Basic Comp Companion

A Guide for Instructors of 100 and 100R at Rutgers

2017 edition
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction to Basic Composition (100 and 100R) ........................................ 7  
  Basic Composition Students: Who Are They? ................................................. 7  
  Relationship between Expository Writing and Basic Composition ..................... 8  
  Standard Course Requirements ........................................................................... 9  
  Reading and Writing Requirements .................................................................... 9  
  Reading and Writing Skills in 100 and 100R ...................................................... 10  
  Classroom Practices ........................................................................................... 11  
  Assignments and Sequencing ............................................................................. 12  
  Responding to Student Papers ............................................................................ 14  
  Revision ............................................................................................................... 15  
  Challenges Our Students Face ........................................................................... 16  
  100R: Basic Composition with Reading ............................................................. 16

II. Sample Syllabus and First Day Writing Sample .............................................. 21  
   Comments on the Sample Syllabus .................................................................... 23  
      Important University and Writing Program Policies ........................................ 24  
      First Day Writing Sample ............................................................................. 24  
         First Day Sample (with Turkle, “The Empathy Diaries”) .............................. 25  
      Fifteen Week Class Plan for Basic Composition – Fall 2017 ................................ 26

III. Assignments and Sequencing ........................................................................ 29  
   General Tips on Designing a Sequence ............................................................. 29  
   Advice on Writing Assignments ......................................................................... 29  
      The Assignment Question ............................................................................. 30  
         Close Reading ............................................................................................. 31  
         Synthesis .................................................................................................... 31  
         Frame and Case ............................................................................................ 31  
         Terministic Frame ......................................................................................... 32  
         Action Horizon ............................................................................................. 32

IV. Sample Assignment Sequences ....................................................................... 33  
   Sequence #1 by Deborah Allen ......................................................................... 33  
      Assignment #1: Chua ....................................................................................... 33  
      Assignment #2: Chua and Alison Gopnik ......................................................... 34  
      Midterm Exam: Gopnik and Goodall ............................................................... 35  
      Assignment #3: Gopnik and Goodall ............................................................... 36  
      Assignment #4: Goodall and Turkle (new) ....................................................... 37  
      Assignment #5: Turkle (new) and Gladwell .................................................... 37  
   Sequence #2 by Joshua Eaise ........................................................................... 38  
      Assignment #1: Turkle (new) .......................................................................... 38  
      Assignment #2: Li and Turkle (new) ............................................................... 38  
      Midterm Exam: Li and Jay-Z .......................................................................... 39  
      Assignment #3: Li and Jay-Z .......................................................................... 39  
   Sequence #3 by Laurence Mintz ....................................................................... 40  
      Assignment #1: Turkle (new) .......................................................................... 40  
      Assignment #2: Gladwell and Turkle (new) .................................................... 40  
      Assignment #3: Thompson, Gladwell, and Turkle (new) ............................... 41
Assignment #4: Turkle and Thompson.................................................................42
Assignment #5: Chua and Turkle (new).............................................................42
Final Exam: Bain.................................................................................................43

V. Group Work and Peer Review.................................................................45
Pre-Reading .........................................................................................................45
Teaching Students How to Read .................................................................45
   For Students: Approaches to Reading, Step by Step......................................45
   For Students: Clarifying Your Confusion.....................................................46
   After You Read: Re-reading the Essay.........................................................47
Reading Questions............................................................................................47
Close Reading Activities..................................................................................48
   Close Reading Strategies .............................................................................48
100R Activities and Quizzes............................................................................49
   Quiz 1: Alison Gopnik....................................................................................49
   Quiz 2: Reading for Writing.........................................................................50
   Quiz 3: Malcolm Gladwell Vocabulary.......................................................51
   Reading Exercise - Berry .............................................................................51
   Reading Comp and Vocabulary, Part Two – Berry and Gladwell..............52
   Reading Quiz – Turkle..................................................................................52
Getting Started on an Assignment...............................................................54
Midterms and In-Class Writing.......................................................................54
   Sample Midterm on Assignment ..................................................................54
Collaborative Interpretation and Composing.............................................55
   Working with Quotes ...................................................................................55
   Writing Paragraphs.......................................................................................55
   Sample Paragraph Formula.........................................................................55
   Types of Connections ...................................................................................56
   Drawing Pictures to Aid Interpretation or Revision.....................................57
   Debates...........................................................................................................57
   Mock TV Show...............................................................................................57
   Mock Trial......................................................................................................58
   Post-Draft Writing Exercise.........................................................................58
   Working with Quotes...................................................................................58
Revision and Peer Review.............................................................................59
   The Logic of Peer Review............................................................................59
   Some Ideas for Making Peer Review More Effective...............................60
   Making Peer Review Work .........................................................................62
   Peer Review Sheets.......................................................................................62
   Some Advice in Constructing Peer Review Sheets.....................................63
   Good Practices in Conducting Peer Review................................................63
Sample Peer Review Sheets.........................................................................64
   Peer Review Worksheet Activity #1.............................................................64
   Peer Review Worksheet #2...........................................................................66
Teaching Revision............................................................................................67
   Activities for Drafts and Peer Revision.......................................................67
Public Speaking.................................................................................................69
   Reading Exercises.......................................................................................69
   Writing Exercises.........................................................................................69
Context Exercises ........................................................................................................ 69
Rough Drafts Presented to Peer Revision Groups .................................................. 69
Rough Drafts and Final Drafts as Works in Progress Presented to the Class ........ 70
Rough Drafts, Final Drafts and Responses Done Collectively ............................... 70
Students Presenting Readings to the Class ............................................................. 71
Group Presentations to the Class ............................................................................. 71
Self-Evaluation and Reflection ............................................................................... 71
Midterm Self-Assessment ....................................................................................... 71

VI. Teaching with Technology .............................................................................. 73
Types of Technology for Teaching Writing .......................................................... 73
Computer Classrooms (and Computers in the Classroom) .................................... 73
Discussion Forums .................................................................................................. 73
Chats and Backchannels ........................................................................................ 73
Google Drive .......................................................................................................... 74
Sakai Sites ................................................................................................................ 74
Getting Started with Forums .................................................................................. 74
Advice on Forum Assignments and Activities ....................................................... 74
Ideas for Forum Assignments .................................................................................. 74
Sample Forum Assignments as Presented to Students .......................................... 75
Good Practices for Managing Forums ..................................................................... 76

VII. Commenting and Grading ............................................................................ 77
Marginal and End Comments .................................................................................. 77
Marginal Comments ................................................................................................ 77
End Comments ......................................................................................................... 77
Patterns of Error ...................................................................................................... 78
Patterns of error and grading .................................................................................. 78
Teaching students their patterns of error ............................................................... 78
Addressing patterns of error in class ....................................................................... 80

VIII. Sample Student Papers .............................................................................. 81
Liejyang, “How the Virtual World Affects People’s Relationship” ...................... 81
Deborah Allen, Assignment #4 (A) ........................................................................ 81
Damien, “The Unspoken Truth” ............................................................................ 85
Deborah Allen, Assignment #4 (A) ........................................................................ 85
Evelyn, “Effects Caused by the Digital World of Technology” ............................ 91
Deborah Allen, Assignment #4 (B+) ..................................................................... 91
Alejandro, “The Succeeding Paradox” .................................................................. 95
Laurence Mintz, Assignment #5 (B) ....................................................................... 95
Sarah, “Trying to Connect in the Modern Age” .................................................... 100
Laurence Mintz, Assignment #1 (C) ..................................................................... 100
Maisy, “Dreamer” .................................................................................................... 104
Joshua Eaise, Assignment #2 (NP+) ....................................................................... 104
I. Introduction to Basic Composition (100 and 100R)

There are two types of Basic Composition offered by the Writing Program: English 100 and 100R. These courses are designed to prepare students for Expository Writing (355:101). Students have been placed into one of these 100-level courses through a combination of their SAT scores (typically 450 – 550 on the Critical Reading SAT) and placement tests in reading and “sentence sense” or grammar. Students may also arrive in 100R by successfully completing Composition Skills (355:098) or English as Academic Discourse II (356:156).

100 (Basic Composition)
The English 100 course is a 3 college-credit course that meets twice per week. Students are assigned a letter grade. At the end of the semester, students must receive a grade of “C” or above in order to pass the course and enter Expository Writing (101). Students who do not pass (with either an F or a non-credit grade) must repeat the course.

100R (Basic Composition with Reading)
The English 100 and English 099 combination is a 4.5 credit course that meets three times a week: 3 of these credits are college credits and count towards graduation; the remaining 1.5 “E” credits for 099 appear on the transcript and count toward a student’s full-time registration status, but they earn no credit toward the degree and are not computed in the overall cumulative GPA. Students are placed in 100R because they require additional practice with reading comprehension (as shown by their reading placement test scores) or additional work with grammar and vocabulary (based on their placement tests). Roughly one-third of the course (the 099 portion) should be spent focusing on reading comprehension or grammar and vocabulary activities. As with regular 100, students are assigned a letter grade for the 100 portion of the course and must earn a “C” or above in order to pass the course and enter Expository Writing (101). However, the “R” portion of the course (099) is graded pass/fail, based on grades for quizzes focused on reading comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar. STUDENTS DO NOT NEED TO PASS 099 IN ORDER TO MOVE ON TO 101. Also, students can pass 099 and not pass 100, in which case they will be able to take regular 100 (meeting two days per week) the following semester.

Please Note: If you are teaching a section of 100, do not allow students in your class who are required to enroll in 099. These students must register for 100R.

It is important to remember that 100 is prepartion for 101. The best preparation is practice in writing college essays. We can neither hold students to the standards of 101 nor teach an ‘easy’ class in order to ‘help’ them: the first holds them to a standard they are not prepared for and the second does not adequately prepare them for that standard. Striking a balance between the two is the trickiest part of teaching 100 and 100R. Knowing who the students are in Basic Composition can help us design a course that meets their needs.

Basic Composition Students: Who Are They?

Students placed into 100 or 100R are a diverse group. Many of them come into the class with low self-confidence in their writing abilities -- an anxiety exacerbated by the their placement in what many students consider a “remedial” class. Some of these fears about writing are connected to their lack of experience in reading or in thinking and writing about abstract concepts. Other students find themselves unprepared the long term commitment that the course requires, and they may not have acquired or been introduced to the sorts of study habits required to succeed with writing a four- or five-page college essay. Basic Composition courses also have many students for whom English is not a native language. These students may have stronger study skills and be more adept at conceptualizing ideas than some native speakers, but they also have greater difficulty expressing their ideas clearly in written English. Finally some students are placed into Basic Composition because they have difficulty
performing on standardized tests. These students may not have a lot of difficulty doing the work of the course, but they will still gain stronger writing ability from it.

Despite this diversity, Basic Composition students are much like those we encounter in 101 in terms of their experience with reading: they have seldom encountered the types of prose texts we ask them to engage with, and the writing tasks required of them in high school have centered around summary and personal response rather than engagement and analysis. The biggest difference between 100 and 101 students may be that 100 students usually recognize that they need to improve their writing.

Relationship between Expository Writing and Basic Composition

At one time, Expository Writing had six essays and a final exam, but we did away with one paper in that course and added a midterm. So there are now few structural differences between 101 and 100-level courses: both courses require 5 papers, a midterm exam, and a final exam. Some minor differences include: 100 gives students two days for the midterm and final, we accept 4-page papers on the first two assignments in 100, and the readings are a little shorter and more accessible than 101 readings. Other than that, though, they are fairly similar courses.

The main difference between 101 and 100, of course, is in the population taking each course. English 100/100R students often have difficulty reading complex texts and recognizing nuanced distinctions, so their writing is often imprecise, vague, evasive or clichéd as a result. Students who place into Expository Writing may initially have similar issues with generalization and often do not know how to construct an academic argument, but they are usually stronger readers, have fewer errors in grammar, and have more experience in reading, writing, and conceptual thinking than 100-level students and therefore can more quickly get to passing level and beyond. Students in 100 need more guidance with the formal aspects of writing than 101 students; this includes guidance in correctly constructing complex sentences, paragraphing, making transitions, and logically developing their ideas. They may also have not acquired the kinds of general study habits and working practices necessary for successful college-level work. Because of their lack of experience and practice, 100-level students can easily become overwhelmed by the task at hand and freeze up because they have no idea how to approach an assignment. Consequently, the overall goals of the course are to:

1. teach students how to understand and engage with non-fiction texts;
2. make them more comfortable with conceptual, analytic, and connective thinking;
3. help them develop a method to approach writing critical essays;
4. guide them through the process of writing an academic paper.

Because students placed into Basic Composition have had little exposure to and practice with the conceptual thinking and critical writing we are asking of them, it is important for instructors to model ways of approaching reading and writing tasks. The single greatest difference between teaching 101- and 100-level is that teachers need to break down the processes of academic reading and writing into smaller steps in the 100-level classroom. Students need more directed activities (specific tasks, broken down into small exercises, such as writing a paragraph), and more time spent on reading comprehension in both the 100 and 100R classroom. The task as a 100 instructor is to continue seeking complex reading and writing from students for whom reading and writing is not as intuitive as it is for the typical 101 student.

Despite these pragmatic differences, the basic principles of English 101 also hold true in 100-level courses. We require students to go through a drafting process for each essay and we ask teachers to sequence their assignments so that students will learn to complicate their initial written responses to texts by re-examining these texts and their own writing in light of a new author’s ideas. By the final two papers students will ideally have learned to formulate a thesis of their own that draws on conceptual connections between texts.
Standard Course Requirements

• Students read six (6) essays from Points of Departure.

• Students write five (5) essays, including a rough and final draft of each. By the term’s end, a student’s final drafts should total 23 - 25 typed pages. Teachers are encouraged to ask for five pages on each assignment, but the practice has been to accept four pages on the first two assignments. Many teachers require that they make it to the top of page 5 on the first two assignments and make it to page 6 (even if there are only two words on page 6) on the last three.

• Students must participate in class and are required to present to the class three times during the term (usually this means presenting ideas discussed in collaborative groups).

• Students take a Midterm and Final Exam, both conducted in class over two days, written in essay format, graded pass or fail. The midterm is intended to help scaffold success on Assignment #3, while the Final Exam is intended to test whether or not students are able to write in class a new reading that they must connect to at least one other essay they have read this term. The final exam is graded pass/fail and is intended to test that students carry with them the lessons of the class. It also confirms that the student has been the one writing the papers all semester.

• Students keep all rough and final drafts in a folder, which teachers collect for “folder review” twice during the semester. Instructors may also have students keep their commented work online in Sakai or Google Docs, so long as it can be shared with a director for folder review.

• Students must demonstrate competence developing a project or argument, organizing an essay, citing and discussing texts, and writing correct Standard English in order to pass the class.

Reading and Writing Requirements

The central text for 100/100R is the 3rd edition of Points of Departure. This book was designed specifically to prepare Rutgers students in Basic Composition courses for Expository Writing. Please read the short introduction for the philosophy and pragmatics behind the collection.

In order to pass Basic Composition courses, students must write five (5) papers with at least one rough draft for each and complete a midterm and a final exam. Students must pass the Final Exam and Paper #4 and/or Paper #5 in order to pass the course. In other words, they need to show a trajectory of passing work in the final weeks of the semester.

Papers

Students in Basic Composition courses are required to produce a minimum of 23-25 typed final pages (Papers #1 and #2 are typically required to be 4 full pages, while Papers #3, #4, and #5 are 5 full pages or more). Instructors are encouraged to supplement the paper requirements with pre-writing and drafting assignments, either in-class or as homework, to help students work with quotations, make connections, build paragraphs, etc. Students should expect to spend at least 8 hours per week reading, writing and re-writing their papers.

Exams

In Basic Composition students are required to take a midterm and final exam. Teachers design their own exams along the lines of the paper assignments. For 100 and 100R the midterm exam occurs during two consecutive class meetings after the Final Draft of Paper #2. Teachers assign a new reading that students discuss amongst themselves, without the direction of the teacher. The midterm exam question should ask students to examine some aspect of the new reading in relation to at least one of the earlier readings. On the first day of the two-day midterm students come to class having read the essay. They receive the exam question and spend the 80-minute class period writing an initial draft of their response. They are allowed to use the text and a dictionary for this purpose, but no prepared notes. At the end of the first class period, teachers collect the blue books and the exam question; during the second class period, these drafts are returned, and students are asked to revise them.
The midterm should be given after Paper #2. Though it serves as an in-class check of student progress, it should also be considered part of the drafting process for Paper #3. For the paper assignment following the exam, teachers can have students build on the work they have done for the midterm by revising their midterm questions and asking students to add complexity to the ideas they have already begun to explore, or by developing a new question that explores a different aspect of the same readings.

The midterm should be graded on a pass/fail basis and not averaged into the final grade or the grade for the following paper. In grading the midterm exam, look for students who are unable to generate ideas or revise their drafts, as this may indicate that they have been getting a lot of outside help on their papers.

Passing midterm exams may not be as polished or complex as the out-of-class essays your students will write, but they should clearly display students’ ability to:

- understand the assigned readings
- assert a thesis that engages with the exam question and assigned texts
- select and analyze appropriate quotes for their points
- make connections between texts
- control grammar and sentence-level errors

The final exam for 100 follows exactly the same procedure as the midterm, and takes place during the final two class periods of the semester. Students must write a passing final exam to pass the course.

Teachers of 100R should also give a longer quiz as a “final exam” in 099, but students ARE NOT required to pass the 099 exam to pass the class. Also, students who fail the 099 portion of the class can still pass 100.

**Reading and Writing Skills in 100 and 100R**

With consistent practice over the semester, students in 100 or 100R will demonstrate that they are making improvements in both their reading and writing skills. However, as with all Writing Program courses, grades are not based upon improvement, but upon demonstration of basic reading and writing skills. These skills are arranged below in the general order that we will emphasize in teaching, and in the order we hope students will acquire them. Students will be employing all of these skills in each paper to the level they can, but improvement on them may be gradual and varied. We’ve found that improvement is often best made in this order. Students’ papers should show their proficiency in:

- **Reading comprehension**: locating and understanding an author’s position within an essay; following the development of an author’s thesis within an essay; distinguishing between contradictory positions within an essay or essays; understanding vocabulary and key words in the essays and assignments; using a dictionary effectively

- **Thesis and position**: articulating a thesis and taking a clear position in their own responses to assignment questions and assigned texts

- **Using quotation**: selecting relevant quotes and using quotation effectively to further their thesis and engage with the texts; this also includes proper incorporation of quotes within their own sentences, and correct citation

- **Connective thinking**: making specific connections between texts, particularly between ideas in texts, that help them answer the assignment questions and contribute to their own thesis
• **Sentence-level control and grammar**: identifying and correcting errors, especially fused sentences, sentence fragments, and agreement errors (subject-verb, number, pronoun); sentence-level control includes proofreading for typos and eliminating errors caused by carelessness

• **Vocabulary**: understanding critical vocabulary in the reading; gaining control over idioms and collocations so that there are not major sentence break-downs; having the ability to use meta-discourse to distinguish the author’s ideas from their own and to advance an independent claim and no ventriloquize or paraphrase the author’s argument in their own words.

• **Paragraph structure**: including topic sentences, supporting evidence, the differences between summary and analysis, textual engagement, and paragraph transitions

• **Organization**: demonstrating strong paragraph development throughout the paper, including introduction and conclusion

These categories are also the basis for our grading criteria. In addition, from the beginning of the semester, in order to pass, papers should meet the page-length requirements for both rough and final drafts, and should demonstrate students’ abilities to use peer review effectively, and to revise their papers significantly between rough and final drafts.

**Classroom Practices**

Perhaps the greatest difference between teaching 100 and 101 is in classroom practices. Because of the students’ uncertainty about and limited experience with the type of tasks we ask of them, teachers need to be more directive than in the 101 classroom. Since the 101 course began using *The New Humanities Reader*, our greatest challenge in 100 is aiming for "thesis-oriented" papers from students who may really struggle with finding the argument in every essay they read. We can best work toward this goal by focusing on specific exercises that provide the students with models for approaching difficult texts and developing ideas through writing. Rather than spend the bulk of each class “discussing the text,” we can use well-designed close-reading exercises, practice with paragraph-building around quotations or key terms, and other directed writing exercises to scaffold the writing and revision process. It is useful to reiterate at the end of each class the steps the class took or the skills they practiced in order to understand a reading or to begin writing; in this way, students can develop a “blue-print” for working independently. Indeed the most productive classroom “discussions” for Basic Composition students are those that involve a combination of active student reading, discussion, and writing.

*Points of Departure* is a vast improvement on our previous readers in assisting with these classroom practices because the essays have been chosen in part for the modeling they do: in asserting a complex thesis (many are written from the first-person and tackle controversial issues that have many justifiable positions), mobilizing key terms for analysis, using quotations effectively and correctly, and developing solid paragraph structure (including topic sentences, support, transitions). Our custom-designed textbook is ideal for modeling the kinds of writing students will be asked to do in both Basic Composition and Expos; and hopefully, these essays will help us pedagogically to connect the reading and writing skills we want our students to acquire.

As in Expository Writing, we want to enable students to discover their own ideas and their own perspective. Thus, we ask teachers to emphasize group work and other student-centered classroom practices rather than lecture. Basic Composition students often have difficulty with this kind of pedagogy at first because they believe that they cannot do the work or that they have nothing to contribute. They may want the teacher to tell them what to do and have difficulty working independently. So when you first introduce a new task, you may have to be quite directive. Although it is important to avoid telling students what to do or think, it is also important not to let them flounder unproductively. Activities such as peer review and rough-draft workshopping should be carefully
structured (especially at the beginning of the semester) so that students have clear tasks and a model to follow. While teachers may need to give more guidance during the early part of the semester, they should move students in the second half of the semester toward greater independence in order to ensure that they will be ready for 101.

**Assignments and Sequencing**

Assignments for Basic Compositions should focus on sequential readings. They should ask students to look at an idea in the context of what others have said about it, to consider ideas from different perspectives, and to recognize that discussions can be continually complicated through the addition of new texts. A sample packet of assignment sequences will be available at orientation.

The first assignment should ask students to respond to one reading, but all subsequent assignments should require students to work with at least two readings. Although it is not a requirement for the course, some teachers allow or encourage students to address three texts in at least one paper during the second half of the semester. While most students by the end of 100 or 100R are strong enough readers and writers to succeed at such a task, teachers should only present using three readings as an option for Paper #4 rather than Paper #5 and not a requirement. The purpose of allowing stronger students to use three authors’ ideas in an essay is to prepare them to achieve the highest grades in 101. However, we do not want to penalize students who are not yet ready for using three readings by making that a requirement.

The first assignment in Basic Composition poses a number of difficulties for students, partly because working with only one text often leads them to summary. Thus, it is productive to use the first paper to help students practice careful reading, identifying the author’s position and thesis (as opposed to other positions represented in the essay), asserting a thesis of their own in response to the assignment question, and selecting useful quotes from the text to accomplish these other goals. The first assignment must set for students a reasonable task, such as working closely with the specific examples from the reading, and the main goal(s) of the paper must be clearly articulated for the students.

Experienced Basic Composition teachers have found that assigning the more conceptually challenging essays for reading early in the term produces stronger student writing. While students may struggle with the material, their reading and writing skills improve considerably when they are asked to work with abstract ideas early on. As in all Writing Program courses, but perhaps especially in Basic Composition, it is very important to avoid asking students to write papers that are a “personal” response to the readings. Personal responses often become personal accounts, allowing the student to bypass the task of engaging the ideas in the readings. At the same time, we want students to consider their own reactions to these essays as fruitful places to begin the writing process. We may incorporate this kind of reaction-writing into the exercises building up to the actual assignment question, but not for the assignment question itself. In Basic Composition we want to prepare students for the essays in The New Humanities Reader and the kinds of assignments in 101, where they will be asked to produce papers in which they articulate a position and assert a thesis of their own that is in direct conversation with the texts. This should be our ultimate goal, but will require more detailed assignments than you would write for the 101 student.

As such, in writing Basic Composition assignments, many teachers find it useful to articulate two or three clear goals on each assignment. These are writing goals separate from the conceptual question(s) engaging the text that students are asked to address in their paper. Listing goals is a good strategy as it helps students know what you will be looking for when you grade. The following are some examples drawn from various 100 teachers’ assignment questions:

- Clearly distinguish between your own voice and that of the author. Be sure to quote from the author, discuss quotes, and connect them to your own project.
In Basic Composition, effective sequencing is of the utmost importance. The goal of the assignment sequence is not to encourage students to master particular readings, but to reconsider a particular issue through another author’s perspective, or to reconsider an author’s perspective by introducing a new issue. We’ve found that *Points of Departure* works very well for both kinds of sequencing. Especially with the more difficult readings, students engage most effectively with the complexities of the text when they return to it to write a second or third paper. The challenge which we present to the students by asking them to read and write about difficult texts can only be met if we give them the chance to return to and re-evaluate their complex ideas.

Because 100 and 100R require 5 papers and a two-day midterm, there is more flexibility in the organization of sequencing than in 101. Here are two sequences that have been used effectively:

**Paper 1:** Reading 1  
**Paper 2:** Reading 1 & 2  
**Midterm:** Reading 3 and choice of reading 1 or 2.  
**Paper 3:** Reading 3 & choice of readings 1 or 2 (giving the option to use all three but not requiring that students use three texts)  
**Paper 4:** Reading 4 and choice of any other reading – or direct students to a particular reading that will yield the best connections for this assignment.  
**Paper 5:** Reading 5 and choice of any other reading.  
**Final Exam:** Reading 6 and choice of one other

100-level students tend to differ from 101 students in terms of the trajectory of their work over the course of the semester. The folk wisdom in 101 is that the class “turns around” at Papers #3, with previously failing students beginning to pass, and stronger students moving clearly toward the grades they will achieve in Papers #4 and #5. There is much more variety in the trajectories of 100 students. For some, the “turn” may come as early as the second paper; it is more common, however, for this moment to come much later in the semester, as late as the Final Draft of Paper #4. It’s at this point that the weakest students may begin to demonstrate control over the basic skills they need to pass, including solid reading comprehension, thesis articulation, work with quotation, and control over sentence-level error. For this reason, experienced instructors with a weaker group of students will sometimes give the midterm exam between papers 3 and 4 in order to concentrate the revision benefits of the exam on that critical late juncture for weaker students.

**Revision**  
One of the important skills students learn in their Writing Program courses is revision. Unfortunately, trying to persuade Basic Composition students to revise in a productive manner can be a source of extreme frustration for teachers. Despite employing the 101 practices of a Rough Draft Workshop into each paper, many Basic Composition students persist in their belief that revision is lengthening, proof-
reading and editing for grammar and sentence structure. Consequently, they often turn in final papers with few substantial changes between drafts, except for an additional page of writing and some corrections. The best way to get students to move beyond seeing revision as merely lengthening and proofreading is to build revision into the assignment process itself so that they cannot complete the assignment without significant revision. This involves first breaking down the revision process into small and manageable steps and then using these small steps to build a finished paper. Listed below are some suggestions for breaking down assignments:

- Using in-class “free-writing” with the introduction of each new text. The “Points of Access” questions in the reader are wonderful for this type of in-class work, and can help students generate, and put into writing, their gut-reactions on an issue before they actually read the essays. They then have written work that they must revise to some extent if they want to use it in their rough drafts.
- Using daily reading and writing assignments that help students build up to the assignment.
- Using group exercises to help students in the pre-writing stage. For instance, you might include with the assignment five or six questions for thought, and ask students to work on these questions in small groups.
- Using targeted questions and written responses as part of the drafting process. These can either be reading comprehension or connection-oriented, and may be done in-class or as homework.
- Generating two different assignments for each paper—one for the rough draft and one for the final paper—handed out on two different days. The preliminary assignment would probably be quite broad, while the second assignment would focus on the same issue but be more specific.

Another strategy to move students beyond proofreading is to set aside a separate time (preferably class time) for proofreading only. The first part of the class on final draft day is usually a good time for this. Setting aside this class time gives students the message that proofreading is important, but that it is an activity separate from revision.

**Responding to Student Papers**

The comments you write on student papers—both in the margins and at the end—should clearly indicate how well the students are progressing toward meeting the goals of the current assignment as well as areas which continue to need improvement. Effective comments do four things:

1. Engage a student’s ideas/conceptual work by noting the ideas in the paper;
2. Identify successful moments, and clearly explain why these aspects of the paper are strong or promising;
3. Direct the student to two or three skills or areas of improvement to focus on for the next paper;
4. Address mechanics such as the shape of the essay, the logic of the paragraphs, connections between paragraphs, and serious grammar issues.

**Grammar and the Basic Composition Student**

Teachers coming to 100 from 101 may notice more errors, or more egregious errors, in 100 students’ papers. While teachers may tend to react either by focusing extensively on grammatical issues or ignoring them altogether, we recommend an approach similar to the one we use in 101. As in 101 papers, 100 students’ papers often display greater error when they are dealing with complex readings and writing assignments. Focusing on grammatical rules and exercises will not address the cause of the problem, which is often their difficulty understanding an idea or developing a vocabulary to distinguish between concepts. The number of grammatical errors in students’ papers may at first be disconcerting for new 100 teachers. It is important to note that many errors are intrinsically related to issues of meaning-making; as students become clearer about what they want to say, problems like awkward and incoherent sentences will sort themselves out. Nevertheless, there will be students whose writing has severe mechanical errors because they have not done much reading or writing, have had poor preparation in elementary and/or high school, or because English is not their native language. (It’s sometimes difficult to tell these groups of students apart, so don’t assume that “ESL errors” are being
committed by an ESL student.) Their papers may contain sentence fragments, fused sentences, misspelled words, agreement errors, and fractured syntax. While it is tempting to simply correct errors for our students, we have found that extensively editing papers overwhelms and discourages students; furthermore, there is no real evidence that students’ writing improves with these kinds of written teacher corrections. Other effective responses to serious grammar errors are as follows:

- **IN PRINT: Identify Patterns of Error in Individual Papers:** Identify the 2 or 3 most problematic errors (those that impede meaning the most) in a student’s paper. Mark one or two instances of each error on the first and second pages of the paper, and write a marginal comment to the student identifying the pattern of these errors. In the end comment ask the student to look for other errors of the same kind, correct them on that paper, and resubmit the paper to you. If the student is having difficulty identifying the errors elsewhere, you might “box” or highlight culprit sentences in the student’s paper, and require the student to figure out what the error is and correct it using your marked examples on the first page. For students with vocabulary-related issues, encourage them to keep a vocabulary journal to work on mastering idioms and collocations.

- **IN PERSON: Use Office Hours:** Students with chronic grammar or vocabulary issues should work with you in office hours and/or work with a tutor to identify their patterns of error, and correct them independently. This need not take undue time from other students in your office hours. Have the student bring in a rough or final draft you have already read, and explain the problem verbally one-on-one, then set the student on a task to correct errors in the draft while you meet with other students.

- **IN CLASS: Use Student Papers for Group Work:** copy paragraphs or individual sentences from papers that demonstrate errors common to a number of students in your class. You might even assemble a worksheet using one or two grammar or vocabulary errors from each student in your class. Ask the class to work in groups to identify patterns of error and suggest ways or correcting them. Some teachers have even turned this exercise into a “grammar game” or “vocabulary exercise.”

**Revision**

Since many Basic Composition students struggle to reach a passing level, especially in the first half of the semester, it can be very tempting to allow them to rewrite non-passing papers. This strategy can backfire since the students who wish to rewrite papers are often the same students who have great difficulty producing a 4 to 5 page paper. If they get bogged down rewriting the early papers, it may be hard for them to complete the work of the course. You should remind students who are worried about their grades that all the papers in the semester are part of a drafting process, and that they will finally be graded on the basis of the work they are able to achieve consistently by the end of the semester. They will be able to handle 101 more effectively if they learn—in 100—how to apply your comments on one paper to the next paper they write.

Rewrites should be assigned only occasionally and very selectively—they should not be offered to an entire class. If you wish to allow your entire class two shots at a single paper, you must build two rough drafts into the paper sequence. Some experienced 100 and 100R instructors move quickly at the beginning of the semester specifically to allow for two rough drafts on Paper #5. As for individuals earlier in the semester, if you find a paper has several strengths and it seems that the student will really learn from the experience of rewriting and not fall behind in other work for the course, then a rewrite may be assigned. If rewrites are allowed they should be completed by a specific deadline and students should know that they will not be able to pass the course solely on the basis of rewrites.
Teachers might opt to use a strategy of “targeted” rewrites for particular students or as an informal writing exercise: asking a student to rewrite a portion of a paper (usually no more than a page) in order to address one specific issue such as developing connections or working with quotations. Once the student has practiced and mastered the skill on a small and manageable piece of writing, he or she will be more likely to replicate it on subsequent papers.

**Challenges Our Students Face**

Students arrive at college with a variety of experiences in writing, but they have generally not been asked in high school to do the type of writing expected of them in college. There are many historical, structural and institutional reasons why that is so. But we know that because of this divide, students experience difficulty in making the transition from high school writing to college writing.

College confronts students with a completely new paradigm when it comes to writing. The idea that knowledge comes into existence through conversations among informed readers and writers, and that students should take a position of their own in relation to these dialogues, is often quite a completely new concept that requires a structural shift in their thinking. Typically, students have been taught how to summarize or report information, or if their views have been invited it has only been to offer “personal responses” to literary works or to practice the art of “debate” between two polarized positions so that they can pick a side in a pre-determined binary.

Given our students’ typical preparation, it is important to build an incremental curriculum, one that takes students through the process of reading and developing connections as a step-by-step process. 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 most good readings begin as mis-readings, and that reading, writing, re-reading, and revising are essential steps in getting from initial interpretation to making knowledge.

**100R: Basic Composition with Reading**

100R combines regular Basic Composition (100) an “E” credit course called Reading for Basic Composition (099). We call it “Basic Composition with Reading” and designate it as “100R,” the “R” signifying the “reading” emphasis in the course. However, your students may also have issues with grammar and vocabulary, especially if they are international students or coming from EAD II. In terms of the registration, 355:099 (the “R”) counts as the 1.5 E-credit portion, graded pass/fail, and 355:100 counts as 3 college-credits, evaluated by a letter grade. The 100 portion counts toward graduation credits, but the 099 portion does not. However, students can use the full 4.5 credits to qualify as full time students. Students must pass both components of 100R in order to advance to 101.

Sections of English 100R are designated by a letter (e.g. 100:AA through 100:ZZ); sections of English 100 are numbered (e.g. 100:13, 100:14). Students must enroll in 100R if they have:

- Placed into 100R upon entering Rutgers University
- Passed English 098
- Passed EAD II
- Earned an 095P or an F in English 100 in a prior semester

**Class Structure**

Roughly one-third of 100R should be concentrated on reading comprehension, vocabulary and grammar issues, hence the additional day per week. You may want to designate one class per week for this, or you might approach this focus on reading and vocabulary more fluidly throughout the semester. In either case, student work and progress on reading comprehension should be evaluated throughout the semester with a series of 099 assignments or quizzes (9-12 total) in order to establish a final 099 grade. In addition, the reading exercises and quizzes that you use to satisfy the 099 requirement should be organized as a supplement to the assigned drafts and regular 100 work. There is no midterm in 099, but most instructors give a quiz on each new reading and count this as part of 099 grading. 099 does have a
separate one-day final exam, as well as a separate pass/fail grade assigned at the end of the semester, though most instructors give a “final quiz” that draws from the whole variety of topics that have been covered during the semester.

100R Students: Who Are They?
Those skills which 100 and 101 attempt to develop suggest a more subtle difficulty in 100R. The Basic Composition exercises designed to encourage independent thinking and engagement with texts may require a measure of “tinkering” for the 099 student. The 100R teacher may find it necessary to try a variety of exercises, to assess the individual challenges faced by the students, and to pace the rigor of the quizzes and comments. It will probably not be sufficient simply to ask students to select passages and to analyze them. More specific questions, about identifying key terms and finding quotes that define them, are advisable. The 100R student’s temptation to make broad, superficial comparisons between texts frequently leads them to summary. Therefore, emphasizing key concepts in class discussion can help students to frame a more analytical essay.

Distinctions between 100R and 100
• 100R meets 3 days per week instead of 2
• The 3-day schedule of 100R allows more time for structured reading assignments that move the students toward their writing tasks.
• Reading, vocabulary and grammar quizzes, in-class reading assignments and reading homework are more deliberately assigned and tracked in 100R than 100. These are used both to establish a final grade in 099 and to move the students toward a better understanding of the texts they will need to write about in their papers.

Standard Course Requirements for 099
• Students do not need to pass 099 in order to advance from 100R to 101. Those who fail the 099 portion, however, will have an F on their transcript – but because 099 is an e-credit course, that F will not factor into the GPA.
• Students must complete a minimum of nine (9) 099 assignments/quizzes during the semester to pass.
• Students must complete both an 099 exam and a 100 exam.

Goals of 099 for 100R
• Your classroom practices, and reading and writing exercises for the “reading” component of 100R should move students toward the following goals:
• Approaching difficult texts by underlining, taking notes in the margins, writing summaries, identifying the main points and topic sentences of each paragraph, etc.
• Defining terms in context.
• Identifying key terms in an essay.
• Distinguishing between an author’s position, and other positions presented in an essay
• Attending to how an author uses other sources: does the author challenge them, extend them, use them, or do all of these at different times?
• Prioritizing information in an essay in order to choose and use it effectively in their papers
• Understanding how different parts of an essay (introduction, conclusion, etc.) function
• Reading for tone.

Language
• Verbs: Missing verbs, subject/verb agreement, proper tense usage.
• Pronoun usage.
• Prepositions, phrasal constructions: how both prepositions and phrasal constructions create complications in an essay.
• Syntax and structure: Articles, Adjectives, Adverbs, Apostrophes, Comparative superlatives, Modals.
• How to properly use a quotation and analyze it in the paragraph.
• Proper use of punctuation (i.e., the comma, the semi-colon).

Sentence Style
How to use the correct word to create a proper transition in thought both in a paragraph and between paragraphs.

Since grammar would be the key component in this course, one day a week would be focused on particular grammar problems that are unique to second language learners. During this class period a “combo” approach using individual and group assignments will often be used to deal with ESL grammar problems: the students will work by themselves on grammar exercises and then proofread each other in peer group. Then the entire class and the instructor will share with one another strategies to improve grammar and syntax.

Strategies for Teaching 099
The central text for 100R is Points of Departure, just as it is for 100. Students will read the same essays for 099 as they will for the 100 portion of the class, and you will have an additional day to discuss the reading and have the students work closely with passages. There are a variety of ways to organize this “extra day.” You could have the students work to select important passages in the reading (099 students often complain that they do not know how to decide what is important); you could spend the period going over one sentence or paragraph (099 students often have difficulty distinguishing between a clause that adds information and a central idea); you could spend time going over the “answers” to their homework questions; you could ask them to work in groups, first writing a summary of a particularly difficult passage, and then developing an interpretation or analysis of it.

All Basic Composition students must be given more time and preparation to enable them to comprehend an essay. The 100R student may need time to focus on comprehending certain parts of an essay before discussing the text as a whole. For the first two essays especially, it is advisable to assign as distinct tasks the steps which contribute to generating an interpretation of the texts. Rather than ask students merely to find a key passage and discuss it, you will need to construct an exercise which breaks down the steps of identifying passages, close-reading the passage, and responding to the passage into several tasks assigned in succession. For example:

• Locate a quotation that contains an author’s critical concept and copy it down;
• List an important assumption in the author’s use of the concept;
• Present the author’s definition of the concept in your own words;
• Respond to the author’s idea as you have formulated it.

Once the students have internalized the steps, in-class exercises can move a bit more quickly.

As with all Writing Program courses, our ultimate goal is for students to develop an independent thesis that synthesizes multiple sources. In 100R this goal may be more modest than in 100 or 101, but should still be along the lines of helping students to develop workable readings of complex textual material. They may struggle with identifying ideas or concepts in the texts that are both a fair indication of the author’s position and thesis and are narrow enough to enable the students to address the ideas. Bringing an author’s ideas into a manageable framework is perhaps the most difficult skill for the 099 student to develop, and the most difficult to teach.

Assignments for 099
100R is exactly the same class as 100 in terms of the writing assignments and sequencing of assignments. The difference is centered upon the reading work assigned to accompany and contribute to students’ written work, and with the “extra day” per week, you have more time as a teacher to work through
student needs. The third class day is particularly earmarked for reading and comprehension skills, which are likely to be too time-consuming in the regular 100 or 101, 2-day-per-week format. Teachers often incorporate the third day into the regular class flow, spending some time on reading exercises each day; other teachers choose to set aside whole class session to address reading issues; still others will vary their use of time as they move through the semester, spending more full days on reading exercises at the beginning of the semester, then incorporating smaller exercises throughout the week later in the semester. Class discussions of text, then, may be extended for an extra day, with particular emphasis on reading issues; alternatively, when the class is in the midst of revising a draft then the extra day may supplement that process as well, and focus on the reading skills necessary for effective revision. While reading-dedicated, the third day in 100R is flexible and allows for a certain margin of instructor discretion, in terms of how it is to be used in any given week. However, over the course of the semester, one third of the total class time is devoted to “R” (reading) materials and exercises.

Generally, quizzes are given on each new assigned reading. These quizzes may ask simple questions to check comprehension, but as the semester progresses they also begin to ask students to connect this new reading to previous readings or to ask students to evaluate the meanings of specific passages. Students should definitely be expected to learn the vocabulary of the readings, and you might assist students in constructing lists of vocabulary to learn from each new reading. Quizzes may prove more productive if instructors expect more rather than less from students; quizzes might challenge the student to re-read one author, relying on a concept in the new text. If the quizzes are lively and ask ambitious questions about the texts and possible connections, students are more likely to develop their ideas and may be able to strengthen their rough drafts. Request definitions of concepts that lean more on analysis, and ask for sharper re-readings of the earlier texts.

Grading Criteria for 099
All work is graded Pass/Fail. This includes in-class work, homework, quizzes, and the final exam. At the end of the semester, 65% of the work for 099 must be passing in order to pass the course. “Passing work” is defined as 65% correct or plausible responses to the questions being asked of the student on any given assignment. Students must complete a minimum of 9 quizzes. If you have assigned 10 or more, you may drop one grade for each student in determining the final grade. For example: a student passes 6 of 10 quizzes. That is 60% and failing. But you may drop one failing grade, bringing the total to 6 of 9. That is 66% and passing. Alternately, if a student has missed a quiz, you may drop that grade in lieu of dropping an F. Please do not drop more than one grade.

Final Grades in 100R
Because 100R is really 100 and 099, it exists as two courses, which means that there must be two grades. There will be a separate roster for the 099 portion of the class. While the possible 100 grades are A, B+, B, C+, C, F, and 095 P, 099 is graded on a PA or F basis. Some students may do very well on the testing in 099 but not be able to write passing papers due to productive vocabulary problems. Some students might hand in all of the essays for 100 and pass but miss too many quizzes in 099 to pass that class. In these cases, we should look carefully for why the student failed the 099 exam, what sorts of reading, vocabulary, or grammar difficulties he or she is having, whether the mis-readings in the exam are patently “wrong” and numerous, pointing to larger reading difficulties, or whether they are local and minor in the context of the entire exam. Such cases should be discussed in folder review with a director.
II. Sample Syllabus and First Day Writing Sample

The syllabus of a course creates a contract with students, so it is important that you spell out any rules you want to enforce during the course of the semester. The following sample syllabus contains some material we would like to see standardized across sections. While you are welcome to include additional policies, please do include all of the standard policies, as indicated in the discussion that follows. With the course calendar, we suggest that you only give a limited calendar at the beginning of the term and then use each assignment sheet as an opportunity to update the calendar as you move forward through the semester.

Basic Composition (355:100 Section ___), Fall 2017
Instructor:
Instructor’s Email:
Class Meetings: Days, Times, Location
Office Hours: Days, Times, Location

Course Description
In this course you will read and write about a variety of texts concerning a range of contemporary issues. The goal of the course is to prepare you for success in Expository Writing (355:101) where you will need to read deeply, think critically, and write interpretively and effectively, creating your own independent argument that synthesizes multiple sources.

Required Texts
• Miller-Cochran and Raimes, *Keys for Writers*, 7th 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 *Points of Departure*
• Write five out-of-class essays
• Write a typed rough and final draft for each assignment (and demonstrate significant revision between drafts)
• Give three brief oral presentations in class
• Complete an in-class midterm exam over two days (essay format, graded pass or fail)
• Complete an in-class final exam over two days (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.
• 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 Basic Composition 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 Basic Composition 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.

Partial Calendar

Tuesday, September 5
First class meeting. Discuss syllabus. Respond to the first day writing sample in class. If you miss the first class meeting, please submit the first day sample (available on Sakai) as soon as possible.

Thursday, September 7
Always bring your book to class, especially today. Come to class having read the first assigned reading: Sherry Turkle’s “The Empathy Diaries.” First essay assignment distributed. Discussion activity.

Tuesday, September 12
Rough draft due. Bring three copies for peer review.

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://rhhpharmacy.rutgers.edu
• Health Outreach, Promotion & Education (H.O.P.E.) http://rhshope.rutgers.edu

Academic Deans and the Office of Academic Services
Comments on the Sample Syllabus

In this sample syllabus, the Requirements, Grading and Policies are those for the Writing Program as a whole. All teachers must respect these standards and must make them known to students.

Attendance
The attendance policy is important in a course that depends upon classroom participation and interaction. Students who miss six classes fail the course, and should retake it at a time when they are better able to commit to it. If a student switches into your section from another section during the Add / Drop period (or has his or her placement changed by the Department during this period), our policy is that this student should be given one excused absence. So, for example, if that student misses the first three class meetings, he or she will be counted as having two absences.

You should remind students of the absence policies periodically (e.g., on the days when drafts are due). Teachers should also penalize students for excessive or repeated lateness to class, and twenty minutes late to class counts as half an absence.

If you have doubts about the validity of a student's claim to a justified absence, you can speak to a Director on your campus. 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. Dean will speak with the student, and will also need documentation from the student verifying the circumstances. The Dean will then decide upon appropriate action, if any, and will contact you with the decision. It is useful to remind students that they cannot “drop” Basic Composition in the same way that they can any other course at the University.
Sometimes students are not aware of this policy and will stop attending class for over a week before seeking permission to drop, only to discover that they cannot drop the course and therefore must return, often having missed important work.

Early intervention can prevent serious problems. Speak with students after as few as two absences. Remind them of Writing Program policy and ask them to meet with you in your office hour, where you can determine more fully the reasons behind these absences and work with the student to resolve potential problems. Remember that students must submit all five papers and take the exams in order to pass the course. In unusual circumstances, however, you might encourage students to move on to the current assignment and to turn in missing work at a later date. Speak to the Director on your campus for advice on dealing with cases where you are trying to help a student return to the classroom after repeated absences. If you feel it is warranted, or might have a positive effect, you might also ask students in this situation to speak with a Director themselves.

**Late or Missing Work**
On the issue of late papers, teachers must set firm guidelines on their syllabus and apply them uniformly. Any grade changes that overturn your policies can be made during final folder review, where we will generally try to pass (with a C only) students who are capable of generating passing work but whose late work has lowered their grades. We generally recommend a penalty on the final draft of a half-letter grade (C+ to C) if the rough draft was late, and a full letter grade for late final drafts that are turned in by the next class meeting. Any final drafts turned in later than the next class meeting fail, but must be completed. All drafts must be typed and instructors should not accept handwritten work. We also recommend that instructors not accept work via e-mail – though students must be given some form of contact information, generally your email address, so that they can reach you outside of class.

You are welcome to add policies that will help you manage your class, such as a policy addressing cell phones in the classroom.

**Important University and Writing Program Policies**
Students may switch class sections through Add/Drop, but as stated above, they are not allowed to drop Basic Composition except with the permission of their Dean (which is rarely granted), as students must be able to complete their writing requirements in a timely manner. Please inform your students of this policy to avoid unnecessary failures.

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 or handle Add/Drop issues.

All plagiarism issues should be referred to the Writing Program office on your campus. Students who plagiarize generally must meet with a Writing Program director before returning to class.

**First Day Writing Sample**
First day writing samples are very important in Basic Composition because placements are sometimes changed based on them, especially with the availability of 100R as an alternative for students with clear reading or writing issues. We urge experienced teachers to develop their own first day writing samples for Basic Composition that fit with the first reading that they intend to use. That way the first day sample also serves as an introduction to the reading. A good question will simply present students with
a rich passage and ask them to do some close reading of the passage to answer a question that is not explicitly addressed in the reading itself.

Please also ask students to include their contact information (name, student number, email and phone) on their response sheet in case we decide to change their placement based on the first day sample.

**First Day Sample (with Turkle, “The Empathy Diaries”)**

*In asking you to produce a first-day writing sample, we are interested in getting an initial sense of your strengths and weaknesses as a reader and a writer. We are also interested in checking to make certain that you have been correctly placed in this course. For these reasons it is crucial that you do your best work on this writing sample. Use all of the time allowed and produce your best version of what you understand an essay to be. If you finish early, please check your spelling, grammar, and syntax.*

Please spend at least 60 minutes reading and responding to the following passage from Sherry Turkle’s “The Empathy Diaries” with respect to the questions below. Your essay should be thoughtful and should engage directly with the passage. Make sure you are as specific as possible with how you are reading the passage, and use quotations.

Just as some people will ask, “Why a book about conversation? We’re talking all the time,” some will say, “Why bring up the negative? You must know about all the wonderful new conversations that happen on the net!” I do know. I’ve gone to a reunion of my sixth-grade class from PS 216 Brooklyn that could never have happened if not for Facebook. Texts from my daughter, when she was twenty-three, made her seem closer to home even when she took a job on another coast. These from fall 2014:

> “Hi! I REALLY like *Life After Life*!”
> “Where do I get challah?”
> “My roommate and I are going to the party as Elsa and Anna from *Frozen*.”

All of a sudden, with no warning, on my phone, in my hand, there will be a reference to a book or a food or a Halloween costume that reminds me of our intimacy and infuses my day with her presence. This is pleasurable and to be cherished. The problem comes if these “reminders” of intimacy lead us away from intimacy itself.

Most relationships are a blend of online and off-line interaction. Courtships take place via text. Political debates are sparked and social movements mobilize on websites. Why not focus on the positive—a celebration of these new exchanges? Because these are the stories we tell each other to explain why our technologies are proof of progress. We like to hear these positive stories because they do not discourage us in our pursuit of the new—our new comforts, our new distractions, our new forms of commerce. And we like to hear them because if these are the only stories that matter, then we don’t have to attend to other feelings that persist—that we are somehow more lonely than before, that our children are less emphatic than they should be for their age, and that it seems nearly impossible to have an uninterrupted conversation at a family dinner.

**Questions for Writing**

According to Turkle, why can technology fundamentally not replace in-person interactions as a way of generating empathy? What makes person-to-person conversation unique? Be sure to point to specific places in the passage to support your answer.

**Tip:** Spend about 5 minutes reading over and marking up the passage. Underline whatever terms and sentences seem important to you, and write in the margins why they are important. Doing this early on in the writing process will help generate ideas. (Feel free to write directly on this assignment.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>September 5 - 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Distribute and discuss syllabus.</td>
<td>● Classes begin Tuesday, September 5, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● First day writing sample (of your design or download and copy one from the 100/100R Sakai site). Read these right away and discuss possible placement changes with the director on your campus.</td>
<td>● Add/Drop runs September 5 - 13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Assign first reading</td>
<td>● Use your Sakai site to aid students who add your section – especially by posting the first reading and the first writing assignment online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Explain and practice close reading.</td>
<td>● Post the first day writing sample online for students adding your class and ask them to submit it electronically to you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Distribute Paper 1 assignment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>September 11 - 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Group work focused especially on close reading strategies.</td>
<td>● Continue to use your Sakai site to aid students who add your section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Rough draft of Paper 1 due.</td>
<td>● Last day to change sections is Tuesday, September 14.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Peer review Paper 1 drafts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>September 18 - 22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Workshop sample student work, identifying strengths and weaknesses.</td>
<td>● Writing Centers begin enrolling students. When commenting on Paper 1, urge students who struggle to sign up for tutoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Final draft of Paper 1 due</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Assign second reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Do a close reading exercise with the second reading.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Distribute Paper 2 assignment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>September 25 - 29</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Group work and other activities, focused especially on making meaningful connections between readings 1 and 2.</td>
<td>● Roster check (watch your email and mailbox for a memo).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Rough Draft Paper 2 due</td>
<td>● Tutoring sessions begin at Writing Centers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Peer Review Paper 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>October 2 - 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Final draft of Paper 2 due.</td>
<td>● Sign up for Midterm Folder Review online. Times will be posted using Google Docs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Assign third reading.</td>
<td>● Collect midterm folders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Begin Midterm Exam if possible (over two days).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>October 9 - 13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Return Paper 2.</td>
<td>● Midterm Folder Review, October 9 - 20. Bring at least graded papers 1 and 2, copies of assignments, and your grade book. Bring exams if students have completed them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Midterm Exams conclude.</td>
<td>● Issue Warnings to failing or non-attending students from October 9 - 20.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Assign Paper 3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 7</th>
<th>October 16 - 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Return Midterm Exams and folders.</td>
<td>● This is a great time to have students write a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>October 23 - 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ● Rough draft of Paper 3 due.  
● Peer review drafts.  
● Writing activities, especially focused on developing the thesis. | midterm self-assessment, if you choose to do that. It can also be a good time to meet students individually to discuss their work. |
| Week 9 | October 30 - November 3 |
|● Final draft of Paper 3 due.  
● Assign Paper 4.  
● Discuss reading 4. | ● This is a good time for optional conferences with students. |
| Week 10 | November 6 - 10 |
|● Rough draft of Paper 4 due  
● Return graded paper 3. | ● Remind students that the last day to sign up for tutoring is approaching. |
| Week 11 | November 13 - 17 |
|● Final draft of Paper 4 due  
● Assign Reading 5  
● Discuss Reading 5 | ● Last week to enroll in tutoring on some campuses. |
| Week 12 | November 20 - 22 |
|● Close reading activity for fifth reading.  
● Focus on developing the thesis.  
● Rough draft of Paper 5  
● Peer Review Paper 5 | ● Change in class designation days: Tuesday, November 21 will hold Thursday classes and Wednesday, November 22, will hold Friday classes.  
● Thanksgiving Break from November 23 – 26.  
● Writing Centers close and suspend tutoring for Thanksgiving week. |
| Week 13 | November 27 - December 1 |
|● Student evaluations.  
● Paper 5 due (final draft)  
● Assign reading for final exam (reading 6). | ● Conduct student evaluations of your class before the last day. Distribute paper evals and ask a student to collect them and return them to the Writing Program. |
| Week 14 | December 4 - 8 |
|● Student led discussion of Final Exam reading.  
● Begin two-day final exam. | ● Sign up for Final Folder Review online.  
● Schedule final office hours and notify your students. |
| Week 15 | December 11 - 13 |
|● Two day final exam in 100.  
Administer final quiz in 100R.  
● After final folder review, be sure to hold final office hours to return folders and discuss final grades.  
● Submit remaining folders to the Writing Center on your campus. | ● Classes end Wednesday, December 13.  
● Final Folder Review: December 12 - 21. Bring folders for all students with all 5 graded papers, copies of your assignments, grade book with final grades in pencil, final exams, and grade information sheets for failing students. |
III. Assignments and Sequencing

This section sets forth our recommendations on creating clear assignments for your students and putting them together to create sequences that build upon each other incrementally.

**General Tips on Designing a Sequence**

Almost any set of readings can be developed as a sequence, in which students read a series of texts and make connections among them through a series of written assignments. The goal of a good sequence is to help students deepen their understanding of a theme or topic by exploring it from a number of angles or at an increasingly complex level. Each assignment in a sequence should build on the one before it. Here are some tips to keep in mind when forming your sequence:

- **Think context, not connection.** In choosing the readings to use in your sequence, don’t be concerned about the specific textual connections you see between them. Instead, think about what larger contexts or conversations draw them together. Our natural tendency is to put together a number of readings related to the same topic. But students write more original essays when they are challenged to connect readings that usually are not put together.

- **The best pairings complicate each other.** Teachers’ natural tendency when constructing a sequence might be to put together readings that are similar. But often the best writing comes from exploring pieces that complicate each other or seem at first difficult to connect.

- **Choose frame and case.** Often it is good to pair a reading that presents a theoretical framework (typically a nonfiction essay containing useful analytic terms) with a text that offers an interesting example for testing the “frame” (typically a personal reflection or fiction). We refer to this pairing as a “frame and case,” where students use the framing essay to interpret the example or examples offered by the case.

- **Be flexible.** Sometimes, a planned sequence goes awry. It may be that your class has particular problems with an essay or with a particular assignment. Or it may be that class discussion goes off in a whole new interesting and exciting direction. Always be ready to adapt your sequence to the needs and interests of your class.

**Advice on Writing Assignments**

Students are often confused by our assignment questions. I have heard them in the Writing Center talking to their tutors:

_Tutor:_ “When is the paper due?”
_Student:_ “I can’t remember—it might be next week.”
_Tutor:_ “Which readings are you supposed to write about?”
_Student:_ “Well, we have a new reading, but I think we’re supposed to connect it to the previous one as well.”
_Tutor:_ “OK—what’s the question you are writing on?”
_Student:_ “I’m not exactly sure—there are a lot of questions on the assignment sheet.”

As this rather typical dialogue suggests, there are some very basic ways we can help our student understand what we are asking them to do. Here are a few words of very practical advice to help make your assignments more consistently usable for students.

- **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 them to bring extra copies of their
Rough Draft for peer review! That way they have no excuse for forgetting copies on draft day.

- **Name the 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 have 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. Some teachers set the list of readings for the assignment apart somewhat by giving it a label (“Readings:”) and listing author, title, and page numbers.

- **Provide specific instructions in preparing the paper.** Your school may have developed standard ways of presenting student essays or it may not. In any case, students need guidelines. Especially on the first assignment, you should note basic formatting you expect and to specify all of the basic rules (to help to stave off chaos). My list includes the following: “one-inch margins, typed, double-spaced, no large point sizes, name and date in the upper left or right hand corner, a staple in the upper left hand corner, page numbers at the bottom of every page, and an original title centered on the first page.”

- **Use the visual elements of the page for emphasis.** With computers, we can all now be good page designers, able to use white space, lists, boldface, and other visual cues to help students understand our assignments. I think a good assignment will use boldface especially to highlight the specific question that is being asked. You should also set each separate part of the assignment into its own paragraph or its own part of the page.

- **Ask a question.** Some assignments, including even those by very experienced teachers, never really ask a question of students. Without a question to answer, students have no clear instigation 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 way students can focus on what you are really asking. And be sure your question has more than one possible answer! The best question will begin “how” or “why,” will use a specific term or idea from at least one of the readings, and will be open-ended enough for them to connect the readings while developing their own ideas.

- **Ask follow-up questions or give advice.** After you have written your question, try to think about the ways your weakest students might struggle to answer it. What advice can you give them? What additional questions (clearly segregated from the main question) might help them to understand what you are asking and how it applies to the texts under consideration? Ask questions that direct them to specific terms and ideas that they should use to inform their analysis. Point them to specific scenes or statements from the readings that will get them thinking.

- **State the learning objectives or goals.** With each paper you likely will be emphasizing different skills, which you might call the “learning objectives” for that assignment. With Assignment #1, you will usually be most concerned about getting students beyond summary and making sure they are using textual evidence to support their points. In Assignment #2, you might be looking for more connective work, patterns of error, and signs of a project. It’s a good idea to set these forth at the bottom of the assignment (perhaps in an unordered list) so that students can pay attention to them. The learning objectives can then inform your comments.

### The Assignment Question

The most important part of any writing assignment is the main question it asks, which you can think of as the instigation for writing. You might want to ask a number of questions to encourage reflection, but there should be one central prompt to which students respond. Highlight this 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.) Make sure that students don’t miss it. And work hard at making it an effective instigation for student projects. Be sure, first of all, that it is in the form of a question. That means it should end with a question mark. Make sure it is open-ended enough to allow for a variety of responses. It should not be possible to answer it “yes” or “no.” The best questions are often those that even you are not sure how to answer. They set students with a task and motivate them to develop an original project to fulfill that task. Questions can take a wide variety of forms, but they tend to begin with “How” or “Why” rather than “Who,” “What,” “Where,” or “When.” The following are some categories of successful questions.

**Close Reading**

Students are asked to examine implicit assumptions in the essay (usually about some “big question” or topic) that can only be revealed through close reading and analysis, using specific evidence from various parts of the essay itself. This type of question is especially useful with a single text and so is a good form for the first assignment. A good close reading assignment will ask students to use a part of the text to examine the whole or will ask students to consider a relevant topic engrained in the text but not explicitly discussed in the author’s argument.

- What views does Adam Gopnik imply about the qualities that make up a good parent? How should we measure "success" in parenting based on the model that he provides?
- How does Gopnik's interpretation of Olivia's "paracosm" involving Charlie Ravioli transform through a process of "revision"? What drives Gopnik's revision process and how does his final interpretation relate to his initial idea?
- What does Hochschild mean by "From the Frying Pan into the Fire" (what’s the “frying pan” and “what’s the fire,” for instance)? How does that title resonate with her overall argument about the ways families are being transformed by capitalism?
- How does De Botton’s adoption of a “travelling mindset” prove useful to him in changing his attitude toward life?
- How are the strategies of relationship management and "structures of perpetual deferral" that Gopnik describes related to technological development and change? What does this suggest about the relationship between technology and generational differences, such as the difference between Gopnik and his daughter?

**Synthesis**

Students are asked to combine ideas from one reading with those of another.

- How might “covering” as described by Yoshino grow out of the “fences” described by Klein?
- How might Zadie Smith’s “Dream City” be a version of Klein’s “windows of possibility”?

**Frame and Case**

Students are asked to use a theoretical “frame” from one reading to interpret the “case” of another. This type of assignments works well when you have one strongly theoretical reading and one rather descriptive or narrative reading. The ideal question here will ask students to “re-frame” one reading in the terms of another, re-evaluating the ideas or story of X in terms of Y.

- How might Sherry Turkle’s concept of “authenticity” help explain problems raised by Zadie Smith, and how might Smith’s argument problematize the concept of an “authentic” self?
- How might Susan Blackmore’s argument about the “replicator power” (25) of “memes” explain why capitalism (as described by Arlie Hochschild) is such a powerful force in people’s lives?
**Terministic Frame**

This works like “frame and case,” but here students are challenged to focus on terms from the essay or specific topics you suggest to frame their discussion.

- How does the "grid of busyness" affect how people like Gopnik see others, and what does Gopnik's essay suggest about the possibility of authentic human connection with others given our increasingly busy lives?
- Is "busyness" something we choose ourselves or is it thrust upon us? Does whether or not we choose it make a difference in how we feel about it? How is "busyness" affected by "choice," and why might choosing matter?

**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 through applied knowledge.

- How have Zadie Smith and Amy Chua turned their differences from the larger society into a source of strength rather than weakness? How can we learn from their embrace different identities in the way we manage our own?
IV. Sample Assignment Sequences

The following assignment sequences were written for Basic Composition (100) at Rutgers using essays drawn from Points of Departure by Michelle Brazier and essays expected to be included in the next edition (available on Sakai this term).

Sequence #1 by Deborah Allen

Assignment #1: Chua

Reading

- Amy Chua, “Why Chinese Mothers Are Superior”

Question for Writing

“Why Chinese Mothers are Superior” is an excerpt from Amy Chua’s book The Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother. The article was first published in the Wall Street Journal. Chua did not write the title, a WSJ editor did that. This controversial article raised a firestorm of critical responses. In many case, the exchanges became a shouting match in print.

It would be very easy to write a reaction paper to this article in five ways that would not be helpful in this paper or any other paper for this class. Avoid the following responses.

a) Express your own emotional knee jerk reaction.

b) Report what Chua said.

c) Report your own experience with Asian or Western parents.

d) Express your agreement with “one side” or another.

e) Judge Chua (love or hate the author”)

Why are discussions of cultural differences so sensitive? What do we gain by being able to discuss cultural differences? What are the risks and realities of stereotyping groups of people based on their cultural differences?

Questions for Thinking

Note: These are prewriting questions. Do not structure your paper as a list of answers to these questions. They are only meant to help you start developing your own original ideas, and think more deeply about the article.

a) What is the difference between a cultural trait and a stereotype?

b) Look carefully at the one or two critical responses you chose to read. Look for evidence that helps you decide if the extremism of the response comes from the fact that the topic is parenting or the fact that the topic is culture.

c) What parts of Chua’s essay might surprise and/or anger a Western parent?

d) Can you find any places here Chua identifies that in some cases, Western and Asian parents have different ways of achieving the same goals?

e) What could a Western parent learn from Chua and weave into her parenting skills that would take advantage of the best of the East and West? Does Chua ever hint that she too could benefit from weaving a little “Western style” into her parenting?

f) What parts of Chua’s story are specific to her particular family rather than cultural?

b) Can you identify any places in the text where Chua says positive things about Western parenting?
Paper Expectations
In this paper I want to see that:

• you have your own thesis which you articulate at the end of in the first paragraph of your essay (a thesis does not need to be only one sentence long)
• you use quotes that reference main ideas in the text, not just the factual information it provides
• you are analyzing the text, not summarizing it
• you prove your point with just the text and not examples from personal experience
• you are choosing relevant quotations and examples, and you are using proper citations
• you are writing paragraphs that include at least one and no more than two quotes and which begin with clear topic sentences
• you are proofreading your essay VERY, VERY carefully for grammar and spelling errors and revising all unclear sentences.

The Rules of Format

• The draft must be typed and double-spaced.
• The draft must have 1-inch margins on every side.
• The font must be Times Roman, 12-point font.
• Quotations should follow MLA guidelines. (See your grammar book for tips.)
• Pages must be numbered and stapled.
• Final drafts must be stapled to rough draft and both peer review sheets.

Assignment #2: Chua and Alison Gopnik

Readings:

• Amy Chua, “Why Chinese Mothers Are Superior”
• Alison Gopnik, “Possible Worlds: Why Do Children Pretend”

Question for Writing
Alison Gopnik and Amy Chua present very different pictures of children, their potential, their behavior, and the adults around them. Think about the parenting strategies described by Amy Chua, both Chinese and Western.

How do Gopnik’s ideas about counterfactual thinking, causal knowledge, and possible worlds influence our understanding of Chua’s claims? Where is the balance of between discipline, and choosing for your children, and freedom, letting their imaginations determine what they do?

What would Gopnik say about Chua’s ideas about parenting? Are Chinese mothers superior? Does Western parenting better respond to Gopnik’s findings about the way children learn? Note: You do not need to answer all of these questions in your paper, and/or in the order they are asked. But you must respond to at least three of these questions somewhere in your paper.

Formulate your own original thesis by considering the connections between the two essays based on the above questions (and use the questions below to also think of connections between Gopnik and Chua’s essays). A connection is NOT always a similarity. Often the best connections are complications, and clearly Chua complicates Gopnik’s ideas. Definitely consider in your paper how Chua and Gopnik’s essays pose complicated questions about one another. Do not mention either Gopnik or Chua’s names in your thesis statement.
Questions to Get You Thinking

- Would Chua’s approach to parenting enable and/or limit the kind of counterfactual thinking Gopnik describes?
- What might Chua’s perspective be on the importance of the “possible worlds . . . dreams and plans, fictions and hypotheses” (in terms of her ideas about parenting), which Gopnik claims are part of counterfactual thinking?
- How does Chua engage in counterfactual thinking with respect to her parenting?
- What might Gopnik have to say about Chua’s parenting strategies and philosophy?
- Might Gopnik challenge Chua’s understanding of the psychological development of children? If so, how?
- Gopnik claims that “knowledge is actually what gives imagination its power, what makes creativity possible” and that it’s “because we know about this world that we can create possible worlds” (181). How would the differing Chinese and Western approaches to parenting Chua describes enhance and/or limit creativity, and the creation of “possible worlds”?

Goals for the Assignment

- Interesting and detailed connections based on at least one quote from each author’s essay per paragraph. Use the connections between the ideas in both authors’ essays to draw your own conclusion or main point(s) about the two texts.
- Clearly address my actual assignment prompt in your paper.
- Draw a specific conclusion of your own about the ways in which the ideas presented in the new reading not only confirm but also complicate or challenge the ideas in the other reading, and vice versa.
- Try to work with complex “idea” quotes rather than fact quotes.
- Structure every paragraph so that it develops a point of its own, and starts with a clear topic sentence.
- Sentence clarity, transitions, and sharp proofreading – make your ideas (moments of analysis) as clear as possible. Re-read your paper for sentence fragments, run-ons, comma splices, subject/verb agreement, and subject/pronoun agreement, as well as spelling errors, missing words, incomplete/unclear sentences, and other errors you may find.

Midterm Exam: Gopnik and Goodall

Readings:

- Alison Gopnik. “Possible Worlds: Why do Children Pretend”
- Jane Goodall, “In the Forests of Gombe”

According to Alison Gopnik, “Even very young children constantly think about future, past, and present possible worlds” (171). Using Gopnik’s ideas in connection to Goodall’s essay answer the following questions: How does this ability to think about “possible worlds” encourage or discourage religious and/or spiritual beliefs, as discussed by Goodall? How might looking at the world through a “scientific window” enhance or discourage the “possible worlds” that religious and/or spiritual thinking makes possible?

Basic Instructions

You will need your textbook to quote from the two authors’ essays. You may also consult a dictionary that I will provide at the front of the class. No other books or papers should be on your desk. Please write NEATLY, preferably in ink or dark pencil.
Make sure that you develop **at least two** good connections between the two authors based on quotes (one quote from each author’s text in each body paragraph), and make sure to advance a thesis of your own based on these connections. Make sure to clearly explain the connections between the authors’ ideas and examples based on the quotes you choose, make sure each of your paragraphs makes a clear point in response to the above questions, and aim to make your thesis as clear as possible. See the questions below to get you thinking.

Proofread VERY, VERY carefully the final draft of your midterm, as serious grammar errors may result in an NP grade. Good luck!

**Questions to Get You Thinking**

Does Goodall use counterfactual thinking to write about the possible worlds she discusses in her essay? How might Goodall’s discussion of the “many windows though we humans, searching for meaning, can look around us” connect to Gopnik’s argument about possible worlds? How do Gopnik’s ideas about counterfactual thinking and causal knowledge apply to Goodall’s discussion of both scientific and spiritual windows, her spiritual experience in the forests of Gombe, and her conversation with the bellhop? What might Gopnik have to say about Goodall’s ideas about spiritual and scientific windows?

**Assignment #3: Gopnik and Goodall**

**Readings:**
- Alison Gopnik. “Possible Worlds: Why do Children Pretend”
- Jane Goodall, “In the Forests of Gombe”

**Question for Writing**
According to Alison Gopnik, “Even very young children constantly think about future, past, and present possible worlds” (171). Using Gopnik’s ideas in connection to Goodall’s essay answer the following questions: **How does this ability to think about “possible worlds” encourage or discourage religious and/or spiritual beliefs, as discussed by Goodall? How might looking at the world through a “scientific window” enhance or discourage the “possible worlds” that religious and/or spiritual thinking makes possible?**

**Questions to Get You Thinking**
Does Goodall use counterfactual thinking to write about the possible worlds she discusses in her essay? How might Goodall’s discussion of the “many windows though we humans, searching for meaning, can look around us” connect to Gopnik’s argument about possible worlds? How do Gopnik’s ideas about counterfactual thinking and causal knowledge apply to Goodall’s discussion of both scientific and spiritual windows, her spiritual experience in the forests of Gombe, and her conversation with the bellhop? What might Gopnik have to say about Goodall’s ideas about spiritual and scientific windows?

**Goals for the Assignment**

- Interesting and detailed connections based on at least one quote from each author’s essay per paragraph. Use the Breaking Down the Basic Comp Paper handout. Use the connections between the ideas in both authors’ essays to draw your own argument/position and your own or main point(s) based on your discussion of the two texts. What ideas and examples from Gopnik’s essay help you to analyze Goodall’s essay, and vice versa?
- Try to take risks and think “outside of the box” with this essay, at least in one body paragraph
- Clearly address my actual assignment question in your paper.
- Try to develop your argument logically, so that in your paper you are clearly going from point A to point B to point C (point C can be a complication of what you have argued so far in your paper).
• Try to work with complex “idea” quotes rather than fact quotes.
• Sentence clarity, transitions, and VERY, VERY CAREFUL proofreading – make your ideas (moments of analysis) as clear as possible. Re-read your paper for sentence fragments, run-ons, comma splices, subject/verb agreement, and subject/pronoun agreement, as well as spelling errors, missing words, incomplete/unclear sentences, and other errors you may find. Errors will affect your grade, no matter how good your ideas are, and you need to show the ability to reduce errors with fairly limited help from to get a higher grade.

Assignment #4: Goodall and Turkle (new)
Readings:
- Jane Goodall, “In the Forests of Gombe.”
- Sherry Turkle, “The Flight from Conversation.”

Question for Writing
In Jane Goodall’s essay, we learn of her intimate and healing relationship with the forest, in addition to her appeal that humans live in harmony with each other and nature. Sherry Turkle, in “The Flight from Conversation,” concludes her essay with the claim that “So many people say they have no time to talk, really talk, but all the time in the world, day and night, to connect. When a moment of boredom arises, we have become accustomed to making it go away by searching for something – sometimes anything – on our phones. The next step is to take the same moment and respond by searching within ourselves. To do this, we have to cultivate the self as a resource. Beginning with the capacity for solitude” (56)

For your fourth essay, explore the how the ideas and examples in Goodall might remedy the problems with our addiction to electronic devices and preferences for digital interactions which Turkle examines, and explore the differences in the way we relate to one another, both electronically and “in the flesh,” or face-to-face. What does Goodall’s experience of harmony with nature, and what she discovers about herself and the world in her time in the forests of Gombe, offer that the virtual world might not? What does the world of digital connections offer that nature can’t provide? How does Goodall’s account of her experience in nature, and her interaction with the bellhop, complicate and/or confirms Turkle’s ideas about digital connections versus face-face conversation? Find examples and ideas from Turkle and Goodall that illustrate harmony, authenticity, connectivity, self-reflection, solitude, empathy, and control in our relationships and interactions with each other and the world (you do not have to discuss all of these topics).

As in previous papers your goal should be to develop an original thesis through showing how one author’s text confirms, extends, and/or complicates a second author’s text and if possible “think outside of the box.” Feel free to challenge the ideas of one or both of the assigned authors you will be discussing in this paper, as well as complicate my assignment question. Do not simply compare and contrast the two texts.

Assignment #5: Turkle (new) and Gladwell
Readings:
- Sherry Turkle, “The Flight from Conversation”

Question for Writing
In “The Flight from Conversation” Sherry Turkle is concerned that our use of digital technology has become a substitute for and has become an impediment in our ability to engage in meaningful face to face conversation, which she thinks is vital for our capacity for empathy. She is concerned about what we may be losing in our transition to a society that interacts online through texts messages, email, and
other digital media. Malcolm Gladwell expresses skepticism about technology’s ability to fulfill vital social, political or emotional needs, and about the possibilities of using digital technology for positive social change. What kinds of ties do we lose from traditional to virtual forms of interaction? What do we gain? Is technology really to blame for the weakening of social ties? Or are we just redefining how these ties bind us together? Using the ideas in Turkle and Gladwell’s essays, develop an argument about how the transition to a wired society is transforming our lives, and our ties to one another, for better or for worse (you do not have to have a “black and white” response to the above questions; you can explore benefits and problems with our use of digital communication in your paper).

As in previous papers your goal should be to develop an original thesis through showing how one author’s text confirms, extends, and/or complicates a second author’s text and if possible “think outside of the box.” Feel free to challenge the ideas of one or both of the assigned authors you will be discussing in this paper, as well as complicate my assignment question. Do not simply compare and contrast the two texts.

**Sequence #2 by Joshua Eaise**

**Assignment #1: Turkle (new)**

**Reading:** Sherry Turkle, “The Empathy Diaries”

Sherry Turkle, throughout her essay “The Empathy Diaries,” refers to “human values,” “human predicaments,” “human consequences,” “human nature,” and “society.” She juxtaposes those terms with references to “avatars,” “virtual space,” “simulations,” “machines,” “robots,” and “artificial nature.” She thinks that the prevalence of technology has “diminished us” by making us more machine-like. Indeed, she even describes a seventh-grade student as “almost robotic” (5). Respond to the following question in bold: Are human nature and artificial nature reconcilable? Why or why not?

**Keep in Mind as You Revise**

- Project (Also called thesis or argument): Your discussion should make an original claim which addresses the question directly. Be sure your reader understands what your main claim is by the end of your first paragraph.
- Citation: You must use citations to advance and support your discussion. This means giving at least one quote from Turkle in each of your body paragraphs. Remember, though, that you are free to use more than one quote per paragraph! The number of quotes you use should be determined by what you’re trying to accomplish in the paragraph rather than an artificial formula or rule.
- Do not summarize Turkle’s essay. You are responding to the ideas it raises, not repeating them.
- As you write, keep asking yourself: So what? Why does that matter? Explain why that matters.

**Assignment #2: Li and Turkle (new)**

**Readings:**
- Sherry Turkle, “The Empathy Diaries”
- Yiyun Li, “Dear Friend, From My Life I Write to You in Your Life”

Sherry Turkle, in her essay “The Empathy Diaries,” describes a “virtuous circle” that links conversation to the capacity for empathy and self-reflection. In solitude we find ourselves; we prepare ourselves to come to conversation with something to say that is authentic, ours. When we are
secure in ourselves we are able to listen to other people and really hear what they have to say. And then in conversation with other people we become better at inner dialogue. (10)
Yet, we might read Yiyun Li, in her essay “Dear Friend, From My Life I Write to You in Your Life,” as complicating the relationship between solitude and conversation when she wonders, among other things, whether “I am only hiding my nothingness from people” (119).

To what extent is Li a participant in a “virtuous circle”?

Keep in mind the following as you revise:
• Project (Also called thesis or argument): Your discussion should make an original claim which addresses the question directly. Be sure your reader understands what your main claim is by the end of your first paragraph.
• Make sure you include quotes from both Turkle and Li in each paragraph. Use those quotes to make connections that advance the argument you’ve made in your thesis statement.
• As you write, keep asking yourself: So what? Why does that matter? Explain why that matters.
• For a frame and case prompt, remember that it is often true that the case can be used to modify or challenge the frame. Always ask whether the case speaks to the frame in some way rather than only applying the frame to the case.

Midterm Exam: Li and Jay-Z

Readings
• Yiyun Li, “Dear Friend, From My Life I Write to You in Your Life”
• Jay-Z, “Decoded”

Main Question
Yiyun Li, in her essay “Dear Friend, From My Life I Write to You in Your Life,” considers how the ways in which an individual relates to time shape the sort of person they are. In his essay “Decoded,” Jay-Z explores the rise of hip-hop during the 1980s. We might read him as detailing how hip-hop is a product of a particular time and place. How does time affect art?

Assignment #3: Li and Jay-Z

Readings
• Yiyun Li, “Dear Friend, From My Life I Write to You in Your Life”
• Jay-Z, “Decoded”

Reflecting upon a line from one of Katherine Mansfield’s notebooks which gave her the title for her essay (“Dear Friend, From My Life I Write to You in Your Life,”), Yiyun Li tells us that the line “reminds me too why I do not want to stop writing: the books one writes – past and present and future – are they not trying to say the same thing: dear friend, from my life I write to you in your life. What a long way it is from one life to another: yet why write if not for that distance; if things can be let go, every before replaced by an after” (120). Jay-Z, in his “One Eye Open,” details how hip-hop provided him with a way to “re-create myself” and “reimagine my world” (5). Ultimately, he writes, “we needed to hear our story told back to us, so maybe we could start to understand it ourselves” (16).

How might we understand Jay-Z’s account of his youth through Li’s frame of “before” and “after”?
Sequence #3 by Laurence Mintz

Assignment #1: Turkle (new)

Reading
Sherry Turkle, “The Flight from Conversation”

Question for Writing
Sherry Turkle’s “The Flight from Conversation” offers a critical examination of communication in the digital age. Observing people’s interaction via texting and smart phones, she argues that while new technologies facilitate efficient connection, they also discourage genuine, personalized communication via conversation and thus weaken the powers of empathy and reflection that individual human relations and social cohesion are based on. Much of her discussion focuses on the ambivalences of users who feel torn between the promise of technology and a sense that they are missing out on more traditional ways of connecting with others. Given the evidence and arguments Turkle presents, how is technology affecting what it means to be human and the relation between people and their tools? In your view, are these developments, as defined by the author, to be embraced, resisted, or reconciled with older values and modes of behavior?

In developing your thesis and argument you may want to consider some of the following questions: (1) To whom does Turkle’s essay appear to be addressed? (2) Why does she repeatedly emphasize generational differences in attitudes towards technology? (3) Why are fragmentation, shallowness, and distraction characteristic of digital communication? (4) What is the relation Turkle sees between connectedness, control, perfection, and social anxiety? (5) What is the appeal of minimal social contact? What might be lost; (6) Why does Turkle repeatedly juxtapose the world of home and the world of work? (7) What in her view are the positive uses of boredom, solitude, and uncertainty? (8) What are the positive and negative sides of multitasking? (9) Why, according to Turkle, does technology appear to possess an almost irresistible power and mystique? (10) Is Turkle optimistic or pessimistic about the future?

Paper Requirements:
• Three typed pages (four pages for final draft), 1-inch margins, double spaced, 12-point font.
• Name, course, assignment, my name, and date should appear in upper left-hand corner.
• Page numbers should be on bottom right-hand corner.
• Title in regular type and centered.
• Cite quoted material in MLA format (see Keys for Writers, p. 166).
• Half a grade off for each late day and for non-participation in peer review.

Assignment #2: Gladwell and Turkle (new)

Readings
• Sherry Turkle, “The Flight from Conversation”

In “Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted,” Malcolm Gladwell challenges the popular idea that technological advances in social media are crucial to the spread of social movements, arguing instead that traditional forms of human social organization play a bigger role in their success. Sherry Turkle in “The Flight from Conversation” focuses on private life and small-scale social activity. Central to the critiques of both Gladwell and Turkle are (1) the distinctly modern social and economic conditions of mediated communication and (2) the differences between strong and weak ties between people under these conditions. Based on your readings of Gladwell and Turkle discuss whether
people’s choices and actions, both private and public, are determined more by active individual will and imagination or by passively (or unconsciously) submitting to the pressure of larger social forces and group imperatives fostered by advanced technology. What might the far reaching social consequences be?

In developing your thesis and argument you may want to consider some of the following questions: (1) How do both Turkle and Gladwell see a link between risk and commitment? (2) Does Gladwell’s historical perspective show parallels with Turkle’s discussion of generational change? (3) How would you characterize each author’s speculations on future developments relative to digital technology? What are some of the ways both authors view the leveling or equalizing social effects of digital media? Which effects are positive and which negative? (4) Do the authors suggest that while technology changes human nature remains the same? What are some of the social and psychological effects? (5) How do both authors treat issues of individual vs. group consciousness? (6) How do the authors see ease vs. effort in relation to technology and social interaction?

Paper Requirements:
- Three typed pages (four pages for final draft), 1-inch margins, double spaced, 12-point font.
- Name, course, assignment, my name, and date should appear in upper left-hand corner.
- Page numbers should be on bottom right-hand corner.
- Title in regular type and centered.
- Cite quoted material in MLA format with works cited given at the end.
- Half a grade off for each late day and for non-participation in peer review.

Assignment #3: Thompson, Gladwell, and Turkle (new)

Readings
- Derek Thompson, “The Four-Letter Code to Selling Just About Anything”
- Sherry Turkle, “The Flight from Conversation”

Derek Thompson’s “The Four-Letter Code to Selling Just About Anything” proposes that there is a consistent pattern whereby social change and technological innovation are popularly accepted and adopted when they appear to be grounded in familiarity. Basing his argument on industrial designer Raymond Loewy’s MAYA theory (Most Advanced Yet Acceptable), Thompson attempts to show how this pattern characterizes cultural shifts from scientific theory, to the marketing of consumer goods, to trends in entertainment, and even the popularity of baby names. The essays by Gladwell and Turkle also deal with shifting patterns of behavior in response to technological innovation (specifically in digital media) but argue that the relation of novelty to familiarity is deeply problematic. Using either Gladwell or Turkle (or both if you choose), answer the following: To what extent does Thompson’s application of MAYA theory help to explain the discontents analyzed by Gladwell and/or Turkle, and to what extent do these reveal the strengths and/or limitations of the theory?

In developing your response you may want to consider some of the following questions: (1) Does MAYA theory suggest an imbalance of new and old in the marketing of digital communications? (2) Does Thompson’s discussion take adequate account of the social impact new products or just how they become popular? (3) Do Gladwell’s and Turkle’s analysis of risk find parallels or illustrations in Thompson’s discussion of novelty? (4) Does Thompson’s view of social change seem optimistic in comparison to Gladwell and Turkle? Why might this be the case? (5) Is there a parallel between Raymond Loewy’s work and the digital entrepreneurs discussed by Gladwell and Turkle? (6) Do the readings suggest ways in which the sense of familiarity and/or newness might be illusory or deceptive.
in regard to authentic human need? Is this related to the nature of marketing? (7) Does Thompson emphasize social connection to the same extent as Gladwell and Turkle? How does this affect his argument? (8) How do familiarity and innovation factor in Gladwell’s and Turkle’s essays?

**Assignment #4: Turkle and Thompson**

**Readings**
- Sherry Turkle, “The Empathy Diaries”
- Derek Thompson, “The Four-Letter Code to Selling Just About Anything”

**Question for Writing**
Turkle’s essay seeks to explain why empathy may be threatened by digital social media. While acknowledging the new technology’s amazing applications and convenience, she points out its tendency to weaken older values of emotional connection fostered by face-to-face conversation. Thompson’s essay also addresses the allure of the new. Using industrial designer Raymond Loewy’s MAYA (Most Advanced Yet Acceptable) theory, he argues that people need the comfort of familiarity and tradition in order to absorb and accept life-altering technological innovations. **Does Turkle’s evidence suggest that digital culture has already rendered Loewy’s MAYA theory obsolete (by redefining comfort and familiarity as the result of controlled, risk-averse choices, disconnected from traditional human bonds), OR can the MAYA theory be used in support of her hope that conversation might restore the proper relationship between technology and its users by balancing the old and the new?**

Consider any of the following questions in framing your response: (1) How does the fantasy of self-transformation appear as a theme in both readings? (2) What are the core values associated with modernity and innovation in each author’s account? (3) Do the discontents Turkle notes seem to be outweighed by the hopes people invest in digital technology? (4) Does Loewy’s desire to overcome “messiness” via streamlining and abstraction ultimately tip the balance in favor of the new? (5) What social or economic factors tend to favor technological advance over cultural tradition? (6) Does the cultural memory of close connection fade from one generation to the next or is the need for it intrinsic to human nature and will thus reassert itself?

**Assignment #5: Chua and Turkle (new)**

**Readings**
- Amy Chua, “Why Chinese Mothers are Superior"
- Sherry Turkle, “The Empathy Diaries”

**Question for Writing**
In “Why Chinese Mothers are Superior” Amy Chua contrasts two ways of parenting—Chinese and Western—and argues that the former is far more effective at providing practical life skills in a demanding and competitive world. By contrast, Sherry Turkle’s “The Empathy Diaries” makes the case that social success and emotional well-being depend on our ability to connect sympathetically with others through committed personal engagement and conversation. **In view of the social and economic realities of the contemporary world, can their views be effectively reconciled or does one author present a more convincing model for upbringing, education, and socialization?**

Consider any of the following questions in framing your response: (1) How might Turkle regard Chua’s list of prohibitions? (2) How does Chua’s description of parent-child interaction relate to Turkle’s ideal of communication? (3) How do both authors deal with the theme of boredom? (4) Chua’s argument is rooted in self-discipline and self-denial; is there a comparable point in Turkle? (5) How might Chua respond to Turkle’s idea that children need solitude for daydreaming? How does Turkle’s claim that we
are resilient correspond to Chua’s belief that children should be strong? (6) Does Turkle’s discussion of the “responsibilities of mentorship” fit in with Chua’s example of the parent-child relationship? (7) Does Chua offer any model for the acquisition of social skills? (8) Turkle treats the flight from conversation as a public issue whereas Chua’s approach is entirely within the private realm of the family. Does this reflect contrasting social values or world views?

**Final Exam: Bain**

**Readings**
- Marc Bain, “The Neurological Pleasures of Fast Fashion,”

**Question for Writing**
In his essay “The Neurological Pleasures of Fast Fashion,” Marc Bain describes the psychological dynamics of online shopping, the methods that marketers use to influence buyers, and the problems of unthinking consumption. In the previous readings, the authors have all taken a critical and/or analytic view of the various ways behavior has been modified or manipulated by advertising and digital media, often to foster social conformity and expectations of instant gratification with a consequent loss of personal authenticity and human connection. At the same time they grant that, for many, innovation and digital technology have liberating, life-enhancing qualities that broaden social horizons and promote equality.

Based on your reading of Bain and ONE of the previous five essays we have read, do you think it is more likely that technological change and the power of market forces are eroding individual consciousness and freedom OR that they are offering people a wider range of choices and actions in the private and public realms that may ultimately lead to greater self-realization and social improvement? Explain why, based on the evidence of the readings.
V. Group Work and Peer Review

One goal of our pedagogy 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 engage actively 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 places students in conversation with each other and with the authors of our 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.

The most productive learning environments typically feature a number of different but related tasks. A class might begin, for example, with individual “free-writing,” move to work in small groups, and then return 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.

Pre-Reading

The pre-reading part of the paper development 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 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. 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.

Teaching Students How to Read

As high school and college instructors, we tend to take reading for granted, not recognizing that the reading habits our students bring to class (especially the bad habits) can really interfere with their ability to get something out of what they read. The following are some model handouts for helping teach students how to read.

For Students: Approaches to Reading, Step by Step

Understanding complicated texts requires careful, systematic reading. Spend this week thinking about how you read, and consider the information below.

Before you start

- Get the right level of comfort: read on your bed, at a desk, on a sofa.
- Get the right level of noise: read in complete silence or with some background noise.
- Get enough light: read by sunlight, lounge lights, room lights.
- Get the right environment: read alone, read with others.

First reading

- Underline or highlight passages you feel are important.
Get together with students from our class to work through complicated passages.

Get together with students from our class to review the main ideas of the essay.

Now read it again

When you plan to write about a text, reading it once simply isn't sufficient. Read a text twice before coming to class so you can best participate in conversation, and read it again (possibly again and again) before writing about it.

Look up any words you still don't understand in a dictionary.

Write questions you have about a text down and bring your list to class.

Understanding and Analysis

Try some of these strategies to help you understand a text.

Look for repetition of words, ideas, or phrases. They might be important to the argument as a whole.

Look for words in bold, italics, or “quotations marks.”

Look for passages you don't understand. You may not understand them because the author is trying to express a difficult, complex, or important idea.

Pay attention to any questions the author asks. They may be pointing you towards the argument.

Look for the ways in which the title of the essay relates to the content.

Pay close attention to any examples that the author gives. Try to figure out how they prove her or his argument.

Try to state the argument in your own words periodically as you read.

Pay close attention to the opening and closing of the essay.

Look for places where the author summarizes his or her argument.

Pay attention to passages you react to. If a passage provokes a response, that may mean you are about to do some critical thinking— you should consider why or in what way a passage has moved you.

For Students: Clarifying Your Confusion

You may still have some confusion about an essay even if you’ve followed all the reading tips from the first handout. That's perfectly normal when encountering a complicated piece of writing. But that doesn't mean you should walk into class, throw your hands up in despair, and declare "I just don't understand this." Granted, there are parts you may not understand, but that's not the same thing as not understanding any of it at all. In order to resolve that confusion, first you have to clarify it:

Jot some notes or write a quick paragraph about what you do understand. This is an important starting point. You can make your paragraph as general as you would like. You could just write, "I know this is an essay about work" or "I know this is an essay about culture" or something like that. Even doing that much gives you a basis from which you can work.
Identify what you don't understand. Either list the concepts and ideas that are confusing you, or simply be sure to find the exact passages that lose you. It's fine if that passage is in fact the opening of the essay. The point is that you need to be able to identify which passages or words are giving you trouble.

Then attempt to work through difficult passages by breaking them into pieces. Start with one sentence that's giving you trouble. Break it down word-by-word, and then paraphrase it until you think you have a good sense of it. You will need to have a good college dictionary handy while you do this. Then try to work through a paragraph using the same method, word-by-word, and sentence-by-sentence.

Bring specific questions to class. The more specific you can make the question, the more likely it is that your class or instructor can help you find a good answer. For example, you may want to point to particular parts (or paragraphs or sentences or even individual terms) of the essay that confused you.

Accumulate notes. Be sure that you take good notes during class discussion or when asking your instructor about the text. It's possible you'll suddenly understand things during class but then will forget it all by the time you get home later that evening.

**After You Read: Re-reading the Essay**

Remember that no one fully understands an essay after just one reading. Teachers read an essay more than once before teaching it. So, you should be prepared to read the essay more than once. In fact, the more you read it, the more you will understand. What's more, each time you read the essay you'll see something new in the writing or the author's argument, because with each reading you will bring a greater depth and understanding to the text.

Read an essay twice before your class even discusses it. Read it over again before working on the paper associated with the essay. And, if you have a subsequent assignment that works with the same essay, be prepared to read it yet again. This is especially important because bringing the ideas of the second essay with you to the first reading will shift the emphases you see in the essay as whole. Re-reading of this kind is a great start to a new paper.

**Reading Questions**

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. 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 the text’s understanding, especially when small-group work precedes full-class discussion.

**Close Reading Activities**

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 our pedagogy. 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 and simply skim past them or decide to understand the author simplistically or inaccurately. But for the purposes of college-level reading and writing, students must become comfortable grappling with challenging texts. Academics generally call this confrontation with complex texts “close reading,” and this kind of work with the text requires engaged textual analysis that can help to 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 that they can begin to develop the strategies they can always use 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 most basic things that we 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 even go around the room to check up on students to see that they are showing the visible work of engaging with the reading. 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, re-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.). For a first close reading activity, you might even assign specific passages to groups and ask them to focus on specific words or phrases from each passage, to model for them the type of words that will yield the most meaning. After such a guided activity, students are often more quickly successful in isolating key terms and phrases on their own or in less structured close reading activities in class. 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. An author’s use of the word “we” can be very significant.

Use close reading to teach grammar and syntax: We often assume that our students come to college with at least 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 and so they are mostly forgotten or misunderstood. Emphasize to your students that such terms are part of the basic vocabulary that any college student should have, and if they have forgotten these terms they better take the 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. And 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.

100R Activities and Quizzes

Many teachers use close reading activities, vocabulary exercises, and quizzes about the reading to help students in the 100R class. Here are some examples of exercises from Mark DiGiacomo’s, Jackie Loeb’s and Brook Stanton’s classes.

Quiz 1: Alison Gopnik

Mark DiGiacomo

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper. Answers should be about 1 to 4 sentences in length and are each worth 10 points. You may use some quotation but answers should contain your own words as well. Put your name and “Quiz 1” on your paper and number your answers clearly.

1. On the top of page 164, why does Gopnik write the following sentence: “Counterfactual thought requires a more demanding ability to understand the relation between reality and all the alternatives to that reality” (164)?

2. In your own words, describe how Gopnik contrasts counterfactuals about the past with counterfactuals about the future (see first full paragraph of p. 166).

3. What is the significance of “trial and error” to Gopnik’s argument in the section of the essay called “Counterfactuals in Children: Planning the Future” (166-167)?

4. Define Gopnik’s use of the word “pretense” on page 170 (second sentence of last paragraph).

5. Define the word “cognitive.”
6. On page 170, Gopnik writes, “In the past, this imaginative play has been taken to be evidence of children’s cognitive limitation rather than evidence of their cognitive powers” (170). How does Gopnik respond to this idea?

7. How does Gopnik define “causal knowledge?”

8. What does Gopnik suggest about the relationship between causal knowledge and counterfactual thinking?

9. What is the significance of this relationship to her larger argument?

10. According to Gopnik, what is a “causal map”?

Quiz 2: Reading for Writing
Mark DiGiacomo

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper. Put your name and “Quiz 2” on your paper and number your answers clearly.

1. What does Gopnik mean by “conventional wisdom” in the following sentence? “Conventional wisdom suggests that knowledge and imagination, science and fantasy, are deeply different from one another—even opposites” (164). [10 points]

2. How does Gopnik discuss the relationship between counterfactuals and possible worlds? [10 points]

3. What does the word “cognitive” mean in the following sentence? “Cognitive scientists have discovered that this conventional picture is wrong.” (164). [10 points]

4. According to Gopnik, are thinking counterfactually and solving problems using “trial and error” the same thing? If not, what is the difference between them? [15 points]

5. Which of the following sentences is more likely to be a good choice to quote in a paper?
   A. “One little boy we tested decided to demonstrate his counterfactual knowledge by actually acting out each of the possibilities after he had made the predictions.” (176).
   B. “…having a causal theory of the world makes it possible to consider alternative solutions to a problem, and their consequences, before you actually implement them, and it lets you make a much wider and more effective range of interventions” (173). [10 points]

6. Explain why you chose the quote that you chose for the above question. [15 points]

7. Briefly explain at least one reason why the following quote is likely to be a poor choice to include in a paper: “It seems that what is making Mr. Crane unhappy is not the actual world but the counterfactual worlds, the ones in which the taxi arrived just that much earlier or the plane was delayed just a few minutes more” (165). [15 points]

8. If a student really wanted to use the above quote about Mr. Crane, what does he or she need to do to present it effectively in the paper? [15 points]
Quiz 3: Malcolm Gladwell Vocabulary
Mark DiGiacomo

Provide a definition for each of the following words or phrases. Then write a sentence explaining the significance of the word for Gladwell’s essay. Use only the definitions that apply in the context of Gladwell’s essay. If you didn’t look up a word, you should still use the context of the passage to make an educated guess. Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper. Put your name and “Quiz 3” on your paper and number your answers clearly.

1. sit-in [p. 134 and throughout the essay]
2. radicalized [end of first full paragraph on 134: “Thousands were arrested and untold more thousands more radicalized.”]
3. innovator [second sentence of last full paragraph on 135: “Innovators tend to be solipsists.”]
4. solipsists [same sentence as previous question]
5. insubordination [first sentence of last paragraph on 135; fourth line from bottom of page: “Greensboro in the early nineteen-sixties was the kind of place where racial insubordination was routinely met with violence.”]
6. status quo [last sentence of first full paragraph on 136: “Activism that challenges the status quo—that attacks deeply rooted problems—is not for the faint of heart.”]
7. “evangelists of social media” [first sentence of second full paragraph on 138: “The evangelists of social media don’t understand this distinction…”]
8. hierarchy/hierarchical [throughout bottom half of page 139]
9. networks [throughout bottom half of page 139]
10. “Viva la revolución” [last sentence of article]. HINT: Consider Gladwell’s tone in using this phrase.

Reading Exercise - Berry
Jackie Loeb

Write your responses on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What are 3 criticisms Berry has of Professor Steven Weinberg? (21-22)
2. What are 3 characteristics of a fundamentalist, according to Berry?
3. What does it mean to “counter one absolutism with another” (25)?
4. What is Berry’s central argument about God, science and imagination? What does it have to do with fundamentalism? Try to summarize his argument in a few sentences.
5. What is Berry saying about wonder? That is, what is he saying about having the ability or desire to wonder about things?
Reading Comp and Vocabulary, Part Two – Berry and Gladwell
Jackie Loeb

Respond to the following questions precisely and specifically. Answers that are vague or otherwise too general will be marked incorrect. Keep your response brief; these are short-answer questions. Use simple, uncomplicated language. Continue your responses on the back if necessary.

1. Berry states that “one of the primary characteristics of the biblical God is his irreducibility” (23). Define irreducibility in this context:

2. Define immemorially (bottom 27):

3. Rephrase “empirically flimsy” (bottom 22):

4. What are the two organizational structures that Gladwell contrasts and why?

5. “Innovators tend to be solipsists” (135).
   Define innovator:
   Define solipsist in this context:
   What do you think this sentence means?

6. “Even revolutionary actions that look spontaneous…are, at core, strong-tie phenomena” (136).
   Define spontaneous:

7. Rephrase the following idea in a way that shows you understand the phrases in bold:

   “The moment even one protester deviates from the script and responds to provocation, the moral legitimacy of the entire protest is compromised” (140).

Reading Quiz – Turkle

Define the following words. You may not use a dictionary. (You should have looked them up already).

augur (bottom 264):
authenticity (265, elsewhere)
therapeutic (mid/lower 270):
chauvinism (top 269):
diminished (top 268):
anthropomorphism (lower 269):
aesthetic (mid-268):

**Short Answer**
Turkle draws on a variety of examples to explain her different points. For each of the three examples below, explain specifically how Turkle uses this person/entity to illustrate one of her central concepts. Be very precise. Write your responses on the reverse side.

- Rebecca and the Galapagos tortoise
- Miriam and Paro, the robotic harp seal
- Anthony the computer hacker, and Levy’s use of Anthony in his book

**Part I. Vocabulary and phrases (1.5 points each=21 points total)**
In 1-2 sentences and in your own words, define each of the following phrases or vocabulary words:

145 empirically 
146 intuitively 
146 battered 
147 lobbying 
sad **associations** 
utterly peaceful 
147 heightened awareness 
merge 
148 vivid 
contemplated 
149 descended 
150 parable 
cope 
ecstasy

**Part II. Short answer (12 points each=36 points total)**
In 2-3 sentences and in your own words, explain what Goodall means when she writes:

1. “self was utterly absent” (147)
2. the natural world “dwarfs yet somehow enhances human emotions” (147)
3. On 149 Goodall writes, “alas, all of these amazing discoveries have led to a belief that every wonder of the natural world and of the universe—indeed, of infinity and time—can, in the end, be understood through the logic and the reasoning of a finite mind.”

Rephrase this idea in your own words, and characterize Goodall’s perspective on this idea.

**III. One paragraph summaries (10 points each=20 points total)**

1. Summarize Goodall’s encounter with the bellhop. How did the bellhop feel when he approached Goodall? What was his chief concern? How did he feel afterwards? Why?
2. What is Goodall’s position on the conflict between science and religion? Characterize her position by citing the text.

IV. Essay question (1-2 paragraphs, 20 points)

In a combination of your own words and citation, explain Goodall’s metaphor of “windows.” What are the different windows she is referring to? How are the windows similar? How are they different? What do these windows afford us? Be sure to cite the text in your response.

V. Chronology (3 points)

Be sure you have completed the rest of the exam before attempting this question. Number the following events in the proper sequence (i.e., in the order in which they occurred):

- Goodall meets the Bellhop
- Derek dies
- Goodall returns to Gombe
- Goodall begins a six-week fundraising tour in America
- Goodall recollects her encounter with the bellhop

Getting Started on an Assignment

On the day you give out the assignment for writing, it is a good idea to have an activity that will help students plan their writing strategies and work together to make sense of any difficult challenges the assignment might pose. Getting the students to engage with your assignment in class also has the advantage of bringing out any difficulties or problems with the assignment question which you might choose to address yourself once they have finished grappling with it as a group.

Have students read the assignment together and write for a few minutes on how they might try to address the question. Once they have written for five to ten minutes, put them into groups of three or four with the following prompt: “Mission Possible: Your job is to work together as a team to unlock the mystery of this assignment. The fate of the free world (or at least of your GPA) hangs in the balance! 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?” If you create a fun and involving activity on the day you hand out the assignment, students will more likely begin work right away on it rather than waiting until the last minute to get started.

Midterms and In-Class Writing

Having students write during class is important to supporting their success with assignments. One opportunity for in-class writing in our classes is the midterm exam, which students write in class over two days. The midterm serves as a check on how well students understand the writing process while also providing an excellent opportunity for in-class writing. The ideal in-class exam should also function as a draft of the next paper, which it then helps to scaffold.

Sample Midterm Question

Readings
- Yiyun Li, “Dear Friend, From My Life I Write to You in Your Life”
- Jay-Z, “Decoded”

Main Question
Yiyun Li, in her essay “Dear Friend, From My Life I Write to Your in Your Life,” considers how the ways in which an individual relates to time shape the sort of person they are. In his essay “Decoded,” Jay-Z explores the rise of hip-hop during the 1980s. We might read him as detailing how hip-hop is a product of a particular time and place. **How does time affect art?**

Remember to try to develop your own argument. Strive for analysis and not summary. Use quotes to support your points and be sure to discuss the quotes you use and to connect your discussion with your argument.

You must write at least five blue book pages in order to pass, but try to write as much as possible. Remember: this is also a preliminary draft of Paper #3, so the more you write the better prepared you’ll be to write a strong paper.

The first day of the midterm, you should focus on making a basic outline and writing a draft. On the second day, you will be given a blank blue book in which to write your final draft.

**Collaborative Interpretation and Composing**

Probably the most standard exercise in Expository Writing classes is to put students into small groups of 3 to 4 students and give them a reading or writing task. At the end of the task, an elected group leader will report their results back to the rest of the class. For example, you can ask them to find two quotes from Sacks’s “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 their paragraph to the rest of the class.

**Working with Quotes**

The classic group activity is to put 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 present their paragraph 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.

**Writing Paragraphs**

Especially as a way to aid class activities, it is useful to give students a basic guide for writing paragraphs. Some teachers have called this “the secret formula” or “the quotation sandwich.” With a basic formula for constructing an analytic paragraph, students will have an easier time approaching the writing task. Their early work may be formulaic, but as they advance and improve you will begin to see them break free of the formulae and discover their own voices. Typically these exercises work best after students have written their drafts and have a sense of where they are trying to go in their papers and already have some drafted paragraphs that they could try to revise.

**Sample Paragraph Formula**

The following formula works best if you work through it twice with attention to what you are really trying to say in your paragraph. Often, on the first time through, the best version of the topic sentence is at the bottom of the page rather than the top. Then you have to revise.
• Start by stating your claim, or what you are trying to prove in this paragraph. This is usually called your “topic sentence.”
• Introduce the first quotation. The most basic introduction would be “‘Name of author’ writes” etc. but a better introduction would give a sense of how the passage relates to your topic.
• Give the first quotation, being sure to indicate the page on which it occurs in parentheses, following MLA guidelines.
• Explain the quote in your own words, focusing on how it connects to your topic.
• Give some sort of transition to the next quotation, providing a clue to the connection you are developing. Typical connections are:
  o Similarity or Agreement
  o Difference or Contrast
  o Frame and Case (idea and example of that idea)
  o Alternative Explanation
• Give the second quote, with page reference.
• Explain how the second quote connects to the first one in a sentence or two. This last part is crucial. You need to explain the connection in order to really prove it.
• Try to draw some conclusion from the connection that relates back to your topic sentence.

Types of Connections
The very core of the writing program centers upon “connections” that students discover. But what is a connection? A good exercise around Assignment #3 is to ask the class to describe the types of connections that are most useful. Here are some examples of the types of connections we can encourage students to make.

Angles and lenses. Most generally, a connection should use one text to transform the way we see another one: our angle of view should change. Thus, although Yoshio might seem to be about personal identity, Klein might show us that his work is also about social limits and boundaries.

Critique. You can use one author’s ideas as a vantage point from which to critique the other author’s work. What does Turkle’s idea of “authenticity” suggest about the validity of “covering” (Yoshino) or “speaking in tongues” (Smith)? Perhaps Turkle and Orr, when taken together, start to suggest that it’s a prejudice to imply that some people are “inauthentic.”

Cause and effect. Sometimes one text will show an effect, such as “covering” some socially stigmatized aspect of yourself, while the other essay shows its cause, like “fences.” These are similar to frame-case connections (below).

Assessing two models. If two essays offer theories of the world, perhaps a connection can help us decide on the merits and comparative strengths and weaknesses of those two models.

Limitation or extension. Sometimes one text can help show the limits of the claims made in another text, or how those claims could be broadened to include more cases.

Question and answer. Sometimes material from one text can be used to raise a question or a problem, and then use material from the other text to answer the question. Or the reverse: one text makes an assertion, but then the other text calls it into question.

Frame-case structure. If one author presents a theory, sometimes students can use it to analyze material presented in another essay. The theory is the frame, and the data is the case. For example: Kenji Yoshino’s idea of “covering” explains why some people mask their normal voice, as described by Zadie Smith.
Name that connection. Maybe students can think of a totally new kind of connection, one that will allow them to create their own unique, original “term of art” to create and name an idea, such as “the robotic moment” (Turkle)? Tell them to take a risk and invent something.

Drawing Pictures to Aid Interpretation or Revision

Many writing teachers have experimented with drawing in their courses, because they find that switching to the visual provides a register that can unearth new language and interpretations that students can then test against the text. Visual images can help students paraphrase complex ideas using their own words, enhance classroom presentations (by giving each student a visual aid), serve as part of a game (such as “Group Pictionary”), and create mental maps of complex relationships that help students grasp “the big picture.” Drawing pictures works best when combined with close reading so that the picture brings students back to the text rather than drawing their attention away from it. By combining close reading (left brain) and drawing pictures (right brain) students develop insights and construct connections that they might not achieve through writing alone. Here are some drawing activities that have been used with our reader:

• Have students construct as homework a “mental map” of the various groups and individuals involved in an essay. Students should bring in their maps and present them in small groups, and then either vote on which in their group they find most complete or try to create an improved drawing by combining elements of two or more. Students should then present their group’s chosen or synthesized drawing to the rest of the class, pointing to at least one passage from the text that informed the map or that the map helps explain.

• Ask students to draw a picture of a “meme” (Blackmore), showing as much as possible how they influence people and replicate themselves. You might use a particular meme as an example.

• Ask students to draw one or two pictures, using whatever medium they like, to represent “covering” (Yoshino) and “fences” (Klein). If the goal is to help students synthesize those terms, invite them to draw a picture using both ideas on the same page.

• Ask each student to draw a picture, make a collage, or find art online (perhaps using Google Image Search) to represent how Arlie Russell Hochschild describes the effects of capitalism on the individual.

Debates

Many of the readings in our book are about controversial situations or issues. If this is the case for a reading you are doing, 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.

Mock TV Show

Since looking for connections between authors and speakers within their texts is of fundamental importance in our method of teaching composition, one effective and fun way of doing this is to set up a Mock TV show, in which you ask students to volunteer to be each author under discussion. You could also invite as “guests” some of the characters discussed in the author’s work. For example, maybe David Levy (who advocates sex with robots) should be on the same bill with Sherry Turkle. This works especially well on Assignment #3 or at the end of the term as a way of reviewing for the exam. You, as teacher, can host the program and ask the authors and guests a set of questions that get them to talk to each other. It’s a good idea to prepare these questions in advance and share them with students, or to
organize an online activity to get students to help in preparing questions. Students playing the part of each author should be encouraged to refer to “their” writing, in an effort to help students to identify key and relevant quotations. People quoted in the text should have to be able to defend things they had said. This role playing ensures that students meaningfully discover connections between the authors, and the questions asked of the panel could even help point them towards topic paragraphs that they might want to write about in their essays. To broaden this activity, you could make this “interactive TV,” whereby all the other students in the class are members of the audience and can also ask questions of the panelists. Some good authors to put on the spot include Susan Blackmore, Amy Chua and Sherry Turkle.

**Mock Trial**

Holding a Mock Trial can help students to better understand controversial issues. Kenji Yoshino’s essay makes reference to several real life courtroom dramas, but you can also create a fictional context for a trial. For example: imagine that Amy Chua and her husband divorce and are fighting for custody of the kids. Imagine that a children’s rights organization takes the Hughes family (from Lisa Belkin’s essay) to court to stop them from using their youngest child for “spare parts” for their oldest. This is an activity that could involve all the students in the class, as students volunteer for all the parts of the players in the trial, including the judge, attorneys, jury, witnesses, and the media. This kind of deep immersion not only helps students to better understand the case from a number of viewpoints, but is generally a fun way of learning, too.

**Post-Draft Writing Exercise**

The following is an example of a post-draft writing exercise. Once you have reviewed student rough drafts, you might identify problems that students are having that are common to many. You can develop a focused post-draft activity to address that problem. Students might be asked to do this exercise at home or in a computer lab.

**Working with Quotes**

Remember that I want you to use the IQCDC formula to help incorporate quotes into your paper. That means that every quote must be Introduced, Quoted accurately, Cited properly, Discussed, and Connected to your thesis, to your topic sentence, or to another quote. However, while I am impressed by how many of you are following this formula, I noticed that many students are struggling to discuss the text accurately and in a way that helps them to develop ideas independent of the reading. It occurs to me that some of the “misreading” I saw may be the beginning of independent argument. But you have to take it in stages: first discuss the text accurately, and then distinguish what you are trying to say.

Here are some examples of quotations and mis-readings from your drafts. For each one, identify how the student has misinterpreted the quotation, what the quote more accurately says, and what the student might be trying to say that is independent of the text but still in conversation with it.

As Turkle says, “Technology is the architect of our intimacies” (263). She is saying that as technology advances, so will the lives of humans as it is the building blocks for how we go about life.

“Technology is seductive when what it offers meets our human vulnerabilities” (263). Turkle’s belief is that we hide behind technology to veil ourselves from letting out our weaknesses; however, when one stashes away their vulnerabilities, it only proves to be more cowardly.

Turkle fears that, “we deny ourselves the rewards of solitude” (265), meaning that through technology everyone is slowly becoming pretentious and dependent on these false ideas so significantly, that in the future we will not be able to recognize or even appreciate what realism holds.
Distinguishing Your Voice from Turkle’s

-Type out a quote from Turkle that you may have trouble interpreting or which you know you have not been reading accurately.
-Try to write accurately about the quote and to explain exactly what Turkle is trying to say here. Take several sentences to do so if necessary.
-Now add something about what you are trying to do with this quote in your paper. What point are YOU trying to make by referencing this quote? How is your point saying something different from what Turkle herself argues?
-Write all of that out and then post it in the Discussion forum in response to this post.
Respond to someone else’s post in the forum.

Revision and Peer Review

Most first year college students have had very little practice with a rigorous revision process, because they have rarely if ever been asked to write lengthy argumentative essays that engage with complex ideas. Most of their writing has taken place under timed conditions that do not allow for much development. So they have adopted what Keith Hjortshoj in The Transition to College Writing calls a “Euclidean method” of composition: they start at point A (the beginning) and they write until they reach point B (the end), following the shortest distance between the two points (Hjortshoj 51). If they spend any time reflecting, it is before they write, where they might outline a basic five-paragraph structure, breaking the subject into three parts and constructing a clever introduction and conclusion with which to frame it. When these students are confronted with more complex writing tasks in college, they quickly discover that the Euclidean method and the five-paragraph formula are not so effective.

College students often have to learn by trial and error that the academic writing process is never linear, even if its goal is to create a coherent and linear product (Hjortshoj 52). In fact, trying to write an academic essay in linear fashion is like putting the cart before the horse: it’s not going to get anywhere. Academic writing typically requires students to work with multiple complex readings and to develop an argument in conversation with the text; it is too complicated an activity to expect to master without the support of a good writing process and multiple drafts.

Successful academic writing must be developed through a process of revision that is open to discovery and changing perspectives. Just as the first reading of complex texts is never the final one, so the first draft of an academic essay is never the last. Through the drafting process, students learn to write their way into a viable idea that subsequent revisions help to clarify for themselves and then foreground for the reader. Typically, an authentic project (which grows out of a thoughtful conversation with readings) only emerges in the final paragraphs of the early drafts or is discovered only after multiple revisions. Students need to learn to build on promising moments of connection and to discard the writing that merely helped them to discover their project in favor of new writing that helps them to clarify and more clearly present what they have discovered. They can only learn to revise in this fashion if they claim ownership over the revision process and learn to push themselves to discover new ideas.

The Logic of Peer Review

The goal of peer review and collaborative learning is to place the onus on students to claim their own authority in the writing process. Our goal is not to help them write one paper, but to help them learn how to do academic writing. By commenting extensively on drafts (no matter how well intentioned), teachers can rob students of authority and turn their revision process into “doing what the teacher wants” or “making the teacher’s corrections” rather than engaging in an authentic act of original and creative analysis. By instead focusing on collaborative work, teachers place students on an equal footing, peer to peer, where they can get help in a less hierarchical context than that created by the
student-teacher dyad. Through peer review, students are able to claim ownership over the writing process and to gain a sense of authority that is reinforced by helping others and learning how to distinguish strong writing from weak.

Teachers can contribute to a collaborative writing process in a number of ways: engaging students in collaborative reading activities, organizing peer review of drafts, selecting parts of drafts and final papers to examine in class, and giving students focused exercises to support revision.

- **Collaborative Reading.** Part of why we recommend an active learning environment in the classroom is because it shifts the source of interpretation and idea generation from the teacher to students even before they begin the drafting process. Teachers might at first guide discussion activities by, for example, pointing groups to specific passages to discuss which would be most relevant to the assignment question. Eventually, however, students should be asked to select passages on their own and to work with multiple texts to make original connections.

- **Peer Review.** The most important activity in the revision process is peer review, in which students are broken into groups of two to four and asked to exchange drafts and comment on each other’s work during class time. You can also ask students to do peer review as a “take-home” activity or an online activity (which is especially effective with those using Google Docs to support the revision process), or in some combination of face-to-face and computer mediated activity. Most teachers design a peer review sheet (like the ones given below) to guide peer editing – asking students to attend to the issues that students are most likely to struggle with at that point in the semester. By the end of the term, you can have students design their own peer review questions, either through discussion or by having students write questions to each other. Give students a substantial amount of time to fill out your peer review sheet and return them to their partners. They should also be given time to discuss their comments.

- **Sampling Students.** Teachers can use parts of student drafts (collected on the peer review day) or final drafts to focus on revision strategies. Doing this not only encourages students to see all writing as work in process, not “safe” from revision, but also helps them to develop evaluative skills. Good models of discussing and incorporating quotes, developing paragraphs with clear topic sentences, or developing a clear thesis are always helpful for showing students how to improve their writing. Promising work that is in need of improvement can also be used in class, especially as part of a guided activity that helps students learn how to revise.

- **Focused Revision Activities.** Teachers should always review student drafts, especially during peer review, in order to see general issues that many the mass of students are struggling with on each assignment. Once you identify the issue that students are having trouble with, you can create a focused activity to help them improve their drafts while improving their writing. These activities can be collaborative or they can get students to work individually on their draft in progress. Individual activities are especially effective in a computer lab, where students can work directly on the draft. On early papers, activities might help them to turn summary into analysis, to incorporate quotes more effectively, or to begin to distinguish their own voice from that of the author under discussion. Later, students might be given tasks that help them to clarify the thesis, to complicate the thesis by “playing devil’s advocate,” to organize their paragraphs more effectively with a post-draft outline, and to use stylistic choices to improve and clarify their writing.

**Some Ideas for Making Peer Review More Effective**

Students will want to know what you think, but rather than provide detailed commentary for each draft (and so foster an unproductive student dependence upon your input), you should try to lead the class toward productive group effort. Try some of these strategies:
• **Use photocopied passages from students:** 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. Looking at passages is most effective as an activity, one that gets students involved in the revision process, perhaps in collaborative groups, rather than in class discussion where the students most in need of help might not participate. You might 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. Or you could find a paragraph where the best version of the topic sentence only emerges in the final sentences, and you can have students work together in groups to revise the paragraph to foreground and clarify its ideas. Using passages in this way helps reinforce messages you are sending about how to write better and will inevitably carry over into improving peer review sessions.

• **Rationalize the process.** Students will often be resistant to peer review, asking the natural question: “how can someone who doesn’t know more than I do help me with my writing?” It is important to provide some rationale for the peer review process and to explain what they are going to get out of it. You might explain that one goal of peer review is to help students to develop a critical distance on the writing process by looking at the writing of someone else struggling with the same assignment. If they can bring that same critical distance back to their own writing, they will be better enabled to revise. Getting advice from others is almost secondary to developing this editorial authority. Peer review helps acclimate students to giving and getting feedback on their writing, which is integral to all academic work. No one should write in isolation, and we need to learn to get advice and suggestions from readers and editors. We also have to learn how to temper all advice with our own judgment. Engaging in the process of peer review is not only a way to help others, it is a way to get fresh ideas and perspectives to bring back to your own draft.

• **Give time for discussion.** Besides allowing sufficient time for the peer review task itself, it is also important to give students time for conversation after they have done their written work. This way they can begin to develop a “writer’s meta-discourse,” or the critical editorial language all good writers develop for talking about what makes some writing better than others. This meta-discourse typically emerges through the course of the semester during discussions like these, where students themselves begin to claim authority over the writing process.

• **Make global comments:** Many teachers use the time during peer review to look through drafts and write global comments on the board that are relevant to several drafts examined during the session. If class time is at a premium, you could also type up a composite set of comments in response to the class’s drafts for distribution to the students, identifying (and perhaps providing brief examples of) the most common or important areas for revision. You should use these strategies and peer review sessions alike to make clear the need for re-reading as well as revision. You may be surprised to find how 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.

• **Count peer review:** Students often do not initially value peer comments. Besides taking time to rationalize the process (see above), two strategies can alter this perception. First, you can “grade” or comment on peer comments to motivate students to write more effective comments for each other. Second, you can reference peer comments in your end comments on a graded draft. Adding a brief comment such as “I’m glad you followed X’s suggestion on your draft” or
“Please note that Y made the same comment on your rough draft” demonstrates to students that peer comments are an effective tool for revision.

**Making Peer Review Work**

In order to focus students on the idea that it is up to them to make meaning out of the material in front of them, rather than having wisdom handed down to them from on high, instructors should avoid giving specific comments for revision on students’ rough drafts. In fact, if you tell students that they are going to get your comments on their drafts after they do peer review, you will often see that they do not work as hard on peer review itself. After all, they think to themselves, “why bother – I’ll just wait to hear what the teacher has to say.” It’s important that students recognize that they are “on their own” and the only advice they are going to get is from their peers. The only time you might comment on drafts is on the first assignment, where you will want to model commenting and help to control the failure rate.

Most teachers use a sequence of peer review activities that address different concerns at different parts of the semester. Early peer review sheets might focus on distinguishing summary from analysis, incorporating quotes effectively, making connections, identifying promising moments, and organizing material into paragraphs. Later peer reviews might be able to leave these concerns behind and ask students to clarify the thesis, come up with an original title, challenge the thesis by “playing devil’s advocate,” or to identify places where the writing needs to be improved to clarify meaning. Instructors typically ask students to hand in peer review sheets with the final draft (along with the rough draft for comparison), and those looking to improve peer review often factor a student’s responses into the grade on the paper, with a lazy peer reviewer having his or her final draft grade reduced. This helps motivate students who don’t take peer review seriously, as well as to encourage them to practice the skills that will ultimately help them be more successful in reviewing their own work.

It is not easy to make peer review work. Students are often resistant to accepting comments on their papers from people who they see as being “just as bad” at writing as they are. The peer review questions and sheets included below have worked not only as exercises for students to review each others’ work, but they also provide questions that students should be encouraged to ask of their own writing. This technique of specific questioning helps students give feedback that their peers see as a useful alternative to instructor comments. It also helps them to develop a sense of critical distance and editorial authority that will improve their overall writing ability.

Peer review sheets should provide questions that focus on both content and form—not only what the author wants to say, but how he or she might say it most effectively. Peer reviews focus on different things throughout the course of the semester; each new peer review activity should reflect the points of emphasis that are new, or that students are not doing very well. One point of peer review – and especially peer review sheets – is to help reinforce the writing lessons you have been covering.

**Peer Review Sheets**

Especially later in the semester, some teachers develop peer review questions in dialogue with their students, spending some time the day before or at the beginning of a peer review session to develop a collaboratively composed list (written on the board) of things to do in peer review. Most teachers, however, find it useful to distribute a “peer review sheet” to guide the work of the class, especially during the early parts of the semester when students need the most guidance. The best sheets are not overly formulaic, since formulae have the potential to rob students of control over their writing process. However, if you use formulae, be sure to move away from them as the semester progresses. It’s also important that students be given very practical tasks, which they can perceive as useful and not “busy work.”
Some Advice in Constructing Peer Review Sheets

The best way to improve the way you put together peer review sheets is to share ideas with other teachers and to try to improve your sheets each time. However, here are some good words of advice to keep in mind:

- **Focus on Task.** The best peer review sheets give students several explicit tasks to address during the course of the period. Write these in the imperative voice as things to do right now. So, for example, in getting them to distinguish summary from analysis, have them write an “S” in the margin where there is too much summary and an “A” where there is more analysis. That’s much better than having them write abstractly about whether there is “too much summary.”

- **Think about Usability.** Ask yourself what students are going to do with your sheet in class. See if your instructions are written to students to help them follow what things you are expecting of them. See if you have left enough room for them to write on the sheet. And make sure you are asking them to do something specific.

- **Don’t Make Them Too Long.** As with any activity sheet, peer reviews have to be timed to fit into the space allowed. Remember that you need to leave time for instruction and for discussion after the sheet has been filled out. Even if you are asking students to take the peer review sheets home, you should not overwhelm your students or make peer review into an onerous process.

- **Involve Students in the Process.** As the semester progresses, you can make your peer review sheets more open ended, allowing students themselves to develop portions of the peer review sheet. Even from the beginning, you could leave one question open for students being reviewed to ask: “what do you, as the writer, most want to know from your peer reviewer?”

Good Practices in Conducting Peer Review

There are several key practices in peer review that help students get the most out of it.

- **Tell Them to Write on Each Other’s Papers.** Many students are at first reluctant to write on the drafts of their peers. Be sure to give them permission to do so. Make sure they know that writing on drafts is all part of the process of revision.

- **Allow Time for Discussion.** One goal of peer review is to get students to begin articulating how they judge good writing or writing that needs work. Giving them time to discuss their insights helps them to begin exercising meta-critical skills.

- **Make It Count.** Check peer review sheets at the end of class and collect them when the final paper is submitted. Go around the class at some point to make sure that students are engaged. Deduct points if students have not sufficiently engaged in the activity.

- **Reference the Sheets in Your Comments.** Ask students to attach the peer review sheet to the final draft of the paper they hand in for a grade. As you write comments on the student paper, be sure to point out places where your comments echo those of the peer reviewer.
Sample Peer Review Sheets

Many teachers develop peer review questions in dialogue with their students, spending some time before or at the beginning of a peer review session to develop a list of things to look for and comment upon with their students. Most teachers, however, find it useful to distribute a “peer review sheet” to guide the work of the class. The best sheets are not overly formulaic and try to respond to the issues students typically struggle with at each stage of development in writing, from essay to essay. Here are four sample peer review sheets used with some of the assignments given above. When presented to students, these would normally leave additional space so that students can write their responses on the sheets themselves.

Peer Review Worksheet Activity #1

Peer Editor’s Name: ___________________________________________

Draft Writer’s Name: ___________________________________________

Instructions
• Please be sure to give me a copy of your draft before the end of class today.
• Form groups as directed and exchange papers with others in your group.
• Fill out a peer review sheet for one fellow student and make marginal notes or comments on the draft itself as directed below.
• Be sure to return this sheet to the student with your name on it so that he or she can hand it in with the final draft.
• When you hand in your final drafts on September 22nd, please include the commented draft (with your peer’s comments or marks) and the peer review sheet.

A Check List
The assignment sets forth policies for preparing essays and drafts. Please check “yes” or “no” for the following:

Writer’s name in upper-left corner ____Yes ____No
Assignment number and draft ____Yes ____No
Today’s date ____Yes ____No
Stapled ____Yes ____No
Original title (centered) ____Yes ____No
Rough draft makes it to page 4 ____Yes ____No
Times New Roman 12-point font ____Yes ____No
No funny business to make length ____Yes ____No
Uses quotes from the text ____Yes ____No
Uses parenthetical page citations ____Yes ____No

Summary vs. Interpretation / Analysis
As you read the draft, mark with an “A” in the margin all the places where you feel the writer is analyzing the text or developing an original idea (i.e.: an idea that does not merely repeat Turkle’s argument or summarize her points).

Which of these moments of analysis or original argument is the most promising moment in the paper? Circle that part and mark it with three stars on the paper. Then explain below how the part you marked says something different from or in addition to Turkle herself:

Answering the Question
Remember, the question for this assignment was: “Given the evidence and arguments Turkle presents, how is technology re-conceptualizing what it means to be human and the proper relation between people and their tools? In your view, are these developments, as defined by the author, to be embraced, resisted, or reconciled with older values and modes of behavior?” Though it is not essential to answer every part of the question, it is certainly helpful to do so if you want to write a focused paper. In your own words (or paraphrasing the student), how does the draft answer that question?

Do you think this answer is sufficiently distinct from Turkle’s argument? ___Yes ___No

Based on the student’s answer to the question, what do you think would be the best title for this essay? (in your own words—and not repeating any title already supplied):

Use of Evidence and Quotations
The best evidence helps to support analytic points. Quotations used for summary are not useful (since you can allude to anecdotes from the text or summarize more succinctly in your own words). Good quotes also need to be well incorporated using the IQCDC formula we discussed last time:

- Introduce, at least by giving the speaker’s name (e.g.: Turkle says, “Quote”).
- Quote accurately and with consideration of the original context (including who is speaking and the exact wording – do not change the quote or take it out of context.)
- Cite correctly in MLA format, with parenthetical page reference, e.g.: “Quote” (263).
- Discuss to explain the meaning of the quote or with attention to some key word being used.
- Connect to your argument, to the point being developed, or to another part of the text.

Give all quotes “the IQCDC test.” Look at the quotations used in your peer’s paper and do the following two things for each:

1) If the quote seems to be used for purposes of summary or seems overly long, make a note of that.

2) Write IQCDC next to every quote, and circle the letters that indicate what the student has done well. For example, if the quote is introduced, quoted accurately, and cited properly but not discussed or connected, you would circle only I, Q, and C.

How many quotations has the student used? (count them up and give a number): _________

Do you think this is adequate direct evidence from the text? ___Yes ___No

Paragraphs
Make a note in the margin to indicate which you think is the “Best Paragraph” in the paper.
In your own words (or paraphrasing the writer), what would be the best topic sentence to begin this paragraph – stating the main independent claim that the writer is making in that paragraph?
Peer Review Worksheet #2

Peer Editor’s Name: ________________________________

Draft Writer’s Name: ________________________________

Instructions
1. Please be sure to give me a copy of your draft before the end of class.
2. Form groups of three as directed and exchange papers with others in your group.
3. Fill out a peer review sheet as directed and make marginal comments on that student’s draft.
4. Be sure to return this sheet to the student so that he or she can staple it to the final draft.
5. When you hand in your final draft, please include the commented draft (with your peer’s comments or marks) and the peer review sheet.

Paragraphs, Topic Sentences, and “Post-draft Outline”
Remember: paragraphs help us organize ideas by topic and they should ideally be introduced with a topic sentence that states the argument or point of that paragraph. Before you read the paper, go through and number each paragraph from first to last. As you read through the paper, write down each paragraph number below and (to the best of your abilities) the topic idea or topic sentence that is its focus. When you finish, you will have produced a “post-draft outline” of the paper.

Answering the Question
Remember, the question for this assignment was: “Based on your readings of Gladwell and Turkle discuss whether people’s choices and actions, both private and public, are determined more by active individual will and imagination or by passively (or unconsciously) submitting to the pressure of larger social forces and group imperatives fostered by advanced technology. What might the far reaching social consequences be?” In your own words, how does the student answer that question, especially as regards other people?

1. Does the writer answer the question in the first paragraph? Yes ____ No ____

2. What is the best answer the writer gives to the question (which might not be in the first paragraph)

Quotations and Missed Connections
Remember “IQCDC”: you should always introduce the speaker, quote accurately, cite using parenthetical page references, discuss what it means, and connect to larger ideas. Quotes can be connected to each other, to the main point or topic sentence of the paragraph, or to your overall argument or answer to the question.

1. Does the writer ALWAYS introduce quotes, naming the speaker? Yes ____ No ____

2. Does the writer ALWAYS cite page references in MLA format? Yes ____ No ____

3. Does the writer ALWAYS discuss quotations? Yes ____ No ____

4. Go through the draft and note any quotations that are not properly introduced, cited, discussed or connected by writing a big “IQCDC” in the margins.

5. Scan the quotes you noted for the most significant “missed opportunity for connection,” where the writer has used a quotation but has not connected it to another quote in that paragraph, or to the paragraph’s topic idea, or to the overall answer to the question. Circle that quote and write “CONNECTION?” in the margin. Comment below on what you think the writer could do with the quote to make a strong connection:
Connections
Remember: the best connections are those that get beyond “compare and contrast” and will synthesize ideas from both authors or use ideas from one to frame a discussion of the other or present a larger idea within which both can be brought in useful conjunction.

1. Do almost all paragraphs use quotes from both authors? Yes ____ No ____

2. Are connections ALWAYS connected back to the argument? Yes ____ No ____

3. Scan the draft and mark with a “C” in the margins all the places where you feel the writer is making an interesting connection between the two authors – where they are both discussed in the same sentence in some connected way.

4. Once you have marked all of the connections, go back and put a big star or several stars next to the best moment of connection. Summarize or quote the connection below and describe what it suggests about how the writers are connected.

Teaching Revision
Making peer review primary in a student’s revision process raises the question of how to teach revision without commenting directly on student papers. That is, how can an instructor make sure that the students in his class are recognizing points in each other’s papers, as well as their own, that need revision? Apart from the peer review sheet, we encourage the use of parts of sample student papers to focus on revision strategies. Doing this not only encourages students to see all writing as work in process, not “safe” from revision, but also helps them to be able to apply an abstract revision idea to their own paper. Making them do this is arguably more effective than commenting directly on a student’s rough draft about a particular moment, as it gives the student a template that can be applied over and over again in the production of the final draft. The student is encouraged to look for moments in their papers where a particular revision strategy applies, and by doing so hopefully moves them a little further towards being an independent writer with an inventory of writing strategies up her sleeve. Global instructor-driven revision complements the peer review described above, in that the latter gives the student practice in applying the former, but allowing them the distance that is sometimes necessary to be an effective reviewer. They are both steps in the ultimate goal to have students have an objective awareness of their own writing, and of the steps that writing a good paper requires.

Activities for Drafts and Peer Revision
Students will want to know what you think, but rather than provide detailed commentary for each draft (and so foster an unproductive student dependence upon your input), you should try any of these strategies:

• 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 drafts as a group for distribution to the students, identifying (and perhaps providing brief examples of) the most common or important areas for revision. You should use these strategies and peer
review sessions alike to make clear the need for re-reading as well as revision. You may be surprised to find how 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.

- Count peer review: Students often do not initially value peer comments. Two strategies can alter this perception. First, some teachers “grade” the peer comments to motivate students to write effective comments. Second, you can reference peer comments in your end comments on a graded draft. Adding briefly a comment such as “I’m glad you followed X’s comment on your draft” or “Please note that Y made the same comment on your rough draft” demonstrates to students that peer comments are an effective tool for revision.

Some students don’t do well in writing classes because they are not involved enough in the processes of the class. When they go home to write their papers, they have nothing to draw on, because they have been only passive observers, rather than active participants in the class. Here are some suggestions for getting students more involved in class:

- Ask students to write on the board. If you are having a full-class discussion, ask students, several at a time, to take ten-minute shifts at the board, writing down important ideas. Tell them it’s okay if they duplicate each other’s work. The point (in terms of their responsibility) is to get as much as possible on the board; simultaneously, these students will be obliged to pay closer attention to the discussion, and will be actively contributing to the success of the class.

- Alternatively, 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- When small groups report, arrange a “panel” of chairs at the front of the room. I usually start rearranging the furniture while the groups are still working, so that they see that they will be on the panel, addressing an audience. The panel format has produced some of my best classroom moments.

- Tell students in advance that, when their small groups report, every member of the group must say something. About five minutes before you ask the groups to report, remind them that they need to make decisions about who will say what.

- 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.”)
Public Speaking

Simply as a way of requiring class participation, it is useful to have a “Public Speaking” requirement. 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.

Reading Exercises

The reading exercises typically require students to make brief presentations on 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 students the initiators of 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 Exercises

The writing exercises 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 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 Exercises

Finally, the context exercises 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.

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.

Rough Drafts Presented to Peer Revision Groups

For the first (and possibly second) rough draft of the semester, have students work in peer groups of three members. Students should bring three copies of their draft—two for peers, one for you. Students give their two peer readers their drafts. However, before the student-reviewers read the draft, the student writer delivers an oral account of:

- her approach to the assignment
- the issues she considers
- the textual passages she uses.

The peer review group then reads the draft, gauging the differences between her oral account and her written draft. Peers assess the paper as a draft and use the oral delivery to help in organizing their response to the draft. This practice is designed to begin the speaking in class process with a minimum of distress, but it should not be the only approach taken throughout the term.
Rough Drafts and Final Drafts as Works in Progress Presented to the Class

For papers two through six, 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 he or she has interpreted the assignment, which parts of text were used, which the points made. 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. The student 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.

On days where you photocopy sample student papers for discussion, you might have groups work on identifying particular strengths and weaknesses or a particular pattern of error and then having group spokespersons present the group’s findings to the class.

Alternatively, on the class day after rough drafts are due for each of the essays 2 through 5, four students will present and four other students will respond, leaving about twenty minutes of class time for each essay. Their rough drafts will have been photocopied to distribute to the entire class. Students will be given a few minutes to read the rough draft; then the author will talk about the rough draft, about what argument she was trying to make, where she wants to go with the final draft, why she chose to connect the texts the way she did; then the respondent will talk about the essay’s strong and weak points, offering specific suggestions for revision; then discussion will be opened up to the class as a whole. Each student in the class does both of these tasks. Each, then, is a presenter and a respondent. These should take five minutes each. (This particular teacher used a group panel project for the third speaking activity.)

Rough Drafts, Final Drafts and Responses Done Collectively

This approach to presenting rough drafts sequences both the level of critique and the amount of time the student speaks to the class.

• In Phase One, which is to say on the day when the first final draft is due, each student addresses the class after handing in her/his first final draft. Each student speaks to the class, from his/her seat, addressing three issues: initial framing of rough draft, insight gained from peer review process, changes in framing made for final draft.

• Phase Two covers papers two through five and works by having students maintain consistent peer groups of four or five people. In the first session scheduled for peer review of drafts, all the students in the group read and discuss the draft of one of the group members. The students reviewing will collectively identify at least one, perhaps two weaknesses of the rough draft. One student will be designated as the spokesperson for the group’s review process.

In the second session scheduled for peer review on that draft, the student who drafted the paper will stand at his or her desk and report to the class on the issues he or she determined were necessary to address in that paper, and how he or she framed those issues in the draft. This student will speak for five minutes. The student designated to represent the group’s review process will then report to the class the strengths and weaknesses the process identified, and the suggestions for revision that emerged.

With ten minutes allotted to each group to address the class, the reporting process should take no more than one hour. The remaining time in that session will be used to discuss what kind of insights the class gleaned from the group reports.
These responsibilities will rotate for each paper. Each student will have the benefit of the group’s attention on a draft and the responsibility to speak to the class about that draft. Each student will also have the responsibility to serve at least once as the group’s spokesperson.

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

Group presentations, scheduled for the first class meeting after students read a new essay, may also serve as a way of starting class discussions. 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.

**Group Presentations to the Class**
After working on papers throughout the term, students will be organized into four groups, and each group will choose the issue and format of their presentation. Students need not present their own ideas. They could, for example, each take part of one of the authors we’ve read throughout the term and give short presentations on a single topic. They could weave together their own work with a writer we have read. The emphasis, no matter what format they imagine, is on bringing together a number of different perspectives on a single issue and exploring the ways in which those perspectives support, challenge or undermine one another. Each panel should appoint a moderator and should be prepared to field questions from the class. This exercise might work particularly well as preparation for the final exam, where any discussion of the exam reading should be student-run.

**Self-Evaluation and Reflection**
There are a number of ways to ask students to reflect on their progress, but one of the easiest is a “midterm self-assessment” assignment. Ask them to go through their work thus far and to write you a note or an e-mail message about how they have improved and what they need to do in the coming papers. You can also use this as an opportunity to assess student response to the activities you have done so far in the course. It’s best if you ask them to do this in response to a set of guiding questions that you hand out or e-mail to the listserv. Here is a sample self-assessment exercise that has been successfully used in class:

**Midterm Self-Assessment**
Reread your first three papers, along with my comments. Once you’re done, write a short “report” to me via e-mail evaluating your portfolio 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.

Consider the following questions in making your self-evaluation:

- 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 activities you’d like us to engage in, or things you’d like us to do or cover in class?
• Is there anything you feel a bit confused about and wish I’d explain again? Are there any remarks I’ve made in class or on your papers that you have not understood? Is there anything you’re concerned about as relates to the class?

The questions you ask can go beyond self-assessment to invite assessment of the class, of your comments on papers, and of class activities.
VI. Teaching with Technology

Writing instructors have often been at the forefront of experimentation with new technologies, which often enable new teaching methods. Though students only need a basic word processor—which could be as simple as pencil and paper, after all—to accomplish the essential goals of any writing course, technology can add important dimensions to their experience. Computers can make the writing process more efficient, create virtual spaces for discussion, increase time on task, facilitate “backchannel” discussions in the classroom, and make writing more public -- and more meaningful to students.

This section of the Instructor's Resource Manual is an introduction to common instructional technologies, and an argument for making some of them a part of your everyday teaching practice.

Types of Technology for Teaching Writing

Learning to be a better reader and writer is an active and experiential process. The most useful technologies for teaching writing, therefore, are those that increase student motivation and encourage them to read and write. Technologies that directly contribute to writing include computer classrooms, cloud-based writing software (such as Google Docs), asynchronous discussion forums, synchronous “chat” spaces, mobile computing (especially via ubiquitous cell phones), websites, and blogs.

Computer Classrooms (and Computers in the Classroom)

You no longer need a dedicated computer classroom to introduce writing technology to the classroom. The cell phones, tablets, and laptops that our students already own can be harnessed to turn any classroom into a technologically enhanced space for learning.

Our students bring with them certain skills in “surfing the web” for entertainment and consumption, but they have a surprisingly specialized set of Internet skills. We have probably all met students, for example, who could locate, download, and start playing their favorite song in seconds but who were at the same time incapable of locating and evaluating information on issues relevant to our classes. As educators, we need to aid students in learning the skills they will need to make sense of the world of information and knowledge available at their fingertips.

You can reserve a computer lab on any Rutgers campus. Simply go to the following website, check the calendar for availability, then fill out the reservation form:
https://oit-nb.rutgers.edu/service/teaching-labs

Discussion Forums

One of the “old fashioned” but still useful tools for sharing ideas and collaborating is an online discussion forum or bulletin board system, where ideas and responses can be posted asynchronously to create a conversation on class topics. These asynchronous environments can extend time on task before, during, and after class discussion – allowing students to post their initial ideas before face to face meetings, to participate in collaborative activities during class (in a computer classroom), or to continue discussions at home. For those who do not have access to courseware (such as Moodle or Blackboard), which generally includes an online discussion module, there are a variety of free, cloud-based options (including comments on blogs). The best online forum activities are ones that ask students to develop ideas that can go right into their papers or that actually have students write a paragraph or revise their introductions, which will go right into the paper.

Chats and Backchannels

Students are probably more familiar with communicating synchronously through “chat” rooms and instant messaging than their instructors are, since they have grown up as these technologies have
become widespread. Though commonly used for “virtual office hours,” synchronous communication environments can also be useful to create a space for communication during class. We will be discussing TodaysMeet.com and Cel.ly (ideal for cell phones) during our session on technology.

Google Drive

There are many new technologies that make it possible for students to share drafts online and get feedback on their writing. But no program is more widely used or available than Google Drive, with its powerful Google Docs tool. Students often find peer review more effective when it is done at a keyboard rather than with pencil and paper, and having papers shared in the cloud makes online peer review possible, which can increase time on task. Teachers especially find that Google Docs are easier to keep track of and organize (especially with the help of apps like “Doctopus”) than traditional papers, and having electronic access to all of your students’ work makes it easier to teach writing by gathering sample paragraphs to workshop in class, by examining the revision history of a struggling student, and by offering timely feedback on drafts or final papers.

Sakai Sites

Instructors increasingly use class homepages to post course information (including syllabi and assignments) and to create a sense of community in their classrooms that extends beyond the brief time of their meeting. Sharing assignments on Sakai is especially important early in the semester when students might be adding sections. Because they have access to the Sakai site as soon as they add a class, students are able to look at the assignment and catch up with the reading or writing tasks before they attend class for the first time. Instructor websites can also become a useful vehicle for sharing assignments with colleagues or developing communal standards for grading. The Assignments function of Sakai is also essential for checking work using Turn-it-in.

Getting Started with Forums

Advice on Forum Assignments and Activities

One of the easiest ways to get started with instructional technology in the writing class is by setting up an online forum. In fact, most instructors who end up using technology extensively say that an online forum was their “gateway” experience that taught them the ways that technology can add a significant dimension to the class. After all, adding a forum to your class is like building a deck onto your house: it creates another space where you can gather with others for conversation. For the most part, any group activity you might do in a writing classroom can be done in the virtual space of the forum, and you would probably only have to modify your in-class handouts slightly to make them into online activities. What follow are some sample activities that have proven useful with The New Humanities Reader.

Ideas for Forum Assignments

- **Make a Connection.** The best basic forum assignment is for students to make an inter-textual or intra-textual connection, using two quotes from either two different texts or from the same text to help them make and explore a point. You can leave the topic for these connections open-ended or you can give a specific question, but it is best to give students as much freedom as possible.

- **Point to the Text.** Require students to post a question in the forum and then to respond someone else’s question by doing two things: 1) quoting from the text and 2) explaining how that quote helps to answer the question. The key, though, is to get them to point to the text. Besides helping students work with the texts, such an assignment can also facilitates community-building in the
forum by giving students a model for useful interactions in that space.

- **Connect to the Web.** Forums are a great vehicle for getting students to use online material. Have students collaborate to create an annotated bibliography of web links related to the reading.

- **Share Your Thesis.** Teachers can ask students to post their project or thesis ideas in the forums and have peers not only offer feedback but also point to a specific idea or quotation to help the student develop the idea further.

- **Try an Online Peer Review Session.** You can easily do peer review of drafts as an online activity, with students posting their drafts in the forum and then responding to two of their peers’ drafts. Of course, there are other interactive technologies besides forums that might be more effective for peer review. But if forums are all you have, they can be made to serve. The advantages of online peer review over peer review in a regular classroom are numerous:
  - It allows you to better monitor the effectiveness of peer review since you immediately get the peer review comments and drafts,
  - It provides you with access to electronic copies of your students drafts to use in preparing follow-up classroom activities (including grammar activities based on the errors that students actually make in writing),
  - It lets you extend peer review beyond the class session by having them respond to one draft during class time (in the computer classroom) and then another online later (from home or from campus computer lab),
  - It allows students the opportunity to see everyone’s draft (so they can compare their work to that of the best students),
  - And it makes it easy for students who miss the class session to still participate in the review process.

**Sample Forum Assignments as Presented to Students**

The following are real assignments you might give to students to write about in your online forum. These assignments can be done during class time or they can be assigned to do as homework.

- **What’s your thesis?** One of the best ways to get started on revising is to try to write out a paragraph where you describe exactly what you think you are trying to argue in your paper. In other words, what’s your overall point? Or, as we teachers often say, “What’s your thesis?” What I want you to do in the forum today, before you move on to other directed revision activities, is to post a reply to this message that answers the question, “what’s your thesis in Essay #5? and how do all of the writers you are going to discuss fit into that thesis?” Write as much as you can, and be as clear as you can—and try to write a full paragraph that mentions all the writers we are discussing. For most of you, what you write here will be the basis for your first paragraph in your essay, where you should try to forecast your argument for your reader so as to guide him or her through your paper (though you might still revise it later). For others, this might still be a preliminary step in revision, and you may need to revisit the way you’d describe your argument once you have a better idea of just what you are trying to say in your essay. . . .

- **Question and answer.** Ask a clear question about a specific place or aspect of the text that causes you confusion or uncertainty. Once you are done, try to answer someone else’s question that has been posted in the forum. Be sure to do two things in your answer: 1) offer a quote from the text and 2) explain how the quote helps to answer the student’s question. We will use some of the more interesting or puzzling questions to start off class discussion.

- **Sum up the learning.** Sum up the learning that is posted in our forum or sum up a class discussion. What issues were raised that interest students? What questions are being posed in the
forums?

• **Write the author.** Write a forum posting directed to the author of our reading. What would you ask or say to the writer?

• **Write other audiences.** Write a summary of the text for a specific reader, such as your mother or your high school English teacher. What are you learning in class.

• **Reflect on the forum itself.** What does our readings and your own experience suggest about the value of online forums for student learning? How do forums compare to class discussion? What are the positive and negative aspects of forums?

**Good Practices for Managing Forums**

One reason instructors often give for not using technology in their classes is that it will require more time commitment from them. But this does not have to be the case. In fact, after the initial start-up (which will always take some adjustment), most instructors find that using technology such as an online forum can lighten their workloads considerably—so long as it is used effectively. Here are some good practices to make forums work for you.

• **Just-in-Time Teaching.** Set the deadline for forum postings for the time before next class when you are most likely to be reading the forum and preparing for class yourself. This will optimize everyone’s use of time and let students post at odd hours.

• **Make it mandatory.** Unless students are required to post in the forum, they rarely will do so on their own. Treat online activities as either attendance or drafting activities and hold students accountable for their work in the forum. In literature or professional writing courses, where you might use a point system for grading, make forum activities an integral part of the final grade and deduct points if students fail to post online.

• **Do some forum activities in the computer classroom during class time.** A good way to make the computer classroom more collaborative is to have students do their collaborative work in the forum—answering questions and responding to each other online. It may seem less natural than normal group work activities, but you will gain many advantages: 100% participation, a complete record of every student’s activities for the day, and a body of generated text that students can access from home and reflect upon further (thus extending time on task). Definitely consider using the computer classrooms the first time you have students access the forums, since some will probably need your help getting over the technological hurdle of signing on.

• **Bring postings to class.** Treat online postings the same way you would paper drafts: bring copies of interesting paragraphs to class to stimulate discussion.

• **Rarely respond to postings yourself.** Occasionally, it will be necessary to respond to postings—especially to any early postings that might set a bad tone in the forum and encourage poor responses. By responding to one weak posting you will show students that you are reading the forum and that you care if they take it seriously. But stop there. Don’t ever try to respond to everyone’s postings. And tell students that while you will generally read everyone’s online posting, you cannot possibly respond to them, except when you bring them into class to start discussion.
VII. Commenting and Grading

Marginal and End Comments
The importance of your making careful, specific and extensive marginal and end comments on students’ final drafts cannot be over-emphasized. Think of these comments as having an ongoing conversation with the student, in which you are interacting with their thoughts as expressed on paper.

Marginal Comments
Try to make marginal comments very explanatory. Rather than just writing “good quotation”, explain what makes it good, such as how it supports the student’s thesis well. The more the comments engage with the students’ ideas as specifically addressed in the paper, the better. It’s also important to avoid generic, “rubber stamp” comments without specific elaboration, since students often misunderstand how they apply to their work. So, for example, instead of just commenting, “Awkward wording”, or “Subject-Verb Agreement error,” explain why this is so.

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. Being helpful, positive and constructive in your comments will also provide a good role model for students when they review each other’s work.

Don’t overwhelm students with an excessive number of marginal comments, as this might cause them not to be able to focus on how to improve their writing. Instead, focus on patterns of error, as mentioned in the previous section. At the same time, don’t avoid commenting at all. As a general rule of thumb, have approximately three marginal comments per page.

End Comments
Papers should be followed by an end-comment—about a paragraph long—that points out at least one success of the paper, and then summarizes your two or three most pressing points of concern as they develop 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 asterisk when discussing the promising moment in the end comment. This allows the student to see exactly what you mean by your comment because she or he can locate it within his or her own text. You might also use an asterisk and a double-asterisk to contrast a strong and weak moment so that the student can see where he or she does something well and can compare that to an area that’s not as strong.

Some teachers develop a table rather than a paragraph, with one column being on strengths and the other on suggestions for improvement. This can also be a very valid way of communicating your end-comments to students, and might provide a clear visual impression.

The end-comment should not be used to justify the grade on this assignment but should always be written with the next assignment in mind. It should address the specific writing, reading, citation, or argument issues that may affect the student on the next paper. So if a student has had trouble with an idea of Sacks’s that you know will come up in the next essay, you could redirect him or her to the appropriate passage in the text; or, if you find that a student does not demonstrate in detail how a key idea from Sacks applies to a moment in Stout, you may assume that such demonstration will be called for again, and so needs to be highlighted. If the student struggles with particular patterns of error, you should point those out—but no more than three patterns at a time, so as not to overwhelm the writer. There will be time on the next essay to point out other patterns. And, whenever possible, try to point out what the student is doing well so that he or she will carry those skills forward.
Patterns of Error

What is a “pattern of error”? Most of us come to teaching writing with considerable skill as editors. We’re used to reading our peers’ work and offering suggestions and corrections. For some, the instinct to simply correct a grammar or spelling mistake when we come across it is almost overwhelming. In our teaching, however, we need to adopt practices that encourage students to find and correct their own errors before the paper is due. This is why the Writing Program pedagogy emphasizes “patterns of error” rather than individual mistakes.

Very few papers run the gamut of potential grammar mistakes, even when it seems like it at first glance. Most students have a handful of errors, such as sentence fragments, subject-verb agreement, confusion over their/there/they’re, which they make again and again. This is what we call a “pattern of error.” Some patterns are severe (the student makes the same mistake several times in almost every paragraph) and some are mild (the error occurs once or twice in each paper.) Some errors, such as comma placement, are relatively superficial (with the rare “eats, [sic] shoots and leaves” exception); some are “fatal” (as in “he eat leaves.”) Instructors especially need to distinguish among these varieties of error when grading student papers.

Patterns of error and grading

If we look at the grading criteria, we can see that 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.” So one factor that must be taken into account is the type and severity of the student’s pattern(s) of error. Certain errors, including subject-verb agreement, verb tense, sentence boundary issues (run-on and fragments), and, to a lesser extent, pronoun reference are called “fatal” errors and are severe enough to hinder the author’s ability to communicate effectively. A paper that has several of these kinds of mistakes on each page (an average of three or more perhaps) risks not passing.

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, but in general they do not prevent the reader from understanding the author’s intention. In order for a student to move beyond a C+ in the class, however, they must have both kinds of errors reasonably under control.

Teaching students their 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:

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 rather than a particular sentence. 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:

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.
Since now that the journalist was killed, Americans are more raged than ever.

These sentences show us that the student runs into problems when she tries 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 all of the subject-verb errors with a line in the margin. You might notice a second problem, like a tendency to mis- or overuse “that” clauses, in which case you might mark all of those problems as well. In general, however, try to mark only one or two fatal errors and one or two non-fatal errors in each paper letting the rest slide. 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. Two or three patterns of error are probably as much as the student can deal with in 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.

- 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.

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

- 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.

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

- 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 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 look up in their copy of Handbook for Writers. This helps you build a common language for talking with the student about his or her pattern of error. You will find that you pick this language up quickly if you start by finding groups of sentences that are awkward in similar ways and then try to find labels to explain aspects of this awkwardness.
Addressing patterns of error in class

In every class, the students seem to develop a pool of common errors. By the third paper, it should be clear what these errors are. Just as lectures on the assigned texts are less enabling than activities that require the students themselves to make meaning, 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. Try to avoid errors that are ESL related, such as articles and preposition choices, since this embarrasses the student in question and is less helpful for the other students. 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.
VIII. Sample Student Papers

The sample student essays in this section were produced by students in Basic Composition. They have not been corrected or changed except that their formatting has been modified to fit this book’s style and student names have been changed. We hope that instructors will find them useful for discussion.

Lieyang, “How the Virtual World Affects People’s Relationship”

Deborah Allen, Assignment #4 (A)

In the wake of the development of digital technology, human beings have entered a brand-new era. As a symbolic product of technology, social platforms create a digital world for people to have new ways to connect to others. However, the virtual world which technology brings for human beings is not perfect. While it provides people with convenience, it still has unexpected consequences for them. In the essay “The Flight From Conversation”, Sherry Turkle points out that electronic devices have caused a new generation of individuals to lose the ability and courage to engage in face-to-face conversation. People feel more anxious without their smart phones, because they feel alone without access to the devices they are so addicted to. Turkle’s essay reveals the negative impact the digital world has on the younger generation. Moreover, in the essay “Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted”, Malcolm Gladwell claims that the connections between people on social platforms such as Twitter and Facebook are just weak ties which are unable to lead to high-risk-activism. He points out that even though social platforms make it easier for people to communicate, they rarely have huge impact on social movement. Actually, digital world can have different impacts on people’s relationship. Sometimes digital world causes people to lose their strong ties between their friends surrounding them since it constantly distracts them and takes up their time so that people are less able to make emotional and meaningful conversations with their friends. However, social platforms can still be a great way for people to reveal the dark side of society, which may remain unknown for most people who do not have smart phones. Such a function can be a wonderful contributor to pushing people to form strong ties so that they can fight against something like injustice to make society better. Moreover, through digital connection on social media platforms, people are able to form a distinct relationship with virtual “friends” in the digital world. These friends can have a great impact on helping people, which even cannot be attained by real friends and family.

People’s addiction to the digital world can lead to the weakening of their relationships with their actual friends in real life. Now many people are more likely to use Twitter and Facebook to make connections with friends and families. Texting becomes the main way for them to express and communicate, because it is a more convenient and effective way to transmit information. Social
platforms provide them with a lot of opportunities to meet new groups of people and gain more information. The functions of these social platforms seemingly help people a lot, but, actually, they are distracting people and weakening their relationships between those who surround them in the real world. Gladwell claims:

The platforms of social media are built around weak ties. Twitter is a way of following (or being followed by) people you may never have met. Facebook is a tool for efficiently managing your acquaintances, for keeping up with the people you would not otherwise be able to stay in touch with. That’s why you can have a thousand “friend” on Facebook, as you never could in real life.(137)

Due to such a function of a lot of social media platforms, many people would rather spend most of their time interacting in the virtual world. Besides, the incoming messages from the digital world makes them feel surprised and excited just like a gift. At first, these messages may just serve as a source of stimulation for people when they are bored. However, they may be gradually addicted to it since people start to expect replies from others to their posts. Therefore, they may constantly check their phones even if they have no message. People are hugely distracted by this situation because they are unable to concentrate. Time is wasted when they are just waiting for replies and doing nothing. This is why some people usually complain that they are too busy to spend time in in the company of their parents or relatives, or even just having a video chat with them. Indeed, people can possess an great amount of acquaintances on social platforms; however, they may actually be damaging their relationships in the real world, since “[they] miss out on necessary conversations when [they] divide [their] attention between the people [they’re] with and the world on [their] phones”(Turkle 22). Through evenly assigning limited time to family, friends, acquaintances and all kinds of information spreading on networks, people also separate their attention in this way. Gradually, people may find that they are unable to make any emotional and meaningful conversations which are important to maintain healthy relationships with friends and family since they do not have time to spend with them. In the past, when people did not have smart phones, they would go out to meet friends and randomly talk about things that happened recently in their lives. A feeling of intimacy could be easily captured while they were laughing or complaining about their experiences. However, now some people may only contact friends when they really need them. Otherwise, individuals may just converse with those people they just met online and surf websites. Day by day, the relationships people have with their acquaintances and friends become similar, which are all in a weak condition. Eventually, an inexplicable estrangement may occur between people and their true friends.

Even though social media may weaken the relationships between people, they are really effective tools to make society more transparent. With the help of them, people can be motivated to form strong ties so that they can become united to participate in social movements. Because of the invention of social media platforms, many people can get involved in talking about things that are controversial in society
through expressing their opinions in the virtual world. They are able to criticize or praise whatever they see on websites. However, some people may think the intervention of individuals in this way cannot largely help make any social movement since individuals on social networks are connected by weak ties which hardly lead them to engage in any real action. Turkle claims, “when politics goes online, people begin to talk about political action in terms of things they can do online. They are drawn to the idea that social change can happen by giving a “thumbs-up” or by subscribing to a group”(50). Individuals on social networks often just hide in the digital world and rarely do any meaningful action in the real world. However, if a social event which people learn about on social media platforms is serious enough to violate people’s rights and threaten their safety, people may no longer remain silent and unmoved under the shelter of the digital world. There was an event of police brutality which happened on July 6, 2016. A man named Philando Castile was shot by a white police officer. Castile’s girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds, immediately recorded the aftermath of Castile’s shooting with her phone and put the video on Facebook. After that, Reynolds claimed that Castile was killed because he is an African American. Such an event quickly reverberated throughout the nation. However, if Reynolds had not used Facebook, images of this event may never have been seen by so many people. It is social media platforms that make the dark side of society more transparent. It can help reveal that racial discrimination still exists in this country. To fight against racism, a lot of African Americans did not just type their words behind a display screen to demonstrate their inner indignation. Instead, they used social media platforms to amass more participants to engage in fighting for their rights and safety. In such a situation, Facebook and Twitter “[make] it easier for the powerless to collaborate, coordinate, and give voice to their concerns” (Gladwell 134). Because of Castile’s death and the death of other innocent African Americans, many African Americans have realized the real situation they are in. They are still treated unfairly and threatened. Injustices such as police brutality due to racism are more likely to happen to them since they are minorities who are profiled by the police. For them, giving a “thumbs-up” or “thumbs-down” cannot change anything, and society will remain unmoved if people simply express their anger or complain online. In order to fight for justice and push for change, they have to stand up and be united. Therefore, what people see and read about on social media platforms may eventually spur them to fight against the darkness of society with necessary actions like protests in the street. Sometimes it is, in fact, hard to collect and organize people to engage in high-risk activism since many people lack conviction and courage and the ties between them are not strong enough to enable them to become united. However, if people realize that they are really in a hopeless situation, they may be easily forced to stand together and form a strong tie which can lead to high-risk activism to make changes and create social movements. With the help of social media platforms, people can quickly know their situation and get ready to ally with others to fight against injustice in society.
Actually, the connections between people in the digital world can somehow serve as different ties from those which people have with real friends and family. These ties are not necessarily weak and useless. Sometimes they can have a unique function that friends and family cannot give. Turkle argues that “technology gives us the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship” (50). That may be true. Because people cannot see each other’s facial expressions or hear the tone of each other’s voices in some forms of electronic, it is sometimes hard for people to convey their complex opinions and emotional expressions through digital interactions such as texting. Therefore, many conversations conducted in the virtual world lack the empathy which is important to maintain friendships. However, this is just a situation based on the fact that some people only care about the quantity of conversation but not the quality of it. If people simultaneously divide their attention by interacting with many acquaintances in the virtual world, of course, they cannot engage in an empathic connection with others since it requires people to totally commit themselves to the conversation to understand and feel what others are expressing. Instead, if they are able to concentrate on talking to one person for the moment, a feeling of empathy can be obtained when people can carefully think about what others are trying to say. After all, humans are intelligent enough to understand the nuances of different uses of words if they really pay attention to them. Furthermore, many people usually have their own privacy or secrets that cannot be shared with friends and family. Some of these secrets can be problems that people do not know how to face and solve, which can bother them for a long time without finding any solution. For example, now school bullying is a pervasive phenomenon in a lot of schools. It can leave a hugely serious scar on kids who have experienced it. What’s more, it may sometimes be hard for them to talk to their parents and friends about their experiences since they may feel ashamed. For these kids, most of them may not know how to get relief from the dark feeling they have due to the experience of school bullying by themselves. However, if they have a smart phone, these kids may be more willing to share this bad experience with those acquaintances they have gotten to know in the digital world. These acquaintances can be people who they have never met physically and live in another place which is far from them, so it is safe for these kids to tell their secrets. These virtual “friends” may be the only people who can help these kids find relief from their dark feeling through empathizing with them and encouraging them. In this way, even though they are not real friends of these kids, a distinct relationship between them can actually be built. These acquaintances who can only be approached on social media platforms may gradually become “virtual friends” as they have helped each other several times through interacting in the digital world. Gladwell claims, “Our acquaintances—not our friends—are our greatest source of new ideas and information. The internet lets us exploit the power of these kinds of distant connections with marvellous efficiency” (Gladwell 137). This is the strength that the virtual world can provide for people. With the help of social media platforms, people can form a completely different tie with others they have met in the digital world. They can help people in a lot of
ways which even cannot always be achieved with real friends and family. Actually, these invisible people are also friends but just virtual ones for those individuals on social networks. They may never see each other in person, but they can form a healthy relationship maintained by the digital connection.

The relationships between human beings are complicated. It is hard to sort them out. Because of the digital world, people can have a digital connection with others they may never meet physically. Sometimes such a connection may weaken people’s relationships with their real friends by dividing their attention if they are addicted to using social media platforms to obtain more acquaintances. However, a digital connection can make people be more aware of what happens in the world and serve as a significant motivator for them to get united and form a strong tie to fight for justice and their rights. Moreover, people can form a unique relationship with acquaintances they make in the virtual world, which can be well maintained with the help of social media platforms. Actually, the impacts which the virtual world has on people’s relationships basically depend on how people use the Internet and act based on what they learn from it. Different ways of implementing virtual world can lead to different consequences and have different impacts.

Damien, “The Unspoken Truth”
Deborah Allen, Assignment #4 (A)

Face-to-face conversation is a dying form. With its rapid ascension into the mainstream global landscape, technology has transformed every day “speak” into a thing of the past. Noncritical, nonjudgmental, and biased to one’s needs, digital mobile devices appeal to us and attract our attention away from the more task orientated and mental thinking processes that require work. Instead of turning toward each other in meaningful relationships we’ve opted for our digital mobile devices for companionship, and created a great divide between many of us. Have we compromised our most primal of urges? As exhibited in Jane Goodall, “In the Forests of Gombe,” a face-to-face conversation facilitates the shared experiences of a human being with another via an authentic, reciprocal exchange of speaking and listening. A willingness to make oneself available and open to face-to-face conversation allows for the permissive state for humans to tend to each other’s needs, and allow for gainful insight and reflection. This taking in of the other and response is the place by which we learn to articulate and build on our conversational skills and where we form interpersonal bonding skills. The forgoing of face to face conversation and the immersion of the self with digital mobile devices, can cause a paralysis of the mind and of the heart. In Sherry Turkle’s “The Flight from Conversation,” she illustrates how digital mobile devices has spawned a desensitization of mankind, as apathy and solitude have become the new norm. We have come to believe ourselves as intrusive in each other’s lives and have forgone our natural
inclinations to, as Turkel puts “lean toward each other” (44). Despite this, Turkle points out, that there is an awareness among people and conscious understanding that the very thing we draw near to has compromised our ability to engage with others with unapologetic confidence. One’s mobile devices are the harbinger of a new dawn, a world which reflects indifference and emotional paralysis. Without face to face conversation, we sacrifice our humanity: the intimacy, authenticity, and an ability to reflect and contribute in a meaningful way that makes one human. From behind a cloud of deception that is our online presence, we manage and control others at arm’s length to avoid the responsibility for confronting other’s unfavorable emotions that come from face to face conversations.

People make sacrificial bonds to their devices, and they tend to and care for them with a sense of obligation and duty that is removed and absent from the present. A new form of relationship has evolved that has enraptured our focus and made it so that thinking is effortless and inconsequential to formulating intimate unions with each other through face to face conversation. Acting like a filter for all the excessive idiosyncrasies and judgments that come with being complex human beings, digital mobile devices provide a re-do, a face-lift so to speak, by facilitating an editing of ourselves and of others. It excuses one from feeling a need or responsibility “to tend to each other, to lean toward each other” (Turkle 44), and as more and more disengage from face to face contact and become more interconnected with digital devices, the character of thought amongst people then becomes an “understood” subliminal pervasive message that reinforces an isolating and alienating mode of behavior as an acceptable practice. The idea being, that so long as the environment around you reflects this “closed off” to the public digital device pull, then it is not all unusual and justifiable for anyone to be doing it with little attentiveness to being present and undistracted for others. Digital devices secure the self from feeling the hardship and trials that will us to “… turn taking, … to listen to someone else, to read their body, their voice, their tone, and their silences. [Where] you bring your concern and experience to bear, and you expect the same from others” (Turkle 45). There is a psychological and emotional cost that comes from investing the whole of oneself with another through face-to-face contact. In conversation, as we attempt to participate and contribute to a discussion, in our vulnerability we run the risk of our thought processes jamming and the words that we employ failing us and exposing our flawed character. As a result of this, unexpected feelings of unworthiness, self-consciousness, and helplessness renders the individual as powerless and insecure. Serving the ego of man, these ill feelings are masked and handled by retreating to a haven, a place that gives us the illusion of confidence and control that digital devices placate to. However, this disengagement and retreat into digital devices also contributes to spending less and less time with our own thoughts. Distracted by the endless feeds of texting, world wide web, and social media platforms, which have become the substitute of learned behaviors through shared experiences and face to face interactions, one loses the rewards of self-reflection that comes from a place of solitude. Sitting in contemplation and free from the any attachments or demands in the forests of
Gombe, Goodall deepened her kinship and belief in the spiritual world through a moment of revelation that would have otherwise not been afforded her had Goodall been closed off to the world because of the distracting pull of her digital devices. What she experienced in the solitude of her own thoughts lessened the gravity of her pain at the passing of her husband, and even more, exposed her to a new meaning and understanding for the precious sanctity of life and how intricately connected all living things are to each other. This solitude also enabled Goodall to capture a unique perspective on life that enabled her to aid the bellhop in quelling the torrents of his emotions and concerns that came from seeing the world through one singular lens. Self-reflection through solitude is an invaluable source for tapping into our inner selves and maturing us with new meaning and perspectives that can be something worth passing on to others who are seeking something you may know. As stated by Goodall, “The bellhop was very young, very fresh-faced. But he looked worried—partly because he felt that he should not be disturbing me, but partly, it transpired, because his mind was indeed troubled. He had a question to ask me” (149). As seen through the bell hop, people have a desire to engage with each other in face to face conversation, especially when one is burdened with troubles and are seeking a responsive listener. Being in the presence of someone, vulnerable and open to the possibilities of hurt, one can potentially experience the sharing of experiences and ideas that can be impactful and life altering. Goodall used her new arrived perspective gained through self-reflection to ease the mind of the bellhop by way of sharing her experience through face-to-face contact. The practice of reciprocal exchange of listening and speaking through conversation that is devoid of the distractions of our digital devices enables an authentic bond between people, and enriches our ability to self-assess, self-reflect, and mature into seeing others for who they are.

Solitude is a promising defense that offers self-reflection and the gathering of oneself to combat against the digital throes of inauthenticity and complacency that is rampant among humans. Nature acts as a refuge, and a sanctuary for solitude that is far removed from all the attachments that humans deal with on a daily basis. Undemanding and free from expectations, humans can intimately and intuitively respond to their inner lives in solitude and nurture their sense of self that goes unattended in the digital world. Goodall describes this sort of benefit of solitude:

It was in the forests of Gombe that I sought healing after Derek’s death. Gradually during my visits, my bruised and battered spirit found solace. In the forest, death is not hidden … It is all around you all the time, a part of the endless cycle of life…Time spent in the forest, following and watching and simply being with chimpanzees, has always sustained the inner core of my being. (146) Nature as depicted by Goodall is presented as a sacred place, a retreat from the conventional societal demands and expectations that one may find confining and restrictive to the self. Unobstructed by the distracting and technical contrivances of the digital world, nature offers an immutable rendering of life in motion where life and death is not hidden there. Like Goodall, human beings can take solace and refuge in the solitude
of nature, because it reflects an authenticity that is devoid of illusion and simulated pretense. Self-reflection can be possible, as the character of nature emboldens one to ponder and mediate freely without any controlling variable. People tire themselves with “fitting in” to the ideas and expectations that others may have of them by remodeling and altering their desires or true selves to appease and control the impressions that others may have of them. However, what the unbridled spirit and character of nature offers, is an “unstolen” and spared moment for revisiting and communing with the inner self, which is often compromised by our urges to please those around us or by the lure of digital devices that enable “escapism” from confronting one’s identity. Digital devices are an easy “out” from facing inner demons or uncertainties about how we feel about the world around us and how we fit into it. Therefore, it provides a means for rerouting one’s anxiety and disengaging from the uncomfortable and confronting feelings that are elicited from insecurities, by simply occupying one’s time and attention with the virtual realities that are a touch of a finger away.

More so, digital devices have become an emotional and psychological crutch for boosting the ego and preserving one’s self-esteem. An individual runs the risk of exposing his or her flawed character through face-to-face conversation, and that vulnerability can be met with judgment and cynicism that may bruise one’s ego and make one feel undignified and small. People aim to circumvent these negative feelings by editing themselves through texting and contriving online personas behind a hidden and controlled environment. The authentic self is shrouded by the veil of the digital era. From behind this veil, people create a pseudo-self, one that highlights and embellishes the truth of who they are by modifying and editing for example, the self through texting, as it is an agreeable form for saving face and disguising one’s weaknesses and shortcomings that impact our self-esteem. Yet this trade-off - this conformity - compromises one’s personal growth, independence, and individualistic perspective from ever meeting the light of day. Coming into one’s own, authentic and true self, is motivated by self-reflection, which requires a yielding to solitude. As stated by Turkle, “The capacity for solitude makes relationships with others more authentic. Because you know who you are, you can see others for who they are, not for who you need them to be. So solitude enables richer conversation” (46). Solitude as the basis for self-reflection provides an answering to the self, and a catalyst for assessing one’s feelings and assertions of the world and their place in it. Unfurled before nature’s solitude, one can have a conversation with the self, an intimate inner dialogue that has long been neglected. This time of reflection can deepen one’s meaning and perception of the world by imparting clarity, wisdom, and understanding. This in turn can be the impetus for authentic bonding and meaningful experience with others as one faces the world with confidence, that is not predicated on performance or the masking of one’s beliefs or curiosity, but rather the divulgence of the actual self. Knowing thyself can “[sustain] the inner core of [one’s] being” (Goodall 146), and enable one to approach others with a sense of self that can view others for who they are. Nonetheless, digital devices make it difficult for one to be in tune with
solitude and tend to one’s emotions as its lure attracts one into a state of tunnel vision, and leads one to be preoccupied with the trivial pursuits of enacting and maintaining an image that represents the ideal self to the world, which is unflawed, perfect and in control. However, when we sit in solitude we learn to confront and dispel our fears and anxiety from an objective place. We are able to rationalize our worries and fears and begin to challenge ourselves to become more and more of what we desire of ourselves to be. As we evolve to know ourselves, there is a sense of freedom that comes to fruition, and empowers one with confidence and assurance to cope with the unpredictable twists and turns and challenges that are sprung from conversations. Inadvertently, this in turn gives others the permission to bring the whole of oneself to the forefront as they witness your unabashed and courageous efforts to be present and available for others. More so, conversation is a place by which through trial and error in communication we learn to trust one another.

Although humans have used technology to manage relations with others and spare themselves the potential harms of face to face contact, they have also compromised their ability to achieve meaning and understanding through empathy. The actions of managing our relations in the online environment by filtering and modifying the self is a false representation of ourselves and “[i]n all of these cases, we use technology to “dial down” human contact, to titrate its nature and extent. People avoid face-to face conversation but are comforted by being in touch with people-and sometimes with a lot of people-who are emotionally kept at bay” (Turkle 29). Humans have parted ways with being forthright and emotionally available to others and supplanted it with the distant and unchallenging connections that would make it possible to invest little of oneself. As people connect more and more over social media platforms like Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram, and many others, they become emissaries to negotiating censorship. With both the editing and retouches of online pictures on Facebook that represent the most glorious and “captured’ moments in our lives and the videos that depict the highlights of our experiences we omit the struggles and the sorrows that one is not immune to. In doing so, we use social media platforms to convey to others what is expected from them, and this illusion of the actual self which represents the “peachy side” of life becomes a tool for managing people’s emotions and keeping unfavorable responses at bay. Through censorship of the darker moments of our lives, we sidestep the emotional maintenance of others and give way to letting each one fend for themselves. As one forgoes exposing the honesty of their struggles and plight with others, we dehumanize ourselves and limit our potential to serve others. This emotional detachment is what produces a loss of empathy.

Furthermore, with the proliferation of digital relations, human to human relations has been reduced drastically, and this change has redefined how one responds to and expects of the other. What was once considered an obvious indication of empathy for those who have lost someone dear and close, by making one’s presence known in person or over the phone is now being responded to by a widespread of apathy among those who are friends, family, and acquaintances of someone who have
lost a dear one. The promoted digital substitutions of our actual selves that have been created online has created a dissociative behavior in which one can no longer recognize or even identify one’s own humanity and the human needs of others, as stated by Turkle, “[h]is friend’s father has died...he has texted his friend to say he is sorry...The boy assumes that conversation is intrusive even at moments that beg for intimacy” (45). The concessions that have been made to omit the authenticity of our lives by masking our struggles and imperfections, has led to a forgetting of the human responsibility for openness and emotional availability to those that require it. We have convinced ourselves that the respectable and courteous action is letting someone be alone when it comes to matters of the heart. However, this is the result of the hold that digital devices have on one’s attention and it’s pull away from learning the human traits and behavioral attributes that make it possible for one to respond intuitively to someone else. By fully engaging the faculties of one’s senses in the intimacy of face to face conversation, nuances and subtexts are made readily available that would otherwise go unnoticed behind our virtual screens. These nuances and subtexts are evidences and cues for the emotional state of someone and they aid in initiating an emotional response by another; however, digital devices have pulled our focus away from face to face conversation and the reading of these cues. It has blinded our ability to understand the emotional needs of an individual as “[e]ye contact is the most powerful path to human connection” (Turkle 36).

With our eyes transfixed on the virtual screens of our digital devices we busy and exhaust ourselves with managing and controlling a network of acquaintances, family, and friends but compromise being an authentic person along the way. A person’s online presence has become a false representation of their lives that is supported by a misleading message that life always mirrors stability, happiness, fulfillment, companionship and experience, devoid of suffering and troubles. This is censorship of the emotional self and a deception that detracts from the experience of empathy through suffering. The more one builds walls around the not so peachy aspects of our lives the more we say to others that it’s okay not to talk about it. That it is okay to not look up from your digital devices and confront another with the whole of yourself for fear of conflict or some other nonsense. It is in the struggle, in the conflict, that we come into our own and begin to understand how valuable the human experience is. When we trade in complacency and desensitization for authenticity and truth we lose all hope for humanity. We need to face each other and put done our vices and begin to have a conversation about the things that matter.
In today’s world, the value of nature has been gradually taken for granted by many individuals in the world. And certainly the reason for this is the introduction of technology. Technology has revolutionized the world in a both negative and positive ways, which is proven and reflected by everyday “normal” human behavior or interactions. Technology may free humanity from tackling conflicts, but it can also lead to issues that may had not previously existed without the development of technology. A dramatic difference in humanity has been the reduction in the ability for humans to communicate face-to-face. People have become addicted to their electronic devices and it has impacted their preferences for digital interaction rather than face-to-face conversations. Sherry Turkle, the author of “The Flight from Conversation”, discusses the complex relationship between technology and humanity. Turkle argues that human imperfection emerges from the reliance over technology. She also discusses the importance of solitude and face-to- face conversations. Turkle strongly emphasizes the consequences that digital communication has on changing interpersonal interactions. She describes how face-to-face conversations have been sacrificed for merely digital connections. Face-to-face communication has become endangered due to digital forms of communication, through the use of technological devices and other social media platforms. Jane Goodall in her essay “In the Forest of Gombe,” experiences a spiritual journey within the forests in the company of chimpanzees. Goodall firmly believes in the existence of God; she seeks solace when she faces the death of her husband. Within the forests of Gombe, she experiences a harmony with nature, which leads to crucial self-discoveries. Both authors, through ideas and examples, examine the differences between virtual worlds and electronic communications, and the world of nature and face to face conversation. Goodall’s experience in the forest displays a multitude of benefits that nature offers, that digital connections fail to provide. Humans live in a technological universe in which they are always communicating. In today’s world of digital technology, both digital connections and face-to-face conversations are important. They make up different components of human communication and interaction. It is important to consider that no matter how valuable digital communications are in today’s world, they do not substitute for in-person face to face communication. Although digital technology is intended to make communication easier, it is preventing the growth of real human relationships through face-to-face conversations. Technological devices wield psychological power over humans because they have not only influenced human actions and behavior, but they have changed who they are. A face to face conversation creates
the possibility for the growth of self confidence, solitude and self knowledge. However we need to recognize the importance of the digital world and social media platforms because they help people communicate over vast distances through the abundance of technological innovations.

Humans need to have the ability to have face to face interaction because that builds confidence, instead of relaying on electronic communication within the digital world. There are many differences within the digital world, and the physical world of face to face in person interactions. The use of technology is not inherently a problem and if used correctly it can effectively aid human communication. However, it is easier to interpret things through face to face communication. Humans need the physical presence of others to interact because digital technology cannot substitute for face-to-face conversations. In today’s generation, people are more addicted to electronic communication. A main reason for this is because to relay on one’s smartphone, mental activity is hardly required. In contrast, in a for a face-to-face conversation, a person has to be fully mentally and emotionally present. In- person conversation offers the potential for growth and understanding of others. It's easier to be understood, and to understand the other person because “To converse, you don’t just have to perform turn talking, you have to listen to someone else, to read their body, their voice, their tone, and their silences. You bring your concern and experience to bear, and you expect the same from others” (Turkle 45). Turkle express the significance of face-to-face communication. Its characteristics are critical to effective conversations and communication skills. Communication has the benefit of voice, touch, and body language, something electronic communication does not convey. An individual is able to witness another person’s body language and observe how the other person handles an unpredictable situation as it unfolds. In this situation, that individual is able to develop a true sense of that person. Phones and technology do the opposite; they tend to pull a person away from communication and this causes him or her to become less vulnerable and confident. Face- to- face interactions offer an intellectual stimulation that builds confidence. Confidence is needed in order to become more open and present within different situations. Goodall experienced a moment with the bellhop, who seemed unconfident and afraid to speak out. Immediately Goodall noticed that the bellhop “looked worried- partly because he felt that he should not be disturbing me, but partly, it transpired, because his mind was indeed troubled” (149). The characteristics that the bellhop acquired when wanting to ask Goodall questions about her ideas seem relatable to young adults in today’s generation. Young adults are often scared to speak out in person and shy because they would much rather text and talk over the phone, rather than talk in person. These individuals are so used to electronic communication that their ability to communicate with others has worsened and have become less vulnerable. They experience a sort of anxiety about conversation, and they may start to assume “that conversation is intrusive even at moment that beg for intimacy” (Turkle 45). Young people have become anxious about the give-and-take of conversation, due to their addiction to their phones. Thus, the bellhop with whom Goodall
spoke, created a valuable form of conversation. The bellhop decided to approach her in person, rather than through email or online. He grew confident because at the end of his conversation he was “looking considerably less worried” and “his eyes were clear and untroubled, he was smiling” (Goodall 150). Young people need to become less fearful of conversing in person, because these are skills that will need to be learned sooner or later. No matter how valuable technology and electronic communication are, they do not substitute for the supremacy that face-to-face communication obtains. It is no surprise that face-to-face interaction is proven to comfort people and provide them and important sense of well-being.

We need to be able to detach from digital devices in order to gain the capacity for the solitude that we need to gain a sense of self knowledge and self evaluation. It is true that we have created an immense attachment to technological devices. People are constantly plugged into the Internet and social media, leading to a digital addiction and an inability to be present within their lives. It is ironic how humans are constantly dialed into technology, where they are more connected with people around the world, yet many of them have never felt more alone. Although people are digitally connected, they are not really present to one another, leaving them feeling separate and isolated. It is crucial to be capable to disconnect and unplug from all forms of technology. To be able to focus on one thing, without allowing distractions to intrude, creates its own form a sacred solitude. Solitude is necessary, because it is in moments of silence that we have the opportunity to benefit from a contact with our inner self. Goodall was able to seek solitude through the world around her when she “longed for the peace of the forest. I wanted nothing more than to be with the chimpanzees, renewing my acquaintance with my old friends, getting my climbing legs back again, relishing the sights, sounds, and smells of the forest” (146). It was during her visits to the forests of Gombe where Goodall’s spirit found solitude and time for self-reflection. Her husband’s death leads her to desire solace and her experience within nature was spiritual, not scientific. Goodall gained solitude from this experience, where she was able to evaluate her life and reflect on the message within her heart. Solitude granted her a new path for new reflections, in order to create new conditions for self-knowledge. Hence, young people today seem to have no eagerness for solitude because technology is taking away their ability to be alone. In fact, “solitude does not necessarily mean being alone. It is a state of conscious retreat, a gathering of the self” (Turkle 46). When people flee solitude, they are unable to bring any ideas to the table with authority and confidence. Turkle examines how people who are addicted to their phones lack the ability for introspection and the capacity to examine the self. We hamper the experience of self-reflection “when we go to our phones instead of claiming a quiet moment for ourselves. We have convinced ourselves that surfing the web is the same as daydreaming. That it provides the same space for self-reflection. It doesn’t” (Turkle 25). Turkle urges people to create sacred spaces where solitude can be embraced. When we spend the majority of the time on social media platforms, we lose the ability to endure being alone with our
thoughts, to contemplate deep ideas that form the basis of a spiritual life. Solitude and self-reflection leads us to develop our consciousness, productivity and creative thinking. People, who are deeply attached to their phones, should consider disconnecting from technology and engaging with nature. Unplugging and creating moments like Goodall’s spiritual experience in the forest, can give us a chance to observe and engage with the world around us and with ourselves. Solitude is harder to find in a world where people are always connected. No real self-reflection can arise without solitude, because true solitude is established through social and digital withdrawal.

Technological effects on human behavior are controversial because they can benefit and affect humans all at the same time. In today’s generation, technology has demonstrated a potential in reshaping cultures, learning and social interaction. Introducing technology within the human life has developed and improved the quality of life. The contribution technology has made to modern life has been positive because it has improved the quality of many fields, such as medicine, education, and daily human life. There are plenty beneficial qualities that the world of digital connections offers that nature cannot provide. Technology has created such unique revolutionary windows “Through them we can see ever farther, ever more clearly into areas which until recently were beyond human knowledge. Through such a scientific window I had been taught to observe the chimpanzees” (Goodall 148). Although Goodall’s experience with nature has bought her to a positive mental and emotional realization, she has now thought about the advances that human knowledge has developed. These scientific windows were developed through the help of technology, and they have allowed humans to improve the quality of life in several positive ways. Technology has evolved with the help of human knowledge, and human knowledge has expanded through the help of technology. Although nature can mentally and emotionally help humans, it is not sustainable and sufficient enough like the power of technology when it comes to offering a more advanced environment. The world of technology is a powerful world, just like the nature. Technology does have negative human impacts, and Turkle argues that “we use technology to “dial down” human contact, to titrate its nature and extent. People avoid face to face conversation but are comforted by being in touch with people- and sometimes with a lot of people- who are emotionally kept at bay” (29). Turkle presents a one sided argument against people’s use of technology and constantly diminishes the possibilities of what technology can offer. In reality she fails to recognize the positive qualities that technology has to offer. Her belief is that technology can strongly diminish human connection, but actually there is a value in how we use technology. Mostly, technology is used to communicate over vast distances. Our lives are becoming more connected, and it’s a phenomenon enabled and driven by technology. It helps us all stay connected more quickly and efficiently, regardless of the distance between us. As Turkle writes, “we can design technology that demands that we use it with greater intention” (44), because this is a form of integrating technology within our lives without creating a negative impact. Of course there are negative side effects in the
digital world, but overall we cannot deny the fact that technology is a part of our life and we cannot live without it. It as has become very essential to us because it is used everywhere; like hospitals, schools, households, etc. Ultimately technology has made our lives simpler by creating many conveniences in everyday life from communicating faster and inventing new windows.

The digital world in today’s generation has taken over many lives in positive and negative ways. Many people are deeply addicted to their technological devices which have lead to preferences for digital interactions. These digital interactions, like Turkle discusses are impacting human behavior and the way we communicate. We are constantly isolating ourselves from face to face conversations, and it is affecting us in various ways. Digital connections take away our confidence and solitude without us noticing. Technology devices are changing the way we interact with ourselves and nature. Overall, human need to experience solitude like Goodall did in the forests of Gombe, in order to gain and self-reflection and knowledge. But nonetheless, we must not ignore the ways the world of technology has improved the quality of life.

**Alejandro, “The Succeeding Paradox”**

Laurence Mintz, Assignment #5 (B)

In the competitive world, success is a sensitive achievement such that even a mindset can determine it, along with some luck and elbow grease. However, looking in the dictionary, success is defined as the “accomplishment of an aim or purpose”, which explains why every person would have a different answer to ‘What is success?’, success is open to interpretation. Amy Chua, author of “Why Chinese Mothers are Superior”, writes about the difference in Western and ‘Chinese’ parenting, a synonym for strict parenting, and how the Chinese approaches the same thing as every Western parent, the best for their child, yet she argues the Chinese mothers do it better by enforcing the child’s work ethic to build the fundamentals of children self-esteem. Sherry Turkle, social scientist and author of “The Empathy Diaries”, writes about how technology is negatively effecting the newer generation by stripping us of empathy and enforcing our ‘need’ to be distracted and comfortable with our devices, despite being uncomfortable with the real world. Turkle does not define success, but it can be inferred that she believes being able to relate to one another and having the abilities to have intimate moments with each other should be everybody’s goal. However, both texts take an extreme stance on the issue on
school, where Chua believes that following the system of school and having a rigid mindset will cultivate enough for the child to be well off in the future. On the other hand, Turkle believes that school should be a place where students learn to relate to each other and success will come to those that can make stronger connections than the people that hide behind their cellphone screens. Given the social and economic realities of the world, their views can be effectively reconciled by using confidence, education in and out of the classroom and socialization to maximize success.

Technology, when it first came to be, has paved the way to success like no other era, starting with the Industrial Revolution, and made it available to transcend wage and social classes through, what should be called, working smart. When describing that both Western parents really want the best for their children and both the different parenting methods, Western and Chinese, really want to achieve the same thing, Chua says, “the Chinese believe that the best way to protect their children is by preparing them for the future, letting them see what they’re capable of, and arming them with skills, work habits and inner confidence that no one can ever take away” (Chua 56). A lot of children grow up with issues of self-esteem and self-imaging, Chua, along with other Chinese mothers, believes that to avoid this string of issues they must have their children work to build their own confidence, have something fundamental that they are proud of as they want their child to be and grow strong. One example in Chua’s text is when Chua was describing the grueling process of teaching one of her daughters, nicknamed Lulu, how to play a song on the piano called ‘The Little White Donkey’ by Jacques Ibert. An intermediate level song, that require two different rhythms playing in each hand. A difficult song for a non-piano players and beginner players. Lulu could not play it for a week so each day of that week practice was enforced until Lulu finally was able to play it. The pair was so excited once this happened and there was a lot of praise in both the private, at home, and the public scene, later at a recital. But the interesting part is how after Lulu played it right the first time she called it easy, which enforces her confidence in the piano which most likely resulted in her playing better, making her a stronger player. To bring into account reality, this trait can attract people to one person, as confidence is wanted and needed. In society people believe that they need leaders, their most alluring characteristic is usually
confidence, and so far, this is true, as there are hierarchies in government and corporations with seemingly powerful CEO’s. Continuing, Turkle, in her text, visits a middle school and observes how the children’s friendship patterns are changing with the rise of digital technology, and says “Conversation is on the path toward the experience of intimacy, community, and communion. Reclaiming conversation is a step toward reclaiming out most fundamental human values” (Turkle 7). In other words, much like hard work in Chua’s text, conversation can also build as a fundamental value that kids can fall back on, as it builds to make understanding, close-ness and intimacy. This becomes an exterior way to build confidence, much like the high that popular kids feel, and promotes connection building. This is the literal structure for networking, and is necessary because who we know can have an impact on success. They, the person you know, can offer more connections that can open doors to many companies or institutions. The capacity to work well is not the only thing to determine how successful someone will be but neither can just knowing someone. So, they both build off each other, a cyclic relationship to approach success. Adopting these traits from Chua’s and Turkle’s writing will increase the likelihood of succeeding, which is what all decent parents want for their children.

Education is mandatory in most first world countries, and usually is encouraged by their governments. Schooling seems to be associated with success, but no innovator of the world has succeeded by following a structure, they took creative leaps, discarded the rules and did what they needed to do. Chua, explaining what will happen if a Chinese mother’s child does anything but excel in school, says, “The devastated Chinese mother would then get dozens, maybe hundreds of practice tests and work through them with her child for as long as it takes to get the grade up to an A” (Chua 54). In other words, a heavy amount of repetition is needed to do well in school, to be the best; it should be noted that the Chinese mother believes that their child doing well in school is a display of their good parenting. Yes, practice makes perfect but this tunneling of vision can only serve to do well for that one topic, and even worse, enforce a structure that does not apply to the real world. The child may have practiced a lot for the subject, but what if the child found a pattern to the test, followed that and still did well? Then the child will become reliant on that pattern, a habit has been formed and they are not
always good ones. Being ready for every situation is impossible, but to be prepared is doable, it just involves on-the-spot creativity which can only be enforced by leaving things open to interpretation. Just like how Lulu, from earlier, could not immediately play the piece she was assigned and most likely tried to play the piece many different times with different ideas as to how to approach it. She was struggling because, most likely, because she was too used beginner pieces and this piece was more exposure to the complex world of music than she’s used to. Getting out of school, life and problems begin to become less predictable so much so that the child should be prepared to be thrown off their feet. No practice test can help them with that. When describing how technology has effected the mindset of generations and their view on conversation, Turkle said “we forget our responsibility to the new, to the generation that follows us. It is for us to pass on the most precious thing we know how to do: talking the next generation about our experiences, our history; sharing what we think we did right and wrong” (Turkle 14). Turkle suggests that it is human to pass on previous experiences so the next generation can learn from them. This is sufficient to help guide a child into believing what is seemingly right and wrong without needing to experience said events, which can be beneficial to the child in the real world and save them years of struggling by themselves. This kind of education becomes more about life and is taught outside of the classroom. This education can also be used to frame a child’s mindset, but can only be tested when thrown in the real world and faced with tons of self-reflection. A mindset, if free enough, can lead to a sense of intuition which is a spark of both intelligence and creativity that transcends logic. Intuition is what great scientists like Albert Einstein and Nikolai Tesla are fond of and praised, they even have inspiring quotes about this topic. In the real world, though, it will be challenging to face the world with only an intuition and not a practical understanding of the world, so it will serve well to have a structure that is practical. A structure that could work for the individual and an intuition would be a great benefit for what they want to do because these both lead into innovation.

Success in creating and maintaining relationships is also another kind of private success and is one that at least everyone can relate to when seeking a friendship or a relationship; usually this skill is developed early on. As Chua is describing one of the big differences between Western and Chinese
parents, she says “Western parents are concerned about their children’s psyches. Chinese parents aren’t. They assume strength, not fragility, and as a result they behave very differently” (Chua 53). According to Chua, the confidence in the child should be instilled in the privacy of home, as it allows room for closeness in the house. The assumption that their child is strong, gives the child strength itself. Which is not only an ego boost, but a real confidence booster as well. It gives the child a feeling that they can assume power in other situations as well. It allows for constant communication within the privacy of home because they feel like their strength allows them too. Not to say they are fearless though, because if they dare be disrespectful to their parents, their parents will unleash punishment that the Western parent cannot imagine. Moreover, Turkle says “If children don’t learn how to listen … when will they learn the give-and-take that is necessary for good relationships” (Turkle 14). Having a conversation is difficult and can be honed by experiencing more of it, so being able to have a conversation is a skill. Here Chua would also agree that conversation is disciple, but she would prefer to keep that skill developed in the privacy of home. In Turkle’s case, however, she believes that the capacity for a good relationship should start with listening. Of course, listening can help with a conversation, but that is assuming you are having an intelligent conversation, which are not exactly expected of a child. The capacity for closeness, or the give-and-take for a good relationship, should be developed first, as done in Chua’s case with the private ego boosting and praise given to her child. Should the child seek a good relationship outside of the family, they will have enough confidence to approach whoever they feel like. Or maybe they will be approached, because their general confidence is alluring. Once they take that first step, then they will learn how to listen and take a path to master conversation.

In short, the viewpoints of both authors can and should be harmonized to promote the possibility of success. Success will be promoted by this because of the cyclic relationship between confidence and work, education from school and the real world, and success in private life by conversing with one another.
Technology is a widely-used term to describe different inventions and tools that help people with their everyday lives. Modern technology can be explained as something that allows hours of conversation from screen to screen, or as the pizza tracker installed into a browser that alerts a person when their pizza is ready or being prepared. Some people could argue that all this technology is regressing our social skills, and this in turn has led many others away from traditional means of conversation. Sherry Turkle, a professor of Social Sciences at MIT, is one of these people who argue with most of the current generation’s obsession with technology and illuminated forms of communication. In “The Flight from Conversation” Turkle goes into detail on the modern generations’ love affair with technology and its bright flashing screens. From the inabilities of today’s youth on conducting conversation, to many technology user laments, her essay offers an opinion that technology is ruining our lives and regressing us to hide behind a screen instead of having a presence within a conversation. Modern technologies are rapidly becoming a preferred method of communication and are removing intimacy from conversations; however, these technologies allow people to talk to others with whom they would never expect to become friends. Therefore, Turkle is right that technology users need to find a happy medium in which these technologies should not be cast away nor worshiped, but rather than merely disconnecting as she suggests, people should and reconcile technology and intimacy by using less communication technology and more face-to-face connections.

From simple technologies and machines to the more complex and digital ones that keep many drawn to the screen, technology has found a rapid line into daily life. Communication technologies have found a (rapid line) into daily life, and are making face-to-face communication more difficult and less common. The communication technology referred to includes cellular smart phones, e-readers and tablets, personal laptops and desktop computers, which have all found their ways into most homes across the globe. With the newer generations embracing communication technology at a rapid pace,
there are fewer conversations occurring face-to-face. Turkle has noticed this, as did her friend Cameron: “There are fewer conversations—not with the people you’re texting, but with the people around you!” (Turkle 21). Cameron’s astute observation accurately describes the modern generation—the generation Turkle is trying to reach out to. The Millennial Generation has the largest affliction with the modern technology, as it is an integral part of their lives from the daily conversations over texts to the ordering online due to anxiety of using their voice to order a simple meal. A student once said to Turkle “…It takes place in real time and you can’t control what you’re going to say” (Turkle 22). This “real time” communication poses a threat, because of the love affair the new generation has with smartphones.

With the newer generations embracing communication technology at a rapid pace, there are fewer conversations occurring face to face. This generation has no concept of the element of human emotion—where conversations are supposed to be awkward and not perfect; where “real time” is supposed to be frightening and uncertain. Most, if not all, of the Millennial generation is obsessed with the perfect response and needs to have time to create the perfect persona online, that they forget how to hold a conversation face to face.

The generation that has grown up with this modern communication technology, has been conditioned towards responding to flashing messages on a screen. Through instant messaging and texting, the intimacy that once was found through thoughtful face-to-face conversation has drifted away. Of course, the newest generation is not solely to blame for the gap in communication, as the older generations have surrendered to the allure of the all-powerful pocket god. “A young father, thirty-four, tells me that when he gives his two-year-old daughter a bath, he finds it boring. And he’s feeling guilty…”The bath should be a time for relaxing with my daughter…I find the downtime of her bath boring” (Turkle 39). In this example, a father admits to his bonding time being interrupted, and as a result a once intimate and treasured moment becomes something boring, and in the way. This phenomenon is, however, not just found between families, but also with some of the self-aware newer generation who notice this pattern growing. Some college students, however, wish that their friends would give the phones a break, starting to miss the company of their fractured friends. As Turkle
remarks, “…college students who text continuously in each other’s presence yet tell me they cherish the
moments when their friends put down their phones” (Turkle 30). In the modern generation, there are
those that notice the afflictions that many of said generation possess—the love affair with their phones
takes preface over existing friendships. Perhaps what cannot be said to a person face to face, can be said
over a screen with a person sharing similar values, or has the empathy one has been searching for.

For all the negative side effects this modern communication technology has upon our growing
population, the exact same technology can offer other experiences not found in books, movies, or in
schools. With tools like instant messaging and video chatting, people across the globe can create
unlikely bonds and friendships, and we are able to learn more about not only ourselves, but also others.
Turkle argues points that “Technology enchants. It makes us forget what we know about life” (Turkle
23). Turkle does not seem to account for the experiences and friends people make online, and how they
are teaching others about life from different perspectives. The experiences that others can provide are
much more different than those found in a textbook or a travel blog—giving a more personal experience
shared with a friend. Not only do people gain these experiences, they also find themselves with friends
who might possibly understand better than friends within the nearest mile. “Technology does not make
emotions easy. Social media can make emotional life very hard indeed” (Turkle 40). Turkle’s opinion is
one adopted by few people—as many people can find connections with online people and friends they
make, proving that they can find their true selves online and over a screen. Despite these online
connections, it is true that modern users do wish they could be free from the grasp of technology. A
good idea for these users is to find a happy medium, by reconciling with face-to-face conversation and
giving phones a break occasionally.

With this current age of modern communication technology, some users have feelings of remorse
for being so attached to their phones. For the users who have these feelings, Turkle claims that they are
not alone—as many want the same type of balance between the technology modern society developed,
as well as the traditional methods of communication often relied upon. “Today, we are more discerning,
with a greater understanding that what tempts us does not necessarily nourish. So, it can be with
technology” (Turkle 25). Pro-conversation is how Turkle describes her point of view, like the option of reconciling modern society’s differences with technology. People know how alluring the lit-up screen can be, as they look for an excuse to be relieved of a boredom they believe in person conversation cannot save them from. By reconciling, it seems that this would keep the checks and balances of society in check by not taking technology away from users, but helping them detox so to speak. “When we allow ourselves to be vulnerable and less in control, our relationships, creativity, and productivity thrive” (Turkle 56). By allowing the extra time to disconnect from cellular devices, people can find themselves—their true selves that they may not even know existed. And perhaps by allowing others to look in on the private section of ones’ life, they can find that same vulnerability that had been hiding behind the LCD screen of a phone or communication device.

Whether modern technology harms or hurts this modern generation, it will still be an integral part of this twenty-first century. How people decide to use this communication technology will impact how the future generations will interact with each other; some would prefer that a dichotomy be found between the technology and conversations held in person. Communication technology makes people feel “in control” and feel more accomplished, but to the similar tune having minimal contact with technology allows us “…to be vulnerable and less in control, our relationships, creativity, and productivity thrive (Turkle 56).” It is important to find the balance between depending on technology, and finding ones’ true self hidden by the fractured personas across the internet—finding who truly is the real person behind technology’s mask. Of course, there is the benefit that technology gives people, as it allows others to connect to gain experiences only possible through a first-person perspective. This communication technology, capable of people talking over a span of miles and countries, can allow others to find their true selves with others who share similar ideals. It is uncertain what the future of this technology will be, if people will embrace a balance of technology and person-to-person communication, or revert to integrating their everyday life into a small microchip—but whatever the outcome is, this technology is here to stay and will become an integral part in everyone’s life.
Maisy, “Dreamer”

Joshua Eaise, Assignment #2 (NP+)

[Editor’s note: This student showed significant progress in developing an emerging project but still had a high level of error. The grade would be a pass/fail question, but the high level of error should make teachers delay giving a passing grade until the student demonstrates greater control over error. Comments should be encouraging regarding the development of an emerging project and a few significant patterns of error should be noted.]

Human have a nature of insecure that occupies the majority origin of worrisome of people’s daily life. It not only misguide people to hide their true self up but also induces people to acquire recognition from a awry path. Nevertheless, vanity is the control center of every single psychological feelings. For endless desire develops the unsatisfactory towards every present situation. When people are blind by their desire they are step by step walking away from their humanity. Sherry Turkle, the author of “The Empathy Diaries”, discuss how people should act to reach the goal of self-understanding with being solitude and engaging in conversation under the technology base era. Informing the importance of face-to-face conversation to develop empathy, Turkle bases her idea on people’s mutual believe in each other. In contrast to Turkle, Li Yiyun, the author of “Dear Friend, From My Life I Write to You in Your Life”, points out the contradiction people are facing, where they intend to hide themselves from others while welling recognition form the public at the same time. Describing the self-abasement nature of people, Li uses time as her main point to explain people’s fear of control in fragile self-confidence. The desiring human nature seems to be constantly pushing people from saneness. Time can either be the motivation to desire more or the aspiration of self-realization. However, how can people be in a part of the “virtuous circle” that gets people ready to the unpredictables?

Time, the most valuable factor to human, which can neither be purchased nor get it from any where else. As people evolve, the one thing that is never evolved with them is their human nature. Even back in last century when people are free of the stress to keeping up with speedy technology base working pace, people complain for limited time. It is mainly because of people’s enormous desire which develops the sense of insecure. The degree and the range of desire can be wide and intense, because ever since people possess more they demand for more. From financial to recognition, the competitive human nature does not allow people to satisfy simply with what they acquire. For comparison shows discrimination between status, desire can make a person selfish and arrogant, and competition can make a person hideous. Ignoring their true desire, people gradually lose their humanity with the endless comparison. However, time is the only thing that can never be competed for. When people’s desire expand simultaneously with possession, time seems to be limited all the time. As the desire grow, the amount of wanted gradually become dense within a time. Like what Li points out, “the center of
their ambitions—smaller than dreams, more commonplace, in need of broadcasting, and dependent on the recognition of this particular time” (Li 116). For the gradual increase in possession likewise a catalyst that accelerates the insecure feelings of losing everything and turning back to nothingness, constant recognition from the surrounding becomes a needful refuge. Like old generations trying to keep up with the constant escalating modern technology, “they fear they are too late with their admonishments, that they will be left behind”(Turkle 13). With the fear to be left behind, people are dominated by qualm toward present situation. While people are only focusing on what they can obtain, they are already lost at the scratch line. For, they are not working for themselves, but the vanity.

Hiding provides people with a sense of secure and protection. “One hides something for two reasons: that one feels protective of it, or one feels ashamed by it” (Li 122). Eliminating the possibilities to be judge, no matter if the event is shameful, heartrending, or as simple as daily habit, the sense of privacy offer people a space to rest and a distance from the surrounding environment. However, as the anxiety is intensify by the merge of scandal and social stress, people are no longer satisfied by the sense of secure brought by merely covering up their true self. Gradually they not only hide from others but also blinds themselves from recognizing the reality. They intend to alter their memories to make it more beautiful and worth cherish. From hiding to deceiving, people are developing multiple illusions to mask whatsoever that violates the area of secure. However, while people are changing their ways to fudge themselves perfectly “[they] forget [their] responsibility to the new”(Turkle 13). From Turkle’s point of view “the new” indicates the new generations, but it also stands for future, for the unpredictable situations. Real life situations are inevitable, which will shrike on people in unpredictable time and form. The steps to reach the sense of security is merely the footsteps escaping from the reality to the virtual world. People are physically living in the reality, but mentally staying in their virtual world “to focus on its pleasure”(Turkle 16). Nevertheless, regardless of how hard people are trying to deceive themselves, reality cannot neither be cancel nor erase, therefore facing the it becomes the only solution.

To truly have a sense of protection people have to surely understand themselves in the first place. Since self-confidence, without depending on others, can offer people the most stable insurance. “In solitude we find ourselves; we prepare ourselves to come to conversation with something to say that is authentic, ours” (Turkle 10). If people can take time and take one step back, they can clearly realize their covetousness, the competition of prosperous, the coordination of surrounding, and the deceiving of oneself. The time of solitude does not merely calms down people it also brings people back to the most natural state of self. If the masking of oneself is the bury of one’s true self, the process of realizing the reality, on the other hand, is the gradual uncover of the authentic self. Solitude likewise a classroom that provide the learning environment, but one’s own self will be the only teacher, because no one can teach a person how to understand themselves. In the “virtuous circle” people are prepared to become prepared for everything. In contrast to what Li says “a fatalistic person cannot be a dreamer, which I
still want to become one day” (Li 121), when people are prepared, every situation is no longer inevitable but reasonable, since anything that happens is unlikely to exceed a truly prepared person’s anticipation. Owing to the fact that the so-called fatalistic, which is the sense of inevitable that is developed from the desperation and give up of facing of reality.

Considering merely to get prepared in the “virtuous circle” does not fully explain how is it possible for people go through the process of preparation. By asking oneself a simple question: if I do not receive any benefit will I still do the same action? Most people might reply: no, because that is a waste of time. As soon as the answer comes with this time indicate that the person, with no doubt, is controlled by time and avidness. As Li mentions meditation: “From empty to full, and from full to empty[…] Life before birth is a dream, life after death is another dream. What comes between is only a mirage of the dreams,” (Li 120) is also a form of solitude, and a step to walk in to the “virtuous circle”. From empty to full human are born and grown up, and from full to empty human are passed away together with what they had possessed. Living in the in-between where the vanity cage people in the frame of desire, present becomes a jail that blocks people from meeting their true self. However, if people can focus on recognizing their own acquisitiveness instead of the amount of possession, present can become a storage of resource. After answering the question whether to do the same action “we recognize that we crave a feeling of being ‘always on’ that keeps us from doing our best, being our best. So we allow ourselves a certain disenchantment”(Turkle 17). Self-reflection can not only bring a better perceptive of themselves but also acceptance of their capability. Although most people like Li might argue that the characteristic of dreamer is be hinder less and full of courage to pursue their dreams, it is when people are secure in their “virtuous circle” that people have the deep realization of themselves. Instead of being insatiable, they not only understand what they truly desire but also maintain their thoughts. The fear of the control of time is merely the fear of not obtaining enough. When people realize and drop their vanity, time becomes nothing but a timeline of their steps to success.

Perplexing by the limitation of time, hardly can people sober from their thoughts when they are restricted to a specific factor, possession. When people are not fulfilled, they turn to others, and through comparing with others they acquire self-recognition. To be authentically prosperous is to let go of the avidness and be truly vulnerable. Because only being fully open to the surrounding can people sincerely embrace the resources from the storage, which is the reality.