

**ENGLISH ADJUNCT
HANDBOOK**

AN INSIDER'S GUIDE

BROOKLYN COLLEGE

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I. INTRODUCTION

In Fall 2009, the Brooklyn College Writing Fellows began to hold English Adjunct Workshops for those teaching English 1010 and 1012. These workshops were created to provide adjuncts with additional assistance and support in preparing to teach these courses, often for the first time. In addition, the workshops were intended as a forum for adjuncts to talk to one another in a relaxed setting, exchange ideas, and discuss whatever issues had come up in their classrooms.

This handbook was created in conjunction with the workshops as a kind of “insider’s guide” to teaching these introductory English courses. The handbook is divided into chapters that give general guidelines for dealing with different issues in the preparation and execution of these courses. In addition, at the end of each chapter, you will find quotes that were taken from experienced instructors who answered a questionnaire provided by the Writing Fellows. These quotes, which contain an array of teaching strategies, are meant to supplement the information contained in each chapter. You will find that many of the teaching strategies vary; this book is not meant as a definitive “how to” so much as a guide to help you find your own way during the early stages of your teaching career. Some teaching strategies work for some classes and instructors, others do not. We hope you will take what works for you from this guide, and overlook whatever does not.

A NOTE FROM ELAINE BROOKS AND JANET MOSER

Those of us with considerable teaching experience play a particular role in the formation of novice instructors. As supervisors, as instructors of the writing pedagogy course, and as mentors, we offer guidance and advice, enhancing and adding to the ideas and skills that new instructors bring to their teaching. Nonetheless, we are not the peers of those students whose next teaching experiences we are trying to inform.

What is particularly striking about this new handbook from the Writing Fellows is that it offers a sort of “insiders’ view” of freshman composition. Conceived much in the same spirit as the group work that many instructors use in class, this handbook resembles a form of on-going peer support for new composition instructors. The opportunity to learn from peers—whether as undergraduate students discussing and peer reviewing their classmates’ writing or as adjunct instructors fashioning courses and responding to the challenges of teaching at a diverse urban college—has shaped the content of this guide. It is very much a product of peers helping peers, providing explanations, suggestions, samples, provoking unexpected questions and offering innovative solutions.

We hope that this handbook, like many an effective piece of writing, will be viewed as a work in progress, one whose content will continue to be revised in ways that reflect the ongoing conversation about the changing and surprising field of teaching composition.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Writing Fellows (2010-2011) would like to acknowledge the English Department for their support in putting together this handbook. We would especially like to thank Elaine Brooks and Janet Moser for their enthusiasm and help. In addition, we would like to thank the experienced English professors who generously donated their expertise, including Len Fox, Tanya Pollard, Marie Warmbold, Wythe Marschall, and all of those who anonymously contributed to this text.

II. WRITING A SYLLABUS: ENGLISH 1010 & 1012 - ENGLISH 1010

It is always helpful to look at an array of syllabi before preparing to create your own. Please visit the Brooklyn College English Department website for a sampling of syllabi for English 1010: <<http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/composition/homepage.html>>.

Readings: Since English 1010 is a composition class focused on expository reading and writing, you will want to choose readings that model the types of essays that your students will be writing. The department-wide final exam for English 1010 is based on two essays that the students are asked to compare and contrast, so it is especially useful to choose a few sets of essays that closely replicate the types of essay pairings that comprise the final exam essays and put them into your syllabus. (See Chapter VI: Exit Exam for more on the English 1010 final exam. You can get previous Exit Exams from the English Department and use those as well.). Students need to learn how to write critical essays in this course, and the best way to teach critical essay writing is to provide excellent models for students. In addition, all students should be required to purchase a copy of the Department-adopted style manual, Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference* (Bedford/St. Martin). Since the book is a bit pricey, you might encourage students to buy a used copy of the manual, but be sure to specify which edition they will need (the most recent editions are usually fine, but you should check them out yourself to see the differences). You might also point out that students will need this manual for many of their courses, including English 1012, so it is best for them to shell out the cash early on and be able to use it over the course of their college careers.

Freshman Common Reading Project: Since 2004, the incoming freshman class at Brooklyn College has participated in what is called the Freshman Common Reading Project. The text chosen for the Reading Project, which is selected before the beginning of the semester by English Department and other faculty, is often the only non-expository reading included in the course (although sometimes the common readings are in fact expository). Some past readings have included Dave Egger's *Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Jonathan Lethem's *Disappointment Artist*, and Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*. Students are given copies of the text during orientation, and they should spend the first two weeks of English 1010 focused on readings from the Common Reading Project. The best essays written about the Common Reading are collected for a department publication, *Telling Our Stories, Sharing Our Lives*. Note that the student writing done for the freshman anthology may include non-expository writing, although the rest of course assignments should focus on expository writing. For more on the Freshman Common Reading Project, see the college website: <<http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/TellingOurStories/>>.

Course-Packs and Textbooks: As a new teacher, it can be overwhelming to deal with designing a course from scratch. This is why textbooks are a very useful tool for new teachers. We have included a list of recommended textbooks at the end of this chapter, and you can find more

suggestions on the English Department website (under “Recommended Texts”). Since textbooks can be expensive for students to buy, you can try to photocopy selected readings and create an inexpensive course-pack for your students (be sure to comply with Fair Use regulations). If you decide to create a course-pack, be sure to include an index and write in your own page numbers throughout the packet. This will help your students stay on track. You might also consider posting the readings as PDFs in a Blackboard course site or on a course website.

Assignments: As you can see in the Brooklyn College English Department Guide for Adjuncts, the requirements for English 1010 are approximately eight formal essays, with revisions. Since this can be an overwhelming number of papers to grade, you might think about scaffolding a few of your short paper assignments (see more about scaffolding in Chapter VII: Research Project; also see Chapter IV: Responding to Student Writing for more on how to evaluate paper drafts using the peer reviewing process).

Schedule: When designing the course schedule, be sure to check the Brooklyn College website to view the Academic Calendar. Mark down any vacation or conversion days. For English 1010, students will need to visit the library to receive a basic orientation and provide you with proof of a library visit. (You can obtain this form from the English Department office.) Mark on the course calendar the day that you would like this form to be due. You should also mark down the date of the final exam. In terms of scheduling readings, students will be doing a lot of writing in this course. Therefore, it is important not to overwhelm them with readings when their writing assignments are due. You will often find it useful for discussion purposes to pair readings, or discuss two readings over the course of one week so that you can compare and contrast them in class on the second day. Finally, be sure to write into the schedule the dates that any drafts of papers are due and any class days that will be devoted to peer review.

Remember that as a new teacher, you might not always find that you are sticking to your schedule. For that reason, it is useful to bring in new, printed copies of the course schedule every time you find yourself making revisions. (You don’t want to do this too often, but once or twice over the course of the semester is acceptable.) If your course has a website, be sure to post the latest version of the schedule on the website so students don’t become confused.

Other: Some teachers like to include course assignments in full on their course schedules. If you are someone who likes to prepare everything in advance, this can be useful. However, you should assume that some students will lose their syllabi over the course of the semester. Try to remind your students that many of the questions they will have for the course are answered on the syllabus, and they should always consult it before emailing you with any questions. On the first day of class, you might also have students exchange contact information with at least one other member of the class. Then tell them that if they ever miss class or have questions, they should contact another student before trying to get in touch with you.

Some Useful Textbooks

Bartholome, David, and Anthony Petrosky. *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers*. 9th Edition. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010.

Clark, Marlene. *Juxtapositions*. Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing, 2009.

Colombo, Gary, et al. *Rereading America*, Eighth Ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010.

Kennedy, X. J. et al. *The Brief Bedford Reader*, Eleventh Ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011.

Muller, Gilbert, ed. *The New World Reader*, Third Ed. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2010.

Silverman, Jonathan, and Dean Rader. *The World is a Text*, Third Ed. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2008.

ENGLISH 1010: THOUGHTS FROM EXPERIENCED INSTRUCTORS

“For English 1010, we use a lot of brief journalistic pieces, ranging from one page to fifteen, but primarily in the two-to-three-page category. Most days we read and discuss two or three of these brief essays. I find it useful to have a number of different models for approaches to building an argument, and a number of different topics and arguments to compare and discuss. I also think that assigning short essays makes it much more likely that students will finish the readings and will be able to focus on single issues, like analyzing an argument or considering prose styles and the use of evidence.”

“About one-third of Brooklyn College students have an ESL background... so I think that all English I teachers should try to choose readings whose content would be relevant and interesting to these students.... In my special ESL sections of English 1010 and 1012, I have the students read essays, stories, poems, and one full-length book related to the course theme.... I think it is important to include some writers who are not from the U.S. and England, or some writers from the U.S. with immigrant backgrounds.”

“Essays and articles that are of similar length to that of the Exit Exam are most effective.”

“I structure the readings around some theme. In the last English 1010 class I taught, I delved into truth and lies, and I assigned everything from Errol Morris blog posts (lies about lying, a great series) to Saint Augustine. The students’ favorite reading was a chapter from a Paul Collins history of forgotten geniuses (the chapter about the greatest liar to ever walk the earth, George Psalmanazar).” [The name of this wonderful Collins’s book is *Banvard’s Follies*. Ed.]

“I assign short essays from *The Brief Bedford Reader* – thirteen essays. This book has comparison-contrast questions for essays.”

“I assign at least one (sometimes two) essays per class meeting to identify the thesis and key points. They are expository in nature to provide models for their own writing.”

WRITING A SYLLABUS: ENGLISH 1012

Please visit the Brooklyn College English Department website for a sampling of syllabi for English 1012:

<<http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/composition/homepage.html>>.

Course theme: For English 1012 you will likely begin designing your syllabus by choosing a general theme for the course. This is not a requirement, but it tends to make the course cohere for both the students and the instructor.

Readings: English 1012 is a course focused on teaching students to write an MLA-documented research paper. The readings that teachers choose as the focus of the course are up to them. Keep in mind that some of your students will not be taking any courses in English literature, and, for this reason, it might be helpful to include literary works as part of the course's assigned readings (although it is not necessary). It might also be useful to include an assortment of genres as the required readings, although that is also not necessary. Instructors teaching primarily book-length works generally find that there is time to teach about four novels over the course of the semester, along with some supplementary, shorter readings. Some instructors choose to teach a single, long text over the course of the semester, with more supplementary readings. Finally, some instructors teach short readings throughout the semester, without any longer works.

All students are required to purchase a copy of the Department-adopted style manual, Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference* (Bedford/St. Martin) for English 1010 and 1012. They will be relying on the manual quite a bit for their research papers.

Course-packs and textbooks: It is less likely that you will want to use a textbook in your English 1012 class, since you will probably be focusing on longer readings. However, textbooks and course-packs might be useful for supplementary readings.

Assignments: In English 1012, students are required to write a seven-to-ten-page research paper, formatted in MLA-style. It is useful to give the students various shorter assignments leading up to the research paper over the course of the semester, as outlined in Chapter VII: Research Project. In addition to the research project, you should assign about two short papers to students related to the readings. These papers are a helpful way to have students practice citation styles and incorporating evidence from texts into their arguments.

Schedule: As with English 1010, when designing the course schedule, be sure to check the Brooklyn College website to view the Academic Calendar. Mark down any vacation or conversion days. For English 1012, you will want to schedule a library visit for the class when they are beginning to work on the research project. Be sure to email a librarian at the beginning of the semester, specifying that you would like to schedule a library visit for English 1012 (See Section X: Additional Resources for more information about the library). You might also provide

the librarian with the theme of your class, or even a copy of your syllabus, so that he or she can tailor your library visit.

You should note on your course schedule the days that all assignments are due that are part of the more general research project. Be sure to leave enough time between the days that different assignments need to be handed in, so that you can successfully manage to grade and return assignments before you are handed new ones.

Remember that as a new teacher, you might not always find that you are sticking to your schedule. For that reason, it is useful to bring in new, printed copies of the course schedule every time you find yourself making revisions. (You don't want to do this too often, but once or twice over the course of the semester is acceptable.) If your course has a website or you use Blackboard, be sure to post the latest version of the schedule on the website so students don't become confused.

Other: Some teachers like to include course assignments in full on their course schedules. If you are someone who likes to prepare everything in advance, this can be useful. However, you should assume that some students will lose their syllabi over the course of the semester. Try to remind your students that many of the questions they will have for the course are answered on the syllabus, and they should always consult it before emailing you with any questions. On the first day of class, you might also have students exchange contact information with at least one other member of the class. Then tell them that if they ever miss class or have questions, they should contact another student before trying to get in touch with you.

ENGLISH 1012: THOUGHTS FROM EXPERIENCED INSTRUCTORS

“I have only taught English 1012 once, and we read three full-length books (two novels and one non-fiction). I chose them because they explored the topic we were discussing and I felt they were well-written and represented very different ways of writing and of approaching the topic. I’m not sure whether I would use these same texts and approach next time or not.”

“A single masterful work can serve as a great anchor to an English 1012 class, especially when backed up with shorter essays and related stories. *Moby-Dick* works surprisingly well, as students burn themselves out quickly and are forced to actually *enjoy* what they discover to be a weird, funny, and entirely human epic. A longer work that intersects a variety of disciplines and influences a number of later writers also gives students plenty to draw upon as they do research for their essays.”

“For English 1012, I assign five-to-seven major texts; i.e., four novels, one novella, one long poem, etc. The numbers seem to work well over a sixteen-week semester. It allows time to dig into each text deeply, while also providing a variety of voices, styles, themes, and so on.”

“A play or novel every two-to-three weeks fully covers and explores the theme of the course.”

III. DESIGNING WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Low Stakes vs. High Stakes: Not every assignment needs to be a long paper with an official grade attached to it. The fact is that students become better writers by writing often. We call assignments that do not get officially graded “low-stakes” assignments, whereas “high-stakes” assignments are formal writing assignments that should be more rigorously edited and revised for a grade. You should give students multiple opportunities for low-stakes writing; these can take place in the form of blog posts, journals, in-class free-writes, or any other ungraded writing assignments you can think of. For low-stakes writing, it is helpful to remind students not to focus on grammar or syntax. This will make it easier for them to practice their writing without getting bogged down. You can grade these assignments with a simple check-system (check minus, check plus, check), or perhaps even give them a cumulative grade on their low-stakes writing (like a journal you collect once a month or even just once at the end of the semester). Low-stakes writing assignments are a wonderful way to supplement the high stakes writing assignments that will inevitably be a part of your course.

Scaffolding Assignments: It’s best to incorporate as many low stakes assignments as you can into what will eventually become high stakes assignments. One way to do this is to scaffold assignments, which is to break them into smaller and more manageable pieces. For a high stakes paper, for example, you might also have the class do a free-write in class that addresses issues they may have had with the writing assignment. You could also ask students to expand on a low stakes blog post to turn it into a formal paper.

Writing assignments can be broken up in other ways as well. For a research paper, for example, you could ask students to hand in a thesis statement or paper abstract first, then a shorter rough draft, then a preliminary bibliography, etc. (for more on the research paper, see Chapter VII: Research Project). Scaffolding assignments gives you the opportunity to intervene early on, allowing students the chance to receive more feedback. It also helps prevent plagiarism, and makes ambitious writing more manageable for students.

Remember, finally, that scaffolding assignments does not have to mean an inordinate amount of extra work for you. You can cut down grading time by looking over shorter assignments in class (during a peer review, for example), by using a check grading scale, or by having students present parts of their assignment to the entire class instead of handing them in. Keep in mind also that if you are making copious notes on a student’s paper draft, there is no reason to spend as much time grading the final draft of that same paper (for more on grading, see Chapter IV: Responding to Student Writing).

Make Your Objectives Clear: Assignment handouts should let students know exactly what you want and when you want it. This means telling students exactly when the assignment is due (or assignments, if you are scaffolding), and how long the paper should be. The clearer and more detailed your assignment prompt, the better your student papers will be. It is also always helpful

to leave at least ten to fifteen minutes open for questions when you hand out a paper assignment. Never hand an assignment out as students are leaving the class; this will inevitably lead to more work, as you will find yourself responding to email queries and likely having to respond to papers that are completely off the mark.

Allow Time for Peer Review and Revision: Always give your students ample time to complete writing assignments – they will be more likely to complete work in a timely manner and less likely to plagiarize if they don't feel rushed. This process needs to be helped along by scheduling drafts or other check points along with way (like scaffolding). Peer review sessions either during or outside of class provide students with a moment of reflection on their work before submitting it to you, helping to ensure more thoughtful final products.

Peer Review: The goal of peer review is to allow students to become better editors of both their own work and the work of their peers. The revision process is where students become better writers and critical thinkers. The more they can do that work both alone and with their peers, the more independent and effective their writing skills become.

Peer review sessions need to be shaped by you, so that students effectively direct their comments and suggestions towards revision. Create worksheets or guides for peer editing that point students toward specific and manageable revision aims. Some examples might include peer review sessions and worksheets focused on thesis statements, organization, introductory paragraphs, or uses of evidence. Also, whether peer editing happens within class or not, you should at least give the class one good example of how peer editing should function before they begin to do it on their own.

Be sure to keep the peer review groups small, at around two-to-four students. This allows students the time to read and edit each paper carefully while also guaranteeing that the writer will get feedback from more than one student.

Your involvement in peer-editing should be minimal. Keep your eye on groups and feel free to intervene if you see any troubles, but students will oftentimes be freer when they don't feel you hovering or overly engaging with their groups.

ASSIGNMENT DESIGN: THOUGHTS FROM EXPERIENCED INSTRUCTORS

“A sample thesis statement, a prompt, or suggestions for paper topics usually yield much stronger papers.”

“I think it’s valuable for an essay assignment to be framed as a question that forces students to take a stand – otherwise, they might just ramble without forming an argument.... Whether there is a specific handout for each assignment or not, there should be clear directions regarding the format (including specifying that assignments need to be typed, not handwritten), length (including directions regarding the margin and font), and the goal of the assignment (e.g. to explain an article’s argument, to compare and contrast two articles’ arguments, to agree or disagree with an article’s argument and say why, etc.).”

“Half of the time, I give them a choice of topics, trying to be sure that they will find a topic that they will find interesting to write about, and half of the time, I tell them to write an essay comparing two texts and following the above format of a comparative essay (doing what they will have to do on the final essay test).”

“I always include a one-to-ten rubric to show them what they are literally being graded on.”

“I have students write about ten essays over the semester, of which they write four in class. Every other essay is a ‘comparative essay,’ in which they quote from and compare two texts (similar to the English 1010 final essay test).”

“For English 1010, I assign three at-home essays, each with two drafts (at least), and three in-class summaries, plus a midterm. Each at home essay is between two-to-three pages.”

“I typically assign eight papers. Every paper may be revised if the student *chooses* to do so.”

“In English 1010, an essay or revision is due every week from the second or third class until the last month before the exam. I build from less formal narratives and personal essays to more complex (though often shorter) arguments and syntheses of texts.”

“I assign six essays, and for each they submit first a draft and then (after work-shopping) a revision. We do revision workshops in class for each essay. Students also write short responses to readings (one paragraph to a page long).”

“I assign three papers, two-to-three pages each, with required revisions for each. There are also in-class writing assignments and journals, both of which do not receive revisions.”

On low-stakes writing: “I think this is very important. They should write often, and at a number of different levels of formality. Writing shouldn’t be associated only with long, high-stakes formal essays; it should be a natural part of a dialogue with one’s readings.”

IV. RESPONDING TO STUDENT WRITING

Read Twice, Grade Once: In order to respond most effectively to student writing, it's best to skim over the paper once without making any comments and comment only during the second, more thorough reading. You will have a better sense of the essay's structure, argument, strengths, and weaknesses. This means you will also avoid making potentially incorrect or unnecessary comments during the process.

Feedback: Feedback to students is most effective when it can be incorporated into both revisions and future assignments. When you make extensive comments that your students won't have a chance to incorporate into their work, they will usually ignore them or won't know how to make use of those comments. It's better to comment on a first draft and give students a chance to revise based on those comments. The final draft will then require less commenting and grading time for you.

Minimal Marking: A student paper covered in red ink only creates fear and frustration on the part of students. Student writers can't possibly make every change, as they won't know where to start and might feel defeated by the whole process. Design your margin notes and edits for maximum efficiency, and make clear the most necessary changes and ideas you want to share with your students. This also means that you should avoid marking up every grammatical and syntactical error you see. Such edits lead students to believe that a small, sentence-level problem is as important as organization and argumentation. Instead, make a note of one or two grammatical issues that you find repeated in a paper, and ask them to look up the rules in the Hacker manual. (For more, see Chapter V: Teaching Grammar/Syntax.)

Focus on Improvement: You should generally try to avoid negativity in your mark-ups. When you respond to a weakness in a paper, make clear how that weakness can be improved. And when you see something that works well, let your students know it. If your revision comments only focus on what isn't working, they might also do damage to those parts of their writing that are successful. Give students an indication of the best points of their paper so they know what to work toward and are aware of their strengths.

Clarity: "Unclear" written on the margin of a paper is unclear to students. The same goes for "awkward" or a simple "?". Make sure your students know what your concerns are and point them towards specifics that they can revise.

Provide a Grading Rubric: A grading rubric allows your students to know ahead of time what goals and expectations you have for writing assignments. When these are clear at the outset, students can write with those expectations in mind. A grading rubric also helps demystify the final grade on papers and gives students a way to make your revision notes and final comments more intelligible. Finally, a rubric can make the grading process much easier for you. Aligning your comments to the expectation laid out in the rubric means you don't have to repeat yourself as much during the grading process.

**RESPONDING TO STUDENT WRITING:
THOUGHTS FROM EXPERIENCED INSTRUCTORS**

“The time I spend on a paper depends on the length of the paper, how high-stakes it is, and its quality.”

“I base grades on four categories: 1) writing/grammar, 2) argument, 3) evidence, and 4) revision. Students get a check, check plus, or check minus in each of these categories, and the total is then tallied up for a letter grade.”

“For ESL students, I find it is useful to give them separate grades for content, organization, development, and grammar. For example, a grade of A/C- indicates that the content is very good, but the grammar is not.... I first read a paper and comment on the ideas, then read it a second time and mark the grammar. I make about fifteen grammatical corrections (actually, not correcting, but underlining errors and asking students to try and correct the errors themselves) and then stop. I think correcting all the ESL student errors would be too much, would take too much time, and would in fact be discouraging to the students. The correcting strategy must be encouraging rather than discouraging, to make students feel that they have done something good and are capable of writing a good essay.”

“I use pencil (*not red pen!*) to ‘correct’ and offer suggestions.”

“I comment on the structure and thesis for first drafts, and then grammar, style, and support for the revisions.”

V. TEACHING GRAMMAR/SYNTAX

Make Your Priorities Clear: Though sentence level errors are oftentimes frustrating, focusing too much on such errors misleads students into believing that grammar and spelling are the only concerns professors have about writing. When teaching and responding to grammar and syntax, make sure you make clear that there is more to good writing than an absence of sentence-level errors.

Be Responsive: Don't presume in advance what problems your students may or may not have. Wait until you've seen a representative sample of student writing and teach whatever seems to be a consistent problem for students across the class. It is often useful to create a "grammar errors sheet" when handing back a set of papers. This sheet could address a handful of issues that you've found repeating on a majority of student papers. You might also use specific examples of student errors from papers to give examples of how to revise grammatical errors.

Link Things Back to Editing: Abstract discussions of grammar will rarely make an impact with students. Make sure that whatever sentence level concerns you address in class can be practiced and incorporated into the writing and revision process, for example, through peer editing.

Clarity of Meaning: Focus first and foremost on grammatical and syntactical errors that interfere with meaning of what students are trying to say. If instructors can demonstrate how such errors make meaning ambiguous or opaque, it becomes easier to convince students of the value of correcting them.

Choose Common Errors: When marking up students papers, instead of marking up all grammar errors, find one or two (no more than three) common errors that repeatedly appear. At the end of the paper, list these common errors. You might even reference pages in the Hacker manual so that students can look up the grammar rules themselves.

GRAMMAR AND SYNTAX: THOUGHTS FROM EXPERIENCED INSTRUCTORS

“I teach short lessons on grammar as needed, based on how well or poorly the students write. Students almost always make the same mistakes, over and over again, and I’ve found only by being patient and addressing one or two specific mistakes per class (though not harping on them as ‘mistakes’) do they start to disappear. The goal isn’t to correct every mistake, every time, but to help students *hear* and especially to *see* good English as clear and powerful, whether spoken or on the page, and awkward English as a barrier to communication.”

“Yes, I do teach grammar in both English 1010 and 1012, but I am teaching ESL sections. I do it at the beginning of the class. I choose exercises based on the typical errors they make.”

“I think teaching grammar is absolutely imperative in both classes, especially in English 1010. So far, I have focused on teaching about topics in which I commonly see problems: subject-verb agreement, uses of semicolons, uses of apostrophes (contractions, possessions), dangling modifiers, incomplete sentences, run-on sentences, etc. I do mini-lessons in which we use worksheets, sometimes based on examples from their writings, sometimes invented. They fill them out in class and we go through them together and discuss what is correct and what the operative rule is and why. I think it would be useful to have a common store of worksheets that faculty members can draw on. Certainly, teachers should feel free to take their own approach, but it takes a lot of time to reinvent the wheel, and most of these kinds of problems recur throughout every class. I have not been able to access the worksheets that apparently accompany the Hacker handbook.”

“I teach grammar in my special ESL sections and will make available the text of grammar explanations and exercises (which I have written myself) that I use with my classes.”

“When major grammatical issues present themselves, I ‘teach’ grammar. That is, upon viewing and reading my students’ written work, I will notice patterns of error. The major ones will be covered in class at the nearest convenience. Tips (samples via handouts, and making them read these handouts aloud in class) seem to work for me.”

“I cover their common errors as they arise. I keep each grammar lesson to a 10-15 minute minimum.”

VI. EXIT EXAM (ENGLISH 1010)

At the end of every semester, the English Department gives a department-wide final exam for English 1010. Passing the exam is a requirement for passing the course. The following chapter provides examples of exercises you might use to help prepare your students for this exam.

The basic format of the final exam is as follows: students receive a longer essay about a week before the scheduled date of their in-class exam. They are allowed to make notes on this essay and discuss it among one another, but they are not allowed to discuss it with you. During the final exam, they are given a shorter essay to read, and then they have to write an essay comparing and contrasting the two readings.

Compare and Contrast: To prepare students for the task of comparing and contrasting essays, you might start by having them compare and contrast more basic materials. These could include images, advertisements, characters from a text, or real people. As an introduction to the idea of comparisons and contrasts, for example, you might bring in a bag of chips and a bag of pretzels to my classes and asked students to come up with ten points of comparison and ten points of contrast. At first, the task seems a bit daunting, but over time students start to see all the different ways they might compare the two (e.g. the packaging of pretzels versus chips). You might also try the same exercise with two images that are similar, but not exactly alike (e.g. a cartoon image of a woman and a sketch of a woman, or two images of couples with various dissimilarities).

Note Taking and Other Exam Preparations: Since you cannot discuss the readings with students, it is helpful to go over skills that the students will need for the final exam over the course of the semester. This includes note taking. You can teach students how to write notes directly on their readings (by underlining or writing in the margins) early on in the semester. You might have a class discussion on when to underline phrases or sentences, and how to create a “roadmap” of an essay using short paraphrases. Remember that students are allowed to make as many notes as they want on the first final exam reading, so they should take advantage of it.

Grading: You will get prepped by the English Department about how to grade the final exam. Keep in mind that if you are unsure of how to grade a particular paper, it is helpful to ask a colleague to read the paper in order to help you make your decision.

EXIT EXAM: THOUGHTS FROM EXPERIENCED INSTRUCTORS

“We do a ‘mock’ exit exam in class based on actual previous exams. In addition, all of their assignments are modeled for learning the skills needed to pass.”

“We compare/contrast readings all term. I devote the last three to four class meetings entirely to taking ‘practice’ exit exams.”

“We do about four in class-essays during the semester, and about five essays in which they must compare two texts. In the last class, I remind them about how they must write a comparative essay (see below) and we look at the form of the final essay question in order to understand how the question tells them to organize their essay.

Form of a comparative essay:

Paragraph 1: Intro: Mention the essay topic and the two authors and titles of the texts.

Paragraph 2: Discuss what text 1 says about the topic, use quotes.

Paragraph 3: Discuss what text 2 says about the topic, use quotes, and compare to text 1.

Paragraph 4: Discuss your own thoughts/opinions/observations/experiences related to one or both texts.

Paragraph 5: Conclusion: Return to the topic and end with a ‘concluding sentence.’”

“We do a mock exam in class and discuss the essays that result, which I correct and return to them. We also write a compare-and-contrast essay and discuss it. We also talk in class about the goals of the exam and how to achieve them, and I take questions. I don’t dedicate a lot of class time specifically to the exam, but we do devote time to working on the processes that the exam tests: breaking down an argument, summarizing it, critiquing it, finding textual evidence to demonstrate it, comparing it with a related but not identical argument, and writing clearly.”

“I do two practices the last couple of weeks before the final. I give the students a comparison-contrast midterm, so they have the format, and all of the at home essays are comparing and contrasting two texts.”

“I show students old exams. Make them take old exams. Grade. Discuss how they could improve their exams. Repeat.”

I spend about a month reviewing for the exam, while reading some new materials and continuing to explore themes from earlier classes. Students are nervous about the exam, and many underestimate their ability to pass (to cogently synthesize news articles about an interesting topic). They seem to appreciate invented exams, as well; some enjoy writing about politics or other topics unlikely to appear on the real exam.”

VII. RESEARCH PROJECT (ENGLISH 1012)

One of the key requirements for English 1012 is to assign a research project resulting in a seven-to-ten-page paper formatted in MLA or APA style. It is important to break this project into manageable, component parts, as for many students this will be the first research paper they have ever written in college (and, for some, the first research paper they have written, ever).

There are many ways to break down the research project. Below are some examples of various assignments that address the most integral skills students will need, as well as some added tips to help you along in teaching each stage of the process. This breakdown is by no means the only way to assign the research project; instead, it is meant as a starting point for instructors to consider how the research paper might be broken down. Keep in mind also that you do not have to have students hand in every assignment that makes up the research project. In order to save time grading, you might have students work on some of these assignments during peer review, or you might have them present their work to the class. Finally, even if you do decide that you want students to hand in every single smaller component, you might grade the earlier assignments on a check-system and save a letter grade for the end of the semester, when they hand in a portfolio that includes a final paper.

Research Proposal: The first step in writing a research proposal will inevitably involve helping students decide what topic they want to write about. Depending on how you envision the final paper – whether you want students to be responding to a class-related topic or not – you might want to offer students some sample topics to discuss in class. You might even provide a list of general topics (possibly even in your syllabus), which students can choose from and tailor to their own needs. Some students will likely need extra attention at this early stage of the process. It might be helpful to assign a worksheet for students to fill out, either in class or at home. Some questions to ask include: What is your **general** topic in a few words? What more **specific** aspect of your topic will be your focus? What is your preliminary thesis or hypothesis, or what do you want to say about this narrowed topic? Or, what questions do you have about this topic? Where will you begin looking for legitimate primary and secondary sources? What is your research plan? Why does this topic interest you? Why have you decided to pursue this topic? Can you state your topic in the form of a single question?

The research proposal hand-out is something that students can hand in to you directly. Or, they could exchange proposals in class and revise them before handing them in. Finally, you might have each student present his proposal to the class, and use the class time to respond to the proposals and have students respond to one another as well. This final tactic is especially useful in the early stage of the research project process, as hearing your response to other students' topics will guide students in rethinking their own topics.

Topic-Narrowing Workshop: A topic-narrowing workshop is another way to help students further hone in on what their papers are going to be about. In a topic narrowing workshop, you

have students bring in a research question to class. Then, you pair your students and have them respond to one another's projects, focusing especially on the scope of their projects. Some questions you might have students answer about their partners' research questions during this workshop include: Is the question easily and fully researchable? What type of information does your partner need to answer the research question? Is the scope of this information reasonable? Given the type and scope of the information that your partner needs, is his/her question too broad, too narrow, or o.k.? Does your partner have a good quality research question that he/she actually will be able to answer by doing research? Is there a way to narrow or broaden the scope? Should the question be asked in a different way?

Library Narrative: At some point in the semester, as mentioned in Chapter II: Writing a Syllabus: English 1012, you should have scheduled a library visit for your class. During this visit, a librarian will guide your students through some of the resources available at the library, allow them some time to explore online resources on their own, and answer whatever questions they might have. It is important for students to venture out on a library visit on their own at some point after this initial visit. For this reason, you might have students fill out a library narrative. A library narrative is an informal way for students to express their frustrations and successes, which will give you a strong sense of how the class is doing overall. For the library narrative, you might ask students some of the following questions: What has your search entailed? Where have you looked for sources? Has it been easy to find reliable sources? If so, how and where did you find them? Has it been difficult to find reliable sources? What have been some of the challenges to finding sources? What has been the most useful source you've found? How and where did you find it? How has your research changed or shifted the ideas you came up with in the paper proposal? Have you answered your research question or proven your research hypothesis? Or, based on your new knowledge, do you want to ask a different question or put forth a different hypothesis instead? What has been the most interesting or rewarding part of this research process so far for you? What have you learned? What has been the most frustrating part of the process for you?

Sources Worksheet: Once you feel like your students have their general topic figured out and have been exposed to the library, it is important to have a discussion about what makes a valid source for their research papers. You should set aside time during class to discuss the various types of sources available, both online and on paper, and to explain what makes one source more valuable or valid than another. For example, students should think about the qualification of the author who has written whatever text they have chosen, and what makes that author an expert in whatever particular area they are writing about.

To ensure that students are choosing acceptable sources for their papers, you might have students bring in and present one or two of their sources to the class. You might also have them fill out a sources worksheet (for one or two or even all of their sources). In this worksheet, students answer some or all of the following questions: Is this an appropriate, academic, college-level source? (i.e., did you find it at the Brooklyn College library and/or through the library

databases?) What kind of source is this – an entire book, book chapter, journal article, newspaper article, etc.?

In addition, to prepare students to write their annotated bibliographies, you might include several additional prompts. (1) Create a bibliographic entry in correct MLA style for this source, and write it here. See the index on page 379 of Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference* for help creating the appropriate entry. (2) Summarize the thesis/argument of this source in a few sentences. What point is the author of this book/article trying to get across? (3) Copy down a couple of the most useful/relevant/important quotations from this source, and be sure to note the page numbers. (You might need to excerpt from longer sentences/paragraphs in order to shorten the quote to just the most relevant parts.) (4) What do you agree with in this source? What do you disagree with? (5) How do you plan to use this source to answer your research question and prove your thesis? What types of useful information does this source contain? (Possibilities include, but are not limited to, historical background, statistics, interviews, an argument you agree with, a useful counter-argument, etc.)

Annotated Bibliography: Depending on whether or not you have had students fill out sources worksheets for some or all of their sources, you might want to have students hand in or workshop an annotated bibliography. Before you hand out this assignment, you should be sure to spend some time in class showing students how to use the Hacker manual. It is helpful to have students practice writing bibliographic entries and citations for different kinds of sources. You should also discuss plagiarism and paraphrasing at this point.

For an annotated bibliography, students should include a proper citation followed by a 100-150 word annotation. You should explain exactly what you would like the annotation to say, and include an example if possible. You might describe an annotation as follows: (1) **Summarize**, in your own words, the main idea or claim of the source. (2) **Explain** why this is a reliable source. Does it stack up to the criteria of authority, accuracy, and currency? (3) **Explain** how the source connects to your research paper hypothesis or research question (does it agree with your central point, present a counterargument to your point, or provide necessary background, for example?). In other words, how will this source fit into your paper?

Outline: In general, it may be helpful for students to create an outline in preparation for writing the first draft of their papers. Very often, students feel intimidated at the prospect of sitting in front of a blank computer screen. An outline can give students a document to work from when they are ready to begin writing their papers.

For the outline, you might ask students to follow a basic, four-step process: (1) **Brainstorm:** List all the ideas that you want to include in your paper. (2) **Organize:** Group related ideas together. (3) **Order:** Arrange material in subsections from general to specific or from abstract to concrete. (4) **Label:** Create main- and subheadings.

Again, it is helpful to provide students with a few sample outlines before writing them on their own. You might also have students bring their outlines into class for peer review, instead of having them hand in these outlines to you.

First and Final Drafts: If you have properly scaffolded the research project, writing a first draft of the paper should be a relatively painless process for students. As noted in Chapter IV: Responding to Student Writing, you should focus the bulk of your comments on the first draft of student papers, as opposed to the final draft. You might also have students hand in an entire portfolio with the final draft of the paper, so that you can trace the entire trajectory of their research experience and evaluate them, in part, on the basis of their progress over the course of the semester.

RESEARCH PROJECT: THOUGHTS FROM EXPERIENCED INSTRUCTORS

“Typically, short [polemical] papers are [given] in the beginning of the term so that students can focus on closely reading primary texts and writing critically about them. We then move to a prospectus and annotated bibliography before the final paper (revised) is due.”

“Though research guides the class throughout, I spend at least one class focusing on what it means to specifically *research* a paper. What are other people’s ideas? How do we use them? How do we cite them? Build up from these basics. After a more intense introduction, perhaps halfway through the term, it becomes much easier to link back all the texts and assignments to the fundamentals of research.”

“The best class on research I’ve seen taught was by my friend Scott. He made it fun. He made it simple and organic. You attack a paper from the thesis, down to the key arguments proving your thesis, down to the component ideas (drawn from research) that comprise your arguments, down to the sentences, the wild prose part, that comprise those arguments. Here you bring in your quotations and block quotations. You analyze every single one. You are bold and clear, and you link every quotation and every argument back to your thesis...”

“It all seemed so simple. I aspire to make research and writing sound simple—which it is—because many students view it as not only boring but arcane, some skill they will never be able to ‘really’ understand or hone.”

“We do an entire library session, I give them the topics to choose from, but if they feel strongly, they can do another. This term it was cell phones and fast foods and obesity. I go over the sample research paper in our text, and the sources used. I choose two of the sources the paper used and we summarize them in class. I spend a class on paraphrasing and quoting, and I choose sample first drafts of the paper to workshop as a class. I try to choose good models for the class. I do workshops of the research paper twice, so at least seven classes all together.”

“We break the assignment down into steps: finding a topic, identifying questions, doing a research workshop in the library, identifying a set of research sources, writing up notes on the sources, making in-class presentations on their topic and the research they’ve done. We write drafts of the paper and revise them.”

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VIII. TEACHING STRATEGIES AND ADVICE: MORE THOUGHTS FROM EXPERIENCED INSTRUCTORS

How do you encourage students to talk about readings? (How do you structure your class discussions? Do you call on students? What do you do when the class is silent?)

“I explain to students that when we discuss a reading, I am not going to explain it to them, but I am going to ask them to explain it to me. In class, I go down my class list and ask students to explain the reading, page by page. I tell them that they should take notes and underline assigned readings, and be prepared to explain the readings in their own words and also to read sentences/short passages that they have underlined. They are also frequently required to quote from assigned texts in their essays. If a student says that he/she has not done the reading, I make a note in my grade book and say they get one warning and if this happens again, it will affect their grade, possibly to the extent of not passing the class.”

“I ask them to write responses, often just a paragraph long. I also assign five or six of them each class to prepare some questions and ideas for discussion based on a passage from the reading, and to present their ideas to class.”

“Mostly, we discuss the texts. I ask them to summarize the texts and define key terms. I ask for their general opinion and try to expand the criteria by which I judge what they read. They ask me questions. I can see who sits, head down, phone in hand. I also ask students to write responses to the readings, or sometimes (not as a rule) to analyze the readings in their essays.”

“Class discussions usually yield this assessment. Plus, those who do not bring their book may be asked to leave, as they are not properly prepared.”

“When the class is silent, I wait it out.”

“I don’t threaten them with quizzes, but they are required in English 1012 to submit a response paper on the text on the first day of discussion.”

“I sometimes use my list to call on individual students and sometimes allow students to raise hands to say what they want to say. Before having students start to write an essay, I divide the class into groups of four and have them discuss what they are planning to say in their essay.”

“I assign students in advance to be responsible for discussion—five or six for any given class—and the goal is for them to lead discussion with others, rather than for them to give a lecture. If it’s hard to get others to join in, I can ask those students questions to draw them out further, but if the reading is on topics that are lively and relevant to them and these students have already gotten things started, usually there are plenty of others ready to jump in.”

“I prepare general discussion questions before class. But usually I let the nature and direction of the class discussion draw organically, directing and guiding my students through the text as necessary.”

“I ask them question after question during class discussions.”

How should I (an adjunct) prepare for my observation? Do you have any suggestions for structuring my observation lesson? Should I provide my observer with materials in advance? Should I tell my students I am being observed?

“Give the observer in advance a copy of your syllabus. It also wouldn’t be a bad idea to tell the observer in advance (perhaps by email) what you are doing, why, and how it relates to the overall goals of the class. Personally, when I observe a class, I pay attention to the students and if they seem to be engaged and learning something. I do not like a class where the teacher is doing all the talking, and fortunately, I don’t often see classes like this.”

“I let my students know that ‘someone’ will be joining us from the department.”

“I don’t think it should require preparation very different than for another class, but it’s a good idea to provide the observer with materials in advance, and it’s a good idea to have it be a class that demonstrates group discussion and interaction, as opposed to mainly silent working in pairs (although some group-work can be fine). I often tell my own students when our class is going to be observed, because it often encourages them to be prepared and lively!”

“I am always nervous to be observed. Observers have always asked for materials (usually just a syllabus and an email catching them up on what the class has covered so far). I prepare by spending a little extra time on the observation lesson. I try to move fluidly from subject to subject, often breaking up the class into mini-lessons, a group activity or peer-review, and rolling discussions that help the observer hear from the class itself as much as from me. I definitely tell students I am/we are going to be observed, since the observer may interact with them.”

“Let it be organic; it’s just ‘another day at the office,’ tell yourself and prepare class as you would any other day. Yes, tell your students in advance that a fellow professor or guest will be joining the class one day.”

“Just relax and do what you always do.”

Do you have a blog or website for your class? Would you recommend setting one up? Why or why not?

“Yes and yes. It makes it easy for students to locate information, and hard for them to say, ‘I lost the syllabus.’”

“Yes. It provides an excellent space for low-stakes writings (journals) and course documents and announcements.”

“I don’t, mostly because I make the handouts and don’t change the syllabus. If I need to notify the class, I send a mass email.”

Do the students do any writing during class? Do you find in-class writing to be a valuable use of time?

“Yes. Sometimes they start to write an essay in class and I have in-class conferences with individual students, and they write four in-class essays during the semester.”

“When there is group work, in-class writing is given.”

How do you deal with the needs of ESL or ELL students in your classes?

“...[I]t is important to be encouraging, to respect their ideas, to give them a feeling that they can succeed, and to try to be clear about what a passing paper should look like. Related to grammar, this involves understanding what kind of grammar is teachable (e.g., use of verb forms and correct sentence structure) and what is not (e.g., use of prepositions, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions). Of course, the most important overall question is “Do you understand what the student is trying to say?” Another overall suggestion is you should choose texts and give essay assignments that you are personally interested in and that will also be likely to interest your students. If you are interested, your interest and enthusiasm will likely be contagious. About assignments, you might ask yourself if you would be interested in writing an essay in response to your own assignment, and you should try to notice if the students respond well to the assignment in their essays. If not, it might not be that there is something wrong with the students, but rather that there is something wrong with the assignment, or perhaps the teacher’s way of presenting the assignment.”

“One-on-one meetings in office hours. Recommend Learning Center appointments.”

IX. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Brooklyn College Learning Center

Location: 1300 Boylan Hall (straight ahead through the building's central entrance)

Hours: 10 am - 7 pm, Monday - Thursday
10 am - 3 pm, Friday

Website: <http://lc.brooklyn.cuny.edu/>

The Learning Center is a place on campus where Brooklyn College students can receive free tutoring and general advice on coursework across the curriculum. The Learning Center offers peer tutoring in writing, ESL, core courses, science courses, CIS, foreign languages, and mathematics. To see a writing tutor, it is best for students to schedule an appointment. They can do that by visiting the Learning Center or by calling (718) 951-5821. If you as an instructor think that a student needs extensive help with writing, you can encourage the student to schedule weekly sessions with a tutor. E-mail the Learning Center at LC@brooklyn.cuny.edu to obtain a weekly session referral form, or pick one up from the Learning Center or English Department. Encourage students to use this resource well before a paper is due so that they can set up multiple sessions, allowing a tutor to intervene at various stages of the writing process. One last-minute session is better than none, but not optimal.

If students need tutoring in the content of a Core class, the Learning Center has tutors who specialize in the various Cores available at certain times (these are not writing tutors). The schedule for the Core tutors is available here: <http://lc.brooklyn.cuny.edu/schedules.html>

Brooklyn College Library: Faculty Services

The library website has some useful web resources to help instructors design writing assignments, avoid and detect plagiarism, and use a variety of library services (the "Creating Library-Friendly Assignments" section is particularly useful). You can find these here:

http://dewey.brooklyn.cuny.edu/resources/?sub_id=44&view=subject#182

In addition, a subject specialist librarian is available for consultations to help instructors design research assignments and to schedule library sessions that demonstrate research resources that are available at the library. You can find a listing of subject specialists here:

<http://dewey.brooklyn.cuny.edu/resources/?view=specialists>

Writing Across the Curriculum: Writing Fellows

Website: <http://bcwac.wordpress.com/>

Writing Across the Curriculum is a pedagogical practice that encourages the use of writing in every discipline. At Brooklyn College, Writing Fellows trained in WAC practices are available for consultations with instructors to help them incorporate writing into their courses more effectively. Fellows work with instructors to design syllabi and specific writing assignments. Fellows are also available to come into instructor's classes and give twenty-to-thirty-minute "mini-lessons" on a variety of topics: summarizing a source, writing a literature review, avoiding plagiarism, constructing a thesis statement, etc.

SEEK

Website: <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/pub/departments/seek/>

SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge) is a higher education opportunity program found at each of the senior colleges of the City University of New York. The SEEK Program provides special academic, financial, and counseling assistance to students entering college for the first time. The program provides services to help students succeed in the college setting.

SEEK was created in 1966 when the New York State Legislature enacted a law that mandated the creation of programs providing access and support for New York City residents and sought to advance the cause of equality and educational opportunity of the City University of New York. Today, the university maintains a commitment to admit students under the provisions of this law and accept students who normally would not qualify through regular admissions criteria.

Center for Academic Advisement & Student Success

Website: <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/portal/caass/>

The Center for Academic Advisement and Student Success offers students both appointment and walk-in service. Walk-in service is limited to quick questions. Half hour appointments may be made with our academic advisors for educational planning, first-year student advisement, transfer student advisement, core and educational foundations advisement or any other issues related to a student's educational goals.

The Women's Center

Website: <http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/womens/center/>

The Brooklyn College Women's Center houses the "Returning Women's Cafe", a multi-function drop-in lounge, the Alice Miller Computer Lounge, and a resource center. Coffee and tea are available during regular office hours. The Center also provides crisis intervention and advocacy services to Brooklyn College students on academic or non-academic related issues.

Veterans Affairs and Counseling Center

Location: 0303 James Hall

Phone: 718-951-5105

Magner Center for Career Development and Internships

Website: <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/pub/departments/magner/>

The Magner Center assists Brooklyn College students and alumni in developing the skills necessary to attain their lifelong career goals. The Magner Center provides assistance in: Career and Major Counseling, Finding Internships, Professional Skill Development, Resume and Cover Letter Review, Job and Internship Fairs, Graduate School Advisement, Career Panels and Workshops, Alumni Mentoring, On Campus Recruitment, Pre-law Advising, Mock Interviews/Interview Preparation, Full and Part Time Job Postings, Career Assessments, and Internship Stipends.

The Center also has a wide variety of resources available, including a career library located in 1303 James Hall and various online tools such as career videos, OptimalResume, eRecruiting, Internships.com and the career assessment MyPlan, to name a few.

Center for Student Disability Services

Website: <http://dephome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/disability/>

If you are a matriculated student with a documented disability, you are entitled to services and resources provided by the Center for Student Disability Services. All students who wish to register with the Center should make an appointment to see the director, Roberta Adelman. Documentation should be brought to the appointment.

X. SAMPLE MATERIALS

The following pages contain various sample materials for use in the English composition classroom. For various sample syllabi, previous Exit Exams, and other recommended texts, please see the English Department website:

<<http://dephome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/composition/homepage.html>>.

Disclaimer: In collating the following documents, we benefitted from the input of various colleagues and other sources widely available to composition instructors. If you recognize your own materials and would like us to credit them, please contact the Writing Fellows at wac@brooklyn.cuny.edu and we would be glad to do so.

In-Class Interview Ice-Breaker

Name of interviewer: _____

What is your name?

Where were you born?

How long have you been a student at BC?

What music do you listen to?

What are some of your favorite movies?

What role does reading play in your life? Do you like reading?

What role does writing play in your life? What do you like to write?

In-Class Presentation Guidelines

Each student is responsible for a 5-10 minute class presentation. Be sure to write down the date that you have signed up for. You can see me during office hours or contact me by email if you would like to discuss the topic of your presentation. I recommend planning your presentation well in advance.

This presentation comprises 10 percent of your course grade. A **one-page, typed (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font) reflection** is due the class period following your presentation. In this reflection, briefly explain the subject of your presentation and your impressions of how the class responded to your presentation.

Here are some suggestions for your presentation.

- Choose a short passage (1-2 paragraphs) from the day's assigned reading. You can read the passage aloud, explain any important themes or details in the passage, discuss its relation to the text as a whole, and/or analyze how it fits in with the themes we've been discussing in class.
- Research (informally; no bibliography required) the background of today's author and/or the history of the text. This is an especially good choice if you are presenting on the first day of a new text.
- Choose a character (or a pair of characters) from the day's assigned reading. You can discuss several short passages in which the character appears, and/or trace how the character has grown or developed over the course of the reading.
- Discuss the setting of the assigned reading. You can talk about anything from a single room to a home to a neighborhood. Think about the significance of this place in relation to the rest of the narrative. How is it described? How do the characters move within it? How does it look and feel?
- Bring in an object or photograph that illuminates a theme within the day's reading. Be sure to describe in detail how your object relates to the text.
- Be creative. If there is something you would like to do, but you're not sure how it will work out in class, please ask!

All presentations should conclude with a question or series of questions to begin class discussion. Be prepared to lead discussion for several minutes after you've completed your prepared presentation.

Essay Assignment for English 1010 Freshman Common Reading Project

Note: this is the only essay assignment for English 1010 that should include the option of a non-expository essay

Step 1: Rough Draft—2-3 pages

This assignment is due at the beginning of class on **Monday, September 15**. Your paper should be 2-3 pages, typed and double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font. We will be workshopping these essays in class, so please bring **TWO** copies of your essay to class on Monday. Remember, failure to bring a draft to class will count as an absence and a one level decrease of the essay grade.

Choose ONE of the following essay topics:

Option 1: Tourist/Outsider (Personal Essay): Jhumpa Lahiri's short story, "Interpreter of Maladies," portrays a day in the life of a young American family visiting India. Write a personal essay that traces an experience you have had visiting a foreign place—whether it be another country, another city, or any environment that somehow felt new to you. Remember that the point of a personal essay is not just to portray events that were meaningful to you, but also to make them universally relatable and thus more interesting to the reader.

Option 2: Secrets (Personal Essay): Both of Jhumpa Lahiri's short stories, "A Temporary Matter" and "Interpreter of Maladies," confront the power of communication and secrets in relationships. Write a personal essay about an incident when a secret that you told or, alternatively, a secret that was revealed to you affected a relationship that you had with another person. Remember, again, not just to portray events that were meaningful to you, but also to make them universally relatable and thus more interesting to the reader.

Option 3: Communication (Critical Essay): Using quotes and examples from the text, write a critical essay in which you compare and contrast the notion of communication in Jhumpa Lahiri's "A Temporary Matter" and "Interpreter of Maladies." What is the role of secrets and confession in each of these stories? Why do the characters reveal secrets and how do these confessions affect their relationships?

Option 4: Your Choice: You may choose a topic of your choice **only if** you see me during office hours on Wednesday, September 10th, after class. I **must** approve your topic before you can write about it.

Step 2: Final Draft—2-3 pages
Due 9/17/08

Polish your rough draft into a final draft, fixing all grammar/punctuation/style errors, organizing paragraphs, crystallizing your thesis, and expanding on any suggestions your peer editor and/or instructor gave your rough draft. Grading Criteria (to be handed out on Wednesday) explains the standards by which your paper will be graded. Your grade on this paper comprises 10% of your final grade.

Tips for your first essay:

Thesis: When you are writing any essay, including a personal essay, you should know your thesis before you even start to write the paper. A thesis statement is usually one sentence long and encompasses the main idea or argument of the paper. Write a thesis statement on a separate piece of paper before you begin.

Outline and Paragraphs: Even for a short paper such as this one, an outline can do wonders for the organization of the essay. After you write your thesis statement, divide your paper into three to five paragraphs. For each paragraph, write a sentence or two about what you will be discussing.

Questions? Ask me sooner rather than later! Good luck.

In-Class Group Discussion Questions
"Letter from a Birmingham City Jail"

- (1) Why is King in Birmingham? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
- (2) What are the four basic steps of any nonviolent campaign as outlined by King?
- (3) In your own words, explain how King differentiates a "just" from an "unjust" law and give an example of each.
- (4) What does King mean by "the white moderate"? How does he feel about "the white moderate"?
- (5) King uses evidence from his personal life to defend his position. Cite a specific example where he does this.

In-Class Group Discussion Questions
“The Metropolis and Mental Life”

Reread paragraph five of the essay on pages 363 and answer the following questions:

1. In Georg Simmel’s words, what is the definition of the “blasé attitude”? (Choose no more than one to two sentences.)
2. In your own words, what is the “blasé attitude” and why are modern city dwellers particularly prone to it?
3. Do you think the “blasé attitude” exists in modern life in the city? Give examples from real life to support your answer.

From “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” by Georg Simmel, page 363:

The same factors which, in the exactness and the minute precision of the form of life, have coalesced into a structure of highest impersonality, have, on the other hand, an influence in a highly personal direction. There is perhaps no psychic phenomenon which is so unconditionally reserved to the city as the blasé outlook. It is at first the consequence of those rapidly shifting stimulations of the nerves which are thrown together in all their contrasts and from which it seems to us the intensification of metropolitan intellectuality seems to be derived. On that account it is not likely that stupid persons who have been hitherto intellectually dead will be blasé. Just as an immoderately sensuous life makes one blasé because it stimulates the nerves to their utmost reactivity until they finally can no longer produce any reaction at all, so, less harmful stimuli, through the rapidity and the contradictoriness of their shifts, force the nerves to make such violent responses, tear them about so brutally that they exhaust their last reserves of strength and, remaining in the same milieu, do not have time for new reserves to form. This incapacity to react to new stimulations with the required amount of energy constitutes in fact that blasé attitude which every child of a large city evinces when compared with the products of the more peaceful and more stable milieu.

In-Class Essay Assignment

Option #1: In class, we talked about how, according to Georg Simmel, the “close-knit community” found in small towns can impair individual freedoms. Are there any signs of the “close-knit community” in “Fifty Cents a Night” or “Bananas”? How does the existence of this close-knit community on the Lower East Side of Manhattan complicate Simmel’s ideas about city life?

Option #2: In Georg Simmel’s “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” he writes about “the blasé attitude.” In either “Fifty Cents a Night” or “Bananas” is there any sign of the blasé attitude? Do the stories reflect Simmel’s ideas about this attitude and city life? Why or why not?

You will have an hour-and-forty-minutes to write this essay in class. I would advise you to spend the first twenty minutes outlining an essay, the next hour and ten minutes writing, and the last ten minutes proofreading your essay. You will be able to look at the stories throughout the exam, so feel free to make notes in your book (Juxtapositions) to use for the essay.

In-Class Group Activity

Think about Hawthorne's story, "Young Goodman Brown," and identify "witch hunts" that are occurring today in your community or your country. For example, are people on one side of an issue attempting to discredit people on the other side of the issue by using unfair tactics that impugn the latter's reputation?

1. Choose one person in your group to be the **note-taker**. This person should be writing all of your ideas down, but *everyone* in the group needs to contribute.
2. **Brainstorm:** each group is going to be writing a paper today in class. To start, read the essay question together and spend about 10 minutes discussing what topic you will use for your paper. Make sure you choose a topic that everyone in your group agrees upon. The topic should be familiar to every person in your group. The note-taker should take notes as you brainstorm.
3. **Thesis:** Once you've decided on your topic, come up with a solid thesis statement. Remember that a thesis statement should make some kind of argument. It should also be original, not too broad or narrow in scope, and clear. Each note-taker is going to write the thesis statement on the board.
4. **Introductory paragraph:** As a group, you are going to write an introductory paragraph with your thesis statement as the last sentence. Refer to the sheet on introductions for some help.
5. **Outline:** Finally, if there is time, each group should write an outline of the essay. Imagine that you will be writing an essay that is 5-6 paragraphs long. What will you discuss in each paragraph? What points will you bring up in the conclusion?

In-Class Group Discussion Questions
The Bluest Eye

Questions on the last chapter of "Spring" (pages 164-183):

1. Who is Soaphead Church? Describe him briefly and then find quotes from the text that support your description. Remember to describe him not just physically, but also in terms of his history, his interactions with others, his voice/thoughts, and his psychology.
2. Look at the overall structure of "Spring." How does this last scene relate to the earlier parts of "Spring"? What are some points of comparison with the earlier chapters of "Spring" and what are some points of contrast? Why does Morrison structure "Spring" in this way?
3. Think about the text as a whole. How does Soaphead Church fit in with the rest of the novel? How does he relate to other characters in the text? Which characters could you compare him to or contrast him with?

Questions on "Summer"(pages 187-206):

1. Look at the first half of spring (until page 192) and briefly summarize what happens in this part of the text: who is telling this part of the story? Is it the same narrator the whole way through? What are the main points that Claudia and Freida are trying to relay about their experiences that summer? Is there anything they do not understand that the adults do? Is there anything they understand that the adults do not? Why or why not?
2. What is happening in the conversation on pages 193-204. Choose three points of dialogue and explain the significance of these quotes: are we learning anything new about the story here? Does this scene help us understand the why or how of what happened to Pecola?
3. Look at the last paragraph of the novel and compare it to the introduction on pages 5-6 (beginning with "*Quiet as it's kept*"). Are there any words or phrases that are repeated in these two scenes? Compare and contrast that last paragraph with those first introductory pages. Why does Morrison structure the novel with these "seeds" at the beginning and then at the end?

In-Class Peer Review Worksheet
Focus on: Details

Your Name: _____

Author of paper you are critiquing: _____

1. Read the paper once without writing anything. Just read to enjoy it and get a feel for the writing.
2. Now read the paper again and look for both its strengths and weaknesses.

If there are any sentences, words or ideas that you don't understand or that need to be corrected, circle them and put a * next to each circle. This should include all grammatical and spelling errors.

If there are any images or ideas that seem especially interesting or well written, put a check mark next to them.

3. Now underline the single sentence in the paper that best states the main point or **thesis statement** and write it in your own words here:

4. Does the author use interesting, detailed examples to support his or her main ideas?

5. Make a list of any especially original details and another list of any clichéd language that should be revised.

Original Details

Clichés

6. Is there anything you would like to read more about? Is there anything you would like to read less about?

In-Class Peer Review Worksheet
Focus on: Organization

Your Name: _____

Author of paper you are critiquing: _____

1. Read the paper once without writing anything. Just read to enjoy it and get a feel for the writing.
2. Now read the paper again and look for both its strengths and weaknesses.

Put a * next to any unclear or confusing word, phrase, or sentence.

Put a ✓ next to any image or idea that seems especially interesting or well written.

Questions

1. Create a road-map of this author's essay, as we've been doing in class. Jot a 3-5 word summary of each paragraph in the margins of the paper.

2. In 2-3 sentences, describe how this paper is organized:

Short Paper Assignment

This assignment is due at the beginning of class on **Wednesday, February 18**. Your essay should be 2 to 3 pages long, typed and double-spaced in Times New Roman, 12-point font.

Choose ONE of the following essay topics on Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*:

1. Choose a character in the novel (this could be anyone, including a minor character) and write a character analysis. How is the person described (physically, emotionally, spiritually, and/or in terms of her personal history)? How does the character see herself? How do others see her? Does she change throughout the text? If so, how and why (or why not)?

It's best to choose no more than two or three moments or scenes within the text depicting your character (and/or your character's interactions with others), and to use these moments to form an argument about your analysis of this person. Remember, you do not (and should not) answer all of the questions listed above. Choose a specific angle of character analysis and focus on that. It's important to be able to narrow down your topic.

2. Choose two places (a place could be anything from a house, store, or room to a neighborhood or city), and compare and contrast them. How do different characters interact in these spaces? How are these spaces depicted and is there a deeper significance to these descriptions or interactions?

Again, remember to make a specific argument and bring in evidence from the text to support your argument. With this kind of comparison/contrast, it's best to begin with the language of the text and form your argument from there. Remember also that comparison/contrast essays lend themselves to various useful organizational patterns, which should be helpful in terms of structuring your ideas.

3. If you would like to make argument that does not focus on the questions in options 1 or 2, be sure to send me an email by Wednesday, February 11th with your desired subject. You must receive an "okay" from me to write on your own topic, but I'm generally very open to writing outside the allotted paper topics.

Note on revisions: Once I hand the papers back to you, you will have two class sessions from that day to hand in a rewrite. You must hand in your rewrite along with your original paper (including my notations) in order to be graded on your rewrite. You should also include a cover letter with a paragraph describing the changes you made and why.

Research Paper Assignment for English 1012

As you can see on your syllabus, we will be dedicating class time to the final research paper from 3/30-5/13. You are required to bring Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference* (Sixth Edition) to class on each of these days; we will often be working directly out of her text.

You will hand in a 6-8 page final research paper (Times New Roman, 12-point font, typed, double-spaced, and stapled) as part of your final research portfolio on Wednesday, May 13. The final research portfolio should include the research paper proposal, an annotated bibliography, an outline, a first draft and a final draft of the paper.

You have two options for this paper (choose only one):

1. Write about a contemporary issue that is related to one of the topics we have been discussing in class. You will need at least five sources for this paper.

Some options to consider for research are listed below, although the work of your initial proposal will be not just to select, but also to narrow your topic and suggest a research strategy. As you embark on your research, you will further develop an argument of your own once you have learned more about your topic. You should select a topic you are interested in, and think about how you will structure your research. For example, will you do a comparison/contrast paper? Will you attempt to discredit a commonly believed myth? Will you try to prove or disprove a point? Think about how you will approach as well as how you will narrow your topic.

Possible areas of research on the course theme include:

- bilingual education
- the Mexican-American border
- family and immigration
- affirmative action
- the legacy of the Holocaust
- religion or spirituality in immigrant communities
- music and race or ethnicity
- the Harlem Renaissance
- New York City neighborhoods and the immigrant experience
- race and migration
- human trafficking
- illegal aliens/ work visas
- racial/ethnic tensions across groups and communities

2. Choose one of the works we have read for class and write a critical essay exploring a character, relationship, or theme from the text. Your primary text for this essay is the work we read for class. Your secondary sources (you will need at least four) will provide critical background for your thesis. Databases for these secondary sources include JSTOR and Project Muse.

Research Paper Topic Peer Workshop for English 1012

Name of person being workshopped: _____

Your Name: _____

Workshop: Narrowing Your Topic

1. Is the question easily and fully researchable?
2. What type of information does your partner need to answer the research question?
e.g., The research question, "What impact has deregulation had on commercial airline safety?," will obviously require certain types of information:
 - o statistics on airline crashes before and after
 - o statistics on other safety problems before and after
 - o information about maintenance practices before and after
 - o information about government safety requirements before and after
3. Is the scope of this information reasonable? (e.g., can he/she really research 30 on-line writing programs developed over a span of 10 years?)
4. Given the type and scope of the information that your partner needs, is his/her question too broad, too narrow, or o.k.?
5. Given the answers to the above questions, does your partner have a good quality research question that he/she actually will be able to answer by doing research? Is there a way to narrow or broaden the scope? Should the question be asked in a different way?

Annotated Bibliography Assignment for English 1012

Please write an annotated bibliography consisting of at least **five** reliable, valid secondary sources related to your topic, due in class on **Wednesday, April 22**. In an annotated bibliography, each entry has two parts: an MLA style citation and an annotation.

A citation provides the publishing information on your scholarly article. It says where the article was published, who wrote it, and a few other things we'll learn about in class.

Following the citation, you should give an annotation of about 100-150 words. Use your judgment to evaluate your sources according to the criteria we've been discussing in class: authority, accuracy, currency.

- **Summarize**, in your own words, the main idea or claim of the source.
- **Explain** why this is a reliable source. Does it stack up to the criteria of authority, accuracy, and currency?
- **Explain** how the source connects to your research paper hypothesis or research question (does it agree with your central point, present a counterargument to your point, or provide necessary background, for example?). In other words, how will this source fit into your paper?

Here is a sample entry for an annotated bibliography (a citation followed by an annotation):

Rish, Patrick. "The Ritalin Dilemma." *Young Children* 43.3 (2004): 23-42. This article looks at the use of Ritalin in the United States. Specifically, it covers the drug's side effects, why there is so much debate surrounding its use, and how teachers have come to rely on it to control problem students. The article is based on information taken from interviews, statistics, and studies that were conducted, and the author is a well-known psychiatrist who has been studying the topic for over ten years. The author is a strong supporter of Ritalin usage, and his argument is directly opposed to mine. Nevertheless, the statistics on the effects of the drug in the concluding paragraphs will be helpful in supporting my thesis that the negative effects of Ritalin outweigh the benefits.

Secondary Source Worksheet for English 1012

The following questions will help you get started in using a secondary source for your research project. Your answers will help you write your annotated bibliography, and will help you decide how to incorporate this source into your research paper.

1. Is this an appropriate, academic, college-level source? (i.e., did you find it at the Brooklyn College library and/or through the library databases? Was it originally published in print, even if you found it through an online database?) If not, please check with your instructor to make sure it is an acceptable source for your research project.

2. What kind of source is this – an entire book, book chapter, journal article, newspaper article, etc.?

3. Create a bibliographic entry in correct MLA style for this source, and write it here. See the index on page 379 of Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference* for help creating the appropriate entry.

4. Summarize the thesis/argument of this source in a few sentences. What point is the author of this book/article trying to get across?

5. Copy down a couple of the most useful/relevant/important quotations from this source, and be sure to note the page numbers. (You might need to excerpt from longer sentences/paragraphs in order to shorten the quote to just the most relevant parts.)

6. What do you agree with in this source? What do you disagree with?

7. How do you plan to use this source to answer your research question and prove your thesis? What types of useful information does this source contain? (Possibilities include, but are not limited to, historical background, statistics, interviews, an argument you agree with, a useful counter-argument, etc.)

Research Paper Proposal for English 1012

Before beginning research, you should have a preliminary idea, or a “hunch,” of what you will be looking for and how you to plan to look for it. Of course, your proposal idea should transform through your research. Nevertheless, it is good to start with a direction in mind. We will start with this worksheet, which you should then write up into a one to two page proposal for me typed in standard form, explaining what you plan to research and how you will go about it. The research paper proposal is due in class on **Monday, April 6.**

Note: While they are **not** valid secondary sources, there’s no harm in looking at Wikipedia or Google searching to get a general overview of a topic of interest just for the sake of putting forward a preliminary thesis or hypothesis on the topic if you aren’t yet well-informed about it. You can then begin *really* researching your topic with valid, print sources (books, periodicals, and on-line databases) and more official web sources if these are applicable.

Answer the following questions:

1. What is your **general** topic in a few words?
2. What more **specific** aspect of your topic will be your focus?
3. What is your preliminary thesis or hypothesis, or what do you want to say about this narrowed topic? Or, what questions do you have about this topic?
4. Where will you begin looking for legitimate primary and secondary sources? What is your research plan?
5. Why does this topic interest you? Why have you decided to pursue this topic?
6. Can you state your topic in the form of a single question? Type this question at the very bottom of your proposal.

Grading Rubric

Organization (Topic Sentences, paragraph structures, transition sentences)	Development (Thesis Statement, use of quotations and evidence)	Original and Critical Thought (Depth of thinking, original and complex ideas and writing)	Sentence Structure and Grammar (Syntax, punctuation, grammar)

Although these criteria inform each other (for example, it is difficult to develop a disorganized paper), I will focus on each part in evaluating your paper to explain your grade. Here is how I define each criterion:

Organization: A well-organized paper has a clear direction followed throughout. The paper has a coherent and unified structure, with the paragraphs addressing individual points which are nevertheless connected to the central point, or thesis, of the essay, as well as connected to the points before and after that paragraph. Sentences are connected and flow smoothly within the paragraphs.

Development: A well-developed paper contains enough descriptions, details, explanations, examples, and illustrations to develop the thesis. The kind of development used might vary by assignment (for instance, a personal essay might require more descriptive detail while a synthesis essay might require more explanation), but the reader should be able to clearly see your central point in detail after finishing the paper.

Original and Critical Thought: This criterion evaluates how effectively and originally you responded to the given assignment. Did you fully answer the queries asked? Were you able to provide original analytical arguments to support your stance? Did you consider the issue from many angles (analysis) or effectively connect different points of view or perspectives (synthesis)?

Sentence Structure and Grammar: A paper with an effective sentence structure consists of sentences that flow smoothly (without any awkward wording or, for example, the consistent use of the passive voice). Sentence structure should vary and be complex enough to convey your ideas. Diction and tone should be appropriate to the assignment (for instance, you might use a more informal tone in your personal essay, but a more academic tone in your synthesis essay). There are few grammatical errors.

For extra help with your papers, you can always come to my office hours (Wednesdays from 12:15-1:15) or make an appointment with me. You can also make an appointment for extra help at the Learning Center. Stop by to make an appointment (you can call or email too).

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