



Writing Across the Curriculum at the University of Denver: Contexts and Issues

Essays by DU Faculty
Edited by Doug Hesse

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Introduction

**Issues in Undergraduate Writing at DU:
First Year Seminars, Advanced Seminars, and Points Between/Beyond**

Doug Hesse
Writing Program and English

In June 2013, a group of eighteen University of Denver professors gathered for an institute devoted to writing in the university's First Year Seminar (FSEM) and Advanced Seminar (ASEM) programs. Responding to a campus-wide call, all participants were veteran teachers of one or both courses, and they were scheduled to teach again during 2013-14. In concert with extended conversations, everyone completed a short article about a writing issue—in the compressed stretch of a single week. This volume presents the results.

It also maps the terrain of undergraduate writing at DU since 2006, the red-letter inception of an ambitious new campus writing initiative. My introduction, then, is part history and context, part overview of the issues that my colleagues addressed and the essays they wrote in response.

**Sites of Undergraduate Writing at DU:
A Low-Resolution Map**

A comprehensive writing program was perhaps the most visible component of an ambitious and progressive revamping of general education impelled by a gift from the Marsico Foundation. Beginning in 2006, all undergraduates were required to complete a First Year Seminar, two writing courses (one each in winter and spring), and an upper-level writing intensive core course, all in

sections capped at 15 students. Supporting this effort was a permanent and full-time professional writing faculty consisting of (by 2013) 25 lecturers hired in national searches; a state of the art writing center offering consulting to undergraduates, grad students and faculty; and over 20 new tenure-line positions across campus to build capacity for the seminars.

Writing in FSEM: Brief History

First year seminars were piloted at DU in the mid 2000s, before becoming a universal requirement in 2006. From the outset they were imagined as thematic, content rich courses, taught in small sections of fifteen to create an inquiry-based introduction to college. The catch phrase, even before I came to DU and continuing now, was that the course would focus on a subject of the professor's passion—and, one hopes, the students' as well. Students received a menu of seminars, with brief descriptions, in the summer before they arrive and selected their top choices. While there's a small "introduction to college" component, marked by the FSEM professor being first year advisor to his or her students, and while there's a socializing and bonding component, marked by the each seminar's having a budget for outings and activities, the clear focus is on the topic.

The small course caps were designed to facilitate discussion and active learning—and, in the minds of many people—writing. Indeed, curricular space for FSEM was opened by reducing the former three-course first year writing

sequence to two courses. The idea was that students would still have a full-year sequence of small, intensive courses. Starting with FSEM would steep them in a subject matter straight away and introduce them to college writing. There was a reasonable notion that students would perceive that writing was important in college, that it differed from the kinds of writing they'd done in high school, and that they needed to develop more skill and facility with it. As a result, they'd be more receptive to the WRIT 1122 courses in the winter and WRIT 1133 in the spring. The seeds of instruction in rhetoric and writing would fall on more fertile grounds. Or so many of us imagined.

There were a couple of wrinkles in this plan. First, not all faculty were convinced that FSEM needed to be writing-intensive. Some faculty, including a few based in mathematics and the natural sciences, suggested that their course might emphasize other kinds of activities, including symbolic manipulations. The compromise language was that the courses would focus on engaged learning; students were to produce knowledge, not simply receive it. (I've included the broad goals and requirements of FSEM as Appendix A.) Writing was promoted as perhaps the most obvious means of engagement and the likely default for the majority of sections. However, it was not obliged. Still, according to student reports each January, the large majority of FSEMS include writing.

The larger wrinkle for the new first year sequence, at least regarding writing, was that the nature and purpose of writing in the FSEMs was not specified. How much of the writing was to be formal, and how much informal? In terms of "formal" pieces, what was the target discourse: Disciplinary writing? Popular writing for general educated audiences? Some kinds of assumed "general academic writing?" Furthermore, what responsibilities did

FSEM faculty have for teaching writing? Were they to provide instruction? Teach concepts and strategies about writing? Read and respond to drafts?

Writing in ASEM: Brief History

Bookending FSEM is ASEM, the Advanced Seminar. ASEM similarly grew out of a pilot program located in the previous incarnation of general education at DU. In that version, students completed a series of three Core Courses, with one of them required to be writing intensive. When I arrived at DU in 2006, one of my earlier tasks was to get the Writing Intensive Courses established. Unfamiliar with how curricular changes happened here, I asked how to define and implement those requirements and was told, essentially, "We hired you as the expert. Just tell us." Tantalizing as this power was, it was also dangerous in terms of campus investment and legitimacy. I was appointed to the Faculty Core Committee, which approved courses and distributed some professional support funds, and chaired a small subcommittee of that group. This was in October, and we worked quickly. After surveying what constituted "writing intensive" at a number of campuses around the country, we decided on four requirements:

1. Students will write a minimum of 20 pages (about 6000 words), some of which may be informal, but some of which must be revised, polished, and intended for an educated readership.
2. Students will complete a minimum of three writing projects that are distributed over the quarter; exceptions might include a cumulative project completed in multiple stages.
3. Students will revise some of their work based on feedback from their professor.
4. There will be some instructional time devoted to writing.

The whole Core Committee approved them, and we put out a call for proposals. By the spring of 2007, DU was already teaching Writing Intensive Core classes, a pace of implementation that would have been

impossible at most schools. The striking thing to me was that “Writing Intensive” was defined entirely in terms of instructional requirements and features, not at all in terms of goals or outcomes. While I don’t remember consciously having this debate, one underlying assumption might have been that, given the wide variety of WI courses, any specific goals would have been impossible to create.

DU undertook a sweeping general education change in 2009, with one upshot being that the Core Courses disappeared and ASEM replaced the Writing Intensive Core requirement, with the slight modification that ASEM was imagined to be taken during the senior year or at least the late junior, after all other Common Curriculum requirements were completed. Previously approved WI Core courses were grandfathered in, provided their professors proposed outcomes and assessment processes. The previous requirements for writing were rolled over. The Core Review committee generated a new, minimal description of the course that included goals for the first time, namely, that students will

1. Integrate and apply knowledge and skills gained from general education courses to new settings and complex problems.
2. Write effectively, providing appropriate evidence and reasoning for assertions.

Both goals proved challenging both for implementation and assessment. The first goal, while emphasizing the “multiple perspectives” and “integrating knowledge” focus of the course, characteristics that differentiate it from capstone majors, for example, explicitly privileged general education courses. This proved impossible both to teach and to assess. With many complex and varied paths through general education to arrive in the advanced seminar, students would reasonably have quite different bodies of knowledge and, likely, skills, so faculty would have difficult time

planning particular assignments that drew of particular prior knowledge. Furthermore, even when student artifacts provided evidence of integrating prior knowledge and skills, it was impossible to discern whether they gained them from “general education course,” from majors courses, from self-sponsored reading or so on. As a result, we didn’t try to assess that goal until the spring of 2013; in January of that year, the ASEM committee revised the goal to read, “Demonstrate the ability to integrate and apply content from multiple perspectives to an appropriate intellectual topic or issue.”

The writing goal, while less problematic, was—and is—hardly uncomplicated. It privileges a certain kind of writing, generally argumentative, that makes assertions and provides evidence and reasoning for them. Despite these being reasonable goals for academic writing, one could imagine advanced seminars that prized different kinds of writing. Moreover, the goal is silent about matters of genre and audience for course writing. To some large extent, this is desirable leaving faculty considerable leeway to define the kinds of writing they wanted to assign and teach. Still, it provides little guidance to faculty designing courses and leaves open the broader question of what, in terms of writing, we hope ASEM might achieve.

There has been a faculty development component required of anyone teaching ASEM. Professors attend a three-day workshop, with assigned reading and writings, for which they receive \$1000 (and which accompanies another \$1000 for designing the course the first time). These workshops focus on writing as a mode of learning, developing and sequencing writing assignments, the nature of writing development during college years, responding to writing, writing-related activities during class time, grading, and so on.

WRIT 1122 and 1133

All students¹ complete a two-quarter writing sequence. WRIT 1122: Rhetoric and Academic Writing has six goals. Upon completing 1122, students will

- Demonstrate practical knowledge of the concept “rhetorical situation,” through the abilities both to analyze and to write effectively in different kinds of situations.
- Demonstrate proficiency with basic elements of rhetorical analysis (such as logos, ethos, and pathos) in a range of texts, and the application of that facility in their own writing.
- Demonstrate the ability to produce writing that effectively provides evidence and reasoning for assertions, for audiences of educated readers.
- Demonstrate the ability to incorporate and attribute or document source material in rhetorically effective ways.
- Demonstrate the ability to use feedback to revise their own writing and the ability to provide useful feedback to others.
- Demonstrate the ability to edit and proofread their writing.

WRIT 1133: Writing and Research has four goals. In addition to continuing to master the goals of WRIT 1122, students will in 1133 will:

1. Demonstrate practical knowledge of academic research traditions (for example, text-based/interpretive; measurement-

based/empirical; and observational/qualitative) through effectively writing in at least two of those traditions.

2. Demonstrate understanding of rhetorical/conventional differences among various academic disciplines or groups of disciplines.
3. Demonstrate practical knowledge of rhetorical differences between writing for academic audiences and writing for popular audiences, through both analysis and performance.
4. Demonstrate proficiency in finding, evaluating, synthesizing, critiquing, and documenting published sources appropriate to given rhetorical situations.

For a detailed elaboration of these goals, please see Appendix , which also details course features (how much writing, drafting, etc.) and policies.

Writing in the Majors

A significant amount of writing obviously happens in courses in students’ majors. DU has no formal requirements or guidelines for such writing, but two initiatives have focused some attention on writing at the departmental level. One was the Writing in the Majors Project or WIMP. Departments were invited to request funds and expert help to research the amount, kind, and quality of writing in their programs. A research team consisting of 2 or 3 professors, 2 or 3 undergraduate students, and 2 writing program faculty gathered data and completed a quick and dirty report on the state of writing. More information about WIMP is in Appendix D. The second major initiative looking at writing in the majors was the Denver Longitudinal

¹ About 10% of students earn credit for one writing course through Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams, and several students also transfer credit from other institutions.

Study of Writing. We followed 59 students through their entire undergraduate careers, collecting and analyzing every piece of writing they completed, surveying, and interviewing them.

Issues and Ideas for Writing in FSEM and ASEM Courses

Prior to the June 2013 workshops, I'd offered six foci for writing. Faculty were free to choose one of these or to select their own topic—and they did:

1. What kind of writing should students do in your class? (Or in FSEM or ASEM?) This is a richer question than it might seem. Consider the matter of audience. Should students be writing to scholarly readers—members of academic or disciplinary communities—or to educated general readers? Or consider place of publication. Should they write as if for academic journals, as if for public periodicals (*Harpers?* *The New York Times?*), for web spaces, for you as the professor?

2. What should be the purpose of the writing? Consider the conventional distinction between “writer-based” or “writing to learn” pieces and “reader-based” or “learning to write” works imagined for polished publication? What genre? My point is that the target writings we posit for a course, consciously or unconsciously, have a lot to do with how students experience writing and how we teach. Arguments can be made for all sorts of approaches.

3. What can you learn by analyzing how students perform on a “typical” assignment in your class? This option would involve your doing some close reading and analysis of a few student papers, treating them like significant and revealing artifacts. What strategies do

students use? How do they compare with strategies that you or other expert writers might use? What are comparative strengths and weaknesses? What could you change about assignments or how you teach them that might result in stronger papers?

4. What role should multimodality play in your course—or more broadly in FSEM or ASEM? Clearly, writers today have access to all sorts of modes of production and circulation that would have been exotic twenty years ago—sound, image, video, and so on. What's the relationship between traditional prose texts and all of these multimodal options? How should we deploy attention and time?

5. What do you see as your main challenge as you assign writing in your ASEM or FSEM course? Can you explain and analyze that challenge in detail? How have others wrestled with this issue? How might you?

6. What is the difference, if any, between your expectations for writing in FSEM or ASEM, and your expectations in a course you teach for majors? What similarities and differences do you perceive between the kinds of writing that students do in your course and the kinds of writing they do in other courses—especially prior to your course?

In many respects, the first questions are most fundamental, their answers complicated by two factors. First, FSEM and ASEM are designed to feature and include writing—extensive writing, in the case of ASEM—but they are not writing courses per se. That is, their focus is on addressing an issue or topic, not centrally on the development of student writing skills. To be sure, writing skills do develop through practice, with well-crafted assignments and strategic instructor feedback, but extended direct instruction in writing is not a feature of these courses—at

least not nearly to the extent that occurs in writing courses per se, that is WRIT 1122: Rhetoric and Academic Writing or WRIT 1133: Writing and Research.

Second, FSEM and ASEM by design are multi-perspectival, intended to examine a particular subject matter or focus through content best suited to the enterprise, not intended to introduce a discipline. ASEM is particularly interesting and vexed in this regard. Senior capstone seminars that exist in many programs or follow the trajectory of the major; students complete projects—or one major project—that somehow applies and embodies accumulated disciplinary knowledge, in the company of fellow majors, with departmental professors as a large context and audience. However, ASEM is intentionally and defiantly not a capstone in a discipline. It interrupts the usual flow of American general education whereby students get basic requirements out of the way en route to specialization. We know, by the way, from the University of Denver Longitudinal Study of Writing that many students relish ASEM and the opportunity, late in their studies, to step outside their majors courses and into a fresh topic of personal interest.

Several institute participants pursued a version of this issue. Before introducing their work, however, let me map the general terrain of undergraduate writing at DU.

The Contents of this Volume

The brief essays that follow are organized into four broad groups.

The first focuses directly on the issue of writing to learn vs. learning to write; at stake is the degree to which the primary focus in FSEM and ASEM courses should be on writing that promotes student learning—that is, whose purpose is explorative and, perhaps, writer-focused—or on writing designed to meet

reader expectations—that is, whose purpose is designed to display demonstrate conventions and, thus, reader or discipline-focused. **Hillary Hamman** (Geography and the Environment) explores this in the context of her FSEM, *Colorado Rivers*, explaining how the course does both, even as she considers more writing to learn opportunities. **Kateri McRae** (Psychology) develops a matrix of goals and perspectives for her ASEM course, “Emotions in Theatre and the Brain.” One dimension of that matrix is knowledge that is “objective” v. “subjective.” Another is a set of goals, including content (empirical measures v. personal insight) and writing skills (third person, technical v. first person, narrative). **Hava Gordon** (Sociology and Criminology; Gender and Women’s Studies) asks a tough question of students in her ASEM course “Globalization from Above and Below?” Do students actually become better writers? The question is especially complicated because writing brings a third dimension to the content and process concerns that mark ASEM. A brief essay by **Doug Hesse** (Writing Program and English), sets these issues in the historical context of American Writing Across the Curriculum movements.

A second group focuses more specifically on issues their authors have identified with FSEM courses. While issues of the type and purpose of writing shoot through pieces in this section, too, the essays foreground the first-year element. In “Genre-Hopping: Teaching Writing Reflexivity in First Year Seminars,” **Pavithrah Prasad** (Communication Studies) explains how having students adhere to parameters of specific and varied genres can work in concert with self-reflexivity and evaluation. **Blake Sanz** (Writing Program) explores “Assigning Multiple Genres of Writing in an FSEM Course,”

in this case, his focusing on “Literary Depictions of Madness.” **Jennifer Hoffman** (Physics and Astronomy) discusses “Integrating Writing with Content in a Science-Themed FSEM,” which in 2012 was called “Measuring the Milky Way.” **Sarah Morelli** (Music) discusses “Writing as a Tool for Shifting Focus: From Content- to Process-based Teaching in FSEM.”

A third cluster of essays explores various issues emerging from faculty experiences teaching ASEM. **Lindsay Feitz** (Gender and Women’s Studies) rethinks “Feminist Pedagogy and the Question of Audience in ASEMs,” using her course “Sex and Globalization” as the case. **Sandra Lee Dixon** (Religious Studies) uses her course “Do the Wicked Prosper?” as the basis for “Liberal Arts and Essays in Advanced Seminars.” **Ermitte Saint Jacques** (Anthropology) explains how she addresses the challenge of incorporating instructional time for writing in her ASEM course “Muslims and Identity in Europe.” Finally, in “How Far is too Far? Music, Consciousness, and Mind-Altering Substances in ASEM,” **Kristin Taavola** (Music) narrates and analyzes a particularly challenging set of events in her ASEM “Music and Consciousness.”

The final set of essays here explore broader issues of writing in these courses. In “Multimodal Writing in an FSEM Context,” **John Tiedemann** (Writing Program) explains how he has students create graphic novellas in his course “Graphic Writing Across Cultures,” making the case that having students compose in modes other than writing helps them become more purposeful, attentive, and imaginative writers. **Lydia**

Gil Keff (Languages and Literatures), makes a related call for multimodal writing, in this case to the serve the needs of international students she teaches in her hybrid iFSEM, “Immigrant Stories: Theirs and Ours.” The gist of her essay, which explains both why and how to, is captured in her title, “Multimodality in the FSEM Classroom: Digital Storytelling and ESL Students.” The needs of international students figure prominently in “Reflections on My Use of Writing in ASEM and FSEM Classes,” by **Jing Sun** (Political Science). Sun also notes a significant difference between his ASEM (“Politics of Reconciliation”) and his iFSEM (“Pacific Century: American, China, and Competition for Global Leadership”), writing in the former being more content-based and in the latter more process-based. **Kara Taczak** (Writing Program) offers three strategies for helping students embrace both the “ugly” aspects of their writing experiences and the possibility for becoming better.



Finally, in “Fundamental Problems in Structure: IDEAS ARE ALL THAT MATTER,” **Tyrone Davis** (Media, Film, and Journalism Studies) develops three concepts that he argues are vital to every meaningful writing.

Writing to Learn, Learning to Write: Are Students in FSEM 1111: “Colorado’s Rivers” Doing Either Effectively?

Hillary Hamann

Department of Geography & the Environment

For two years I have taught an FSEM entitled “Colorado’s Rivers.” The course was born out of both my recreational and research interests and broadly addresses the geography, hydrology, human impacts to and future of rivers in Colorado. The course was designed to meet the FSEM Common Curriculum learning goals to develop an intellectual community and practice active learning through a variety of inquiry activities. In my class these activities include readings, discussions, field/laboratory work, a service project and writing assignments. In addition to weekly reading summaries, students are assigned to write seven critical analysis essays. My syllabus states my goal for this latter assignment: to help students “to engage more specifically and deeply with the week’s readings and activities.”

However, despite reading and grading more than 200 of these essays over two years, I have not stepped back to examine whether my assignment indeed promotes the learning goals that I have expressed. Because this assignment spans the 10 week course and is repeated it provides an opportunity to use these writings as “revealing classroom artifacts” (Melzer 2009: W240) to examine learning. In this essay, I closely examined the essays of my 2012 FSEM class to identify common pitfalls in early writings and to determine if students show improvement through the quarter. More broadly, I questioned whether that students are “writing-to-learn” or “learning-to-write” (“writing-in-the-disciplines”) through these essays with the goal of better aligning my learning

expectations and goals with my writing assignments and student outcomes.

Melzer (2009) concisely defines the focus of “writing-to learn” as an expressivist pedagogy, and thus as informal and exploratory with the self as audience. He contrasts “learning-to-write” or “writing-in-the-disciplines” as investigating writing in different and specialized discourse communities. Additionally, Rosen (in Russell 1992:158) suggests disciplinary writing to be more formal and impersonal. Yet, as Melzer (2009: 244) also highlights, many examining the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) movement argue that a split between these two approaches is artificial. Certainly, if the goals of WAC are to use writing “to produce active student-*and* teacher-centered learning” (Russell 1992: 165), then there is room for more integration of both approaches.

Expectations

Before participating in the 2013 ASEM/FSEM Writing Institute, I had not thought explicitly about WAC or its goals. Indeed, in teaching an FSEM, although active learning and intellectual community are learning goals, writing per se is not. Still, because I assign writing, it is helpful to examine the goals and conventions that I expect, even in retrospect.

I provide students with a detailed, four-page assignment and grading rubric handout for the Critical Analysis Short Essay assignment. This handout details length expectations (250-350 words), due dates and online turn-in procedures (the essays are due

outside of class times and turned in on Blackboard using SafeAssign to help check for plagiarism). The handout also gives a suggested process for students to help them develop a thesis statement and write their essays. Finally, the handout provides an explanation and detailed examples of in-text citation use and formatting as well as my grading rubric for the papers. My grading rubric provides a grid of expectations for each grade (A,B, C, etc) in three categories: content, writing and mechanics. For example, I define an A paper as the following:

- Content--Thesis and ideas are thoughtful, innovative and linked to the week's topic. Thorough support of ideas is provided from the week's assigned readings. Paper provides high quality reasoning and analysis.
- Writing-- Paper is well organized and clearly written with few to no grammatical, punctuation or spelling errors. Direct quotes are only used when critical for capturing author's exact phrasing.
- Mechanics-- Paper follows assignment guidelines for length and is correctly and appropriately referenced.

Examining my assignment through the lens of writing-to-learn and learning-to-write, I find that while my goal for the assignment and perhaps the content element of the grading rubric reflect an emphasis on exploration and writing-to-learn, a large portion of my expectation and rubric for this assignment privileges a learning-to-write or writing-in-the-discipline approach. Geography is a broad discipline that encompasses numerous types of/approaches to writing, similar to what Matthew Evangelista describes of political science. My own physical/environmental science research background and writing conventions are just one example of styles/genres encountered in Geography. Yet, based on my background, I have come to expect similar style conventions from my students including clear organization and a

claims and evidence approach. In my assignment, I expect an essay that:

begins with an introduction that sets out clearly what the author intends to argue, including a summary of the main conclusion or 'findings.' Each paragraph follows in an order that the reader will have anticipated from the introduction. The conclusion typically sums up the overall argument and often proposes suggestions for further research (Evangelista, 168).

Considering these expectations helps to better examine student essays in terms the skills and styles that they bring from their past experiences, the common pitfalls that I identify in their writing and what types of improvements they show with repeated attempts at this particular writing style.

Analysis

I began my analysis by reviewing the first set of papers turned in by students. The readings, lectures and discussions in the first week of class that formed the basis for the first essay focused on the early exploration and mapping of Colorado's rivers and the importance of rivers and water resources today. I looked at these essays specifically in terms of my grading rubric categories and present them in the same order: content, writing, and mechanics. I then examined the essays of a few students that showed improvement through the quarter to try to identify where the improvements were occurring in terms of the same categories.

Content: In terms of paper content, most students did not seem to have a problem focusing in on a specific aspect of the readings. The level and quality of their thesis, ideas and support varied. Few were strong, a couple were quite weak (eg. providing a summary instead of analysis), but most were acceptable for the first essay.

Beginning with their thesis idea, several patterns appear. The first is the student whose thesis remains too general. As an example, one student wrote the following thesis statement:

There are many underlying issues that Colorado must deal with when it comes to its "precious" water.

In contrast, another student provided a clear and focused thesis that was clearly drawing from the readings:

The author posed the question as to whether conservation or creation was the key to increasing the amount of water available in Colorado. Through reading it has become clear that conservation is a better way to ensure that the people of Colorado have water available in the future.

Katzenstein comments that a challenge for many new college students is "to know what is interesting and to make critical judgments" (174). The second student in the examples above seems, at first glance, to be more skilled in identifying an interesting and critical idea for analysis. However, in terms of innovation and creativity, the following introduction excerpt may be the best of the 15 essays:

Pertaining to this article, control of the river was control of food, water, shelter and a mode of transportation during the early exploration of the west. Whoever was in control of the river had the say as to who passed through and who didn't, which could've impacted who settled where. Today, this idea of river control is

equal to nation control can still be applied to an extent.

The idea presented by the student begins to step away from the face-value of the information presented and begins to expand on the ideas of the readings while still using them as support. The clarity of the argument and writing, however, needed some work in order for the essay to reach its full potential. This critique brings up an important example of where the expectation of writing-to-learn starts to cross over to learning-to-write. In this case, writing-in-the-discipline includes a level of specificity and clarity that are necessary even if the student's ideas are good.

Writing: For most students, writing organization and grammar were relatively strong. Certain students had clear issues with grammar and spelling, but most could express themselves well. Even clarity was pretty consistent overall. Some students could shorten sentences for clarity, but most didn't get too bogged down in trying to use a voice they were not comfortable with.

Two main writing pitfalls appeared to predominate. The first was the use of questions. A number of students utilized question statements in their introductions. Very often they answered them, but in most cases the question was used as a "hook" to create interest and draw the reader in to the essay. This convention is often emphasized in high school writing assignments such as the five-paragraph-essay. Writing in the discipline of science asks students to be concise, to present the conclusions first (eg. in an abstract) and to interact less with the reader. Thus, in a short essay such as I have assigned to my students, the use of questions or other hooks such as anecdotes use up space (words) that could be more effectively used to argue and support their thesis.

A second writing pitfall (specifically writing-in-the-discipline here) in the first set of essays is the voice and objectivity used by students. Although students may be told in high school never to use "I" in their writing, that aversion did not appear and many

students used “I” freely in their essays. The trouble came in how they used “I” and personal opinion in their analysis.

The following example uses “I” in a way that fits within the expected disciplinary style by backing up an opinion with information from the reading.

One new possible way would be Cloud Seeding mentioned by McDaniel (2012). This is when scientists send up silver iodide chemicals into the clouds and hope they release their precipitation. I am not a huge advocate for this idea because the effects of the silver iodide can be negative. Also there haven't been signs of Cloud Seeding being successful in any particular area.

However, there are many more examples of students who use “I” to fall back on personal opinions or reactions. Here are three examples:

I enjoyed reading this passage because the information was presented in an easily understandable way and the author strove to show the importance of water in every aspect of our lives.

The readings from this week were both very interesting yet totally different. I enjoyed reading Orsi's article about the early exploration of Colorado's rivers and how difficult travel was during that time, but McDaniel Article is what I am most interested in.

Throughout the article How Precious is Water? I was repeatedly surprised by facts about where Colorado's water comes from and what uses it is put towards.

One of the conventions of writing-in-the-discipline is that authority is often established by the author's absence rather than by their presence (Bartholomae, 622). This convention is one that students are clearly less comfortable with using or they may be drawing more heavily on the genre of the “opinion paper” (Reiff and Bawarshi, 323) that they have more comfort or experience using.

Mechanics: Within my rubric, the mechanics section provided room to make sure that students followed directions for length and references. Student essays almost all fell within the length guidelines. However, despite detailed instructions about how to correctly use in-text parenthetical references, almost none of the students did this without error. Several had no in-text references at all. My informal questions revealed that this format of reference was one that few students had experience with. My comments in student papers corrected formatting, inserted references where appropriate as a demonstration and referred students back to the examples provided in the assignments. Most students showed improvement in future essays, though at least one student was persistent in their lack of use of in-text references. For this student, it appears that referencing habits are quite hard to break.

Improvements: Grades and quality of student essays rarely showed a clear trajectory from needs work to improving to improved. Instead, grades bounced around. Some students slipped in some weeks and lost ground on mechanics, writing or

content that they seemed to have made up in earlier essays.

There are likely multiple explanations ranging from the relative amenability of the assigned readings to a creative thesis or even an obvious one. It is also likely that the time spent on the essays varied dramatically based on other social and academic demands at the time.

Interestingly, most students showed poorer performance on their second essay. Only two students showed improvement, including a non-native speaker who utilized the writing center. The second student showed relatively consistent improvement through the quarter. While the student began with a style that emphasized personal experience and opinion, his essays first developed a strong thesis, and then began to develop strong support from the readings.

Conclusions

The goal of my analysis was to identify ways to better align student outcomes with my writing goals and expectations. In fact, one of the main conclusions that I am able to draw from this exercise is that while I thought my assignment might have leaned toward a writing-to-learn exercise, it also was heavily weighted toward a learning-to-write experience. Knowing this fact, along with many of the pitfalls that students experience related to writing in the discipline gives me several ideas to improve my course and assignments to meet both goals.

First, I see a strong value in being more explicit and transparent to students about the role that their essays play in gaining practice in writing-in-the discipline. I can also be much clearer about what that entails and show students several of the pitfall examples presented in this paper. A corollary to this practice will be including an explicit

learning goal in my syllabus to express writing-in-the-discipline, such as, “Students will develop the ability to support assertions with evidence and argue clearly and logically.”

Secondly, because I feel that I may be shortchanging students on the practice of writing-to-learn, I plan to alter a second weekly assignment—the reading summaries. By encouraging students to explore and express themselves in a more informal way, I can encourage the first steps of the writing process that my critical analysis essay assignment suggests:

- 1) Prepare by reading all materials and thinking about some of the different issues raised in your reading and in class discussions and activities.
- 2) Select one of the ideas, which has lingered in your mind because you disagree or are uncomfortable with it (critique), or because you agree with it but believe it needs much more thought (analysis), or that you see as a common theme addressed in several different ways (synthesis).
- 3) Consider a question about this lingering **idea** that you might want to investigate in your paper. Ask yourself what your **feelings** are about this issue, and what **reasons** you might use to support your feelings. If you like what you have come up with then you are ready to form a preliminary thesis. If you do not like it then go back and consider another question from your reading.

Finally, I believe that I can help students to develop both their writing-to-learn and learning-to-write skills by incorporating required drafts, peer review and self-editing of papers. By reducing the number, but expanding the length of papers, students can spend more time developing the innovative thesis, strong support and writing conventions that I expect.

Structuring Objectives in ASEM

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Psychology

In my ASEM, titled “Emotions in Theatre and the Brain,” the course content is built around two lines of inquiry into the nature of human emotion. Students learn that emotions can be studied objectively by manipulating variables in psychological experiments and measuring one or more aspects of the emotional response. Students are also exposed to the idea that emotions are also inherently subjective phenomena, so their personal experiences and insights are also valuable. These two methods of learning about emotions, objective and subjective, are paralleled with instruction in two types of writing. Students learn to write objectively, in the third person, reporting on facts, following the logic of the scientific process, using evidence from previous empirical studies, complete with citations in APA style. In parallel, they are encouraged to write subjectively, weaving a compelling story about emotions from their personal history, using the first person, reporting on emotions and memories, following the chronology of their insight unfolding over time, and using evidence from their own experience, no citations needed.

There are several goals of my ASEM. They can be most easily divided into objectives surrounding the course content and objectives aimed at building specific skills. Below, I refer to the objectives regarding course content as “Writing to Learn” objectives, and objectives regarding writing skills as

“Learning to Write” objectives. I will outline the nature of these objectives briefly, and then move on to a section about the various ways that I try to motivate the students to achieve both of these objectives.

Writing to Learn

There are two major objectives in my ASEM that could be characterized as broader generalizable skills that students must master while writing in the course. The first involves clearly structuring knowledge, and the second involves drawing parallels between scientific reports of experimental findings and their personal experiences. The first goal is primary in that in order to draw the correct parallels, the knowledge must be structured correctly.

The first goal, structuring knowledge, also reflects the clarity with which the students understand the course content. All students in the course write about a “truth” of human emotion. Many students choose to compare and contrast prominent theories about emotion, or to report the results of a particular experiment. In all of these cases, students are encouraged, as William James would say, to “carve nature at its joints.” By this, I mean that the students are encouraged to zoom in on a single distinction that is especially crucial in the topic they’re discussing. An example from the present paper would be the distinction between

objective and subjective ways of learning about emotions. I encourage students to make the precise qualities that distinguish these from one another the crux of their research paper and to summarize in a single sentence the most important distinguishing quality. For example, I might summarize by saying, “The main distinction between objective and subjective methods of learning about emotion is that objective methods involve measuring emotion using empirically validated, replicable means and subjective methods involve personal experience and insight.” To emphasize that this is a structural goal, I often have students represent this distinction visually, using a two- or three-column chart, for example.

Figure 1 displays an example of a two-column chart, depicting the distinction between understanding objective and subjective methods of inquiry about human emotion.

The second goal, drawing parallels between empirical studies and the students’ personal lives, is both exciting and tricky. Most students in this course enjoy writing about their personal experiences. However, it can be difficult for them to use these personal examples as precise parallels to the scientific concepts, theories or findings that they are writing about. The inability to draw this parallel in a tight fashion is in some sense helpful and diagnostic. Often, students

who struggle with the person parallel lack complete understanding of the underlying distinction I have asked them to make. Often, to help with this parallel, I encourage students to make a second row in their three-column chart (or other visual tool). Then I ask them to make sure that their personal examples align well with the examples on the chart. Most often, the student can then see when the distinction that has been made in the first row of the chart does not serve the examples second row equally well. This lack of deep parallelism can be more easily hidden in a lengthy piece of writing than in a bare visual representation, such as the chart. Having students contain their thoughts in the chart forces them to be specific, clear, and decisive about the structure of their topic. To me, the chart assists in the construction of an apt analogy, and can lead to one of the deepest forms of understanding.

In Figure 2, I’ve added another row to my previous chart. This second row adds writing skills as a second goal in my class. The existing columns inform the distinction between the two types of writing I would like to teach, and with this structure, the hope is that the analogy is informative.

		Perspective	
		Objective	Subjective
Goal	Content	Empirical measures	Personal Insight

Figure 1. Contrasting goals of objective and subjective methods of inquiry about human emotion.

		Perspective	
		Objective	Subjective
Goal	Content	Empirical measures	Personal Insight
	Writing Skills	Third person, technical	First person, narrative

Figure 2. Writing skills added to goals of objective and subjective methods of inquiry about human emotion.

These full charts also represent an important way of thinking within experimental psychology – a factorial design. In a factorial design, two types of manipulations of an experimental setting or procedure are ‘crossed’ with one another. When understanding the results of these experiments, it is an important skill to deconstruct the factorial into its component parts. While all four conditions are informative, it is also useful to think separately about each factor, or main effect, separately, and then how they relate to one another, or interact. In this way, structuring knowledge and drawing parallels prepares the students in my class to think more like a professional research psychologist.

Learning to Write

In addition to representing psychological concepts clearly, another major goal of the course is writing proficiency. I try to convey two main messages about writing. The first is that writing is a communicative act. The

second is that different writing styles are important for different contexts.

There are several qualities of my course that serve as evidence of my conceptualization that writing is communicative, most of them are the writing strategies I offer my students. I ask them to try to imagine their audience as their roommate, or a student in a different class. Ultimately, I would like them to convey their ideas to a reader who is educated and bright but lacks the specialized knowledge taught in the class. I often ask them to explain the idea for their paper to their roommate before writing, to solidify the logical structure and to keep audience in mind. Another artifact of my communicative view of writing is that I have them work with several different peers in the class to review drafts of the paper. I try to make the case that once someone reads your paper more than once or twice, they are not an objective judge of whether you’re transmitting ideas clearly or not. Finally, I encourage students to leave drafts of their paper alone for a while between revisions.

In this way, they are re-visiting their own arguments with somewhat fresh eyes.

The second writing goal, for students to understand that there are different writing styles for different contexts, is strongly emphasized by the writing assignments. Students are asked first to draft two separate papers, one written objectively, in the third person, reporting on empirical findings from the course readings, and the other written subjectively, in the first person, reporting on an emotional experience. The final paper asks students to weave these two styles of writing together into a seamless argument for or against a particular “truth” about human emotion. I have found that it is imperative that students write their drafts separately, to try on the very different styles and voices, and only then are students successful in combining them to make a unified argument.

Motivating Course Objectives

Another large part of my class is to motivate the students to write well, and to see the utility of writing well beyond the course context. One philosophy that I employ for this purpose is that of transparency. I walk the students through the logic of the university offering the course, and then of my own grading system for their assignments in the course. In this attempt, my goal is to make the objectives of the course clear, challenging, but ultimately achievable.

In service of this goal of transparency, I introduce the objectives of the course in the context that DU is holding me accountable to make sure that they graduate as a proficient writer. I then have them help me enumerate the reasons that DU would care so much about the skill of writing to warrant a specialized course that is required for graduation. In addition, after students have turned in several drafts of assignments, we reserve

time to have students reveal to one another what their post-graduation plans are. I have the students brainstorm about how they might use writing in these various jobs or hobbies. In addition, reinforce the second message about writing in the course by asking students to classify these writings as subjective or objective. This helps reinforce my second “Learning to Write” goal in a more relevant, real-world context.

To achieve transparency in how students will be evaluated, I give students as much information about assignments and grading as early as possible. On the first day of class, I give them a sample final paper, written to the exact prompt that their final paper will have. I also give them the rubric that I use to grade the papers. I first thought to do this in response to comments on student evaluations that indicated that the students didn’t know what the final paper should look like, even as they were completing exercises and drafts of it throughout the quarter. This grading preview also had the unexpected benefit of an opportunity to make my grading system transparent. After seeing what I expect the final product of the course to be, and the rubric with which it will be graded, I ask for the students’ input on the deadlines that outlines, drafts and final papers will be due. I have found that the students are more willing to stick to the deadlines that are set when they have had a voice in setting them.

Concluding Comment

Many faculty members struggle with the balance between content and writing instruction in an ASEM course. I think that the 10-week course is indeed too short for students to digest a quarter’s worth of content while completing related writing assignments. What has allowed me to feel as though there is enough space is

when the understanding of the content informs the writing, and the writing process underscores the content. By collapsing content-driven and writing-

driven goals into a single underlying structure, students can both write to learn and learn to write.



Writing to Learn versus Learning to Write: The Impact of Informal and Formal Writing Assignments in ASEM

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At a first glance, and for faculty who did not participate in the curricular discussions that led to the creation of the common curriculum ASEM requirement, the ASEM seems to have been instituted to promote three things: critical thinking, interdisciplinary examination, and (of prime importance) better writing among our students who are preparing to leave the university as their undergraduate odyssey comes to an end. It is also the bookend to the FSEM: a small, intimate fifteen person seminar. For the professor, the course offers the promise of an experience that is interdisciplinary, quirky, centered on the instructor's passion and full of wild promise: an opportunity to stray from one's disciplinary boundaries to teach and engage in deep investigation of a complex issue that might already pervade one's professional work and general consciousness.

There is also the potential that a room full of students will pick *your* course out of the vast array of courses they could choose- your course, whose subject material *could* be as fascinating to them as it is to you. There is also the promise that this won't be the summer camp experience that is the FSEM. In the ASEM, you have seasoned undergrads who have been through writing courses, who have mastered their departmental curriculums, who are acclimated to college expectations and can more clearly prioritize multiple responsibilities, and

who have presumably become adept at time-management. They are ready to buckle down and devote the next ten weeks to the course you have passionately created, and you can ask a lot of them.

The Course

My ASEM is "Globalization from Above and Below." As a social movements scholar and someone who (at least tries) to write about how neoliberalism impacts the ways in which community movements function, the massive phenomenon of globalization lurks in the background of all of my research questions. I obsessively listen to the news of the European debt crisis, for example, trying to figure out how this catastrophe might clue me into a phenomenon I research in my own city: the crisis of public school failure and the politics of urban school reform. I view the ASEM as my chance to tackle something more vast, contradictory, evolving, and mystifying than I can possibly contain within my more narrow research focus or with any other course. This is my chance to look at this phenomenon through multiple lenses: not just sociology, but also Women's and Gender Studies, economics, political science, cultural studies, and activist writings. And I get the chance to think about this fascinating stuff with fifteen

other brains who want to think and talk about the same thing!

And oh, there is that *writing* component. Hmm... what to make of that? The ASEM is not just an interdisciplinary, engaging capstone to an undergraduate odyssey. It is also intentionally designed to sharpen students' writing skills and to make them *better* writers. Although this has always been somewhat of a goal in my other classes, I have realized that this has been a secondary goal of mine. More important to me has been that the writing students produce stand as evidence to me that students' learned and critically thought about the MOST important thing: the content of the course. So at first, I felt a bit out of my depth. The writing component seemed like an add-on for me. For those of us who remember the CORE, the ASEM is a restructuring of the CORE- with an added (and integral) writing component. As ASEM instructors, we must emphasize and teach writing, as well as teach the substantive material.

Most often, as instructors, we think about teaching as a dual exercise in and of itself already: our responsibility is on the *content* of teaching and the *process* of teaching. We constantly try, and fail, and try again to translate the volumes of disciplinary work we have consumed into an engaging lesson that will capture students' imaginations, bring out their best selves, and maybe even change the way they view and impact the world. We think about content and about process, about what kinds of material are vital to teach, and how exactly to teach these.

The ASEM adds a third dimension to this; forcing us to think about not just *pedagogy* as process, but also about *writing* as process. So the usual dual goal of teaching has now become triple with the ASEM. We are to communicate important information, teaching

effectively, and produce better writers. For me, someone who usually thinks about writing as a vehicle for digesting content, but not really as a goal in and of itself, there was the temptation to think of the writing component as a simple overlay or add-on. I'd figure I'd build in a few writing workshops here and there, have students revise a draft, include an array of informal and formal writing pieces, and voila! I've done it.

Beyond the Overlay

This is how I approached the writing process in my ASEM at first: as an overlay. A well-intentioned, thorough, and thoughtful overlay, but an overlay nevertheless. I strategically built writing into my syllabus so that it was unmistakable, but I was still not clear on why it was there beyond fulfilling ASEM requirements. What I found, however, is that I enjoyed a cascade of benefits simply by thinking more carefully about instituting this intentional writing process within my course, and found that the writing-intensive requirement gave me more license to demand more productive writing and critical-thinking from the entire class. I have realized that getting students to engage in various and consistent writing exercises forced them to read the material more deeply and critically in order to write. And when they read the material more deeply and critically, they were ready to engage more readily in class discussion.

I instituted a number of writing assignments in this course, mostly to prepare students for class discussion. On the one hand, I felt comfortable instituting a tried and true writing assignment that I use in nearly all my classes: periodic short response papers throughout the quarter. In most of my classes, I ask my students to write a series of two-page response papers, each

covering all of the readings for a given day. In two pages (three at most), students must demonstrate to me that they grasped the main concepts, respond to these concepts with their own reactions and/or critiques, and offer a discussion question. A tall order for a two page paper! Since the ASEM is a writing-intensive seminar, however, I felt license to expand this response paper to four pages, which produced much more careful and in-depth writing from students. Students were to write four of these throughout the quarter. On the days these were due, students came to class having hashed out their reiteration, analysis, and critique of what we had all read. Our class sessions were spent putting all of these analyses into conversation with each other, and playing with student discussion questions. As a result, I had to spend much less time outlining the reading for the class, and spent more time in dynamic and productive discussion that went beyond the readings. To my surprise, these four page papers were even more productive for class discussion than are my usual two page papers—as the two page papers still allow students to skim the material, and perhaps not read it as closely as they must in a writing-intensive seminar.

Because I felt I couldn't ask students to write a four page paper for each class, and because I certainly couldn't grade all of this work, I made it clear at the outset that even on the days that students didn't turn in formal writing, I would assess their preparation for class and their understanding of course readings through various informal, in-class writing assignments (it is, after all, a writing-intensive course!). In my other courses, I don't require writing from students for every class period. But for the ASEM, I felt I had license to ask students to do this. I also made it clear at the outset of the course that I would use these informal

writing assignments in class to assess their preparation for class. Usually, the in-class writing would be prompted by a single, focused question. I would have students do this writing at the beginning of class, or sometimes in the middle. Often, I would have students read each other's writing and start discussion from there. Making their writing "public," even just to each other, produced an accountability to student writing and made the stakes somewhat higher in terms of what students produced.

Writing and the Quality of Class Time

As I began teaching the ASEM, I realized that there was an important and extraordinarily valuable relationship between students' writing and the overall quality of the time we spent together in the classroom. Through crafting writing assignments designed to hold students accountable to the reading (nearly every reading, each class), and by consistently making their work public to each other, I began to see their writing efforts translate into electrified, motivated, and invested discussion that surprisingly held up even when we hit the usual points of collective exhaustion throughout the quarter (I find these are the 4th week and the 7th week walls, where no matter what my lesson plan is, it seems to fall flat at these tough times in the ten week quarter). At the end of the course, one student in the class approached me and said "I don't know what it was about this class, maybe that we met around a table and were facing each other, but I've never had a class where people were so excited to talk *all* the time." I felt this same way. Although the student couldn't quite pinpoint "why" the discussion was consistently so engaging (and maybe it *was* the table that we sat around!), I attribute this to the writing my students were required to produce for the course.

Where I still struggle, however, is around whether or not students actually *became better writers* as a result of my class. I can speak volumes about how constructive and productive short writing assignments like response papers and in-class informal writing assignments were to producing a *quality* of student discussion that I do not experience in my other courses. I have been so moved by this experience that I plan to at least attempt to institute these same consistent writing exercises in my other courses as well. I have now seen the ways in which writing produces a much more enjoyable collective classroom experience, especially in an engaged seminar, and I now realize that student writing powerfully advances my other pedagogical goals. But this is a clear example of “writing-to-learn.” Students really did learn as a result of their writing.

Does Writing Improve?

But did students really “learn-to-write?” That, I cannot confidently answer. Their large writing assignment required them, by week 7, to pick an instance of counter-hegemonic globalization and assess how extensively, and in what ways, it countered hegemonic globalization. Students focused on a wide range of political projects to examine: culture jamming, Venezuela’s 21st century socialism, the fair trade movement, and even localized, conscious hip-hop. These were projects that students picked themselves, and that they were excited about. They read and reviewed each other’s 5-6 page versions of what, by the end of the quarter, was to turn into an 8-10 page polished paper. They were also required to integrate several course readings, as well as outside research (both peer-reviewed and non-peer reviewed sources). I gave them extensive feedback on their midterm papers according to the

detailed rubric I gave them: feedback on everything from grammatical errors and awkward sentences, to how to develop a more convincing argument as to why their chosen topic stands as a clear example of counter-hegemonic globalization. Their final drafts were to reflect this feedback, and most students turned in improved and expanded versions of their earlier papers.

But did they actually become better writers? Or did they simply take my and classmates’ specific feedback to systematically produce a better final version? And what is the difference? This was the most formal piece of writing I had them do (complete with a revision process), and the one piece of writing that was more individualistic. This writing represented an effort to “learn-to-write” as it was much more intentionally designed to hone a broader set of writing skills (including integrating research and making a compelling argument anchored in various scholarship). Yet, besides quickly presenting their final papers in the last week of class for about ten minutes each, this was one piece of writing that wasn’t made public to anyone but myself, and was not for the purposes of enhancing class discussion or our collective understanding. While impressive, these pieces of writing were still not quite as engaging and sharp as the shorter pieces of informal writing.

I now see that many formal writing assignments like this that I assign for my classes are often for an imagined academic audience, and they are important to me—but they don’t necessarily produce a palpable difference in my actual course the way that shorter “write-to-learn” writing exercises might. They require many components and student labor, but it is hard to really assess whether or not the student gained writing skills that they will carry into other writing assignments or tasks ahead of them, academic or

otherwise. While the rest of the student writing for the class magically and magnetically aligned with our collective class interaction, this more formal piece of writing had a mechanistic, abstract, individualistic quality to it that seemed less urgent or applicable. This realization, that my writing assignments produced different kinds of investment in the class and in each other, leaves me wondering how to make more formal, complicated, academic writing assignments take on the same student urgency, passion, excitement, and investment that I saw in the more consistent “write-to-learn” assignments.



What Kind of Writing Across the Curriculum? History, Trajectory, and a Nudge for Civic Discourse

Doug Hesse
Writing Program and English

Without a doubt, the prime lever for expanding the writing across the curriculum movement was the promotion of writing as a mode of learning. Encapsulated in Janet Emig's influential 1977 article by the same name, this movement articulated how the activity of writing promoted deeper learning and understanding than more passive modes of reading and listening. It was a line of thinking umbrellaed later by the "Active" or "Engaged" Learning folks, a trajectory that continues to morph through enterprises like the flipped classroom. The thrust of this movement was to replace learning as a receptive activity, marked by taking occasional exams and completing occasional writings that functioned primarily as exams, with learning as a productive activity. Students instead were to do and make things.

Writing as a mode of learning had a couple of major promises and advantages. First, it freed professors across campus from having to think of themselves substantially—or even significantly—as writing teachers. Writing became a means to promote learning of course content, a means to an end that respected professors' interests and appealed to their perceptions of expertise. The juxtaposition was "writing to learn" vs. "learning to write," with the latter being perhaps an ancillary consequence of the former, not necessarily something that had to be tackled head on.

Second, it meant that new forms of writing could be justified in the academy. Instead of formal papers and reports or genres correlating to published writing, professors could assign forms that were instrumental to learning, genres like journals or letters or

microthemes. Just as high energy physics creates particles or elements that don't exist outside the environments in which they were made, so might writing assignments function as modest supercolliders. If the focus was on learning and not on crafting well-made artifacts—on the writer and subject matter rather than on the audience—then all manner of prompts and exercises free from "real world" constraints got legitimated. The bible of all Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) faculty development, John Bean's *Engaging Ideas*, collected this wisdom in several chapters, most notably an extended one on informal writing assignments.

The Rise of WID

Of course, Bean's bible has another chapter on formal writing assignments, and surely these didn't disappear from campuses. However, they did begin taking a different form in the late 1980s, with the rise of Writing in the Disciplines, or WID. The twin underpinnings were, first, social constructivist theory, embodied in the idea of discourse communities—groups of people who communicate about certain topics in certain ways through certain channels—and, second, genre theory, which described the different epistemologies, rhetorics, and textual characteristics of different categories of writing. For many scholars, the upshot was that it was folly to teach "general writing skills" about "no content in particular." David Russell famously analogized that teaching general writing outside of context was akin to teaching basketball, bowling, billiards, and baseball through generic instruction in "ball skills." Furthermore, except for extreme versions of paralogic rhetoric, in which any writing

situation was radically unlike any other writing situation, academic genres or discourse communities could be sorted into different traditions. In an award-winning article, Michael Carter identified four broad academic metagenre groupings: problem solving; empirical inquiry; research from sources; performances.

The upshot of all this was to give a complementary mission to WAC: WID. (The acronyms, by the way, are endless. There's WIC (Writing Intensive Courses) and WEC (Writing Enhanced Courses) and CAC (Communication Across the Curriculum) and MAC (Multimodality Across the Curriculum).) In WID emphases, student writers are taught to develop the kinds of writing skills and genres indigenous to different academic disciplines—learning to write like a philosopher or an accountant or a chemist or a social worker. Most vitally, they learn in major courses and from major professors. Rather than writing abilities being something students were to have acquired, once and for all, prior to courses in the major, learning to write in a major was part and parcel of the major; a discipline had a content, of course, but also forms of thinking and being, and writing was one of them.

The Limits of Academic Discourse

Now, there's a wrinkle and divide, one somewhat more pronounced in some fields than others, and that's the difference between the "academic" manifestations of a discourse community and its genres and the "vocational or professional" manifestations. Were students to practice and master kinds of writing like that appearing in a field's journals, or were they to emulate writing in jobs that graduates in that major got? Take an English major, for example, especially one concentrating in literary studies. Unless that student goes on to graduate school, chances are slim that she will ever have to write a ten-page essay, complete with MLA citations, that analyzes a literary text for a scholarly audience. She will no doubt write in almost any job she takes, but this will take the form primarily of reports, proposals, emails, documentation, and so on. If she writes for popular audiences, as a journalist, that writing will differ in crucial ways from strictly academic discourse.

Decades ago, when writing was seen to be writing, this discrepancy between the kind of

writing students did in school and the kind they'd do after graduation was no problem. Academic writing could be seen as calisthenics to build general writing muscles that could then be deployed in all sorts of ways. Decades ago, for example, required writing courses were often "writing about literature" courses. The notion was that explicating a Keats poem served students well for writing lab reports or history term papers, and it also served them for writing marketing studies and accounting reports. Those consolations have been seriously eroded, and one key area of research right now is transfer: how do skills learned and practiced in one setting transfer to another one? DU Writing Professor Kara Takzack has been a leading researcher on this particular question (see Yancey, Robinson, and Taczak).

Most contemporary WAC/WID programs have tacitly deferred this question through a couple of decisions. Many allow students to take a designated writing intensive course from those generally offered in any department, with students and departments finding that majors courses offer the practical best option. Some, as I noted earlier, have required a specific writing course in the major. In either case, the knowledge and forms of writing taken for granted are explicitly disciplinary. The default genre is the scholarly article or chapter, generally a lite version (or a very lite version: the ubiquitous "paper"). But even these assumptions are questioned. Research that Anne Ruggles Gere and her University of Michigan colleagues reported at the 2014 International Writing Across the Curriculum conference showed skepticism by many faculty and students. "Writing like an academic sociologist," for example, matters perhaps only at the graduate level—and perhaps not even then, if one is going to work as a professional outside a university setting.

The configuration of ASEM at DU stacks the assumptions against the academic or disciplinary default, leaving a couple of options. One is for "writing to learn," having students produce work that may have no "extra-classroom" correlative, done for the good of the student, first, and the classroom community second. However, this seems problematic for a senior level course, one especially designed to mark some synthesizing and performative role in

the general education sequence. While writing to learn is valuable for any class (indeed, a process pedagogy of drafting and revising presumes it, such writing seems meager for an advanced course.

A Nudge

A second, and better, option, I suggest, is having students write for some public audience: for readers who are not experts. Rather than the journal article or chapter, the default genre is the magazine or newspaper article or the policy brief, the *Harper's* or *New Yorker* or *Salon* piece that is steeped in research and analysis but written for intelligent folks who aren't obliged to read it but do so from a combination of individual betterment, civic responsibility, or interest. That interest can either be brought to the topic (people who read anything about baseball or the middle east or the Civil War) or created by the writer, who makes readers care about a topic they didn't expect by the approach or style of the piece. Now, this kind of writing poses considerable problems, as I'll explain soon. But let me elaborate the possibility.

I recently taught WRIT 1733: Writing and Research for a section of honors students. Because one of the course goals was to acquaint students with different research traditions and their implications for writing, I had them do one paper as a conventional IMRD report (Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion) aimed at a social sciences journal. (As a class, we'd devised a 27-item survey that explored the relationship between degrees of introversion and various demographic characteristics, beliefs, and practices, giving that survey to 120 students.) I next had them write a second version of that paper, this time as an article for a magazine with a popular readership. No longer could they presume a readership; they had to make one. As part of this process we looked at how writers for NPR, the *New York Times*, the *Huffington Post*, and similar venues translated scholarly articles for popular audiences, noting along the way how frequently those translations got sensationalized or even wrong.

I suggest that the "multiple perspectives" and theme/issue focus of ASEM lends itself well to this kind of popular and civic discourse. Students come to the courses out of interest

(mostly), drawn to topics about which they may know little, as smart amateurs led by a fine professorial guide. They read, talk, and write their way to some understanding, potentially some new insights fostered by that ASEM's particular concatenation of course materials. They produce knowledge for themselves and for the other members of the seminar. Why not have them take the next step and perform that knowledge for intelligent others not privy to this course, the publics whose thoughts and actions our university vision and values would have them shape—for the public good?

At least two challenges abound. Years ago, one could invoke "editorial" or "op ed" or "magazine feature" and count on students to have some familiarity with these genres. Now those seem curious relics of a previous age, as do the "intellectual" periodicals. Our common civic sphere, is famously fractured, with highly energized—and often highly partisan—discourses abounding, available (and abandonable) at the click of a keystroke. The first challenge, then, is oddly one of identity. To have students write "for the public" brings a host of new questions starting with where and what is the public sphere.

The second challenge concerns the difficulty of popular writing. The academic sphere, demarcated by that blandest of enterprises, the "paper," is a safe and known one. Professors and classmates are obliged to read in it. Contexts and audiences come prefabbed with assignments. Writing for readers who don't expect or necessarily want a particular text is, in many ways, much harder.

Still, I think the challenges are worthwhile. I think we at DU should attend to students not only as academics, not only as working professional, but also as engaged citizens, realizing that the world of ideas and inquiry—the world of questions and issues vexed and enriched by multiple perspectives—doesn't end at graduation but starts there.

Genre-Hopping: Teaching Writing Reflexivity in First Year Seminars

Pavithrah Prasad
Communication Studies

To teach writing is to teach critical thinking – that is the worthy foundation of our discussions at this institute. In order to facilitate a writing intensive course, I spend a good portion of my time as a teacher, writing assignments and responding to student work. About three quarters of the time, my responses are directed towards the students' ideas and arguments as opposed to writing techniques. Since styles of writing vary from student to student, I find myself spending less time adjusting rhetoric and style in each student's writing. However, elements of style are equally revealing of the writer's depth of understanding of a certain subject. Often what distinguishes maturation of writing is the writer's grasp of interpretation rather than mastery of grammar and syntax. What is also significant to the development of writing skills is reflexivity about one's own writing process, that is, the ability to be critically aware of one's own writing. An awareness of one's writing strengths and weaknesses can focus one's writerly voice and make students more confident of expressing their critical thinking through their chosen genre. The challenge is to not only make writing an essential part of how a student's intellectual progress is evaluated, but to convince students of the value of

writing as an intellectual process in and of itself.

To that end, my course goals look a little different for a writing seminar than a topics course. The following ruminations may work best for the Freshman Seminars, although I imagine they could be adjusted for the Advanced Seminars.

Course Goals

- To develop critical thinking skills and generate theoretical discourse about subject.
- To develop a distinctive intellectual voice or perspective.
- To develop writing skills in a variety of genres that can be employed for critical analysis and interpretation.

My problem has been drafting the kind of writing assignment that requires the student to not only do some research or critical thinking to complete, but also some reflection on the process of writing that particular assignment as well. The goal of incorporating a self reflexive element is perhaps two-fold, in that it spares the professor some of the exclusive burden of pointing out individually to students what works stylistically and what doesn't, and also cultivates an editorial

reflex in the student writer. Throughout the June 2013, institute I have been thinking about how to craft a series of assignments that will help students focus their existing writing skills, while developing experience with others. For instance, students might be well-versed in churning out five-paragraph essays, which are sound and perfectly pithy, but lacking in perspective or critique. I would perhaps ask them to re-imagine the five-paragraph essay as a satirical take focusing on one aspect of the subject they wanted to critique. What this assignment does is introduce satire as a form of critical writing, while at the same time asking students to make a critical interpretation of the subject they are to satirize. Since one of my course goals is to explore various styles of writing, this strategy pairs critique with an appropriate genre.

Assigning writing in order to teach a particular method of analysis seldom retains the students' interest or skills. Instead, once students perceive that analysis can be formulaic, they feel encouraged to reproduce forms rather than engage in interpretation (which would lead to an appropriate form). One strategy is to respond to that impulse towards formula – I would assign a genre that is relatively fixed or identifiable in terms of its form. Using this structure as a base, I would ask the students to present an argument or critique in this style.

For example, I would ask them to write a manifesto to promote one side of a cultural debate – say, sex work. By using the inherent qualities of the manifesto, students will be able to express strong opinions that they have to put some thought and consideration into. It is often too easy for students to take the softer route of indecision and relativism at the expense of critical engagement. Requiring them to adhere to the specific parameters of a particular style or genre might give them the freedom to experiment with

ideas without being hindered or inhibited by (a lack of) form.

Genre-hopping

Genre-hopping is one such method of developing content and voice through a fixity of form. While it may be noted that writing strictly within genres such as satire, propaganda, argument, formal request, or plea, encourages a blind reproduction of formulaic writing, I argue that the fixing the parameters of a particular form allows students to focus less on aesthetics and more on content. This is not to say that style and improvisation in writing are not valued, rather that at the freshman level, the focus should be on cultivating scholarly thinking in addition to mastering a particular style of writing. By limiting the field of form, students are encouraged to use familiar styles of writing to explore the directions their critical voice can take.

For instance, I may ask students to write a letter to their congressman commending or vilifying them on their position on immigration rights. Here I am limiting the form of the letter by suggesting they 1) write a direct address to a particular individual, 2) adopt one of two positions congratulating or denouncing a political issue, 3) offer reasoning for the congratulations or denouncement. What this kind of assignment will hopefully accomplish is 1) recall established writing skills, 2) force students to choose a critical position (without succumbing to a relativist cop-out), and 3) process their choices introspectively. So, while students gain confidence from familiarity with a writing convention, they can be pushed harder to question and develop their critical stance.

From a professor's point of view, evaluating a letter offers the opportunity to address inconsistencies in voice, tone,

credibility, persuasive argumentation, etc rather than on basic writing issues such as sentence construction, passive voice, word choice, syntax, etc, which no doubt strengthen writing, but only address issues with the writing and not the content. By taking the focus off strictly writing issues as the basis for success, students may find that they automatically develop better writing styles based on how reflexive they are about the content they include. The more invested students are in the content of their writing as it pertains to them, the more care they will take to present their perspectives in a compelling and ultimately more readable form.

For students to become aware of their critical voice, it is imperative to teach self-reflexivity and self-evaluation as a crucial component of writing. The ability of the students to edit and evaluate their own writing results in the two-fold pedagogical triumph that I discussed earlier – that is, to place the burden of justification (of a grade or a perspective) on the student writer, and also to cultivate the student writer’s own editorial reflexes. By asking students to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their writing invokes their own agency in determining their successes or shortcomings in the course. Of course, much of student energy is focused on getting the grade, but when students farm out the potential for success (a good grade) onto their professors, the tendency is for them to resent or argue over a grade rather than trying to understand whether the grade was deserved or not. By requiring students to evaluate their own work, some of the burden of justification is placed on the students, hopefully attuning them to the challenge, as it stands, of anticipating of external reviews and responding to them during the process of writing.

Half the battle is generating interest in the process of writing something. Students must see themselves as writers

already, then recognizing what kind they are, and playing to those strengths or strengthening the weaknesses. In order to make the process of writing as alluring as the subject matter, I am proposing the following strategy for designing writing assignments. It looks something like a survey course of both subject matter and writing styles. As I said before, this would work best for a First Year Seminar since the skills we are developing are basic academic skills that will benefit students throughout their college careers.

Designing Assignments

The following discussion takes my upcoming FSEM on “Public Cultures” as the context for assignments.

Survey of Genres: Each week, students will be required to write a short assignment of about two pages in a prescribed style. Depending on the course content for the week, students will be asked to summarize the scholarly theses, positions, arguments, and contradictory perspectives they read about and encounter, in a particular style. A request, a plea, a complaint, a manifesto, a declaration, a guilt trip, an announcement, obituary, and a joke are some of genres we might explore.

For instance, if we are reading and discussing public protests one week, I may ask students to write a social media announcement inviting people to join in a protest they wish to mount. This is a task in persuasion and raising critical awareness that places the onus of forming a justifiable opinion on the student, rather than reproducing an opinion they have encountered in the readings (as fostered by writing prompts such as “Do you agree or disagree with the author’s argument? Why or why not?). Students are also held accountable by their potential audiences, which would be a varied public and not just their professor.

Another assignment might look like this. If during one week, we are learning about the purposes and socio-cultural outcomes of public parades, I may ask students to complete the following writing assignment:

- You have been selected to represent your student club, organization, or committee at the planning session for Denver's 4th of July parade. Draft a persuasive speech of about 5mins (two pages, double spaced) convincing the planning committee to include your organization in the parade. Address the following issues in your speech:
 - Why is it important for your organization to be represented at a city-wide event?
 - What is the significance of marching in the parade, as opposed to setting up a stall or demonstration along the parade route?
 - How will including your organization in the parade help the culture of Denver as a city?

Writing Reflexivity

Students will also be required to keep a writing journal, in which they will respond briefly to their experience with every weekly assignment. They should address such questions as: What did you like about this assignment, genre, and critical experience? What does that tell you about the kind of writer/thinker you are?

The purpose of maintaining this journal is to allow students to reflect on why they enjoyed a particular writing task, or why they disliked it. The intent is not to evaluate students' expertise in each genre, rather to foster reflexivity in students

about their scholarly choices. Answering questions about the level of pleasure or pain in completing an assignment may well demonstrate for the students how to process their emotions, academic anxieties, or discomfort while dealing with particular form and content. Suppose that a student reflects that he or she disliked writing a concert advertisement for an indie band. The reasons they give for disliking the assignment may well reveal that the task was distasteful to them not because of the form, but because the form did not match the content (writing a commercial advertisement for a band that shuns commercialism). Reflecting on the process of writing this advertisement may actually reveal for the student where their criticism lies (not of the form, but of the interplay between form and content), allowing them to get further in tune with their own critical voice and perspectives.

Setting up Future Writing Success

A larger final project may take the form of a formal scholarly research. By saving this important assignment for last, I am hoping to capitalize on the quarter-long critical explorations students have been engaging in. In trying out different styles within which to locate their critical skills, students will hopefully enter this final assignment with some measure of confidence about their scholarly and writerly capabilities – identifying a topic, locating the ongoing conversations around it, and suggesting ways of intervening in a conversation. This assignment does what the previous ones do not – teach a particular genre of writing. Having explored the many other styles of writing, students will be able to understand the limits (and possibilities) of scholarly writing, and what distinguishes good scholarly writing from other types of “good writing.” Again, this will not be a research project, but rather an exercise

establishing a genre of writing, by framing a research topic, problem, or argument.

As I mentioned in earlier sections, this format of teaching reflexive writing praxis through genre-hopping was designed primarily with the First Year Seminar in mind. This survey style of writing pedagogy works best in introductory college curriculum as its major goal is to help students transition from viewing high school training in genre adeptness as proficient writing to viewing genre-specific writing as sites of possibility for rich and complex critical thinking. This course design anticipates the challenges students will face in writing for

other college courses, and attempts to set up writing as a favorable and exciting hermeneutic tool. When students re-envision themselves as writers as well as students, they place different stakes in their (re)production of knowledge and enter into the academic milieu with more agency and investment. And finally, this first year course design will hopefully set up a foundation for students to not only be proficient and comfortable in at least a couple of chosen styles of writing by the time they take the Advanced Writing Seminar, but also grow to be inquisitive, adventurous, and rigorously engaged in their studies through writing praxis.



Assigning Multiple Genres of Writing in an FSEM Course

Blake Sanz
Writing Program

In my FSEM entitled *Literary Depictions of Madness*, writing will serve many purposes, and it will come in many forms. In weekly assignments, students will summarize the content of novels, memoirs, short stories, films, TV shows, and critical essays involving “mad” characters. In informal writing posted to Blackboard, they’ll consider what patterns exist (or not) in how the mad are depicted, and how those patterns align (or not) with arguments made about this issue by scholars. In short answer exams, they’ll demonstrate that they’ve learned this basic course content. In peer review, they’ll write to each other with feedback on their formal writing. And in a final paper, students will write for an outside group, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), one of whose stated goals is the promotion of accurate depictions of the mentally ill.

Across all this reading and writing, I hope students will see changes in how madness has been depicted over the last sixty years, concurrent with major changes in treatment and treatment facilities for the mentally ill happening at the same time. I want to get students to the point of seeing that such things are within the realm of scholarly debate at the university level, and that writing is one of the chief ways in which these debates play out. Ultimately, once I’ve exposed students to a base amount of content and critical

thought on these issues, I hope students will have an understanding of how texts and films actually can and do shape public perception in meaningful ways. The final formal assignment for NAMI, which I’ll describe in more detail shortly, will give students a chance to perform that knowledge for a particular audience in a way that’s meaningful not only for what it says about what they’ve learned, but also for what it might help an outside organization do.

Writing Challenges

And so, in each of these many writing assignments (reading responses, short-answer essays, peer reviews, the paper for NAMI), a different genre is assumed, and with each of them come different expectations for what the audience and context are, what the purpose is. I face the challenge, then, of deciding how much time to dedicate to explicitly discussing these differences and their implications for students writing—especially given that I have ten short weeks, the self-imposed content obligations I’ve mentioned above, and a larger set of FSEM goals to fulfill. While it’s true that, as FSEM teachers, we’re free from the burden of covering a set amount of material, I see a possible tension between “teaching toward my passion” and teaching to make students better writers. I’m not sure that that

second goal necessarily always aligns with the goals of FSEM. Certainly, foregrounding genre differences for students in FSEM may in some ways contribute to broader goals, but there will likely be choices that we as teachers must make between, for example, class time devoted to writing-specific concerns and class time devoted to how some particular insane character relates to classic depictions of insanity. This might clearly be a false binary for *us*, but I can imagine some students pushing back (fairly, and distractingly) against too much emphasis on composition issues in a course advertised and promoted as being about something else.

Perhaps the biggest difference across all these assignments is audience. My students' final paper is for an outside organization, their peer reviews are for each other, their short answer exams are for me, and their posts to Blackboard are both for other students and for me. I look forward to exposing students to this range of writing, as I think it will both provide them a number of avenues to explore and understand the class material, and also expose them to a range of writing tasks likely to be asked of them throughout the course of their college careers. I do worry, though, as I mention above, at how asking students to negotiate so many different types of tasks might distract them from learning what I want them to learn about how the mad have been depicted.

The NAMI Assignment

Perhaps a closer look at the NAMI assignment will help concretize how this issue might play out in a single assignment. Here is a brief description of that prompt:

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is a group that advocates on behalf of those afflicted

with mental illness and their families. One of the stated missions of this group is to “aggressively respond to current events ensure accurate portrayals of mental illness.” For this paper, choose a current event related to mental illness. Find some substantial piece of writing or video footage that addresses that current event. Then, using what you’ve learned about how madness has been depicted in literature and film, make a case for how that writing/video portrays the mentally ill similarly to or differently from those texts we’ve encountered in class. In a 5-6-page paper, make specific connections between how mental illness is portrayed in certain films/novels you’ve encountered this quarter, and how it’s portrayed in the writing you choose for this assignment. Ultimately, your goal is to make an argument that connects media representations of a current event associated with the mentally ill to the literary depictions we’ve studied.

To give students the chance to perform well on this task, a fair amount of scaffolding might be necessary: Who, exactly, is NAMI? What sorts of efforts do they typically make to combat inaccurate portrayals of the mentally ill? What style is appropriate here that wasn’t appropriate in earlier assignments meant for me, or for other students? How is writing for NAMI different from writing for their high school English teacher? How should it be different from writing in a major course in English? These would all be valid concerns a student could have about this assignment, and yet, because there are so many other types of writing going on in the class, and because there is a fair amount of content to cover, I wonder how and how much to

foreground these kinds of audience-related questions explicitly with students.

So, then: given those many issues, why not just have them write a standard scholarly paper about literary depictions of madness? Or a popular article for a magazine like *The Atlantic*? What's the value of this kind of writing over and above these others?

Writing for Tweeners

The short answer is that, while those genres might seem straightforward to us, they're just as fraught for students in terms of audience and expectations as the above assignment. The long answer is that I hope that the NAMI assignment gives students a chance to write for a "tweener" audience, somewhere between the two kinds of mentioned above (scholarly, and something *Harper's*-like). In my experience, the problem with asking students to write as if for scholarly publication is that they know instinctively that this will never happen for them. This exercise, then, becomes a classic game of guessing what the professor wants, as students bring little to no prior understanding of what the larger goals of such a paper might be in a real context for academic. The results often approximate what Bartholomae has discussed in "Inventing the University," where students' genuine attempts at playing the academic game overwhelm their genuine thinking about the material of any given course.

In a strange way, the problem with getting students to write as if for *Harper's* or some such publication is similar. That is, while such magazines are perhaps more "relatable" to students, this is still as far-fetched a notion to them as is the idea that they'd be published in *Modern Language Quarterly*. Freshmen at DU, by and large, are not regular readers of magazines like *Harper's*, and so, while it

may seem somewhat natural for *us* to imagine what that writing would look like, I don't think it's actually so easy a move for students to make. And given the other goals of the course, I'm not sure that it makes sense to block out time to have them become familiar with the ins and outs of such a journal.

And so, by asking students to write for a "tweener" audience, I hope that they'll implicitly begin to see that what they're learning about—literary depictions of madness—can have very real consequences for some specific population. NAMI provides an exigency for the writing situation of the formal paper that goes beyond "showing my professor that I'm learning the tricks of the academic trade." Perhaps, through such an assignment, students will sense that the content they're studying might have application beyond the academic contexts in which they're studying it, and that the purpose of such writing (to articulate clear and accurate analysis of trends in literary texts) might nicely align with what English professors would want from majors—but in a way commensurate with the experience level of freshmen.

My hunch is that I won't have enough time to articulate the subtleties of NAMI-as-audience to students as fully as I'd want. There will likely be some hand-wringing from students about how to fulfill this kind of assignment, and also some consternation over having to, one more time, account for a new audience and a new purpose that are different from those audiences and purposes that they've had to write for earlier in the quarter. And I won't have time as I would in a writing-centered course to fully teach how to account for such shifts. But I hope that, by constantly exposing them to various assignments for various audiences and purposes throughout the quarter, I will have at least accustomed them to importance of thinking about those

things, no matter what the prompt. And in that way, I'll have exposed them to the content that's important for me to cover, at the same time that I've exposed them to something important about writing at the college level in general, as well.



Integrating Writing with Content in a Science-Themed FSEM

Jennifer Hoffman
Physics & Astronomy

I have taught FSEM three times at DU and will teach my fourth in Fall 2013. I have incorporated writing assignments into all my previous FSEM classes, but I have not yet found a strategy for these assignments that seems to resonate with students as well as reinforcing the course material. Participating in the FSEM/ASEM Institute has given me some new ideas about how to restructure my writing assignments, and I explore many of those ideas here.

My FSEM course is astronomy-themed and focuses primarily on “backyard astronomy”—that is, objects and phenomena observable to an amateur stargazer with the naked eye, binoculars, or a small telescope. I originally inherited the course from a colleague when the teaching assignments in my department were reshuffled, and I have changed the course title and slightly revised it each year I have taught it. In Fall 2012, it was called “Measuring the Milky Way.” As this course title was meant to suggest, the course incorporates a significant mathematical component; I hope to show students that application of even basic mathematical tools can reveal fascinating insights about the Universe. However, I am also convinced that writing is an essential part of the scientific endeavor and would like this to be one of the lessons of my FSEM as well.

I envision this paper as a means for me to examine some of the difficulties I have had with writing in my past FSEMs, consider what my fundamental course goals are for the students in the class, and explore alternative strategies that I can apply when I teach this course again in the fall. I also plan to initiate discussions with other science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) faculty about writing in their FSEM courses and the successes and challenges they have encountered.

1. What’s the problem?

When I first started making notes for this paper, I generated a list of several ostensibly separate issues that I had with the writing assignments I used in Fall 2012. These included “Students don’t take assignments seriously or spend sufficient time and effort on them” and “The course feels unfocused because I’m trying to teach math skills and physical/astronomical concepts as well as writing skills.” I think, however, that all the issues I listed can be boiled down to one main problem: *my writing assignments are not well integrated with the course content.*

This leads to all kinds of difficulties with the course. I suspect that it seems to students as if the writing is at best an afterthought and at worst something

completely separate from the rest of the class. Student evaluation comments reflected this, for example: “There were many times that our assignments... seemed to have nothing to do with what we were talking about.” In addition, poor integration makes it seem (even to me) that there are far too many assignments in the course. In Fall 2012, I gave weekly homework in addition to biweekly writing prompts, which made the grading very time-consuming, which means I didn’t return work promptly, which sapped motivation even more for everyone involved. One student summed this up by commenting in the evaluations, “There was a lot of outside work, and it would have been easier to follow if so many assignments didn’t overlap [in time].”

I have also noticed that students are very reluctant to write about topics with which they don’t feel comfortable; this effect is likely universal but may be exacerbated in the sciences, which tend to cultivate a reputation for being rigorous, difficult, and accessible only to geniuses. When I ask students to find their own topics to learn and write about (because I don’t have time to cover popular topics like black holes, extraterrestrial life, or the Big Bang), it’s no wonder they have difficulty navigating the arena of exotic physics and phenomena well outside the range of everyday experience. David Bartholomae describes an assignment of this type as “an act of aggression disguised as an act of charity,” pointing out that it asks the student to

assume the right of speaking to someone who knows more about baseball or “To His Coy Mistress” [or black holes] than the student does, a reader for whom the general commonplaces and the readily available utterances about a subject are inadequate. (610)

It’s not as though I haven’t tried to interweave the writing into the course content; I’ve been thinking about these issues since the first time I taught the class, and, I hope, have been steadily improving the situation since then. But I haven’t found the right balance yet, and I’m looking for new ideas.

2. What do I want students to learn?

Before I make any changes to my course, I need to define my overall goals, particularly as they relate to writing in a scientific context. Here are the learning outcomes from my Fall 2012 syllabus:

By the end of this course, students will be able to

1. recognize and describe a variety of celestial objects, including planets, stars, constellations, asterisms, clusters, nebulae, and galaxies;
2. understand and explain celestial motions and phenomena using words, diagrams, and/or equations;
3. identify a variety of astronomical tools and measurement techniques;
4. use basic astronomical equations with confidence;
5. read, analyze, and summarize popular-science articles about astronomical topics;
6. identify and discuss significant historical ideas and contributors to our understanding of the Universe.

As I revisited these learning outcomes for this paper, I realized that several were already out of date last fall; for example, I haven’t emphasized “tools and measurement techniques” (#3) or

“historical ideas” (#6) in any systematic way since the first time I taught the course. More importantly for this paper, the only one relating to writing is #5 (although #2 does at least nod in the direction of written communication), and as currently stated, this outcome focuses on reading and responding to “popular-science articles” rather than producing original writing or connecting the process of writing with the process of doing or understanding science.

My current writing goals for FSEM students are twofold: one attitudinal and one practical. First, I would like them to gain an appreciation for the role of writing in science (including some familiarity with the kinds of writing that scientists do); I think this has the potential to broaden the appeal of STEM majors to a population of students who may hold the preconception that one is either a “words person” or a “numbers person” and that those preferences determine one’s future path. In other words, I’d like to expose students to the ideas that being good at writing doesn’t mean you should rule out a STEM major, and conversely, that being a STEM major doesn’t absolve you from learning to write effectively. This forms a nice parallel with my goal for students’ attitudes about math: I want them to understand its central role in science and to be able to use it as a tool, regardless of their intended major. I hesitate to include these attitudinal goals in a formal statement of learning outcomes, primarily because they are very subjective and difficult to assess. However, because they underlie much of my course design, I think it’s important to articulate them; I might call it these two guiding principles my personal “zeroth goal” for my FSEM class.

Second, I would like my students to expand their writing skills, improving their abilities to explain (especially scientific) concepts clearly and learning to employ

deliberate strategies for addressing different audiences in different contexts. I have done a fair amount of work in past FSEMs helping students to identify the audience of a piece of writing and think about how to tailor their own writing for different audiences; I think these have generally worked well and should remain part of my class. This goal dovetails with Linda Flower’s assertion that “the difficulty inexperienced writers have with writing can be understood as a difficulty in negotiating the transition between ‘writer-based’ and ‘reader-based’ prose” (Bartholomae 608). Melissa Rice, an astronomer at Caltech, incorporates this idea into her first-year seminar syllabus explicitly:

By the end of the semester, your written work should demonstrate that you can... begin to think of yourself as a *writer* engaged in trying to have an effect on *readers* – rather than as a *student* trying to satisfy *teachers* (2, emphasis Rice’s).

With this ideas in mind, I propose to revise my FSEM learning goals as follows.

By the end of this course, students will be able to

1. recognize and describe a variety of celestial objects, including planets, stars, constellations, asterisms, clusters, nebulae, and galaxies;
2. understand and explain celestial motions and phenomena using words, diagrams, and mathematical expressions;

3. use basic astronomical equations with confidence;
4. write effectively about scientific topics in a variety of genres and for a range of audiences
5. tailor their own writing to different audiences and rhetorical situations, articulate the authorial choices that this entails,

and identify these strategies in others' writing.

2012 writing assignment	Learning outcome from revised list	Audience
Short-answer homework/exam questions	1, 2	Instructor
Observing reports	1, 2	Instructor
Descriptive paragraph	5	Not specified
Letter to the editor	1, 4, 5	Educated nonspecialists
Scientific proposal + lab report	2, 4	Experts
Topical sequence	1, 2, 4, 5	General public, classmates
Facebook posts/discussions	4	Instructor, classmates

Table 1. Mapping of 2012 writing assignments onto revised learning outcomes, with audience specified for each. Note that learning outcome #3 is purely quantitative in nature, so I don't expect it to be addressed by any of these assignments.

I'm not completely happy with #5 yet—I may still try to incorporate some language similar to Rice's—but the last two items in this revised list at least better encapsulate my underlying goals for the writing aspect of the course. In addition, with two items specifically devoted to writing, this list now reflects the central role of writing in the course.

3. What needs to be revised?

Now that I have a better idea of my own writing-related goals for the students, I will look at the writing assignments I assigned in Fall 2012 and consider which ones are effective at working toward these goals and which can be revised or replaced. I identified 7 different types of writing I asked the students in that class to

produce. For each, I discuss (and list above in Table 1) the learning outcomes it addresses and the audience for whom the students write.

- a) *Short-answer homework and exam questions*, mainly factual (“Describe how the Solar System formed,” but occasionally opinion-based (“Why do you think people made up constellations?”). Students seem comfortable with these types of questions, though they often answer them very tersely—Doug Brent calls this a “highly efficient but low-investment [strategy] based on retelling information” (279). This primarily addresses learning outcomes #1 and #2, since writing for the audience of the instructor is something with

- which the students presumably need no practice.
- b) *Short “observing reports”* after stargazing sessions. These have been a bit of a throwaway (students normally don’t spend much time on them), but I think they can be developed into more useful exercises (see section 4). In the past these have addressed learning outcomes #1 and #2 only, but as I discuss in the next section, I can envision modifying them, by adjusting the assigned audience, to meet goal #4 and possibly #5.
- c) *Descriptive paragraph* about an object that represents the student, assigned during the first week. In class, students rewrite their paragraphs as a technical or aesthetic description (as opposed to a personal one). This is a good first-week activity that demonstrates how choices about writing depend on the rhetorical situation (and thus begins to address learning outcome #5); however, it has little to do (on the surface) with the course material. I also realized that I do not assign an audience for this writing, though I indirectly suggest some as examples to help students understand the assignment.
- d) *Letter to the editor* of a newspaper about whether or not Pluto should be considered a planet. This is a great example of a scientific debate, but it’s getting somewhat dated and most of my recent students don’t seem to think it’s much of an issue. Also, I wonder whether letters to the editor are losing their relevance for today’s students—if they don’t themselves read newspapers, they may have difficulty understanding the audience and striking the appropriate tone. The assignment is designed to address learning outcomes #1, #4, and #5 (in addition to the letter, I ask students to write a paragraph describing their rhetorical strategy, citing specific examples from their own text).
- e) *Scientific proposal and report*, in groups, accompanying a lab exercise. I didn’t give the proposal enough emphasis last year; this is a great example of persuasive scientific writing for an expert audience, but we did not spend much time on it. The lab report is very boring for most; I think the students don’t see it as “real writing,” but rather as a cookbook exercise. Because I put so little time into discussing these as rhetorical exercises, I would classify them as supporting learning goals #2 and #4 only.
- f) *4-assignment sequence* on an astronomy topic of the student’s choice. Students first envision and describe a non-specialist audience member; find a press release on their chosen topic and summarize it for that particular audience; read a scientific article on the topic and compare/contrast it with the press release; and finally present the topic to the class at the end of the quarter. For each of the written assignments, I ask them for an extra paragraph of meta-analysis in which they discuss specific choices they made in their writing. Students struggle somewhat with the scientific article, but I think it’s important for them to be exposed to this genre of writing, at least in an introductory way. In 2012, the capstone presentations were pretty bland; there was much too much

PowerPoint involved. Taken as a whole, this sequence addresses all my writing-related learning goals. I think the sequence is effective overall, but I would like to revise the presentation aspect of it to make it more of a creative opportunity for the students (and more interesting for the audience).

g) *Class discussions on Facebook.* I envisioned this as a way for students to talk about the class and share astronomy-related pictures and news stories they came across, but it wasn't very successful. Maybe the students felt it was too creepy to have the instructor be part of the group, but there was little activity except when I mandated it, and almost no follow-up commentary to anyone's posts. I've tried this also in listserv and discussion board formats, with no luck; I'm about ready to give up on the idea. Perhaps the problem is that I've never fully defined the purposes of this discussion space; I have a hard time assigning it a place in my list of learning outcomes, since it doesn't entail much actual writing. However, since my intent was for them to discuss course topics with their peers, I will classify this under learning outcome #4.

My main reaction to this list is that it's far too long, especially given the weekly homework assignments (which incorporate a and b but not the others). As I discussed in section 1, an advantage to reworking the writing in this class will be to streamline things, allowing for more immediate student feedback, something Brent argues is important for helping students "focus on high-level goals" (279). However, I think that my learning

outcomes are well represented in my list of assignments, and I want to make sure I retain that distribution as I revise the assignments.

The easiest place to start seems to be to eliminate the assignments that only fulfill one of my four relevant learning outcomes—perhaps not coincidentally, these are the two (descriptive paragraph and Facebook posts) that I feel most ambivalent about. Given the ideas I have found in my reading this past week, I think I can also remove the letter-to-the-editor assignment and incorporate its most salient aspects into another type of assignment, which I'll discuss further in section 4 below.

However, simply removing a few of the smallest assignments won't make much difference in the writing workload for students in my class (particularly if I replace them with new assignments); nor will it guarantee a tighter connection between the writing and the course content. In section 4, I consider how to revise the remaining assignments and incorporate new types of writing in ways that will keep the writing closely tied to the content of the course. As I plan my new course over the rest of the summer, I will also consider making some assignments (such as the lab report) into shorter, in-class writing exercises; this will also allow me to incorporate more collaboration and peer review, as well as discussion of good and bad examples of the forms I assign. Happily, the astronomy content of the course is quite flexible, so I don't feel as much "coverage pressure" in this course as I might in one designed for majors; thus, I have quite a bit of flexibility in deciding what will happen during my class meetings.

4. What new options can I introduce?

During the FSEM/ASEM Institute, I read and heard about many other types of writing that professors at DU and elsewhere incorporate into their courses. Four in particular seemed to me promising possibilities for my own course: journals, blogging, microthemes, and multimodal presentations.

I spent some time researching astronomy-themed first-year seminars at other institutions and found a useful article by Tom English at Gardner-Webb University, in which he discusses his experiences incorporating writing into a course very similar to mine. I found his idea of a “student observing journal” particularly interesting; English describes how keeping a regular observing log can help students develop precision in both observing and record-keeping. In his course, students conduct and record their own observations of the sky twice a week; the logs are evaluated with feedback three times during the semester, but scored for credit only at the end. Throughout the term, his students generally progress from sketchy weather reports to detailed descriptions, predictions, and accounts of explaining celestial phenomena to friends and family. English concludes, “These writings show a general enthusiasm for the sky that would not necessarily be developed in the traditional classroom treatment... Though this is a simple exercise, it is truly writing to learn” (21).

Although the “observing journal” as English implemented it was focused primarily on one task, I think it could easily be modified to serve some of the same functions as journaling in non-science courses, e.g., reading responses, early free-writing or drafting for longer writing assignments, or communication with the instructor about course content or difficulties. In past versions of this class, I have frequently given in-class

quizzes to help students practice for exams, but these have proven more stressful than useful for first-year students, so I have decided to eliminate them. Some of the functions of the quiz could, however, be incorporated into the journal. Especially if these aspects were included, the observing journal could address all my writing-related learning outcomes and cover a wide range of audiences, while its recurring format would allow me to assign entries that closely follow course topics. As English suggests, I would grade these only once or twice per quarter, but find a way to provide ungraded feedback to students as the course progresses; this will make the journaling assignments low-risk for the students and simple for me to grade.

Many instructors at DU and elsewhere are making use of course blogs as a way to give students practice writing for the public—because so much of these students’ lives is now conducted online, this seems to me the natural successor to the letter-to-the-editor” exercise. It also has the potential to incorporate the social and community spirit I envisioned would arise from the Facebook experiment. Several instructors with whom I’ve discussed these ideas assign students to maintain personal blogs; some then hand-pick particularly interesting or well-written posts to be featured on a central course blog. A good example in astronomy, though designed for a more advanced course for majors, is John Johnson’s course blog for Ay20 at Caltech: <http://ay20class.blogspot.com>. Johnson grades his students’ posts on a 5-point scale, providing helpful links in an early post to examples of 1-point, 3-point, and 5-point entries on his own personal blog.

I have mixed feelings about this idea (though will almost certainly imitate Johnson’s structure in an upper-level astronomy class I’ll be teaching next winter). I think the idea of writing for a

larger web audience could be very motivating for FSEM students and make them think carefully about what they post. On the other hand, if I incorporate the journal/observing log idea above, I think adding regular blog posts would be too much to ask of the students. One way to get around this would be to find a way to make the students' journals electronic, so that I could easily copy/paste exemplary writing into a main course blog. Another way would be to use Lydia Gil Keff's model in which students are paired up to revise one or more of their journal entries into posts for the course blog. This would only need to happen once per quarter for each student, so would not add to the overall writing load too much (although timing might be tricky in some weeks). Such an assignment would be written for

a general or educated non-specialist audience and could fulfill learning goals #1, #2, and #4 (possibly also #5 with a follow-up analysis).

In his book *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*, John C. Bean discusses a type of writing assignment with which I was previously unfamiliar: what he calls "microthemes," "very short piece[s] of formal, closed-form writing usually less than 250 words" (111). It's not the brevity of these assignments that makes them stand out to me, but rather the flexibility in tone, audience, and structure they allow in student responses. Bean's two examples take the form of a question about physics

2013 writing assignment	Learning outcome from revised list	Audience
Short-answer homework/exam questions	1, 2	Instructor
Weekly journal/observing log	1, 2, 5	Various
Microthemes	1, 2, 4, 5	Various
Scientific proposal + lab report	2, 4, 5	Experts
Topical sequence	1, 2, 4, 5	General public, classmates

Table 2. As in Table 1, but for tentative 2013 writing assignments.

to an advice columnist/Q&A answer person and a hypothetical discussion among psychology students analyzing a case study. Such assignments seem particularly well suited to combining scientific content with different types of writing; they could address all my learning outcomes as well as being quite flexible in terms of how I incorporated them into the class (as homework or part of a journal assignment or an in-class exercise; individually or as part of a group). I can imagine assigning microthemes that ask students, for example, to respond to an online call for comments about the federal budget allocation for NASA, to predict the location and phase of the Moon on a given date, to address the myth of an egg

balancing on the equinox, or to speculate about what kind of alien life might survive on the new exoplanets being discovered every day. I would grade these, as Bean suggests, using a simple rubric emphasizing correct understanding of scientific topics combined with clarity of expression and appropriateness for the intended audience.

5. Preliminary plan for 2013

With the above discussion as a guide, I present a preliminary plan for the writing assignments in my FSEM for Fall 2013, noting what decisions I still need to make before September. The updated table connecting assignments with audiences and learning mechanisms is shown in

Table 2. My tentative new scheme includes fewer separate assignments, but each type of assignment addresses more of my learning outcomes. The increase in smaller writing exercises will also result in greater flexibility in weekly scheduling.

- a) *Short-answer homework/exam questions*: I plan to keep these mostly intact from 2012, though in some cases I may replace them with microthemes or journal entries.
- b) *Weekly journal/observing log*: I will incorporate this new type of assignment, as a way for students to engage with course material in “real time” through informal writing. I tentatively plan to require 2 short entries per week, one an “observing log” and one an assigned exercise (reading response, pre-writing, microtheme, etc.) and collect them for assessment or grading 3 times during the quarter. As I continue to plan the course, I will brainstorm writing prompts that respond to course content and ask students to consider writing strategies for various audiences.
- c) *Microthemes*: I plan to use these in homework or journal assignments as well as in group work in class. I will spend some time this summer writing prompts for microthemes, exploring a range of topics, formats, and audiences.
- d) *Scientific proposal and report*: I will keep these assignments similar to last year’s but reschedule the course so that I can spend more time discussing the proposal and having students read examples. I will also try to schedule the topical sequence (see item e below) so that the students look at scientific papers before they write their lab

reports. Finally, I will consider making the lab report an in-class project so that teams of students can get feedback from me and this assignment will not add to their workload outside class.

- e) *4-assignment sequence*: I will keep this mostly intact, but revise the final presentation to give students a range of genre options, such as a blog post or salon.com article, a Nova-style educational video, a hands-on demonstration, etc. I will add an analysis paragraph to this part of the assignment (similar to those I already assign for the other parts) asking students to describe the choices they made when designing their presentations for an audience of their classmates. If students see this as more of a creative activity, it may feel less onerous to them at the end of the quarter.

I am still considering whether to incorporate the “class blog” idea into my plans for the fall. In addition to the advantages I discussed in section 4, this might help me prepare to use this tool in future courses. However, I’m reluctant to make too many changes to my FSEM at once, so may decide to keep this in mind for a future incarnation of the course.

I appreciate the opportunity the FSEM/ASEM Institute has given me to reflect on writing in my course, learn about the pedagogical theory underlying the FSEM project, and discuss related issues with other instructors. I hope to organize a few informal discussions among STEM faculty teaching FSEM and ASEM later this summer. I am also happy for the encouragement to produce a more-or-less complete piece of writing on this topic; it will be a valuable resource for me as I continue to refine this course in the future.

Writing as a Tool for Shifting Focus: From Content- to Process-based Teaching in FSEM

Sarah Morelli
Music

My First Year Seminar, “Soundscapes: Exploring Music in Multicultural America” introduces select musics of the world by exploring their transmission, reception and development in North America. If asked to describe my main goals in teaching the seminar, I would likely first discuss my interest in students developing more awareness of the diversity of musics and musical communities found in the United States. An equally important aspiration, though one that I might not mention until describing the course content more fully, is to give students the tools to learn for themselves about the musics and musical communities they will encounter throughout their student careers and into their adult lives. These goals represent differences in focus: one on content, and the other on process.

As I think about this course in the context of our writing workshop, I realize that in previous iterations I have focused more on content and that the second goal has not been addressed to my satisfaction. I am using this essay as an opportunity to think through some ways I can reconfigure the course, primarily through new and revised writing assignments, in order to emphasize a more process-based approach to its teaching.

In addition to the goals described above, the course functions as an introduction to ethnomusicology, a discipline in which we ethnomusicologists spend a fairly significant amount of time working to define, redefine or refine our understanding of the field. As a step-discipline of musicology and anthropology, ethnomusicology has been defined in various ways that reflect differing emphases on these two disciplines. “The study of all the musics of the world,” is a definition that privileges study of the music itself; from the more anthropological camp, ethnomusicology has been described as “the study of “people making music” (Jeff Todd Titon, 192) and defined as “the anthropology of music,” (also the title of one of the discipline’s seminal monographs, authored by Alan Merriam in 1964).

One thing that most ethnomusicologists can agree upon, however, is that our research methodology heavily emphasizes fieldwork: meeting people *in situ*, observing and participating in music-making and other activities, taking fieldnotes, interviewing, and then doing the work of connecting our understanding of “the music itself” to theories of cultural and/or musical significance.

Changes I propose for my seminar involve emphasizing the practice of fieldwork, in all its complex messiness, and deemphasizing writing by ethnomusicologists—the more polished end results of others’ fieldwork. Below, I outline changes to two writing exercises already in place in the course (a description of musical sound, and description of a musical event), one new area of focus (involving an interview project and two writing assignments), and changes to the final writing assignment. Again, my goal in crafting these assignments is to give students the tools to better understand how to learn from their everyday experiences of musical diversity and cultural meaning.

Revising the First Assignments

In previous years, during the first few days of the course I have typically focused on musical materials. I would expose students to a variety of musical sounds and styles, provide them with vocabulary for describing and discussing what they hear, and give them practice in doing so, usually through short, in-class writing assignments. I would often play a recorded piece of music once or twice and ask the students to jot down terms to describe the music as they were listening. After the example was finished, they would then write short paragraphs based on their notes and discuss what they heard. In this format, the writing and the conversation would generally take place in the past tense: timbres, melodic shapes, changes in dynamic level or texture that were heard, musical gestures that had already come and gone. With this assignment, I also found students’ descriptions to typically be fairly superficial, as they had not had the opportunity to play through the example several times, to pause or rewind at

interesting passages, or to spend much time in reflection.

I plan to supplement or replace these exercises with a writing assignment that utilizes online resources available through the Office of Teaching and Learning. With an online tool available through the Office, students can embed comments in a track of music so that they appear in “real time” while the track is playing. This will bring more specificity to the exercise: students will be asked pinpoint the precise moments when they hear changes to some aspect/s of the music, and I and other students will be able to comment with more accuracy on the descriptors used. One option for this assignment is for students also to practice field recording. In this additional step, students would go out and record live music and then upload the recording on which they would comment. This additional step would necessitate that we as a class discuss the importance of gaining permission for recording, and fieldwork ethics more generally. Whether or not I decide to have students comment on their own recordings, I believe this technology would encourage closer listening and engagement with musical vocabulary.

After spending several days discussing musical sound (relatively divorced from cultural meaning), most of the course’s remaining days have focused on articles by various ethnomusicologists based on case studies of particular musical communities in which they have spent a significant amount of time doing field research. Topics have included generational differences in musical practice within the Japanese American community in California (Asai), contexts for music making in Detroit’s Arab community (Rasmussen), the role of music in shaping identity within the Riot Grrrl feminist community of 1990s New York (Cateforis and Humphreys). Sometimes students have been given a specific prompt to

respond to in their writing about a particular article. At other times, students have been asked to write a more general “one-page response.”

One-Page Responses

Students are asked to structure the one-page response by writing two to three paragraphs: the first paragraph should provide a broad overview of the work; in the second, students are asked to choose one particular idea or aspect of the reading to explore in greater depth. In the third paragraph, which is optional and should be shorter than the others, students are encouraged to provide reflection on the topic that is more personal in nature, or to respond to other aspects of the reading such as the author’s writing style. Before I give students an outline of the structure of these responses, I hand out to each student one of four model responses taken from other courses and discussing articles these students will not read. Each student is first asked to take out a pencil/pen and write notes on his/her copy while reading, paying particular attention to identify the structure of the response and what s/he felt to be strengths and weaknesses of the writing style. The class then separates into four smaller groups (based on which article each student read) to discuss the response. Then each group summarizes for the rest of the class response they read and reports their findings.

Only after these presentations and discussion do I explain the structure outlined above that I want for their own one-page responses. While I do provide written guidelines for other assignments, I do not do so for this one. In the future, I plan to emphasize that this method of learning—gleaning information from observation and conversation—is similar to the fieldwork process. That said, if any students appears stressed by not having

written guidelines, I will repeat my description of the assignment so he or she can take careful notes. If after hearing the description twice, the student is still not clear, I will suggest that he or she interview other students and then report back to me what they understand the assignment to be.

These one-page responses serve a number of functions. In writing the first paragraph, students practice succinctly describing the scope of an author’s work. The second paragraph gives students a bit of freedom to select a topic of interest to them and tease out some of its facets. The third gives students practice using the first person singular pronoun, one that so many of them are taught to avoid at all costs! More practically, these assignments help ensure that students have done the assigned reading and have thought about the issues we will discuss in class.

Through these assignments, students work with the connections scholars have made between music and cultural meaning, but they do not get much practice in attempting to draw similar connections for themselves. And while the majority of the class readings are based on fieldwork, in previous iterations of the class we have not spent a significant amount of time discussing this basic method for learning in the field, and have not focused enough on writing exercises that have students engage with the crucial steps between experience and a written product.

Interviewing and Writing

The most important new aspect of the course will involve a series of interview experiences and writing exercises drawing from those interviews. Students will first be asked to interview someone they see in their daily lives (though not another student) about his or her musical tastes, what kind of music s/he finds meaningful, and the memories s/he associates with

that music. Each interview should not last more than twenty minutes. After students complete this interview, their first assignment will be to select three minutes of the interview they feel are the most revealing to transcribe and turn in. The transcription should include three levels of writing: the words spoken (as close to verbatim as possible), description of the interviewee's body language, and the thoughts and/or interpretations taking place in the interviewer's mind during this portion of the conversation. Students will be given an example of this type of multi-level writing found in the edited collection *Shadows in the Field*. The second assignment should integrate these three levels of writing into a more fluid narrative in which students describe the interview context and use quotes to reinforce their descriptions. We will read and discuss in class at least one example of this style of ethnographic writing before students turn in this assignment.

Ethnography Revised

Past iterations of this course have included only one ethnographic writing assignment. In this assignment, students have been asked to describe a musical event of their choice, focusing on three aspects of the event: sound, setting and significance (see Appendix). They were expected to draw on the musical vocabulary previously learned, to describe the setting of the event, and to speculate on the significance/s of the event for those they observe and with whom they communicate. The purpose of this assignment was for students to experience a musical event as an ethnographer, to practice describing the setting, and to attempt discussion of significance.

In the future, I intend for students to all base this writing assignment on the same musical event. Having students all generate ethnographic descriptions of one

event will facilitate the peer review process, in that students will more easily be able to identify effective descriptions and to compare theirs and their peers' writing styles more concretely. Assuming that various students will highlight different aspects of the event, this assignment will also lead to discussion of the multiplicity of experiences of a "singular" event. I will also ask them to identify the thesis (the statement of significance) in each paper they review. As a class, we will then discuss and debate various statements of significance, again to better understand experiential subjectivity.

In the past, I have asked each student to produce a fairly typical final paper project based on a music community of his or her choosing. As I reflect on the time needed for the projects described in this paper, I feel it is enough for students to learn about and practice these tools for ethnographic work. To ask that each student then conduct fieldwork for his or her own topic that is substantive enough to craft a thesis and generate evidence-based discussion is impractical and worse, might undermine the sense of respect I hope to generate for the time and depth of field research ethnographic writing necessitates.

Instead, for the final writing project, I intend to assign a research proposal. Students will be expected to do enough fieldwork/research to be able to craft a working thesis, and to detail how they intend to go about learning more. I will provide them with sample research proposals and let them know that the grade for this assignment will partly be based on the credibility and persuasiveness of the proposal. I hope that such an assignment will leave many students with a desire to carry out their research projects, and with the sense that ethnographic work is never really finished.

Appendix

Writing Assignment: Ethnographic description of a local music event

Your 4-6 page ethnographic description of one musical event should focus on the three concepts we've already discussed in class: SOUND, SETTING and SIGNIFICANCE. Your argument regarding the significance of the event should be foregrounded, *by including it as a thesis statement in the introduction to your paper*. This thesis should be strengthened in the body of the paper through description of sound ("musical" and otherwise) and setting.

A few pointers:

- While witnessing/taking part in this event, observe the goings on as broadly as possible, noting details such as the physical layout of the building/room/outdoor space, how the participants are configured within that space, age, ethnicity, dress, body language and mannerisms of the participants, the progression of the event and how, when, and if possible, for what purpose music plays a role in the event. What else strikes you?
- Talk with participants at the event; ask them questions related to why they are there, and what the event means to them (i.e. the significance). Try and speak with as many different people and kinds of participants (musicians, dancers, audience members, other workers at the event,

etc.) as possible.

- Take a small notebook with you, though you are the only one who will be able to judge whether it's appropriate to write notes in the midst of this event. If it is not possible or appropriate to write observations down, fieldworkers take what we call "headnotes"—a mental outline of points that you will want to write about when it is possible. If there is some quote or list of things that you are afraid of forgetting later, you might excuse yourself to go outside or to the bathroom and write a few things down there (although this likely will not be necessary for the concerts you are attending).
- **MOST IMPORTANTLY:** Write down everything you can recollect after the event BEFORE going to sleep that night. This might mean expanding on your notes, or writing down and expanding on your headnotes. Describe. Don't filter your experience at this time, simply write everything you can remember. Later, when you return to your notes you can choose what is relevant as you write more pointedly about the role of music in the event.

Please contact me if anything here is unclear. -Prof. Morelli

Rethinking Feminist Pedagogy and the Question of Audience in ASEMs

Lindsey Feitz
Gender and Women's Studies

Over my past two years at DU, I have taught my ASEM, "Sex and Globalization" three times. Despite its racy title, the course is not really about sex. My primary objective is to teach students about the gendered (and sexed and raced) dimensions of globalization while also helping them refine their writing skills. To help with this first objective, we spend a large amount of time reading about structures of inequality that shape global processes. Teaching students to analyze the gendered dimensions of problems like sweatshop labor, migration, and the sexualized nature of war means helping them adopt (and convincing them of the worthiness of) a critical feminist lens as a valid academic framework. Along the way, I hope these lessons about inequality help students make sense of the world that awaits them beyond the college classroom. In my mind, this is an essential part of feminist pedagogy that one should expect (and maybe even require?) from a course offered by a Gender and Women's Studies program.

However, I have always struggled with the degree that my writing assignments, especially in ASEM, provide students formal instruction on scholarly writing "versus" giving them opportunity to write for audiences that fall outside the traditional "professor as audience"

formula. As a feminist scholar and teacher, translating classroom learning (and writing) into vessels for broader social change is a central to my pedagogy. And yet, I find myself trapped (or succumbing?) to the pressure of assigning and teaching writing for more traditional scholarly audiences. Thus, for this short piece, I would like to think more about this conundrum by asking what kinds of writing should we assign in our ASEMs. And for the purposes of my class, how can these assignments work within a feminist-centered pedagogy that teaches students to embrace (and use) writing as a generator of social change?

The Audience of FSEM Writing?

To answer these questions, it seems important to briefly discuss the question of audience. Who should students be writing for in ASEM as opposed to who they might (or will be?) writing for once they leave the hallowed halls of academia? Most of us know that our students live and write in a world that looks radically different from the one we knew (and wrote in) as college students. According to a recent survey of DU student writing, our students spend significantly more time reading and writing in genres of social media as opposed to the traditional print-based mediums that dominated classroom

teaching twenty years ago. Ironically, however, students seem to recognize that writing itself (as a skill, requirement, and/or activity) will be important in their lives following college². And, despite the general grumblings of my ASEM students, I honestly believe most of them want to improve their writing, if only because of its “real world” applications. The stakes are, for those who possess a “job-driven” mentality to higher education, often much higher than simply earning an A in a college writing course.

To deny these realities seems to be denying the world in which our students live and exist. As much as I would like to think that the next big “feminist” scholar of globalization will pass through my ASEM, I realize that the academic writing I am assigning in my classes has very little to do with the actual writing most of them will produce after leaving DU. And, if I *really* want to be honest with myself, writing that inspires awareness and change is more than likely to be found in a blog, op-ed, or popular press book as opposed to an academic journal.

On the other hand, I believe that most of us teaching ASEM (myself included) have an allegiance and responsibility to teach the content and skills that are our professional specialties. I am not interested in training students how to write “business” speak or post-college shorthand. This is not why I became a professor, and quite frankly, I don’t see this as my job. I do not think the needs of the business community should dictate writing pedagogy in university classes, especially in the liberal arts, the intellectual tradition from which I hail. My responsibility, first and foremost in ASEM, is to teach students what feminist critiques of globalization look like and help them produce (i.e., write, think, envision) their own. In the process, I

secretly hope they might be inspired to embrace writing as a tool for social change in their civic, professional, and personal lives, but I am not holding my breath.

Thus, we arrive at an interesting paradox that university writing programs and instructors have long been busy researching and debating. This debate also plagues those of us who teach writing in classes like ASEM. Who should we teach our students to write for? An audience of scholarly peers or an interested group of concern citizens that they can help educate? At the risk of sounding naïve or reductionist in my thinking, I think the solution is relatively simple: I don’t see these approaches as mutually exclusive or as rigid binaries. I think we can do both with our writing instruction and more importantly, I think an ASEM provides an ideal setting to do so.

What I’m Doing: A Critical Reflection

This grand proclamation thus necessitates some self-reflection about my own pedagogical choices when it comes to the types of writing I assign in my ASEM. Ironically before beginning the institute, I naively thought my writing assignments achieved both of these goals. I structure, my ASEM around four formal writing assignments: (e.g., a reader’s response journal, a large research paper, and two short papers). The rationale for the reader’s response journal is to give students an opportunity to informally reflect on what we read and connect it to their lived experience. My goal is to help validate and engage their opinions and more importantly, situate the material we read in relation to their own lives. This is easier said than done on most days, but unfortunately, it is the only assignment that actually asks students to write for themselves rather than for me.

² Get writing survey from Doug

When I look at the rationale and design of the other three writing assignments (e.g., the research paper and two shorter papers), I realize that I have more or less re-inscribed the same tried and true “traditional” approaches to undergraduate student writing that David Bartholomae describes. By and large, I have asked my students to demonstrate their knowledge by writing papers for scholarly audience in a format (and with a purpose) that shows that they have mastered the content and discourse of undergraduate scholarly writing. Is this bad writing pedagogy? Maybe not. But, if I am trying to give students the opportunity to write thoughtful feminist critiques that the rest of the world might find useful, I need to rethink my goals and rationales for these assignments.

Before heading down the wormhole of self-doubt and writing-instructor despair, I would like to discuss the first of these formal writing assignments, the research paper. As a supporter of the “write to learn” model, I believe writing assignments should help students meet concrete, content-driven objectives. In my class, this means assigning writing that helps students understand what a feminist analysis of globalization looks like. Like most professors, I have enlisted the aid of a more –or less traditional research paper. I ask students to develop a research question. Then they have to locate and read scholarly articles. For some, this might even require a trip to the library. Along the way, we spend a significant amount of time working on project proposals, researching peer reviewed sources, drafting, revising, talking, editing, and “working” out what it means to “do” a scholarly, feminist analysis. We have also thoughtful discussions about what it means to write for an audience of scary feminists, and perhaps more importantly, what it means to write for audiences who might be skeptical of using the categories

of gender, sexuality, and race as lens to study global phenomena.

I feel like these are worthy intellectual exercises that hopefully help students’ writing evolve and improve over the duration of the course. And, by and large, they research and write papers on topics that would have never have occurred to me, often to such an extent that I actually think some of them “get” what it means to study globalization from a feminist perspective. I see victory in their papers, and for this reason, sometimes I think I have the right to celebrate myself as both a successful writing instructor and feminist scholar. Not suprisingly, I am comfortable keeping the research paper as the “largest” writing assignment in my ASEM. It constitutes approximately half of the pages of their assigned writing during the quarter (i.e., approximately 10-15) and it seems to be working.

Beyond the Academy

At the same time, I realize this assignment does not teach students to write in the world that awaits them outside the college classroom, nor does provide the opportunity engage wider audiences that a feminist-centered writing class should. This is where I think the other two writing assignments in my ASEM (currently five pages each) might be put to better use. As it stands, one of them asks students to the degree that “love” should be used as a factor in analyzing the ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ of globalization. To be honest, the assignment itself is a bit heartbreaking because it requires students to rethink the circumstances that inspire (or necessitate) women from the Global South to leave their own children and care for, love, and clean up after those residing in the Global North. The other five page paper asks students to analyze U.S. immigration policies by using sexuality as a category of

analysis. (e.g., what happens when we think about the persecution of gays and lesbians who seek asylum or refugee status in the USA? What happens when we think about human sexuality as a factor that facilitates or impedes the movement of people around the world?).

These are tough issues that require a significant amount of time for most students to grasp, let alone “enjoy.” But, I also realize that there’s a wealth of different ways I could ask students to engage these ideas outside a scholar-as audience paper. They should be writing letters to human rights organizations or employers or their peers. They could post to a feminist blog. They could petition the U.N. or the Secretary of Defense. Heck, they could even write a feminist blog (an assignment I actually require in another GWST class). I could - and should - be helping them refine their writing by providing assignments that engage with genres other socially-conscious, intellectually-curious people read.

If one of my objectives is to help students engage in writing that generates awareness (and maybe even social change?), then clearly at some point, I’m going to have to let go of the notion that the only way to teach college writing is to assign traditional academic papers. After all, they already have a ten page, original research paper to research and write. At the very least, I should be making space for other types of writing in my ASEM. Working within the quarter system and a ten-week time frame makes this challenging. It also means that I have to take the time to go back and revise writing assignments that I have already spent a significant amount of time planning. As stated earlier, I don’t think the objectives of my ASEM necessitate that scholarly, academic writing is the only way to teach students writing. I simply have to take the time to “do” what I ask of my students: to create writing assignments that pays credence to (and teaches) the transformative possibilities of writing both in - and outside- the college classroom.



Liberal Arts and Essays in Advanced Seminars

Sandra Lee Dixon
Religious Studies

The Advanced Seminar, known at the University of Denver by the course abbreviation ASEM, creates a small, medium altitude, briefly visited plateau in the liberal arts curriculum for all undergraduate students. From it the students can look back to their formative general education experiences in entering the university through the First-Year Seminars, sampling broad collections of disciplines and “ways of knowing,” expanding rhetorical skill and writing fluency, and acquiring languages. The students as juniors or seniors in ASEM slip momentarily out of their majors, which nonetheless occupy part of their peripheral vision. As future graduates they sit with self-assurance in the familiar setting of a seminar while the next phase of life comes hovers indistinctly at the horizon ahead. At this last explicitly liberal arts moment the students and world citizens consolidate and parlay forward their critical thinking over a mixture of approaches to a topic.

In my class, we contemplate, “Do the Wicked Prosper?” It is a twist on an ancient question of the biblical book of Jeremiah: “Why does the way of the wicked prosper?” (Jer. 12:1). As critical thinkers in a world quite different from the prophet Jeremiah’s, we can ask whether in fact the wicked prosper. We can add, “Says who?” and “Why?” As we engage one another on our small plateau, essays

offer our best chance of writing to practice and accomplish the goals of the liberal arts.

The course material and its connections to the liberal arts multiply potential topics for discussion. To keep the focus on the essays assigned for the course and the way the liberal arts inform the course design, I will grant each topic its own section. First, liberal arts, then essays.

Liberal Arts, especially for ASEM

The liberal arts, etymologically, are the skills of the free person. They are not the arts as “fine arts” or the arts of today’s political “liberal.” Rather, as the roots let us know, the liberal arts are “arts,” from the Latin “*ars*.” *Ars* suggests skills, or developed capacities to do things. The adjective “liberal” comes from *liber*—the free-born man. In the shifts of meaning that accrue over centuries, we will want to include here the *libera*, or free woman. In so doing, we note that even in the ancient world discussions considered whether people who were not *liberi* (free-born men) could demonstrate the capacity for such learning. Thus, while the phrase “liberal arts” carries a complex history of connotations, the notion of the skills of the free person can serve educators trying to prepare people for a thoughtful, active, and useful life in a continually shifting

world. The skills of the free person become all the more important in the U.S.A. today, the world power that beckons people around the world as a home and hope for liberty and finds itself evaluated at times by this criterion in the global press.

What are the arts of the free person? Arguments for the liberal arts today derive in their broadest outlines from the heritage of the liberal arts. Although these outlines would shift if enough fine distinctions were drawn into the picture, we share with our predecessors the belief that training in a wide variety of subjects helps people become ready for participation in the world outside the home. In particular, seven standard subjects dominated theories of the liberal arts through the end of the middle ages: rhetoric, logic, and grammar, as well as arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music.

From the classical centuries onward, some of people educated thus would go on to study the professions of law and medicine, and in later centuries theology. Others might become educators or they carry on their family's position in commerce, government, or the military. Their patterns of thought did not differ so much from ours that families at that time would believe that their sons developed the skills of generalship or deal-making directly from the liberal arts. Instead, the belief, like that of liberal arts proponents today, was that people could learn basic intellectual skills, such as how to make a persuasive argument and clear distinctions in thought. The liberal arts would prepare the person for conversation across professional boundaries as well as for the acquisition of further forms of specialization, not all of which would be learned in school. The liberal arts education would serve as a preparation, not a destination. A career would extend the liberal arts, not result directly from

them. For us, the corollary idea of lifelong learning flows unsurprisingly from the challenges of readying the mind for rich participation in the life of work and the civic world.

So when I write of the skills of the free person, I am informed by our heritage. Yet customarily we do not teach the seven liberal arts of days gone by. So what skills of the free person do I hope to foster for my students, especially those in the last course of their general education and perhaps of their liberal arts coursework? I hope to continue laying the groundwork for intelligent analysis and reflection and problem solving in the public world. I aim for my students to be able to collaborate with other people to define courses of action, celebrate small outcomes on the way to larger accomplishments, reflect on progress and on accomplishment of big goals, and collaborate again to revise, improve, celebrate, and maintain worthy projects. Several more specific skills help initiate and sustain such efforts.

First, citizens collaborate by speaking and writing clearly about important issues so that the people listening or reading can understand key aspects of the situation. Then the audience can reflect on the speaker's or author's point of view in order to develop their own. Clear speech and writing figure prominently on the agenda of liberal arts, in order to foster a functional civic world.

Second, the free person as citizen should represent facts, points of view, people, and social groups fairly. In this sense, fairness implies crucially that the representation—especially of points of view, people, and social groups—should be recognizable to the people represented. When the liberally educated person speaks or writes publicly, the response from the people she describes should be, in the vernacular, “Yeah, that’s me” or “That’s us!” Adjustments may be needed, but

sketches faithful to the original should facilitate discussion.

Third, specific skills of fair representation include the following. A free citizen operating in the public world should observe and report with care, so making the contours of the situation plain. His representations should avoid the old complaint and instead generate more light than heat. Fair representation also requires analysis, emphasizing major points and explicating their connections. While people still share the 19th century fear that analysis “kills in order to dissect,” adroit analysis should allow the whole to show more thoroughly its structure. In the best instances when analysis draws its conclusions, people should engage with satisfaction a fuller self-recognition. Discernment in reading is also one of the skills necessary to mine many kinds of source material. To read carefully, coordinating various passages of the text with our questions about it and other perspectives on it is critical. It’s also difficult. Many students in the liberal arts need to learn how to read beyond the smooth surface of textbooks and magazine articles. These two may please us and even assist with some tasks, but they will not suffice to deal with the public realm. Nor do their writers and publishers claim that they will. Exposure to a wide range of subject matters can help students become adept interpreters of written texts as citizens consulting technical, exploratory, ancient, or otherwise perplexing sources of information and insight.

Finally, as a matter of representation, but also of reading and life in society more generally, the free person must be able to create and respond to wholes as well as parts. For such persons, the old defenses, “I was just following orders,” or “not my job, why should I care?” must be indefensible, especially as their own utterance. Orders and jobs are always parts of whole modes of conduct.

The life of the other person one encounters, of groups of people, of plants and animals and the flux of the inanimate universe potentially impinge on every discussion. They cannot, of course, all be discussed and weighted equally at once. Therefore, the expectation must remain that the free person will focus closely, then distantly, on the aspect of life at hand and its implications for future action and regard for the past. Similarly, the free person will attempt to draw together attention to the detail of information, the great trains of thought, the individual, the small groups, and the largest communities of people involved at the present.

Essays in the ASEM as it Arises from the Liberal Arts

The students write two kinds of essay in the ASEM “Do the Wicked Prosper?”: first, expository; second, application of clearly linked concepts to information and stories that deal with prosperity and deprivation. Both kinds of essay serve the purpose of writing to learn because the students have to increase their familiarity with the course materials and think about how to understand them systematically. The second also should persuade an audience of intelligent non-experts that the student has proposed a reasonable judgment about virtue or vice, wickedness or goodness in the financial crisis starting in 2007-2008. The student comes to a circumscribed claim about the course question or a variant of it. Did the wicked prosper? Did the good? Did the innocent suffer? Did the guilty? What was prosperity and what is prosperity in the face of fluctuating financial circumstances? What is goodness and what is wickedness? The essay assignments discourage research outside the material for class. As described later, the essays are a try at understanding materials and advancing positions; they

need not pretend to be an exhaustive presentation.

If this is the task to be accomplished by the end of the course, how are students to do it? The course readings, discussions, and large and small writing tasks move them toward the goal. In reading, they encounter concepts, narratives, and philosophies of virtue and vice, goodness and wickedness. Most recently, the readings included theories and examples of myths, the first nine chapters of Genesis, and most of books I-IV of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Students use the journal feature of Blackboard to write short entries on these, and develop their expository essays from such informal efforts to set out key parts of the reading. Then, as we listen together in class to shows on the financial crisis from National Public Radio's Planet Money programs, the students hear stories from people living through the financial crisis as well as experts' explanations of it. The programs received strong positive notice from the *New York Times*, as well as from a number of academic economists.

The audience for the NPR program *This American Life*, which first broadcast them, encompasses many educational levels, so the shows are accessible, as well as thoughtful, engaging, and informative. They also represent the kind of information and perspective that the students as free persons in a civic realm will need and encounter in their lives in the future. The students draft expository papers and share them to explore one perspective at a time on virtue and vice or goodness and wickedness. Then they apply each point of view to the financial crisis as presented in the Planet Money programs. Revisions follow to produce the required number of pages of polished writing for ASEM's.

Class discussions afford opportunities to wrestle with the texts and to discuss the larger liberal arts context of

the assignment with the students. For instance, they might wonder why we bother to analyze the readings with great attention to detail. One elaboration on the exercise would highlight that we often have to understand a sequence of events and the roles people played in them in order to carry on our lives. The discussion of the financial crisis can be foreshadowed to make the point. Who did what? When? Why? We may never discern full answers to these questions, but we want answers because we hope that answering could lead us to avoid future crises or diminish their impact. Given the need to cope with such complex events and their consequences, we need to be able to look at stories closely and fairly, so that everyone involved can recognize and comment on the narrative without haranguing about its presentation. Given general agreement, people can move more productively to wrestle with implications and courses of action for the future.

The expository essays move forward the process of practicing the arts of the free person. First, they require students to analyze a position that is not their own so that they can present it fairly to someone else. Rather than reproduce the whole of Genesis 3, the story of Adam and Eve and the serpent, for example, they must analyze what important points it conveys about goodness and wickedness. They must be fair to the story. Fairness, when Adam is not available to comment on the essay's depiction of him, implies that the representation of him should be recognizable to people with a range of attachments to the narrative, even if they disagree with the author about its implications. So, for instance, the story exhibits the serpent making arguments to Eve about the goodness of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:4-5). After she accepts these and eats, she offers the fruit to Adam, who eats it (3:6). The student then can argue, for instance, that forbidden things can be

made to seem attractive and that evil actions arise from their attractiveness. Among the conclusions that the student cannot draw fairly is that Adam's greed for the fruit overcame his obedience to God and he succumbed to a small nudge from the serpent. Nor could it depict human nature as inheriting Adam's susceptibility to a non-human evil force. Why not? The text says nothing about the reasons Adam accepted the fruit and the serpent does not speak to him.

Essaying

The second kind of essay applies the student's understanding of goodness and wickedness or virtue and vice to the financial crisis. It allows the student to try her skills. It lets her to see that her fair representations and careful analyses can lead to a thoughtful evaluation. And it most likely will culminate in the awareness that nothing absolute, airtight, or flawless can result. The essay suits this situation well because etymologically an essay is a "try." The root of the word in French, *essayer*, means "to try." For a college course, an essay should engage and persuade the reader that it presents a reasonable and sometimes enjoyable try. But especially for someone aiming to contribute as a free person to a public realm, the essay must also allow others to try. It should contribute to a cultural discussion, but not try to dominate it and rarely try to end it. Instead, it should foster a common good that will come into view only as the process of many analysts' and visionaries' work.

This caveat about trying bears repetition for both kinds of essays but especially for the application of concepts to the financial crisis. Typically, by writing the first essay, students have gained confidence that they can articulate some part of Aristotle's philosophy or a narrative account of good and evil. Yet

anxieties about their competence appear like mosquitos as the class members try to use their prior work to set out a view on part of the financial crisis. The assignment is loosely worded, so anxiety will tend to accompany the freedom in any case. Are they permitted to limit their discussion to the homeowners who took out mortgages they could not afford? How can they talk about "greedy bankers" when companies exist to make money? How can they evaluate situations too big for anyone to understand fully?

As these questions recur, I repeat that the students are trying; they need not give the be-all and end-all evaluation of the financial crisis and all its players. They have the chance to try to bring into view an evaluation based on what they know; they need not claim to trump every other evaluation based on what anyone else might know. I remind them of all or part of how their paper continues their training in the liberal arts: The process of writing the paper will force them to observe and set out information fairly, analyze and seek the importance of various kinds of information and evaluation for the argument they want to make, read with discernment, and imagine that their perspective will come into conversation with others and perhaps then need revision. This last eventuality is assured, because they bring drafts of the papers to class to discuss with other students. The suggested length of the paper encourages analysis, because the aim is to set out the argument, both concepts for evaluation and information to be evaluated, in five pages. So emphasis of what is important rather than endless rehearsal of concepts or evidence becomes central. And their capacity to enter as a free, if finite, person into the public world becomes plain.

Normally, the students report success with various aspects of the course. Few say in so many words that they find their facility in the liberal arts increased.

Some will say, however, that they discovered that factors of the financial crisis can be highlighted and understood, that they see that evaluative judgments can be made in line within certain guides for thought (i.e., stories and philosophies about goodness and wickedness), and that they would like to know more. If such comments arise face to face, I may respond that the liberal arts education is meant to nourish a desire to know more, and that they have practiced once again with the tools of the free person. I hope they are more ready to participate in the public sphere. When the student rues the fact that none of the efforts have yielded a complete analysis or assuredly correct judgment, I note that no tool alone is complete, just as none of us alone is complete. I encourage them to believe that even if at the end of the formal liberal arts education one cannot say absolutely, “Here is a major problem and I can solve it,” one can say with confidence, “Yes, thoughtfully and with some diligence, we can together achieve some progress.”

Inevitably, the students descend from the small plateau of our course. They complete the requirements of the major and take it along with their liberal arts education as they leave the university and commence their next activities. As educators we can train students to survey the landscape, point directions, and otherwise prepare for future travels. Whether they keep looking forward or sometimes glance back, they will have the opportunity to see and speak with discernment and care about the world and its inhabitants, close at hand and far off, in

presentations that speak clearly and helpfully to their communities’ situations and projects.

Appendix

Planet Money Broadcasts on the Financial Crisis of 2007-2008

- Blumberg, Alex, and Adam Davidson.
“The Giant Pool of Money.”
<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode355/the-giant-pool-of-money>. First broadcast May 9, 2008. Accessed January 22, 2013. Web.
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<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/365/another-frightening-show-about-the-economy>. First broadcast October 3, 2008. Accessed January 24, 2013. Web.
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On Teaching “Muslims and Identity in Europe”

Ermitte Saint Jaques
Anthropology

After teaching my ASEM course, Muslims and Identity in Europe, I find the challenge to be incorporating instructional time for writing. Writing is central to the ASEM but at the same time marginal. The ASEM is design for nonmajors, which means that some students may not have prior knowledge of certain concepts of social phenomena, like ethnicity and nationalism, which are explored in my course. Both concepts are complicated and each can be a course in itself, leaving little time for writing instruction. As part of the ASEM requirements, I engage the course topic “from multiple perspectives.” Teaching complex social concepts to nonmajors from different theoretical views leaves little time for writing instruction. I discuss the challenges of incorporating instructional writing in the ASEM and summarize lessons learned from teaching an ASEM course for four quarters. I end with an outline of strategies for incorporating instructional time for writing.

The ASEM overview requires that “students demonstrate their ability to integrate different perspectives and synthesize diverse ideas through intensive writing on that topic.” This requirement actually encompasses two objectives: learning the topic and writing. Having students demonstrate knowledge through

written assignments requires the instructor to assess both students’ comprehension of the topic and students’ writing. With regard to the writing component, the ASEM requires the instructor to assign “some instructional time devoted to writing... [and] to provide some minimal strategies that nonetheless can be very useful to students.” How much instructional time to allocate is open and left to the discretion of the instructor as indicated in the “possible teaching practices” listed in the Features of Writing in ASEM. The practices vary from a 10-15 minute talk about a writing assignment to a 45-minute workshop run by the staff of the Writing Center. The openness of instructional time for writing reflect the uncertainty of the abilities and skills of students each course. How can I incorporate writing more in the ASEM? Although the topic of the course remains central, I have tried to bring writing from the margins.

The first lesson is to assign a short writing exercise within the first week of the course. Previously, I had students submitting a five to seven page reaction paper to Eriksen’s *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (2010), at the end of the third week of the quarter. For the reaction paper, students are asked to summarize the anthropological approaches to ethnicity,

distinguish between ethnicity and nationalism, and present their viewpoints on the different theories using examples to support their positions. Rather than having student comment on the entire text, which takes three weeks to cover, having students respond to specific topics or sections in two to three pages each of the weeks covering the text has proven to be more effective. At the end of the first three weeks, students write an equivalent amount of pages. A short writing assignment in the first week of the course enabled me to assess the writing of the students and to determine the need for writing instruction. Why not have students respond to questions on discussion forums or create blogs? I have found that students are more casual with their writing within these genres. As formal writing assignment, students can later use their reaction papers as part of their theoretical framework for their research paper due at the end of the quarter.

The second lesson involves giving students comprehensive feedback on their writing assignments. Giving detailed comments on writing assignments is a method of providing instruction that does not consume valuable classroom time. The key to providing feedback is to give extensive comments on a section of the student's paper with the understanding the problems in the selected section are

found throughout the paper. I gained this insight from a workshop entitled "Responding to Writing While Saving Some Weekend," led by Doug Hesse. Detailed feedback works best when accompanied by additional instruction from a writing handbook or manual. In my comments, I refer students to the section of the handbook that deals with the specific issue or problem in their writing. Students can then use the handbook to review the shortcomings in their writing. Depending on their individual motivation, students can complete the practice exercises in the handbook to improve their writing skills. Moreover, students can use the handbook as a reference tool for writing. The writing handbook is also helpful to students, especially international students, who may have problems with grammar. In the instructional time devoted to writing, I focus on stylistic and process issues rather than grammar as the course is an advanced seminar and most students have a proficient understanding of grammar.

A third lesson is to take full advantage of the reading texts as both expositions of the subject matter and models for writing instruction. As examples of writing, the assigned texts for the course represent various genres. Although students are not writing in of the genres represented, they are exposed to them.



“How Far is too Far?”
Music, Consciousness, and Mind-Altering Substances in ASEM

Kristin Taavola
Music

I teach an ASEM called “Music and Consciousness,” which is meant to provide students with a paradigm for examining thought and experience. An individual’s musical understanding could be described as a melting pot of subjective experience, “observable” data, and intersubjective cultural meanings. This course, “Music and Consciousness,” explores ways of framing and defining individual and collective responses to musical arts, and, in turn, how the understanding of these responses can lead to a broader view of human consciousness. Though the study of different musical cultures (and subcultures), students can critically examine their own musical preferences, as well as respond to other’s aesthetic positions. For many students, music has played a formative role in the development of adolescent identity. As a result, they often feel strongly about issues of musical taste and values, and proceed from those unquestioned values when confronted with music that challenges them. By confronting these values through their own writing, students can not only gain a larger perspective on musical consciousness, but also hone their writing skills as they learn the craft of descriptive analysis.

We study a variety of musics in the course, ranging from John Cage’s 4’33” to Ravi Shankar’s North Indian classical

performances to the music of Charles Ives, Charles Mingus, Beethoven, and Daft Punk. I teach basic musical terminology in the first part of the course, and students begin to examine different positions towards music, including their own subjective responses, culled in short essays such as “Music I HATE.” Work in weeks 1-5 sets a philosophical paradigm for examining different musical genres during the second half of the quarter, during which we listen in-depth to repertoires from around the world, as well as reading at different literary styles such as *New York Times* articles, webzines, and scholarly articles and books focusing on ethnomusicology and music theory.

The study of bias, both obvious and hidden, is essential to this part of the course. We begin with essays the students assume to be “factual,” then progress to more opinionated writings, finally ending with the “Musical Manifesto,” some kind of statement that declares a new future for music, based on sound, song, or perhaps some performative feature. The manifestos we read are extreme, and can often seem like parodies, so at this point in the course, I sometimes introduce a skit from “Saturday Night Live,” or some other comedy show, to facilitate a compare-and-contrast discussion: who goes further, the comedian or the revolutionary? And whose work is more effective?

The last time I taught this ASEM, the question “To what degree is the writer biased?” morphed into “How far is too far?” This question came to life based on a discussion of encyclopedia-type entries, gaining momentum as we compared a Futurist manifesto by an Italian composer at the turn of the twentieth-century and the rock band Riot Grrl. The students were inspired and sometimes inflamed by these works, and I think perhaps their fire got out of control when they set out to write and perform their own manifestos during the last week of class. Below, I’ll take you through the progression of ideas, perspectives, biases, and provocations we experienced during the quarter in an attempt to illustrate my pedagogical uneasiness with a situation that moved into territory that I wasn’t sure belonged in the classroom.

Objectivity and Bias: Two Exercises

The unmanageable undercurrent started out tamely enough in the middle of the quarter. We compared this excerpt on Beethoven from Wikipedia (above) with the one from the Oxford Dictionary Online that follows. The Oxford resource, formerly the *New Grove Dictionary of Music*, is a resource written by and for music scholars, carefully edited by experts in the field

Beethoven composed his first six string quartets (Op. 18) between 1798 and 1800 (commissioned by, and dedicated to, Prince Lobkowitz). They were published in 1801. With premieres of his First and Second Symphonies in 1800 and 1803, Beethoven became regarded as one of the most important of a generation of young composers following Haydn and Mozart.

He also continued to write in other forms, turning out widely known piano sonatas like the "Pathétique" sonata (Op. 13), which Cooper describes as "surpass[ing] any of his previous compositions, in strength of character, depth of emotion, level of originality, and ingenuity of motivic and tonal manipulation."³ He also completed his Septet (Op. 20) in 1799, which was one of his most popular works during his lifetime.³

Yet even when dealing with instruments that were not in a state of radical development, he [Beethoven] acted as if they were. The string quartets of op.59 so strained the medium, as it was understood in 1806, that they met with resistance from players and audiences alike. The first movement of the F major Quartet op.59 no.1, though in mood very different from the ‘Eroica’ Symphony, resembles it in its unexampled scope and also, **rather surprisingly**, in a number of technical features. The second movement is Beethoven’s largest, most fantastic scherzando – not a true scherzo, but a free essay in the tradition of the sonatas op.31 no.3 and op.54. All three quartet slow movements, **surely**, cry out for evocative titles, and the last two finales are all but orchestral in conception.

³

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig_van_Beethoven Accessed 20 June 2013.

Each quartet was supposed to include a Russian melody, for the benefit of the dedicatee Count Rasumovsky, the Russian ambassador to Vienna. Here for the first time may be seen Beethoven's interest in folksong, which was to grow in later years. **Folksongs did not much help the first two quartets**, but Rasumovsky's notion **came to superb fruition** in the third, where Beethoven gave up the idea of incorporating pre-existing tunes and instead wrote the haunting A minor Andante in what he must have conceived to be a Russian idiom.⁴

The Wikipedia expert essentially provides factual detail, elaborated by a quote that features an opinion. The Oxford example, however, interweaves a narrative of progressive style-types in Beethoven's evolution with subtle value judgments (highlighted in **bold** for the purpose of this discussion). I work with students to develop their eyes and ears from such critical sleights of hand, introducing the idea that even a dictionary entry can value some musics over others, just as they do.

Next, we moved on to consciously biased works, the manifestos. Below, an excerpt from Baililla Pratella's *Musica Futurista*, followed by a few lines published in the fanzine Riot Grrl's.

Pratella

I, who repudiate the title of Maestro as a stigma of mediocrity and ignorance, hereby confirm my enthusiastic adhesion to

⁴ "Beethoven," from *Oxford Dictionary Online*. Accessed 20 June 2013.

Futurism, offering to the young, the bold and the reckless these my irrevocable conclusions:

- 1) To convince young composers to desert schools, conservatories and musical academies, and to consider free study as the only means of regeneration.
- 2) To combat the venal and ignorant critics with assiduous contempt, liberating the public from the pernicious effects of their writings. To found with this aim in view a musical review that will be independent and resolutely opposed to the criteria of conservatory professors and to those of the debased public....
- 4)) To keep at a distance from commercial or academic circles, despising them, and preferring a modest life to bountiful earnings acquired by selling art.
- 5) The liberation of individual musical sensibility from all imitation or influence of the past, feeling and singing with the spirit open to the future, drawing inspiration and aesthetics from nature, through all the human and extra-human phenomena present in it. Exalting the man-symbol everlastingly renewed by the varied aspects of modern life and its infinity of intimate relationships with nature.

6) To destroy the prejudice for “well-made” music—rhetoric and impotence—to proclaim the unique concept of Futurist music, as absolutely different from music to date, and so to shape in Italy a Futurist musical taste, destroying doctrinaire, academic and soporific values, declaring the phrase “let us return to the old masters” to be hateful, stupid and vile.⁵

Riot Grrl

BECAUSE us girls crave records and books and fanzines that speak to US that WE feel included in and can understand in our own ways.

BECAUSE we wanna make it easier for girls to see/hear each other's work so that we can share strategies and criticize-applaud each other.

BECAUSE we must take over the means of production in order to create our own moanings.

BECAUSE viewing our work as being connected to our girlfriends-politics-real lives is essential if we are gonna figure out how we are doing impacts, reflects, perpetuates, or DISRUPTS the status quo.⁶

⁵ <http://www.unknown.nu/futurism/musicians.html> Accessed 20 June 2013.

⁶ http://onewarart.org/riot_grrrl_manifesto.htm Accessed 20 June 2013.

Then, I gave the assignment in the appendix to this paper. In the past, students had dealt with their newfound freedom in responsible ways. This quarter, however, one student pushed boundaries in a responsible way, opening the floodgates for others to follow.

Manifestos Too Far?

During the last week of class, students present their manifestos. They are required to have musical examples and a PowerPoint slideshow that includes at least some of the edicts they espouse. Generally, some of them are predictable, some hysterical, and some brilliant; this quarter, for example, one student made a case for Taylor Swift's music as the epitome of genius, and another proclaimed that country music lyrics revealed the deep meaning of life, citing songs such as “Get Your Tongue Out of My Mouth ‘Cause I'm Breakin' Up With You.” A music student made a case for “The Emancipation of Consonance,” an alternative to the twentieth-century tract by atonal composer Arnold Schoenberg, “The Emancipation of Dissonance.” He called for the use of at most three chords in any tune, and his performance of “The Song of One Note” had everyone rolling on the floor laughing.

While these projects resonated with those I've had with past classes, that same Tuesday 4 p.m. class, another student, a psych major who was smart and interesting, and usually pretty engaged in class, approached me and said, “I want to do something unusual, but I don't want to tell you what it is, because that will spoil the surprise. I went to the Office of Student Conduct and got permission to do it; I can show you the letter.”

Thinking about it now, I sigh. I liked the student, whom I'll call Jeff. He'd taken steps that seemed appropriate, so his request didn't make me especially nervous

or anxious. But I was exhausted that day, perhaps too tired to get worried—it was the last week of a long Winter quarter, and I had a couple of exams to write for other classes. I knew I really needed a vacation, but Spring Break was going to be filled with grading and writing a new syllabus. And it was already 4 p.m. and I wanted to go home. I didn't have it in me to play bad cop at that very moment, and I was pretty sure it wouldn't help my student evaluations, so I said yes. What could really go wrong?

Jeff set up his computer at the beginning of the room, with his backpack conspicuously on the floor beside it. He took off his jacket, revealing a ripped t-shirt underneath, and pulled a studded collar from his bag, snapping it at the back of his neck. The manifesto was about punk music, and he began with a little history of the movement in the UK. Embedded in his PPT was a YouTube track of the Sex Pistols' "God Save the Queen." Jeff cranked up the sound and danced aggressively at the front of the room while it played. Then, after introducing Sid Vicious, he blasted another track, reached into his backpack and pulled out a can of Pabst Blue Ribbon, cracking it open and slamming the full beer in one swig before the forty-six second clip had ended.

So, this is what he had needed permission for. I was vaguely uneasy; I did not actually know whether he was twenty-one. Also the music was quite loud, and Lamont's main office was on the other side of the wall. By this time it was about 5 p.m., though (I rationalized), and the Director and her staff were probably gone. If he has permission, this should all be fine, I said to myself, and to the pit in my stomach. Just wait and it will over soon. The tenets of the punk movement are pretty well-rehearsed in the annals of the internet at this point, and there wasn't much more left to say.

Meanwhile, the students were eating it up, catcalling and applauding and screaming. And Jeff—Jeff was in his element. He was a small, serious guy, not really geeky, but not cool either. He was someone who had probably never pushed the boundaries of the classroom this far, and he was ecstatic, slam-dancing in front of his peers and grinning from ear-to-ear with their approval.

I'm guessing that Jeff will remember that moment of college for the rest of his life, and if it means that he'll also remember my class and some of the things we studied, and maybe tell his friends or his kids about it someday, then I suppose the inclusion of the PBR did some work that I couldn't have done myself. You never know. At least, that's what I told myself when we left the classroom at 6 p.m. and it smelled like cheap beer.

One-Ups(wo)manship

On Thursday, the last day of class, I somehow naïvely thought that things would go as usual, we'd have a few laughs, and maybe we'd be done early so I could go home and binge watch the "Homeland" DVDs a friend had lent me in celebration of the end of the quarter. Class started routinely enough, with a predictable but funny presentation on Miley Cyrus and a relatively inspired manifesto on "Why Violin Is and Always Will Be the Best Instrument Ever." Then it was Meg's turn; she was a writer, an alternative type with dreadlocks, glasses, and lots of creativity. The week before we'd discussed several ideas for her presentation, including a critique of Insane Clown Posse and a folk music renaissance manifesto, and I wasn't sure what she'd decided on, but I figured it would be witty and full of life.

When she flashed the first slide onto the screen, I cringed: LEGALIZE was

emblazoned in black over a green pot leaf. The Grateful Dead started playing through the speakers, and Meg's voice modulated to a stoner rhythm. "Yeah, man, so I'm going to like play some tunes for you all and um..." she paused, removing a brownie from her purse. "And I am, um, going to share with you the reasons to legalize marijuana."

What followed was pretty predictable: a long playlist, a variety of similar edicts to legalize, and continual nibbling on the brownie, all narrated by an increasingly loopy Meg. Ugh. I was uncomfortable and also bored.

Unlike Jeff, Meg didn't seem to be stretching a new boundary in her life. Given her dreds and the ease with which she'd adopted a stoner voice, it wasn't a stretch to imagine her having a similar conversation with her friends; nor was it difficult to imagine that she knew exactly where to buy a special brownie. My guess is the students probably knew that too—she got some positive feedback from them, but none of the hoots and howls Jeff had, and some looked a bit bored.

Argh. It was the last day of class, and I really, **really** did not want to play the bad cop against the legalize movement with these students. So I let it go, and at the end, I said, "I do NOT want to know whether there is pot in that brownie. You can tell the others after I leave, but please do NOT tell me."

I'm not sure that "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is really a solution to anything these days, but I have to say it turned out to be a great coping mechanism in that moment. What's sad, though, is that Meg, inventive as she was, may have taken away LESS from the course, rather than more, if in fact she had been role-playing a familiar scenario that she found "cool" in lieu of exploring the creative possibilities of an unfamiliar genre.

Another couple of presentations passed, and I could see Homeland in the

distance. Mark was up last. He'd been a bit of a struggle to teach that quarter; he was convinced that everything he did was good, and all of the self-reflexive exercises we'd done somehow served to underscore his genius at every turn. He played guitar in a rave band, and he idolized a group popular in Denver called STS9, or Sound Tribe Sector 9.⁷ Both Mark's band and STS9 played music festivals, and he'd already written a paper claiming that drug use at the festivals was an integral part of the musical experience, that is was important to use drugs to appreciate the music, and it was important to be safe about it.

I'd told him the manifesto had to be different from the first paper, but that point hadn't sunk in. He began to rehearse his earlier thesis, showing concert footage and reading passages he'd written, including the prescriptions for drug use. He had none of the required tenets of the assignment. The presentation went on longer than it needed to, but not beyond the allotted duration. The students, who'd already heard his diatribes several times, began to pack up to leave, anxious to go to their own binge behavior, I guessed. There was no applause, no cat-calling.

It was monotonous, frustrating, and unnerving for me all at once. I'd said no to the project, and he had gone ahead and presented it. I knew him well enough to know that if I'd stopped him because he was out-of-bounds of the assignment, I would have gotten lots of flack, and no one there wanted to hear it. It's rare that I have encountered a student who is really unteachable, but Mark, set as he was in his path, really wasn't looking to learn anything from me. Beyond that, if I were to take issue with the presentation, it could appear that I was taking a stance against psychedelic drugs, which I didn't want to do during the last ten minutes of

⁷ <http://sts9.com/home/>

the course. I was aggravated—no learning was going on here, for him or any of the students. Mark left happy, though—in my worn state, I speculated (to myself) that he was glad to have had the floor to talk about himself.

Everyone left the room on a fairly low note. “Bye,” they said. A few music majors stayed behind to say thanks, but that was it. We’d lost the laughter and lightness from earlier, and I felt tired and a little defeated.

Controlled v. Canned

I’d lost control of the room at several points that week, or at least I’d felt I did. I’ve been teaching for a while, and it’s rare that I am unsure how to respond to something in the classroom. And while I am not sure how to handle controlled substances in a formal setting, here I’m more concerned with the loss of a potentially “teachable” moment, and how that might affect student writing.

The three students created manifestos that lacked certainly qualities that other student’s had embodied. For example, even though I’ve seen many college proclaim a hatred for Taylor Swift and her name often pops up in class, the manifesto that “Taylor Swift is the best of all musicians,” forced a student to put herself in the mindset of a starstruck teen and exaggerate those feelings, supporting her edicts with things like the Facebook page “I love Taylor Swift Awesome Voice,” which currently has 896 likes, and a poetic reading of the song “Teardrops on My Guitar.” In that context, when students recognize the absurdity of the situation, I can ask critical questions such as, “Is there a grain of truth in what’s being said?” Usually someone admits that there is, leading to a discussion of “How are the tween fans using Taylor Swift’s music to construct an identity?” and “What might make you like Taylor at that

age?” or “If you were going to create a new pop star, what qualities do you think she might embody in order to be as famous as Taylor, and what does that say about our society?” After we see a creative performance, the students’ brain is ready to take on more creative questions, and they are ready to write more interesting papers.

Jeff’s punk presentation, on the other hand, incorporated principles of the punk movement that are widely published, so his presentation did not take an idea or concept to its extreme. His creative contribution was simply shooting the beer. His final paper, as a result, was more like a research paper than a dramatic creation, and the students had fun, but they didn’t have much more to add.

Meg’s stoner PPT may have been timely, given the legalization of marijuana in Colorado, but she also didn’t say anything new, and, in fact, eating the brownie felt less innovative after Jeff’s PBR. And Mark’s diatribe was just that; it felt like old ground in our classroom, even if he thinks of these issues as a personal passion that channels his own music making. Both of these presentations had less direction than Jeff’s; they were more of a “state of being” than a statement.

The problem, then, was not so much the controlled substances, but the controlled, canned nature of the topics. Perhaps my disappointment at the end of the quarter might have been the same had students copied from Wikipedia or written research papers with pat, predictable conclusions.

I’m still not sure what to do about controlled substances in the classroom, but I think I may write an assignment next time that asks the students to think of an original topic, not one that has lots of play on the internet. I can use the punk movement and the “legalize” topic in class to show how issues that press certain accepted boundaries can, ironically, turn

into conventional, boring topics. If it's a good day, I might be able to get the students to understand that creativity begets creativity. Unexpected humor and absurdity can sometimes show us parts of ourselves, and of our culture, which deserve deeper examination.

That's what the course, "Music and Consciousness," is about, anyway. And I

have to say, as uncomfortable as my students made me, they did wake me up a little. These issues have stuck with me, and even after a weekend filled with twelve Homeland episodes (not to mention another quarter of teaching), I am still mulling them over.

Appendix

ASEM 2688

Musical Manifesto: FINAL PAPER/PRESENTATION Project

Presentations in class on 3/7 and 3/12

Write your OWN musical manifesto that expresses a **strong and biased** viewpoint about the one or all of the following:

- What music is meant to express
- How it should express emotion, or formal balance
- Whether or not it should express emotion
- How music should be built
- Values of that music should express
- Why Everyone should listen to this music
- Justification for the music
- How music should be composed, performed, recorded

While you may list TENETS of the music (basic principles), your paper/project should have an extended prose discussion of the musical viewpoint at hand. (Follow Stravinsky's *Poetics* as an example, or possibly .) Establish a particular tone for your argument (authoritative, rebellious, abstract, etc.) and maintain that tone throughout the paper.

Music videos are acceptable as well.

I offer the option that your Manifesto take the form of a **parody**. That is, you can exaggerate certain features for the sake of comedy, imitating another musician's view ironically. Often, parody papers are among the most successful; unless you have a truly unique and passionate

Multimodal Writing in an FSEM Context

John Tiedemann
Writing Program

Why teach multimodal composition in an FSEM?

My FSEM is titled “Graphic Writing across Cultures.” We read a variety of contemporary graphic novels and examine how their creators tell stories that cut across boundaries of race, nation, gender, class, religion, and sexuality by exploiting the unique meaning-making opportunities afforded by the slippery, often surprising interaction between words and images. The students complete two major graded projects: each writes a research-based, thesis-driven interpretive essay and each creates a graphic novella of his or her own.

This latter requirement — creating a graphic novella — means that my FSEM qualifies as what folks in writing studies call a “multimodal course:” i.e., one that aims to teach not only written composition but other kinds of composition, too: aural, sculptural, architectural, or, in my case, visual. The question of whether, to what extent, and why a college writing course ought to teach modes of composition other than the verbal kind has been hotly debated in writing studies in recent years. On the one hand, because so much composing nowadays takes place in digital environments, where it’s the norm to communicate not only with words but with sounds and images, too, it seems important to give students practice in

composing across a variety of modes. On the other hand, however, because learning something meaningful about a craft as demanding as scholarly writing in a mere 10 or so weeks is, to say the least, a challenge, it makes sense to ask: Is it realistic to ask novice academic writers to grapple with elements of visual, oral, or musical composition, too?

The question is only more pressing in the context of the First-Year Seminar program. While it is true that FSEM courses often have a strong writing component, their primary purpose is not to teach writing as such but to introduce students to the richness and rigor of intellectual life in the academy. To invoke an invidious but in this case necessary distinction: the FSEMs aren’t “writing courses” per se, but what are sometimes called “content courses.” That is, the writing, however intensive, is not the end in itself; it serves, rather, as a means to an end: a deeper understanding of the course “content.” So, again: why, in this context, teach multiple modes of composition?

In what follows, I’ll try to answer that question by describing how and why I teach my FSEM as I do. In a nutshell, the argument I’ll make is this: A particularly effective way to help students to become more purposeful, more attentive, and more imaginative writers is, paradoxically, to invite them to compose in modes *other than* writing, and then to adapt what they’ve learned about other modes of

composition to the business of putting scholarly words on the page. By asking students to compose in multiple modes, then, I am emphatically *not* attempting to inculcate in them yet another set of prescriptive rules (as in, “You have learned that you must never use the word *I* in an academic essay. Now you must learn never to use the color indigo in an illustration”). To the contrary, my purpose in asking students to try their hand at composing in various modes is precisely to help them shake off the oppressively prescriptive notions of scholarly writing that so many of them bring to college, in order that they may come to grasp the craft of creating continuous, argumentative prose — i.e., scholarly writing so-called — not as a stuffy, stultifying academic exercise, but as a creative process every bit as demanding and rewarding as the making of art. That, it seems to me, is exactly the disposition toward intellectual life that the FSEM program means to teach. And it’s to that end that I ask my students to experiment with words and pictures alike.

The course itinerary

In the first four weeks of the course we read three graphic novels, each of which tells a personal story of coming of age through the experience of cultural conflict. In *Blankets*, Craig Thompson recounts how his development as an artist was shaped by the experience of growing up in a religiously conservative community that held virtually all forms of personal expression to be sinful. In *Fun Home*, Alison Bechdel explores what it was like coming out as a lesbian while at the same time dealing with the tragic consequences of her father’s closeted homosexuality. And in *Spit and Passion*, Cristy Road depicts her experiences as teenage lesbian Latina punk rocker growing up in a largely white,

heteronormative, and thoroughly un-punk suburb.

Our focus in class is upon the ways that the creators of these texts match “content” and “form,” i.e., with how they render the tensions, ambiguities, and clashes of culturally conflicted experience via the semiotic tensions, ambiguities, and clashes that occur at the intersection of the verbal and visual registers of their texts. I therefore assign two kinds of secondary texts. On the one hand, we read some cultural theory, to help us understand the nature of the conflicts that the graphic novels depict; on the other hand, and in order to appreciate the artistry at work, we read selections from some of the now standard texts on composing comics: Scott McCloud’s *Making Comics and Understanding Comics*; Will Eisner’s *Comics and Sequential Art* and *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative*; and Alan Moore’s *Writing for Comics*.

In these latter texts, the emphasis is on production over analysis, creation over criticism. The students attend to four comics composing strategies in particular: (1) how *conflict* gives rise to plots and the development of characters; (2) how these plot lines and character arcs are advanced through verbal and visual *sequencing*; (3) how the pages and panels making up a sequence are organized around various kinds of verbal/visual *juxtaposition*; and (4) how graphic storytellers enrich their narratives by *quoting from* and *alluding to* other verbal or visual texts. Drawing upon these precepts, and with the examples of Thompson, Bechdel, and Road in mind, the students spend week 5 drafting their first major project: a graphic novella that treats of their own experience of cultural conflict.⁸ Each student tells his or her own

⁸ Students do not need to be able to draw to take this class. For one thing, there are a lot of free comics-making services online nowadays. What’s more, my goal isn’t to teach them how

“origin story,” i.e., the story of how, through an experience of cultural conflict, s/he has come to be who s/he is today.

The second part of the course is, to my mind, the more challenging, though at first glance it may appear to be the more conventional. During weeks 6 through 9, the students read three graphic novels that explore cultural conflict on a less personal, more global and historical scale. *Incognegro*, by Mat Johnson and Warren Pleece, is the fictional tale of a Thirties-era African American detective who “passes” as white in order to investigate a series of lynchings in the Deep South. Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* is a history of the continuing trauma of the Holocaust framed by the experience of a single family. And Joe Sacco’s *Palestine* depicts Sacco’s contemporary experiences in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as well as the history of the Palestinian people. During week 10, the students draft a research-based, thesis-driven interpretive essay about one of these three texts or a graphic novel of their choosing, having prepared to write that draft by completing a series of writing exercises in class and at home.

As in the first part of the course, our focus in this second part is upon how the creators of graphic texts match “content” and “form,” i.e., the events represented and the verbal/visual style of their representation. And, once again, I assign secondary readings to help us toward that end, most of which are historical in nature, since much of the relevant history is likely unfamiliar to many students. However, whereas in the first part of the course I assign several

to *draw* but how to *compose*, i.e., how to arrange visual (and verbal) elements meaningfully and deliberately. Therefore, the quality of a student’s draftsmanship isn’t an issue; she could create a brilliantly composed text using just stick figures and word balloons.

secondary readings having to do with the craft of composing comics, here I do not. Rather, the students undertake a series of exercises that ask them to adapt the compositional concepts they learned during the first part of the course — conflict, sequencing, juxtaposition, and quotation/allusion — to the task of researching and interpreting the graphic novels that we read in the second. Students consider how theses are generated by staging conceptual conflicts; how those theses can be developed through careful and deliberate sequencing; how the sections and paragraphs making up a sequence are organized around the juxtaposition of various argumentative elements; and how those arguments can be enhanced through quotations from and allusions to sources discovered through research. In their final essays, then, the students not only aim to argue an original interpretation of the historical significance of the graphic novels they’ve chosen to interpret, but to cast that argument in an essay form deliberately crafted to fit it — in terms of the essay’s overall structure, the shape of its various parts, and the ways that it incorporates outside sources.

Multimodal composition as a way of writing to learn

Teachers familiar with the rhetorical tradition will likely recognize in the adaptable concepts I have described at least four of the five canons of classical rhetoric. *Conflict* corresponds to the canon of *invention*, which shows how arguments can be generated by framing the matter at hand in dialectically opposed dyads. *Sequencing* corresponds to *arrangement*, which has to do with ordering the arguments thus generated such as to bring them to a climax at once logically satisfying and aesthetically pleasing. *Juxtaposition* corresponds to *style*, which concerns the paragraph- and sentence-

level choices a writer or speaker makes in suiting her language to her theme, the occasion, and her audience. And *quotation/allusion* corresponds to *memory*, which involves embedding a particular composition intertextually within the discourse of the community more generally, hence enriching it with history and commending it to posterity.

Again, these correspondences may be recognizable to a teacher. But they likely do not — and this is the crucial point — strike the students as familiar, even those students who have studied rhetorical concepts in, e.g., their AP English class. To the contrary: In my experience, asking students to deploy the strategies of comics composition to the writing of scholarly arguments strikes them, at least initially, as a strange idea, indeed. A novel idea, perhaps; maybe even an alluring one. But always also strange.

Provoking that sense of (hopefully productive) estrangement is precisely the purpose of taking the multimodal “detour” I’ve described. For it is a perennial pedagogical challenge — and not only for writing teachers — that students come to college with a good deal of prior knowledge about how to write. That prior knowledge is not, of course, a bad thing; indeed, it is often quite useful. However, and perhaps paradoxically, prior knowledge about writing can serve as an impediment to learning: that is, when the knowledge takes the form of prescriptive rules that seem somehow to have acquired the force of law, to be obeyed without question and regardless of context. Probably all faculty who have taught first-year courses can make a list of some of these imported prescriptions: *Begin your essay with a sentence that grabs the reader’s attention. Don’t use I in an academic essay. All essays should have five paragraphs.* And these are only some of the more obvious ones. More subtle are the broader attitudes toward the meaning and purpose of

academic writing that students acquire as a result of their various high school curricula, their experiences of national and state testing regimes, and the myriad ways they have been asked to write in and out of the classroom.

The point, then, of provoking a sense of estrangement from prior writing knowledge is not to invalidate that knowledge, nor to replace it with a different, “truer” set of prescriptions. Rather, by making a familiar activity strange again, I hope to encourage students see the composition of scholarly texts not as a process of rule-following, but one of decision-making, of puzzle-solving, of art-making. My goal is help students take control over, and responsibility for, their choices as writers. For there is, of course, no “correct” way to compose a paragraph by analogy to a comics panel, to organize an essay by analogy to a visual narrative, etc. Experimenting with these acts of multimodal “translation” is just that: an experiment. Students are called upon to actively create the principles and strategies they’ll employ in their writing; to decide consciously to adhere (or not) to one principle or another, to pursue (or not) one writing strategy or another; and to reflect critically upon their writerly choices. It is these qualities — imagination, an active sense of purpose, and a capacity for reflection — that make a strong scholarly writer.

Of course, it is these same qualities that make for a strong scholar in general, i.e., a deep, complex, and lively thinker, whether that thinking takes place in words, images, sounds, or numbers. Since cultivating that kind of thinking is a primary purpose of the FSEM program, it seems to me that multimodal composition is very well suited to it. Indeed, it can be one of the most powerful forms of writing to learn.

Multimodality in the FSEM Classroom: Digital Storytelling and ESL Students

Lydia Gil Keff
Languages and Literatures

I teach one of the "hybrid" FSEM courses (also known as "iFSEM") in which half of the students are domestic and the other half international. These courses are designed to benefit both groups by facilitating cross-cultural student interaction in a particular academic area and intentionally addressing issues of language and writing proficiency in a multicultural setting. While these courses are not necessarily writing intensive, there is a particular emphasis on working towards proficiency in academic, creative, professional and/or civic writing, as informed by the topic of the course.

In my course, "Immigrant Stories: Theirs and Ours," we examine the various ways in which individuals displaced by emigration and exile have chosen to tell their stories. We discuss texts by 20th and 21st century Chinese, Middle Eastern and Latin@ immigrants to the US in a variety of genres, from literary memoir and film to digital story and performance art. For their final project, students explore their own stories of displacement (ancestral, familiar, individual or collective) in the form of a literary essay, short memoir, collection of poems, digital story, performed monologue, or documentary film. Each of these options is explored through a dedicated workshop--often facilitated by a guest speaker--in which we study the conventions of each medium and explore how the form enhances content. Therefore, by the

time students are required to make a decision about medium for the final project, they will have had some exposure to the different options, both informally, through content --immigrant stories created in the various media--and formally, through dedicated readings and discussions about the form.

In the two years that I have taught an iFSEM, I have observed that most domestic students opt for working in essay form for their final projects, a choice that seems to correlate with their academic writing experience in high school and comfort level as informed by this experience. On the other hand, international students seem much more open to exploring multimodal writing projects, perhaps as a way of leveling the field in terms of language proficiency. These students favor digital storytelling in particular, as they find the form meaningful in its succinctness and semantic possibilities. Regardless of what initially motivates their openness to alternative narrative forms, it soon becomes apparent that multimodal writing projects--digital stories in particular--are an effective tool for ESL students to gain confidence in their writing while acquiring valuable skills in terms of revision, audience identification, editing, and metacognition. In my particular iFSEM, digital storytelling has also proven a valuable medium for ESL students to explore issues of displacement, cultural identity and otherness by making

connections through text/image/sound in aesthetic ways that would have been challenging in traditional narrative forms in a second language.

The Nature of Digital Stories

In general terms, a digital story is a short, digital media-writing project grounded in a first person narrative. It combines a narrated piece of personal writing with digital photo or video, and it is often set to musical soundtrack. Unlike most writing for social media, digital stories are self-contained pieces, with a beginning, middle and end. These story projects are often meticulously planned, as the orchestration of visual and audio components is designed to contribute a layer of meaning to the narrative.⁹ They can be technically complex--incorporating audio and visual effects--or quite simple in structure, as long as they privilege story over technical mastery.

There are certain conventions about length, as most digital stories will range between 3 to 4 minutes in duration and will be based on a script of 350 to 400 words¹⁰. Such succinctness requires a labor-intensive process of revision in order to distill a narrative to its essential components, while keeping it grounded in the personal, yet open enough to allow interpretations beyond it. In other words, making it transcendent. While this may seem a lot to ask from first-year ESL

⁹ Although there is a subgenre of digital storytelling using iPhone or other video capable small devices, these projects are more spontaneous in nature and are often done in one take.

¹⁰ While still open to much debate and interpretation, the Center for Digital Storytelling in Berkeley, California has helped define the conventions of this genre through their "Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling," which addresses emotional content, point of view, a dramatic question, and decisions about voice, soundtrack, economy and pacing, and sharing (Joe Lambert, *Digital Storytelling Cookbook*, Berkley, CA: Digital Diner Press, 2010).

students, those who opted to do a digital story for their final project not only achieved the goals of the assignment, but also reported a great feeling of accomplishment from having completed a work that was intensely personal, creatively critical, and aesthetically pleasing. To their surprise, they also acknowledged having spent many more hours writing, revising, editing and thinking about what creates meaning than they had originally expected.

A digital story requires methodical planning to go from idea to finished product, which makes it an effective instrument to convey that writing assignments are often multi-step projects that should not be left to the last minute to complete.

Process

Before committing to a particular genre or medium for their projects, we work on refining ideas through exploratory writing assignments. These assignments usually take the form of informal writing exercises in which students are asked to connect class readings to their particular story of displacement. Often, an idea with enough potential to be developed into a story emerges from these exercises. At this point, more free-writing exercises follow in order to clarify the idea and to explore the pertinence of a particular genre or medium as a vehicle for the story. Therefore, in addition to the practical value of exploratory writing (having an idea to develop and a genre or medium to work in) students learn to recognize pre-writing as a valuable first step towards the completion of a writing project.

The next step is shaping the idea into a story that is grounded in the personal (defining what makes this particular story "my own") and to explore its emotional resonance. While some students may complete this step through freewriting, others opt to jump right into scripting, hopefully with an understanding that scripting at this point will

require considerable revision to adjust to the length and content requirements.

A script will normally go through several iterations before a student is able to tell a personal story with an identifiable dramatic moment and the potential to transcend itself and resonate with a culturally different audience. At this point, a student will consider what visual elements will enhance the emotional content of the story and suggest additional avenues for interpretation. While the selection of visual material may begin with explicit imagery (images that mirror or merely illustrate the accompanying script) as they begin to assemble their story, many students will consider using implicit imagery and juxtaposition to contribute an additional layer or layers of meaning. This process is usually accomplished through storyboarding, which allows students to see how the visual and audio narratives complement each other.

The process of orchestrating the visual and audio components is an arduous one, requiring not only precision in timing the various components, but also aesthetic decisions about voice, intonation, pacing, visual transitions, volume, etc. I leave this part of the process completely open to the student, emphasizing that their project will not be graded based on how well they manage the technical aspects of their story, but on content and metacognition. I have found this last point--the reflection about their own thinking process in making connections between the course content and their personal stories and assigning semantic value to the orchestration of the multimodal resources--to be essential to the learning process.

Reflection and Assessment

Therefore, I ask all students who choose non-essay forms for their final projects to include a separate short narrative in which they address the structural choices they made and their semiotic value. Some of the guiding

questions I include for this part of the assignment are:

What is the "transcending" theme of your story? How does it relate to the overarching theme of the class? Why did you choose this particular medium to tell your story and how does it add a layer of significance? What meanings did you assign to the orchestration of multimodal resources? (Provide specific examples).

For this part, one student reflected on the benefits of working on a digital story project versus writing an essay with the following:

The format allows for a more open expression of emotions and a true reflection of the experience through photos, voice intonations, and text rather than a hollow description It allows for creativity. Emotions and an experience are hard to explain in the traditional, full-sentence, essay-format way. This format allows for the expression of emotion through creativity with photos, text, and the script. It is much more flexible.

Some students also take this as an opportunity to convey the challenges of the form (from technical aspects to putting their personal stories "out there"). All the while, however, they are not only considering their learning from a variety of angles, but also do so through writing--something they may have been initially resistant to do. Throughout the course of planning, writing and assembling their digital stories, students will have produced an impressive amount of formal and informal writing with a variety of goals and audiences in mind.

I must add a few words about assessment of digital story projects. While there are many rubrics specific to digital story projects, I wanted to develop a common rubric for assessing all final projects, regardless of the medium/genre chosen by

the student.¹¹ I also wanted to keep it simple, so students tempted to work in technically complex forms would not be discouraged from exploring them for fear that non-mastery of the form would affect their grade.

Students also receive separate homework grades for exploratory writing assignments, revisions, in-class presentations, and integration of feedback from peers, all of which reinforce the *process* of writing a multi-step project.

Course Grades

- 25% Focus (theme; connection to course; integration of research; tightness of prose)
- 20% Medium (pertinence to story; exploration of semantic possibilities)
- 30% Thought-provoking (transcendence and universality of story; analysis)
- 25% Ancillary materials and reflections (annotated bibliography; reflection on learning/writing process; conclusion)

In conclusion, as multi-layered, multi-step projects, digital stories help students find value in the processes of writing (planning, drafting, revising), promote creative critical inquiry (through the semantic exploration of multimodal resources), and deepen their engagement with the course material. For ESL students, digital storytelling has the additional benefit of promoting confidence in their writing and providing the satisfaction of being able to express complex personal stories in a meaningful and aesthetically pleasing manner in a language in which they are not yet proficient.



¹¹ However, I make available a rubric developed specifically for digital story projects (<http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/eli08167b.pdf>) for their reference. Students can use the detailed descriptions as a checklist for editing their digital stories.

Reflections on my use of Writing in ASEM & FSEM Classes

Jing Sun
Political Science

Writing is a crucial component in my ASEM class of “Politics of Reconciliation” and international-FSEM (iFSEM) class of “Pacific Century – America, China, and Competition for Global Leadership.” In this short piece, I will explain these courses’ empirical themes, the structures of writing assignments, how students have performed with it, and my reflections of students’ learning experiences in these two courses.

Let me begin with my ASEM class of “Politics of Reconciliation.” In this class students examine processes of making and accepting apologies in the political world: domestic and international. Even as individuals, we may find at times that to say “sorry” (or to accept it) is not easy. The task becomes all the more daunting for nation states, for they need to tackle with past wrongs that afflicted many more people and had more dire consequences. By looking at both successful and failed reconciliation projects, students explore the relations between victimizers and victims in varied geographical, historical, ideological, and cultural settings (to be specific – the three cases we examine are: the Rape of Nanking, post-apartheid South Africa, and the federal government’s internment of Japanese Americans during World War II). In

what contexts did these past grievances occur? What were their consequences? To what extent has the painful memory continued to haunt contemporary politics? Why have some political actors apologized while others haven’t? Why are some apologies accepted while others aren’t? What common lessons can we draw from these cases? These are just some of the questions I ask students to explore in this class.

Three Writing Components

Writing in this class has three components: short memos on readings, movie review, proposal for the final research project, and a ten-page final research paper. For short memos, I offer students a list of questions drawn from the readings and ask them to share their thoughts. Some questions are factual ones to check whether students have done the readings in the first place. Other questions are open-ended ones that require analysis. Students watch the movie *Invictus*, which is about South African reconciliation, and need to produce a movie review of 3-4 pages. For the movie review, I offer students a list of key themes embedded in the movie (leadership, no-loser strategy, political engineering, nationalism, politicizing sports, etc.). Students choose three key words and write their

reviews based on their choices of the key words. Toward the end of the quarter, students will work on their own research topics. To make sure they stay on the right track, I ask students to turn in proposals, in which they need to tell me their topics, the scholarly literature they have located thus far, and raise questions to me so that I can help them more effectively. Finally, students will turn in their final paper by the end of the quarter.

I have taught my ASEM class based on this structure for three years. Students' feedbacks were positive. They felt that all these assignments helped them connect the dots – that is, using various concepts and theories from different disciplines to make sense of real-world cases of reconciliation. They also liked the semi-structured nature of these assignments: students were given guidance on particularly relevant readings and parts of lectures. But they were also given ample autonomy, especially on the last final project, to choose empirical cases that they cared most. The study of reconciliation could be emotionally charged. I always feel rewarded in seeing students using knowledge they learned in class to explore empirical topics they felt passionate about.

My iFSEM Course

My iFSEM class is an experimental one – it is different from mainstream FSEM in that half of the students are domestic, and the other half international. Last year when I taught it the first time, given the topic (Sino-US relations), it was no surprise that all the international students were from China.

To me, a major difference between writing for ASEM and writing for FSEM is that the former is more content-based and substantive, whereas

the latter is more process-based. In other words, for an FSEM class, to train freshmen to become familiar with writing in college is a major purpose. Professors need to teach students to acquire a reasonable level of familiarity with writing at college level and generalizable skills that students can put to use in their forthcoming years at DU. This purpose, however, is and should not be a major factor for ASEM classes. By the time a student takes an ASEM class, she is expected to have acquired such skills and ready to put them in use. Practically, what this means to me is that my iFSEM class emphasizes more about the technical procedures of writing. The fact that half students in my class are international only makes this training/orienting component all the more important.

I designed shorter writing assignments in my iFSEM class. Writing component consists of five short memos on readings and/or latest events in Sino-US relations, debate preparation notes, and a take-home final that test students' ability of using theoretical concepts learnt in class to make sense of real-life phenomena in Sino-US relations.

One key purpose of this class is to train students to consider complex foreign affairs phenomena from alternative perspectives. Hence, I would ask the American students to write and orally defend Chinese government's positions on contentious issues like human rights, Tibet, among others. Meanwhile, I would ask the Chinese students to do the same from the American perspective. Many students liked this arrangement and found it intellectually refreshing.

Challenges

But let me also address some problems I encountered. Last fall quarter was the first time I offered such an iFSEM. Though already a veteran of the generic version, I found the new, experimental one challenging. To assist the students, the school assigned a senior student to serve as a “writing fellow” in this class. The student fellow was very committed and diligent. She attended all my classes – something that not all freshmen could accomplish. She took careful notes and held both individual appointments and group meetings with students to help them improve their writing. But – somehow I acquired the impression that the particular attention the school invested in this experiment paradoxically overwhelmed the students, especially domestic ones. I had a higher than average percentage of American students complaining that the class was too hard and there was too much writing involved. Some also felt frustrated by the level of English proficiency the Chinese students demonstrated. Since Chinese students constituted half the class, it was no small frustration.

This made me think – writing is an essential part of college learning. But, just like any other academic assignments, it is embedded in culture. As the culture at DU is getting increasingly diverse, are our students prepared to deal with it? Frankly speaking, the root cause of at least a few American students’ complaints was their lack of preparation for this international experience. To be sure, I emailed the American students prior to the start of the fall quarter, alerting them to the truly international (or, more exactly, bilateral) nature of the student body in

this class. Apparently – some were still caught off guard by what they encountered in class. Some students were also confused about what they should or should not expect from the writing fellow.

I will offer iFSEM again this coming fall. I do not expect major changes to the writing assignments. But I do want to make both domestic and international students better aware of diversity being an inalienable part of college learning. One colleague offered me a very interesting proposal: last year, I brought my class to a local Chinese restaurant. Predictably, all the American students ordered “safe” choices like sesame chicken, broccoli & beef, orange chicken, etc., whereas the Chinese students ordered dishes prepared in authentic Chinese ways with names American students never heard of (I made sure the Chinese students would only order vegetables, pork, chicken, or beef. In other words, ingredients were the same but cooked in the real Chinese way). This year, this colleague suggested – how about NOT allowing the American students to order? Instead, they will try the dishes ordered by their Chinese classmates, knowing the ingredients are the same as their familiar, “safe” ones.

The bigger point is this: as “inconsiderate” as the idea may appear at first sight – this is actually what Chinese (and other international) students have to deal with almost every day at DU’s dining halls – they simply do not have a choice. I like this idea. I may even ask the class to share their thoughts on this experience in the form of a short memo. I am sure this will be a very memorable experience to all – a meal that makes everyone realize diversity is not something one can always choose. Rather, it is a fact one has to learn to deal with (and enjoy)!

Embracing the *Ugly*

Kara Taczak
Writing Program

Good teachers do [prepare students]. And I think, good classes that embrace...how do I want to word this...*the ugly*. The things that people don't want to talk about, the things that people don't want to think about...[because], you know, the world out there has teeth and claws.

—Jess, first year student

As a composition instructor, I teach “the ugly”: the subject that is often students’ least favorite or the one they least enjoy doing. Students can step into our classes viewing writing as something they *have* to do instead of something they want to do, or at least want to improve at doing. Their writing experiences are marred by standardized tests and overly strict attention to grammar and represented through a knowledge that’s frequently limited to genres found only in literature—not composition. Ironically, though, many students walk into our classrooms with the attitude that they do not need to learn anything new about writing because they believe they have learned it all already. They believe their prior experiences with writing accurately inform any other writing experience they may encounter. But this Jekyll/Hyde reaction to writing has them part afraid to welcome the new learning while the other part doesn’t believe there’s a need to learn more. Writing with its apparent teeth and claws becomes the students’ “ugly”: they don’t want to talk about it; they don’t want to think about it.

Sometimes life experiences can mirror writing experiences. When I was young, I, like most others, heard the story of the ugly duckling. I often related this story to myself, not in terms of becoming beautiful, but in terms of becoming taller. I figured as a child that, like the ugly duck shedding its shell, I, too, would eventually shed the shortness. Unfortunately that never happened, and I continue to flounce through life well below the average height of a woman. The amount of speculation and discussion that happens because of my height often astounds me. My height has been the topic of conversation many times: men have flatly stated (to me) that they will not date someone under 5’2, and on several occasions airport security officers have questioned my age because of my height, making derogatory comments in doing so. More than a few have joked at my expense about my being tall enough to ride a roller coaster—a joke I’ve never found that funny. And in high school I was nicknamed “Willow” after the movie about little people. People tend to find issue with what is different, or what they cannot understand, and apparently height is something people

can't always understand. Similar to the ugly duckling, it took me a long time realize my "beauty" or rather to realize that I am good just the way I am. My experience with my height mirrors my own experiences with writing as it has taken me awhile to get comfortable in my own *writing* skin, and it has involved many ups and downs to get to place where I am confident in my writerly identity. Much like my own students, I struggled to embrace my ugly.

Sometimes writing experiences are ugly. Last year, during the first week of classes, I decided to try a new approach to the "introduce yourself" exercises instructors commonly use to break the ice within a new classroom. Normally I ask students to respond to five questions using traditional questions such as what's your name, where are you from, and what makes you uniquely you, or something similar. This time, instead, I asked each student to tell a story about a good and/or solid writing experience. In my "First Year Experience" course, with 15 students, 97% of the students began their story with the preface, "I'm not really a good writer" or "I don't like to write" or "I had a really hard time thinking of one" suggesting that their prior experiences with writing have resulted in a negative outlook. And the stories told from my FSEM course *all* dealt with either receiving a "good" grade or being recognized somehow for their writing. Not one student told a story that didn't have some form of positive reinforcement as the end result. It appears these ducklings have been stunted, not evolving, and they came into my classroom ready to wallow around in their prior "ugly" experiences.

So, how can we work with these prior experiences? How can we help students embrace both the "ugly" side of their

writing experiences as well as embrace the possibility of becoming a better writer? As instructors, we need to do three things:

- (1) We need to structure our writing assignments in a way where students can see and understand the different rhetorical strategies they are responding to. For example, any and all classes I teach, whether FSEM or WRIT, my writing assignments always include three categories: (1) genre; (2) audience; and (3) rhetorical situation. These categories go into detail with the purpose of the assignment, but they are there to show students that no matter the writing situation, all respond, in some way or another, to these rhetorical concepts. Throughout the quarter, we discuss the importance of these concepts and how they can later apply to different writing situations.
- (2) We need to encourage students to have confidence so that they can get to a point of accepting who they are as writers: to embrace that they do, in fact, have a writerly identity. Just as the ugly duckling takes time to realize his beauty, so, too, can students take the time to realize their potential as writers. To do this, we need to create assignments that encourage the recognition of past experiences, but that also asks students to build upon the prior experiences and create new knowledge. We can do this through different types of reflective activities in the

classroom where students are asked to write for 20-30 minutes drawing connections between past and present experiences. We can't discount what students walk into our classrooms with, but we can also ask them to expand upon it.

- (3) We need to be explicit in our teaching practices, and we need to continue to have conversations across the university so that we are promoting similar rhetorical concepts and practices. Prior experiences with writing create barriers for students—even if these experiences were all positive—and they often struggle to get past them. If we work together to show students that writing practices *do and can transfer*, then we give students a knowledge that will grow and mature as they grow and mature as writers throughout their academic careers, and as importantly, a knowledge that they can carry forward to other writing sites and that will help them succeed in those sites.

One thing I like to encourage my students with: writing is not going anywhere. It's a practice that will follow them into any career they might have, so learning key rhetorical concepts becomes pivotal. To reinforce this idea, most quarters, I play a game with my students that begins the first week and continues until the last week. In this game, which they initially see as an easy win for them, I ask them to find a career or a job that does not require any amount of writing. Students confront this challenge with many different answers ranging from the

unusual to the traditional jobs. At the beginning, I'm the one responding back showing how the different careers do, in fact, have some need for writing. But as the semester progresses the students take up the challenge and join me in connecting the writing they are learning about to the careers they'll enjoy and lives they will lead. The end result is never to prove or disprove that writing is a part of any and all careers, but rather to show students the many different ways that writing operates within different communities and even the world: to show students the need to embrace, at least in some part, writing as essential to their identity.

Sometimes though writing is the ugly duckling. Writing, no matter how we, as composition instructors, pretty it up, can be ugly for students often because they come into our classrooms ready and willing to simply blow it off as something they have to suffer through to graduate. And as many scholars have pointed out, we only have a limited time with students, a semester or a quarter, to try and shift their thinking—to try and teach them a knowledge about writing that they can carry forward. My goal, my hope every semester is to challenge students to embrace, or at least suffer gladly, the ugly—embrace the writing—if only for the moment, to see the possibilities, so they can mature into their own writerly identity. Likewise as I've matured and embraced my height, I've come to realize that being shorter than the vast majority of people is okay.

With luck the ducklings do embrace *the ugly* and by embracing it, figure out that the ugly is okay. In fact, they become who they are, in part, because of it.

Fundamental Problems in Structure: IDEAS ARE ALL THAT MATTER.

Tyrone Davies

Media, Film, and Journalism Studies

As educators, most of us know if we are reading a bad paper before we finish the first paragraph. The “bad writing” cues we pick up on can be as diverse as our students, but usually I find that (with the uncommon exception of egregious grammatical errors) the most common category of writing conventions that signify a poor paper so immediately are structurally based. Sort of. Actually, they are reflected in the structure, even though they sometimes have nothing to do with it.

Let me put it this way...

On many occasions I’ll read a paper that I would consider “Structurally deficient,” but not for any of the reasons that the student might expect. In such a paper, the structure might actually be quite “correct,” but the problem with the structure is not really the structure itself. The problem is that, like a beautiful car careening down the street without a driver, the well-built paper is so obviously hollow. I read many papers that are, in a sense, a suit of shinning armor without a soldier, a flashy argument without an idea that is bright enough to back it up. I call this a structural problem because it is not solely a problem of content and it is not solely a problem of thesis (or lack thereof). More than anything, the

problem probably has something to do with a lack of balance between the structure and the idea because the idea (though it might be a very good one) does not “hold up the structure.” It’s not developed enough to serve as a foundation.

All in all, I will risk over-generalization for the sake of clarity: At the heart of every meaningless but skillfully written paper is a fundamental misunderstanding about what an “idea” actually is.

Of course, almost any student smart enough to be accepted to a major university or college would likely be offended if I told him/her to his/her face that he/she did not know what the word “idea” even means. And so, before I continue, I think that I should establish three concepts from which I am working:

1. A fully formed idea has multiple layers, and is a construction in and of itself—normally independent of the paper it might inhabit.
2. Ideas are not “talking points.” In a thesis paper, the thesis should be expansive and should not serve as a simple answer to a set of questions (“Everything I say is the way it is because [insert thesis here]” does not make an inspiring paper).

3. A really good argument is not just a logician's trick. It should be, for all intents and purposes, a real thing.

By now I imagine that, you, the reader, might be filing me away with the same people who want to tell you what "Art" is, and what it isn't—or with any other brand of semantic fundamentalist that you may not like (folks who want to tell you what marriage is and isn't, what "good and evil" means, what patriotism really means, or what is fashionably "IN" or "OUT"—that is with people who draw sharp lines of theoretical demarcation. These, typically, are people I avoid and so I would not be surprised if you want to avoid me as I try to tell you what an idea *really* is. Nevertheless, I hope you'll indulge me for a few minutes and, if nothing else, briefly consider the ramblings of an idealist on the nature of ideas.

Being Chaos Friendly

I come into teaching writing from a very chaos-friendly art school background. Personally, I don't like it at all when someone tries to tell me what something is or is not because I come out of a tradition that constantly questions everything and almost never confirms anything. Maybe such a perspective only affirms one value: The value of ideas. When one is always questioning, one ends up learning a large variety of concepts primarily through the act of deconstruction. This subtractive mode of pedagogy doesn't value assumptions much but it does offer the pupil a sense "mechanics" concerning the systemic concepts (the structure of any subject) he or she studies.

When I was nine years old, I enraged my mother by smashing all of my transformers. I told her that I just wanted

to know how they were put together. When I smashed them to pieces and then examined each piece, I actually did figure out how most of them were constructed, and if I had started the process with the proper tools, I think I could have taken them apart in a gentler non-destructive way and then (hopefully) put them back together successfully.

While some students lack the tools to deconstruct or reconstruct an idea properly, I really feel that, at the college level, it is more likely that students lack the **willingness** (not the tools) to disassemble and reassemble an idea. At DU, especially, I think that most students come to college with an understanding of multiple writing styles. What they need to learn here in college is a willingness to define and understand the ideas they write about within AND without the process of writing.

They need to understand that writing a paper is "not about the paper." The odds are that nobody will ever read that final ASEM or FSEM paper again after it is graded. On the other hand, the idea behind the paper *might* just possibly live on in the student's memory. Those of us who teach writing know that "it's not about the paper" (when the paper is a class assignment) just as we know that grades don't matter all that much except as a stimulus for rigorous learning. Every quarter, it seems as though I have one or two students who exhibit the reckless, yet awestruck childlike attitude of the proverbial nine year-old who smashes his toys to understand how they work. Though these students sometimes exhibit sloppy writing skills, it's my opinion that the writing center (and/or a diligent professor) can offer some simple tools to whip their writing into shape. Basic structural writing tools (such as following the form of a thesis paper, journalistic essay, fictional narrative etc.) are generally

just a question of understanding the conventions of a genre and applying them. Knowing what you really want to explore within that genre is another thing. I will focus the remainder of this little essay on the other 90% of the class. The cautious applicators of form who know how to write but still need to learn how to really explore a topic.

And so I'll get back to my three rather fundamentalist definitions:

1. A fully formed idea has multiple layers, and is a construction in and of itself—normally independent of the paper it might inhabit.

For this first concept, let's assume a student in my "Religion and Film" ASEM is writing a paper about how the use of "natural light" (this is what it is called when existing light conditions, not augmented ones, are used to film a scene) in a film enhances the film's sense of "realism". While this is possibly a useful starting place for developing a paper, I can tell you as an instructor who has read dozens of papers on this subject that it is not a good starting point for the actual paper. It stands to reason that a ten page paper about how "Terrence Malik's use of Natural light makes his films more natural" is going to be pretty weak.

I sometimes advise students begin to structure their ideas with a series of questions and try to define the worldview of the concept before they write anything at all. For example:

Natural Light:

Does natural or available light actually affect the camera used for the film in the same way it affects the human eye? If so, is this the case with other cameras, film formats, video formats? What is it really like to film in natural

light? Is it more or less difficult and constructed than other ways of filming? If it is harder or easier, how does this play into the sense of what is "real" or "natural"? Does it feel more real to an audience if it mimics the human eye or if it mimics a home video? What do we consider "real" or "natural" when viewing mediated content? Do we view ANY mediated content as "natural" anyway? Does an audience's idea of what looks natural on the screen come from real life or from the history of Realist/Naturalist art?

The questions can and should go on and on, and even if the student has no intention of answering most of them in the paper, the student should develop his or her own answers. Sometimes a flowchart or a Venn diagram can be helpful. To some, what I am saying might seem like I am suggesting students to do heavy logic-based research. However, I would argue that this type of "worldview building" should start with simple brainstorming.

If a student simply begins writing down every question he or she might have about a subject, and then either looks up the answer (when actual right or wrong answers apply) or reaches a personal conclusion (in the case of more speculative or subjective matters), then that student begins to construct a philosophy about the "idea." THIS is, for the purposes of my classes, the beginning of a legitimate idea. Once this worldview is constructed, questions such as "How should I argue this?" or "What genre of paper is this?" start to answer themselves.

2. Ideas are not "talking points." In a thesis paper, the thesis should be expansive and should not serve as a simple answer to a set of

questions (“Everything I say is the way it is because [insert thesis here]” does not make an inspiring paper).

This concept builds on the last one. The flawed argument that “Natural light makes the film feel more natural because it’s natural light.” Will start to fall apart for the writer once he or she has investigated the idea long enough. If the writer has a stronger set of assumptions on what the use of natural light actually connotes and communicates, then a weaker thesis will sound absurd to the student before it is even committed to paper. I find the best way to point this out to students is to liken the writing to arguments they may have heard from candidates in elections. “Is Mitt Romney actually explaining anything to you about small government, or is he simply touting small government for small government’s sake?” Is the line you are feeding your audience educating them or is it just a talking point?

3. A really good argument is not just a logician’s trick. It should be, for all intents and purposes, a real thing.

Though it may be harder to gauge conviction in professional sectors, it is often possible to tell if student writing is unrelated to the writer’s personal beliefs. In my classes, I stress the importance of personal voice. Film criticism is all opinion anyway, so why not write something you believe in? I sometimes worry that institutions such as debate clubs undermine a students’ ability for genuine introspective thought. On the other hand, I suppose such practices can help expose the realities of media that students consume every day. Either way, I’d wager that nearly all the

students I have ever taught come into my classes with some idea that the most important thing in writing a research paper in a logically sound argument. While this is probably true, I also try to instill in them my own ideology that if that a logical argument written without conviction is virtually worthless.

Why is it worthless? I can think of probably a hundred situations in which people are required professionally to write statements that they do not necessarily support or believe in, but such situations are ones in which a person is constrained to do a certain thing “correctly” in order to succeed at his or her job, to stay out of legal trouble, or to maintain other important relationships. But this is not the purpose of a critical writing class and it has nothing to do with the practice of critical thought.

What good is intense study and the discovery of new intellectual horizons if the enhanced consciousness it affords is squandered on menial and highly specific tasks? What good is a belief that nobody believed? Sometimes I tell my students that their papers “need more meat”. I always have to explain what I mean by this as this statement could mean just about anything... but, in the end, If a paper does not represent some idea that is real (true) to the writer, then it’s a paper most people would rather not read.

Ideas Matter

This set of three key points expresses what I have found important to teaching writing in as simple a way as I can think of. Sometime I feel like a kind of subversive bent on coaching students through the hoops of writing for “The Academy” in a way that won’t crush their souls. Higher education has a great power to liberate and also a great power to

assimilate. It's my hope that in teaching students to write with a focus on ideas, that they can develop as critical thinkers and avoid a few pitfalls on their path to seeking a profession. A final paper from a writing intensive class may never be read again after the quarter ends, but the expansion of personal understanding that that paper might create can last forever.

Does anyone doubt this to be true? When I talk about students who

write about lighting techniques in filmmaking, it might seem as though I am taking a trivial trade-based matter and exaggerating it's importance. But just as the paper itself may be unimportant after the grade is given, the content of the paper is sometimes possibly disposable as well. What is not disposable, forgettable, or unimportant is the notion that ideas matter. Ideas matter. Conviction matters. Worldviews matter. Beliefs matter.



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Appendix A

First Year Seminars (FSEM)

All first-year students who begin fall quarter are required to enroll in a First-Year Seminar. The seminar, approved by the faculty in the spring of 2004, introduces first-year students to the intellectual, academic, and community expectations of the University. The First-Year Seminar is a small (20 students), four-credit, academically rigorous course that also provides students with year-long mentoring and academic advising. Up to seventy-four First-Year Seminars will be offered for 2013-2014 academic year; all seminars will be taught on-load. The seminars will be implemented and overseen by members of the First-Year Seminar Faculty Committee who are elected representatives from the divisions of Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

FSEM Goals

1) **Intellectual Community.** Each seminar will foster a sense of **intellectual community** so that students appreciate academic discourse as a key element of college life. Experience in the first year seminar should demonstrate what it means to be an active member of an academic community through critical reading, discussion, research, and/or writing. Seminar topics will reflect the wide-range of intellectual passions of the appointed faculty who lead them. As part of the FSEM experience, students may participate in a variety of special events (e.g., on- and off-campus lectures, films, discussions, concerts, performances, field-trips, laboratory or research experiences).

In some cases, students will read and/or discuss particular works in preparation for attending these special events, as seminar leaders find appropriate.

2) **Academic Expectations.** Each First-Year Seminar will introduce students to the rigorous **academic expectations** they must meet if they are to be successful at the university level. These academic expectations include the notion that the quantity and quality of academic work required of students in a university setting are significantly higher than in high school; that students will allocate sufficient time outside of class to independent and focused learning; and that students will be held responsible for mastering the course material and participating, in a constructive and informed way, in class discussions and exercises. Your students should feel as if they are being challenged and need to work harder than they have before to meet your expectations.

3) **Active Learning Environment.** Each seminar instructor will create an **active learning environment** where writing, performance, laboratory work, quantitative analyses, or other forms of experiential and/or creative activities shape the goals and activities of the seminar. The amount and nature of each learning activity will vary according to the specific goals of each seminar. Generally, assignments should be devised to deepen students' understanding and engagement with course materials, to foster analytical, critical and creative thinking, and to familiarize students with some aspects of

academic writing, if appropriate. Some seminars might require several short papers, have students post online responses to questions, or make use of a research notebook or log. Others might assign creative projects, performances, debates, or oral presentations, as just a few examples. Clearly, there are multiple strategies for designing active learning that best fit the nature and goals of the seminar. Faculty who are interested in using writing as an active learning strategy are invited to attend a writing workshop or to contact Doug Hesse, Executive Director of Writing, for some helpful ideas.

4) Strong Academic Advising Relationship. Each First-Year Seminar instructor will foster a **strong academic advising relationship** with seminar students. Students will learn how to form an academic relationship with their advisers that extends beyond obtaining information about academic requirements and the mechanics of how to register for courses. Students will learn how to work with an adviser to make academic plans

for each quarter, how to evaluate whether academic goals have been met, and what actions need to be taken when academic goals are not reached. This advising relationship can help students recognize the value of forming relationships with faculty and taking advantage of office hours or appointments.

A key element of the First-Year Seminar program is to introduce first-year students to the value and excitement of pursuing intellectual questions and issues and to help students experience the rewards and empowerment that come from developing deeper levels of expertise and analytical skills.



Appendix B

Advanced Seminars (ASEM)

After completing all other common curriculum requirements, DU undergraduates must complete a writing-intensive Advanced Seminar Course, typically in their Junior or Senior year. This class must be taken at DU. The ASEM Committee, consisting of representatives from AHSS, NSM, Daniels, and Korbel, reviews proposals from faculty across campus and approves ASEM courses. Doug Hesse currently chairs the ASEM Committee, with administrative support from Amy Kho.

Overview

Successful people navigate complex political, social, cultural and economic environments that challenge more traditionally limited concepts of higher education and competencies. To help students better understand the demands of contemporary life, instructors teach advanced seminars based in their area of expertise and passion. The topic will be approached from multiple perspectives in a course designed for nonmajors. Studying in this setting, students demonstrate their ability to integrate different perspectives and synthesize diverse ideas through intensive writing on that topic. This course must be taken at the University of Denver. Students must complete all other common curriculum requirements before taking the Advanced Seminar.

ASEM courses are capped at 15 students, to foster interaction between professors and students and to allow significant

writing. Course that were approved as “Writing Intensive” in the previous Core program are automatically transferred into ASEM. Faculty will receive \$1000 to develop a new ASEM course, and they will be eligible for new course development funding every two years or after having taught three offerings of a one course. Faculty who haven’t previously completed a Core Writing Intensive workshop are required to participate in a Seminar on Writing in ASEM. They will receive an additional \$1000 stipend for their efforts. Additional professional development funding is also available.

Course Outcomes

1. Students are able to integrate and apply knowledge and skills gained from multiple perspectives to an appropriate intellectual topic or issue.
2. Students will write effectively, providing appropriate evidence and reasoning for assertions.

Advanced Seminar course meet four criteria in terms of writing

1. Students will write a minimum of 20 pages (about 6000 words), some of which may be informal, but some of which must be revised, polished, and intended for an educated readership.
2. Students will complete a minimum of three writing projects that are distributed over the quarter;

exceptions might include a cumulative project completed in multiple stages.

3. Students will be required to revise some of their work based on feedback from their professor.
4. There will be some instructional time given to writing.

Expansions and Explanations

1. Students will write a minimum of 20 pages (about 6000 words), some of which may be informal, but a majority of which must be revised, polished, and intended for an educated readership.

Different kinds of writing serve different kinds of purposes. For example, “writing to learn” assignments are designed primarily to have students grapple with course concepts in order to engage them more fully. They might consist of reading summaries or responses, course journals, or answers to specific questions. They might even be assigned in class, during the first ten minutes to help students focus on the topic of the day or during the last ten minutes, to formulate some ideas about the preceding hour. These and other informal writing assignments might be relatively short, single draft assignments, receiving brief comments and graded holistically.

More formal writing assignments put a premium not on the student as learner but on the student as communicator of ideas to various audiences. The stakes are higher in this kind of writing—everything counts—so students tend to have longer to produce these assignments, which almost always require multiple drafts. Given the extra time and significance of these writings, faculty generally respond more fully to them and

occasionally comment on a draft before the final version is due.

The faculty development in writing seminars for ASEM courses will provide numerous options for assignment making. However, here are some scenarios:

- At the beginning of every class meeting, Professor Whitt has students turn in a one-page response in which they comment on what they found most interesting, puzzling, or disturbing about the readings for that class meeting. She writes a brief reaction on each of them and assigns a rating from one to three. Professor Whitt also assigns two five-page papers, one in week 5, the other in week 10.
- Professor Becker has his students keep a media log, in which each week they summarize and analyze at least two television episodes, YouTube videos, or films related to his course content. Students post their logs on the class Blackboard, and every two weeks, they write a comment on someone else’s posting. Becker has a final 10-page paper due at the end of the course. Students turn in a draft in week 8.
- Professor Kvistad wants to focus on more extended, formal writings in her course. Accordingly, she assigns three seven-page papers, due in week 4, 7, and 10.

2. Students will complete a minimum of three writing projects that are distributed over the quarter; exceptions might include a cumulative project completed in multiple stages.

It's more effective—both to develop writing abilities and to learn course content—for students to write frequently rather than infrequently, even if doing so means that papers will be shorter. Generally, then, students should write at least three papers in the course. The faculty development seminars for the ASEM courses will provide strategies for making effective assignments.

Keep in mind that the pattern of assignments can take many forms. For example,

- Professor Jefferson assigns ten 2-page papers, one due each week. She requires students to revise 4 of these papers.
- Professor King begins the course by having a one-page paper due each class meeting for the first 10 classes. She then has a five-page paper due in week 7 and a second five-page paper due in week 10.
- Professor Jones assigns three 6-7 page papers, spaced over the course of the semester.

In a few cases, professors may find it vital to have fewer than three papers, perhaps because they find it important to produce a single, larger writing project. Such projects can—and should—be divided into several smaller projects that culminate in the final whole. Doing so, and providing feedback to each piece, accomplishes many of the goals of a longer project.

- Professor Klaus wants students to complete a 20-page, researched position paper on a topic central to the course. In week 2, assigns a one-page proposal. In week four, he assigns a 2-page paper that summarizes and analyzes two key

readings on the topic. In week five, he assigns an annotated bibliography of all the sources to be used in the paper. In week seven he assigns a first draft of the entire paper. In week ten, he assigns the completed final draft.

3. Students will be required to revise at least some of their work based on feedback from their professor.

One of the most powerful strategies for teaching writing is to provide feedback to students on a draft, then have them revise the work before turning it in for a grade. “Providing feedback” is not editing or correcting. Instead, the professor indicates strengths and areas of improvement for the student, who must then do the real work of revision (literally, “seeing again”). Feedback can come as written responses to drafts or in the form of individual conferences. Students in writing intensive core courses should have the opportunity to revise multiple papers after feedback from the professor.

Except in the rare cases when students have turned in a highly polished draft that is the product of extensive revisions already, most revising feedback focuses on “higher level” matters than mere grammar, punctuation, or style. The faculty development seminars for the ASEM courses will provide some strategies for encouraging effective revisions.

Some examples of revision comments are:

- Your draft is too one-sided to be effective. That is, while you present the arguments for X pretty well, a lot of reasonable people would argue for Y instead. Can you take into account their arguments and still defend your position?

- Your draft relies extensively on quotation and summary. While these are generally apt, the paper doesn't have enough of your own thinking. For example, when you summarize X, what do you see as its significance or importance?
- Your assertion X lacks sufficient evidence to be convincing. What facts or analysis could you provide to make your point?
- I have a difficult time following your line of thinking. For example, on page 2 you jump between point A and point B, and the connection just doesn't make sense. You'll probably need to write more obvious connections, but you might also have to rearrange the parts of the paper—or even discard some.

4. There will be some instructional time given to writing.

Giving “some instructional time” to writing certainly doesn't require providing extended lectures. (In fact, that would be less effective than other strategies.) One of the purposes of the ASEM faculty development in writing seminars is to provide some minimal strategies that nonetheless can be very useful to students.

Consider several possible teaching practices

- Whenever Professor Wallace gives a writing assignment, she takes 10-15 minutes of class time to talk about the assignment. She asks students to brainstorm ideas, she contributes some ideas of her

own, and she discusses evaluation criteria for the papers, perhaps sharing a grading rubric.

- For each assignment, Professor Kalter has students bring a draft to one class. He divides into small groups and has them furnish some peer response to one another, following a review sheet he has provided.
- After each assignment, Professor Mencia selects two or three of the strongest papers and reproduces them for the entire class, then takes several minutes of class time to point out their strengths.
- Professor Jones discusses her writing process on an article she's writing, including sharing drafts with the students. Occasionally, she invites a colleague or advanced student to do the same.
- Three or four times a quarter, Professor Roen invites professional staff from the Writing Center to guest teach in the class, for about 45-minutes each time. These topics range from helping students generate ideas to helping them revise to helping them document sources effectively.
- Once a week, Professor Anukye leads a 15-minute discussion about a piece of writing from her field. She invites the students to “read like writers,” that is, to point out the features of a text and to speculate how its writer got from blank screen to finished product.

Appendix C

WRIT Classes: Goals, Features, Assessment

WRIT 1122: Rhetoric and Academic Writing

Students will:

1. Demonstrate practical knowledge of the concept “rhetorical situation,” through the abilities both to analyze and to write effectively in different kinds of situations.
2. Demonstrate proficiency with basic elements of rhetorical analysis (such as logos, ethos, and pathos) in a range of texts, and the application of that facility in their own writing.
3. Demonstrate the ability to produce writing that provides effective evidence and reasoning for assertions, for audiences of educated readers.
4. Demonstrate the ability to incorporate and attribute or document source material in rhetorically effective ways.
5. Demonstrate the ability to use feedback to revise their own writing and the ability to provide useful feedback to others.
6. Demonstrate the ability to edit and proofread their writing.

Elaboration of the Goals for WRIT 1122 (Notes to Faculty)

1. Demonstrate practical knowledge of the concept “rhetorical situation,” through the abilities both to analyze and to write effectively in different kinds of situations. A rhetorical situation has a purpose, an intended readership, and a writer. Situations are embedded in contexts, which bring certain expectations by readers

of textual conventions, what will count as effective rhetorical moves, genres. (For example, arguments about individual privacy rights in 2000 differed from those in 2002.)

No single course can teach students to be effective in every possible rhetorical situation. However, a course can—and should—teach students the need to adjust for writing situations, and students should demonstrate their grasp of that concept, including by producing pieces of writing that would be successful in different ones.

2. Demonstrate proficiency with basic elements of rhetorical analysis (such as logos, ethos, and pathos) in a range of texts, and the application of that facility in their own writing. Teachers of WRIT 1133 should expect students to come to their classes 1) knowing the terms logos (including assertions, evidence, and logical arrangements), ethos (the type of persona the writer creates and projects for his or her reader), and pathos (strategies for eliciting emotional or affective responses) and 2) having some experience with rhetorical analysis. As a result, students completing 1122 should be able to discuss and write meaningful things about strategies that writers have employed in particular rhetorical situations (both what and why), even to point out the weaknesses, limitations, or critiques of their choices. Of course, there are many layers and complexities for each of those terms, centuries of rhetorical theory. The point is not to bury students (or teachers) with all the nuances and complexity, although some teachers may choose to include more than others. The point is to give them some theoretical knowledge (and associated techniques) and the opportunity to practice it.

3. Demonstrate the ability to produce writing that effectively provides evidence and reasoning for assertions, for audiences of educated readers.

While WRIT 1122 broadly teaches rhetorical analysis, it privileges logical reasoning, for two reasons. Logical reasoning is privileged in academic writing (a practical reason), and civic society would be better served by discourses in which claims were supported with evidence and reasoning (an ethical and idealistic reason). As a result, a substantial amount of writing for the course should be for “educated” (even idealized) readers.

4. Demonstrate the ability to incorporate and attribute or document source material in rhetorically effective ways.

Students in WRIT 1122 should come to understand the rhetorical uses of sources—to enhance ethos, to add support, to generate contrasting ideas, etc.—as well as the ethical. Effective rhetorical use of sources also includes providing clear, in-text attributions for public and professional writing, following conventions for in-text citation and bibliographic pages in academic writing, and incorporating quotations effectively. The emphasis in 1122 is on using sources (summarizing, paraphrasing, critiquing, synthesizing) rather than finding sources. As a result, teachers may find it most productive to have students work with “given” readings—and with one or two source materials—rather than on extensive “found” sources.

5. Demonstrate the ability to use feedback to revise their own writing and the ability to provide useful feedback to others.

As the features of 1122 and 1133 make clear, all elements of composing are important. This goal underscores the revision as a key skill to be developed/demonstrated in the course. Revisions are changes to a text that would change the summary (or propositional content) of that text. Because much writing occurs in collaborative contexts, it’s also important for students to develop abilities to give productive help to others.

6. Demonstrate the ability to edit and proofread their writing. Texts that have errors in word choice, spelling, grammar, conventional usage, or punctuation significantly compromise the ethos of their writers and may even cloud meaning. Texts whose style, voice, or register is inappropriate to the rhetorical situation at hand also compromise ethos. Students unable consistently to produce generally well-edited or proofed texts have not accomplished this goal.

WRIT 1133: Writing and Research

In addition to continuing to master the goals of WRIT 1122, students will

1. Demonstrate practical knowledge of academic research traditions (for example, text-based/interpretive; measurement-based/empirical; and observational/qualitative) through effectively writing in at least two of those traditions.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of rhetorical/conventional differences among various academic disciplines or groups of disciplines.
3. Demonstrate practical knowledge of rhetorical differences between writing for academic audiences and writing for popular audiences, through both analysis and performance.
4. Demonstrate proficiency in finding, evaluating, synthesizing, critiquing, and documenting published sources appropriate to given rhetorical situations.

Elaboration of the Goals for WRIT 1133 (Notes to faculty)

1. Demonstrate practical knowledge of academic research traditions (for example, text-based/interpretive; measurement-based/empirical; and observational/qualitative) through effectively writing in at least two of those

traditions. Research is central to WRIT 1133, but research understood broadly. There is a close relationship between rhetoric and epistemology, the ways that knowledge is made in different traditions, including such matters as what counts as evidence and what form an argument must take. The University houses several research traditions. One is reading-based research, in which the writer assembles a set of written texts and, through complexly intertwined practices of interpretation, analysis, and synthesis, develops an argument. For most students, in most writing courses, this is what research means. It is the primary method of the humanities, and it is a component of most other disciplines. However, it is hardly the only research tradition that matters in the university. A related tradition is interpretive, in which the artifacts aren't print texts but, rather, art or music, images, architecture, and the whole gamut of popular culture artifacts. A third tradition is measurement-based research, in which the writer uses a systematic procedure to generate a quantitative representation of a phenomenon, then makes an argument based on that representation. The phenomena are physical in the natural sciences, and the measures come through instruments such as scales or rulers or dosimeters or spectrometers or so on. The phenomena are social or psychological in the social sciences, and the measures come through instruments such as surveys. Another research tradition is qualitative research, in which the writer uses systematic observational or first-hand inquiry strategies to generate descriptions of phenomena, then interpret those descriptions to support arguments. Methods include interview and direct observation.

2. Demonstrate an understanding of rhetorical/conventional differences among various academic disciplines or groups of disciplines. The emphasis of this goal is “understanding of differences” and not “mastery of specific disciplines.” The latter, of course, would be impractical for WRIT 1133 and is properly the responsibility of individual departments and disciplines. The goal is not inoculation to

perform well in the writing style of many disciplines but, rather, the ability to analyze and learn to emulate that disciplinary discourse, with the help of future teachers of it, in future courses. “Academic discourse” is hardly a unified entity, and students benefit from knowing that the concept of “rhetorical situations” learned in 1122 applies within the academy as well as without. Clearly this goal maps closely against goal one. That is, the adherence to certain epistemologies in certain disciplines often manifests itself in patterns of organization and development, citation practices (and the values underlying them), the ethos of writers, and so on. However, a research method isn't manifested only in disciplinary discourses. A lot of popular writing uses interview or observation, for example, or gathering and interpreting artifacts (think of essays on film genres). One can “demonstrate an understanding” both through analysis and through performance, and teachers will likely find both useful in teaching this goal. As with any of these goals, teachers may elect to have students emulate features of disciplinary disciplines, writing short papers or parts of papers or doing exercises with voice and style, rather than only doing fully-fledged papers.

3. Demonstrate practical knowledge of rhetorical differences between writing for academic audiences and writing for popular audiences, through both analysis and performance. There are significant differences between writing for academic audiences and writing for popular audiences. The most obvious is a depth of knowledge or expertise between the two groups of readers. However, another important difference is that academic audiences are usually obliged to read texts to keep up with their professions, while popular audiences elect to read—or not read—texts on various subjects; this has implications for style and manner of presentation, perhaps even the design of the texts. Students in 1133 should recognize and understand the differences between writing to an audience of disciplinary experts reading for professional reasons and writing to an audience of

nonexperts reading for civic or aesthetic reasons. One way to develop that knowledge experientially is to have students “translate” pieces written for one type of audience into pieces intended for the other.

4. Demonstrate proficiency in finding, evaluating, synthesizing, critiquing, and documenting published sources appropriate to given rhetorical situations.

While multiple kinds of research are important in 1133, writing with reading is vital. The added emphasis in 1133 (over 1122) is on “finding.” Students should learn to use academic databases and develop strategies for finding information for specific rhetorical needs. Research needs to be understood as a purposeful act, with sources sought and used to address specific writing needs rather than as a hollow formal act of gathering and dumping.

Features of Both WRIT 1122/1133

Both WRIT 1122 and 1133:

1. Focus on the production of student texts. The feature that most distinguishes writing courses from, say, other classes that may include written assignments is the former’s sustained emphasis on student writing. The student’s texts are the primary focus of the course, receiving as much respect as expert texts—and more time and attention. The focus can be seen in several practices, including explicit instruction on writing strategies and processes; sharing student writing with others in the course; peer workshops; writing center consultations; individual conferences with the professor, and so on. While students do engage readings, they do so primarily in order to improve their own writing and their critical/analytical facilities. Students will have an opportunity to write for different purposes and audiences, with the goal of developing tools they need to communicate effectively in various academic and civic contexts.

2. Include specific instruction in rhetorical and critical analysis. Rhetorical and critical analysis helps students become more astute readers, analysts, and critics of published texts, focusing on how and why writers achieve effects on readers. Students will learn how texts vary in both form and content according to their intended audiences, their purposes, and the contexts in which they were written. Students will learn to read a text closely, and write *about* the way it functions, and not just what it contains. They will also learn to evaluate claims, evidence, reasoning strategies, and ethical and emotional appeals as well as logical. WRIT 1122 focuses on basic strategies for rhetorical and critical analysis, primarily in popular and civic discourses. WRIT 1133 emphasizes how these skills function within the contexts of research and disciplinary traditions, including in relation to more popular writings about academic knowledge.

3. Include specific instruction and practice in using rhetorical strategies. The emphasis on using rhetorical strategies complements instruction in rhetorical and critical analysis. The shift in emphasis is from *analyzing* what others have done, with what effect, and why, to *using* those strategies in students’ own writings. Writers face a host of decisions as they plan, organize, and compose texts. They must persuade audiences situated within a certain historical time and cultural place, limited by certain constraints: time, money, logistics, etc. Vital to navigating this maze of choices is understanding the particulars of the rhetorical situation. What does my audience know or believe, and what implications does that have for me as a writer? What evidence and reasoning will be most effective? What tone should I adopt, and how should I present myself? What organizational strategies are most effective in this given situation? How do I best deal with points of view different from my own?

4. Emphasize writing for well-educated audiences, generally for public/civic purposes (1122) and academic audiences

(1133). In the finite time of a single course, it's clearly impossible to give students practice in all types of writing and writing situations they will encounter. For example, writing to people with high school educations and who may do fairly little reading, may invoke strategies significantly different from writing to college graduates subscribing to *Wired* or *Harpers*. Similarly, there are important differences between writing in professional/workplace situations, writing for personal development and pleasure, writing in specific academic disciplines, and writing on subject matters, issues, and ideas for a broader reading public. This latter falls under writing for civic purposes, that is, writing that seeks to inform and influence thought and decision making in various public spheres.

5. Substantially use process pedagogies, including regular attention to invention, production, revision, editing, and design; responses to multiple drafts and works in progress; and so on. Good writing does not occur magically. Process pedagogies recognize that strong writing skills develop over time through practice. Rather than focus solely on the finished product (e.g. the final exam; the one-time graded paper; the longer research paper), process pedagogy guides students through various aspects of writing, from invention to drafting to revision. A key feature of process pedagogies is providing feedback to students during the process. These may include small group feedback sessions, teacher-student conferences, comments on drafts, and in-class workshops.

- **Invention** is the act of generating ideas and content or discovering new directions that writing might take. Invention strategies may include systematic inquiry heuristics, free-writing, journaling, preliminary research, outlining, questioning, along with classroom collaboration and discussion. Through invention, students discover both what they already know about their subject and what they need to know.

- **Drafting** is the fundamental process of getting words down on the page or screen in a productive order informed by purpose, audience, and context when producing any document.
- **Revision** involves considering the fit between a developing text and the rhetorical situation for which it's being produced. Revision attends to substantive issues, including overall structure, argument and logic, purpose, and uses of evidence. Based on their self analysis and feedback from instructors and peers, students doing revision work make additions, subtractions, transpositions, and substitutions to their texts, at levels ranging from sentence to paragraphs to ideas and sequences.
- **Design** means attending to the physical features of the text as it is delivered to its audience. At one level, design includes features such as typefaces, margins, and spacing. At another level, it includes the incorporation of visual elements (images, tables) and document layout. At still another level, it may include multimedia or digital texts, perhaps even including sound or video.
- **Editing** means attending to surface-level features of texts to make them conform to readers' expectations of style, grammar and usage, manuscript conventions, and so on. Editing involves both proofreading and focusing on textual features as small as words, phrases, and sentences to promote not only correctness but also precision and rhetorical effectiveness. See #8, below.

6. Include a reading component. Reading in WRIT 1122 and 1133 is important both for practice in rhetorical analysis and for providing content for students to write about, with, through, and against. Through active reading, students come into conversation with texts by others, analyzing received positions and arriving at their own. Students need to be able to summarize readings, interpret their meanings and

implications, analyze their rhetorical strategies, relate them to other texts about the same subject matter, and explain their limitations or inadequacies. To practice these skills, students in WRIT 1122 and 1133 may read a text or set of related texts; discuss them (unpacking the meanings, debate the terms used, arriving at an interpretation); write in response; synthesize multiple readings; produce critiques or reviews; and use summary, paraphrase, or quotation to incorporate ideas into their own texts. Reading of student writing in the course is also important, using all the strategies one might use for published writing.

7. Teach basic techniques for incorporating and documenting sources.

In WRIT 1122, students will begin to develop an awareness of, and comfort with using, sources in their writing. The course will focus primarily on **working with sources, rather than finding them**, and concentrate on dealing effectively with a limited number of sources, rather than an extensive list of them. This will include learning how to summarize accurately, paraphrase key ideas, and quote or cite specific ideas or information concisely, accurately, and in ways that blend source materials effectively with their own writing. Students will consider such questions as *Why draw on sources? What types of sources will best support particular arguments or rhetorical situations? How do writers evaluate sources, attending to such things as the author's credentials and quality of reasoning and evidence, the timeliness of the research, its intended readership, and so on?* Students will gain **basic experience** in documenting sources appropriately according to MLA and at least either APA or Chicago Manual of Style. The goal is not to have students master all conventions of all style manuals but to teach them how to use style manuals and to understand the vital importance of following conventions to document sources aptly. **Students in WRIT 1133 will emphasize, additionally, finding and evaluating sources.**

8. Teach students editing and proofreading strategies in order to produce texts that meet the grammar, usage, and delivery expectations of their readers.

Students should learn that careful attention to editing and proofreading strengthens their ability to be taken seriously by their readers. At the same time, students learn that the absence of sentence-level errors does not necessarily mean that the writing is effective. Students should learn strategies for editing and proofreading in the context of their own writing, rather than through generalized grammar exercises. Based on need, instructors may devote small amounts of class time to particular issues in style, or to grammar, punctuation, and usage errors. **Editing** is understood as having both an emphasis on **style** (e.g., word choice, diction, emphasis, transition, gracefulness) and on **managing errors in grammar, punctuation, and usage.**

- *Editing for style:* As time allows, concepts about editing as stylistic craft are introduced, with reference to course readings for positive models. Though students may not be ready for more sophisticated stylistic editing, they will benefit from introductory instruction on word choice, sentence structure, and other stylistic elements that can be used to enhance meaning.
- *Editing as error management:* Students learn to make distinctions within a continuum of concerns—between higher order and lower order writing errors. They learn to identify their own patterns of error and develop a variety of strategies for addressing and correcting these patterns. Students develop long-term skills for self-diagnosis of error and successful use of available resources, including use of a handbook and familiarity with the Writing Center. As students become proficient in self-diagnosis, explicit emphasis is placed on high-order errors, such as sentence-boundary confusion, that block readers from understanding the text.

Proofreading is a last step to ensure that the text is as free as possible from

errors or unintentional elements. Students learn strategies for catching typographical errors, inconsistencies in spelling, and other purely surface-level mistakes that irritate readers and affect the author's ethos. Because research indicates the limited efficacy of marking all errors in a piece of writing as a means of teaching mechanical proficiency, instructor marking and evaluation of editing and proofreading errors is constructive and instructive, rather than punitive. Student writing is not expected to be error-free by the end of WRIT 1122, but by the end of the course, students should be able to distinguish different categories of error, be able to identify their individual error patterns, should have developed strategies for addressing these, and should be aware of the some of the resources available to them for strengthening their writing at the levels of style, grammar, usage, and punctuation.

9. Require students to produce from 6000 to 8000 revised and polished words (20-25 pages), in at least four texts. Just as musicians and athletes learn by practicing—by “doing” rather than by “studying about”—so do writers develop by writing. Students can generally expect many writing assignments, some of them single-drafted, even informal exercises, others more formal papers multiply drafted and revised. As a four-credit courses, WRIT will have students complete 8 to 12 hours of out-of-class work each week, the bulk of it in their own writing. Students will generally write several thousand words, in as few as four to as many as twenty individual writing assignments. Of that total volume produced, students will complete a least four “finished and polished” pieces, together totaling 6000-8000 words. By “finished and polished,” we mean writing that is thoroughly revised and carefully

edited, usually based on responses from the instructor (and peers), and represents the student's best work in given rhetorical situations.

10. Accomplish the course goals through a well-conceived sequence of activities and assignments. A commitment to the *process* of writing, which is at the heart of our pedagogies, informs the design of both courses: each section provides a careful sequence of reading and writing assignments designed to build student skills and abilities. Sequences of writing activities, for example, will equip students with the rhetorical skills to use in future or longer assignments. The cumulative sequence of assignments means that students continually draw upon what they have learned already in order to push themselves even further. Our goal is not only to provide students with a repertoire of writing tactics but to teach them how to combine those tactics into coherent, purposeful, and context-specific strategies.

11. Require a brief final portfolio. At the end of WRIT 1122, students will turn in a portfolio containing three pieces of writing that demonstrate their knowledge of and ability to use rhetorical strategies. Two of the pieces should be papers written during the course. The third piece (which might count toward the “revised and polished” course total, if suitable) should analyze and introduce the other two, persuasively explaining how they demonstrate the writer's facility with rhetorical strategies. At the end of WRIT 1133, students will turn in a portfolio containing three or four pieces of writing. An additional piece (which might count toward the “revised and polished” course total, if suitable) should be a compelling analysis of the other artifacts, persuasively explaining how they demonstrate how the writer has demonstrated course goals.

Appendix D

ASEM 2014 Assessment Report

June 20, 2014

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We contacted 28 faculty teaching ASEM in winter and spring 2014 and asked them to assess a section of ASEM they taught. Twenty completed the assessment, a completion rate of 71%, evaluating 304 students. Faculty identified an artifact from their course (they described the artifact they chose). They then applied the following rubrics, with the aggregated results reported for each level.

ASEM Outcome #1

Students are able to integrate and apply knowledge and skills gained from multiple perspectives to an appropriate intellectual topic or issue.

Level 3: Proficient

Proficient -- Student is effectively able to synthesize content derived from two or more points of view, scholarly interpretations or perspectives, bodies of data or information, or disciplinary/methodological traditions. This synthesis, further, is accompanied by analysis or interpretation that makes an effective point about an appropriate topic or issue. For example, the student explains and justifies how one perspective is preferable to others, or the student articulates the bases of convergence or divergence among multiple perspectives. Number of students performing at Level 3: Proficient:

Proficient	Winter	Spring
Number of Students	123	50
Percent of total	59%	53%
Average per section	8.79	8.33

Level 2: Somewhat Proficient

Somewhat Proficient -- Student is able to present content derived from two or more points of view, scholarly interpretations or perspectives, bodies of data or information, or disciplinary/methodological traditions. While the topic or issue is appropriate, the student relies primarily on summary. When analytic points are made, they remain largely at the level of assertion, with relatively little explanation, development, or justification. Number of students performing at Level 2: Somewhat Proficient:

Somewhat Proficient	Winter	Spring
Number of Students	64	36
Percent of total	30%	38%
Average per section	4.57	6.0

Level 1: Not Proficient

Not Proficient -- Student is unable to present content derived from two or more points of view, scholarly interpretations or perspectives, bodies of data or information, or disciplinary/methodological traditions. As a result, the work lacks depth or is one sided. Or, when the student does present content from multiple perspectives, the presentation is shallow or, even, inaccurate. Or, the student chooses a topic or issue that is inappropriate. Number of students performing at Level 1: Not Proficient:

Not Proficient	Winter	Spring
Number of Students	22	9
Percent of total	10%	10%
Average per section	1.57	1.5

ASEM Outcome #2

Students will write effectively, providing appropriate evidence and reasoning for assertions.

Level 3: Proficient

Student produces texts that meet the conventional expectations of an academic readership, using ample evidence from worthy sources. Student explicitly analyzes evidence and logically ties it to assertions. The chain of reasoning is clear and convincing. The very best work summarizes and refutes alternative positions or interpretations. Number of students performing at Level 3: Proficient:

Proficient	Winter	Spring
Number of Students	116	55
Percent of total	55%	59%
Average per section	8.29	9.17

Level 2: Somewhat Proficient

Student produces texts that meet the conventional expectations of an academic readership; the amount of evidence may be minimal or derived from lesser sources; or, the evidence may be plentiful and appropriate but not subjected to analysis. Argument may rely more on assertion or declaration rather than on demonstration, leaving readers to do much of the connecting of evidence to claims. Number of students performing at Level 2: Somewhat Proficient:

Somewhat Proficient	Winter	Spring
Number of Students	69	28
Percent of total	33%	30%
Average per section	4.93	4.67

Level 1: Not Proficient

Student produces texts that fail to meet the convention expectations of an academic readership. Or, evidence may be so minimal or inappropriate as to be unconvincing. Or the student may so misinterpret or misapply evidence as to lead the reader to question the writer's grasp of material. Or the student may simply do a "data dump," reporting sources

with almost no analysis or reasoning about them. Number of students performing at Level 1:
Not Proficient:

Proficient	Winter	Spring
Number of Students	24	8
Percent of total	11%	9%
Average per section	1.71	1.33

Global Rating Assessment, Fall 2012-Spring 2014

Fall 2012, 8 ASEM courses, 121 students
 Winter 2013, 7 ASEM courses, 105 students
 Spring 2013, 5 ASEM courses, 77 students
 Winter 2014, 16 ASEM courses, 242 students
 Spring 2014, 6 ASEM courses, 94 students

1. Disposition to engage others in intellectual discussion:

Engage in Intellectual Discussion	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Fall 2012--			
Number of Students	20	56	45
Percent of total	17%	56%	45%
Average per section	2.5	7	5.63
Winter 2013--			
Number of Students	14	40	51
Percent of total	13%	38%	49%
Average per section	2	5.71	7.29
Spring 2013--			
Number of Students	9	35	33
Percent of total	12%	45%	43%
Average per section	1.8	7	6.6
Winter 2014 --			
Number of Students	52	77	113
Percent of total	21%	32%	47%
Average per section	3.25	4.81	7.06
Spring 2014 --			
Number of Students	18	42	34
Percent of total	19%	45%	36%
Average per section	3.0	7.0	5.667

2. Willingness to challenge familiar ideas and existing frameworks:

Challenge ideas and frameworks			
Fall 2012–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	42	40	39
Percent of total	35%	33%	32%
Average per section	5.25	5	4.86
Winter 2013–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	10	33	62
Percent of total	10%	31%	59%
Average per section	1.43	4.71	8.86
Spring 2013–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	9	31	37
Percent of total	12%	40%	48%
Average per section	1.8	6.2	7.4
Winter 2014–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	43	91	108
Percent of total	18%	38%	45%
Average per section	2.69	5.69	6.75
Spring 2014–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	25	25	44
Percent of total	27%	27%	47%
Average per section	4.167	4.167	7.333

3. Demonstration of critical analysis no matter what form of expression (e.g., writing, speaking, problem-solving):

Critical Analysis			
Fall 2012–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	31	49	41
Percent of total	26%	40%	34%
Average per section	3.88	6.13	5.13
Winter 2013 –	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	26	28	51
Percent of total	25%	27%	49%
Average per section	3.71	4	7.29
Spring 2013–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	2	43	32
Percent of total	3%	56%	42%
Average per section	0.4	8.6	6.4
Winter 2014–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	51	82	109
Percent of total	21%	34%	45%
Average per section	3.19	5.13	6.81
Spring 2014–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	25	38	31
Percent of total	27%	40%	33%
Average per section	4.167	6.33	5.167

4. Inclination to improve intellectual skills (e.g., writing, argumentation, logic, problem-solving, discussion, numerical analysis):

Improve Intellectual Skills			
Fall 2012–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	24	55	42
Percent of total	20%	45%	35%
Average per section	3	6.88	5.25
Winter 2013–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	24	31	50
Percent of total	23%	30%	48%
Average per section	3.43	4.43	7.14
Spring 2013–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	5	37	35
Percent of total	6%	48%	45%
Average per section	1	7.4	7
Winter 2014–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	29	81	134
Percent of total	12%	33%	55%
Average per section	1.81	5.06	8.38
Spring 2014–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	21	26	47
Percent of total	22%	28%	50%
Average per section	3.5	4.33	7.833

5. Ability to consider, synthesize and appropriately use evidence in analysis or problem-solving:

Use Evidence in Analysis			
Fall 2012–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	17	56	50
Percent of total	14%	46%	41%
Average per section	2.13	7	6.25
Winter 2013–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	15	38	52
Percent of total	14%	36%	50%
Average per section	2.14	5.43	7.43
Spring 2013–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	10	40	34
Percent of total	13%	52%	44%
Average per section	2	8	6.8
Winter 2014–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	47	83	113
Percent of total	19%	34%	47%
Average per section	2.93	5.18	7.06
Spring 2014–	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	19	33	42
Percent of total	20%	35%	45%
Average per section	3.167	5.5	7.0

6. Eagerness to explore ambiguous and/or complex issues:

Improve Intellectual Skills			
Fall 2012--	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	16	66	42
Percent of total	13%	55%	35%
Average per section	2	8.25	5.25
Winter 2013--	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	12	30	63
Percent of total	11%	29%	60%
Average per section	1.71	4.29	9
Spring 2013 --	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	9	39	29
Percent of total	12%	51%	38%
Average per section	1.8	7.8	5.8
Winter 2014--	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	40	76	126
Percent of total	17%	31%	52%
Average per section	2.5	4.75	7.86
Spring 2014--	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	17	30	47
Percent of total	18%	32%	50%
Average per section	2.833	5.0	7.83

7. Openness to challenge existing beliefs by adopting new perspectives:

Improve Intellectual Skills			
Fall 2012--	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	18	73	35
Percent of total	15%	60%	29%
Average per section	2.25	9.13	4.38
Winter 2013--	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	20	24	60
Percent of total	19%	23%	57%
Average per section	2.86	3.43	8.57
Spring 2013 --	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	5	41	31
Percent of total	6%	53%	40%
Average per section	1	8.2	6.2
Winter 2014--	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	30	71	126
Percent of total	12%	29%	52%
Average per section	2	4.73	8.4
Spring 2014--	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	20	29	45
Percent of total	21%	31%	48%
Average per section	3.33	4.833	7.5

8. Displays intellectual curiosity and is driven to seek out additional knowledge:

Displays Intellectual Curiosity			
Fall 2012--	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	22	70	32
Percent of total	18%	58%	26%
Average per section	2.75	8.75	4
Winter 2013--	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	13	39	53
Percent of total	12%	37%	50%
Average per section	1.86	5.57	7.57
Spring 2013--	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	5	41	31
Percent of total	6%	53%	40%
Average per section	1	8.2	6.2
Winter 2014--	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	42	90	113
Percent of total	17%	37%	47%
Average per section	2.63	5.63	7.06
Spring 2014--	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of Students	20	29	45
Percent of total	21%	31%	48%
Average per section	3.333	4.833	7.5



Advanced Seminars

As of June 2014

Sex, Gender, and Rock & Roll
Progressive Music In The Rock
Era
Heavy Metal and the Re-
enchantment of Modern
Society
Philosophical Foundations of
Mathematics
All in the Family
New Media, Conflict and Control
Gothic Trappings
Satiric Eye
Witchcraft and Renaissance
Drama
Bioethics in Today's World
Food Security & Food Politics
Health, Media, and Self
Justice, Legal Obligation, and
Judicial Decision Making
Culture, Media and Power
Framing the Debate
France and Germany: From
Carnage to Community
Attachment, Trauma, and Culture
Sustainable Living
American Material Culture
Caring in a Capitalist Economy
Society, Nature, Animals
Wealth, Power, & Justice in the
European Union
Water and the West
Voices from the Margins
Sin Cities: Las Vegas and her
Progeny
Queer Lives in Musical Theatre
Gender and Power in Africa
This Land is Your Land
Religion & Filmmaking in the
Global Village
Free Form Film
From Bach to Beethoven
American Through Foreign Eyes
Do the Wicked Prosper?
Tango: Border Crossings in Art,
Race, Gender and Politics
Asian/Pacific Diasporas:
Communicating
Transnationality
Latin American Dependency
Fairy Tale Morality
Latina/o Identity and Community
Sex and Globalization
Environmental Controversies
Analyzing the American Dream
War and Peace in Japanese Film
Jewish Lit of Latin America

Bad Girls, Riot Grrrls and
Misbehaving Women
Seduction & Satire in British
Women's Novels of the
Eighteenth Century
New England: Myth and Memory
Globalization from Above and
Below
Media networks in Early America
Questioning Middle East News
Presidents, War and the
Constitution
Comm. & Production of Cultures
Art and the Environment
Thinking, Eating, Writing: Food
History
Cinematic Storytelling
Inventing America
Money, Sex, and Power
Satire in the Arts and Media
Development in Latin America
Versions of Egypt
Celtic Identities and Nationalisms
The Sixties: Swinging London
Latina/o Religious Traditions
Contemporary Art in Context
Gender, Race, Class in Media
Media, Culture, & Globalization
Slave Narrative Tradition
Modern and Postmodern Music
Community in Urban Society
Sex and Gender in the City
Critical White Studies
Immigrant America
London and Media: Then and
Now
Emotions in Theatre and the
Brain
Dance in India
Archetypes Through The Ages
Perspectives on Climate Change
Philosophy of Migration and
Global Citizenship
India and Historical Film
Africa
Cultural Intersections
From Literature to Film
Sport, Deviance, and Social
Control
Occupied France in Perspective
Participatory Culture & Fandom
Murder in America
Chinese Cultural Revolution
Global Ecology of America
Freaks: Stigma and Resistance
Postcolonial Literature and
Performance
The Female Outlaw
Art, Thought, Spirituality

Jammin': Technoculture and
Improvisation
Law & Politics of Reproduction
Paranormal Phenomena
Thinking
Pursuing Equality: Gender
Politics and the Law
Humor Theory & Application
Memoirs of Madness
Life's Aim
Applied Neural Networks
Unfathomable Russian Soul:
Identity and Self-Perception in
19th Century Literature and
Culture
Science and Religion in Dialogue
Strangers in a Strange Land: The
Role of the Traveler
The Desert of the Real
Our Evolving Future
Body & Sexuality in Religions
The Addictive Self
Communication in Close
Relationships
American Religious Movements
Muslims and Identity in Europe
Belonging: State and Family in
our World
The Golden Age of Musicals
Lit of Nature and Apocalypse
The Lit of Trauma
Politics of Reconciliation
Comparative Democratization
Conspiracy Theories / Cont. Cult
Communication and Adoption
Music and Consciousness
Music and Spirituality
Animals and Human Societies
Belonging in America
Life and Death
Individuals, Individuality, and
Society
Writing Our Lives, Writing Our
Communities
Civil Rights to Civil Unions
Forgiveness, Politics, and Film
The Harlem Renaissance
Rough Draft History: Film/Video
Exploring Italy
Harry Potter and Esoterism
Globalization: Its Discontents
The Long Civil Rights Movement
Food Culture: Foodies, Foragers
& Food Politics
Religion and Politics in China
The Berlin Republic
Nazi Germany: History, literature,
Culture
Climate Science and Policy



Independence Pass



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