along with timeliness, we project our attitude toward student work 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. A number of contextual matters have an impact on the language that we use in commenting on student work, including the kinds of work invited by the assignment prompt, the priorities established through written evaluative criteria for the assignment and through interactions with students as they draft and revise, and the rhetorical terms and approaches explored during class time.

In addition to contextual criteria that originate with course discussions, assignment guidelines, and small group and individual conferences, an important piece of contextu-
al criteria for instructor grading is what Bob Broad terms “teacher’s special knowledge” (TSK). TSK arises out of assumptions that instructors make based on the way students write (and speak). An instructor’s familiarity with students can be an asset in that it permits an understanding of the challenges faced by individual students and enables instructors to use comments as productive contributions to student endeavors to work through these challenges. It is important to ground these contributions in actual encounters with student writing across this semester; for instance, instructors might take into account the concerns that students have noted in group or individual conferences or in reflective writing. These experiences allow feedback to reflect a continuing conversation between students and instructors, rather than stemming from imagined assumptions about a student’s background or abilities. Instructors should be self-aware about the ways their assumptions and imagined contexts may influence their responses, and use TSK instead to make fully-informed comments that take into consideration each individual student’s needs.

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

**WRITTEN AND ORAL FEEDBACK**

**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, or as locations of interest. 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.

**Best Practices for Feedback: Rough Drafts**

- Feedback should take as a starting point what the student’s writing is already doing, and so instructors should read with an eye toward the student’s developing project. Although it may be easier to mark primarily surface-level or textual features (like grammar, punctuation, word choices, and citation), what matters in academic writing is how the text develops and advances a meaningful project. Encouraging the development of this project may mean that the student will need to remove or completely rethink large portions of the rough draft; emphasize that a first draft is a “discovery 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

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the same time, don’t make feedback on an invention draft “evaluative” when it’s meant to help the student reshape the work, rethink the problems, and redraw lines of thought.

• Specific evaluative criteria help students to understand how you will be responding to their work, even prior to the actual evaluation of their last draft. It is important to 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 that work 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. 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.

• Comments should not 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.

• When responding to multimodal texts, keep in mind that responding to these texts is similar to responding to written texts and that you don’t have to be an expert in a given technology to comment on a student’s rhetorical use of the composing technology. When giving feedback, it may be useful to consider the genre and purpose of the multimodal text students are composing in and to what extent their drafts respond to and engage in that particular genre, purpose and the overall assignment. Comments should not primarily focus on students’ technical proficiency (mechanical skills) unless the lack of technical proficiency is hindering your understanding of the text.

• Marginal comments are a useful way to make note of particular moments in a student’s draft that introduce ideas worth exploring further. These will often take the form of questions that arise from particular claims or rhetorical approaches in the draft. These comments work productively in cooperation with endnotes, as they allow instructors to engage closely with textual moments in student work that inform the larger patterns of inquiry noted in end comments. Marginal comments can also alert students to specific errors, such as improperly formatted citations, but should not attempt to point out every single error in the draft as this can prompt students to focus on isolated, sentence-level revisions, and become too overwhelmed for larger, more global changes. Many instructors find it helpful to note the first instance of a common error with a suggestion to work on similar issues throughout the draft. Avoid covering student papers with a large number of marginal comments in general, as these may overwhelm the student.

• Endnotes help to communicate a set of priorities for the revision of the draft. These do not need to reiterate every marginal comment, but should instead focus on the larger questions that underlie the comments throughout the essay. Endnotes can point students toward the major choices that they need to make when revising the draft, and can enable the instructor to draw connections between related comments and questions appearing at different moments in the draft. These
comments can help students to develop a plan for their revisions by making clear the instructor’s primary concerns about the paper. Consider limiting endnote comments to two or three major points of interest and/or concerns.

• Audio or video feedback is an alternative to marginal and endnote comments that some students may find helpful. These modes do much of the same work as marginal and end comments, but research suggests that feedback through these modes tends to be more formative than summative (that is, more helpful during drafting stages than as an evaluative comment on a completed project). Audio or video comments also help students understand the tone or ethos of your comments in a way that written comments cannot, which may make students more responsive to your feedback. Some instructors have also found that this mode of commenting more time efficient.

• Individual conferences make possible a direct conversation between instructor and student about a rough draft. 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.

**Best Practices for Feedback: Final Drafts**

• Clarify your expectations—in your syllabus, on assignment sheets, and in verbal discussions with your class. 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.

• It is worthwhile to keep in mind the difference between formative and summative comments. Feedback on rough drafts should focus on helping students to advance and develop an existing piece of writing, and so will rely heavily on formative comments. Final drafts provide the opportunity for more summative commentary, allowing instructors to note the work that a paper has accomplished and the ways in which the student’s approach has enabled them to take on this work. These
comments should reflect the language that the instructor has established for the evaluation of written work.

- While this feedback involves response to a completed project, it should reflect an awareness of the student's ongoing development as a writer and should situate comments such that they are useful for the student's future written work. This feedback may involve emphasizing particular approaches to revision that helped the student to improve the essay, or noting specific strategies or methods of analysis and argument that the student might focus on in subsequent papers.

- 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.

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. At the end of this section, 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, 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. You should base semester grade decisions on the student’s level of achievement and decide how you personally would best be able to measure that. We have included recommended methods of grading in the section “Grade Calculation and Management.”
We discourage you from using the D grade, which can connote a paradoxical mix of both passing and not passing (technically, a student who earns a D has “passed” the course, per university rules). 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.

Participation

Because participation is vital to the work of a writing seminar, many instructors include participation as part of a student’s final grade. FYW recommends that instructors weight participation between 10 and 25 percent. Instructors should make their expectations for participation clear early in the semester and in the syllabus, giving students an opportunity to approach the instructor should they have anxiety about participation. Instructors should consider participation as encompassing more than just a student’s verbal responses in whole-group discussions, as some students feel more comfortable participating in small-group discussions or through in-class writing. University policy does not permit the use of a system of points based solely on attendance, such as the deduction of a certain number of points for each unexcused absence; however, students who do not attend a class are unable to participate in the work of that session and should understand that their participation grade will reflect their lack of contribution.

Instructors may calculate participation as a cumulative grade at the end of the semester or as a more regularly calculated grade (e.g., a bimonthly participation grade). Some instructors record daily student participation, while others keep sparser notes.

Assessing Multimodal Projects

FYW’s Writing Across Technology initiative encourages instructors to assign multimodal projects as part of the work for FYW courses. Even when a multimodal project has not explicitly been assigned, students are increasingly writing for diverse multimedia environments, and multimodal scholarship is becoming more common in various academic communities. Multimodal writing presents many exciting possibilities for students and instructors. However, for teachers of English steeped in print-centric linguistic practices, approaching and assessing work that expands beyond this one mode of communication can seem daunting.

Sometimes, discomfort with assessing multimodal projects can stem from your own unfamiliarity with certain media, technologies, or ways of knowing. However, it is important to remember that (1) you needn’t be an “expert” in a given media or technology in order to respond to or evaluate it, and (2) you already are already an expert in some respects. As a teacher of writing and scholar of English or a related field, you have the expertise to assess a variety of texts through close reading, regardless of whether you could produce that text yourself.
That said, students are typically not experts either—in fact, they are likely also far more used to producing traditional alphabetic texts than multimodal ones—and you’ll want to keep this in mind as you approach multimodal projects. In general, you should prioritize the learning goals of the project and how students address the rhetorical demands of the assignment above technical proficiency with media or polish—which is to say, you should prioritize the same elements that are most important in a traditional academic essay. That said, there are differences between multimodal projects and traditional alphabetic essays. Here are some guidelines to consider when assessing multimodal projects:

- **Prioritize learning goals.** Try to grade projects based on how successfully students show that they have achieved the learning goals of the assignment rather than by focusing on technical elements (e.g., page count, bibliography formatting, camera manipulation, technology quality).

- **Make instructions and evaluative criteria clear.** When assigning multimodal projects, be very clear about your expectations and spend time in class going over examples if possible. It’s likely students haven’t been asked to do work like this many times before and won’t have as much genre knowledge to fall back on. Articulate transparently in assignments how you will assess projects (e.g., whether you will give credit for process writing or what you consider the most important thing for students to accomplish).

- **Emphasize the rhetorical dimensions of technology.** Sometimes it can be easy to be taken up with the spectacle or “cool” factor of multimedia projects. But you should stress, in both your assignment and evaluation, the rhetorical aspects of these elements. Is the student using these elements for a good reason? Does the medium or genre of text support the goal of the project?

- **Include process writing.** Process writing (asking students to describe and analyze the choices they made while writing) is a great way for students to reflect and learn. It also may be helpful in assessing whether they are using technology rhetorically and meeting the assignment’s learning goals. Additionally, it can give you important information when a student is using a technology that you are not familiar with, such as how time-consuming the process is or what some of the technology’s limitations are.

- **Communicate.** Invite students to discuss with you, in and out of class, what your expectations are. If you haven’t explicitly assigned a multimodal project but are open to students attempting them, make it clear that you would like to negotiate how you will address things like required page counts or use of sources before the project is handed in.

- **Use resources available to you.** We’re happy to help you with specific challenges. Contact the FYW office at firstyearwriting@uconn.edu.

**Grade Calculation and Management**

Be sure to submit grades at two points in the semester. At the end of Week 6, you must submit DFUN grades via PeopleSoft (instructions will be sent in FYW’s weekly digest). This is a university requirement for all 1000- and 2000-level courses. These grades serve
as fair warning to students in danger of failing the course and alert their advisors to the issue as well. You will also 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). Some instructors use Excel or HuskyCT to organize and calculate grades throughout the semester. For more information, consult with FYW or see the HuskyCT guide on its grading resources.

Instructors use a number of ways to record and calculate grades. We have outlined a few below:

- **Letter grades.** Some instructors assign letter grades for both essays and the semester. The advantage of assigning letter grades is that it allows instructors to refer to more general criteria without feeling the need to assign point values to certain items. Instructors may indicate what qualities they see essays in the A range as achieving, B range, etc. Further, some instructors then may use their special knowledge about students to observe if the student has made significant improvement consistently later in the semester; if a student, for example, receives a C, B, and two A-’s on their papers over the course of the semester, the instructor may award them with an A- at the end if they so choose and if they feel it is accurate (and if the student’s in-class work has additionally been A-level) to reflect the current achievements of the student’s writing. The downside to this method is that students (and some instructors) may feel that it is overly subjective. It is also difficult at times to account for new significant problems not anticipated in an instructor’s evaluation criteria.

- **Numerical or point-based grading.** Some instructors assign number grades for each essay. The advantage of this method is that it allows grades to reflect a precise understanding of the work of the paper. A paper that falls between B+ and B quality work might merit a grade of 86, for example, which eliminates the need to make a choice between the two letter grades. The downside of this method is that the use of such fine distinctions can run the risk of seeming arbitrary—it can be difficult to justify the difference between a 91 and a 92. Similar effects can attend the use of number grades to calculate the semester grade; this method makes it easy to determine a student’s average grade, but can obscure the nuances of other considerations, such as improvement over the course of the semester. *Instructors making use of number grades are encouraged to think carefully and holistically about the student’s level of achievement in the course when determining semester grades, rather than relying entirely on the numerical average.*

- **Portfolios.** Some instructors base semester grades on a final portfolio, in which students revise and collect their own papers into a portfolio that is then used as the sole grade for determining the semester grade. Students may have received grades on their papers throughout the course, but the only one that will be factored into the semester grade will be the final portfolio. Some instructors include portfolio assignments as a final paper assignment without using it as the only grade for the semester, as well. The advantage of the portfolio grading method is that it allows students to revise their papers and reflect on them, and it allows the instructor to view their work collectively when determining the semester grade.
The final revision allows students to utilize skills they may have developed later in the semester on earlier papers, thereby potentially more accurately reflecting their end-of-semester achievements in writing. The drawback to this method is that students may feel overwhelmed by such a final assignment as they are beginning to become concerned about final exams, and some students will potentially have had more time to devote to the class at the beginning and consequently the pedagogical narrative of growth over time may not hold.

Regardless of the model that you decide to use, it is important to be consistent and transparent. Together, your grades and comments should help students to understand how they are doing in the course.

What Essay Grades Mean in FYW: A Starting Point

A. Responds energetically and creatively to the readings and/or outside texts, the assignment sheet, and feedback from classmates and the instructor. Engages meaningfully with texts in a sustained manner. Contributes to the ongoing conversations of other authors. 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 sheet and feedback from classmates and the instructor. Engages meaningfully with readings and/or outside texts in most parts of the paper. Attempts to contribute 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. Ignores much of classmates' and the instructor's feedback. Uses readings or outside texts, but does not attempt to contribute to the ongoing conversations of other authors. Exhibits inconsistent levels of rhetorical awareness. Citations may be faulty or missing. In brief, a C grade connotes a problem of some sort (understanding, execution, etc.).

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. 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. An A can be reserved for recognizable and substantial contributions to the ongoing work of the course.
B. Students will receive a B for the course if, in addition to meeting criteria (2) and (3) 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. The B connotes personal achievements and success, but the A recognizes the far more vital academic goals of impact and influence.

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. The student has met the course requirements and the assignment requirements consistently, despite the persistence of one or two significant issues.

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

**FURTHER RESOURCES**

- HuskyCT Grading Help
- General Information about Grades
- Instructions for Submitting Final Grades