English 101:

Prologue to Literacy or Postmodern Moonshine?

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English 101: Prologue to Literacy or Postmodern Moonshine? Executive Summary

Since freshman composition became a required course at Harvard in 1872, it has seen many changes—but none so radical as the changes brought about in the 1970s, when composition theory became a specialty. Postmodern theories about teaching composition have transformed writing programs nationwide, and this paper examines what has become of freshman writing courses at the two flagship branches of the University of North Carolina – N.C. State and UNC-Chapel Hill. Most striking among the changes imposed by composition theorists is the disappearance of literature and grammar instruction from course content. The following study exposes six conspicuous fallacies upon which the new system is founded and shows how postmodern theories about teaching writing have weakened freshman composition, as well as contributed to a decline in the quality of student writing overall. Corrective measures are discussed at the end of the study.

English 101: Prologue to Literacy or Postmodern Moonshine? By Nan Miller

Hundreds of thousands of recent college graduates today cannot express themselves with the written word. Why? Because universities have shortchanged them, offering strange literary theories, Marxism, feminism, deconstruction, and other oddities in the guise of writing courses. They've offered everything, really, but the basics of clear writing.—
Stanley Ridgeley

Anyone who taught English 101 before it was "post-modernized" knows that the theorists' takeover of college writing did not happen without a feud. That feud once simmered within the University of North Carolina system, pitting old school against new school educators, tradition against novelty at NC State University and UNC-Chapel Hill. I say "once simmered" because, for now, the new school theorists have a lock on freshman composition, not only at North Carolina's main public universities, but at most colleges and universities around the nation. Composition is taught according to their vision, in spite of new evidence that shows a sharp decline in literacy among college graduates. If Dickens were writing this tale of two schools, it would open, "For composition students in the postmodern era, it was the worst of times—period."

Before I revive an old quarrel and perhaps incite a new one, I shall make three points that can stand uncontested. First, freshman composition occupies a unique position in any college curriculum. It is the only course required of about 90 % of all enrollees, the only freshman course committed entirely to writing, and the only course designed to prepare students to write in other disciplines. Thus, the weight the course bears is self-evident.

The second point concerns the unique position writing occupies among the arts: writing is the only art most graduates will practice over a lifetime. Most will never take up singing or painting, but cannot sidestep writing if they aim to succeed in a business or profession, *or* to express themselves clearly in their everyday lives. Simply put: "Writing today is not a frill for the few, but an essential skill for the many." The newly established National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges made that claim the epigraph for its 2003 report. It's what composition teachers have always contended and what a new college graduate will soon discover.

Third, gauging the effectiveness of any writing program is a tricky business. One program must serve students whose diverse interests, aptitudes, and prior writing experience make up a complex set of variables. When a program's advocates cite statistics or empirical evidence to show that the courses in place serve students well, critics counter by questioning the program's goals and the means by which they are met and measured. Hence, the appraiser's dilemma, so aptly put by Chris Anson, who directs the Campus Writing and Speaking Program at North Carolina State University: "Clearly, no single method, no set theory, no specific research findings, no matter how conclusive, will provide everything we should know about or act upon in this rich and complicated process"—teaching writing.²

That scholars, nonetheless, devote whole careers to the process commends them. That they have scrapped an outdated approach to teaching writing commends them. And, as I shall make clear, there is much to approve in the system composition theorists

installed in the mid 1980s. But if their latest methods brought convincing results, there would be no National Commission on Writing with a report entitled *The Neglected "R"*, stating that "the level of writing in the United States is not what it should be."³

The commissioners' observation is dead right, but when they cite "The Need for a Writing Revolution," they miss four key points:

- 1. the revolution is over,
- 2. the rebel composition theorists prevail,
- 3. they do not neglect composition—far from it, and
- 4. insider opposition to their methods has been consigned to a frustrated silence.

Asking the victors in the composition wars to start a new revolution, then, is like asking the establishment to overthrow itself.

Thus far, no insider opponent has been able to loosen the lock the theorists have on teaching composition in the university. And few outsiders are aware that when theorists let "cutting edge" or "postmodern" research trump reason, common sense, and years of classroom experience, they hold students hostage to a bad idea. My mission is to say when, why, and how the bad idea caught on and propose ways to rescue composition from this postmodern mania. In short, I shall

- describe an outdated system that made composition ripe for a revolution,
- review the progress brought about in the 1980s by the first wave of composition theorists.
- show how the theorists' love affair with all things "postmodern" has come to undermine the progress they themselves had initiated, and finally,
- propose ways to improve freshman composition.

I base my findings upon interviews, research, and upon the twenty-six years I taught college composition, a career that spanned all three stages in its evolution. By no means am I alone in my dismay over what the composition theorists have wrought.

English 101 before the Theorists' Takeover

She who dares call this the worst of times for freshman composition must concede upfront that every stage in its evolution has been called so by some would-be reformer. No sooner had Harvard College made composition a specialty in 1872 than the nay-sayers attacked, declaring that it cost too much, neglected literature, and had failed in its mission to improve student writing. Here, I tip my hand and place the latter two among my own objections to the current system. Unlike the Harvard nay-sayers, however, I see change in higher education as an inevitable, desirable and, in one particular case, long-overdue response to a changing culture. I refer, of course, to freshman composition, which until two decades ago had languished, unrevised, since the early twentieth century.

Under the old system, instructors spent class time teaching grammar and lecturing on assigned essays whose style, correctness, and depth of insight students were to mimic when they sat down to write. The concept sounds promising, but a closer look reveals the faulty premise: if a student reads the assignment carefully, listens in class, and prepares a detailed formal outline, a first-rate essay will burst—full-blown—onto the page. Under the old system, students were to turn in a new outline and essay each week, a schedule

that left little time for them to seek feedback on drafts and revise before the next due date loomed. To earn even a passing grade, students could make no more than two grammatical errors. To be judged "first-rate," an essay must adhere rigidly to a five-paragraph formula and follow the outline a student, when pressed, would usually admit had been crafted after the essay was complete.

Defenders of the old system point out that its long reign saw the emergence of many great American poets, novelists, journalists, and scholars. And no doubt every author from Eliot to Safire to Dillard (if indeed they took such a course) stood out—not because a formula for writing suddenly made sense, but because they brought to the course innate gifts that no formula could frustrate. It was the average college writer, the typical enrollee in English 101, who left the course with two misconceptions: one, the main point of any essay would subdivide itself naturally into topics for three body paragraphs, and, two, good writing is mostly a game of eliminating surface errors. When old-school educators, even today, trace the declining quality of student writing to the demise of what is now known as the "writing-as-product" era, they conjure a golden age that never was.

Progress brought about by composition theorists in the mid '80s

The idea to let students in on the secret that professional writers treat writing as a "process" had been around for years before it caught on in the university. As early as 1953, Purdue professor Barriss Mills observed that "The basic failure in our teaching centers is our unwillingness or incapacity to think of writing in terms of process." But it would be three full decades before the process approach to teaching composition became standard practice in the academy. The aftermath was exciting because this new approach did indeed make a difference in student writing.

Of the theorists who introduced it, only two, Peter Elbow and Donald Murray, became well known to writers and would-be writers outside the academy, and it was Elbow and Murray who influenced the way many instructors taught English 101. Their premise sounds simple. Writing is a process done in stages—planning, prewriting, drafting, and revising—but writers will use different strategies as they advance or double back through the stages, depending on what works for them *and* for the task at hand. The instructor's job was to give feedback to fledgling writers during each stage of the writing process. Instructors also assigned more informal, warm-up pieces, which students often completed in class before the advent of the online discussion board in the mid nineties. (See Appendix A for a list of uses for the online discussion board.) Under the new system students were still writing constantly but not necessarily turning in the final version of an essay each week.

This new approach gave students two distinct advantages: it taught them to devise strategies that worked best for them, but more important, allowed time for students to meet one-on-one with instructors and revise drafts according to their suggestions. Advantages for instructors included a familiarity with each student's writing style, making plagiarism easier to spot in a final draft. And naturally, grading the revised edition of a student-written essay is far less frustrating and time-consuming when an instructor has invested time upfront in the writing process.

The first wave of theorists also encouraged collaboration among writers as a tactic to improve skills. In colleges nationwide, the concept was manifested primarily in the rise of the writing center, where students could discuss their work with peer tutors who were themselves exceptional writers and who had been trained by the writing center director to help other students with their writing. Legalizing collaboration gave students ready access to additional help and lessened their dependence on "back-alley tutors" — friends, parents, and former teachers who gave too much help. I became an advocate for peer tutoring in 1987, when I was hired to open and direct a writing center at Meredith College and saw firsthand that collaboration, used wisely, reinforces classroom instruction and can indeed improve student writing.

Experienced instructors initiated other changes on their own—before those changes became official components of the new pedagogy. For example, many of us disposed of the rigid five-paragraph formula for writing essays, as well as the formula we had used to compute grades—by counting errors. Many added a speaking component to English 101, requiring each student to present in class an oral defense of the argument set forth in his or her research paper. And with experience came the know-how to treat English 101 as a service course—as a freshman's opportunity to acquire skills necessary to write in other disciplines. By no means, however, did we make that the primary mission of the course.

These innovations, all of which were patented by a new breed of specialists, made teaching composition a useful, agreeable experience for students and instructors. As a result of the improvement in student writing, many instructors put together supplemental texts of model freshmen essays which students typically evaluated as the "most helpful" component of the course. If the methods we had adopted to prompt these essays were the theorists' only legacy, there would be no need for a paper exploring the weaknesses in today's college writing programs. But in the university, where research—not teaching—is the ticket to advancement, theories must mutate to cut a new edge and thereby extend the life-span of a chic new field. Therein lies the reason for the changes that have undermined the benefit of these reforms and turned composition courses into "postmodern moonshine."

The Downside of the Theorists' "Upgrades"

I am not the first to observe that the latest theories about teaching writing blunt the very progress innovators like Elbow and Murray had inspired. Nor am I the first to explain why theorists have co-opted a course that once was the charge of mere teachers. If teaching composition were indeed what one Yale professor called "a torture to soul and body" and if instructors earned neither respect nor equitable pay for enduring such torture, then here was an opening for enterprising scholars to fix a course no one wanted to teach. Equipped with "post-Sputnik infusions of federal cash," a new breed of scholars emerged and set about to achieve three aims: (1) raise the status of instructors who taught composition (2) improve the writing of students who took composition, and (3) secure whole careers for themselves in the process.⁷

The failure of aim one is a well-known fact because in universities nationwide English 101 is still taught largely by non-tenure track faculty—adjuncts, part-timers, and graduate students who are stuck on the low rung of the academic hierarchy. While

theorists set both the content and format of English 101, they rarely ever teach it themselves, preferring instead to assign walk-on instructors up to three sections per semester. Such a heavy load would require thirty hours of conferences each week if instructors met individually with sixty or more students, so the teaching method described in the preceding section of this report, involving instructors in every stage of the drafting process, simply does not work in the university—the very institution where the process approach was first implemented. Pure necessity, then, is the mother of the theorists' latest invention—the "student-centered" class, which has students giving each other feedback on drafts, a tactic that has downgraded the status of instructors even further.

The failure to upgrade instructor status is not entirely the theorists' fault. Department heads and deans have long treated freshman programs like bargain basements where a ready supply of cheap labor is a boon to budgets. Cutbacks are always felt first by freshman instructors who were hired when enrollments went up, let go when funding went down. And Ph.D.-granting institutions rely on an even cheaper source of labor—graduate students who divide their time between teaching and taking classes, between grading papers and writing their own. Critics of this arrangement contend that it puts the least experienced, least qualified teachers in charge of the most important freshman course. But the trouble with this age-old practice isn't so much that it puts novices in charge of teaching freshmen how to write—although that isn't ideal—rather, the problem is that composition theorists now require those novices to teach using dubious methods, which are discussed below.

Until recently the failure of the theorists' second aim, to improve student writing, was not well known—except to upper-level faculty teaching the offspring of the theorists' new version of English 101. From my conversations with senior faculty at both North Carolina State and UNC, I learned the following:

- The new English 101 is a continuation of the "disastrous" public school trend to have students work in groups.
- The new English 101 continues the public school trend to go easy on grammar gaffes, so enrollees in upper level classes have "startling" problems with correctness.
- Enrollees in upper level courses are ill-prepared to "read, understand, or discuss literature" because freshmen no longer read literature in English 101.
- English 101 students are not encouraged to read for "pleasure and understanding."
- English 101 classes look like "typing classes" because students spend more time working at laptops than they do listening to an instructor teach writing strategies.
- The new course "trains" students to write for other disciplines but does not expose them to great models of written English.

For a while, old school faculty or "traditionalists" protested loudly the deficiencies in the new version of English 101, especially the jettisoning of literature and grammar instruction from composition courses. And for a while the clash between old school educators and composition theorists led to rancorous departmental meetings and battles for control reminiscent of corporate in-fighting. In the late 1980s, a local reporter called the battle at North Carolina State "the closest thing on American campuses to an academic Beirut." ¹²

At the height of the composition wars at State, English Professor Michael Grimwood predicted that "the pendulum will swing back" and reunite composition and literature. In 1988, Grimwood had been encouraged by the unexpected success of E.D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy* and Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, both of which were bestsellers at that time and both of which decry what a chapter title in Bloom's book calls "The Decomposition of the University," in other words, the willful erosion of a classical education.

Unfortunately, Dr. Grimwood's prediction has not come true. Not only has the pendulum not swung back—it has swung even further in the direction of decomposition. Before 2003, however, the best a professor could do to oppose the new methods was to observe that the writing of students enrolled in upper level courses had not improved since the theorists took over—in fact, quite the contrary. Composition theorists countered that senior faculty were hardly qualified to criticize, having removed themselves altogether from the time-consuming business of teaching freshmen. Theorists also noted that senior faculty were so immersed in their own research and writing, they weren't even aware that new research in composition actually *prescribes* the jettisoning of literature and grammar instruction from writing courses.

The traditionalists proved no match for what composition theorists claimed their research had shown, and by the late 1980s, the theorists had persuaded administrators to grant them control of composition because they were on "the cutting edge of research." The theorists' third aim, then, has succeeded brilliantly. Backed by administrators and by research they themselves had generated, a new breed of scholars has indeed carved whole careers out of composition. Having overruled objections by senior faculty, having surrounded themselves with dispensable junior faculty and pliant freshmen, the theorists proceed unchallenged. In the recently published *Our Underachieving Colleges*, Harvard President Emeritus Derek Bok observes, "Today the process of teaching composition is a topic bristling with controversy and debate." Unfortunately, Bok's observation no longer holds true in the flagship branches of the University of North Carolina where critics of the theorists' trendy new methods have long been silenced.

Three reasons to reopen the discussion about composition

Now there is clear cause to reopen the discussion about composition. In 2002, in preparation for the addition of a writing assessment to the SAT, the College Board established the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges. But the Commission's "larger motivation," which was spelled out in the preface to its 2003 report, "lay in the growing concern within the education, business, and policy-making communities that the level of writing in the United States is not what it should be." The 2003 report was the first of three consecutive reports, each of which calls attention to a nationwide crisis in the way writing is handled in our nation's schools and colleges.

- The Commission's 2003 report opens with this statement: "Although many models of effective ways to teach writing exist, both the teaching and practice of writing are *increasingly shortchanged* throughout the school and college years [emphasis added]." The report is available at
 - http://www.writingcommission.org/prod_downloads/writingcom/neglectedr.pdf

- The Commission's 2004 report includes results from a survey of business executives in 120 major American corporations employing eight million people. Respondents to this survey concur: "People who cannot write and communicate clearly will not be hired and are unlikely to last long enough to be considered for promotion." The survey also found that salaried employees with poor writing skills must be retrained and that "remedying deficiencies in writing may cost American firms as much as \$3.1 billion annually." The report is available at http://www.writingcommission.org/prod_downloads/writingcom/writing-ticket-to-work.pdf>
- The Commission's 2005 report includes results from a survey of state human resources divisions by the National Governors Association. Respondents to this survey conclude "that writing is an even more important job requirement for the states' nearly 2.7 million employees than it is for the private-sector employees studied in the Commission's previous survey of leading U.S businesses." Yet respondents are "amazed at how many people with top education credentials have really poor writing skills" and wonder if "English composition" has "fallen off the list of things that count in college." The report is available at

http://www.writingcommission.org/prod_downloads/writingcom/powerful-message-from-state.pdf

With their exposure of a nationwide crisis, these commissioners have performed an invaluable service. But nowhere do they say precisely how writing instruction has failed or what a school administrator can do to fix it. And the commissioners' goal to "create a writing revolution in the United States" will go unmet until someone pinpoints what went wrong with the revolution that took place in the 1980s—when composition theorists overthrew tradition and radically changed the way writing is taught in English 101. It's "what went wrong" with the theorists' takeover that is the focus of this report. What follows is a review of six conspicuous fallacies under which the new system operates.

Fallacy 1: The purpose of English 101 is "to empower writers to membership in various discourse communities."

The quotation comes from an article by Dr. Erika Lindemann, architect of the writing program at UNC-Chapel Hill, and it is this theory that prescribes the content of English 101 at NC State and English 12 at UNC. (See Appendix B for sample syllabi from these two courses.) The premise sounds reasonable. After their freshman year, most college students will be writing primarily in disciplines other than English, so freshman composition should prepare them for "college writing"—not just for writing about literature. With that aim in mind, theorists designed courses that have freshmen reading essays from the sciences, social sciences, and humanities and studying the "discourse methodology" of each discipline before "they practice creating similar texts: journalistic essays, interpretations of music or art, case studies, analyses of data, and investigations of problems a discipline seeks to address."

According to Lindemann, "Seeing writing as a system contextualizes these disciplinary perspectives and raises questions student writers invariably must answer for every course they take." The new theory sounds impressive, but in practice, the aim to

have freshmen writing like scientists and social scientists in one semester is as lofty as the rhetoric theorists use to defend it. In essence, it asks freshmen to learn language that is foreign to them before they have learned the basics of clear writing. It also asks English instructors, many of whom are novices, to teach content outside their own field. The same logic, applied in the sciences, would put first-time physics instructors in charge of teaching *Hamlet*.

As early as 1991, Peter Elbow questioned his colleagues' aim to make "academic discourse" the sole content of freshman composition. In a strongly worded article titled "Reflections on Academic Discourse: How It Relates to Freshmen and Colleagues," Elbow admitted that he was "troubled, first, by the most extreme position—the idea of giving over the freshman writing course entirely to academic discourse." To expose the fallacy in such reasoning, Elbow presented "three brief arguments" for teaching nonacademic discourse in freshman composition:

- "First, life is long and college is short. Very few of our students will ever have to write academic discourse after college. The writing that most students will need to do for most of their lives will be for their jobs—and that writing is usually very different from academic discourse. When employers complain that students can't write, they often mean that students have to *unlearn* the academic writing they were rewarded for in college."²⁶
- "Second, I want to argue for one *kind* of nonacademic discourse that is particularly important to teach. I mean discourse that tries to render experience rather than explain it. To render experience is to convey what I see when I look out the window...to tell what it's like to be me or to live my life. I'm particularly concerned that we help students learn to write language that conveys to others a sense of their experience...I'm thinking about autobiographical stories, moments, sketches—perhaps even a piece of fiction or poetry now and again."²⁷
- "Third, we need nonacademic discourse even for the sake of helping students produce good academic discourse....That is, many students can repeat and explain a principle in say physics or economics in the academic discourse of the textbook but cannot simply tell a story of what is going on in the room or country around them on account of that principle....When students write about something only in the language of the textbook or the discipline, they often distance or insulate themselves from

experiencing or really internalizing the concepts they are allegedly learning."²⁸ Elbow concludes his argument by disclosing, "It bothers me when theorists argue that someone doesn't know a field unless she can talk about it in the discourse professionals use among themselves."²⁹

Elbow's assessment is clear, concise, and right on target: courses designed to teach freshmen how to write like the experts in a field are not helpful in the long run *or* in the short run because they reduce composition to an exercise in semantics. Thus far, however, the theorists in charge remain unmoved by bad press about their preference for "academic discourse"—even when it comes from within their own ranks or from the National Commission on Writing. Thirteen years after the publication of Elbow's article, the Commission's survey of prominent business leaders issued this caution: "Recent graduates may be trained in academic writing, but we find that kind of writing too verbose and wandering." "30

Nevertheless, the aim to teach only "academic discourse" in freshman composition persists—as do critics of the theorists' reasoning. In a winter 2006 article titled "Reading Without Literature," Emory University English professor Mark Bauerlein echoes Elbow: "Bringing more texts that young people will deal with later in life into the classroom sounds like a common sense practice, but it overlooks the developmental aspect of learning. It is to identify an achieved skill with the learning of it, to assert that the best way to become adept with informational text is to study informational text."³¹

Moreover, freshman instructors themselves dislike the new emphasis upon "academic discourse" or "informational text" and would prefer teaching texts students might actually enjoy reading. Two who spoke on condition of anonymity admitted: "I don't feel qualified to teach the methods of a scientist" and "I'm glad the unit on science comes first so I can get it over with." Other respondents at both North Carolina State and UNC cited what many professors, including Dr. Bauerlein, say is the gravest defect in the latest approach to teaching composition: eliminating literature from the syllabus altogether. Bauerlein lays bare the harm done by courses designed to achieve "technical" outcomes only:

[T]o orient the classroom too much to workplace proficiencies and, more significantly, to diminish the role of literary materials in reading and writing skills, is to impoverish liberal education. The broader awareness that comes from wide reading in literary and civic traditions is reduced to mechanical activities. Literary understanding gives way to "the construction of meaning." Literary history is supplanted by facility with texts. Traditionally, liberal education has been about *resisting* such norms of the workplace as productivity and rationalization.³²

Composition theorists counter by saying that teaching literature in freshman composition is simply not practical because few students pursue careers requiring an acquaintance with great works. But another reason—far more disturbing—looms large in the mind of theorists. In addition to being impractical, grounding composition in the humanities would be *elitist* because such courses might assert the supremacy and timelessness of masterworks from our own discipline. This bizarre turn I shall develop at length under "Fallacy 6."

What the theorists do not say is that writing programs designed to serve the needs of other academic fields duplicate programs already in place at most universities. Both UNC and North Carolina State, for example, have programs that encourage and support writing in the disciplines. NC State's excellent Writing and Speaking Program offers "department specific workshops" and "individual consultations" for faculty who assign writing campus-wide. A full description of the program's services can be found at http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/cwsp/.

On a smaller scale, UNC offers "team-taught" or "linked courses," which give students the benefit of two instructors, one of whom is a composition instructor, the other, an expert in another discipline. The school also has a Communication Intensive requirement and a first-year seminar program, both of which incorporate writing across the curriculum. Even without such programs, however, an instructor can broaden the scope of freshman composition simply by choosing the right text. With each new edition of "readers" comes an improved selection of poetry and short fiction, as well as essays on

history, politics, religion, and American culture—meaty topics for discussion and writing—without the overlay of shibboleths about "discourse communities."

In their determination to incorporate writing across the curriculum in freshman composition, theorists overlook one troublesome fact. The new design for English 101 has coincided exactly with a decline in reading and writing skills among high school graduates. As any veteran 101 instructor can attest, over the past two decades, entering college freshmen have become less and less able to read and write about complex material. Indeed, a 2005 survey conducted by the Peter D. Hart Research Associates found that "Large majorities of college instructors are dissatisfied with the job public schools are doing in preparing students for college when it comes to writing quality (62 percent) and their ability to read and comprehend complex materials (70 percent)." For this reason alone, students should spend their first year in college mastering the basics of composition and improving reading skills by studying great models of written English.

Fallacy 2: The best way to ensure quality instruction in English 101 is to hire instructors who are trained in composition theory.

This notion is backed by two notable authorities. Upfront in the 2003 Neglected "R" report, the commissioners recommend the "completion of a course in writing theory and practice as a condition of teacher licensing." And the National Council of Teachers of English, in their 2004 report NCTE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing, advises: "Teachers of writing should be well-versed in composition theory and research, and they should know methods for turning that theory into practice." 35

The case for training writing teachers in "composition theory" sounds airtight, but there are two problems with this proposal. The first is one of logistics. Hiring only those whom theorists have trained to teach freshmen would narrow the pool of qualified applicants, as well as derail plans to let graduate students teach freshman English, which is, as NC State's program director notes, "a critical part of graduate training in English."

The other flaw in the NCTE's proposal is the notion that "an approach deeply rooted in cognitive psychology and linguistics" works better than one rooted in observation and experience. In a recent interview, composition expert Gary Tate explained why the new approach to training teachers does not always turn out good readers of student prose:

We aren't very good readers many times. Which goes back, I think to the split between composition and literature. You don't ask students who are going to teach music or be composers to ignore the great composers of the past. We demand that they study them. They study Bach; they study Beethoven; they study Stravinsky. But we say now in composition studies—or a lot of programs do—"You're going to study composition and rhetoric, so you can teach writing" and ignore the great writing that has been going on for centuries....I think that's a real mistake.³⁶

To Professor Tate's observation I add another. To train all prospective writing teachers in composition theory and research rather than in great writing would be to suppress talent, invention, and a passion for the written word, which most likely is what attracted instructors to teaching English in the first place.

A better measure of writing teacher potential is a love for great works, a knack for writing clear sentences, and a yen for having both rub off on a class of sometimes reluctant eighteen-year olds. Important also is a candidate's willingness to meet one-on-one with students after class and occasionally to advise a bewildered freshman on matters other than composition. Those qualifications can come complete with an M.A. or Ph.D., but can also be found in graduate students who aim for careers in teaching.

For two decades theorist reformers have emphasized pedagogy over an individual teacher's special gifts, a misstep that has been the wont of reformers for at least a century. In an 1896 essay, composition expert Thomas Lounsbury assailed the Harvard reformers for putting pedagogical method above teacher talent and a command of literature. The passage in which he exposes the dangers in such misplaced emphasis could have been written yesterday, for it pinpoints the defect in postmodern pedagogy as well:

Two dangers loom up in the path of reform. First, that of exalting pedagogical method at the expense of the teacher's personality; second, that of placing mere training in composition superior to familiarity with good literature. The country is suffering at present from an acute attack of pedagogical psychology in its most malignant form; so that some zealous teachers spend more time on the study of method than on two things vastly more important—their specialty and human nature. Nothing is more vicious than to suppose that a man with a "psycho-pedagogical" method can teach either school or college students without a sympathetic and personal knowledge of his pupils. Much of the popular pedagogy of today is all moonshine, because the natural-born teacher (and there are many such) does not need so elaborate an apparatus, and the pedagogue who has no natural gift is deluded into thinking that this new-fangled machinery of soul-development is all that is required.³⁷

The natural born teachers to whom Lounsbury refers are the ones whose passion is a certain subject and whose joy it is to make that subject irresistible—year after year—for students whose main interests probably lie elsewhere. In English 101, they are the ones who have seen firsthand the power of literature to engage students, to serve as a model for good writing, and to impact the reading and writing skills of college freshmen. They are teachers who will resist any pedagogy that excludes literature from freshman composition.

With his timeless rebuttal for the pedagogue and his "new-fangled machinery," Lounsbury answers the question I posed in my title. Much of today's ingrown pedagogy, this fallacy among them, is indeed "all moonshine." Hiring only those who are "well-versed in composition theory" would actually hinder a student's chance to master basic composition. It would, in theory-speak, "problematize" further a course already beset with problems.

Fallacy 3: "The use of isolated grammar and usage exercises not supported by theory and research is a deterrent to the improvement of students' speaking and writing."

This quotation comes in a resolution the National Council of Teachers of English passed in 1985. 38 A year later, the NCTE supported its position by publishing the results

of a study they themselves had commissioned. Three sentences in George Hillocks' *Research on Written Composition* stand out because they sum up the position on grammar composition theorists have taken ever since:

The study of traditional school grammar (i.e., the definition of parts of speech, the parsing of sentences, etc.) has no effect on raising the quality of student writing....Taught in certain ways, grammar and mechanics instruction has a deleterious effect on student writing. In some studies a heavy emphasis on mechanics and usage (e.g., marking every error) resulted in significant losses in overall quality.³⁹

Two decades later, theorist James Williams regrets that support for teaching grammar "persists even today" despite the widespread belief among theorists that "Experience should have made it clear to everyone that grammar instruction and drills did nothing to improve writing." Ironically, the third edition of Williams' book *Preparing to Teach Writing* appeared in 2003, the same year the National Commission on Writing made public its discovery that "Recent analyses indicate that more than 50 percent of first-year college students are unable to produce papers that are relatively free of language errors."

Perhaps in response to the Commission's disturbing disclosure, the section on usage in the NCTE's 2004 report relents somewhat, admitting that "Writers need an image in their minds of conventional grammar, spelling, and punctuation." Just how they are to come by this image isn't made clear, but the NCTE still contends that "conventions of writing are best taught in the context of writing," not by "completing workbook or online exercises." Surely every composition instructor wishes this were true, but now we know that over 50 percent of today's college freshmen need more than what the NCTE calls "reflective appointments" with instructors who "permit students to set goals for their own improvement."

It is no coincidence that the demise of grammar instruction has coincided exactly with an increasing diversity among college enrollees, many of whom did not grow up speaking or writing "standard English." To avoid making these students feel uncomfortable or inadequate, composition theorists made two decisions. One, requiring all students to conform to strict standards of correctness would brand some with an unjust stigma. Two, revising what we mean when we say "standard English" would minimize the problem. Hence, the theorists' new position on correctness, which Lindemann made clear in her "Three Views of English 101": "The criteria for good writing do not always derive from literary standards applied to finished drafts."

Buried at the bottom of the *NCTE Guideline* "Some Questions and Answers about Grammar" is the real reason theorists have redefined the phrase "standard English": "Many people find the term *standard English* to be inaccurate and misleading because it creates a false impression that there exists a single variety of English that all educated Americans speak and write." In keeping with the current trend to obfuscate facts that sound harsh or judgmental, the NCTE suggests "*edited written English*" or "*Language of Wider Communication*" as alternative labels for the offending "*standard English*." "⁴⁵

Even more telling is the NCTE site's link to a resolution passed by its Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in 1974:

We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they

find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language.⁴⁶

Here is the earliest official warning that endorsing only one standard of literacy is "immoral" and need not be the goal of a college education—a notion that betrays the very students whose "varieties of language" the resolution meant to uphold. It ignores the fact that failure to write correctly will prove to be a serious handicap for all students, regardless of their race or ethnicity.

The extent to which writing program directors at North Carolina State and UNC have relaxed standards to make room for "varieties of language" is hard to determine. Printed guidelines for composition students at both schools advise that correctness matters, but instructors say that program directors forbid a hard-line approach to ensure correctness and admonish instructors caught emphasizing it. In her "Three Views of Composition," Lindemann rationalizes the inconsistency in theorist thinking by saying: "Though writers must conform their messages to reasonable conventions of spelling, mechanics, and usage, these same rules and principles may prove confining." One wonders what a freshman, reading a classmate's essay quickly to determine its "holistic" value, would decide are "reasonable" standards of spelling, mechanics, and usage. 48

What may prove even more confining for graduates is their failure to conform to strict conventions of spelling, mechanics, and usage—when they apply for jobs. In the 2004 survey of business leaders entitled "A Ticket to Work," The National Commission on Writing found that proficiency in writing was the "ticket to professional opportunity, while poorly written job applications are a figurative kiss of death." Upfront in the report, the commissioners sum up their findings in one line: "Whatever the form of communication, it is clear that respondents expect written material to be accurate, clear, and grammatically correct." Among the respondents' comments are the following:

- The skills of new college graduates are deplorable—across the board; spelling, grammar, sentence structure...I can't believe people come out of college now not knowing what a sentence is.
- Recent graduates aren't even aware when things are wrong (singular/plural agreement, run-on sentences, and the like). I'm amazed they got through college.⁵¹

Preparing students to impress corporate America or any other discerning employer has never been easier to accomplish *outside of class*, so the theorists' other argument against grammar instruction—that it takes class time away from actual writing—no longer applies.⁵² In addition to meeting with students one-on-one to discuss usage in the context of their own writing, instructors can require that students work and check handbook or online exercises and attend writing center workshops.

Teaching grammar in freshman composition shouldn't be necessary and wouldn't be necessary if our public school system were doing its job.⁵³ Most college freshmen

need a systematic review of grammar precisely because public high school teachers often go by what the NCTE claims "research shows" rather than what they can see with their own eyes. ⁵⁴ Learning the mechanics of English is like learning the mechanics of any other language. It requires drill and practice, drill and practice. Students do not learn to write correctly by superimposing grammar, punctuation, and spelling on their final drafts—especially when they outsource the editing of those drafts, that is, turn them over to friends who correct errors.

During the Modern Language Association's December 2005 convention, panelist Anne Curzan expressed the belief that "Punctuation itself is not an ascertainable fact, like mountains" and furthermore that "Creating this kind of insecurity in people is not helpful." Such statements perpetuate the notion that grammar drills are a form of educational malpractice. No one would argue that grammar instruction improves the depth of analysis in a student-written essay, but it does improve correctness, which still matters a great deal to a discerning employer.

Fallacy 4: A "student-centered" class provides the best format for "the making of knowledge."

Composition theorists, backed by their own research, say that students can learn more from each other than they can from a teacher/authority whose position as expert actually stifles a student's "authentic voice." In her "Three Views of English 101," Lindemann explains how the student-centered model works:

Though students may begin the course having been schooled in the strategies of individual competition, the teacher deliberately fosters collaboration so that students must now learn from one another. In this model, students are always members of a stable writing group, working together for the entire term so that they develop trust in one another, accept responsibility for the group's successes and failures, and appreciate one another's diverse abilities and interests. Every class meeting involves group activities: developing schedules for a project and assigning research tasks, sharing information gained from independent reading and research, talking out plans for a draft, responding to and revising drafts, sometimes writing collaboratively. Discussions of readings also may begin in groups. ⁵⁶

In short, the student-centered classroom model has provided a way for theorists to curtail "teacher talk," which they see as another great enemy of student progress.

Most instructors endorse some collaboration among students, especially when it has them making appointments to see trained tutors *after class* to talk about writing. At UNC, however, collaboration among students has become the primary source of *in-class* instruction. Throughout the semester, freshmen meet in small groups to which they are assigned during the first week of class. UNC's *Student Guide to English 10, 11 and 12* assures enrollees that

the teacher doesn't spend much time lecturing. Instead he or she will give a variety of writing and reading activities that you will work on in class. The teacher's role is that of a facilitator, one who circulates among students reading work in progress and offering advice and suggestions for improvement. Much of your time in class will be devoted to reading the drafts of assignments produced by your groupmates while they read your draft.⁵⁷

An inherent contradiction in this arrangement is that students with SAT scores not high enough to place out of freshman composition are presumed qualified to critique the work of their peers. The *Student Guide* informs students that teachers "will assume that you know a great deal and will expect you to contribute your knowledge to the class." If, based on their classmates' advice, these students do indeed become skillful critics and writers in one semester, they will have achieved what takes teachers and tutors a good bit longer. And not once in twenty-six years of teaching composition did I hear an able instructor or writer say that he or she became so by chatting with other novices in the field.

Theorists justify the shift in power from teacher to student on the grounds that, left alone, students will "create knowledge" from some vast, untapped depths. Lindemann explains the concept:

The student writer is the expert, commanding subjects and strategies for composing that the teacher has no access to because they are born of the writer's experience. The student has a self to discover, some truth to express, a unique language and voice. ⁵⁹

In his1988 exposé of our dumbed-down educational system, E.D. Hirsch traces such idealism to disciples of eighteenth-century philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, "who believed that we should encourage the natural development of young children and not impose adult ideas upon them." Within reason, that is not a bad idea, but, applied liberally in freshman composition, it panders to teenagers already hooked on Google, iPod, TiVo, and txt msgs—handy and above all *instant* sources of pleasure and information. Included in the *Neglected "R"* report is the assertion "Writing competence builds confidence, which readily turns into creativity and *fun* [italics added]." Composition theorists transpose the terms of this equation—putting fun before competence—perhaps heightening the desire to write, but no doubt hindering the performance of an unschooled freshman.

UNC's *Student Guide* even trumpets: "Students report that getting to know a few students well is one of the best features of their composition course"—as if socializing were a valid aim of any college course. The directors of NC State's program refer to teachers as "instructors," not "facilitators," but call for a liberal dose of peer/peer interaction for yet another reason: "Research shows that a college freshman's attention span is about twenty minutes." Anyone who has taught freshmen knows that their minds do wander but also knows that a teacher in charge can expand attention spans by professing: "I know a great deal about the process of writing. You have paid a whopping tuition to hear it and now must sit still and listen to learn it—sometimes for longer than twenty minutes straight!" Such a bold stroke would be heresy to theorists who treat short attention spans as a given rather than as a deficiency to be overcome. Theorists fear that putting a teacher in charge might reinstate what Lindemann calls "strategies of individual competition" among students. And a teacher/authority would most certainly interfere with the theorists' aim to "forge their English 101 classes into a community of writers." ⁶³

Another possible rationale for putting students in charge is never mentioned by program directors, but instructors admit that a course designed to promote in-class writing, talking in groups, and surfing the web for information requires less of the one who facilitates it. The student-centered model appeals especially to instructors who are also reading and writing for graduate classes or who are teaching three sections of composition per semester. The student-centered format lightens their load considerably because it reduces the time they must spend preparing for class.

Nor do program directors mention that grade inflation is another byproduct of the student-centered model. Of the 110 sections of freshman comp offered at UNC in the spring of '05, only six had an average GPA below 3.0, and only one of the six had an average GPA below 2.9.⁶⁴ Perhaps assigning a grade lower than B would belie the assumption that enrollees already know a great deal and will learn plenty more interacting in groups. Or perhaps allowing students to participate in the "holistic scoring" of student essays heightens their chances to make A's and B's. Carolina's *Student Guide* asserts that holistic scoring makes grading "more objective and more reliable" when students spend class time reading unsigned photocopies of their classmates essays "quickly but carefully" and assigning numeric scores. The *Student Guide* cautions that "*Reading too slowly makes scores unreliable because isolated features, not overall quality, assume too much importance* [emphasis added]." Each essay is scored by two students, and if the two scores do not agree within one point, the teacher "acts as a third reader" and gives the essay the "deciding score."

The teacher, then, does have the final authority. However, "Because students can be trained to be highly reliable scorers, teachers rarely find it necessary to change a paper's score." If freshmen can, in one semester, become "highly reliable scorers" by reading "quickly," they will have achieved a goal instructors spend whole careers working toward. And if UNC instructors do indeed trust freshmen to perform what was once a tough, time-consuming job, they'll have saved themselves a great deal of time.

In the concluding paragraph of the section on "holistic scoring," the UNC *Guide* notes that some students feel "uncomfortable" with the process because it "seems so different from the kind of grading they experienced in high school." Apparently, some instructors feel uncomfortable with the process as well. According to one, few freshman instructors follow the procedure to the letter because "students hate it."

No one would deny that classroom interaction plus some in-class writing engages students in ways that an all-lecture format does not. But a willful inversion of the teacher/student relationship slights the knowledge of the real experts and overstates the potential for freshman writers to teach each other. An improved course would reinstate the teacher as authority and limit the time students spend reading, writing, and working in groups or online—in class. No composition course should entrust a class of eighteen year olds, lacking in maturity and acumen, with the task of teaching each other how to write or with the task of grading papers.

Fallacy 5: If composition theorists talk about writing in the language they themselves have invented, no one will notice that their mission in English 101 has more to do with promoting theorist ideology than it does with promoting literacy.

Proceeding on that assumption, composition theorists have written volumes in defense of the course whose content and format I described in sections one through four of this study. But deciphering what theorists mean when they talk about the new "social-theoretic model" for English 101 lets one in for a tough read because the very ones in charge of teaching freshmen how to write clear, concise prose often display a torturously dense, jargon-laden style in their own writing.

A prime example of theorist ideology masquerading as dazzling discovery can be found in the work of James Berlin, whose ideas about teaching composition seem to have had the greatest impact on local practitioners. Upon his death in 1994, colleagues at Purdue called Berlin "the primary theorist and leading spokesperson for the cultural studies movement in composition," and the following contains Berlin's insights into what happens in the new "democratized" composition class:

[W]riting and reading become acts of discourse analysis as individuals attempt to understand the semiotic codes operating in their discursive situations. Composing and reception are thus interactive since both are performances of production, requiring the active construction of meaning according to one or another coded procedure.⁶⁸

There one finds a banal observation—reading and writing are interactive—dressed up in language only a theorist could love. But Berlin also notes what happens when composition studies parallel cultural studies: a "social epistemic rhetoric" will emerge, "a rhetoric that considers signifying practices in relation to the ideological formation of the self within a context of economics, politics, and power." Tangled up in the jargon one can find a new aim for English 101, an aim more important than teaching basic writing skills to college freshmen. Theorists would rescue freshmen from what Berlin calls "conformity of thought and expression" and bring their newly formed ideology in line with theorist notions about "economics, politics and power."

The effect such thinking has had on classroom practice at both State and Carolina is apparent in the theorists' move to "democratize" their own versions of English 101—by forging the class into a "community of writers," which one suspects is code for "groupthink." In his 2003 book, State theorist Michael Carter touts a "relationship between theory-talk and practice" because the writing class sets up "an occasion for collaboratively constructing theories about writing." Here, Carter endorses classroom collaboration and, several pages later, couches the Berlin mission in slightly more accessible prose. According to Carter, Berlin believed that "creating an antifoundational classroom—open, pluralistic, democratic—will encourage students to write in a way that interacts critically with the ideological formations of their world and take action to change them." Therein lies the aim of many theorists, and where they succeed one envisions students leaving the composition class thinking that writing is the joint effort of budding activists—not an arduous process done mostly in isolation.

In her defense of the "egalitarian" class, Jane Danielewicz, new director of UNC's freshman program, advocates replacing the "standard curriculum" with a "dialogic curriculum" wherein student/teacher interaction empowers a class "to create knowledge rather than to accept 'official' knowledge." To clarify what she means by "official knowledge," Dr. Danielewicz quotes another prominent theorist, Brazilian Paulo Freire: "Traditional discourse confirms the dominant mass culture and the inherited, official shape of knowledge" (which presumably should be suppressed or overruled). In its

place, Freire would have a "liberatory dialogue," more specifically, "a democratic communication which disconfirms domination and illuminates while affirming the freedom of the participants to re-make their culture." Perhaps aware that the Freire doctrine must be translated for the uninitiated, Danielewicz continues:

The hierarchical relationship that now exists between faculty and students (as prospective teachers) would be transformed into an egalitarian one if everyone works jointly to understand conceptual knowledge. Teachers would no longer be experts who possessed knowledge, but partners exploring knowledge with students.⁷³

In even plainer English, this is Danielewicz's call for teachers and students to work together to subvert tradition and "remake" a culture badly in need of remaking. These ideas are presented in her guide for training public school teachers—not one for freshman composition instructors. Still, they supply a rationale for what a Carolina student handout calls the "social-theoretic" model in freshman composition and explain why another departmental handout calls writing "a way of making meaning" but also "a form of social action." The same handout informs students that in freshman composition they will "use writing to identify themselves with a group and, sometimes, to alter what the group thinks or does." Carolina theorists, then, make no bones about it—the social-theoretic model for freshman composition is more about altering student thinking than it is about improving student writing.

To that end, Carolina instructors have freshmen making videos, storyboards, or group presentations on topics such as "Disease in Developing Nations" or "Astronomy and Space Science." Students are also asked to analyze the "Social Interactions" on an episode of "Reality TV," which was viewed in class, and write law firm Memoranda on *Miranda v. Arizona*. Under the new rule at State, students read essays on "Coyote Food Habits," "Attitudes on Dating, Courtship, and Marriage: Perspectives on In-Group Versus Out-Group Relationships by Religious Minority and Majority Adolescents," and "Adverse Effects of Hyposalinity from Stormwater Runoff on the Aggregating Anemone," all of which appear in a text currently used in English 101 at NC State. No topic, it seems, is off-limits for freshman composition—except those topics requiring students to read great works of literature.

It is no coincidence that the rise of the "cultural studies movement in freshman composition" has coincided exactly with a decline in literacy among college graduates. Two generations of freshmen have been "democratized" in English 101 rather than schooled in the basic of writing and in great models of written English. Two generations of freshman instructors have been trained by theorists who use high-flown rhetoric to camouflage their real intent. The best appraisal of the "jargonitis" that afflicts many theorists comes from Donald Lazere, English professor emeritus at California Polytechnic State University:

[T]hese theorists' own discourse has a lockstep, scholastic uniformity and, far from being comprehensible to the masses of teachers and students, it seems calculated mainly to win prestige for composition theory by elevating it to the level of the most arcane (and now outmoded) literary theory; "doing theory" now often has become a substitute for teaching writing, as it earlier became one for teaching literature.⁷⁴

And yet scholars who, Yeats once said, "cough in ink" win big grants to pursue arcane theories about writing, most likely because legislators or other patrons (A) haven't read any postmodern theory, (B) have read it but are reluctant to admit they don't get it, or (C) are beguiled by the promise of a new "cutting edge." Thus, grantors and theorists still thrive in perfect symbiosis.

A sharp insight into how "theory-talk" can warp student writing comes from Stanley Ridgley. In the title of a 2003 article, Ridgley asks, "College Students Can't Write?"—then answers the question in his opening statement, which is the epigraph for this report:

In fact, hundreds of thousands of recent college graduates today cannot express themselves with the written word. Why? Because universities have shortchanged them, offering strange literary theories, Marxism, feminism, deconstruction, and other oddities in the guise of writing courses. They've offered everything, really, but the basics of clear writing.⁷⁵

The question many might ask is why, despite a noticeable decline in student literacy under the theorists' watch, theory still parades itself through the university—clothed in a dark new lingo. The answer is that composition theorists have convinced grantors and administrators that "new ideas and methods now taking hold in response to writing seem clear and theoretically sound compared with the misguided and provincial efforts of the past." More specifically, they have convinced patrons that "Undertheorized work is naïve, politically immature, ill-read, unenlightened, culturally backward." These are the words Robert Connors predicted theorists would use to dismiss his 1997 book *Composition-Rhetoric*—if he didn't include at least some "revisionist," "poststructuralist," "Marxo-constructivist," or "postdeconstructive" theory.

Few outside academe, I think, are aware that such misbegotten creeds actually influence classroom practice or that their inventors' Goliath-like grip on composition programs makes colleagues reluctant to protest—lest they revive an old quarrel or imperil their own careers. For to trespass on what theorist research shows—and come down hard on the side of Experience Shows More—is to invite charges of benightedness, or rather of "undertheorization." It is to be charged with what James Berlin once called an "anti-intellectual conservatism." Contained within that one word is the sum of all theorist fears.

Fallacy 6: "Freshman composition: No Place for Literature"

No tenet in the theorists' prescription for composition courses is more radical or perverse than this one. Here it comes packaged in the curt title of a Lindemann article that would settle, once and for all, the debate about literature's place in freshman composition. Including literature, Lindemann decides, is "inappropriate" (1) because reading others' texts distracts students from writing their own (2) because literature invites too much "teacher-talk" (3) because writing *about* literature does not teach style (4) because students can get it in other classes, and (5) because interpreting literature "also represents only one way of knowing, a process of knowledge-making peculiar to the humanities" An offshoot of problem five is that to learn how to teach the "peculiar" methods of the "humanists," Lindemann thinks instructors would need "a course, a

practicum, or a substantial mentoring program."⁷⁹ But Lindemann endorses having freshman instructors teach the "methods of making meaning" of other disciplines because writing program directors will support that aim. ⁸⁰ In short, Lindemann thinks that English 101 is "no place for literature" yet thinks that putting walk-on instructors in charge of teaching freshmen how to write like scientists and social scientists is a good idea. ⁸¹

The debate over the value of including literature in any college class is nothing new. Literature's original guardians were nineteenth and early twentieth-century classicists who defended teaching Greek and Latin on the grounds that "no education can be called excellent which does not include some study at first-hand of the life and thought of the two peoples who developed and carried on for a thousand years this civilization which is our inheritance, and out of whose literature and philosophy and art our own have sprung." The classicists eventually lost that argument to scholars who proposed literature written in *English* as a better guide to our past, to our collective psyche, *and* to good writing in English. In the twentieth century, however, even that claim was challenged—by scholars in other disciplines who thought studying literature wasted students' time, by parents who feared a concentration in literature would narrow a graduate's job choices, and by students who declared great works boring and irrelevant. Nevertheless, until recently, a university degree required at least some exposure to the English classics.

No more. In a bizarre postmodern twist, the devaluing of literature now comes from within the English department itself. Composition theorists say it has no place in a course designed to teach freshmen how to write for other disciplines, but there is something else going on here. Lindemann refers to literature professors who contend, "Although literature may have been taught poorly in the past, we should now reassert its importance in writing courses by adopting the insights of recent developments in critical theory."83 Lindemann lets us know that she has indeed considered allowing today's freshmen to study great writing in their writing class, that is, if a theorist taught it right perhaps by having students "deconstruct" a great work rather than enjoy it, or perhaps by telling students that literature has no "intrinsic merit" as Professor Stanley Fish once declared. 84 But Lindemann rejects even that proposal. While she agrees with professors who say that "critical theory" has indeed given us "a better understanding of how readers engage texts [and] how those texts are socially constructed," she insists it's still not safe to go back into those Shakespeare-infested waters. 85 The "something else going on here" is that theorists see Shakespeare and his ilk as carriers of oppressive Western values racist, sexist, patriarchal, and imperialist. But the offending white males are long dead. and, as far as the theorists are concerned, should not be resurrected in freshmen composition.86

When the new commissioners on writing found that students are "increasingly shortchanged" in their writing courses, they did not name the ban on works by dead white males as part of the swindle. But experienced teachers, such as Peter Elbow, Gary Tate, and Mark Bauerlein, each of whom I quoted earlier, have emphasized the connection between what students read and how they write. ⁸⁷ And all experienced teachers will have noticed that the best student writers are those with an ear for the "dress of thought" one finds only in great writing. They are students who have studied the incomparable language of a Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Austen, or Dickinson, to name but four such

masters. They are students who can spot similarities in Chaucer's clergy and modern day clerics and who liken Shakespeare's monarchs to today's politicians. They are students who see that overcoming pride and prejudice in any age is no mean task and who know that a "modest" proposal is anything but. Often they are students who balk at reading Marlowe, Milton, or Joyce, then show up years later remembering an exact line or idea from a certain work. But most important, they are students who are touched, sometimes unawares, by a great writer's insights into human nature and by the diction, cadence, and syntax he or she uses to explore it. Nothing, then, could be more practical than to let students see and hear the indelible words great writers choose to give us a sober warning, a rush of pleasure, or a reminder that we are not alone in this scary business of living.

Because composition theorists do not see an instant, measurable improvement in the writing of students who read great works, they conclude that reading literature does not improve student writing. But when theorists set about to teach freshmen how to write like scientists and social scientists by having them read essays from those disciplines, they acknowledge the connection between reading and writing—as well as discredit their position that reading literature does not impact student writing.⁸⁸ Lindemann would excuse this quirk by saying that assignments in literature "silence students' voices in the conversation literature is intended to promote" and furthermore that "literature teaching offers the writing teacher no model worth emulating."89 Here we see the theorists' view that exposure to literature actually *impairs* student progress and that no precedent exists for teaching literature well. In two fell swoops, Lindemann would dismiss the efforts of teachers who've spent whole careers proving otherwise—and who have saved copies of thoughtful, well-phrased freshman essays to serve as evidence. Lindemann would also ignore what writers themselves routinely say in interviews and autobiographies—they were inspired by reading the works of other great writers, sometimes on their own, sometimes in a memorable class.⁹⁰

Even more alarming than the theorists' stand against literature is their position on reading in general. Some theorists doubt that any reading can inspire good writing. Lindemann's idea that reading others' texts distracts students from writing their own is backed by theorists who claim that textbooks "inhibit students' use of writing as a tool of inquiry" because students "may feel so intimidated by published readings that they will dismiss their own texts as unworthy by comparison." In the same vein, State's Michael Carter once claimed that "Most research has shown that we learn to use discourse by reading voluntarily when we are young, but not much as we grow older."92 The NCTE's 2004 "Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing" update the Carter theory: "Most research indicates that the easiest way to tap motivation to read is to teach students to choose books and other texts they understand and enjoy."93 Slipping in the phrase "teach students to choose books" mitigates only slightly the Carter stunner. Theorists believe that, left alone, or perhaps with a shadowy facilitator looking on, students will choose texts wisely. Or theorists might choose for them but choose a big dose of discourse from other "discourse communities." Thus, the distance between theorist notions about reading and the decree "Freshman Composition: No Place for Literature" becomes one short step. 94

Left alone students rarely reach for masterworks that bring to life characters they recognize and remember. What they do choose, however, reveals a longing for insight, as well as explains the enduring appeal of self-help tracts such as *Chicken Soup for the*

Teenage Soul, which have long been a fixture on the best-seller list. I do not deny the quick-fix potential of a self-help tract; I simply propose great works as a more reliable source of insight. Nothing, in fact, could be more useful than to include in freshman English works that, in Elbow's words, "render experience rather than explain it." To deny students exposure to such works is to deny what writing program directors themselves were privileged to have, that is, if they were educated before the theorists began, in the words of one scholar, "plowing the field with salt." (For an example of how a theorist can plow the field with salt, see Appendix C.)

With *Literature Lost*—as the title of one work laments—the content of freshman English is now set by utilitarian practitioners who have imposed on literature and composition what John Briggs calls an "unwanted and unwelcome divorce." Over the past two decades, theorists have cut the teacher/authority, "teacher-talk," and grammar instruction from English 101, but the unkindest cut of all is literature. Composition courses would be greatly improved if literature were reinstated, but for students to benefit from studying literature, it will also be necessary to reinstate teachers who hold art sacred, who love great works for their timelessness and for their perfectly wrought passages—teachers who aim to cultivate in students an appreciation for both.

Restoring the Link between Composition and Common Sense

As a first step toward reform, composition theorists must concede that the system in place does not give students the foundation they need to become skillful writers—quite the contrary, according to evidence made public in 2003, 2004, and 2005 by the National Commission on Writing. But a theorist concession will not be forthcoming unless department heads, deans, even college presidents see the connection between what the Commission has identified as a decline in literacy among college graduates and what goes on in their own writing programs.

In any other business, a three-year slide would have a CEO hustling to retool a faulty product. Not so in higher education where the poor value shows up later. An internal review of English 101 by its architects, for example, would tout its success having students write for other disciplines and would publish testimonials from selected faculty and students who endorse the new content. But an internal review would no doubt ignore what specialists in literature and faculty in other disciplines say about English 101's failure to prepare students to write in upper-level classes. Only a critic who is not in thrall to the new system can state the obvious: the new approach to teaching writing is founded on fallacies.

Theorists rode in on a promise to revolutionize the content and format of English 101 and, having achieved both, rest comfortably under the banner "research shows"—that they know best. In 1988, when Pulitzer prize-winning journalist Michael Skube saw how postmodern research had revolutionized composition courses at NC State, he concluded: "So the research goes on, and as it does the wealthiest nation in the world slowly becomes uneducated."

Recommendations for putting freshman composition back on track

If college administrators take a hard look at writing programs in their own institutions, they will find that the pedagogy *du jour* is fraught with contradictions. It puts walk-on instructors in charge of a pivotal course, then leaves them to stand on unfamiliar ground. It responds to a drop in correct usage among college freshmen by dropping grammar instruction from English 101. It responds to a growing sense of entitlement among college students by inflating grades and downgrading instructor authority. It operates in the midst of specialists in literature but thinks literature would "inhibit," "intimidate," or "silence" an ordinary freshman. And finally, it responds to insider criticism, whenever possible, by seceding from the English Department altogether and establishing its own little fiefdom. A college administrator, made aware of these contradictions, might conclude, as SUNY professor Thomas Bertonneau concludes: "fostering literacy is not, in fact, the intention of the postmodern curriculum." And based on evidence presented in this report, one might conclude that the real aim of the postmodern curriculum is to

- put readings from the sciences and social sciences on a par with masterworks from the humanities—in order to level the value of all writing,
- soft-pedal grammar instruction—in order to level the "varieties of English" found among college enrollees,
- discourage classroom competition and forge English 101 classes into "a community of writers," in other words, to level the writing field as well,
- sustain a strong connection between "theory talk" and classroom practice,
- keep literature out of freshman English because theorists do not approve the humanities' "one way of knowing,"
- sharpen a post-postmodern cutting edge—in order to substantiate postmodern research that brought about these radical changes in composition studies.

Anyone who is disturbed by these changes would agree that it is time to reopen discussion about the content and format of English 101 and start the new "revolution" or "transformation" the National Commission on Writing has called for. But the National Commission admits that its "only lever is the power of persuasion" and that it "has no authority to impose change." Nor do I or any other outsider dismayed by what the theorists have wrought. Only a college administrator can ask a writing program director to put freshman composition back on track by

- 1. leaving the "discourse methodology" of the sciences and social sciences to experts in the sciences and social sciences,
- 2. granting instructors latitude to select texts that suit their particular gifts,
- 3. insisting that instructors use class time teaching writing strategies and pointing out how professional writers employ them, rather than having students work in groups,
- 4. reminding instructors that using technology in class is no substitute for lively instruction,
- 5. urging instructors to incorporate daily quizzes or online postings that hold students accountable for the assigned reading,
- 6. endowing instructors with absolute authority and providing strong backup when students challenge that authority,
- 7. requiring instructors to schedule at least two conferences with each student during the course of the semester and encouraging them to meet with students on a regular basis,

- 8. assigning instructors no more than two sections of freshman English per semester, so that they can make time to grade papers carefully and meet with students outside of class, 98
- 9. requiring that essays be graded by instructors whose comments address an identifiable writer—not an anonymous piece of writing—and who routinely hand papers back during the next class period,
- 10. requiring instructors to design a systematic review of grammar—making use of handbook exercises, online tutorials, and writing center workshops in preparation for a departmental test that all students must pass at mid-semester,
- 11. administering a departmental writing test at semester's end (departmental tests provide an excellent measure of teacher competence as well),
- 12. reinstating essay assignments that pique the imagination, e.g., narrative and descriptive essays,
- 13. suggesting that faculty who write or talk about composition read what Aristotle said about clarity—in Book III, Chapter 2 of *On Rhetoric*:

A writer must disguise his art and give the impression of speaking naturally and not artificially....Strange words, compound words, and invented words must be used sparingly and on few occasions....A good writer can produce a style that is distinguished without being obtrusive, and is at the same time clear.

- 14. requiring a two-semester sequence in freshman composition and allowing instructors to include some literature in the introductory course if they wish. For example, instructors could choose an all-essay text like the *Norton Anthology*, which is organized around themes, but also assign fiction and poetry that treat the same themes. Or instructors could choose a freshman text such as *Literature and Ourselves*, which organizes both fiction and nonfiction around themes.
- 15. designing a second semester composition course around great works. ⁹⁹ Ideally, the course would resemble David Denby's *Adventures with Homer, Rousseau*, *Woolf, and Other Indestructible Writers of the Western World*, better known as the 1996 *New York Times* best seller *Great Books*. ¹⁰⁰ But program directors could design a far less ambitious course that would engage students in challenging reading, lively class discussion, and perceptive writing.

The caliber student now accepted at both State and Carolina could handle such a course, would be enriched and enlightened by such a course, and would become a better writer having taken such a course.

In an age where educators routinely blame poor student performance on inadequate funding, I have proposed fifteen changes that would—at little additional cost—narrow the gap between what students pay for in a university education and what they actually get. ¹⁰¹ It's the resistance to change that will cost students plenty when they find themselves competing with graduates of institutions whose composition courses are still grounded in classical literature and strict standards of correctness.

Conclusion

In the best of all possible worlds, parents and teachers would have made literacy a source of pleasure and insight long before students enter college. In a perfectly good world,

both colleges and universities would require proof of literacy for all graduates—if only to deliver standouts to a discriminating job market. For now, we inhabit neither world and cannot raise literacy with the wave of a wand. We can, however, urge university administrators to rescind the patent on a postmodern invention that has taken a good idea way too far. A reformed English 101—one that charts a middle course between innovation and tradition—would indeed earn a far, far better return on a graduate's investment in a university education.

Notes

The Neglected "R": The Need for a Writing Revolution: Report of the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, The College Entrance Examination Board, 2003, 1. http://www.writingcommission.org/prod_downloads/writingcom/neglectedr.pdf>

² Chris M. Anson. Writing and Response: Theory, Practice, and Research (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1989), 11.

The Neglected "R", 7.

⁴ John Brereton, ed., Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875-1925: Documentary History (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: U of Pittsburgh, 1995), 21.

Brereton, 21.

⁶ Barriss Mills, "Writing as Process," *College English* 15, no.1 (1953): 19.

⁷ Scott McLemee, "Deconstructing Composition," Chronicle of Higher Education 49, no. 28 (March 21, 2003): A16

⁸ Writing Program Directors are not listed in the spring 2006 course schedule for freshman English at State or Carolina.

For a detailed discussion of the student-centered model, see "Fallacy 4."

- At present, graduate student TAs teach over 80 % of Carolina's sections of freshman composition. Acting director Todd Taylor had this to say about the high percentage: "The ideal would be to have a qualified Ph.D. in front of every class, but we don't have that much money." By contrast, TAs teach 8 % of freshman composition at State, which has only recently added a Ph.D. in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media.
- The National Commission on Writing's 2003 report notes that complaints about the "problems associated with leaving the teaching of writing to inexperienced graduate students have gathered dust on shelves for decades" (14).
- ¹² In 1988, Pulitzer prize-winning journalist Michael Skube's wrote a long exposé of the battle at State. Skube's column was the front page story of the editorial section of the News and Observer, Sunday, January 31, 1988.
- Michael Skube, "Traditionalists clash with 'process' profs," The News and Observer, 31 January 1988, sec. D.
- In private institutions like Meredith College and Davidson College, senior faculty routinely teach freshman composition but rarely more than one section per semester.
- ¹⁵ In 1988, Skube's article quoted John Bassett, then English Department Head at N.C. State, summing up the attitude of many university administrators—then and now—when he stated his position in the feud over composition: "I kind of want to back off and turn it over to the experts" because they are "on the cutting edge of research."
- Derek Bok, Our Underachieving Colleges (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006), 93.
- The Neglected "R", 7.
- The Neglected "R", 3.
- Writing: A Ticket to Work...Or a Ticket Out: A Survey of Business Leaders. College Entrance Examination Board. 2004, 3.
- http://www.writingcommission.org/prod downloads/writingcom/writing-ticket-to-work.pdf>
- Ticket to Work, 4.
- Writing: A Powerful Message from State Government, College Entrance Examination Board, 2006, 21. http://www.writingcommission.org/prod downloads/writingcom/powerful-message-from-state.pdf>
- ²² Composition theorists at State and Carolina will counter that these reports do not indict their methods, but upper level faculty at both schools say that composition students have indeed been "increasingly shortchanged" in their instruction.
- Erika Lindemann, "Three Views of Composition," College English 57, no. 3 (March 1995): 287.
- 24 Lindemann, "Three Views," 287.
- 25 Peter Elbow, "Reflections on Academic Discourse: How it Relates to Freshmen and Colleagues," College English 53, no. 2 (February 1991): 135.
- Elbow, 136.
- 27 Elbow, 136-137.
- Elbow, 137.
- 29 Elbow, 137.
- 30 The Neglected "R", 14.
- 31 Mark Bauerlein, "Reading without Literature," The Common Review 4, no. 3 (Winter 2006), 27.
- 32 Bauerlein, 25-26.
- 33 This research was conducted for Achieve, Inc., a bipartisan, nonprofit organization founded by our nation's governors and business leaders to raise academic standards nationwide and prepare all students for post-secondary education.
- The Neglected "R", 3.
- NCTE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing, 2004, 1.
- http://www.ncte.org/about/over/positions/category/write/118876.htm
- Gary Tate said this in an interview for Composition Studies, the journal he founded at Texas Christian University in 1972. The interview is available at
- http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/miga3986/is 200310/ai n9310484>
- Brereton, 239.

- The NCTE membership includes teachers and supervisors of English programs in grades 1-12 and in colleges and universities. Its premier publication is *College English*, which I quote often in this study.
- George Hillocks, *Research on Written Composition: New Directions for Teaching* (Urbana, Illinois: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, 1986), 248.
- James Williams, *Preparing to Teach Writing: Research, Theory, and Practice*. 3rd ed. (Mahweh, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003), 50.
- The Neglected "R", 14.
- NCTE Beliefs, 5.
- NCTE Beliefs, 6.
- Lindemann, "Three Views," 294.
- NCTE Guideline: Some Questions and Answers about Grammar." 2002.
- http://www.ncte.org/about/over/positions/category/gram/107646.htm
- Conference on College Composition and Communication. fall, 1974.
- http://www.ncte.org/library/files/About_NCTE/Overview/NewSRTOL.pdf
- Lindemann, "Three Views," 294.
- Composition students at Carolina grade each other's papers, using a system called "holistic" scoring, which I outline in the upcoming section of this report.
- 49 Ticket to Work, 3.
- 50 Ticket to Work, 11.
- ⁵¹ Ticket to Work, 14.
- One suspects that preparing students to impress corporate America would be the last thing on the mind of a postmodern writing program director.
- Two recent articles offer hope that public education is about to improve. At their February, 2005 summit on high school education, governors from forty-five states pledged "to raise high school rigor and align graduation requirements with skills demanded in college or work." A July 31, 2005 article in *The New York Times* exposes schools of education whose mission is "building a caring learning community" rather than "equipping future teachers with the practicalities to be successful." And prominent educators like Arthur Levine, president of Columbia University's Teachers College, are calling for nationwide reform of teacher education.
- Typically, graduates of private or parochial schools have stronger backgrounds in grammar and usage.
- The Modern Language Association (MLA) was founded in 1883 to oversee "the study and teaching of language and literature" in American schools and colleges. But at its December, 2005 convention, Dr. Curzan, associate professor in the English Department at the University of Michigan, admitted, "Despite our name, there are very few panels on language at the MLA."
- Lindemann, "Three Views," 297.
- 57 Student Guide to English 10, 11, and 12. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 5.
- ⁵⁸ Student Guide, 5.
- Lindemann, "Three Views," 293.
- 60 E.D. Hirsch, Cultural Literacy (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), xiv.
- 61 The Neglected "R", 13.
- An October 19, 2005 *Wall Street Journal* article titled "College Tuition Costs Increase At Twice the Rate of Inflation" reveals that "tuition and fees at four-year universities are up 7.1% from a year ago" (D3).
- Lindermann, "Three Views," 297.
- ⁶⁴ By contrast, of the 96 sections offered at State in the spring of '05, 51 had a GPA below 2.9.
- 65 Student Guide, 8.
- 66 Student Guide, 8.
- A Carolina student had this to say about the student-centered format in English 12: "We all hated it. Everybody but the slackers got sick of group work in high school."
- James Berlin, "Composition Studies and Cultural Studies: Collapsing Boundaries," in *Into the Field: Sites of Composition Studies.*, ed. Anne Ruggles Gere (New York: MLA, 1993), 109.
- ⁵⁹ Berlin, 109.
- Michael Carter, Where Writing Begins: A Postmodern Reconstruction, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2003), 173.
- ⁷¹ Carter, 180.

- Jane Danielewicz, *Teaching Selves: Identity, Pedagogy, and Teacher Education* (Albany, New York: State U of NY P, 2001), 148.
- 73 Danielewicz, 148.
- Donald Lazare, review of Into the Field: Sites of Composition Studies in JAC: A Journal of Composition Theory 15, no. 1 (1995): 4.
- < http://jac.gsu.edu/jac/15.1/Reviews/3.htm>
- Stanley Ridgley, "College Students Can't Write?" *National Review Online*, (February 19, 2003). Available from
- http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment-ridgley021903.asp

Ridgley is president of the Russian-American Institute and has served as executive director of the *Collegiate Network*, a national association of college newspapers. While teaching at Duke, Ridgley founded the independent school newspaper *The Duke Review* in 1989. In '91, the *Review* predicted the fall of "the cult of deconstructionists, post-modernists, New Age Critics, Marxists, and feminists," but the theorists still prevail at Duke as well.

- Anson, Writing and Response, 7.
- ⁷⁷ Robert J. Connors, *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogue* (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh, 1997), 20-21.
- ⁷⁸ Berlin, 116.
- Erika Lindemann, "Freshman Composition: No Place for Literature," *College English* 55, no. 3 (March 1993): 314-15.
- Lindemann, "Freshman Composition," 315.
- For a point by point refutation of Lindemann's argument, see John Briggs' "Writing Without Reading: The Decline of Literature in the Composition Classroom" (33-34). Available from https://www.bu.edu/literary/projects/briggs/briggs-report.pdf
- Clement L. Smith, "The American College in the Twentieth Century," *The Atlantic Monthly* 85, no. 508 (February 1900): 229.
- Lindemann, "Freshman Composition," 311.
- Stanley Ridgley notes that during Fish's tenure as head of the English Department at Duke (1986-'98), many knew that he "was destroying the English Department with his dubious and expensive radical faculty hires and recruitment of substandard graduate students steeped in bizarre postmodernist theory" (3). What was known in some circles as the "Fish tank" collapsed in the late 90s.
- Lindemann, "Freshman Composition," 314.
- During the early 90s, the anti-Western literature bias among English Department theorists was a hot topic in the media. *Newsweek's* December 24, 1990 issue called it a new brand of "McCarthyism" and quoted an English professor saying "the word *classic* makes me feel oppressed!" *The Atlantic's* March 1991issue notes that one by one prestigious universities were replacing requirements in Western literature with requirements in Third World cultures. In a December 12, 1995 *New York Times* editorial, Maureen Dowd quotes Georgetown English professor John Glavin saying, "We want to get away from the notion that literature is sacred." But English Department radicals who would depose literature still exert influence at most universities.
- For the pertinent quotations from Elbow, Bauerlein, and Tate see pages 8, 9, and 10 in this report.
- The connection between what one reads and how one writes is also apparent in the books and articles written by composition theorists—in the language they invented two decades ago.
- Lindemann, "Freshman Composition," 314.
- North Carolina's own Reynolds Price and Anne Tyler give legendary high school English teacher Phyllis Peacock credit for having encouraged and inspired them. Other recent testimonials to the connection between reading and great writing have come from authors Anne Lamott, Annie Dillard, and the late Eudora Welty. Scott Fitzgerald devotees will recall that he wrote *The Great Gatsby* under the influence of Keats, whom he read daily while writing what many say is the great American novel.
- Chris Anson et al., Scenarios for Teaching Writing: Contexts for Discussion and Reflective Practice (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1993), 100, 18.
- Skube, D1.
- 93 NCTE Beliefs, 6.
- For the effect this theory has had on student reading, see the National Endowment for the Arts' 2004 report "Reading at Risk," which called the decline in reading "a national crisis," most noticeably among

young adults, aged 18-24. The NEA concludes, "It is time to inspire a nationwide renaissance of literary reading and bring the transformative power of literature into the lives of all citizens." Available from http://www.arts.gov/pub/ReadingAtRisk.pdf

Briggs, 6.

⁹⁶ Skube, 5D.

Thomas Bertonneau, "We all have our Own Brains: The Price Students Pay for 'Cutting Edge' Instruction," *The Montana Professor* 11, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 12. http://mtprof.msun.edu/Spr2001/Berton.html

Harvard President Emeritus Derek Bok notes that hiring only full-time professionals to teach freshman English "may be beyond the financial reach of many institutions" but that "every college can try to assemble a central core of experienced, properly compensated, full-time teachers" whose "teaching loads must be reasonable enough to allow sufficient time for meeting individually with students" (98).

I define "great works" or "classics" as masterworks—fiction, nonfiction, or poetry—that are generally recognized as having enduring value because of their timeless insights into the human condition and

unique, memorable crafting.

In the fall of 1991, thirty years after he had taken "Literature Humanities" (Lit Hum) and "Contemporary Civilization" (C.C.) as a freshman at Columbia University, Denby retook those freshman courses, which were commonplace requirements in universities until recently. In the introduction Denby notes that no one in 1961 "could possibly have imagined that in the following decades the courses would be alternately reviled as an iniquitous oppression and adored as a bulwark of the West" (11).

Limiting the number of sections instructors teach to two would require additional funding or reallocating available funds.

Appendix A

Uses for an online discussion board

Accompanying each reading assignment in the syllabus are questions that students must answer on an online discussion board by 8:00 p.m. the night before the assignment is due in class. The instructor reads student responses, takes notes, and comments upon their postings in class the following day. Sometimes students respond online to their classmates' assessments of the reading, setting up a dialogue or point/counterpoint about a particular assignment. Here are eight specific advantages an online discussion board can have for students and instructors.

- 1. The instructor goes into class knowing what his or her students have understood and misunderstood about an assignment, so online discussing is far more effective than journal writing, which instructors always read after a class has discussed a particular assignment.
- 2. The questions are designed to make students think about and assess what they have read; their postings, then, become warm-ups for their formal writing assignments.
- 3. Their class preparation (or lack thereof) is exposed for the whole class to see, so most students take this informal writing very seriously.
- 4. Because postings are required, even reticent students can be involved in class discussion. The instructor can ask reticent students simply to repeat in class what they have said online, thereby giving them an opportunity to shine in class.
- 5. Students are old hands at chatting online and adapt easily to the process in English 101.
- 6. Instructors can have students' first posting be an autobiographical sketch, which introduces them to their classmates.
- 7. Instructors can have students submit questions for in-class quizzes on the reading assignments and cull from those submissions five or so for the quiz; students prepare for quizzes by making sure they can answer the questions their classmates have posted.
- 8. Students can be required to post critiques of their classmates' oral presentations in class. For this assignment some instructors change the discussion board format to make these postings anonymous.

The only disadvantage of online discussing is that reading postings adds to the time an instructor must spend preparing for class. Some of that time, however, is recovered when instructors grade formal essays by students who have done significant pre-writing/thinking about the task at hand.



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ENG 101 Sample Syllabus

English 101: Academic Writing and Research A 4.0 Credit-Hour Course

Instructor:

Office Location / Phone:

Office Hours:

E-mail address:

Course Description

Intensive instruction in academic writing and research. Basic principles of rhetoric and strategies for academic inquiry and argument. Instruction and practice in critical reading, including the generative and responsible use of print and electronic sources for academic research. Exploration of literate practices across a range of academic domains, laying the foundation for further writing development in college. Continued attention to grammar and conventions of standard written English. Successful completion of ENG 101 requires a grade of C- or better. This course satisfies the freshman composition and rhetoric component of the General Education Requirements in Writing and Speaking.

Prerequisite: A grade of C- or better in ENG 100 or placement via English department guidelines.

GER Category Objectives: Writing and Speaking

Each course in the writing and speaking category of the GERs will provide instruction and guidance that help students to:

- communicate effectively in specific writing or speaking situations, which may include various academic professional, or civic situations; and
- understand and respond appropriately to the critical elements that shape communication situations, such as audience, purpose, and genre; and
- critique their own writing or speaking and provide effective and useful feedback to enable other students to improve their writing or speaking; and
- 4. demonstrate critical and evaluative thinking skills in locating, analyzing, synthesizing, and using information in writing or speaking activities.

ENG 101 Learning Objectives

In keeping with these general goals, ENG 101 is specifically designed to help students.

- Learn basic principles of rhetoric and develop an understanding of written texts as arguments generated for particular purposes, audiences, and rhetorical contexts.
- 2. Examine similarities and differences in forms of inquiry and writing across academic disciplines.
- 3. Practice analytical reading strategies and hone the ability to summarize, paraphrase, draw evidence from, synthesize, and respond to the scholarship of others.
- Learn to find and evaluate print and electronic source materials appropriate for academic research projects.
- 5. Learn to develop original arguments for a range of academic purposes.
- 6. Practice critically evaluating their own and others' work and collaborating effectively with other writers throughout the writing process.
- Practice and refine technical skills in areas such as grammar, mechanics, and the documentation of source materials.

Required Texts

- Kirscht, Judy and Mark Schlenz, Engaging Inquiry: Research and Writing in the Disciplines. Prentice-Hall, 2002. \$44.70
- Troyka, Lynn Quitman, Simon & Schuster Handbook for Writers, 6th ed. Prentice-Hall, 2002. \$44.70

Course Organization and Major Projects

Introduction (Week 1): A rhetorical perspective on language

Unit I. Inquiry and Writing in the Sciences (Weeks 2-4)

Project 1: Rhetorical analysis

Unit II. Inquiry and Writing in the Social Sciences (Weeks 5-8)

Project 2: Argument summary and response

Project 3: Literature review

Unit III. Inquiry and Writing in the Humanities (Weeks 9-11)

Project 4: Comparison of Critical Interpretations in the Humanities

Unit IV. Critical Applications (Weeks 12-15)

Oral presentation (group): Evaluation of electronic resources in a discipline Project 5: Analysis of contemporary issue from multidisciplinary perspectives Oral presentation (individual): Research Symposia based on Project 5

Course Requirements and Grading

Coursework includes regular class attendance and participation, daily reading and writing assignments, the five major written projects listed above, and two oral presentations based on your written work. All projects must be completed to pass the course. Final grades will be calculated as follows:

Project 1 Rhetorical Analysis 10%

Project 2 Argument Summary/Response 10%

Project 3 Literature Review 20%

Project 4 Comparison of Critical Interpretations in the Humanities 20%

Project 5 Issue Analysis 20%

Oral presentations 10%

Class participation (includes daily assignments) 10%

COURSE POLICIES

Policy on Attendance

Because of the collaborative and cooperative nature of the first year writing courses, class attendance is crucial. Accordingly, in English 110, 111, 112, 113, students who miss the equivalent of 7 or more 50-minute classes or 5 or more 75-minute classes will earn a grade of F. In ENG 100 and 101 students who miss 9 or more 50-minute classes or 5 or more 100-minute classes will earn a grade of F. That is, more than two weeks' worth of absences will result in failure to meet this element of the General Education Requirement, and you will need to repeat the course.

This policy does not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences, even in the case of emergencies. All absences will count toward the total number, and this policy obtains from the moment you are registered in the course. As is the case for all courses, students experiencing extended medical or family emergencies during the semester should consult with the instructor about seeking a medical drop.

The first two weeks of missed classes will be treated as excused absences, and you will be allowed to make up all course work missed. Instructors will establish make-up assignments, standards for evaluation of such assignments, and a reasonable period after the absence within which they must be turned in. If you fail to turn in make-up assignments or if the make-up assignments are of insufficient quality, your grade will be penalized. Because this policy includes all types of absences, those defined by the university as excused do not have to be cleared with the instructor beforehand.

No matter what the cause of the absences, as a student you are responsible for finding out what material was covered, getting notes, being prepared for class on the day you return, and turning in subsequent assignments on time. Since due dates for major assignments are established at the beginning of the semester, and since these projects are developed over a series of class periods, students are advised that submitting these projects late may result in penalties.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is defined as copying the language, phrasing, structure, or specific ideas of others and presenting any of these as one's own, original work; it includes buying papers, having someone else write your papers, and improper citation and use of sources. When you present the words or ideas of another (either published or unpublished) in your writing, you must fully acknowledge your sources. Plagiarism is considered a violation of academic integrity whenever it occurs in written work, including drafts and homework, as well as for formal and final papers.

The NCSU Policies, Regulations, and Rules on Student Discipline (http://www2.ncsu.edu/prr/student_services/student_conduct/POL445.00.1.htm) sets the standards for academic integrity at this university and in this course. Students are expected to adhere to these standards. Plagianism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be handled through the university's judicial system and may result in failure for the project or for the course.

See the Office of Student Conduct website for additional information about academic integrity: http://www.ncsu.edu/student_affairs/osc/Alpage/acaintegrity.html.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

First-Year Writing Requirement

For additional information about the First-Year Writing Requirement, see the program's website at http://www.ncsu.edu/firstyearwriting.

Writing and Speaking Tutorial Services

For help with any writing assignment, for any course, visit one of the free walk-in centers on campus. Writing Tutors are available through the University Tutorial Center in Leazar Hall.

Read K&S Ch. 1 pp.11-31

D2 Observation and objectivity

Homework: K&S inquiry 1.1 pp.14-16; in pairs, complete Steps 1-2

D3 Pairs complete Step 3: comparing observed details

D4 Reading science

Read: John Gribbin's Light (K&S Ch.2)

In-class groups: Analyze Gribbin's chapter following Inquiry 1.4 guidelines, p.23

Week 3

D1 Formal writing in the sciences

Read K&S pp.31-52

Write: summary of Gribbin's chapter

Introduce PROJECT 1: Rhetorical Analysis (K&S 31-36; Inquiry 1.9 Reading for global features; all students

analyze the Quinn report for this project)

D2 Read Quinn report from Northwest Science (K&S Ch. 2)

Write: content summary of Quinn

D3 Read Martin et al. report from Bulletin of the Southern California Academy of Science (K&S Ch. 2).

In class: global features analysis of Martin et al.

D4 Write: outline global features analysis of Quinn

In class: groups develop evaluation criteria for Project 1

Week 4

D1 Finalize evaluation criteria

D2 PROJECT 1 draft due

In-class peer review

D3 Drafts returned with instructor commentary

D4 PROJECT 1 final draft due.

Introduce Library Online Basic Orientation (LOBO)

Unit II. Inquiry and Writing in the Social Sciences Week 5

D1 Forms of inquiry in the social sciences

Read K&S Ch. 3, pp. 111-135

D2 Subjectivity and selectivity

Read: Allport, Rimmerman, Sklar, or Orr (K&S Ch. 4) as assigned to your group. Following guidelines in Inquiry 3.3, outline hypothetical research designs using observation, survey, and/or interview methods.

In class: groups examine relationships between research questions and methods

D3 Reading theory as argument

Introduce PROJECT 2: Argument Summary & Response

(based on K&S Inquiry 3.4A-B, pp. 121-127)

D4 Read Bennett selection from Apathy in America, 1960-1984 (K&S Ch. 4)

In class: practice summary and response to Bennett

Week 6

D1 PROJECT 2 draft due

in class peer review

D2 PROJECT-2 final draft due.

D3 Formal writing in the social sciences

Read K&S Ch. 3, pp.135-168

Introduce PROJECT 3: Literature Review (3-4 sources; K&S 138-143)

D4 Conducting literature searches

Read S&S Ch. 33-34 on library and online research

In class: plan literature search for Project 3; identify databases

Week 7

D1 Principles of citation and documentation

Read K&S Appendix, 534-546

Read S&S Ch. 39 comparing the disciplines

D2 The language of citation and argument

Review K&S 129-135

D3 Summarizing, paraphrasing, quoting

Read S&S Ch. 31

D4 Develop evaluation criteria for Project 3

Week 8

D1 PROJECT 3 draft due

In-class peer review: global issues

D2 Drafts returned

D3 In-class peer review; local issues

D4 PROJECT 3 final draft due.

Unit III. Inquiry and Writing in the Humanities

Week 9

D1 Forms of inquiry in the humanities

Read K&S Ch. 5, pp. 323-341

D2 Interpretation and evaluation

Homework: Part 1 of K&S Inquiry 5.1, p. 325

In class: Groups complete Parts 2&3: interpreting statements of "fact" as issues of value and meaning

D3 Close reading in the humanities

Read Mailloux's "Interpretation" (K&S Ch.6

D4 Read Sontag's "Against Interpretation" (K&S Ch.6)

Introduce PROJECT 4: Comparison of Critical Interpretations in the Humanities (K&S pp.347-8: compare and contrast two interpretations of artistic texts)

Week 10

D1 Topic and research plan for Project 4 due.

D2 Formal writing in the humanities

Read K&S 341-360

D3 Finalize topics and sources

D4 Develop evaluation criteria for Project 4

Week 11

D1 PROJECT 4 draft due

In-class peer review

D2 Groups prepare response to Inquiry 5.2 #4-5: propose research/discussion issues for a humanities discipline

D3 Oral presentations: Groups report

D4 PROJECT 4 final draft due.

Unit IV. Critical Applications

Week 12

D1 Introduce PROJECT 5: Critical analysis of contemporary issue (K&S Ch. 7, pp. 437-443)

D2 Writing in college

Read Bell's "Everybody Hates to Write" (K&S Ch. 8)

D3 Writing in academic disciplines

Read Bartholomae's "Inventing the University" (K&S Ch. 8)

D4 Topic and research plan due for Project 5

Week 13

D1 Writing in technological contexts

Read Sorapure, et al. on web literacy (K&S Ch. 8)

D2 Introduce group project: Disciplinary analysis and evaluation of electronic information sources (K&S pp. 429-437)

Read K&S Ch. 7

D3 Group planning: determine topic and websites

D4 Group planning: disciplinary analysis, rhetorical analysis, presentational analysis

Week 14

D1 Project 5 annotated source list due

D2 Group presentations on website analysis

D3 Group presentations on website analysis

D4 Source lists returned.

Plan research symposia panels

Week 15

D1 Develop evaluation criteria for Project 5.

D2 Oral presentation guidelines

Read S&S Ch. 44

D3 Research Symposia begin (individual oral presentations)

D4 ResearchSymposium

PROJECT 5 drafts due (optional)

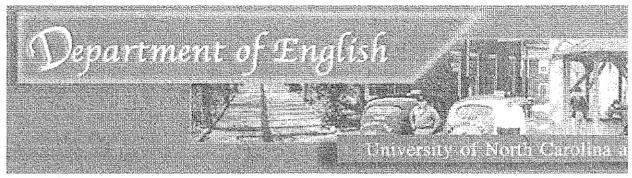
Exam Period

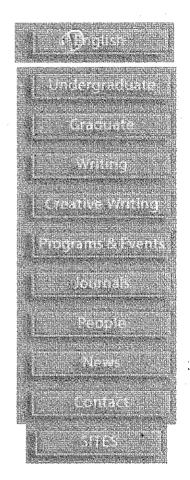
Research Symposium

PROJECT 5 final draft due.

North Carolina State University Department of English

Maintained by Karen VanOreuma Site Designed By Nicote Privelle





Through composition, in the root sense of the word, we "put together" into an orderly whole our experiences with the world around us. Writing is a way of making meaning, but it also is a form of social action. Writing always involves a "self" communicating with an "other." People write because they are members of a community, hoping to influence others by what they say. They use writing to identify themselves with a group and, sometimes, to alter what the group thinks or does.

College composition courses are important not because students "didn't get it in high school," but because they have entered a new discourse community. They write to acquire particular ways of communicating as college students, as prospective scientists, business people, historians, teachers. They learn the written "dialects" that these disciplines sanction. They practice the forms of discourse appropriate for communicating with other members of the community.

A freshman composition course, then, should serve two ends: It should encourage students to discover more about themselves as writers, and it should help them become confident participants in the discourse communities to which they seek entrance. English 11 is both an introduction to college writing and a workshop in which students investigate the ways discourse functions in various communities.

Principles

Writing practice informed by frequent, meaningful feedback teaches writing. This premise underlies the design of the course as well as the textbooks used in English 11. Students need opportunities to plan, draft, and revise their work in consultation with others. English 11 is a student-centered course, as are all of our writing courses. The focus is not on textbooks but on students' writing. For this reason, classes provide a workshop format with regular emphasis on group work.

The class must become a supportive community of writers, and every class meeting must provide opportunities for group work. Students need opportunities to discuss their plans for writing assignments, to discuss the results of their reading and research, and to help one another improve drafts with suggestions for revision. Students must listen carefully to what their classmates have to say, offer helpful suggestions, and be willing to share their writing with others.

Effective writing develops over time, and although a certain amount of native ability never hurts, the skills involved can be learned. Consequently, the course design assumes that all writing assignments will require students to practice writing and rewriting. Students should write multiple versions of each assignment before they publish a version for grading, and we suggest that each of the different drafts receive peer responses in writing groups.

In addition, the suggested assignment sequence encourages students to use shorter forms of writing, such as regular, assigned entries in reading notebooks or journals; in-class paragraphs to plan new assignments, explore organization options, or analyze audiences; reflections on the comments they have received from group members; assessments of their revisions on

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various versions of an assignment; even explanations of why they think they received the grade they did on an assignment. These assignments also lend themselves to student explorations of the discourse communities they are studying in their other classes.

The Workshop Environment

English 11 is designed to take full advantage of the workshop classroom. Students' research, the written materials they collect, and their own writing represent the major readings for the course. Students will spend much of their class time in their groups, discussing these materials and planning their papers-in-progress. Student versions also can be duplicated for the class to discuss. The teacher's role in such a course is not to lecture on readings from a textbook but rather to plan carefully the opportunities for group work and to monitor student progress from one class meeting to the next.

English 11 workshops serve several functions. First, they ensure that students plan assignments carefully and write multiple drafts. Second, they offer students responses to their work, from classmates as well as the teacher. Third, they encourage students to be critical readers, benefiting from multiple perspectives on texts. Fourth, they establish the notions that collaborative work is normal and that students are capable of offering one another good advice. Students need to develop confidence in their ability to judge good writing and to depend a little less on their instructor to tell them what they have done right or wrong.

Establishing a workshop environment allows students to become members of their own communities in the classroom, engaged in the social act of sharing writing and ideas about writing. Activities reinforce the concepts of collaborative communities and writing as a social act.

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The Course

The English 11 assignment sequence addresses audiences in three discourse communities of increasing formality-those immersed in broad-based pop culture; those immersed in more serious public issues; and those engaged in scholarly research. Perhaps the fundamental questions common to any discussion of discourse communities are how each community uses written conventions to help define itself and what constitutes appeal and credibility within the group. Encouraging students to explore these and related questions on their own and with their peers is crucial to the success of the course.

Each assignment in English 11 follows a whole-language approach, beginning with planning and research. This approach combines the four language modes-speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Whether collecting data through field work, interviews, or memory, students must investigate how language defines a particular community, how its members communicate with one another in writing, how writing generates concepts for understanding human experience, and how it sometimes results in community action. Part of their research should involve collecting relevant samples of writing that the community has produced. In the process, students will begin to understand the background of each community.

Next, students must analyze the texts as expressions of people interacting in a community. Through group work and class discussion, students must recognize the rhetorical strategies and techniques in the texts, what conventions and assumptions the community has established for written discourse, and how a writer can best use that written "voice."

Finally, for each unit, students will produce a piece of writing that demonstrates their awareness of the

conventions of various discourse communities. In preparation for that final project, two to three feeder assignments are recommended.

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SITES > Teaching Composition > Teaching Materials > Assignments > English 11 Assignments

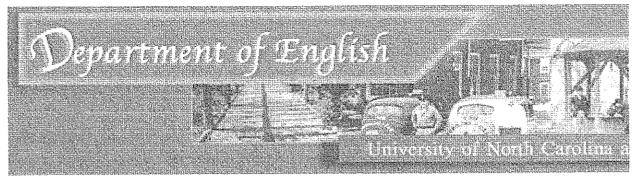
Sample Assignments for English 11 - see key for details

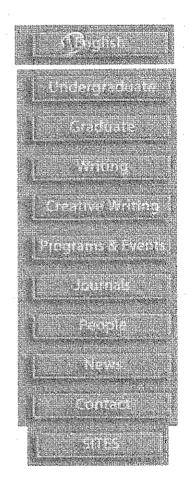
- UNIT ONE: POPULAR CULTURE
 - Print Ads, Commercial Websites, TV sitcoms (html) (i)
 - 2003 Herschel winner. Video Killed the Radio Star.
 based on the documentary Frontline: Merchants of Cool.
 Analyze a music video for industry professionals, analyze a print ad for musicians, create a marketing campaign for a new artist.
 (html) ①
 - Analyzing e-zines (html) ii)
- UNIT TRO: PUBLIC ISSUES
 - Prospectus, Letter, Speech
 (html) (1)
 - Your View, the Opposite View, Speech (html) (i)
 - Controversy and the Internet (html) ①
 - Voicing Others (html)
 - Hometown Concerns (doc)

- Annotated Bib, Article Analysis, Collaborative Journal Production (html)
- History of a Debate, Your Position, Persuasive Essay (html)
- Career Services Reflection, Interview, Annotated Bib, Article Analysis, Proposal for Independent Study (html)
- Perspectives on Disease (html)
- Perspectives on Environmental Issues (html) (i)
- Blogging in Academia (doc)
- Brown vs. Board of Education (doc)
- Censoring People and Ideas (doc)

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English 12 is a writing course built on principles from two prominent theories about composition: the writing-as-process model and the social-theoretic model. In other words, it emphasizes the stages of the writing process as well as the influence of discourse communities on the language and form of our writing. What distinguishes English 12 from English 11, a course also built on these principles, is its focus on academic writing.

Teachers may develop their version of this course in several ways, although it should have at its core two primary objectives. First, the course should help students develop their skills at each stage of the writing process. Second, it should introduce students to the discourses of various academic communities and help them begin to develop the skills and versatility they need to be effective writers for these communities.

Teaching the Writing Process

The writing-as-process approach to composition maintains that effective compositions are written in three overlapping stages: prewriting, writing, and rewriting. At each stage, writers employ a variety of skills. For example, in the prewriting stage, writers analyze, synthesize, relate, and generate ideas; in the writing stage, they translate ideas into written words and organize these words into a composition; in the rewriting stage, writers become critical readers and editors as they judge and then improve the effectiveness of what they

have written. The progression from one stage to the next is not, however, a smooth one. Writers frequently return to prewriting activities after they begin to write, just as they may jump to rewriting activities before completing the first draft of an entire composition.

The best way for students to become comfortable with this writing process is to practice it. Teachers should give students an opportunity for this practice by designing assignment sequences that emphasize each stage of the writing process and by engaging students in small-group and whole-class tasks that focus on particular skills. In all of the units, students should have an opportunity to read classmates' drafts and to offer suggestions for revisions. Moreover, students should write in class almost every session.

Teaching the Discourse of Academic Communities

Underlying English 12 is the premise that members of the different communities have different ways of knowing and that these ways of knowing shape the ways members of the communities write. For example, an anthropologist and an English professor may examine the same text, but their interpretations of the text and their presentations of these interpretations to their peers may differ significantly. Frequently, students are asked to write for professors from two, three, or even four different academic communities in the same semester. Before they can communicate effectively in all of these communities, they must become sensitive to the different ways of knowing and must learn to recognize how these ways of knowing shape writing conventions.

In addition, it's useful for students to recognize that two rhetorical positions significantly influence all writing: That is, writers are either insiders or outsiders vis-à-vis a given community. The resulting rhetorical relationships between writers and their audiences are straightforward

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and easily identifiable in most texts:

insider to insider insider to outsider outsider to outsider outsider to insider

Of these four rhetorical relationships, the first three are the most common in real writing situations. In many classrooms, however, writing is used as a means of examination. Such use necessarily involves the last rhetorical relationship.

Finally, teachers need to understand that many professors ask students to adopt different rhetorical positions, depending on the nature of the course and the assignment. Some professors will ask students to develop a paper using the insider-to-insider rhetorical relationship because assuming the role of an insider is an important part of the initiation process of all disciplines. Other professors will do just the opposite, asking students to write as outsiders to outsiders. English 12 teachers, therefore, incorporate the following goals into your writing assignments and class activities:

- introduce students to the ways of knowing in different communities;
- illustrate how ways of knowing shape ways of writing;
- and give students opportunities to practice 'knowing and writing as members of the different communities.

Much of the English 12 course will be devoted to identifying the differences among the academic communities; however, attention also should be given to the similarities. No matter what the discipline, most writing assignments ask students to interpret information and produce an argument. Consequently, writing

assignments should ask students to produce arguments characteristic of those employed in the various disciplines. The primary objectives of the course are to raise students' rhetorical awareness and to help them appreciate how context affects rhetorical choices.

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Sample Assignments for English 12 - see key for details

- UNIT ONE: NATURAL SCIENCES
 - Fact and Fiction in the Pharmacy Aisle.
 (html) ⊕ 𝑃
 - Doping and the Olympics.
 Translate journal article for outsiders, Annotated Bib,
 Recommend changes to Olympic Committee.
 (html) (1)
 - What is Science? What isn't it?
 Short article summarizing research on one of a list of topics; methods & procedures; argumentative analysis of research.
 (html)
 - Disease Management.
 Web-based annotated bibliography, analyzing chats about a disease, reporting as an expert consultant (html)
 - Epidemiology and Diseases.
 (html) (i)
 - Scientific Legends.
 Groups select one scientist from provided list and write a lab report detailing his/her contribution, annotated bibliography to understand paradigm shift, group presentation. Includes example annotated bibliography and grading sheets for presentations.
 (html)

- Public Service Announcements.
 - Summary of article related to addictive disease, grand plan or storyboard, 30-60 second video. Includes tips for teaching digital video.

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- Disabilities. (doc)
- Disease in Developing Nations.
 (doc)
- Religious Faith and Health. 2004 Herschel Awards, 2nd place (doc)
- Astronomy and Space Science . (doc)
- Memory.(doc)
- The Science of Murder. (doc)
- Physics.(doc)
- UNIT TWO: SOCIAL SCIENCES
 - Sociological Study of Academic Dishonesty on Campus.

Methods Proposal, Lit Review, Formal Write-up. The interesting thing about this project is that the best paper from each group becomes part of large report that is published on the web and includes the instructor's own writing too.

(html)

Gender and Popular Culture (Linguistic Emphasis).
 Compare and contrast 3 specific journal articles, gender

autobiography, journal article. (html)

Developing and Reporting a Survey.

Proposal, survey, formal report. Social Interactions on Real TV. Analyze one episode viewed in class, respond to a documentary (3 listed), group presentation to pitch a new idea for a reality TV show to network producers.

(html)

Voter Turnout Analysis.

Sythesizing voter turnout theories from provided list of resources, analyze the candidates, consulting report for a candidate.

(html)

o Film Psychology.

 $(rtf) \perp \mathcal{Q}$

Social Interactions on Reality TV.

Analyze one episode viewed in class, respond to a documentary, pitch a new idea for a reality TV show to network producers (class presentation) (html)

- Investigating Education at UNC. (doc)
- Memorials and Public Memory. (doc)
- Testing Short-term Memory. 2004 Herschel Awards, 1st place (doc)
- Armchair Anthropologists. (doc)
- Social Change in North Carolina Communities. (doc)
- Sociological Perspectives on UNC's Student

Government. (doc)

• LBITTHERE: HUMBATTEG

Describing the Canon.(rtf) []

Iconography in Art, Religion, and Myth.
 (rtf) (1) (1) (1)

Generic Conventions in Film.
 (html) ⊕ a/v

Genres and Auteur Criticism.
 (rtf) (1) ₽/v † † †

Hitchcock's Notorious and Other Great Films.
 (rtf) (i) a/v

Comparing Film Remakes.
 (rtf) (i) a/v

- History through the Lens of the Print News Media.
 (doc)
- Film Studies.2004 Herschel Awards, 2nd place (doc)

Childhood.(doc)

Humor in Film. (doc)

Film Noir.(doc)

- Business of Legal Writing
 - Mock Honor Court Trial (role-playing).
 Connecting situation to The Instrument, Brief, Presentation.

(html)

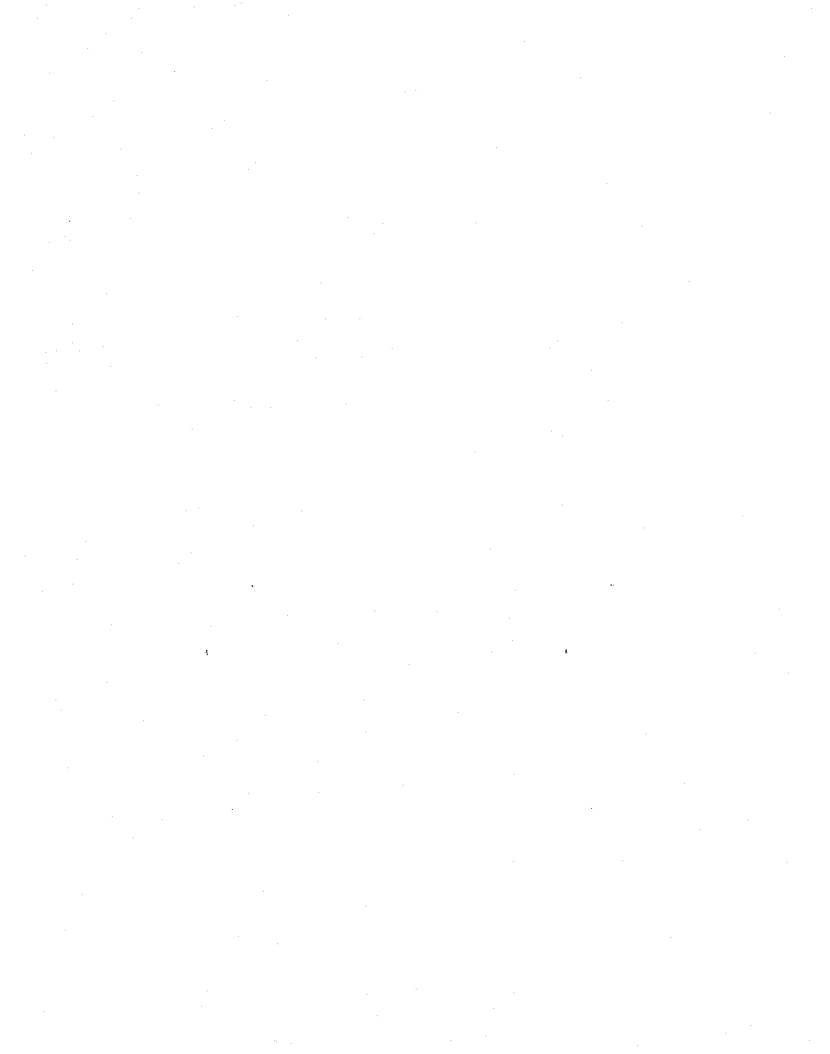
- Miranda Case Analysis.

 Brief about Miranda v. Arizona, Synthesis of changes to Miranda for chief of police, Office Memoranda in law firm. (html)
- Written and Oral Communication for Business.

 Annotated bib of organizations working to solve a social problem, close analysis of one organization, recruiting speech for organization.

 (html)
- o Consultancy and "Branding." (rtf) 心 タ
- Business Presentation.(rtf) (i) (ii)
- o Alumni with Dream Jobs. (rtf) (i) 人
- Learning the Business: Introduction to Business Writing and Media Relations. (doc)

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Appendix C

In any ranking of English masterworks, *Hamlet* will most likely appear at the top. *Hamlet* devotees cite the play's unparalleled poetry and its masterly depiction of a mind in torment. Under the lens of a theorist, however, Shakespeare's masterpiece can become something almost unrecognizable, something twisted and misshapen, something of less value than the interpretations thrust upon it. Susan Sontag likened such interpretations to "fumes of the automobile and of heavy industry," and one whiff of Marxist Michael Bristol's interpretation of *Hamlet* can prove Sontag's point.

To Bristol, *Hamlet* is more about "irreconcilable social difference" than it is about one man's inner struggle, and Bristol finds evidence to support his claim in the play's "Carnivalesque" imagery:

The comprehensive rethinking of the social world in terms of common everyday material and physical experience is central to the practice of "uncrowning"—the fundamental transformation downward of the popular festival imagery....Carnival brings our knowledge of social reality down to earth and substitutes the body, its needs, and its capabilities, for more abstract and restrictive "laws" of society and its organization. Carnival draws attention to the relative and arbitrary character of the official version of political order. (351)

For those who missed the point, Professor Bristol is using Shakespeare to draw attention to "the official version of political order"—in hopes of unseating that order and installing in its place what Bristol calls "distributive justice." Never mind that he maims a great play in the process. Never mind that he would serve up nectar—then call it something else. In the mind of literary theorists, to focus upon Hamlet's inner struggle and the indelible words Shakespeare chose to reveal it would be, in the words of UNC's Erika Lindemann, to teach *Hamlet* "poorly."

The excerpt is taken from Michael Bristol's essay "Funeral Bak'd Meats': Carnival and the Carnivalesque in *Hamlet*," which appears in the Bedford/St. Martin's series *Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism* of *Hamlet* in 1994 (348-67).

Michael Bristol teaches Renaissance literature and the sociology of literature at McGill University in Montreal. A *Library Journal* review had this to say about Bristol's 1990 book *Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare*:

"This is a learned book about the relationship between Shakespeare and American political culture. Bristol analyzes how Shakespeare came to occupy a place of such massive authority in American culture—the plays have been understood to validate a political economy based on individualistic social ideas—and how the institutional ethos, embodied in the work of textual scholars, editors, curators, and libraries, perpetuates it. The second part of the book analyzes the relationship between 20th-century Shakespearean criticism and ideology, which reveals a dialog between neo-conservatism and advanced liberalism. Aimed primarily at scholars; the overabundance of technical jargon will discourage the general reader."

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