

Red Rocks Community College  
English Department

Guide to Teaching Composition



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# I. Welcome

Welcome to the RRCC English Department. We're glad you're teaching with us. This handbook will answer some of your questions about our department's policies and practices. You will undoubtedly have other questions as the semester progresses; feel free to contact any of the full-time faculty members in the department.

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## Composition at RRCC

The department offers five composition courses, as well as courses in creative writing, business writing, and technical writing:

- ENG 030 focuses on sentence and basic paragraph structure and development.
- ENG 060 focuses on paragraph structure and development and introduces the formal essay.
- ENG 090 emphasizes critical thinking as students explore writing for specific purposes and audiences.
- ENG 121 emphasizes the planning, writing, and revising of compositions, including the development of critical and logical thinking skills.
- ENG 122 emphasizes critical/logical thinking and reading, research strategies, and writing analytical, evaluative, and/or persuasive papers that incorporate research.

ENG 121 and ENG 122 are considered college-level transfer courses; ENG 030, ENG 060, and ENG 090 are considered developmental courses and do not transfer.

ENG 090 and ENG 121 do not cover research skills, such as finding, evaluating, and citing sources.

The Part-Time Lead will give you a curriculum guide for the course(s) you are teaching. The curriculum guide will tell you exactly what the required outcomes for your course are.

## RRCC English Department Philosophies and Best Practices for Composition

Your course should be designed to reflect these philosophies and best practices:

- Writing classes center around writing and the discussion of writing.
- Instructors engage students as both writers and readers.
- Instructors help students connect their thinking with reading and writing.
- Instructors approach writing as a process. They expect and teach revision, with essays being produced through multiple drafts.

- Students write for an audience beyond the teacher.
- Students share their writing with classmates.
- Instructors and students assess writing according to large-scale concerns, such as focus and development, before small-scale concerns, such as mechanics.
- Instructors demonstrate intellectual respect for students by encouraging them to develop their own voices.
- Instructors provide written assignment sheets with assignment requirements, due dates, and grading criteria.

There is an infinite number of ways of designing a course that reflects these philosophies and best practices. Some instructors organize their course around a theme, such as the environment or popular culture. Other instructors design their course as an exploration of different modes of public writing. You may do either, a combination of both, or something else altogether.

## II. Designing the Class

### Writing the Syllabus

All classes should have a syllabus. The College considers this document a contract for the course. By the end of the first week of the semester, you should email your syllabus to the department chair. The chair will keep your syllabus on file and will also forward it to the Writing Center Coordinator and your faculty mentor.

The Department recommends that all syllabi include the following:

- Course name and section number
- Instructor's name
- Office hours (optional for part-time faculty)
- How students can contact faculty member
- Required texts and/or supplies
- General description of the course from the catalog
- Specific course outcomes/objectives from curriculum guide
- Course requirements and assignments
- Attendance policy
- Late work policy
- Grading criteria (for example, what constitutes A-quality work and what differentiates it from lower grades)
- Methods of evaluation (for example, a midterm portfolio is worth 25% of the final grade)
- Assignment calendar
- References to the College's Academic Integrity Policy and the Student Code of Conduct (both are in the Student Handbook)

You will find sample RRCC English syllabi in the appendix.

You will find helpful information about writing a syllabus at the following Web sites:

- <http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/writesyl.htm>
- <http://teaching.ucsc.edu/tips-syllabus.html>

## Studentship

Some part of most course grades is based on how well the individual fulfills her/his role as student. This assessment does not necessarily indicate how well the individual has mastered academic skills, but it should indicate the extent to which he or she has tried to achieve the course objectives. For example, studentship would include how well a student has met the RRCC policy on classroom behavior:

The instructor in the classroom and in conference must encourage free discussion, inquiry, and expression. Student performance must be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct unrelated to academic standards.

- A. Protection of freedom of expression: Students are free to take reasoned exception to the interpretation of data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course in which they are enrolled.
- B. Protection against improper evaluation: Students have protection through orderly procedures against prejudice or capricious academic evaluation. At the same time, they are responsible for achieving standards of academic performance established for each course in which they are enrolled.
- C. Protection against improper disclosure: Information about student's views, beliefs, and political associations are considered confidential, and under no circumstances will become a part of their records or transcripts. Judgment of ability and character may be provided upon appropriate circumstances with the consent of the student.
- D. Protection against sexual harassment: Students have protection against sexual harassment by Red Rocks employees as well as other students as outlines in the college Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunities policies.

Here is an example of another slant on studentship, taken from East Carolina University:

Studentship involves

- *Participation, cooperation, and attitude*: Does the student attend? Does she/he meet deadlines? Does she/he have text and computer disks when they are required? While in class, does she/he respond to class discussions, contribute to small group projects, ask questions?
- *Effort*: Whatever the quality of participation or rhetorical achievement, does the student try to participate thoughtfully? Does she/he devote not just time but her/his full intellectual resources in trying to fulfill her/his obligations as a writer serving an audience? For example, does she/he go to the writing center, see the instructor after class to try out an idea, submit essays in which efforts to imagine and think deeply are evident? Does she/he exceed minimum requirements in exploiting library resources?
- *Progress*: Do all features of achievement, studentship, as well as quality of essays, improve? Progress naturally requires a comparison of early with recent work. A problem is that

our curriculum requires several types of writing for several types of purposes; therefore, we may seem to be comparing early apples with recent oranges. But there are some improvements we can trace: increased keenness in conceiving subject matter, greater adeptness in drafting and editing, fewer instances of grammatical dysfunctions and, especially, greater adeptness in revision.

Studentship can also include class participation, which is discussed below. You should develop your own statement on studentship based on your classroom philosophies.

## Class Participation

When determining your class participation policy, try to allow room for quiet students to succeed by highlighting areas where participation comes into play beyond talking in class. Here are two sample class participation policies:

### Grading Scale for Participation:

A - always prepared for class; participates without being called on; criticisms of other student papers show insight, close reading; comments are clear, succinct, and helpful.

B - generally prepared for class; occasionally participates without being called on; criticisms of other student papers demonstrate a good grasp of the course goals; comments generally are clear and helpful.

C - adequately prepared for class; only participates when called on; mastery of the course goals generally is evident, but criticisms of student papers, although somewhat helpful, demonstrate a less than thorough reading or understanding of the paper or course goals.

D - preparation is less than adequate; never participates unless called on; criticisms of other student papers demonstrate a casual reading, at best; comments demonstrate a failure to master the course goals.

F - disruptive to class (reading newspaper, talking, continual tardiness, etc.); unprepared when called on; unable or unwilling to participate in class discussions.

### An "A" student can answer yes to each of the following statements:

- I am prompt and have regular attendance in class.
- I am prepared for class with assignments, notes, and other required class materials.
- I print out and read assigned documents posted on the class web site, underline important passages/make notes in the margins, and bring them to class.
- I am an active and regular participant in all types of class discussions and activities.
- I listen respectfully when others talk, both in class and in group.
- I initiate questions in class.
- I build on and relate to points made by other students or by the teacher.
- My comments add important facts and perspectives or present outside information that reflects additional research that I have done which goes beyond the required assignment.

- I am never inattentive or rude in the class.
- I am not overtly sensitive, and can take constructive criticism and learn from my peers

## Writing Assignments

You will find many sample writing assignments in Appendix 2. All major writing assignments should

- be given to students in writing,
- explained in class, with plenty of time for students to ask questions,
- have clearly expressed objectives, and
- have clearly articulated grading criteria (the section below on rubrics should help you articulate these).

## Writing Portfolios

Some faculty choose to assign a portfolio as a final assignment or they assign multiple portfolios over the course of a semester to chart students' progress. Portfolios can take many forms from including the entire body of work -- including journal entries and exploratory drafts -- that the student has produced during the semester to a representative sampling of the best work. Depending on teaching style, instructors grade the portfolios in different ways. Some instructors base the majority of the final grade on portfolio performance. Others allocate a lesser percentage.

Portfolios can be effective teaching tools for composition courses. They provide students a framework for demonstrating the quantity, quality, and range of their writing skills; developing several essays over a long period of time; and having an active role in choosing which pieces should carry the most weight. Portfolios can also introduce self-assessment into the classroom in the form of a reflective portfolio component in which students assess the work they have accomplished in the course. Reflections can take several forms, from formal cover letters to reflective or artful essays- depending on the course goals. Some instructors opt to include an additional piece of writing- a Class Participation Self-Evaluation that utilizes a standard set of criteria and requires the student to argue for their participation grade.

Portfolios can be completed in traditional printed formats, although with the resources available to students, especially for those in hybrid or online sections, individual blogs or online class magazines can be used as portfolios. A blog is a convenient online journaling tool that enables students to customize a small part of the internet for themselves without necessitating any prior knowledge of HTML or web design. They can be utilized in a variety of ways. For individual portfolios, the students could post final drafts on their blog, along with their comments if desired. The instructor could also opt to create a class blog where representative work gets "published" in the same manner as a hard-copy class magazine. Some blog providers we like are [www.blog-city.com](http://www.blog-city.com), [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com), and [www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com).

In any case, a successful portfolio should demonstrate the writer's rhetorical skill, versatility, and willingness to experiment and revise.

## Rubrics

A rubric specifies evaluation criteria for different levels of achievement. A rubric helps tie composition theories to their practical applications. With rubric in hand, composition students are clear on what is expected by the instructor in each writing assignment, and instructors can assess the writing progress of individual students or groups of students consistently.

One way to develop a rubric is to list the writing skills to be assessed in a particular assignment along one side of a grid and anticipated levels of achievement along another. Some composition rubrics, such as the one below, are developed with lengthy, detailed information in each cell, and include totals at the bottom of each column for scoring:

Score	Structure	Writer's Voice	Content	Mechanics
4	Clear beginning, development, and conclusion. Appropriate paragraphing. Clear and appropriate transitions	The writer's "voice" is consistently unique, original, sincere, and compelling. Writer's detailed language and readable style helps readers become engaged with the paper.	Appropriate length to cover assignment's task. Writing clearly and coherently focused on topic. Thoughts clearly organized and presented. Assertions clearly supported by references to the class texts.	Correct sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and source citations. Appropriate word choices.
3	Mostly clear beginning, Development, and conclusion. Mostly appropriate paragraphing. Mostly clear and appropriate transitions.	The writer's "voice" is mostly, but not always, unique, original, sincere, and compelling. The writing has a readable style, but the topic isn't fully brought to life, and readers, thus, are not as effectively engaged.	Appropriate length to cover assignment's topic/task. Writing clearly and coherently focused on topic. Thoughts mostly organized. Most assertions supported by references to the class texts.	Generally free of errors in sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, word choice, and citation of sources. Errors do not become too distracting for the reader.
2	The writing has a structure that is logical; however, beginning, development, and conclusion are not clear; paragraphing is not effective; and/or transitions are not clear.	The writer's "voice" shows very few signs of uniqueness, originality, or sincerity. Writing, as a result, is not very compelling, and readers are not allowed to be effectively engaged.	Barely adequate length to cover assignment's topic/task. Writing sometimes strays from the topic. Thoughts adequately organized and presented. Some assertions supported by references to the class texts, but supported awkwardly or weakly.	Relatively few errors in sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, word choice, and citation of sources. Yet, errors become distracting for the reader.
1	Structure becomes hard to follow: Weak beginning, development and conclusion. Weak paragraphing. Weak transitions.	The writer seems indifferent or insincere, uninvolved, or distanced from the topic and/or audience.	Inadequate length to cover assignment's topic/task. Writing is weakly focused on topic. An organization of thoughts exists, but it is hard for the reader to follow. No assertions supported by references to the class texts.	Many errors in sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, word choice, citation of sources
0	Serious and persistent errors in organizational structure and paragraphing		Does not cover topic/task. Not focused. Writing is completely unorganized.	Serious and persistent errors in sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, word choice, citation of sources.
	Structure	Voice	Content	Mechanics

Note: The rubric above is based on a rubric from Johnson County Community College made available by Jeffrey Seybert at the AAHE Assessment Conference in Cincinnati, 1998. Modified by Henry Gambill, Director of Assessment, Pepperdine University.

Some composition rubrics are written on a much more limited grid of skills and levels, as in the example below, developed from Pamela Flash's "Creating Grading Rubrics for Writing Assignments." (See the text of "Creating Grading Rubrics for Writing Assignments" at [http://writing.umn.edu/tww/responding\\_grading/creating\\_rubrics.htm](http://writing.umn.edu/tww/responding_grading/creating_rubrics.htm).)

Insights and ideas	1	2	3	4	5
Address of target audience	1	2	3	4	5
Organization and use of prescribed formats	1	2	3	4	5
Integration of source materials	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar and mechanics	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Final Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1= not present
- 2= needs extensive revision
- 3= satisfactory
- 4= strong
- 5= outstanding

The advantage of using a rubric, no matter how detailed or brief the information written in the cells, is that it makes the grading criteria and instructor's expectations clear to students and instructors alike.

Check out <http://www.techtrekers.com/rubrics.html> for an extensive list of links to rubric development and use across the curriculum. Rubistar at <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php> will help you develop new rubrics.

## III. Teaching the Class

### Day One

“Don’t panic.”

Douglas Adams, [The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy](#)

This is probably the most important thing to keep in mind on the first day of class, especially if you’re a new teacher. Or maybe, go ahead and panic. As Tammy Wiandt of Kent State’s English Department [writes](#): Panic = Enthusiasm (to your students).

Either way, the tone you set on day one will likely persist to a greater or lesser extent for the rest of the semester, so use this period to model your *modus operandi* for the class. Will the classroom be intense or laid back? Will you focus on group or individual work? Any exercises you choose to do should help you to establish this tone. Above all, don’t do an exercise just because you think you “should” do one. Do one because it interests you, or because it fulfills your pedagogical purpose.

There are a few items that might seem to go without saying, but on Day One, you may be jittery enough that you forget the most basic elements...

- Write the course number and name on the board.
- Write your full name on the board.
- Take attendance (verbally, to help you learn names).
- Go over the syllabus. [One way](#) to make this often dull task more engaging, while fostering a sense of community from the get-go, is to read the syllabus as a class and then break into groups to form questions or comments about the syllabus, the instructor or the material. Your syllabus is probably not as clear as you think it is.

You may be amazed (as we all were when we first started) at the calming effect performing these simple tasks can have. After successfully remembering your own name and phone number, you will begin to feel confident, even cocky, about your ability to actually do this job you’ve gotten yourself into.

### Icebreakers

So you’ve introduced yourself to the class, now you want to establish a sense of community, a rapport among the students. You may want to try an informal icebreaker. The icebreaker can even be used to establish and activate participants’ previous knowledge of the subject area. Experiment with some of the icebreakers below. Some more can be found [here](#).

- Do a "naming cycle" where the first person says his name and then those that follow have to add their name to the list until it gets to the last person (preferably the instructor) who has to list the names of the entire class.
- Do peer interviews in which they are paired with another student and given five minutes to exchange information. They then have to introduce each other.
- Have students state their name and the author or literary character they would most like to be or meet.

- Have the class pretend they are at a cocktail party and mingle, meeting each person in the class (including you) before they are allowed to leave.
- Hand out [fortune cookies](#). Follow the link for Catherine Chambers' explanation.
  1. Identify quotations that are appropriate for your target audience. Use these literature-related [quotes](#), or find quotations at [quotations.about.com](#). You can also pen your own quotations under a pseudonym to add humor to your session.
  2. Insert the quotations in fortune cookies (or tape them to the cellophane wrapper). You'll find that tweezers work well if you need a tool for removing and replacing fortune cookie scripts. If time is limited, simply fold the strips of paper and place them in a container.
  3. Distribute the fortune cookies (or strips of paper) to individuals, pairs or teams.
  4. Provide 10-minutes for participants to reflect and formulate a response (e.g. agree/disagree and/or relevance of the quotation).
  5. Debrief - display each quotation on a flip chart, whiteboard, or PowerPoint slide in turn to ensure everyone can reflect on the quotation.

The most important element of a successful first day is thorough preparation. Make sure to have plenty of material going in, and don't be afraid to jump right into the material at hand. Make this time worthwhile, it will let your students know serious you are. Put some thought into every [aspect](#) of your first class period, from your attire, to how early you'll arrive at the classroom.

Remember: your students have a vested interest in your success. They have paid for this class, for your knowledge. Let their confidence in you reinforce your confidence in yourself. Have fun.

## The Diagnostic Writing Sample

Many instructors administer a diagnostic writing sample early each semester. Twenty to thirty minutes can be set aside at the end of a class for students to write on an assigned topic. There are two advantages to collecting writing samples from all students: the instructor will have baseline information on the first-draft writing skills of each student, and the instructor will have an accurate idea of composition abilities for the group as a whole.

The diagnostic writing assignment may ask for a brief paragraph written on an issue, concern, or problem of a general nature. Considerations for the selection of the issue may include its relevance to students, timeliness, and its potential level of controversy. Alternatively, the assignment may ask for the student's description of a person, place, or sequence of events. See below for examples of diagnostic writing assignments given by RRCC instructors.

Instructions to students should be included in the handout: Remind students about the need to thoughtfully consider the topic and to use pre-writing strategies and correct grammar, punctuation, and sentence construction. Developmental instructors may need to assess writing samples for baseline skills, since students may not have learned pre-writing strategies and correct grammar, punctuation, and sentence construction. In any case, the emphasis on the diagnostic writing sample is how effectively student writing communicates its whole message in terms of its stated purpose.

It is important that this writing sample not be graded. The instructor should provide written comments (both positive and negative) on the writing sample for the student's review as the beginning of the semester-long dialogue about composition that goes on between instructor and student. The instructor should make a general note in his or her grade book of each writer's abilities and difficulties, for later reference.

For a discussion of the diagnostic writing sample, see <http://teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/firstday.html> and scroll down to "Setting Course Expectations."

Below is a sample diagnostic writing prompt.

### **Diagnostic Writing Sample**

Throughout its history, the United States has depended on fossil fuels such as oil, natural gas, and coal to power industry and society. The United States needs to import oil and oil products in order to maintain the supplies that are required. As national – and worldwide – supplies of fossil fuels diminish, the need to develop alternative energy sources has become part of a national debate. Energy sources such as wind, hydroelectric, and nuclear are becoming increasingly attractive as alternatives, but, like fossil fuels, each comes with its advantages and disadvantages.

Prepare a brief written argument of several paragraphs on the issue of the use of fossil fuels versus the use of alternative energy sources. Defend your position with logical arguments and appropriate examples.

Use the time available to plan, write, review, and edit what you have written. Your writing will be assessed on the basis of how effectively it communicates its message, and on your ability to express, organize, and support your opinions and ideas.

## **Following Up with Students with Significant Weaknesses on the Diagnostic Writing Sample**

Students who have the required prerequisites for ENG 121 (a grade of "C" or higher in ENG 090 or the appropriate SAT, ACT, or COMPASS score; see the [Red Rocks Community College General Catalog](#)) may, on occasion, demonstrate significant composition weaknesses on their diagnostic writing samples. In this case, and having given the situation careful thought, if the instructor believes that a student truly is not prepared for the level of writing skills necessary for success in ENG 121, and, further, believes that the student can benefit from the review of skills that ENG 090 provides, the instructor is encouraged to (1) advise the department chairperson of the situation, (2) discuss alternatives with the student in a diplomatic and professional manner, and (3), provide the student with a letter such as the sample below. Note, however, that the instructor cannot require the student to drop ENG 121 and can only give advice regarding alternatives.

**Sample Letter:**

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

After reviewing your diagnostic writing sample for English 121, I noted the following strengths and weaknesses:

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Unfortunately, the weaknesses indicate that you may not be ready to take English 121. To be successful in English 121, you need a certain level of skills. I feel that you may lack some of these skills (noted above), and I recommend that you take English 090, a developmental writing course, to ensure your mastery of basic skills.

There are several advantages to taking English 090:

- Students feel more confident about their writing after taking and passing English 090, and they have a greater chance of passing English 121 because they are better prepared;
- English 090 covers grammar problems in class and helps students learn to recognize and correct these errors;
- English 090 emphasizes many basic reading and thinking skills needed for English 121; and
- Students who have not done any college-level writing for a long time get a chance to improve their skills before trying English 121.

Please see me to discuss your diagnostic writing and developmental writing courses.

Sincerely,

.....

**In-Class Writing Activities**

The range of opinions on the value of in-class writing activities (like freewriting) is vast. Pamela Flash, Associate Director of the Center for Writing at the University of Minnesota [writes](#) on their website that in-class writing “can lead students to develop insightful, critical, and creative thinking,” and that without it, students “might not otherwise give themselves enough time and space to reflect on class content, or to forge connections that will allow them to remember and use ideas from assigned readings, lectures, and other projects” (<http://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/inclasswr.html>).

Even the most ardent supporters of in-class writing as a teaching and learning tool would agree that its value depends largely upon its administration: what is its purpose? how is it integrated with the remainder of the text and classroom materials? how does the instructor use the activity as a diagnostic tool?

If you have never used in-class writing you may have a few questions at this point, the first being perhaps, “what the heck *is* in-class writing?”

There are several types of possible in-class writing activities, from pure freewriting, to fairly directed response-to-the-response or summarize-the-lecture assignments. Here are brief descriptions of several possible in-class writing exercises, all taken from Pamela Flash’s Website at the University of Minnesota :

- **Freewriting** To improve fluency and comfort with the process of writing, to generate ideas for longer, more formal pieces, to break writer’s block. **Focused freewrites** allow students to generate or develop ideas based on a prompt supplied by the instructor or other students. **Unfocused freewriting** encourages students to cast about for ideas without being penalized for grammatical or mechanical “mistakes,” and without fear of being judged for the content of the exercise.
- **Micro-theme Writing** To encourage students to be concise in their writing, and to give instructors quick feedback. Pass out 3x5 cards and have students write on a specific topic. Questions or topics may be expanded into more formal essays.
- **Assignment Paraphrase** To ensure students understand course writing assignment. Ask students to write a 3-4 sentence paraphrase of the assignment. Several students can read them aloud, and the class can discuss the degree to which it reflects the work they’ve been asked to perform.
- **Draft of Introductory Paragraph** To help students clarify their ideas and learn how to identify and construct a thesis statement. Ask students to write a draft of their intro paragraph (it may be easier to have them do this outside of class and bring it in). Ask volunteers to read their paragraph aloud, and then discuss the components of a good paragraph and thesis statement.
- **Progress Statement** To ensure students are working on a project or paper, and find out what help they need. Mid-way through a project or paper, ask students to write a short evaluation of their progress, noting what they have accomplished this far, what they are most satisfied with, what work remains to be done, and what questions they have.
- **Assignment Cover Sheet** Gives grader a good sense of the kinds of problems students had and makes responding easier and more focused. On the day students turn in a paper, have them write for 5-10 min., reflecting on the paper. What problems and concerns did they have? What insights did they attain? Ask them to pose 1-2 specific questions for the grader to respond to.
- **Response to the Response** To encourage students to look at and consider the graders’ comments After handing back a graded assignment, ask students to respond for 5 min. after reading the teacher’s comments. Ask them to identify one strength and one area to work on that is evident from the comments.

And here are two more ideas:

- Invite students to take a few minutes to record their thoughts that came to mind while reflecting on a quotation you provide (see Appendix 3 for a list of quotations you can use).
- Have students keep a journal or build a "learning portfolio" about their own thoughts, learning, feelings, etc. Kathleen Hardiman reports,
  - I often have my students journal as part of a class blog where I post questions on difficult readings that aim to deepen the students' understanding of the essays and their forms, help them relate the essays to their own lives, and/or enable them to weigh strengths and weaknesses so they can see what could work in their own papers. Those teaching with Blackboard can take advantage of the discussion feature to achieve the same aims. For the techno-phobic, paper journals work as well, but can be harder to grade because the students are more likely to feel "threatened" if the assignment is seen as a type of diary.

According to Pamela Flash, although these exercises differ in some key ways, "when successful they share certain characteristics. They

- promote active learning
  - encourage discussion
  - remain mostly ungraded
  - engage all students
  - may be expanded into longer, more formal assignments (see <http://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/inclasswr.html>)
  - are short (3-15 minutes)
  - ask students to write
  - are integrated (explicitly) into class content, objectives, and activity, and, are optimally, utilized in subsequent writing projects
  - elicit multiple responses
  - where appropriate, receive content-focused (versus mechanics-focused) response
  - aren't formally graded, but count toward a portion of the grade
- (Pamela Flash, Associate Director of the [Center for Writing](#) at the University of Minnesota)

Why would, or why should you use in-class writing in your classroom? Flash says that as a [teaching tool](#), in-class writing activities can:

- Help your students realize the idea-generating potential of writing and its value even when it is not graded.
- Give students practice in the sort of single-draft writing expected of them in exam situations.
- Help students focus their ideas as they prepare for formal assignments.
- Discover what students understand and what is confusing to them.
- Improve your ability to give effective feedback on assignments.

So you're convinced. We can tell. But, as great as it all sounds, how does it really work? Here are some tips on procedure, again from Pamela Flash at the University of Minnesota.

- When introducing the activity, give students your rationale for assigning it. Avoid characterizing it as a "fun, little writing activity."
- If you're using a prompt, present it both orally and visually by writing it on the board or projecting it on the screen. Exceptions include disciplines where response to oral instructions is valued.
- Whenever possible, do the activity yourself before presenting it to students and/or do it along with them in the class. This makes a significant impact on student motivation.

- Before students write, describe next steps. Will the writing be collected? discussed? included in an assignment portfolio? graded? If students are going to be able to be truly informal, they need to know that they aren't going to be judged on the quality of their exploratory writing.
- Be clear about time limits ("I'll stop you in 5 minutes") and when time is almost over, give 1-minute or 30-second warning.
- At the completion of the assignment, ask students to reflect on insights and developments.
- If you collect student writing, summarize, or at least highlight and comment on your findings during a subsequent class.

(Flash, <http://writing.umn.edu/tww/assignments/in-class.htm>)

As useful as these exercises may be, they are not without their pitfalls and problems. As freewriting can result in very personal writing, even diary-like in its intimacy, students may be reluctant to share the results with their peers, or even their instructor. When the assignment is given, make sure to be clear about both the audience and level of "publicness" that you will expect. Keep in mind that students may be unfamiliar with the concept of ungraded writing. You can expect a lot of blank stares when you give your first prompt or assignment, although anecdotal evidence suggests that as students become more comfortable with the idea and with the process of in-class writing, they become more engaged and enthusiastic. Some even come to regard the few minutes of class time given over to this exercise as their own time to relax and to get their minds in the right place for writing and assimilating the classroom material. Remember also to devise some way of giving your students credit for their informal writing. In-class assignments could be collected and turned in as part of a portfolio, or included in the class participation portion of their grade.

Remember to have some fun with these. Your enthusiasm will be contagious and your students will come to value these exercises as much as you do.

You'll find a list of quotations about writing that can be used as freewriting prompts in Appendix 3.

## In Class Activities

In addition to writing activities, we encourage you to integrate active and cooperative learning activities into the classroom. Charles Bonwell and James Eison describe active learning in the following fashion: "When using active learning students are engaged in more activities than just listening. They are involved in dialog, debate, writing, and problem solving, as well as higher-order thinking, e.g., analysis, synthesis, evaluation." Here are some suggestions:

Take small groups of students and have them make a decision or answer a focused question periodically. (Dee Fink, University of Honolulu)

- There are a variety of ways to achieve this. The instructor might opt for freewriting exercises (see freewriting section) or they could assign a short question from their textbook. One way to get students more deeply involved is to assign two essays that have contrasting points of view (an example would be David Kelly's and Stephanie Koontz' essays that take anti and pro-welfare stances, respectively).
- Kathleen Hardiman describes how she implemented this type of activity: "I divided

students into four teams. One team played the role of people agreeing with Kelly, the other agreed with Koontz. The other two teams were instructors who were looking for strengths and weaknesses in the structure of the two arguments. Each group had a chance to speak their mind and the class sparked a lively debate.”

Find ways for students to engage in authentic dialogue with people other than fellow classmates who know something about the subject (on the web, by email, or live). (Dee Fink, University of Honolulu)

- For those instructors teaching online or hybrid classes, supplementing class readings with an interview found online can be very interesting. If in-class speakers are not an option, bringing in videos can add to the understanding of the topic.
- An example from Kathleen Hardiman’s class: “When I discuss the definition essay, I try to add voices on video to supplement the readings, such as Tammy Rae Carland’s video to her mother where she tries to define herself as a lesbian. Works like this serve to show the struggles that can come with writing a definition essay, and can spark interesting discussions on the differences between seeing and reading texts.”

Find ways of helping students observe (directly or vicariously) the subject or action they are trying to learn. (Dee Fink, University of Honolulu)

- An example from Kathleen Hardiman’s class: “This is where videos and other visuals can aid in the class. Reading about gun control is one thing, watching selections from a Columbine documentary is another. I also like to bring in paintings or photographs that complement the essays or themes we’re covering to show students how far rhetoric reaches. A good example would be to select some interesting or humorous ads to show how argument works in them.”

Find ways to allow students to actually do (directly, or vicariously with case studies, simulation or role play) that which they need to learn to do. (Dee Fink, University of Honolulu)

- An example from Kathleen Hardiman’s class: “Case studies where the students play teacher, reviewer or critic with actual texts can be helpful. Debates, as mentioned above, are an easy way to have students experience the in’s and out’s of the essay formats.”

The following websites are full of invaluable resources with activities you can use in your classroom.

- Short active learning activities can be found at [www.cat.ilstu.edu/teaching\\_tips/handouts/newactive.shtml](http://www.cat.ilstu.edu/teaching_tips/handouts/newactive.shtml)
- Ted Panitz's home page (<http://home.capecod.net/~tpanitz/>): A vast collection of resources on cooperative learning including an e-book, articles, faculty surveys, examples, and links to many other sites, compiled by Ted Panitz of Cape Cod Community College
- Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom by Charles C. Bonwell and James A. Eison ([www.ntlf.com/html/lib/bib/91-9dig.htm](http://www.ntlf.com/html/lib/bib/91-9dig.htm))
- Introduction to Active/Cooperative Learning ([www.foundationcoalition.org/home/keycomponents/collaborative\\_learning.html](http://www.foundationcoalition.org/home/keycomponents/collaborative_learning.html))

## Handling the Paper Load

You may feel overwhelmed with student writing to respond to, but take a deep breath and consider that you may not need to respond to every piece of writing every student composes during the semester. Not only is it much too much work to respond to every piece of writing, but research shows that students do not necessarily become better writers when instructors do respond to every piece of writing.

Here are some ways to give yourself less writing to respond to:

- Require students to turn in a certain number of their writings for your response. For example, if you require six essays in a semester, you might require students to submit drafts for two or three—but not all six—essays during the semester.
- Invest a couple of class periods in modeling and training students to respond effectively to each others' writing. Once students can provide each other with focused, substantive, specific, and articulate feedback, they won't depend on you so much for it.
- Assign fewer essays. There's no research showing that having students write seven essays in a semester is better than having them write five.
- Decide to grade journals and in-class writings on a credit/no credit basis or assign a plus, check, or minus. You can then skim through journals and in-class writings, commenting only on passages that are especially insightful or problematic.

Here are some ways to write fewer comments on student writing:

- Remember that marking every grammatical or mechanical error in the paper does not help the student learn grammar or mechanics. Try marking errors in one paragraph or on one page and then writing the student a note describing patterns of error you see and suggesting possible solutions.
- Focus your comments on the most important issues in the paper and limit the number of issues you comment on to three.
- Consider meeting with students for 15 minutes to discuss a draft rather than putting all of your comments in writing. You may be more productive in a 15 minute meeting than you would be spending 25 minutes reading and writing comments on the draft.

For more ideas, see suggestions from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE): <http://www.ncte.org/pubs/journals/cnp/back/109658.htm>.

## Responding to Student Writing

In responding to student writing, keep in mind that your primary purpose is to provide students feedback on how a careful reader reads their writing.

Current research supports the following best practices:

1. Get a sense of the paper before writing anything. Quickly skim the paper from beginning to end to determine what the most pressing issues are.
2. Respond as a reader first, coach second, and judge last (and don't respond as an editor at all!). Remember that the most important purpose of your response is to show students how you read their writing.
3. Respond to the writer not the writing. Remember that there's a person behind the writing and that person is very likely sensitive about his or her writing.
4. Focus your comments on no more than three things. Students are overwhelmed when their papers are covered in instructor comments and may not be able to prioritize the issues you've commented on.
5. Make your comments specific, descriptive, and clear. Comments such as "vague" and "awkward" do not help most students. It's more helpful to explain why a sentence is vague or awkward and suggest a few possible strategies for making the sentence less vague or awkward.
6. Give praise as sincerely as you give criticism and understand that failure is often a sign of progress.
7. Assume students have something to say and read and respond as if you care.

You can find more information about responding effectively to student writing at <http://www.tengrrl.com/tens/032.shtml>.

## Peer Response

Peer response can be a very effective way to teach students

- to read critically, and
- to develop a sense of how a reader reads his/her draft.

Students do not generally come into a composition class knowing how to respond effectively to the writing of others. We need to model effective response techniques for them and train them to provide effective response to others.

Peer response can take different forms in the classroom. Here are a few different models used by Red Rocks instructors:

- The whole class workshop: several students bring in enough copies of a draft for each student to have one. The class reads the draft and then comments on it verbally, with the instructor facilitating.
- Small groups: students bring in enough copies of a draft for their small group (3-4 students). Each group member takes a turn reading his/her draft aloud and then the other

group members comment on it. This type of peer response is described further at <http://wrt-howard.syr.edu/Handouts/PeerGpResp.html>.

- Email: students email their drafts to their small group (3-4). Students use **track changes** or **comments** to type comments on the draft.
- Read around: Each student brings one copy of his/her draft. Drafts are redistributed and critiqued according to the following instructions, written by Niki Nolles. Niki notes that she has employed this method in ENG 090, 121, 122, 131, and literature classes with great success.

**In-Class Peer Review Method: The Read-Around  
written by Niki Nolles**

1. Ask each student to bring to class a completed, typed, double-spaced rough draft. Students must not put their names on the drafts since the success of the read-around depends upon anonymity. Make certain the pages of each student's draft are stapled together.

2. To begin, collect all the students' drafts and write a number on the first page of each draft. (Let us say you have 20 drafts numbered one through 20.) Next, ask the students to take out a clean sheet of lined paper and number every other line (1, 2, 3, 4, . . .20).

3. Now, tell the students that they are to read each draft holistically, concentrating on the content, organization, and coherence of each draft. (You can alter this step by having the students decide what they, as a group, want to look for, such as competent thesis statements, unity and coherence of paragraphs, sensible sentence structure, etc.)

4. Explain to the students that they will have two (or three) minutes to read each draft; you, the instructor, are the time keeper. Also explain that when a student's own draft reaches him/her, the student should treat it as any other draft: read it and make comments.

5. After two (or three) minutes of reading time, stop the students and tell them they have 30 seconds (or one minute) to write comments about the essay on their numbered comment sheet that they created earlier (that is, the sheet of paper numbered 1 through 20). Remind them to notice the number of the essay they just read and to write their comments next to the corresponding number on their lined, numbered comment sheet.

6. After 30 seconds (or one minute), tell the students to stop writing. Then, tell each student to pass the essay he/she just has read to the student sitting to the left of him/her. Once the papers have been passed, tell the students to begin reading for two (or three) minutes, call time, tell them to write their comments for 30-60 seconds, have them pass the papers again, and repeat this process as many times as you deem necessary. (In a class of 20, I usually go through the read-comment-pass process five or six times.)

7. When the students have finished the read-around process, collect all the drafts and hand them back to their owners. Ask the students to remember their own individual draft number so they can pay special attention to comments made about that draft. Finally, tell the students to put their drafts face down in

front of them to protect their identities.

8. Write the numbers 1-20 on the white board (or on the computer which you can project on the screen). Then, call out a number and ask the students who read that draft to orally make honest, constructive comments about the draft by looking at the notes they wrote next to that draft's number on their comment sheets. As the students are talking, you—the instructor—are writing what they say on the board (or computer) next to the number of the draft under discussion. Remind the students to take note of what other students say about their drafts so that they can choose to use the remarks or not as they revise and edit their own drafts.

9. If conflicting comments arise concerning a draft, I ask the writer of the paper to talk with me after class so that I can help the student find out where the confusion lies in his/her writing.

10. I require the students to keep the comment sheets which they composed during the read-around and put them with the rough draft and final draft that they hand in to me.

Some instructors give their students specific questions to answer in their response. For example, you might ask students to comment on the clarity of the thesis sentence. Some instructors require students to turn in their written comments on classmates' drafts and students are assigned a grade for the quality of their feedback. You can find sample sets of questions for peer response in the appendix and at [http://college.hmco.com/english/raimes/keys\\_writers/3e/students/templates/index.html](http://college.hmco.com/english/raimes/keys_writers/3e/students/templates/index.html). You'll find help developing your own peer response forms at <http://mwp01.mwp.hawaii.edu/resources/wm7.htm>.

You'll find more information on using peer response in the classroom at [http://writing.umn.edu/tww/responding\\_grading/peer\\_workshop.htm](http://writing.umn.edu/tww/responding_grading/peer_workshop.htm).

## **IV. Where to Go for Help and Supplies**

### **Audio-Visual Services**

The A/V office provides faculty with a variety of services including TV, VCR, and DVD reservations. Faculty can also reserve items such as data projectors, overhead projectors, and slide projectors. One useful tool is the portable laptop lab that includes 16 laptops with a wireless internet hub. To make a reservation, stop by the office in room 1178 or call 303-914-6730 or email [audio.visual@rrcc.edu](mailto:audio.visual@rrcc.edu).

The office will also aid any faculty member who is having trouble using the equipment in a smart classroom.

### **Computer Labs and Online Learning Resources**

Students have access to computers in the LARC and the Student Project Center; other labs can be reserved by instructors. A complete guide to the locations and computer equipment of the campus labs follows:

#### LARC Lab:

- \* Gateway and Macintosh PowerPC computers
- \* Microsoft Office Suite 2003
- \* Internet access –academic research only
- \* Computerized tutorials
- \* Scanner

#### Foreign Language Lab – 303-914-6719

- \* Microsoft Office Suite
- \* Internet access (for academic research only)
- \* Foreign language tutorials
- \* ESL materials

#### Gateway Room – 303-914-6705

- \* Full computer and Internet functions
- \* Projection unit
- \* Must be reserved by staff/instructor

#### Library – 303-914-6740

- \* Open to everyone
- \* Internet access (for academic research only)

#### Office of Special Services – 303-914-6733

\* For use by students with special needs, students with disabilities, and students needing tutoring

The following Website features information about online and hybrid courses at RRCC, as well as information on orientation for students new to online learning:

<http://www.rrcc.edu/online/index.html>.

## Duplicating

Copy machines are in the Copy Room (Room 1510), Room 2601, in the LARC (west side, first floor), and in the CIS hallway.

For the access code to the Copy Room and the Faculty Mail Room, see the Administrative Assistant in Instructional Services.

For your copier access code, see the Department Chair.

For printing more than 20 pages, please use Duplicating Services. Allow approximately a week for production. Order forms are available in Instructional Services.

## Forms

The following forms are located in Instructional Services (Room 1501), in the Copy Room (Room 1510), and/or in the Faculty Mail Room (Room 1525):

- Application for admission
- Grade change form
- Incomplete grade contract
- Independent study registration form
- Add/drop form
- Satisfactory progress form
- Writing Center referral form
- Computer Services work order

## Library Services and Collections

The [Marvin Buckels Library](#) of Red Rocks Community College is located on the second floor of the college's Learning and Resource Center (LARC). The library provides learning and research materials, study facilities and library services to students, faculty, and staff of the college as well as to the general public. The library's collection of print resources includes 40,000 circulating books, 3,000 reference volumes, 350 periodical subscriptions, and a small collection of current best-sellers in fiction and non-fiction. The library's audiovisual materials collection includes over 4,500 videotapes, some laser disks, and several hundred audiocassettes. The library's online services include subscriptions to several full text article and reference databases, a large collection of NetLibrary ebooks (electronic books), general access to World Wide Web information resources, and specialized guides to research resources in many areas. The library's Web catalog provides information on Red Rocks library holdings and information on borrowers' accounts. Several small quiet study rooms and a photocopier are available.

Here's the library's home page: <http://www.rrcc.edu/library/>

The library offers workshops on research and information resources throughout fall and spring semesters. To arrange a tour of the library or an orientation to the library's electronic resources for your class, contact Joseph Sanchez, Library Director, at 303-914-6743 or [joseph.sanchez@rrcc.edu](mailto:joseph.sanchez@rrcc.edu).

## Professional Development Opportunities

Professional development opportunities at RRCC are available throughout the year. Announcements of current opportunities are usually made at departmental meetings and/or through e-mail.

- For information about current opportunities for our department, contact Amy Braziller at 303/914-6212 or at [amy.braziller@rrcc.edu](mailto:amy.braziller@rrcc.edu).
- Professional development opportunities for computer training are available from IT; contact Rebecca Woulfe, Director of E-Learning, at 303/914-6444 or [rebecca.woulfe@rrcc.edu](mailto:rebecca.woulfe@rrcc.edu) for information on the schedule of workshops.
- Faculty and staff development sessions are scheduled each semester by the Achieve Classroom Excellence Center (ACE). Contact Marjorie Berman ([marjorie.berman@rrcc.edu](mailto:marjorie.berman@rrcc.edu) or 303-914-6259) for topics, times, and dates.

Note that, in general, professional development opportunities may also be available through participation in training sessions, service learning, workshops, conferences, mentoring, publications, presentations, classes, job shadowing, special projects, and work experience.

If you wish to be compensated for your professional development, check first for approval by the department chairperson. You need to fill out two forms (“Red Rocks Part-Time Instructors’ Training and Development Reimbursement” and “Professional Development Activity Record”), which are in the holder outside of Personnel, Room 1025. Complete the forms, send both to the department chairperson for signature, and when signed, take the forms to Human Resources to begin the reimbursement process.

## Room Changes

If you want to change the classroom your class meets in, contact Thyra Powers at 303-914-6387 or [thyra.powers@rrcc.edu](mailto:thyra.powers@rrcc.edu). If Thyra is able to move your class to a different room, be sure to notify the department chair.

## Students with Disabilities

The Office of Special Services can help you provide accommodations for students with documented physical and/or learning disabilities. For information, call 303-914-6733, visit the Office of Special Services located just inside the LARC, or email Marilyn Kenfield at [marilyn.kenfield@rrcc.edu](mailto:marilyn.kenfield@rrcc.edu).

## Supplies

The following supplies are available for teaching staff:

- Dry erase markers (only two at a time, please)
- Paper (copy paper, pads, Post-It Notes, etc.)
- Folders
- RRCC stationery and envelopes
- Sleeves
- Transparencies
- Correction fluid
- Paper clips
- Tape
- Pens, pencils
- And many other items...

See the Instructional Services Administrative Assistant in Room 1501 for these supplies, or to have the storage cabinets in the Copy Room (Room 1510) unlocked.

Staplers, scissors, paper cutters, hole puncher, rulers, and staple removers are also available for use on the work table in the Copy Room.

## Texts

All faculty choose their own textbooks for ENG, LIT, and REA classes. Please do not require students to purchase more than two text books for ENG 030, 060, 090, 121, and 122. Contact the department chair for instructions for selecting texts. Be sure to contact her well in advance of the deadline for book submission. If you do not select texts, do not hand the form in on time, or hand in a form that is incomplete, you will use the standard texts from the list below.

All ENG and LIT courses use the handbook, *Writing @ RRCC*.

You are responsible for obtaining desk copies of your text(s) from the publishers (see list of publishers, below).

Lists of default texts and publisher representatives' names and contact information are available from the department chair.

## Writing Center And Online Writing Center (OWC)

The Red Rocks Community College Writing Center is one of several tutoring labs located in the [LARC](#).

The purpose of the Writing Center and Online Writing Center is to help students to improve their overall writing skills, as opposed to improving any given piece of writing. All Writing Center tutors are fully qualified English instructors who undergo an intensive "boot camp"-style certification/re-education program deep in the jungles of Academia. The Writing Center is available to help students at any stage of the writing process, from finding and narrowing their topic, to organizing their ideas, to producing a final draft.

Face to face tutoring is available on a walk-in basis, or by appointment. Students are particularly encouraged to set appointments if they are working on papers of six or more pages. To set up an appointment call or email the Writing Center Coordinator.

Some instructors require their students to spend time in the writing center on a weekly, for-credit basis. Referral forms for instructors to give their students are available to download [here](#), or can be obtained from the Writing Center coordinator. The Referral forms are a way for instructors to communicate to the student and the tutor what he or she feels the student needs to work on. You'll find a referral form in Appendix 4.

A Record of Session form will be generated after each tutoring session and sent to that student's instructor (unless the student requests that this not happen). The Record of Session is a method of allowing the instructor to track their students' progress and use of the Writing Center, and serves as a tool of communication from the tutors to the instructor.

For those students who are unable to utilize the Writing Center during its normal operating hours, the Online Writing Center ([OWC](#)) is available and can be accessed at this address: <http://www.rccc.edu/writing/index.html>.

Students go to the web site above, click on [send your paper to a tutor](#), and are walked through the process of creating and attaching a file which can then be emailed to the OWC. There is also an HTML form which the students fill out to let the tutors know what type of feedback they are looking for. Students should expect a turnaround time of twenty-four to forty-eight hours. This type of tutoring environment is probably more conducive to global and higher-order feedback than sentence-level response or proofreading (which the tutors are discouraged from in any case). The OWC is probably better suited to more advanced writers who are likely to be comfortable working with computers and are at least somewhat familiar with the internet.

In addition to tutoring services, the OWC provides a step-by-step [guide](#) to writing an essay, (including links to other websites), a grammar [FAQ](#) page, and extensive [links](#) to outside web resources.

A couple of caveats: whether students intend to use the Writing Center or the OWC, it is important that they not wait until the last minute to seek tutoring. The student should leave themselves time for extensive revision if necessary, based on the tutors' feedback. Also tutors do not give grades and are not in the business of competing in any way with instructors. The tutors' job is to improve the students' writing, not to assess it for grading purposes.

## V. Appendices

### Appendix 1: Sample Syllabi

- [Paul Gallagher's ENG 060](#)
- [Johanna Carter's ENG 090](#)
- [Amy Braziller's ENG 121](#)
- [Gregory Pierce's ENG 121](#)
- [Jess Wangsness's ENG 121](#)
- [Doug Yates's ENG 122](#)
- [Liz Kleinfeld's ENG 122](#)

### Appendix 2: Sample Assignments

Here is an assignment Travitt Hamilton gives his ENG 060 students:

#### **ASSIGNMENT 3: COMPARE AND CONTRAST**

In the wake of the discovery of and contact with our newfound Martian neighbors, the nations of Earth have elected to band together, pool their resources and send the aliens a gift signifying our esteem and good faith. A team, consisting of diplomats, exobiologists, communications experts, and the survivors of the First Contact expedition, has been in constant touch with the leaders of the Martian planetary government in an effort to determine what form such a gift might take.

After intensive negotiations, it has been determined that the Martians would like a human pet, selected from among the American upper classes. The American establishment has chosen 2 men, only one of whom will have this great honor bestowed upon them, John F. Kerry or George W. Bush.

As a member of the Committee to Rapidly-Elect the Pet (CREEP), you must write a recommendation comparing and contrasting the two candidates' pet-like qualities, ultimately choosing which one you think would make a better pet for the Martians.

Remember to write a strong topic sentence in which you lay out who you are comparing or contrasting, and why this comparison or contrast is important. Use 3 to 5 specific examples for each candidate, vivid sensory description where appropriate, and the narrative skills we developed for our last essay.

Your rough draft should be hand written and is worth 15 points.

Your second draft is due on Tuesday 10/26/04 and is also worth 15 points. It will be typed in the format outlined on your syllabus. If your draft is not formatted as outlined the syllabus, I will not accept it, and no points will be awarded. This revision should take into account any feedback you receive in the Writing Center, and the mechanical and grammatical issues we have been working on all semester. This paper will be returned to you on Thursday, 10/28/04

Your final draft is due on Tuesday, 11/2/04 and is worth 50 points. Please give it typed in the

required format and turn it in, stapled to copies of drafts 1 and 2, along with any brainstorming and/or clustering you did.

By the time you turn in your final draft, all mechanical and grammatical problems should be worked out, your paragraphs should be logical, unified and complete. Up to 25 points will be awarded bases on content—That is, logical organization, a good topic sentence and well developed, coherent support of that topic, flow and unity. Up to 25 points will be awarded based on grammar and mechanics.

At some point during your brainstorming or drafting process, take you paper to the writing center to work with a tutor on pre-writing, brainstorming, global organization or structural issues (depending on where you are in your process). *Do not* work on proofreading issues like grammar, punctuation or spelling unless you and the tutor agree that there are *no* higher-order concerns with paragraph or essay organization. Have one of your drafts signed by the tutor you work with.

Here is a worksheet Johanna Carter uses for peer editing workshops in her ENG 121 class:

### **Definition Essay**

Writer's Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Please write all responses in complete sentences.**

1. What concept are you explaining? How did you come to choose this one?
  
2. Why did you choose your particular focus?
  
3. What are two main points you make about your concept?
  
4. Explain briefly how you've divided and organized the information in order to present the definition/explanation in your essay. Why is this division and organization especially important for your readers?
  
5. What are you most pleased about in this draft? Please be specific (beginning/middle/ending)?

6. What specifically will you revise and edit for your final draft?

Here are two assignments Reney Lorditch gives her ENG 122 students:

### **Book Report**

Choose a book to read that reflects the country of your ancestors' origins during the time period of immigration, or one that reflects the United States during the same period of time. Then in a report of one to two pages, summarize the book, tell me why it is relevant to your project, and what you learned from reading it.

In addition to the written report, you will make a brief oral report on the book.

The report, both written and oral, is due Mon. 2/21/05.

### **Mini-Research Paper**

Your topic will be the history of immigration to the United States of America and migration to Colorado. The paper will be no less than two and no more than three pages long. (Approximately 1000 to 1500 words in length-do **not** count words!).

The focus of the paper is entirely up to you. You may concentrate primarily on one period of immigration, or on the entire history. You may look at one port of entry, several ports of entry, or all of them. Perhaps you would like to recount the history of public laws regarding immigration, or changing public sentiments. Again, the focus is entirely up to you. It is required that you include a section on the migration of immigrants to Colorado. You may focus this section on the recent growth in population or on the early settlers, or both.

The paper must be properly formatted using MLA style, must be properly cited, and must include a Works Cited page, and, if needed, a bibliography.

The paper is due on Wed. 3/16/05

Here is an assignment for a midterm portfolio Liz Kleinfeld gives her ENG 121 students:

### **Midterm Portfolio, 250 points**

Due: **Wednesday, October 13 by 5 p.m. in my office or mailbox in Instructional Services**

Your portfolio must include the following items:

- All the drafts you've started. At a bare minimum, you should have the snapshot essay

and something else. Any Rawlins exercises that asked you to write an essay should be considered drafts.

- At least two revisions plans written for a draft during the week of 9/13, two revision plans written for a draft during the week of 9/20, two revision plans written for a draft during the week of 9/2, and two revision plans written for a draft during the week of 10/4.
- At least one content and function outline and a reflection on it written for a draft during the week of 9/20, at least one content and function outline and a reflection on it written for a draft during the week of 9/27, and at least one content and function outline and a reflection on it written for a draft during the week of 10/4
- At least one abstract and a reflection on it written for a draft during the week of 9/27, and at least one abstract and a reflection on it written for a draft during the week of 10/4.
- Two extensively revised drafts
  - Choose **any two** drafts to revise. For **each** draft you revise, write at least one revision in which you demonstrate **“the spirit of revision”**
  - At the top of each revision, write the purpose, audience, thesis, and tone of the essay. The thesis you list may or may not appear in the essay.
  - Next to the introduction of each revision, write how your intro says “Read me! Read me!”
- A letter to me in which you discuss the following:
  - Specifically how your portfolio demonstrates the spirit of revision
  - Some specific ways you’ve read the chapters in *A Piece of Work* as an apprentice
  - Some specific ways you have incorporated reflection into your writing practice.
  - Specifically what you have done to achieve your two resolutions to give better feedback

**Please do not edit or proofread your work;  
focus your energies on revision.**

Please label each item clearly. Assume that I am very absent-minded and forgetful and will not remember what I have asked you to include in your portfolio. Make your labels very clear and descriptive and then **highlight them with a colored highlighter pen.**

Please make sure that the pages of multiple-page documents are **stapled** together. Put all of your portfolio components into a large envelope with your name on the outside.

I will read your portfolio and then meet with you for a conference to discuss it.

This portfolio will be evaluated based on the following rubric:

A portfolio that	Does these things
------------------	-------------------

	and are accompanied by thoughtful and detailed reflections
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is on time and complete</li> <li>○ The letter to me is chock full of specific details and examples, although some items in the letter are treated cursorily rather than fully and completely</li> <li>○ The revision plans, outlines, and abstracts are thoughtfully completed; outlines and abstracts follow the rules in Rawlins and are accompanied by thoughtful reflections that may lack detail</li> </ul>
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is on time and complete</li> <li>○ The letter to me touches on each item, but lacks specific details and examples and most items in the letter are treated cursorily rather than fully and completely</li> <li>○ The revision plans, outlines, and abstracts are cursorily completed; outlines and abstracts follow the rules in Rawlins to a limited degree and are accompanied by cursory reflections</li> </ul>
D	<p>One of the following is true:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is one day late</li> <li>○ Is between 80-99% complete</li> <li>○ The letter lists rather than discusses</li> </ul>
F	<p>One of the following is true:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is more than one day late</li> <li>○ Is less than 80% complete</li> </ul>

Here are some materials relating to Amy Braziller's Multi-Genre Research Project Assignment for ENG 122:

### Final Multi-Genre Research Project Assignment

450 points

A multi-genre project is a collection of pieces or short chapters of different genres. Each piece is self-contained, meaning there are no formal transitions between pieces or references within pieces to other pieces, but the pieces are connected through theme, topic, language, and/or imagery. Multi-genre writing brings personal and academic writing, as well as critical and creative writing, together. A multi-genre research project combines researched "facts" with the conventions of literary non-fiction.

This project will grow out of the 8 genre drafts you will write for this course. You will revise five or more of your genre pieces for unity and coherence and write an introductory essay. Your final project will treat a topic of your choice.

**Topics:** All of your genre pieces should focus on the same topic, but they may deal with different aspects of or perspectives on the topic. Pick a topic you are interested in – you will be spending a lot of time and energy on this topic.

**Project Components:** Your final project will be made up of several different components:

- An introduction: You will be given more information about this as the semester moves along.
- At least five genre pieces.
  - You need to include at least 3 different genres
  - At least one item from group 1
  - At least one item from group 4
- Elements which connect the parts to the whole
- Endnotes that explain how each piece was informed by your research

**Grading Criteria:** To earn an A, all of the components must be exceptionally well done. Here are some general principles I will use in evaluating your project:

- A variety of genres are used to present the content. Genres are used effectively and each piece either observes and follows the conventions of its genre or goes against the conventions effectively and with a purpose.
- All aspects of the project are stylistically sophisticated.
- All aspects of the project are edited effectively for grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, proofreading, and formatting clarity.
- Each genre piece and the introduction are informed by thorough and well-documented research. Sources are effectively summarized, paraphrased, and quoted. The genre pieces include specific details and facts from the research.

#### **Grading Criteria—MultiGenre Project (450 points)**

	<b>Points</b>	<b>Possible Points</b>
<b>Inclusion of necessary genres</b> (minimum of 5 genres, 3 different genres, one from group 1 and one from group 4)		50 points
<b>Introduction</b> Sets the reader up for the project, discusses the various genres and how they fit together, discusses the methods/research used)		100 points
<b>Endnotes</b> Included for each genre. Explains each genre in terms of the source of information and the reason behind the use of that genre.		50 points
<b>Bibliography/Works Cited</b> Included for each genre. Works are cited correctly		40 points
<b>Table of Contents</b> Is included and clearly directs the reader		10 points
<b>Unity/Development/Organization</b> There is a clear thread that ties the project together. Each piece in the project helps develop the focus and		150 points

works toward unification/theme. There is a clear organizational scheme. A clear pattern evolves as your reader moves through the project.

### **Mechanics/Grammar**

50 points

All genres are free of grammatical errors (spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, usage)

### **Endnotes**

Your endnotes explain each genre in terms of the source of information and the reason behind the use of that genre. Think of your endnotes as explaining what is in the genre and what it conveys to your reader. Additionally, the endnotes incorporate how you used your research to inform the source.

#### **Samples**

I chose the Haiku, which are poems usually about the natural elements. Ben Hogan used to watch the trees move in the wind to find out which direction the wind was going. He also used the smoke from his cigarette. I thought that was neat that the slow-moving smoke from his mouth directed his shot. I learned this technique of Ben's in the book *Hogan*. The last poem I wrote to show how Hogan was a product of his childhood. Living in poverty and facing the world without his father was something I saw affect Hogan's entire perception. However, this was also something I did not quite understand. I figured by writing this type of poem I could touch on the idea or situation and still feel as though I expressed my true feelings.

The purpose of this newspaper article is to give the factual event-by-event accounts of the actual charge. It gives you an idea of what actually occurred. The newspaper comes across as impartial to the Union and that is because it is a Union newspaper. You can tell that the author is trying to sound impartial, but he fails, largely due to the fact that this was one of the first in a series of major victories for the Union. You will also notice that this paper is written the day after the charge. I have placed you emotionally into the war and supplied the visual for which to channel your emotions. The movie *Gettysburg* influenced my decision to report on this particular battle, because of it being a first victory for the Union. This was a decisive turning point in the war.

Nothing gets people's attention better than a tombstone. I have chosen this genre and the tombstone because it is symbolic of lost lives. The most powerful part, though, is not the stone; it is the dullness of the picture. I wanted you to focus on the numbers, the lives lost. I have listed the statistics of those lost in Pickett's charge. I wanted you to see how much of a massacre this charge was. In Pennypacker's article, he stresses how two thirds of the men that left that tree line and headed across the field would rest there eternally. This tombstone lets you see the reality of one of the bloodiest battles in American history.

### **Putting Together the Multigenre Project**

#### **Introduction**

The introduction to the multigenre project should set the reader up for your project. What are important things you want your reader to know before embarking? Your introduction should draw your reader in and prepare your reader for the journey through your project. Within the introduction, you should talk about the nature of the project and what lies ahead for the reader. You should discuss the variety of genres included and how they fit together. Remember, that while your endnotes address the genres separately, the introduction can bring the genres together as a whole. What were the methods you used for research? Your introduction should be approximately 2 pages.

### **Table of Contents**

You should have a clear table of contents indicating what is on each page, complete with titles.

### **Assembling the Project**

Consider the order you arrange the pieces in. What organization scheme are you choosing for your reader and why? There should be a clear pattern that evolves as your reader moves through the project. Remember that the project needs a sense of unity. What is that unifying thread/theme/idea that is evident when the reader is done?

Here is an assignment Liz Kleinfeld gives ENG 121 and ENG 122 students. Each student draws a classmate's name from a hat and reads his or her final project or portfolio; then the student writes a foreword for the classmate's project or portfolio.

### **Forewords and Prefaces**

A **foreword** is generally written by someone other than the author, while a preface is usually written by the author. The foreword is usually a publicity or selling tool. Both are written in the first person and addressed directly to the reader.

A foreword usually does the following:

- Gives one enthusiastic (and usually famous) reader's testimonial about how great the project is
- Tells a little story or anecdote about the project's author to humanize him/her or show how intellectual or otherwise qualified he/she is
- Tells how the project is different from any other, through its topic, approach, perspective, etc.
- Praises any unconventional choices made by the author
- Emphasizes how relevant and timely the project is and who would most benefit from reading it and why

Here is a simple template for a basic foreword:

**Paragraph 1:** I have known [author of the project] for [amount of time] and have always been impressed with his/her [characteristic that makes them a good author for this type of project]. [Tell a brief story about the author, give a thought-provoking quote from the author, or provide some other light detail that will humanize or help qualify the author to the reader.] Because of this, I was thrilled/excited/honored to be asked to write the foreword to this project.

**Paragraph 2:** Many have written about this topic, but [author of the project] [explain how the project is unique – perhaps it breaks down a complex topic for non-experts, or it gives a perspective that hasn't been given before or well before, or it raises thought-provoking questions, etc.].

**Paragraph 3:** While most authors would have shied away from [name the unconventional choice], [author of the project] boldly [explain what he/she did and praise it].

**Paragraph 4:** This project should be on the shelf of all college-educated people. It [explain what it does that makes it so valuable].

Your name

Your title or claim to fame

**You will write a foreword for someone else's project (whoever's name you drew). Bring the printed out foreword to class on Monday, May 10.**

You may write a **preface**, if you wish. This is 100% optional! The preface is where the author speaks directly to the reader about the choices made in the project.

Some things that may be dealt with in a preface:

- An explanation of how you chose or focused your topic or chose your angle
- A statement of the project's or author's purpose
- A discussion of the challenges of the project (but not excuses)
- A discussion of how the current project fits in with other work of the author
- An explanation of any unconventional choices, such as using slang
- A preview of the structure or organization of the project
- A discussion of major revisions and their purpose
- A critique of the project's limitations (but not an apology)
- A comparison of your approach to approaches others have taken
- An acknowledgment of anyone, such as peer responders, who has helped you

### Appendix 3: Epigraphs about Writing

- I have rewritten - often several times - every word I have ever published. My pencils have outlasted their erasers. -Vladimir Nabokov
- Read, read, read. Read everything - trash, classics, good and bad, and see how they do it. Just like a carpenter who works as an apprentice and studies the master. -William Faulkner
- I have to write everyday because, the way I work, the writing generates the writing. -E.L. Doctorow
- My first draft usually has only a few elements worth keeping. I have to find what they are and build from them and throw out what doesn't work, or what simply is not alive. -Susan Sontag
- You can write anytime people will leave you alone and not interrupt you. -Ernest Hemingway
- Writing and rewriting are a constant search for what it is one is saying. -John Updike
- No accomplished and serious writer is overrated in my opinion. -Tennessee Williams
- There's something very sick where if you speak well and you speak articulately that's looked at as being negative and speaking white...I don't think it makes you any less black by being articulate. -Spike Lee
- You know when you think about writing a book, you think it is overwhelming. But, actually, you break it down into tiny little tasks any moron could do. -Annie Dillard
- Writing is one of the great, free human activities. There is scope for individuality, and elation, and discovery, in writing. -William Stafford
- Nothing is more satisfying than to write a good sentence. It is no fun to write lumpishly, dully, in prose that the reader must plod along through like wet sand. But it is a pleasure to achieve, if one can, a clear running prose that is simple yet full of surprises. This does not just happen. It requires skill, hard work, a good ear, and continued practice.- Barbara Tuchman
- Writing is hard work. A lot of people talk about writing. The secret is to write, not talk. -Jackie Collins
- Start writing! Now! As Oliver Stone wrote: "Writing = Ass in chair." -Howard Gordon
- Acquire the habit of economy. -Alfred Conn
- Respect your reader. The niftiest turn of phrase, the most elegant flight of rhetorical fancy isn't worth beans to a clear thought clearly expressed. -Jeff Greenfield
- For God's sake, keep your eyes open. Notice what's going on around you. -William Burroughs
- There's nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and open a vein. -Red Smith
- All the fun's in how you say a thing. -Robert Frost
- Every style that is not boring is a good one. -Voltaire
- What is written without effort is in general read without pleasure. -Samuel Johnson
- I have never been a title man. I don't give a damn what it is called. -John Steinbeck
- The title comes last. -Tennessee Williams
- The wastepaper basket is the writer's best friend. -Isaac B. Singer
- Words are all we have. -Samuel Beckett
- Every writer I know has trouble writing. -Joseph Heller
- Writers can treat their mental illnesses every day. -Kurt Vonnegut
- Writing is a dog's life, but the only life worth living. -Flaubert
- Writing's not terrible, it's wonderful. I keep my own hours, do as I please. When I want to travel, I can. But mainly I'm doing what I most wanted to do all my life. I'm not into the agonies of creation. -Raymond Carver
- I love being a writer. What I can't stand is the paperwork. -Peter De Vries
- Writing, like life itself, is a voyage of discovery. -Henry Miller

## Appendix 4



### WRITING CENTER REFERRAL FORM

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_ Dept. & Course: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructor**, please complete this form and give it to your student (if the student intends to use the Online Writing Center, please download the electronic version of this form at [www.rrcc.edu/writing](http://www.rrcc.edu/writing) and email the completed form to the student). After the student has worked with a tutor, you will receive a copy of the Writing Center's Record of Session form, which will provide you with some information about the session.

On which areas of your student's writing would you like us to focus our attention? Please feel free to elaborate.

- \_\_\_\_\_ thesis development
- \_\_\_\_\_ organization
- \_\_\_\_\_ paragraph development
- \_\_\_\_\_ grammar and punctuation
- \_\_\_\_\_ sentence structure
- \_\_\_\_\_ treatment of source material (quotations, paraphrase, summary)
- \_\_\_\_\_ documentation
- \_\_\_\_\_ other (please specify)

**Student**, please bring this form with you to the Writing Center. The Writing Center is located in the Lakewood LARC and is open Monday through Thursday for drop-in tutoring. If you have a paper of 6+ pages, please call 303-914-6243 or email [RRCCWritingCenter@gmail.com](mailto:RRCCWritingCenter@gmail.com) for an appointment. We are also available online at [www.rrcc.edu/writing](http://www.rrcc.edu/writing).

## Appendix V: Resources for New Composition Instructors

In addition to the readings listed below, composition instructors may find the professional journals *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, *Pedagogy*, and *CCC* useful.

- Barnett, Timothy. *Teaching Argument in the Composition Course: Background Readings*.
- Bartholomae, David. "Inventing the University"
- Bartholomae, David. *Writing On the Margins*.
- Bean, John. *Engaging Ideas*.
- Berlin, Jim. *Rhetorics, Poetics and Culture*.
- Berthoff, Ann. *Making of Meaning*.
- Bishop, Wendy, and Deborah Teague, *Finding Our Way*.
- Bishop, Wendy. *Teaching Lives: Essays and Stories*.
- Booth, Wayne. "The Rhetorical Stance."
- Brodkey, Linda. "Writing on the Bias."
- Bruffee, Kenneth. *Short Course in Writing*
- Carroll, Lee Ann. *Rehearsing New Roles*.
- Clark, Irene. *Concepts in Composition*.
- Corbett, Ed, et al., *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*.
- Delpit, Lisa. "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children."
- Durst, Russell. *Collision Course: Conflict, Negotiation, and Learning in College Composition*.
- Ede, Lisa, and Andrea Lunsford, eds. *The Selected Essays of Robert J. Connors*.
- Ede, Lisa. *On Writing Research: The Braddock Essays*.
- Elbow, Peter. "Ranking, Evaluating, and Liking: Sorting out Three Levels of Judgment."
- Elbow, Peter. "Reflections on Academic Discourse."
- Elbow, Peter. *Everyone Can Write*.
- Elbow, Peter. *Writing With Power*.
- Elbow, Peter. *Writing Without Teachers*.
- Glenn, Cheryl, et al., *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing* .
- Good, Tina, and Leanne Warshauer, *In Our Own Voice: Graduate Students Teach Writing*.
- Graham, Joan, et al., *Scenarios for Teaching Writing*.
- Graves, Richard. *Writing, Teaching, Learning*.
- Harris, Joseph. *A Teaching Subject*.
- Haswell, Richard, and Min-Shan Lu. *Comp Tales*.
- Haswell, Richard. "Minimal Marking."
- Hawisher, Gail, and Cynthia Selfe. *Passions, Pedagogies, and 21st Century Technology*.
- Hillocks, Jr, George. *Teaching Writing as Reflective Practice*.
- Huot, Brian, and Pamela Takayoshi. *Teaching Writing With Computers*.
- John McPeck. *Critical Thinking and Education*.
- Johnson, T.R. *A Rhetoric of Pleasure: Prose Style and Today's Composition Classroom*.
- Jolliffe, David, et al eds. *Against the Grain: A Volume in Honor of Maxine Hairston*.
- Leamson, Robert. *Thinking about Teaching and Learning*.
- Lee, Amy. *Composing Critical Pedagogies*.
- Leki, Ilona . *Understanding ESL Writing*.
- Lindemann, Erika. *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*.
- McDonald, James, ed. *Allyn and Bacon Sourcebook for College Writing Teachers*.
- Moore, Cindy. and Peggy O'Neill, *Practice in Context*.
- MorahanShirley, and T.R. Johnson, *Teaching Composition: Background Readings*.

- Morgan, Dan. "Ethical Issues Raised by Students' Personal Writing."
- Murray, Donald. *The Craft of Revision*.
- Noguchi. *Grammar and the Teaching of Writing: Limits and Possibilities*.
- Reynolds, Nedra. *Portfolio Teaching: A Guide for Instructors*.
- Roen, Diane, et al eds, *The New St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing: Strategies for Teaching First-Year Composition*.
- Rose, Mike. *Lives on the Boundary*.
- Rosenwasser, David, and Jill Stephen, *Writing Analytically*.
- Rosser Raign, Kathryn . *The Harcourt Brace Guide to Teaching First-Year Composition*.
- Ruskiewicz, John. *Well Bound Words*.
- Seitz, James. *Motives for Metaphor*.
- Shor,Ira, *Empowering Education*.
- Smith, Frank. *Joining the Literacy Club*.
- Sommers, Nancy. "Responding to Student Writing."
- Straub, Richard, *A Sourcebook for Responding to Student Writing*.
- Tarvers, Josephine. *Teaching in Progress*.
- Tate, Gary, et al., *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*.
- Tobin, Lad. *Reading Student Writing*.
- Tobin, Lad. *Writing Relationships*.
- Villanueva, Victor. *Cross Talk in Comp Theory*.
- White, Ed. *Assigning, Responding, Evaluating*.
- Williams, James D. *Preparing to Teach Writing : Research, Theory, and Practice*.
- Winterowd, Ross. *Composition in the Rhetorical Tradition*.
- Wysocki, Anne, et al., *Writing New Media*.