A Teacher’s Almanack

A Guide to Expository Writing 101

2014 – 2015
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A LETTER OF WELCOME

Dear Colleagues,

Expository Writing is the only course that all Rutgers University students are required to take, and about 6,000 students take Expos each year.

Expository Writing at Rutgers has bold and ambitious goals. It aims to teach students to read non-fiction texts carefully and with sensitivity, when most of the undergraduates who take the class have rarely been asked to confront non-fiction prose at all. The course hopes to encourage critical thinking that enables students to make independent claims, claims derived from analytical readings of texts that address some of the most complex and pressing issues of our time. Our students are asked to consider topics they have rarely confronted, especially in an English or Writing course, such as global warming, cultural and national conflict, and genetic engineering. Finally, Expository Writing urges students to communicate their ideas to the world with confidence and clarity that can only be achieved through revision, from the reformulation of a phrase to the wholesale reversal of one’s prior position. Revision is an essential part of the writing process, but few incoming students have been asked to revise their work to the extent Expos requires of them. These are lofty and ambitious goals indeed.

But what is at the heart of Expository Writing, and what makes me admire the pedagogy of The New Humanities Reader so much, is its deep and abiding optimism, which insists that Rutgers undergraduates can achieve the goals the course has established. The course maintains the belief that entering students can read and synthesize complicated texts from disparate disciplines, make independent claims based on those texts, and then articulate those claims in a coherent and meaningful way. Expository Writing represents a hope that our students will successfully grapple with and solve the problems that loom so large in the reader.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Rutgers and to the 101 Orientation, and I hope that you will find the mission of Expository Writing as inspiring as I do. I invite all of you to share the course’s mission with your students in the most explicit terms; tell your students what faith their university has in them, and that the challenges this course will present are an articulation of that faith. With your help, your students will rise to the occasion.

Best wishes for a productive semester.

Sincerely,

Regina Masiello
Assistant Director, 101 Coordinator
I. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PEDAGOGY

*The New Humanities Reader* encourages students to see themselves as participants in an ongoing written “conversation” about some of the most important issues of our time: globalization, urban development (and redevelopment), biotechnology, environmental decline, the encounter between different regions and cultures, the changing nature of identity, and the search for enduring values beyond the prospect of seemingly random change. This conversational model of writing assumes the notion of a community that includes the authors of the assigned texts, the teacher, and all other students in the class. In other words, as the students read, they can imagine being in conversation with the author in terms of what the author is saying; when the students participate in class discussion, they are in conversation with their peers and the teacher about the reading; when the students write an assignment concerning two or more texts, they can assume that the authors are in conversation with them and each other as they lead them in discussion; when the students write, they show their work to a group of their peers to converse with them about the merit and meaningfulness of their work; when teachers grade the final draft, they are in conversation with the students through their written marginal and end comments. In all ways, therefore, the Writing Program’s pedagogy is a collaborative one. It assumes that in the absence of definitive “answers,” the writer’s most important task is the understanding of complex issues and the communication of this understanding to others.

*The New Humanities Reader* presupposes that the context for writing is always prior reading and critical thinking, and in this spirit it is an anthology rather than a textbook or rhetorical text. The point of this anthology is to elicit writing that closely approximates the work students are likely to do in many of their college classes and, later, in their professional lives. To encourage complex thought, teachers should construct “sequences” of readings and assignments that will lead incrementally toward essays that synthesize multiple sources while making an independent argument.

Reading, interpretation, connective synthesis, and the use of textual evidence should receive highest priority during the first half of the course. We want our students to develop independent claims and to engage the essays in the reader conceptually. Strong academic writing incorporates cycles of reading, pre-writing, drafting, peer review, rereading, and revision. Revision, as part of this cycle, is not only about the formal presentation of the paper, but also about developing one’s ability to rethink a position or to re-examine one’s previously held conclusions. Revision, therefore, is as much about conceptual and intellectual flexibility as it is about rewriting individual sentences.

We ask our students to think complexly, and communicating this complexity with clarity must be a priority. Grammar and formal presentation must be addressed. To this end, students are asked to read and re-read, to think and re-think, to draft and re-draft, so that final drafts represent the polished delivery of a synthetically generated claim. Students should be taught grammar, clarity, and structural coherence in the context of revision, and student writing generated within the context of the course (as opposed to workbook-style
exercises or lectures on correctness and style) should be the center of all revision related conversation. The conversational, collaborative and community based model of the course must be encouraged so that students can acquire and then mobilize a shared discourse about their writing and the writing of their peers. Together, students learn to develop claims successfully by drafting and revising.

The idea that knowledge comes into existence through conversations among informed reader/writers, which can be thought of as a social process involving a “co-construction of meaning,” contradicts several of the assumptions underlying the curriculum in many high schools. Typically students have learned how to summarize or repeat information, or to offer “personal responses” to literary works or to themes assigned by the teacher. Few first-year students have read prose texts as lengthy and complex as Steven Johnson’s “The Myth of the Ant Queen” or Joseph Stiglitz’s “Rent Seeking and the Making of an Unequal Society.” In the presence of extended arguments that challenge and, at times, even threaten to defeat their best efforts at understanding, students need to be reminded that many good readings begin as misreadings, and that re-reading, writing, and revising initial interpretations are fundamental to the discovery of knowledge in every field.
Critical thinking and analytical writing are predicated on the practice of careful reading. Making students conscious of how they read and why they read is at the center of Expository Writing. When students confront conceptually dense passages of text, unfamiliar vocabulary, or syntactically challenging sentence structures, their first instinct may be to avoid the discomfort or anxiety these passages provoke. But for the purposes of Expos, and for the purposes of careful reading in all of college and in the world, students must become comfortable grappling with challenging texts. The Writing Program calls this confrontation close reading, and this kind of work with text requires engaged textual analysis that can help build independent and original claims.

Teachers should begin modeling the practice of close reading on the first day of class, and should emphasize that the work of close reading is essential to good analysis, and an essential part of working with quotations in their papers. Activities should be designed around the practice, and each time a new essay is assigned (usually the day a final draft is due), teachers should isolate a passage for close reading in class. Return to this practice in order to reinforce the notion that close reading is an integral part of generating ideas and of using textual evidence.

**Close Reading Strategies**

- **Choose dense passages**: When modeling close reading in class, it is helpful to choose conceptually (and sometimes grammatically) dense passages for analysis. The beauty of dense passages is that every word is meaningful, so when you ask students “what word or phrase seems important here, and why?” they can rarely be wrong, and the word or phrase they choose can always be used to begin generating discussion.

- **Don’t give background, just jump right in**: Teachers sometimes feel that they need to introduce a text, give some background to help students understand it, or explain some basic parts of its argument that students might have missed. Don’t do this! The goal of our pedagogy is to make students independent and active learners. The beauty of close reading is that it forces students to do the work of confronting what they do not understand so they can develop strategies to make sense of all of the complex and unfamiliar texts they will encounter at college. Among the strategies they should learn are looking for repeated words or phrases, thematically related words, key terms that help to name concepts in the text or that seem to speak to the core meaning of the passage, apparent contradictions, and unusual grammatical or syntactical choices.

- **Practice active reading**: Teachers often forget that we need to instruct students to do some of the basic things that well-practiced readers of complex texts always do, such as reading with a pen or pencil in hand and making comments in the margins.
or on post-it notes. Some teachers require that students make a certain number of marginal comments per page, and go around the room to check for visible work that demonstrates textual engagement. Encourage students to use their marginal comments not only to mark what seems important, but also to ask questions of the text or make connections with other things they have read.

- **Read, re-read, and then read it again**: When modeling close reading in the classroom, read the passage in question out loud. Then ask the students to read it quietly to themselves. Multiple readings create more sophisticated understandings of texts. Tell students to read, read carefully, and then do it again.

- **Isolate key terms and phrases**: When working in class with a passage from an essay, ask students which words seem important, and why they seem so. Help students become conscious of textual signs that indicate when a term is critical (such as repetition, modulation, etc.). Many students are inclined to think the “big” words are the ones that matter. Help them attend to the small words as well; pronouns, prepositions and articles often imply collectivity, isolation, selectivity and connectivity.

- **Use close reading to teach grammar and syntax**: We often assume that students come to college with a basic vocabulary for discussing grammar. We think: “shouldn’t they at least already know the terms ‘subject,’ ‘verb’ and ‘object’? Weren’t they taught to identify ‘articles,’ ‘prepositions,’ and ‘pronouns’?” Likely they were taught these terms at some point in their K-12 education, but few have been required to use those terms. As a result, that grammatical vocabulary has been largely forgotten. Emphasize that grammatical terms are part of the basic vocabulary any college student should have, and if they have forgotten these terms they should take time to learn them. Discussing an interesting sentence in class is a great opportunity to teach students some of this basic vocabulary.

- **Make connections**: Students should attend to how parts of an essay speak to one another, contradict one another, or complicate one another. Making connections within a text is critical to understanding the text as a whole. As students begin to work with multiple texts they should begin to do the work of making connections between them at the level of specific language.
### Expository Writing: 15 Week Class Plan (Fall 2014)

Please use this 15-Week Class Plan to determine the pacing of your course. The schedule provides a sense of where you should be throughout the term, as well as information on administrative procedures you need to keep in mind for each week. This offers a workable schedule for the entire semester—a rough draft or a final draft due each week. To maintain this pace, it is important that you return work to students promptly; please do not collect a new set of final drafts before you have returned the previous set. Once you establish this rhythm, you can carry it through to the end of the semester. **Please remember that the final exam in Expos should take place on the last day of class (and should be written in blue books). If you find you have some extra time in your schedule over the course of the term, please use that time for revision exercises or student conferences.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>September 2 – 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Complete first day writing sample***</td>
<td>• Classes begin Tuesday, September 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Distribute syllabus</td>
<td>• Add / Drop Period</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Discuss course pedagogy</td>
<td>• Encourage students to visit course Sakai site</td>
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<td>• Photocopy, distribute, and discuss grading criteria</td>
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<td>• Assign reading 1</td>
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<td>• Explain and practice close reading by working in class with a passage from reading 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Discuss reading 1</td>
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<td>• Assign paper 1</td>
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<th>Week 2</th>
<th>September 8 – 12</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Rough draft paper 1 due</td>
<td>• Encourage students to visit class Sakai site</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Define goals for peer review</td>
<td>• Last day for students to drop a class is Thursday, September 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Peer review drafts</td>
<td>• Last day for students to add a class is Friday, September 12</td>
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<th>Week 3</th>
<th>September 15 – 19</th>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>September 22 – 26</td>
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<td>• Discuss Reading 2</td>
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<td>• Assign Paper 2</td>
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<td>• Rough Draft Paper 2 due</td>
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<td>• Peer Review drafts</td>
<td>• Referrals to Writing Centers</td>
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<td>• Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown on Wednesday, September 24</td>
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<th>Week 5</th>
<th>September 29 – October 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Final Draft Paper 2 due</td>
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<td>• Assign Reading 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Practice close reading by working in class with a passage from reading 3</td>
<td>• Sign up for folder review</td>
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<td>• Yom Kippur begins at sundown on Friday, October 3</td>
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<th>Week 6</th>
<th>October 6 – 10</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Discuss reading 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Midterm exam (one full class period)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Assign paper 3</td>
<td><strong>Midterm Folder Review:</strong> Bring graded papers 1 and 2 from all students; copies of your assignments; and your grade book and attendance records.</td>
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<th>Week 7</th>
<th>October 13 – 17</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Rough draft paper 3 due</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Define goals for peer review</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Peer review drafts</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Return and discuss midterms</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Final draft paper 3 due</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Assign reading 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Practice close reading by working in class with a passage from reading 4</td>
<td><em>This is a great time to ask students to fill out a midterm self-evaluation. This practice is optional, though it often turns out to be informative for both students and instructors.</em></td>
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<th>Week 8</th>
<th>October 20 – 24</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Discuss reading 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Assign paper 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Rough draft paper 4 due</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Define goals for peer review</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Peer review drafts</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Workshop student writing</td>
<td><em>This is a great time to schedule conferences with students. This is optional, but students often benefit from talking with instructors at this point in the term.</em></td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>October 27 – 31</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Return rough draft of paper 4 with</td>
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<td>teacher comments</td>
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<td>- Assign second rough draft of paper 4</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>November 3 – 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Final Draft Paper 4 due</td>
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<td>- Assign Reading 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Practice close reading by working in</td>
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<td>class with a passage from reading 5</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>November 10 – 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Discuss reading 5</td>
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<td>- Assign paper 5</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>November 17 – 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Rough draft paper 5 due</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Define goals for fifth peer review</td>
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<td>- Peer review drafts</td>
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<td>- Assign second rough draft of paper 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Peer review second drafts</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>November 24 – 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Final draft paper 5 due</td>
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<td>- Assign reading 6</td>
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<td>- Change of Designation of Days:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Nov. 25 = Thursday Classes</td>
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<td>Wednesday, Nov. 26 = Friday Classes</td>
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<td>- Thanksgiving Break from November 27 -</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>- Writing Centers suspend tutoring for</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>December 1 – 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Exam prep: discuss reading 6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Student Evaluations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>December 8 – 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Final exam preparation session</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Final exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Folder Review:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bring folders for all students with all 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>graded papers, copies of your assignments,</td>
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<tr>
<td>roster with grades in pencil, grade book,</td>
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<tr>
<td>attendance records, final exams graded</td>
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<td>pass/fail in pencil, and completed grade</td>
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After Final Folder Review

- Hold a final office hour to return folders and discuss students’ grades. Submit final exams to the director with whom you have folder review.
- Do not post or e-mail grades!
- Return folders to the Writing Program office on the campus where you teach; watch for a memo with details regarding end-of-semester procedures.
IV. SAMPLE SYLLABUS

SAMPLE SYLLABUS
(Available on the “Expos 2014 - 2015” Sakai project site)
Expository Writing
Fall 2014

Instructor:
Instructor’s Email:
Class Meetings: Days, Times, Location
Office Hours: Days, Times, Location

The certified learning goals for 355:101 are:
1. To communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English, to a general audience.
2. To evaluate and critically assess sources and use the conventions of attribution and citation correctly.
3. To analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights.

Course Description
In this course you will read and write about a variety of texts concerning a range of fascinating, relevant, contemporary issues. Course goals include helping you to read deeply, think critically, and write interpretively and effectively, creating your own independent argument that synthesizes multiple sources.

Required Texts
• Miller and Spellmeyer, The New Humanities Reader, 5th Edition
• Selected student papers to demonstrate and correct errors, or as models of strong writing

Course Requirements
• Write a first day writing sample
• Read six selections from The New Humanities Reader
• Write five out-of-class essays, minimum of five typed pages each
• Write a typed rough and final draft for each assignment (and demonstrate significant revision between drafts)
• Give three brief oral presentations in class, including one on grammar
• Complete an in-class midterm exam (essay format, graded pass or fail)
• Complete an in-class final exam (essay format, graded pass or fail)
  Students must pass the final exam to pass the course.
• Keep all rough and final drafts in a folder, for mid-semester and end of semester folder review.
• Regularly check your Sakai Course Site at sakai.rutgers.edu. (To access Sakai, you will need your Rutgers Net ID and password. You will receive announcements from Sakai at your Rutgers e-mail address, so remember to check that account frequently.)
Grading

- The final course grade will be determined by your highest level of sustained achievement until the end of the term.
- You must complete the midterm exam to pass the course.
- You must pass the final exam to pass the course.
- Half a letter grade will be deducted from the final draft for each day its rough draft is late, one full letter grade will be deducted from a final draft for each day it is late.
- The lowest passing grade for a paper and for the course is C.
- Papers that exhibit significant errors of punctuation, grammar, spelling, or syntax (generally, three or more errors per page) risk failing.
- All grades are subject to departmental review.

Policies

- Attendance at all classes is expected. After four absences you risk failing the course.
- Punctuality is important. Lateness of twenty minutes or more counts as half an absence. After missing forty minutes of class you will be marked absent.
- You must submit rough and final drafts of all five papers to pass the class (there should be substantial revision between rough and final drafts). You must also complete the midterm exam, and pass the final exam to pass the class.
- If you are two final drafts behind, for any reason, you automatically fail the course.
- If you transfer into a section of Expos late, you have one excused absence only. If, for example, you miss the first three classes of the semester, only one will be excused and you will have two absences.
- You must review and abide by the University’s Policy on Academic Integrity. This can be found online at: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu.
- You cannot drop Expos 101 without a Dean’s permission.
- Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey abides by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments (ADAA) of 2008, and Sections 504 and 508 that mandate that reasonable accommodations be provided for qualified students with disabilities. If you have a disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodation, please register with the Office of Disability Services for Students, which is dedicated to providing services and administering exams with accommodations for students with disabilities. The Office of Disability Services for Students can be contacted by calling 848.445.6800 and is located on the Livingston campus at the following address: 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Suite A145, Piscataway, NJ 08854.
Finding Support At Rutgers

Rutgers Health Services
• http://health.rutgers.edu
• Medical http://rhsmedical.rutgers.edu
• Counseling, Alcohol & Other Drug Assistance Program & Psychiatric Services (CAPS) http://rhscaps.rutgers.edu
• Pharmacy http://rhspharmacy.rutgers.edu
• Health Outreach, Promotion & Education (H.O.P.E.) http://rhshope.rutgers.edu

Academic Deans and the Office of Academic Services
• http://sasundergrad.rutgers.edu

Dean of Students
• http://deanofstudents.rutgers.edu

Writing Centers
• http://wp.rutgers.edu/tutoring/writingcenters

Office of Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance
• http://studentaffairs.rutgers.edu/services/office-for-violence-prevention-and-victim-assistan

Center for Social Justice & LGBTQ Communities
• http://socialjustice.rutgers.edu/

Office of Disabilities Services
• https://ods.rutgers.edu

Public Safety
• RUPD http://publicsafety.rutgers.edu/rupd/
• Department of Transportation Services http://rudots.rutgers.edu/
Writing Program Policies

The Writing Program’s policies on grading, attendance, and academic integrity are represented on the sample syllabus above; please respect these standards and alert students to these policies. Review the following items before the first day of class, be sure students understand these policies before the end of your first class meeting, and review these policies throughout the semester:

- After four absences, students risk failing the course. Students who miss six classes automatically fail the course, and should retake it at a time when they are better able to commit to it.

- Teachers must contact students who have missed class three times to remind them of the course attendance policy. Once a student has missed six classes, his teacher must notify him that he has failed the course.

- A student who is twenty or more minutes late to class earns half an absence. Once a student has missed forty minutes of class, he or she is considered absent.

- If a student transfers into your section from another section at the start of the semester, the student has one excused absence only. If, for example, a student misses the first three classes of the semester, the student has two absences.

- In accordance with University policy, absences for religious observance are excused.

- If a student is experiencing dire circumstances, he or she should be advised to contact the appropriate Dean. For a list of Deans, see the following site: http://sasundergrad.rutgers.edu/staff-directory. Please refer students struggling with academic issues to the Academic Deans, and students struggling with personal issues to the Dean of Students. A dean will speak with a struggling student, and will need documentation from the student verifying the student’s circumstances. The Dean will determine an appropriate action, if any, and will contact you with his or her recommendation. Students who appear to be struggling in the course are always welcome to talk with a Writing Program director.

- Students may switch class sections through add/drop, but they are not allowed to drop Expository Writing without a Dean’s permission. It is useful to remind students that they cannot “drop” Expository Writing. Students who are unaware of this policy will sometimes stop attending class while they seek permission to drop, only to discover they cannot drop the course and must return. Alert students at the beginning of the term that they should not stop attending class while seeking a Dean’s support.

- Students must submit all five papers, must complete the midterm exam, and must pass the final in order to pass the course.
• Instructors may set their own policies about late papers. Given the pace of the course, late and missing papers may become difficult to accommodate. The following penalties are recommended: a half-letter grade (C+ to C) if the rough draft is late and a full letter grade if the final draft is late.

• All drafts must be typed and instructors should not accept handwritten work.

• Instructors must comment on the rough drafts of papers one and four.

• Instructors must comment on all five final drafts.

• Instructors cannot assign minus or “split” grades.

• Instructors must provide students with some means of contact outside of class (an e-mail address is typical).

• Instructors must maintain (establish and regularly update) a course Sakai page.

• Instructors must require students to submit papers to Turnitin via the course Sakai site.

• Instructors must attend mid-term and end of semester folder review.

• Instructors are required to hold one office hour each week for each section of Expository Writing. If, for example, an instructor has two sections of the course, that teacher must hold two office hours each week (one for each section). Instructors must hold office hours on the campus where the class meets.

• Instructors cannot give special permission to add a student to their sections. Students must follow the add/drop process to add an open section. The Writing Program generally does not over-enroll sections.

• All plagiarism issues must be referred to the Writing Program office on your campus. Please speak with a Writing Program Director before addressing a potential plagiarism issue with a student.
V. Writing

Students will come to your class with a great deal of practice in writing to demonstrate prior knowledge (a skill that will continue to have value for them in many other courses). They may have had less practice writing to discover a position of their own in relation to other writers, and even less practice communicating that position to others in a cogent way.

Early in the term, teachers should be less concerned with seeing a fully developed argument and more concerned with deepening the students’ understandings of the texts and encouraging the making of sustained and pertinent connections. Emphasize conceptual engagement in early papers, as opposed to focusing primarily on rhetorical form; emphasize the importance of ideas to deepen their sensitivity as readers and thinkers.

At the same time, students must recognize that thinking, speaking, and writing are fundamentally social acts. Understanding by itself is never adequate; the point, finally, is to be understood. As the semester progresses, open reflection and risky engagement with texts are framed as first steps in a process that ends with the convincing presentation of a new way of seeing. Without risk, the writer learns nothing; without coherence, the same fate awaits the reader. Organizational effectiveness and general clarity should be emphasized during the later weeks of the semester.

Teachers should construct sequences of readings and assignment questions. Sequencing asks students to revisit essays and asks that they think connectively as new ideas are introduced to the class discussion. Sequencing requires students to read closely and to think synthetically. During the 15-week semester, students will complete two reading sequences.

The Five Paper Model for Expository Writing

- Students are required to read a total of six essays from The New Humanities Reader.
- Students will write 5 graded papers. Each paper must be a minimum of five pages.
- The structure of each assignment throughout the semester is as follows:
  - Paper 1 – Reading 1
  - Paper 2 – Readings 1 & 2
• Midterm Exam – Readings 1, 2 & 3

• Paper 3 – Readings 1, 2 & 3

• Paper 4 – Reading 4 & one of the first three readings  
  (The instructor may choose one particular reading from the first sequence, or the instructor may allow students to use any one of the first three readings.)

• Paper 5 – Readings 4, 5 & one of the first three readings  
  (The instructor may choose one particular reading from the first sequence, or the instructor may allow students to use any one of the first three readings.)

• Final Exam – Reading 6 & One of the previous five readings from the semester  
  (The instructor may choose one of the previous five readings to pair with the sixth reading, or the instructor may allow the students to choose which one of the five readings they wish to pair with reading six. The final exam should ask students to pair reading six with only one other essay from the course of the semester.)

• Teachers must comment on the rough draft of Paper 1, and on the rough draft of Paper 4. No grade is given on rough drafts.

• Teachers must grade and comment on all five final drafts.

• Do not assign minus grades or “split” grades.

• Students conduct Peer Review for every paper they write.

Building An Assignment Sequence
When choosing essays for a sequence, consider larger contexts or themes which might draw readings together about such issues as urbanization, aesthetics, human psychology, the effects of technology or modernization, globalization, perception and so on. Once you have a context or theme that draws your essays together, create each assignment with a view towards developing that context/theme and adding layers of complexity to it. The sequence should help students identify topics as points of connection, in which students might not only connect authors in terms of saying “and” or “furthermore,” but also “but” or “however” as they acknowledge the complexity of issues.
The Assignment Sheet

Class discussion should revolve around textual complexity, forming connections between texts, and the discussion of ideas. This idea driven conversation can be sabotaged by questions about formatting, assignment requirements, or guidelines. To keep the conversation in your class on ideas, use your assignment sheet to give clear instructions so that practical matters do not become the center of discussion.

• **Name the Reading or Readings**
  You should name the readings you expect students to discuss at the outset of each assignment. This becomes especially important as the semester progresses and you expect students to return to readings they had discussed previously. Some students will not immediately understand that this means they should discuss all of these readings in conversation with each other. Be explicit about which readings need to be discussed. It is advisable to set the list of readings for the assignment apart by giving it a label (“Readings”) and listing the author and title of each piece.

• **Give Due Dates**
  Either at the top or at the bottom of the page, you should have clear due dates for both the Rough Draft and the Final Draft. And be sure to remind students to bring extra copies of their Rough Drafts for Peer Review day.

• **Provide Specific Formatting Instructions**
  Please specify the basic formatting you expect students to follow in preparing their papers. Be sure to repeat the minimum page requirement of at least four pages for the Rough Draft and at least five full pages for the Final Draft on all assignments. Be explicit about your expectations: the paper should have one-inch margins; should be typed; should be double-spaced and in a 12 point font; the paper should have the student’s name and the due date in the upper left or right hand corner; assignments should be stapled in the upper left hand corner; pages should be numbered; and each paper should have an original title.

• **Use the Visual Elements of the Page for Emphasis**
  With computers, we can all be good page designers, able to use white space, lists, boldface, and other visual cues to help students understand our assignments. A good assignment will use boldface to highlight the specific question that is being asked, and will use the blank space of the page to organize the various components of the question.

• **Ask a Question**
  Some assignments, including those by some very experienced teachers, never really ask a question of students. Without a question to answer, students have no clear prompt for writing. Not only should your assignment ask a question, but it should also highlight that question (perhaps with boldface or by putting the question into its own paragraph, or both). This enables students to focus on what you are asking. Your question should not be posed as an either/or scenario, as some
students might assume they are limited to one of two predetermined answers. For example, the question “Can uncertainty preserve happiness?,” invites to students to answer either “yes, it can” or “no, it can’t.” This question might be more fruitfully posed in the following manner: “What is the role of uncertainty in the preservation, creation or destruction of happiness?” This formulation asks students to consider a multiplicity of possible answers.

- **Highlight the Main Question**
  Highlight the main question in some way, perhaps by putting it in bold, making it an independent paragraph, explicitly labeling it “Question,” or all of the above. This will then provide a prompt for an effective and succinct instigation for writing.

- **Utilize the Language of the Essays to Introduce the Question**
  Before one can pose a meaningful question, the assignment must provide the student with a brief introduction to the issue at hand. A class that has focused on issues of happiness and uncertainty (in their readings and in class discussions), for example, would benefit from a paper assignment that places the assignment question in the context of these previous considerations. While providing this context, instructors should use the critical language of the assigned texts, thereby modeling the very work we want our students to do. If we ask that our students engage with the language and the ideas of the texts, we ought first to do it ourselves in the assignment question.

- **Ask Follow-up Questions or Give Advice**
  After you have written your question, imagine how your students might begin to formulate an answer. What advice can you give them? What additional questions (clearly segregated from the main question) might help them understand what you are asking and how it applies to the texts under consideration? Think also of the kinds of thought questions that might invite students to consider your assignment question from a less obvious position. Introduce the possibility of an alternate approach to the question. Please mark these thought questions explicitly, telling students that they need not answer all of them in order to address the assignment.

- **State the Learning Objectives (or, “What I’m Looking For”)**
  With each paper you likely will be looking for different skills, or “learning objectives.” With the early assignments, you might want to emphasize the importance of connective and interpretative work, guiding students away from papers which are primarily composed of summary or which treat the texts in isolation. In later assignments, once your students can adequately distinguish between summary and analysis, and can grapple with complicated passages from the readings, you might specify the learning objective is having a strong thesis.
The Assignment Question
The most important part of any writing assignment is the main question it asks. You might want to ask a number of questions in your assignment, but having one main question (or no more than three related questions) can focus student responses. Once you have decided upon a main question, you might use secondary or rejected questions to organize class discussion or group activities.

Begin with “How” or “Why”
Questions can take a wide variety of forms, but the most successful tend to begin with “How” or “Why” rather than “Who,” “What,” “Where,” or “When.” Other ways of asking these types of questions include “In what ways” (equivalent to “how”), “what is the relationship between” (or “how are they related”), “For what reasons would” (which is basically another form of “why”).

Point to the Text
Be sure that the question directs students back to the text and that the texts can be used to address the question.

Open It Up
Make sure your question is open-ended enough to allow for a variety of responses. It should not be possible to answer only “yes” or “no.” The best questions are often those that even you are not sure how to answer. Such questions set students with a task and motivate them to develop an original project to fulfill it.

Push Beyond the Explicit
The best questions don’t ask for an explication of the text (which will tend to produce summary) but instead direct students to consider the implications, complications, or applications of its ideas.

Types of Questions
The following are some categories of successful questions that follow the pedagogy of the New Humanities. These questions are modeled on the kinds of questions professors across the university in all disciplines pose on paper assignments, and they encourage responses that are based on connective thinking and analysis.

Close Reading
Students are asked to examine implicit assumptions or arguments within the text (usually about some “big question”) by looking closely at a specific motif or recurrent theme. Often, a close reading will direct students to decode symbolism, unpack the implicit meaning of specific terms, or untangle the relationship between form and content.

• How does the way that O’Brien has written his essay relate to his own claims about storytelling?
• How do symbolic representations or cultural symbols, such as a veil (Nafisi), operate in the formation of community?

Synthesis
Students are asked to combine ideas from one reading with those of another to produce a more complex idea or a more complex representation of the world.
• How might XXXX contribute to “living fully” (Sacks), and to what ends?

Frame and Case
Students are asked to use a theoretical idea from one reading to “frame” (or create a paradigm for interpreting) the “case” (or example) offered by a second reading. This type of assignment works well when you have one strongly theoretical reading and one or two rather descriptive or narrative readings. The ideal frame and case question will encourage students not only to use the frame to read the case but also to use the case text to complicate the frame. A frame and case assignment can also be used with three readings. You might use a synthesis of two texts to create a frame for interpreting a third, or consider two texts as dueling paradigms with the case text used to demonstrate the validity of the preferred framing text. Frame and case questions are often formulated in the following manner: “What is the role of idea X in example Y?” or “How would writer X interpret writer Y?”
• How might Gladwell’s theory regarding the power of context predict the ways in which the Citadel academy responded to Shannon Faulkner as described by Faludi?
• How might the forces that give rise to “Generation Me” (Twenge) be explained using “the power of context” (Gladwell)?

Terministic Frame
Students are asked to use a term offered by the instructor’s assignment, to invent a term of their own, or to apply terms from one of the readings in order to frame their interpretation of a second reading. This works like “frame and case,” but here students focus on using terms as the frame.

Dueling Paradigms
Students are asked to examine the competing worldviews or models of society implied by two texts and either decide which paradigm is more compelling, explain how both might be compelling in their own right, or try to explain the root of their differences.
• Is scientific progress as described by XXXXXX driven by the workings of the psychological immune system, which “makes us strangers to ourselves” (as discussed by Gilbert)? Or, conversely, does genetic technology or synthetic biology have the potential to redefine the workings of the psychological immune system, putting happiness within more people’s reach?

Action Horizon
Students are asked to use ideas from the readings to describe a plan of action in the real world. This question asks students to develop an “action horizon” to describe how real problems might be solved by applying ideas from the readings.

- How and why did the media get Matt Shepard’s murder wrong, as described by Loffreda? What would it take to provide better coverage of such tragedies?
- Loffreda records her frustration at hearing teachers speak of their own “uselessness” and “irrelevance” in the face of Matt Shepard’s murder. What is it that teachers can or should do at such times? What role should secular institutions play in trying to shape the way their students see and understand the world?
Sample Assignment Sheet

PAPER I ASSIGNMENT

Text: Leslie Bell, “Excerpts from *Hard To Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom*”

Throughout her discussion of women’s sexuality and psychological development in “Excerpts from *Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom*,” Leslie Bell repeatedly calls attention to the multiple and often conflicting narratives that govern and sometimes limit experience and identity. This complex web of narratives – both the stories we tell about ourselves and those born of sociocultural constructions – produce “confusion, uncertainty, and anxiety” (28) in various and often subtle ways, according to Bell’s argument.

Using specific quotations, examples, and details from Bell’s text, write an essay that responds to the following question: **How and why does “creating a history for oneself” help to address the “problem of instability” produced by the “contradictions and uncertainties” of lived experience (31; 39; 28)?**

Some further questions that may be useful in developing your argument (You do not need to answer all or any of the following; I provide them merely as possible ways of beginning to think about the question above):

- What might it mean to “creat[e] a history for oneself”?
  - How could you relate this phenomenon to Bell’s language of “agency” and “autonomy” (29)?
  - How could you relate this to Bell’s discussion of a young woman’s need to achieve a “sense of control over her life” (39)?
- Bell’s use of the phrase “problem of instability” seems to suggest that a lack of stability or certainty is disruptive; are there ways to think about “instability” in a more productive sense? What might be some implications of doing so?

All of the formatting guidelines (as to font size, margins, etc.) specified in the Style Guide apply to this (and every) paper; please review them. Cite in MLA format, found in the Wadsworth Handbook, and also available at: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/).

You must submit the drafts of your paper both as a hard copy in class (2 copies for rough draft) and on Sakai.

DUE DATES:
- Rough draft (at least 4 full pages; the draft ends on page 5) – **Tuesday, June 3rd**
- Final draft (at least 5 full pages; the draft ends on page 6) – **Monday, June 9th**
Sample Assignment Sequences

Sequence 1: Michael Monescalchi

PAPER 1

Reading:
- Leslie Bell, “Selections from Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom"

Question:
In “Selections from Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom,” psychotherapist Leslie Bell asserts that personal identity is not a self-evident, readily explainable phenomenon. When discussing the gap between Jayanthi’s appearance and her actual thoughts, Bell writes: “I was surprised when Jayanthi confessed that she worried about being overwhelmed by a relationship, concerned that she’d quickly lose her own identity in the other person. It was difficult to square [such a] fear . . . with the forceful personality before me. I came to learn that Jayanthi’s strength felt very tentative to her” (32). Rather than just claiming that personal identity is an unstable and “tentative” phenomenon, though, Bell also addresses some of the reasons for Jayanthi’s fractured identity. After admitting that Jayanthi’s “forceful personality” seemed to be at odds with her “concern that she’d quickly lose her own identity,” Bell moves to discuss why it is that such a gap may exist, and she does this by stating, “Jayanthi’s early sexual experiences profoundly shaped her expectations of men and their trustworthiness” (32).

In this essay, I would like you to think about the various things that “shape” persons and help them become who they are. For your first paper, I would like you to use passages from Bell’s text to form an original argument in response to the following question: How is it that an individual comes to define itself?

Though you are in no way obligated to answer the following questions, they may assist you in thinking about your response to the prompt:
- What happens to a person after she has a traumatic experience?
- How is it that the past influences or not a person’s decisions?
- To what extent are binaries or paradoxes useful or not to understanding the self?
- To what extent can a person ever escape social cues or preconceived notions of personal identity?
- Does the self always have to be defined by what is outside of it?

PAPER 2

Reading:
- Leslie Bell, from “Selections from Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom"
• Martha Stout, “When I Woke Up Tuesday Morning, It was Friday”

**Question:**
In “Selections from Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom,” Leslie Bell discusses a woman named Jayanthi who “worked hard to give herself a history that differed from her family’s expectations” (34). When describing her patients’ dissociative psychological episodes in her essay “When I Woke Up Tuesday Morning, It Was Friday” Martha Stout says that though her patients may not be able to “give [themselves] a [new] history,” distancing themselves from their past trauma can nevertheless be a beneficial coping mechanism.

It therefore becomes evident that though Bell and Stout both discuss persons who attempt to vacate the pain inherent in the world that surrounds them, not all of the persons that they describe deal with pain in the same way: some are able to overcome past trauma and some are unable to escape the hardships of the world no matter how hard they try. Given the lack of consistency in describing traumatic experiences between these two texts, I would like you to consider whether pain—as an emotion and concept—is or is not a phenomenon that belongs to persons.

So, in your second paper, use passages from both of the texts at hand to form an original argument in response to the following question: **To what extent does trauma attach itself to—or detach itself from—one’s self-conception?**

Though you are in no way obligated to answer the following questions, they may assist you in thinking about your response to the prompt:
- How do traumatic events contrive or not one’s idea of the self or one’s daily life?
- Is a person’s distancing herself from her past (i.e. her culture or her family) similar to how a person disassociates from her pain when a traumatic event occurs?
- Do persons have any ability to avoid or forget about the pain that they have experienced?

**PAPER 3**

**Reading:**
- Leslie Bell, from “Selections from Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom”
- Martha Stout, “When I Woke Up Tuesday Morning, It was Friday”
- Barbara Frederickson, from “Love 2.0: How Our Supreme Emotion Affects Everything We Think, Feel, Do, and Become”

**Question:**
In “Love 2.0,” Barbara Frederickson makes the startling claim that personal identity is not a stable conception and that persons are always in the process of becoming something else. She writes, “Constancy, ancient Eastern philosophies warn, is an illusion, a trick of the mind. Impermanence is the rule—constant change, the only constancy…Seen in this light, your body is more verb than noun: It shifts, cascades, and pulsates; it connects and builds; it erodes and flushes” (109). If persons are truly “impermanent” fixtures, because they are always “shifting with each breath [they] take,” then any discussion of the individual
as such needs to shift its focus away from the person and onto the various aspects that make persons become who they are (109).

So, in your third paper, use passages from Frederickson’s text, as well as Bell’s and Stout’s, to form an original argument in response to the following question: **To what extent is the notion of a stable and individualized sense of self a fiction?**

Though you are in no way obligated to answer the following questions, they may assist you in thinking about your response to the prompt:
- Can individuals only be understood by the relationships that they have with other persons?
- Are persons wholly determined by the environments that they live in throughout their lives?
- Do persons have any ability to avoid the impact of outside influences on their conception of self?
- To what extent does a person always need to be defined by what is outside of—or what has preceded—it?

**PAPER 4**

*Reading:*

Choose one of the essays listed below and write about it in conjunction with Tim O’Brien’s “How to Tell a True War Story”

- Leslie Bell, from “Selections from Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom”
- Martha Stout, “When I Woke Up Tuesday Morning, It was Friday”
- Barbara Frederickson, from “Love 2.0: How Our Supreme Emotion Affects Everything We Think, Feel, Do, and Become”

*Question:*

In the only piece of fiction we will read this semester, “How to Tell a True War Story,” Tim O’Brien writes about the status of truth. More than this, O’Brien is concerned with how the way in which an experience is narrated impacts its truth-status. The essays that we have read by Bell, Stout and Frederickson, too, talk about experiences, but they focus more on how our relationships and our experiences—both past and present—impact notions of the self.

In this essay, I would like you to think about the various ways in which experiences or events, claims or thoughts, are communicated from one person to another. I would also like you to consider how these different methods of narration affect a person’s understanding of an experience.

So, for your fourth paper, I would like you to pick passages, both from O’Brien’s essay, and from one of the essays we have read previously, in order to write an original argument in response to the following question: **How is it that persons define truth (or discern what is truthful)?**
Though you are in no way obligated to answer the following questions, they may assist you in thinking about your response to the prompt:
- Besides spoken language, what are the other ways in which events can be understood or described?
- What are the other ways in which the human or animal body can communicate knowledge?
- Can a truth-value ever be assigned to a past event or experience? Why or why not?
- What are the moral, political, or ethical implications of each of the various modes of narrating experiences?

PAPER 5

Reading:
Choose two of the following essays listed below and write about it in conjunction with Oliver Sacks’s “The Mind’s Eye: What the Blind See.”

- Leslie Bell, from “Selections from Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom”
- Martha Stout, “When I Woke Up Tuesday Morning, It was Friday”
- Barbara Frederickson, from “Love 2.0: How Our Supreme Emotion Affects Everything We Think, Feel, Do, and Become”
- Tim O’Brien, “How to Tell a True War Story”

Question:
In his essay, “The Mind’s Eye: What the Blind See,” Oliver Sacks describes many instances in which persons conflate seeing with other sensory activities such as hearing and feeling. For example, Sacks tells of when he turned away from a deaf woman named Amy in the middle of their conversation, and instead of saying to him, “I can’t see you,” she replied: “I can no longer hear you” (310). The confusion that Sacks has as a result of his conversation with Amy is evidence to the fact that persons are, surprisingly, able to control their sensorial interactions with the world around them. Like Sacks, the other authors we have read this semester are also interested in how persons come to know what they know; they are also concerned as to whether persons have any control over what they sense and what they know.

In this essay, I would like you think about the extent to which persons control their sensorial engagement with the world. I would also like you to consider whether sensing something is equivalent to knowing something. So, in your fifth paper, pick passages from three of the essays listed above (one of which must be Sacks’s) in order to formulate an original argument in response to the following question: To what degree are we the creators of our reality?

Though you are in no way obligated to answer the following questions, they may assist you in thinking about your response to the prompt:
- How does Sacks’s discussions of blind people who aim to control their sensorial engagements with the world relate to Bell’s and Stout’s arguing for the relationship between the past and the present?
- How does O’Brien’s discussion of the unattainability of truth relate to Sacks’s discussion of impressions as being highly personalized and not universally understood?
- Just because we sense something—like pain—are we really able to know anything about it if we do not experience that pain firsthand?
- How does Kiley’s writing to Curt Lemon’s sister and her refusal to read—and thus know—about her brother’s pain help elucidate the relationship between sensing and knowing in O’Brien’s text?
Sequence 2: Ian Bignall

PAPER 1

Reading:
- Davidson, Cathy. “Project Classroom Makeover”

Question:
In “Project Classroom Makeover,” Cathy Davidson imagines “a new paradigm of formal education for the digital era” (55), critiquing authority-centric forms of standardized pedagogy predicated upon “expertise, specialization, and hierarchy” (55). Such approaches to learning, she suggests, are relics of an era when “public education was seen as the most efficient way to train potential workers for labor in the newly urbanized factories,” and thus fail to engage the “intellectual habits of a new generation of students” (57; 50).

In place of the top-down “standardization” of thought she criticizes, Davidson proposes a turn towards a collaborative “revolution in the democratization of knowledge,” a function of “the new forms of thinking required by our digital, distributed workplace” (59; 60). She envisions not a simple dumbing-down of familiar ways of learning and thinking, but an embrace of diversity and complexity which “requires attention to surprise, anomaly, difference, and disruption, and an ability to switch focus, depending on what individual, unpredictable problems might arise” (60).

Employing evidence from Davidson, write an original essay addressing the following question: in what ways might the shift from “standardization” to multiple “forms of thinking” impact the individual’s relationship to “knowledge”?

Below are some further questions that may be useful to consider in generating your argument. Remember that you only need to address the above prompt in bold:

- What is “knowledge” for Davidson? How might her definition differ from other possible definitions? Does Davidson seem more interested in knowledge itself, or the means by which we acquire it?
- Davidson privileges “crowdsourcing” as a model of knowledge production. What happens to the role of the individual amidst this emphasis upon collective work? What is an individual in this essay?
- How might concepts such as the imagination, freedom, and individual agency – or their opposites – prove helpful to your argument?
- Davidson states that “unlearning is as vital a skill as learning” (67). How might this rethinking of knowledge as not only multiple but multidirectional impact your argument?
Question:
In our last essay, we explored how Cathy Davidson reconceives the idea of knowledge, moving from a privileging of “expertise, specialization and hierarchy” towards something more multiple and collaborative that engages “the intellectual habits of a new generation” (55; 50). While Jonathan Lethem doesn’t share Davidson’s preoccupation with questions of formal education, he is no less engaged in “The Ecstasy of Influence” with reimagining the nature of knowledge itself.

Arguing against a proprietary model of creativity, Lethem suggests instead that “the primary motivation for participating in the world of culture in the first place [is] to make the world larger” (220). That is, where Davidson suggests knowledge should not be approached as a narrow line running from expert to apprentice, but rather as a broad “cloud” that emerges from the reciprocal communication of the “crowd,” we move with Lethem towards a closely related position: that “invention … does not consist in creating out of the void but out of chaos” – a chaos, that is, of “appropriation, mimicry, quotation, allusion, and sublimated collaboration” (214). The value of this crowded and chaotic “public commons,” as Lethem identifies it, lies in the fact that it is something which “belongs to everyone and no one,” “altered by every contributor, expanded by even the most passive user” and thereby serves as a “practical necessity” for a healthy collective intellectual life (222; 223).

Employing evidence from Lethem AND Davidson, write an original essay addressing the following question: What are the implications of reimagining knowledge as a “commons”?

Below are some further questions that may be useful to consider in generating your argument. Remember that you only need to address the above prompt in bold:

• Do Davidson and Lethem have similar concepts of “knowledge”? If so, how can we complicate that similarity?
• Lethem is primarily concerned with questions of creative production; what is the relationship between creativity and knowledge?
• There is tension in this piece between ownership of knowledge and use of knowledge; how might this impact your argument? Is Lethem’s rethinking of “plagiarism” useful?
• Is it helpful to think of “knowledge” as a process as opposed to an object, a thing?
• Do questions of individual freedom and agency still matter? What is the nature and role of the individual when knowledge is treated as a “commons”??
• How might Lethem’s conception of the “gift economy” aid us in putting him into conversation with Davidson?

PAPER 3
Readings:

• Nelson, Maggie. “Great to Watch” New Humanities Reader, Fifth Edition
• Davidson, Cathy. “Project Classroom Makeover” New Humanities Reader, Fifth Edition

Question:
Our last two essays have both worked to complicate the concept of knowledge, treating it less as an object to be acquired than as an engaged, analytical process. This discussion of knowledge production has centered largely upon questions of binaries and how they structure – or limit – thought through blurring, breaking down, complicating, and even multiplying “boundaries.” Maggie Nelson continues this conversation through her efforts to question contemporary culture as a sharp division between “unremitting banality and inconceivable terror,” an undermining of the same tendency towards reductive binary thinking that comes under attack in Lethem and Davidson (306).

While the “boundary” is an important concept implicit in all three texts, Nelson’s argument regarding the need to interrogate the means by which we understand knowledge makes this issue explicit. As Nelson explains, “Not all boundaries or mediating forces are created equal; not all serve the same purpose,” such that “the function of that boundary need not be a constrictive or restrictive one.” (308)

Citing specific evidence from all three texts, develop an original argument in response to the following question: In what ways might the concept of the boundary be productive rather than “constrictive or restrictive”?

NB: Make sure the argument you craft in response to this question is specific and proposes a clear framework for the different ways in which we see “boundaries” manifest in these texts. In other words, make the stakes of your argument – the “So what?” claim – very clear. While this question seems to move away from the key term of “knowledge” that we’ve been developing this term, you can still incorporate it as part of the intellectual context for your argument.
PAPER 4
Readings:
• Nelson, Maggie. “Great to Watch” New Humanities Reader, Fifth Edition

Question:
Our work this semester has centered upon questions of knowledge production, especially in terms of how it is limited – or encouraged – by boundaries. Perhaps the clearest engagement with this topic thus far has been with Maggie Nelson, who interrogates the familiar characterization of contemporary culture as a sharp division between “unremitting banality and inconceivable terror” (306). Nelson’s interest, however, is not so much in the binary itself as in the nature of the boundary which props it up – as she explains, “not all boundaries or mediating forces are created equal; not all serve the same purpose,” such that “the function of that boundary need not be a constrictive or restrictive one” (308).

While she approaches the topic from a new angle, Azar Nafisi is no less interested than Nelson in what it means to remake the world around us through thinking about it in new ways. In “Selections from Reading Lolita in Tehran,” Nafisi writes of organizing a class of young women dedicated to considering “the relation between fiction and reality” (250). Devoting their attention to “the chinks between” the “open spaces the novels provided and the closed ones we were confined to,” Nafisi and her students work collectively to recognize themselves as “living, breathing human beings” caught within the depersonalizing uneasiness of “life in a totalitarian society” (264; 259; 262). Like Scheherazade, who Nafisi suggests “fashions her own universe,” the class thus sought through “imaginatively articulat[ing] these two worlds” to “create” a new one (259; 264).

Using specific examples from BOTH Nafisi and Nelson, answer the following question: How might thinking of boundaries as productive enable the “creation” of “other worlds”?

In answering this question, you may want to consider some of the following avenues of thought.
• Nafisi’s text is rife with binaries, from the first page through to the last. Why does she rely so significantly on constructing oppositions? What does she do with them? Would her argument work the same way if it didn’t lean so heavily on dichotomous thinking?
• This prompt presumes that “world creation” is somehow to be desired – why might that be? Or why not? What does thinking in these terms permit that is otherwise unachievable?
• Nafisi sees the world as a place “where we simultaneously invent ourselves, and [are] figments of someone else’s imagination” (263). What is the role of the individual for Nafisi? The role of the group? Of different kinds of groups?
• How does thinking about spaces change them? Or the individual’s experience of them? Is there a difference?
• What is the significance of existing in multiple environments at once? Of having to go back and forth? Can more than one represent “reality”? 
PAPER 5
Readings:

- Plus TWO additional texts of your choice.

Question:
In our last paper, we continued our discussion of knowledge as complex and multiple through applying ideas about the productive capacity of boundaries to the “creation” of “other worlds” in Azar Nafisi’s “Selections from Reading Lolita in Tehran.” An important part of this process involved beginning to take into account questions of how and how attentively the individual perceives and interprets his environment from a unique perspective, as well as why that interpretative process matters.

In “How to Tell a True War Story,” Tim O’Brien asks precisely this question. Because “nothing is ever absolutely true,” he tells us, and the “hard and exact truth as it seemed” from our own point of view is all we have, it is necessary to be consciously alert to the relative and partial nature of individual perspective (276). Through characterizing experience as marked by “overwhelming ambiguity,” O’Brien questions the accessibility of “final and definitive truth” to the point that “absolute occurrence,” while it perhaps does not disappear, becomes at once inaccessible and “irrelevant” (276; 273; 277).

Using specific examples from O’Brien and any TWO of our other texts from this term, write an essay which addresses the following question: In what ways might the relative nature of perspective help us conceive of knowledge as fundamentally collaborative?

In answering this question, you may want to consider some of the following avenues of thought.

- This prompt presumes a collaborative conception of knowledge is both feasible and desirable; what does that actually entail? Might it be a problematic premise?
- This question returns us to a discussion of knowledge, but that doesn’t mean you must abandon the other ideas you’ve developed. In papers III and IV, we spent a good deal of time on both binaries and boundaries – how might that language aid you in addressing this question?
- The heart of O’Brien’s essay is a problematization of the concept of “truth.” What does that term mean if we strip it of any claim to objectivity? Is it still a useful word? If not, what might we discuss instead?
- O’Brien seems just as interested in attempts to bridge the gaps between individual perspectives as he is in the perspectives themselves. How might we characterize
those gaps? Can they, like boundaries, be “productive”? How can we attempt to bridge them?

• The concept of “attention” has been relevant to each of our essays, though it has never been our topic. How might paying attention – or failing to do so – bear on this question?
Sequence 3: Erik Wade

PAPER 1
Reading:
• Leslie Bell’s “Selections from *Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom.*”

Question:
In her article, Leslie Bell describes the conflicting values that twenty-something women are forced to negotiate when it comes to their sexual lives. For your first paper, consider the role that identity plays in all of this: for these women, sex is not simply a matter of what they do but also plays a role in how they view themselves. Claudia, for instance, worries that her family will discover the “number of sexual partners she’d had” and that they would therefore be “devastated and disappointed that their daughter had not become the woman they raised her to be: a good girl who would marry her first boyfriend” (25). Bell describes the intricate psychological processes that women in their twenties use to sort through the “contradictory directives” and “confusing messages” that they receive (27). Using the article, write a paper that considers the following question: how and why do attitudes towards sex shape how young women think of themselves?

PAPER 2
Readings:
• Leslie Bell’s “Selections from *Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom*”
• Beth Loffreda’s “Selections from *Losing Matt Shepard: Life and Politics in the Aftermath of Anti-Gay Murder.*”

Question:
In her article, Leslie Bell documents how clashing values systems affect the psychology of young women in the contemporary era. Similarly, Beth Loffreda's article describes how the media and the town began to fight over the portrayal of the town's values. The media talks about Wyoming as the “hate state” and locals become angry about the town's “being depicted as a hate crimes capital” (Loffreda 231). Using Bell to analyze Loffreda's article, consider the media and town's portrayal of values and answer the following question: how does Bell's description of the psychological effects of conflicting values systems help us make sense of the media's representations of Laramie?

In this assignment, you should make heavy use of the text without simply summarizing it. A successful paper will make a claim about the text that tells us something we might not have understood about Bell's article by simply reading it. You will write a synthesis paper that uses one text to make more sense of another text, rather than a compare/contrast paper that just shows how two texts are similar or different.
PAPER 3
Readings:
• Leslie Bell’s “Selections from Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom”
• Beth Loffreda’s “Selections from Losing Matt Shepard: Life and Politics in the Aftermath of Anti-Gay Murder”

Question:
In your midterm exam, you used the articles by Bell and Loffreda to consider how Azar Nafisi represents conflicting values in Iran in her memoir. In your third paper, build upon these initial insights and consider why Nafisi might have represented Iran and the cultural clash that she and her students experience in this way. For instance, she wonders openly whether her reading group’s room or the “censor’s world of witches and goblins outside” was “more real and to which did [they] really belong” (Nafisi 264). She ultimately suggests that she no longer knows. Considering this and other value clashes in the memoir, use Loffreda and Bell’s articles to form a theory that answers the following question: why does Azar Nafisi represent conflicting values in Iran in her essay in the way that she does?
Your essay might choose to explore Nafisi’s implied audience (consider the discussion of the book cover and publishing audience that we discussed in class), Loffreda’s discussion of media and audience, Bell’s discussion of psychology and cultural clashes, or any other aspects of this that interest you. Your argument should be about Nafisi and use Bell and Loffreda to understand Nafisi’s article more, rather than simply comparing or contrasting Nafisi with both authors.

PAPER 4
Readings:
• Ethan Watters’ “The Mega-Marketing of Depression in Japan” and another article of your choice (either Bell, Loffreda, or Nafisi).

Question:
In Ethan Watters’ essay, he discusses how the drug companies who consulted him and others imagined that America was the most advanced nation and that all nations would eventually have to become like America in order to be advanced: “We [the Americans] were the most ’evolved culture’ culture and, as one executive said to Applbaum, their job was to 'speed the evolution along,' that is, to move other countries along the path to be like us” (528). Using another article to support your argument, create an argument about the ethical implications of the radical changes to Japanese culture that the drug companies attempt to bring about in order to “speed the evolution along.” With examples and theories from Watters and another article, write a paper that answers the following questions: how and why is the pharmaceutical mega-marketing of depression in Japan a form of cultural imperialism? What would it take to avoid such cultural impositions?
Your paper might begin by creating a definition of cultural imperialism (using the articles, rather than a dictionary) and then comparing it to the situation described by Watters' article, before proceeding to an argument about how one culture might avoid imposing its values on another. It is, of course, possible to argue that cultural impositions a) shouldn't be avoided or b) that the situation in Japan is not an example of them.

Most importantly, however, whatever argument you choose to make must engage with both of your articles, not only for examples and evidence but in order to engage with their arguments and insights sympathetically and completely. As we have discussed in class, what we are seeking here is examine the gray areas and complexities of arguments and ethical problems, rather than making blanket statements (such as “all media does X” or “all advertising has Y characteristics”).

PAPER 5
Readings:
- Martha Stout's “When I Woke Up Tuesday Morning, It Was Friday” and two other articles of your choice (from among Bell, Loffreda, Nafisi, and Watters).

Question:
Martha Stout begins her article with a long metaphor of a house whose fuse-box fails and presents the reader with a thought question: would we try to fix the fuse-box? Only afterward does she enter her main topic: trauma and its effects on the brain. This involved story may seem like a hokey introduction for a science essay (why begin a discussion of the mechanics of neuroscience with the phrase “Imagine that you are in your house—no—you are locked in your house”?) (Stout 381). Or, instead Stout might be demonstrating that trauma and memory have an essential connection to narrative and metaphor. Indeed, as she says later, trauma affects the part of the brain that governs our ability to “[translate] experience into language” (382). In your final paper, consider the connections between story-telling and our personal experiences, whether traumatic or ordinary. Using Stout's theories and two other articles of your choice, answer the following question: **how and why does narrative and story-telling help to make sense of our personal experiences?**

Your paper might choose to examine the role of story-telling about traumatic experiences, it might consider the role of narrative in our own identities, story-telling as a connection between the individual and society, or another approach altogether.

Most importantly, however, whatever argument you choose to make must engage with both of your articles, not only for examples and evidence but in order to engage with their arguments and insights sympathetically and completely. As we have discussed in class, what we are seeking here is examine the gray areas and complexities of arguments and ethical problems, rather than making blanket statements (such as “all media does X” or “all advertising has Y characteristics”). You will not simply make a claim and then provide examples where you are proven correct but engage with theoretical concepts from the essays and using the essays.
VI. Revision

Once students have written their rough drafts, they will embark on the process of revision. Our focus on revision reinforces the claim, central to *The New Humanities Reader* pedagogy, that writing is a process, and that the conversation between authors—students and others—should be developed in an open-ended process of revision that may actually lead to a change in perspective. Just as we encourage students to think that their first readings of the essays in *The New Humanities Reader* cannot be the final one, so the first writing of their paper is not the final one. Also, from a practical perspective, students usually write themselves into a viable project. While they start to answer the assignment question at the beginning of their rough drafts, it is often the case that a synthetic thesis (which connects the assigned readings with the students’ own ideas) only emerges towards the end of the process. Revision invites students to observe their own development, build upon successful moments of composition, and sometimes discard the writing that helped them develop a claim in favor of new writing that develops a coherent thesis around which they can structure their papers.

Peer Review

Students must become independent readers of their own writing. This skill is necessary throughout college and in the professional world. Students learn to read their own writing critically by reading the writing of their peers – writing that has been generated in response to shared class assignments. Some students are resistant to their peers’ comments; they imagine their peers are inexperienced and unable to offer valuable advice. And in some cases, this is a justified criticism of the peer review process. However, the value of peer review is not only in the comments one might receive from a helpful reader, but also in the experience of reading the work of others and learning what is successful and what is not successful in their partner’s papers. The value of peer review is in the training our students receive in reading and discussing their own writing. This value must be made explicit in the classroom, and should discussed openly before peer review begins.

Peer review should focus on different aspects of paper writing throughout the course of the semester, and should change to reflect the focus of the class. For example, an instructor might only ask about summary versus interpretation on the first two papers. Once the class has mastered that distinction, the instructor might move to a new set of conceptual issues or writing skills. Although teachers comment on the rough drafts of papers one and four, students should be doing a peer review of those rough drafts as well.

In order for peer review to run successfully in class, a shared discourse about writing must be established in the classroom. Students need a language with which to discuss their writing and the writing of their peers. Before asking students to read one another’s work independently, model the discussion of writing in class by using sample writing from the
students themselves. When discussing their writing, emphasize how one speaks with respect as well as how one offers revision-oriented comments. Guide the class through a discussion about both the strengths and the weaknesses in the sample writing. Use the following question to motivate discussion: “What work has the student done?”

Peer review groups usually consist of two or three members. Students will need an appropriate number of copies for class, so indicate on your assignment sheet how many drafts students will need for class on that day. Students give their peer readers their drafts, and peer readers use the directions from peer review sheets to comment. After students have completed the peer review process, it is critical that students have time to share their comments with one another. This period of discussion allows students to converse with one another about their writing; they use the discourse established in class to work with one another in a smaller setting.

Most teachers rely on peer review sheets during peer review days. These sheets give students instructions, ask specific questions, and create tasks for students to complete as they read one another’s work. Below are the kinds of instructions one might include on a peer review sheet:

- Go through your partner’s paper and mark with a star all the places where you think the writer is interpreting and thinking rather than supplying information directly from the readings in the form of summary. Also mark places with a large S where you feel the writer is providing unnecessary summary that does not seem to help her develop an argument.

- Which of the starred moments in the draft seem especially interesting or promising? That is, what place in the essay does the writer say something that seems most original or interesting? What is strong about this moment?

- What is the writer’s argument, in your own words? That is, how does she respond to the main essay question? What answer does the essay suggest? Do you agree with the writer’s argument, as you see it? Why or why not?

- Is the writer’s argument or project coherently represented in the introductory paragraph of the paper? Is the paper trying to accomplish what the thesis announces, or is it attempting (or accomplishing) much more than that? Perhaps the paper is actually doing something the thesis does not promise at all?

- How does the writer utilize multiple sources to produce his idea? In other words, how do the assigned essays come together to inform the writer’s position?

- Does the writer quote the readings in most paragraphs of the essay? Where should the writer do more to incorporate or quote from the readings? What passages or ideas from the readings should she or he especially consider?
• Locate at least one place where the writer can strengthen connections between essays. Explain the connection: Is the connection between the essays clear? Does this connection relate back to the main argument? How might he or she explain this connection more carefully?

• What are some of the things that the writer should work on in revision? For example: Does the writer address the basic elements of the assignment? Does she try to form an argument that addresses the essay question? Does the writer generally work to present analysis rather than summary? Has she incorporated the other readings into the essay well enough? Does she or he use quotes or discuss these writers’ arguments directly? Does the writer use specific references to the text to illustrate points? Does the writer try to engage the texts in conversation rather than just using them to back up her or his narrow argument? Does the writer acknowledge the arguments of these writers and work to separate her or his own voice from that of the writers (not repeating things said by the writers as though it were her or his own opinion)?

• Look at two quotations that the writer uses, and talk about how accurately and how well the writer deals with those quotes. First, pick a quote that you think the writer could definitely discuss more thoroughly. Second, look at the longest quote that the writer has used. Is this quote too long? Is it being used in place of writing or in place of some sort of directed summary? If you think the choice of quotation is useful—or if you think it should be shortened—what is the most important part of the quote? What part should the writer discuss most? What might the writer say about the quote? Does the writer explain how the quotation works and why it is important?

Student Created Peer Review

Once students have become accustomed to reading their own work critically and to commenting on the work of their peers, some teachers ask the class to generate a peer review activity on the day peer review is to take place. These teachers ask students to create a list of questions they are to address as they read one another’s papers. This exercise puts the students in control of the revision process, and contributes to creating a writing community in the classroom. Again, the success of this kind of peer review depends on the shared discourse about writing that has been established through the discussion of sample writing in the classroom. You might guide your students to generate their own peer review by providing them with the following categories:

Project
• Can you find and understand the author’s project and identify two or three main supporting ideas? Can you restate the project in your own words? Do it here, if you can. Can you mark the places in the paper where the project and the ideas emerge? Write ‘project’ in the margins where you see this happening.

• Does the project really respond to the assignment? Why or why not?
• Is the project sufficiently developed? Is there enough detailed, relevant, supporting evidence? If not, what ideas need support?

Organization
• Does each paragraph’s topic sentence relate directly to the project? If not, write a suggestion to help the writer make that relationship stronger.

• Are there any places where the author needs better transitions between paragraphs? Within paragraphs?

• Are there any places where the author seems to get off track? Is there any evidence that is not really relevant?

• Are there any places where the essay breaks “unity”?

• Are there any problems with unity within paragraphs?

• Is the essay coherent? Can the reader follow the author’s ideas? Indicate places where the coherence breaks down.

Use of Text
• Look at the author’s quotations. Has the author selected “idea” quotes rather than “fact” or “summary” quotes, and used those quotes to strengthen, launch, or complicate her/his own argument?

• Are there quotes that are not smoothly integrated or embedded? (Do not rewrite the paper for your author, but suggest what she or he might want to accomplish).

• Are all quotations and paraphrases properly cited? If not, show specifically where and tell what the problem is.

• Is the author using unnecessary summary? Where?

• Are all three texts used, in reasonable balance? If not, what’s the problem?

• Are all three texts interpreted fairly? If not, what is the author misreading?

Presentation
• Normally, peer reviewers stay away from commenting on presentation. No peer reviewer should become another student’s editor, and many students are not necessarily skilled enough in grammar, mechanics and syntax to avoid giving bad advice. However, many of you requested feedback on presentation, so . . .

• Are there one or two kinds of error that you see the author repeating over and over again? Mark the places and identify the kinds of errors the author needs to address.
Teaching Revision

The use of sample student papers to focus on revision strategies is critical. Using sample work not only encourages students to see all writing as work in process, but also creates a sense of shared purpose in the classroom. Self-directed revision is arguably more effective than commenting directly on every rough draft, as it gives students the ability to be their own best readers and critics (in Expos and in other courses as well).

- Use photocopied passages: You may photocopy representative passages from several student essays and ask the class as a whole to consider their successes and the opportunities for revision they present. (This revision work may also be done in small groups.)

- Try group revision of selected passages: You may photocopy and distribute one page where a student writer has introduced but not really engaged with a quotation. Each student might redraft that paragraph, and some students might share their revisions with the class.

- Make global comments: You may write a composite set of comments in response to the rough drafts as a group for distribution to the students, identifying (and perhaps providing brief examples of) the most common or important areas for revision. Then ask the students to apply those global comments to their own work, identifying the common errors and correcting them.

- Emphasize the importance of re-reading as part of revision: Many students attempt to revise without re-reading the assigned texts, even when the primary need for revision is misunderstanding (or too simplistic an understanding) of the texts. Ask students to select one of the quoted passages in their papers, and have them re-read the pages from which the quotations were taken.

- Develop revision stamina: While teaching revision usually begins with passages of student work, be sure to eventually ask students to work with entire drafts as well. It is essential that students be able to revise an entire paper as well as smaller pieces of drafts.
VII. THE MIDTERM AND FINAL EXAMS

The Midterm Exam

The Midterm should be administered after the completion of paper two and after the class has read and discussed the third reading. The exam should ask students to connect the new (third) reading with the first two readings, and it should serve as a meaningful preview of the third paper topic.

The in-class Midterm Exam (graded pass/fail) serves multiple purposes:

- Students practice for the in-class final exam, which they must pass in order to pass the class. It is almost unfair to expect students to perform well on the in-class final without having prepared students for timed writing, which they will also experience as a requirement in other classes at Rutgers.

- Students benefit from using the midterm as a lead-in or fast draft of paper three. This is especially useful for students who struggle beginning a paper or complain of “writer’s block,” because students see that, indeed, they can produce writing on demand.

- Students are more willing to reconsider or complicate their positions on paper three because they have already spent time thinking about the new text for the midterm. For students struggling to develop an independent claim (which is needed to earn a B range grade), the extra draft the midterm provides can work to complicate a thesis.

- A failing midterm often gives students the psychological push they need to sign up for tutoring or to put more effort into the remainder of the essays.

- A passing midterm is sometimes a student’s first passable work, and thus it may give them hope in continuing toward passing work in the remaining papers.

- The midterm gives instructors a mid-semester indication of where students stand in the course; instructors can use the midterm to assess which skills their students seem to use with dexterity and which skills still need work.
Sample Midterm Prompts

• In your previous paper, you reflected on the effects of conflicting values on the media situation in Laramie, Wyoming, as described by Beth Loffreda. In this essay, please use Leslie Bell and Beth Loffreda’s articles to consider the following question: how does Azar Nafisi represent conflicting values in Iran in her essay and why might she use this approach?

• Using Leslie Bell’s “Selections from Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom,” Daniel Gilbert’s “Immune to Reality,” and Susan Faludi’s “The Naked Citadel,” please answer the following question: To what extent are psychological defense mechanisms (like “splitting” and the “psychological immune system”) at work at The Citadel?

• Gladwell, Stout, and Nafisi give us examples of individuals who choose to live in divided states of mind, or find their minds divided against their will. Using examples from Stout, Gladwell, and Nafisi, compose an essay that answers the following question: How can a divided self protect or endanger an individual?

• In our last paper we considered how Malcolm Gladwell and Susan Faludi address the ways individuals and social groups arrive at a sense of right and wrong because of context. Using Gladwell, Faludi, and a third author, Beth Loffreda, address the following prompt: How do stories, or the ways events are reported, influence our sense of right and wrong?

The Final Exam

On the last regular day of classes you will administer an in-class, open-book final exam. The Writing Program is the only Department at Rutgers allowed to administer a final exam during regularly scheduled classes instead of during the exam period (which would complicate the process of folder review). The exam is essay format and is graded on a Pass/Fail basis. Students must pass the final exam in order to pass 101.

The final exam asks students to connect and write about a newly assigned sixth reading. The exam continues the practice of sequencing, and requires students to make an independent claim, make connections, and use textual evidence to accomplish the work of the paper. The exam is not meant to “trip up” your students. In thinking about which essay to use for the final, aim for a “soft pitch” which clearly relates to the other readings of the class versus one in which the larger context or textual connections are obscure. You might want to select, in particular, an exam reading that clearly sequences with the fifth essay, which will be fresh in students’ minds, or which relates to several other readings (which allows students to choose the one most familiar to them).
In writing the final exam question, some instructors use a directed question, which asks students to work with the new essay and one of the previous essays selected by the instructor. However, a more generous exam question will be phrased in such a way that students can select which of the previous essays they would like to use in conjunction with the new reading. Whatever approach you take, students must engage at least two texts in the final exam.

In preparation for the final, you should have students come to the penultimate class meeting having read the exam essay. Allow them to discuss the essay in small groups. You should not direct this discussion. If you are planning on a question that gives students a choice about which of the previous essays to use in their response, you might tell students that they should select which essay they want to use with the exam reading in their response. That allows students to focus their reading of the new essay, as well as their discussion, on the reading they will actually use during the final.

The purpose of the final exam is to check that students embody the lessons of our class and that they are the people who wrote the papers they submitted during the term. The exam is thus about “the body,” as it were, so it is essential that it be administered in class and that students take it in your presence or in the presence of a proctor (if they miss the original exam session). They are allowed to use dictionaries and should refer to their textbooks (especially to quote passages). No notes, other than those they have written in the margins of their texts, can be used.

Note: If any students miss your final exam session, please leave a copy of your exam question with the Department secretary so that it can be made available to your student during an exam make-up session. You should also remember to pick up any exams from students who missed your last session so that they can be graded before your final folder review.

Sample Final Exam Prompts

- In describing Mitchell Sanders’ desire to get his story right, Tim O’Brien says “In a way, I suppose, you had to be there, you had to hear it, but I could tell how desperately Sanders wanted me to believe him, his frustration at not quite getting the details right, not quite pinning down the definitive truth” (444-5). In his essay, “How to Tell a True War Story,” O’Brien often returns to the notion of “being there” or of instinct, and how those things might change or determine truth. He shares this concern about perception (its generation, its reliability, etc.) with many of the other authors we’ve read this semester. Using Tim O’Brien’s essay and any other essay we have read this term, answer the following question: How does one arrive at an understanding of “truth”? 

At the end of “Homo religiosus,” Karen Armstrong sums up one of her main concerns as follows: “Religion as defined by the great sages of India, China, and the Middle East [… ] did not require belief in a set of doctrines but rather hard, disciplined work, without which any religious teaching remained opaque and incredible” (38). Using Armstrong’s discussions of the rewards gained through experiential knowledge, deeds, actions, and trials, and examples from one of the other essays we have read this term, please answer the following question: What is the value of hard work and close attention?

Work with Twenge and Gilbert, and respond to the following question: How might the case Gilbert makes about our “ignorance of our psychological immune systems” lead us to reassess the use of self-esteem programs in education?
VIII. CLASSROOM PRACTICES

One goal of *The New Humanities Reader* is to foster student writing that goes beyond the staid formulae of personal response or book report. The pedagogy of *The New Humanities* encourages students to actively engage in connective thinking not just in the context of the composition classroom but in their other courses and in the world in which they live. To encourage student engagement, we recommend an active learning approach that creates a collaborative classroom environment that puts students in conversation with each other and with the authors of the readings. All of these activities are conceived of as working in the context of the students’ own writing: theirs are ultimately the primary texts with which we deal. With this in mind, the activities described here take the instructor through the full arc of a single paper assignment. In the course of a 15-week semester, with five papers to be completed, an instructor can expect to spend four to five class periods on a paper cycle. The cycle would look something like this:

- Day 1—Introduce a new reading, and perhaps hand in the final draft of the previous assignment
- Day 2—Discuss the reading, and give the new assignment
- Day 3—Rough draft due—peer review
- Day 4—Work on revision and the mechanics of writing
- Day 5—Final draft due, proof-reading, next reading assignment

Each of the steps in this cycle lends itself to different kinds of in-class work; an activity that works well on a new reading assignment will not necessarily be appropriate for working on rough drafts (though there can be very useful moments of overlap). The activities collected below have been divided into sections based on the stage in the paper-writing process at which they have been best used, and/or in terms of which part of *The New Humanities Reader* pedagogy they are relevant to. It is essential to revisit the different parts of the writing process at various points in the cycle.

The most productive learning environments typically feature a number of different but related tasks. A class might begin, for example, with individual “free writing,” then move to work in small groups, and then gather students to a discussion with the entire class. Tasks for the individual student can be used either to prepare them for a discussion in a larger group or to help them absorb the ideas that come up in general class discussion. Small group activities make students accountable for their ideas but relieve the pressure of both individual work and whole class work, fostering collective knowledge in a context which allows every student’s voice to be heard in a less threatening context than the full-class discussion. And whole-class activities are essential for exploring the different interpretations of a text that are available, and providing a forum for the teacher to approach the issues a class is having globally, without singling any student out for particular attention. Each kind of activity reinforces a different part of the writing process and ultimately fosters our goal of teaching exploratory and connective thinking.
Assigning a New Reading

The pre-reading part of the paper arc, occurring when the instructor presents a new reading to the class, is a crucial point in the entire process. At this stage, we want students to be able to engage with the concepts introduced by a new essay both as a discrete entity and in the context of prior readings. Both reading comprehension and contextualization are critical—a student needs to start to understand the concepts introduced by the new essay, and needs to connect those ideas with other texts.

This stage focuses students’ attention on particular parts of the new text, without the expectation that the students have read the whole text. This requires preparation on the part of the teacher, in order to focus students’ attention, and to help them to comprehend the new, possibly intimidating, prose that they see before them. Typically students are asked to work from part to whole and back again, puzzling through sections of the text or working with quotations, then trying to synthesize the overall argument and connect it with prior readings.

Discussing a Reading

In order to reinforce the idea that reading and writing go hand-in-hand, as well as to give students concrete points of access to the text, instructors usually assign some reading questions for students to consider as they begin a new selection from the textbook. Early in the semester, these questions may take the form of review questions, intended to test and encourage reading comprehension. But questions should ultimately call for as much interpretation as summary. The “Questions for Making Connections within the Reading” at the end of each essay are intended as reading and pre-writing exercises. If students address these questions as they read, they will be prepared to participate productively in class discussion and to enter into the writing process with confidence. Even if you only ask students to write a list of their own questions as they read, they will come to class more ready to make sense of the text than if they were to read it with no guidance.

Throughout this reading and re-reading process, students will often find that as one question is answered or one problem resolved, another question or problem—often a more complex one—emerges. This trial-and-error or exploratory method of conducting class discussion is messier than lecturing to the students, or simply answering their questions as they arise, but it has several advantages over lecturing. Not only does the exploratory method usually cover the same textual issues that a lecture would, but it also raises important issues that you yourself might not have thought to raise. The exploratory method also models—and gives students practice in—learning as discovery, rather than as delivery of understanding from teacher to student. Finally, the exploratory method gets all students (not just those who are already comfortable talking in class) involved in understanding the text, especially when small-group work precedes full-class discussion. Here are some suggestions for making group work successful:
• If you are having small group discussions, you can include a step that involves writing on the board. (Incidentally, this also helps to get “slow” groups up to speed, because they see that other groups are ahead of them.) You might ask students to establish a list of important terms and write it on the board, to define a term and write the definition on the board, or to choose a significant passage from the text and write the passage on the board.

• When small groups report, assign several students in advance to ask questions of each group after they report. If students know in advance that they are “on call” to ask questions, they will be more engaged with the class.

• In full-class discussion, ask each student who speaks to choose the next speaker. Students often feel more comfortable participating in response to another student’s request, than answering the teacher’s question.

• Always recognize every serious effort to participate as beneficial to class discussion. Find ways to reward students when they make a clear effort to be involved in class discussion. Even if a student is “wrong,” we can find ways to make use of every student comment. (For example, “Pat has pointed to an important passage. Let’s all spend some time working with this passage to see if we can extend Pat’s idea.”)

• Many of the readings in our book are about controversial situations or issues. Staging an in-class debate might help students crystallize their own positions, while imagining counterarguments. If you decide to hold a debate, you could create two debating teams, and ask for about five volunteers on each side. You might even ask students to position themselves on the side that they initially do not think they believe in, as often, by playing ‘devil’s advocate’, they are forced to expand their understanding of opposing viewpoints or to complicate their own views. The advantages of holding a debate are that students learn not only to articulate clearly, which will help them in their writing, but also to anticipate and evaluate clearly what others are saying. Those students not on the debating teams can ask questions when the presentations and rebuttals are complete, and then a vote can be taken to see which team had the most convincing position.

• Divide the class into small groups and ask them to generate a list of the larger contexts for this essay, locating quotations from the piece that point to that context or larger conversation. At the start of the semester, it might help students if you choose quotations for them, but later in the semester they should try to identify good quotations themselves. For example, with Sacks, we might list the different methods of adaptation for someone recently blinded, the role of the visual imagination, the way the brain works, and so on. Not only does this generate the themes of the essay, but it also helps students to see that these texts are not isolated writings but participate in larger conversations when considered alongside one or two other readings. It additionally gives them practice in locating these larger conversations.
When working in groups in this way, there should be a group leader who then comes forward in front of the whole class, and who talks about the chosen quotations and the connections between them from the different readings, to the whole class.

- Either schedule class in a computer classroom when beginning a new reading, or ask your students to do some online research of their own to learn about the background of the author of an essay they are about to read. There is fascinating information found on Google, for example, about the rich life of Oliver Sacks. In the case of students having researched this as homework, one or two students could give an oral presentation to the rest of the class about their research discoveries, and this could then turn into a larger conversation.

**Getting Started on an Assignment**

On the day you distribute a paper assignment, design an activity that helps students work together to make sense of the challenges the assignment might pose. Getting students to engage your assignment in class has the advantage of exposing difficulties or problems the assignment question might present.

Have students read the assignment together and write for a few minutes about how they might address the question. Once they have written for five to ten minutes, put them into groups of three or four to work on the following tasks: In your own words, what is the question asking? What process will you use to answer the question and write the essay? What answers do you think you might find? Do not distribute a paper assignment and then immediately dismiss class. Like the essays we assign, teach students to read paper assignments closely; ask them to identify and question key terms, and to look for implications.

**Collaborative Interpretation or Composing**

Probably the most standard exercise in Expository Writing classes is to put students into small groups of three to four students and give them a reading or writing task. At the end of the task, an elected group leader will report the results back to the rest of the class. For example, you can ask them to find two quotes from Sacks’ “The Mind's Eye” that they would use to construct a paragraph that begins to address the question that Sacks asks in his essay: “But to what extent are we - our experiences, our reactions - shaped, predetermined, by our brains, and to what extent do we shape our own brains?” Each group’s leader would then be responsible for presenting the group’s response to the rest of the class.

**Working with Quotes**

Another group activity involves putting students into groups where they are directed to choose two quotes from the text or from two different texts that they then connect in a paragraph with a strong topic sentence. Each small group then elects a group leader to speak to the class. On the first occasion you do this activity, you might actually type out
five quotes from the reading onto a piece of paper, with instructions that each group should choose two quotes that they think can be connected in a paragraph. This way you have a chance to model for them which quotes would be most fruitful for discussion. On subsequent occasions, make students responsible for locating and choosing the quotes they will use.

**Self-Assessment and Reflection**

A midterm self-assessment assignment asks students to reflect on their progress. Ask them to go through their work thus far and to write a note or an e-mail about how they have improved and what they need to do in the coming papers. Use this as an opportunity to assess the activities you have done so far in the course. It’s best to have students respond to a set of guiding questions that you distribute. The questions can go beyond self-assessment to invite an assessment of the class, of your comments on papers, and of class activities. The following instructions and questions are commonly found on successful midterm assessment activities:

- **Reread your first three papers, along with my comments.** Once you are done, write a short “report” to me via e-mail evaluating your work and thinking about things you can do to improve. I will respond before the next paper is due. Try to give a thoughtful and honest assessment. To do this well should probably take from thirty minutes to an hour of your time.
- **What have you learned in this class about college writing that differs from what you had thought or learned before?**
- **What do you consider to be your greatest strength(s) as a writer?** What things are you doing well?
- **What are your weaknesses?** What do you need to work on in future papers?
- **Compare your weakest paper with your best paper so far.** What things are you doing in your best paper that you were not doing in the weakest paper? What improvements have you made that can help you in future papers?
- **What concrete steps do you think you can take to improve your performance in the class?**
- **What class activities or exercises have been the most helpful in improving your writing?** Can you suggest any in-class activities you might find helpful, or things you would like us to do or cover in class?
- **Is there anything you feel a bit confused about and wish I would explain again?** Are there any remarks I have made in class or on your papers that you have not understood? Is there anything you are concerned about as relates to the class?

**Final Reports to the Class**

This self-assessment happens late in the term, and allows students to articulate the skills they have acquired throughout the course. Each student addresses the entire class, and
presentations consist of descriptions of achievement and/or struggle in the course. The student can discuss the work he or she did to resolve a problem or to achieve a particular success. Use this kind of assessment to remind students to apply the lessons of Expos to their writing throughout their college careers.
IX. Grading

Grading can be anxiety provoking, both for students and teachers. Having common grading criteria can help. The following are the standards used in the Rutgers Writing Program:

- The official final grades for all papers in the Rutgers Writing Program are A, B+, B, C+, C, and NP. Please note that there are:
  - no "D" grades
  - no minus grades
  - no split grades such as C+/C (these can lead to ambiguity)

- While the F or NC can indicate that a student has not passed the course at the end of the semester, instructors should use the mark "NP" (not passing) to indicate that an individual essay is not passing quality. This mark encourages revision.

Official Grading Criteria

Papers need to fit all four categories (thesis, working with assigned text, organization, and presentation) to some degree to receive the grade defined; however, **thesis and working with text should be weighted more heavily than organization and presentation in determining a paper's final grade.** Papers are not expected to fulfill every point to receive the grade.

Reasons why a paper might not pass:

**Thesis**
- The paper has no clear or emerging thesis. It may work with the readings through reference, paraphrase, or quotation, but it provides no indication of how these moments of textual work contribute to a larger point or position in the paper.
- Alternately a paper may have a thesis, but rely too heavily on summary and fail to engage responsibly with textual evidence.
- Papers that do not show significant revision from the rough draft to the final draft may not pass.

**Working with Text**
- Although the paper may make reference to the issues raised by the assignment question, it does not engage with the assigned readings but over-generalizes about the texts.
- The paper does not work effectively with text, as it demonstrates a lack of basic reading comprehension, or misinterpretation, or a failure to grasp the outline of an assigned author's argument.
• The paper depends largely on summary of the assigned reading that is not pertinent to the assignment question.

ORGANIZATION
• It may have too little coherence from paragraph to paragraph, or it may lack an organizational structure. Use of paragraphs may be weak.

PRESENTATION
• The paper has significant sentence-level error that makes it difficult to follow. Serious patterns of error might include sentence integrity, verb agreement, and number agreement. Less serious patterns, including misused apostrophe and other spelling errors, can contribute to a paper earning an NP, especially when they occur with high frequency.
• Alternatively, students may fail to proofread their papers, possibly resulting in errors that they may be able to correct on their own.
• In either case, if a student’s errors are so numerous or severe that they impede meaning, the student should not pass.

C range:

THESIS
• In a C paper there is evidence of an emerging thesis—something the student wants the paper to accomplish—or the beginnings of a focus or argument. Often, C papers fail to articulate their thesis in the paper’s introduction.
• Papers often achieve a passing grade by taking a clear position once—perhaps at the end of the essay—even when the project is not sustained in the rest of the paper.
• The thesis may be vague or general.

WORKING WITH TEXT
• The C paper demonstrates the student’s ability to work with more than one source of text and engage with the ideas in the readings. The C paper can make connections within a text, or between texts.
• The C paper generally lacks a clear sense that the student’s voice contributes to the conversation.
• Although a passing paper may include summary, the quality of the summary demonstrates sufficient reading comprehension and often helps the student begin to define a focus.

ORGANIZATION
• Passing papers, in places, create coherent relationships within paragraphs even if they have not developed a larger organizational structure. Students have a sense of how to write paragraphs, even if the relationship between the paragraphs is not clearly presented.
PRESENTATION
• A passing paper has fatal sentence-level errors under control. Although errors may appear on each page, they do not significantly impede the meaning of the essay or undermine the writer’s credibility.

C+ range:

THESIS
• C+ papers have a thesis, but it may not be clearly articulated. In other words, C+ papers often have thesis or position statements that do not represent the true achievement of the paper, and do not express the paper’s actual project.
• There may be a sense that the writer has not realized that there is a thesis in the paper.

WORKING WITH TEXT
• C+ papers have several moments of solid work with text. However, the paper may not indicate how these moments contribute to the project.
• C+ papers more consistently attempt to engage with the more complicated ideas and examples from the readings than do C papers.
• The moments of working with text may remain implicit: connective thinking may not be explained fully or at all.

ORGANIZATION
• C+ papers are often distinguished from B papers because they lack a meaningful structure. There may not be a clear relationship between the paragraphs.

PRESENTATION
• C+ papers have errors under control. That is, there should be no patterns of error, just a few irregularities in either mechanics or citation and formatting standards.

B range:

B papers may include "C" moments in an otherwise well-reasoned and well-developed thesis.

THESIS
• B papers do everything the C-range essays do, but they offer a sustained and meaningful structure and/or a thesis that is often more complex than in a C-range paper.
• The student advances more independent ideas. However, B papers may be distinguished by a repetition rather than a development or reconsideration of these ideas.
• B papers can represent the thesis of the paper in the introductory paragraph with some degree of accuracy.

WORKING WITH TEXT
• The paper shows the student beginning to take interpretive risks, responding to the assignment and to the readings in thoughtful and distinctive ways.
• The paper demonstrates that the student is able to work with textual evidence in a number of ways. It does not rely solely on summary, reference, or paraphrasing, but is able to work with quotations and think connectively to contribute to the thesis.

ORGANIZATION
• The paper demonstrates a reasonable coherence in its overall presentation: the relationships between the paper's paragraphs are clear and coherent.
• The presentation and development of the thesis is controlled and organized.
• Topic sentences and transitions between paragraphs are smoother than in a C-level paper.

PRESENTATION
• Presentation errors must be minimal.

B+ range:
Sometimes, a paper achieves the B+ level because it executes several of the elements of a B paper particularly well.

THESIS
• B+ papers do everything a B paper does, but the independent thinking is consistently developed.
• A B+ paper is itself more complex because it engages with more of the complexity in the readings.
• B+ papers begin to, but may not fully, understand the actual complexity of their own argument. They often exhibit a turn in thinking that is not yet fully integrated into the way they forecast their thesis for the reader. Possible moments of insight are sometimes not as fully developed as an A range paper.

WORKING WITH TEXT
• B+ papers show that the student is able to assume confidence and authority in working with the full range of textual evidence.
• B+ papers may have more sophisticated work with text, including an ability to analyze text with particular insight.
• These papers demonstrate connective thinking in which student’s ideas are in control through most of the paper.

ORGANIZATION
• B+ papers are particularly well organized. Each paragraph clearly functions within the paper and contributes to the thesis with an overall fluid movement.

PRESENTATION
• Presentation errors must be minimal.

A range:

An A paper might have one or two "B" or even "C" moments, but they do not significantly detract from the overall force of the paper.

THESIS
• An A paper does all the good things that B-level papers need to do, but an A paper is usually distinguished from B range work because the student understands his or her own thesis from the beginning and clearly represents that understanding to the reader.
• The thesis is clear and original, and exhibits complexity of thought and discovery. A papers generally develop theses that cut across the readings in unanticipated ways.
• An A paper moves through its own thesis step by step, though the individual paragraphs.
• An A paper develops and presents its independent ideas persuasively throughout the paper.
• Sometimes a paper achieves an A because a student develops a thoughtful and well-defined interpretive approach and an awareness of his or her own position in relation to the positions of the assigned essayists.

WORKING WITH TEXT
• A papers are distinguished from B-level work by student-centered connective thinking that engages with the ideas in the readings. The paper presents the sustained development and effective articulation of a position that is related to ideas in the readings, while it is not reducible to relationships readily identifiable in the readings.

ORGANIZATION
• The organization is logical, fluid, and clear.

PRESENTATION
• Presentation errors must be minimal.
• There is often an eloquence and elegance of writing style.
Determining Final Grades

The Final Grade will be determined by the student's highest level of sustained achievement at the end of term. A student must earn her highest grade twice in order to demonstrate that she can sustain that level of achievement. As always, any questionable or borderline grades will be discussed in Folder Review.

Please tell students that Expos is not graded on improvement (this is part of the Expos mythology that pervades the campus). If the class was graded on improvement, the student who started with an NP on Paper 1 but earned a B by Paper 5 would receive an A for improving so much, while a student who had been earning a B all semester would get a lower grade because he did not improve as dramatically. You may want to use an example like this to demonstrate to your students that improvement would not be a fair measure. Students who fail the Final Exam fail the course. Cases where a student has written passing work but failed the exam should always be examined in folder review. The final exam is graded Pass or Fail only and is never factored into the grade for passing students.

Final grades for the course are determined by paper grades and not by classroom behavior, participation, or attendance (except in the case where a student has failed the course for excessive absences or missing work). Any penalties exacted for late papers or missed drafts should have been deducted from the individual paper grades.

Teachers cannot exact later penalties in addition to those imposed on the papers themselves, nor should teachers award higher grades to students whose attendance and participation were outstanding, unless their work merits it. Diligent effort, after all, will naturally contribute to higher grades. Note: we recommend that, when making deductions, teachers indicate the reasons for the lower grade clearly on the paper itself or on the final paper so that if a student appeals the grade the department will understand the reason the grade was lower than the paper's quality might indicate.

Non Passing Final Grades

At the end of term, please fill out a Grade Information Sheet (several of which will be attached to your Final Roster) for ALL STUDENTS WHO RECEIVE A NON-PASSING GRADE other than a “W”, and give it to the Director with whom you are doing Folder Review. This helps us keep track of failing students and to monitor the reasons as to why they are not passing. Below is a list of possible Non-Passing Final Grades:

F: This is a punitive failing grade. It is assigned only to students who have a failing performance on the Final Exam and/or on Papers, in combination with any of the other following problems:
  o Six absences during the term
  o The student was two final assignments behind
  o Missing assignments
  o Missing rough drafts
  o Frequently late work
NC: Students have attended the class regularly, completed all five rough and final drafts of the papers, taken the midterm and final exams, but their work is not yet passing. This is a non-punitive failing grade given to indicate that despite the students’ efforts throughout the term, their work is not yet passing. Even though some students have improved throughout the semester, they may not be strong enough as writers to complete 101. Once students retake the course, the grade is replaced. To pass 101, students should be ready for English 201, a course in which they will be expected to read long and complex texts that they must synthesize into a research paper that asserts a point of view. Those who, for example, are still struggling with reading comprehension or sentence-level error are not ready to take on the demands of an independent research project.

TF: The “temporary fail” is almost never used in 101, and only when students have already demonstrated passing work on two of the last three papers but are missing one assignment OR the final exam due to illness or other adverse circumstance. Instructors should never promise to assign a TF grade to students who need extra time and should never grant extensions beyond the last day of class. Students receiving TF grades must complete all missing work by the deadlines set in the Final Exam Memo and instructors must submit a Change of Grade Form with the department secretary in Murray 108 before the start of the following semester. All TF grades must be discussed in Folder Review.

W: If a student appears on your final roster with a note of “W” in the grade area, the student has officially withdrawn from the course. You do not have to fill out a Grade Information Sheet for a student who officially withdraws. A “W” cannot be assigned to a student by the instructor, and students cannot withdraw from 101 on their own. Students may only withdraw from 101 with a Dean’s permission (and that permission is only granted in exceptional cases). Even if students claim to have withdrawn from the course or say they will seek a withdrawal from their Deans, they must be given an “F” if their names appear on your final roster without a preexisting printed “W” in the grade area.

TZ: The TZ should only be assigned when a student is unable to finish his/her course work due to a verifiable emergency situation. Documentation from a Dean is required. All TZ grades must be discussing in Folder Review.

All grades are subject to departmental review. Instructors are expected to apply the department’s grading criteria when grading papers. If a director feels that those standards have not been applied accurately, he or she will adjust grades accordingly. Departmental review helps to protect both students and teachers by making the grading process less subjective and more transparent.
While many of the mistakes our students make are readily apparent, identifying each of these errors may not be the most valuable commenting practice. Instead, commenting becomes most productive when it takes the following question as its starting point: **what work has the student done?** Teachers should begin their comments by identifying the “promising moment” (or moments) in their students’ papers. A moment of conceptual complexity, a particularly well-analyzed quotation, or a finely crafted sentence can all serve as promising moments to which attention should be drawn. These moments deserve more than a star or check mark in the margin (which might leave a student wondering what made the moment successful in the first place). Teachers need to provide an explanatory comment along with the indication of praise (e.g., “this is particularly strong engagement with the text because you are pointing to specific words in the quotation which develop your claim”). When successful moments are praised, students benefit in two ways: first, they have a model to imitate in their very next drafts. Second, having been provided with evidence of their ability to succeed, they become more receptive to the constructive criticism that will inevitably follow.

Once instructors have identified the promising moments in their students’ papers, they must move on to the task of identifying errors. When commenting on student papers, instructors need to remember the triage method: treat the most serious problems first. Instructors should call attention to the three most pressing problems in any given paper. If, for instance, a paper has no emerging project, or no idea it wishes to develop, this should be identified as a pressing issue. If a paper does not engage with the assigned texts, or is not thinking connectively about the texts, this problem should be identified as pressing. When trying to determine which errors are most pressing, instructors should consider the grading criteria, and the fact that thesis and work with text are weighted more heavily than organization and grammar.

Most students have a handful of grammatical errors that they make again and again. This is what we call a “pattern of error.” Once a pattern of error is identified, it is beneficial to circle and correct it the first few times it occurs, and to attach a name to the error (this way the student can look it up in the grammar guide). Some instructors choose not to identify each occurrence of the error in the paper, and to instead extend an invitation to the student to work on identifying and correcting the remaining errors during office hours. Instructors should identify patterns of error rather than identifying each and every grammatical problem in a paper. By identifying a particular pattern of error in a paper, the instructor sets a reasonable task for the student’s next draft: the student must avoid that pattern (not every single error he made in his last paper).

**Patterns of Error and Grading**

According to the grading criteria, a non-passing paper “has significant sentence-level error that makes it difficult to follow,” while “a passing paper has fatal sentence-level errors under control... Although errors may appear on each page, they do not significantly
impede the meaning of the essay or undermine the credibility of the writer.” Patterns of error need to be taken into account both in terms of their frequency, and the nature of the error itself.

When a pattern of error appears more than once in every paragraph of a paper, it is considered frequent and severe. When a pattern of error only occurs once or twice in a paper, it is considered mild.

As for the nature of the error itself, certain errors, including subject-verb disagreement, verb tense shifts, sentence boundary issues (run-on and fragments), and, to a lesser extent, unclear pronoun reference, are called “fatal” errors, as they are considered severe enough to hinder the author’s ability to communicate effectively. A paper that has several fatal errors on each page may not pass.

“Non-fatal” errors include articles, preposition choices, word choice, spelling and some punctuation. Some of these, particularly the first three, may still be severe enough to prevent a paper from passing if several occur in almost every sentence. In order for students to move beyond a C+ in the class, however, they must have their errors reasonably under control.

**Teaching Students to Recognize Patterns of Error**

Sometimes you will be faced with sentences that seem overwhelming in their grammatical confusion. Here is an example from one student’s third essay:

A) “An outcome of re-thinking that people was brought up with kindness towards other can make us realize that different positive approach to problems that’s been going on.”

The temptation may be either to mark this as “awkward” and move on (which doesn’t really tell the student how to address the problem) or to start listing problems in the margin and overwhelm the student. Neither of these approaches is likely to be very effective. Instead, it is better to focus on a pattern of error, an error that occurs again and again in the student’s paper.

In order to do this, we need to find other sentences that are awkward in a similar way. Looking earlier in the same paper, we find:

B) “Re-considering a more humanitarian method of solving other problems, on the other hand, would make some difference in some situations that’s been happened lately.”

and

C) “Since now that the journalist was killed, Americans are more raged than ever.”

Sentences A and B show us that the student runs into problems when trying to contract verbs in subordinate clauses. This seems to be part of a larger difficulty with subject-verb
agreement. Once you have noticed a problem like this, go through the paper marking several of the subject-verb errors with a line in the margin. Then, name the error, and explain in your comments that although you’ve marked it in three or four places, the error occurs throughout the draft.

Mark only one or two fatal errors and one or two non-fatal errors in each paper. The problem with comparatives (“more raged” instead of “angrier”) in sentence C, while it looks particularly unnatural, is probably not serious or common enough in the student’s writing to be worth calling attention to at this stage. The student’s difficulty with subject-verb agreement takes precedence. Two or three patterns of error are probably as much as the student can learn about within two weeks before the next paper is due.

In the end comment, mention to the student that he or she has x, y or z pattern of error and that this needs to be addressed either in office hours with you or with a tutor.

1. When the student comes in to talk with you, start with the “cleanest” example you can find—the sentence with the fewest problems apart from the one you are trying to isolate. Given a choice between sentences A and B above, you would probably pick B.

2. Explain to the student what the problem is—in this case the student needs to uncontract her verb to “that has”, find the subject of “has” and decide if it is singular or plural—and help her correct it.

3. Once the student understands how to recognize and fix the problem, take her back to the final clause of sentence A and have her fix it on her own.

4. Then give her the whole sentence and see if she can find the other subject-verb problem.

5. After this, you might have her correct the rest of the mistakes you marked on her own as “homework”.

One problem may lead directly into another. Looking at sentences A and B side-by-side you might point out to the student how she uses “that’s been going on” in one sentence and “that’s been happened lately” in the other. She understands how to use a gerund correctly in one sentence but not in the other. Isolation and comparison allow her to see the difference. You may find that many ESL students who have had formal grammar training recognize the problem immediately and already know how to solve it. This should not get them off the hook because they may not be able to control the error on the final exam if they make it carelessly when they are tired. These students should still meet with you in office hours and drill on practice sentences from their papers.

You do not need expertise in the meta-language of English grammar to help students, but it is a good idea to label problems as much as you are able using terms that students can
find in a common grammar book for class. This helps you build a common language for talking with the student about his or her pattern of error.

**Activities for Addressing Patterns of Error**

By the third paper, it should be clear which errors occur most often in your students’ papers. Just as lectures on the assigned texts are less enabling than activities that require the students themselves to interpret them, so the discussion of grammar, clarity, organization, and related issues should occur in the context of workshops that require revisions and then some discussion of the results. (Not every revision is an improvement, of course.) These sorts of activities are most effective if you can talk about the mistake in the context of the students’ own writing. Examples from grammar handbooks tend to be too simple to be really useful.

Many teachers scan the rough drafts pulling sentences that contain common grammar mistakes. It helps to take one or two from every paper so that everyone sees that they have a problem and no one feels singled out. Put all of these sentences together into a worksheet and hand them out in class. You might introduce this exercise by going over some examples of the two or three most frequent or serious problems. Then have the students correct the sentences either alone or in groups. At the end of the period, you can go over the “answers” in class.
Marginal and End Comments
The importance of making careful, specific, and extensive marginal and end comments on students’ final drafts cannot be over-emphasized. Think of these comments as an ongoing conversation with your students. Your marginal and end comments will help your students see their work from the perspective of the reader. Additionally, your comments on the draft of one paper will help students be more thoughtful and deliberate in the writing of their next papers.

Marginal Comments
We ask our students to imagine themselves in conversation with the authors of the essays they read. We ask our teachers to imagine their marginal comments as their own contribution to that conversation. Marginal comments should first and foremost engage with the students’ ideas. Vague check marks or unexplained lines in the margins do not contribute to the conversation, but questions that force students to return to a given line of thinking and reconsider its direction push the conversation forward. For example, a student writing about the catastrophic effects of losing one’s sight in adulthood may claim that the loss of vision is insurmountable. An effective marginal comment would ask the student to consider some of the examples in Oliver Sacks’ essay “The Mind’s Eye: What the Blind See” in order to question this conclusion. Or, a student writing about happiness might be asked to pause to consider how a term like happiness is defined (culturally, personally, religiously, etc.). These kinds of marginal comments ask students to consider (and reconsider) the ideas they are developing.

Instructors should make marginal comments as revision oriented as possible. Rather than writing “good quotation,” explain what is good about the moment in the paper. Is it the student’s choice of quotation? Why is it a good choice? Is it the analysis of the quotation? What might the student do again to engage in the same kind of analysis? Comments that provide explanations for why a quotation is good (such as how it supports the student’s thesis, how it relates to the overall meaning of the paper, etc.) will enable students to develop their skills. The more the teacher’s comments engage with the students’ ideas as specifically addressed in the work, the better.

Avoid being too negative or demeaning in your comments. Comments such as, “I hardly see what you are getting at here” are of no value, and can in fact create animosity and a feeling of being demeaned. Being helpful, positive and constructive in your comments will also provide a good role model for students when they review each other’s work.
**End Comments**

Instructors should compose an end comment that first identifies one strength in the paper (or a promising moment), and then summarizes the two or three most pressing points of concern in the paper. These comments should be revision oriented; they should aim at providing advice about avoiding the same mistakes in the next paper. It’s especially useful to students if your end comment refers to particular places in the body of the essay. You might, for example, place a large asterisk in the margin at a promising moment in the paper and then refer back to that page and that asterisk when discussing the promising moment in the end comment. You might also use an asterisk and a double-asterisk to contrast strong and weak moments so that students can see where they do things well as well as where they don’t.

The end comment should always be written with the next assignment in mind. If some students had trouble with an idea in an essay you plan to use in the next paper assignment, you could redirect them to helpful passages in that text; or, if you find that a student does not demonstrate in detail how a key idea from one essay applies to another, you may assume that such demonstration will be called for again and help that student develop the ability to articulate that connection. Remember that the ultimate goal of written comments is to help the student to become a more effective writer.
XI. Sakai

Sakai is an on-line system used to enhance and sustain various university communities (such as classes, interest groups, or research teams). It is organized into “sites,” and instructors, group leaders, and students can create sites in order to communicate and share materials with other members on-line. Writing Program instructors are required to establish and maintain a course site using Sakai. To get started with Sakai, please visit: https://sakai.rutgers.edu.

There are many benefits to using Sakai: when students are unable to attend class, they access their course Sakai site and find their missed work right away; when inclement weather impacts class meetings, instructors use Sakai to maintain class momentum and move learning on-line; when traditional class meetings end, Sakai facilitates asynchronous conversation and learning.

Creating Your Course Site

You will need to log on to sakai.rutgers.edu. Once there, you will be prompted for your user ID, which is your Rutgers Net ID, and your Password, which is the password you use to retrieve your Rutgers e-mail. Once you have provided this information, you can then log in. Please note that it is important to use your Rutgers e-mail account information when using Sakai, otherwise Sakai will think you are a ‘guest’ and you won’t have critical privileges, such as creating your Course Site.

When you have logged in, you will be able to create your Sakai Course Site.

You will see from the tab at the top left of your screen, that you are in ‘My Workspace.’ You will also see a vertical list of options below the ‘My Workspace’ tab, and the one you will need to click on is ‘Worksite Setup.’ Then click on the red button ‘New’ at the top left of your screen. You will be asked to specify which type of worksite you would like to create: a Course or a Project site. Definitely select the ‘Course Site’!

Once this is selected, then select the academic term, Fall 2013, from the dropdown box.

Click Continue.

You will then be able to add your Roster, as you will be taken to a screen displaying course sections. Check the box that corresponds to your course section number. If you are teaching two sections of Expository Writing and only want one Sakai site, you can check both section numbers, and the rosters from both sections will be imported into your Sakai site. However, most teachers find it easiest to create a Sakai site for each section they teach.

Once you have selected the section numbers that you want, click Continue.

You are now ready to customize your Course Site, and will be taken to a screen that will do just that. The Title of your Course Site will be your section number. You will then see a
response box in which you are asked to enter a **Description** of your course, so you could add your Course Description here. This will be displayed on your Course Site’s Homepage. There will also be a window for a short description, but this should be left blank.

Add your full name into the **Site Contact Name** box and your e-mail address in the **Site Contact Email** box if it is not already there.

Click **Continue**.

You are now ready to specify what **Tools** you would like to be incorporated into your Course Site. Each tool has a short description of its functionality next to its title. Select each tool that you would like to use in your Course Site by clicking the check box next to its title. We recommend that you select the following Tools:

**Home**: For viewing recent announcements and online discussion.

**Announcements**: For posting current, time-critical information. (Each announcement, once created, can also be sent as an e-mail to all your students.)

**Assignments**: For posting assignments online. (Optional as you could post assignments in the Announcement area.)

**Chat Room**: For real-time conversations in written form. (Optional, but students might like this.)

**Discussion and Private Messages**: For an online Discussion Forum. (Optional.)

**Syllabus**: For posting the Course Description and Goals, Readings, Course Requirements, Grading and Policies. (The Syllabus, once created, can also be sent as an e-mail to all your students.)

Once you have selected these Tools, click on **Continue**.

Click the check box next to **Publish Site** to make your Course Site available to your participants. As soon as you publish your worksite, it will be live and any participants will be able to see it. If you are still selecting tools and customizing your Course Site, do not yet check the ‘Publish’ box.

Do not check the box for Global Access, as your Course is only for those with authorised access in the Rutgers Writing Program; namely your students.

Click on **Continue**.
You will be shown a screen with a synopsis of your Course Site details. Review the details to make sure that everything is correct. Click **Back** to make changes, or **Create Site** to finalize your course worksite. Please be patient as it might take a few minutes to complete the operation.

After your Course Site is complete, it will have a tab in the site navigation bar. **To enter your site, click on its tab in the site navigation bar.** Click on **Site Information**, which is close to the top of the vertical menu on the left of your screen, and you will see, once there, that your roster has been imported. There is even a photo roster, so you can see the faces of all your students!

Students log into your Course Site by logging on to sakai.rutgers.edu, using their Rutgers Net ID and the password they use to retrieve their Rutgers e-mail as their User ID and Password in Sakai. Once they have logged on, they will see your Course Site, when it is published, as a tab in the site navigation bar at the top of their screen. Please note that students must be told to check their Rutgers e-mail so as to see any e-mail notifications that you send from your Course Site.

### Customizing Your Course Site

To create an **Announcement** in your Course Site, click on the word 'Announcement' to the left of your screen. Then click on the red button, 'Add' at the top of the screen and you will be taken to a screen in which you type in the title of your announcement, and then add the text of your announcement in the response box below. When it is complete, you have the option of notifying your students by e-mail of this announcement, so click on the down arrow alongside the words 'E-Mail Notification' and then click on 'High-All Participants'. Then click on 'Add Announcement', and your announcement will be added to your Course Site, appearing on the Home Page, and will also be e-mailed.

To add your **Syllabus**, click on the word 'Syllabus' to the left of your screen, and then click on the red button at the top of your screen that says, 'Add'. Follow the same procedure as noted above, including choosing whether to notify your students by e-mail, and when you are complete, click on 'Post'. Your Syllabus will be visible to students in your Course Site when they click on the word 'Syllabus' at the left of their screen, and by e-mail if you choose to notify them this way.

**Assignments** can also be created in the same manner, by clicking on the word 'Assignment' on the left of your screen, and then on the red button ‘Add’. When you have typed in the name and content of the assignment, click on ‘Post’, and it will be visible in your Course Site. There is no E-Mail Notification for assignments. Students will see the assignment when they click on the word ‘Assignment’ on the left of their screen.

**Discussion Forums** already exist in your Sakai site, and you can start to use one by clicking on **Discussion and Private Messages** to the left of your screen, and then you will
see these Forums. You can start to use one by simply clicking on the name of the **Forum**, and then on the button that says **New Topic**. You will be taken to a screen in which you name the topic, and then have a response box into which you compose your message. When you are finished, simply click on **Submit**, and your students will be able to read your topic and start responding.
XII. PRESENTATIONS

We require each English 101 student to make three brief oral presentations in class. The Public Speaking exercises used by most teachers can be arranged in four categories: Grammar, Reading, Writing, and Context. Any of these kinds of Public Speaking exercises can be presented by a single student within a small group, by a single student before the whole class, or by a group of students before the whole class. Teachers typically vary the format and the type of presentation so as to give students the opportunity to find the ones that work best for them, as well as to expose students to the range of ways that public speaking might function.

In every case, although public speaking exercises always involve monologue—the single speaker making a sustained point before his or her peers—they should also, often, lead to dialogue of some sort. That is, we want students to treat speaking in public not just as the presentation of finished thought, but also as thinking in public: making one’s thought public, and so inviting (and expecting) response from others. Here are some suggestions for class presentations:

**Grammar Presentations**

Students must do at least one oral presentation on a grammatical issue, based on the handbook and examples they come up with themselves. As an instructor, you can help students identify grammatical errors in their writing, and to understand and apply grammatical rules during revision. Asking students to give presentations about the errors they are currently making in their own work shifts responsibility from the commenting teacher to the proactive student. Here some common topics for grammar presentations: “MLA Citation Guidelines,” “Plagiarism and Boundaries: Your Words and the Writer’s,” “Sentence Integrity When Using a Quote,” “Subject-Verb Agreement,” “Verb Tense Shift,” “Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement,” “Vague Pronoun Reference,” “Sentence Fragments,” “Run-on or Fused Sentences,” “Comma Splices,” “Other Comma Usage,” and “Apostrophe to Show Possession.” It is up to each instructor when these presentations are made and in what order. Grammar presentations are often helpful on peer review or revision days; once a group has presented on a particular topic, students can review their papers for the grammar point and then set about correcting identified errors.

**Reading Presentations**

Reading presentations typically require students to briefly discuss some aspect of the currently assigned reading. Some teachers find it more useful to have students present on a question asked ahead of time, while others require students themselves to pose questions for the class to explore. In either case, the point is to make the students initiate discussion. This works especially well when several students present on the same question or topic; inevitably there are significant and interesting differences in their presentations, and the teacher then needs to do little more than point to these for good discussion to ensue.

**Writing Presentations**
Writing presentations tend to be less aimed at starting discussion about the assigned reading (though they often do so) than at providing occasions for students to help one another produce better drafts. For instance, some teachers ask small groups of students to identify weak and strong areas in one another’s rough drafts, and then to present these to the class along with suggested revisions that they have arrived at together. On the days when rough or final drafts are due, some teachers have students present their “finished” arguments to the class, and then have chosen respondents evaluate these. When this works, students both make excellent defenses of their work and also discover ways in which their papers might be revised even further.

**Context Presentations**
Context presentations require students to present the results of research they have undertaken on some aspect of the assigned reading. But in addition to presenting such information simply as a way of explaining something in the text that had been unclear, students are also encouraged to present their research so as to “open up” the assigned reading.

**Drafts Presented as Works in Progress**
For all five papers, each student can present either a rough or a final draft as a work in progress. While a rough draft offers the most room for revision and intervention, a final draft, especially one in the middle of the semester, offers revision in the subsequent papers of the sequence. Each student has five minutes to present to the class how she has interpreted the assignment, which parts of text she is using, which points she wants to make. Having student presenters prepare a handout for the class and identifying respondents might help to focus these presentations for the audience. In the presentations, students should test out their claims. They should offer a working thesis, a focus that is entirely under construction, and they should point out their interest in it, anticipating objections and articulating some worries. The presentation should include some discussion of the parts of the text they will discuss. Students should offer a focus and then should ask for help with that focus. You can have three students present and then have the class respond, or have all six present and have students prepare questions.

**Students Presenting Readings to the Class**
Ask students to work in groups to identify key passages and terms or to unpack quotations; have the spokesperson of each group present his group’s findings to the class.

**Student Initiated Class Discussion**
Group presentations scheduled for the first class meeting after students read a new essay, can serve as a way of starting class discussion. Group members will each be responsible for a five minute talk that addresses any aspect of the new essay which they find interesting and which can relate in some way to one or more of the essays previously read in the course. Examples might include a look at how two authors approach a similar theme differently, or an examination of how two authors use personal anecdote or textual evidence.
XI. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Please review the university’s policy on academic integrity, and ask students to do the same. The policy, along with a description of the types of violations and their attending consequences, can be found on-line: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/policy-on-academic-integrity. Discussing plagiarism in the classroom is critical in a writing course, where anxiety and stress can lead to ethical violations, and where some students may be unfamiliar with proper citation procedure. Many of these violations can be prevented by providing students with a detailed lesson on MLA citation standards.

Please be advised that while the Internet has made it easier to copy other students’ work, it has also made it much easier to detect and document acts of plagiarism. If you suspect that a student in your class has engaged in plagiarism (willful or inadvertent, mild or severe) do not confront the student before speaking with a Director about the potential violation. Please provide the following materials to the Director with whom you speak:

1. The paper you suspect has been completely or partially borrowed, with all of the suspect sections highlighted.
2. The source you believe has been copied or stolen, with all borrowed passages highlighted (Turnitin should have identified the source and made it available to you).
3. The Turnitin report.
4. Your course syllabus.
5. An objective, written account of the circumstances surrounding the particular case, and a description of the assignment in question (rough draft, final draft, paper number, etc.).

The Transparency Test
When you suspect a student has cheated, place the papers under suspicion next to one another (particularly when the papers in question both belong to students in your class). Given the collaborative design of the class, some overlap of ideas can be expected; student writing will be influenced not only by readings of the assigned essays, but also by class discussion, and work with peers. This overlap should not produce papers that are identically structured, which draw on the same passages in the same order, make the same connections, draw the same conclusions, and use the same vocabulary.

The Attribution Test
Many plagiarism cases involve students who have received outside help from people not affiliated with the course and unaware of its conventions and concerns. This kind of help usually leads to papers that use language the student writer does not understand fully and makes arguments that the student writer may be unable to follow or reproduce on his own.

If you suspect that a student has plagiarized, but you do not have definitive proof, it can be useful to ask the student a series of questions: Can you explain why you chose to cite one
passage rather than another? Can you explain why you've structured your argument the way you have? Can you identify the key terms in your argument and define them?
All teachers must meet with a Writing Program Director twice during the semester, at mid-term and at the end of term. In folder review you will meet individually with one of the Writing Program Directors for one hour to review your teaching work. This is an opportunity to talk about how your class is going, to share pedagogical strategies, and to ensure that course objectives, levels of difficulty, and grading are consistent throughout the Writing Program.

During folder review, teachers should present copies of their assignments and their grade rosters as well as their students' folders in order to discuss individual students and their progress. At mid-semester review, folders for 101 should contain two papers that have gone through the full process of student revision and instructor response, and possibly a third paper at the rough draft or final stage.

During the final meeting, teachers should again bring their students' folders, containing all five rough and final essays and the final exams, and their grade rosters. This meeting usually focuses on those students whose grades present some kind of uncertainty. The Directors often assist in making pass/fail decisions.

Some Practical Guidelines for Folder Review

- **Have copies of all of your assignments.** We like to keep these for orientation purposes. If you have particularly strong assignments, we may want to publish these on our website, too. On a practical note, it's hard for us to understand the papers we're reading when we don't have the assignments. You might also want to bring drafts of your next assignments, or some ideas of what essays you want to use next; we'll be happy to look at these with you.

- **Bring all the folders from your class(es).** Of course, we realize that often the students you most want to discuss are also the students least likely to give you their folders. If a student at particular risk doesn't give you a folder, try to bring in any work you might have from him.

- **Try to collect all student folders.** In order to get as many folders as possible, you should explain to your class that Folder Review helps standardize grading across all sections. Often, students believe their instructors are too severe when assessing student work, so let them know it's in their best interests to give you their folders, since it's the only way the Program can review grades.

- **Bring in your grades and a roster.** We'll want to look at these so we can have a quick sense of how your class is doing overall and, of course, we will want to look at the
grades of particular students you're concerned about. Having a roster with you can help us look up a student in the system.

- **Bring in your attendance records.** We'll want to see how many absences the student has had in case there is a larger problem that needs to be addressed.

Some instructors may be concerned about the progress of their students at midterm. Generally, the class will show significant improvement as a whole by the third paper; however, if you have students who are clearly struggling, midterm is a good time to recommend them to one of the Writing Centers.

Midterm is also a good time to review your students’ absences. You may wish to identify students who are at risk of failing the class because of excessive absences, and you may wish to warn these students about their attendance. Sometimes issuing students a midterm progress report of sorts can head off emerging attendance problems.

You may encounter other problems with student progress or with your class in general. Remember that the Directors of the Writing Program are always more than happy to meet with you to discuss any issues or concerns you have, or to answer any questions. Often, addressing these concerns at midterm can avoid problems at the end of the semester.
XV. TEACHING SEMINAR

In addition to Orientation and Folder Review, the Writing Program offers Expository Writing teachers support in the form of a teaching seminar (required for all new Teaching Assistants and open to new Part-Time Lecturers) and Faculty Development Workshops (voluntary meetings on topics such as crafting paper assignments, writing effective marginal and end comments, helping struggling students succeed, etc.). Teachers are always welcome to visit a director to discuss issues related to their courses. Directors generally have an open door policy, though it may be useful to schedule an appointment.

The teaching seminar is designed to support instructors teaching Expository Writing at Rutgers for the first time. New Teaching Assistants from all disciplines are required to attend, while Part-Time Lecturers new to the Writing Program are strongly urged to attend.

Each seminar will meet for about an hour, with the remaining twenty minutes reserved for questions. The time spent in the seminar will inevitably save time for instructors later; learning to grade efficiently or use classroom time wisely will ease the demands teaching Expos can make on instructors.

Fall 2014 Teaching Seminar Schedule

Mandatory Meeting One: Week of September 8 – 12
- Practical Matters: Rosters, Add/Drop, Booking Computer Labs
- Identifying Students at Risk
- Course Pedagogy and the Practice of Close Reading
- Techniques for Discussing New Texts
- Crafting Assignment 1

Mandatory Meeting Two: Week of September 15 – 19
- Writing Revision Oriented Comments
- The Principles of Peer Review

Mandatory Meeting Three: Week of September 22 – 26
- Grading and Commenting

Mandatory Meeting Four: Week of September 29 – October 3
- Crafting the Midterm and Paper 3 Assignments
- Helping Students Move to the Next Grade Level
- Preparing for Folder Review

Mandatory Meeting Five: Week of October 20 – 24
- Grading Workshop
• Review Course Policies: Absences, Missing Work, etc.

Optional Meeting: Week of November 10 – 14

Mandatory Meeting Six: Week of December 1 – 5
• Preparing for the Final Exam
• Crafting the Final Exam Question
• Preparing for Final Folder Review
• Determining Final Grades

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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Seminar Leader</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>10:00 – 11:00</td>
<td>LSHB 105</td>
<td>Lynda Dexheimer</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>10:00 – 11:00</td>
<td>Murray Hall 305</td>
<td>Regina Masiello</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>3:00 – 4:00</td>
<td>Murray Hall 207</td>
<td>Regina Masiello</td>
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If for some reason you cannot attend your regularly scheduled mentoring session, please arrange to attend another section that week. Please alert both Regina Masiello and Lynda Dexheimer, should this be the case.
XVI. Special Concerns

Though students at Rutgers long ago rejected the parental authority and duties of teachers (or *in loco parentis*) so that they could lay claim to the freedoms of college life, we know that students can use a little guidance from time to time. Often, a little timely intervention on the part of the teacher can prevent students from making costly mistakes or getting into trouble. “An e-mail in time saves nine,” one might say, and both teachers and students find that e-mail is the quickest, least intrusive and most efficient way of exercising some early intervention. E-mail also creates a historical record that may be useful later in addressing student complaints.

**Absent and Disappearing Students**

It’s important to let students know early on that attendance in Expository Writing is required and the course cannot be dropped without a Dean’s permission. After four absences, they risk failing and no student should be passed who has missed six classes. Also, if students are ever two final drafts behind in the course, they have already failed and should be told so immediately to avoid any confusion.

When students miss even two sessions, it might be useful to send an email to remind them of the attendance policy and to encourage them to return to class. Sometimes student absences can create a pattern of behavior that needs to be addressed.

**Support for Students at the Writing Centers**

The Writing Program in New Brunswick has three Writing Centers. At each Writing Center, students work with tutors on a variety of issues such as reading closely and critically, understanding assignments, revising rough drafts, creating arguments, and identifying and correcting patterns of error. The goal at each center is to reinforce and strengthen the skills that teachers are trying to develop in students’ writing. Please refer all students whose reading and writing skills seem to require more than the help you can offer during office hours.

Tutoring is free to students, although they must commit to attend for at least five weeks. The Writing Centers open in the 3rd week of the semester for scheduling, and in the 4th week of the semester for tutoring. You will receive an opening announcement along with copies of referrals in your mailbox in the 2nd week of the semester. When you refer a student to the Writing Center, please complete the bottom half of the “Referral Form.” The more detailed you can be, the more a tutor can tailor the work she or he does with your student. You will receive notices when one of your students signs up, when a student misses a session, and when that student completes 3 sessions with a tutor. Please attend to these notices as soon as possible. In order to ensure that a student is getting the best
help possible, tutors find it very helpful when teachers write tutoring comments on students’ papers regarding particular skills or areas they wish the tutor to focus upon.

The three Writing Centers and their directors are:

- The Plangere Writing Center (College Avenue)
  Website: plangere.rutgers.edu
  Murray Hall, Room 304
  Phone: 732.932.1149
  Coordinator: Brendon Votipka (848.932.5338)

- Douglass Writing Center
  Website: dcwc.rutgers.edu
  135 George Street, Room 201
  Phone: 732.932.8856
  Coordinator: Jacqueline Loeb (848.932.8042)

- Livingston Writing Center
  Website: lcwc.rutgers.edu
  Lucy Stone Hall, 106A
  Phone: 848.445.4048
  Coordinator: John Holliday (848.445.5659)

As the Writing Centers operate on the same pedagogical principles as writing classes, teachers are some of our best tutors. If you are interested in tutoring, please contact the center director on that campus. The Writing Centers always welcome graduate students and teaching assistants to work as tutors.

**Student Athletes**

Below are some important guidelines and policies for instructors with student athletes in their classes.

**University Policy for Athletes**

Rutgers University leaves the issue of attendance, missed work, and make-ups regarding student athletes to the discretion of faculty. In practice, this policy often means that student athletes are able to make up work they have missed due to athletic events when an instructor knows in advance that the athlete will miss the work.

**Writing Program Policy for Athletes**

Student athletes in Writing Program courses are held to the same attendance standards as other students, with the understanding that they may miss some classes because of games. Expect a student athlete to provide a list of game days early in the term. While these days generally count as absences in the class, the individual student and instructor
should make arrangements to make up any missed work. These arrangements may involve electronic submission of a paper, an early due date, or a due date that coincides with the class meeting following the athletic event (without penalty).

Writing Center Tutoring for Athletes
Student athletes should be encouraged to register for Writing Center tutoring. All tutoring for athletes in Writing Program courses occurs in a Writing Center. This arrangement ensures that the tutoring athletes receive conforms to our "minimalist tutoring" pedagogy. Student athletes whose Close Reading assignment and/or first paper exhibit writing weaknesses more significant than the bulk of the students in the class should be given extra encouragement to attend the Writing Center. Instructors should fill out the tutoring sign-up form for these students, and speak with them individually regarding tutoring. When a student athlete receives tutoring in the Writing Center, the tutor submits a weekly progress report to the Writing Program. This report is forwarded to the student athlete’s academic advisor, providing the Writing Program with important tools to support instructors with student athletes in their classes.

Problems
Instructors should contact a Director for guidance if a student athlete (or any student) begins to accumulate absences or missed/late work. A student athlete who has more than two absences, is missing/late work, or is not passing by mid-semester must be discussed in folder review. Close attention to these problems early in a term can often correct them before they prevent a student from passing a course.

Plagiarism is another problem instructors may encounter with a student athlete. Fortunately, such problems are relatively rare. As with any student suspected of plagiarism, do not directly confront the student before speaking with a Director. Writing Program instructors are discouraged from discussing the status of a student athlete with a student’s coach or academic advisor. Refer all contact from athletic student support services directly to the Writing Program’s liaison to Academic Support Services for athletes, Peter Sorrell.
Leslie Bell refers again and again to “contradictory directives” and “confusing messages” twenty-something women experience (27). After identifying and thinking through these messages, address the following question drawn from Bell’s own title: How does the “paradox of sexual freedom” influence decisions young men and women make about relationships?

Julia

Paradox of Sexual Freedom

The complexity of the human relationship, with all its versatility, remains an inexhaustible field for study. As history has shown, the desire for independence, a commitment to democracy, and gender equality were the forces behind the sexual revolution, the beginning of sexual freedom. People around the world recognize this freedom of intimate relationship as one of their most important values. It is undisputed that the explosion of sexual freedom has meant liberation from previous bans, and it has changed the repressive attitude of society toward sex. Sex without limitations is as highly valued as freedom of speech and the right to choose. This emancipation, including liberation from harassment, dependence, and restrictions, has enabled women to be independent in an economically oriented society. The freedom to choose their own destiny, to love and be loved and have children without a complex relationship has radically transformed the notion of marriage. Psychologically flexible and able to adapt to constantly
changing circumstances, the modern young woman is trying to integrate herself, her desires, and her academic goals into the social and psychological world, as a unified, organic whole to satisfy her life expectations. Leslie Bell, a psychotherapist and a writer, in her essay "Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom," contemplates the complexity of the psychological development of heterosexual relationships under the influence of sexual freedom, recognizing it as a “paradox of sexual freedom.” Indeed, the consciousness of modern society has broken many traditional rules and brought new knowledge and new values into human interactions, thereby positioning a phenotypically transformed, committed heterosexual relationship into the sphere of uncertainty.

On the verge of the 21st century, the paradox of sexual freedom, along with the degradation of the desire for committed relationships, as one of its negative effects, seems to fit almost naturally into the sequence of such outcomes as technological-industrial progress and environmental decline, antibiotic therapy and the unbelievably rapid emergence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, breakthroughs in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer, and the significant increase in the number of new cancer cases due to environmental changes. This is either the path of humanity towards perfection or the beginning of the extinction of humankind through self-destruction. The contribution of media into the process of development of a new generation is enormously important. Bell writes about women in their twenties, “Their peers, television shows such as Sex and the City, and movies seem to encourage sexual experimentation. ... Every piece of “modern” advice about maintaining independence and using their twenties to explore and experiment sexually is layered over a piece of “old-fashioned” advice about getting
married before it’s “too late,” not being too assertive or passionate in sex, and not being too sexually experienced” (27). The triumph of individualism, the desire to escape from time and space, and the feeling of freedom without any boundaries are only some sketches on the canvas of life of twenty-something women or men. Nobody wants to think about commitment and marriage or sustainability and ecological footprint. It is still somewhere in their distant future. It seems like the young men and women are almost genetically challenged by the sexual empowerment and freedom of modern society to get engaged into promiscuous sexual activities resulting in the degradation of the moral-ethical phenotype of humankind. As a consequence, it is almost the norm rather than an exception to have promiscuous sexual relationships, which weaken the role of a committed relationship, marriage, and family. For thousands of years the human lifestyle was primarily determined by religion and church. The only moral codex that was recognized as an appropriate sexual behavior was a sexual relationship existing within the boundaries of marriage in the presence of the absolute necessity for procreation. As a rudiment of this concept, in some families, the tradition of an arranged marriage still exists. In their twenties, a lot of young people feel like their parents have no value as mentors due to their outdated attitudes, but perhaps exactly this attitude is an obstacle in the development of human relationships. The way of self-affirmation as a strong woman or man by means of multiple sexual relationships could be very thorny and not always successful. Such a way would more likely lead to disappointment, chagrin, moral devastation, and confusion, leaving no room for the desire to become involved in a committed relationship.

Considering marriage as a type of monogamous, committed relationship and its place in modern society, one can conclude that such is a social movement, as sexual
freedom jeopardizes the significance of traditional codes related with organization of social foundation as family. It is absolutely important to have sensual experiences and the correct balance between sexual relations and moral contributions to each other, without coercive restrictions, for the harmonious existence of marriage. Bell contemplates of young women’s hesitations about marriage, “What kind of a marriage should they hope for? It’s difficult to square their experiences in their twenties with marriage, which inevitably involves need, compromise, dependence, and vulnerability” (27). Indeed, marriage as a monogamous relationship is opposite to sexual and personal freedom. It is a completely different adult lifestyle, which involves the sharing and sacrificing of personal space, contributions and obligations to each other, and sometimes, the immolation of personal dreams and desires. It is very difficult not to let your personal life experiences be in the way of choosing a significant other for a committed relationship in sickness and in health, for better or for worse, and for richer or for poorer. It is complicated to make the right choices and to be guided by your heart and love, rather than to stumble onto the slippery slope of prudent, calculating, cold-blooded decision making for life. Bell describes how Jayanthi’s sexual experiences made her feel about men, “But they also weren’t “relationship material,” according to her family or herself, so this strategy “protected” her from the possibility of developing an emotional connection with the men”(36). The consideration of a human being as “relationship material” sounds incredibly cynical and heartless. Hypothetically, if an utterance such as “relationship material” gains significant utilitarian value, the authenticity of the human relationship is in great danger. Nevertheless, sexual freedom has become an important attribute of modern society, influencing a high rate of sexually transmitted diseases (STD).
When society prioritizes sexual freedom, people are encouraged to start having sexual activities at an early age, exploring and experimenting with multiple different partners and posing a great threat to human health in general. Bacterial infections are on the rise due to the increase of bacterial antibiotic resistance. The growth of STDs is a direct consequence of a model of behavior that includes ignorance of sexual education and the underestimated value of family planning programs among young people. Such behavior of individuals could be considered as a psychological setting for irresponsibility towards others. Bell exemplifies Alicia, a twenty-eight-year-old Hispanic woman with a Catholic background. Alicia’s sexual behavior is being described as that of “the good girl.” She was abstaining herself from promiscuous relations and was saving her virginity for committed relationships. Bell expounds, “When she [Alicia] finally did have sex, in committed relationships, being a good girl didn’t protect Alicia from STDs--she contracted gonorrhea from one partner and genital warts from another” (36). This example underlines that men, as well as women, are posing a threat to human health by neglecting the importance of a stable sexual relationship. People with unrestrained sexual relations are at higher risk of being infected. Moreover, the use of contraception does not guarantee complete protection from STDs. Therefore, it takes the whole society to be morally obligated to respect each other in order for a single individual to be psychologically and physiologically stable and healthy. The psychological disappointment, which Alicia had acquired thought her sexual experience, could potentially negatively affect her intimate relations in the future. As a consequence, all that has been said above can serve as an explanation to why young girls like Alicia or Jayanthi will categorize all men into the "relationship material" and "non-relationship material." Bell writes in her essay, “She
Jayanthi reflected that she loved part of it [being a bad girl and having promiscuous relations], but also felt lucky for not having gotten STDs and not having been raped or killed” (33). Here we see that the sexual freedom is setting up the stage not only for STDs but also for violent behavior, which gains strength in the form of sexual abuse. Men’s nature is to be strong, warrior-type creatures. The level of testosterone in conjunction with sexual freedom could be the best or the worst combination.

It is not a secret that, despite their gender or cultural background, people are looking for relationships where they can feel happy and beloved, cherished, and cared for. Sexual freedom and experimentation, in my opinion, have the right to exist in a relationship between people who are in love. Indeed, the sphere of love and sexuality is one of the most important spheres of a person’s life, but it is his or her responsibility to manage it with great reverence. Human sexuality is primarily intended for the deeper unity of two loving people. The future of humanity starts today. The most precious legacy that each generation could pass on to their children is an example of true love, respect, and devotion between a man and a woman. The foundation of true love is a deep unity of two people who are “sealed” by a sexual relationship. Love, affection, mutual respect, and understanding are some of the important qualities that must be permanently attached to sexual freedom in order to make harmonious, heterosexual relationships possible.
According to selections from Leslie Bell’s *Hard To Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom*, twenty-something women “systematically employ certain unconscious defenses to resolve their internal conflicts” (28). In his essay, “Immune to Reality,” Daniel Gilbert also highlights a psychological process he calls “the psychological immune system.” When discussing “cooking the facts,” he explains: “The benefit of all this unconscious cookery is that it works” (Gilbert 135). Both authors describe psychological mechanisms as “unconscious.” What happens when we become aware?

Jordan

**Absolutely Nothing: Our Reactions to the Inner Mind**

The human mind is a complex device that knows what it takes to make itself happy. When one is in a less than favorable situation, you have probably noticed your mind employ such unconscious defensive mechanisms, and classified it by a common word that is heard all of the time, overthinking. What is overthinking? Well I’ve always believed that to be our conscious understanding of unconscious psychological happenings that, until I’ve read the explanations stated in Daniel Gilbert’s, “Immune to Reality,” I have never really been able to explain any better than, “Eh, I’m just overthinking it.” In Leslie Bells *Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom*, she explains how this unconscious phenomenon applies to young women by using the term “splitting.” She defines splitting as “a tendency to think about in either/ or patterns and to insist that one cannot feel two seemingly contradictory desires at once” (28). The fact of the matter is that when we become aware of these unconscious psychological mechanisms nothing
changes. Our minds are specifically programmed to act a certain way in specific situations, and simply knowing that we participate unwillingly in such things as “cooking the facts” really doesn’t change how we perform in certain situations.

These unconscious processes that our minds put into motion to deal with problems is an enigma. In Gilbert’s essay he makes it really easy to understand this strange, unconscious thought process that we have all felt before by putting a name to it. He coins the phrase, “psychological immune system,” and furthermore goes on to explain how it “protects us when we suffer wrenching setbacks but not when we try to cope with minor ones” (132). It takes these major setbacks and distorts them to a more manageable “favorable fact” that we can handle. On the other hand, it looks at the minor setbacks we deal with as meaningless issues that we can handle on our own, and because of this we may perceive these smaller issues as more detrimental to our minds. This is where we really have to look deep inside our own psyche and assess a time where we think our psychological immune system has come into play. Gilbert uses the example of being left standing at the alter by your fiancé. Now, depending on your personality and who you are, this can be a pretty devastating setback that you need help coping with. Instantaneously, your psychological immune system goes to work to make justifications on why this shattering experience occurred. You start “cooking these facts” to work towards one of your brains most primal goals, to be happy. When you start making these facts up in your mind, usually you can tell that you are bending the situation to be in your favor, but honestly does that change the fact that you are consciously unconsciously doctoring the situation? Not at all. Because after all, who doesn’t want to be happy? Isn’t that we are all working for? So when Gilbert explains “The benefit of all this unconscious cookery is that it
works,” that’s just it, it works. When we look back to Bell’s psychological findings, we see yet another conscious unconscious cognizance mechanism that is referred to as “splitting.” Similar to “cooking the facts,” it was something that these young women’s minds were programmed to perform as a defensive process to “manage anxiety and to defend against uncertainty” (28). She says it right in her quote; their minds were programmed. This psychological predetermining is an attribute that we are all intuitive of, and have to learn to live with. These defensive mechanisms that we are born with create biased, yet favorable, ways of life.

Now, the unconscious defenses that we come up with aren’t a catchall to always make us happy. If this were the case, well we wouldn’t know anything but happiness. The “psychological immune system” has some parameters and stipulations. The deliberations that we come up with must be credible to ourselves. Whether it is “cooking the facts” or “splitting,” our minds won’t just accept anything to secure our happiness. In Gilbert’s example, he talks about the judge and jury experiment. It was easier for the subjects to get over being judged by one person because they just took it as an “interpersonal rejection that everyone experiences from time to time.” On the other hand, when the subjects were rejected by an entire jury he explains that, “Being rejected by a large and diverse group of people is a demoralizing experience because it is so thoroughly unambiguous and hence it is difficult for the psychological immune system to find a way to think about it that is both positive and credible” (136). If the strict conditions are not met for the psychological immune system to work, it won’t. Because there was a group of people judging the subjects, it was a lot more difficult to make a favorable situation from the rejection. Bell talks about how, “It’s no wonder that the women I interviewed struggle to square these
contradictory messages with their own individual experiences” (27). This is a prime example of these young women’s minds trying to take these mixed messages and make a credible justification so that they can rationalize their thoughts and experience happiness.

Just because we are aware of the processes that are occurring doesn’t mean that we don’t still have regrets about the decisions our minds are making. Gilbert defines regret as “an emotion we feel when we blame ourselves for unfortunate outcomes that might have been prevented had we only behaved differently in the past, and because that emotion is decidedly unpleasant, our behavior in the present is often designed to preclude it” (137). Regret is a feeling of unhappiness that our brain is constantly trying to pick out and avoid. Although being aware of the psychological mechanisms our minds are programmed to use doesn’t change much, being aware of certain aspects that can be attached to the unconscious defenses our minds practice can help us on our road to happiness. Being able to recognize what causes regret and how to pick it out and isolate it is detrimental in avoiding it in the future. The stipulation to this is that there are two different causes of regret. “Most people think they will regret foolish actions more than foolish inactions” (Gilbert 138). Meaning that if we actively make a decision that is the wrong one, we will regret it over passively standing by and having a wrong decision occur. Knowing this piece of psychological knowledge means that we can better lead our minds in the right direction by avoiding certain types of regret, and although the psychological immune system itself is unchangeable, we can have a direct effect on the information that goes into it to be processed. As Gilbert states, we know that “the psychological immune system has a more difficult time manufacturing positive and credible views of inactions than of actions” (138). Bell’s writing tells the story of a “twenty-something” Jayanthi who
makes conscious decisions in her choices of relationships with men. Her first relationship was one that can be described as inaction. She let the relationship she was in “happen” and unfold as a new experience. When she found out that he “played” her by being in multiple relationships with multiple women at the time they were together, she felt devastated by the choices she made. We cannot change the process that our minds are programmed to think, but we can tweak our actions to prevent the process from having such a big input on our thoughts and actions by changing the aspects of our thought processes that we control such as action and inactions.

Although we can try to change the process before it gets to our psychological immune systems, such as regret, there are certain aspects of our life that are constantly being evaluated by these psychological defenses, and are unchangeable or “inescapable.” This is explained by stating how “we just can’t make the best of fate until it is inescapable, inevitably, and irrevocably ours” (Gilbert 141). If we know for a fact that we are going to be stuck with something for an extended period of time, we are more accepting of whatever it may be because we know there is nothing we can do about it. Even though that we are aware that our little brother is extremely annoying, there is nothing that you can do to change it and you learn to live with it and accept it. That is how our minds work, and just because the fact that we are aware that something strange is happening in our thinking process, there is just simply no change because after all your mind is going to do what it is programmed to do to get what it wants, happiness. The women in Bell’s book were experiencing this internal conflict when trying to make their own identities in that complex and developmental stage in their lives. These women felt inescapable of the archetype that they fit into and thereby became “cookie cutter” in the sense that they came to terms with
the psychological deficiency they fit into whether it be the “sexual woman, the relational woman, or the desirable woman.” Although there are aspects of our psychological processes we can influence, there are also the characteristics that cannot be changed, which is why becoming aware of these mechanisms changes nothing.

As we find out more information about why people make the decisions they make, we will better be able to influence these so called “unconscious” traits, but we are a long way away from actually being able to change the way the mind thinks and perceives. The programming that we are born with is unchangeable by nature. They are instinctive processes that do not change just because we are aware of them. Bell and Gilbert both call their processes “unconscious,” but the paradox is that most of us actually are aware of the “behind the scene” actions we are performing and don’t have any means, or desire, to change them.

Works Cited

According to selections from Leslie Bell’s *Hard To Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom*, twenty-something women “systematically employ certain unconscious defenses to resolve their internal conflicts” (28). In his essay, “Immune to Reality,” Daniel Gilbert also highlights a psychological process he calls “the psychological immune system.” When discussing “cooking the facts,” he explains: “The benefit of all this unconscious cookery is that it works” (Gilbert 135). Both authors describe psychological mechanisms as “unconscious.” What happens when we become aware?

Awareness and Happiness: Ignorance is Truly Bliss

In Leslie Bell’s *Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom*, it is young women’s natural instinct to protect themselves using a psychological defense called “splitting,” which she describes as a women splitting different personality characteristics, such as sexual desires and levels of promiscuity, into separate exclusive categories. Daniel Gilbert also discusses psychological defense in his essay “Immune to Reality,” though his essay focusing primarily on what he calls “cooking the facts”. Gilbert describes this as how people unconsciously view facts through different filters to allow themselves to cope with dissatisfying events. Awareness, starting at becoming aware of how people are “ought to act” according to their surroundings, begins a path of awareness and conclusions that ultimately leads to making people unhappy no matter what choices they make. Becoming aware of how people are supposed to act causes people to realize they are not making the choices their environment promotes, giving them a sense of guilt.
While people maintain psychological defenses unconsciously to fight against this guilt, once a person becomes aware of their mechanisms they become ineffective; the person ends up being less protected and confused or unhappy.

People’s state of awareness has a great effect on their mood and whether they find a way to live their life in happily. The issue with not having awareness is not being able to connect with yourself and find your own identity. Gilbert argues that, “The benefit of all this unconscious cookery is that it works, but the cost is that it makes us strangers to ourselves,” (Gilbert 135). While being a stranger to ourselves is not ideal, the unconscious work we are doing (“cooking the facts”) allows us to cope with disappointments. If a person was to become aware of how they are rationalizing events, the cookery fails to work. Even if we are no longer strangers to ourselves, becoming aware does not allow for a more satisfying life. Even though this guarantees unhappiness, the alternative is not necessarily more appealing. By being unaware, a person lacks the self-awareness to make his or her own choices. One of Leslie Bell’s study participants Jayanthi demonstrates how awareness causes more confusion than fulfillment. When describing her jumps from being a bad to a good girl, she said, “I was just like 'I don't want to be the poster child, so the other extreme is this.' It was like the Virgin Mary or the ho. And I was going to the other side. And I just didn't like that. And I was like, “Okay, I’m not gonna do this anymore.’ I’d try not to do it and then it’d be the other extreme. I wouldn’t find anybody meaningful.” (Bell 33). Even though Jayanthi would recognize her extremes as a form of rebelling and then attempting redemption, she was arguably less happy with her decisions than she would have been if she stayed unaware. By Jayanthi saying that she wouldn’t find anybody meaningful, it is clear how even though she was conscious of her actions and
consequences, she was not moving on a path towards fulfillment. She couldn’t find an identity of her own, but was busy making her choices based on outside influences. She originally made the conscious decision to stop being so well behaved only to be sexually promiscuous and then jump back and forth between both alter egos. She is more confused about who she herself as a person is because of her conscious switches from one end of the spectrum to another. Her awareness of her extreme actions leaves her feeling confused and unhappy, shown by her inability to chose whether she wanted to be as she stated “the Virgin Mary or the ho”. not being able to find any mate who she was connected to.

While Jayanthi’s awareness leaves her more confused then ever, she is not alone in her dissatisfaction due to awareness. Awareness is in part due to the mixed messages given to women in their twenties. Bell points out how these messages are often paradoxes: “And real women, not those in magazines, books, and movies, often contend with messages from their families, religions, and partners that they ought not to be sexually assertive, or sexually active at all…These confusing messages are in contrast to the clear and helpful direction young women in the twenty-first century receive about how to succeed academically and professionally,” (Bell 27). Being told how to act makes women conscious of their actions, not allowing them to cope using unconscious defense. Women are told by their culture or religion to do things such as repress their sexual desires until they meet their husband, so there is no way to create an explanation for their actions if they do otherwise. While this defense system seems like a good solution, when women become aware of their defenses the psychological immune system being ineffective. “Second, deliberate attempts to cook the facts are so transparent that they make us feel
cheap,” (Gilbert 134). Since the women cannot live in denial, any attempt to fabricate an excuse feels fraudulent and is therefore ineffective. The women are aware of how they should act, leading to them realizing they are not acting how their environment expects them too, as shown earlier, putting these women in a position where they know what they are doing is considered wrong. This awareness probably would not be so detrimental if the messages weren’t so conflicting that a woman has to choose one or the other, but as Bell states: “Their twenties ought to be a decade of freedom and exploration. But in interviews and in my psychotherapy practice with young women, I have found them to be more confused than ever about not only how to get what they want, but what they want,” (Bell 26). While their culture tells them to remain virgins, social pressure tells women to be empowered and be sexually free in their twenties. These twenty-something women are aware of what they are told to be from their surrounding environment so they cannot make excuses for themselves, but they are still dissatisfied because what others in their surrounding preach is not necessarily what will make them happy. In essence, women being told they to behave certain ways are the wood and the mixed messages are the fire, creating very unhappy circumstances even if women are no longer strangers to themselves.

As shown, the effects of awareness at all levels cause different consequences which leads to more unhappiness. The realization of the defenses actively attempting to make excuses is not effective. Gilbert says, “When we cook facts, we are similarly unaware of why we are doing it, and this turns out to be a good thing, because deliberate attempts to generate positive views contain seeds of their own destruction,” (Gilbert 134). The “seed” Gilbert is referencing is the awareness of the false positivity. If a person feels
that they are purposely putting a positive spin on an unpleasant fact, it could make them feel even worse about the event because they know they are trying to trick themselves as if they aren’t smart enough to know the truth. This translates to Bell’s research when Jayanthi comes to the realization of just how confused she was. “And when I was doing everything, I was censoring myself, ‘cause I didn’t know what… I wanted. I kind of knew what I wanted, but I wasn’t able to really express that. I wasn’t able to really say no. I wasn’t able to be honest to myself,” (Bell 34). Previously Jayanthi lived her life thinking that her promiscuous ways were making her happy and keeping her safe from getting hurt from men. Once she slide back and forth from the good girl side of the spectrum to the bad girl personality a few times and her parents expressed their complete disappointment with her, she was conscious of how her actions were not giving her satisfaction. Jayanthi felt deep down that her overly sexual lifestyle was not making her happy and that she didn’t really want to live that way, but she was trying to trick herself into thinking that she was perfectly satisfied with her adventurous nights. Her awareness of her own tricks was not making her feel more settled into her identity; in fact, she was almost more of a stranger to herself knowing that her bad girl lifestyle was too much but continuing it anyway. Jayanthi’s “seed of destruction” was firmly planted and it was making her unhappy with her choices, no matter what side of the spectrum they resided on. Even when she knew that she didn’t want to be the bad girl, trying to trick herself into being a good girl seemed equally as fake. “Being a good girl gave Jayanthi some clarity and purpose but it didn’t feel like an identity of her own,” (Bell 33). So even though she wasn’t living in ignorance rationalizing her decisions, her awareness left her equally if not more unhappy. The good
girl identity was a cheap trick, one which she recognized because of her conscious
decision to occasionally relive the poster child alter-ego.

While unconscious psychological mechanisms can make a person a “stranger to
themselves”, being aware doesn’t leave a person any more happy or fulfilled. The first
step is becoming aware of what the people in their surrounding environment expect from
them, only to be followed by the awareness of not satisfying their demands. This is
followed by awareness of their psychological immune system attempting to rationalize their
decisions, making them feel cheap and rendering them equally if not more as unhappy as
before. The confusing messages and trying to please everyone produces ever
dissatisfying situations. Becoming conscious of these defenses as well as aware of what
they “should” be like according to their environment makes them useless and tends to
leave the person more unhappy than they were previously.
Sample Paper 4

According to selections from Leslie Bell’s *Hard To Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom*, twenty-something women “systematically employ certain unconscious defenses to resolve their internal conflicts” (28). In his essay, “Immune to Reality,” Daniel Gilbert also highlights a psychological process he calls “the psychological immune system.” When discussing “cooking the facts,” he explains: “The benefit of all this unconscious cookery is that it works” (Gilbert 135). For paper three, I want you to consider what works at The Citadel. Susan Faludi reminds us that the college has no military affiliation – but we must remind ourselves it is a university granting college degrees. For paper three, consider the following prompt: **What role do unconscious psychological mechanisms (like “splitting” and “the psychological immune system”) play in education at The Citadel?**

Ian

Learning Experiences: Teaching How To Avoid

Education is a vital part of life, because it plays a huge role in human development. For some, education is about acquiring knowledge or skill; for others education is about seeking a kind of personal fulfillment. Sometimes, education is about all of these things at once. Education at the Citadel, a military college on Charleston’s Ashley River that is not connected to the U.S. military, teaches cadets more than just academics, but also, according to the school, how to be a man and what it means to be masculine. Studying in a school with a male-dominant student body creates an interesting environment for cadets. In Susan Faludi’s, *The Naked Citadel*, she writes about her experiences and investigation of the behavior of men at the Citadel. She writes about how the men react when she asks about why women cannot attend The Citadel. She also includes experiences of hazing
from incoming freshmen known as “knobs”. There are defensive mechanisms that can explain why cadets behave such ways and their reasoning behind the idea that women cannot attend the Citadel. One defensive process that can help explain why the men in The Citadel behave the way they do is the “psychological immune system”. In Daniel Gilbert’s, *Immune to Reality*, he writes about how people use the “psychological immune system” to protect themselves from emotional pain. The “psychological immune system” is a defensive process that protects a person from bad experiences. “Splitting” is another defensive process that can help explain such behavior. In Leslie Bell’s, *Hard To Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom*, she explains a defensive process she calls “splitting, and how it works in the mind of women. “Splitting” is the binary way of thinking people use to seek approval by society. Although she talks about how “splitting” works in women, cadets at the Citadel show similar “splitting” behavior that Bell mentions in her article. Both authors attempt to explain psychological defense mechanisms that men and women invoke in different situations, and these mechanisms help explain the behavior of cadets at the Citadel. The men at the Citadel use these psychological mechanisms to develop explanations for their violent behavior that allow them to bond with their male classmates and free them from societal judgment.

A version of Gilbert’s “psychological immune system” serves as a defensive process to help the cadets create excuses to prevent women from ever becoming a part of The Citadel. They create these excuses to make themselves feel better and to avoid any other types of explanation. In Gilbert’s writing, he explains, “we pay more attention to favorable information, we surround ourselves with those who provide it, and we accept it uncritically” (Gilbert 146). Gilbert explains that we tend to surround ourselves with things we want to
hear, and with people who say the same things we might say. The men at the Citadel are
doing this by surrounding themselves with other men who also are in favor of keeping
women out. They then create positive views of their exclusion of women from bad
experiences to help themselves feel better about the situation. In Faludi’s text, she talks to
some of the Cadets in the academy and asks them why they think women should not be
able to attend the Citadel. One of the cadets replies: “Studies show- I can’t cite them, but
studies show that males learn better when females aren’t there” (Faludi 83). The phrase
“studies show” explains that the cadet is trying to show real evidence to better his
reasoning. He also then states, “I can’t cite them”, which presents an uncertainty in his
response. This would make his statement hard to believe since he cannot cite from which
study he acquired such knowledge. On the same page, another cadet replies by saying,
“You cannot put a male and a female on that same playing field,’ though he couldn’t say
exactly why” (Faludi 83). The cadet mentions “same playing field”. The “playing field” he
speaks of is unknown. It can be the Citadel, or the Corps of Cadets. He can also be
implying that men and women are not equal. Faludi also mentions that the cadet “couldn’t
say exactly why” because he was just making an excuse to avoid an explanation. The
cadets were both unspecific and uncertain. The uncertainty also shows that the cadet may
possibly be lying and just making an excuse to have an explanation. The “psychological
immune system” is helping the men create an explanation that is helping them feel better
and to justify their position, but not completely explaining how they truly feel.

The Citadel as a school, aside from the cadets, uses the “psychological immune
system” to avoid explanations. The Citadel also uses the “psychological immune system”
to stay in control over the cadets. According to Gilbert, the “psychological immune system”
helps produce positive views of negative experiences to make us happy: “…when experiences are unpleasant, we quickly move to explain them in ways that make us feel better” (Gilbert 143). Gilbert writes “quickly”, to show us that “we” come up with reasons so fast without taking time to think about what we say. In the academy, although there are female professors, the cadets try to keep women out of the Corps of Cadets because they claim that it would affect their performance negatively. In Faludi’s text, Boo, the legendary Citadel elder, addresses this issue. He says, ‘‘With women, there’s going to be sexual harassment.’ His wife, Margaret, counters, ‘Oh, honey, those cadets are harassing each other right now.’ ‘That’s different,’ he says. ‘That’s standard operating procedure.’” (Faludi 92). Boo believes that if women join the Corps of Cadets, there will be sexual harassment. When his wife counters his claim, he “quickly” comes up with a reason to counter his wife. Boo’s “psychological immune system” causes him to come up with a reason to counter his wife in order to negate the negative response of his wife. Boo says that the harassment is “standard operating procedure”. He is implying that the “harassment” is something the cadets have to do, as if it is a requirement by the Citadel for cadets to do. The “psychological immune system” does not only help Boo come up with a reason, but it also justifies the control the Citadel has over the cadets. The Citadel requires the cadets to harass each other because it is “standard operating procedure”. The use of the “psychological immune system” helps the Citadel keep women out of the Corps of Cadets and keeps control over the cadets.

When it comes to education at the Citadel, men use “splitting” to protect themselves from peers and to seek approval by other men at the Citadel. The men use this defensive mechanism to help sustain their social status at the Citadel. According to Leslie Bell,
“multiple splits that people invoke at different times and in various situations to manage anxiety and to defend against uncertainty” (Bell 28). Men in The Citadel use “splitting” “to manage anxiety” against the other men. Specifically, the young incoming freshman students, also known as “knobs”, are the ones who use “splitting” to protect themselves from the upperclassmen. The freshmen students protect themselves from upperclassmen who act out in a way that “knobs” accept and forces “knobs” to act in the same way to “fit in”. Faludi writes about some of the things the men do and talk about in school in her article. In Susan Faludi’s article, she writes, “Vergonolle, a magna cum laude graduate of the Citadel class of ’91, recounted several such stories to me, and added that bragging about humiliating an ex-girlfriend is a common practice- and the more outrageous the humiliation, the better the story, as far as many cadets are concerned” (Faludi 94). Faludi describes the humiliation of an ex-girlfriend as a “common practice”. She is using this phrase to show us that humiliating an ex-girlfriend is something that the men in The Citadel do and talk about often. Faludi also mentions that “the more the outrageous the humiliation, the better the story”, which implies that the cadets may be competing with each other. The phrase “the better the story” shows this implication by explaining that the more humiliating, the “better” the story is. This may cause competitive cadets to humiliate their ex-girlfriends on purpose to have a “better” story and so other cadets will accept them in The Citadel. The cadets bond together and through the time they spend together, a relationship forms. They help each other out with whatever they can, not because they want to, but because it is their duty and everyone else does it. In her writing, Faludi talks about how the cadets help each other and why they do it. She writes, “‘When we are in the showers, it’s very intimate,’ a senior cadet said. ‘We’re one mass, naked together, and it
makes us closer…. You’re shaved, you’re naked, you’re afraid together.” (Faludi 102). A senior claims that the cadets take care of each other. They do this to keep an intimate relationship between each other. This helps with the approval of the freshmen by the upper classmen. The cadet says that it makes them “closer” to show the relationship that forms when the cadets do things for each other. The senior also uses the word “together” to show that almost everything they do is “together”, as “one”. Then she talks to a couple cadets about a place where they do not have to act and pretend to be something you are not. A couple pages later, a cadet says, “You don’t have to be a leader. You can play back seat. It’s a great relief. You can act like a human being and not have to act like a man” (Faludi 107). The cadet uses the terms “don’t have to” and “not have to” to show a limitation. It also shows a great relief lifted off their shoulders. They feel like they are pressured to “act” like a man because everyone else is. The cadet shows this by using the word “act”. The word “act” implies that the cadets are pretending and behaving a different way because they have to. “Splitting” causes the men to act this way by forcing them to “act like a man” to seek approval by the other cadets in The Citadel. “Splitting” serves as a mask. It protects the cadets’ identities, and helps the seniors accept the “knobs” as their own. Cadets use “splitting” to cope with the fact that everyone else acts like some concept of a man, and in order to fit in, he too must “act” that way. “Splitting” causes them to pretend to be someone they are not because they are not sure who they are. Acting like the Citadel version of a man is the only thing they know to do, because the Citadel enforces it and it is associated with power and masculinity.

The defensive processes from Gilbert and Bell’s essays explain the behaviors the cadets have in the school. It explains why they think women do not belong at the Citadel. It
also explains that they behave this way to seek approval and to better their education. The "psychological immune system" serves as a shield, and protects cadets from bad experiences and explanations. “Splitting” acts as a mask and a support to survive through the school. The cadets are not the only people who use these defensive mechanisms. The Citadel itself also uses defensive mechanisms in order to stay in control over the cadets. The “psychological immune system” helps come up with quick reasons to justify irrational actions performed by cadets and the Citadel as a college. The defensive mechanisms become a coping strategy for many cadets. It helps cadets cope with difficulties, to deal with insecurities, and other many problems they face as they attend the Citadel.

Works Cited


Sample Paper 5

In “Love 2.0,” Barbara Frederickson makes the startling claim that personal identity is not a stable conception and that persons are always in the process of becoming something else. She writes, “Constancy, ancient Eastern philosophies warn, is an illusion, a trick of the mind. Impermanence is the rule—constant change, the only constancy...Seen in this light, your body is more verb than noun: It shifts, cascades, and pulsates; it connects and builds; it erodes and flushes” (109). If persons are truly “impermanent” fixtures, because they are always “shifting with each breath [they] take,” then any discussion of the individual as such needs to shift its focus away from the person and onto the various aspects that make persons become who they are (109). So, in your third paper, use passages from Frederickson’s text, as well as Bell’s and Stout’s, to form an original argument in response to the following question: To what extent is the notion of a stable and individualized sense of self a fiction?

Stephanie

Individualization and Stability

In our readings, Leslie Bell’s “Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom,” Martha Stout’s “When I Woke Up Tuesday Morning, It was Friday,” and Barbara Frederickson’s “Love 2.0: How Our Supreme Emotion Affects Everything We Think, Feel, Do, and Become,” there is a common theme about identity and stability. In all three texts identity is not stable or consistent, instead it is always changing depending on what happens to a person and the choices they make. Barbara Frederickson writes in her essay that, “Constancy...is an illusion, a trick of mind. Impermanence is rule-constant change, the only constancy...this is especially true for living things, which...change or adapt as needed in response to changes in context” (109). Frederickson suggests it is just part of human life to constantly change, that “constant change” is the only “constancy” because people are constantly “adapt[ing]” to “respon[d]” to all the
“changes” around them. A person’s identity is constantly changing due to either context or free will.

A person’s relationship with their trauma can cause a huge rip in their identity making them change who they are. Stout had said that, “the person who suffers from a severe trauma must decide…and in the manner of the true hero, she must choose to take the risk” (382). What Stout is saying is that for a person to get past their traumatic experience they must “choose” and “decide” to take the “risk” of becoming a different person. Jayanthi from Bell’s essay was one person who “chose” to change her life after a traumatic experience. Bell writes: “Jayanthi’s strategy shifted from being a bad girl who was ‘up for anything’ to being a bad girl who was in control…being a bad girl allowed Jayanthi to control her identity” (36, 34). What Bell is saying by this is that Jayanthi refused to let her bad experience control her. Jayanthi chose to come up with a “strategy” to stay in “control,” and she believed that in order to “control” her “identity” she needed to have a “strategy shift.” Jayanthi took the relationship with her trauma and with her own free will changed her identity. Jayanthi was just one person who was able to alter her personality after a traumatic event but this is not a one in a million case. Julia from Stout’s essay was another person who also chose to alter her life by getting counseling – but she had unconsciously chosen to alter her life during trauma. Stout states that “while she was being abused, Julia developed the reaction of standing apart from herself and the situation. She stopped being there…part of her consciousness that she thinks of as her self was not there; it was split off…therefore in some sense protected” (389). What Stout is saying about Julia is that she unconsciously took her abusive trauma and separated it from her identity to protect “her self.” Julia began to “stand apart” from her trauma and keep it away from
“her self” because by doing that she was “in some sense protected.” By “standing apart,” not “being there,” and “split[ing] off” she could protect her identity and maintain her sense of “self.” Julia and Jayanthi both responded to trauma by changing their identity. Jayanthi had a “strategy” to keep in control and Julia “split off” to keep her sense of “self,” while Julia’s response was automatic and uncontrolled. While relationships to traumatic experience have a big impact on a person changing their identity, like it did with Julia and Jayanthi, it is not the only type of relationship that can alter a person’s identity.

A person’s relationship with the environment they grew up in can have as much of an impact on their identity as that of a traumatic relationship. In Fredrickson’s essay she writes about two different home situations. Regarding the first situation Frederickson discusses “when an infant and parent do click, their coordinated motions and emotions show lots of mutual positive engagement…positivity resonates back and forth between them” (116-117). The other home situation involved parents and infants “show[ing] little mutual engagement…these pairs are simply less attuned to each other, less connected…rare moments when they are engaged, the vibe that joins them is distinctly more negative” (117). What Fredrickson is saying is that if one grows up in a happy environment, positive energy is more likely to surround them as opposed to those who grow up in a negative household are more likely to have a negative energy around them. This is significant because environments have a big impact on a person’s identity. Those with “positive engagement” will have “positivity resonate” while those that are “less attuned” will have a much more “negative” energy about them. Both Bell and Stout treated patients that where “less attuned” with their family and grew up in a “negative” household, but these women also tried to take control. Alicia from Bell’s essay grew up in a “negative”
environment. Alicia’s relationship with her environment is what drove her and her free will to live a much more “positive” life. Bell writes, “the good-girl strategy, Alicia also adopted it...to prove that she was different from them by not becoming a teen mom or a high school dropout...Alicia’s rebellion was to succeed academically and to be different from her family” (37). What Bell is saying is that Alicia decided to adopt a “strategy” that would keep her from becoming like the rest of her family. Alicia chose to create a strategy because she wanted to be “different”; she did not want her identity to be defined as a “teen mom” or “high school dropout.” Alicia wanted to “succeed academically” and become the person she wanted, and so she took the “negative” energy of her environment and with her free will was able to “adapt” a “strategy” that would lead her to a “positive” future where she “succeed[ed] academically.” As Alicia took control of the “negative” environment she grew up in, Seth from Stout’s essay accomplished the same. Seth grew up in an abusive home, much like Julia did, and Stout tells Seth, “it was your reality, and of course you never questioned it any more than any other child questions his reality,” and Seth replies with “…there’s this brief moment when I know I’m about to go away, but I still have time to try to keep it from taking over” (395). What these quotes are saying is that the abusive home that Seth grew up in was his entire life and at times Seth wants to run away from his current situations but he at least recognizes that he is able to take control of his self and whether or not he wants to go “away.” This is significant because Seth’s identity involves this traumatic environment but he has to choose whether or not he wants to keep on living his life. The traumatic environment was Seth’s “reality” and it was deeply integrated into his identity. The “reality” is so much for Seth to take that he often wants to “go away,” but with his free will he can “try to keep it from taking over,” which he is finding through counseling.
Seth is choosing to deal with the environment because he does not want it to “take[en] over” his identity. While the trauma will always be a part of Seth’s “reality” and identity, he can still “try to keep it from taking over” by taking control of his identity and shaping it the way he wants it to be shaped. Alicia and Seth both had a relationship with the environment they grew up in and while it did become part of their identity they were able to take that “negative” energy and create their own identity with the different paths they chose.

Relationships with trauma and environment greatly impact a person’s identity but a person’s relationship with love can create an everlasting wound that could carry on all their lives. Fredrickson writes about the effect that love can have, “through love, you become a better version of yourself. And as your better self, you experience love more readily” (120). What Fredrickson is saying is that the more love a person experience the more love they will find in their lives. Unfortunately, Jayanthi from Bell’s essay was negatively affected by her first relationship with love. Bell writes, “in that first experience she felt devastated and to emotionally involved…she distanced herself from the men she was involved with” (32). What this quote is saying is that Jayanthi became more distant after her first relationship because she did not want to get hurt again, and in turn her identity became someone who was “distant[er]” and not “emotionally involved”. Jayanthi had not received the love that was supposed to replicate into her other relationships so she had chosen to “distance herself” from men because her first relationship showed her that she could not get “emotionally involved.” Instead of receiving a “better version of herself” Jayanthi was left to develop her own idea of love. As soon as Jayanthi decided to “distance herself” her aloofness became part of her identity. Jayanthi first relationship with love changed her identity forever and with her free will decided to take the experience and shape her identity around it.
In the end the different relationships and free will of a person shapes their individuality and changes according to the situation. People are constantly changing who they are because their lives are always changing. People must take the different relationships and contexts they encounter and learn how to adapt to the situations, but they also have to learn to do so in a conscious way. Relationships with trauma, the environment and love all have different effects on different people and it is in their nature to want to protect their sense of identity, whether unconsciously or consciously. An identity is never stable because every person has the ability to choose who they want to be and the people and contexts they want to be around. People’s choices will always lead them to different perspectives which in turn will change the way they believe themselves to be. The idea of a constant self is a fiction since adaptation and environment are always affecting one’s identity.

Works Cited
Our last two essays have both worked to complicate the concept of knowledge, treating it less as an object to be acquired than as an engaged, analytical process. This discussion of knowledge production has centered largely upon questions of binaries and how they structure – or limit – thought through blurring, breaking down, complicating, and even multiplying “boundaries.” Maggie Nelson continues this conversation through her efforts to question contemporary culture as a sharp division between “unremitting banality and inconceivable terror,” an undermining of the same tendency towards reductive binary thinking that comes under attack in Lethem and Davidson (306).

While the “boundary” is an important concept implicit in all three texts, Nelson’s argument regarding the need to interrogate the means by which we understand knowledge makes this issue explicit. As Nelson explains, “Not all boundaries or mediating forces are created equal; not all serve the same purpose,” such that “the function of that boundary need not be a constrictive or restrictive one.” (308)

Citing specific evidence from all three texts, develop an original argument in response to the following question: **In what ways might the concept of the boundary be productive rather “constrictive or restrictive”?**

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Danica

**Bounding Who We Are**

No one really knows if we all see the same colors. Someone’s red may be another person’s green, or the color of your sky may be my mind’s purple. “Color” is just a construct of our mind, but it is useful because it sets common boundaries for what would otherwise be indescribable. Although subjectively different hues of color may be different to us, we determine that from this shade to that shade is red, enabling discussion for something that was previously indefinable and enabling comparisons with other
predetermined colors. In a similar way boundaries help us describe and define both our exterior and interior worlds, providing individuals enough common ground to interact and engage in intelligent, reasoned dialogue. However, more focus and criticism is directed to the divisive rather than unifying potential of boundaries. In both “Project Classroom Makeover” and “The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism,” Cathy Davidson and Jonathan Lethem, respectively, criticize boundaries in the form of dichotomies. Maggie Nelson, however, takes a more balanced approach to boundaries in “Great to Watch,” recognizing the existence of a middle ground or “third term” that exists between two ends of a spectrum. Without the concept of a boundary, we would be unable to define what those ends of the spectrum even are, losing not only that rich third term between boundaries, but the ability to even frame our ideas and arguments. Boundaries provide both a framework and a lens for communicating about both our inner and outer environments, enabling interpersonal interaction and commonality from the inherent anarchy and chaos of our world.

Our construction of the world is based entirely upon our perceptions, which are strongly subject to bias and variation based on our specific living conditions and patterns of thought. These details build upon, influence, and connect to one another to create unique individuals, each with their own personal perspectives. As a result of this uniqueness, our perceptions become inherently subjective and different even when exposed to the same external stimulus. We can take the same element of an experience and incorporate it in different ways into our identities and our creations. Therefore, the worlds we build based upon these perceptions differ dramatically from each other, making direct engagement and comparisons difficult. As Lethem wonders of an iconic line from a film, “Yet what were
those words worth—to Siegel [the director], or Silliphant [the screenwriter], or their audience—in 1958? And again: what was the line worth when Bob Dylan heard it . . . and inserted it into ‘Absolutely Sweet Marie? What are they worth now, to the culture at large?” (212). A writer may craft a line with a different meaning and intention than what a director or actor understands that line to mean; the audience members in turn may each have their own interpretation of that same line, their mental lenses having been colored by their unique life experiences. Later on in history, with less context surrounding and limiting the meaning of the original phrase, someone may incorporate into his own work that very same line, now imbued in his mind with a different meaning and purpose. Although we can surmise that each person had a different perception of a common experience, we have no way of knowing exactly what those perceptions—the thoughts and meanings derived from that single phrase—were: thus Lethem’s answerless question, “Yet what were those words worth?” We cannot commune with our minds, nor read our raw thoughts on each other’s foreheads. In essence we are speaking different languages without words; we have little hope of communicating or even attempting to translate without finding a way to frame our ideas, a “third term” to serve as a bridge between disparate concepts.

Boundaries serve as this third term for our perceptions, providing a frame of reference for what was previously indefinable. Boundaries hold their power by being mutually agreed upon by all parties engaged, enabling us to describe our thoughts in relation to such boundaries. Such basic facets of communication as words are themselves boundaries, ideas contained within agreed-upon groupings of sounds and pictograms. Without such boundaries providing frameworks of reference, writers would not even be able to explain their ideas to others, let alone bolster and defend their arguments. In order
to convince her audience of the validity of her argument, Davidson explicitly lays out one such boundary by defining a term commonly understood in the population of young, tech-savvy students described in her essay but likely unfamiliar to the minds of her expected audience of older adults. “In the world of technology,” she says, “crowdsourcing means inviting a group to collaborate on a solution to a problem, but that term didn’t yet exist in 2003 when we conducted the iPod experiment” (51). She introduces the presumably older readers to “the world of technology,” ushering them down a third term “bridge” of her creation. She assists the reader by defining and familiarizing a foreign concept, but this very act of assistance also gives her power over the reader. If the reader did not previously know what “crowdsourcing” was, he or she would have no choice but to trust that Davidson’s definition is accurate, mutually agreeing with her on this boundary by default. This allows her to use the words of her definition to guide the reader’s thoughts down whichever path best supports her argument. Additionally, her seemingly incidental comment that the “term didn’t yet exist . . . when we conducted the iPod experiment” actually hints at the power of the word as a boundary and third term. The iPod experimented operated under a radically different creative model than what society had been accustomed to using. There was no name for what they were doing, and subsequently no way for them to succinctly communicate and explain their methods or defend the project by referring to previous examples of successful crowdsourcing projects. Such is the power of a term such as “crowdsourcing.” The mere existence of a boundary that encompasses a novel and potentially powerful working concept has since enabled similar projects to be communicated, explained, and validated in today’s society.
However, despite or even because of the existence of boundaries, conflict and breakdowns in communication still occur. This is because although boundaries are meant to serve as a metaphorical anchor to ground and relate our ideas to, the exact location and constraints of a boundary can still be contested between particularly oppositional parties. This is exacerbated when people set boundaries up as strict dichotomies (black/white, easy/difficult) or as parameters dependent on the observer (us/them, similar/different, friend/enemy, good/bad), without empathy or regard for the opposite side's viewpoint. These boundaries are harmful because due to their strictness and exclusiveness, they lose that crucial third term, the middle ground for discussion. Nelson says of a human rights organization’s multimedia website, “the Hub aims to zero in on the little window of time between an upsurge of outrage or sympathy and the onset of apathy—to hurl an otherwise fleeting emotion into action before it dissolves” (303). She is skeptical of the efficacy of graphic videos in instigating action because the emotional binary of outrage and apathy being assumed and therefore enforced through the videos is, as she says, “fleeting.” The viewer reacts out of shock, possibly takes some sort of vague action against the horror viewed, then satisfied with his or her action, returns without a thought to the state of apathy. In this situation the binary lies not only in the viewer’s state of mind, but also in the oversimplification of human rights violations, whose root causes are much more multifaceted and complex than good and evil or right and wrong. In this oversimplification through binaries, viewers are neither educated about the situation nor given a chance to contemplate potential solutions; by simply working with the assumption that the viewers lie within a strictly bounded binary of outrage or apathy, this system has doomed them to enter and remain in that binary as a self-fulfilling prophecy of sorts. Who is to say,
however, that given more consideration the viewers wouldn’t have fallen into the trap of limited, binary thinking? Perhaps some would have seen outside of the dichotomy of apathy and outrage other boundaries detailing other solutions and means to cause change. As in Lethem’s question earlier, there is no way to know, because the dichotomy prevents new boundaries—and therefore new third terms—from being created. The failure of this dichotomous system of boundaries elucidates what makes other conceptions of the boundary so effective.

The key in the beneficial use of boundaries is that we create ideas around the boundary, not directly on it. Boundaries are a frame of reference, so we can describe how close to or far away from the mutually understood boundary our ideas lie, or what side or direction of a boundary our ideas lie in in relation to another’s ideas. Because in this way we don’t use the boundary’s location as our exact ideas, this allows for the slight differences in perceptions of the boundary that occur naturally with differences in personal experience. In evaluating the idea of an age of extremity, Nelson asks, “for whom is it true, and who presumes it to be true for others?” (306). Because our perceptions differ, and our thoughts use boundaries only as guidelines or landmarks, the answer to the first question is whoever perceives it for themselves to be true. The very idea of extremity differs between individuals, so in the same situation one person may come to believe in the age of extremity, while another may staunchly refute it. These differences in themselves inspire rich, engaging inquiry and dialogue between intellectually-diverse people, providing a fertile medium for critical thought that could transform society. However, in answer to Nelson’s second question, the one “who presumes it to be true for others” is society itself. This creates a paradox, for it is the purpose of society to establish boundaries, to create
common ground through which communication is made possible. While society must create boundaries to be specific and constant enough to provide meaning and enable communication, excessive specificity and rigidity actually hinder communication. The exclusivity and either-or understanding of strict boundaries is so disruptive because it takes away the potential for nuance, severely limiting ideas and discourse. It automatically places people into separate and opposing forces and ignores the complexity of both the conditions of the external world and the complexity of the internal world of our minds.

Therefore, we need to find a balance between strict exclusivity and subjective openness to interpretation in boundaries to most effectively and harmoniously communicate. Excessively open or lenient boundaries would leave us floundering in the chaotic perceptions of our thoughts and our surroundings, unable to point to a landmark to orient ourselves. At the same time, excessively structured and exclusive boundaries oversimplify the world and our thoughts, preventing a deeper understanding of our world and limiting the potential for individuality through our thoughts. We are, essentially, what we think, and the language that crafts our thoughts is shaped by boundaries. Therefore we need to be mindful of how we construct our boundaries, because our boundaries define our world, our thoughts, and ultimately, ourselves.

Works Cited
Sample Paper 7

Throughout her discussion of women’s sexuality and psychological development in “Excerpts from Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom,” Leslie Bell repeatedly calls attention to the multiple and often conflicting narratives that govern and sometimes limit experience and identity. This complex web of narratives – both the stories we tell about ourselves and those born of sociocultural constructions – produce “confusion, uncertainty, and anxiety” (28) in various and often subtle ways, according to Bell’s argument.

Using specific quotations, examples, and details from Bell’s text, write an essay that responds to the following question: How and why does “creating a history for oneself” help to address the “problem of instability” produced by the “contradictions and uncertainties” of lived experience (31; 39; 28)?

Cassie

Breakthrough the Boundaries

It is an old but not too old story. It was a trend that almost everyone talked about in the last year. A Duke female student was filmed in pornographies. It is shocking because she is a high-educated young woman, but she is a porn star. Many parents want their daughters to have high education so they will not only avoid low-wage jobs, but also avoid in prostitution. The Duke female student is “creating a history for oneself,” a new experience that people have not gone through, because she is first one who has high education yet involve in a job field like that (Bell31). When people talk about her sex, they often talk about her education as well. More and more young women start to “create a history” about their sex and relationships because women often were not allowed to express them in the public. It is hard to change and search for new identity for women.
when they have been set up with certain traits. Women often can do this but cannot to that when it comes to sex and relationships. Leslie Bell, from “selection from Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom,” called women have “splitting” on their sex and relationships. Women are established that they should not have sexual desire and should always have traditional mind, which it bothers many young women. Splitting causes women who have the desire of sex and relationship to be afraid to admit and explore them. The young, educated women who want to have a steady relationship with men face many problems, such as sexual desire, that make them unable to have the relationship. When they develop strategies from the history that they created to solve their problems, they are still unable to sustain the relationship because their strategies are too selfish, which means that the strategies are one-sided and favor toward the young women. It is important to “create a history” and develop non-selfish strategy to solve their problems so they can sustain the relationship as well.

The young women often do not like to “create a history” in the relationship with men because they often care too much of being judged by others since they do not act the way that they are expected to, and will lead them to repeat the path the women from previous generations made. The young women have their own sexual desire in the relationship with men, but they often hide it because they do not know how much they can act without being called something harsh. Like many young women, Claudia, a high-educated women in her twenties, does not know the “fine line between being experimental and being a slut” with sex so she “[feels] some shame about her sexual desires and [fears] others might label her a ‘ho’ for acting on them”(Bell 27; 25). Claudia is afraid to admit her sexual desire not only to men in her relationships, but also to everyone that she knows of because they would
change the way to look at her. It is true that no one likes to be judged, and it is also true that the young women have sexual desire as well, not only young men. Standing alone to show her sexual desire without being judged is impossible. However, without standing alone and embrace the true self, the young women do not know how to test out the boundaries and change the way of how others look them who have sexual desire. When the young women are afraid, they choose to ignore the problem and try to find excuse. One of the common excuses that the young women often say is “good sex and relationships were proving elusive” (Bell 25). Their excuse is not because they do not want to search for the one, but because those are so hard to find and they do not find them. When they deny others, they deny themselves as well. If they do not change about how they look at themselves in some other possible ways, such as “creating a history,” to test out, then they would end up like their mothers and repeat the same destiny of how other treat and look at women.

The young women who are “creating a history for oneself” to show their sexual desire and to test out the boundaries; however, they still cannot sustain the relationship with men. Every history takes times, just like science experiment, for the young women to test out a result, and more often the result will not help the young women to establish a way to help them to deal with the relationship. However, the result can help women to improve the way to solve their problems or help women to avoid. Many women create some strategies to help the to solve the problems they have in the relationship. Even though they feel they solve something in the relationship, they still miss some pieces. The strategies are not perfect but the women are “creating a history” that helps them to analyze their problems with the relationship and their ways to solve. One of the examples is a
young woman named Jayanthi. Because she was hurt from many relationships, she decides to “[distance] herself from the men she was involved with, wither physically or emotionally”(Bell 32). Jayanthi tries either physically attaching to men in her relationship or emotionally attaching. Even though her strategy does not get fully what she wants, it inspires others to analyze what she did wrong with her strategy and why many women cannot have successful in both physical and mental in the relationship. On the other hand, “creating a history” can provide a result that the young women should avoid. One of the examples that women should avoid is being independence that the young women should not get involved with the relationship with men. Bell realizes that “Every piece of ‘modern’ advice about maintaining independence and using their twenties to explore and experiment sexually is layered over a piece of ‘old-fashioned’ advice about getting married before ‘it’s too late,’ not being too assertive or passionate in sex and not being too sexually experienced ” (27). Many young women are independent in their academic field, which often creates an illusion for them to believe it is important to be independent in their relationship. High education creates independent mind as well as creates finical independent. Therefore, becoming independent in the relationship will create a steady relationship. Many people believe is a way to solve the problem if the young women do not want to deal with men anymore; however, those women actually want the relationship. So instead of solving the problem, it is more like teaching the young women to avoid the problem with the relationship with men. Since it is does not help the young women to move out the circle that the young women be still labeled, as the old female identity in the relationship, being independent is not relevant for them. The young women often cannot satisfied with the relationship with men because they care too much about themselves in
the relationship. They often lack of caring about others, which lead them use the wrong strategies to solve their problem in the relationship.

When the young women are too selfish when they are trying to form a strategy to solve their problem in the relationship, which causes them not able to sustain a steady relationship with men. If men and women can “create a history” together in their relationship, then they will stay in a relationship longer since both men and women know how to respect each other. The young women only care what they think more than what others think, which is why they will never have a strong relationship because they only try to “create a history for oneself” but not “creating a history” with the men. Not only they cannot solve their problem in the relationship, but also they cannot set up a better example for the other young women to look up to. Jayathni states that “I want to party, I want to meet people, I want to hook up, I want to have stories, I want to have a history” and simultaneously, “I need to settle down. I need to find a partner” (34; 33). She only cares about what she wants from her side. She finds the solutions for her sexual desire but she cannot keep up the relationship because she is uncertain of keeping up with her relationship or ignoring them completely. If she is uncertain about what she is looking for from the relationship with men, then it is hard for the men to keep up with her and their relationships will come to the end. On the other hand, another young woman named Alicia creates her own strategy to deal with her problem in her relationship. She thinks if the relationship goes with her way then she will have a perfect relationship. She is “following the good-girl strategy buys some poor and working-class girls the time for education and development tat middle-class and upper-middle-class fields claim as their birthright”(Bell 37). Her strategy is being a good girl - not having sex and getting pregnant during high
school. However, her selfish idea leads her to the wrong path. Fixing only her problems does not help her to build up her relationship. The men play an important role in the relationship as well. She often cares more if she has more fun than the guys.

However when women are trying to “creating a history” in the relationship with guy trying to have independence, they often turn independence into selfishness. Women are repeating the same mistake if they are not trying to learn how to become independent while in a relationship. Those desire women often do not turn their desire into a must they often believe if they have their desire will success then their relationship will be successful as well. Their desire make them selfish that they only care what they want but not their a partner want. If a person does not meet what she or he wants, then the relationship will be one sided and weak.

“Creating a history for oneself ” is a way to create solutions to help the young women to find a way to address the problems that they have in the steady relationships with men; however, the strategies from their history are often too selfish, which causes women to get what they want but unable to sustain the relationship. In order to have a steady relationship, both partners have to care each other and solve the problems together. Often in the relationship, women try too hard to change their role which causes them unable to make the relationship steady. Recently, a relationship are not just a man and a woman; it can be two men and two women, which will be harder to handle the roles in the relationship. Therefore it is important for partners to engage with each other and help each other to solve the problem.
Sample Paper 8

While Bell and Lethem have different explicit subject matters – the paradoxical challenges posed to young women’s development of a sexual identity in the modern era and a defense of the need for creative and free use of culture, respectively – both authors are invested in questions related to breaking down conceptual boundaries, connectivity, and interdependence. Indeed, we might read Lethem’s assertion that “[f]inding one’s voice isn’t just an emptying and purifying oneself of the words of others, but and adopting and embracing of filiations, communities, and discourses” (214) as a response to a feature of contemporary society, which Bell highlights as problematic: “In modern western culture, autonomy and all that accompany it are much more highly valued than interdependence and all that accompany it” (29).

By engaging significantly with both texts to provide the primary evidence for your argument, write an essay that addresses the following question: What is the role of “interdependence” in contemporary society? In what ways does it enhance, limit, or otherwise impact identity?

Cassie

Relationships need interdependence

Independence and dependence are not the only roles in the relationships with others; interdependence is an alternate role that leads to a strong relationship. People are more satisfied with interdependence because they find a balance between having and relinquishing control. In, “Selections from Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom,” Leslie Bell states that even though women become more successful in their academic fields, it does not help women to change their role in their relationships with men. Women often think that being in relationships with men would lose their identity. Right now, the best way to solve their problem is to be interdependent in their relationships.
relationship with men. Being interdependent, the women can keep their identity and feel engaged with men in their relationship. On the other hand, Jonathan Lethem believes the intellectual property requires interdependence. In “The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism,” Lethem states that ideas are expanded from others’ ideas, which means the new ideas are somehow similar as the others’ ideas, but they are not really the same. People’s identities can be interdependent when they have relationships with others as well, and the relationships do not have to be sexual. To have strong, healthy relationships with others, the participants have to be interdependent because it helps them to create their own unique identities that are interesting to others, and simultaneously, not too powerful or too weak- a balanced relationship. Not only that but also, since everyone has strength and weakness, they can help each other out; however, people’s relationships can end if do not know how to balance their strength and weakness with others.

Interdependence creates a unique identity, which helps people to create connections in different ways. People think that having a unique identity would scare others away because having a unique identity often means that they are different from others and cannot find connection with others. Bell states, “I hear this fear of losing track of their identities again and again from women in their twenties. Self-help books call out to them to ‘focus on yourself,’ ‘make yourself happy,’ and not ‘to lose yourself in a relationship.’ But without a solid and reliable identity, these intonations rang hollow for women” (Bell 32). When people are “fear of losing…their identity,” they decide to “focus” on themselves, which means they decide to be alone and independent without any close interactions with others. However, the unique identity that is formed by interdependence does not scare people away, and it can be so seductive that it makes others want to
explore everything about the person deeper, not just looking at the surface, and to unravel the mystery of this unique identity. People’ identities have different strengths in different fields because their identities are built by the experiences they have been through. One way to understand a person is to not having any pre-established stereotypes and Lethem has a method that can help people change the way they think. Lethem states, “[t]oday… when damn near everything presents itself as familiar—it’s not a surprise that some of today’s most ambitious art is going about trying to make the familiar strange” (Lethem 216). People are so used to how things function that they do not see other potentials. “Everything” that is visible and “everything” that is invisible, such as identities and intellectual property, can become a different form in the future if people can work with different ideas and make them into a new one. By “making the familiar strange,” people not only see different possibilities, but also understand more. Any stereotypes or related experiences from their past relationships to their current ones can affect how people think of others. When people look at a person, they have to take out everything that can define the person. They would find out their identities are so familiar but so different, which helps to create an interdependent relationship so when people become interdependent in the relationships, they will not lose their identities.

People, who are interdependent, are willing to work together and expecting to have relationships with others even though they have their own unique identities. Lethem describes the “gift economy - a gift establishes a feeling-bond between two people” as well as “makes a connection,” and also makes the “art that matters to us- which moves the heart, to revives the soul, or delights the senses, or offers courage for living” (Lethem 221). When people have relationships with others, they create bonds with others and search for
their similarities. People become so attached to one another that one another become part of them. Because one another are part of them, people do not want one another to get hurt. People, who are interdependent, like to help out others because their unique identities have strength and weakness that they know they have to work out with others. They also like to fix problems instead avoiding or abandoning them. What people learn from one another is a “gift.” Interdependence creates time for people to have a chance to learn from each other, look for connections, explore their differences, and understand them. It helps to create a strong relationship as well, because people would help out one another not only to protect their weakness, but also to teach them how to be stronger. Bell states, “[women] who could tolerate the conflicts they felt over sexual and relational desire made use of the productive strategies of the Desiring Women. These women used their conflicts to inform how they could pursue their desires; they were comfortable with and expressed their desires for sex and a relationship...” (Bell 31). These women are interdependent. They are “comfortable” in their relationships. They know how to keep their identity and what they want in their relationships. These women are not too independent and not too dependent. They get what they want, and at the same time, they give out what others want. They create an equal, balanced relationship. In a relationship with someone, people cannot have overly strong identities because it is hard for others to get involved with them. On the other side, people cannot have overly weak identities as well because those people can be hurt by others very easily. Interdependence helps people to create a strong relationship that people would find fulfillment in. In an interdependent relationship, people can see every side of a person, not just strength and weakness or good and bad,
which makes them feel that they are relating to each other even though they have their own unique identity.

Not everyone can find a balance in their relationships; therefore, many relationships do not last long. A relationship can become unstable, when some feel betrayed. Lethem states, “[artists] and their surrogates who fall into the trap of seeking recompense for every possible second use end up attacking their own best audience members for the crime of exalting and enshrining their work” (Lethem 219). Both artists and the audience members have “contamination anxiety” because the artists are afraid that their audience members have stolen their ideas, and the audience members are afraid that they might steal ideas from the artists who inspired them (Lethem 215). They have good relationships when they share ideas; however, when someone starts to use the ideas in other places or build beyond that idea, they feel betrayed, so one person starts to “attack” to one another. After that, they start to build walls between one another. The relationship can be unstable when someone starts to become independent and dependent, which it is likely to end the relationship. When a participant feels insecure, he or she not only starts to protect her or him but also starts to hurt others as well. Jayanthi, a woman whom Bell interviews with, admitted that “[she] later felt the man had ‘played’ her - he was dating with other women, and she was disgusted and put off by that. In that first experience, she felt devastated and too emotionally involved. She vowed not to be played by a man again” (Bell 32). Jayanthi was hurt by the man with whom she was very close. Therefore, she does not trust men anymore and becomes independent in the relationship, which is why she never stays in a relationship long or creates a strong bonded relationship. Previous experiences can hurt someone so much that people start to build up an independent identity to protect them. As
a result, she stops giving people chances to have a strong relationship with her. Since she becomes independent when it comes to relationships, her relationships do not last long and are weak. It is hard to find a balance in relationships that is why partners should give each other a chance, and not let their past experiences hurt the chance of success. “First experience” always affects people the most. If it doesn’t turn out nicely, people like to deny it and never try it again, which they never give it a chance anymore. What Jayanthi did not do is to “make something familiar strange” in her relationship. People often feel that they have to be independent, by hiding their identity, because they have been hurt from previous relationships. Jayanthi does not try to solve the problem. A relationship can be unbalance if participants do not want to work out and fix the problem that they have. Attacking one another and becoming independent are ways to end a relationship quickly. If people are interdependent, then they would try to work out their problem that they would not give up.

In a relationship, people often are afraid of losing their identity and keeping their identity because losing their identity means following with others and being dependent; and keeping their identity means being selfish and independent. Being interdependent helps people to create a unique identity, which can create connection with one another. The unique identity has strength and weakness, which people need to create relationship to help one another out to sustain the balance. Not only to find the balance in relationships with others, but interdependence also helped people in relationships to move forward together to fight for more difficult problems. Even though finding balances relationships in different fields can take a lot of time and effort, and often in time, they do not work out, they should not give up. If people give up easily and move on, then they never know how to
work with others, which it will become harder for them to find a balance relationship in the future.
Of interest to all of the texts we’ve read so far this term has been the relationship between stories and an individual’s ability to experience various forms of freedom. We see this theme taken up explicitly in “Selections from Reading Lolita in Tehran,” where Nafisi identifies one of the primary interpretive questions motivating the creation of her subversive reading group as

how these great works of imagination [the literary stories she selected for the class to read] could help us in our present trapped situation as women. We were not looking for blueprints, for an easy solution, but we did hope to find a link between the open spaces the novels provided and the closed ones we were confined to. I remember reading to my girls Nabokov’s claim that “readers were born free and ought to remain free.” (259)

While Nafisi’s citation of Nabokov in this passage proposes an inherent relationship between stories (via the identity of “readers”) and freedom, the nature of that relationship is more complex and ambiguous than Nabokov’s assertion suggests.

By engaging significantly with all three texts to provide the primary evidence for your argument, write an essay that addresses the following question: How do “stories” produce, preclude, or otherwise influence one’s ability to achieve “freedom”?

Cassie

Human Mind limits What Comes Out of a Story

Stories are created by people’s imagination of things that they have actually gone through and expected. People add extra elements, such as personal feeling and personal perspective, in their stories to make them one of a kind. Stories can be very complicated because people use their own imagination to rephrase the stories, which forms different versions. In “Selection from Reading Lolita in Tehran,” Azar Nafisi sets up a class with her favorite female students to analyze some fictions that are very related to them. Those
students have a hard time in Tehran because of their unequal gender rights. By reading through the fictions, they see the characters’ feelings and perspective, which helps them to learn to understand things differently, not only in fiction but also in the real world. Similar to Nafisi’s story, in “Selection from Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom,” Leslie Bell discovers that the young women have troubles dealing their relationships with men. As they talk about their stories, Bell discovers that the traditional gender values do not help them to get what they want in their relationships with men. In “The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism,” Jonathan Lethem states that every great story comes from other stories. Lethem also states that the world would become more advance in technology if everyone were willing to open and share with one another. Lethem shows the stories are very influential based on how people say and how people think of them; therefore in Nafisi’s situation, her female students feel free from reading novels by being able to connect between fiction to reality while the young women who Bell interview create a paradox conclusion that makes them confused because they feel like that they have to pick a side after they heard stories about other women’s relationship with men. A story can be manipulated and reformed, and people like to do that to stories because when they like the stories, they want to share them with others in their own way. Once the story is told, the meaning changes because not only how the person told it changes the meaning, but also how others who received the feeling can change the meaning as well. People make connection with one another by finding connection from the stories. Because they only want a carbon copy of a solution from a story into reality, people limit themselves and narrow down the possibilities of what they can find in the story to help them to solve their problem in reality. On the other hand, people who look beyond
the stories look for the meaning of the stories, and they find connection between stories and reality. They think stories produce freedom because they know how to take parts of stories into reality, which helps them to think of creating possibilities, instead of applying the entire story to substitute it into reality.

People feel that the stories limit their action because they want to engage their society so they have to embrace the dominant identity of their society in order to get the approval from the members of their society. People like to connect with others, but also want to be different from others so they can feel special. People like to “appeal in the drama and excitement of having crazy stories to tell and creating a history for oneself, especially if one’s history previously has been defined by others’ expectation of what a [person] should be and do” (Bell 31). People like to have their own story and especially those “crazy stories” that can attract others’ attention because most people enjoy the feeling of getting attention from others, particularly the one they care about. To grab others’ attention, people use their own story that is somehow different from other. By having their own story to tell, people feel that they have created their own identity. “[Creating] a history for oneself” makes people feel they have created their own identity because that identity is a result of everything they have experienced so far. However, people often exaggerate and reshape stories just to interest others and make them feel good about themselves. People create their identity that their society wants instead of the identity of what they really want. Also, a society that is ruled under such as a dictatorship or a tyranny can create its own story and the story leads its members to follow its rules.

Nafisi states, “in [a mirror’s] reflection, I could see the mountains capped with snow even in summer, and watch the trees change color. That censored view intensified my impression
that the noise came … from some far-off place, a place whose persistent hum was our only link to the world we reused … to acknowledge” (Nafisi 252). Story is a mirror’s “reflection.” Every story that is created by the society, such as cultural traditions and taboos, has its own meaning and expects others to believe and follow it. Every story has its own identity, and by being connected with the story, people absorb its identity as their identity; therefore, they only act the same way as other people in their society. The stories setup intimacy that people feel connected to one another; however, the stories limit people’s behavior because they have act very similar as others in their society in order for them to find connections with others and not to get punishment.

Unlike the people who think story creates limitation, some people absorb the meaning in a story and build up or extract it to create more possibilities to transform into reality, which they believe stories help them achieve their freedom. Humans have the ability to imitate others’ behaviors to build up or extract them into their behavior; they also have the ability to copy from others’ stories to build up and/or extract them into their story as well. People may not know that “[every] piece of ‘modern’ advice about maintaining independence and using their twenties to explore and experiment sexually is layered over a piece of ‘old-fashioned’ advice about getting married before ‘it’s too late,’ not being too assertive or passionate in sex and not being too sexually experienced” (Bell 27). Every story has layers, and it takes times to unfold the layers to really understand what is under every layer. When people figure out what is under in each layer of the story, they start to learn to understand and look at a thing in different views. What people learn is not a copy and paste solution but how to develop a solution to the problem that they face. People learn to make the impossible possible and their imagination into reality. People’s “modern”
identities have “old-fashioned” identities that influence others. People should know, “[finding] one's voice isn't just an emptying and purifying oneself of the words of others but an adopting and embracing of filiations, communities, and discourses. Inspirations could be called inhaling the memory of an act never experienced. Invention…does not consist in creating out of the void, but out of chaos” (Lethem 214). Everything is related to one another; therefore, “finding one’s voice” is not just absolute copy and paste or complete ignore it. People’s inspiration comes from others’ stories. People take different parts of stories from different people and their own experiences to form who they are. Everyone has a shadow of other people. People can never take them out because humans have the ability of imitating. Every story has its own world because it is formed by different elements that people added and subtracted. People may think the story is copying from someone else because it is too similar but, because it is form by different elements from others, which is unique.

Because small differences in the similar stories would lead to different results; therefore, people should really understand the stories and analyze them deeper by knowing which parts work and which do not before they want to try it into their life. Stories can be similar, yet have different endings. Not every situation can have same, exact result; therefore, people should use their knowledge to see different possibilities to solve their problems. Many people need to understand the danger of the copy and paste method. A story can be very powerful; therefore, “do not, under any circumstances, belittle a work of fiction by trying to turn it into a carbon copy of real life; what we search for in fiction is not so much reality but the epiphany of truth” (Nafisi 248). Fiction is a kind of story that is from people’s imagination, and it is impossible to turn every part of it into reality. However,
people can take some parts of fiction into the real life; therefore, what people get from fiction is “the epiphany of truth,” not the “carbon copy of real life.” When a thing is successful, people try to copy and paste because it is the fastest and easiest that someone already set up a successful conclusion; when a thing is unsuccessful, people try to ignore it completely because they do not want to have the same ending. Lethem states, “Old and new make the warp and woof of every moment. There is no thread that is not a twist of these two strands. By necessity, by proclivity, and by delight, we all quote… memory, imagination, and consciousness itself is stitched quilted, pastiched. If we cut-and-paste our selves, might we not forgive it of our artworks?” (Lethem 225). Everything is related to one another just like the “modern” stories come from the “old-fashioned” stories. It is impossible to be completely original. Every little thing can relate to one another that it is invisibly “twisted.” When a situation has a little difference from other situations, it can lead to a huge different result. People need to use their knowledge to gain more knowledge to help the world to figure out the problem that they did not solve. People choose what they want from a story and what they want to ignore for their identity. It is a freedom that people can choose what they want as their identity. When people understand the stories they would understand what should keep and what should stay away.

A story is just a story until people share and talk about it in their own perspective. When people start to spread the story, people create connection with one another. They create similarity and difference. A story can preclude people’s freedom because it narrows people’s perspective and shows one of the results, which people may lead to. When people do not look beyond the stories, they see fewer possibilities; when people look beyond the stories, they find connection between imagination and reality. People should
not just listen to others’ stories; they should experience things on their own as well. From a story, people learn its meanings and gain knowledge. People do not just copy down the solution but they cut down what is useful from different and form a solution that help them to solve their own problem. It is very important how people think of a story because how they analyze story can affect how they think of other people and ideas.
Sample Paper 10

All of the texts we have read this semester have explored the ways in which narrative and creativity are “fundamentally social process[es]” (Lethem 213); that is, stories are influenced and produced by relationships between individuals and communities. In our most recent text, “How to Tell a True War Story,” we see evidence of this conceptual trend in the title itself. By naming his work “How to Tell a True War Story” (emphasis added), O’Brien implicitly highlights the relational nature of creativity and interpretation: to “tell” a story requires that another party receive it.

Yet as important as the act of storytelling is to O’Brien’s text, his final characterization of a true war story makes us question how successful this endeavor ultimately is. “How to Tell a True War Story” concludes its complex and contradictory descriptions of its subject with the following: “It’s about sorrow. It’s about sisters who never write back and people who never listen” (278). By ending his text in this way, O’Brien makes us reflect on the potential instability – and even failure – of the connections created by stories. Indeed, as we see in both Nafisi’s and O’Brien’s texts, there are sometimes specific environmental factors which profoundly alter the “fundamentally social” nature of connecting via sharing stories.

Citing specific evidence from both Nafisi and O’Brien, write an essay that presents a coherent argument in response to the following question: How does the environment one inhabits influence one’s ability to experience and create connections?

Cassie

Becoming From a Part to a Part

Living in a society, the members who are in the mainstream tend to isolate some groups of people who are called outcasts because they are different. People in the isolated groups barely have a chance to have a voice in their society, which causes them to have frustrations about living in their society with people and members do not understand each other very well. For example, women in Iran have no voice because men are dominant and
mainstream, which is mentioned by Azar Nafisi in “Selections from Reading Lolita in Tehran.” The government of Iran sets up a lot of limitations for women. Nafisi creates a book club in her living room instead of a class in the university that she teaches to discuss some abandoned fictions, such as Lolita by Vladimir Nabokov, that are relating to their situation with the female students that she specifically selected. In this fictional story, “How to Tell a True War Story,” Tim O’Brien mainly uses a fictional character’s event, Curt Lemon’s death, to bring out the concepts of what a true war story is like. O’Brien indicates a true war story is very difficult to describe because this event contains a mixture of different kinds of feeling occurring at the same time. People who have never been to the war can hardly understand the soldiers’ situation. The soldiers are forced to stay in a group even though most of them did not know each other when they were in the United States. The soldiers have to stay in bond and trust each other. Both authors talk about how those people, soldiers and female students, live in the places without a choice, a voice to speak up in their society, and they are forced to stay together because they have to. People in the same isolated group are emotionally bonded because they have been in a similar situation, which is why they understand one another. Stories often have to be revised so it can be understood from others’ perspectives. Every society has its own limitations of understanding the problems that each individual outcast has; therefore it is important for those outcasts who want to have a voice in their society to work themselves up by creating their group and expanding it. Creating a group with people who went through similar experiences makes the outcasts feel more comfortable to express their situations better because they have more chances to practice; therefore, they are more willing to share and work on their feelings and ideas with one another. After the outcasts gain their confidence
of expressing their situation, they will be more willing to share it to their society, a larger
group and their society becomes more united because they understand more about the
outcasts even though they have not been through similar situation.

People in the isolated group have a desire to be understood by the members in their
society because humans have the emotions of wanting to be bonded with as many others
as possible. However, the members in the society tend to misunderstand about people in
the isolated groups’ purpose of telling their story because of lack of understanding. For
example, O’Brien states that “a true war story is never about war...It’s about love and
memory. It’s about sorrow. It’s about sisters who never write back and people who never
listen” (O’Brien 275). A story is about “Love,” the feelings that people went through, and
“Memory,” the experiences that people went through. The outcasts may misunderstand
that the members of their society as the “people who never listen” because the members
do not understand their story. The story is about letting others to be understood; therefore,
if the outcasts do not know how to mention their story that is understandable for the
members in their society, then it is not the members’ fault for not understanding them.
Also by having a voice, people in the isolated group feel that they are engaged with the
creates for us... is not the actual physical pain and torture of a totalitarian regime but the
nightmarish quality of living in an atmosphere of perpetual dread” (Nafisi 262). People in
the isolated group are not physically hurt, but emotionally hurt by the members of their
society because those people want to connect with others in their society, but their
differences, such as ideas and perspectives, cause disconnections between themselves
and the members in their society. They are living, but they are invisible, especially, in their
society; they are living but not alive. It may look like the members of their society do not want to engage with the people in the isolated groups, but it is more likely that those people refuse to make connection with the members because they are not ready to connect with the members.

The mainstream members in their society do not know anything about the outcasts is not because they do not know much about what those outcasts have been through, but because the outcasts do not know how to talk about it with someone who has never been in the same situation as they have, which they need practice to express their situation. People in the isolated groups have not prepared to develop their knowledge well enough to explain to the members in their society. One reason that people in the isolated groups are not ready to talk about what they have been through may be because they just went through a tragic event. For example, after his best friend, Curt, died accidentally during a patrol, “Rate Kiley was crying. He tried to say something, but then cradled his rifle and went off by himself” (O’Brien 275). This tragic event of Curt’s death makes Rat’s emotion very unstable and miserable. The shock of his best friend dying accidentally makes him so emotional that he “[tries] to say something,” but he stops because he does not know how to describe his feelings to anyone. Even though he is not ready to tell anyone about the event that he has been through, his behaviors change in a way that the American citizens who are inexperienced with war do not really know what is wrong with him; he is quiet, but he shows his emotions, so the citizens know that he is up to something but do not exactly know what happened. Another reason that people in the isolated groups are not ready to talk about what they have been through may be because their knowledge is not developed enough to describe in a way that can be understood by others who did not go through the
similar situation. For example, the women in Iran do not know how to describe their feeling because they are not ready for it since their knowledge is not developed enough to change how the members in their society think or at least to let the society to know how uncomfortable their situations are. Nafisi states, “in [a mirror’s] reflection, I … see the mountains capped with snow … and watch the trees change color. That censored view intensified my impression that the noise came not from the street below but from some far-off place, a place whose persistent hum was our only link to the world we refused, for those few hours, to acknowledge” (Nafisi 252). The female students and Nafisi create their own place to protect from the unfair gender rights of their society by “refusing to acknowledge” for a few hours so they can act however they want in Nafisi’s living room. It may seem like they are protecting themselves from their society; however, simultaneously, they are the ones who “refuse to acknowledge” of learning to connect with the members of their society. Both stories reflect how the people in the isolated groups want to have a voice to speak up, but they are not ready for it because they do not know how to put down their feeling and ideas into words.

For outcasts to feel comfortable talking about their feelings and ideas with others, they first need to be confident about what they want to say before talking to the members in their society in order to gain some experience of how to mention their situation from practicing with the group of people who have similar experience. One way to have confidence is to make the story very realistic and understandable. For example, O’Brien’s idea is that “you can tell a true war story if you just keep on telling it” and telling it into “many times” and “many versions” (O’Brien 277; 274). Telling the story “many times” can give the person who wants to mention their story confidence. By continually telling his or
her story, he or she can make whatever is false to become very true because of brainwashing. When the person mentions about it many times, it gives him or her many practices of telling his or her story better form. It also helps them to learn to how to talk about his or her story in a way that others who do not have a much similar experience can understand his or her situations a little better. Another way to build up confidence is to gain some knowledge about looking at a thing in different perspectives. Nafisi states, “[we] were, to borrow from Nabokov, to experience how the ordinary pebble of ordinary life could be transformed into a jewel through the magic eye of fiction” (Nafisi 252). Because everyone’s “magic eye” is different, the speakers have to use different ways to tell the story to help people understand their problem. Also, Nafisi teaches the female students to learn how to use their “magic eye” to see a thing in different views. By learning to use their “magic eye,” the female students develop their knowledge. Gaining knowledge makes the female students build confidence of knowing how to prepare to bring out and to solve their problems. Telling a better story and learning how to see different sides from a thing can help people in the isolated groups to build knowledge and self-reflection.

Telling the members in their society first would be too risky; therefore, they find their comfort zone first by meeting with people who have same experience first. O’Brien states, “[nobody] said much. The whole platoon stood there watching, feeling all kinds of things, but there wasn’t a great deal of pity for the baby water buffalo. Curt Lemon was dead. Rat Kiley had lost his best friend in the world” (O’Brien 274). Soldiers in Rat’s troop understand Rat because he just lost his best friend, and they see the event in front of their face as well. Nobody in the troop says anything because they know Rat’s feeling. They know that he needs to release his sorrow and anger. They support Rat in a way that giving him
comfort without saying a word because they do not stop him when he is shooting the baby buffalo. Another reason that it too risky to express to their society first without having practices with a smaller group may be because being individual is too weak versus the society as a whole. Nafisi states, “…these particular girls [had] the peculiar mixture of fragility and courage I sensed in them. They were…call loners, who did not belong to any particular group or sect. I admired their ability to survive not despite but in some ways because of their solitary lives. We can call the class ‘a space of our own’…” (Nafisi 254). When people who are isolated from the members in their society have “a space of [their] own,” they feel that they are protected from those who do not understand them. They will not be easy to tear down. Nafisi creates this group of female students so they can feel comfortable to express who they are, which they cannot express in the public. Because they are a little different from one another, they learn to accept each other’ differences.

People who have experienced harsh situations have desires of becoming the members who are in the mainstream of their society. However, it is hard for people who are isolated from the mainstream because it is not that the members of their societies refuse to understand, but more likely because people who are isolated from the mainstream do not know how to describe their situations of how things went through with their life. With lack of confidence, it is harder for people who are isolated from the mainstream to explain their feelings and thoughts; therefore, they need bonds with people who have went through the very similar experience to help them gain knowledge of letting their feelings and thoughts into words. Even though the members in the mainstream can still ignore people in the isolated group, but when the members wants to know the feelings and
thoughts, people who are isolated are well prepared and ready to mention their feelings and thoughts.
All of the texts we have read this term have aimed to complicate the ways in which we conceive of their respective subjects, proposing a move away from binary models of thought, and prioritizing instead the concepts of “contradiction, fluctuation, incoherence, and perversity” (Nelson 311). In Nelson’s argument in “Great to Watch,” which interrogates the relationship between violence, habits of spectatorship in contemporary culture, and knowledge, she proposes that our collective reliance on binary thinking presents an imposing and perilous threat with very high stakes:

Do we really live under the aegis of these opposing threats [of “unremitting banality” and “inconceivable terror”], or is it the very reiteration of them as our primary ontological options (and our unthinking acquiescence to such a formulation) that acts as a truer threat to our enlivenment, to our full experience of the vast space between these two poles—a space which, after all, is where the great majority of our lives takes place? (306)

This concept of “enlivenment” is at the heart of what Nelson feels must be valued and preserved in human experience, yet as a key term, its definition remains nebulous. For your fifth and final essay, your goal will be to propose a more nuanced, specific argument regarding the implicit significance of this concept, which forges surprising connections between Nelson and our other readings.

Citing specific evidence from “Great to Watch” and any TWO of our previous readings, write an essay that addresses the following question: What is “enlivenment,” and how does it work to mitigate the reductive effects of binary thinking?

Cassie

Can Women Do This?

“Women cannot do this; women cannot do that.” Women who live in a society where men were and are dominant have been hearing these phrases all the time. Why are women still hearing this today? The society does not allow women to do some things
because it considers them sources of “shame, guilt, and … embarrassment” (Nelson 300). Simply defining right or wrong of someone’s behavior may lead to uncertainty about that behavior, especially for women. In “Great to Watch,” Maggie Nelson talks about the binary thinking, which she focuses about humans do not feel either too excited or too boring when the media exposes a situation too often, but feel in between. Nelson states that binary thinking about one way or another is not useful for people in the twenty-first century because so many things in these days are so much harder for people to accept simple definition. This oversimplifying from binary mind creates problems about questioning whether their behavior is being accepted in their society to the young women whom Leslie Bell interviews in “Selections from Hard to Get: Twenty-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom.” Bell states that the young women are supposed to be more liberated about their love, sex, and relationships with men, but their binary thinking makes them “more confused” (Bell 26). The young women’s behaviors are different than what they should be according to others’ opinion. Binary thinking problem also occurs with Azar Nafisi and her female students in “Selections from Reading Lolita in Tehran.” Nafisi sets up a book club for her selected female students to read some fiction that is banned in their country, Iran, to help them to get away from binary thinking. These female students live in binary life that they have to hide physically and mentally of whom they are in the public. Today, women have more freedom about their behavior than before; however, their binary thinking causes them to question their behavior more often than before. People who are binary thinkers are very stubborn because they do not like to change how they think; they want everything to stay the same. It is easier to keep track when everyone is the same, but it is impossible because “contemporary life is [so] mind-scrambling, fragmented, and
distracted” that binary thinking is too reductive because it creates two too-simplified solutions to a complicated problem (Nelson 310). The enlivenment for women in this generation who still have binary thinking due to dominant society of men is to understand that the problems with binary thinking cause them to question their behavior and whether they are being accepted in their society and how to reject society’s influence in order to solve their behavior problem in their own way. Because they are able to see their behavior problem deeper, they understand their behavior problem is not as easy as right or wrong that they see the broader options and they need to adjust it on their own based on their strength, in order for women not to feel stigma about doing something or thinking something as feminine.

The society that is established by men creates its own representation, especially for women, and expects them to follow, and if they do not follow it, the society makes them feel bad and isolates them. This unfair representation has damaged women’s self-esteem, and furthermore, they often regard the decisions that they made. According to “Prejean’s logic relies on the hope that shame, guilt, and even simple embarrassment are still operative principles in American cultural and political life-and that such principles can fairly trump the forces of desensitization and self-justification” (Nelson 300). From Nelson’s point view, binary thinking causes people to desensitize. However, in this special case, binary thinking does not desensitize, but it makes things more complicated because how women behave and what they think do not match, which creates confusion instead of desensitizing about their behavior. Right or wrong about women’s behavior depends on how the society defines them, and the society’s judgments influence how women judge themselves and other women in the future. Applying to Prejean’s logic to the society today, it wants women
to feel guilty, such as having sex before marriage, because it wants to “trump” them so it is easier to control and have a stable society. The society chooses women may be because they are physically weaker than men, which is hard for them to rebel. No wonder “[today’s] young women are …more confused than ever about not only how to get what, but what they want” instead of being “liberated from old edicts about sex and love” (Bell 26). There are unwritten rules for women in this generation. Even though the young women from Bell’s text are physical liberated that they can do what they want, people talk about their behaviors behind their back because they act differently than the majority does. Because it is not against the laws for some places about how women should behave, the society uses different ways to punish those women who are different. One way to punish those women who behave differently is to develop words that give them bad representations. Another way is to isolate women by giving them bad representations to turn others against them. Therefore, when women want to change who they are by doing something that is not accepted in the society, they need to have strong self-esteem to help them to stand up for their behavior.

One way for women to get their self-esteem to help them to stand up for their unique identity is gaining the kind of knowledge that can solve their behavior problem; however, often the kind of knowledge that they are getting is not that helpful to solve their behavior problem they have. For example, women often think that getting ahead in academic field is a way of achieving more feminist goal, but they are wrong. Bell finds out that “…the skills twenty-something women have developed in getting ahead educationally and professionally have not translated well into getting what they want and need in sex and relationships [with men]…”(Bell 28). Women get the knowledge in educational and
professional field, which helps them to get their financial status stable. It may be helpful in a way because women no longer have to rely on men financially. However, it is not the social and sexual knowledge that women still need to believe that they are feminine with their behavior. Also, even though they get their knowledge and “advice” about love, sex, and relationships with men from “self-help spectrum,” the spectrum does not really help women a lot because the young women do not have someone to talk and to ask if this “advice” works or not (Bell 27). Without having a group conversation to share their ideas, women often think the advice is always correct, which is not always the case. Women have the problems with their relationships because they spend more time working in their academic fields instead of on human relationships. Just because they have more knowledge in the academic field, it is not enough for women to become less feminine. They have to gain more knowledge on the fields about love, sex, and relationships with men, which is what Nafisi uses. Nafisi uses fictions that are very related to their situation of being female. Nafisi states, “[we] were not looking for blueprints, for an easy solution, but we did hope to find a link between the open spaces the novels provided and the closed ones we were confined to”(Nafisi 259). Instead of analyzing advice from books, women today want to copy and paste a solution so they do not have to spend times to solve their behavior problem. It is not easy for women to find others to talk to because their society believes talking about those topics is very embarrassing. If these women get the knowledge that helps them to understand deeper in social and relation field about their gender, they will understand their behaviors more and not have the feeling of “shame, guilt, and… embarrassment” of what they do and how people talk about them. The kinds of
enlivenment that women are looking for are very important because some enlivenments do not help women to reduce the work to mitigate binary thinking.

What women are looking for to solve their behavior problem is not as easy as right or wrong; therefore, women need extra sources that are not from their society to help them to build up their knowledge about their gender rights, which helps them to gain the type of knowledge that they need about love, sex, and relationships with men and build up self-confidence. Nelson states, “there is always a third thing – a book or some other piece of writing – alien to both [teacher and student] and to which they can refer to verify in common what the pupil has seen, what she says about it and what she thinks about it” (Nelson 308). By “slow seeing, slow thinking,” women do not rush to look for a solution to apply immediately to their complex problem until they can fully understand it (Nelson 308). In Nafisi’s situation, she and her students read fiction that help them to create imagination to escape from how they think about themselves and how others think about them. It is important for women to read the books because reading books helps making connection, but not like those self-help books of tell women to be independent which avoids their behavior problem instead of facing them. The “third [things]” are book, people who can share ideas, and “creating a history” (Bell 31). Bell states, “[there] is also appeal in the drama and excitement of having crazy stories to tell and creating a history for oneself, especially if one’s history previously has been defined by others’ expectations of what a woman should be and do” (Bell 31). “Creating a history” helps women to be physically liberated, and reading books help women to be mentally liberated. If women do not have confidence about themselves, then even when they are physical liberated, they still cannot accept who they are because their minds do not accept who they are. Therefore, it is
better for women to be mentally prepared so when it is the right time, they do not have to feel feeling of “shame, guilt and… embarrassment” about what they do. Getting experience that is different from others, such as “[creating] a history”, may be dangerous, and it may cause a lot of questions about their behaviors. Once they find something to support them, they will not feel afraid to be different. They may not see the result that soon, but it opens up more roads for women. These women need something to help them link in many different ways in order to make them feel comfortable about who they are, which allows them to feel liberated both physically and mentally.

Women often question about their behavior because their behavior is not accepted by their society that was and is dominant by men. When the society’s standard and their standard are different about how women should behave, women do not know if they should fight back or not. However, it is important for them to really have a deep understand about their behavior problem in order they have start to stand up for their unique identity, which it is very complicated problem that may take a lot of time for them to solve. Furthermore, it may look like women have barely moved on from the old-fashioned behavior that is because it has been settled for many centuries. Even though women have been spending so much time to find a way to escape patriarchy, but often it is only temporary. As women become more liberated, the old-fashioned standard of how women should behave can no longer apply to women in this generation because time has changed, and therefore, women’s behavior should change as well. Also, since women’s standard has changed, it is definite that men’s standard is no longer the same as well. This binary thinking problem not only causes women, but also causes people in the less
dominated group. Binary thinking is not useful for people in the twenty-first century also because it limits people’s ability to do greater things.