INSTRUCTOR HANDBOOK FOR TEACHING WRI 102
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I THE WRITING PROGRAM AT TCNJ

WRI 102 was approved as the academic writing course at TCNJ in 2003 when the curriculum had undergone a massive transformation. In place of two required rhetoric courses (in which both composition and speaking were emphasized), the college implemented a writing intensive First Year Seminar course which all incoming students would take in their first semester. In addition, students who need additional preparation would take WRI 102 in the spring semester.

One of the primary goals of WRI 102 is to help empower students to become more confident and capable writers in an academic context so that they can write proficiently in their other classes, where faculty will expect them to be able to construct an argument, support an interpretation, synthesize multiple scholarly perspectives, or analyze data—all in writing. Students must feel confident about stepping into a public forum where they will be joining an academic conversation.

Helping to "grow" this kind of writer, of course, cannot be done in one semester. But we have an obligation to help students develop these skills. All the guidelines and best practices in this guide are designed to help you do that.

The students who take WRI 102 are those who did not score at or above 580 on both their Math and Critical Reading SAT's, or who otherwise did not place out of the course through AP exam scores, ACT scores, or the TCNJ Writing Exemption and Placement Exam. Some students taking WRI 102 know they need this additional instruction and are happy to take the class; others feel self-conscious and resistant to being there. It's our job to assure them that it will be a challenging and supportive environment, and that the skills they'll develop are essential to their success in the rest of their career here at the college and beyond.

It's therefore helpful to step back and see WRI 102 in a broader context. In *Professional Writing in the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Southern Illinois UP, 1994) Susan Peck MacDonald offers a model of writing development which identifies four stages:

> **Stage 1**: What students bring from high school—"Nonacademic or pseudo-academic writing."
>
> **Stage 2**: Goals of first-year writing—"Generalized academic writing concerned with stating claims, offering evidence, respecting others' opinions, and learning how to write with authority."
>
> **Stage 3**: Early courses in the major—"Novice approximations of particular disciplinary ways of making knowledge."
>
> **Stage 4**: Goals for advanced courses in the major—"Expert, insider prose within a discipline."

--cited in John Bean "Helping Students Achieve Disciplinary Expertise: the Role of Writing in University Outcomes Assessment" presented at the University of Delaware, 10/5/06.

TCNJ's writing intensive curriculum then tackles stages 3 & 4:

> The intellectual and scholarly growth of all College of New Jersey students involves the development of confident identities as good writers who can communicate clearly and effectively to an array of audiences for a range of purposes. All students, therefore, are required to take three writing intensive courses during their tenure at the college. The first of these is First Seminar, taken in the fall semester of the first year; in the sophomore or junior year, students take another writing intensive course of their choice, usually inside their major, and then in the senior year, a writing intensive capstone course in the major. In addition, some entering students may also be required to take WRI 102, Academic Writing, to help better prepare them for the demands of their writing intensive requirements. -- http://www.tcnj.edu/~writing/wicurriculum.html

All of the mid-level and the senior-level writing intensive courses have had to meet specific criteria and have gone through a rigorous evaluation process before being designated as officially writing intensive (www.tcnj.edu/~writing/faculty/intensiveguide.html).

WRI 102 correlates to stage 2 above. However, in much recent scholarly work in the field of composition and rhetoric, the notion of somehow teaching "generalized" academic writing has been hotly contested. Many scholars have argued that writing in the disciplines is so different (in terms of genre, terminology, what counts as evidence) that teaching "general academic writing" is impossible and far too often correlates with writing in the humanities, and in English, in particular. This is a bias of the instructors teaching composition, who for the most part, come out of English departments.

However, other scholars, while acknowledging the important differences among the disciplines, have nevertheless identified some core traits of academic discourse. In *Engaged Writers, Dynamic Disciplines: Research on the Academic Writing Life*, Chris Thaiss and Terry Myers Zawacki argue that there are at least three core traits of all writing in the academy:

1. **"Clear evidence in writing that the writer(s) have been persistent, open-minded, and disciplined in study**. The concept of the discipline—and of "discipline" without the "the"—is central to the university, because academics have learned so much respect for the difficulty of learning anything sufficiently deeply so that "new knowledge" can be contributed. What the academy hates is the dilettante, the person who flits whimsically from subject to subject, as momentary interests occupy him or her, and who assumes the qualifications—merely because of that interest—to pronounce on that subject of the moment. Whether they are reading student papers or evaluating journal articles, academics are invariably harsh toward any student or scholar who hasn't done the background reading, who isn't prepared to talk formally or off the cuff about the subject of the writing, and whose writing doesn't show careful attention to the objects of study and reflective thought about them. Of course, standards for fellow professionals and for introductory students differ monumentally, but even the most neophyte student will be penalized for shallow reading and for lack of careful thinking about the subject.

2. **The dominance of reason over emotion or sensual perception.** In the Western academic tradition, the writer is an intellectual, a thinker, a user of reason. This identity doesn't mean

that emotions or sensual stimuli are absent from academic writing: indeed, the natural sciences have always depended on acute sensate awareness, detection of subtle differences in appearance, fragrance, flavor, texture, sound, movement; moreover, the arts and humanities would not exist without the scholar's intense and highly articulated sensual appreciation. As for emotion, every discipline recognizes at the very least the importance of passion in the ability to dedicate oneself to research, acknowledged as often tedious. But in the academic universe the senses and emotions must always be subject to control by reason. Political thinkers, for example, may be motivated by their passion for a system of government, even by their anger at opponents, but the discipline of political science demands, as do all disciplines, that writing about these issues reveals the writer as a careful, fair student and analyst of competing positions. The sociologist may describe in passionate detail personal experience of poverty or family dislocation, but the academic writer must not stop with the appeal to emotion (what Aristotle called pathos); the responsible sociologist must step back, as it were, almost as if he or she were a separate person, and place that emotional, highly sensual experience in a context of the relevant experiences of others and of the history of academic analysis of the topic.

3. **An imagined reader who is coolly rational, reading for information, and intending to formulate a reasoned response.** The academic writer may wish also to arouse the emotions to agreement or to sympathy, as well as to stimulate the senses to an enhanced perception, but the academic writer wants above all to inspire the intelligent reader's respect for his or her analytical ability. The writer imagines the reader looking for possible flaws in logic or interpretation, for possible gaps in research and observation, and so tries to anticipate the cool reader's objections and address them.

While the three "standards" we have described for academic writing might appear simple, they are devilishly hard to teach and even to observe in any given piece of writing. Would that the standards were as straightforward as "avoid the first person" or "use correct English" or "have a clear thesis." As our findings chapters will describe in detail, our informants tended to speak vaguely about what they regarded as "standards" and "conventions" in their fields, even though none of them had any hesitancy to say that they knew what the standards were. What their stories imply to us is that their knowledge of standards accrued over time, through coursework, reading, attempts to write and reactions to that writing; through regular talk with fellow students and fellow researchers and teachers."

I would add to Thaiss and Zawacki's three traits the following levels at which proficiency is expected in academic discourse:

1. "Rules": what we often refer to as the "micro-level" aspects of writing, or grammar, mechanics, and usage. Note: some of these conventions differ across the disciplines (e.g., use of the passive voice).

2. "Moves"; the sentence-level wording and phrasing that are expected in academic discourse; moves include everything from the effective use of transition phrases and subordinating clauses to the correct way to refer to someone else's ideas. Note: some of these conventions also differ across the disciplines (depending, for example on APA or MLA style).

3. "Plays": the larger, macro-level aspects of writing that refer to the logic and development of thought needed in various kinds of argumentation; these are Bloom's high order thinking modes such as evaluation. Note: these conventions can differ significantly across the disciplines as well, even while basic logic and avoidance of logical fallacies is expected in all contexts.

The textbooks chosen for WRI 102 address all three levels and are in sync with this approach to the teaching of writing. I also have on file numerous examples of writing assignments from the writing intensive courses which will give you a good idea of the kinds of writing tasks that await your students. I often find it effective to share some of these assignments with students so that they can see what lies ahead and how WRI 102 relates to it.

II   WRI 102 COURSE OUTCOMES

The purpose of WRI 102, then, is to coach students in the following skills and proficiencies:

- ➢ a comfort level, interest in, and familiarity with writing tasks typical in college
- ➢ ownership of their own writing process and a strong sense of voice
- ➢ reading comprehension strategies, including the ability to analyze texts thematically and rhetorically
- ➢ the ability to reason logically and to critique the logic of the texts they read
- ➢ the ability to use the language and conventions expected in academic prose
- ➢ the ability to employ—and the understanding of when to employ—different types of claims when making an argument, including definitions, evaluations, and proposals.
- ➢ an understanding of how to cite other "voices" in the conversation, use evidence effectively, and write with integrity.

WRI 102 does not, however, teach genres. Indeed, "argument" is not a genre *per se*. How argument appears in Psychology is quite different from how it appears in English. In Psychology, the researcher describes other experiments in order to position and justify the current experiment; the researcher then describes the data obtained from the experiment and discusses its meaning and ramifications—including the extent to which it matched the anticipated hypothesized outcomes—as well as limitations, directions for further research, etc. Both the format of the document and the methods used are distinctly different from the kind of textual interpretation and "research" used in literature arguments.

Nevertheless, both kinds of writing must be able to accurately and fairly summarize the relevant scholarship; they both involve the ability to position current claims in the context of what has gone before (or been said by others); and both may involve intellectual moves such as using the logic of consequence (causation).

Public or civic argument also expects accuracy, deep familiarity with the subject matter, and appropriate use of rhetorical strategies with readers. Public or civic forms of argument often use a variety of claim types, or what *Allyn and Bacon* refers to as hybrid arguments: using multiple claims to support an overall point.

We can never prepare students for the actual genres they will encounter in their majors. While genres do involve specific writing standards, including specialized vocabularies, formats, and other technical norms, they are, more importantly, ways to communicate and problem solve in a specific discourse community. As Carolyn Miller argues, genres are "typified rhetorical actions based on recurrent situations" and they result in "a socially recognizable and interpretable way" to enact one's intentions; for the student, "genres serve as keys to understanding how to participate in the actions of a community" (159, 165). Until students enter the discourse community of their major, they can't truly learn those typified rhetorical actions. However, they can practice the broader traits of academic discourse, as outlined in the previous section. It is, therefore, most important that we contextualize and promote meta-cognitive awareness of the characteristics of academic discourse in our classes.

III   PAPERS & LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Academic writing is about engaging in a conversation with others, not jumping through hoops "to get the assignment done." We structure our courses and design our assignments so that students can explore the course's topic by means of practicing specific claim types in rhetorically meaningful contexts.

> "Experienced writing instructors have long recognized that writing well means entering into conversation with others. Academic writing in particular calls upon writers not simply to express their own ideas, but to do so as a response to what others have said."
>
> --Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, They Say / I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing
>
> "The skills needed for this kind of thinking [academic argumentation] are best learned in a context, a context in which students have something at stake beyond a grade—in other words, in which they have some desire to solve a problem or interpret some set of information because of its inherent interest for them, or perhaps even some ramification for their personal experience."
>
> --Gary Dohrer, "Do Teachers' Comments in Students' Papers Help?"

A. Stage 1 vs. Stage 2 Papers

In his wonderful *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking and Active Learning in the Classroom*, John Bean describes in more detail the kinds of writing most often done by Stage 1 writers—writers not yet conversant with academic writing:

1. **The "and then" paper** is "a chronological narrative in which the writer tells what happens between time point A and time point B without focus, selection, pacing, or tension. . . . A typical example is writing a summary instead of an argument when asked to review an article or producing a straight chronological narrative instead of a causal analysis when asked to write about an interpretive problem in history" (20).

2. **The "all about" paper** "tries to say a little bit of everything about a topic. When well written, such papers may seem organized hierarchically . . . but the categories do not function as reasons in support of a thesis" (22).

3. **The "dump writing" paper** "has no discernible structure. It reveals a student overwhelmed with information and uncertain what to do with it" (23).

We have all seen papers like these. In fact, these are precisely the kinds of papers written for TCNJ's Writing Exemption and Placement Exam which did not score high enough to place out

of the course. All three kinds of writing, according to Bean, "reveal a retreat, in some manner, from the kind of reasoned analysis and argumentation that we value in academic writing" (24).[1] Bean narrows in on an important contributing factor: a positivist model of the writing process which assumes that writers first choose a topic, then narrow it, then make an outline, then write a draft, and finally revise and edit. In contrast, Bean reminds us of what we know to be true about our own academic writing: "For example, few scholars report starting an article by choosing a topic and then narrowing it. Rather, academic writers report being gradually drawn into a conversation about a question that does not yet seem resolved" (30). We are aware of a controversy over what something means or about why something is happening, and we want to make a contribution to the debate.

The process, then, goes more like this: perception of a problem, doubt about a theory, or puzzlement over unexplained data; further exploration through research of various kinds, informal tentative writing, intense focus, and periods of incubation; then there is the first attempt to "get ideas down on paper in preliminary form" (31). It is at this point that real revision takes place:

> Many writers report dismantling their first drafts and starting afresh, often discovering their true thesis at the conclusion of their first draft. At this point, writers often make new outlines; they begin considering audience; they clarify their rhetorical purpose; they try to make the essay work for readers. Several drafts are often necessary as writer-based prose is gradually converted to reader-based prose. (31)

Finally, there is editing, and even here the recursive nature of writing can require re-thinking of substantive parts of the essay.

Bean suggests several broad ways to begin transforming the way we teach so that we are "teaching thinking through teaching revision." Here are 3 of his 15 recommendations (quoted directly from pp. 33-34):

- Profess the "new rhetorical" or problem-driven model of the writing process. Instead of asking students to choose "topics" and narrow them, encourage students to pose questions or problems and explore them. Show how inquiry and writing are related.

- Give problem-focused writing assignments. Students are most apt to revise when their essays must be thesis-governed responses to genuine problems.

- Incorporate non-graded exploratory writing into your courses. . . . Exploratory writing gives students the space, incentive, and tools for more elaborated and complex thinking.

In the next section are concrete guidelines and examples for designing paper assignments that will align with this model of teaching writing.

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[1] One additional pattern we often see in first year writing is the sole reliance on personal experience or emotional appeals to support a claim. This too, goes against the heart of academic writing, as is clear in Thaiss and Zawacki's work.

B. Claim Types & Sample Paper Assignments

In your themed section of WRI 102, you are responsible for identifying the debates and unresolved questions on the topic at hand, and then formulating interesting questions for students that allow them to learn specific claim types, while being "persistent, open-minded and disciplined" in their exploration of the field of inquiry.

The excerpt below from *Allyn and Bacon* outlines the main kinds of claims that can be used in nearly any kind of argument; they'll form the foundation of the types of questions you develop for your papers. Although most arguments involve multiple claims types, we are breaking them down so that students can learn individual ones in detail.

It's critical to be aware of what type of claim your question is asking for. If your question requires an evaluative argument but you think it's about causation, you won't be teaching the right chapters and you won't be able to design an appropriate rubric.

It's important to keep in mind that in each paper they'll also, of course, learn things like topic sentences, paragraph coherence, information literacy, etc. The rubrics for each paper will reflect the specific expectations for its primary claim type as well as the specific micro-level issues you are focusing on for that paper.

Please see page 143 for a chart with additional examples of the types of claims and their inter-relationships in different rhetorical contexts. (NOTE: Never in *Allyn and Bacon* do the examples say "Write a definitional argument.")

Definition arguments: *In which category does this thing belong?*
• Is sleep deprivation torture?
• Is an expert video game player an athlete?

>Create a definition that establishes criteria for the category.
>Use examples to show how the contested case meets the criteria.

Causal arguments: *What are the causes or consequences of this event or phenomenon?*
• What are the causes of autism?
• What might be the consequences of requiring a national I.D. card?

>Explain the links in a causal chain going from cause to effect.
[or]
>Speculate about causes (consequences) or propose a surprising cause (consequence).

Resemblance arguments: *To what is this thing similar?*
• Is opposition to gay marriage like opposition to interracial marriage?
• Is steroid use to improve strength similar to LASIK surgery to improve vision?

>Let the analogy or precedent itself create the desired rhetorical effect.
[or]

> Elaborate on the relevant similarities between the given case and the analogy or precedent.

Evaluation arguments:

What is the worth or value of this thing?
• Is behavior modification a good therapy for anxiety?
• Is it ethical to use steroids in sports?

>Establish the criteria for a "good" or "ethical" member of this class or category.
>Use examples to show how the contested case meets the criteria.

Proposal arguments: *Should we take this proposed action?*
•Should the United State enact a single-payer health care system?
• To solve the problem of prison overcrowding, should we legalize possession of drugs?

>Make the problem vivid for the audience.
>Explain your proposed action to solve the problem.
>Justify your solution by showing how it is motivated by principle, by good consequences, or by resemblance to a previous action the audience approves.

Here are two examples of an evaluative argument. The first is from Jen Hunter's section on Travel; the second is from my course, "Reading *The New York Times*." Note that my assignment, while an evaluative argument, is also an analysis of a text that gets students to learn several other claim types. The criteria they're using are indeed from the *Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*.

WRI102-19 Academic Writing: Travel Texts & Contexts
Professor Jennifer Hunter
Paper #2 Assignment, 25% of final grade

PURPOSE: To learn how to: create and defend criteria; match criteria with well-chosen examples and evidence; evaluate something based on a given set of criteria; compare and contrast the ideas of multiple authors; form a persuasive and logical argument; practice expected conventions and moves in academic writing; revise as a critical stage of the writing process.

TASK: You are an editorial intern at a publishing house and the senior editor has asked you to compile stories for a travel anthology directed toward college students. She asks you to read four stories, but you can only include two of them. Which two stories would best fit into the anthology and why?

APPROACHES: Before you begin writing this paper, there are a few questions you must answer:
• What are the key components of a good travel narrative?
• What makes a good travel narrative for college students different from one for other audiences?

- How does each story exemplify the traits of a good travel narrative for college students?
- What makes them better than the other two stories?

Use either the separate sections or interwoven organization strategies in Allyn & Bacon pp. 207-208 to structure your paper.

Research component: Choose at least one article from a scholarly journal to support your ideas about what constitutes good travel writing. We will hold a library session to learn how to use the online research databases at TCNJ. Use search terms such as "travel writing conventions" or "travel writing genre."

LOGISTICS: 5-6 pages double-spaced, 12 pt font, Times or similar; number all pages; staple pages together. Underline your thesis statement in ALL drafts. MLA or APA for in-text citations and Works Cited/References page.

DUE DATES: All drafts must be submitted to SOCS on the due date by 5:30 p.m. and you must bring a hard copy to class.

First draft:
Second draft:
Final draft:

WRI 102-18: Reading the New York Times
Spring 2011, Dr. Goldschmidt
Paper #1: Rhetorical & Argument Analysis (20%)

Purpose:

- To learn the academic conventions used when referring to others' texts
- To master an understanding of the rhetorical strategies used in persuasive writing
- To fully comprehend how a given type argument is logically and structurally organized
- To build your skills in close textual analysis
- To practice writing a thesis that accurately forecasts the structure and scope of your paper
- To gain practice in organizing your own argument with detailed examples and "evidence" to support your claim
- To gain better proficiency in paragraph unity & coherence as well as sentence construction

Task: Chose **one** of the 6 articles that were selected for our Blog Activity (from February 4 and 11), and analyze how effectively the author uses various rhetorical and argumentation strategies to be persuasive with the reader. How successful is the author in making his or her argument?

Guidelines: Even published authors don't always argue effectively! And not everyone will agree about the extent to which a particular text is persuasive, depending on where they're coming from and what values they may share with the writer. So your job here is to examine an article **in**

detail, determine how effectively you think the claim was argued, and then make a convincing case for why your analysis is on target. Note that while you cannot know if the writer actually persuades the wider *New York Times* readership, you can make a case for whether the author used various rhetorical and argumentation strategies successfully.

Your paper, therefore, will be an evaluative argument. You will be determining the quality of someone else's argument using the standards (or criteria) from *Allyn and Bacon*.

Here are the steps you'll take in order to draft your paper. Even though Step 1 is due Tuesday 2/15 for an in-class activity, you will need to start working on all steps this weekend since the complete first draft is due Thursday or Friday, 2/17-18.

Step 1: Close Reading (DUE Tuesday 2/15)

1) Re-read your selected article, this time making comprehensive hand-written notes (also called annotations) in the text so that you understand every line and word choice. There shouldn't be any phrase or sentence in the article whose meaning or purpose you're unclear about.

2) Now summarize your selected article, using the approaches we've gone over class so that you have a succinct and accurate understanding of what the author is really arguing. This should be about 150 words.

3) Identify the genre, intended audience & purpose, angle of vision, as well as use of pathos and ethos. How do all of these things help shape the choices made by the writer? Using the chart on pages 82-83, begin to write a rhetorical analysis of your article; finish at least one complete paragraph analysis of one of these elements underlined above. Make sure you have concrete examples from the text and that you explain your analysis of them. We will examine these in class together on 2/15.

Step 2: Analyze the Argument Structure and Evidence

4) Using the analysis you've already conducted in the Blog as a starting point, examine in more detail how the author makes the argument, analyzing every kind of tool that's used. First make sure you cover the main elements in the primary argument form (definition or proposal). But since we know that all arguments use many claim types as sub-points within their arguments, you will also need to examine every use of reasoning (logos) that the writer employs (e.g., definition, causation/consequence, resemblance/precedent/analogy, etc.). Does the author effectively address the issues outlined in *Allyn and Bacon* for this type of argument? Where is the author's argument strongest? Weakest? Where, if at all, does it break down?

5) Evaluate the author's use of sources and evidence. Do they meet the criteria on pages 243-44 in *AB*?

Step 3: Once you've conducted your analysis, what conclusions can you come to? Write a tentative thesis that captures your sense of the argument's effectiveness and why. Then outline the body of your paper (in whatever format is helpful for you), and write your first draft.

Logistics and Due Dates: 4 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font, with one-inch margins. **Underline your thesis statement**.

- Thursday, February 17 or Friday, February 18: Draft #1 for the small group conference in my office (sign up in "Calendar" in SOCS). We will not have class on Friday 2/18, but this conference counts as your attendance.

- Tuesday, February 22: Revised Draft #2 for an in-class workshop. Identify and underline all your topic sentences. Also identify one paragraph that you think doesn't "flow" well.

- Friday, March 4: Final revised, edited paper due in SOCS; hand in printed copy along with all draft(s).

C. In **both** cases, the informal assignments leading up to the paper must allow students not only to learn about the issues, but also to practice the kinds of writing expected in the paper. Here is an overview of the informal assignments leading up to Jen's paper:

Activities leading up to Paper #2

Introduction
Read additional travel stories. Read AB = AB pp. 194-197, 204-208 on categorical evaluations.

Defining Criteria
What constitutes good travel writing? Do the criteria differ for students?

Research
Conduct searches on travel writing conventions

Evaluation/Matching Examples
Deciding what makes the best fit of good travel writing for a college audience and finding examples from the readings.

The informal assignments leading up to my paper were as follows:

1. Practice summarizing: students are asked to summarize an editorial from *The New York Times* that I chose; in class, small groups compare and contrast their summaries and must decide which one is most accurate, making revisions where needed to come up with what
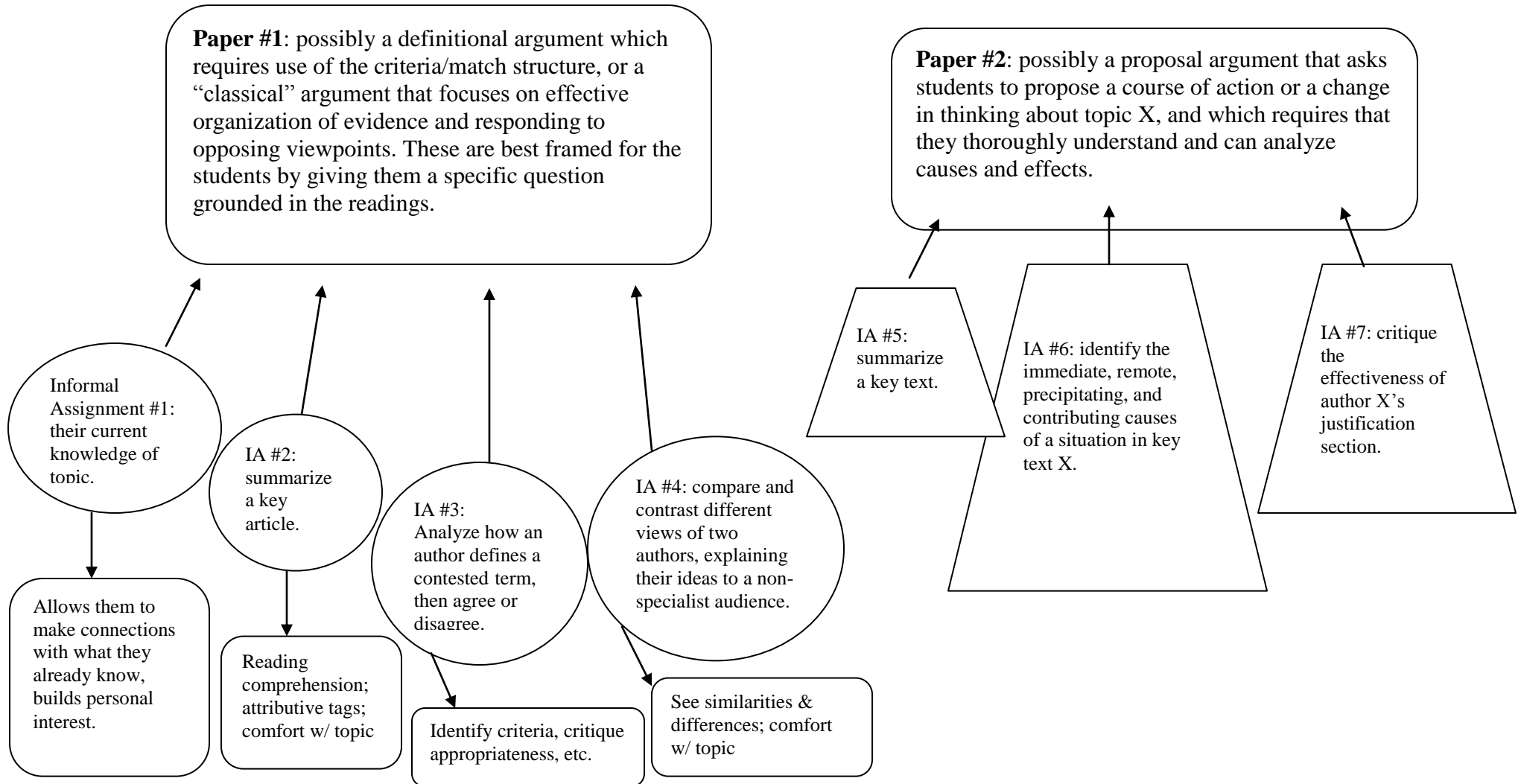
they now agree is a good summary. Then a representative from each small group comes up to the computer to type up their summary. Then as a class we read each one and decide which one is best. Never is one group's summary 100% on target. In our discussion we discuss and review everything from effective use of attributive tags to content accuracy and proportion.

2. Students read an Op-Ed that I chose to illustrate the particular claim type we were studying that week. We discussed the article in depth, analyzing its rhetorical strategies and diagramming how the author has set up the argument.

3. A weekly Blog activity in which that week's 3 students each choose an Op-Ed from *The New York Times* that illustrates one of the claim types we've been studying. They then have to write a Blog entry in which they discuss the issue being addressed in the Op-Ed and pose a question to the rest of the class about how the author makes his or her argument. We meet for class in a computer lab and students respond to at least two of the Blog entries and at least two classmates' responses.

Further examples of how you can align your informal assignments to help prepare students for the formal papers appear on the next page.

How the Informal Assignments Relate to, and Help Students Prepare for, the Formal Paper Assignments.
Use informal assignments to help students learn and practice specific skills that they will need for the formal papers. Be sure to use these assignments for in-class activities so that students can further develop the skill with peers. Here's an example of how some informal assignments might be sequenced to build up to the papers, but use the specific of your topic to be creative!

Paper #1: possibly a definitional argument which requires use of the criteria/match structure, or a "classical" argument that focuses on effective organization of evidence and responding to opposing viewpoints. These are best framed for the students by giving them a specific question grounded in the readings.

Paper #2: possibly a proposal argument that asks students to propose a course of action or a change in thinking about topic X, and which requires that they thoroughly understand and can analyze causes and effects.

Informal Assignment #1: their current knowledge of topic.

IA #2: summarize a key article.

IA #3: Analyze how an author defines a contested term, then agree or disagree.

IA #4: compare and contrast different views of two authors, explaining their ideas to a non-specialist audience.

IA #5: summarize a key text.

IA #6: identify the immediate, remote, precipitating, and contributing causes of a situation in key text X.

IA #7: critique the effectiveness of author X's justification section.

Allows them to make connections with what they already know, builds personal interest.

Reading comprehension; attributive tags; comfort w/ topic

Identify criteria, critique appropriateness, etc.

See similarities & differences; comfort w/ topic

D. In designing your formal paper assignments, please use this model from Kerry Walk, the former Director of Princeton's Writing Program. The importance of the model cannot be over-emphasized!

Elements of an Effective Writing Assignment

The assignment. Surprisingly, many teachers forget to include the crucial ingredient: the assignment itself. At least one sentence on your assignment sheet should explicitly state what you want students to do. The assignment is usually signaled by a verb, such as "analyze," "assess," "explain," or "discuss." For example, in a history course, after reading a model biography, students were directed as follows:

> Your assignment is to write your own biographical essay on Mao, using Mao's reminiscences (as told to a Western journalist), speeches, encyclopedia articles, a medical account from Mao's physician, and two contradictory obituaries.

A good strategy for coming up with an effective assignment is to imagine the kind of essay you want students to write, then to work backwards to the specific instruction that's likely to produce it. Having drafted the assignment, you should read it from a student's point of view for clarity and comprehensibility. *Note that the best assignments nudge students toward making an argument.*

The purpose of the assignment. Explaining to students why they're doing a particular assignment can help them grasp the big picture—what you're trying to teach them and why learning it is worthwhile. For example,

> This assignment has three goals: for you to (1) see how the concepts we've learned thus far can be used in a different field from economics, (2) learn how to write about a model, and (3) learn to critique a model or how to defend one.

Approaches to the assignment. Some instructors give students assignment sheets that are filled with big blocks of questions and lengthy ruminations on the topic. Students often can't tell which part is the assignment itself and which is advice for approaching it. To avoid confusing students, it's best to separate the assignment from methods for approaching it, questions to consider, and pitfalls to avoid. For example,

> The most successful papers will have a tight focus. Don't attempt to include all of the suggested topics or comparison passages in your essay. Make an argument based on a close reading of a few carefully selected passages and be sure to make both your argument and the texts that will support that argument clear in the opening paragraph of your paper.

Logistics. When and where is the paper due? How long will it probably be? What are the formatting specifications (margin width, font size, etc.)? What citation style should be used? By answering these questions on the assignment sheet, you can avoid a host of problems later. For example,

> Due date: Monday, February 28, at the beginning of class (don't be late!)
> Length: 4-6pp. (1500 words)
> Format: Times 12, one-inch margins, no cover page
> Citations: MLA in-text citation style; include a properly formatted Works Cited
> Sources: Limit yourself to the source book for this assignment; do not do outside research.

It's also important to tell students your policies regarding extensions, late papers, and rewrites. Many instructors communicate their policies in the syllabus, where they may also list criteria for grading papers and give information about how final grades are calculated.

IV   REVISION

WRI 102 is grounded in the philosophy that writing is a recursive process: that is, writing requires numerous invention, drafting, revising, and editing techniques, and that this process is rarely linear. In fact, writers often jot down initial ideas, then expand to a partial draft, and in the process of revising (or even editing), decide to go back and brainstorm or research more, return to the drafting stage, and so on.

In promoting writing as a way of learning, WRI 102 **particularly emphasizes the importance of revision**, where revision means truly re-thinking one's ideas, their presentation, and their effect on the reader. Therefore, WRI 102 includes **two drafts for each formal paper.**

However, as Richard Larson warns, while the "procedures students are taught to follow are by no means unimportant. . . . the teacher and the student both need to remember, of course, that using the scaffolding of composing processes to facilitate writing does not produce, or assure the success of, any kind of writing. The success of any writing is determined by the quality of the information included, the clarity of the organizational plan and its development, the lucidity of style, the 'ethos' of the writer, the appropriateness of the writing for its reader(s), and the suitability of the writing to its occasion and purpose. Engaging adroitly in composing processes does not relieve the writer of the responsibility for producing 'effective' discourse, although on occasion (I have perceived) some teachers seem to suggest that the skillful traversal of processes—skillful execution of this 'continuing assignment'—is all one needs for successful writing" (378).

So, please be careful to not to over-emphasize the elements of the writing process in lieu of more fundamental aspects of writing. The tools of the writing process are just that—tools. Don't inadvertently convey to students that as long as they do each step in the process it will result in an "A" paper. Ultimately, students must produce effective writing that meets the identified outcomes of the assignment, and they can do this through a **guided revision process.** Below are some fundamental tenets of giving effective feedback to promote engaged, substantive revision.

A. Early writing deserves non-judgmental, but constructive, feedback.

Writing is actually a thinking process (not simply transcribing what's already in our heads), and therefore it's OK when a first draft is messy. We are clear with students about the exploratory nature of early writing, and we back this up with non-judgmental, but constructive, feedback at the early stages.

"Student learning can be greatly enhanced by having room to make mess in writing and someone to read that mess with intense love and attention."

--Alfred E. Guy, Jr., *R.W.B. Lewis* Director, Yale College Writing Center

If we want our students to think about their ideas, the structure of their claim, its support, and their logic (among many other higher-order or macro-level revisions), we **undercut** our own efforts the minute we start underlining and circling every micro-level error. But it's hard NOT to

do this, isn't it? Put the pen away (or the keyboard if you respond electronically), and first read for overall structure.

- What is the thesis?
- Has the student actually addressed the assignment?
- What main issue (thematic or structural) does this student primarily need to re-think?

> The first level of feedback that a student receives should address these big picture issues. Only after they revise their paper so that it's effective overall in its main points, organization, and logic should they begin to look at more detailed editing for "flow" and "correctness."

In fact, Alfie Guy suggests keeping macro-level comments limited to 2 or 3 aspects at most, and to identify the categories or types of revision that you're making note of so that students can "transfer what they learn to other writing projects."

Guy also recommends not making any marginal comments until you've read the whole draft and decided what the main focus of your end comment is going to be; that way, you can make sure that your marginal comments are on the same issue and reinforce the suggestions you're making for revision.

Here are some additional "minimal marking" techniques that you can try:

1. Provide a note at the top of the first page that both support how students currently think and yet challenge them to think in more complex ways; so, provide one paragraph that praises conceptual strengths and one paragraph that suggests ways to re-think the topic (Slattery 334).

2. A similar method is to comment on 2-3 strengths and 2-3 weaknesses, and then make recommendations for revision, keeping miscellaneous comments to the end (McAllister 62).

Conferencing

One particularly effective and efficient method of providing feedback on a first draft is to have conferences with students rather than responding solely on paper. When we are face-to-face with a writer, we can ask questions and **engage in a dialogue** about what the writer was trying to say and where they are still confused. Sometimes, a simple question clears away a LOT of clutter and allows you to see where the student was headed.

Written feedback is a one-way street, and if we've misunderstood the student, then our comments are unlikely to be clear. Or, even if we are clear about what needs to be revised, the lack of face-to-face communication can sometimes pose other problems. In short, speaking face-to-face allows us to:

- Make sure the student understands what we are saying.

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- Provide more detailed explanations of why a certain revision is needed; for example, we can simply say, "As a reader, I had difficulty following your point here." But then—most importantly—you can say, "Explain to me what you were getting at here." Then once the student does so, you can work together to clarify the point and re-structure the argument as needed.

- Provide more off-hand positive feedback and reinforcement so that students understand that this really is the process all effective writers go through.

- Remind the student of other similar revisions that have been reviewed in class ("Remember when we looked at the topic sentences in Joe's paragraphs?").

- Hear what's confusing for the student.

- Ask at the end if the student feels confident about making the revisions you just discussed.

Another option is to meet with groups of three students (in lieu of class that week) for an hour and have students bring copies of their draft as they normally would for peer review, but you participate in the session as well. Each student should have a copy of the rubric at hand. After the first student reads his or her paper, allow time for the group members to jot down ideas on the rubric. Then ask each student to respond to the following question:

> **What's the one or two most important things that Sue needs to work on to make this paper more effective?**

You then answer the same question and summarize what kinds of macro-level revisions the writer should work on. I have found this to be one of the most effect ways to give feedback on 1st drafts. But it does take time, so you must be willing to transfer time you would normally have spent at home to a location on campus.

B. We view students as apprentice writers, and we view our job as coach and eventually, as evaluator.

*"From a teacher's standpoint, commenting to prompt revision, as opposed to justifying a grade or pointing out errors, may also change one's whole orientation toward reading student writing. . . . You begin looking for the promise of a draft rather than its mistakes. **You begin seeing yourself responding to rather than correcting a set of papers.** You think of limiting your comments to the two or three things that the writer should work on for the next draft rather than commenting copiously on everything. You think of reading for ideas rather than for errors. In short, you think of coaching rather than judging."*

--Bean, *Engaging Ideas*, p. 242

This is where the difference between formative and summative assessment is crucial. Formative assessment provides advice and "coaching" to help someone improve. Any skill—playing a

musical instrument or a sport, painting, dancing—requires **practice** and then feedback on that practice in order to get better. And sometimes, those practices are full of mistakes. Only after much practice is the person ready to be evaluated at a concert, in a game, or by a judge.

As writing instructors, we have to wear both hats!

Giving feedback to promote real revision has its challenges. The comments we give—no matter what color the ink we use—are often *felt* as a personal judgment. How do we give an honest assessment of what the student has done so far, while also suggesting ways for the student to develop their thinking, and improve the structure, organization, clarity, and overall quality of their work?

We have the potential to do many things in our comments on student writing: correct/critique, direct, guide, prompt, question, or reflect. As the authors of *Twelve Readers Reading* conclude, faculty who provide evaluative comments with moderate levels of direction tend to be more "product" oriented, and assume that it's their responsibility to *intervene to assist in student development*. Faculty who are more apt to pose questions or reflective statements with little or only indirect guidance on revision tend to be more "process" oriented and *assume that a student's development will happen in the right climate*. At the extremes are the authoritarian responder who takes on the role of editor, and the analytical responder who takes on the role of reader (focusing only on his or her understanding of the text); **somewhere in the middle is the advisory responder who blends the best of both approaches**.[2]

Another term for this advisory responder is "coach."

Just as a music teacher would never make a student perform at a concert without lots of lessons and practice, and a baseball coach would never ask a player to play in a game without lots of batting and fielding practice, so too, we writing teachers need to remember that we cannot assign and grade papers until we've given students some "practice."
This means practice in all three areas (rules, moves, and plays) in various formats—some isolated, some integrated together. But these must be "low stakes" situations where the main purpose is learning (not getting a grade that's worth a high percentage of the final course grade).

During practice, the coach DOES evaluate how well the student can perform these functions, but ONLY with the purpose of helping the student to improve and master the skill. The evaluation is formative, not summative.

- The batting coach will watch a batter in the cage, and comment on each swing ("open your hips," "pull your swing all the way through").

- At times, the coach may even stand behind the hitter with his arms around his or her shoulders, and physically guide the hitter in the proper form.

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[2] I have copies of the chart and explanatory comments from *Twelve Readers Reading* for anyone who would like to see it, and I highly recommend this book!

- For initial learners, the coach will demonstrate the proper form to show what it looks like, and then break down a swing into each part of the physical movements involved, describing the positioning necessary.

In the writing classroom, we need to adopt similar coaching methods. Practice may take any of the following forms:

- Examining a text to see what a particular type of argument looks like, what it involves, and how its writer has "performed" it.

- Reviewing written guidelines and examples of various arguments, with each part broken down into step-by-step directions for the particular components (*The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writi*ng provides a lot of this, as do the templates in *They Say / I Say*).

- Informal opportunities to try out a particular type of argument, with discussion and live feedback.

As coach, you provide "feedback" for the writer who is practicing in the "batting cage." Here is where you offer advisory comments which provide directions (not commands which take away the student's ownership of their own writing). Simply making observations or posing questions ("Your paragraphs do not flow as well as they might," "Is this the most effective location for this paragraph?") won't always work because our students are not able to translate our comments into a revision. Instead, be specific, and explain why the paragraph needs to be moved ("This paragraph expands the point you make on p. 3 so it would be more effective if you move it there.").

The trick is knowing how to turn a comment, question, or instruction into **a suggestion for action**. *"Why are you going in this direction" or "How does this relate to the previous paragraph?"* might become: "Readers often expect explanations of how the last point you made relates to a new point that you're developing. Given the complexity of the ideas here, **make those connections explicit in a transitional sentence here**."

C. **Our comments on student writing are structure- and content- focused, not error-focused. In other words, we relinquish the somewhat natural (or at least deeply ingrained) tendency to search for and correct errors, and pay more attention to what students are trying to say and then help them say it more effectively.**

> "'If schooling leads students to expect only the hostile reader, or only the reader who serves a proofreader, or only the reader who serves as gate-keeper, then writing will come to seem less a pursuit of meaning than a survival exercise.'"
>
> --Gary Dohrer, "Do Teachers' Comments on Students' Papers Help?"

In a study done at the University of Texas at Austin, Gary Dohrer examined what students view as the purpose behind faculty comments on drafts and the relationship between the comments

and the students' responses. First, he found that despite overt claims about wanting to promote revision, 52-80% of the comments on the drafts were on surface-level features. Not surprisingly, this corresponds to the types of changes most often made by students (59-90%): "students . . . had consciously decided that revision was predominantly an exercise in correcting errors to get a higher grade" (4). In doing their "revision," most students did not re-read their paper, but only skimmed through the comments to correct the errors that were noted. They were not re-considering their text in a global way; they were not re-thinking the purpose or effectiveness of their writing. They were not, in other words, engaged in true revision. Rather, faculty "took on the role of evaluators, and students became correctors" (7).

Pointing to the work of Nancy Sommers from the 1980's, Dohrer affirms that **feedback that is primarily about error finding results in students relinquishing "ownership and authorship" since they attend to the faculty member's concerns not their own purposes in writing** (5). This, too, further eliminates the possibility for real revision.

In his review of the scholarship on responding to student writing, Rich Haswell comes to the same conclusion: students "assiduously follow the teacher's surface emendations and disregard the deeper suggestions regarding content and argumentation" (11).

Extensively marking grammar mistakes on early drafts—even with a concise system in which mistakes are numbered and refer to a master list—ultimately sends the wrong message and is counter-productive.

First, it sends the message that **we're all about searching for errors as opposed to listening to what students have to say** and helping them communicate more effectively. Of course good usage DOES help writers communicate more effectively, so patterns of improper usage should be brought to students' attention, but in a way that is manageable. The way we bring it to their attention should allow them to understand the pattern and then learn to correct it on their own. Second, it can simply result in students tuning out. Studies have found that "students attend to nothing at all when paper corrections are overwhelming" (McAllister 61).

Third, it sends the concrete message that revision means correcting grammar mistakes. Thus, as MacAllister concludes: "Beyond fostering deafness and defensiveness in students, grammar-centered responses can also promote unproductive revision behaviors. Current research in this area indicates that one important distinction between poor and proficient writers is that poor writers restrict revision to changes in words and sentences, while proficient writers rewrite whole sections to clarify meaning for the reader" (60).

As Alfie Guy, director of Yale's Writing Center and frequent Bard Institute writing workshop facilitator here at TCNJ, puts it:

"It is entirely appropriate to give comments on sentence-level issues, but proofreading or copyediting every error is worse than a waste of time—it is generally detrimental to learning. If a student needs help with diction, syntax, or correctness, you should select a pattern to focus on and mark only instances of that particular problem. . . . Students will not internalize more than 1 or 2 new rules during a given revision. Calling attention to more than this just generates noise."

Keep in mind as well that when students truly revise and re-write whole passages, some of those errors you see in an early draft will be rectified. In fact, some of these errors are a product of simple confusion on the part of the student. We have to remember that they're struggling to formulate an idea and it's not going to come out perfectly.

To address common problems in usage, style, grammar and other mechanics, it's best to hold class workshops, using sentences and passages from your students' papers. You can assign readings and exercises in the St. Martin's handbook, then review that in class together, and then jump into putting these ideas into practice by having students assess and then correct the paper you've projected on the screen.

I'll end with the following quotation: "To effect improvement in students' writing, comments must confront students with issues situational to the text. . . . They must raise questions in students' minds that cause them to **reevaluate their own purpose**, and not merely to guess at the teacher's purposes. Russell Hunt (1989) contends that 'we don't learn language by having our errors pointed out and corrected; we learn as a by-product of **using language in order to do things we care about doing**'" (Dohrer 7 *empahsis added*).

V   STUDENT ASSESSMENT

We make grading transparent. For each major paper assignment, we provide assignment-specific rubrics which allow students to better understand the learning objectives and which provide guidelines as students envision their text's characteristics and effects.

The rubric should be handed out when the assignment is distributed so that expectations are clear for students. Students will be much more successful if they understand the goals of the assignment. You can then use an un-scored version of the rubric for giving feedback on drafts. Using the rubric throughout the revision process ensures that your feedback is consistent and that students know what they should be aiming for.

Assignment-specific rubrics are well worth the initial effort it takes to design them: you have a focused, detailed rubric that you can use again and again, or modify easily for future use; grading is faster, easier, and more objective. Moreover, by sharing the rubric with students when you distribute the assignment, you will notice a marked improvement in their papers—rarely will you receive papers that are so off the mark that you wonder what assignment they were reading, and more often you'll have successful (or at least authentic) efforts to achieve the objectives.

Here are the steps for designing one:

1. Review the intended outcomes of the assignment. What specifically do you want students to gain from doing this assignment? What skills should they be able to demonstrate? The items you include must match the specific components of the claim type for the paper, and therefore your rubric will, to some degree, refer to the elements listed in *Allyn and Bacon*.

    Another way to think about this is: what do you expect in these papers? It's important to be specific and to prioritize your expectations. It's very difficult to grade a paper if you've left out a major component that you expect to see and view as essential.

2. Translate these outcomes into the criteria by which the paper will be evaluated. Keep the total number of criteria to between 5-10, fewer if applicable, but not more than 10. Each criterion should refer to an element of the paper; it should be a noun, with no evaluative description.

3. Determine the relative weight of each criterion. Some rubrics list the points for each level of quality, and these can vary from criterion to criterion.

4. Decide how many levels of proficiency you want to include for each criteron. For example, three (weak, satisfactory, or strong), five (based on grades A-F) or some other set-up based on points.

5. Now write out the descriptions for each level. For example, what specific features will an A paper's thesis have? What will an A paper contain in terms of the evidence used to support the thesis? **Describe the characteristics of a student's paper as specifically as possible at each level in each criterion.** Sometimes it's best to describe the best possible paper in all its facets first, next describe the worst possible paper, and then fill in the intermediate levels.

Other people start at the bottom and work their way up, including phrases such as "includes the previous box plus has xyz," but here the lowest level must meet minimum expectations.

Here is the rubric that matches my paper assignment on pages 11-13. In this example, I do not include a detailed list of the rhetorical and argumentation strategies in items 2 and 3 because we have been covering these in class and they differ for each student depending on which Op-Ed they chose to evaluate. However, most of the other items are descriptive at each level.

1. **Thesis**

○ 15 pts - The thesis clearly states the degree to which the author successfully makes his or her argument, specifies the ways in which the author is successful and/or unsuccessful, and serves as an accurate forecast for the organization of the paper.

○ 12 pts - The thesis states the degree to which the author successfully makes his or her argument, but is not specific in describing the ways in which the author is successful and/or unsuccessful, and therefore only partially forecasts the organization of the paper.

○ 9 pts - The thesis is unclear or confusing in its attempt to describe the degree to which the author successfully makes his or her argument, and/or does not describe the ways in which the author is successful and/or unsuccessful.

○ 6 pts - Regardless of the level of completion and specificity, the thesis simply does match the paper.

2. **Rhetorical Tools**

○ 12 pts - The writer includes and accurately understands all of the relevant rhetorical tools used in the article, and when appropriate, effectively explains how they are used in conjunction with one another.

○ 9 pts - Most, but not all, rhetorical tools used in the article are included and accurately understood.

○ 6 pts - The writer does not include and/or misunderstands many of the rhetorical tools used in the article.

○ 3 pts - The writer fails to examine the relevant rhetorical tools used in the article, and those that are included are misunderstood.

3. **Argumentation Tools**

○ 12 pts - The writer examines and accurately understands all of the relevant argumentation tools used in the article.

○ 9 pts - Most, but not all, argumentation tools are included and accurately understood.

○ 6 pts - The relevant argumentation tools are included but some are misunderstood.

○ 3 pts - The writer fails to examine the relevant argumentation tools and those that are

examined are misunderstood.

4. Evidence

○ 12 pts - The writer selects a sufficient number of appropriate examples and passages from the article to support each point being made.

○ 9 pts - For some points being made, there are no examples or passages from the article being referenced.

○ 6 pts - The number of examples and passages is sufficient but they are often not relevant for what the writer is trying to illustrate.

○ 3 pts - There are few pieces of evidence from the article to support the points being made.

5. Analysis

○ 14 pts - The writer clearly and insightfully explains how the selected example or passage supports the point being made, and includes any important qualifications.

○ 11 pts - Most times the writer explains how the selected example or passage supports the point being made, but once or twice only re-states the content of the example, without conducting any analysis or providing any necessary explanation.

○ 8 pts - The writer frequently only re-states the content of the example, without conducting any analysis to explain how the selected example or passage supports the point being made.

○ 5 pts - While the writer usually includes an analysis, it is incorrect, confusing, or illustrates a fundamental misreading of the article.

○ 2 pts - There is little to no analysis throughout the paper, with only summary instead.

6. Paragraph Unity and Coherence

○ 10 pts - Each paragraph is unified around one main idea and the sentences flow logically and clearly from one to the next.

○ 5 pts - Some paragraphs go off topic, and /or lack internal coherence so that the connections among ideas are not clear.

○ 0 pts - Many paragraphs go off topic, and /or lack internal coherence so that the connections among ideas are not clear.

7. Topic Sentences

○ 6 pts - Each body paragraph has a topic sentence that accurately introduces the content of the paragraph, and either indicates how the paragraph relates to the thesis or uses effective relational and transitional words to show its connection with the previous paragraph.

○ 4 pts - Most, but not all, paragraphs have effective topic sentences.

○ 2 pts - Many paragraphs lack effective topic sentences.

8. Incorporation of quotations

○ 9 pts - Nearly all quotations are skillfully and smoothly incorporated into the writer`s sentences with appropriate attributive tags; there are no incorrect paraphrases,

○ 6 pts - Some quotations are awkwardly incorporated or do not have appropriate attributive tags; some paraphrases are too close to the original or are inaccurate.

○ 3 pts - Several quotations are unattached to the writer's sentences, and/or are awkwardly incorporated or do not have appropriate attributive tags; and/or some paraphrases are too close to the original or are inaccurate.

9. Editing and proofreading.

○ 10 pts - The paper has been thoroughly proofread and edited so that most sentences are clear (with no missing words or unclear references), and all words have been carefully chosen to meet the needs of the specific sentence. There are few, if any, grammatical errors (such as subject-verb agreement) or typos.

○ 5 pts - There are 2-3 problematic sentences, word selections, and/or errors per page.

○ 0 pts - The paper reflects no proofreading and editing, with more than 3-4 problematic sentences, word selections, and/or errors per page

VI   INFORMATION LITERACY

WRI 102 is not a research course, but academic argumentation is inherently about joining a conversation with others who have thought about and studied a problem, question, or issue. As we know, reading what others have said is an essential step in formulating one's own ideas. Interpreting, connecting and synthesizing new information (or data) in a way that reflects accurate, fair, and disciplined reading is also a key component in academic discourse. Thus, WRI 102 should more properly be thought of as a "researched writing" course, not a research course.

As a result, information literacy is an important component of the course outcomes. *Allyn and Bacon*'s chapter 13 is an excellent resource in teaching students how to read rhetorically and critically, as well as how to evaluate the sources they'll encounter throughout college, whether print or electronic. Moreover, it includes hands on tips on everything from incorporating quotations to using MLA and APA citations.

In addition, each section of WRI 102 will have its own Library Session in which a librarian will create a tailored presentation for your section's topic. Once you know which librarian has been assigned to your section, you can provide that person with your syllabus, readings, and the paper assignment on which students will be working at the time of the library session. **The library sessions will take place between the 3ʳᵈ and 6ᵗʰ weeks of the semester.** If you realize you need your session at a later or earlier date, please notify John Oliver, the information literacy librarian, to reschedule as needed.

One of the key goals of the library session is to show students how to use online academic databases to find scholarly, peer reviewed articles. More than ever, students need to understand how to access the vast array of potential sources of information, and they need to know how to evaluate them (for example what's the difference between websites ending in .gov, .edu, .org, and .com?). Again, work with your librarian so your class's session matches the needs of your course.

VII   TEXTBOOKS

All sections of WRI 102 will use the following two texts:

Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say / I Say: The Moves that Matter in
        Academic Writing*. New York: Norton, 2006.

NOTE: The Allyn and Bacon text is customized to TCNJ:

Ramage, John D.. John C. Bean, and June Johnson. *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*. 2ND
        Custom Edition Pearson-Longman, 2008.

These orders will be place automatically for all sections. In addition, you may require additional
reading based on your theme. Book orders are placed in the fall through the Professional
Services Specialist.

VIII   COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In order to accommodate the needs of each section's topic, there is not a standardized syllabus
for WRI 102. Nevertheless, there are common and mandatory components, as each section must
work towards the same learning outcomes.

1. Papers: Each section of WRI 102 will include three major (formal) papers, which will entail
   two drafts each prior to the final version which is graded.

   Thus, working backwards from the final due date of a formal paper, you will need to plan a
   sequence of activities that include the following:

   - Informal written assignments and in-class activities that get students immersed in and
     engaged with the issues of the course topic, usually by some kind of writing in response
     to the readings.

   - Informal written assignments and in-class activities that allow students to "practice" the
     various elements of the paper (e.g., learning how to structure a criteria-match definition,
     or how to summarize someone else's ideas)

   - Time for you to read and respond to the first draft

   - Time for students to revise the draft

   - Time for you and/or peers to respond to 2nd draft (or to have a workshop in a computer
     lab).

   - Time for students to do final editing prior to submission of the final version.

2. <u>Week by week course design</u>: The textbooks have been carefully chosen to assist instructors to work towards those outcomes. When planning your week-by-week calendar, please be aware of the following breakdown of topics:

Chapters 1-4 in *Allyn and Bacon* provide an excellent introduction to the kinds of reading and inquiry common in the academy. You need not assign every page of every chapter, nor must you assign concepts in the exact order in which they are presented in the book. After reading the textbook, it is up to you to choose carefully in conjunction with your chosen topical readings, in a way that will best match the needs of each of the major papers. Note, too, that many concepts can be effectively assigned alongside the preface, introduction, and chapters 1-3 of *They Say / I Say*.

Chapters 5-10 cover the major types of papers including image analysis and all claim types. You need choose only 3 of these, although forms of the proposal argument often require you to also cover causal claims.

Chapter 11 covers what the authors call a "classical" argument based on its origins in Greek Rhetoric. This chapter can be used effectively in conjunction with any of the major claim types as it provides an excellent way for students to assess their own stage of development as one who is able to both prioritize truth-seeking and persuasion. It also offers a nice section on addressing opposing points of view, as well as a section on logic. Parts of this chapter can effectively be combined with chapter 6, "Skeptics May Object," in *They Say / I Say*.

Chapter 12 is likely one of the best resources you'll find on concrete revision techniques. The concepts can be assigned throughout the semester. Several of the concepts here can be usefully paired with chapters 8, 9, and 10 in *They Say / I Say*.

Chapter 13, as explained earlier, addresses information literacy.

Chapter 14 provides strategies for editing as well as a grammar and usage handbook.

Within this schedule, you will also be assigning the <u>required thematic readings</u> for your section. Don't underestimate the time needed for discussing an assigned text to make sure students fully understand it. If they don't "get" what someone else is arguing, then they won't be able to respond to these issues in their own writing. By grappling with and understanding the nuances of someone else's argument, students also learn strategies for their own writing.

<u>Final Exam</u>: There is no final exam in WRI 102, and we do not, unfortunately, use portfolios for grading students. If you have experience using portfolios and would like to incorporate this in your class, please consult with me prior to the start of the semester.

IX   SYLLABUS TEMPLATE

WRI 102-xx: Academic Writing
-Instructor's Name
-Office and Office Hours
-TCNJ email address
-Phone number (optional; we do not have office phones so it is up to you to give your students you phone #)

Although there are required elements in this syllabus, the course is yours and your students should hear *your* voice. Where the template indicates that you complete certain sections, use this as the first chance to model for students your identity as a confident writer! ☺

Course Description

Academic Writing offers students from across the college the opportunity to practice and develop their skills in the production of academic prose—particularly, academic argumentation. Within a framework of weekly reading, guided writing workshops, and instructor feedback, students will practice the modes of writing necessary to succeed in college. Students will develop their skills in critical thinking and reading, cultivate habits of effective and ethical research using proper documentation methods, and advance their use of information technologies.

*Optional: Include an additional paragraph here that outlines your theme and how it relates to the course components above.

Student Learning Outcomes

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

- Understand each act of writing as an act of communication in a specific genre, for a specific audience, with a specific purpose.
- Collect, analyze, interpret, and present information effectively and ethically.
- Use a variety of reasoning strategies, including definition, causation, analogy, deduction, and induction, while avoiding logical fallacies.
- Write rhetorically effective and well-structured arguments with clear thesis statements which accurately forecast the paper.
- Construct writing processes suitable to your learning style.
- Revise all aspects of an argument from its organization and logic to its paragraph unity and coherence.
- Edit and proofread your writing so that it conforms to Standard Written English.
- Use skillfully the conventions of academic writing.
- Interpret and apply the feedback you receive on your writing in an appropriate and conscientious way.
- Offer tactful and productive feedback to others on their written arguments.

Textbooks and Required Readings

*List here the required textbooks and required books related to your section's theme, as well as readings that you will be including in SOCS. Of course, you can add additional readings later (for example, a newspaper or magazine article that is relevant to your topic), but primary readings must be listed here. Indicate if they will be handouts or files in SOCS.

Learning Activities & Course Requirements

*You must include all major learning activities and assignments, including all formal papers—anything that will be expected of students during the semester. Although you will be handing out (and posting in SOCS) the detailed assignment, you should still provide a brief description here. You may also want to include a brief statement about your teaching philosophy (for example, you may want to describe your role as "coach.")

Grading & Student Assessment

**Include a list of all graded assignments and their weight in the final course grade. Also mention here that all formal assignments will be assessed according to an assignment-specific rubric, which will be distributed when the assignment is given out.*

You may want to include any other expectations you have. As an EXAMPLE, here something I regularly include in my syllabus:

What I expect of you and what you can expect of me and one another:

- ❑ That you attend all classes
- ❑ That you arrive on time (10:00 AM).
- ❑ That while you are in class, you focus your mind and energies on the tasks at hand, whatever they may be: working with your peers, discussing a reading, etc. Getting an education is an active process which requires your participation. If you don't show up--physically or mentally--then you won't be getting an education.
- ❑ That you express your concerns and questions rather than assume that I or your fellow classmates can read your mind. If I don't know that something's wrong, I can't help you fix it. If I don't realize that you don't understand something, I won't know to explain it in a different or better way.
- ❑ That you treat everyone in this class with respect and that we, as a group, work hard to make this a class where everyone feels safe to be themselves, express their views, try out new ideas, and make mistakes without fear of ridicule.

**The syllabus should not say that attendance will be graded. However, attendance is a precondition for participation which can be graded if you desire. If participation is graded, some evaluation criteria should be included. See link to the College's attendance policy: http://www.tcnj.edu/%7Eacademic/policy/attendance.html

Course Schedule

Include a date-by-date account of the day's topic, classroom activities, readings due, and any written assignments due. Please choose a visually clear and effective format.

Academic Integrity

You must include this official formal statement. (You may include additional points as long as you are not contradicting the college's policy.)

The College of New Jersey is a community of scholars and learners who respect and believe in academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is not tolerated at The College of New Jersey. Each student must do his or her own work and behave in an ethically responsible manner. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following behaviors:

- Using another author's words without enclosing them in quotation marks, without paraphrasing them, and/or without citing the source appropriately
- Concealing, destroying, or stealing research or library materials with the purpose of depriving others of their use
- Falsifying bibliographic entries
- Submitting any academic assignment which contains falsified or fabricated data or results
- Submitting the same term paper or academic assignment to another class without the permission of the instructor
- Feigning illness or personal circumstances to avoid a required academic activity
- Sabotaging someone else's work
- Collaborating on homework or take-home exams when instructions have called for independent work
- Attempting intimidation for academic advantage
- Inappropriate or unethical use of technologies to gain academic advantage
- Submitting a falsified document

For a complete description of the college's policy, including the adjudication process and possible sanctions, please see: http://www.tcnj.edu/%7Eacademic/policy/integrity.html.

Differing Abilities

You must include this official formal statement.

Any student who has a documented disability and is in need of academic accommodations should notify the professor of this course and contact the Office of Differing Abilities Services (609.771.2571). Accommodations are individualized and in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992. For additional information and guidelines for registering with the Office of Differing Abilities, please see http://www.tcnj.edu/~wellness/disability/

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