

TO: English Department
Stephen Ruffus, Chair

FROM: English 2010 Committee

DATE: 22 April 2008

RE: 2008 Portfolio Assessment Report
Executive Summary

Background. The portfolio assessment the English 2010 Committee carried out on January 2008 is the second time we have used portfolios to assess the course in whole or in part. This assessment, a follow-up to a finding from the first (Spring 2006), looked for evidence (in a randomized sampling of twelve sections and 228 portfolios) that students were proficient in two of the course outcomes, to wit:

- Approach reading and research critically, analytically, and rhetorically, choosing appropriate research strategies for a particular writing task.
- Cite sources appropriately for the writing situation, including using an academic system of citation with a high degree of proficiency.

The numbers. Through a process of holistic reading, searching for two traits (“Adapt citation practices to a writing situation”; and “use source material appropriately for the writing task”), we found that sixty-five percent of portfolios featured writing that represented this trait at a highly proficient, proficient, or marginally proficient level.

Significance. This result indicates, certainly, that there is more work to be done on students’ proficiency at these outcomes. However, because of the conditions under which the course is taught (half the sections taught by part-time faculty, not all of whom attend forums); because this is the first time we have assessed specifically for these outcomes, focusing narrowly and leaving aside all the other outcomes of the course; and because it is impossible to know which of the measures we took to improve student performance on these outcomes, it becomes difficult to know what exactly the figure of sixty-five percent proficiency means.

Caveats. Finally, the committee felt strongly that it was important to view this figure as a narrow view into one aspect, albeit an important one, of the course. This figure doesn’t mean, for instance, that thirty-five percent of students are doing poorly at all of the outcomes of the course. Assessment always presents a partial picture; as we continue to look at the course, we will always be trying to capture a glimpse of a moving target.

Plans. The committee will continue developing materials to support the teaching of research-based writing and situationally-appropriate documentation, designed both for students and their instructors, and will continue to review the curriculum to improve our teaching of these outcomes. We will also continue to target the training and discussion

opportunities we have with all faculty, to support and assist faculty in their efforts to improve student performance in these areas.

Report: English 2010 Assessment (2008)

Background. The English 2010 committee carried out an assessment of the course in Spring of 2006. The goal of that study was to find out whether, “at the completion of English 2010, students demonstrated proficiency” in the relevant Academic Student Learning Outcomes, and whether “students had substantially achieved proficiency at the course outcomes” (Assessment Report, 2006).

As we reflected on the assessment, we noted

. . . a small but significant difference in student performance in the traits having to do with academic writing, which suggests to us that we may not have a consensus view of how important it is to integrate research-based writing, citation, and analysis into all of the writing students do in the course. We agreed, then, that one of the major things those working on the course should do is build more specific language about these matters, including a discussion of how students should document their sources in the publicly-oriented genre pieces they produce in the course. We also agree that the course should retain its focus on genre play, so that this work in more fully articulating student outcomes with regard to academic traits would represent an enrichment of the course rather than a shift away from its current strengths. To this end, we believe that we should focus on how to help students bridge between academic writing and more publicly-oriented writing, with help in understanding how they might represent their research in flexible and adaptable citation practices being a key ability in making this bridge. (Assessment Report)

We also noted that the first assessment project was based on portfolios taken from just four instructors, no doubt artificially constraining the reliability of the overall findings.

What we did with the findings from the 2006 study. We decided that we needed to significantly strengthen our curricular materials having to do with integrating source material and developing a flexible citation practice. We also knew that we needed to place a continuing and prominent emphasis on these matters in our work with part-time faculty. To this end, our forums with part-time faculty always included a presentation or discussion of working with source materials in various genres and in various writing situations, including a discussion of when the full academic apparatus for citation appropriately came into play. We revisited the published curriculum and specified research and source material as a required part of all writing projects in the course, including mention of using an appropriate citation practice as a part of the writing situation that the student writer designated for his/her writing projects. We talked about the findings of the assessment project, published the report on the English 2010 website (<http://English2010.edublogs.org>), and in general tried to frame our discussions with part-time faculty about the course in terms of research-based writing in multiple genres and multiple settings. We also revisited the English 2010 course outcomes, since we felt the previous iteration of those outcomes did not, perhaps, foreground these critical concepts as powerfully as they might have.

Goals of the current study. In designing a follow-up study, we hoped to discover whether our efforts to strengthen the curriculum in terms of integrating and documenting sources appropriately for various writing situations had improved student performance on these course outcomes. We focused on these course outcomes:

- Approach reading and research critically, analytically, and rhetorically, choosing appropriate research strategies for a particular writing task.
- Cite sources appropriately for the writing situation, including using an academic system of citation with a high degree of proficiency.

Method. We used the same basic method for this assessment as for the previous assessment, using the course portfolio that is, as a matter of departmental policy, supposed to be a feature of all sections of English 2010. From the course outcomes cited above, we derived two closely related traits and read the portfolios holistically to find evidence of these traits. Each portfolio was read twice, scored independently, using a six-point rubric. A difference of more than two points in the scoring resulted in a third read. No instructor read his or her own students' work.

Because of the very small number of instructors involved in the previous assessment, we also decided to broaden this number. We had a dozen instructors aid us by supplying a section's worth of final portfolios. The instructors were Julie Saul, Julie Roberts, Kelly Jeppson, Jeffrey Tucker, Sheri Rysdam, Denise Pfeiffer, Melissa Helquist, Jason Pickavance, Jennifer Courtney, Brittany Stephenson, Louise Bown, and Lisa Bickmore. Half the sections were taught by part-time faculty and half were taught by full-time, which roughly reflects the balance of sections overall taught by part-time and full-time faculty. Twelve sections represents just under eighteen percent of the total sections of English 2010 in the Fall of 2007.

We met in early December to norm our readings and to fine-tune our traits and our rubric, in preparation for the actual holistic reading session. This, we felt, was very useful, and we had a conversation in which we identified likely indicators for each of the traits. We had planned to score each trait separately, but came to feel that the traits were so closely intertwined that it made little sense to track the traits independently. These traits are what we used to assess each portfolio:

- Adapt citation practices to a writing situation
- Use source material appropriately for the writing task

On January 3, readers Brittany Stephenson, Melissa Helquist, Louise Bown, Jennifer Courtney, Jason Pickavance, Lisa Bickmore, and Julie Roberts gathered in the Student Writing Center to read and score the portfolios. We read a total of 228 portfolios. (See Appendix C for the description of the project.)

The ways we prepared students to submit their portfolios probably varied quite a bit. In fact, we don't know what specific instructions individual teachers gave their students. We

circulated the departmental guidelines to promote some consistency in the substance of the portfolios by encouraging students to select and revise work that would represent their achievement with respect to the outcomes. The guidelines were published on the course website and we referred to them frequently in part-time faculty training sessions. (Of course, the guidelines were discussed and voted upon in the English Department's meetings.)

Data from the study. Most readings either coincided or had a one point differential. Twenty-eight portfolios had a two point differential in the two ratings, and only three portfolios had a three point differential, requiring third readings. We feel this shows a high degree of reliability in the readings.

We also found that despite some significant differences in the types of assignments students from the various sections included in their portfolios, a no doubt various mix of approaches to the course, including three sections that were using a new textbook, the course was still assessable. Our outcomes, and the prominent role they assume in our curricular materials and our approaches to training, ensured that we could still measure student performance. This speaks to the great strength of programmatic course outcomes.

Fig. 1: The Numbers.

<i>Combined Score</i>	<i>Number of portfolios</i>	<i>Pct. of total (approx.)</i>
12	1	3 %
11	6	
10	10	4 %
9	21	9 %
8	25	11 %
7	41	18 %
6	46	20 %
5	42	18 %
4	26	11 %
3	7	4 %
2	3	

- *Seven portfolios* had a combined score of *eleven or twelve* (six at eleven; one at twelve).
- *Thirty-one portfolios* had a combined score of *nine or ten* (ten at nine; twenty-one at ten).
- *Sixty-six portfolios* had a combined score of *seven or eight* (forty-one at seven; twenty-five at eight).
- *Eighty-eight portfolios* had a combined score of *five or six* (forty-two at five; forty-six at six).
- *Sixty-eight portfolios* had a combined score of *three or four* (twenty-six at three; forty-two at four).

- *Ten* portfolios had a score of *one or two* (three at one; seven at two).

After discussion, we agreed that a score of eleven or twelve represents high proficiency at the traits measured. We scored three percent (of two hundred twenty-eight portfolios) at this level.

A score of nine or ten represents above average proficiency at the traits measured. We scored thirteen percent at this level.

A score of seven or eight represents average proficiency at the traits measured. We scored twenty-nine percent at this level.

A score of six represents marginal proficiency at the traits measured. We scored twenty percent at this level.

A score of five or below represents below average proficiency at the traits measured. We scored thirty-three percent at this level.

Discussion of the data. Our discussion of the significance of the data was wide-ranging, and included the following questions and observations:

- **What kinds of research did students cite?** Jennifer Courtney noted that “The *kind* of research students utilized seems to vary substantially. Students integrated a range of sources from Wikipedia . . . to highly specialized academic journals. I think it's important to discuss with students what kinds of sources are appropriate for different writing situations—as academic sources are not always the best sources to use in certain situations—but it also seems like students, overall, could use more practice in finding and utilizing credible sources.”
- **How did the student writer cite in a given situation?** Both Jennifer Courtney and Melissa Helquist noted that students may not have demonstrated their ability to cite appropriately for a given writing situation. Melissa Helquist asked, “Are we maintaining the academic documentation expectations of 1010, but applied to public genres, or are we wanting to give students a more expanded sense of documentation, an ability to make rhetorical choices about documentation?” Jennifer noted that “student writing that integrated many academic sources did not seem to vary as much in terms of the different genres represented and their given styles, tones, and other characteristics. An abundance of academic sources seemed to encourage more academic (student) writing, which didn't always fit the given genre.”
- **Do we have consensus on what types of source-based writing 2010 should be privileging?** Our discussion suggests that we do not. Does English 2010 privilege academic forms of citation over less formal citation practices apparent in much public writing? When it comes to academic citations styles, which style do we teach or require? Does academic citation practice hold regardless of the genre

or writing situation? Do we need to create more concrete guidelines? And do we expect all writing in English 2010 to be research-based? There was enough variability in what we saw in student portfolios to say that we do not have consensus on any of these points, at least not a consensus that seems to be exemplified in practice.

- **Do our writing projects in English 2010 support “sustained, meaningful engagement with sources”?** Jason Pickavance asked, “Maybe we're teaching research writing well enough, but not providing students with enough opportunity to show what we're teaching them? Is there a way to introduce one or two longer genres where students write from sources, a way to do this without flipping over to the traditional canned academic research essay?”

These questions suggest paths for future discussion, for curricular examination and fine-tuning, and for developing better, more targeted training and support for all the faculty teaching the course. It's quite clear that we can profitably continue all these activities, to the end of bettering the course and our students' abilities to use and document source material. It seems true, also, that our strategies for addressing this aspect of the course should probably go further than what we've previously done, despite the fact that understanding the effect of our previous efforts is very difficult: who attends the forums? Did the participants in the study attend the forums? What measures made a difference, and how would we be able to know? The process of answering these questions is not linear nor is it simple, which underscores the difficulty of getting a fully valid measurement, and the difficulty of measuring a program.

However:

- **Data on a narrow point might not be as rosy as data about the course more broadly construed.** It's important to keep a perspective on this data—the course isn't just about these more limited outcomes, important as they are.
- **One strategy we think will make a difference is to work on making the course outcomes visible, and keeping them visible throughout course instruction.** Brittany Stephenson suggests that “the more adept I have become at keeping the outcomes on the forefront of my mind and my students' minds, the more effectively I have been able to teach the course. *I think we need to emphasize the outcomes more with adjuncts—not just what they are, but how to make them visible to students and how to build instruction around them*” (emphasis in original). Julie Roberts echoes this point: “Another thing that occurred to me after reading those papers is the importance of the course goals in general. I have tried to refer to the goals more in my classes – particularly with the final portfolios, where I asked the students to address how their chosen writing pieces demonstrate that they've met the course goals. But I think I'd also like to have a mid-semester review with my students to discuss how the goals connect with the lessons we're discussing in class.”

- **To this end, we believe that portfolio-making is a matter for explicit teaching.** Brittany speaks for many of us when she notes “I don’t think I really *taught* portfolio creation. If we are moving toward electronic portfolios, possibly exit portfolios, and portfolios that represent a student’s work in more than one class then we need to teach more about portfolios themselves. I certainly could have given students more guidance and instruction in the construction of their final portfolios.” Jason makes something like the same point: “I think that the structure of some portfolios was an obstacle to students’ ability to display their proficiency in writing from sources. In one set of portfolios, for instance, . . . I saw primarily short memoirs, movie reviews, and rhetorical analyses. None of these genres really provide much opportunity to really engage with a set of sources in a way described by our traits.”

In our discussion, we underscored what we have previously found, that there is great value to be found in participating in assessment activities. Julie says

Also, participating in this exercise inspired me to evaluate my own teaching methods. For example, I have spent some time thinking about how I can more effectively emphasize documentation principles in my own classes. I have to admit that I think this is one of the most difficult things to teach – especially in English 2010, where students have to cite sources according to genre specifications. But after reading these portfolios, I realized that I could (and should) use more creative strategies for teaching documentation and citation to students.

We found that one of the great values of the project is the chance to see what is really going on in the course across multiple sections. There is a great pedagogical benefit, one which allows us to share our practices and ideas about the course in a way that enlarges our individual sense of what we can take back to our teaching and to our students. The assessment makes the results of teaching visible, shared, and more subject to change and improvement. Jennifer notes that

I felt as though this assessment was much easier than the first because we only looked at two closely related traits. That focus certainly helped me see that I need to teach this outcome more successfully; however, looking at portfolios with all of the course outcomes in mind (as we did in the last assessment) gave me a more holistic sense of my strengths/weaknesses and allowed me to seek advice from colleagues even more.

Melissa says

It was interesting to see what's happening in other classes; for me, this is the most significant aspect of assessment, that we have the opportunity to make our courses and teaching practices more transparent. This transparency allows for new

pedagogical insights for me as a teacher and hopefully for continuity among our courses.

Immediate steps. In order to continue to improve student performance of the outcomes we studied, we should

- continue to develop materials that will support the teaching of integrating and documenting source material, especially with a situationally-attuned citation practice. Such materials might include handouts, podcasts, rubrics, and so on.
- Revisit our discussion of the outcomes, to refine our shared understanding of what the outcomes signify, very specifically, in terms of written behaviors by students. What spectrum of research-based and source-integrating behaviors do we expect to see in English 2010?
- Additionally, we may want to discuss ways to more prominently feature the course outcomes in instruction. Methods might include using the midterm portfolio (for those who use one) as an opportunity to refocus student attention on the course outcomes, or having periodic discussions with students about the course outcomes as they are working on producing new work and revising other work.
- Continue our committee and departmental discussion of what we mean by “portfolio.” The English Department must continue to discuss the 2010 end-of-the-course portfolio and its meaning in the two-course composition sequence.
- Work with all faculty to help them teach portfolio construction as a key practice of the course.

Reflections on the study and suggestions for future assessments. The greater number of instructors showed a greater spectrum of student performance, which is no surprise. The great variability in student performance creates a significant question: we really don't know if this variability is due to the curriculum itself, to variable emphasis placed on this outcome by the faculty, full- and part-time, or to inadequate emphasis on the outcomes themselves, especially with regard to portfolio-making. Each of these areas needs to be addressed in future curriculum work, published materials, and work with part-time faculty.

A future assessment using the same basic model as this one and focusing on the same outcomes and traits would be useful and instructive, given that the present assessment must legitimately be considered only the first. In other words, this study cries out for a follow-up.

Finally, we strongly encourage the department to consider ways to involve more part-time faculty in future assessment projects. The benefits we have found, and which the participants themselves have expressed, are so powerful that we think building

participation by part-time faculty in assessment should become a key feature of our adjunct mentoring program.

Appendix A, Outcomes for English 2010 & Departmental Guidelines for the End of the Course Portfolio

[Note: these outcomes and the guidelines were revised and approved by the English Department in April 2007.]

Course Outcomes for English 2010

At the completion of English 2010, students should be able to:

1. Adapt strategies of argumentation for a given writing situation.
2. Adapt style and design for a given writing situation.
3. Write in multiple genres.
4. Conceive, draft, and revise many kinds of documents, and manage these processes independently.
5. Approach reading and research critically, analytically, and rhetorically, choosing appropriate research strategies for a particular writing task.
6. Cite sources appropriately for the writing situation, including using an academic system of citation with a high degree of proficiency.
7. Understand and respond critically to a civic conversation and become a legitimate participant in that conversation.
8. Work collaboratively on writing tasks with other writers.

Department Guidelines for End-of-Course Portfolios

Proposed by the English 2010 Committee
April 9, 2007

At an English Department meeting in the fall of 2006, the English 2010 Committee presented a resolution to the department that all sections of English 2010 would have an end-of-the-course portfolio. Such a portfolio will, we argued, provide a feasible and consistent basis for future assessments of the course. At that same meeting, the department agreed to support a required end-of-the-course portfolio. At the April 20, 2007 meeting, the department voted to support the following guidelines for such portfolios.

Guidelines: These guidelines should provide sufficient flexibility to suit the course designs of individual instructors, but also enough consistency to give focus to our efforts.

1. Students should have the opportunity to select pieces from their course work for revision and inclusion in their portfolios.
2. The contents of the portfolios should demonstrate a range of the writers' abilities and a variety of types of writing.
3. The contents of the portfolios should demonstrate that students have substantially achieved the course outcomes.
4. The portfolios should come in sometime in the last few weeks of the course, to allow students sufficient time for substantial revision.
5. Instructors should use the English 2010 course outcomes in designing the writing assignments for the course.
6. Student portfolios should include between 4-6 pieces of writing as well as either a self-reflective essay or a substantial cover letter.

7. The end-of-the-course portfolio should account for some percentage of the student's final grade.

For your convenience, the **English 2010 Course Outcomes**:

At the completion of English 2010, students should be able to:

1. Adapt strategies of argumentation for a given writing situation.
2. Adapt style and design for a given writing situation.
3. Write in multiple genres.
4. Conceive, draft, and revise many kinds of documents, and manage these processes independently.
5. Approach reading and research critically, analytically, and rhetorically, choosing appropriate research strategies for a particular writing task.
6. Cite sources appropriately for the writing situation, including using an academic system of citation with a high degree of proficiency.
7. Understand and respond critically to a civic conversation and become a legitimate participant in that conversation.
8. Work collaboratively on writing tasks with other writers.

Appendix B, Published Curriculum for English 2010, Academic Year 2007-08

[Note: This is the curriculum that we published on the department's English 2010 webpage for the 2007-08 academic year. It was the curriculum we presented to the part-time faculty, and it was the curriculum we supported through our training. As a result of our visits to part-time faculty classrooms, it was, as near as we can tell, the curriculum that nearly all the part-time faculty followed.]

Note: The two sequences of writing projects differ mainly in the details of the first four writing projects. Both sequences share the Preliminary Portfolio, the Community Writing Campaign, and the Final Portfolio.

Writing Projects (Sequence 1)

Project 1, Genre + Rhetorical Analysis

In this project, you will work in one of two possible genres, either the *letter* or the *public document*; you also write a two- to three-page argument analysis essay.

For the genre piece (either the letter or the public document), you are to think about a possible public context for such a document. Write the letter or public document as if it were going to enter the public context—that is, have a specific public audience in mind; consider what kind of letter or public document might actually reach that audience, considering your own position and that of your audience; organize and design it so that it would be acceptable and persuasive to the audience. For this piece of writing, you must do appropriate research, and cite it appropriately for the writing situation.

For the two- to three-page rhetorical analysis essay, you are to choose a source relevant to your genre piece—some document, article, website, or other source you found in doing the research for your genre piece. Using the following questions, analyze the rhetorical situation of your source:

- What is the context of issues? What do you know about the topic? What issues does the topic raise? Is there a larger debate, discussion, or controversy already going on? What seems to be at stake?
- Who is the writer? What do you know about the writer's background, credibility, knowledge of the topic, beliefs, and social allegiances?
- What is the publication? What do you know about its intended readers, reputability, political slant, and the topics it covers?
- What is the call to write? Why is the writer addressing the issue and taking a position at this particular time? Is there some sense of urgency involved? How does the writer identify the significance of the issues involved?
- What is the writer's purpose? What is he or she trying to accomplish? Is the purpose stated explicitly or implicitly?
- Who is the intended audience? Is the writer addressing one group of readers or more than one? What kind of relationship is the writer trying to establish with readers? What assumptions about readers does the writer seem to make?
- How does the writer use language? What is the writer's tone? What does the writer's word choice show about his or her assumptions about readers? Does the writer use specialized terms or slang? Are there memorable figures of speech? Does the writer stereotype?
- What is your evaluation of the rhetorical effectiveness? Does he accomplish his purposes? What constraints, if any, qualify the writing's effectiveness?

Write your essay by summarizing the main line of reasoning. Use your answers to the above questions to help you write your essay, but your essay's analysis should be an integrated discussion and not just a list of answers. Conclude with a well-supported evaluation of the writing's rhetorical effectiveness.

Document this essay using MLA-style citation, with a Works Cited page.

Project 2: Genre + Argument Analysis

In this project, you are to work in one of three possible genres: the *profile*, the *report*, or the *commentary*. In addition, you are to write two- to three-page argument analysis essay.

For the genre piece (either the profile, the report, or the commentary), you are to think about a possible public context for such a document. Write the profile, report, or commentary as if it were going to enter the public context—that is, have a specific public audience in mind; consider what kind of profile, report, or commentary might actually reach that audience, considering your own position and that of your audience; organize and design it so that it would be acceptable and persuasive to the audience. For this piece of writing, you must do appropriate research, and cite it appropriately for the writing situation.

For the two- to three-page argument analysis essay, you are to choose a source relevant to your genre piece—some document, article, website, or other source that you found in doing the research for your genre piece. Using the following questions, analyze your source's argument:

- Summarize the argument. What is the main claim?
- Identify the type of issue—substantiation, evaluation, policy.
- Describe the context of issues. Is the argument part of an ongoing debate, discussion, or controversy? What positions have people taken in the past?
- Describe the intended readers and explain how the argument seeks to influence them (to take action, support or oppose a policy, reconsider an established fact or belief, make a value judgment).
- Analyze the rhetorical stance. How does the writer integrate ethos, pathos, and logos?
- Analyze the parts of the argument—claim, evidence, enabling assumptions, backing, differing views, qualifers—and how the writer puts them together.
- Examine any strategies used to negotiate differences.
- Evaluate the overall effectiveness of the argument. Keep in mind that the goal of argument is to clarify reasonable differences as well as to convince others.

Your essay should summarize the argument, then analyze the argument. End with a well-supported evaluation of the argument's effectiveness. Document this essay using MLA-style citation, with a Works Cited page.

Project 3: Genre + Visual Rhetoric Analysis + Annotated Bibliography

In this project, you are to work in one of two possible genres, the *proposal* or the *review*. In addition, you are to write a two- to three-page visual rhetoric analysis, as well as an annotated bibliography

For the genre piece (either the proposal or the review), you are to think about a possible public context for such a document. Write the proposal or the review as if it were going to enter the public context—that is, have a specific public audience in mind; consider what kind of proposal or review might actually reach that audience, considering your own position and that of your audience; organize and design it so that it would be acceptable and persuasive to the audience. For this piece of writing, you must do appropriate research, and cite it appropriately for the writing situation.

For the two- to three-page visual rhetoric analysis essay, you are to choose a source relevant to your genre piece—some document, article, website, or other source that you found in doing the research for your genre piece. Using the following questions, analyze your source's visual rhetoric:

- Describe the document. What type of document is it?
- Describe the specific ways the document uses both text and visual elements. Are there charts or graphs? Headings? Images, such as logos?
- How does the document use visual design to make its point? To create its argument? To direct the attention of the reader?
- How does the document use visual design to persuade the reader?
- How well does the document use the principles of visual design (see pp. 617-627)?
- What is the occasion that called for the document you're analyzing? How well, in your estimation, does the document respond to that occasion?
- What is the document's purpose?
- Who are the apparent intended readers of the document?
- How is the document organized? If it is a web page, what is its structure (see pp. 639-641)?

Using your answers to the above questions, write an essay in which you analyze the visual rhetoric of your source. Begin with a description of the document; end with a well-supported analysis of the document's visual effectiveness, given its rhetorical purpose and situation. You might consider citing visually. Document this essay using MLA-style citation, with a Works Cited page.

The annotated bibliography is an academic genre. In this genre, you cite the sources you've used, as you would with a regular Works Cited page for an academic assignment. However, you also summarize and assess each source, as well as write an introduction and a conclusion to the bibliography. I will provide you with an example. You should aim for 4-6 sources.

Project 4: Rhetorical Situation Assessments

For each of the genre pieces you've written, for projects 1, 2, and 3, write a one-page written assessment of the rhetorical situation in which you're writing, as you see it, and your plan to deploy the piece of writing, if you were actually to put it into circulation.

You might use the following questions to help you think about your assessment/plan for each genre piece:

- To whom am I speaking in this piece?
- Is my intended audience likely to accept the kinds of statements I make in this piece from me? What credibility to I have with this audience?
- Have I used evidence adequate to my task, given my audience? Have I documented that evidence appropriately, given my audience, the genre, and the circumstances?
- If I am trying to reach a particular audience, who might be able to help me do so?
- With whom do I attempt to align myself in order to write more effectively?
- How will people get my document—that is, how will the document circulate?
- If this document were actually to circulate, who would pay for its production?
- How will my document be distributed? Who would need to be on board for that to happen?
- What do I hope will happen as a result of my having written?

While I want to see these assessments/plans in your preliminary portfolio, you might also usefully see them as a preparation for further revision.

Writing Projects (Sequence 2)

Project 1

- Genre piece (possible genres: public document, profile, or report)
- Cover letter to appropriate audience
- Analysis of source
- Rhetorical assessment/deployment plan

Genre Piece. In this project, you are to choose from among three genres: the public document, the profile, or the report. (The specifics about these genres you can find by reading the relevant chapter in *The Call to Write*, the relevant online presentation, and the online readings, which I'll assign and we'll discuss in class.) Whichever genre you choose, you should develop this piece of writing with a specific context or scene in mind: an audience you'd like to address, a purpose for writing, a means by which this document might actually circulate. This piece of writing should be researched, and you should document your sources appropriately for the writing situation.

Cover Letter. With this genre piece, you should also write a cover letter addressed to someone that might help your genre piece circulate. The cover letter should function as an introduction to the piece and should help the piece reach its audience. In other words, the cover letter potentially helps the piece to begin circulating. You might consider

leaders of local organizations to which your audience might belong; editors of publications or newsletters; webmasters; and so forth.

Analysis of Source. For all the writing you do in this class, you should do research—to find out about the topic or issue on which you’re writing and also to find out more about the audience for whom you’re writing, or the scene in which the document might circulate. You should choose one of the sources you’ve found in your research and write a two- to three-page essay analyzing the source. The following questions should help you to analyze the rhetorical circumstances and the argument of the source. You do not have to answer all of the questions—rather, use them to help you understand the source’s rhetorical circumstances and argument. Then, you can compose an essay about the source that discusses what you deem to be the most important features of the text’s argument and rhetorical circumstances. **Note:** this essay should be documented, using MLA-style citation and a Works Cited page.

- What is the context of issues? What do you know about the topic? What issues does the topic raise? Is there a larger debate, discussion, or controversy already going on? What seems to be at stake?
- Who is the writer? What do you know about the writer's background, credibility, knowledge of the topic, beliefs, and social allegiances?
- What is the publication? What do you know about its intended readers, reputability, political slant, and the topics it covers?
- What is the call to write? Why is the writer addressing the issue and taking a position at this particular time? Is there some sense of urgency involved? How does the writer identify the significance of the issues involved?
- What is the writer's purpose? What is he or she trying to accomplish? Is the purpose stated explicitly or implicitly?
- Who is the intended audience? Is the writer addressing one group of readers or more than one? What kind of relationship is the writer trying to establish with readers? What assumptions about readers does the writer seem to make?
- How does the writer use language? What is the writer's tone? What does the writer's word choice show about his or her assumptions about readers? Does the writer use specialized terms or slang? Are there memorable figures of speech? Does the writer stereotype?
- What is your evaluation of the rhetorical effectiveness? Does he accomplish his purposes? What constraints, if any, qualify the writing's effectiveness?
- Summarize the argument. What is the main claim?
- Identify the type of issue—substantiation, evaluation, policy.
- Describe the context of issues. Is the argument part of an ongoing debate, discussion, or controversy? What positions have people taken in the past?
- Describe the intended readers and explain how the argument seeks to influence them (to take action, support or oppose a policy, reconsider an established fact or belief, make a value judgment).
- Analyze the rhetorical stance. How does the writer integrate ethos, pathos, and logos?

- Analyze the parts of the argument—claim, evidence, enabling assumptions, backing, differing views, qualifers—and how the writer puts them together.
- Examine any strategies used to negotiate differences.
- Evaluate the overall effectiveness of the argument. Keep in mind that the goal of argument is to clarify reasonable differences as well as to convince others.

Rhetorical Situation Assessment . Please write an informal, exploratory page about your genre piece, using the following questions:

- To whom am I speaking in this piece?
- Is my intended audience likely to accept the kinds of statements I make in this piece from me? What credibility to I have with this audience?
- Have I used evidence adequate to my task, given my audience? Have I documented that evidence appropriately, given my audience, the genre, and the circumstances?
- If I am trying to reach a particular audience, who might be able to help me do so?
- With whom do I attempt to align myself in order to write more effectively?
- How will people get my document—that is, how will the document circulate?
- If this document were actually to circulate, who would pay for its production?
- How will my document be distributed? Who would need to be on board for that to happen?
- What do I hope will happen as a result of my having written?

Project 2

- Genre piece (possible genres: proposal, commentary, or review)
- Cover letter to appropriate audience
- Analysis of source
- Rhetorical assessment/deployment plan

Genre Piece. In this project, you are to choose from among three genres: the proposal, the commentary, or the review. (The specifics about these genres you can find by reading the relevant chapter in *The Call to Write*, the relevant online presentation, and the online readings, which I'll assign and we'll discuss in class.) Whichever genre you choose, you should develop this piece of writing with a specific context or scene in mind: an audience you'd like to address, a purpose for writing, a means by which this document might actually circulate. This piece of writing should be researched, and you should document your sources appropriately for the writing situation.

Cover Letter. With this genre piece, you should also write a cover letter addressed to someone that might help your genre piece circulate. The cover letter should function as an introduction to the piece and should help the piece reach its audience. In other words, the cover letter potentially helps the piece to begin circulating. You might consider leaders of local organizations to which your audience might belong; editors of publications or newsletters; webmasters; and so forth.

Analysis of Source. As with the first project, you should choose one of the sources you found as you were doing research and write a two- to three-page analytic essay focusing on its visual rhetoric. This means you should choose a source with visual elements that you feel comfortable analyzing. **Note:** this essay should be documented, using MLA-style citation and a Works Cited page. Use the following questions to help you begin to compose your essay:

- Describe the document. What type of document is it?
- Describe the specific ways the document uses both text and visual elements. Are there charts or graphs? Headings? Images, such as logos?
- How does the document use visual design to make its point? To create its argument? To direct the attention of the reader?
- How does the document use visual design to persuade the reader?
- How well does the document use the principles of visual design (see pp. 617-627)?
- What is the occasion that called for the document you're analyzing? How well, in your estimation, does the document respond to that occasion?
- What is the document's purpose?
- Who are the apparent intended readers of the document?
- How is the document organized? If it is a web page, what is its structure (see pp. 639-641)?

Please cite directly from the source to support your analytic points.

Rhetorical Situation Assessment. Please write an informal, exploratory page about your genre piece, using the following questions:

- To whom am I speaking in this piece?
- Is my intended audience likely to accept the kinds of statements I make in this piece from me? What credibility do I have with this audience?
- Have I used evidence adequate to my task, given my audience? Have I documented that evidence appropriately, given my audience, the genre, and the circumstances?
- If I am trying to reach a particular audience, who might be able to help me do so?
- With whom do I attempt to align myself in order to write more effectively?
- How will people get my document—that is, how will the document circulate?
- If this document were actually to circulate, who would pay for its production?
- How will my document be distributed? Who would need to be on board for that to happen?
- What do I hope will happen as a result of my having written?

Project 3

- Annotated Bibliography

In this assignment, you write an annotated bibliography of all your sources for one of the first two assignments. You should have six to eight sources.

See the online readings for directions about how to write an annotated bibliography, plus examples.

Project 4

- Case Study of a Document

In this assignment, you're going to perform a kind of extreme rhetorical analysis. You're going to do the usual kind of questioning of a text that you've already learned to practice in your previous analytic essays, but you're also going to do some firsthand research into the circumstances of the document's production and into its circulation.

Here are the steps you will take:

1. Choose a document that meets these three criteria:

- first, it circulates in the public sphere;
- second, you must have some access to information about how the document was created, and preferably access to a writer connected with the document; and
- third, it has some potential connection with some community issue or need that might serve as a site for the Community Writing Campaign. This possible site might be a public agency or a non-profit organization.

Some examples of documents that would work for this assignment, once you've identified the agency or other organization, include: a newsletter, brochure or pamphlet the agency/organization publishes; a website for the agency/organization; a handbill or advertisement publicizing the organization's activities or services; a report the organization published; a commentary published by a representative of the organization; or a review of the organization's programs or performance.

2. You should find out the following:

- Who wrote the document?
- Why did the writers write the document?
- What purposes did the writers have in mind for the document when they created it?
- What purpose does the document appear to serve now?
- Who uses or reads the document?
- What plans do the writers or the organization have for the future of this document?
- What other documents does the organization circulate? How does this document fit into this system of documents?

3. You might want to do further research on the organization to supplement what you find out about the specific document.

4. Once you've gathered information through various processes (print or internet research; interview or on-site work, including service, at the agency or organization), write a report of your findings. Your report should include the following sections:

- Introduction, which gives some context for the document and the community setting in which it functions;
- Detailed description of the document;
- Discussion of the document's history;
- Discussion of the document's functions, including its circulation and the systems of writing into which it fits;
- Discussion of the future, if any, of the document; and
- Discussion of your sense of how well the document fulfills its design and purpose.

Please cite directly from the document and from your research, including any interviews or contact you have had with the writers. Document the essay, using MLA-style citation and a Works Cited page.

In order to fulfill the above criteria, the case study will probably be about five or six pages.

[Both Sequence 1 and 2 share the Preliminary Portfolio, the Community Writing Campaign, and the Final Portfolio, below.]

Preliminary Portfolio

Contents

Your preliminary portfolio is due [date]. This portfolio should contain all the writing you have done for the course thus far. Revise this work to the extent that you're able, remembering that this is a preliminary, formative assessment and not a final grade. At a minimum, you should present all your work in clean copy. Include drafts only if you think it would be useful to me as I review your work.

For your convenience, I have listed the assigned writing below:

- Project 1: Genre piece (public document, profile, report)
- Project 1: Cover letter addressed to appropriate audience
- Project 1: Analysis of a source
- Project 1: Rhetorical Situation Assessment

- Project 2: Genre piece (proposal, review, commentary)
- Project 2: Cover letter addressed to appropriate audience

- Project 2: Analysis of a source
- Project 2: Rhetorical Situation Assessment
- Project 3: Annotated bibliography
- Project 4: Case Study of a Document

In addition to the above, please write

- a cover letter addressed to me, [instructor name], in which you assess the work you have done thus far, and project the kinds of revisions on which you would like to work in the latter half of the semester. What do you think you've accomplished with regard to the course outcomes? Where do you still need to improve?

I will schedule times for consultation in order to discuss your preliminary portfolios with you the week of [date].

Project 5: Collaborative Community Writing Campaign

For the Collaborative Community Writing Campaign, you will work with one or more other writers

- to identify a community need or an issue of concern to the community;
- and to develop pieces of writing to address that community need or concern, with a public aim.

This set of pieces of writing will represent your collective rhetorical knowledge of a public issue, will create knowledge resources for that issue, and will enter the public discussion of the issue in some substantive ways. Your work should be ambitious, commensurate with what you should know from having worked through the first several assignments.

Your work will take place on several fronts. I have detailed below various aspects of that work, starting with:

A Research Project Proposal. For this part of the work, you and your partners will propose to me a research project—that is, you will propose a project for this assignment. See the specific criteria below.

The Community Writing Campaign. For this part of the work, you and your partners will produce several pieces of writing to meet a public need or concern. You should aim to produce writing in a variety of genres, making certain that your choice of genre for each individual piece is rhetorically appropriate, given what you hope that piece of writing will accomplish for a focused audience. In other words, the same criteria that have held for your writing up to this point still apply: these pieces must be *fully rhetorical*

and *deeply knowledgeable* about the topic and about your audience(s). [Note: at this point, you should know to document all pieces of writing, appropriately for the circumstance.]

In addition to the campaign itself, each group will be responsible for a **Genre Presentation**. See specific criteria below. You will choose one of the genres that you're using in your public writing campaign, and demonstrate its features within that setting. You will do this partly by showing your work-in-progress on that genre, and partly by showing one or more pieces of writing in that genre that you've found as you've done research on your campaign's topic.

You will produce an **Annotated Bibliography**, one that includes all the sources you used in your work. You may, of course, frame this part of the work as the standard academic genre, but again, if you see other ways to fulfill the same genre *activity* in another way more appropriate to your project, please discuss the possibilities with me. For instance, if your Community Writing Campaign includes a website, you may wish to frame your annotated bibliography as a set of annotated links on the page.

Finally, each group will write a **Cover Letter** for the entire project. Since this letter will be collaborative, you should plan to consider together, near the end of the project, what aspects of the project on which you'd like me to focus as I evaluate your work.

You should feel free during the remaining weeks of the semester to consult with me regularly, either as groups or as individuals. You may also wish to consult with me about your individual course portfolios. As you can see from the schedule below, I have some time set aside for instruction and for presentations, but by and large, much of our time during these last weeks will be yours to use for collaborative work.

I have asked for a **Progress Report** (see due date below, and attached criteria). In this report, you should account for your accomplishments to date, your immediate challenges, and your plans for carrying out the remainder of your work.

Project Proposal Criteria

For the Project Proposal, you should meet the following criteria:

1. Identify the community need or issue. Tell as much as you know about the particular sector of the community that you intend to address with your writing. What will be the rhetorical situation of your writing, insofar as you know it at this point?
2. Identify the pieces of writing you plan to do as part of the campaign.
3. Make clear how the writing you propose will address the community need or issue. How will it help? What effect do you intend the writing to have?

4. Identify the research you intend to do. You should plan to do both topic- or issue-based research as well as community-based research.

5. Identify any rhetorical obstacles you must address, such as the fact that you are college students and not necessarily experts. How do you intend to address your constraints?

Your proposal should be addressed to me in memorandum format:

TO: Lisa Bickmore

FROM: The Group

DATE:

SUBJECT: Project Proposal

You should use section headings to identify the parts of your proposal. You can use the above questions/criteria as guidelines or create your own section headings.

I will use your project proposal as a basis for giving you initial feedback on the project, so the more information you can give me about your proposed project, the more helpful I can be.

Criteria for Progress Report

Progress reports are a genre typical in many settings. They are a means of communicating to a supervisor or other authority figure what work has already been accomplished on a long-range project, what work remains to be done, and to assess the obstacles, if any, to finishing the project as planned.

Your *progress report* should be written collaboratively. It should be written as a memorandum, addressed to me, and it should be typed. You should plan to explain to me each of the following components: what you've accomplished; what remains to be accomplished; and your plans for finishing the remaining work. The progress report should be about a page long.

Guidelines for the Genre Presentation

For this presentation, you will choose one of the genres that you're using in your public writing campaign, and demonstrate how it works within that public setting. You will do this partly by showing your work-in-progress on that genre, and partly by showing one or more pieces of writing in that genre that you've found as you've done research on your campaign's topic.

As you plan your presentation, you should keep in mind the following:

For the piece or pieces you've found in your research:

- How does the piece demonstrate the features of the genre?
- What other genre activity seems to be going on in the piece?
- To whom does the piece seem to address itself?
- How does the genre shape the relationship between the writer and the author?
- How has the piece circulated in its public setting?
- What are the strengths and limitations of the piece in terms of its genre—that is, how does the genre help the piece achieve its communicative goals, and how, if at all, does the genre constrain the piece in achieving these goals?

For your work-in-progress:

- Why did you choose this genre for this piece?
- What are your communicative goals for the piece?
- What features of the genre seem to be consonant with your communicative goals?
- How much credibility or authority do you as a group have as writers within this genre? Within this public setting? What strategies do you have for negotiating a more credible, authoritative stance? How does the genre help or hurt?
- What opportunities does the genre allow you? What constraints?

You should plan for a ten to fifteen minute presentation. The group can decide how the presentation will go—whether everyone will have a formal part, or whether fewer than all of the members of the group have an active part in the presentation. Make sure that you can make the context of the documents clear: this means giving the class a strong sense of the topic, the audience, and the scope of the documents. If you would like any assistance in making copies, transparencies, or arranging for other forms of presentation such as Power Point, please let me know. I will ask you ahead of time if you need any help, but please feel free to consult me about any aspect of your presentations.

Final Portfolio: Guidelines

For a complete preliminary portfolio, you turned in the following pieces of writing:

- Project 1: Genre piece (public document, profile, report)
- Project 1: Cover letter addressed to appropriate audience
- Project 1: Analysis of a source
- Project 1: Rhetorical Situation Assessment

- Project 2: Genre piece (proposal, review, commentary)
- Project 2: Cover letter addressed to appropriate audience
- Project 2: Analysis of a source
- Project 2: Rhetorical Situation Assessment

- Project 3: Annotated bibliography

- Project 4: Case Study of a Document

During the latter half of the semester, you've worked on a collaborative community writing campaign that includes the following pieces of writing:

- Project Proposal
- Genre pieces (various)
- Annotated Bibliography
- Genre Presentation

For your final portfolio, you should choose from among the above pieces. While the choice is yours as to what you include, I suggest that you *read carefully the advice I gave you regarding your preliminary portfolio* as you decide what to include. In general, you should balance analytic, academic writing with writing oriented toward public settings. You should demonstrate that you can document sources using an academic framework—including a revised annotated bibliography is probably the most direct way to demonstrate this. You may also want to consider including some collaborative writing, to show what you can do in that setting. A piece taken from the collaborative project need not be completely authored by you; in fact, including an explanatory comment (either separately or as a part of your cover letter) about your role in the production of a collaborative piece would make a very interesting part of a portfolio.

The number of pieces should be substantial enough so that I can base a full assessment of your writing on what's in the portfolio, both in its present quality and as it has improved. I suggest to you that you might aim for four to six pieces of writing. You do not need to—nor should you—include every piece of writing you've done in the class. You should consider the course outcomes—what you choose to put in the portfolio should demonstrate that you have met the course outcomes. You should also think about *variety* and *selectivity*: variety, to show me your range as a writer, and selectivity, to choose what you think is best.

You should also write a substantial cover letter, addressed to me and signed by you, for the portfolio. The purpose of this cover letter is to interpret what is in your portfolio for me. At this point, since I am evaluating you, your goal is to help me to see what you want me to see in the portfolio. I will always read with my own goals in mind, but your cover letter can help me to see what I might miss—what you want me to see. In the cover letter, explain anything you think I should know as I read and respond to your portfolio. ***Special Note: Please include your e-mail address as a part of the signature to your letter, so that I can send you comments on the portfolio.***

Your portfolio is due in class on [date]. If you need an extension, I expect that you will speak directly with me about this need. If you don't speak with me, and I don't receive a portfolio from you, I will be forced to assume you do not intend to submit one, resulting in severe consequences for your overall course evaluation.

Here are the Course Outcomes for English 2010, for your reference as you prepare your portfolio.

Course Goals : The English Department has listed the following as its desired outcomes for student writers, who upon the completion of English 2010 should be able to

- Adapt strategies of argumentation for a given writing situation.
- Adapt style and design for a given writing situation.
- Write in multiple genres.
- Conceive, draft, and revise many kinds of documents, and manage these processes independently.
- Approach reading and research critically, analytically, and rhetorically, choosing appropriate research strategies for a particular writing task.
- Cite sources appropriately for the writing situation, including using an academic system of citation with a high degree of proficiency.
- Understand and respond critically to a civic conversation and become a legitimate participant in that conversation.
- Work collaboratively on writing tasks with other writers.

Appendix C: Design of Portfolio Assessment Pilot

English 2010
2007 Assessment Project for English 2010

Background: In 2006, the English 2010 committee designed and carried out an assessment of its curriculum by reading and assessing final course portfolios. We used a blind reading, double reader protocol, reading holistically to see how well students' work demonstrate the course outcomes, which we saw as broadly correlated with College Student Learning Outcomes 2, 4, and 5.

A key finding had to do with a lack of consensus on the role of research-based writing and academic writing practices in the course. We noted

. . . a small but significant difference in student performance in the traits having to do with academic writing, which suggests to us that we may not have a consensus view of how important it is to integrate research-based writing, citation, and analysis into all of the writing students do in the course. We agreed, then, that one of the major things those working on the course should do is build more specific language about these matters, including a discussion of how students should document their sources in the publicly-oriented genre pieces they produce in the course. We also agree that the course should retain its focus on genre play, so that this work in more fully articulating student outcomes with regard to academic traits would represent an enrichment of the course rather than a shift away from its current strengths. To this end, we believe that we should focus on how to help students bridge between academic writing and more publicly-oriented writing, with help in understanding how they might represent their research in flexible and adaptable citation practices being a key ability in making this bridge. (Assessment Report)

To this end, we have tweaked writing assignments to include more specific expectations about research, citation, and specific academic writing practices. We have also made this a focus of all subsequent adjunct training. We would like to assess, at this point, what difference these changes may have made in terms of how well our students meet the course outcomes specific to these matters.

Proposed Study: We propose to use as the basis for the 2007 assessment project the final course portfolios from 10 sections of English 2010. This time, rather than having the portfolios all come from the sections taught by the investigators, we propose using sections randomly selected from both full- and part-time instructors. We will follow the same basic method:

- Holistic scoring, using a 6 point rubric
- A short list of traits
- Blind reading
- Two readers for each portfolio, with a third reader adjudicating differences of more than two points

- Students held harmless with respect to the scoring of their portfolios.

We will focus on the following course outcomes in generating the traits we use as the basis for scoring:

5. Approach reading and research critically, analytically, and rhetorically, choosing appropriate research strategies for a particular writing task.
6. Cite sources appropriately for the writing situation, including using an academic system of citation with a high degree of proficiency.

We intend to do the reading and scoring of the portfolios in the summer, to avoid the end of the semester rush we experienced the last time we carried out a project of this scope. This seems appropriate to us, since we're not trying to factor a score into final grades. [Note: ultimately, we did the reading and scoring on January 3, just prior to the start of the spring semester of 2008, using portfolios drawn from Fall Semester 2007.]

Note: In addition to helping us find out about student achievement of course objectives, we also believe that this study will give us information about how well students in English 2010 accomplish the following College Student Learning Outcomes:

- 1. Acquire substantive knowledge.**
- 2. Communicate effectively.**
- 4. Think critically.**

Traits and Rubric

The portfolio demonstrates the student writer's ability to

- Adapt citation practices to a writing situation [correct use of academic citation; attributive tags and careful demarcation between source material and their own material; parenthetical in-text citation in the case of academic writing]
- Use source material appropriately for the writing task [integrating source material; understand how the source functions within the "conversation"; evidence of source evaluation; appropriate balance between source material and their own voice]

Exemplary	6	Always or almost always exhibits both traits
	5	Same as 6, but has a few inconsistencies
Proficient	4	Demonstrates both traits but with notable inconsistency
	3	Demonstrates both traits but with greater inconsistency, or demonstrates one trait but not the other
Not proficient	2	Struggles with both traits
	1	little to no evidence that the student knows how to work with sources or cite

Appendix D: Data in Brief

Initial figures for 2010 Assessment (2008)

<i>Combined Score</i>	<i>Number of portfolios</i>	<i>Pct. of total (approx.)</i>
12	1	3 %
11	6	
10	10	4 %
9	21	9 %
8	25	11 %
7	41	18 %
6	46	20 %
5	42	18 %
4	26	11 %
3	7	4 %
2	3	

Number of portfolios scoring 7 and above: 104, 45.6 % of total.

Number of portfolios scoring 6 and above: 150, 65.6% of total

<i>Differential btw. 1st and 2nd readers</i>	<i>Number of readings @ differential</i>	<i>Pct. of total readings (approx.)</i>
No difference	85	37 %
One point	115	50 %
Two points	28	12 %

Total of 3rd readings: 3

Appendix E: Reflective Comments by Participants in the Assessment

Brittany Stephenson:

Teaching Portfolios

One of the things that occurred to me as I read portfolios is that *selection of writing* became a key issue in how the portfolio was assessed. Thinking about my own students, I knew that many of them had pieces which demonstrated citation well, but then hadn't included those pieces in the final portfolio, in part I think, because the students were trying to build portfolios balancing their representation of all the course outcomes and not just the outcome that deals with citation. I also realized that I didn't really spend much time talking to them about how to build their portfolios. I referenced the course outcomes numerous times and told them about how many pieces to include, but I don't think I really *taught* portfolio creation. If we are moving toward electronic portfolios, possibly exit portfolios, and portfolios that represent a student's work in more than one class then we need to teach more about portfolios themselves. I certainly could have given students more guidance and instruction in the construction of their final portfolios. So aside from concluding that I need to strengthen my focus on portfolio teaching next semester, I also conclude that in some cases scores given to portfolios may be lower not because the writer doesn't know how to cite or incorporate research, but because the writer chose not to include pieces that demonstrated this outcome the best.

Outcomes

Once again participating in the assessment has reinforced to me the importance of the course outcomes and of using the course outcomes in a visible way with students throughout the semester. Each time I participate in an assessment (3 of them now) one of the primary ideas that emerges for me is the outcomes and how to use the outcomes in the classroom. I think the more adept I have become at keeping the outcomes on the forefront of my mind and my students' minds, the more effectively I have been able to teach the course. *I think we need to emphasize the outcomes more with adjuncts—not just what they are, but how to make them visible to students and how to build instruction around them.*

I am also reassured that *course outcomes can be the unifying factor* that holds a program together while still allowing for differences in assignments and textbooks. One of the sections I read used "Writing in a Visual Age" and though the assignments were different, I felt they reached the outcomes as well as the portfolios I read that used "Call to Write". Related to this issue is the tension between uniformity and flexibility that an assessment always seems to highlight. It is a fine line to walk to make a course structured enough that an assessment works (we all have the same type of final product to work with) and structured enough that it can be given to adjuncts (this is a whole different can of worms that I don't want to go into right now) and yet flexible enough to allow for individual creativity and different approaches to the course. *I think the portfolio model with clear outcomes (which we have) that are clearly understood and implemented by instructors (which we could work on) is probably the best way to approach this tension and find a good workable balance.*

Adjuncts

I think assessment is a valuable activity not just for what we learn about our program, but also as a teaching/training tool for instructors. I know I have certainly benefited in many ways from participating in assessment, and I think we could utilize some type of assessment more with adjuncts. I think it would be useful for adjuncts to participate in reading and scoring papers (either formally in an assessment, or less formally as simply an instructive activity) in order to draw their attention to the outcomes more. I think the conversations that come out of assessing writing would provide instruction and perspective for adjuncts that simply talking about the curriculum can't provide. When we assess, we have to think critically and specifically about traits (based on outcomes) and what it really means for a paper to "demonstrate persuasive writing", for example. Assessment clarifies and sharpens the way we think about the outcomes, about student writing, and about our own teaching practices. I would like to see an adjunct forum where instructors brought 3 or 4 sample papers/portfolios from the end of their class and we participated in a mini-assessment, not for the purpose of actually assessing the course, but for the purpose of giving adjuncts the experience and the conversations that come out of an assessment. I think such a forum would go a long way in helping adjuncts think about the curriculum and about their teaching.

Melissa Helquist:

I was impressed by how smoothly the assessment went, and I'm grateful for the work you and Brittany did beforehand to make sure this was possible. It was interesting to see what's happening in other classes; for me, this is the most significant aspect of assessment, that we have the opportunity to make our courses and teaching practices more transparent. This transparency allows for new pedagogical insights for me as a teacher and hopefully for continuity among our courses.

My main observation from the assessment is that we have different notions of what 2010 should demand in terms of source usage and documentation. These are some of the questions that the process posed for me:

- Should/ does 2010 privilege academic forms of citation over more public forms?
- When academic citation is used, which style guide do we prefer? MLA, APA, student choice?
- Do we expect students to use academic citation regardless of genre or do we want students to adjust their citation practices according to genre/ audience expectations? If the latter, do we need to agree on genre-based citation guidelines?
- What are our expectations of research/ engagement with sources? Do we expect research from students in all genre pieces or are we willing to let them write from personal opinion/ knowledge?

Overall, I think that we don't share a sense of how research and documentation figure in 2010. Are we maintaining the academic documentation expectations of 1010, but applied to public genres or are we wanting to give students a more expanded sense of documentation, an ability to make rhetorical choices about documentation? I personally

feel we should focus on the latter, but that makes assessment (and perhaps instruction) trickier.

The assessment presents an opportunity for discussion of our expectations of documentation and how these expectations figure with our 2-course sequence. I hope that we have this discussion.

Addendum (Melissa H.): I'm in the middle of reading a C's article about plagiarism (trying to write up a version of my presentation at TYCA in Park City last year). The gist of the article is that citation and therefore plagiarism is context-dependent.

This got me thinking about the various questions that our assessment posed for me. The trick, it seems, is to encourage students to make rhetorically-based decisions about documentation, but still have a point of reference for assessment. Assessment becomes difficult because we may not know the contextual details that the student has worked with throughout the semester. In a quick read for citation, it's easy to skip over the more nuanced contextual elements and how they impact documentation.

So, I wonder if it might be worth 1) Creating as a committee some type of document that specifically addresses the contextual nature of documentation and how students might go about making rhetorically savvy citation decisions and 2) Asking students as part of the portfolio to specifically comment on their documentation choices, linking them to their broader contextual choices.

I'm going to see if I can structure something like this into my class this semester, but I thought I'd throw out the idea as it addresses (at least for me) many of the questions that our assessment presented.

Jason Pickavance:

The assessment went smoothly. I liked assigning one score on a focused set of interrelated traits on research writing.

And how well are we teaching research writing in English 2010? Based on this assessment, I would say that there's room for improvement. But I didn't see anything I found horrifying either.

I think that the structure of some portfolios was an obstacle to students' ability to display their proficiency in writing from sources. In one set of portfolios, for instance, (not yours Lisa) I saw primarily short memoirs, movie reviews, and rhetorical analyses. None of these genres really provide much opportunity to really engage with a set of sources in a way described by our traits. I'm also concerned that portfolios made up of many shorter pieces don't really allow for a sustained, meaningful engagement with sources. Maybe we're teaching research writing well enough, but not providing students with enough opportunity to show what we're teaching them? Is there a way to introduce one or two

longer genres where students write from sources, a way to do this without flipping over to the traditional canned academic research essay?

Overall, this was a positive experience. I feel like I learned a lot from this assessment. I'm already thinking about how I'm going to place greater emphasis on integrating sources this semester.

Jennifer Courtney:

The *kind* of research students utilized seems to vary substantially. Students integrated a range of sources from Wikipedia (and let's not forget the celebopedia, which is now fanunity.com) to highly specialized academic journals. I think it's important to discuss with students what kinds of sources are appropriate for different writing situations—as academic sources are not always the best sources to use in certain situations—but it also seems like students, overall, could use more practice in finding and utilizing credible sources.

On the other hand, students who integrated a lot of academic research did not always cite the sources appropriately for the writing situation. Also, student writing that integrated many academic sources did not seem to vary as much in terms of the different genres represented and their given styles, tones, and other characteristics. An abundance of academic sources seemed to encourage more academic (student) writing, which didn't always fit the given genre.

I wonder if we might continue to share ideas/activities/lectures that teach students to conduct and integrate research. I *thought* I spent significant time this semester focusing on these skills, but I don't feel as though my efforts made a huge difference in how my students view and approach research-based writing.

...maybe it's because I forgot to use Brittany's brilliant baseball metaphor. My bad.

Because I used Writing in a Visual Age last semester, I also paid attention to how students utilized or did not utilize images and design in their documents. It seemed as though students either fully embraced a visual approach or resisted it (almost completely). I wonder how we can make the visual approach more accessible to students who are less visually/design inclined.

In terms of the work of the assessment itself, I felt as though this assessment was much easier than the first because we only looked at two closely related traits. That focus certainly helped me see that I need to teach this outcome more successfully; however, looking at portfolios with all of the course outcomes in mind (as we did in the last assessment) gave me a more holistic sense of my strengths/weaknesses and allowed me to seek advice from colleagues even more.

Julie Roberts:

First, I have to say that I enjoyed this project quite a bit. I thought it was fun to work with you and the other teachers, and the tedium (bad word to use, but it's honest!) of reviewing papers was broken up by some interesting discussions. I discovered it's much more fun to review papers as a group – I really do think we should have a mass paper-grading session at the end of the semester!

Also, participating in this exercise inspired me to evaluate my own teaching methods. For example, I have spent some time thinking about how I can more effectively emphasize documentation principles in my own classes. I have to admit that I think this is one of the most difficult things to teach – especially in English 2010, where students have to cite sources according to genre specifications. But after reading these portfolios, I realized that I could (and should) use more creative strategies for teaching documentation and citation to students.

Another thing that occurred to me after reading those papers is the importance of the course goals in general. I have tried to refer to the goals more in my classes – particularly with the final portfolios, where I asked the students to address how their chosen writing pieces demonstrate that they've met the course goals. But I think I'd also like to have a mid-semester review with my students to discuss how the goals connect with the lessons we're discussing in class.

So, you can see that the assessment gave me some ideas about my own personal teaching goals, but I also think this project is important to our department as a whole, as it is a positive way to help teachers do their jobs better.

