

English 401.45
First-Year Writing
Spring 2017 — M/W 3.40-5pm — Kendall 310

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Office hours: T/R 5-6pm or by appointment (**note:** meetings after 4pm will be in the library)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Required Materials](#)

[Course Description](#)

[Course Objectives](#)

[Individual Conferences/Office Hours](#)

[Assignments](#)

[Major Assignment Descriptions](#)

[Analysis Essay](#)

[Researched Persuasive Essay](#)

[Personal Essay](#)

[Portfolio \(60% of final grade\)](#)

[Everyday Assignments](#)

[Homework \(20% of final grade\)](#)

[Participation \(20% of final grade\)](#)

[Grades](#)

[Late Policy](#)

[Policies and Procedures](#)

[Attendance Policy](#)

[Academic Honesty Policy](#)

[Confidentiality](#)

[File Formats](#)

[Computer problems](#)

[Services](#)

[CLASS SCHEDULE](#)

[Unit 1: Analysis](#)

[Unit 2: Research & Persuasion](#)

[Unit 3: The Personal Essay](#)

WRITING EXERCISES

[Exercise 1](#)

[Exercise 2](#)

[Exercise 3](#)

[Exercise 4](#)

[Exercise 5](#)

[Exercise 6](#)

[Exercise 7](#)

Major Assignments

[Essay #1: Analysis](#)

[Process](#)

[Further ideas & guidance](#)

[Essay 2: The Researched Persuasive Essay](#)

[Overview](#)

[Requirements](#)

[Paper Format](#)

[Title](#)

[Source Requirements for the Précis](#)

[Citation Requirements:](#)

[The Writing Center:](#)

[STEP 1: Research Proposal & Research Question](#)

[Audience](#)

[STEP 2: Rhetorical Précis](#)

[Good Types of Sources:](#)

[Quality of the Sources:](#)

[Format of the Précis:](#)

[STEP 3: Make a Plan for Drafting and Revision!](#)

[Essay 3: Personal Essay](#)

[Overview](#)

[Details](#)

[Final Portfolio](#)

[Overview](#)

[Requirements](#)

[Format](#)

[Reflection](#)

[Grade](#)

Required Materials

The following books are **required** and will be available at Durham Book Exchange (36 Main St.; 868-1297) and the UNH Bookstore (MUB; 862-2140).

- Butler, Octavia. *Parable of the Sower*. 1993. Grand Central Publishing, 2000.
- Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *"They Say / I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. 3rd ed. W.W. Norton, 2014.
- University of New Hampshire Composition Program. *Transitions*. Fountainhead Press, 2016.

Recommended:

- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. **3rd edition**. University of Chicago, 2008. [Available online via the UNH Library website](#).

Course Description

"The writer writes to live life a second time, a third, a fourth, each life richer, more fully experienced on the page than in reality. The writer writes to feel, to think, to learn."

—Donald M. Murray

This course will encourage you to feel, to think, and to learn by writing. It will provide you with techniques you can use to generate ideas; to explore language; to research questions that compel you; to reflect on your self, your work, and your environment; and to analyze the texts that compose the world around us.

The course will be divided into three units, and you will write a different kind of major essay in each. The first unit will focus on *analysis*, and you will work in groups to decide on topic areas and to develop knowledge within a field of your group's choice. Analytical skills are essential for success as a college student, and we will work to hone your analytical skills from the beginning.

The second unit will add *research* to analysis by asking you to gather evidence, analyze it, and write an essay in which you persuade your audience that your analysis and viewpoint is valid. Research is a primary task for all universities, and this unit will help you develop a process for research and to learn to use some of the many resources available to you as a UNH student. You will research a topic of your own choice.

The third unit will bring your skills of research and analysis to bear on a *personal* concern. You will, in effect, research and analyze yourself. Being able to construct and communicate a story of your self is a vital skill for both school and the world beyond school.

Frequent short papers in response to assigned readings will help you prepare for each major essay, as will the multiple drafts of each paper you will write. Workshops and instructor conferences will give you many opportunities to closely analyze the writing of your peers as well as your own writing, and thus learn ways to enhance your communication skills.

In this section of 401, many of our assignments will focus on questions of the future, of utopia and

dystopia, of building a world worth living in.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- demonstrate your ability to write in a variety of modes (personal, academic, civic);
- use various invention strategies to identify suitable topics for writing projects;
- explore, develop, and organize your ideas, information, and arguments;
- analyze and understand rhetorical situations, including purpose, writer positioning, audience, and genre;
- use various online and library resources to identify and choose appropriate material for your research and writing;
- evaluate and incorporate information from external sources (both library and web-based) into your own writing and document sources appropriately;
- develop texts that use grammatical, stylistic, and genre conventions that are appropriate for college-level writing;
- summarize, analyze, and respond to texts written by other writers, including your peers;
- revise, edit, and proofread your own texts for maximum effectiveness.

Individual Conferences/Office Hours

You may stop by my office during open office hours as well. (Note: For most people, it's more convenient to meet at the library than my office, and I'm happy to do that. Indeed, you should probably check outside the café at the library before heading over to my office, as I may already be meeting with somebody there for office hours.) During our scheduled visits, I will meet with you individually or in small groups. **These scheduled meetings are mandatory.** If you cannot attend a scheduled meeting, please email me at least two hours before our planned time. If you miss a meeting without emailing first, I will count it as one of your three class absences.

Assignments

Major Assignment Descriptions

Note: In asking for any draft of a certain length, I expect the pages to be full of prose, however rough. That means bullet points, outlines, and similar brainstorming work is not okay. Anything below the minimum will for a major assignment will be a violation of the B contract (see below).

([For full assignment guidelines, see the area below after the class schedule.](#))

Analysis Essay

in which you will analyze an element of Octavia Butler's novel *Parable of the Sower*. An "element" may be a character, a feature of the novel's setting, a particular theme, or anything else that you want to zoom in on. This paper is about laser focus, about pulling a single thread out of a large tapestry. The key is that you need to be able to look at the element on its own and within the context of the novel as a whole. (Note: This does not necessarily have to be a literary analysis. If you want to analyze, for instance, how money works in the novel, that could be great. How might you write about this novel for a business class, or a science class, or a history class, or...? Choose something you're interested in. Be creative. Be original.) Length: 1,200-2,000 words.

Researched Persuasive Essay

in which you will inquire into a specific research question about something you think needs to be changed so that the world can become a better place. You will then write a paper that proposes how we can make such a change, and that seeks to persuade us both that the change is necessary and that you have a strategy for implementing it. You will need to research the topic thoroughly, using a variety of credible sources. The first step in this process is to create rhetorical précis of sources for your researched persuasive essay. After that, you will begin to draft your paper. Length: 2,000 words minimum.

Personal Essay

in which you will explore an idea about change, the future, and/or making yourself a better person by using your own thoughts, experiences, and story to shape the essay. You will employ techniques that make a personal essay effective, such as narrative, description, dialogue, reflection, creative use of language, etc. You may experiment with structure as well. Length: 1,000 words minimum.

Portfolio (60% of final grade)

I will collect drafts (see schedule) of the first two major essays, comment on them, and return them. I call these "evaluation drafts." You can then continue revising until the portfolio is due. (Note that your participation grade, as well as the quality of your final portfolio, depends on your ability to meet all due dates with completed, polished drafts.)

For the personal essay, you are more on your own. This is by design, for two reasons: 1.) It gives us more time to work on the researched-persuasive essay, the most difficult and time-consuming in the course, and 2.) by the end of the course, you should have learned what sorts of feedback are useful to you, and how to seek out those sorts of feedback — for instance, I will read as many drafts as you send me, time allowing. I will meet with you multiple times every week if you want. But you have to ask. One of the most important skills in college is the skill of advocating for yourself. So advocate! This is not an excuse to be lazy. If you revise your personal essay less than the others, it will show. Really.

Be sure to keep separate drafts for all of your work throughout the term. Number your draft files so you can find them easily. (I recommend creating a file folder for each major assignment and a file folder for everyday homework assignments.) Do not throw anything out. Remember:

Everything you write for this course, and every version of everything you write for this course, may be useful for your portfolio. KEEP AND ORGANIZE IT ALL!

Everyday Assignments

Homework (20% of final grade)

various short assignments, components of each final essay, and writing and research exercises to help you improve your skills. These will be graded as Excellent (100), Good (88), and Inadequate (60).

Participation (20% of final grade)

“Participation” means a lot of things. A big one is participating in class sessions: asking questions, being present, not looking at your phone when you should be doing something else, etc.

Whereas in other courses you may have found yourself sitting silently in a class, in this course **thoughtful participation in discussions is a vital part of your work**. In fact, the value of class meetings will largely be determined by the conversation you and your classmates create each day. Your participation in this dialogue is expected and will be considered when I assign your final grade.

But class participation isn’t every type of participation for this course. “Participation” is about how well you contribute to the course as a community member: Do your efforts help you and other people to achieve your best work...or not? Are you a positive contributor to the class, or just an observer?

Peer feedback is a key component of your participation grade. Have you provided your fellow writers with helpful, thoughtful feedback on their work, or have you skimmed through their writing and only offered a few vague words of response?

You will speak to your final participation grade in the self-evaluation you write in your portfolio, and I am happy to talk to you about it whenever you want.

Grades

Your final grade is made up of three percentages:

the **portfolio** (60%),

homework (20%), and

participation (20%, which includes in-class writing, peer review, group work, and class discussion).

The three major essays you write for this class will not receive individual grades. Homework will be graded via a simple rubric on Canvas (Excellent [100], Good [88], Inadequate [60]).

Constantly grading every draft of every assignment can sometimes result in very poor student writing. If you are focused solely on what letter grade your paper is going to receive, you aren't putting your attention where it will do the most good: constant revision based on descriptive feedback. Comments tell you how to improve your writing; a letter grade does not. This is especially a problem in a writing course such as this one, where your attention needs to be focused on the practice of writing and revision.

In order to keep you focused on drafting, I have decided to use a portfolio system.

This means that the majority of your grade will come from the portfolio due at the end of the semester. You can continue working on drafts of all major assignments until then. (Indeed, your portfolio needs to show continued thought, drafting, and growth for it to receive a high grade.)

It's entirely understandable if you find this system confusing. It probably goes against every grading experience you've ever had. And it can be nerve-wracking to know that 60% of your final grade is in flux until the end of the semester. I sympathize. So, I have devised two ways of setting you at ease about your major paper grades:

1. *The 3-point system.* I grade your homework as "Excellent", "Good", and "Inadequate" and will use this system for your evaluation drafts as well. **These grades don't count for anything officially** (everything can still be revised until the portfolio), but they are a way of letting you know if you are way off base or doing especially well. (Note that "Excellent" will be a much rarer grade for evaluation drafts than for homework, and that "Inadequate" is not a terrible grade, but rather a sort of warning that you've got some significant work still to do before the paper could be considered a final draft.)

2. *The B Contract.* I state here my guarantee that if you maintain a certain level of engagement with the course you will receive at least a B (85). Think of this as a contract between you and me. I will guarantee you at least a B if you do **ALL** of the following:

- You do not miss more than three classes.
- Consistently participate in full-class discussions (i.e., you should speak up, on average, once per discussion class).
- Consistently participate in group work.
- Complete all assignments and activities on time, according to the guidelines, and your work demonstrates effort and care. For this condition, you must score "Good" or higher on the 3

essays and for your homework average.

- Consistently demonstrate effort on all peer feedback activities with the goal of being helpful and supportive to your peers.
- Substantially revise your drafts at each stage, including the portfolio.
- Carefully copy-edit all evaluation drafts by following the [proofreading guidelines](#).
- Have at least two individual conferences with me ~~once in the opening half of the semester, once in the later half~~. [**Update 2/16:** Because we have lost so much time to snow days in the first half of the term, I am removing this requirement from the contract. You need to schedule at least 2 conferences with me *for different papers*.] Because (I will almost always be available after class for office hours. If you want to meet at a different time, just [email me](#).) **This is your responsibility to remember and to schedule.**

(You will be able to measure your progress through self-evaluations during the term, but you should also check on this list yourself now and then.)

How do you get above or below a B? By doing more or doing less than the list above. Your self-evaluations through the term will give you some sense of whether you're in B territory or if you're exceeding it or falling below. You'll write a final self-evaluation in your portfolio that discusses how you see your work and participation in the course, and there you'll be able to propose and justify a grade for yourself.

Late Policy

I tend to think about late work as having two types: The type that it really isn't going to matter to anybody that it's a little bit late (*soft deadlines*) and the type that it actually does matter (*hard deadlines*).

Your homework assignments, for instance, are mostly useless to you if done after the deadline because they're keyed to a particular moment in the course progression. Thus, I'm not likely to give you credit for late work, because the value of most of the homework assignments relies on them being done on time. But maybe not always. So don't be afraid to ask.

With evaluation drafts of papers, I'm perfectly happy to let you have a two-day grace period on the paper if you're prepared for the presentation time, which has to be on that day because it's a group activity in class. If you're going to want to use the grace period, please just let me know beforehand.

The portfolio does not have a grace period. I wish it could. But the problem is that I have to get all of the portfolios read in a really short amount of time so that I can turn your grades in by the deadline the university imposes on me.

If you need significantly more time with an assignment, please come talk to me and tell me what's up. We can probably figure things out. My concern will always be for your progress and for your ability to participate in the course. I can't do for any one student what I wouldn't do for the others, because that violates the basic fairness of a course, but fairness doesn't have to mean that everybody does everything at exactly the same time if it will hurt no-one for you to receive an extension.

Policies and Procedures

Attendance Policy

All sections of English 401 follow the same attendance policy. Each student is allowed to miss up to three meetings (classes or conferences) for whatever reason: no distinction will be made between excused or unexcused absences. Don't waste these three absences; save them for times you really need them. Each additional absence beyond the three deductibles will lower your final grade by one grade (For example, if you earned a B but missed four classes, you'd get a B-; if you missed five classes, you'd get a C+). Missing a scheduled conference or more than 50% of a class meeting also counts as an absence. Exceptions to this policy will not be made unless extenuating circumstances can be documented.

It is your responsibility to get the assignments, class notes, and course changes from a classmate if you do miss a class. It is also your responsibility to keep track of and complete the missing work. In-class work cannot be made up. If you miss class on the day a written assignment is due, make arrangements to send it along with a classmate.

It is my responsibility to inform you if and when I will be late or unable to attend a class. In normal circumstances, I will inform you in advance by e-mail and/or on Canvas. If I haven't notified you in advance and I am not in class, please send someone to check with the English Office in Conant 113 or call them at 862-1313. I may have left a last-minute message there. If you think a winter storm might have caused a delay or cancellation, you can check the UNH website or the storm information line: 603-862-0000. To receive UNH alerts to your email and/or cell phone, go to <https://alert.unh.edu/index.php?CCheck=1>.

Academic Honesty Policy

In order to make the most out of this course, you are expected to present your own original work. Any attempt at plagiarism or misrepresentation will result in a failing grade for the project and, in some cases, for the entire course. [*The University of New Hampshire Student Rights, Rules and Responsibility*](#) defines **misrepresentation** and **plagiarism** as follows:

Plagiarism. The unattributed use of the ideas, evidence, or words of another person, or the conveying of the false impression that the arguments and writing in a paper are the student's own. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. The acquisition by purchase or otherwise of a part or the whole of a piece of work which is represented as the student's own;
2. The representation of the ideas, data, or writing of another person as the student's own work, even though some wording, methods of citation, or arrangement of evidence, ideas, or arguments have been altered;
3. Concealment of the true sources of information, ideas, or argument in any piece of work.

Misrepresentation. The deliberate falsification of information substituted in place of the truth is misrepresentation and includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Having another person represent or stand in for oneself in circumstances where the

- student's attendance and/or performance is required;
2. Leaving a class, laboratory, etc. without permission but after attendance has been taken;
 3. Presenting false academic credentials;
 4. Having another person author one's written work;
 5. Submitting work originally submitted for one course to satisfy the requirements of another course, without prior consent of the current instructor (it is assumed that the current instructor expects the work to be original);
 6. Forging or using another's signature;
 7. Altering or destroying academic records and documents;
 8. Presenting false data, experimental results, or physical results.

To avoid plagiarism and misrepresentation, be sure to acknowledge the source, using the conventions of an appropriate academic documentation style (such as MLA and APA) as specified by your instructor. For more information about plagiarism and how to avoid it, see our textbooks and/or the [Purdue OWL](#).

See also the resources on plagiarism, paraphrasing, etc. in *Transition*.

Confidentiality

In a personal essay (your last major essay for the course), students often write about sensitive experiences, and since these experiences can lead to strong writing, I encourage you to do so if you wish. My responses and your classmates' will cover your writing, not your life, and I ask all students to respect the confidentiality of these pieces. *However, if you mention subjects in your writing that may be harmful to yourself or another person or you mention crimes conducted by yourself or others on this campus, your revelations may have to be reported to university authorities.* Please consider carefully what you feel comfortable sharing.

File Formats

You will upload most of your work to Canvas. To make my life easier, I ask that you please submit most files as Word documents, either .doc or .docx, because this makes reading them via Canvas easier. [UNH provides all students with Microsoft Office for free](#), but you do not need to use Microsoft Word to save in Word format – any word processing program can save as/export as .doc or .docx. If you don't have Microsoft Office, [LibreOffice](#) is a perfectly good and completely free alternative (go to *File*—>*Save as*—>*File type*.) In Google Docs, go to *File*—>*Download as*. In Apple's Pages program, go to *File*—>*Export to*. Thank you for paying attention to this.

Computer problems

It is a basic law of the universe that you will have computer problems at the worst possible moment. This is generally not an acceptable excuse for a late assignment, because you have many options available to you on this campus. For information on the computer labs, check out the following site: <http://clusters.unh.edu/>. There is also lots of help available to you via Information Technology: <http://it.unh.edu/>, including their help desk in Dimond Library (phone: 603-862-4242).

Additionally, UNH now provides each of us with free storage space at Box, so check it out: <http://unh.box.com/>. Just sign in with your UNH username and password. Box is a great way to automatically back up your work. If your computer explodes, you'll still have your work saved there and

able to be downloaded to any computer. **There is simply no longer any excuse to lose an important file because of a hardware failure.**

Services

[Robert J. Connors Writing Center](#)

The Writing Center is an invaluable resource for all kinds of writers at UNH. The Writing Center is not only for those who feel they “need help” with their writing. Although you will definitely “get help” at the Writing Center, you should see it as a place to share ideas, work through concepts, and fine-tune your writing. The center also now helps with oral presentations. Please visit the Writing Center by appointment or by dropping in (www.unh.edu/writing; 862-3272; 7 Hamilton Smith Hall).

[Disability Services for Students](#)

If you are a student with a documented disability who will require accommodations in this course, please register with Disability Services for Students for assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs. I will be unable to make any accommodations without a letter from Disability Services (201 Smith Hall; 2-2607).

Additional Services

[Center for Academic Resources](#) (201 Smith Hall; 2-3698). [IT Service Desk](#) (2- 4242). [IT Support Center](#) (Dimond Library, Level 3). [Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention Program \(SHARPP\)](#) (24-hour Crisis Line: 603-862-SAFE). [Counseling Center](#) (862-2090; Smith Hall, 3rd Floor, 3 Garrison Ave). [Military & Veterans Services](#) (862-0355; Stoke Hall; unh.veterans@unh.edu)

CLASS SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to change with notice at least 24 hours before the affected class meeting.

All assignments on the schedule are due by the START of class on the day listed unless otherwise noted.

Unit 1: Analysis

1/24 (T): ~~Introductions~~ Snow day; class cancelled. Let's try to stay on track, though -- please do the work for Thursday as scheduled:

1/26 (R): Reading Due: "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" by Ursula Le Guin (on Canvas)
Writing Due: Exercise 1

1/31 (T): Reading: *Parable of the Sower* Chs. 1-5 (pp. 3-60)
Writing: Exercise 2

2/2 (R): Reading: *Parable of the Sower* Chs. 6 & 7 (pp. 61-85)
Group work on *PS* chs. 1-7

2/7 (T): Snow day; class cancelled. Please contact your group and decide on roles for next time, as we are going to stick to the schedule, which means about half of next class will be group work devoted to *Parable* through Chapter 15.

Reading: *Parable of the Sower* Chs. 8-13 (pp. 86-149)
Writing: Exercise 3 (this is still due)

2/9 (R): Another snow day! We're going to bump the work for today up to Tuesday, but I'm adding a bit of writing. We were going to do conferences Tuesday; I will reschedule those for either the 16th or 21st, depending on when I can reserve a room in the library.

2/14 (T): Reading: *Parable of the Sower* Chs. 14 & 15 (pp. 153-178)
Group work on *PS* Chs. 8-15
Writing: Exercise 4

2/16 (R): Reading: Group work on *PS* Chs. 16-22 (pp. 179-278)

2/21 (T): Reading: *Parable of the Sower* to end.
Group work on *PS* to end.
Please bring *Transitions* to class, as we'll be looking at the grammar section in it.

2/23 (R): Peer feedback workshop. Either bring hardcopies of your paper for your group to read or email it to them before class. Everybody in your group needs a copy of your paper.

2/28 (T): CONFERENCES. You only have to be in class during your group time:

Group 1: 3.40-4

Group 2: 4-4.20

Group 3: 4.20-4.40

Group 4: 4.40-5

(If you don't know your group number, you can find it on Canvas by going to the People link on the left sidebar of our course page, then clicking the tab up top for the analysis groups.)

Please bring a draft copy of your paper, either on a computer or as a print-out.

These conferences do not count as conferences toward the B Contract. You still need to schedule personal conferences with me.

Unit 2: Research & Persuasion

3/2 (R): **Essay 1 due.** Introduction of research unit.

3/7 (T): Reading: *They Say/I Say* (TSIS) Ch. 1 (pp.19-29)

Writing: Brainstorm at least 5 topics for a research paper for this course. Bring to class Topic/Question/Significance outlines for each (as described in *Craft of Research* pp.44-46, section 3.4.1-3.4.3. You could also use the template on p.49 if that works better for you.) [The online version of *The Craft of Research* is available at [this link](#).]

3/9 (R): *We'll be going over how to research with the databases today. If you have a laptop computer or a tablet you should bring it to class.*

Reading: TSIS Ch. 3 (pp. 42-51)

Writing: Exercise 1 at end of TSIS Ch. 3 (p.50) (Turn it in on Canvas.)

SPRING BREAK

3/21 (T): MLA citation.

Reading: Find 2 articles via the databases that may be useful to your research. Bring them to class, either on your computer or as a print-out.

3/23 (R): Introduction to précis writing.

3/28 (T): CONFERENCES & RESEARCH DAY

MEET AT THE LIBRARY IN ROOM 537

Research Proposals are due on the Discussion Board by class time.

3/30 (R): Reading: TSIS Part 2 (pp. 55-101); recommended: *Craft of Research* on planning & drafting

Writing: Bring précis draft to class for discussion.

4/4 (T): **MEET AT THE LIBRARY IN ROOM 537**

Final précis are due. Upload to Canvas.

4/6 (R): Group workshops in the classroom. Bring Exercise 5 and any draft material of your paper so far.

Group 1: 3.40-4

Group 2: 4-4.20

Group 3: 4.20-4.40

Group 4: 4.40-5

(If you don't know your group number, you can find it on Canvas by going to the People link on the left sidebar of our course page, then clicking the tab up top for the analysis groups.)

Writing: Exercise 5

4/11 (T): 1.) Read revised student essay in TSIS (pp. 143-159);

2.) Choose **one** of the following student examples to read in *Transitions*:

1. "Pet Friendly Campus Proposal" (pp. 27-32)

2. "Venice: Soon to Be Atlantis" (pp. 38-42)

3. "The Relationship between Music Therapy & Intellectual Disability" (pp. 43-48)

3.) Read in *Transitions* both drafts of "I Am Not a Vegetarian Yet" (pp. 49-56)

Be ready to talk in class about the essays you read and the revision strategies. Look for the essays strengths (what you can use for your own work) and weaknesses (what you don't want to do in your own work).

4/13 (R): Library day. Check in and out with Matt outside the café.

Unit 3: The Personal Essay

4/18 (T): **Paper 2 due.** Introduction of personal essays.

4/20 (R): Reading: [David Sedaris, "Understanding Owls" at *The New Yorker* website](#). Either print this out or bring a laptop or tablet to class, because we will be looking very closely at this essay's structure and writing techniques.

Writing: Exercise 6

4/25 (T): Reading: [Read the examples of sentences here](#).

Writing: Exercise 7

4/27 (R): No class. (Matt away at conference.)

5/2 (T): Workshop drafts with groups in class. You must make a *completed draft* of your essay available to your group, either by providing hardcopies or providing electronic copies.

5/4 (R): LAST DAY OF CLASS

5/11 (R): PORTFOLIOS DUE by 12 noon on Canvas

WRITING EXERCISES

For exercises, writing less than 400 words in the body of the text will be an automatic grade of “Inadequate” unless specifically noted otherwise in the exercise description. (Yes, 399 words is less than 400 words.)

Exercise 1

Write a response of at least 400 words to “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”. This should be an organized, thoughtful mini-essay. Don’t write a summary of the story, but rather write about it as you would discuss it with a friend who has also read it. Dig into it. Find its corners and angles. Confront what perplexes you. Try something out. Experiment. There’s no one way to do this assignment — find a way to make it yours. Surprise your reader. Surprise yourself.

Exercise 2

Listen to the [Thinking Aloud radio episode on the concept of utopia](#).

Write a response of at least 400 words. What draws your attention in this episode? What gets you thinking? Why?

Exercise 3

Write about your experience reading *Parable of the Sower* so far. The most valuable use of this exercise would be to try writing in some specificity and depth about what most interests you in the novel. (For instance, choose a short passage and write about it.) Another approach would be to write about something that perplexes you, and to see if by writing about it you can become a little bit less perplexed. (Hint: Done well, this exercise could easily be expanded to be part of a draft of your paper.)

Exercise 4

Write at least 500 words that could be part of your paper. This doesn’t have to be good writing. It’s time to be drafting, though, and the more material you can get on paper, the better off you’ll be. Don’t worry about spelling, grammar, transitions, or any of that stuff. Just try to get some ideas down and see where your ideas lead you.

Grading for this one is different from most of the other exercises. Provided that your content is stuff that could potentially end up in your paper, I will not be looking at the quality of that material, but

rather simply counting words. Under 500 words = Inadquate; 500-750 words = Good; 750+ words = Excellent.

Exercise 5

Look for templates in *They Say/I Say* that fit your writing at this point. Write **at least** 6 possible sentences for your paper using different templates. *(This exercise does not need to be 400 words. Fewer than 6 sentences will be evaluated as “Inadequate”; wordcount is irrelevant.)*

Exercise 6

Analyze how Sedaris’s “Understanding Owls” works. Point to specific techniques he uses to engage his reader and develop the story he tells. Consider: his diction and tone, the first and last paragraphs, the events he chooses to include. What techniques do you find especially effective in this essay? What can you steal for your own writing?

Exercise 7

Part 1: Choose a story to tell for your personal essay. You don’t need to know the significance yet, or the details you will focus on — you just need to know the general outline of the story. Write a fast draft of at least 800 words. Try to really write quickly. Don’t worry about chronology, sense, or anything. Let your brain puke on the page. *(minimum 800 words)*

Part 2: Revise at least 2 of the sentences in what you just wrote to fit the form of 2 sentences from [the example sentence document](#). (Copy your chosen example sentences onto your paper first, then put your own revised sentences underneath them. That way we can really compare.) *(Wordcount is irrelevant for Part 2. Fewer than 2 sentences will be evaluated as “Inadequate”).*

Major Assignments

Essay #1: Analysis

For Essay 1, you will analyze an element of Octavia Butler's novel *Parable of the Sower*.

An "element" may be a character, a feature of the novel's setting, a particular theme, or anything else that you want to zoom in on. This paper is about laser focus, about pulling a single thread out of a large tapestry. The key is that you need to be able to look at the element on its own and within the context of the novel as a whole.

Length: 1,200-2,000 words

Process

1. *Decide on a topic.* As you are reading through the novel, think about what most grabs your attention and curiosity. Take notes about this material. Remember that this essay does not necessarily have to be a literary analysis. If you want to create a topic that fits your own major, that's great -- you could analyze, for instance, how money works in the novel, or what the novel suggests about urban sociology, or... Consider how you might write about this novel for a business class, or a science class, or a history class, or a psychology class. Choose something you're interested in. Be creative. Be original.
2. *Take notes.* Annotate your book, either by writing in it if you own it or with Post-It notes if it's a library book or bookstore rental. Having a topic in mind for your paper will help here, because you'll know what sorts of details to focus on, but don't be afraid to mark things that seem important, that confuse you, etc. Keep a character list. Keep a list of unfamiliar words.
3. *Educate yourself about the particular topic.* To analyze well, you'll need to be as educated on the topic as you possible can be. Seek out background information and alternate points of view beyond the material in the novel. This is not a research paper, but you do need to know something about what you're analyzing.
4. *Prewrite.* Are you an outline person? Make an outline. Are you a freewriting brainstormer? Freewrite and brainstorm. Do you need to draw a graphic of your essay? Do it! Do whatever you need to do to start trying out some ideas, finding some language for what you might want to say, and throwing stuff against the wall to see what sticks.
5. *Draft.* Go ahead. Give it a try. Get words down. There is no requirement that your first draft be brilliant. Indeed, you're welcome to write a truly terrible first draft.
6. *Cite your sources.* You don't need to use an official source citation format like MLA (you will have to for the research paper). Instead, follow the lead of the models you look at. How can you best make it clear to your readers where you got your information? Links in your paper are allowed, but please don't just paste URLs in — make specific words into hyperlinks. (If you don't

know how to do this with the word processing program you use, look it up in the Help file or Google it with the name and version number of the program you have.)

7. *Revise*. Take a look at what you've got. Change it. See what happens.
8. *Get feedback*. We'll have some feedback activities in class, but you shouldn't feel limited to only getting feedback from class. Bring a draft to the Writing Center. Share it with friends, family, foes. Test it out on audiences and see what happens.
9. *Revise*. Keep re-envisioning.
10. *Edit*. Look at your sentences. Pay attention to your word choice. Play around with your punctuation. Polish, polish, polish. (Now would be the time to pay attention to grammar, spelling, and proofreading.)
11. *Read your paper aloud*. Reading the paper aloud is one of the best ways to get a different perspective on it. Before you turn the final draft in, be sure you have read the paper aloud at least once.
12. *Turn in the evaluation draft*. The evaluation draft is **due 3/2** and needs to be turned in on Canvas.

Further ideas & guidance

Don't leave your reader wondering, "So what?"

Part of your job in writing this paper is to help the reader understand why the accuracy and veracity of this statement matters. Imagine you have a skeptical reader, one who likes to ask, "So what?" Be sure to answer that implied question by the end.

Look at a range of examples and don't be afraid to be creative.

One important question for you is: What form and style of writing will be most effective for my purpose and my audience? Look for examples of writing with a similar purpose and audience. (I'm happy to help you find models if you're having no luck in your own searching.)

Use the library!

The library is full of resources and people to help you. The reference librarians' entire job is helping library patrons find answers to their questions. (The reference desk is at the back of the entrance floor -- walk in, keep walking past the circulation desk, and you'll see it back there next to the Writing Center.) You can also do it yourself via the library website — for instance, take a look at [these research guides](#) (many of them created for specific classes).

The library pays lots of money for subscriptions to all sorts of [databases](#). There are ones for almost every subject area, and it can get confusing (we'll spend a lot of time looking at the databases in the research unit), but don't be afraid to look around and give them a test drive.

Be careful to find credible, authoritative sources of information.

If you want to make your reader trust your analysis, you've got to use the best information you can possibly find. The Library has lots of resources, and there are also some good ones generally on the web such as [Journalist's Resource](#), but no matter where your source comes from, be sure to evaluate it carefully.

Essay 2: The Researched Persuasive Essay

Overview

For this paper, you will inquire into a specific research question about something you think needs to be changed so that the world can become a better place. You will then write a paper that proposes how we can make such a change, and that seeks to persuade us both that the change is necessary and that you have a strategy for implementing it. You will need to research the topic thoroughly, using a variety of credible sources. The first step in this process is to create rhetorical précis of sources for your researched persuasive essay. After that, you will begin to draft your paper.

Length: 2,000 words *minimum*. (If the body of your paper is 1,999 words, you are under the minimum and the paper will automatically be evaluated as “Inadequate”.)

Requirements

Paper Format

The body of the essay should be a minimum of 2,000 words in length (not including Works Cited page), double-spaced, with one-inch margins, in font size 12, using Times New Roman.

The paper must have the author’s name in the header along with page numbers. Do not just write these on every page -- your word processing program will do it automatically for you. If you don’t know how to create headers or insert page numbers, look in the Help file or Google it.

The paper must use [MLA \(8th edition\) format](#).

Title

You will need a title for your essay that piques your reader’s interest and leads your reader into your topic. A separate title page is not necessary.

Source Requirements for the Précis

You will need a ***minimum* of five (5)** sources by the time you submit your *précis*. All sources need to be evaluated for reliability and academic soundness. Of these sources:

- **No more than one of these five sources can be from the Internet** (meaning, published *solely* on the Internet. For example, electronic databases such as Academic Search Premiere, JSTOR, and ProjectMuse are subscription databases [your tuition dollars at work!], not general Internet sources.)
- **At least two of these five sources must be from either/both academic databases or ebooks available via the library website.** (Thus, 2 items from databases fulfill this requirement, as do 2 ebooks, or 1 database article and 1 ebook. Your *précis* citation will show what is from where. Note: These sources should still be academically solid — a big database like

Academic Search Premiere provides access to a lot of general material that may be of questionable academic pedigree, and plenty of very questionable books are available as ebooks. Use your judgment, as always.)

- **At least one source must be a physical, academic book from the actual library itself.** A real book. One you hold in your hands and can flip through the pages of. One you have to go to the library and find in the stacks and check out yourself. What do I mean by “academic”? For our purposes, let’s say a book that includes a bibliography or at least a significant section of source notes.
- General encyclopedias, including Wikipedia, *cannot* be used as one of these five sources, and you should probably not use them for any of the sources for your paper. (Though they can be a good place to start for initial research.)
- Beyond this, you can add as many sources as you want. But you should evaluate them. Don’t ruin the credibility of your research and argument with weak, invalid sources!

Remember that these are **minimums**. If you have more than 5 sources, you can exceed any of these. As long as your 5 sources are covered, whatever else you see fit to include is welcome.

Source Requirements for the Paper

Your paper must include a works cited page, and therefore it must cite sources in the text. As you develop your paper, you may decide that sources you thought would be useful are not ones you end up citing in your text. That’s okay, and perfectly normal in the research and writing process. However, you want to be very careful to make sure your paper includes good, rich sources — indeed, I’d highly recommended citing more than 5 sources in your paper.

Sources help create credibility. They show that you’ve done good research, that you know what the academic conversation you’re entering is.

Sources also help readers find more information. This is a short paper (even if it doesn’t feel like it when you’re writing it!). You don’t have space to cover all the possible ground thoroughly, and so you can use references to sources to show your reader paths toward more information.

Citation Requirements:

Make sure that all summaries, paraphrases, and quotes drawn from these sources are integrated into the text of your essay. Use [MLA format](#) to cite all your sources, both in your essay and on the Works Cited page.

Note: Not all disciplines use the MLA format of documentation. When you write a research paper for other classes, be sure to check with your syllabus or your professor regarding the proper citation format for other papers. (The other popular styles are APA [American Psychological Association] and Chicago [*Chicago Manual of Style*]. We’re sticking with MLA because this is an English class, that’s the most common style within this discipline, and I’m not only a member of the MLA but also part of its governing body, so I would feel like a traitor using another system!)

The Writing Center:

The researched essay is a good opportunity to explore [the Writing Center](#). You should strive to set up an appointment and meet with a writing consultant from the Connors Writing Center to work on this research essay. Be aware that the Writing Center often gets very busy this time of the semester. Do not wait until the last moment to make this appointment.

STEP 1: Research Proposal & Research Question

The proposal should be at least 800 words in length and it should explain why you are interested in this subject and what audience you want to address. Your purpose in the Proposal is to persuade me (and other members of the class) that this is a strong research topic, guided by good, researchable questions. The Proposal should include the following:

- A final topic/question/significance statement for your project.
- A persuasive discussion of why you're interested in this research topic, including any personal connections
- Something about the audience you want to write for
- Questions to guide your research: What do you need to find out?
- A list of key search terms that you've already discovered (and alternative search terms), as well as a list of 2 possible library databases that will be useful for this project,
- Your overall game plan/time line for completing the essay, including how you will structure your time. (This is for you, as much as for us. As you plan, take into account given you current schedule and other commitments. Plan ahead.),
- A list of 3-4 possible library-based and/or other academic sources, properly cited in MLA format.

Audience

Consider how the research you choose will be effective (or won't be effective) for the audience that you are trying to reach in your final researched paper.

To determine your audience, you might look closely at the web sites of stakeholders in the conversation, including:

- A public interest group you find online involved in the debate
- A political figure invested in this debate
- An author who has written on the debate
- An official who is a decision maker in this debate
- Another group/person who could be considered a stakeholder

STEP 2: Rhetorical Précis

“[Précis](#)” is a word originally from French that simply means a summary of a text or speech. (People

disagree about the pronunciation. You'll often hear it Anglicized as *PRAY*-siss. That's wrong, but lots of us do it anyway [yes, I am guilty]. The correct pronunciation in English is *pray-SEE* for the singular and *pray-SEES* for the plural. Note that the singular and plural are spelled the same.)

For this assignment, you will write précis of AT LEAST 5 sources for your paper.

Compiling this information will help you select an audience, know which methods are effective for you to employ, and find backing for your position. It will also help you to practice summarizing and evaluating sources. The exact format is described below.

Good Types of Sources:

To support your research and argument, consider sources and evidence that include the following:

- Statistical sources—not just those directly related to those in your debate, but those that dovetail with it. For example, if you're arguing for drilling, you might consider current gas prices at the pump.
- Studies—particularly those from peer-reviewed journals/reliable books.
- Quotes from authorities your audience would trust—political (especially if on their side of the debate), historical, governmental, etc. Look at King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" for examples.
- Stories/anecdotes from interviews you conduct or from reputable articles, books, documentaries, radio or television news broadcasts, etc.
- Analogies/counter-examples—Consider other controversies that could be compared to/serve as analogies for yours, just as the sample essay compares the Cape Wind debate to the fight over the Northern Pass Project. If you're suggesting your audience change strategies, which group's approach—whether part of their debate/not—might you recommend?

Quality of the Sources:

Wikipedia—or any other general encyclopedia—can NOT be considered one of the sources. You can look at it initially for background, but unless your topic is specifically something to do with Wikipedia itself, then you need to find a more specific, informed source.

For each source, consider these factors, among others, to assess its quality:

- Publication/sponsor credibility/level of bias (credentials)
- Author credibility/level of bias
- Credibility of style of site/article/writing (logic, fallacies, harshness of style, etc.)
- Timeliness
- Information verifiable?

Keep in mind that "being in the database" or "in the library" is not enough of a reason to consider a source credible. Ensure that you are basing your decision to use the source on more than one standard.

Of the five+ sources you start with, at least one source must be print-based (i.e., a book). You might

consider a possible interview as well, particularly if you choose a local/university debate.

Your précis assignment is not your final works cited page. Some of these sources you may end up dropping, and you may add others later.

Format of the Précis:

At the top of the page, put the working title for your paper, your name, and then a sentence or two describing your topic.

For each source, begin with the bibliographic information, as you would on a Works Cited page. Then, below this information, write a précis.

A rhetorical précis has only **four sentences**, each of which has specific guidelines:

1. The name of the author, the genre and title of the work, the date in parentheses, a rhetorically accurate, active verb (such as "asserts," "argues," "suggests," "implies," "claims," etc.), and a "that" clause containing the major claim (thesis statement) of the work. Optional: an appositive (a phrase describing the author) following the author's name.
2. An explanation of how the author develops and/or supports the major claim, usually in chronological order.
3. A statement of the author's apparent purpose, followed by an explanatory phrase such as "in order to" or "so that".
4. A description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience. (Often, this includes tone.)

Here's an example:

MacFarquhar, Larissa. "Who Cares If Johnny Can't Read?" *Slate.com*, 16 Apr. 1997, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/high_concept/1997/04/who_cares_if_johnny_cant_read.html. Accessed 1 Oct. 2016.

In the article "Who Cares if Johnny Can't Read?" (1997), Larissa MacFarquhar asserts that Americans are reading more than ever despite claims to the contrary and that it is time to reconsider why we value reading so much, especially certain kinds of "high culture" reading. MacFarquhar supports her claims about American reading habits with facts and statistics that compare past and present reading practices, and she challenges common assumptions by raising questions about reading's intrinsic value. Her purpose is to dispel certain myths about reading in order to raise new and more important questions about the value of reading and other media in our culture. She seems to have a young, hip, somewhat irreverent audience in mind because her tone is sarcastic, and she suggests that the ideas she opposes are old-fashioned positions.

Here's another example. Note how the author here includes quotations:

Turkle, Sherry. "Cyberspace and Identity." *Contemporary Sociology* vol. 28, no. 6, 1999, pp. 643-48.

In her essay "Cyberspace and Identity" (1999), Sherry Turkle argues that "today's life on the screen dramatizes and concretizes a range of cultural trends that encourage us to think of identity in terms of multiplicity and flexibility" (272). Turkle supports her assertion by juxtaposing theories of cyberspace and identity formation with older understandings of identity found in psychology, sociology, and philosophy. Her purpose is to show readers that theories on cyberspace and identity, which claim that identity is multiple and cyclical, do not overturn, but rather add to our understandings of identity in order to encourage her audience "to rethink our relationship to the computer culture and psychoanalytic culture as proudly held joint citizenship" (278). Turkle's tone assumes a highly educated audience who is familiar with theories not only of cyberspace and identity, but sociology and psychology as well.

For more examples, including a list of useful terms for each sentence, [see this page](#) (from which I stole the above examples).

STEP 3: Make a Plan for Drafting and Revision!

With your group, determine a good schedule for your work. Map out when you want to create due dates for yourselves. You have all of the dates in the schedule above. Use the Calendar in Canvas, or an online calendar, or a calendar on your phone, or an old-fashioned paper calendar — whatever works best for you. But be aware of the various deadlines. This is your responsibility.

Additionally, for the sake of the B contract, you need to schedule a time for a meeting with me to discuss the progress of your research. (You are welcome to do this with one or two other people, if you'd prefer.) When you do it is your choice. Scheduling it is up to you.

The final evaluation draft of the essay is due by class time on Monday, November 14.

Essay 3: Personal Essay

Overview

This assignment is designed to help you expand on what we have learned about purpose, audience, analysis, and style. In this assignment, you will put what you have learned into practice by telling a story for which you are the living expert: a story of you. You will analyze the context(s) and meaning(s) of your story, and then seek out the most effective way for that story to communicate beyond yourself. You will lead the reader on a journey into some moments of your being — moments that lead you and us to both knowledge and empathy.

For the purpose of giving us a shared focus, *you will explore an idea about change, the future, and/or making yourself a better person* by using your own thoughts, experiences, and story to shape the essay. You will employ techniques that make a personal essay effective, such as narrative, description, dialogue, reflection, creative use of language, etc. You may experiment with structure as well.

Length: 1,000 words minimum.

Details

Personal essays can come in so many different shapes and styles that we need to impose some limitations if you are to have greater chance of success with this assignment, given the short amount of time we will be working on it.

First, you need to choose your story. The requirements for the story are these:

- Your essay must include something about the you who you were before the experience and the you who you became after the experience.
- Your story does not need to be about a monumental change. Seemingly trivial experiences can have huge effects on us. (For instance, I can trace my love of horror movies to when I was 8 years old and my father let me watch, against my mother's will, *Poltergeist*.) Small moments can make us into new people. All that is required is that the relationship to the media/cultural object somehow changed you, and that you want to think about how.
- You are, however, welcome to write about monumental events in your life, if you wish. But remember: Everybody in class could potentially read this essay. Many people in class certainly will read this essay. Don't write about something you're unwilling to share with everyone.
- Remember that your story needs an *after*. You'll probably want to stay away from events that happened recently. You need some distance and perspective. Writing about 5, 10, even 15 years ago in your life is fine.
- You do not need to know the significance of the event before you write, you just need to know that there is a before and after. As you have learned by now, writing is itself a way of learning. If

you do this assignment well, you will learn about yourself and your experience. It will probably be more interesting for you to write if you don't know all of what the experience means to you. Trust the process.

Finally, the final draft must be carefully proofread and formatted according to [the MLA standards for academic manuscripts](#) and our course proofreading guidelines.

There is not time to do an evaluation draft of this essay, so once again I encourage you to schedule conference time with me outside of class, either during office hours or another time that works for both of us.

Late work will not be accepted. If you are the sort of person who tends to have tech problems, don't wait till the last minute to try to upload your assignment.

Final Portfolio

Overview

The final portfolio is your largest grade for this course (60% of your final term grade) and comprises all of the notes and drafts of your major essays alongside new, final drafts of each plus a substantial reflection. You can submit your portfolio as a file on Canvas or you can create a website portfolio using a service such as Weebly, Google Sites, Wordpress, etc.

Requirements

Your portfolio *must* include:

1. A short introduction (100-300 words) telling the reader what they are about to read.
2. Final drafts of your three major essays (analysis, researched persuasive, personal). Each of these must be revised beyond the evaluation drafts.
3. Copies of all earlier drafts of your major essays to show your writing process.
4. Any notes or ancillary material that you think is useful in showing your writing process.
5. A final reflection of at least 1,000 words that includes a proposed grade for the portfolio.

This is the minimum. You are welcome to personalize and expand your portfolio in any ways beyond these minimums.

Format

You have quite a bit of freedom in how you format your portfolio, so long as it meets the requirements. There are two major ways to format it:

A File on Canvas

Create a .doc, .docx, or .pdf file of all of your materials and upload that file to canvas. It should be organized, easy to navigate, and complete as a single file.

A Website

You can create a website and submit the URL for the website on Canvas. Here are a few sites that are pretty easy to get started with and have free options:

- [Weebly](#)
- [Google Sites](#)
- [Wordpress](#)

What should your site look like? It's up to you -- be creative! As long as it includes everything that is required, it can be in any shape or form that you think fits your work.

Reflection

The reflection at the end should include all of the following:

1. Discussion of your process in writing each essay.
2. Discussion of how you went about assembling the portfolio and how you thought about it as you worked on it — what, in other words, was your process here?
3. Discussion of your perspective on your work now that it is all assembled into a portfolio.
4. A proposed grade for yourself for the portfolio and an explanation of why you are proposing that as a grade.

As with the portfolio itself, you are welcome to have more than this in the reflection, but you must have all of this as a base.

Grade

My grade will be made in response to the grade you propose for yourself. (The better case you make for yourself, the more likely I am to see things the way you do!)

Here's a general rubric for you to work from:

A = Exceptional work. Exceeds the minimum guidelines for everything, demonstrates thoughtfulness, creativity, and care.

B = Very good work. Meets all guidelines (including proofreading guidelines for final drafts), demonstrates thoughtfulness and care.

C = Okay work. Gets the job done. Struggles to meet the guidelines, but isn't deficient in any significant way.

D/F = Significant guidelines struggles, or incomplete, or especially lacking thought and care. The more significant the problem, the lower the grade.

That's pretty vague, and intentionally so. I really want you to make an argument for yourself and your work. It's not always comfortable to do this, especially if you're not an egomaniac, but it's important for a few reasons. First, you need to develop an ability to know when you are doing your best work, good work, and not-so-good work. You don't want to go through life thinking you're doing great work when really you're not at all — and, conversely, it's awful to always think you're doing terrible work when you're actually doing pretty good stuff. Being able to assess yourself is an important skill. Arguing for

your work's value is also an important skill, especially when you're proud of your work. You've got to be able to advocate for yourself in this world.

As always, be sure if you have any questions to ask before the due date.

The due date is Thursday, May 11 by 12 noon.

No late portfolios will be accepted.