AN INTRODUCTORY GUIDE TO TEACHING AT OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY
We end every Orientation by asking GTAs for feedback, part of our persistant efforts to improve the Writing Program, and the School of Writing, Literature, and Film.

Among other things, we learned from our assessment that the sessions GTAs found most productive were those where, unsurprisingly, they were producing—ideas, lesson plans, in-class activities, friendships, solutions, etc.

At around the same time, I was revisiting the work of Eric Mazur, a physics professor whose large classes challenged him to develop more effective teaching techniques. Mazur steadily moved away from lecturing and innovated a variety of interactive exercises (including “clickers,” which can now be found in classrooms across the nation).

The combination of reading Mazur while reflecting on how we support our GTAs has led to the e-book in front of you now. It’s a means for you to get a basic sense of our curriculum before arriving at Orientation. My intention is that it will not only get some thoughts flowing about writing, rhetoric, and teaching, but that it will also shift Orientation away from being primarily an information-delivery zone and help transform it into more of a maker-space, where we can create and collaborate.

There will still be plenty of information to absorb at Orientation, of course. We have a rigorous curriculum and the teaching of writing is a complex task. Although this book won’t answer all questions about WR121, it will help make our Orientation together more productive, and by extension, your teaching this fall more effective and satisfying.

Please do keep in mind as you read that this is an introductory guide. When questions arise as you make your way through, jot them down and then bring them to Orientation. Your curiosity to learn more will always be appreciated.

I hope you will take full advantage of the e-book medium. The Table of Contents is fully linked; clicking any section title or page number will take you there. Also, on most readers you can tap any page marker in the lower corners to bring you back to the ToC.

Thank you for reading, watching, and contemplating. We are eager to see you on September 12 and make this a great year for you and WR121.

Tim Jensen
Director of Writing
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The learning process is something you can incite, literally incite, like a riot.

~ Audre Lorde
**Tim Jensen**
Assistant Professor  |  Director of Writing

I find that teaching rhetoric and writing ranks among life’s most challenging and rewarding pursuits. As a teacher, I enjoy ruining students’ ability to look at advertisements unanalytically and infecting them with the 7-year-old-child virus, where one suffers from asking “Why?” in response to just about anything. I think that affect and emotion are perhaps the most critical aspects of rhetoric, and as a scholar, I attempt to understand how those forces function persuasively. I find a lot of beauty in the texture of rocks, the rising of trout, and the revolution of bicycle wheels.

**Kristy Kelly**
Assistant Director of Writing  |  Instructor

After moving several times around the country, I’ve chosen to call the Pacific Northwest home. I’ve spent the last six years in Eugene, teaching writing and mentoring graduate student instructors while finishing my PhD at the University of Oregon. I like to view writing classes as a place where students learn to recognize their own strategies for questioning and analyzing the worlds they inhabit. My research focuses on the rhetorical practices of feminist counterpublics on platforms like Reddit and Twitter, and I always love to talk about productive ways to incorporate social media into writing classrooms. I also love to hike in the Cascades, imbibe fine Oregon brews, and hang out with my adorable pet rabbit.

**Paisley Green**
MA Student in Literature  |  Composition Assistant

I fled to Oregon from sun-scorched Phoenix; before that, I received my undergraduate degrees from Northern Arizona University. Before undertaking graduate studies and composition teaching, I worked retail, finished student teaching, and helped to research and write a traveling educational exhibit about the Holocaust in Poland. I’m writing my thesis on madness in 19th-century literature, but I read science fiction, fantasy, and horror in my free time, wherever I can find it. Right now, I’m really into good video games, documentaries, beers, and hikes—I’d love to talk about or share any of them with you.

**Robin Cedar**
MFA Student in Poetry  |  Composition Assistant

Before coming to Corvallis, I lived on Whidbey Island, where I helped run my family’s business. I hail from a place where we have a yearly festival dedicated to salmon, so incidentally, I write poetry about water and anything you point to and exclaim, “Wow, this person likes nature.” Also my family. My interests also include mythology, outer space, and potatoes. Also cool stuff like incorporating poetics into a composition classroom or reaching that point where students laugh at your rocking jokes (preferably before week nine). Looking forward to meeting you all and working with you this year!
Andrew Bashford  
MFA Student in Poetry | Composition Assistant  
Currently a poet, formerly a linguist, and futurely (with luck) a rhetoricker (Aristotle’s term)—I clearly don’t like to get too comfortable with any one discipline. Needless to say, though, my interests tend to center around language, especially style, and that focus certainly influences my approach to writing and to teaching. I’ve lived most recently in Utah, middle recently in Brazil (Pernambuco, to be more exact), and then least recently in Colorado (where I was born and raised). I’m also a firm believer in and advocate for dessert.

Emily McLemore  
MA Student in Literature | Composition Assistant  
I completed my BA in English and Secondary Education licensure at Western State Colorado University in May 2015. While I’d considered myself more of a creative writer, I became enamored with literary analysis and theory, research, and critical writing as an undergraduate. I’m particularly interested in Medieval British literature and hope to pursue a PhD, so I can continue teaching at the university level indefinitely. The last year of teaching at OSU has been a tremendous experience, and I look forward to working alongside this year’s incoming GTAs and providing support as you transition into your lives as graduate students.

Emily Foster  
MA Student in Literature | Composition Assistant  
Raised on a Christmas tree farm in Salem, Oregon, I graduated from Carleton College in Minnesota with a BA in English and a minor in German. Then I spent three years tutoring in Palo Alto, California before realizing that I should really go to grad school. My MA thesis brings together a George Eliot novel, celebrity and adaptation. Additionally, I love me some British television, puppy cuddles, dancing and dark chocolate. I’m thrilled to be living in my home state, to be part of SWLF and to work with all of you this year!

A Note of Thanks —  
Composition Assistants from previous years have been instrumental in the conception and construction of this O-book. The Writing Program and our entire School are better because of the efforts invested by Hannh Kroonblawd, Samara Surface, Lacey Rowland, Mike Chin, Rich Collins, Hannah Baggott, Jacob Day, André Habet, and Jordan Terriere, and our former Assistant Director, Sara Jameson. My sincere thanks also to those who contributed ideas and their time, especially those who sat down for interviews: André Habet, Amy Kennedy, Hannah Baggott, Steven Moore, Scott Latta, and Jesse Johnson.
Transitioning to the rhythms and demands of graduate school is a challenging—yet exhilarating—process for almost everyone. Similar to learning how to swim by jumping in the deep end of the pool, it’s likely to feel overwhelming at some point in the initial immersion. Soon enough, however, through a combination of instincts, guidance, and encouragement, you’ll become attuned to your environment and begin to move with more confidence and fluidity.

If you’re like me, having a clear understanding of key information makes getting into a groove much easier. Here are some timelines and tips pertinent to being a GTA in the School of Writing, Literature, and Film that I hope you find helpful.

**A BRIEF OVERVIEW**

If you haven’t already, please visit **08 Hovland Hall** during regular business hours. If you have any questions, contact Stefanie Maerki at 541-737-4584 or at Stefanie.maerki@oregonstate.edu.

**FALL TERM AT A GLANCE**

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**STIPENDS**

It feels good to get paid. In order for that to happen on time, it’s critical that you get your employee paperwork squared away with Human Resources. You have until **Thursday, September 1** to complete this process and ensure your first check is delivered on time. My recommendation? Don’t wait. Do it as soon as you can.

If you haven’t already, please visit **08 Hovland Hall** during regular business hours. If you have any questions, contact Stefanie Maerki at 541-737-4584 or at Stefanie.maerki@oregonstate.edu.

**ORIENTATION**

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<th>9/12</th>
<th>10am–3:30pm in 206 Moreland Hall. Coffee, light breakfast options, and lunch provided. You will receive a detailed agenda and schedule on the first day.</th>
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**COURSE LOAD**

GTAs teach four courses across three quarters. As first-year GTAs, your two-course term will be in either winter or spring. Second-year GTAs are often scheduled their two-course term in fall.

As a GTA, you will teach WR121 for the entire first year. The range of possible teaching assignments expands in your second year, including opportunities to serve as a Teaching Assistant (TA) for a Literature course, to teach Business Writing (WR214), or if you’re an MFA, to teach Introduction to Fiction or Introduction to Poetry. Opportunities for administrative appointments are also available.
A teacher who loves learning earns the right and the ability to help others learn.

~ Ruth Beechick
As GTAs in the School of Writing, Literature, and Film, you earn and maintain eligibility to teach in part by following a professional development sequence designed to support and enhance your teaching at OSU. These opportunities emphasize a combination of practical knowledge with an understanding of the pedagogical principles and theories that inform effective instruction.

**GTA Orientation**

This one-week, pre-term program will immerse you in the WR121 curriculum and prepare you to enter the classroom on day one with confidence and competence. Our goal with Orientation is to lay the foundation for your productive growth as a teacher. Orientation begins at 10am on Monday, September 12 in 206 Moreland Hall.

**WR517**

Taken during fall term of your first year of teaching, this two-credit seminar continues your training in WR121. In addition to providing practical support in the week-to-week specifics of the curriculum, WR517 also broadens focus to examine pedagogical frameworks for quality instruction, offering opportunities to develop skills in core teaching processes.

**Classroom Observation Teaching Statement**

Ideally scheduled as soon after WR517 as possible, all GTAs further their professional development by enrolling in a pedagogy-designated course that examines foundational issues in Rhetoric and Writing. By engaging with the rhetorical and pedagogical theories that WR121 and other composition courses are built on, you’ll be better equipped to be effective, reflective instructors.

This requirement is typically satisfied through one of the following three courses:

- WR511: The Teaching of Writing
- WR512: Current Composition Theory
- WR593: The Rhetorical Tradition and the Teaching of Writing

Your teaching will be observed in either winter or spring term of your first year. This is a chance to discuss your teaching with an experienced instructor, have them sit in on a class session, and receive helpful feedback afterward.

In spring term of your graduating year, you will craft a 1–2 page Teaching Statement that articulates the practices, principles, and philosophies that inform your instruction. Your Teaching Statement will go through one round of revision with a designated teaching mentor before being submitted to the Director of Writing.
The job of an educator is to teach students to see vitality in themselves.

~ Joseph Campbell
To answer this question comprehensively, let’s approach it from three different levels: school, state, and nation. At Oregon State University, WR121: Introduction to English is a required course for all students. Of course, this does not mean that all students must take the course at OSU, though roughly 60% of each class cohort does. The other 40% earn credit through other means, often by transferring credits from another institution or achieving a high enough score on either an AP or IB test, or less frequently, by taking and passing our waiver exam.

We envision WR121 as the beginning of and foundation for students’ writing development as undergraduates at OSU. Although our curriculum places great emphasis on analytical writing—the kind of writing that most academic genres privilege—we teach with the conviction that the skills learned through the course will help students write effectively in situations that extend well beyond their university studies.

Perhaps the best way to describe this course is to articulate what it attempts to do—what we aim for students to know or be able to do as a result of taking it. The next section on Course Objectives will go into WR121’s goals in much more depth, but before we get to those specifics, let’s consider the course at a slightly larger scale.

WR121 is also an important element of the University’s Baccalaureate Core, which is most often referred to in its abbreviated form—the “Bacc Core.” All OSU students fulfill the Bacc Core, which focuses on the foundational skills of writing, speech, and mathematics.

Incoming OSU students are introduced to the Bacc Core via the following video:

The Bacc Core has a three-course sequence for writing. WR121 is the only class that fulfills the WR I category. The WR II category can be satisfied through a variety of courses, ranging in focus from Business Writing (WR214) to Intro to Short Fiction (WR224). For the final requirement, students take a Writing Intensive Course (WIC) within the scope of their major. You can learn more about the WIC Program, led by Rhetoric Professor Vicki Tolar Burton, by clicking here.

WR121, however, is not unique to OSU. All higher education institutions within Oregon require WR121. As you can imagine, as a state-wide writing course, WR121 garners a variety of stakeholders, from state legislators to the parents of students, from first-year students to first-year GTAs.

To scale out even further, WR121 is a First-Year Composition course (FYC), and as such, is part of a rich and ongoing tradition. Issues surrounding FYC spur lively debate among scholars, teachers, and administrators. You’ll eventually learn more about the scholarship and national conversations that have influenced our course and curriculum. For now all that’s needed is an awareness that WR121 is many things to many people, and part of a complex network of higher education ideas and practices.
One phrase that you'll hear frequently during your development as a GTA is “backwards design.” It’s a pedagogical methodology where the very first step is to identify and explicitly articulate what is it you want students to be able to do or know as a consequence of the course and your instruction. We begin our planning by considering the end result we hope to achieve and design everything “backwards” from there.

The next step is to think about how you’ll know when or if those results are actually achieved. What evidence can we use to evaluate how close we came to our goals? By thinking about assessment from the outset, you will be more focused in your activities, yet more flexible, too, since you have an end-point in sight.

The final step of course, is to design activities and assignments that you believe will help lead students to achieve the outcomes. What learning experiences can you craft that will be most effective and efficient?

So instead of jumping into the assignment sequence or which textbooks we’ll be using (a more traditional approach), we begin with WR121’s learning outcomes—those things we want students to be able to do or know as a result of taking the class.

Below you’ll find the first two pages of our syllabus (though there will be some updates before Orientation). Please click on the first page (lower left) to read the six learning outcomes for the course, as well as the outcomes for the Bacc Core WR I requirement. Click on the other page to read through the seven Learning Goals for Graduates of Oregon State University.

Because these outcomes are numerous, expansive, and not exactly written in the most portable, student-friendly language, we’ve distilled them into two primary objectives, which form the backbone of our WR121 curriculum: Analytical Writing & Rhetorical Awareness.

Although we still attend closely to all the outcomes listed, having these two core objectives in mind at all times keeps the headspace a bit clearer and planning a touch easier.

To get a better understanding of how we use these terms in WR121, I’ve included the Introduction to our custom textbook, wherein I walk through each word of each phrase as carefully as I can. This introduction is one of the first items students will read, so having a solid grasp of it going in will pay dividends. Thanks for reading it in advance of Orientation.
FROM OUR CUSTOM TEXTBOOK

SOME WORDS OF WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR OF WRITING

WELCOME TO WR 121

You'll get the most out of this class and find it more enjoyable if you have a solid sense of its main features. To give you a better idea of what you'll encounter, let’s map out the course goals, define key terminology, and discuss why this class matters.

You bring to this course a set of unique ambitions—professional, academic, and personal goals to achieve at Oregon State University and beyond. WR 121 also has a set of aims and objectives, which you’ll see outlined in your syllabus. Moreover, this course is a foundational part of your studies at OSU, an institution that has even bigger goals for its students, as you can tell from the list on the next page (see Learning Goals for Graduates of Oregon State University). In addition, by participating in WR 121 you’re engaging with the humanities—the larger discipline in which the study and teaching of writing is situated—which has the aim of exploring and explaining the human experience, with its messy affairs of communication, meaning, value, beauty, truth, and justice. Whew.

All of these goals considered at once can seem pretty overwhelming. After all, WR 121 takes place in just ten weeks.

To make all this a bit more focused and manageable, then, let’s concentrate on two core objectives of WR 121. This course seeks to 1) develop your skills and confidence in analytical writing, and 2) foster rhetorical awareness.

Your commitment to these pursuits will help equip you to succeed in college and beyond, so let’s take some time to break them down, so that you have a clear sense of what you can achieve with this course.

WHAT IS ANALYTICAL WRITING?

To answer this question, we must first ask another—what is analysis? Like so many of our words, “analysis” comes to us via the Greek language, which combines _ana_, meaning “up” or “toward,” with _lysis_, which means “a loosening.” Analysis, then, refers to a loosening or breaking up to see what elements are involved, and an examination of how those components work together to make something happen.

We’re performing analysis right now, in fact—by looking at the etymology (the word origins) of the actual term, “analysis,” and breaking it down into parts to examine how those parts work together: _ana_ + _lysis_ = _analysis_. We’re also doing analysis on the phrase “analytical writing,” by first breaking it down into two components—analytical and writing—and examining each, all in an effort to clarify what the phrase as a whole means. In this course, you’ll perform analysis on a wide variety of texts, first identifying what elements contribute to a text’s meaning and then explaining how those components function together as a whole to communicate something.

When it comes to analysis, I often think of some wise words a Buddhist auto-mechanic once told me with a wink: “A lot of things in life, from
broken carburetors to broken relationships, can be dealt with through the same simple process: Disassemble. Clean. Inspect.” The act of analysis begins with these same critical steps—disassemble, clean, inspect. We can’t stop there, however. There are two more key steps to the analytical process: articulating how those parts work together to create meaning and why it matters. In other words, we don’t want to simply break down a text and then walk away, leaving it just lying there in parts on the floor. We need to explain the relationships of those parts and make a case for how best to understand them.

“That is real freedom. That is being educated, and understanding how to think. The alternative is unconsciousness, the default setting, the rat race, the constant gnawing sense of having had, and lost, some infinite thing.”

— David Foster Wallace

Although analysis can often be challenging, its benefits are clear: we become more observant of the world around us, as well as more curious about the way things work; we strengthen our abilities to think critically about the world we inhabit and engage others by crafting arguments that are effective and ethical. For these reasons (and more), we encourage you to practice analysis to the point it becomes habitual, a routine way of observing, making connections, and understanding.

But how exactly does one “disassemble” a text? One of the key moves of analysis is to render the implicit explicit. Let’s turn to etymology again to determine what this phrase means: The word “imply” comes from Latin and has at its root the verb plicare, which means “to fold.” To imply something in communication means to fold it into the message but not state it directly. To “explicate”—as you may have already guessed—means “to unfold.”

To render the implicit explicit, then, is to unfold that which has been folded in. The process entails stating clearly and directly what assumptions are being made by a text, identifying and explaining important connotations or allusions, and clarifying any tacit logics being used. Combine this with the other moves of analysis you’ll practice in this course—identifying patterns of repetition and contrast, moments of intensity, and anomalies—and you have quite a powerful toolkit at your disposal.

In WR 121, you’ll strengthen these skills of critical thinking by examining texts and cultural artifacts to see how they communicate meaning. Using this analysis, you’ll then make an argument for how a particular text or artifact might be best understood or interpreted.

You may notice that I’m using “artifact” and “text” interchangeably, and in ways that may seem a bit strange. Artifacts, in short, are things made by people—they are things that can be seen, read, heard, or felt. We can just as easily say “text,” a term that, in this course and in most of the humanities, is understood as anything that can be read analytically and interpreted. Here we’re using “text” in a more expansive sense than just printed words on a page. For example, a recent album review on the music site Pitchfork is certainly a text that can be read and analyzed.

However, a $200 pair of designer jeans that have been “distressed”—purposely manipulated to look weathered and well-worn—is also a “text” that can be “read” for various meanings. (What does a prefrayed cuff on a pair of jeans communicate? Why do people seem to pay more for items that have been intentionally damaged?) We use “artifact” in conjunction with “text” to emphasize that in analysis you’re not limited to things that are only comprised of words.

You will also perform analysis on your own writing—assessing the various elements used in making an argument and, importantly, reflecting on what can be done to make that argument even more compelling. Analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, and possibilities of your own arguments is a key practice in WR 121. Developing such a reflective stance will enable you to keep improving your writing and communication even after the course is finished.

“Analytical writing,” then, encompasses two levels of analysis. At one level, you will analyze cultural artifacts made by other people; at another level, you’ll analyze your own arguments in an effort to
make them more persuasive. This type of writing is closely associated with academic argument, a style or genre of writing that emphasizes the quality and accuracy of the claims being made, the quality and congruity of evidence used to support those claims, and the reasoning used to tie the two together. In other words, the kind of academic argumentation you’ll be doing privileges analytical writing because it pays close attention to the core elements of argument—claims, evidence, and reasoning—and the quality of the relationship between them.

Let’s focus more on the last half of the phrase “analytical writing.” To some it might seem silly to ask, what is writing? Isn’t that already obvious? It’s often the case, however, that what seems most obvious and entirely basic is actually quite complex once you stop a moment to pay it closer notice.

Writing is frequently characterized as a means of expression, an act of externalizing thought, most often done so that you can share your thoughts with others. There’s a lot of truth to this, without question; however, it’s not the full truth. If writing were only the process of transcribing fully-formed thoughts, then writing probably wouldn’t be so darn difficult.

One of the main reasons writing is so challenging—and so rewarding—is because writing is a means of thinking. Writing is a tool for thought, not just to express thought. As the novelist E.M. Forster put it, “How am I to know what I think until I see what I say?” We often come to understanding through the act of writing. We often surprise ourselves when we write, too, making discoveries and drawing connections that we may not have considered otherwise. This is one of the great delights of writing, and a good reason for sticking with it even when it grows frustrating or tiresome. Moreover, research in both the sciences and humanities has demonstrated that writing improves our ability not only to understand topics better, but also to recall them more readily, making it a unique and truly valuable mode of learning.

You will also find that writing as a process is emphasized in WR 121. By paying attention to the various acts and sequences of writing—such as note-taking, freewriting, brainstorming, researching, journaling, outlining, concept mapping, drafting, reviewing, revising, editing, formatting, etc.—you can become more aware of what works for you. Analyzing your own writing entails paying attention to the entire writing process, experimenting with different portions, and refining a sequence that yields the best results for you.

So what, then, according to WR 121, is writing? It’s a mode of expression. It’s also a mode of inquiry and exploration. It’s an invitation to think and a way to think. It’s an occasion to work through issues large and small. Writing is a process and a product. Writing is argument, art, and activism. It’s critical to everything from science to sales, from public policy to pleasure for pleasure’s sake. Writing can clarify and confuse, delight and destroy. As a principal mode of communication, writing is inherently a powerful act, and as such, is worth studying with our full investment and commitment. Analytical writing is a particularly useful mode to study and practice, as it places emphasis on the quality and delivery of claims, evidence, and reasoning, the core components of argumentation.
I write entirely to find out what I’m thinking, what I’m looking at, what I see and what it means. What I want and what I fear.

~ Joan Didion
WHAT IS RHETORICAL AWARENESS?

Let’s also break down this phrase, look at the different parts and determine how they work together. The first term—rhetorical—is the adjectival form of rhetoric, a term that has been around for over two and a half thousand years. The question—what is rhetoric?—has been around equally as long, so as you can guess, there are an awful lot of answers to it. Although we won’t be able to give the term “rhetoric” its full due here, much in the same way that any textbook’s definition of “physics” or “forestry” wouldn’t be able to encapsulate their broad scope or the intricacies involved in their study and practice, we can nevertheless look at how the term is typically understood and how it will be used in WR 121.

Rhetoric most often gets defined as the arts of persuasion, and for many occasions, this serves as a decent pocket-sized definition. Our contemporary understanding of “persuasion,” however, presents significant limitations that should be noted. When I search the term on Amazon.com, for instance, and look at what books come up on the first page, I encounter titles such as, Mind Control Mastery: Successful Guide to Human Psychology and Manipulation, Persuasion and Deception! and Persuasion: The Art of Getting What You Want. These titles suggest a popular characterization of persuasion—that it is like magic or a dark art, where you control other people’s minds with fanciful tricks like a svengali, all so you can fulfill personal desires. Such a view of rhetoric— as persuasive manipulation of others who instantly follow your every command—is narrow and unrealistic. Rhetoric is much more complex than such a view affords.

“Language is like fire: it can heat your home or it can burn it down.”

— Frank Luntz

Here’s a more nuanced, slightly longer definition: rhetoric is the practice, art, and study of using symbols to influence or invite behaviors and beliefs. It is the term we use to identify the ways in which communication shapes attitudes and incites action. In the beginning of its formal study (in Greece around 500 BCE), rhetoric was concerned almost exclusively with how to make effective oral arguments. Over time, as the world of writing and its technologies continued to develop, the study of rhetoric turned to the power of the written word. Today, the study of rhetoric has been expanded to include not just oral and written communication, but also non-linguistic symbols, especially visual communication. By participating in this course, you’re entering into a historic lineage of thinkers, makers, and doers who are interested in how communication occurs.

“[Rhetoric] should be a study of misunderstandings and their remedies.”

— I.A. Richards

In WR 121, we will approach rhetoric at two levels—analysis and production. That is, we will study and practice how to decode acts of communication, as well as how to encode them. The aim of this two-fold practice is to have you leave the course with an increased sensitivity to the forces of communication that shape your world. We call this sensitivity to the operations and consequences of communication rhetorical awareness. Rhetorical awareness is more of a mindset; it’s an embodied perception of your everyday environment that attunes you to the ways behavior and belief are shaped through rhetoric—the ability of words and symbols to quite literally move us.

We use “rhetorical awareness” instead of “rhetorical knowledge” because the latter suggests a set of facts, terminologies, and recommended formulas, which, although certainly important and helpful, can only take you so far. WR 121 will foster your ability to recognize, observe, and respond to a range of rhetorical situations. This type of awareness is what Aristotle suggests when he defines rhetoric as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.” Developing your rhetorical awareness, in other words, is about developing your perception of where, how, and why communication works and doesn’t work.

A popular graffiti phrase scrawled on the walls of Athens in 5th century BCE offers at least one reason why it’s important to be educated in the arts of rhetoric: “He who does not study rhetoric will be the victim of it.” Then and now, it’s
important to be prepared.

However, developing rhetorical awareness isn’t only about being on the defensive for those who seek to deceive, use weak or specious logic, or can’t provide evidence. It’s also about equipping yourself to build what ancient Greek philosophers would call “the good life.” Your heightened awareness of communication can often lead to stronger, more rewarding personal relationships. Your ability to communicate effectively—especially through writing—will also be a critical asset for advancing your own professional and economic prospects. (One of my colleagues is fond of saying, “Engineers who can’t write well end up working for those who can.” This is equally true for many other professions.)

Rhetorical awareness, then, is about attuning yourself to the whole spectrum of communication—the good, bad, and dangerous; the written, spoken, and implied; that which is performed by others and that which you produce, too.

Changing your habits of mind will at times seem intimidating. The ubiquity and complexity of rhetoric make its interrogation a formidable challenge. But studying rhetoric and developing your writing can be some of the most productive and pleasurable pursuits. Once you reach a certain point in your rhetorical awareness, there is no turning back. And as Franz Kafka says, “That is the point that must be reached.”

The good news is that you’ve already begun this process, and have most likely developed some pretty savvy skills for both decoding and encoding rhetoric. You already know that advertisements use sex to sell everything from toothpaste to cars. You know that for certain things it’s better to ask Mom first, rather than Dad (and vice versa). You already write emails with an awareness of audience, tone, purpose, and content. You are already a writer. You are already a rhetorician.

*We’re here to help you be better at both.*
WR121 uses two textbooks and one online review platform. In an effort to maximize use of the materials we require students to purchase and minimize their cost at the same time, we’ve collaborated with Bedford/St. Martin’s to create a custom project that combines sections from multiple sources. The majority of our primary reader comes from *Habits of the Creative Mind*, a book that’s at the forefront of composition theory emphasizing habits of mind. And we’re helping lead that charge, considering that *Habits* won’t be published as a stand-alone book until after our custom project is in the hands of OSU students. This text also contains carefully selected chapters from *The Academic Writer* and *Understanding Rhetoric: A Graphic Guide to Writing*, which help fill critical gaps.

*They Say/I Say* has been a part of the OSU curriculum for a number of years, in large measure due to its effective template-based system, which guides students into making what the authors rightly call “the moves that matter in academic writing.” I encourage you to head here and read the introduction chapter, which elaborates on the key metaphor we use when discussing research in WR121—“entering a conversation.”

Finally, we use *Eli Review*, a site that facilitates quality feedback. We’ll talk more about the site when we get to *The Exchange*, an assignment that asks students to engage with each level of the publication process: author, reviewer, and editor.

Free copies of all our required materials will be made available to you during Orientation. So that you can read through our custom textbook before then, however, we have secured some digital copies for immediate download. Just follow the directions on the next page and begin familiarizing yourself with the material before Orientation. Although I recommend you read the parts that interest you most first, I’ve also included a list of chapters that are almost certain to make the final version of the course calendar to help prioritize your selections.*

* The Writing Program makes every effort to ensure the curriculum is as refined as possible before entering the new academic year. This means that fine-tunings are made through the beginning of September. Not to worry, though—you’ll get all that you need to succeed (and perhaps a smidgen more) during Orientation.
INSTRUCTIONS FOR DOWNLOADING

Desk copies and directions courtesy of Bedford/St. Martins

1. Make sure you are using a compatible device.

You can download your e-book on a computer (PC or MAC) or an e-reader (iPad, iPhone, Nook, Kindle Fire, Android, or any Adobe supported device). Click here to find a list of all Adobe DRM compatible devices.

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FOR YOUR READING PLEASURE

Please do your best to read the following chapters before Orientation

From Habits of the Creative Mind:
- Orienting
- Beginning
- Paying Attention
- Asking Questions
- Connecting
- Practicing
- Arguing

From The Academic Writer:
- Analyzing & Synthesizing Texts (pg. 90–97)
- Making and Supporting Claims (pg. 130–147)

From Understanding Rhetoric:
- Why Rhetoric?
- Strategic Reading
- Rethinking Revisions
- Going Public
ASSIGNMENT SEQUENCE

To help contextualize the specific elements of our assignment sequence that follow, let’s briefly consider some of the defining vantage points that factored into its creation.

**FRONT-LOADED**

In most college courses, the assignment sequence steadily builds to the biggest assignment worth the most amount of points. There are reasons for this—some of them quite good—but when each course in a student’s schedule does this, it creates significant strain on the economy of attention. (As graduate students, you’ll often find yourself in the same situation with your courses.) WR121 front-loads the assignment sequence, avoiding the end-of-term bottleneck. We hit the ground running, asking students to get writing on Day 1. It also means the assignment worth the most amount of points—the Critical Analysis Essay—comes due in Week 7 instead of Finals Week.

There are several beneficial by-products of this arrangement. A lengthy essay involving research is likely to receive more attention when it’s not competing against three other final exams or projects.

Another benefit to front-loading the curriculum is that it frees up more headspace for you to concentrate on your own writing, scholarly and/or creative. One of the keys to success as a GTA is harmonizing your studies and your teaching. We want you—and your students—to succeed at OSU, and we’ve structured our curriculum with this firmly in mind.

**RECURSIVE & RETICULATE**

In *A Moveable Feast* Hemingway stoically declared, “The only kind of writing is rewriting.” Roald Dahl—who didn’t have Hemingway’s distrust of adjectives—said something similar: “I am suspicious of both facility and speed. Good writing is essentially rewriting.” WR121 shares the same perspective and our assignment sequence reflects as much.

Our two major projects (which combined constitute roughly 75% of the sequence) challenge students to engage with writing as a recursive process, in which revision isn’t synonymous with proof-reading and drafting isn’t something that’s only done once before “beginning” an essay. These projects call on students to revisit their writing regularly, to continually expand and refine their ideas, and to remain flexible with their process and perspective.

Our curriculum is also reticulate, with key concepts and skills making connections across assignments, linking the writing done in WR121 with other courses, and weaving examples and artifacts from everyday life into the very structure of the course.

WR121’s core course objectives—analytical writing and rhetorical awareness—are invitations to see connections and networks of ideas where one may not have previously.

**ANALYSIS DRIVEN**

Although the Critical Analysis Project is the only project that includes “analysis” in its title, every aspect of WR121 aims to animate and strengthen a student’s analytical abilities. This may sound odd, given that it’s a writing class. Because WR121 frames writing not just as a mode for expression, but as a unique means for generating thought, we do not draw hard distinctions between the two. Instead, we see them as two sides of the same coin.

The link between writing and critical thinking is indissoluble, but that doesn’t mean it’s immediately evident. Nor does it mean that the significance of such a link is going to felt with any deep appreciation when it’s communicated directly. It’s our job, then, to lead students to a point where they realize for themselves that writing is one of the best ways to develop their critical capacities and simultaneously, that the written word is one of the most powerful means for communicating the outcomes of analysis.

**WR 121**
The infographics below represent our assignments in terms of point value, as well as their location and duration within the quarter. These same infographics are included in each WR121 syllabus (though altered slightly to make them more readable in grayscale), so that students can quickly and easily perceive how the course is laid out. We’ll go over each of these in the sections that follow.
The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically.

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

Intelligence plus character — that is the goal of true education.

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.
The Writer’s Inventory bookends our curriculum: the Initial Writer’s Inventory is the first assignment students complete and the Final Writer’s Inventory is the last. These are online surveys that prompt students to take stock of their writing experiences, perspectives, and goals.

I tend to think of the question-set for the Initial Writer’s Inventory as divided among three categories: past, present, and future. You can see a few examples of these questions by clicking through the images at left. You’ll also take the Initial Writer’s Inventory during Orientation, so that you can get a better sense of what students will experience.

Students are first asked about previous writing courses and experiences, in part to simply jog their memories and remind them that they’ve been developing as writers for some time. A good chunk of the survey that follows asks them for their current views on writing and to perform some self-assessment. Finally—and perhaps most importantly—it prompts students to explicitly articulate their goals for the course. These questions encourage students to take ownership of their education, to reflect on what they actually want from the course and how to get it, rather than simply go through the motions.

As an instructor, you’ll be able to see individual responses—allowing you to get to know your students in ways that in-class discussion can’t provide—as well as the class aggregate. The latter provides insight into patterns and trends about your specific class, allowing you to tailor your teaching to the unique roster you’ve been dealt. Even more importantly, it will allow you to reflect back to students their collective voice, using that as a point of departure for conversation, thereby demonstrating that you value their input and perspectives.

The Final Writer’s Inventory asks a very similar set of questions, but with one small change: it adds the clause, “Having now taken this course,” to the beginning of each question. It also asks them how they will continue to develop their writing skills. The Final Writer’s Inventory encourages students to reflect on their progress. It does the same for us as teachers, since we’re able to compare results with those from the Initial Writer’s Inventory.

Goals of the Writer’s Inventory

- Establish Empathetic Connections
- Provide Entry into Conversations about Writing
- Generate Evidence for Tailoring your Teaching
- Move Student Voice to the Center
- Catalyze Backwards Design
In a traditional college essay, students are often asked to pick a topic, research it, and then develop an argument. Although such a sequence has its merits, there are also some significant pitfalls. Students often choose safe topics (think steroids in baseball) and their arguments tend to be unsurprisingly aligned with the research they just read. Throughout all of this, it’s possible to avoid performing actual analysis on anything.

The Critical Analysis Project takes a different angle. We ask students to begin with close analysis—to really scrutinize something closely, break it down, observe and examine details, and explore how various elements come together to communicate meaning.

With analysis as the foundation, the project evolves through research and revision of ideas. And only after students have done a close reading, tried their hand at integrating research, and met with you to discuss the project’s progress and trajectory, are they then asked to go write the final essay.

Once again, I’m going to ask you to first approach this as a student might. Please watch the two videos at right, which we’ve made to communicate the arch of the project and point out some important aspects. On the next page you can click through the assignment prompts for each stage of the project.

Your aim in reviewing these materials is simply to get a sense of the project and its primary parts, not to master its intricacies. Remember, this is only an introductory guide, not the totality of your training, so when you have questions, jot them down for Orientation.
CRITICAL ANALYSIS PROJECT

Use the navigation buttons to work your way through the sequence of assignment prompts. (If you have the read-only pdf version, simply request the prompts from either the Director or Assistant Director.) Please keep in mind that minor adjustments may be made between now and Orientation.

INITIAL ARTIFACT ANALYSIS

WHAT IS THIS ASSIGNMENT?

The Initial Artifact Analysis assignment asks you to choose a cultural artifact and perform a close analysis of what it is communicating and how it is communicating it. In 2–3 pages, work to identify the defining elements of your artifact and explain how those parts fit together to communicate various meanings. Support the claims you make with evidence and connect the two with clear reasoning. Please make sure to provide me with access to your chosen artifact (attach the image, link to a url, etc.).

WHAT ISN’T THIS ASSIGNMENT?

One of the first key moves to make when entering an analytical perspective is to try and suspend your initial judgments, and turn your focus on observing details and patterns. We are very good at jumping to evaluate something, looking at a text first as either “good” or “bad.” Please keep in mind, however, that with this assignment, the objective is not about whether you agree or disagree with what you find the artifact is communicating. Nor is it about whether you like or dislike it, or think it should or shouldn’t do something. In fact, the goal is to practice pressing pause on our evaluative judgments, keeping our concentration squarely placed on the evidence at hand.

As this is an Initial Artifact Analysis, the objective is not to settle on any central argument. Committing to one angle of interpretation so early in the analysis could limit your ability to observe other details of the text, and consider alternate viewpoints. Let’s work to unpack and understand an artifact’s complexity before taking a position on how it could best be interpreted.

This assignment emphasizes analysis, the act of breaking something down to its key elements and determining how those elements work together to create meaning. This means that the assignment is not just about description and summary. Although description and summary have important roles in a compelling critical analysis, in this assignment you’re prompted to engage with specifics and details—moving beyond summary—and pursue possible interpretations—thereby moving beyond description.

ANY TIPS?

Yes. Work hard in and out of class to 1) understand the characteristics a great artifact; 2) select a great artifact; and 3) practice the fundamental moves of analysis—again and again.

DUE |

POINTS | 100
COURSE THEMES

In the animation on selecting an artifact we point out that the “instructor will set some parameters on what types of artifacts may be selected.” The most significant parameter will be your course theme, a mechanism that enables the class to focus conversation around a shared topic. The artifacts students pick will relate to the course theme, but the directions students take from there will be determined by what is revealed through their analysis and research.

Course themes are a way to channel collective inquiry and analysis, without having to sacrifice individual student interests. (Sara once insightfully compared course themes to the main ingredient a culinary class would use when teaching cooking techniques—there has to be some type of substance to practice the technique on.) Course themes are also a means for leveraging your own interests and expertise. Students will respond to the energy of your investment in and knowledge of the theme.

What course themes aren’t is equally important for both you and students to understand. Course themes are decidedly not the primary focus of the class—developing students’ skills and confidence in analytical writing and cultivating their rhetorical awareness are the primary foci. In other words, course themes are not synonymous with “Introduction to __X__” content courses.

So that you can begin slow-cooking your course theme, consider some of the example titles below. These courses have been taught either at Oregon State or Stanford University, where Rhetoric and Writing classes also integrate themes. You can peruse Stanford’s current course theme offerings here. Clicking on the title will take you to a description of the theme and a course-trailer that elaborates on it. WR121 follows a similar formula for articulating course themes, so you should feel comfortable envisioning your theme along the same lines. We will work together on developing course themes and their description during Orientation, so all you need to arrive with is some reflection about possible routes.

COURSE THEME TITLES

- Obsessed: The Rhetoric of Fans, Fandom, and Fanatics
- Display Cases and Databases: The Rhetoric of Collection
- From Trash Talk to Toxic Discourse: Rhetorics of Waste
- What We’re Made Of: Representations of Food, Farming, and Animals
- Rhetorics of Gender and Sexuality in Popular Culture
- “Little Boxes”: Evolving Symbols of Conformity and Consumption
- Riding into the Danger Zone: Rhetorics of Safety and Prevention
- The Way of the Dodo: Rhetorics of Extinction
- Where We’re From: Representations of Home, House, and Neighborhood
- Ladies, Tramps, and Other Furry Friends: The Rhetoric of Pets
- Doomsdays: The Rhetoric of Apocalypse
- How Much Is Too Much: Rhetorics of Indulgence and Excess

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Is your course theme broad enough to invite in a range of students? Consider the degree of cultural literacy one may need to engage fully with course.
- Is your course theme narrow enough to productively focus the course conversation? Education is a big topic. Education and social media? There you have an intersection of ideas whose tension has more potential provoke interesting artifacts, inquiries, discussions.
- Can you provide quality examples of artifacts in different mediums, and at least two thematic readings appropriate to a 100-level college course?
Always to see the general in the particular is the very foundation of genius.

~ Arthur Schopenhauer
Beginning in Week 7, we transition from the Critical Analysis Project and its focus on academic argumentation to a more public-oriented project of persuasion. *The Exchange* is a student-driven publication that features writing by WR121 students on issues they determine relevant to the OSU community. It is published as an insert in *The Daily Barometer*, Oregon State’s student newspaper, once a quarter (with the exception of summer).

Students act at all levels of the publication process with *The Exchange*. They not only author the articles, they also act as reviewers, providing and receiving quality feedback. Near the end of each term, students inhabit the role of editor, determining which pieces merit a wider audience and should advance toward publication.

At each stage the goal remains the same: develop compelling arguments that invite new perspectives and facilitate the kinds of change students want to see realized.

Our goal with *The Exchange* is to create *authentic conditions* for writing. Part of this entails using the language of publication. We use “manuscript,” for example, rather than “assignment.” Instead of an assignment prompt, we distribute a Call for Submissions. These terms are part of a larger effort to get students fired up about actually being able to change minds and behaviors.

To facilitate the exchange and review of manuscripts we use an online platform called Eli, which allows you to structure a guided review process, oversee the feedback students are giving in real-time, and make more effective interventions. Our aim with *The Exchange* is to teach quality feedback as both product and process, empowering students to become better writers by becoming better readers and reviewers. Eli is a powerful ally in this mission.

I think one of the coolest (and most effective) aspects of this project is that *The Exchange* hits the streets right after you’ve introduced it, giving you a high-quality set of model writing to debate in class. Students see others around campus reading it and realize that this isn’t your typical writing assignment. And with each quarter you teach, you’ll have a new issue to discuss, keeping the conversations timely and relevant. You can check out our last issue on the following page.
THE EXCHANGE
A FORUM FOR WRITERS, READERS, AND NEW PERSPECTIVES
Paying close attention to issues of style at the level of the sentence can be incredibly difficult in college writing courses, where essays are long and the roster is too. One cannot realistically respond in depth to both style elements and global concerns for each and every paper. Nevertheless, elements of style—word choice, syntax patterns, transition phrases, etc.—are of critical importance for persuasive writing.

Our curriculum has 50 points dedicated to an assignment where the emphasis is on style from the very beginning, thus allowing you to provide feedback that is more specific and effective.

This assignment is entirely your creation, providing an opportunity for experimenting with your pedagogy and assessing the results. Your objective is to create a project/exercise that explicitly identifies writing as a craft, where words and sentences are sculpted, molded, and worked on in ways similar to other (more traditional) craft-work.

For example, students might rework one paragraph in 5 different ways, examining how order, word choice, and tone can be manipulated to produce different effects. Or you might have students distill one page of writing down to a paragraph, and then distill it further into a single sentence, and reflect on the choices they made in the process. You can read about two other examples at right, one of mine and the other from Hannah Baggott, recent MFA graduate of OSU and winner of this year’s Lisa Ede Award for Excellence in Composition Instruction.

The Style Project is an effective tool for bridging the Critical Analysis Essay with The Exchange, which is why it’s located in weeks 7, 8, and 9 on the calendar infographic; however, its placement can work elsewhere, and it’s up to you to decide on how and when to implement it.

I play the euphemism game with my students, turning everyday phrases into what George Orwell called “double-speak.” The clip below with Frank Luntz and Bill Maher demonstrates the power of reframing, especially in politics. After watching the clip and reading Orwell’s Politics and the English Language, I provide sample sentences for students to rewrite from multiple viewpoints, “spinning” and “de-spinning” them in myriad ways.

Hannah Baggott created a Style Project around the 6-word memoir, a genre based on Hemingway’s anecdotal shortest story: “For sale: baby shoes. Never worn.” Hannah asked her students to first listen to an NPR segment, “Can You Tell Your Life Story in Exactly Words?” She then had students write a short memoir of exactly 365 words and bring it to class, where they then edited it down to 75 words. The final step was to contemplate their narrative once more and pare it down to only 6 words. All versions were then turned in as a complete assignment.

Hannah also had students practice the genre by writing a 6-word memoir about their experience in WR121. Two of my favorite are, “Conventional to creative; boring to compelling,” and “Too many thoughts, not enough time.”
Running from Week 2 through the end of Week 7 is Write365, an online writing application that encourages students to develop healthy habits of writing. Developed right here at Oregon State, Write365 is available to anyone with ONID credentials, so the best way for you to get to know the site is to log on and start writing.

Students are challenged to write 365 words (or more) three days a week. For each week where they hit this minimum, they earn 20 points. Take note that Write365 is the only means by which students can earn extra credit. Students earn extra points equal to their longest writing streak, with a maximum of 30. If they write 365 words 17 days in a row, they earn 17 extra credit points.

As an instructor, you don’t see the students’ writing. Instead, you see reports that show a variety of metrics: word count per day, words per minute, etc. Although the grading labor is minimal, that doesn’t mean the assignment should fade from view. We have found that instructors have significant influence on whether students take on the assignment in earnest. Instructors who suggest prompts for daily writing, remind students regularly, or even attempt a writing streak alongside them, notice an uptick in engagement and higher overall scores.

Write365 is the only assignment I discuss explicitly and at length in the Introduction to our textbook. I hope that by reading the next section—excerpted from the Introduction—you gain a sense of how the project fits into the course’s focus on habits, and of how you might encourage students to create their own writing habit.

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REGARDING “HABITS” IN WR 121

Towards the end of the last section I used the phrase “habits of mind.” Earlier I advocated for you to practice analysis to the extent that it becomes habitual, a reflex for revealing patterns, details, assumptions, anomalies, and possibilities. And you may have noticed that this custom text primarily consists of a book, Habits of the Creative Mind. Why all the focus on habits? Because our habits shape who we are in significant ways.

One of the crazy aspects of habits is that they often form without us really noticing. In this course, however, we’ll focus on consciously creating certain habits, a process that will necessarily include changing or “breaking” other habits (like starting a paper a few hours before it’s due). The habits we’re asking you to cultivate will allow you to observe more, observe better, and communicate those observations through the written word in more compelling ways.

Specifically, we’ll emphasize the following “habits of mind” throughout WR 121:

Curiosity — the desire to know more about the world.

Openness — the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world.

Engagement — a sense of investment and involvement in learning.

Creativity — the ability to use novel approaches for generating, investigating, and representing ideas.

Persistence — the ability to sustain interest in and attention to short- and long-term projects.

Flexibility — the ability to adapt to situations, expectations, or demands.

Metacognition — the ability to reflect on one’s own thinking as well as the individual and cultural processes used to structure knowledge.
All the best ideas come out of the process; they come out of the work itself.

~ Chuck Close
These eight habits of mind come from the Framework for Postsecondary Success, a manifesto of sorts created collaboratively by the National Council of Teachers of English, the Council of Writing Program Administrators, and the National Writing Project. Success in college and in life is frequently a matter of cultivating these habits—curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition—and this is especially true when it comes to success in writing.

All writers have certain habits, however, that diminish the power and pleasure of their writing process. The most prevalent habit I see with students is binge writing. Perhaps you’re familiar with this scenario: hours before a deadline one will puke a pile of words onto the page, heaving up anything that will fill the space needed to meet the length requirements. We’ve all done it. The problem, though, is that this approach rarely yields quality writing with any consistency. It’s also stressful, and it keeps you from learning about the craft of writing.

Just as any serious athlete or musician will tell you, regular practice is necessary to improve performance. (Can you imagine a basketball player not practicing for weeks and then trying to get better by cramming in a bunch of practice the night before a big game?) Writing is a craft that must be practiced in order to improve. By writing regularly, you’re exercising that funky muscle we call the brain. To help you create a habit of doing so, we built a writing gym of sorts. Write365 is an online writing platform that anyone with ONID credentials can use—just head to write365.tac.oregonstate.edu and log on. The challenge of the site is straight-forward: write at least 365 words a day.

Why do this? For starters, your writing will improve. The benefits of free-writing, journaling, brain-storming exercises, and drafting are well known for loosening up ideas, stimulating creativity, and allowing you to “write your way in” to a topic. Write365 provides a means for ritualizing and rewarding this kind of writing. Over time you’ll see how writing is a unique mode of thinking, a way to work through problems, and reflect on situations. This means that by improving your writing, you’re also improving your ability to think.

Another reason to use Write365 is that the muses (i.e., inspiration and ideas) most often come during composition, not before. This is Roger Ebert’s advice for writing, and I think it’s some of the best. Chuck Close, another brilliant artist, put it more bluntly: “If you wait around for the clouds to part and a bolt of lightning to strike you in the brain, you are not going to make an awful lot of work.” Insights and connections will come more easily when you establish a regular practice of writing. Make it part of your day—no matter how small—and you’ll reap big rewards.

There’s also a growing body of scientific literature that demonstrates surprising health benefits to regular writing sessions. Studies have shown that routine writing can improve memory recall in college students and reduce symptoms in depression-vulnerable young adults. Another study showed that biopsy wounds recovered faster when patients wrote regularly before the operation, compared to those who didn’t do any writing. Results of one clinical trial indicated that patients with asthma experience less attacks when they wrote about their condition. In another study, AIDS patients showed higher T-cell counts when they used writing as a supplemental support therapy. These are intense scenarios, to be sure, but they all signal the power of a writing habit.

In WR 121, we don’t require you to write every day. We will, however, reward you for it. In this curriculum, extra credit can be earned by writing 365 words (or more) multiple days in a row. These streaks not only earn you direct points, but it’s likely that by writing more regularly, you’ll become a stronger writer and earn higher grades on your other assignments, too.

Write365 is your private space—neither your teacher, nor your classmates can see your writing. You can use it as a brainstorming board, where you let random tangents out, write without stopping to edit, and just allow your thoughts to roam wildly. It can be a drafting depot, where you work your way steadily to a project’s completion. It can be a personal journal, where you record observations from the day and reflect on what’s happening in life. There are lots of ways to use Write365—it’s like a wide-open gym for practicing writing. And as is the case with any self-directed practice, you’ll get out of it what you put into it.
Let’s take special note from the beginning that this portion of the curriculum is not titled, “Reading Quizzes.” Although a quiz is a form of Reading Response, it is only one form among many from which an instructor can choose to achieve the goals listed at left. In some situations, a pop-quiz can be warranted and productive. However, relying primarily on quizzes can encourage students to surface-read just for facts, instead of engaging more thoughtfully with the material.

Reading Responses in WR121 are dynamic, varied, and generative. For example, to build a shared vocabulary, you might lead an activity where the students collaboratively craft a glossary that’s then shared on the course website for the benefit of all. Or you could lay the foundation for a lively class session by asking students to bring examples of key terms being used in other scenarios (there’s no shortage of the term “rhetoric” being used and abused in politics, for example). Reading Responses can be used to examine different annotation and note-taking methods and to encourage students to build a system that works best for them.

Understanding Rhetoric broaches this in their chapter, “Strategic Reading.”

With 75 possible points, you have plenty of options for allocation, both in terms of when they’re employed and the weight they’re assigned. We will provide examples that you can use outright or adapt, though please consider this portion of the curriculum an opportunity for you to be creative and constructive with your pedagogy.
Since I was lucky enough to get the introduction, it doesn’t seem fair to hog the last word, too. Below you’ll find some reflections from recently graduated GTAs on a variety of topics. These videos are designed to commence, in the strictest sense of the term—a contranym that means both to start and to end. So although they are the final words for this e-book, they are also teasers for what’s about to begin. We’ll hear more from each of the GTAs below, plus more.

Thank you for working through this introductory guide and for arriving at Orientation ready to roll. We’re excited to embark on what promises to be a great year.