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Final MA Portfolio

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FINAL MASTER'S PORTFOLIO

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A Final Portfolio

Submitted to the English Department of Bowling Green
State University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in the field of English
with a specialization in
English Teaching

10 December 2018

Dr. Khani Begum, First Reader
Ms. Kimberly Spallinger, Second Reader

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Narrative

My goal in pursuing a master's degree was originally to fulfill a professional goal. In the end, it became more of a journey of self-discovery and personal growth. It also became a journey to be a better teacher for my students. I needed to grow to help my students grow. Throughout my experience in the master's program, I have found a greater confidence in teaching my content area; more specifically, I have found a greater understanding of teaching writing due to my extended research and study of it. The theory that has influenced me the most is the idea of an authentic audience for writing projects. The idea of the teacher being the only audience for student writing does not provide much motivation for students beyond a grade. Furthermore, I want students to realize the potential writing has for change and personal growth. Creating an authentic audience for students can help them to push themselves beyond writing for the teacher and a grade. These theories have informed the work I have selected for this portfolio. I have also gained a greater understanding of the power language and films have to promote change and create growth in individuals. When I set out to begin my master's degree, I did not realize the personal evolution I would achieve by the end.

The first project included in the portfolio is the "Argumentative Writing Unit" and functions as the research and analysis piece. This project originated as the "Major Assignment Design Project" in English 6200: Teaching Writing with Dr. Andrea Riley-Mukavetz. The purpose of the project is to meet the real needs of students while being aware of the theoretical conversation that created the practices used. The project includes a writer's memo to Dr. Riley-Mukavetz, a handout describing the major assignment, an assessment plan, a daily schedule, a list of Common Core State Standards and a theoretical rationale. I selected this piece because it

embodies the real work I do with my students on a daily basis and provides a detailed theoretical rationale for doing so.

After submitting my major assignment design project to Dr. Riley-Mukavetz, she suggested expanding the rationale and writing it as more of a narrative to other teachers. She also suggested engaging more with the theoretical discussion of the practices used. Therefore, when revising this unit, I set out to expand the theoretical rationale. In my revision for the portfolio, I added discussion in the rationale, revised the writing to be more of a narrative to educators, added another source and added to the unit assignment sheet. While revising it, I found that an important component of a writing project comes from the teacher creating an authentic audience for students. An authentic audience pushes students to do their best work because there are real consequences and an audience beyond the teacher.

This unit is one that I have been revising through trial and error in the classroom each year I teach it. I appreciate having the time and space to really work on this unit and enhance the fine details of it. English 6200 and the portfolio experience have given me time to improve a unit I already use with my students and add to it through theoretical research into best practices. The experience of creating this unit was beneficial on a practical level because I was able to work on something that I use in my courses. It helped me grow as an educator because I was able to research truly authentic ways to help students become better writers. Creating and revising this unit allowed me to hone my craft in an effort to aid students.

The second project I selected to include in my portfolio is “A Resource Guide for Teaching Technical Writing.” This project is the pedagogy-based project and originated in

English 6470: Teaching Technical Writing with Dr. Gary Heba. In English 6470, this project was a final project and compilation of the large assignments we completed throughout the course and served as a guide for educators to use when teaching a technical writing course. This guide includes a teaching philosophy, syllabus for a course, five-day lesson plan, assignment sheet with a rubric, a multicultural assignment with a rubric, additional assignment examples found online and resource links. This piece was selected because it is something that I want to use in my high school courses. I teach at a career and technical school and this practical and career based type of writing can connect with my students specifically as many of them have their eyes on their careers while in high school.

Dr. Heba suggested adjusting the margins to make the document more professional. He also suggested, since it had been a year since I created the guide, I add in some more reflection about teaching technical writing. In addition, I decided to add a theoretical rationale much like the one created in the first project in this portfolio. I believe this research and discussion strengthens the project because it explains why technical writing is beneficial for students. The rationale I created discusses the importance and richness a technical writing assignment or unit can bring to the high school English classroom because of its practical nature and authentic audiences. The process of adding this discussion of the importance of technical writing in high school opened my eyes to the possibilities this type of writing provides.

Next, “Transformations in Revolutionary Times and ‘The UZ:’ A Short Film Project” is the third project I chose to revise and add to my portfolio. This project originated in English 6800: Postcolonial Literature and Film with Dr. Khani Begum. The short film project was selected because it was one of the best creative assignments I made in the master’s degree program.

This project also made me aware of the possibilities of film usage and creation in my own classroom. The short film project originated as the final project for the course and was a way for us to engage with the major postcolonial issues explored in the literature and film examined in the class. The project also included a written discussion of the film and the works and issues that inspired it.

In the discussion of my portfolio with Dr. Begum, she suggested that I include some analysis of how films can be a teaching tool to discuss and examine current political and social issues. In light of this suggestion, I included additional research and sources into the discussion of the short film project. My research focused on how the use of documentary films can increase classroom discussion, social awareness, and change. Revisiting this project and my additional research revealed to me the power of film in the classroom.

Finally, “Generational Changes and Variants in Language: An Analysis of *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person’s Guide to Writing in the 21st Century*” is the fourth and final project I selected to add to my portfolio. This project originated in English 6150: Introduction to Linguistics with Dr. Sheri Wells-Jensen. The purpose of this paper was a book reaction and analysis of a linguistic text in connection with the course materials as a whole. The book reaction was one of four completed for the class. The book I read and analyzed for this paper was Steven Pinker’s *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person’s Guide to Writing in the 21st Century*. I selected this piece because I greatly enjoyed the course and the text. I also selected it because I find the discussion surrounding speaking and writing in millennials and young adults to be fascinating.

Dr. Wells-Jensen suggested adding information about sociolinguistics if I was interested in using this piece in my portfolio. Therefore, I added a personal anecdote from my classroom experience as well as research in language variants and their inability to be remediated due to education, at least in young children. In education, we attempt to uphold a standard use of the English language, but trying to contain something like language proves difficult. I find the discussion and research surrounding linguistics as well as the everyday language spoken by people in various communities to be enlightening. I believe that as an English Language Arts educator it is my responsibility to understand how language functions and how it changes. It is important for me to understand and acknowledge the language variants used by my students and the communities in which they reside. Revisiting, revising and researching more about this important conversation has assisted in my understanding of language and my position as a teacher of both spoken and written English.

Project 1: Revised

Writer's Memo

For this major assignment, I decided to spend some serious time working on a unit that I had done in the past, but was never completely comfortable executing. I also decided to work on the argumentative research paper because it's an assignment students benefit from and enjoy.

To begin, the audience for this project is two-fold. First, the assignment description and the tentative schedule are directed to my senior students in an integrated, traditional ELA class. In addition, the entire document is also written for other English instructors, scholars, and educators as a model-writing unit; however, the theoretical rationale was created with the scholarly audience specifically in mind.

Next, the purpose of this major project is for students to gain knowledge of specific, essential parts of an argumentative paper and create a deliberate organization for a long work such as this. The purpose of this unit is to also aid students in creating new knowledge through the research process. Overall, I want students to experience writing a longer paper, which requires them to gain knowledge through research while focusing on specific aspects of a paper such as a thesis, introduction, body, counterargument, and conclusion.

For context, this unit would be something that I assign to students at the start of the second semester or spring semester of a school year. Before this project, students will have completed a variety of smaller, more informal writings. Students will have also completed larger writings such as a literary analysis of a fictional novel as well as a personal narrative. Students will have had significant experience with using textual evidence to support ideas as

well as practice successfully incorporating textual evidence into their writing. Finally, students will have discussed and analyzed several informational texts relating to various social issues connected to class readings.

With the theoretical rationale, I was interested in exploring the idea of the creation of knowledge as discussed in the article by Stancliff and Goggin. This is an approach to teaching and learning that I have not explored in depth. However, in my planning, I decided to incorporate as much of the ideas presented in the article as possible such as the pre-writing free write and development of questions exercises.

As always, as I make this project “live” students will raise questions that will cause me to adjust the work or refine some details. I too will have questions and ideas that will arise which will result in researching new and/or different assignments, formative assessments, strategies, and techniques to better assist students in their learning. In general, I like to consider most of my lessons/units a living, breathing and ever-changing document where I often adjust and make changes based on my growth as a teacher and my experience with students.

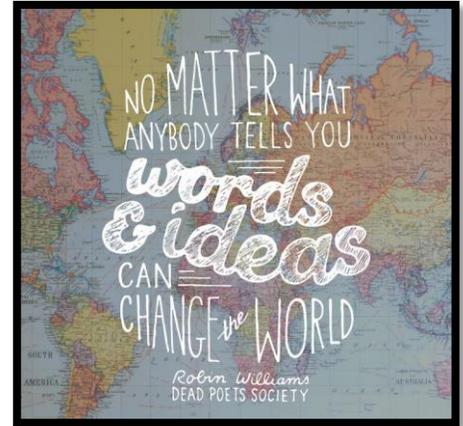
Finally, with this assignment, I have learned a great deal about the writing process and how best to teach it. Even though I have been teaching for four years now, every time I teach a unit I learn more about how to teach it and what works for students. Writing is hard to do and often even harder to teach because as the research shows, everyone processes information differently and comes to the creation of knowledge through different paths and at different times. One major thing I want to make more apparent within this unit is the presence of a real audience (beyond their peers) and an authentic purpose of making some sort of real change.

1. Handout describing major assignment

Argumentative Research Paper

Requirements for this assignment:

- Take a stance on a social issue and validate that stance with data and research. You can select your topic, so pick an issue that you feel strongly about or that relates to your life and/or community. Your interest will make it easier and more motivating for you.
- The purpose is to convince your audience (your classmates, Mrs. Fields, and a small panel of other teachers) to understand, learn something, and/or agree with your side of the issue.
- Format: use MLA format, double spacing, 12 pt. Times New Roman or Calibri font.
- Length: minimum 7 pages (at least one word on Page 8 to make a full page) to maximum 10 pages.
- Your Works Cited page should be on a separate page.
- Use an objective tone. In other words, do not use first-person pronouns (like “I” or “me”).
- A clearly stated thesis should be included.
- Include at least 6 pieces of quoted material in the paper and cite the sources in the paper (with in-text citations) **INCLUDE: 1 block quote. Quoted material must be introduced with a signaling phrase.**
- Use at least 6 trusted and reliable sources (all must be cited at least once in your essay) **INCLUDE: at least *FOUR* from the school databases if not more; optional include a Ted Talk, YouTube video, documentary, radio show (ex: NPR), OR podcast.**
- Include a counterclaim paragraph that addresses the opposite viewpoint and then disproves it.
- The paper’s organization should be as follows: introduction paragraph, at least three or more body paragraphs, counterclaim paragraph, conclusion paragraph, works cited page.



Deadlines:

- Deadlines for this assignment will be **flexible**. That means I will give you deadlines that, if you follow, will keep you on track. However, if you aren’t finished with the assignment at that time, it is okay and you won’t lose points. Also, this is nice so you can work at your own pace.
- **There is one catch- the final paper deadline is a requirement. Submit the paper on Canvas by the deadline. Please also print a copy of your paper and submit it to the class tray.**

Grading:

- Final paper is worth 100 possible points; please see the rubric provided.
- In addition to being submitted on Canvas, the paper will be evaluated for plagiarism using Turnitin.com via Canvas. You will be able to see the plagiarism report on Canvas. Major plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment.
- Additional grades will be given for assignments leading up to the final product such as the **assignment flexible due dates listed in orange on the schedule**. I will give you feedback when I check these items for completion.

2. Final Product Assessment plan

100/100	<p>This is a quality piece of writing that can be described with the following attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The thesis statement is clearly communicated in the introduction paragraph. ▪ A formal, objective tone is used throughout. ▪ At least 6 in-text quotations and citations are correctly attributed to the author(s). ▪ In-text citations are used from at least 6 different sources within the essay (4 from the databases; 1 Audio/Video; 2 Optional). ▪ The author acknowledges the “other side” and appropriately disagrees with that side. ▪ This essay contains at least one word on page 6. ▪ MLA format is accurately used throughout this essay. ▪ A Works Cited page is correctly formatted and appears on the last page. ▪ Formatting and grammatical errors are nonexistent.
A 99-92	<p>This piece of writing does not disappoint. It is not 100/100 because it lacks in one of the above areas, but it is evident that a great deal of work went into this piece.</p>
B 91-82	<p>Solid work. Issues do exist, but they are minor and few. An attempt is made to clearly communicate ideas, but there are some problems. Some organizational, grammatical, or formatting issues may exist. There may be trouble with addressing the other side and tying that into the author’s argument. Although this piece could be more refined, it is a nice effort overall.</p>
C 81-72	<p>This is an average essay. There are major grammatical and formatting issues that should not exist. Content shows little depth or insight. The thesis statement may be unclear. An informal tone may be used. Sources may not be cited correctly. MLA format may be flawed in some ways. Length of this piece of writing may be an issue. There may be fewer than 6 sources cited within the essay.</p>
D 71-60	<p>It is clear that the writer spent an abbreviated amount of time on this assignment. The writing shows almost none of the skills mentioned above. This piece may be unfinished or flawed in ways that show a student has worked inefficiently during in-class work days.</p>
F 0/100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No argumentative essay was submitted to Canvas. ▪ Sources are not cited within the essay. ▪ Essay is heavily plagiarized.

3. Daily schedule that includes required readings, homework, and in-class activities

Tentative Schedule*				
Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Field Guide Notes- defining key terms/vocabulary related to MLA, the research paper and the writing process</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Field Guide Notes cont.</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> “Finding out what matters to you”</p> <p>Focused free write and discussion of topics</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> “Topic→ Issue→ Question”</p> <p>Handout completion to help create research questions (two) based on free write responses</p> <p>Checking handout and giving feedback</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> “Topic→ Issue→ Question” handout completion continued</p> <p>Checking handout and giving feedback</p> <p>If finished: begin initial research- what are people saying about the topic? / what are the ‘sides’?</p>
Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Media Center Specialist Mrs. Anderson coming into class for the school database and research skills presentation</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Media Center Specialist Mrs. Anderson coming into class for the school database and research skills presentation</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Researching and finding sources based on research question</p> <p><u>Homework:</u> Continue research and source summaries log</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Researching and finding sources based on research question</p> <p><u>Homework:</u> Continue research and source summaries log</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Researching and finding sources based on research question</p> <p><u>Homework:</u> Continue research and source summaries log</p>
Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Researching and finding sources based on research question</p> <p>Mini-Lesson: Intro to Counterarguments</p> <p><u>Homework:</u> Continue research and source summaries log</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Researching and finding sources based on research question</p> <p>Source Summaries suggested due date</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Thinking about audience and purpose handout and discussion</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Mini-Lesson: Thesis Statements</p> <p>Passing out Outline</p> <p><u>Homework:</u> Construct thesis and start outline</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Work day for tentative outline</p> <p>Tentative Thesis Statement suggested due date</p> <p><u>Homework:</u> Continue tentative outline</p>

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Mini-Lesson: Introductions (viewing mentor text)</p> <p><u>Homework:</u> Complete tentative outline</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Work on introduction</p> <p>Outline suggested due date</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Mini-Lesson: They say/I say: incorporating quoted material into writing effectively</p> <p><u>Homework:</u> Analyzing argumentative research papers mentor texts</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Analyzing argumentative research papers mentor text discussion</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Work Day for First Draft</p> <p><u>Homework:</u> Continue work on first draft</p>
Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Mini-Lesson: Counterarguments Continued and Conclusions (viewing mentor texts)</p> <p><u>Homework:</u> Continue work on first draft</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Work Day for First Draft</p> <p><u>Homework:</u> Continue work on first draft</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Work Day for First Draft</p> <p><u>Homework:</u> Continue work on first draft</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Work Day for First Draft</p> <p><u>Homework:</u> Continue work on first draft</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Work Day for First Draft</p> <p><u>Homework:</u> Continue work on first draft</p>
Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Peer Review and Editing suggested work day</p> <p>See Friday deadline →</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Peer Review and Editing suggested work day</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Final Draft with Draft Letter Work Day</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Final Draft with Draft Letter Work Day</p>	<p><u>In-Class Activity:</u> Final Draft with Draft Letter Work Day</p> <p><u>Homework:</u> Final Draft of Paper with Draft Letter due on Canvas by 11:59pm</p>

**All dates are subject to change. If you are absent, you will need to make-up the assigned work on your own time.*

4. Common Core State Standards

W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

W.11-12.1.a Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

W.11-12.1.b Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

W.11-12.1.c Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

W.11-12.1.d Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

W.11-12.1.e Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

W.11-12.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

W.11-12.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

W.11-12.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and over-reliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

W.11-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

5. Theoretical rationale

The research paper has become a rite-of-passage for many senior students in high school. Along with being a sign that students are almost finished with secondary school, it has long been a demonstration of their accumulated knowledge and skills in English Language Arts. In addition, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as well as the Ohio Learning Standards for English Language Arts, require educators to teach an argumentative paper, where students take a stance on a topic and provide relevant and reliable research. Unfortunately, many times this style of writing becomes a ‘cookie-cutter’ five-paragraph essay full of unauthentic research; it is seen as just another hoop for students to jump through to reach graduation. Yet, many teachers of writing are advocating for authentic, student-driven writing that is less formulaic and more what Michael Stancliff and Maureen Goggin regard in their article, “Research as Creative Practice: Two Metaphors for Teaching and Learning” as a “creation of knowledge” (28). For my senior students, I have created the writing unit shared above that, I hope achieves a creation of knowledge through research, argumentation, and writing. Writing is one of the best ways for students to demonstrate and create knowledge, therefore, the creation of a truly authentic experience when engaging in an argumentative research unit is an invaluable best practice for students to demonstrate their accumulated knowledge acquired in high school.

Writing— no matter how messy, difficult and stressful it can be— is extremely beneficial for students’ growth as both scholars and citizens. According to many theorists, writing is a process of higher-order thinking skills that aids in the creation of knowledge. Janet Emig states that “Lev Vygotsky, A.R. Luria, and Jerome Bruner, for example, have all pointed out that higher cognitive functions, such as analysis and synthesis, seem to develop most fully only with the

support system of verbal language—particularly, it seems, of written language” (122). In other words, truly deep thinking in the form of analysis and synthesis develop best in conjunction with written communication. Writing isn’t just a means of communication, but a bridge to higher order thinking. In the article “Doing Good and Doing Well: Teaching Research-Paper Writing by Unpacking the Paper” Lisa Bagilone argues that, “In research-paper writing, students do more than become acquainted with academic debates; they are required to collect information and take a stand on important and controversial issues. As such, writing a research paper develops students’ moral and ethical understandings, which enhance their capacity as citizen-decision makers” (596). Therefore, not only is the process of writing and researching refining higher cognitive functions, but it also helps students collect and organize their ideas. Additionally, writing and researching complex issues aids students’ understanding of the issues in our complex world. These issues are ones students are already or are soon-to-be “citizen-decision makers” of. Therefore, the process of taking a stand based on knowledge acquired through evidence-based research is more important than ever. It is imperative for students to be aware of the value and purpose of engaging in this experience. This is something that I plan to incorporate in the assignment introduction to hook students’ interest. When students know that writing can lead to deeper thinking and understanding of important issues, it creates a more meaningful purpose for the writing.

Another method to enhance the importance of a writing experience comes from an authentic audience and purpose. Often, it can be difficult for students to write a paper, let alone think about who will read it. It is also hard for students to imagine an audience beyond their teacher grading the paper unless an audience is made known to the students. As stated in

“EJ in Focus: Real-World Writing: Making Purpose and Audience Matter” by Grant Wiggins a focus on the audience can encourage students to engage more deeply in the writing process. Wiggins states, “By introducing a real purpose, a real audience—hence, *consequences*—we get the *feedback* we desperately need to become good writers” (33). When students know that someone other than the teacher will view his or her work, they take the work and the feedback more seriously. In addition, Nadia Behizadeh’s research suggests sharing the final product in some way. Students in Behizadeh’s study stated that “sharing their final product with someone else increased the authenticity of their work” (35). Furthermore, Behizadeh states that is it not enough to assume that because the teacher says that the writing task is something students will encounter in the future does not make it authentic (39). Rather, what makes the writing more authentic is the possibility of a real impact on the audience (Behizadeh 35). When I have taught this lesson in the past, I did what I did in high school: students would write the paper, I would read it and assign a grade. Now, in addition to writing the paper, I also want students to create a presentation of their knowledge and argument. Students will present this to a small panel of teachers (including myself). This adjustment to the unit will provide students with a more authentic purpose of sharing knowledge and an authentic audience of their peers and teachers.

Students are more engaged in writing they find interesting. For the unit, students may select their topics for research. Students also begin their research with a question rather than a thesis statement. This is something I’ve not used in previous units, however according to Bruce Ballenger “Open-ended, exploratory, and driven by the desire to discover rather than to prove, the essay is most likely to teach not only the power of good questions but also the reward of withholding judgment: the pleasure of discovery.” Ballenger also argues that this type of

inquiry gives students the foundation for learning over a lifetime and the satisfaction of finding something new. By beginning with a thesis statement, students are not formulating new ideas but rather plugging in predictable answers to hackneyed topics. When students begin with a question, rather than a topic, they can also come to topics that are more original and avoid the overused topics such as marijuana legalization, abortion, and the death penalty. Ballenger also argues for the importance of “acquiring working knowledge of a subject” before creating a thesis statement. This idea follows the assumptions of Stancliff and Goggin who argue for the creation of knowledge. With this assignment, I have also created two handouts for students that I have modeled after Stancliff and Goggin’s suggested assignments “Finding a Place to Begin” and “From Topic to Issue to Question” (29). These assignments help students to create questions based on their interests and assists student’s struggle to form a question about the topic they want to explore.

Once students have a question and have done the research it is time to begin writing and within the unit, I have created what I call “flexible deadlines” and “work days” for assignments. I decided to do this based on my knowledge of my students and their needs as well as giving students space to work at their own pace. Additionally, I have given students “work days” to complete the paper in class. This provides students with time, which many of my students do not always have, and a quiet space to work with assistance if needed. As Donald Murray argues, one of the best things teachers can do to help students with writing is giving them the time to do so. Murray writes that the process of writing begins “First, by [teachers] shutting up. When you are talking, he isn’t writing. And you don’t learn a process by talking about it, but by doing it” (5). Janet Emig also states “writing is self-rhythmed. One

writes best as one learns best, at one's own pace" (126). In other words, students need time to work at their own pace, within what Murray states as "the limits of the course deadline" (6) and meet the flexible deadlines when it works for them without punishment.

The use of mentor texts in the unit is designed to assist students, especially those who are struggling. Kelly Gallagher demonstrates the importance of mentor texts in his book titled, *In the Best Interest of Students*. He states "Seeing how previous examples were structured was invaluable in enabling them to take on such an arduous writing task. Before they could do it, they had to know what it looked like, and as they were writing, they benefitted greatly from studying models placed at their sides" (Gallagher 136). Within the unit schedule, I have named the models "mentor texts" and I plan to use a mix of both previous student writing (as suggested by Gallagher) as well as my own writing as a model for students. I have planned to focus primarily on mentor texts for introductions, imbedding quoted material, counterarguments and conclusions. However, I plan to have full papers for students to view and analyze as well.

As a senior in high school making my way through the rite-of-passage research paper, I was required to create notecards with quotes and citation information. As a teacher, I find the notecards time-consuming and unnecessary. Weber and Smithmier share in their article how students can use technology to collect and organize quoted material from their research, "When faced with the research paper, students are often asked to keep track of sources and information on handwritten bibliography note cards....[however] even note cards can be generated and managed electronically" (37). I have a document that I have created for students to use to hold their research notes and citations. In my experience, students like this

process better than transferring the information to easily lost notecards since many articles from databases are already electronic.

The second to last step in the process is peer reviewing and making changes based on that feedback. “De-grading the writing classroom increases the importance and impact of peer conferencing by removing from the teacher as the primary or pervasive role of evaluator. Feedback from peers and from the teacher become options for students as they more fully embrace their roles as process writers” (Thomas 235). Peer-review is important in this unit because it serves as a small, practice audience for the more formal turning in of the paper and presenting to peers and teachers. Also, something that I haven’t mentioned yet, but which holds great importance is the rubric. This is something that I give to students from the start. It is important to provide students with the end in mind so they know what the expectations are. Students may use the rubric to help them while writing and editing their own work. Kathleen Montgomery also argues that rubrics can be used as a self-assessment tool too. She writes “The criteria for judgement should be understood by the students from the start so that they can self-assess their work by applying the criteria” (Montgomery 35). In addition to self-assessment and transparency provided by the rubric, it also helps students to see my expectations for their work early on before we even start the writing process. Finally as stated by Michael Livingston, the rubric, when it comes to the difficult task of grading, gives the teacher “more confidence” in grading students work fairly and with a set of criteria observable or not, in student work. It also “gives students more confidence in the reliability of how they are being assessed, which in turn gives them confidence that they can improve their assessments: the world is not solely the whim of the grader” (Livingston 112).

Finally, students will complete a draft letter to be turned in with the final draft of their paper. This draft letter is important because it will serve as a time for reflection for the students and provide the teacher with insight into the student's thinking about the piece. In Dawn Swaratzendruber-Putnam's article "Written Reflection: Creating Better Thinkers, Better Writers" she instructs students "This is your chance to tell me anything I should know before I give you comments on your writing" (90). She also states that in her experience, "The letters not only help me to monitor students' understanding and progress, but they also give me an opportunity to address individual needs" (Swaratzendruber-Putnam 92). Overall, I find this final step important for students to reflect on their work, strengths, and weaknesses as well as realizing, as Donald Murray suggests earlier, that writing is a process and never really truly done.

In essence, this unit is designed to be a departure from the typical senior writing assignment of the past. Writing is one of the best ways for students to demonstrate and create knowledge and I want it to be a true creation of knowledge from start to finish. I want this to be an authentic and invaluable experience that not only teaches students to write but teaches students to think deeply. The core of this unit is the fact that it is student-driven in the effort to create an authentic and meaningful experience. It is important for students to experience choice, space and an authentic audience and purpose to prepare for life outside of high school, which presents ultimate authentic, decision-making experiences every day from job searching and interviews to presentations for a business to voting in an election. My goal is to allow students the support they need along with the space and time they need to complete the project. That is why my "work days" and "flexible schedule" are so important. Furthermore,

students need time and space to realize the importance of reflection that the draft letter creates. Along the way, I have added in assignments such as developing a research question, a handout for collecting research, a peer-review activity, and the examination of mentor texts to assist students through the process of writing. Writing in high school is a challenge, but the research is there— it is the best way to reach higher cognitive thinking. The research also suggests that writing can lead to authentic experiences. The goal of this unit is to achieve those experiences while supporting students along the way.

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Project 2: Revised

Resource Guide to Teaching Technical Writing

Technical Writing Teaching Philosophy

Over the past four years, the courses in my English Language Arts classroom have consisted of traditional and accelerated high school junior and senior classes at a career and technical school in central, Ohio. Throughout my time teaching, I have been lucky to gain invaluable experience working with a variety of different learners ranging from students generally resistant to reading and writing to those on IEP's, 504's, and English Language Learners as well as accelerated and gifted learners. In addition, many of my students come from a wide range of school districts stretching from large urban schools in Columbus to small rural schools and from higher to lower socioeconomic statuses.

Since I teach at a career and technical school, it is important to provide students with practical knowledge and information as well as assignments designed with a career and practical focus in mind. In my experience, if students find the content or assignment interesting they are inspired to do great work. They are more likely to complete assignments they find meaningful as well as find ways to complete them creatively. Finally, I believe students who connect what they know with English Language Arts they often find themselves enjoying the content more and excelling.

Teaching the subject of technical writing to students is vitally important. I believe this because technical writing is a career-focused and practical subject. Technical writing is something that all people encounter in the workplace in the form of e-mails, manuals, memos,

reports, and contracts— especially those in supervising, leadership and management positions. Technical writing is unique because it allows students to combine writing with a career they find interesting. Interest in an assignment as well as seeing its importance allows students from all backgrounds and experiences with writing to enjoy it or at least find it meaningful. Furthermore, it is often easy to identify the audience and purpose of the technical writing assignment. For instance, I have designed a lesson where students have the choice to write instructions for an item or activity. Thus, students are writing about a topic that they know and likely enjoy such as changing the oil in a car, performing a pedicure or creating a video on the computer. In addition, I have created assignments that are practical and likely to be used in the workplace such as e-mail and memo writing.

Why Teach Technical Writing?

Technical writing is an area of writing often forgotten or untouched in the traditional high school English Language Arts classroom. Many times, state standardized tests, learning standards, and college writing focuses on argumentative or informative writing. Therefore, the most energy goes into teaching these academic forms of writing in high school. More often than not, students do not encounter technical writing until they are in college or on the job. However, technical writing has much to offer to the high school English Language Arts classroom. Technical writing needs to be practiced and valued in the high school English Language Arts classroom because technical writing provides a fresh and varied look at writing characteristics such as word choice, audience, and purpose. Furthermore, since this is a type of

writing used in the workplace, technical writing projects can be a motivator for students as well as necessary practice with this form of writing.

Technical writing compares in some ways to academic writing, but it also differs in specific key ways. Understanding these key differences can help to understand the importance of technical writing in English curriculum. According to the text, *Technical Writing for Success* by Darlene Smith-Worthington and Sue Jefferson, technical writing is similar to academic writing in that it “must be unified, coherent, and well organized” as well as adhere to proper “style and standard usage” (15). Smith-Worthington and Jefferson also states that technical writing, like academic writing, includes paragraphs, introductions, and conclusions. However, technical writing is different from academic writing in appearance, audience, and purpose. According to Smith-Worthington and Jefferson, the purpose of academic writing is to “expand on an idea and make observations about human experience” (15) whereas, technical writing attempts to “clarify and consolidate rather than expand” (15). Furthermore, technical writing is visually different from academic writing, which consists of only paragraphs. Technical writing includes paragraphs as well as “headings, itemized lists, boldfaced type, and graphics” (Smith-Worthington and Jefferson 15). Finally, the audience of a technical document is very specific and has specific needs, which are extremely important to the writer.

Therefore, teaching technical writing can provide excellent classroom discussion of audience. Annmarie Guzy and Laura A. Sullivan argue that “for technical communicators, nothing matters *more* than audience” (274). An assignment or unit in technical writing provides practice with what Guzy and Sullivan describe as an “addressed” or real-life, authentic

audience rather than an “invoked” or an imagined audience. In the classroom that focuses solely on academic writing, the audience of the writing is the teacher or imagined audience. Furthermore, Guzy and Sullivan state that in a typical English class “audience analysis, if performed, consists of assessing what knowledge the instructor wants students to demonstrate through the writing task, such as research papers and essay exam responses, and of making accommodations for that instructor’s particular stylistic or format requirements” (272). However, when teaching technical writing the analysis of audience is unavoidable and necessary to perform the writing task. Technical writing is addressed and customized to reach the target or intended audience. For instance, the writer may be writing a cookbook, a how-to manual, or an email to the entire company. Based on the task, the writer must think critically about the audience’s knowledge level, role, interest, cultural background, and personality (26-29). Therefore, the document produced is created specifically with the audience in mind. Designing a lesson in technical writing can provide an excellent entry point to the discussion of audience.

An additional benefit that comes with teaching technical writing is the lesson in clarity and word choice. Since the purpose of writing a technical document is to clearly and effectively provide information, a focus on clarity and word choice is imperative. Unlike the academic paper, the technical document does not elaborate or expand, but should “clarify and consolidate” (Smith-Worthington and Jefferson 15). When teaching technical writing, simplicity and conciseness is a valuable lesson for students accustomed to expanding their academic writing. Word choice should also be very deliberate. In technical writing, words should be direct and, based on the audience, simple or easy to understand. Furthermore, some students

in the high school classroom may relate to and excel more in this style of writing that promotes directness and simplicity.

Finally, teaching technical writing prepares students for the world of work. Kristen Dayle Welch believes “...incorporating a technical writing assignment into the richness of [an] existing course will give students another valuable opportunity for thinking about writing in a practical way that prepares them for life on campus and, beyond that, in the workplace” (38). After years of education, the next step is work. While academic writing surely has its place in education, technical writing is what students will likely do in their future careers. Therefore, since this is the type of writing students will do in the future, they should have practice with it before entering the workplace. The practicality of this type of writing can also be a great motivator for students resistant to writing or for those interested in their future. Using technical writing in high school can both prepare students for the workplace and can motivate students who are not usually interested in writing.

In the end, technical writing certainly deserves a place in the high school English Language Arts classroom. Teaching a technical writing assignment or unit can lead to rich discussions about audience, purpose, word choice, clarity as well as different styles of writing. A focus on audience and purpose can push students to think about audience more deeply with other writing. The required focus on word choice and clarity provides vital lessons about selecting words, vocabulary, and conciseness. Technical writing also provides a more authentic audience and therefore, pushes writers to try their best because they know someone other than the teacher will read his or her writing. Teaching this type of unit can also interest

students who are motivated by their future. Technical writing can be a nice gateway into writing for students who are resistant to writing or who may dislike standard academic writing. Finally, technical writing is the type of writing students will encounter in their future careers and an early focus on this style of writing can prepare students for the workplace.

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Technical Writing Syllabus

Quarter 1

English 11

Texts: I will be using and adapting much of the material from the class from two texts:
Technical Writing for Success by Darlene Smith-Worthington and Sue Jefferson
Technical Writing that Works by Dr. Steven M. Gerson

Syllabus Code: ICWD= In class work day, TWS= *Technical Writing for Success*, TWW= *Technical Writing that Works*

Note: Syllabus is subject to change; please listen in class for updates.

<p>Week 1</p> <p><i>Introduction to Technical Writing</i></p>	<p>Mon: Introduction to the course and what we will be doing this quarter with technical writing; going over the syllabus</p> <p>Tues: What is Technical Writing? & Characteristics of Technical Writing discussion; Reading pages 7-14 in TWS in class with discussion</p> <p>Weds: (CONTINUED FROM TUES) What is Technical Writing? & Characteristics of Technical Writing discussion; Reading pages 7-14 in TWS in class with discussion</p> <p>Thurs: Technical Writing v. Other Writing; reading pages 4 & 6-8 in TWW and 15-16 in TWS in class with discussion</p> <p>Fri: Clarity, conciseness, and avoiding passive voice when writing discussion; reading TWW pages 10-15 in class with notes</p>
<p>Week 2</p> <p><i>Introduction to Technical Writing Continued and Document Design</i></p>	<p>Mon: Clarity, conciseness, and avoiding passive voice practice handout <u>DUE</u> tomorrow at the start of class</p> <p>Tues: Reading and discussing TWS pages 137-140 in class with notes</p> <p>Weds: Examining Technical Writing examples in groups activity</p> <p>Thurs: Identifying Technical Writing activity; <u>DUE</u> by the end of class</p> <p>Fri: Analyzing Technical Writing activity; <u>DUE</u> by the end of class</p>

<p>Week 3</p> <p><i>Brief Correspondence: E-mail Writing</i></p>	<p>Mon: Introducing e-mail assignment and examining examples of email writing as a class; HW: Reading pages 122-129 in TWFS due tomorrow</p> <p>Tues: Continuing to examine email writing examples as a class and in small groups</p> <p>Weds: ICWD for e-mail writing</p> <p>Thurs: ICWD for e-mail writing</p> <p>Fri: ICWD for e-mail writing; DUE: submit e-mail document to Canvas by 11:59 pm</p>
<p>Week 4</p> <p><i>Brief Correspondence: Letter and Memo Writing</i></p>	<p>Mon: Reading about formatting memos and letters on pages 115-121 in TWS; discuss writing to North American audiences in class with notes</p> <p>Tues: Individual/partner activity- reading, summarizing and writing about international audiences on Purdue OWL</p> <p>Weds: Individual/partner activity- reading, summarizing and writing about international audiences on Purdue OWL</p> <p>Thurs: ICWD composing your own letter and memo using prompt provided in class</p> <p>Fri: ICWD composing your own letter and memo using prompt provided in class; DUE: submit letter and memo document to Canvas by 11:59 pm</p>
<p>Week 5</p> <p><i>Instructions</i></p>	<p>Mon: Introducing instruction writing TWW pages 54-56 reading and discussing with notes</p> <p>Tues: Select a topic to write instructions for from the options on TWW page 86; begin working on instruction assignment</p> <p>Weds: ICWD for instruction writing</p> <p>Thurs: Peer-Review activity; DUE at the end of class</p> <p>Fri: ICWD for instruction writing; DUE: submit instructions document to Canvas by 11:59 pm</p>

<p>Week 6</p> <p><i>Newsletters</i></p>	<p>Mon: Introducing newsletter writing TWW 70-72 reading and discussion; reviewing in-text citations and quoting material</p> <p>Tues: Select a topic for a newsletter from the options on TWW page 88; begin working on newsletter assignment</p> <p>Weds: ICWD for newsletter writing</p> <p>Thurs: Peer-Review activity; <u>DUE</u> at the end of class</p> <p>Fri: ICWD <u>DUE</u>: submit newsletter document to Canvas by 11:59 pm</p>
<p>Week 7</p> <p><i>Recommendations Reports</i></p>	<p>Mon: What is a recommendation report? reading TWS pages 308-309 with discussion with notes</p> <p>Tues: Introducing case study, document outline, and formatting; passing out and discussing partner recommendation report writing assignment</p> <p>Weds: ICWD for recommendation report writing</p> <p>Thurs: ICWD for recommendation report writing</p> <p>Fri: ICWD for recommendation report writing <u>DUE</u>: submit recommendation report document to Canvas by Sunday at 11:59 pm</p>
<p>Week 8</p> <p><i>Group Presentation</i></p>	<p>Mon: Introducing group presentation assignment; reading TWS pages 287-289 (Organizing and Composing) & 296-298 (Organizing a Group Presentation); begin brainstorming topics in groups</p> <p>Tues: ICWD for group presentation</p> <p>Weds: ICWD for group presentation</p> <p>Thurs: ICWD for group presentation; I will be conferring with each group to monitor progress</p> <p>Fri: ICWD for group presentation; I will be conferring with each group to monitor progress</p>
<p>Week 9</p> <p><i>Group Presentation</i></p>	<p>Mon: Groups A & B present</p> <p>Tues: Groups C & D present</p> <p>Weds: Groups E & F present</p> <p>Thurs: Groups G & H present</p> <p>Fri: Presentation make-up day</p>

Five-Day Email Writing Lesson Plan

<i>STANDARDS</i>				
<p>CCSS.W.11-12.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.</p> <p>CCSS.W.11-12.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.</p> <p>CCSS.W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</p> <p>CCSS.W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.</p>				
<i>OBJECTIVES</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will write informative, explanatory and persuasive messages by writing emails in response to the prompts given. • Students will write for shorter amounts of time by writing emails. • Students will use a word processor by writing emails on Word or Google Docs and share their work via Canvas. • Students will produce clear, concise and coherent writing developed and organized according to the information given in class by writing clear, concise and coherent email messages. 				
<i>METHODS AND STRATEGIES</i>				
DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
Direct Instruction	Direct Instruction	Independent Work Day	Independent Work Day	Independent Work Day
<i>STUDENT APPLICATIONS</i>				
Following along with assignment introduction discussion Examining examples of the different types of writing	Examining examples of the different types of writing continued	Writing Work Day	Writing Work Day	Writing Work Day Emails due as one Word Document on Canvas by 11:59pm
<i>ASSESSMENT</i>				
<i>Formative:</i> Observations, discussion, questioning	<i>Formative:</i> Observations, discussion, questioning	<i>Formative:</i> Observations, discussion, conferring with students	<i>Formative:</i> Observations, discussion, conferring with students	<i>Summative:</i> Final emails

Brief Correspondence: **Email Writing**



Why?

- For this assignment, we will be writing emails.
- According to the writers of *Technical Writing for Success*, “communication is essential for being able to act and make decision in the business world. People must be able to share information. Although some communication can take face-to-face, a great deal of communication conducted through text messages, e-mails, memos, and letters” (106).
- In addition, a lot of correspondence is conducted online for classes in high school and college on platforms such as Canvas and through school emails.

Assignment Description

- For this assignment, you will create a total of **5 different emails** based on the prompts provided
- In class, we will look at **examples** of the different types of emails we will write and the way they should be formatted and organized for each situation
- You will create emails based on scenarios or messages that I will provide to you later.

The messages will be:

- **an informative email**
 - **a good news email**
 - **a bad news email**
 - **and two persuasive emails**
- I will provide you with more information about what you need for each message

Grading Rubric

Each of your 5 emails will be graded using this rubric. Each email will be worth 12 points for a total of 60 points.

Trait	1	2	3
Clarity and Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Important points are delayed or absent -Some Reporter's Questions never answered -Many vague, connotative words used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Some important points are delayed Some Reporter's -Questions assumed understood -Some vague, connotative words used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Important points come first -Reporter's Questions answered -Specific, denotative words used
Conciseness, Sentence Fluency and Word Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Longer words are commonplace -Sentences average over 20 words -Paragraphs often exceed six typed lines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Longer words used when shorter ones exist -Sentence average 15-20 words -Some paragraphs exceed six typed lines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Words are generally one or two syllables -Sentences average 10-12 words -Paragraphs do not exceed six typed lines
Audience, Recognition and Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Writer does not define high-tech terms -Writer does not consider audience needs -Writer never uses pronouns to involve audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Writer usually defines high-tech terms -Writer usually considers audience needs -Writer often involves audience through 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Writer defines all high-tech terms -Writer considers audience needs -Writer uses pronouns to involve audience
Accuracy and Writing Conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Punctuation often incorrect -Spelling often incorrect -Excessive grammar & usage errors distort the message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Punctuation is usually correct -Spelling is usually correct -Grammar and usage somewhat flawed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Correct punctuation -Correct spelling -Correct grammar and usage

Multicultural TW Class Activity (Begins on next page for formatting)

- I would typically have the links etc. as a module or page on Canvas but for obvious purposes I have just included the links here

- Here is the link to a Google Slides I would use with the following handout to begin the activity/lesson: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1-bWKZGI5TnXZb75PJR7RDnejLluKawJh_SkEwjslaWQ/edit?usp=sharing

- Here is the link to the Google Doc chart that students will work on their own or with a group to create the guide:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uoZeCNXrvrgYe_nYccKPtIKAIYb9jJeQDBunOSvDQ4Y/edit?usp=sharing

Writing to an International Business Audience



Writing Guide Creation

Objectives

- Students can read and summarize an informational text by creating a summary of key points about writing to a Chinese and Indian business audiences.
- Students can determine the differences between Chinese, Indian and North American business audiences by writing an analysis of the different audiences.

Assignment Description

- You will be **reading two texts** from the Purdue Online Writing Lab or OWL about a **Chinese business audience and an Indian business audience.**
- While reading, you will be **adding key information** about writing a memo and letter as well as style considerations for the audience in that country to the Google Doc chart I have provided for you.
- After thoroughly completing the chart, you will **write an analysis** about the similarities and differences you notice between each audience. You will also compare the audience to the North American audience we have already discussed together.
- You have **two in-class days** to complete this activity.
- You can work with a partner (up to 3 people max) or on your own.
- Follow directions carefully here and on the chart Google Doc.

After Completing the Chart

On your own (if you worked with a partner you will each write your own responses), write one paragraph (5-7 sentences) about the Chinese audience and one paragraph about the Indian audience. Discuss the similarities and differences based on the information from your research of each audience. Also, note the differences you see between the Chinese/Indian audience and the North American audience we discussed previously. **Submit the two paragraphs as a Word or Google Doc to Canvas by 11:59pm on day two of this assignment.**

Additional assignment examples

- PDF of an email writing unit
 - <https://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us/Workarea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=33716>
- “Writing Technical Instructions”
 - Seible, Marcea. “Writing Technical Instructions.” *Read Write Think*, NCTE, www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/writing-technical-instructions-1101.html .
- “A Picture IS Worth a Thousand Words: Using Infographics to Illustrate How-to Writing”
 - Wickline, Kathy. “A Picture IS Worth a Thousand Words: Using Infographics to Illustrate How-to Writing.” *Read Write Think*, NCTE, www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/picture-worth-thousand-words-a-31141.html.
- “Writing a Review”
 - Rubenstein, Susanne. “So What Do You Think? Writing a Review.” *Read Write Think*, NCTE, www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/what-think-writing-review-876.html.
- “Writing to Explain: Creating How-to Scripts and Demonstrations”
 - Christy Brown, Amanda, and Holly Epstein Ojalvo. “Writing to Explain: Creating How-to Scripts and Demonstrations.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 13 May 2010, learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/05/13/writing-to-explain-creating-how-to-scripts-and-demonstrations/.

Additional resource links

- “It's Time to Stop Writing Emails Like You're in a High School English Class”
 - Kalish, Alyse. “It's Time to Stop Writing Emails Like You're in a High School English Class.” *Free Career Advice*, The Muse, 8 Sept. 2016, www.themuse.com/advice/its-time-to-stop-writing-emails-like-youre-in-a-high-school-english-class .
- “Great Examples of Technical Writing”
 - “Great Examples of Technical Writing.” *HelpScribe*, Blogger, www.helpscribe.com/2008/12/great-examples-of-technical-writing.html .
- “Active and Passive Voice”
 - Toadvine, April, et al. “Purdue OWL: Active and Passive Voice.” *Purdue Online Writing Lab*, Purdue University, 13 July 2011, owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/539/01/.
- “10 Stunning Email Newsletter Designs”
 - Wilson, Brant. “10 Stunning Email Newsletter Design.” *DzineBlog.com*, 22 July 2010, dzineblog.com/0-stunning-email-newsletter-design/.
- Flyer, brochure, newspaper, sign, poster “Printing Press”
 - “Printing Press.” *Printing Press*, Read Write Think, www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/Printing_Press/ .

Project 3: Revised

Transformations in Revolutionary Times and “The UZ”: A Short Film Project

I have never made a short film before. In the beginning, it was something that seemed somewhat daunting. I thought a lot about the film throughout the class. I wasn't sure exactly what I wanted to focus on until closer to the end of class once I had a broader perspective of the issues and themes in colonial and postcolonial literature and film. There were two films and one text that stood out as containing issues I wanted to touch on in my film. I was incredibly moved by the resistance to the Palestinian occupation and the documentary film *5 Broken Cameras*. *Earth 1947*, a fictional account of the Indian Partition and a group of friends who are scattered throughout the country during the Partition, is another film I found inspiring. Finally, *Exit West* is a fictional story set in an unnamed city and is a beautiful, modern story about love, borders, and religion. Looking at everything as a whole, there are some overarching themes that were present throughout the films and texts examined. From my perspective, I found the themes of violence, identity, loss of innocence, borders, religion, transformations and the dispersing of friends and family to be the most interesting and profound.

After reflecting on the films and texts as well as our class discussions, I decided to focus on creating a fictional, pseudo-documentary short film. In my short film titled, “The Unknown Zone,” I have attempted to touch on the various themes interwoven into the films and texts covered in class. As I stated earlier, I was highly influenced by *Exit West*, *Earth 1947* and *5 Broken Cameras*. I wanted to use the raw, documentary style of *5 Broken Cameras*. I also wanted to incorporate the concept of non-violent protests leading to the death of a major

character. The use of social media in unstable times from *Exit West* also interested me. Lastly, the transformations in the characters of *Earth 1947* was profound and I wanted to try to capture that in my film as well. All of these works are excellent and I hoped to try to capture a little of what they offered.

“The Unknown Zone” begins with a group of three friends who live together in what is called the UZ or the Unknown Zone. The UZ is an area of the United States that has been unclaimed in the recent divisions within the country. Activists live there in protest of the divisions. Others, who have been displaced or who have nowhere else to go, live there as well. President Mason has recently divided the United States in an effort to stop a civil war making the biggest division the Christian Division or CD. The CD has begun to overflow into parts of the Muslim division, which is causing tension. Religion and ethnicity have also become major dividing factors among people in the United States who once lived, for the most part, peacefully. The viewer soon begins to see the attitudes of the country start to permeate the group of roommates who once also lived peacefully together.

The three main characters Marie, Elizabeth and Ari are all religiously different. Marie is an activist and is not religious. Ari is Jewish and is displaced, as Jewish people are not allowed in other parts of the country without a difficult-to-obtain permit. Finally, Elizabeth is Christian and is thinking about moving out of the UZ to live in the Christian division with her family. The film opens with the group discussing an upcoming protest. The viewer is introduced to the characters through interviews or what I called confessional sessions a la MTV's *The Real World* or any other reality television show. The viewer also gets the background of what led the country to where it is now. Then the viewer sees Marie with a group of friends planning for the

protest that is coming up. Elizabeth expresses her fear of the friends Marie brings over because they are Muslim. It is revealed that Elizabeth's family wants her to leave the UZ. Then Marie expresses her feelings about Elizabeth's disinterest in the protest, the division of the country and she shares why she protests. The viewer then sees "still shots" of the protests as well as the border wall that separates the divisions. Soon after, Elizabeth and Ari find out that Marie has been shot and killed by border police. They are upset and the viewer finds out later that Elizabeth has fled to the Christian Division or CD. Ari has also fled and has not been located.

The group of friends in my film is similar to the group of friends in Deepa Mehta's *Earth 1947*. *Earth 1947* shows the radical transformation within a group of friends that can take place in revolutionary times. In *Earth 1947*, a group of friends meets almost daily in the park and consists of Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs. Like the characters in my film, the group lives harmoniously and their religious differences do not greatly affect their friendship. However, the group of friends is broken up due to the Indian Partition and their religious differences. In both films, the two groups lived happily before the divisions of their countries, but the division of the country leads to the breaking up of the friends as well. The transformation in the group of friends is evident in both films. In *Earth 1947*, "Ice Candy Man" or Dil Navaz undergoes the biggest transformation from a friend to an evil enemy of Shanta. In "The Unknown Zone," there is not a betrayal, but Elizabeth does begin to distance herself from the roommates as expressed in the confessional with Marie. Furthermore, the viewer also sees the transformation of the country. In both films, a once whole country splits into separate "divisions." Both divisions are fueled by religion and fear.

Transformations that create fear and disperse families and friends around the globe are also revealed in the novel, *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid. In the novel, the main characters Nadia and Saeed form a relationship while their country transforms under militant rule. Their country becomes increasingly more violent as the novel progresses. The progression of violence is also seen in “The Unknown Zone.” Nonetheless, soon after Nadia and Saeed and his father live together after the death of Saeed’s mother. They form a temporary family unit. Then they realize they must leave their country and Saeed’s father decides to stay. Nonetheless, they are transformed once again when Nadia and Saeed decide to escape the country through a “door” to another country. The narrator describes the passage through the door: “it was said in those days that the passage was both like dying and being born, and indeed Nadia experienced a kind of extinguishing as she entered the blackness and a gasping struggle as she fought to exit it” (104). This describes the transformation Nadia and Saeed have as they leave their country—a struggle, a fight, blackness.

The use of media and social media from *Exit West* also interested me. It is the only work we encountered during the class that touched on social media usage. Regardless, in the novel, the narrator mentions the characters’ usage of social media a few times. They use it to keep in touch with each other when they are first dating and they use it to contact other refugees while they are on the run. They also use the television news media to find out what is going on in their home country when they are on the run. In the opening scene in my film, the characters are sitting in their living room. Elizabeth mentions that she sees information about the upcoming protest on Instagram. Later in the film, Elizabeth uses Skype to get in contact with the producers of the documentary. The reason why I wanted to include a social media aspect

in my film is the modern feeling it gives the film. It makes it more relatable and it makes it seem more real as social media is something that is ubiquitous in our society.

Finally, I wanted to use the documentary style of *5 Broken Cameras*. I also wanted to use the concept of non-violent protests leading to the death of a major character. In the documentary *5 Broken Cameras*, Emad Burnat, a Palestinian, fears for the future generation and for his youngest son who grew up while under the occupation of Israel. In the film, Burnat records the struggles of the fellow villagers of Bil'in. They are not only under occupation, but their land has been stolen from them. There is a barrier, where the people of the village go to demonstrate against the wall, which divides their land. The adults of the village choose to take a non-violent approach and demonstrate against the Israeli army. However, they are often met with violence, destruction and in a few cases, death. But, death is not the only tragedy in this instance. Burnat is obviously concerned for the next generation and primarily for his youngest son who has only known the life portrayed in the film. Burnat and his friends and the people of the town have taken a non-violent stance on dealing with the Israelis but as Burnat questions, "how will they bear their anger?" How will the villagers and future generations be able to go on non-violently when met with violence? How will they view the world, the Israelis, or violence when they see their fathers, brothers, friends arrested or killed because they took a stand? These are Burnat's fears for the future of his people as well as his son.

Physical borders, loss of innocence and non-violent demonstrations are things from the texts and films examined in class that I wanted to incorporate into my film as well. In "The Unknown Zone," a border much like the one seen in *5 Broken Cameras* divides the country. In both films, a border is an object of dispute between both sides of the conflict. As Marie states

in “The Unknown Zone,” the country is everyone’s and there should be no borders. Also, much like *5 Broken Cameras*, a group of people are flooding beyond the border and onto the land of the other group. This causes tension between the groups in both films. The characters in my film, especially Marie, also choose to engage in non-violent protests and someone important dies. This is the climax in both films as the remaining characters are left to deal with the aftermath. Finally, I wanted the idea of a loss of innocence to be portrayed more in my film. As previously stated, Burnat fears for the future and the loss of innocence of his son. In my film, I wanted Elizabeth to be a character who also loses her innocence in the wake of Marie’s death.

My film was recorded using my iPhone. I used iMovie to edit and produce the film. I have never used iMovie before and it’s very user friendly. I did want to include background music in the film, but the limited options available on iMovie did not fit the tone of the scenes. I was not able to figure out how to import music so there isn’t any. However, as mentioned before, a majority of the film is portrayed through interviews or confessionals with the characters. I wanted the film to have a “real” feeling and like that of a documentary and I hope the confessional scenes help to portray that. I recruited my husband and my sister to help me with the film and to play characters. While we are not the best actors, I think the point gets across.

In closing, this project is probably one of the most creative and interesting thing I’ve done in the MA program here at BGSU. As I stated in the beginning, this initially seemed like a daunting and scary task. I did not think I was capable or had the technology to pull it off. In the end, I feel good about the film I created. In addition, after having completed this project, I think I want to do a similar project with my students with modification for a high school audience.

Arthur Auerbach describes, “at all levels of education instructors are increasingly using feature and documentary films in class to demonstrate various viewpoints and spur provocative classroom discussion” (517). Taking this course and completing this project has helped me realize that film can be a powerful medium for education and social awareness. I agree with Auerbach, that the use of film can reveal a new perspective and prompt rich discussion. Students love watching films and since many students are visual learners, films connect with students, especially students who struggle or are resistant to reading. In the article, “The Ideological Implications of Using ‘Educational’ Film to Teach Controversial Events” Jeremy Stoddard argues that "Documentary films, in particular, are often created to examine controversial historical events in order to elicit social awareness of change" (407-408). The inclusion of films to teach political and social issues in the high school classroom can bring awareness to events that students did not realize or consider before. With this in mind and my own experiences as a student in a class that used film to inform and create social and political awareness, I believe a unit that uses film to teach about an issue such as post-colonial, political or social concepts and themes can be tremendously enriching for students’ English class experiences.

Video: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/o4WdTs9LdJDrXq7s7>

Annotated Bibliography

Auerbach, Arthur H. "Teaching Diversity: Using a Multifaceted Approach to Engage Students." *PS: Political Science and Politics*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2012, pp. 516–520. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41691369.

In Auerbach's text, he discusses the value of teaching with a multifaceted approach in a course on diversity and discrimination in society. Auerbach combines several approaches to teaching beyond a lecture to engage students such as the use of documentary films and student discussion. He found that this multifaceted approach lead to increased student engagement.

Burnat, Emad and Guy Davidi, directors. *5 Broken Cameras*. Kino Lobor, 2013.

5 Broken Cameras is a documentary film that was shot over many years using five different home cameras. The film is set in Palestine along the border with Israel. The adults of the village engage in non-violent protests with the Israel army. In the end, the filmmaker Emad wonders about the future generations of their village who have seen so much violence against the adults in their lives. He wonders how they can also peacefully demonstrate against oppression.

Hamid, Mohsin. *Exit West*. Riverhead Books, 2017.

Exit West is a fictional novel set in an unnamed city. The two main characters Saeed and Nadia fall in love while their country crumbles under militant rule. They eventually escape and live on the run as refugees.

Mehta, Deepa, director. *Earth 1947*. YouTube, YouTube, 24 Oct. 2011,

www.youtube.com/watch?v=BEJdS7_RC4Q.

Earth 1947 is set during the start of the partition in India. This is a fictional story that focuses on a dark time in India's history. The young character, Lenny follows her nanny as she hangs out with her friends. The group consists of men from the three major religions of the country. As the film progress, the group breaks up due to their religious differences. In the end, Lenny's nanny is stolen by her friend Dil and never seen again.

Stoddard, Jeremy D. "The Ideological Implications of Using 'Educational' Film to Teach

Controversial Events." *Curriculum Inquiry*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2009, pp. 407–433. *JSTOR*,

JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/20616439.

In his case study, Jeremy Stoddard examines two teachers who use films about controversial issues as a way to both inform and engage students. Stoddard discusses how it is viewed that teachers' use of film can cause students to only accept the teacher's biased opinion on the topic. However, the teachers he focused on made a point to use the films as a neutral space where students could make their own decision on the issue.

Project 4: Revised

Generational Changes and Variants in Language:

An Analysis of *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century*

The grammar police can just calm down already because everything is okay. Things are not as bad as people make it out to be on the grammar and writing front. This is the main argument made by Steven Pinker in *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century*. We've all heard people complain about "kids nowadays," how they can't get off their phones and how they can't write, etc. I cannot tell you how many times parents complain about kids not being able to write or how it's such a shame that "they don't teach cursive anymore." Parents and adults in general love pining for the way things used to be. However, Pinker argues that kids in the internet age do not write any worse than their counterparts fifty or even a hundred years ago. He also calls out former writing style gurus like Strunk and White for their stuffy and old-school style guidelines. He believes that writing changes with time and that's okay. Throughout the text, he shares how a decent or proficient writer can improve their craft in practical and real ways. In the preface, Pinker states that he hopes to give easy-to-remember advice, "By replacing dogma about usage with reason and evidence, I hope not just to avoid given ham-fisted advice but to make the advice that I do give easier to remember than a list of dos and don'ts" (6). Overall, Pinker's writing style is relatable and his honesty about what matters and what does not when it comes to writing uncovers a larger discussion about language.

In the first chapter of the book, Pinker discusses good writing. He first states that becoming a good writer takes time and that it is not something that is innate. Writing, he

argues, is a “life-long calling” (12) and often the key to becoming a better writer is to become an ardent reader. Pinker so adequately describes that “Writers acquire their technique by spotting, savoring, and reverse-engineering examples of good prose” (12). This may seem obvious, but this is essentially, why I am an English teacher. I love reading. Reading is where my love of English began. I also love “spotting” and “savoring” good prose. This brings me back to why I am where I am in my life. Nonetheless, he encourages “lingering over good writing wherever you find it and reflecting on what makes it good” (12). In his first chapter, he does exactly as he suggests. He spends time lingering over writing and describes what makes it good.

One example that I found the most stunning was the way Pinker describes good writing and the way the writer he uses as an exemplar sets it up. He states, “The writer can see something that the reader has not yet noticed, and he orients the reader’s gaze so that she can see it for herself. The writer knows the truth before putting it into words; he is not using the occasion of writing to sort out what he thinks” (29). I’ve never thought of writing in this elegant way. Yet, Pinker describes how the writer slowly guides the reader to a “truth.” As he states, the writer is not trying to figure something out, she already knows what she will reveal and builds her images and words around that.

In the preface, Pinker also talks about how writing is not a natural thing, like talking, for humans. Speech comes naturally; yet, writing must be learned and practiced. This concept is reflected as well in Finegan’s text, *Language: Its Structure and Use* “Speech and writing are not related to the world they symbolize in the same way. Speech directly represents entities in the world... writing represents the physical world only indirectly” (15). Furthermore, in Pinker’s

text, he describes how easily babies and children acquire spoken language, but must learn to write. Maybe, as described by Finegan, since writing represents the world indirectly that is why it takes longer to master. It is something that has many abstract components like the reader or audience, the ideas, and the construction of sentences.

When it comes to the classroom, I don't discourage students from speaking the variety of English that is most comfortable to them. In other words, if they are speaking slang or African-American Vernacular English or AAVE, I don't correct them during class discussions or other forms of class conversation. In addition, if we are learning new vocabulary or discussing a word, I might ask students to share or use a word they already know to associate with the new word. In the classroom, I also like to have candid conversations about when to use different varieties of English such as when to "code-switch" and why. I am flexible with written language as well when it is an informal assignment. However, when we are doing formal assignments such as writing a paper or doing a presentation, I would ask students to use Standard English. Again, I would have a candid conversation about why we are writing or speaking in this particular way for this assignment. I like to make the switching between types of language explicit because as stated in the previous paragraph, writing does not come naturally and must be learned. Yet, what is the connection between written and spoken variations of language? And, does school have the ability to change these variants?

According to "Understanding Children's Non-Standard Spoken English: A Perspective from Variationist Sociolinguistics" Stephen Levey concludes that even though educators attempt to uphold a standard spoken language, it is a "significant challenge" to do so:

The research reported here indicates that the inherent variability of human speech poses significant challenges for operationalizing a unitary spoken standard. The failure to attain consensus on what constitutes the spoken standard stems largely from the difficulty of trying to reconcile the notion of a relatively invariant and idealized set of norms with the pervasive, but structured, variability found in everyday speech. (418)

The "inherent variability of human speech" is hard to control. The focus of Levey's study was observing if vernacular variants were changed by the influence of school on young children and his conclusion was that they were not. Levey argues that "children's maintenance of these patterns across the age range examined here testifies to the tenacity of vernacular norms in the face of the countervailing normative pressures exerted by the school" (416). He concludes that the "community-based norms" (Levey 416) are too hard to overrule, especially in children. Therefore, the trends in variants found in written language are possibly community or socially driven as well and attribute to the changes in language seen today in various groups of people.

Finally, as I stated in the beginning, Pinker tries to calm the naysayers by discussing that language is not on the decline. In Geoff Nunberg's article, "Irked By The Way Millennials Speak? 'I Feel Like' It's Time To Loosen Up" he echoes Pinker's argument. He states, "If the language really had been deteriorating all this time, we'd all be grunting like bears by now" (Nunberg). This is true in light of a fact Pinker uses in his text that, "According to the English scholar Richard Lloyd-Jones, some of the clay tablets deciphered from ancient Sumerian include complaints about the deteriorating writing skills of the young" (6). The point of the matter is language changes and has variants and everything is okay. According to Nunberg, the real reason older generations get upset about language is that they are upset that they no longer

feel relevant. Yet, the most interesting thing is the idea that a fully standardized use of language is largely impossible and probably always has been, despite our best efforts, but that lack of control does not mean that language is declining. In fact, as Pinker reveals, examples of beautiful language are all around us and maybe it's better to "spot" and "savor" the good language that speaks to us than get caught up in the variants of different groups.

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Pinker, Steven. *The Sense of Style*. Penguin, 2016.