

Personal Experience Pedagogy: Renewing the Purpose, Reviving the Passion

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Personal Experience Pedagogy: Renewing the Purpose, Reviving the Passion

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After writing a 230-page dissertation, one might think I would be out of things to say; however, the most important words are yet to come.

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Personal Experience Pedagogy: Renewing the Purpose, Reviving the Passion

Abstract

First-year composition (FYC) standards typically encourage personal reflection and very little research in the first-semester course; however, English department instructors who are required to teach these courses are often more familiar with research writing or with their areas of research in literature, folklore, or cultural studies. This division often leaves professors feeling trapped by the required teaching of FYC or, perhaps, feeling like they are not being utilized appropriately by their department. Personal Experience Pedagogy (PEP) can bridge the gap between teaching personal writing and doing research writing.

This dissertation, an instructional design, is founded in Martin E. Ford's Motivational Systems Theory (MST) and several theories within the field of composition and rhetoric including Liberatory Pedagogy (Pablo Freire), Process Pedagogy (Peter Elbow), Audience Studies (Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford), Interpretive Communities (Stanley Fish), and Modeling (Donald Murray). The most basic principle of PEP is the instructor's ability to adapt the goals of FYC to his or her own interests.

The use of PEP encourages professors of literature, cultural studies, or any field within the English curriculum to find their comfort zone in FYC. The PEP curriculum allows professors to bring their interests—ranging from songs or poems to intriguing mathematical formulas—into the classroom as a theme.

In Chapter One, I outline the methodology of Personal Experience Pedagogy. Chapter Two, a review of the literature that inspired PEP, is divided into two sections:

composition theory and education theory. Chapter Three provides a justification for the use of Personal Experience Pedagogy, outlining the course design that is applied in Chapters Four through Six. Chapters Four (popular culture), Chapter Five (literature), and Chapter Six (politics) are given as broad examples of how PEP can be applied in the classroom. Chapter Seven is a discussion of the desired results of using Personal Experience Pedagogy, based on experiences in my own FYC classes and its future implications for encouraging English Department instructors to be enthusiastic about the teaching of FYC.

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CHAPTER 1:

“The Beginning:” What Is Personal Experience Pedagogy?

“There will come a time when you believe everything is finished.
That will be the beginning.”
—Louis L’Amour

1.0 Introduction

It happens every year. A crop of new ivory tower guards finish their English PhDs and are knocked off the academic pedestal into the reality of undergraduate education. Though these newly minted professors know their content areas and want to teach, few are eager to tackle the challenges of college freshman writers. Most dream of that moment when the department chair will call them into his or her office to say, “You are such a great scholar that for the first time in the history of this university, we would like you to begin by teaching our upper-level and graduate courses. You will start this fall by teaching a class in (fill in blank with dissertation topic, author, or favorite work of literature).”

However, this scenario does not occur. Even tenured professors are expected to teach their share of the freshman composition course load, and new professors must serve their time in the trenches with writers who do not know they can write, who have been discouraged as writers, who see writing as punishment, and who do not really want to write—ever.

Unfortunately, though, the problem is not just with the students. It is shared by every professor who considers a First Year Composition (FYC) course as “Service Work.” Professors who specialize in rhetoric and composition spend hours discussing and debating the most effective and realistic ways to teach composition; their research

can make teaching freshman writing courses easier for those instructors in other specialization areas—if professors have the time, energy, and interest to find, read, and reflect on their findings. This concentration area is not always efficiently utilized because it is subverted beneath the professor's own interests, which is fair because that is also why the rhetoric and composition scholars do what they do. Of course, asking a literature professor to teach FYC can be similar to asking a biology professor to do the same. English professors know their content and, most often, they are inherently successful writers, but that does not mean that they know how to teach writing to students who are not natural writers. So, how can professors in different areas of specialization effectively utilize their own research and knowledge along with the research of their professional peers and co-workers to teach writing?

In this dissertation, an introspective qualitative study, a common research methodology in the fields of education and in composition and rhetoric which allows “teachers and learners to reflect on their teaching processes, beliefs, and experiences” (McKay 17), I am proposing a methodology and a practical strategy for all professors of freshman writing courses under the title Personal Experience Pedagogy (PEP). Under this methodology, professors use their own areas of interest to create the theme for the class, which allows students to bring in their interests as well. Although the area of professor motivation and professional happiness for instructors outside of the field of composition and rhetoric is lacking in research, this project is inspired by Donald Murray's book *A Writer Teaches Writing*, my primary motivation within the field of composition and rhetoric, and the pedagogy of Lad Tobin, Lee Odell, Mina Shaughnessy, and scholars of liberatory pedagogy. Martin Ford's Motivational Systems Theory (MST), which is rooted

in education theory and in psychological practices, is the foundation for the understanding of motivational theory and the ideas behind why people choose to do what they do. Through the development of PEP, I encourage practical strategies for the classroom utilizing each professor's passions and personal interests for his or her students. These strategies are practically applied; once the guidelines have been established, Personal Experience Pedagogy is discussed in several proposed courses and themes applicable to most professors who teach under the heading of an English curriculum or in an English department. The resulting satisfaction and passion of the instructor should trickle down to the students as an extension of liberatory pedagogy, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Rooted in the guidelines of FYC (ENG 1010 and ENG 1020) at Middle Tennessee State University, the proposed courses will require four essays and the themes will be based on writing genres of the instructor's choice. The theme for the course will determine the types of writing that will be most beneficial for students and of interest to the professor. However, the professor's theme is not the content for the class—the class has no predetermined content. The students decide the subject of each of their essays, guided by the professor's example from his or her own interest area. The example may also include modeled essays written by the professor or by former students.

This dissertation, an instructional design, will include not only the pedagogical implications, strategies, and benefits of using Personal Experience Pedagogy in the classroom, but it will also include the theory underlying PEP and three complete course designs for those professors who would like more time with their research and other teaching areas. With sample syllabi, assignments, essays for modeling, and suggested

texts for three different specializations within the English department curriculum, an entire course design for any professor who teaches in these areas will be at the turn of a page.

The purpose of this instructional design is to persuade, encourage, and motivate English professors—who have so much to offer freshman writers—to become passionate about writing courses by relieving them of much of the preparation time. Also, by organizing the course this way, departmental consistency can be achieved among faculty. English professors with various specializations will be able to share their academic research successes with both their peers and their students.

1.1 The Idea for Personal Experience Pedagogy

My personal background can help to explain how Personal Experience Pedagogy developed. My undergraduate major was English with a “Writing Emphasis.” I also earned a Kentucky Teaching Certificate in Secondary Education (Grades 8-12). Splitting my time between literature and writing classes in Western Kentucky University’s English Department and the WKU Education Department required some serious compromise. From style to theory, very little of what I learned was compatible because of the differences between the training I was taught within educational practices and English department curriculum.

In my senior year of college, though, student teaching was an excellent learning experience. I was assigned to a ninth-grade classroom; in Kentucky, ninth grade writers are required to write certain pieces because of the state portfolio system mandated under the Kentucky Education Reform Act (*KERA*). Portfolios are evaluated at the fourth,

eighth, and twelfth-grade levels, and students who score well are rewarded with parties, awards, and scholarship offers. High-school freshmen, who have just received rewards or have seen other students rewarded in the eighth grade, are often motivated to compile a well-written collection of writings to choose among for their final portfolio in the twelfth-grade. Assignments are not standardized, and they are created by individual high school teachers; however, the assignments are appropriate to grade-level. Freshman students are encouraged to do creative writing, personal narrative essays, and formal essays in each discipline, including but not limited to their math, science, physical education/health, social studies, and health classes. After four years, the students compile their best five writing pieces along with a resume, a letter to the reviewer, and a table of contents. My students wrote poems and personal narratives during my time with them. Usually, after several revisions, the students had a text which they were proud to share with their classmates.

One year later, my own teaching experience was not marked by such enthusiasm for the writing process. I was hired to teach eighth-grade Language Arts, eighth-grade Arts and Humanities, and seventh-grade Reading (these seventh graders also had a writing class taught by another teacher). By the time the students compiled their eighth-grade portfolios, they were tired of revising work they had written in the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades. Without almost constant support and encouragement from me or the other eighth-grade teachers, the students had no desire to compile their best efforts; they only had the desire to be "done." Also, as an eighth-grade teacher, I was required to score portfolios with science, math, and history teachers. Although the grading was a standardized process, the subjectivity created by both my training as a writing teacher and

my lack of experience as a first-year teacher made the process difficult. A supporter and an alumna of the portfolio process, I found myself in the minority because it was a top-down mandate. Eventually, I wanted the process to be “done” as well.

After teaching for a year, I left the world of middle school to return to college. As a masters-level Teaching Assistant at Middle Tennessee State University, I worked in the University Writing Center (UWC). I tutored students in all stages of college from those taking First-Year Composition to PhD students in Economics, and I began to see the importance of assignment development. Students who visited the UWC were much more likely to put in the effort to succeed as writers when they knew what their professors expected of them; they did not express the same discouragement with the subjectivity of assessment as so many students. The students also responded more enthusiastically when asked about assignments that had been adequately written, explained, discussed, and modeled for them. For example, sessions for students who came in with well-written assignment sheets and a syllabus that provided guidelines were more efficient and generally more productive because the tutor knew what the instructor wanted the student to do. The assignment did not have to be the same for each student; it could include choices or could be completely open-ended. The difference in student engagement typically came from his or her professor’s level of involvement with the assignment and the student’s involvement with the subject matter regardless of the department in which the essay was assigned.

My idea for Personal Experience Pedagogy was sparked in a graduate-level class titled “Practicum in Composition Methodology” and taught by Dr. Allison Smith in the spring of 2005. In this three-credit course, a group of mainly English Department

Teaching Assistants gathered to develop, discuss, and share strategies for teaching Freshman Composition, developing professionally, and surviving both graduate school and the job search process. At MTSU, TAs at the masters' level are assigned to the UWC in their first year, and then, typically, they teach two classes in their second year. PhD students are encouraged to teach two classes per semester from their first year in the program although some students are assigned to work in the UWC as well. In the practicum class, some of the TAs were in their first year of teaching first-year composition, other students did not have Teaching Assistantships, and others were still working their twenty hours per week in the UWC. Among the students in the class, personal interests varied from rhetoric and composition to various fields in literature or a handful of other areas; some students were taking the class to fulfill the requirements of their assistantships. I realized during our class discussions that the key to enjoying the teaching of writing was not necessarily tied to a love of composition theory. Although most of us who had an interest in rhetoric and composition were enjoying the 6560/7560 class, several literature and folklore students, who served as TAs but who initially seemed disinterested in the course, were also contributing wonderful strategies for the teaching of writing. As TAs, we were encouraged to bring a theme into our 1010 classes; most of the literature-focused TAs used their favorite books or authors to inspire their students' personal reflection.

From these experiences, I realized that students and professors of rhetoric and composition must begin to consider more extensively the particulars of the writing process and the teaching process for those outside of the field. Also, they should reflect on the characteristics of those professors (and their students) who are successful as

academic researchers or teachers of literature, folklore, and film and those who are unsuccessful in either or both teaching or writing. My ninth graders were enthusiastic not because they loved writing, but because they were allowed a fresh start. My students in the UWC were enthusiastic because they understood their professors' assignments. My classmates in the practicum were enthusiastic because they had incorporated their own interests into their class design. At three different levels, I had seen success in the writing process and in the teaching of writing. However, I had also seen failure in these areas. My eighth graders were frustrated with the writing process because the assignments were old. The students who came to the UWC for therapy instead of writing assistance typically complained that their professors were disinterested, and the TAs who didn't enjoy teaching or who weren't having successful semesters were often modeling their teaching style or assignments after a former TA, friend, or professor who had personally inspired them rather than on their own personal strengths.

The problem, being unmotivated because of negative experiences, is consistent among students and professors, but we, as college professors, do not have the ability to change our students' writing pasts or our colleagues' teaching pasts. We can only dismiss our own negative writing experiences and give our students and ourselves a fresh start. If we take what we love about being academics—teaching, students, or our own research—and apply that passion to the writing classroom, professors and students have the potential to let go of our writing pasts and concentrate on our writing futures.

1.2 The Writing Future

Because of the need for general education courses, the MTSU English department is focusing more time teaching students how to write, and how to write well, than on their areas within the literary fields. MTSU, because of a mandate from the TBR, has even cut the sophomore English literature requirement for general education; only two composition courses and one literature course in either English or Humanities are now required. The job search for English graduates will continue to require experience and willingness to teach writing in lower division classes to students who are primarily majors from other departments on campus. As of September 11, 2008, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* listed more available jobs in rhetoric and composition than in any field of literature or all literary fields combined (*Chronicle Careers*). This trend may be threatening to professors of literature or other fields within the English curriculum. However, as colleges become more and more like a job-preparatory track instead of institutions of higher learning, the demand for writing courses is growing. In a January 3, 2008 *Newsweek* article, "Getting In Gets Harder," Peg Tyre asserts, "A little less than two decades ago...the baby boomers, were busy having kids. Now those kids are in junior high school and high school creating a demographic boomlet of their own. This spring the largest number of high school graduates in the history of the country—some 3.32 million—will don a cap and gown.... Next year,...3.3 million" (par. 2). English departments continue to offer literature degrees to students who will, quite possibly, be teaching writing almost exclusively to this "boomlet" for the first several years of their careers with the potential to teach some literature survey classes. This argument does not assume that departments should not offer advanced literary degrees or that students

should not pursue their own interests within English. It does maintain, though, that an English departmental curriculum should realistically represent the job market to its students and pragmatically prepare students to teach freshman writing courses as part of their future careers.

In this proposal for Personal Experience Pedagogy, we must also consider what currently comprises an English department. Typically, all branches of literary and literacy research make up the interests of most tenured faculty members as this was the foundation of most English departments. However, with a rise in the studies of critical theory, folklore, American and world cultural studies, popular culture, rhetoric and composition, women's studies, English as a second language, literacy, linguistics, film, and queer theory, "English" has become an all-encompassing term for research or study in the humanities that does not quite fit into other departments and, usually, does not have a large enough faculty, student-base, or income to form its own department. This compilation of subject matter into one heading that could up until recently be easily defined as "Writing" or "Literature" is bound to cause political problems within English departments and among faculty members who must compete to schedule courses in each of these areas. Michelle M. Tokarczyk and Irene Papoulis, in their collection *Teaching Composition/Teaching Literature: Crossing Great Divides*, explain, "On the one hand, composition is associated with the pragmatic and with anxieties of the working and middle classes . . . Literature, in contrast, represents the high culture associated with the upper classes" (3). Because of this traditional cultural divide, faculty members do not typically argue that these new research areas are not in need of study, only that these fields should not take students away from the traditional English literature curriculum (3).

The problem lies in the fact that new courses are being taught in place of existing courses, taking away the preferred courses of tenured professors. Of course, professors in each of the aforementioned areas will be hired as English faculty and will, therefore, most likely be required to teach a FYC course. Richard Weaver, Professor of English at the University of Chicago, argues that all English professors should teach their passion for writing: “Maybe America’s college students would appreciate writing if they could tell that their most talented professors did, too” (par. 3); however, he implies that the scenario is never quite that simple:

The [full] English professor rarely teaches freshman writing courses because it is beneath her to have to worry over catchy introductions, pithy thesis statements, and thoughtful conclusions. Certainly she cannot be bothered by grammar and form, except briefly and in passing. There is a workman-like quality to the teaching of writing; it is as close to blue-collar as you can get in the liberal arts classroom. In my first tenure-track job at a community college I taught a five and five load, four of which were composition classes (far too many, to be sure). I felt like Lucy in the candy factory. (Weaver, par. 2)

Though asserting the opinion that full professors may not desire to “stoop so low” as to teach FYC, Weaver makes the point that most will be teaching these classes until they gain enough seniority to make this choice, if at all.

1.3 Ten Considerations for the Application of Personal Experience Pedagogy

In order to discuss the practical application and theoretical background of PEP, I must first describe the basic guidelines and assumptions behind the design. These “Ten Considerations for the Application of Personal Experience Pedagogy” are listed below (fig. 1), and they are described in the section that follows.

Ten Considerations for the Application of Personal Experience Pedagogy

1. Instructors must decide what they most enjoy teaching; then, this topic becomes the theme for the class or for modeled assignments.
2. Instructors must be aware of their own personal beliefs and assumptions about the writing process.
3. Instructors must use a modified version of the Process approach to teach writing.
4. Instructors must model writing for their students through their own samples, student samples, or textual samples.
5. Instructors must be willing to be transparent in the classroom.
6. Instructors must allow students to bring their interests into the classroom through the instructors' individual writing assignments.
7. Instructors must realize that, by assigning work that students would not otherwise do on their own, they are in a sense becoming co-authors of the students' work.
8. Instructors must develop assignments that address the real audience (the professor, other students in the course) for each assignment and the concept of the artificial audience for each composition assignment.
9. Instructors must consider their students' writing across disciplines (and WAC) when designing real-world writing assignments.
10. Instructors must be concerned with the issue of grading consistency and the possibility of grade inflation, specifically because they are sharing their own personal interests and learning about the interests of their students.

Figure 1

The first consideration for discussing Personal Experience Pedagogy is what professors would choose to teach if they could create and teach any course for their department. Most courses falling under the English curriculum would intrinsically require some form of writing or communication. Based on the professor's utopic course design, a FYC course can then be created. For example, if a folklore professor would prefer to teach a course on American folk songs, that becomes the theme for the composition course. Assignments could vary from writing a folk song to writing a formal essay on a song that impacted each student's early family life. With this design, the professor is encouraged to share his or her interest in folklore and writing about folklore with the students, and they also benefit from his or her experience and passion.

Of course a problem lies underneath these assumptions about course development. Typically, a professor would design a course for upper-level undergraduate students or graduate-level students who would make a conscious choice to enroll in and to show up for class. A course for freshmen must be designed to motivate and encourage participation. To return to the previous example—whereas a more advanced group of students may use class time for discussion, development and application of critical theories, and presentation—the freshman class time discussion will also need supplementation with planned group or individual classroom activities, such as listening to the folk songs as a group and individually and reading essays or viewing films about the creation, history, and significance of folk music. With these adaptations, though, the classroom can become an effective meeting place for the internalization of the writing process through the example of a professor's interest in folk songs.

The idea of the thematic unit is much more prevalent in secondary and middle school education than in college-level academics; however, it is applicable to all levels. In “An Apology for Teaching American Literature Thematically,” David T. Anderson argues the need for themes as a unifying classroom principle: “[C]hronological sequencing...goes against a basic principle of education: Begin with simple experiences on which to base learning and move to complex understandings” (62). By choosing a theme for the FYC class, an instructor can allow his or her students to learn the writing process through, first, simple writing prompts, and then, at the end of the semester, more complex designs; however, the students will feel as though the course is unified.

This discussion of classroom adaptation to student ability level leads to the second consideration of Personal Experience Pedagogy—writing and the teaching of writing. In order to effectively teach a FYC (or any writing) course, a professor must be aware of his or her own personal beliefs and assumptions about the writing process. Instructors should ask themselves questions, beginning with these, which are adapted from Donald Murray’s *A Writer Teaches Writing* and Erika Lindemann’s *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*:

- What is the purpose of Freshman Composition at this school?
- What are my goals for a student leaving my Freshman Composition classroom?
- How can I best achieve these goals?
- What parts of teaching Freshman Composition do I enjoy the most?
- How can I capitalize on these portions of the class?
- What parts of Freshman Composition do I enjoy the least?

- How can I lessen this portion of my class?
- Do I believe in writing as a process?
- What is my process of writing?

After answering these questions about the teaching process and the writing process, an instructor should also make an effort to become aware of current scholarship in the field of teaching writing. Just as a Romanticism professor would never teach a course on Percy Bysshe Shelley without knowing the historical and current critical scholarship on the author, a writing instructor should know the context of the pedagogy he/she is using in composition courses. Chapters two and three discuss the pedagogical foundations of Personal Experience Pedagogy and suggest several readings for professors who are interested in furthering their knowledge of the teaching of Freshman Composition.

The third consideration of Personal Experience Pedagogy is that, through its development, professors will use a modified version of the process approach to teach writing. Developed in the early 1970s by Donald Murray and Peter Elbow, process pedagogy encourages students to break their writing into stages, including prewriting (often called free writing), drafting, revising, and editing. By using a theme in the writing classroom, which I, through the development of PEP, advocate, the professor may easily be distracted from the actual purpose of the class—allowing students to practice writing and, therefore, to grow as writers. In order to keep the primary focus of the course on teaching students to communicate, instructors using Personal Experience Pedagogy, advocate process writing. Instructors are encouraged to allow their students class time to journal or prewrite (formally, informally, or in any way that makes the professor comfortable and stresses to the students the importance of critically thinking about the

subject before drafting), to revise, and to edit. By stressing the process of writing, professors have the opportunity to share their writing progression with their students as well. Students can see that the course is relevant to their college career because the professor will be teaching strategies for writing that transcend the English curriculum.

The writing process also allows professors an opportunity to model writing for their students, which is the fourth consideration of Personal Experience Pedagogy. Modeling can be accomplished in several different ways; the most utilized form of modeling in the FYC classroom is typically accomplished through the FYC reader or textbook. Most composition “readers” include sample essays in different modes that students may read for examples or for inspiration, such as Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech as an example of reflection/response rhetoric. The problem with this form of modeling is that students are often reading essays from established, often professional, writers who do not always think or sound like them (Cartwright and Noone). Another example of modeling that is sometimes used in the writing classroom and is often more successful is the use of essays written by a professor’s former students. An effective form of modeling, essays from former students are usually more relevant to the students and are more closely identified with their respective writing levels. Another successful strategy for modeling is use of current student essays as examples for the class. By allowing students to present a paragraph or a sentence to the entire class (for a presentation or participation grade) a professor may lead a class discussion on both the positive and negative aspects of students’ writings. This strategy can also be used anonymously; a professor may choose the best or worst sentence from each of the

students' essays to present to the class for discussion, as long as the activity is done fairly and evenhandedly.

The type of modeling that the instructors' of Personal Experience Pedagogy can advocate as the most effective, though, is professor modeling. This practice, supported by NCTE as an effective strategy for the teaching of writing through its "ReadWriteThink" program, allows for transparency in the classroom between an instructor's assignment and a student's interpretation (Gardner). For example, if the same folklore professor assigns an essay on a song that influenced each student's early family life, the instructor would then bring into the class one possible answer to the prompt through a piece of his or her own modeled writing. The professor would bring in the song for the class (or possibly bring in an invited performer from outside the English department) to hear; then, he or she would actually write a sample essay or outline for the students to read. The professor's narrative would show, not only tell, the students what that individual instructor would like to see in each of their essays. Although this strategy initially creates more work for the professor, FYC assignments are simplistic compared to the typical writing projects of an academic researcher; he or she can use the same model over and over, and the benefits of this strategy for the students outweigh the temporary inconvenience for the professor. Many student questions and concerns can be addressed with an effective professor model.

The fifth concern of Personal Experience Pedagogy is addressed by both modeling and through the addition of professor interest—the exchange between the professor and the student. The application of Personal Experience Pedagogy not only encourages, but also demands effective communication in the classroom. Professors

must be willing to reveal a version of their true selves in the classroom, and they must allow their students to do the same through their writing as well or they risk holding themselves to a standard of objectivity they may be unable to achieve. Lad Tobin, in "Reading Students, Reading Ourselves: Revising the Teacher's Role in the Writing Class" argues, "As teachers, we play a crucial...role in our students' writing processes.... We need to develop a theory of reading student texts which takes into account our reading of the students themselves, of our own unconscious motivations and associations, and finally, of the interactive and dialectical nature of the teacher-student relationship" (74). Professors must be sure of what they want and what they expect from their students, and this expectation must be efficiently communicated through the syllabus, the assignments, and the classroom environment. Students who understand the instructor's interests and personality are less likely to feel as though the instructor is an enigma, and the assignment itself may be easier to interpret. The syllabus and assignments that reflect this transparency are of specific importance to the PEP classroom. Because the professor is expected to contribute to the class, the same expectation must also apply to the students. The students should be aware of any rules and expectations so that they can be constantly encouraged to succeed. Students and their interests must be treated with respect.

An emphasis on student interest is the sixth consideration of Personal Experience Pedagogy. Personal Experience Pedagogy is primarily based on bringing a professor's capacity for interest and enthusiasm back to the students who need them the most, and therefore, this methodology emphasizes a professor's interests in the FYC classroom. However, the professor's personal interests cannot be expected to apply or to relate to

every student (or any student) in the class. The professor's enthusiasm and passion for his or her interests should help to motivate the students, but the students might not—to return to a previously illustrated example—become personally enthusiastic about folk songs. Therefore, assignments will be open to interpretation and application by the students. After the professor brings in a modeled folk song and essay, the students will choose a song that has impacted them or their family lives. Perhaps they will have the opportunity to present their song to the class or to a small group of students; then, they will write the essay assignment based on their own experiences.

The seventh consideration of Personal Experience Pedagogy directly relates to professor modeling and to student interests in the writing process. The design of PEP, influenced by Tobin, is created after the assumption that professors who assign work to students are inherently becoming co-authors of the students' work. Not only does the professor decide on the subject or assignment for the paper, but in the writing process, he or she typically comments on student drafts (evaluating the grammar, the language, or even the content) and makes verbal or written suggestions to the class that change the students' natural inclinations. This assumption does not change or challenge the effectiveness of the Freshman Composition classroom, but it does force professors to decide how much they should influence a specific piece of writing by a student. By allowing for options in the content of each assignment, the instructor is allowing the student to make choices that are not so closely controlled by the professor, and by modeling, the professor may be able to remove him or herself from so many questions about the structure of an assigned essay.

The eighth consideration for Personal Experience Pedagogy is with audience. Based on the research of Peter Elbow, Walter Ong, Lisa Ede, and Andrea Lunsford, Personal Experience Pedagogy addresses the real audience (the professor, other students in the course) for each assignment and the concept of the artificial audience for each composition assignment. Students who are being trained to write for curricula outside of English should be allowed to write for realistic audiences in their major fields, in their careers, or in their other coursework. For example, the students who write about a song that has influenced their lives may want to write essays to an audience of their peers, their family, or to a specific person to whom it would be significant. If the essay is written to a generic audience, namely the instructor, then the details will not be as important and the essay will not mean as much to the student-writer. The theory behind audience development within assignments is discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

The discussion of audience leads directly to the ninth consideration of Personal Experience Pedagogy, Writing across the Curriculum (WAC). Students are required to take a certain number of English courses at most universities, but most university students are not English majors, and they will be applying their new writing strategies and skills to writing in other courses. However, with the application of professor and students interests in the classroom, students will ideally be writing essays and learning skills that are applicable to their majors or to their own coursework outside of English. The students should obviously be prepared to write in future English courses, and as Erika Lindemann argues in "Freshman Composition: An Apology for Service Courses," English professors should not be expected to be scholars prepared to teach every area of research within the university (5). However, the instructor must be prepared to welcome

students into the classroom not as potential English majors, but as students who are experienced in an area that the instructor may not know as much about.

The tenth consideration of Personal Experience Pedagogy is assessment. All teachers of writing should be concerned with the issue of grading consistency and the possibility of grade inflation with professors who are exchanging personal interests with their students. Professors of Personal Experience Pedagogy, specifically new professors, may also run the risk of too personally identifying with their students, seeing student improvement as success, and assessing a student's effort, opinions, or choice of content rather than the writing, which can lead to grades that are askew; as Tobin explains about his own experience responding to and assessing student writing, "It only makes sense that I would be pleased and excited to see that my student's writing supported and even validated my own positions and, therefore, that I would make her argument more eloquent and sophisticated than it actually was" (73). He clarifies by noting that "there were other reasons for my misreading. This was not the first essay of Nicki's I had read. All semester I had seen her work: I read this final essay in terms of all of our interactions.... I was also reading Nicki herself" (73). As Tobin illustrates, instructors of writing sometimes find it difficult to be objective when grading; however, instructors should be willing to follow the grading guidelines of their respective college or university as well as the current scholarship on the assessment process. The application of Personal Experience Pedagogy addresses the assessment process and problems through the layout of the rubric for each essay assignment. Chapter 3 also addresses these concerns and includes suggestions for further reading in this area.

1.4 The Politics of Personal Experience Pedagogy

Like every new teaching methodology, Personal Experience Pedagogy must be situated within its political context. FYC has a particularly interesting political climate because of the sheer number of courses, professors, and opinions directly influenced by and involved in the debate.

The political climate of FYC begins with the debate over what should be taught in the course. Many professors argue about the use and teaching of grammar, literary analysis, politics, and logic. Most scholarship on these subjects agrees that, if used minimally as a theme, any of these additions to the curriculum of Freshman Composition can be beneficial for students (i.e. Tate, Murray, Berlin, Odell, Moneyhun, George, Trimbur, Giroux, Sullivan and Qualley, and Fergenson,); additional readings on this subject are suggested in Chapter 3 and throughout Chapters 4 through 6. However, Personal Experience Pedagogy is rooted in the idea that FYC is strictly a writing and communication course to minimize the distraction from writing that the addition of other curricular elements may introduce. Although a theme dictates course-specific assignments, discussions, and classroom activities, the areas in which students are assessed will be the writing process, presentations, formal essays, and participation. Any additional material has the potential to take away from the importance placed on writing in the course.

Another aspect of the political climate of FYC is that Teaching Assistants (TAs) and new instructors (non-PhDs) often are assigned to these classes. Tenured professors regularly teach a required number of classes per semester or year, and their scheduled FYC courses are in addition to their upper-level and graduate classes. Although some

schools use TAs only to co-teach or to supplement a professor's instruction of the course, the practice of allowing TAs to teach these beginning courses is common at MTSU; it gives them teaching practice and experience for the job search, it frees tenured faculty members from having to facilitate so many classes, and it gives students a fresh approach to college teaching. The TAs' newly-developed strategies may become relevant to the entire department as their students move into upper division courses; they have not had time to settle into a comfortable routine or plan for their classes. What TAs lack in experience can be made up for in their course development, daily planning, and enthusiasm for the teaching process. Although they also have busy schedules of graduate coursework and teaching, the lack of a service requirement and the fact that they have no upper-level classes to prepare means that they have more time to develop FYC classes. Tenured faculty members must often devote the majority of their time to the development of upper-level and graduate classes—if these professors even have the luxury of time to do that. So much of a professor's time is taken up with service work, committee appointments, student advisement, meeting research requirements, and a number of other requirements of the job that it is sometimes hard to see how they have time to develop courses at all.

Alternate teaching methods are typically not popular in FYC courses when the professor is too busy to redesign, restructure, or even to revise his or her course plan. Suggesting that tenured professors redesign their FYC courses based on the ideas of one new instructor may not be a popular recommendation among faculty members. However, Personal Experience Pedagogy is designed to be user-friendly and time-saving. In order for professors to be able to take the existing themes, assignments, and models, modify

them to their own liking, and use them in as a revamped version of their own FYC course, complete courses are designed around themes that are prevalent under MTSU's current English guidelines.

Personal Experience Pedagogy allows instructors to take advantage of their goal of lifelong learning. As emphasized by Jerry Farber in "Learning How to Teach: A Progress Report," "[O]ne can continually learn how to teach. Continually—because this learning isn't something you do once and for all, as though teaching were a solid piece of property that one could finally acquire and own" (277). Instructors should continually strive to become more effective in the classroom; however, faculty members—whether researchers, teachers, or both—have at least a financial motivation to learn, to share, or to collaborate. John Ulrich explains, in "Tenure, Promotion, and Textual Scholarship at the Teaching Institution," research, publishing, and service are typically the main qualifications for tenure and promotion (117). From motivation to meet research and teaching goals can follow a desire for an instructor's students, undergraduate or graduate, to share in their own personal academic interests. The use of Personal Experience Pedagogy demands that students share in the discussion and modeling of a professor's interests without necessarily sharing those interests.

1.5 The Purpose of Personal Experience Pedagogy

My primary goal in creating Personal Experience Pedagogy is to inspire and energize professors in their FYC classes. Professors should be happy in their teaching jobs, and they should be pleased with their students in order to be truly successful as educators. Professors who no longer enjoy their work or who never enjoyed teaching

writing may find in PEP a way to reinvigorate their teaching style and their students' interests.

My second goal for Personal Experience Pedagogy is to inspire and energize students. Professor motivation is the key to student motivation, and students who are motivated are typically willing to devote more time and energy to the class. Throughout this dissertation, several examples will be given of ways to motivate students to learn, beginning with the Ten Considerations for Personal Experience Pedagogy and their applications within the classroom.

The application of Personal Experience Pedagogy does not allow for blame for prior unsuccessful classes (or future unsuccessful classes) to be placed on the professor or the students. Sometimes personalities clash, or interests do not match. Motivation will be sacrificed by forcing blame where it does not belong. In *Motivating Humans: Goals, Emotions, and Personal Agency Beliefs*, Martin E. Ford asserts, "[Emotions] in fact may be every bit as influential as cognitive processes in terms of enduring motivational patterns" (147). Not all students will come into the classroom ready to work, ready to learn, and ready to devote the time necessary to grow as writers. However, not all professors go into their FYC courses with positive attitudes, plenty of time to develop the course, and a passion for writing and the teaching of writing. We cannot control the students' mindsets, though; we can only control our own. These mindsets should be free from the emotional baggage of past teaching experiences.

By using Personal Experience Pedagogy, FYC instructors may become willing to teach authentically or to generate learning that is connected and genuine by actively engaging students. A professor's attitude must be positive about his or her students.

Students must be seen as wanting to learn, just as not necessarily having the skills to make this a reality on their own. They must also, realistically, be seen as college students who, in the future, want good, well-paying jobs—not as potential English majors. Each student knows something that the professor does not. Each student has something unique to bring to the class. A professor of FYC must see his or her job as finding out what each student has to offer and helping him or her successfully communicate strengths while improving upon weaknesses. The professor must also have a positive attitude about the course itself. The teaching of FYC consumed much time, as does any general education course. The students are from various backgrounds, from all majors, and are typically beginning college, which brings many more concerns to the course as well. Instructors must see the course as being essential to each student's college success; instructors must also have a positive attitude about their own contributions to the course. Every instructor, whether trained in the teaching of writing or not, has the ability to convey relevant information about the composition process to his or her students. He or she must be authentic in the classroom, letting students know his or her own writing practices, background, successes, and failures. Only then may students be able to become authentic learners while respecting the instructor's contributions. Most English professors, at some point in their career, will be asked to teach this course. Through the development of PEP, I encourage each instructor to try to genuinely enjoy it.

In Chapter Two, I explain the theory behind Personal Experience Pedagogy in two sections. The first is composition theory, and the second is education and motivational theory. Many of the ideas mentioned in this chapter are more fully explored in Chapter Two. Chapter Three provides a justification for the use of Personal

Experience Pedagogy, and it outlines the course design covered more fully in Chapters Four through Six. In these chapters, popular culture, literature, and politics are used as broad examples of the application of Personal Experience Pedagogy in the classroom. Chapter Seven, the conclusion, is a discussion of the desired results of Personal Experience Pedagogy based on experiences in my own FYC classroom and its future implications for unifying the writing classroom with the potential in English departments.

CHAPTER 2:

“Highest Happiness:” Pedagogical Foundations and a Review of Literature

“The highest happiness of man... is to have probed what is knowable and
quietly to revere what is unknowable.”

—Goethe

2.0 Introduction

The pedagogical foundations of Personal Experience Pedagogy are varied and wide-ranging. Inspired by both rhetoric and composition research and the fundamentals of educational theory, this methodology includes many concepts and models that may seem quite contradictory from their premises. However, these theories have been combined to provide a method for instructors to enjoy the teaching of freshman composition while gaining the ability to engage their students not only in the classroom discussion, but also in the structuring of the class.

Originally inspired by the ideas of Paulo Friere and Ira Shor in their construction of Liberatory Pedagogy, a pedagogy of liberation centered around the ideas of social and political change through the educational process and in the classroom itself (discussed further in this chapter, in Chapter 3, and for its political implications in Chapter 6), and furthered by Mary Louise Pratt’s notion of a “contact zone” for students—a place where students may “meet, clash and grapple” with the ideas presented by the instructor, by their peers, and in the course content (Wolff 4), Personal Experience Pedagogy was conceived as an idea to help professors help their students. I now realize, though, that professors cannot motivate and encourage their students by bringing a collaboration of student interests into the classroom until they, too, feel motivated and encouraged to teach freshman composition by including their academic interests.

This notion of professor motivation led me back to my roots in educational theory. Through an exploration of educational theories of motivation, I discovered Martin E. Ford's Motivational Systems Theory (MST). Created to bridge the differences among other motivational theories, MST combines, collaborates, and covers several motivational theories into a readable and definable methodology for successful learning and teaching.

Although MST is the primary theory behind Personal Experience Pedagogy as it is used to inspire professors, many other composition theorists have contributed to Personal Experience Pedagogy as a classroom tool. Donald Murray is the leading influence on the way the theory behind PEP is interpreted in the course designs of Chapters 4 through 6; I read his book in 2004 during my first year of teaching college composition, and his ideas, from the very first sentence of *A Writer Teaches Writing*, "It is time to give away the secret: teaching writing is fun," not only sparked my passion for teaching composition, but also justified my research in composition studies.

This chapter will explore, create, and define the foundations for Personal Experience Pedagogy in two different sections. In the first section, "Composition Theory," I explore the contributions of many scholars of rhetoric and composition theory through their texts. Unfortunately, little research—or practical advice—has been completed on instructor satisfaction in FYC, specifically instructors who are not scholars of rhetoric and composition. Therefore, no one composition theory fully encompasses this idea. The second section, "Motivation and Education Theory," continues the ideas of Ford's MST while also exploring the actions of many educational researchers,

composition theorists, and higher education professional development boards, again, through their published research.

This chapter is not a complete bibliography of composition and motivational theory research, but it is the backbone of Personal Experience Pedagogy and includes suggestions for further research in many of these areas; each text is discussed individually through its contribution and importance to Personal Experience Pedagogy, but each one can also be referenced in its significance and application to the field of academic research in general. Most of these sources are recognized models of education and composition theory, but they are not necessarily well-known in combination with one another.

2.1 Composition Theory

Composition and rhetoric, a field within the study of teaching, is a more specific look at the way in which writing is taught and the way in which language is used within writing to communicate effectively. In these research examples, texts will be evaluated and discussed primarily for their usefulness to a teacher of freshman composition courses and for their contributions to the development of Personal Experience Pedagogy. The trend in composition pedagogies, although it is the study of teaching composition, is actually to provide the student with an individualized writing curriculum in which he or she learns to improve upon his or her own writing, modeling from the writing instructor's example. An instructor who uses Personal Experience Pedagogy, though prioritizing student interests in the classroom, is more concerned with the actual motivation, participation, and modeling of the instructor in the teaching of writing.

Because the study of rhetoric and composition is such a quickly growing field, publishing in the area is also becoming more prevalent. Perhaps the best source for finding texts on the teaching of writing is *The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Writing* compiled by Patricia Bizzell, Bruce Herzberg and Nedra Reynolds. Although the text is indexed by subject, it does not have a listing for texts on teacher motivation in composition studies; the bibliography does provide a multitude of suggested readings for freshman composition teachers. This text may not provide any new insight into the field of composition studies, but the short history of the field is a welcomed bonus for readers and is the most helpful portion of the text in relation to the development of Personal Experience Pedagogy. The history describes pedagogical research up until the year 2004 (when the *Bibliography* was last updated). Fortunately, the editors describe the field as a “blend of interest in pedagogy, research, and theory” and they add “scholarship in composition continues to be richly interdisciplinary” (15). Encouraging the blending of both composition studies and educational research, the *Bibliography* brings together all aspects, and inspired the foundations, of Personal Experience Pedagogy. By noticing what the text lacks, namely motivational studies, professional assignments, and professional satisfaction, the reader gains a different prospective on where the field’s future research is heading than that of the generalized word “interdisciplinary.” It is obvious that the field is continuing toward a study of the student, student interests, and student needs. While noting that these studies are undoubtedly important, professors must be comfortable in their job situations and motivated to solve student issues in order for these concerns to get the full focus that they require. Again, these concerns are addressed through Personal Experience Pedagogy.

Theoretical texts are not only lacking in the area of professor motivation, but they have also been almost absent in the teaching of English until the introduction of rhetoric and composition studies into many English departments. John Schlib's chapter "A Future without Theory" from his text *Between the Lines: Relating Composition Theory and Literary Theory* describes the reintroduction of writing theory into English departments through programs in composition and rhetoric. He writes, "As a body of scholarship, [composition theory] has burgeoned. So, too, has the number of graduate programs devoted to it. Indeed, if composition has gained a measure of respect in English studies, this is largely because it has gone through a conspicuous theory boom" (213). The addition of theory has encouraged more respect for professors of rhetoric and composition from English professors who are often more comfortable with the use of critical literary theory within the English curriculum. In 1996, Schlib addressed the controversy over composition and rhetoric becoming a growing field within English studies: "Even the most traditional English departments have heard the news. More and more of them no longer assume that a teacher of writing needs only minimal training. Several now expect their own writing instructors to be familiar with the field's school of thought. Some are actually adding tenure-track positions in composition theory, as well as demanding that applicants have doctorates in the subject" (214). These ideas, though realistic, can be threatening to some experienced literature or cultural studies professors. After they have been required to teach freshman writing courses for sometimes thirty to forty years, can, and should, experienced professors listen as new instructors tell them how to teach their writing courses? The chapter is an invaluable resource for anyone needing an introduction to the field, but it does not address the need for a bridge between

the burgeoning field of Rhet/Comp and the English professors who may not only dislike the notion of the study of teaching listed under the heading of English, but who also may disagree with their required teaching of the course.

The growth of rhetoric and composition studies has created a segmented field. Theories have evolved from the traditionalists of the 1950s to today's more individualized, student-centered classrooms. In the 1982 article "Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories," James Berlin discusses the three major theoretical movements in rhetoric and composition studies, which are all still relevant today when creating a new theory. Reading like a brief history of the development of pedagogical theory, the article moves chronologically through the progression of the field. Naming the four major theories, Neo-Aristotelians (Classicists), the Positivists (Current-Traditionalists), the Neo-Platonists (Expressionists), and the New Rhetoricians, Berlin then discusses the differences in each through the subjects of audience, writer, language, curriculum, and roots. The article is extremely helpful in distinguishing the prevalent theories of the early 1980s, but the many theories that have developed under these headings may distract a present-day reader from understanding Berlin's initial purpose and intention. Personal Experience Pedagogy, for example, falls under the heading of an Expressionist theory because of the emphasis it places on classroom relationships (both professor-student and student-student) and on classroom dialogue, but in reality, it shares some of the goals of all four theories, such as—through New Rhetoricism—Aristotle's concept of the reality of language. Berlin is a New Rhetorician and makes no excuses for his obvious promotion of this pedagogical method; however, this promotion forces the reader to choose his or her discipline based on a biased

assumption. PEP, therefore, may fall under many headings depending on which composition leader has defined them. The importance of Berlin's text, though, derives from the lasting nature of his four names for defining most pedagogical movements even through today's student-centered focus.

Understanding the major pedagogical theories of rhetoric and composition does not necessarily explain how these theories developed. Personal Experience Pedagogy is practically rooted in the methodology described in Donald Murray's classic text *A Writer Teaches Writing: A Practical Method of Teaching Composition*, which was first published in 1968 and revised in 1984; this text is a primary example of how composition pedagogy has evolved. Through his work with eighteen secondary school teachers who had at least ten years of teaching experience, the author writes a new strategy for the teaching of writing in New England. Based partly on stories of experience from other teachers and professors and, mainly, from the experience of the author himself, the text addresses writing as a skill that requires development. Personal Experience Pedagogy uses Murray's notion that writing requires development. Through the emphasis on modeling and on the process of writing, this methodology is defined by Murray's process based on years of experience and his application of them as a concept that will appeal to teachers of writing who are not necessarily composition researchers. The most helpful attribute of the book is the subject of the teaching of writing. This text is not about the student as a writer any more than it is about the instructor as a writer. Putting at odds the difference between the writer's and the writing teacher's academic backgrounds, Murray describes why writing often is not effectively taught. Realistically and perhaps radically, he explains, "Writing can be taught if English teachers are educated to be teachers of

writing, if they do not believe the myths about the teaching of composition, and if they face up to the problems of heavy student loads. Writing can be taught in our schools today without waiting for ideal conditions" (109). Although Murray does place emphasis on the student as teacher, the development of Personal Experience Pedagogy relies on his assumptions that the teaching of writing can and should take place in a world where professors who would rather be teaching literature or who are not trained in writing instruction are the primary staff of composition courses.

Murray also published *Learning by Teaching: Selected Articles on Writing and Teaching*, a series of articles written and published between 1969 and 1982, in which he addresses several issues within the teaching of writing. Divided into three parts, the text offers suggestions for classroom environment, debate, discussion, and assessment. Personal Experience Pedagogy is most influenced by part two, "Writing for Teachers," which includes Murray's article, "Write Research to Be Read," which addresses the professor's need to publish. This article is the most helpful in understanding Murray's move from this series of articles on teaching to his text *A Writer Teaches Writing*. He explains that research may not always be personally rewarding and that some professors also view the teaching of freshman composition in this way. Referring to the articles "more as questions than answers," Murray requests that his readers use the text to question their own teaching and writing practices and to address the theory of writing within their classrooms and their research. Although he advocates a journalistic style of writing, promoting clarity and readability over the rules of traditionally academic writing, this idea is one of the most helpful inspirations for the idea of Personal Experience Pedagogy. Through the simplicity of models, examples, and classroom results, the

methodology of Personal Experience Pedagogy follows Murray's advice. Murray writes, "[The principles of writing] are, in fact, deceptively simple, and that very simplicity is often rejected by the academic mind which confuses complexity with intelligence.

Simple writing is easy to describe, hard to perform, yet it can be learned and practiced by persons who have something to say and the courage to communicate" (*Learning* 103).

This need for simplicity is at the core of Personal Experience Pedagogy: in the methodology for instructors, in models for the students, and in the students' own writing samples.

In *Theory and Practice in the Teaching of Writing: Rethinking the Discipline*, a collection of essays from 1993 written by many different leaders in the field of composition studies, the issues of learning through teaching are discussed. Following Peter Elbow's recommendation that teachers of writing must adopt a "theoretical stance," Editor Lee Odell encourages readers to use this book to find the theories that underpin the strategies that they use in their classrooms and in their research and to question the strategies they choose. Although Odell acknowledges the divergent opinions against the use of theory, particularly from Stanley Fish or Donald Schon, or more precisely, the over-reliance on theory, he ultimately agrees on its usefulness for teachers of composition. He also, though, emphasizes that each article is only one side of the argument for each theory, and he insists that all sides must be taken into account in order for teachers to truly believe in and understand what they do. Personal Experience Pedagogy is supported by Odell's notion of the theory-driven classroom; even though theory must be rooted in practice, Personal Experience Pedagogy follows the ideas of those methodologies practiced before its conception to learn from their successes and

failures. Odell acknowledges, “In addition to serving as a force for change, theory also underlies our daily practices as teachers and as writers. Implicit in this practice are powerful sets of assumptions—about knowledge, for example, about our own and our students’ role in the educational process, and what we are trying to do and why we are trying to do it” (2). Theory-driven methodology, such as Personal Experience Pedagogy, provides both the instructor and the students with responsibility and accountability in the classroom, and it provides examples of other professors and students who are using the same theories to learn from as well. Thus, the use of Personal Experience Pedagogy must be concerned with the assumptions its theoretical stance implies as well as each theory’s effect on or reputation for its intended audience.

Personal Experience Pedagogy is also partly based on Mina Shaughnessy’s argument that focuses on the “exchange” between university students and teachers of writing. In the article “Diving In: An Introduction to Basic Writing,” Mina Shaughnessy explains the four stages of teaching that she believes most professors experience. From “guarding the tower” to “diving in,” she advocates for students while allowing professors to mature in their profession without blame for their initial immaturity; however, Shaughnessy encourages professors to grow as writing teachers and to insist that their students do the same:

The system of exchange between teacher and student has so far yielded much more information about what is wrong with students than about what is wrong with teachers, reinforcing the notion that students, not teachers, are the people in education who must do the changing As a result of this view, we are much more likely in talking about teaching to

talk about students, to theorize about their needs and attitudes or to chart their development and ignore the possibility that teachers must also change in response to students. (94)

She also takes the entire responsibility off of the students and shares it with professors who have not reached the fourth stage of professionalism. Although she refers to the classroom as a democracy, the author clearly defines a mentoring role for the professor. Shaughnessy is a key figure in basic writing or developmental writing research; Personal Experience Pedagogy, though influenced by Shaughnessy's work on the levels of professionalism in the writing classroom, must be seen as a concept for freshman composition that will free writers to move into more advanced concepts through the support of a motivated, enthusiastic, and energetic instructor. Although PEP is not necessarily identified with basic writing, it may be altered by an interested instructor to be made relevant because of its identification of problems with the process of teaching rather than with the levels of student writing.

By discussing the reading and misreading of student essay drafts, Lad Tobin finds that his own writing style and examples of his own writing can help him to understand the difficulties students experience in their initial writing efforts. In the 2000 essay "Reading Students, Reading Ourselves: Revising the Teacher's Role in the Writing Class," Tobin explains that "by recognizing that our unconscious associations are a significant part of a writing course," composition instructors can become not only better writers, but perhaps more importantly, better readers. This improvement will help the professor and the student to communicate in the classroom and through their essays, and it will help to remove or at least reduce the limitations that are set by professor's biases.

Similar to the concepts of Murray's *A Writer Teaches Writing*, Tobin's notion that the professor must first understand him or herself as a writer before trying to convey these ideas to the students also contributes to the theory behind Personal Experience Pedagogy. This article offers more to the reader than a simple example of a professor's tendency to misread student writing. Tobin argues, "Few writing teachers want to go so far as to admit that we actually create the meaning of our students' texts, particularly if this creative act is largely the result of our unconscious biases and associations. The problem with admitting our role as co-author is that it violates most of our fundamental beliefs about the objectivity of the teacher" (75). As a result of these words, Tobin addresses a primary concern of Personal Experience Pedagogy. With the instructor's modeling of essay writing, the students could, in a sense, be writing like the professor. However, Tobin demands that all interference with student writing, such as assignments and assessment, make the professor a co-author. Though this concept is controversial, it must be addressed in the discussion of professor instruction of freshman composition and its impact on student writing.

Tobin also approaches process pedagogy particularly by dispelling the misconceptions about this method in his 2001 essay, "Process Pedagogy," published in *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*. Although it is an unusual approach, this method is incredibly effective because the process movement has come and gone, but using the writing process to teach within another methodology is still common. Defining the process movement from its origins instead of its rules-driven fading, Tobin also outlines the new notions of "postprocess," and he refuses to give up on the process movement. He respects the diversity of most classrooms, though, and sees process pedagogy as

“elegant, daring, and compelling as any pedagogical design [the author has] yet come across” (16). Process Pedagogy is a driving factor behind Personal Experience Pedagogy. Although instructors of Personal Experience Pedagogy use their own classroom theme to inspire student writing, the class itself is focused on the writing process. Through editing and revision workshops, journaling, drafting, and modeling, Personal Experience Pedagogy is actually an extension of the process movement in composition and rhetoric research. Tobin revisits the writing process and makes a strong argument for its extension into other areas of pedagogy:

Like all binary oppositions, the distinction between content and noncontent can be easily deconstructed. But it is not the only topic on which process’ proponents and its critics are each guilty of exaggeration. Actually, I don’t want to go back to the time when I first discovered process and when I did, in fact, throw everything out of my course except the student writing. It was exhilarating at first, but after a while I found the course a little thin and a little insulated; slowly over the years, I rediscovered the value . . . and I introduced or reintroduced some of those materials and methods into the course. (14)

By teaching process in conjunction with other methods of composition pedagogy, instructors who use PEP benefit from the experience of those researchers and leaders who have implemented these methodologies before its conception.

Process theory gave way to post-process concerns, such as Audience studies, which developed through the combined studies of Cultural Studies Theory and Composition Theory. Because of the definitions of audience provided by Lisa Ede and

Andrea Lunsford in the 1988 article "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked," the development of Personal Experience Pedagogy methodology encourages instructors to propose an audience for their assignments. Ede and Lunsford argue that instructors should "share the assumption that knowledge of this audience's attitudes, beliefs, and expectations is not only possible (via observation and analysis), but essential" (170). Some researchers in the field of composition and rhetoric argue that this artificial audience can seem like a construct; as Walter Ong argues, the writer's audience is always "fiction" (11). However, Ede and Lunsford insist that this opinion holds little stock among the current scholars in the field, citing Ong and Russell Long (174). The use of audience studies allows for the modeling done in PEP methodology to have a sense of real-world application and may, in fact, actually be a real-world writing task.

Personal Experience Pedagogy also includes the basic assumptions of a Writing Across the Curriculum class because of its freedom of theme, and therefore subject matter, for both the professor and for the student. Susan McLeod's essay "The Pedagogy of Writing Across the Curriculum" from *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* defines, explores, and encourages the use of WAC in a basic guide to its teaching and course design. Based on the assumption that all professors, not just English professors, should share responsibility for their students' ability to write, McLeod explains that student writing is often artificial and, therefore, should be presented through real-world assignments, which are easier in WAC classrooms. Instructors of Personal Experience Pedagogy strive to achieve this goal by allowing the students to choose the subject matter for each assignment from their majors, their favorite class subject, or their individual interests. However, this choice advances the methodology because the professor, too, is

allowed to choose the subjects discussed in class and the topics of the essays he or she will model for the students. Where WAC intends to teach not only the discourse of writing outside of the artificial classroom environment but also “the content of the discipline,” Personal Experience Pedagogy is not focused on content, but rather on the writing process (150). McLeod divides writing into two main purposes, learning and communicating, both of which can be served in the WAC classroom and in the Personal Experience Pedagogy class. McLeod also defines WAC as the potential for a mentoring relationship between a professor and his or her student, which is also a goal of Personal Experience Pedagogy; however, this goal is more likely to be achieved through a sharing of interest for the professor rather than through a common academic subject area.

McLeod explains, “The fact that academics are so grounded in their own disciplinary discourse conventions presents an immediate challenge, however, precisely because the conventions seem so natural to those fluent in them that it is difficult to see why students struggle as they learn them, or why writing in other disciplines has different but equally valid connections” (155). The application of Personal Experience Pedagogy uses the professor’s expertise in “disciplinary discourse” to the advantage of the student while also encouraging him or her to understand and appreciate the students’ respective discourses.

Instructors who use Personal Experience Pedagogy rely on the theories and experiences of many composition researchers and on many experienced instructors of freshman composition. Reflecting on not only his past experiences of teaching but also on his past articles and their reception by other leaders in the field, Jerry Farber discusses the nature of student-centered teaching, professors’ conceptions and misconceptions of

students, and the grading/evaluation process in "Learning How to Teach: A Progress Report," published in 1990. By explaining his classroom methods comparing and contrasting with those who have referenced his past article, "The Student as Nigger," the author provides an evaluation of several methods of teaching, grading, and course design. Concluding that he shares the credit for several of his newer ideas with those who have previously disagreed with him, Farber allows his readers to determine the best methods for their own classrooms. "This isn't an essay, really, about how to teach," he explains. "The changes I'm advocating don't magically turn someone into an effective teacher. But they do create a new framework within which one can continually learn how to teach. Continually—because this learning isn't something that you do once and for all" (276). Farber's promotion of lifelong learning fits in Personal Experience Pedagogy. If a professor takes his or her expertise in the field of literature, folklore, or cultural studies into the classroom to use as an example of how and why to write, the professor and the students will benefit from the experience.

Just as no teacher will ever truly know everything about teaching, no composition theory will ever truly embody the combination that brings out the best that each professor has to offer. Jonathan Bishop begins his essay "Criteria for an Adequate Composition Course," published in *Teaching Freshman Composition*, with the assumption that no matter how many theories are present in composition studies, the university system as a whole will never find a methodology that pleases the entire body of English faculty members. Bishop attempts to find and correct instead the weakest part of the historically typical writing experience through three criteria. He addresses the issues of supplementation of subject, language, and independence in students' writing about their

own experience. By taking the emphasis away from what the teacher wants and placing it back on the students' ability to grow as learners, Bishop describes the composition class as becoming less about being "adequate" and more about achievement of both the student and the teacher. Personal Experience Pedagogy employs Bishop's criteria as a means to correct, avoid, or at least to improve upon these areas at its conception. The first issue, supplementation, is addressed in the core of Personal Experience Pedagogy instructors' assertion of a theme for the class and on bringing in individual interests for the assignments. Language, the second issue, demands that the student's own experience be reflected in his or her writing which is, again, addressed through the subject matter that each student will choose on his or her own. Independence, the third requirement for a legitimate composition class experience, may also be called discovery. The student must realize that the course demands a reflection on his or her own life. The development of Personal Experience Pedagogy also addresses this issue through the professor's modeling. The students can see what the professor is writing and his or her personal relationship to the subject so that can reflect in the students' writings as well. Though more focused on the student than the professor, through the criteria, Bishop demands a relationship between the two; the professor will not be able to determine whether the criteria of independence have been achieved without knowing a student's true area of interest.

Perhaps one of the most influential texts in composition theory for the development of PEP is Erika Lindemann's "Freshman Composition: An Apology for Service Courses." In a transcript of the conference presentation from the Annual Meeting of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association in 1980, Lindemann outlines three

standard complaints about FYC by English department faculty members: 1) the students are “inferior” to students in upper-level courses or to past classes of freshmen (2); 2) literature courses are more interesting, and in turn, superior to writing classes (5); and 3) teachers of composition are “inferior” to literature professors (6). This argument is no more or less true now than it was in 1980. Although some professors do subscribe to the divide between literature and composition, certain pedagogical strategies (and university mandates for service work) can make these three complaints empty and obsolete. My goal, through PEP, is to provide positive answers to these three complaints—to help professors find enjoyment with their students, to help them find passion in the teaching of writing, and to find respect for those who struggle through the teaching of FYC every day of every semester.

2.2 Motivation and Education Theory

Motivation Theory has a diverse focus that includes research in education, business, psychology, and human development. Although the approaches that follow often differ, the theory—that motivation increases satisfaction, success, and social responsibility—is often the same. The field of Motivation Theory is quickly growing in educational research. Many universities have commissioned studies to help improve faculty morale, to promote new teaching methods, and to improve entry-level instruction. However, many researchers have begun to study motivation in order to improve student learning and student-professor relations. This section will focus on the major theory of motivation for Personal Experience Pedagogy along with several studies of faculty

motivation and training under Education Theory, which also build the foundations of the methodology.

Ford's Motivational Systems Theory (MST) is the foundation of the reasoning behind Personal Experience Pedagogy. In the 1992 text *Motivating Humans: Goals, Emotions, and Personal Agency Beliefs*, the author bases MST on the Living Systems Framework (LSF) made available by Ford and his father, Donald, in 1987; Ford combines the elements of direction, energization, and regulation of behavior patterns to promote productivity, social responsibility, personal satisfaction, achievement, and learning for both students and faculty. Based on the assumption that "motivation is at the heart of many of society's most evasive and enduring problems," Ford explains that consolidating many theories of motivation into one easily understood theory is in the academic system's best interest (16). He also provides an expert definition of motivation, "the organized patterning of an individual's personal goals, emotional arousal processes, and personal agency beliefs" (244, 246). Through these three elements and Ford's "General Principles" for motivation, my primary goal through Personal Experience Pedagogy is not only to provide a classroom methodology for professors, but also to inspire and to energize professors to adopt a new teaching method and to enjoy teaching freshman composition. These seventeen General Principles form an instructional manual for promoting motivation, job satisfaction, and learning (220). The Responsive Environment Principle ("Relationships are as important as techniques"), The "Do It" Principle ("If a person is capable, just try to get them started"), and The Principle of Emotional Activation ("Strong emotions indicate and facilitate strong motivational patterns") are three examples of Ford's foundational beliefs (220), and in combination,

these seventeen principles define the term motivation. These principles are defined further in the explanation of sample course designs in Chapter 3.

The secondary goal for using MST in correlation with Personal Experience Pedagogy is to help professors who also use this methodology to learn strategies of motivation that they can use with their students. Ford explains, “Whether through teacher training programs or less formal means, teachers must become much more aware of the basic motivational requirements underlying effective teaching . . . and much more practiced at applying these principles on a daily basis. Motivation for learning must be regarded as a vital and ubiquitous goal in teaching” (230). Ford’s section on student learning and classroom motivation is most helpful in achieving this secondary goal. Using key terms such as “facilitate” instead of control, “respect,” and “goals,” MST is minimally invasive, varied, and transformative (228). Ford’s evaluation of job satisfaction in relation to motivation and success is also most helpful in this area.

The study of motivation has been approached in many different areas of education. In *Motivating Professors to Teach Effectively*, a compilation of essays from the *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* series, editor James Bess discusses how rewards, control, feedback, and career phases achieve a balanced role in motivation. Through his introductory discussion of the purpose behind a university desire for faculty to feel motivated, Bess explains psychological, financial, and personal reasons. As Bess argues, motivation breeds energy and, in return, opportunity. As he defines it, “The unmotivated person, then, is simply one for whom this particular situation is not an opportunity” (1). The use of PEP provides instructors the opportunity to further their own research or to help students find their passion for writing or for English studies; this

should provide motivation for the instructor. The purpose behind the text, though, is to explore the ways in which faculty are motivated by their institution and to examine whether these ways are “just” (2). Compiled before MST emerged, this text addresses issues from the stance of an educational researcher; however, instructors, through Personal Experience Pedagogy, have the advantage of being able to apply MST to the issues from the text and, therefore, to give them a fresh perspective. The original purpose of the essays, “to understand the cause of [motivational] dilemmas and to develop enlightened policies to improve teaching,” provides the basic reasoning behind why motivation in academia is such a problem, but leaves the solution to an instructor using Personal Experience Pedagogy’s application of MST (4). The main problem with the use of this text without the application of new theories lies in its tendency to lay blame on the student. Although no author pretends that professors and university hierarchies are not to blame for problems with energy and enthusiasm, students are discussed as being often distant and apathetic. An instructor, while using Personal Experience Pedagogy, can take these assumptions, discontinue the discussion of blame, and address the problems at the personal level rather than at its generalized root.

Pablo Freire, through the foundational ideas of Liberatory Pedagogy, also addresses the apathy and distance of students. This educational theory was created as a direct affront to what Freire describes as the “banking concept” of education (58); this concept sees the teacher as the possessor of knowledge and the students as the consumers of knowledge. In other words, students are never encouraged to have “creative power” or to “critically consider reality” (59). Freire instead stresses an educational democracy where students are encouraged to participate in “acts of cognition” in a “problem-posing

education” (63). This educational strategy inspires the use of PEP because the theme is used in the class to inspire students to pose their own problems about their own areas of interest. However, whereas Freire was concerned with the teacher as center of the classroom, he encouraged a more democratic environment for students to control their own learning; an instructor, when using PEP, is still the assessor, the grader, and the developer of course curriculum. Nothing about PEP methodology implies that the students and the teacher should be equal in the classroom.

Researching education through the problems in the field is a common method for initiating change. In understanding this research, an instructor using Personal Experience Pedagogy must also speak out against archaic ideas that are still prevalent in educational theory. In one example written by Professors Deane G. Bornheimer, Gerald P. Burns, and Glenn S. Dumke and published in 1973, *The Faculty in Higher Education* is a guide to occupations within higher education written as a glossary or a definition to the profession. Although some of the explanations are helpful, most are too general to be useful to an experienced teacher. Some of the subjects are also biased; for example, in the discussion of the college curriculum, the authors allow that sometimes TAs can actually be “proficient” teachers, but “usually the students [of TAs] are once again victims of the system” (86). This text provides an excellent example of what problems instructors using new theories of teaching are struggling against. The development of Personal Experience Pedagogy addresses the text’s concerns with who is doing the teaching of entry-level classes by treating experienced professors and new instructors with the same respect through the use of their interests. Creating problems for the teaching profession, such as a trade of university-loyalty for field-loyalty, the text does

not address other aspects of the teaching profession, such as the lack of motivation. The guide addresses false problems, promotion, and sabbaticals (as the only form of professional development). Because many new professors who are now tenured faculty members were integrated into the educational system at the time when this book was published, these ideas and the evolution of educational theory must be addressed when motivating faculty members.

The handbook-style text for faculty members has evolved into many methods for teacher training. In *First-Order Principles for College Teachers* (1996), one example by author Robert Boice, he presents ten ideas about teaching that he supports for every college educator. Through a detailed description of each principle, readers can easily understand the method and the purpose. The author also presents practical ways for professors to implement these ideas into their teaching. "The best, most creative, and satisfied teachers, in my experience, learn how to work at their craft," Boice contends. "Ordinarily we don't teach ourselves or our students much about how to work at academic tasks. And so it is, I contend, that too few of us in or near the professoriate find enough success in teaching" (ix). Although this experience in craft and not in teaching is an excellent point and one used to support the methodology of Personal Experience Pedagogy, the method is scientific and detailed leaving little room for differences in teaching styles. The second issue addressed is the rhythm and timing of the teaching process. Boice is not assuming that teaching is an art form, but that it follows a simple method that all college educators should be able to synthesize. Although this text provides a methodology that the use of Personal Experience Pedagogy mimics, that of the simple guidebook for instructors, the scientific language and lack of variety and creativity

is not imitated. Boice's method, though, benefits by its allowance for growth within the teaching practice while encouraging new instructors to use the ideas to manage their jobs instead of focusing on the students' products. Though serving as an example of how a basic teaching methodology is presented, Boice's method could, perhaps, be better applied to professors in a more analytical field than English.

Under PEP, the goal of simplicity in instruction is as important as the goal of understanding the methods and reasoning behind one's teaching. Rejoicing in the notion that the "intellectual work of teaching receives regular and serious discussion," editors Deborah Minter and Amy M. Goodburn, through a series of essays in 2002's *Composition, Pedagogy, and the Scholarship of Teaching*, discuss the teaching portfolio and the professional atmosphere in which professors teach (xi). Hints, suggestions, and recommendations compiled from the experience of several teachers of writing, including Chris Anson and Lisa Cahill, allow any aspiring college professor to understand how the profession is evaluated by administration, other professors, and students. The book also gives strategies for improving evaluations through the use of teaching, course, promotion/tenure, and job search portfolios. Because of its roots in composition and rhetoric, it also provides an inspiring collection of teaching materials that are practical for PEP. Personal Experience Pedagogy can take advantage of the author's collection through its companion website, available with course materials and sample portfolios, to help with the development of its own course materials. The emphasis on writing portfolios does not apply specifically to Personal Experience Pedagogy, but the subject matter of the professional portfolios and documenting of teaching strategies is strongly promoted in the methodology. In order for a professor to use alternative teaching

methods effectively, he or she must appropriately document how course and job requirements are met. While questioning the legitimacy of these concerns, the editors and authors provide examples of how teaching styles can be documented and how assignments can be written to provide student feedback. The development of Personal Experience Pedagogy relies on the use of evaluations and feedback, not necessarily from the administration or from peers, but from students as discussed in Chapter Seven. Professors need to be happy in their jobs, but students must also be learning.

Researching the personal aspect of teaching can help instructors to understand the justification for good student-professor relationships. Patricia Cranton explains in her 2001 text *Becoming an Authentic Teacher in Higher Education* how understanding ourselves as professors and members of the academic community can make a more empowered classroom environment and, therefore, a more meaningful experience for our students. “I see authenticity as part of a circle, or perhaps a spiral,” she explains; “we must first understand our Self—our basic nature, preferences, values, and the power of our past experience” (vii). Cranton explores the notion of the “good” teacher, a social construct, and the psychological preferences of instructors. Perhaps the most interesting chapters, though, come toward the end of the book when the author begins to explore relationships in the teaching profession (with students, coworkers, administration) and professional development within the field. Personal Experience Pedagogy, as indicated by the methodology’s title, is concerned with the personal as stated in the discussion of the blame assigned in Bess’s text. Cranton’s discussion of personal relationships and authenticity of the self are directly related to the methodology’s foundation. MST explores personal goals, behavior, values, and experiences as the primary knowledge for

motivation to occur. Cranton's text asks professors to explore this part of their backgrounds in order to know who they are as teachers. Through the author's guidance and my theory, professors can find where their interests fit in the classroom in Personal Experience Pedagogy and Motivational Theory. Reducing the artificiality of teaching and the separation of teacher and self is a goal both of Cranton's and of mine in Personal Experience Pedagogy.

After a look at the importance of the self in teaching, departmental affiliations must also be revisited to understand how the personal plays into the differences in how courses are taught and students are treated. Published in the 1998 collection *Coming to Class: Pedagogy and the Social Class of Teachers*, "Class Conflict in the English Profession" by Donald Lazere addresses the nature of class divisions within English department faculty instead of the more familiar discussion of the division between students and faculty. Assigning graduate students to teach composition courses while senior faculty members teach more advanced literature courses, the author says, is partially the reason for this departmental inattention to FYC; Lazere also claims that because of the division, the job market for English academics is compromised:

This syndrome in the English profession has been intensified by the drastically widening gap between its upper and lower levels in the last three decades . . . the "literacy crisis" came to public attention, with attendant increases in basic writing and other composition programs. Consequently, many of us receiving doctorates in literature since then have been obliged to take jobs in undergraduate colleges, teaching

composition . . . from the remote heights of our graduate seminars and dissertation topics. (80)

While explaining that more professors of literature have been forced to teach writing, Lazere calls for more professors to be willing to teach composition. He also explains that the critical theories employed in graduate-level English courses are less useful to most job search candidates than those regarding the teaching of freshman composition. Because instructors of freshman composition are often literature professors, Personal Experience Pedagogy fits in as a solution to the problem Lazere has introduced. Professors are encouraged to bring the benefit of their area of interest into the teaching of writing through structured modeling of the assignments for the students and, therefore, become more motivated to teach these courses.

Other researchers have explored the discrepancy in departmental teaching assignments, student class demands, and the specialized job candidates who are hired into the department. After a mid-1970s shift in the number of students who were required to take FYC at the University of New Orleans, Elizabeth A. Penfield began to research the effect that more freshman classes and fewer upper-level classes would have on the department. Through her study, titled "Staffing Freshman Composition: A Case for Variety in Course and Teacher," of two decrees that forced senior faculty members to teach the full range of English courses, including freshman composition, the author makes the case that students, professors, and instructors benefited from the change. The analysis of grade inflation, student numbers, and faculty mingling encouraged the department to come together to help students succeed through improved classroom morale and senior/junior faculty collaboration. Though Penfield's research may serve as

a source of inspiration for the development of Personal Experience Pedagogy, the motivation behind the study was primarily that the faculty members did not have the choice to refuse this teaching assignment. Using the study, though, provides impetus for the use of Personal Experience Pedagogy in English departments where tenured professors are already required to teach freshman composition. With solid evidence that student performance, faculty morale, and grading competency all improved with the mixing of motivated faculty members of differing levels, departments can realize a need for motivated faculty—faculty members who will teach freshman composition not only because they are required to, but because the course is another way (an earlier way) to reach students and to share the instructor's academic interests with them.

Some literature, folklore, or cultural studies professors have a negative impression about the requirement of teaching freshman composition, though. In the essay "How to Escape Teaching Composition" from *Teaching Freshman Composition*, author John C. Sherwood addresses the most common distractions for teachers of composition through the use of educational theory. By dividing the article into five parts, Sherwood suggests the many ways that composition teachers are diverted from actually teaching students how to write or allowing them to discover their own writing. The first distraction is the teaching of grammar or literature in the composition class. Although completely against prescriptive grammar, the author takes a much more relaxed stance on literature, suggesting that it may support writing but should not be a substitute for it. This support for theme in FYC applies directly to Personal Experience Pedagogy. The next distraction is referred to as "stimulation" but is basically the use of social or political motivation to get students to debate more than they write (339). Although users of Personal Experience

Pedagogy, as other teaching methodologies, could fall into this trap, the likelihood is that the professor's topic of discussion should be of no more importance than the contributions of each individual student. The professor's subject matter will be used for the purposes of modeling only. Sherwood describes the last distraction as a combination of formal training in semantics and logic. Again, the students would have to raise the topic before it could become a distraction for the Personal Experience Pedagogy classroom. The author's discussions of each of these distractions are mainly opinion-based, but they are convincing. Based on pedagogical research from the last two decades, it is obvious that Sherwood's ideas have motivated spirited debates on the inclusion of these distractions in the freshman composition classroom. Sherwood's lack of motivation, though perhaps feigned, may help the development of Personal Experience Pedagogy by heading off many of the problems at the outset.

Motivation is still the key to the successful teaching of freshman composition by professors who have not been taught to teach writing and who are not in training programs. Ronald K. Teeple and Harvey Wichman conducted a study of both students and professors to determine the expectations and outcomes for students and professors of composition courses, and the results are reported in their 1997 essay "The Critical Match between Motivation to Learn and Motivation to Teach." Determining that the differences between what students and professors expect cannot always be inferred from the syllabus, the authors advocate a collaboration that will allow for realistic expectations for both. This collaboration may come through assimilation of course material or through the practicum method. Although promoting a critical pedagogy, the authors do not use this term. They argue, "Our personal experiences convince us that when courses are designed

so that professors and students share responsibility and work together to achieve common goals, there are very positive effects on educational outcomes” (3). The psychological and emotional effects of classroom work for professors and students may also be improved. Users of Personal Experience Pedagogy can apply the findings of this study to promote student-professor relationships. Instructors model the assignments using their interests; then, the students bring in their interests to share with the professor and with the class in their writing and in workshops. It is important to address the inconsistencies between professor motivation and student motivation, though, and to address the causes for motivation in these two very different groups. The authors of the study found that professors “feel a student's enrollment in the course is tantamount to being motivated” while students “Feel the professor is compensated, at least in part, to motivate them to learn” (par. 1). The students’ expectations, though possibly surprising, are reasonable. Applying MST to the secondary goal of Personal Experience Pedagogy—motivating the student through the professor’s energy and example—helps to bridge the gap between the student and professor’s motivation and expectations.

A study of faculty motivation completed using MST by Carol L. Colbeck, Alberto F. Cabrera, and Robert J. Marine from the Center for the Study of Higher Education at Pennsylvania State University focused on the teaching habits of professors at Penn State to determine what factors influence their teaching styles. The resulting article, “Faculty Motivation to Use Alternative Teaching Methods,” researches some potential applications that could also be applied to Personal Experience Pedagogy:

We used [MST] . . . to investigate how varying motivational patterns influence faculty members' use of teaching practices in their

undergraduate classes. Specifically, we compared the factors associated with faculty members assigning students to work in groups to solve ill-defined design problems. . . . Our study hypothesizes that faculty members' use of teaching practices is a function of their backgrounds, training, experiences, teaching goals, beliefs in their own skills, and their perceptions of the extent to which their organizations provide adequate rewards and resources for teaching. Our findings indicate that faculty members' own goals for teaching and beliefs about their own professional skills are strongly associated with the extent to which they use traditional teaching practices or group design projects. (par. 1)

Because of a call for more active learning and collaborative work on campus, these researchers used the study to determine how to influence professors to reduce reliance on the lecture and question method. The research briefly touches on the purpose behind using MST to support Personal Experience Pedagogy's motivational purposes. "Much has been conjectured . . . about what motivates faculty to teach the way they do," the authors clarify. "[M]ost faculty receive little formal training in teaching; instead they rely on informal training achieved by observing their own professors, reading about teaching, discussions with colleagues, or . . . instructional development workshops" (par. 3).

These reasons are precisely why instructors who use Personal Experience Pedagogy will develop the class structure for professors who may not understand the research behind certain types of assignments but who have the expertise and experience to teach their own subject areas.

Perhaps the most helpful portion of the study, though, was the way in which these researchers applied MST to their study. They stress that “[b]ecause the focus of this study was on faculty members' sustained use of teaching methods . . . the conceptual framework incorporated only personal goals for teaching, capability beliefs, and context beliefs. . . . [F]aculty members' socio-demographic characteristics influence their use of active learning methods” (par. 6). Although this statement relates directly to Personal Experience Pedagogy's application of MST, the authors, then, use a highly scientific approach to the Motivational Systems Theory: Ford's motivational formulas, coded faculty answers to their survey, and produced mathematical results. In developing Personal Experience Pedagogy, I use Ford's strategies for motivation and job satisfaction in order to promote its main goals, namely the seventeen “General Principles” mentioned earlier in the chapter. These principles are not mentioned in this study. A discussion of faculty socio-demographic characteristics would only add to the division between FYC instructors; Personal Experience Pedagogy is a way to unite all course instructors under one methodology that not only allows for, but also encourages, diversity.

Conclusion

The many different theories and methodologies discussed in this chapter contribute to the formation of Personal Experience Pedagogy. The biggest contributor to the composition theory behind this new methodology is Donald Murray and his promotion of modeling, his acknowledgment of the difficulties for professors who are not trained in writing to find their role as primary teachers of freshman composition and to meet the necessity of teaching writing well. Lad Tobin, Lee Odell, and Mina

Shaughnessy also influenced the development of Personal Experience Pedagogy.

Tobin's perseverance with process pedagogy strongly influences Personal Experience Pedagogy's use of workshopping and its lack of a unified content area. Odell's insistence on a theory-driven pedagogy and Shaughnessy's directive for a professor to "dive in" to his or her field have also influenced the methodology's development.

The use of Personal Experience Pedagogy also relies on motivation as the foundation for why this methodology is needed. MST is the primary source for convincing faculty members to try Personal Experience Pedagogy in their freshman composition classes. Carol Colbeck, Alberto Cabrera, and Robert Marine's study of faculty motivation using MST is a major contributing factor to understanding how the theory can be used in educational research; it is being used for different purposes, though. John Sherwood and Donald Lazere provided the most practical reasoning behind professor motivation, perhaps because of their cross-over into both motivation and pedagogy, and Elizabeth Penfield's article provides the motivation for Personal Experience Pedagogy's development to promote a varied and satisfied group of faculty members teaching, discussing, and debating freshman composition.

These works represent a sampling of the sources on the pedagogy of freshman composition and Motivational Theory; however, they are the major influences behind the methodology. They may also provide extra reading in these areas for those new to these concepts. Although other sources were considered as I created the framework for the creation and conception of Personal Experience Pedagogy, each of these provides an excellent example for some aspect of the methodology of PEP. As Odell contends, "Theory . . . underlies our daily practices as teachers and as writers" (2). These theories

of pedagogy and motivation work well together to inspire and energize professors, and they underpin my major goals in developing Personal Experience Pedagogy for the classroom, which were outlined in Chapter One.

CHAPTER 3:

“Give Back:” Why Use Personal Experience Pedagogy?

“If you have zest and enthusiasm you attract zest and enthusiasm.
Life does give back in kind.”
—Norman Vincent Peale

3.0 Introduction

In spring 2004, I walked into an Expository Writing classroom of brand-new college freshmen. My class, held at 1:00 in the afternoon, did not include traditional students; they were all three months out of high school and only a few days into newly-found independence. Because of my past (and recent) experience teaching high school and middle school, I somehow felt relieved to find this class of traditionally-aged freshmen. I knew that my enthusiasm, humor, and interests would translate to students who were, quite honestly, close to my own age.

However, I quickly realized that the five-year age difference was a larger gap than I had anticipated. This class represented a different kind of student than I was when I started college. I went straight through, knowing exactly how to finish in four years, when to start interning before student teaching, and how to prepare myself for a job immediately after graduation. Of course, now less than 35 percent of college students graduate within four years, and only 56 percent of students finally earn their degree in six years (Eisen). Throughout the semester, though, I learned that these students were at MTSU because college is the next educational step after high school. Very few of them had concrete goals; very few of them had majors, and most of them had helicopter parents who tried to contact me at some point during the semester.

The biggest mistake that I made when coming into the college classroom as a first-time instructor was assuming that my students would share my common interest in *The Simpsons*. My theme for that first semester was “*The Simpsons* as Quality Television;” my students, though, were born in 1986, one year earlier than the birth of The Simpson family, who premiered for the first time as a short on *The Tracey Ullman Show* in 1987-88. *The Simpsons*, to them, was not groundbreaking; it was barely even interesting. Compared to such contemporary animation as *Adult Swim*, *Family Guy*, and *King of the Hill*, *The Simpsons* was old news. Also, many of my students were jumping on the cool, trendy bandwagon of those folks who say condescendingly, “I don’t watch TV;” however, most of them could carry a conversation about the most popular television shows of the day.

I was trapped in the “fun” theme I had created for myself; I tried to broaden the writing assignments throughout the semester so that my students would remain interested in their own writing. That, I quickly learned, is the key to student motivation—keep them focused on a collaborative in-class dialogue, but let their writings convey their individuality. The next spring, my theme for English 1010 was “TV and Audience,” and I have continued to widen the topics I choose in advance for my classes as explained through the three theme chapters of this dissertation.

3.1 Who Teaches First-Year Composition?

Very little research has been done to record statistics or to discuss who teaches FYC. Although she is not specifically referring only to FYC, Emily Toth, in her *Ms. Mentor* column for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, explains, “More than half of the

courses are now taught by part timers—who include paid-by-the-course local citizens, career instructors, graduate students, and visiting stars who swoop in to teach one course a week,” and she jokes, “The stars, who may be artists or politicians sharing their knowledge, are lauded and fawned over. Everyone else is at least mildly wretched” (par. 3). These “mildly wretched” instructors are teaching most of the undergraduate lower-division courses whereas tenured and tenure-track professors are focused on upper-division and graduate-level coursework, thesis and dissertation supervision, released time to meet research requirements, and service to the department and to the university. In *How the University Works*, author Marc Bousquet explains his bleak view of the evolving academic system:

More than 80 percent of the ‘faculty’ will be adjuncts; upper-division undergraduates will do much of the teaching of lower-division students. Tenure and curriculum will be the privilege of administrators. At most institutions, whole fields of the liberal arts — philosophy, history, music, literature — will no longer be represented by departments. Basketball coaches will earn as much as \$10-million a year, while “part-timers” teaching eight classes a year will earn less than the minimum wage. While 10 percent of undergraduates will not work at all, the remaining 90 percent will pursue degrees while working 40 hours a week serving lattes to the nonworking students, correcting their papers, and doing their laundry and nails. (par. 2)

This view is cynical, but is it the way most faculty members view the academic system?

Administration and athletics continue to swell while dwindling numbers of full-time faculty members strain to meet requirements of teaching, service, and research.

This situation forces departments, specifically those under budget constraints, to pay adjuncts a minimal fee for teaching introductory-level courses. Most departments only require one graduate degree; for the English department at MTSU, 18 hours of graduate-level work in English (or an M.A. in a field of Liberal Arts) is required, to be qualified to teach FYC. These adjuncts are not provided with benefits, and they make much less per class than even the Full-time Temporary (FTT) faculty members. FTTs teach five classes per semester, and they are guaranteed first a one-year contract and, then, may be renewed for a three-year contract which includes benefits and a living wage. However, these faculty members may also be M.A.-level hires, and they may also lack extensive supervision or pedagogical training. Joseph Harris, in "Undisciplined Writing," clarifies, "[T]he argument for better working conditions is better teaching. I can't imagine how a writing program can exploit its teachers and still hope to serve its students well. But I don't think we will improve how writing gets taught simply by raising salaries. We also need to change how we select and train the teachers in our programs, and how we support and evaluate their work" (164). This support and evaluation could make a difference in the way FTTs are viewed by their faculty peers.

As Figure 2 indicates, at MTSU in the Spring 2008 semester 197 sections of FYC (ENG1010/1020) were offered. Nineteen sections were taught by Tenured professors, 10 sections by Tenure-track Professors, 120 sections by Full-time Temporary Professors, 23 sections by Adjuncts, and 25 sections were taught by Teaching Assistants.

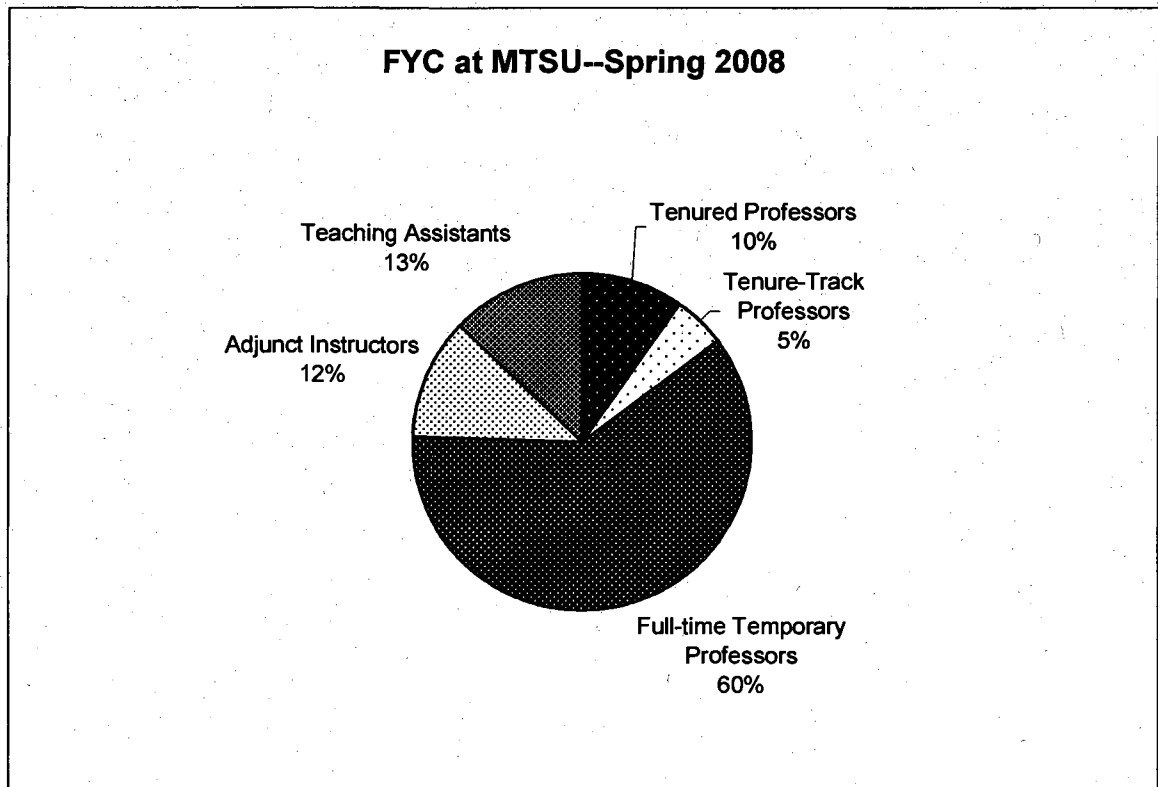


Figure 2

At MTSU in the Fall Semester of 2008, after a university-wide 5% budget cut due to the state recession, 205 sections of FYC (ENG1010/1020) were offered. Fourteen sections were taught by Tenured professors, 16 sections by Tenure-track Professors, 100 sections by Full-time Temporary Professors, 39 sections by Adjuncts, and 36 sections taught by Teaching Assistants (see fig. 3). The budget cut forced the department to hire more adjunct instructors, to assign more classes to Teaching Assistants who would have

otherwise been placed in the University Writing Center as tutors, and to be unable to replace leaving Full-time Temporary Instructors.

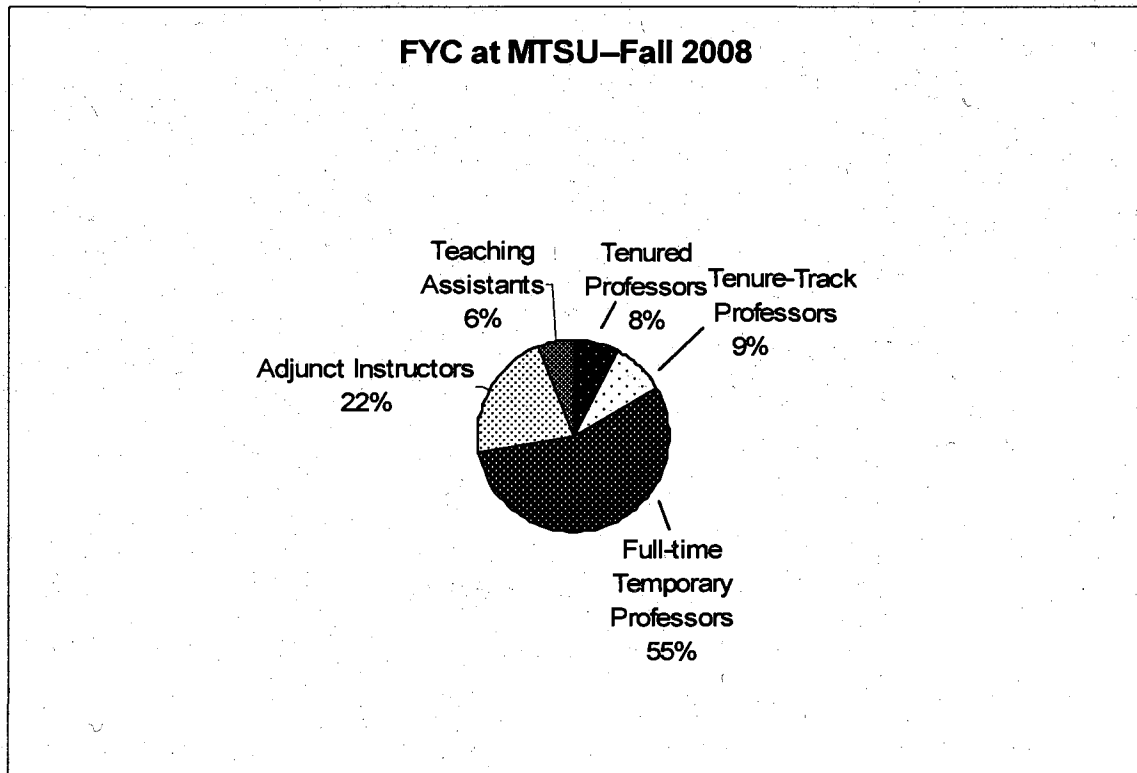


Figure 3

This seems to be indicative of public university course loads across the United States. In his blog *Digital Digs*, State University of New York (SUNY) professor Alexander Reid surmises, “The US Census indicates that in 2005 there were more than 14 million people enrolled as undergrads at two- and four-year institutions. I think it would be fair to estimate that at least a quarter of those people were in their first year (everyone gets to the first semester; not everyone makes it to year four). So that would be 3.5 million first-year students” (par. 1). He goes on to explain, “Not everyone takes FYC. Some place out; some go to colleges that do not have FYC programs. If there are 2.5 million students taking FYC in this fall semester, 25 students per class that works out neatly to 100,000

sections of FYC” (par. 1). This estimate means that many instructors teach the introductory writing course for English Departments and Writing Programs across the country. Reid explains his math to reach a best guess number of FYC professors:

The average FYC instructor teaches two sections per semester. That would be 50,000 people. You've got community college [professors] and college full-time instructors who might teach three or four. You've got graduate TAs who probably teach one. And you've got tenure-line faculty who might teach one per semester or year or every couple years, depending. Plus, some FYC programs are two-semester sequences. Others are just one, and so on. So it's really difficult to know without actually counting heads. Then somehow you'd have to account for folks who teach at more than one institution. (par. 2)

Fifty-thousand FYC professors seems like a large number, but it is feasible with Reid's consideration of another mathematical way to figure the total number of FYC instructors. He articulates, “Come at this another way. There's over 2000 four-year colleges, and at least that many community colleges. If every college has 10 people who teach composition that would be 40,000 people” (par. 3). These two equations work out to a similar estimation, and statistics from George S. Wykoff's 1940 article “Teaching Composition as a Career,” published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, supports these estimates. He found 12,500 sections of FYC were being offered per semester in average American universities in the academic year 1935-1936; thus, he estimated that between 3,500 and 6,000 instructors were teaching at that time (428). The growth in the United States' information-based society and the importance of a having college degree

imply that these numbers should be fairly accurate. Although, as FYC instructors, we must assume that very few of these faculty members are tenure-track. Many writing classes, as stated by Toth and Bousquet, must be staffed by adjuncts and FTTs.

Some departments, such as The University of Delaware Department of English, have written equity statements. In the UD "Internal Equity Statement," the department clarifies the teaching load:

The department is committed to maintaining a balance between lower division courses and upper division or graduate courses in our teaching assignments. Except in special circumstances dictated by contractual arrangement or curricular needs, those faculty members on an administered two/two load teach one lower-division course each semester. Priority in course assignments is given in the following order: tenure-track faculty, continuing non-tenure track faculty, graduate students, part time teachers. Exceptions to this priority order are made for the purpose of allowing PhD candidates to teach regular-term literature courses and thereby enhance their professional development. (par. 3)

Statements such as these may help with the individual loads of professors, put a more experienced face on the department, encourage newer faculty members to try their hand at upper-level classes, and allow experienced instructors to keep in touch with the college community.

3.2 Who Should Use Personal Experience Pedagogy?

Through experience and research, I have discovered that the majority of FYC courses at MTSU are taught by new instructors, part-time instructors, and temporary instructors. However, Personal Experience Pedagogy is specifically advocated for two groups of educators—new instructors and tenure-track professors. These two groups must most often be focused on their research areas of interest—tenure-track professors because they must publish and teach in their disciplines to be promoted and new teachers because they are often working toward a degree in an area other than rhetoric and composition.

Despite the lack of knowledge about the exact number of FYC instructors in the field, we know that the willingness of faculty to teach introductory courses in writing is beneficial to the entire university. This need is especially true of tenure-track faculty members. William A. Pannacker, writing as his pseudonym Thomas H. Benton, advises in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, “Many tenured faculty members avoid teaching introductory courses, surveys, and composition classes, even though those courses are the most important ones in the curriculum. They are the gateways into any major, and they are the public face of your discipline for students who will major in something else” (par. 5). He also asks of these professors, “Make your intro course legendary for being difficult and worth taking in spite of it — even for nonmajors. Support the dignity and importance of the core curriculum, and, in the process, college education as a whole” (par. 5). This request for tenure-track faculty to become the “face” of their department seems reasonable; however, it does ask of them—as does Personal Experience Pedagogy—to give up valuable upper-level or graduate-level teaching time as a good-will gesture for the department, the university, and for students in general. Also,

most faculty members will teach FYC at some point during their career, so if the experience can be beneficial to the faculty member's personal research and teaching preferences, then he or she may find the experience to be enjoyable and less of a "service" requirement.

Of course, it is also imperative for new teachers to have experience teaching composition courses to help them on the job market and to prepare them for a future of introductory course loads. Advice columnist "Dean Dad" for *Inside Higher Ed* recommends that universities consider the appeal of new teachers with experience teaching writing:

The appeal of the comp/rhet grads is that they've walked in fully intending to teach composition. They aren't (presumably) pining for the English Lit job at Oberlin; they actually want to teach freshman comp over and over again, since it's their first love. From this side of the desk, that's appealing...I'm told – though this isn't my field – that the folks in rhet/comp programs are also steeped in the latest research in how to teach composition most effectively. That may be 'beneath' the elite institutions, but... if I'm hiring someone whose primary responsibility – sometimes sole responsibility – will be teaching Comp I and II, over and over again, I'm much more likely to go with the composition specialist than with the disappointed Milton scholar who's willing to slum. (par. 5)

Of course, this implies a degree in the field of composition and rhetoric, but that is not at all necessary. I, through PEP, hope to encourage these new instructors to find passion for the teaching of FYC, to help them find a job, and to find happiness in their chosen career.

3.3 Is PEP Unique?

Some aspects of Personal Experience Pedagogy may not be unique to only this pedagogy; however, it is the combination of these methodologies and the merger of theories and pedagogies in its definition that makes it a worthwhile approach.

Perhaps the most distinctive portion of Personal Experience Pedagogy is in its use of Motivational Systems Theory, a foundation of educational theory, as the backbone for these ideas rather than the use of one or two composition theories. This is both a positive aspect and a negative one since most composition theory is written with the goal of helping the student become a better writer, helping the instructor become a better writer, or giving the student and instructor a common terminology for communicating in the composition classroom, which is positive. However, little is written about the need for instructors who are not scholars of composition and rhetoric to find success in the teaching of FYC, which is the negative aspect of only having student-related studies and pedagogies. These resources from Composition Theory are discussed in the Review of Literature (Chapter 2) and in the following theme chapters (Chapters 4-6).

3.4 Writing Across the Curriculum

As writing coursework is mandated across the curriculum—not just in English classes—PEP might also be beneficial to those instructors in other disciplines who are asked to teach a writing class or who choose to use writing as a learning tool in their content classes; Susan McLeod's description of WAC programs and their growth is discussed fully in Chapter Two. However, the use of Personal Experience Pedagogy in WAC may stretch beyond the English department. As Joseph Harris explains,

“Composition has many friends in the academy (and in the public) beyond English. My experiences suggest that many faculty across the disciplines are interested in and good at teaching first-year writing. We should ask them to join us in that work” (166). Of course, traditional WAC programs incorporate general education writing credits and writing-intensive coursework in English departments FYC requirements; however, PEP can also be used in other courses across the curriculum (other than discipline-specific FYC courses). Because the framework for FYC is given, it may be manipulated, adjusted, or used as is for instructors who are asked to teach writing but who have never been specifically trained in writing pedagogy. The popular culture theme could be appropriate for a course in cultural studies, history, film studies, mass communication, recording industry, business, environmental sciences, speech communication, or political science. The literature theme could be used for courses in departments such as education, political science, history, and cultural studies, and the politics theme could be used in political science, history, cultural studies, mass communication, speech communication, environmental sciences, film studies, women’s studies, diversity studies, and ethics.

3.5 Guidelines for FYC at MTSU

Instructors of FYC at MTSU have very specific guidelines to follow; below (fig. 4 and fig. 5) are the highlights for what is expected in English 1010 “Expository Writing” and English 1020 “Research and Argumentative Writing.” English 1010 requires personal reflection and response writing even though the students in these courses are typically straight out of high school where they have mainly focused on research. The

reasoning behind this decision is best explained by Donald Murray in *A Writer Teaches Writing*:

To develop a writing process students usually have to write on a subject on which they are an authority. They have to know the subject well, have an inventory of information, a point of view or opinion, and an audience which can be instructed by a draft. This is exactly the opposite of the experience most of them have had in school, when they have written on subjects of someone else's choosing and on which they have far less information than the reader-teacher. That, unfortunately, is what often happens in academic writing. In writing *writing* the writer is the authority and has an abundance of information, and the problem is to distill that information so that it has meaning for readers who know far less about the subject than the writer. (239)

Students who are allowed to feel like an authority on their subject—to teach the teacher—may find their assignments less daunting, and may in turn, also find their writer's voice.

The English 1020 guidelines require argumentative writing and research writing.

Although these may be the two types of writing that students are more familiar with from high school, their background in English 1010 should help the majority of students find topics that are more personal and interesting to them than the traditional research paper that is bought and sold online. These MTSU FYC guidelines (fig. 4 and fig. 5) are specific to the English discipline, but they also demand some understanding of pedagogical theory in order to put them into practice.

English 1010

English 1010, Expository Writing, helps students achieve this goal by providing an introduction to critical thinking and writing. Students are introduced to strategies for writing purposeful, coherent, and adequately developed informative and persuasive essays. Students' competencies will be measured by the following objectives:

1. Students will improve their ability to generate a writing plan with informed writing objectives.
2. Students will draw writing content from experience, imagination, and outside resources (e.g., printed materials, interviews, films).
3. Students will be introduced to strategies for synthesizing and analyzing different types of text and material.
4. Students will gain a greater sense of the process of writing: prewriting, drafting, rewriting, and editing.
5. Students will write out-of-class essays that illustrate their knowledge of the writing process and at least one in-class essay that illustrates their on-demand writing ability.
6. Students will write at least four essays of 1000 words each.
7. Students will be able to analyze their writing strengths and weaknesses.
8. Students will improve their ability to develop a thesis clearly with a variety of supporting evidence (e.g., definition, illustration, description, comparison and contrast, causal analysis).
9. Students will learn to adapt their writing to audience and purpose.
10. Students will learn to integrate and document primary sources accurately.
11. Students will develop the ability to vary the structure and length of sentences and paragraphs.
12. Students will learn to write with grammatical competence and to use conventional punctuation and spelling.

Figure 4

These Tennessee Board of Regents mandated and approved guidelines determine the syllabi, assignments, and course goals in the outlined course designs in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. These chapters, which outline the three sample themes that demonstrate the design of Personal Experience Pedagogy, are focused on popular culture, literature, and politics. These three areas are the most popular sub-genres within the English curriculum for new and experienced English department faculty as well. Within these three themes, the basic goals of FYC at MTSU—improved writing and writing practices, strengthened ability to interpret and to internalize text, gained knowledge of research and the incorporation of research, and community-building—are addressed through a series of course necessities.

English 1020

English 1020, Research and Argumentative Writing, is a continuation of the work begun in English 1010. Students should note that many of the course objectives remain the same. However, students will be expected to gain greater competency in those areas. The additional objectives students must achieve are highlighted below.

1. Students will improve their ability to generate a writing plan with informed writing objectives.
2. Students will draw writing content from experience, imagination, and outside resources (e.g., printed materials, interviews, films).
3. Students will be introduced to strategies for synthesizing and analyzing different types of text and material.
4. Students will gain a greater sense of the process of writing: prewriting, drafting, rewriting, and editing.
5. Students will write out-of-class essays that illustrate their knowledge of the writing process and at least one in-class essay that illustrates their on-demand writing ability.
6. Students will be able to analyze their writing strengths and weaknesses.
7. Students will improve their ability to develop a thesis clearly with a variety of supporting evidence (e.g., definition, illustration, description, comparison and contrast, causal analysis).
8. Students will learn to adapt their writing to audience and purpose.
9. Students will learn to integrate and document primary sources accurately.
10. Students will develop the ability to vary the structure and length of sentences and paragraphs.
11. Students will learn to write with grammatical competence and to use conventional punctuation and spelling.
12. Students will draw writing content from primary and secondary sources.
13. Students will write at least four research-based essays of 1250 words each
14. Students will write at least one critical analysis of a longer literary work (e.g., fiction, creative non-fiction, play).

Figure 5

3.6 Outline of Sample PEP Course Design and Rationale

The following are brief descriptions of how the three sample course designs will meet the goals and objectives of English 1010, Expository Writing, and English 1020, Research and Argumentative Writing, at MTSU. As Lindemann defines in *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, the general principle of course design is “giving students enough guided practice in composing that they become more fluent, effective writers at the end of the course than they were at the beginning.” She continues, “To attain this goal we make pedagogical decisions based on what we know about how students learn to write. Our assumptions about composing, in turn, depend on theories, research, and

practice...and if we haven't had the time to read and assimilate the theories and research that could reveal the answer, we must look to those who have" (254). The theories on which these course designs are based are mostly Donald Murray's and other scholars from composition and rhetoric research.

Because Ford's Motivational Systems Theory is applicable mainly to instructors in PEP, it is also important to see how it can be used to motivate students. The following description of the course design also includes examples of how MST is incorporated into FYC.

3.6.1 Syllabus

The syllabus outlines the course goals for FYC; as Murray defines it, "The syllabus is one of the primary ways of establishing the organization of a writing course. It can set the tone of the course, establish ground rules, and let the students know what the course will attempt to do and how it will attempt to do it" (*A Writer* 89). Each of the following examples sets the tone, theme, assignments, and expectations for the course design. The first sample syllabus, used in the popular culture theme, states, "We will be concerned with both the process of writing and the actual text that you will produce. We will focus on improving your knowledge of what makes an effective college-level essay and will spend time looking at strategies that will improve your papers on the levels of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics" (fig. 9). This strategy is taken directly from the guidelines for the course. The syllabus also specifies such policies as the number of essays to be written, the word count of each of those essays, and the application of on-demand writing for future testing and placement situation practice.

The syllabus is applicable to MST through two of the 17 General Principles, “The Principle of Goal Activation” and “The Principle of Goal Salience.” These two principles determine that there must be reasoning behind any action and that goals must be clearly defined in order to “transform concerns into intentions” (Ford 220). These motivational strategies define the purpose of a course syllabus.

3.6.2 Journaling and Class Activities

Murray argues, “Until there is that evolving text, the teacher’s materials are abstract, unrelated to the student’s knowledge or experience. When there is a text, however, the instructor and the class can begin to discover what each writer knows and needs to know” (*A Writer* 83). The use of journaling, with sample journal prompts, and the more creative activities that are outlined in each of the following three chapters not only contribute to the goals of FYC at MTSU, but they also allow students to have a starting point, a text from which to add to the discussion, revise for an essay, or just practice thinking critically. Journaling allows students a low-risk opportunity to gain “strategies for synthesizing and analyzing different types of text and material,” and it encourages students to practice their on-demand writing (“Guidelines”). Journaling can also teach brainstorming as a part of the writing process. Patricia Cartwright and Lynne Noone, in “Critical Imagination: A Pedagogy for Engaging Pre-Service Teachers in the University Classroom,” explain the types of journaling that may be used to engage students:

Some teachers and students see journaling as akin to diary writing, a style of “informal” writing that describes personal thoughts and feelings. Others see journaling as reportage, a style of writing which recounts events and

material, and which gradually allows students to become familiar with both discipline content and language, and with the ways of writing for the academy. While each of these forms can be useful developmentally, it is another form of journaling, academic journaling, which we find the most powerful form of writing to engage the students' critical imagination. Like diary writing, it continues to privilege the "voice" of the writer, but places this "voice" among [others] (par. 39).

Many students in my classes often use journal writings as the impetus for future full-length essays because of the way the topics encourage engagement with their academic orientation. Of course, journals can be used in a less utilitarian way in the FYC classroom as well. Peter Elbow, in *Writing for Learning--Not Just for Demonstrating Learning*, reminds his reader that journals can be "think pieces" and nothing more to create a low-risk, non-punitive writing situation (2). The sample journals in the following designs can be used either way the instructor prefers.

Creative class activities may also help instructors of FYC to meet these guidelines. Murray lists six elements for successful class activities: keep it fun; failure is o.k.; do not make the activity part of the assignment; keep the subject matter open; do the activity with the students; and supplement the activity with a handout or something that the students can keep and use (*A Writer* 108-9). These guidelines are met through several sample class activities and lesson plans in the following theme chapters. For example, the "Homeless Student" activity discussed in Chapter 6 specifically meets the requirements for students to "draw writing content from experience, imagination, and outside resources," to "synthesiz[e] and analyz[e] different types of text and material," and to

“adapt their audience and purpose” (“Guidelines”). Many of the following activities also meet these same standards of classroom functionality while also allowing the students to become more effective critical thinkers. In Chapter 4, the class activity is outlined through a sample lesson plan. Although this detailed planning is not essential for effective teaching of FYC, it may help for new instructors—or for any instructor who is attempting to use a new pedagogical method or someone else’s course design—to have a specific set of goals for a class period. The outline should be manipulated as used based on time and student reactions.

Daily classes comprised of varying types and topics of activities can also be supported by MST. “The Principle of Incremental Versus Transformational Change” advocates that people are more likely to learn in small steps which allow them to gain knowledge to change without giving up ideals, past practices, or prior knowledge. Students may be intimidated by receiving large bundles of new information, and therefore, may not interpret the information correctly, or they may shut down rather than being receptive. Murray suggests that classes be divided into twenty-minute periods (*A Writer* 108); students can be motivated more easily because it is less likely that they will become inattentive in that amount of time.

3.6.3 Assignments

Many FYC instructors rely on modes to teach writing; however, throughout my career as a writing instructor, I have seen that, in other disciplines, students will most often be asked to complete a task through writing and it will be up to students to decide what rhetorical strategies must be used in order to most effectively complete the assignment (i.e. compare/contrast, problem/solution, summary/response). Because of this

choice, the following assignments have general guidelines for formatting, purpose, audience, and style; however, the type of essay written must be determined by students. As Murray asserts, “The open assignment encourages the productive relationship in which the student teaches the instructor the subject while the instructor teaches the writing” (*A Writer* 99). This give-and-take relationship in the classroom encourages a true dialogue, and it opens the classroom to democratic ideals supported by liberatory pedagogy. However, in the selected texts for each class, students are still encouraged to read about different rhetorical strategies, and we discuss some of the more common types in class. These assignments do not ask for one specific type of essay though the purpose may dictate a certain strategy.

The assignments, however, meet the guidelines for FYC at MTSU by requiring a certain level of personal reflection, by meeting the length requirements, by asking students to respond to the world around them or to textual prompts, and by encouraging a writing plan (and the writing process with due dates for three drafts). Most of the following assignments specifically outline what will be assessed as well:

The final draft of this assignment will be evaluated on general levels: how effective your introduction is, how well you organize the entire essay and individual internal paragraphs, how well you use primary and secondary support (examples and details) to describe your specified topic and support your thesis, and how well the overall paper is edited for grammar, mechanics, and spelling. (fig. 9)

As the assignments outline effective strategies for essay writing, most also outline poor writing techniques (and red flags) that the student should avoid. This addition helps the

students to avoid mistakes that I have seen when using the assignment in the past or, possibly, even my pet peeves. The assignment sheet is more objective when the students have the complete picture of how I view the assignment. A few of the assignment sheets do not feature a “Traps to Avoid” section, so instructors using PEP may look at both options and decide for themselves.

In Motivational Systems Theory, Ford advocates for clear standards as a tool for motivation, and that is the purpose of “Traps to Avoid.” “The Flexible Standards Principle” and “The Optimal Challenge Principle” explain the reasoning for assignments that must have some flexibility for student interests and interpretations and maintains that “challenging but attainable standards enhance motivation” (220). The assignment itself can result in enhanced student motivation but only if the instructor considers the students’ interests when writing the assignment.

The use of Personal Experience Pedagogy requires that the most important part of assigning these essay topics, though, is in providing models and allowing the students to write about open-ended topics of their choosing. Murray explains that “Although teachers who are most proud of their assignments believe that they are setting high standards, in fact their students often do far less than they would if they had the higher standard of finding their own subjects and developing them” (*A Writer* 94). Two examples of clearly defined writing topics are included in the theme chapters—for those instructors who fear an assignment that is too open-ended; however, the assignments still allow students some choice in the topic.

MST also encourages the idea that the motivator provide an effective model for the kind of motivation and enthusiasm that he or she is trying to reciprocate. “The

Principle of Direct Evidence” and “The Reality Principle” both advocate for modeling of the desired behavior. In these principles, Ford maintains, “Clear, specific evidence is needed to influence capability and context beliefs,” and he also explains that the students need “real” evidence of the importance and design of what they are being asked to do (220). The “evidence” of a modeled essay provides students with the opportunity to discover their assignment through a real example rather than to guess at the instructor’s expectations.

In each of the following chapters, at least one complete model essay is included. Also, models of introductory, concluding, and body paragraphs are integrated into the assigning of each essay. “Many students, in fact most freshmen, may have no common idea of what is meant by such simple terms as *essay*, *argument*, *narrative*, *fiction*, *non-fiction*, or *research paper*,” Murray explains, “They may well have a clear sense of what another teacher meant by those terms, but the students need a model in a closed assignment, especially if the teacher has a model in mind” (*A Writer* 97). If the professor expects a certain type of organization, vocabulary, or other standards of traditional American university essay writing, then the students who do not (and may not) meet these standards should be provided a model to encourage transparency and success.

3.6.4 Communication, Visual Rhetoric, and Presentations

Each course design includes some form of communication other than traditional typed essays. In the popular culture theme chapter, the students are asked, in groups, to write an “Oral Essay,” which is then presented to the class. This assignment asks the students to collaborate and organize a presentation in the same way that they would

choose to organize an essay; then, they use visual or auditory clips or images as the support for their argument. In the politics chapter, the students create a flag for their own country, which they then explain and justify through a group essay assignment. This feature of the course design meets two requirements for FYC at MTSU: “Students will improve their ability to develop a thesis clearly with a variety of supporting evidence (e.g., definition, illustration, description, comparison and contrast, causal analysis)” and “Students will learn to adapt their writing to audience and purpose” (“Guidelines”).

These assignments also meet a larger goal of FYC, which is to prepare students for future writing situations, and many of our students will go on to complete effective real-world writings that include visual components (charts, graphs, illustrations, Power Points) or speeches and presentations. “I am a successful teacher whenever I can get my students to do my teaching for me,” Murray explains; “when a student has an opportunity...to make an informal or formal presentation on a success they have just achieved, that presentation has an authority for the students that I can never have. It also reinforces the lesson learned by the student making the presentation” (*A Writer* 103). Therefore, preparing the class for these types of activities can only benefit the student and his or her peers.

Motivational Systems Theory also defines motivation as needing more than one intended outcome to be truly important to the participant. “The Multiple Goals Principle” and “The Principle of Goal Alignment” are good descriptors of MTSU’s Guidelines for FYC. Ford explains that multiple goals can strengthen motivation and that these goals “must be aligned rather than in conflict to enhance motivation” (220). Presentations and oral communication should not be assigned as a separate component to the teaching of

FYC, but they should be used in correlation with the writing and communicatory goals of the class.

3.6.5 Assessment

Assessment is a difficult task for any writing teacher, new or experienced. Murray explains what a course grade should mean:

It is the work I am grading, not the student. It is work that can be shown to the student, to colleagues, to administrators; it is work that relates directly to the quality of the reference that would be given for the student when that student applies to more advanced courses or for a job. It is a grade that represents my evaluation of what the student has accomplished and demonstrated at the end of the course after the student has had the benefit of extensive writing and extensive reaction to that writing. (*A Writer* 143)

The assessment for the entire course is included in the syllabus and is an example of how a student might be evaluated over the entire semester.

Ford, in his definition of MST, spends a great deal of time discussing assessment. “The Feedback Principle,” “The Principle of Unitary Functioning,” and “The Principle of Human Respect” are important pieces in this puzzle. First, as a basis for the assessment of goals, Ford advocates that people must be treated as whole persons and with respect; this humane treatment for students allows for the furthering of classroom motivation. Also, Ford identifies one major concern of assessment: “Goals lose their potency in the absence of clear and informative feedback” (220). Students are less likely to keep trying to improve their writing and less likely to participate in the process pedagogy (the revision and editing) that instructors who apply PEP methodologies utilize if they are not

getting any substantial help toward improving their writing. The primary purpose of assessment is to help students improve; the final grade is more of an impression of their overall success.

A sample gradesheet is also provided for each of the three themed-course designs. These gradesheets advocate primary trait grading, which focuses on each specific guideline as outlined above for FYC essays at MTSU. This type of grading places the focus on the guidelines each student is expected to meet on each piece of writing throughout the semester rather than on the work done over the entire semester as a whole (as in portfolio grading). Unlike holistic grading, primary trait assessment allows the student to see where every point was taken off and to get a more accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of his/her writing. In *Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment*, Barbara E. Walvoord and Virginia Johnson Anderson outline the positive attributes of primary trait assessment. They contend that “establishing clear criteria for each assignment” allows the teacher to do the following:

- Save time when grading; make the process of grading consistent and fair;
- norm the grading of teaching assistants; reveal what needs to be taught;
- identify essential relationships between content and processes; clarify expectations for students; help students participate in their own learning;
- help students evaluate their own work; save time having to justify contested grades, because such grievances will be decreased; help student peers provide constructive feedback; and sequence assignments such that each builds on previous learning. (65-92)

For these reasons, primary trait assessment (PTA) is used in the Personal Experience Pedagogy designs. The rubrics are fairly easy to transfer; however, each chapter has a slightly different version of a primary trait grading scale, which could be adopted to fit most assignments.

3.7 Conclusion

Ford's "The Equifinality Principle" is defined by the statement, "There are many ways to motivate humans—if progress is slow, keep trying!" (220). Students are capable of success in the classroom; the following course designs are meant to help both students and instructors find and enjoy this success. The next three chapters outline specific examples of the course designs as described above. However, none of the elements are essential to the success of the others; the assignments build on each other in complexity, but the topics can be switched, re-ordered, or taken out entirely, and the other parts can still function as a successful course. The appeal of Personal Experience Pedagogy is how easily adaptable it can be to a FYC instructor's personal preferences for teaching FYC. The primary goals of these designs are providing models from the instructors and for the students; allowing the assignments to be fairly open-ended (with guidelines to prevent plagiarism and generic topics); engaging the students through texts and activities with an interesting theme; and assessing the students based on the guidelines for the course as set by the university and the department.

CHAPTER 4:

“Something to Say:” Using Popular Culture in Freshman Composition

“You don't write because you want to say something, you write because you've got something to say.”

—F. Scott Fitzgerald

4.0 Introduction

When I worked in the University Writing Center at MTSU for two years in 2002-2004, all Teaching Assistants and most professors of Freshman Composition used the portfolio method of teaching, assigning and grading student writing. For writing assistants, this meant that we would see the same assignment from every 1010 student for weeks at a time. The first assignment of the semester was a descriptive essay titled “Remembering a Person.” In this assignment, students were asked to describe in two and a half to three pages someone important in their lives. With few limits on the way this person should be described, students reverted to their most base tendencies. I constantly thought to myself, “If I see one more ‘Mama’ essay today...” And, of course, I did. If the essay were not written about dear ole mom, then it was about Grandma, Mr. Saxophone—the inspirational band director, or their former best friend from high school who died tragically on Spring Break, prom night, or immediately after graduation. During one of these sessions where Grandma was being described to me as a little grey-haired lady who bakes the most delicious cookies, I needed variety.

“Does your grandmother ever watch soap operas? Like *Passions*?” I asked.

The student—looking slightly bemused, then, slowly smiling—said “Well, when she watches *The Bold and the Beautiful*, she cusses like a sailor every time Brook and Ridge get back together” (Watkins).

And an essay, with interesting and original details, was born. The student was willing to scrap the sentimentality from her first draft and fully describe her grandmother as a person with real interests and a real past. She chose an event to describe that represented her grandmother's most unique characteristics, limited the characteristics to a manageable number for a three-page essay, and described her with humor and love.

The use of popular culture in the FYC classroom should not overwhelm the content of the class, which should be the writing process. As Gary Tate, in "Empty Pedagogical Space and Silent Students," argues, the classroom is not "an empty pedagogical space that needs to be filled with 'content'" (269). Its use can be as simple as a reference to inspire students to individualize the people in their lives based on certain interests and personality traits or as complex as asking them to deal with a social issue from the perspective of its portrayal in popular culture. As cultural studies, and in turn popular culture, become more popular in the various fields of non-traditional English scholarship, the trend for professors to study and research in this area, along with their more traditional interests, will continue to grow. Inspiration may come from a television show or film that a professor loves, or hates, or from something a student says in class that sparks interest for other students. However, its effectiveness in the class is attainable only if the professor is passionate about its use, the basic premise of any theme or content used in Personal Experience Pedagogy. In this chapter, I explore how professors may use their loves within the field of popular culture to excite their students while also accessing the students' frames of reference and reviving the instructors' passion to write.

4.1 Defining Popular Culture

Popular culture is, most often, studied from the perspective of cultural studies. As John Storey in “Introduction: The Study of Popular Culture and Cultural Studies” states, “The object of study in cultural studies is not culture defined in a narrow sense, as the object of supposed aesthetic excellence (‘high art’) nor, in an equally narrow sense, as a process of aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual development; but culture understood...as a ‘particular way of life, either of a people, a period or a group’” (xi). Because popular culture and cultural studies are so closely intertwined, their differences are important to understand as well. Storey goes on to explain that popular culture, “the cultures of everyday life,” is integral to cultural studies but that knowledge of cultural studies is not essential to understanding popular culture (xi). Popular culture is a sub-category within the much broader cultural studies that deals with the culture that is consumed most widely. Storey argues that “culture’s importance derives from the fact that it helps to constitute the structure and shape the history” (xi), and most popular culture theorists argue that popular culture has the potential to most widely impact the structure and shape of a country’s future by so heavily and forcefully impacting each generation. Marxist interpretations of the manipulation of and struggle for power are common within popular culture studies; however, culture may also be studied from a political perspective, which is discussed in Chapter 5.

4.2 Popular Culture and Composition: A Literature Review

Popular culture has also been studied from the perspective of writing. Diane Penrod, in the Preface to *Miss Grundy Doesn’t Teach Here Anymore*, writes,

“Inclusiveness is only part of what makes cultural studies so intriguing for use in the composition class...The dependency of popular culture on rhetoric cannot go unheeded. If the use of language is truly what marks us as being human, then we cannot discount how people effectively use language and symbols in various social contexts to influence individuals’ choices” (ix). Because popular culture can include, or can be included in, the study of semiotics, a composition class that includes visual methods of composing effectively is an environment that almost demands the study of popular culture, especially film, television, and advertising. However, as Penrod argues in “Pop Goes the Content: Teaching the Ugly and the Ordinary,” students view popular culture “as something being done to them rather than topics to explore” (5). This dichotomy between the way culture is seen by academics and the way it is seen by students should allow for interesting classroom discussions. The discussions will also allow professors to see more deeply into their students, to learn who they are rather than what they like or dislike.

Cultural Studies scholar Henry Giroux has also addressed the issue. In his article, “Disturbing the Peace: Writing in the Cultural Studies Classroom,” he argues that a classroom devoted to cultural studies, not writing, can even become a reflective writing environment because of the nature of the subject matter: “My use of writing assignments was closely linked to getting students to theorize their own experiences rather than articulate the meaning of other peoples’ [sic] theories...to get students to examine how representations signify and position students through the institutional and ideological authority they carry in the dominant culture” (par. 21). Most of the work relating composition and cultural studies has been completed by scholars of rhetoric and composition, though. John Trimbur’s 1988 article “Cultural Studies and the Teaching of

Writing” was the first to make the case for connecting the two areas. James Berlin, Diana George, and John Trimbur have, perhaps, been the most prolific writers in the area. Berlin situated the debate in his 1991 article “Composition Studies and Cultural Studies” and in his influential collection *Cultural Studies in the English Classroom*. However, George and Trimbur have taken the debate out of the political and controversial realm and into the commonplace practices of the composition classroom. Their chapter “Cultural Studies and Composition” is a comprehensive approach to the history and pedagogy behind cultural studies in the writing class and a rationale for the growth of popular culture studies as well. As they argue, “We expect, furthermore, that the study of writing will continue to benefit from the appearance of cultural studies” (86). I, through PEP, use this expectation to the benefit of the instructor and the students.

4.3 Integrating Popular Culture with the Writing Process

Popular culture should be (and has been) used in FYC classrooms with different themes and content areas. Just as film adaptations of canonized literary texts have inspired countless assignments, these films on their own, as well as many other products of popular culture, are texts to be studied. Penrod notes that, “Popular culture is a natural subject for composition because it greatly shapes the way cultural memory is formed, how public and private identities are constructed, and how lifestyle decisions are promoted” (12). There are several reasons for encouraging students to use popular culture to inspire their writing. Penrod explains that one of the most beneficial reasons for students to use popular culture:

The excessive commodification of popular culture and its extreme lack of connectedness to historical events have made learning from music, movies, and media technology a shallow experience for most. The constant stimulation and hyperreality present in much of current popular culture are apparent to many. A large number of students in our classes realize that they are constructed schizophrenically in popular culture, simultaneously portrayed in the media as sexual and chaste, violator and victim, slacker and workaholic, dysfunctional and overachieving.

("Preface" ix)

If the goal of FYC is to allow students to both reflect and respond, popular culture and analysis of the students' lives within popular culture should provide an excellent opportunity for these actions to occur within student writing. However, in order to successfully use popular culture, professors must demand that their students create meaningful criteria for evaluation of the material so that students do not resort to their initial like/dislike reactions. As Sanford Tweetie argues in his article "Expatriating Students From Their Television Homelands: The Defamiliarization of Popular Culture," "We teachers who use pop culture want our students to develop distance, to be critics, not simply consumers. We want them...to develop more sophisticated viewpoints" (31). To develop these viewpoints, students must be not only challenged by the assignments, but they also must see the professor's passion for the theme, for teaching, and for the students' success.

4.4 Sample Course Design

Theme: Kids Can Be So Cruel

In Chapter Three, I explain my course design for a survey of popular culture course within 1010 that can be adapted for classroom use by anyone. Because popular culture is my secondary interest, I have used it in each of my English 1010 “Expository Writing” courses. This specific course design was used in the Spring 2006 semester.

In this course, I applied all of the techniques developed for Personal Experience Pedagogy. I wrote each assignment, as a model for the students, based on my passion for popular culture. I allowed the students to bring in their own interests within popular culture in each of the assignments. I also modeled sections of each assignment for my students using my own interest areas and the theme for the class “Kids Can Be So Cruel.” The theme arose from my own writings during the previous semester. As with most Teaching Assistants, during the Fall semester, I was enrolled in classes while I taught. In Dr. David Lavery’s Introduction to Film Studies, a doctoral-level introduction to the theory and application of film studies at the appropriate level, I wrote a theoretical introduction to the films of Sophia Coppola (i.e. *Lick the Star*, *The Virgin Suicides*, *Lost in Translation*, and *Marie Antoinette*). While studying her major themes, I realized that teenage cruelty was a theme of her two earliest films, perhaps, because that is such a universally-experienced subject.

The universal nature of this theme made it an attractive starting point for my first use of many aspects of popular culture in a single semester. I had taught previous courses using “The Simpsons and Quality Television” and “Television and Audience” as themes, but I wanted to broaden my writing assignments to improve the students’ chances of

being attractive to more students. With this theme, I could consistently model assignments for my students, while encouraging them to branch out from these original ideas. By the time I actually reached the film portion of the class, I did not even use Coppola's films, but their inspiration provided me with the spark for five solid assignments.

This course design is also based on the description given in Chapter 3 and is focused on Murray's *A Writer Teaches Writing* and Ford's *Motivating Humans* among the work of other scholars of composition and rhetoric. Each segment of the course is defined both separately and in relation to one another.

The theme "Kids Can Be So Cruel" allows for many thought-provoking journal assignments and class activities. Journaling is an interesting way to begin a class period because, as advocated by Elbow, Murray, Cartwright, and Noone, students can often get their passions, emotions, and biases on paper before the entire class begins to discuss the day's topic. Then, at the end of class, students can participate in a post-task journal exercise where they answer the same, or similar questions to decide whether or not their feelings have changed. The following example is a prompt that works well toward the beginning of the course when the students are fairly new to college.

On-task Writing:

Please respond to the following:

"Freedom has nothing to do with the lack of training; it can only be the product of training. You're not free to move unless you've learned to walk, and not free to play the piano unless you practice. Nobody is capable of free speech unless he knows how to use the language, and such knowledge is not a gift; it has to be learned and worked at." [Northup Frye]

Figure 6

After the journal, the class will begin with a discussion of what the quote means. Ford's "The Principle of Goal Salience" invites students to determine reasons behind their

thoughts on the subject (220), and so when the ten minutes of class discussion have expired, the students get into groups of three and decide their group answer, which has to be unanimous. The groups each write three supporting points for their position. The groups share their points with the rest of the class. Then, at the end of class, the students reflect on the class activities and re-answer the previous question. Hopefully, they are taking into consideration the opposing viewpoints from groups other than their own.

Post-task Writing:

After today's class discussion, do you feel any differently about the Frye quote from your previous journal entry? How? Why? Why not?

Figure 7

Class activities are often self-determining for themes in popular culture, which lends itself to clipping songs, films, television shows, or viral videos. Figure 8 shows one way in which a television show can contribute to the activities of the class. The entire episode can be shown or just clipped for the students.

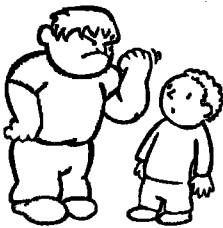
Lesson Plan:

- A. On-task Writing: Do government officials deserve the same level of respect as any stranger? Does this change based on your motivations for speaking with/writing to them? Have you ever had any dealings with an elected official? What elected official do you respect the most?
- B. Discuss journal entries
- C. Watch *The West Wing* episode
- D. Discuss the purpose of the Presidential Cabinet as portrayed in popular culture/the media.
- E. Homework: Revision workshop on Tuesday, Draft Essay 3
- F. Reminders: Bring text to class, Bring two copies of Essay 3 to class on Thursday

Figure 8

Of course, students should be asked to watch the episode before they come to class online or to buy/rent the DVD as a required text. However, if the clip/episode is essential to a writing assignment in class, as any instructor would for a course reading assignment, it can be used for a group presentation in class or as the subject of a quiz to be sure that all students are on the same page for a class activity.

The figure below (9) is the syllabus for the course, with specific requirements included for Middle Tennessee State University ("Guidelines"). Figure 10 is the course schedule, taught as a three-hour course meeting once a week.



English 1010—Expository Writing

Theme: Kids can be SO Cruel

Professor Stacia Watkins

Spring 2006
T 6:10-9:00 pm
Office:
Office phone:
Office Hours:
Email:

COURSE GOALS
English 1010 is the first course in your two-semester freshman writing sequence. We will be concerned with both the process of writing and the actual text that you will produce. We will focus on improving your knowledge of what makes an effective college-level essay and will spend time looking at strategies that will improve your papers on the levels of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. In order to generate ideas for our class discussions and writing assignments, we will view television series, read models of non-fiction writing in *Common Culture*, and do supplemental reading as needed. **Being "present" in 1010 entails more than being physically present. This is not a lecture course; it is a demanding, fast-paced course requiring reading, writing, and participation in class discussions.**

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

- *HHH: Hodges' Harbrace Handbook*, 15th edition, by Webb, Miller, and Homer
- *FC: Surviving Freshman Composition*, 2nd edition by Smith and Smith
- *Common Culture*, 4th edition, by Petracca and Sorapure
- Any digital material presented over email, the UWC website, or WebCT is the equivalent of a required text

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- Access to the internet (WebCT) and word processing software (**MS Word only**)
- One-subject notebook for daily in-class writings (by Tuesday, January 24)
- E-mail address **that you check regularly**

EVALUATION AND GRADING SCALE
To pass the course and earn three credit hours, you must earn an overall class average of C or above. Although I will use the grade "D" in grading assignments, **anyone receiving an overall grade "D" or below will not pass the class.**
Note: Because you own the essay that you write, I will use an evaluation form when I grade instead of making comments on the papers. To calculate your grade, I will divide the percentage of the points you earn on the essay by the total possible points on the form.
Use this scale to convert points to letter grades: 1000-895=A / 894-865 B+ / 864-795=B / 794-765=C+ / 764-695=C / 694-595 = D / 594 and below = F
*First time 1010 students who have met all course requirements may be given an "N" instead of an "F" for the final grade. This grade is only possible for those who have met the attendance policy and turned in all assignments.

GRADES

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Diagnostic (Essay One) | 50 pts. |
| Essay Two | 200 pts. |
| Essay Three | 200 pts. |
| Essay Four | 250 pts. |
| Class Presentation | 100 pts. |
| Class Participation: homework, class work, workshops, quizzes, tests, in-class writing | 200 pts. |
| [75 daily pts= 5/class; 50 pts= reading pres; 25 pts= intro par pres; 20 pts= journal; 30 pts= 10/ quiz] | |

CLASS GUIDELINES

- Attendance and class participation are both mandatory if you want to pass this course. At MTSU, the instructor sets the policy for attendance; be sure to understand my attendance policy before deciding to stay in this class. In my class, absences are neither excused nor unexcused; you are allowed two absences for the semester without penalty. Each absence after the second will result in ten points being subtracted from your final grade. The only exception to this rule is for university-sanctioned absences IF you provide your absence schedule to me before your absence.
- Five daily points will be awarded for completing all work, journals, quizzes, and for participating in class.
- If you miss class and do not turn in assigned work beforehand, you will not receive credit for the work—no exceptions. This policy is firm; don't even ask. You will not receive daily points for any class that you miss; this is the price of being absent.
- Be on time to class! Two tardies equal one absence, and you will not receive any daily points.
- **NO CELL PHONES**—Keep your phone on silent, turn it off BEFORE coming into the classroom, or DON'T BRING IT TO CLASS. If your cell phone rings or if you have any cell phone activity (making a call, playing games, text messaging), you will not receive any daily points.
- You will be involved in two group presentations and one individual presentation in the class. Your score for these projects may include self, peer, and professor evaluations.
- We will begin and end each class with an on-task writing in your journal. Bring your journal to EVERY class meeting. Journal grades are based on completion.

PAPER GUIDELINES

- Per the English Department guidelines, you will be writing four essays based on readings from your text(s) and/or outside sources. The compositions will range in length from 4 to 5 pages.
- All papers and assignments are due BEFORE class on the day that they are due. If this is a problem because of your work schedule or commuting, turn the essay in early! However, life happens. You have one and only one exception to this late paper policy: **you can turn one paper in up to one class period late** without a grade penalty. **Any other late papers WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**, and you will receive a zero. This exception, however, is not applicable to Essay 4, which must be turned in on the due date, or you will receive a zero. Presentations will not be accepted late.
- All papers will be typed, double-spaced, printed in black readable print, and formatted in MLA style. In addition, all papers will use a 12-point Times New Roman font and will have a 1" margin at the top, bottom, and both sides. (NOTE: The default settings for MS Word are 1.25" for the left and right margins—you will need to reset the margins to 1".)
- All papers must be submitted in digital form. Your essays should be e-mailed in MS Word format only and as only an attachment. Do not paste the essay in the body of the e-mail. If you have some other word processing program, be sure to save your file in rich text format (.rtf).
- I will not talk/email about paper grades within the first **24 hours** after you get them back.
- **WRITING WORKSHOPS**—When we have writing workshops (for revision and editing) in class, you must bring the required copies of your essay to class and evaluate the papers of others in order to receive full daily point credit. **Missing a writing workshop will also reduce your final essay grade by 5 points each.** Once during the semester, you will also be required to present your introduction paragraph to the entire class.
- Essays will be returned to you at least one full class period before the next essay is due. Essay four will be returned during the final exam time.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Be sure to visit the English Department's website at <http://www.mtsu.edu/~english2> for more information on MTSU's policies on civility in the classroom, academic dishonesty, disabled services, and absences/tardies. Also available are the English Department's standards, goals, writing requirements, and grading procedures for English 1010. English Department guidelines are also included in *Surviving Freshman Composition*.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED IN THIS CLASS.** You will receive a **zero** for a plagiarized paper. MTSU policy requires that I notify judicial affairs in any plagiarism case. **This matter is serious and equivalent to criminal fraud or theft.** My expectation is that, as a university student, you can do any assignment in this class without cheating. I have access to the website *MyDropBox.com*, which allows me to search the entire internet and essay databases for plagiarism in your papers. In addition to the above, **you will be required to read over, sign, and turn in the plagiarism statement found in *Surviving Freshman Composition* (2nd ed., p. 11) by January 24.** There are no exceptions to this policy; students failing to take this small measure will not receive credit for any work done in this class. Signing the form shows that you are aware of what constitutes plagiarism. Also, any questionable citations or lack of credit to the original source may result in an automatic 55 on the essay.
- The Writing Center is located in PH 325 and on the web at www.mtsu.edu/~uwcenter for students to receive valuable one-on-one assistance with their writing. Conferences are available by appointment only (904-8237); don't wait until the last minute to seek their help! **In order to receive three points extra credit (per visit) for attending the University Writing Center, you must write a brief narrative paragraph about your experience (i.e. what you discussed, what you learned, how your writing changed after the session).** I will accept these paragraphs through email (with each essay) on the day the essay is due.

- **Scholarships and Student Loans**—You must adhere to the terms and conditions of whatever financial support from which you benefit. I am not responsible for any neglect of your duties.
- **Please Note:** Email is the best way to contact me, but it is not a 24-hour link to my brain. I do not return phone calls, but I will (obviously) respond to emails. Please be responsible, and call me or come by during my office hours if you need to speak with me in a timely manner. Also, if you schedule an appointment with me outside of class and cannot make it, please have the courtesy to cancel at least 2 hours before the scheduled time.
- **Please Note:** In case of wintry weather, please check www.mtsu.edu for cancellations. Also, please check your email before coming to class on days of extreme weather conditions.
- **Please Note:** If you need special accommodations due to a disability, please provide a letter from Disabled Student Services (898-2783) to me at the beginning of the semester. I am happy to provide special accommodations but need to know in advance.
- **Please Note:** This is a classroom for mature adults ready for discussion of all media and materials. Some of the subjects we will be discussing, viewing, or reading may make you uncomfortable, and some may challenge ideas that you hold. I do not ask that you embrace or like all of the works that we read, television episodes that we view or the ideas that are raised in discussion; I do, however, ask that you discuss the texts and ideas in a civil and intellectually-engaged manner. **If this is a problem, then PLEASE drop this class.** This is a non-discriminatory classroom, and all viewpoints are to be respected.
- **THIS IS A CONTRACT!** This syllabus is a contract between you (as the student) and me (as the instructor). By staying in this class, you are agreeing to follow all the guidelines given above and to be responsible for your own actions.

Figure 9

| WK. | Date | CLASS ACTIVITY | READING HWK | WRITING HWK | PRESENT | DUE |
|-----|------|---|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | 1/17 | Introduction, In-class Diagnostic | FC 6-30 ; CCC 1-6, 22-46 | Plagiarism sheet | | |
| 2 | 1/24 | The Writing Process; Intro to Essay 2 | UWC 43, 45; FC 31-465 | Draft Essay 2 | Reading Group 1 | Plag. Sheet |
| 3 | 1/31 | Diction, Dialect, and Audience | UWC 52 a,b,c; CCC ch.4 | | Reading Group 2 | |
| 4 | 2/7 | Essay Organization--Revision Workshop | FC 49-64; UWC 21, 21c | Revise Essay 2 | Intro Par. Group 1 | |
| 5 | 2/14 | Mechanics and Style--Editing Workshop | CCC ch.7; FC 147-151 | Edit Essay 2 | Reading Group 3 | |
| 6 | 2/21 | Intro to Essay 3 | | Draft Essay 3 | Reading Group 4 | Essay 2 |
| 7 | 2/28 | Conferences (Held in PH 303a) | | | | JOURNAL 1-5 |
| | 3/7 | Spring Break--NO CLASS | | | | |
| 9 | 3/14 | Workshops, Intro to Group Presentations | CCC ch.1,3, 5, or 6 | Revise/Edit Essay 3 | Intro Par. Group 2, Reading Group 5 | |
| 10 | 3/21 | Group Work | | Draft Group Pres. | | Essay 3 |
| 11 | 3/28 | Group Presentations (Class held in PH 325) | | | ALL Groups | Presentation |
| 12 | 4/4 | Intro to Essay 4 | FC 107-132; UWC 77, a, b, c | Draft Essay 4 | Reading Group 6 | |
| 13 | 4/11 | MLA Workshop, Writing and Researching Lit/TV/Film/Music | FC 137-143 | | Reading Group 7 | |
| 14 | 4/18 | Revision Workshop, Editing Workshop | | Revise/Edit Essay 4 | Intro Par. Group 3 | JOURNAL 6-10 |
| 15 | 4/24 | Day of Atonement--Reviews, Self-evaluation | | | | Essay 4 |
| F. | 5/2 | 6:00-8:00 Final Exam | | | | Self-Evaluation |

Figure 10

Ford's "The Principle of Goal Activation," as explained in Chapter 3, describes the motivating factor that a syllabus should have. Although many logistical details must be included, instructors have the chance to catch their students' attention through the theme, images, and creative assignments or language. As Murray advocates, "There are conditions that not only tolerate but also encourage surprise, and the composition teacher should explore ways to adapt these conditions to the teacher's own personality" (*A Writer* 84). "Inviting surprise" makes the class not only more interesting for the teacher, but also for the students.

The syllabus is handed out on the first day of class in most undergraduate courses, but in an Expository Writing course meeting once-a-week at MTSU, the required in-class diagnostic assignment must also be given that class so that the students will have one essay graded before the drop date. Because of this requirement and the fact that the students are not aware of the requirement before coming to class, I tend to make these assignments a little less challenging than the others will be, but they are graded the same way, using the same primary trait gradesheet (fig. 12).

I choose a narrative essay because, due to my experience teaching high school, I do not see it as an overly challenging assignment based on what is typically assigned in a high school classroom. Although high school students mainly write researched essays and description and analysis can be extremely challenging to them, I realize from my Writing Center experience that narratives can produce simplistic writing due to their non-specific time frame and relatively short page-length requirement at MTSU (now four to five pages). To remedy these complaints, I add requirements to the assignment. The essay must cover a period of time no longer than two to three hours; the student must write

about a specific type of experience in which the student bullied someone or when the student was bullied.

Although this assignment forces the students to do one specific type of writing within the theme of the class, they are not allowed much time for this essay, and, therefore, in my experience I have found that most students write better under pressure when they are told what or how to write—when fewer choices have to be made. In writings completed outside of class, however, I would not use this essay. As a diagnostic essay, I find that the assignment encourages students to express their personalities; I learn not only about their ability to write, but also about their humor, backgrounds, and style.

The format for this assignment, and those that follow, is determined by advice and theory from both Murray and Ford as well as from Lindemann's course design principles in *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, "A Heuristic for Designing Writing Assignments." She recommends that instructors ask themselves the following questions, and then, answer them on the assignment sheet—"What do I want the students to do? How do I want them to do the assignment? For whom are the students writing? When will students do the assignment? What will I do with the assignment?" (220-1). These questions are answered in the "Assignment," "Purpose," "Audience," "Hints," and "Information" sections of the assignment sheet.

ENG 1010 Kids Can Be So Cruel

Diagnostic Essay—Narrative

DUE DATE: TONIGHT! January 17, 2005

Assignment: Write a 4 page essay in which you tell a story about...

...a time that you were the victim of cruel kids.

Or

...a time that you were the bully.

This essay should describe a BRIEF period of time (no more than two-three hours). Be very descriptive and use sensory details to entertain and inform a classmate.

Audience: One of your 1010 classmates

The **purpose** of this assignment is to show me where you stand as an essayist.

Information about essay evaluation:

When I evaluate this assignment, an in-class paper, I will focus mostly on content, organization, use of general and specific details, and effective word choice. However, I will also be checking your editing skills (grammar, mechanics, and spelling) to see how much we need to focus on this area in our class this quarter. Do the best work you can on this diagnostic essay since it will guide the focus of our class for the rest of the semester.

Please double-space your essay (leave a blank line in-between each) and add the following title block at the top of the left side of the paper:

Your Name
Prof. Watkins
English 1010
17 Jan. 2006

Traps to Avoid:

Not stating your opinion as fact (Do not use "I think" or "I believe." You are writing the essay, so I will assume that it is comprised of your thoughts and beliefs.)

Failing to support your narrative with details and examples

Some hints on the writing of an in-class essay:

Use your time wisely—split it into stages: planning and organizing (10 min.), writing (35 min.), revising (15 min.), editing (5 min.), and final checking (5 min).

Focus primarily on details, details, details and examples, examples, examples.

DUE DATE: All work will stop at the end of class today.

Figure 11

Figure 12, the gradesheet for the diagnostic essay, is given to the students on the back of the assignment sheet so that the students know what criteria I look for on the diagnostic. I also go over the criteria with the students orally because it is a similar gradesheet to what I use for the remainder of the semester. This addition to the assignment allows the students to have more reasonable expectations. The gradesheet, a Primary Trait Analysis, is used for reasons outlined in Chapter 3 and in Walvoord's and Anderson's *Effective Grading*.

Essay Evaluation Sheet

Student _____

Final Grade _____

Who is your Audience? _____

This evaluation sheet serves as an indication of where your essay is strong and weak. Use this information as a guide when you write, revise, and edit your papers in the future. Remember: you can come in and talk to me about your papers at any time during the process of writing them or 24 hours after they are returned to you.

This essay counts 50 points of your final grade. Each category uses the Very Good to Weak scale; 100 total points are possible. Your grade is based on the points you receive out of those possible 100 pts.

| AREA | SCORE | OVERALL QUALITY | SCORED CRITERIA |
|---------------------|-------|------------------------|--|
| CONTENT | | ____ Very good | * Interesting topic/title 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| 30 points | | ____ Good | * Clear thesis/judgment 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | | ____ Average | * Meets the assignment 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | /30 | ____ Needs improvement | * Follows Narrative Structure 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | | ____ Weak | * Attention to Audience 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | | | * Strong support; detail from text 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| ORGANIZATION | | ____ Very good | * Introduction 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| 30 points | | ____ Good | * Conclusion 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | /30 | ____ Average | * Development/control of main idea 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | | ____ Needs improvement | * Logical sequencing of ideas 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | | ____ Weak | * Transitions 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | | | * Unified paragraphs w/ Topic Sent. 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| VOCABULARY | | ____ Very good | * Accurate, precise word choice 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| 20 points | | ____ Good | * No wordiness 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | | ____ Average | * Tone/Voice 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | /20 | ____ Needs improvement | * Sentence variety 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | | ____ Weak | |
| GRAMMAR | | ____ Very good | * Missing or misplaced possessive apostrophe 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... 0 |
| 15 points | | ____ Good | * Comma splice/fused sentence 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... 0 |
| | | ____ Average | * Sentence fragment 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... 0 |
| | /15 | ____ Needs improvement | * Agreement (s/v, p/a) 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... 0 |
| | | ____ Weak | * _____ 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... 0 |
| MECHANICS | | ____ Very good | * Spelling/typos 2 ... 1 ... 0 |
| 5 points | | ____ Good | * MLA style/Formatting 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... 0 |
| | | ____ Average | |
| | /5 | ____ Needs improvement | |
| | | ____ Weak | |
| SUBTOTAL | /100 | Divided by 2= TOTAL | /50 |

Figure 12

I also include comments at the bottom of the gradesheet, typically the two weakest points of the essay and one positive comment.

For the first night of class, I also give the students a sample modeled introduction paragraph that I write for my own assignment (fig. 13). As modeling is a necessary part of Personal Experience Pedagogy (because of its heavy reliance on the professor rather than the students), this allows the students an opportunity to see how I would begin the assignment, include a thesis statement, and set up the rest of the story. Modeling is supported by Murray and by Lindemann in their experienced recommendations for course designs. “You should write, too, under the same conditions—on the board or in your notebook—and share your writing first. It’s a matter of ethics,” Murray argues. “You are going to be seeing their work; it’s only fair that they see yours” (*A Writer* 76). He goes on to explain, “[Y]our engagement in the process demonstrates that writing isn’t a magic trick to be mastered, but a craft that is continually explored. It is a skill that is alive, ever changing, ever challenging, not the boring old English that so many of your students think it is, not a matter of etiquette but of meaning, of discovering your own meaning with your own voice” (*A Writer* 76). By allowing the students to see my work, to hear my voice, I hope to motivate them in their own writing quest.

Many of the students comment that it is helpful to have an example of what I look for (fig. 13) and that my example usually sparks an idea for them. As their essays showed personality, the modeled essay, which is mostly true with a few exaggerated details, also allowed my students to get to know me. I chose a story to model that would tell my students my age (which they are typically concerned about), one of my interests (UK basketball), and my sense of humor.

Stacia Watkins

Prof. Watkins

ENG 1010-64

17 January 2006

The Teddy Bear from Wal-Mart (or How a Seventh-Grade Girl Becomes a Bully)

I was never the type of girl who acted on my crushes. Throughout seventh grade, I dreamed from afar of Keith Wilcutt asking me to dance to "Set Adrift on Memory Bliss" at one of the many birthday dances held at the Recreation Department in my hometown of Glasgow, Kentucky; however, when the UK Wildcats lost the greatest college basketball game ever played to the Duke Blue Devils on March 28, 1992 because of Christian Laettner's seventeen-foot, buzzer-beating jump shot, the chances of any boys at the dance that night paying attention to the girls were suddenly and completely shattered. As the screams and temper tantrums began to dwindle into deep depression, though, I saw a pudgy eighth-grader shuffling toward me. Andy Couch lived down the street from me and had been a friend of mine since fourth grade. That night, though, he decided to tell me how he "really felt" about me with an embarrassingly repugnant red and white teddy bear with Wal-Mart tags.

Figure 13

For the second assignment, which is introduced at the beginning of the next class period, the students are asked to complete a more difficult task. In the year I first tried this assignment, 2005-6, MTSU increased the page-length requirements from 2 ½ to 3 pages to at least 1,000 words (around four pages); therefore, even repeat 1010 offenders were being asked to perform at a different level of competency. To meet this challenge, I combine two assignments to create a longer prompt for Essay 2. This assignment asks the students to do two different things. First, they must take a position on the evolution of a social issue; then, they must use two songs from different decades to illustrate the changing social vantage point OR to illustrate that major social themes often stay the same.

Essay #2—Comparing to Persuade**DUE DATE: Tuesday, February 21, 2006**

Assignment: Write a 1000-word essay to **persuade your audience** to agree with you on a contemporary social issue by comparing two songs or musical compositions—one contemporary and one from the past.

You audience for this assignment is a member of your family. Choose one family member and write an essay that would convince that person to agree with you. You must tell me who you are writing to, their current stance on your issue, and how this person is related to you.

The **purpose** of this assignment is to (1.) state your **position**; then, (2.) convince **your audience** of your stance.

The final draft of this assignment will be evaluated on general levels: how effective your introduction is, how well you organize the entire essay and individual internal paragraphs, how well you use primary and secondary support (examples and details) to describe your specified topic and support your thesis, and how well the overall paper is edited for grammar, mechanics, and spelling. **In addition to the above criteria which are usually evaluated, make sure you include the following which are particularly important for a persuasive essay: a clear position and purpose, a clear audience, details that logically support your argument, and consideration/refutation of your opposition.**

You will be given class time for both a revision workshop and an editing workshop; you need to make sure that you take these workshops quite seriously before turning in your paper for grading.

Make sure your paper is double-spaced, has one-inch margins, is in a dark 10 or 12 point Times New Roman font, and has the following title block, also double-spaced, at the top of the left side of the paper:

**Your Name
Prof. Watkins
English 1010-64
21 February 2006**

Traps to Avoid:

Failing to assert a clear and strong judgment

Failing to support the judgments with details and evidence

Overusing first or second person (i.e. "I," "me," "my," "we," "us," "our," or "you")

Failing to properly document ALL information that you take from secondary sources. If you quote, paraphrase or summarize any information from any source other than your songs, then you must give proper MLA documentation.

Forgetting that an effective argument ALWAYS considers and rebuts the opposing point of view by counter-arguing.

Talking to a generic audience!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Due Date for Revision Workshop (bring two copies): Tues., February 7, 2005

(Group 1 must bring their copies to present intro paragraphs.)

Due Date for Editing Workshop (bring two newly revised copies): Tues., Feb. 14, 2005

Figure 14

Though the assignment is complex, it involves personal reflection on the society that the students live in and the society of a past generation. It may also challenge their preconceived notions of past generations.

The assignment also proposes an artificial audience for the students to keep in mind as they are making a persuasive argument. The audience for this essay is a step further away from them than their peers in the class, as it was for the diagnostic, yet not

quite an academic audience. By addressing the essay as one that would effectively make the argument to a family member, the students' personal reflections seem more relevant to them. Also, the audience may inspire the students' song choices, making their initial in-class brainstorming more productive.

Though the audience is not quite academic, the instructions for the assignment help the student to develop a style that is more likely to be appreciated in other departments and in writings for other classes, such as the warning against the overuse of first person and the request for evidence and detail to support the argument.

The gradesheet (fig. 15) is, again, included on the back of the assignment sheet so that the students will be able to reference the criteria for grading as they wrote or after they wrote Essay 2. The major changes from the diagnostic assignment are the opportunities for deductions or extra credit, the assignment definition (under the Content section), and the weight of both grammar and mechanics, which are only graded in the diagnostic if they ruined the cohesiveness of the narrative.

| Essay Evaluation Sheet | | Final Grade _____ | |
|---|-------|-------------------------|--|
| Student _____ | | | |
| Who is your Audience? _____ | | | |
| This essay counts 200 points of your final grade. Each category uses the Very Good to Weak scale; 100 total points are possible. Your grade is based on the points you receive out of those possible 100 pts. Use this information as a guide when you write, revise, and edit your papers in the future. | | | |
| AREA | SCORE | OVERALL QUALITY | SCORED CRITERIA |
| CONTENT | | _____ Very good | * Interesting topic/title 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| 30 points | | _____ Good | * Clear thesis/judgment 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | | _____ Average | * Meets the assignment 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | /30 | _____ Needs improvement | * Persuades and Compares 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | | _____ Weak | * Attention to Audience 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | | | * Strong support; detail from text 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| ORGANIZATION | | _____ Very good | * Introduction 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| 30 points | | _____ Good | * Conclusion 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | /30 | _____ Average | * Development/control of main idea 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | | _____ Needs improvement | * Logical sequencing of ideas 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | | _____ Weak | * Transitions 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | | | * Unified paragraphs w/ Topic Sent. 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| VOCABULARY | | _____ Very good | * Accurate, precise word choice 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| 20 points | | _____ Good | * No wordiness 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | | _____ Average | * Tone/Voice 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | /20 | _____ Needs improvement | * Sentence variety 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 |
| | | _____ Weak | |
| GRAMMAR | | _____ Very good | * Missing or misplaced possessive apostrophe 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... 0 |
| 15 points | | _____ Good | * Comma splice/fused sentence 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... 0 |
| | | _____ Average | * Sentence fragment 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... 0 |
| | /15 | _____ Needs improvement | * Agreement (s/v, p/a) 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... 0 |
| | | _____ Weak | * _____ 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... 0 |
| MECHANICS | | _____ Very good | * Spelling/typos 2 ... 1 ... 0 |
| 5 points | | _____ Good | * MLA style/Formatting 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... 0 |
| | | _____ Average | |
| | /5 | _____ Needs improvement | |
| | | _____ Weak | |
| SUBTOTAL | /100 | | |
| DEDUCTIONS | | | * Missed Revision Workshop |
| 5 points each | | | * Missed Editing Workshop |
| | | | * Issues with Citations (May be up to 45 point deduction) |
| EXTRA CREDIT | | | |
| 3-9 points | | | * Brief Narrative of up to three visits to the UWC |
| TOTAL | /200 | | |

Figure 15

For this assignment, I ask the students which part of the essay is most difficult to write. Most responses I receive are the conclusion, so I model this paragraph for them. We discuss the most effective parts of a conclusion; then, they freewrite a conclusion for practice. Figure 16 is one of my collaboratively written modeled conclusions in the class.

Edwin Starr's "War" is no more or less socially true than Toby Keith's "Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue." Both songs appeal to different crowds. Both songs are one man's opinion. Both songs agree with the fans of their particular genre. Toby Keith is a country music artist. Few fans of contemporary country music would say that they are not patriotic to some degree. Edwin Starr, meanwhile, was an R&B singer. It seems as though most of his fans were anti-government and anti-war before he ever wrote his song. These music artists do not always sway the hearts and minds of their fans, who have often already made up their minds when they got to them. This fact makes one question whether or not these artists truly feel the way they say they do in their music. It is difficult to see if they actually want to spread their message to the world, or if they just want to appeal to their fans to sell records. The end result is the same, however. When someone, regardless of who they are or what they know, sings a message that people want to hear, they take it as gospel and treat it as evidence.

Figure 16

For Essay 3, I ask my students to write on the subject of film. Figure 17 is the assignment sheet for the essay and includes the first academic audience assignment. Although the students in English 1010 are encouraged to both reflect on and respond to writing prompts throughout the semester, it is also important to me that they learn to successfully write for various audiences, but perhaps most importantly for the professors in their other coursework. Most of my students are not English majors, and even though I may not always feel responsible for their ability to write essays in other courses, if they are successful writers in various situations, I have done my job.

Essay #3—Film for Academic Audiences**DUE DATE: Tuesday, March 21, 2006**

Assignment: Write a 4-5 page essay* evaluating any film that a professor from your major area of study would be interested in and persuading the professor to use the information.

The **purpose** of this assignment is learning to back an opinion with factual evidence and learning to write for an academic audience.

Part I: Define the film by discussing SPECIFIC standard/characteristics (i.e. audience appeal, intelligent scripts, artistic direction) that would appeal to the professor.

Part II: Apply these standards to the series of your choice by giving specific details, examples, quotes, and evidence to support the claim stated in your thesis.

***Write the essay that would convince the specific professor to use this film in his/her classes. DO NOT ADDRESS THE AUDIENCE DIRECTLY IN YOUR ESSAY!**

The final draft of this assignment will be evaluated on the usual general levels: how effective your introduction is, how well you organize the entire essay and individual internal paragraphs, how well you use primary and secondary support (examples/details) to describe your specified topic and support your thesis, and how well the overall paper is edited for grammar, mechanics, and spelling. **In addition to the above criteria which are usually evaluated, make sure you include the following which are particularly important for this evaluation essay: a clear audience, a clear definition, a clear purpose, and a logical and interesting thesis.**

You will be given class time for both a revision workshop and an editing workshop; your paper will be turned in electronically. Make sure your paper is double-spaced, has one-inch margins, is in dark 10 or 12 point Times New Roman font, and has the MLA title block, also double-spaced, at the top of the left side of the paper:

Your Name
Prof. Watkins
English 1010-64
21 March 2006

Traps to Avoid:

Failing to define or apply appropriate standards of evaluation

Seeking to evaluate the series from memory only

Failing to support the judgments with evidence, examples, details, quotes

Overusing first person or using second person at all (i.e. "I," "me," "we," "us," or "you")

Failing to assert a clear and strong judgment. (Understand that all TV series will have both good and bad aspects; however, your job is to evaluate and persuade.)

Failing to properly document ALL information that you take from secondary sources outside of the TV series. If you quote, paraphrase or summarize any information, then you must give proper MLA documentation. You must schedule and appointment with me or go to the UWC to cite!

Due Date for Revision/Editing Workshop (bring two copies): Tuesday, March 14, 2006

Due Date for Final Draft: Tuesday, March 21, 2006

Figure 17

Essay three encourages students to move beyond the essays they have written so far for Expository Writing and to write a formal academic proposal essay; however, they can also still reflect on an aspect of media, respond to their academic environments, and manipulate their own interests to apply them to the assignment. While falling within the

category of writing to be applied in a FYC classroom, the essay also demands that the students begin to analyze their role, the professor's role, and the academic curriculum that will affect the next four years of their lives. The gradesheet for the assignment is the same as for Essay 2, with the exception of the definition of the assignment (under Content).

As an instructor of FYC, my personal belief is that students should not only learn to write formal academic essays, but that they should also learn to communicate effectively with different audiences and in different formats as a real-world writing experience. For their fourth assignment, I give the students a break from actually writing but not from the writing process. I ask the students to write an oral essay as a group; in other words, I assign them a presentation where they can apply the skills they have learned as a writer to an oral presentation through choosing the content, organizing the presentation, and evaluating themselves and the other groups. The students apply the basic concepts of visual rhetoric to a field within popular culture studies. The audience is no longer artificial, and the collaboration allows the students to build community before they attempt the fourth and final class essay, a research-based response. Figure 18 is the assignment sheet for the project followed by the gradesheet. The grade for the project is determined by the instructor, the class and a self-assessment from the group itself. The class grades the project on the group's ability to organize and effectively present the information as well as to entertain. The group members evaluate themselves on their ability to contribute to the group individually and as a team.

Group Essay Presentation Assignment (100 pts.)

Assignment:

Choose an area of popular culture that we have not previously addressed (TV, Film, Music, Food).

(i.e. Advertising, Fashion, Animal Culture, Art/Architecture, Folklore, Education, Gender, Media, Radio, Celebrities, Health, Internet, Circus, Decades, Collecting, Soap Opera, Sports, Comics, Conspiracy Theory, Prison, Tarot, Theatre, Political Protests, Travel/Tourism, Dance, Memory, Video Games, Motorcycling)

Relate it to the theme "Kids Can Be So Cruel."

Create an oral essay as a group, dividing the parts of the essay between the group members.

What is the thesis of your group?

Are you the Introductory presenter? Concluding presenter? Somewhere in the middle? Where?

What evidence can you find? What is the most interesting way to present this evidence?

The class is your audience. How can you best entertain them?

Prepare a creative and informative presentation to entertain the class that lasts **30-40 minutes total**.

Everyone must make/bring visual aids.

Each group member is responsible for contributing to the in-class presentation.

Each group should organize a time and place to meet outside of class to work on the presentation in advance. The library has study rooms on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th floors where you can meet.

Write an evaluation paragraph about your contributions and the contributions of each member of your group to be handed in at the beginning of the next class meeting.

Evaluate the other three groups (using a gradesheet I will give you) during class.

Purpose

To communicate effectively with the skills and techniques you've used in Essays 2 and 3.

To persuade?

To evaluate?

To tell a story?

To state your position?

To define a subject?

To ENTERTAIN!

Evaluation: Your grade is determined by

Your self evaluation (10 pts.)

The class's evaluation (20 pts.)

Your group's evaluations (20 pts.)

My evaluation of your class presentation (50 pts.)

To Consider: Did everyone work? Was the presentation an oral essay? Did the presentation meet the assignment? Was the presentation entertaining?

Groups:

Group 1—

Group 2—

Group 3—

Group 4—

Presentations are due on March 28! Evaluation Paragraphs are due on April 4.

Figure 18

| | |
|--|----|
| Name: _____ Group number: _____ | |
| Reading Group Presentation Gradesheet—Prof. Watkins | |
| Did everyone work and use visual aids? ____/10 | |
| Member 1: | |
| Member 2: | |
| Member 3: | |
| Member 4: | |
| Did the presentation meet the assignment? | |
| * Interesting topic/title | /3 |
| * Clear thesis/judgment | /3 |
| * Meets the assignment | /3 |
| * Attention to Audience | /3 |
| * Strong support; detail from text | /3 |
| Was the presentation an oral essay? | |
| * Introduction | /3 |
| * Conclusion | /3 |
| * Development/control of main idea | /3 |
| * Logical sequencing of ideas | /3 |
| * Transitions | /3 |
| Was the presentation entertaining? ____/10 | |
| ____/10 Self evaluation | |
| ____/20 Class evaluation | |
| ____/20 Peer evaluation(s) | |
| ____/50 My evaluation | |
| Total: ____/100 Comments: | |

Figure 19

This project often results in community-building and a focus on organizing a topic that is important to my students. Perhaps a more impressive result is that it allows me to visualize my students' writing processes and their progress in the class thus far. One example of a project that really emphasized the value of the essay process involved relating video games to the theme "Kids Can Be So Cruel." Three students worked

together with a power point presentation of pictures, movie clips, music video clips and statistical charts to tell the story of a college freshman that had been addicted to video games. The students' description of the personal struggle and eventual health problems of this particular student captured the class' attention. Revealing that the presentation had actually been the story of one of the group member's first attempt at college provided a great forum for discussion and class involvement. The project was extremely successful for the presenters, the audience, and for me, personally.

When assigning the project, I model an example for my students by relating the topic "food" to "Kids Can Be So Cruel." My thesis, "Food is often used in teen movies to express the uncertainty of teenage lives," was defended by three main points: teen eating disorders (*Heathers*), cafeteria food fights (*Animal House*) and sexually explicit food usage (*American Pie*). For each point, I show a movie clip; then, the class and I discuss the points that I can, or should, make using each visual example. The students appreciate knowing what is expected of them and participating in a fun activity.

Allowing students to meet the communicatory goals of English 1010 in ways other than traditional writing achieves more than the basic guidelines of the class ("Undergraduate Catalog"). Also, it meets the standards set by Murray and Ford as explained in Chapter 3. Ford's "The Multiple Goals Principle" outlines the need to give students many varying assignments in order to keep their motivation high (220). By encouraging presentations and the "oral essay," I give the students a break from the traditional writing assignment.

Figure 20 is a sample lesson plan written for the subsequent three-hour class period (with a fifteen-minute break) after the visual rhetoric project. In this period, the

class focuses on the importance of knowing and understanding the audience for the text before beginning the writing process. After the students analyze an audience for two nationally distributed publications and discuss the differences with the class, their assignment is given for Essay 4. The assignment is to be written for a nation-wide audience. At the end of the period, the students are given time to brainstorm, ask questions, and journal about the Essay 4 assignment before leaving the room to start the project on their own.

LESSON PLAN

- A. Pre-task writing (10-15 minutes): Last week, your groups presented a visual essay to the class.
 - 1. How was this different than writing the same type of essays?
 - 2. What techniques did you use that may help you on essay four?
- B. Presentations over readings (Choose from Essays in Chapters 1, 3, 5, or 6 of *Common Culture* or *SFC* 155-167):
 - 1. Mike
 - 2. Rhea
 - 3. Michael
 - 4. Jacob
- C. Brief class discussion applying the readings to the writing done so far in class.
- D. Audience discussion in groups
 - 1. Using the sample publications given to your group:
 - 2. Stereotype their audiences. Who do you think reads each specific publication? Describe!

From *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*:

 - 1. How old is the audience?
 - 2. What is the gender of the audience? Sexual orientation?
 - 3. What is the socioeconomic condition of the audience? (i.e. class and wealth status)
 - 4. What is the educational status of the audience?
 - 5. What general philosophies of government or politics does the audience hold
 - 6. What value does the audience place on education, religion, work?
 - 7. How does your audience feel about events in the present? The future?
 - 8. What sources would be most convincing to this audience?
 - 9. What terms do they have to define? What terms would the audience already know?
 - 10. What issues most often make this audience angry or defensive? Why?
 - 11. Does the publication use logic or emotion? Both? Neither? Why?
 - 12. Have the publication stereotyped the audience, overlooking those who have different views?
 - 3. Pass your publication to the right, and continue the activity with the next publication.
 - 4. Class Discussion to compare any overlapping/differing assumptions.
- 10 minute BREAK!**
- E. Introduction to Essay 4 Assignment
- F. Gradesheet
- G. Questions
- H. Read poetry examples
- I. Develop a modeled outline as a class.
- J. Post-task Writing (15 minutes):
 - 1. Brainstorm for Essay 4. What are the books, magazines, newspapers, websites that you enjoy reading most? Why?
 - 2. Things to decide before next week: text and audience
- K. Reminders: READING! Begin Essay 4. See me in Office Hours!

Figure 20

The assignment for Essay 4 focuses on a national audience, but it also allows the students to use one more type of popular culture study in this survey, popular literature. The students from English 1010 will move on to a Research Writing class, English 1020, where many professors use literature to spark their students' writing processes. This assignment uses both literature and research to prepare the students for 1020. In this assignment, students are expected to choose their audience, to choose the popular text they wish to review, and to choose their method of analysis (i.e. the way they organize their essay). This assignment allows the most freedom of any of the essay assignments as the students have earned the right and the responsibility to make choices. However, the guidelines are still there to structure the students' writing strategies.

Essay #4—National Audience Review Essay**DUE DATE:**

Assignment: Write a 4 page essay to review a written text (i.e. a magazine article, a novel, a poem, a newspaper column, an internet blog, etc...) from popular culture (published since 2000).

The purpose of this assignment is to assist you in thinking more deeply about the ideas presented in the reading, as well as to help you articulate your own beliefs about popular literature.

Part I: Summarize: Briefly summarize the text in the INTRODUCTION ONLY. Then, objectively consider the article in both subject and detail in order to discover the author's primary purpose and meaning. What are the author's main points? Use correct MLA format to quote the text.

Part II: Respond: Do not merely summarize the text; react to it. Here are some questions to help you react: Was the text easy to understand? Did it introduce something new to you? What do others have to say about the text (or type of text)? Do you agree with them? Is this text "popular?" If so, with whom? How does the author's belief fit into traditional societal ideas? Does the author take a stance? Do you agree/disagree with the author's stance? Why or why not?

***Who is your audience? Could your essay be published in a magazine, a newspaper, or online?**

***Write the essay that would entertain your audience; however, DO NOT ADDRESS THE AUDIENCE DIRECTLY IN YOUR ESSAY!**

The final draft of this assignment will be evaluated on the usual general levels: how effective your introduction is, how well you organize the entire essay and individual internal paragraphs, how well you use primary and secondary support (examples/details) to describe your specified topic and support your thesis, and how well the overall paper is edited for grammar, mechanics, and spelling. The essay will also be assessed according to the structure and techniques discussed in our Writing about Literature discussion next week (with readings from the UWC) and according to MLA style, which Emily will discuss on April 11.

YOU MUST USE TWO OUTSIDE SOURCES AS SUPPORT IN THIS ESSAY! Because this is your last essay of the semester, this exercise will help to prepare you for the type of research you will be asked to complete in 1020. (Because of the subject matter, both sources may be REPUTABLE Internet sources.)

Make sure your paper is double-spaced, has one-inch margins, is in dark 10 or 12 point Times New Roman, font and has the following title block, also double-spaced, at the top of the left side of the paper:

Your Name
Prof. Watkins
English 1010-64
24 April 2006

Traps to Avoid:

Failing to support the judgments with evidence/examples/details

Summarizing throughout the essay

Agreeing in total with either side of the author's position, thus failing to offer any criticism, position, or insights of your own.

Misrepresenting the author—THIS IS PLAGARISM!

Using the text merely as a point of departure to launch an argument of your own

Overusing first or second person (i.e. "I," "me," "we," "us," "our," or "you")

Failing properly document ALL information that you take from the text or from other sources internally and in a Works Cited page. When you quote, paraphrase or summarize any information from any source you must document; incorrectly citing a source may result in an automatic 55 F.

Due Date for Revision Workshop (bring two copies): Tuesday, April 18, 2006

Due Date for Final Draft (submitted digitally over email): Tuesday, April 25 by 6:00

Figure 21

In the assignment I model for the class, I use a story from the “Odd News” website. I let the class pick the story from a list on the site, and together, we write the essay as a class. The students choose to briefly summarize the story in the introduction, to review the validity of the source and then, to argue that the story is not, in fact, news. This activity challenges the students’ ideas of what popular literature is while allowing them to open their minds to many different sources of their own interest for analysis in Essay 4. However, the essays that used traditional forms of popular literature are interesting and show tremendous progress toward each student’s goal of success in his or her future English endeavors. Figure 22 is one such example of an essay outlined collaboratively by my students with my assistance, which I then completed as a model for the class.

A Wind From Nowhere

People tend to like poems because they are moved emotionally, or because their intellect is challenged. In poems like “The Kid” by Ai, readers can achieve both means of satisfaction. Ai, a female poet who resides in Arizona, is often labeled as somewhat of a contemporary Robert Browning, as she has adopted his style of dramatic monologue (Lee). However, not only has she adopted the style; she is using it for her own means of expression. Although Ai’s works are often compared to Browning, there is an obvious difference in the styles used by the two poets. In “The Kid,” Ai describes the events of an adolescent boy killing his own family one by one. It is an incredibly intense poem which, like all of her other works, is “harsh, stark, and dramatic in style” (Hadas). She uses dramatic monologue and first-person point of view to make the poem feel very cold and dark, as the mind of a bloodless killer would. This poem gives a feeling of originality that is quite pleasing to the poet reader. It is so abrupt and striking that one cannot fail to see the immediate shock factor. This originality is very interesting, and one will see through Ai’s background and her poem how her creative style has evolved from such a style of that of Robert Browning.

In order to understand what Ai writes, it is most important that the reader understands her background. She was born in Tucson, Arizona on January 2, 1947 under the name Florence Anthony. She was the child of what she calls “a scandalous affair my mother had with a Japanese man she met at a streetcar stop” (Lee). Due to this affair creating her, Florence decided to legally change her name to “Ai,” which means “love” in Japanese (Ai(poet)).

Another reason for her name change was attributed to her mother being part black, Choctaw, and Irish, and her father being Japanese. This heritage gave her no true culture from which to distinguish herself.

Ai has written many, many poems under her pseudonym. Almost all of her poems tend to be in dramatic monologue form, as it has become her signature style that helped form her career. She has published several poetry books, including Dread, Greed, Sin, and Fate (Ai(Poet)).

Coming from an entirely different class of society, Browning's background is completely counteractive to that of Ai. Foremost, he grew up with both parents in the household, and was encouraged to read frequently (Robert Browning). However, Browning did not receive much real instruction in the classroom as he withdrew from school at a young age. His decision was a safe one as his parents backed him both "morally and financially" (Robert Browning). Browning began writing anonymous pieces that he pitched to numerous editors, hoping for recognition. His career began and took off under J.S. Mills, the first to sign him after reading Browning's anonymous work titled "Pauline: A Fragment of a Confession" (Robert Browning). As Browning's fame began to rise, so did his wealth. Most would say he lived an easy, well-off life. He frequently visited the local coffee shops for brunch with other famous writers such as Dickens, Carlyle, and Tennyson (Robert Browning).

When looking at the backgrounds of Florence Anthony and Robert Browning, one can easily note the differences. Ai endured a much harder life than Browning did, partially due to family support and partially due to fame. Ai endured growing up with the disadvantage of a single mother, and her works, while recognized, have nowhere near the acclaim of some of Browning's poems. Browning was also married, while Ai lives a single, secluded life, presumably the way she likes it. It is amazing how two completely different sides of the spectrum are influenced to perform in such a similar way.

Although their backgrounds may lack similarity, it becomes much easier to make comparisons when dealing with their poetry. A similar work to the "The Kid" by Ai is "Porphyria's Lover" by Browning. Here Browning is speaking from the mind of a crazy husband or boyfriend who is reminiscing about the strangulation of his former significant other. He speaks of her as "happy and proud" and "mine, mine, fair" throughout the poem. The flowery love chatter ceases in the end when he reveals that he tied a rope around his partner's neck and choked her to death (Robert Browning). He is a considerate killer at least, as he made sure that during her death his partner "felt no pain" (Robert Browning).

The killer in Ai's poem is of a much darker nature than the killer in "Porphyria's Lover." Anthony chooses the character of a fourteen year-old boy, filled with rage and hatred. He is a much more ruthless killer. He doesn't premeditate his violent acts with deranged plots and motives; he simply slaughters with no feeling or remorse. Ai's

poem is significantly darker and more ominous than Browning's, not even due to the events happening but because of the word choice. In "Porphyria's Lover," the only part that is harsh and stunning is the part revealing the act of killing: "In one long yellow string I wound/Three times her little throat around,/And strangled her" (Browning). This is harsh and brutal, but there is no detail besides the color of the rope to put the reader into the experience. "The Kid" is filled with evil lines, specifically lines like "Roses are red, violets are blue/one bullet for the black horse, two for the brown" (Ai 17-18). This little mantra is very threatening, as the intentional lack of rhyme makes one feel almost as dead as the horse that is "brown". At the end of the poem, Anthony reveals what a sick little freak this child really is-as if the multiple homicides weren't enough-when he walks back into the house. Everyone in his family is dead, but he is rejoicing in his deeds, saying "Yeah, I'm Jack. Hogarth's son," as if to say, 'what's it you, bitch?' (Ai 24). He continues his celebration by trying on "the old man's best suit/ and his patent leather shoes" (26-27). Finally, before he heads out on the road, he makes sure to grab his "mother's satin nightgown and [his] sister's doll" (Ai 28-29). Before the kid metaphorically turns his back and the curtain closes, he leaves the reader with these lines: "I'm fourteen. I'm a wind from nowhere/I can break your heart" (Ai 31-32). This ending leaves the reader feeling cold, pondering upon the abrupt closing. Ai's form here reflects the content. The lives of the people in Jack's family were ended so quickly that it came out of nowhere. Now it is gone again, free at only fourteen to blow as he pleases.

As one can see, Ai does compare greatly to the works of Robert Browning in the matter of theme and even in some elements style. However, her works have taken dramatic monologue in the first-person point of view to a whole new level. Although both poets deal with the same subject matter, murder, Anthony manages to magnify the intensity that Browning delivers in "Porphyria's Lover". In "The Kid," she not only lets the reader see into the situation described in her piece, she makes them the character. She gives, in detail, the deranged, deliberate thought process of this young boy. She describes his mania in such a calm state, almost as if he has just given up trying to fight his desire for hatred and aggression. There is no holding back in a poem by Florence Anthony. It's as if she is the villain herself when she writes her stories. Her thoughts are so cruel, so sick, that some can barely withstand the graphic images described in her poetry.

A lot of the anger and aggression found in Ai's poems could be attributed to her broken childhood. Browning, who came from a good home, may have found it much harder to put himself in an evil mind state, as he may probably have had less difficult experiences in his life that would warrant extreme depression or hatred. Ai, however, lived a life seemingly full of hardship without a lot of money or support from her parents. These socioeconomic factors most definitely could have had a heavy influence on the higher level of intensity involved in Anthony's works of dramatic monologue.

Works Cited

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Figure 22

The class's model essay analysis of the poems by Browning and Ai allow me to see the students' prospects for success in English 1020, Research and Argumentative Writing. The essay has its faults and flaws, but the balance of structure and freedom for the assignment is what has allowed the student to find organization in the use of both popular and traditional literature, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.5 Conclusion

The use of popular culture in FYC can allow for many discoveries and discussions to take place that will not only broaden the students' writing ideas, but that will also further their ability to allow the professor into their world. Aided by the theory-driven course designs inspired by Murray and Lindemann, an instructor employing popular culture can create the bridge needed between a professor's interests and a classroom full of young, idealistic students' attention and passions. This bridge can also be applied through other applications of cultural texts as seen in the next chapter, which uses a literary theme.

CHAPTER 5:

“Our Most Secret Self:” Using Literature in Freshman Composition

“Art attracts us only by what it reveals of our most secret self.”

—Jean-Luc Godard

5.0 Introduction

On Wednesday, February 28, 2007, my co-Graduate Student Administrator, our two GSAs-in-training, and I led the staff meeting of graduate-level Writing Assistants (WAs) in the University Writing Center, a meeting which focused on their transition into teaching FYC the following fall. Some of these WAs had student-teaching experience at the high school level, but none had experience teaching college courses. The first question that was asked of us was, “How much time do you actually spend per week/per class?” We were all happy to answer, and honestly, we were happy that the question had been asked; first-year graduate assistants in the UWC usually leave their tutoring work behind when they go home, and we wanted them to have a realistic view of their workload in the second year.

After hearing that their full twenty hours a week would be spent teaching these two classes, the second question asked was, “How can, or should, we use literature in our first-year composition classes to teach writing?” The other GSAs and I looked at each other, hoping that someone had anticipated this question and had prepared a clear answer for this soon-to-be-brand-new instructor of writing, but we all soon realized that we did not even have a clear answer for ourselves or for our current TAs. Of course, we have English 1010 and 1020 Guidelines, which we used to answer the question: almost any text can be used as a theme or as part of the theme for a course provided that the focus is

on the writing and on condition that the course assignments require only reflection and response with no critical analysis of the text (“Guidelines”). This answer given by the TBR and supported by our department’s English instruction is the same for those TAs who choose to use popular culture, semiotics, or multiculturalism.

As emphasized in Chapter 1, FYC at MTSU requires reflection and response writing even though many of the departmental professors who teach these courses are often (from their own writing and research and from types of writing they assign to upper-level and graduate students) more familiar with literary research than reflection and response. This familiarity is also true for the graduate students studying literature who are asked to begin their teaching career with these writing courses. The turn to a rhetoric-based composition course can be discouraging for instructors of literature—especially those with little to no training in rhetoric or in the teaching of writing—who may resent this assignment or, perhaps, may feel as though they are not being efficiently utilized by the teaching of FYC.

The question asked by an astute second-semester writing assistant—one who is already anticipating the schism between what she is studying and what she will be teaching—is one of the research questions that the development of Personal Experience Pedagogy attempts to answer, mainly for the new instructor; however, this schism also applies to tenured professors of English who have not dealt with writing basics for many years. Through the use of PEP, I promote the use of literature as a theme for the frustrated literature instructors who will be teaching writing—and who need to be teaching writing—both as a service to their departments and as a way to stay in touch with their own scholarship. Because MTSU has recently modified general education

requirements to include either one English or one humanities literature course as an option (and two writing courses are required), many English instructors must vie for the few literature courses still available (“2007-9”). If literature is not included in FYC, many students may leave the university without any exposure to literature at all, another reason to include literature as a theme of the writing class.

Classic, canonical literature, popular literature, and other model texts, both visual and aural, are useful tools for the teaching of writing. However, the use of literature in the first-year composition classroom should not overwhelm the required content of the class, which should be the writing. As Tate argues, the composition classroom is not “empty” with a need to be filled with some sort of “content” (269). The use of literature can be as simple as a reference to inspire students to find the themes that are prevalent in their lives and cultures or as complex as asking them to deal with a social issue from the perspective of its portrayal in a classic text. When literature is used as a way to encourage the reflection and response that we so fervently want our students to write, they are learning more than just their personal thoughts and feelings or the writing process. They are learning about our culture, history, and our humanity, a primary purpose for using literature.

The second purpose, though, requires that we consider the needs of English instructors. The effectiveness of using literature in the FYC class is possible if the professor is passionate about its use; asking a folklore instructor to teach freshman composition using *The Great Gatsby* would be just as unreasonable as denying a literature professor the usefulness of the same text. Ford’s MST is another key for choosing to use literature in FYC, as explained in the following course design.

5.1 Defining “Literature”

After defining the purposes and assumptions behind PEP, defining the term “literature” is essential. Literature is defined, typically, as “writing” with some artistic value through universal ideas or interest. For my purposes, literature is any text that might contribute to a student’s education as a writer or that might model specific modes of communication, as defined by Jeanie C. Crain in the Summer 1993 issue of *College Composition and Communication*. As shown in Figure 5, the Guidelines for teaching English 1020 at MTSU use “text” in lieu of the more traditional term “literature.” Literature can be narrowly defined, though, and the following course designs allow for one’s own interpretation. However, included in this argument is specifically the increasingly-expanding canon of literature that is taught in survey and upper-level English courses. Two main theories—Lindemann’s argument that literature overwhelms the content of the class, and Tate’s main point that literature is an effective model for the teaching of writing—together suggest how literature can serve the purposes of the debaters on both sides of the literature vs. rhetoric argument for FYC.

5.2 Literature and Composition: A Lit Review

The debate about the use of literature in FYC is long-running and, at times, heated. Fortunately, though, the development of PEP encourages an understanding of both sides of the argument and takes pedagogical tips from both camps. The debate over the use of literature in FYC was legitimized and nationalized by Erika Lindemann’s “Freshman Composition: No Place for Literature,” published in *College English* in 1993. Lindemann is a nationally recognized scholar in the field of composition and rhetoric; she

has founded *The Longman Bibliography of Composition and Rhetoric*, the *CCCC Bibliography of Composition and Rhetoric*, and she has served as Director of the Composition Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; therefore, her opinions on the teaching of writing are valuable to the field, and they carry great weight with many scholars of composition and rhetoric. "Freshman Composition: No Place for Literature," came out of the debate between Lindemann and Gary Tate at the 1992 College Conference on Composition and Communication. In Lindemann's article, she asserts that FYC must have a purpose in and of itself that is unrelated to the literature goals of an English department. Also, she argues that courses focused on "great ideas," such as contemporary culture, the essay, or social issues, result in the same problem that literature-focused FYC courses encounter, "the pedagogy, in practice, still involves too much teacher talk and too little emphasis on the writing" (312).

In other words, the teacher is doing the communicating rather than giving the students adequate practice. Lindemann gives five additional reasons why she believes that literature should not be a focus in FYC. First, it focuses the course on "consuming texts not producing them" (313). Second, students are required to take other humanities coursework, so FYC should not try to substitute for other general education requirements. Third, students write about literature rather than writing literature, which rebuts the arguments that they can learn style. Fourth, interpreting texts does not have to mean literature; they can interpret texts from their peers or any reading opportunity. And, fifth, Lindemann argues that graduate teaching assistants need to have a good foundation in the teaching of writing and that adding literature to their workload would not benefit them and would erode the value of their program (313-15).

Gary Tate, a Professor Emeritus at Texas Christian University and the editor of several texts including *An Introduction to Composition Studies* (with Lindemann), *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*, and *Teaching Composition: Twelve Bibliographical Essays* disputes these claims. He too, is a respected name in the field as well as collaborating with Lindemann for writing projects. Tate, in "A Place for Literature in Freshman Composition," published in spring of 1993, suggests that encouraging professors of literature to find their own comfort zone in the composition classroom by "introducing" literature as a theme that unites the course curriculum instead of "using" literature as subject matter allows the identities of both the professor and the student to be discussed through the freedom that the option of using literature presents. In this landmark article, which reintroduced the literature in FYC debate in the early 1990s, Tate explains that literature disappeared from composition classrooms in the 1960s without much resistance. He clarifies, "In large part, literature disappeared from the composition classes in this country because it was badly misused by teachers desperate to teach literature, teachers who really should not be blamed for trying to teach the one subject they knew" (175).

Professors of literature should desire to teach literature; however, Tate also blames the support of academic rhetoric for literature's demise. He asserts, "One major reason for this neglect is that many teachers now believe...that the freshman composition course is a place to teach students to write academic discourse...I sometimes think that we are very close to turning freshman composition into the ultimate 'service course' for all other disciplines in the academy" (176-7). Tate complains about "the increasing professionalization of undergraduate education in this country" (177), and he argues that

the “most important conversations will take place outside the academy, as [students] struggle to figure out how to live their lives” (178). This service course dilemma, along with the professionalization of both undergraduate and graduate students, is still a major concern of English departments. Tate concludes, “I am convinced that true education, as opposed to training, is concerned with much more than what we find in the various academic disciplines” (178). He argues that by varying students’ FYC experiences through a variety of texts, they receive more educational tools.

Four scholars comment on the debate in the Summer 1993 issue of *College Composition and Communication* (CCC), but most found the debate to be too divisive between literature and the writing process. Gregory S. Jakes argues that the purpose of FYC is not only to be a writing class. Elizabeth Latosi-Sawin argues that the debate has already found a happy middle-ground in most departments; Leon Knight firmly argues that reading literature is an essential part of educating students on how to write, and finally, Crain neutrally defined literature—as I have in this chapter—as any text, meaning student writings or anything read for a FYC class is really literature. The debate continued over the next years in CCC, but the results were the same; different instructors who have differing values, purposes, and backgrounds still offer opposing viewpoints. In the development of PEP, I take into consideration this spectrum of beliefs by using literature as a theme, but not as a focus of the course, and by leaving the chosen readings (and types of readings) up to each individual instructor. Lindemann’s and Tate’s essays, and many others from the debate, have become standard reading for many FYC instructors, but—because of their argument and methodology—they are also applicable to scholars of criticism.

Published in 1980, Stanley Fish's "Is There a Text in This Class?" easily blurs the boundaries of composition theory and literary theory. The connections between the Fish and Tate texts are obvious, despite the thirteen-year span between their publication and the vast differences in background and context. Arguing for the use of reader-response criticism, a method of literary criticism in which the reader's reaction to the text holds equal weight with the author's intention for the text, has fallen out and into favor several times since the publication of this essay; however, Fish explains, "Communication occurs within situations and that to be in a situation is already to be in possession of (or to be possessed by) a structure of assumptions, of practices understood to be relevant in relation to purposes and goals that are already in place." In arguing against the "integrity of the text" (573) and for a structure of communal assumptions, Fish promotes the theory of interpretive communities, which is similar to what Tate is promoting. Fish writes that the "shared understanding of what could possibly be at stake in a classroom situation results in language appearing to [students] in the same shape (or succession of shapes)" (585). Fish sees literature as a method of communication that needs to be responded to in order to fully represent itself in culture. He argues "that (1) Communication does occur, despite the absence of an independent and context-free system of meanings that (2) those who participate in this communication do so confidently rather than provisionally (they are not relativists), and that (3) while their confidence has its source in a set of beliefs, those beliefs are not individual specific or idiosyncratic but communal and conventional (they are not solipsists)" (585). This essay, in combination with Tate's, clearly answers one theory of literature in the FYC classroom, and responds to Lindemann's claim that writing is the only subject necessary in first-year composition. By bringing the text into

the class, the students may learn more about their lives, their cultures, and their own thought processes, which encourages them to write—as Murray advocates—about what they know with enjoyment.

5.3 Integrating Literature with the Writing Process

What MTSU instructors most often ask FYC students to do with a text is a type of reader-response criticism, or a theory of criticism that focuses on the reader's reaction to a text as being as valid as the author's purpose or as the text itself; however, FYC students write only about their response without the textual analysis. The purpose is not to understand the text more fully, but for students to understand themselves and their culture by comparing their situations, their expectations, and their assumptions about literature and literary culture ("Guidelines"). Tate, in looking for a way to use fictional models in lieu of "personal" non-fiction writing, may actually be promoting the classroom as an interpretive community.

Literature can effectively support the use of real-world writing prompts. According to the Undergraduate Catalog at MTSU, "The goal of the Communication requirement is to enhance the effective use of the English language essential to students' success in school and in the world by way of learning to read and listen critically and to write and speak thoughtfully, clearly, coherently, and persuasively" (65). Since the goal of FYC at MTSU is to encourage students to become better communicators through writing, they could use real-world situations to respond to. Literature simulates these real-world tasks in a way that is not easily replicated; literature provides FYC students with

“what if” situations, “what would you do” scenarios, and “how does this relate to you” questions.

The most popular, and obvious, way to integrate literature into a FYC course design is through assigned readings. Students can view the literature in two ways: first, as a model of good, creative, effective, or possibly even poor writing. The instructor can ask the students questions about audience, purpose, and theme, reinforcing that even the best writers must consider these qualities when composing. Second, the students can respond to what they have read. The students can use the text as inspiration for their next essay or as a catalyst to instigate an active response.

5.4 Sample Course Design

Theme: Literature and Culture

The following course design is organized using the same pattern as the Popular Culture-themed design from Chapter 4 (and the rationale is explained in Chapter 3, “‘Give Back:’ why Use Personal Experience Pedagogy”); however, the assignments, journals, and writings may seem more traditional simply because of the theme. The theme for this course design is Literature and Culture; because of this, the instructor can discover what the students are interested in before finalizing the readings for the class, or each individual instructor can substitute his or her own specialty research area into the design.

One simple way to integrate readings into the FYC classroom is through journaling; as Noone and Cartwright explain, journaling can be a form of “reportage,” recounting material (par. 39). Although journals do not traditionally involve only

readings, a reading journal allows students to respond to the writings that they are doing—perhaps justifying the fact that they are doing readings outside of class—and it allows instructors to make sure that students are doing the readings if the instructors choose to take the journals up during the semester. For example, a clause on the syllabus might include the following:

Sample Journal #1 (For Syllabus):

You will have required readings for most course meetings. Before these meetings, please write a one-page journal entry responding to the text. Questions to ponder: Was the text easy to understand? Did it introduce something new to you? What cultural opinions prevail about this text or about this type of text? Do you agree with these? Is this text “popular?” If so, with whom? How does the author’s belief fit into traditional societal ideas? Does the author take a stance? Do you agree/disagree with the author’s stance? Why or why not? What does your overall evaluation of the text say about YOU?

Figure 23

The journals can also be written in class. The students can be asked a specific question about the text that they are required to answer as a ten-minute (or more or less) introductory activity.

Sample Journal #2

After reading “The Red Wheelbarrow” find something in your life that is that picturesque or grotesque, and write a similar description of it. Be scarce but specific with your details. Use poetry or prose. Then, write a half-page explanation of why you chose to describe this scene. What about it appealed to you?

Figure 24

Journaling is an effective way to begin class because it focuses students on the writing; however, many class activities can give students fodder for writing assignments or class discussion.

Below is the sample syllabus for a literature class. This syllabus is slightly different than in the previous popular culture-themed example; it uses a different type of grading scale in order to demonstrate that the use of one specific scale does not support PEP more than any other, and it depends much more on the theme of the class by outlining the literature focus. Again, these choices are varied to allow each professor the chance to decide what would work best in his or her class. PEP is not contingent on specific classroom policies but only on the Ten Considerations as outlined in Chapter 1. This syllabus is, again, supported by the theories of Murray, Lindemann, and Ford. The reasoning behind each specific choice also follows the Guidelines for English 1010 and English 1020 as outlined in Chapter 3.

English 1010/Expository Writing:

Literature and Culture

Professor Stacia Watkins/ Fall 2009 Office: Office phone:
Office hours: W & F: 2:00-3:30 and by appointment
Email:

Course Goals: English 1010 is the first course in your two-semester freshman writing sequence. We will be concerned with both the process of writing and the actual text that you will produce. This means that you will not only be graded on the paper assignments themselves but also on the process you use in order to complete your assignments. We will focus on improving your knowledge of what makes an effective college-level essay and will spend time looking at strategies that will improve your papers on the levels of content, organization, word choice, grammar, and mechanics. We will be treating revision and editing as two separate processes and using peer review workshops for both revision and editing. In order to generate ideas for our class discussions and writing assignments, we will use canonical and contemporary literature as our primary text. Additionally, we will view films and do supplemental reading as needed.

Required Textbooks:

WWF: *Writing Without Formulas*, 1st edition, by Thelin
HHH: *Hodges' Harbrace Handbook*, 16th edition, by Webb, Miller, and Horner
SFC: *Surviving Freshman Composition*, 5th edition by Strickland and Watkins

Required Materials:

File folders: to hold journal entries, to hold papers to turn in, to be organized
E-mail address (Note: You MUST e-mail me your address by the second day of class)
Access to the internet and word processing software (MS Word only)

Evaluation and Grading Scale:

To pass the course and earn three credit hours, you must achieve an overall class average of **C-** or better. Although I will use the grade of **D** in grading papers and assignments, anyone receiving an overall **D+** grade **will not pass the class**.

Essays (1 Diagnostic + 4 others-all to be revised & edited = 100 pts each) **500 points total**

Class Participation (i.e., DSIRs* = 20 pts ea., Quizzes = 20 pts ea.,

Journals** = 20 pts ea., & Writing Center, Attendance = 20 pts ea. ***) **400 points total**

Presentation**** = 100 pts.

100 points total

TOTAL POSSIBLE SEMESTER POINTS:

1000 points total

SCALE:

900-1000 = A

799 - 899 = B

698 - 798 = C

697 & Below = F

Essay # 1 ____/100

Essay #5 ____/100

Essay # 2 ____/100

Class Participation ____/400

Essay # 3 ____/100

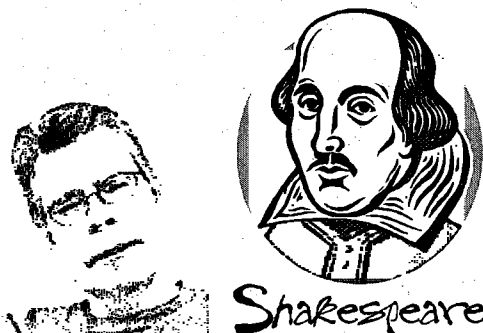
Presentation ____/100

Essay #4 ____/100

TOTAL POINTS EARNED FOR SEMESTER: _____

****ALL ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE DONE IN ORDER TO PASS THIS CLASS!****

****Response Papers:** You will be required to submit five close readings for select class meetings. The close readings will be a critical review of some aspect of that day's reading assignment. The response papers will be two pages, double-spaced, and typed. Response papers cannot be made up or turned in after class. If you know you will not be in class, make arrangements to either turn it in early or have someone else turn it in for you. Note: You should consider these open, free, and informal. This is the place to muse freely!



****Journals:** You will be required to keep a journal. As with the response papers, you should consider these open, free, and informal. You will do this informal journal writing both in and out of class on loose-leaf notebook paper and will organize these pages in a folder that will be collected at various times in the semester. Your journal grade will be based on the ratio of journal entries you complete to the total journal entries assigned. Journal entries should be around one page of a sheet of notebook paper (both sides) in length and must have the date and topic written at the top of the page for you to receive full credit (please write legibly!!). These entries are for your own benefit to help you gather ideas. They will not be graded for grammar or spelling; however, the more you practice editing your writing, the better your writing will be.

****Writing Center Attendance:** The Writing Center is located in PH 325, in Ezell 119, and on the web at www.mtsu.edu/~uwcenter for students to receive valuable one-on-one assistance with their writing. Tutoring is available by appointment or walk-in (904-8237); don't wait until the last minute to seek their help!

****Presentation:** You will be divided into teams, and each team will lead discussions of the readings. Additionally, each team will make a presentation to the class. More information will be given concerning this in class.

Note: I will use an evaluation form when I grade your papers. Each essay's evaluation form will focus particularly on writing strategies discussed in class prior to the writing assignment. When calculating your grade, I will take the points you earn on the essay against the total possible points on the evaluation form. Use the following scale to convert these grades to letter grades: 100=A+, 95=A, 92=A-, 88=B+, 85=B, 82=B-, 78=C+, 75=C, 72=C-, 68=D+, 65=D, 62=D-, 59 and below=F (NOTE: These grades are for essays only as a grade of D+ or below is considered failing for the course).

General guidelines:

Be sure to visit the English Department's website at www.mtsu.edu/~english2 for more information on MTSU's policies on civility in the classroom, academic dishonesty, disabled services, and absences/tardies. Also available are the English Department's standards, goals, writing requirements and grading procedures for English 1010. NOTE: You will email me a quick message relating some info from the site by Friday of the first week of class to let me know you have visited this site.

Paper guidelines:

- ❖ Per the English Department guidelines, you will be writing four essays based on reading from your text(s) and/or outside sources. The compositions will range in length from approximately 4-5 pages.
- ❖ All papers and assignments are due when they are due. However, life happens! You have **one and only one** exception to this late paper policy (otherwise known as your "Get Out of Jail Free Card"); you can turn one paper in up to **24 hours late** without a grade penalty. Any other late papers after that will **NOT BE ACCEPTED**.
- ❖ All papers (in-class and out-of-class) will be **typed, double-spaced, and printed in dark readable print**. In addition, all papers will use a **10 or 12-point font size**. Your **name, instructor's name, course number, and date** will be in the **left-hand top corner of the first page**. Additionally, **each paper will have a title centered on the first page**. You need to follow these presentation guidelines whenever you turn in a paper to me; not following them will reduce your essay grade by **5 points**.
- ❖ Be sure to keep **all** materials in an organized folder. Throughout the semester, I will be looking at your work (in-class work, homework, invention exercises, all drafts of essays, and graded essays) and doing so will make my job easier.

Class guidelines:

- ❖ The theme for this semester is Literature and Culture. All writing assignments will relate to this theme; you will be expected to not only learn how to write better but also learn about the topics covered as a content area.
- ❖ **Attendance and class participation are both mandatory if you want to pass this course.** At MTSU, the instructor sets the policy for attendance; be sure to understand my attendance policy before deciding to stay in this class. All absences negatively impact your grade in one way or another because each day of class prepares you for the next. In my class, absences are neither excused nor unexcused; you are allowed **four absences** for the semester. **If you miss more than four days, expect to fail the course.** The only exception to this rule is for university-sanctioned absences—if you will be missing class for university games, speech trips, livestock judging or some official university activity, please provides your absence schedule to me **by the second week of classes**. Only by giving me this notification **prior** to your absence will you be allowed to make up assignments.
- ❖ If you miss class and do not turn in assigned work **before** the missed class, you will not receive credit for the work. **No exceptions.** You will not receive credit for any in-class work that you miss; this is the price of being absent. Even so, missing a few in-class exercises (other than writing workshops) will not lower your grade significantly, unless you miss writing workshops or more than four days of class.

- ❖ Do not be late to class. If you arrive after I take roll (around five minutes into class), you are automatically considered absent. If you arrive after class starts but before I take roll, you will be marked tardy; two times tardy equals an absence for grading purposes.
- ❖ iPods and other electronic devices are not allowed. However, because of the MTSU emergency text messaging system, here is the policy regarding cell phones: You may leave your cell phone out on the desk during class, but your phone must be set to vibrate, and you may not actively engage your phone during class. Actively engaging the phone means talking on the phone, using the phone to play games, or text messaging (in other words, the phone can be on the desk, but you should not be actively using it); if you do actively engage your phone during class, you will lose all your participation points for the day. In the event that the ETMS is activated by the University, multiple phones should be vibrating at the same time, and in that instance, text messages will be promptly checked. I also do not allow audio recordings of our class—some of the issues and writing we will talk about are of a sensitive or personal nature, and deserve a modicum of privacy.
- ❖ Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class. At minimum, you will receive a ZERO for a plagiarized paper. MTSU policy requires that I notify Judicial Affairs in any plagiarism case. Plagiarism includes submitting work that is not yours as well as failing to punctuate, cite and/or document source material correctly. Plagiarism in any form is cheating, and cheating is for losers. If you plagiarize, you are a loser, and you will fail the course.
- ❖ You will receive points for all homework and quizzes given. In addition to regular grades for homework and quizzes, you will receive points for contributing to the class through discussions about your work, and attending the Writing Center. When we have writing workshops in class, you must bring the appropriate number of papers and evaluate the required number of papers to receive full credit. At the end of the semester, I will calculate your grade for these activities based on the ratio of your earned points to the total points possible.
- ❖ Please Note: If you need special accommodations due to a disability, please provide a letter from Disabled Student Services to me at the beginning of the semester. I am happy to provide special accommodations but need to know in advance; please do not wait to give me your letter.
- ❖ **THIS IS A CONTRACT!** This syllabus is a contract between you (as the student) and me (as the instructor). By staying in this class, you are agreeing to follow all the guidelines given above and to be responsible for your own actions.

Figure 25

This literature-based syllabus has similar policies and procedures as the pop culture one, but instructors using it encourage the students to be aware of the theme and of the types of class discussions that will occur, at least more so than the course designs of Chapters 4 and 6 where the topics may be more open to interpretation and course-shifts.

The following sample assignments promote reflection and response to literature rather than literary analysis, which is difficult for students to separate. Mode assignments for a literature-themed course might include response, reflection, memoir, autobiography, and review; some of the following assignments may fit into one or more of these categories. The use of these rhetorical strategies is supported by Murray's explanation of writing assignments in *A Writer Teaches Writing*, but his terms "Open Assignments" and "Closed Assignments" are much broader and more effective ways to discuss these that follow (97-9).

The first sample essay assignment, a similar assignment to the popular literature example in Chapter Four, illustrates how assignments can be modified and adapted to suit a different theme. In this example, students are asked to identify with a specific character, either the speaker or another character, from Ai's winner of the National Book Award for Poetry in 1999, *Vice*. The students are expected to respond to the text through their own personal or cultural experiences. Although students will have to complete some form of character analysis, possibly through class discussion or group work, in order to determine whom they most closely identify with, the analysis will be pre-writing work; it should not be part of the actual writing assignment because this does not support the English 1010 Guidelines, which are included as Figure 4 ("Guidelines"). This assignment allows students the chance to work within the guidelines of a closed assignment; there is one work of literature that they must find a way to identify with, but with the openness that PEP requires, they may choose from a number of speakers or characters with which to identify. The assignment itself encourages students to look at their own characteristics and beliefs through the eyes of an outsider. They are asked to choose a character with

whom they identify (by their own interpretation, and then, they must define themselves.

The students are not asked to analyze the character, only to describe themselves.

Essay #1—Personal Response to Literature (Peer Audience)

DUE DATE:

Assignment: Write a 4-5 page essay in which you respond to Ai's *Vice* by choosing a character—you can choose the speaker of one or more poems—with whom you identify.

The purpose of this assignment is to encourage literary reflection and personal response.

Part I: Summarize: Briefly summarize the character with whom you identify, and include pertinent information such as which poem or section of the text the character is from.

Part II: Connect and Reflect: Explain your connection to the character with specific details. You may do this by telling a personal anecdote, by describing your own character, or by evaluating or arguing for some action or choice you have made that is similar to one in the text.

***Your audience is your peers in this class.**

***Write the essay that would entertain/inform/persuade your audience.**

The final draft of this assignment will be evaluated on the usual general levels: the effectiveness of your introduction, your organization of the entire essay and of individual internal paragraphs, and your use of primary and secondary support (examples/details) to describe your specified topic and to support your thesis.

Make sure your paper is double-spaced, has one-inch margins, is in dark 10 or 12 point Times New Roman, font and has the following title block, also double-spaced, at the top of the left side of the paper:

Your Name
Prof. Watkins
English 1010-64
24 Jan 2007

Traps to Avoid:

Failing to support your argument with evidence/examples/details

Failing to state your own purpose

Describing the character throughout the entire essay with minimal reflection or response

Failing properly document ALL information that you take from the text or from other sources both internally and in a Works Cited page (when you quote, paraphrase or summarize any information from any source you must document!)

Due Date for Revision Workshop (bring two copies): 0/0/07

Due Date for Editing Workshop (bring two copies): 0/0/07

Due Date for Final Draft (submitted digitally over email): 0/0/07 by midnight

Figure 26

Below is a sample conclusion from this assignment. Modeling of essay expectations does not have to come through an entire essay; students can also learn from

reading what a professor expects from different parts of a complete essay. This modeling is advocated by Murray (*A Writer* 97) and by Ford's "The Principle of Direct Evidence" (220). Ford explains that students must have evidence of the effectiveness of what they are being asked to do.

Although I identify with the speaker in "Conversation" because of my grandmother's recent death, I am different from this woman. My ability to bounce back from tragedy was taught to me by my grandmother, and she would not want me to sit around and mourn her death, to imagine her always holding me up, or to need her constant guidance. She wanted me to be strong, and I am. This is a significant difference because I will be successful for my grandmother rather than with her.

Figure 27

The writer in the model paragraph responds to the assignment prompt, restates the thesis of the essay, and adds additional pertinent information. She also reinforces the significance of her argument and gives value to the assignment.

In the second essay assignment, students are asked specifically to argue or to persuade their reader. Written for a classroom of students who have read *Salvation on Sand Mountain*, it is a great example of how one specific piece of literature can be used to inspire reflective or response writing. This assignment inspires those students who enjoy creative writing; it is open-ended to the point that students may choose from three different topics and respond to them in a universal way. It also steps outside of the box of the traditional "tell me about yourself" FYC essay by allowing students to be a character. Instead, it is a "tell me about your character" essay.

English 1010**Essay 2: Argumentative/Persuasive**

Due Dates for Revision Workshops (bring TWO typed copies):

Due Date for Editing Workshop (bring ONE newly revised copy):

Due Date for Final Draft:

ASSIGNMENT: Write an essay of 4-5 pages on one of the following three topics in which you develop an argument for the purpose of swaying your audience's point of view:

1. You walk into a normal small, rural church service as a class assignment of cultural exploration when the members bring out two rattlesnakes. You must stay to complete the assignment. What can you learn? How do you complete research? What is the thesis you will argue? Have you ever had a similar religious experience?
2. When interviewing a young, rural couple as a beginning journalist, you determine that they are members of a cultist church/organization. What questions could you ask them? What argument would you make about the normalcy of the couple in relation to the abnormality of their chosen affiliation? Are any of your affiliations cultish?
3. Describe your most unusual religious or organizational experience. What made it unusual? Use sensory details to make your reader feel like they experienced it with you!

REQUIREMENTS OF THE ESSAY:

Under no circumstances should you combine any of the three topics given. Choose and meet one of the assignments!

Use the classic argumentative form (described on back).

Use first ("I") or second ("you") person sparingly.

Do not use quotes from the text or from secondary sources; you are essentially writing in character.

AUDIENCE: Your peers in this class

PAPER GUIDELINES: All drafts (including the first) will be typed, double-spaced, stapled, and printed in dark readable print. In addition, all papers will use 12-point Times Roman font and will have a 1" margin at the top, bottom, and both sides. An assignment block must appear in the top left-hand corner, and all pages must be numbered. **Not following paper guidelines will reduce your essay grade.**

Classical Argument

The classic argumentative form, based on the work of the Roman rhetorician Quintilian (35-100 C.E.), consists of five parts:

Introduction – Tells the audience what the argument is about and why it matters; develops a rapport with the audience; establishes the author's credibility (knowledgeable, trustworthy, etc.)

Thesis – Proposition that the rest of the argument (essay) will develop; should be pertinent and polite.

Proof – Reasons and evidence (as many as necessary)

Refutation – Anticipates counterarguments; acknowledges or minimizes legitimate differences

Conclusion – Summarizes main points; tries to sway audience to author's point of view

Figure 28

Of course, this essay assignment is also a direct affront to the idea of FYC as only a service course to other departments and majors. Students are learning what makes effective writing, but they are not necessarily practicing the types of writing that will be

completed in traditional majors outside of the humanities. Instructors of FYC who use PEP must decide for themselves what the purposes of their assignments are.

Essay 3 is a more traditional FYC assignment. By using summary and response as a mode, the assignment asks the students to do in writing what they should always do when reading: forming their own intelligent opinions and viewpoints with valid rationale to support these ideas. By opening up the assignment to any essay that students would like to review, it allows them to look at social issues through historical or modern literary texts. This assignment is very specific since it instructs the students to assume that their audience has not read the essay, which requires an adequate summary; however, the assignment also asks the reader to feel free to criticize the way in which the essay was written. Therefore, if students do not see that the author has a viable argument, then, by making their own argument, they are both teaching and learning this valuable lesson.

Essay #3**Summary & Response**

Due dates: Rough draft 4/15, Peer group 4/22; Final draft 4/27

Assignment: Write an essay in which you summarize and respond to a position presented in another essay. You may choose one among the following 4 essays to summarize and respond to. Each essay will be discussed in class:

Ellyn Kaschak, "The Prism of Self-Image" (19-23)

Dorothy Chin, "The Internet Encourages Isolation" (57-59)

George D. Kuh, Ernest T. Pascarella, and Henry Wechsler, "The Questionable Value of Fraternities" (87-91)

(Source: *Who Are We? Readings on Identity, Community, Work, and Career*, edited by Rise B. Axelrod and Charles R. Cooper published in New York by St. Martin's in 1997).

Michael Nelson's "State Lotteries Are an Unethical Source of Government Revenue"

(Source: *Opposing Viewpoints* database (ed. James D. Torr) available through the James Walker library website at MTSU. It was first published in *The American Prospect*, vol. 12, no. 10, June 4, 2001 under the title "The Lottery Gamble").

OR You may also respond to an essay of your choice. Consider essays dealing with controversial issues (such as gay marriages, the lottery, the Clark Rockefeller case, etc.). Editorials or opinion pieces published in major newspapers/magazines would be appropriate. **Your selection must be approved before you can proceed.**

Purpose: Your general purpose is to persuade by argumentation. More specifically, you are to (1) introduce and summarize the essay to which you are responding, and (2) show clearly, logically, and specifically where you stand, distinguishing your position from that of your source. **You must disagree with the author at least in part.**

Audience: You must assume that your readers have not read the essay that you are responding to. Be sure to narrow to a specific group, however. Most likely, you will want to select the audience that the writer of the essay most likely was targeting. Where was the essay originally published? What audience does the publication target? What hints does the essayist give about his/her targeted audience?

Do's ...

Read selected essay critically by questioning and understanding

Quote, paraphrase, and summarize the essayist's position accurately

Present a logical and well thought out response

Document the source appropriately using MLA guidelines

... & Don'ts

Failing to summarize the essay adequately for your reader who has not read the essay

Agreeing completely with the essayist, thus failing to offer insights of your own

Misrepresenting the author

Using the article as merely a point of departure to launch an argument of your own

Format and Length: The usual guidelines and requirements apply to this assignment (see previous assignment sheets or go to Pipeline).

Figure 29

In the final essay assignment, Essay 4, the students are asked to choose a text to review. The students build on the skills they have learned by completing the Essay 3 assignment: to briefly summarize, make an overall evaluation, and then respond to the chosen text. The overall evaluation picks specific points about the text or the way the text is written to argue for or against the author's point. Students are completing the same type of activity that they take on during a Peer Revision Workshop only, this time, they are reviewing a published author. This assignment brings many interesting issues out in the class. Although, as in the previous assignment, it does not require attention to canonical literature, it does focus students on reading and on evaluating what makes an effective piece of writing, and it may get them thinking about the publishing world. Does writing have to be "good" to be published? Is all published writing of the same caliber? And, as Fish discusses, who makes this determination, and what kind of training do they have (585)?

Essay #4—Review Essay (Nationwide Audience)

DUE DATE:

Assignment: Write a 5 page essay to review a written text (i.e. a magazine article, a novel, a poem, a newspaper column, an internet blog, etc...).

The **purpose** of this assignment is to assist you in thinking more deeply about the ideas presented in the text, as well as to help you articulate your own evaluation.

Part I: Summarize: Briefly summarize the text in the introduction. Then, objectively consider the article in both subject and detail in order to discover the author's primary purpose and meaning. What are the author's main points?

Part II: Evaluate: Is the text effective in its purpose? Is it significant to a specific cultural or literary debate?

Part III: Respond: Do not merely summarize the text; react to it. Here are some questions to help you react: Was the text easy to understand? Did it introduce something new to you? What cultural opinions prevail about this text or about this type of text? Do you agree with these? Is this text "popular?" If so, with whom? How does the author's belief fit into traditional societal ideas? Does the author take a stance? Do you agree/disagree with the author's stance? Why or why not? What does your overall evaluation of the text say about YOU?

***Who is your audience? Could your essay be published in a magazine, a newspaper, or online?**

***Write the essay that would entertain/inform/persuade your audience.**

The final draft of this assignment will be evaluated on the usual general levels: the effectiveness of your introduction, your organization of the entire essay and of individual internal paragraphs, and your use of primary and secondary support (examples/details) to describe your specified topic and to support your thesis. **The essay will also be assessed according to the structure and techniques discussed in our Writing about Literature discussion next week.**

Make sure your paper is double-spaced, has one-inch margins, is in dark 10 or 12 point Times New Roman, font and has the following title block, also double-spaced, at the top of the left side of the paper:

Your Name
Prof. Watkins
English 1010
24 April 2007

Traps to Avoid:

Failing to support your judgments with evidence/examples/details

Summarizing throughout the entire essay

Agreeing in total with the author's position, thus failing to offer any criticism, position, or insights of your own.

Misrepresenting the author—this is plagiarism!

Using the text merely as a point of departure to launch an argument of your own

Failing properly document ALL information that you take from the text or from other sources both internally and in a Works Cited page. When you quote, paraphrase or summarize any information from any source you must document.

Due Date for Revision Workshop (bring two copies): 0/0/07

Due Date for Editing Workshop (bring two copies): 0/0/07

Due Date for Final Draft (submitted digitally over email): 0/0/07 by midnight

Figure 30

Figure 31 is a sample essay written to review an article from National Public Radio. Found on NPR's website, the topic of this essay is unique because it is an article written from a primarily auditory reporting site (radio reporting). The review, though, takes this into consideration. The essay, again, began as a collaborative outline in a 1010 class, but then became a model for future coursework after I completed it for the students to use.

Jane Doe

Prof. Watkins

English 1010

00 July 2007

A Review of Public Health, Childhood Obesity, and the Media

Of all the issues that plague Americans today, public health is one that often tops the list. A primary health concern, especially for American children and teens, is poor health due to junk food diets and lack of exercise. No longer is children's health a concern solely for over-protective parents; influences such as videogames, DVD's and the Internet take up much of children's and teens' time, leaving little for exercise. Childhood obesity is a growing concern in this country, since it can lead to problems such as diabetes and heart disease later in life. It is refreshing to see studies that directly address this concern, such as the one featured on National Public Radio's website: "Study: When Kids Become Teens, They Get Sluggish." Despite the clumsy and somewhat misleading title, this article presents the results of a very important study on the exercise habits of children from the age of nine to fifteen and how they change over time. According to the study, which appeared in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* last week, "average levels of moderate-to-vigorous activity fell from three hours a day at age nine to less than an hour at age fifteen" ("Study"). The study simply concludes that older children do not exercise nearly as much as younger children, which can result in health problems. This is not to say that older children and teens are "sluggish," meaning they do not want to exercise, but that life often gets in the way. The article cites some causes such as increased time on the computer and more homework and other responsibilities

that may keep teens from exercise, as well as some possible solutions. The primary objective of the article is to highlight the results of this study and bring more attention to the problems they present. While the article is successful in bringing attention to children's health, it covers only limited ground.

The article is very convincing that the lack of exercise in children and teens is a real problem. The main reason for this is the many voices of authority presented other than the study itself. An officer that helped conduct the study, James Griffen, comments on his surprise at the results of the study: " 'You would expect somewhat of a decline (in activity), but nothing of this magnitude.' " Dr. Philip Nader, a pediatrician and professor at the University of California at San Diego, center, both attest to the importance of the study's findings and the urgency required in finding a solution ("Study"). Doctors are certainly sources a reader can rely upon in an article such as this, especially parents. Aside from doctors and conductors of the study, the most convincing authority comes from a subject of the test itself: a teenager. Mary Lee's story provides a personal example of what the study shows in terms of numbers and statistics. The article states that for Mary, the "results ring true" ("Study"). While the doctors give expert opinions, which give parents peace of mind, Mary Lee provides an individual, relatable testimony. This type of testimony is more effective in getting the message across to teen readers who might share her experience. The teens that relate to her might be more willing to take her advice and share in her success. The number of expert and personal testimonies that this article provides lends authority to the possible solutions presented later on, such as walking the family dog, swimming, and enrolling in sports.

While the article is very informative, it does leave many questions unanswered. Most of the questions that come to mind are the results of gaps in the study, such as specific health implications of the lack of exercise in older children and their possible solutions. Although these implications are assumed to be bad, they are never specifically examined in this study. These gaps leave room for further research in the field. Other questions arise from the article itself; many questions that the author(s) of the article could have asked the conductors of the study would paint a clearer picture of the situation at hand. For instance, the "special gadgets" used to record activity could not be worn "during swimming and contact sports," so the results could not be totally accurate ("Study"). This raises obvious questions: How could these activities be measured and taken into account in the study? How does this flaw affect the results? The

article provides a general assumption on the part of researchers that "it's unlikely that such activity happened often enough among the children studied to skew the results" ("Study"). This assumption leads one to believe that children and young teens do not participate in such activities, which in some cases is totally false. Another question that comes to mind that is never fully addressed in the article is the discrepancy between the sexes. According to the study, "boys were more active than girls at every age" ("Study"). Although the article provides possible causes and solutions to the problem, a cause for this discrepancy and a possible solution is never proposed here. Perhaps it is simply assumed that boys are naturally more active than girls; of course, this is too dangerous an assumption to make up front, since it would raise concerns of sexism and thus severely reduce the article's reliability. Factors other than sex were taken into account in the study, but are never fully explored in the article. For instance, conductors of the study made sure that "family income, race and ethnic background closely matched the U.S. population" ("Study"). Ties between economic status and rate of exercise among teens are not mentioned, even though this factor might affect accessibility to solutions such as sports and exercise facilities. These gaps in information, while providing avenues for future research, show a possible lack of concern for these issues.

Despite obvious gaps in information, the article does not appear to take a stance on the issue at hand: do children become sluggish as they get older, and how big a problem is this? Instead of debating this issue, the article merely focuses on the study itself and the social climate that triggered it. The attitudes surrounding "one of the largest studies of its kind" that are highlighted briefly are borderline fanatical. The words "crisis" and "risk" are used several times, which illustrates the mild panic surrounding this issue. In fact, the article mentions instances in which children as young as eight years old were given cholesterol-lowering medication. However, instead of taking advantage of the fears of over-protective parents, the article allays those fears by providing simple and effective solutions other than medicating their children. These solutions are proven effective through the example of Mary Lee, who participates in sports and takes advantage of a local health program provided by a children's hospital in her hometown ("Study"). By providing simple, almost mundane solutions to the problem makes it appear to be much less of a threat.

Although the issue of children's health, especially concerning exercise habits, is in no way a new concern, it is definitely a relevant one. "Study: When Kids Become Teens, The Get Sluggish" presents

some new information on a relatively old problem: how can we keep our children healthy into adulthood with so many negative influences out there? With health concerns reaching high levels, it is comforting to find news organizations such as NPR who provide unbiased (if not complete) accounts of what is being done by the medical community to address these problems. Concerned parents can feel at ease that childhood health issues are a major concern for the nations leading doctors and researchers. Older children and teens can also gain a sense of relief that their issues are understood on a personal level and that solutions to these issues are being explored with their needs in mind. This article, as with all the others on NPR's website, is easily accessible and readily understood, which suggests that the website's authors anticipate a wide audience. All interested parties, including parents, kids, teens, and concerned citizens without children should be able to appreciate this article.

Works Cited

"Study: When Kids Become Teens, They Get Sluggish." NPR.org. 16 July 2008. 16 July 2008.

<<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=92563748>>.

Figure 31

This sample essay takes into consideration the purpose, audience, and effectiveness of the writing, which, as Lindemann discusses, are three important writing lessons that we want our own students to consider (254). Therefore, this essay wraps up the class and possibly the view of the literature in FYC debate, as defined by PEP methodologies—literature should be used to allow students freedom to determine their own subject matter while also learning about their lives, beliefs, and cultures. If students can learn to review other texts with a critical eye, then they have a better chance to see their own writings through this same lens.

5.5 Conclusion

The use of literature in the composition classroom has been and continues to be controversial mainly because of the political controversies in English departments where writing programs are sometimes considered “inferior” to literature programs, perhaps more so than that, of itself, the combination—of reading and writing—is unlikely (Lindemann, “Apology,” 2). The idea to completely separate reading and writing is unwise because they rely on one another to be successful. Professors can guide students to examine their personal goals and assumptions through texts from academic and nonacademic discourse communities, in literary texts, and in the students’ creation of their own diverse writings. Expanding rather than limiting the options within composition may also motivate professors of literature to look at Freshman Composition as a class that, as Tate reasons, “excludes no texts” in order to motivate and to include both the student and the professor. This same hope can also be applied to professors who choose to use politics in the FYC classroom, as seen in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6:

“Motion or Action?” Using Politics in Freshman Composition

“Never mistake motion for action.”
—Ernest Hemingway

6.0 Introduction

7 September 2005

Dear All,

I am seriously considering joining FEMA and/or the American Red Cross response team in the capacity in counseling and/or physically helping the victims of this disaster, and the more I learn, I feel pulled as well as denied by the administrations at the same time. Information on how to truly aid is not as easy as it sounds on TV (hence the very late Email).

My concern is only how the university will consider me as an employee and how it will act if I am gone (read: leave my post) for the time I am needed by MTSU. I would sign for two weeks, at least, including training, from what I can gather with the scattered online information, which is conflicted and frustrating to me, at best so far. I am physically going to meet with the local Red Cross in Murfreesboro to hopefully get some gooey concrete answers tomorrow.

I will fulfill the substitutions for my classes the best I can, and will handle this to the best of my ability. My lessons are sound and there are people who are more than able to help assist the needs of my students. I've spoken to a few of them!

Whether or not I am sent to another state to help, I have to do something. I can't just send a check. I have to do something for these people. I'm tired of crying for them, and I'd rather cry with them while helping them. If any of you know ANYTHING about MTSU doing more than sending a check to help, please let me know. I have scoured the MTSU site and really haven't found anything more. There has to be more than what I've found - any buses going, training, counseling, ANYTHING! I just can not possibly live down sending a check or a can of food, although that is great help. I'm an able-bodied person with strength and some personal skills. These people need it, and I need to try to do something for them.

Figure 32

When my co-Graduate Student Administrator, Dianna Baldwin, and I received the above email after Hurricane Katrina from a second-year, MA-level Teaching Assistant, we were both baffled (“Aid”). TAs had stepped down because of academic failures, personal illness, military leave, pregnancy, or family trauma in the past, but we had not ever heard a TA ask to step down (even temporarily) to save the world.

Perhaps, though, what was truly baffling to us was the TA’s oversight of his true ability to “do something,” not only by “sending a check or a can of food,” but also by guiding his students to be critical of political issues, by using this crucial time to help his students realize that poverty thrives in American culture, or by taking examples of media coverage of the Hurricane and the disastrous days after to teach writing through critical thinking and media awareness.

For example, this TA could have used the following lesson plan. He might have begun the class with the journal prompt, “What is poverty?” The students, after ten minutes of writing, could share their answers in a class discussion format. Then, the instructor shows images from the aftermath of Katrina on an overhead screen or projector. The students analyze these visual images for clues as to what the geographical area might have looked like before the hurricane and for examples of the devastation that has occurred. The instructor could show images from Google Earth, so students could visualize the layout of New Orleans before the hurricane. Then, the students could perform a post-task writing about the nature of poverty, such as, “Has Hurricane Katrina caused poverty in New Orleans and the southern US coast, or has it only brought attention to an existing problem? What examples can you provide to support each assumption?” Then, perhaps the class could take on the task of finding one way to help

the victims; they might send non-perishable food, money, or toiletries from the class or volunteer at the local Red Cross. The students would then be asked to write about their experiences in a larger assignment, such as a response paper.

People choose to teach for many reasons—to inspire students, to do research that can further their own interests, or even to try to make a difference in the world; however, due to these lofty goals, the subject of politics in the composition classroom is unavoidable. As Roger Simon in “Empowerment as a Pedagogy of Possibility,” writes, “To propose a pedagogy is to propose a political vision, a [dream] for ourselves, for our children, and our communities” (371). Education is a political act. Writing is a political act. When these two activities are brought together into the political haven of the university environment, many viewpoints will arise, and to ignore them is to avoid the educational process.

Since not all politics can be brought into the classroom as a theme, it is important for instructors of FYC to remember that their own political viewpoints are better left outside of the classroom. Although most FYC instructors encourage their students to participate in class discussions and to express their own opinions through their writings, they may forget that the dominance of their own opinions—especially for students who are only three months out of high school—may suppress the differing opinions and, therefore, the dialogue of their class discussions. And, of course, MTSU has guidelines about instructors expressing their personal political opinions in class or on government property. Tennessee law, and that of the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) mandates that instructors not use “state resources to engage in political activities” (Trapp). The Little Hatch Act forbids the following activities by Tennessee state employees:

- 1) displaying campaign literature, banners, placards, streamers, stickers, signs or other items of campaign or political advertising on behalf of any party, committee or agency or candidate for political office, on the premises of any building or land owned by the state;
- 2) using any of the facilities of the state, including equipment [e.g., computers, telephones, information technology resources, etc.] and vehicles, for campaigning or political advertising;
- 3) engaging actively in a political campaign, or attending political meetings or rallies or to perform political duties or functions of any kind not directly a part of such person's employment, during those hours of the day when such employee is required by law or administrative/ institutional regulation to be conducting business of the state. (Trapp)

Although this law specifically outlines the rules and regulations for appropriate political procedures within a government sponsored environment, the law also mentions the need for political conversations to take place in the classroom. TBR employees are not prohibited from “exercising their First Amendment right of free speech to discuss matters of public concern (i.e., a state or federal election) during business hours. In addition, TBR faculty are permitted to engage their students in an academic exercise/discussion pertaining to campaigns and elections, provided that the exercise is germane to the course curriculum” (Trapp). Political conversations in FYC classrooms are protected by Tennessee law because of the need for such discussions for growth in critical thinking, community-building, and academic success.

6.1 Defining Politics in Composition

In “Politics and the English Instructor: Using Political Literature to Teach Composition,” Laraine Fergenson explains, “Most instructors of composition are aware that students write best when they are moved by the material they are asked to discuss. For that reason, political literature may provide a means by which many students, even those who enter the class with the feeling that they ‘hate to write,’ may be drawn into the content of the course and may participate enthusiastically” (7). Fergenson’s opinion is not new to the field of composition studies; studies in popular culture, folklore, film, feminist theory and many other fields of study (used as FYC themes) that are also relatively new to the academic canon have all been justified using similar reasoning. However, the mere introduction of these fields, or the use of a theme in FYC at all, is a political choice. It is important to remember that the use of politics as a theme of a FYC class is a different concept than the politicization of FYC. In this chapter, I specifically address the use of the American political system and democracy as a theme for FYC.

Many instructors may be tentative about using politics as a theme for the same reasons that others flock toward the idea—because debates can become heated, feelings might be hurt, or narratives can become too personal for comfortable classroom workshopping. However, there are ways to avoid this problem. First, the instructor’s biases need to be transparent. Anything from encouraging the students to avoid “In conclusion” at the beginning of the last paragraph to avoiding the topic of parking on campus should be discussed in class to allow students ways out of traps set for them. Also, any topics that the instructor cannot grade without bias should be vetoed. In my class, I make a list of paper topics that students are not allowed to write about, including

abortion, the death penalty, and parking on MTSU's campus. If I have read these types of essays over-and-over and I am sure that the topic cannot be intelligently discussed in four pages, I will request that my students not write about them. I also, though, give my students the chance to add to this list. They often prohibit gun control, Biblical issues, and legalization of marijuana. By allowing them the freedom to rule out many topics as well, they typically respect my list, and they choose more original topics within the political spectrum.

Politics in composition cannot be defined without mentioning, again, liberatory pedagogy, as discussed in Chapter 2: "'Highest Happiness:' Pedagogical Foundations and a Review of Literature" and Chapter 3: "'Give Back:' Why Use Personal Experience Pedagogy?" Freire and Shor's ideas on democratizing the classroom work well for discussions of student involvement and student interest; however, they do not always allow the professor the freedom to find his or her place in the classroom environment (Freire 63). Ann George in "Critical Pedagogy: Dreaming of Democracy" writes, "the aim of critical pedagogy [is] to enable students to envision alternatives, to inspire them to assume the responsibility for collectively recreating society" (97) and Shor, in *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life*, encourages critical thought in the FYC classroom so that students learn "to be their own agents for social change, their own creators of democratic culture" (48). These concepts are bold and political, but they do not exemplify the instructor-focused goals of PEP. Through Personal Experience Pedagogy, I ask for the instructor's interests to be the focus in order for the student to reap the benefits of their enthusiasm and motivation; therefore, in the next section, the literature of politics and politicizing the composition classroom will exclusively be discussed.

6.2 Politics and Composition: A Literature Review

Much has been written on the politicalization of English departments, the field of rhetoric and composition, and even the teaching of FYC. However, throughout the disagreements of the introduction of subject matter other than the writing process into the FYC classroom (discussed in detail in Chapter 5, "Our Most Secret Self: Using Literature in Freshman Composition), several scholars have taken up the long-running debate over the use of politics in (and the politicization of) FYC.

However, other scholars outside of the critical pedagogy discussion have also made great strides into the debate over politics and composition. Several have spoken out against a narrow definition of this partnership. Victor Villanueva, in "Considerations of American Freireistas," disagrees with the concept of turning the classroom into a "political arena" (99). Instead, he believes that classrooms should be based on the dialectic between hegemony and counterhegemony, tradition and change. This argument, in itself political, argues that students should not only look at current events (the 2008 Presidential Election Campaign for example) but rather should look at historical and current trends that can teach them more timeless strategies of critical thought. For example, students might examine the way that Jimmy Carter's grass-roots fundraising efforts in the 1970s impacted the future of politics and inspired Barack Obama's online fund-raising strategies of 2007 and 2008. Then, for a writing exercise, students may find a way that this has changed their world, define their impact on politics, or rewrite the definition of American democracy.

In the much cited example of the argument against introducing a topic into the writing classroom other than the writing process, Maxine Hairston, in "Diversity,

Ideology, and Teaching Writing,” argues against “a model that puts dogma before diversity, politics before craft, ideology before critical thinking, and the social goals of the teacher before the educational needs of the student” (180). This concern is indeed legitimate if writing becomes secondary to the true communicative purpose of the FYC classroom. The model that Hairston refers to, where the classroom discussion or essay topics of a political nature become more important than student writing or the process of writing, is not an issue in a classroom utilizing Personal Experience Pedagogy because the subject of politics is only used to encourage students to become better writers through their passion, experiences, and frame of reference. The assignments given do not even have to be of a political nature. The instructor could use politics in the modeled essays given to the class without ever requiring the same subject matter from his or her students.

However, the introduction of politics in composition is not a new concept, and although controversial, is a frequently discussed way to engage students in the writing process and new instructors into the teaching of writing. As James Berlin explains in “Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class,” “...a way of teaching is never innocent. Every pedagogy is imbricated in ideology, in a set of tacit assumptions about what is real, what is good, what is possible, and how power ought to be distributed” (492). The distribution of power in the FYC classroom is an implicitly political issue, and it is unavoidable because of the nature of rhetoric within the field of composition studies. Berlin explains the historical roots of this debate: “Most, however, have acknowledged the role of rhetoric in addressing competing discursive claims of value in the social, political, and cultural. This was particularly evident during the sixties and seventies, for example, as the writing classroom became one of the public arenas for considering such

strongly contested issues as Vietnam, civil rights, and economic equality" (499). The historical context of the use of politics in writing can allow instructors of FYC to both understand the importance of this collaboration and to think about Villanueva's argument that historical implications should be the only way that current politics can add to both the teaching of the writing process and to the development of students' critical thought.

In "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class," Berlin also outlines the three "most conspicuous" types of rhetoric: cognitive psychology, which "refuses the ideological question altogether, claiming for itself the transcendent neutrality of science;" expressionist rhetoric that "has always openly admitted its ideological predilections, opposing itself in no uncertain terms to the scientism of current-traditional rhetoric and the ideology it encourages;" and social-epistemic rhetoric, which "is self-consciously aware of its ideological stand, making the very question of ideology the center of classroom activities, and in so doing providing itself a defense against preemption and a strategy for self criticism and self-correction" (10). These three types are described through their political purposes both in and out of the classroom. Although the FYC classroom may use any of these three or a combination of them throughout the semester, students' use of writing and rhetoric must consider their own ideologies, the ideologies of their instructors, and the nature of how composition allows these ideologies to be either expressed or subverted.

Berlin also describes how the politicized definitions of these rhetorics developed through recent history:

Most proponents of expressionist rhetoric during the sixties and seventies were unsparingly critical of the dominant social, political, and cultural

practices of the time. The most extreme of these critics demanded that the writing classroom work explicitly toward liberating students from the shackles of a corrupt society. This is seen most vividly in the effort known as ‘composition as happening’...The only hope in a society working to destroy the uniqueness of the individual is for each of us to assert our individuality against the tyranny of the authoritarian corporation, state, and society. Strategies for doing so must of course be left to the individual, each lighting one small candle in order to create a brighter world. (16, 18)

Although PEP should not be generalized as a new version of “composition as happening,” the theme of politics can allow students to feel “liberated” if that is one of the individual instructor’s purposes for the class. Because community-building is such an important goal at MTSU, many instructors may feel that politically-informed students will feel more responsibility for their classes, their campus, and their colleagues.

The same ideas about the power FYC has to liberate students have been expressed in several works by Elbow. In one of his textbooks, *Writing with Power*, Elbow expresses his desire to help students become, “less helpless, both personally and politically,” (vii) saying that “we need to learn to write what is true and what needs saying even if the whole world is scandalized. We need to learn eventually to find in ourselves the support which—perhaps for a long time—we must seek openly from others” (190). These ideals, written directly to his audience of college students, support the claim of politicizing the composition classroom although the discussion of government and politics may not be included in this debate about “truth.” Students may

write “what needs saying” about their own lives without ever breaching the subject of traditional politics (190). However, I, through Personal Experience Pedagogy, do not emphasize a radical philosophy of student power—only that of student expression and passion. If the students also find a certain power in their words or methods of expression, that is a definite benefit, but it is not the only goal (or even a primary goal) in the development of PEP.

Other scholars of composition and rhetoric have addressed Berlin’s history of politics in rhetoric. Richard M. Coe, in “The Zen of Writing as Social/Symbolic Action,” explains that being a New Rhetorician in the school of Kenneth Burke and I.A. Richards “means thinking of writing first and foremost in terms of what it does, thinking about only what it says only within the frame established by that action” (40). Writing as doing is not a new concept, but one that may be addressed through the methodologies of PEP. Coe continues, “this distinction between doing and saying turns out to be a totally radical move, especially when the focus shifts away from school writing (i.e. away from writing motivated by teachers and grades). Asked what they are trying to do... students often discover a whole new perspective from which all sorts of writing moves and conventions start to make sense” (40). Since an instructor’s use of PEP does not demand a focus away from “school writing,” these shifts may be evident in free writing throughout the semester or in students’ course work from their major classes. This “new perspective” may be a secondary goal of an individual instructor, but not one expressly meant to support Personal Experience Pedagogy (40).

As examined in the discussion of Friere and Shor’s liberatory pedagogy, the use of politics in FYC can draw ideas from many sources, including educational theory.

However, many rhetoricians scoff at the ideal notion of a fully-functioning democratic classroom. Clyde Moneyhun, in "Argument, Free Speech, and the Politics of Deliberation in the Writing Classroom," calls this idea the "myth of democratic participation." He explains that many teachers and students believe in this myth "because liberal democratic ideology has convinced us that what is good for the dominant classes is good for everybody. The revolution that gave us the principals for citizenship, free speech, and democratic representation was only a partial revolution" (8). He defends the notion that democracy may not always work in the classroom although other strategies may have similar results: "We can teach students to locate themselves within ... a scene created and determined by inequality. We can teach students to argue from the point of view of the embodied, engaged participants that they are, and to demand that their adversaries do the same" (13). This political viewpoint, arguing for the disengaged and disenfranchised, presents a different aspect of using politics in the classroom, yet, it is a very popular viewpoint among beginning instructors, as Moneyhun points out. The development of PEP uses this reasoning behind the introduction of Politics as a theme. Not only might it inspire instructors of FYC to bring their passion for changing the world for the better into the class, but it also may teach students not only to express themselves and to communicate more effectively, but also to think more critically about the world around them.

Several collections of essays have also been compiled on this theme. Patricia A. Sullivan and Donna J. Qualley explain in the "Introduction" to *Pedagogy in the Age of Politics: Writing and Reading in the Academy*, "Teachers who once invited students to master or to transcend the structures of written discourse now call upon students to

participate critically in the discourses that shape their lives. Pedagogies that once aimed at self-actualization now aim at social transformation” (ix). Although the idea sounds similar to liberatory pedagogy, this political concept actually asks students to examine what is happening outside of themselves rather than to only learn to control their environment. Social transformation through writing, rather than through the actual classroom environment, presents the closer goals for the use of Personal Experience Pedagogy—that of communication, passion, and modeling. The professor aims for social transformation, and through the use of his/her own modeling and the theme he/she chooses, the students have the opportunity to follow through on this vision or to choose not to participate in such a highly charged debate. In PEP, the right of student choice is never ignored.

Little has been written on the notion of politics used only as a theme for FYC although this is one way to encourage class discussion and journal writings in many FYC classes. Of course, a similar argument is made for the use of pop culture in composition (see “Popular Culture and Composition: A Literature Review” in Chapter 4). The combination of both into a theme is a natural progression. In “Meaning is Cool: Political Engagement and the Student Writer,” David M. Weed explains his use of political popular culture in the FYC classroom to “make...students more incisive writers and, equally important, more astute citizens” (23). This reasoning, similar to the reasoning for PEP methodologies to utilize politics as a theme, allows students to build a better community of citizens, which meets two of the goals of English 1010 “Expository Writing,” community building and communication experience. However, Weed often sees the relationship of politics within academia to be one of avoidance. He explains, “the

notion of citizenship has been neglected in American colleges because of the historical relationship between social classes and the university system” (23). Weed implies that the elite history of America’s university system keeps the modern college classroom from placing much emphasis on the disenfranchised portion of the population that Moneyhun discussed. Weed explains the future of the university’s and the students’ need to recognize their place of privilege:

Meaning, and the student’s place in the structure of meaning, becomes not only cool but also valuable to a university that needs to reconsider its mission if its goals are indeed the promotion of a democratic and egalitarian society. That mission begins in places like writing classrooms, which can challenge students to think about their relationship to complex systems of meaning instead of repeating the truth. The category of truth, finally, is not inherently corrupt, but it becomes dangerous when distorted into a secular religion based on a blind faith in the Western civilization. Then it becomes a perversion, useful as a tool of indoctrination rather than education, compelling students to believe that adherence to tradition makes their privileged position an unequivocal right. (28)

Again, the idea of one “truth” inspires a FYC instructor to use political material in the class to encourage critical thought, community building, and social consciousness. This explicitly explains the use of politics as a theme in Personal Experience Pedagogy.

Although the controversial nature of this material demands maturity and sensitivity, even new teachers can use their own idealism in the classroom to make the political theme work. Matt Herman, author of “Participatory Pedagogy,” describes,

“From my perspective as a teaching assistant, the question becomes a matter of what can be done over a single semester to ensure that the world becomes a germane concern for my students” (31). A large goal, it is similar to that expressed by Moneyhun, Sullivan, Qualley, and Weed. Herman defines this use of politics as subject matter: “This [concern] can involve what I’ve loosely been calling a participatory pedagogy... recognize[ing] the faith students place in the liberalizing capacity of the university, and it takes up the challenge...of bringing students into a ‘participatory’ relation to the public they represent, participatory in the broadest sense as simply a relation of meaningful engagement (31).” The idea of the “participatory” student, though, must come from the notion of the “participatory” instructor. A student will never be engaged in a course that the instructor is only minimally passionate about. As Herman clarifies, “What students seek, quite simply, is an equal exchange: a tuition dollar for a better, more fulfilling life” (33). Although this idea may be discouraging or frustrating for instructors of FYC, especially those of us who have abandoned the concept Friere described as the banking system, students live in a very practical world in which a Bachelor’s degree means as much as a high school diploma meant 30 years ago. Therefore, participating—making certain that the students are involved in their own education and giving them ownership over their goals and future—makes sense. Herman explains participatory pedagogy:

As a content-based, student-centered approach to teaching composition, a participatory pedagogy understands that students have a stake in what happens in their world. It also understands that these students expect their education to help them address that stake...Consequently, what is imagined is a deeply political pedagogy but never a preachy or doctrinaire

one. It seeks to bring students into real-world negotiations through the tools of analysis and inquiry so they can solve problems in ways that suit their own interests and the interests of those in their community. (36)

Participatory Pedagogy is similar to what Moneyhun described; however, it is closer to PEP in that those instructors who use it seek to invite students to become part of the conversation without forcing them into it. Again, it is the student's individual choice to write about whatever topic he or she chooses, only taking hints from the instructor's motivational strategies and learning about the writing process along the way.

The need to include politics in FYC is obvious when one thinks about the nature of the university system, the need for students to "own" their education, and the lack of responsibility that students and instructors might use to justify student failure. As Jeff Smith discusses in "Students' Goals, Gatekeeping, and Some Questions of Ethics," some students want to be acclimated to the academic system rather than to be liberated from it (316). Increasing the enthusiasm and motivation for the faculty member by using a theme that it is easy to find passion in can only boost the students' success in the class.

6.3 Integrating Politics with the Writing Process

In "Politics and the English Instructor: Using Political Literature to Teach Composition," Fergenson argues, "[T]he attempt to avoid all controversy and all political discussion can lead to textbooks and to a classroom atmosphere that are actually hostile to the values of critical inquiry that we are trying to inculcate in order to... educate for democracy. It can also create a classroom atmosphere that is profoundly dull" (8). This last statement, although maybe not as powerful as the first, may be the strongest reason to

use politics in FYC. Most students will not enjoy a class that teaches straight grammar terms through sentence diagramming; they may not enjoy a class that requires them to write six pages on a topic chosen by their instructor, and they probably will not race to a classroom where they expect to discuss the revision process for hours on end.

Unfortunately, all of these may be necessary in FYC from time to time in order to keep the class learning appropriate strategies for dealing with real-world writing situations.

However, students who have the opportunity to be heard, to express their newly forming opinions, to tell stories about their lives and beliefs, and to hear others do the same will enjoy the class, the writing, or maybe even both.

One popular way to integrate politics into the writing process of FYC is through journaling. Ian Cook, in “Nothing Can Ever be the Case of ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ Again: Exploring the Politics of Difference through the Border Pedagogy and Student Journal Writing,” explains, “[Journaling] involves creative combinations of what students learn within and beyond the classroom—using each to interrogate the other—being strung out in partial dialogic and first-person narratives. All being well, students begin to learn to think with their pencils, and perhaps even more important, learn to feel with their pencils” (14). Students thinking “with their pencils,” is a goal of instructors who use PEP. For example, George Orwell, in “Why I Write,” argues, “The opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is in itself a political attitude” (7). Sentiment such as this could provide a very easy way for students to begin the process of thinking (and writing) about politics. More examples of the integration of politics and writing are discussed in the Sample Course Design.

6.4 Sample Course Design:

Theme: “Who are the Authors of Modern American Democracy?”

A complete course design is laid out in the remaining pages of Chapter Six. Included are two sample class activities to integrate politics as a theme; a syllabus for the course, again, slightly modified from the previous syllabi using Literature or Popular Culture as a theme; sample assignments, formatted differently to give each individual instructor more choice as to how the assignments are explained to the class; a sample rubric, again different from the other chapters to provide more choice for the instructor; and sample writings to be used as modeled essays. This course design is based on the same theories and practical examples explained in Chapter 3, and further discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Murray’s *A Writer Teaches Writing* and Ford’s *Motivating Humans* provide the main theoretical and practical basis; however, Lindemann and other scholars of composition and rhetoric also provide prominent inspiration for PEP. I chose the theme “Who are the Authors of Modern American Democracy?” so that students could learn to recognize their own contributions to American society through their self-expression and communication.

Again, this syllabus outlines, as Murray explains, “what the course will attempt to do and how it will attempt to do it” (*A Writer* 89). The syllabus for the class is slightly different than the previous examples, though. First, I chose to use the text *Visions Across the Americas* because of its obvious relationship to the theme. Second, I added this paragraph about the theme for the course: “What does it mean to be ‘American’? Is it a label, an identity, a concept? How has the meaning of ‘America’ changed over the course of history, and what does it mean today? What is ‘American culture’ and can it even be

defined? In this course we will explore the many dialogues and ideologies at play in American society, and examine through writing how our own voices fit into these conversations.” Also, some of the policies are slightly different; however, these are only suggestions for first-time instructors, and as in the previous chapters, should be modified to suit an instructor’s pedagogical beliefs and goals.



ENGLISH 1010-032
EXPOSITORY WRITING
THEME:
“WHO ARE THE AUTHORS OF DEMOCRACY?”

PROFESSOR STACIA WATKINS

Fall 2009
 MWF 11:30 a.m.-12:25 p.m.
 ROOM
 Email:

Office:
 Office Phone:
 Office Hours: MWF 10:00-11:00
 a.m.; other days/times by appt.

Course Goals

English 1010 is the first course in your two-semester freshman writing sequence. We will be concerned with both the process of writing and the actual texts that you will produce. We will focus on improving your knowledge of what makes an effective college-level essay and will spend time looking at strategies that will improve your papers on the levels of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. In order to generate ideas for our class discussions and writing assignments, we will view television series and cartoons, read models of writing in *Visions Across the Americas*, and do supplemental reading as needed. Being “present” in 1010 entails more than being physically present. This is not a lecture course; it is a demanding, fast-paced course requiring reading, writing, and participation in class discussions.

The thematic focus of our course is “Who are the Authors of Modern American Democracy?”. What does it mean to be “American”? Is it a label, an identity, a concept? How has the meaning of “America” changed over the course of history, and what does it mean today? What is “American culture” and can it even be defined? In this course we will explore the many dialogues and ideologies at play in American society, and examine through writing how our own voices fit into these conversations.

Required Textbooks

HHH: *Hodge’s Harbrace Handbook*, 16th edition, by Glenn and Gray
 SFC: *Surviving Freshman Composition*, 5th edition, by Smith, Smith, Strickland
 VA: *Visions Across the Americas*, 6th edition, by Warner and Hilliard
 Any handouts and any material presented over email, UWC website, or WebCT/Desire2Learn are also required texts.

Required Materials

Access to the internet, including WebCT/Desire2Learn, and word processing software (MS WORD ONLY)
 One-subject notebook for daily journal writings

E-mail address that you check regularly

Evaluation and Grading Scale

To pass this course and earn three credit hours, you must earn a final class grade of C or above. I may use any of the grades, including D and F, to grade each individual assignment, but YOU MUST receive a C to pass. The only exception is for first time 1010 students: you may receive an "N" instead of an "F" for the final grade IF you have met all the course requirements, including the attendance policy and completion of all assignments.

I will use a Grade Sheet when determining your grade for each essay. Each part of an individual essay will be awarded points, from which I will total your grade on a 100 point scale. Your final course grade will also be determined on a 100 point scale, which is then converted to letter grades as per the chart below.

A: 100-90% / B+: 89-86% / B: 85-80 / C+: 79-76% / C: 75-70 / 69 and below: F

Assignments and Grades

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| Essay One (In-class) | 10% |
| Essay Two | 20% |
| Essay Three | 25% |
| Essay Four | 30% |
| Journal | 5% |
| Participation | 10% |

Class Policies

--At MTSU, the instructor of each course sets the policy for attendance. In this class, absences are neither excused nor unexcused. You may be absent for any reason four times without penalty. Each absence after the fourth will result in five percentage points taken off your final course grade. The only exception to this rule is for university-sanctioned absences IF you provide proof and your absence schedule to me before your absence. Attendance and participation are essential to passing this course.

--10% of your final grade is for participation. Each day, if you are present in class and complete all in-class work, in-class journals, and participate in class, you will be awarded daily points. If you do this every class, you will accumulate 100 points, and 10% of your grade, at the end of the semester. Participation in in-class parts of peer-review is also part of this grade!

--If you miss class and do not turn in due assignments before the absence, you will not receive credit for your work. There is no exception to this policy for any absence. You will also not receive daily participation points for any class you miss.

--Please be on time. Tardies are disruptive to the whole class. Also, two tardies equal one absence—no exceptions. If you come to class late, it is YOUR responsibility to come see me immediately after class to get your absence changed to a tardy!

--Each day, you will write in class in your journal. Bring your journal to every single class meeting. Writing in your journal in class is part of your participation grade. I will check your journals each week for grading. Your journal grade will be based on completion.

--You will be required to write two Peer Review Response letters for each essay assignment, one for each of your group members. This equals a total of eight Response Letters for the semester. These are graded for completion—and they total 5% of your final grade. You will receive a separate sheet explaining this component in more detail.

--Cell phones, iPods, and other electronic devices are not allowed. Keep them on silent, or better yet, leave them at home. If your phone rings, or you are playing games, text messaging or otherwise engrossed in your phone/device instead of class, you will not receive participation points for that day. If my phone rings, everyone in class will get one bonus point! I also do not allow audio recordings of our class—some of the issues and writing we will talk about are of a sensitive or personal nature, and deserve a modicum of privacy.

--Please don't eat in class, as it can be distracting. Drinks are allowed.

--As we are all adults, mature behavior is expected of everyone in the class. **You will be responsible and accountable for your own work and actions.** We will discuss some materials of a sensitive nature, which may challenge your belief systems or make you uncomfortable. You do not have to agree with anyone, but you should respect the freedom of expression guaranteed to all of us. I ask that you discuss all of the writing and issues in this class in a civilized and intellectual manner. There is an exception to this, however: blatant discrimination and derogatory/hateful language or actions will not be tolerated. Some of your classmates may write about sensitive or personal issues in their essays—please do not discuss these issues outside of class. It is important that we maintain a secure and comfortable learning environment.

--If you need to discuss any issues pertaining to our class with me, please visit me during my office hours or contact me by email. If you contact me by email, please be advised that I only read and respond to student email during my posted office hours. However, if you have a serious emergency situation, please contact me! I am often available for an appointment if you cannot make it to my office hours; however, if you need to cancel, please do so at least an hour before your appointment. I have an open-door policy; I am here to help you, so don't be afraid to ask any question regarding our class.

--For extreme weather conditions, please check www.mtsu.edu for cancellations. Also, please check your email before coming to class on days with extreme weather.

--If you need special accommodations due to a disability, please provide a letter from Disabled Student Services (898-2783) to me at the beginning of the semester. I am more than happy to provide accommodations, but need to know in advance.

-- **PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED IN THIS CLASS.** You will receive a **zero** for a plagiarized paper. MTSU policy requires that I notify judicial affairs in any plagiarism case. **This matter is serious and equivalent to criminal fraud or theft.** It is my expectation and should be yours as well that you can do any assignment in this class without cheating. I have access to the website *MyDropBox.com*, which allows me to search the internet and essay databases for plagiarism in your papers. In addition, you will be required to read over, sign, and turn in the plagiarism statement found in *Surviving Freshman Composition* (4th ed., pg. 13) by Friday, August 31st. There are no exceptions to this policy; students failing to take this small measure **CANNOT** have any work graded until the page is turned in. Signing the form shows that you are aware of what constitutes plagiarism. Also, any questionable citations or lack of credit to the original source may result in an automatic 55 on the essay. --I will occasionally provide opportunities for extra credit. It's totally random, and you have to be in class when it happens.

--Please visit the English Department's website at <http://www.mtsu.edu/~english> for more information on MTSU's policies on civility in the classroom, academic dishonesty, disabled services, and absences/tardies. Also at the website you will find the English Department's standards, goals, writing requirements, and grading procedures for English 1010. These guidelines are also included in *Surviving Freshman Composition*.

Paper Guidelines

--As required by the English Department guidelines, you will be writing four essays of at least 1000 words each, based on class discussions, outside media, and your personal reflection. Your proficiency essay will be written in-class.

--You will have each rough draft of your paper read and commented on by me, as well as evaluated by your peers in editing sessions and peer-review sessions, **BEFORE** you turn in a final revised draft for a grade. This is not optional—and will make you a better writer while also helping to improve your chances of getting a better grade on your final draft.

--All papers, legibly printed and stapled, are due to me when class begins. You **must include** your rough draft with my comments and a printed Grade Sheet attached to your final copy. Also, you must email me a digital copy of the final paper **BEFORE** you come to class. Both versions, printed and digital, must be submitted in this exact manner for your paper to be considered on time. Except for the emergency clause, there is one other exception to this late paper policy: **you can turn ONE paper in up to one class period late with no penalty.** If you fail to turn in this one late paper in at the next class period, you will be penalized a letter grade a class period, until you turn it in, or reach F. **ANY OTHER LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED!** You will receive a zero. This exception is not allowed on Essay Four, however,

which must be turned in on the due date, or you will receive a zero. **ALL FOUR MAJOR ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE TURNED IN TO PASS THIS CLASS!**

--All papers must be typed, double-spaced, printed in black in Times New Roman or a similar font, and formatted in the MLA style. All papers must have a 1" margin at the top, bottom, and both sides. You may have to reset your margins in MS Word to do this.

--As mentioned above, all papers must be submitted in digital form. They should be emailed (THROUGH DESIRE2LEARN ONLY!) in MS Word format only, and only as an attachment. DO NOT paste the essay into the body of the email. I will NOT accept any other format than MS WORD (.doc) format, or Rich-Text (.rtf)! If you send me a digital in any other format than these, I will not accept your paper!

--I will not discuss your essay grades within the first 24 hours after you get them back.

--When we have a peer review or editing session in class, you must bring the required copies of your essay and discuss the papers of others to receive full participation credit for that day.

--I will do my best to return your essays to you within a week of receiving them. You will always receive your graded essay back at least one class period before the next essay is due. Essay Four will be returned to you during our scheduled final exam time.

--Please ask me if you have ANY questions! If you are having problems, please tell me, and I will help you!

Other Information

-- The Writing Center is located in PH 325 and on the web at www.mtsu.edu/~uwcenter for students to receive valuable one-on-one assistance with their writing. Conferences are available by appointment only (904-8237); don't wait until the last minute to seek their help! Online writing assistance is also available. For hours, please visit the website.

The Speaking and Writing Center is now open in Ezell Hall 119 (494-8616); or help with your essays, group projects, and assistance with presentations, please visit this center.

In order to receive three points extra credit (per visit) for attending the University Writing Center or Speaking and Writing Center, you must ask your tutor for a signed form from the center as proof of your visit. I will accept these forms attached to each essay on the day the essay is due.

-- Scholarships and Student Loans— You are responsible to be familiar with and adhere to the terms and conditions of whatever means of financial support you benefit from. In no instance can I be held responsible for any neglect of your duties. This applies in particular to the Hope scholarships that are lottery funded. To retain Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship eligibility, you must earn a cumulative TELS GPA of 2.75 after 24 attempted hours and a cumulative TELS GPA of 3.0 thereafter. A grade of C, D, F, or I in this class may negatively impact TELS eligibility. Dropping a class after 14 days may also impact eligibility. If you withdraw from this class and it results in an enrollment status of less than full time, you may lose eligibility for your lottery scholarship. For additional lottery scholarship rules please refer to your Lottery Statement of Understanding form, review lottery scholarship requirements on the web at <http://scholarships.web.mtsu.edu/telsconteligibility.htm>, or contact the MTSU financial aid office at 898-2830.

--This syllabus is a contract. By staying in this class, you are agreeing to follow all of the guidelines above and be responsible for your own actions. If you are unable to comply with ANY part of the above, please drop this class.

Figure 33

This syllabus provides an example of MTSU accepted policies and procedures, and it should be noted that the "Guidelines" and "Other Information" sections should be

compared to the previous two syllabi examples and do not change much based on the course theme.

Journaling is a low-risk strategy of many writing classes, and one non-punitive writing assignment that can allow the students some freedom to use writing as a way to explore their own thoughts, or in other words, as Elbow defines, a “think piece” (2). By using quotes from Bill Clinton’s *Giving: How Each of Us Can Change the World*, *All The Best*, George Bush: *My Life in Letters and Other Writings* by George H.W. Bush, and Jimmy Carter’s *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*, students may be inspired to think about the course theme, but major assignments can (and should) focus more on personal writing. The following are three examples of journal topics, given at the beginning of class. The students are asked to write for 5-10 minutes; then, teacher and students discuss their thoughts for another 5-10 minutes.

9/14/08

Journal #1

In *Giving: How Each of Us Can Change the World*, former President Bill Clinton encourages the wealthy to donate five percent of their annual salaries; then, he writes, “Who’s happier? The uniters or the dividers? The builders or the breakers? The givers or the takers? I think you know the answer.” Do you agree with his assumption? What difference could be made by such a generous effort? Would things change at all?

Figure 34

10/25/08

Journal #2

In *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*, former President Jimmy Carter suggests that there are really “two Israels,” one celebrating “the ancient culture of the Jewish people, defined by the Hebrew Scriptures,” and another of “the occupied Palestinian territories,” who does not “respect the basic human rights of the citizens.” What do you know about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? When or where do you hear about it? Could President Carter be right? If he is right, why would the United States offer blanket support to Israel? Who do you think that Carter’s opinion might offend?

Figure 35

11/5/08

Journal #3

In a letter to the Saddam Hussein in January of 1991, former President George H.W. Bush wrote, “There can be no reward for aggression. Nor will there be any negotiation. Principle cannot be compromised.” What does this imply about the U. S. military action both today and in the Gulf War? What similarities or differences do you see in George Bush, Sr. and his son, President George Bush?

Figure 36

These three journal entries may not be completely answerable by all students, but they will provide fodder for good class discussion. The first may turn into a discussion of wealth and privilege, perhaps even within the college environment. The second could open the students’ eyes to a world conflict involving a religion other than the traditional Muslim debates that they have heard in high school. The third will allow students to see the current political situation through a historical view. Instructors could also ask them to think about this statement—made in the year that most incoming Fall 2008 freshmen were born—and how it has impacted their entire lives thus far.

Prompts can also be used in class activities or discussions. “Yes, No, or Maybe” is a class activity that I and several other instructors have tried at MTSU with much success. This class plan provides the students an opportunity to practice developing voice and point-of-view, two specific goals that Murray outlines for class activities (*A Writer* 114-5). In this activity, students are asked to stand away from their desks. One side of the classroom is designated as “Yes” and the other “No.” The middle of the room is “Maybe Territory.” First, the instructor outlines the rules for the activity (fig. 37) and reinforces the need for maturity, civility, and respect. Then, the instructor reads the prompts one-by-one. After each one, the students move to the appropriate part of the room. Then, one person from each side, “Yes” and “No,” is chosen to speak on behalf of the group, and it must be someone who has not spoken before (see Rule 3 for exclusions). Any student who chooses to remain neutral must also explain why. A student may only be neutral one time during the activity. By asking leading questions (and sometimes playing Devil’s advocate), discussions can be as shallow or as complex as the instructor would like. Below are ten prompts that I have used in the past.

Rules:

1. You may only remain neutral once.
2. When you are neutral, you must explain why.
3. You may only represent your side a second time if everyone with you has already spoken at least one time.
4. You may not interrupt.
5. You may not change the circumstances of the prompt.

Prompts (revealed one at a time):

1. MTSU should pave more “green space” so that students can have closer parking.
2. Barack Obama should be the next President of the United States of America.
3. Governor Eliot Spitzer should have resigned after the prostitution scandal.
4. Torture, according to the Geneva Convention, should be considered illegal in all forms.
5. Obese Americans should not be allowed to adopt Chinese babies.
6. Electronic voting machines improve the voting process.
7. Euthanasia should be legal.
8. Medical marijuana should be available through vending machines.
9. A physical fence should be built on all American borders.
10. Ammunition control is the answer to gun violence.

Figure 37

In my spring 2008 class, the students seemed to really enjoy this activity. Some of the students who were less likely to usually speak in class really shone on this day. Also, the activity allows the students to consider what is or is not a good argument and how they are affected personally by their peers' beliefs.

The second politically-themed class activity follows Murray's suggestions for class activities that involve both “Observation” and “Empathy” (*A Writer* 110-1). He recommends that students learn about empathy through a classroom learning experience,

and then, “write their descriptions of the world” and “share them” (111). This learning experience provides real-world experience in the safety of the classroom, and it involves the fight against homelessness. The “Homelessness” activity encourages involvement from outside participants, such as Habitat for Humanity. The students are each given an individual, fictional scenario that includes, their race, gender, marital status, number of children, occupation, salary, credit history/score, and current financial standing. Then, six to eight guests, instructors, and volunteers, set up their “offices” around the classroom that symbolize the apartments, rental offices, and mortgage loan plans that they represent. The students travel from fictional office to office trying to find a place to live. The activity is set up so that many students will be living in very poor conditions, and one student will not be able to find a home. Typically, this activity sparks great discussion about discrimination, housing policies, and government aid. The students learn from a simulated experience that they are then asked to reflect on through writing.

Figure 38 is the assignment sheet for the first essay in the class. The class begins with a discussion of class, wealth, privilege, and democracy (especially as related to the Clinton journal entry). This assignment can be presented directly after the class discussion. Again, Chapters 4 and 5 provide more in-depth discussion about why I set up the assignment sheets in this way and about the nature of each individual section (i.e. “Audience,” “Purpose,” etc...); however, the design of Lindemann’s “Heuristic” is the format for asking questions of yourself and answering them for the student. In this essay topic, the students are asked to define themselves and who they want to be in the future through their careers and their lives up until that point.

English 1010**Essay 1: Defining Yourself: How your identity shapes your future****DRAFT DUE:****FINAL PAPER DUE:**

TOPIC: Exploring the causal connections between your identity and your career options.

ASSIGNMENT: You will be writing a definition paper in order to explain to your audience how your future career options depend on who you are and what you believe today. You will accomplish this by analyzing your personality by a method of your own choosing, as long as you can explain and justify it. On the basis of this analysis you should explain how your personality, values, beliefs, and skills provide you with opportunities and limit your possibilities. Imagine who you want to be in the future and what you want to be doing. Can you get there from where you are now? What makes you think so? How does your future depend on your present? Finally, you should describe three of your best career options you wish to pursue at MTSU.

AUDIENCE: Imagine that you are writing to a career counselor, the academic advisor in the department in which you want to study, or a potential employer in a summer internship. In other words, write to someone who is concerned about your future happiness and success and tell them why you are well suited for your chosen career path or course of study.

TASKS TO COMPLETE BEFORE SUBMITTING FINAL DRAFT:

- Type the essay according to correct paper format guidelines
- Incorporate any suggestions that you receive from you peers or myself; however, the paper is ultimately your writing.

SPECIFIC SKILLS and ABILITIES REQUIRED: You will

- Explain what limitations and opportunities this gives you
- Define yourself using a coherent system of an analysis
- Choose three options and classify them

TRAPS TO AVOID: You will want to avoid the following problems, especially

- Vague and incoherent definitions
- Failing to consider alternatives
- Failing to link personality characteristics with future options

Figure 38

This essay should allow students to connect the political to their everyday lives by asking questions of themselves, similarly to what the instructor does when creating the assignment. Who are they as students and as people? Who do they want to be? How do their lives need to change in order to be the people they admire? The next paragraph is a

modeled introduction that is given to the students with the assignment sheet to help them understand the direction their essays might take.

When I started my freshman year of college, I enrolled as a Broadcasting major. I went to my first “Intro to Broadcasting” class on my very first day of college. The professor first passed out the syllabus; then, he began to talk: “If you want to be in Broadcasting, you must not feel. You can’t have a heart because you can’t be over on the sidelines crying when there’s a story to be told. When you are at work, your job must come first. Nothing, and I mean NOTHING, should get in between you and the story. Your audience has a heart—not you.” I realized that I had made a mistake. I’m not heartless, and I’m not good at putting my feelings aside to finish a task. My reasoning for going into Broadcasting is the need for compassionate, honest, and objective journalism so that the average person can understand our government. So, on my second day of college, I walked into the registrar’s office and changed my major to Political Science.

College demands that you constantly reevaluate your life goals and your career goals, and as they change, you must change your educational goals. Also, the opposite is true. As your educational goals change and you learn more about a field of study, you many also have to change your life goals. For now, I want to be either a congressional aide or the editor of a newspaper, and my future courses in political science, my nose for the news, and my big heart will lead me down this path.

Figure 39

This paragraph not only models the type of writing that could be included for the essay assignment, but it also shows the student how a two-paragraph introduction may be used in a completely effective and acceptable way, both modeling effective writing and dispelling the notion of the five paragraph essay. Both of these goals can be identified in Murray’s metaphor of the writing process: “If you need a teaching model...think of how we teach babies to walk, providing experience, encouraging each effort, laughing at each failure, establishing increasingly difficult goals, but making each of them reasonable and

not worrying if they aren't met immediately, while always displaying confidence the baby will walk one of these days" (*A Writer* 80). FYC students are, typically, less skilled writers, and they have had little to no experience with academic discourse. However, with models, patience, humor, and encouragement, students can learn to produce the kind of writing we expect from them.

Essay Two in this course design is an open assignment that asks students to define their "Societal Roles." In journal entries and in class discussions, the instructor and the class discuss many possibilities for the way that students may affect the writing of modern democracy through the lives that they lead. They talk about how others, musicians, artists, TV personalities, and their own families and friends have impacted their view of society. The class even talks about who they might be influencing; then, they are given the second essay assignment in which they may write about most any aspect of their society. Because the purpose of English 1010 is reflective and response writing, this second essay both builds on Essay One by now asking how their identity impacts others and it uses the course theme for the class, "Who are the Authors of Modern American Democracy?".

Spring 2009

ENGL 1010

Essay #2—"Societal Roles"
Narrative/Descriptive Essay

FINAL DRAFT DUE (in class & e-mail to me):

Draft #1 due for Revision Workshop (Bring 2 copies & e-mail to me):

Draft #2 due for Revision/Editing Workshop (Bring 2 copies & e-mail to me):

ASSIGNMENT: For this assignment you must write a 1,000-1,500 word narrative/descriptive essay on the role of the public sphere in your life, specifically identifying how American society has influenced who you are today whether positively or negatively.

The following are ideas that you may use to help you write this essay. You may use any or all in writing your paper; however, you do not have to use any of them.

*Compare realistic American society to the way it is portrayed on television. How is society similar to or different from the T.V. version?

*Tell the story of an important lesson dealing in the public sphere has taught you. What specifically did you learn, and how did it affect you?

*Think about a societal event (election, death, terrorist attack, patriotic moment, war, a special moment from the Olympic games), and describe how it has influenced who you are today.

The purpose of this essay is for you to think about American society and how it has contributed to who you are as person today. By remembering, describing, and telling about this experience, you can better understand who you are and who you will become. Because this is your story, you should tell it in a way that is interesting and appealing to your audience. You should describe the experience in detail, using vivid images, sensory words, and colorful language. Create the scene thinking about all five senses. Again, this is your story, so make it come to life.

AUDIENCE: Your audience for this paper is the person sitting next to you, so you should write as if you are telling him/her a story about your family. Be entertaining and appealing; you should grab your audience's attention at the beginning and hold it until the end.

PAPER GUIDELINES: Your paper must be typed in MS Word, double-spaced, and printed in black ink. In addition, all papers will use 12-point Times New Roman and have a 1" margin at the top, bottom, and both sides. NOTE: The default for MS Word is 1.25". An assignment block must appear in the top left-hand corner, and all pages must be numbered. (See HHH pp. 634-635 for explanation and example.)

GRADING CRITERIA: Attached is the rubric I will use to evaluate this assignment.

Figure 40

Figure 41 is a sample grading mechanism for this Essay 2 assignment. It, again, uses Primary Trait Analysis to indicate a student's strengths and weaknesses.

"Societal Roles" Essay Evaluation

Student _____ Final Grade _____

This is the rubric I will use to evaluate your formal essay. You can talk to me about your paper at any time during the writing process. This essay counts 100 points of your final grade. Your grade is based on the number of points you receive out of those possible 100 points. To reinforce the importance of writing as a process and not simply a product, you can receive up to 25 points for attending and actively participating in all sessions/workshops. Thorough, thoughtful work is required for full credit. There are no make-ups.

Brainstorming Sessions _____/5 points
 Revision Workshop _____/10 points
 Editing Workshop _____/10 points

Introduction that grabs reader's attention & leads in to thesis

STRONG.....AVERAGE.....WEAK
 10 9 8 7 6 5

Strong, clear thesis statement that tells the significance of your essay

STRONG.....AVERAGE.....WEAK
 10 9 8 7 6 5

Conclusion that reinforces main idea & makes reader want to read more

STRONG.....AVERAGE.....WEAK
 10 9 8 7 6 5

Development/control of main idea

STRONG.....AVERAGE.....WEAK
 10 9 8 7 6 5

Unified paragraphs with well-developed topic sentences

STRONG.....AVERAGE.....WEAK
 10 9 8 7 6 5

Strong support & details with use of descriptive & sensory words

STRONG.....AVERAGE.....WEAK
 10 9 8 7 6 5

Appropriate sentence constructions (No fragments, run-ons, or comma splices)

STRONG.....AVERAGE.....WEAK
 10 9 8 7 6 5

Formatting, spelling, & typographical errors

STRONG.....AVERAGE.....WEAK
 5 4 3 2 1

DEDUCTIONS (5 points each)

Missed Brainstorming Workshop
 Missed Revision Workshop
 Missed Revision/Editing Workshop
 Essay is too short

EXTRA CREDIT (3 points)

Brief narrative of visit to the University Writing Center

Figure 41

A helpful portion of this gradesheet, again a Primary Trait Analysis in the vein of Walvoord and Anderson's suggestion, is that it allows students to visually interpret how their writing meets, exceeds, or falls below the expectations for Expository Writing. Also, 25 points (out of 100) are earned through participating in the in-class writing process. The students are being evaluated for the work that they turn in, the product, but also, as Elbow advocates, for learning how to become more thoughtful writers through the writing process (2).

Essay Three is an example of a closed essay assignment that also includes a visual component; however, the students are both reflecting on and responding to their own lives and cultures which opens the assignment to their own interpretation. In this assignment, students are asked to work in groups to both create a flag that represents their interests and to write an explanation and justification of their creation. The group must first figure out what common interests they share, which adds to the community building requirement of ENG 1010. Then, they must subtly portray these interests in a flag as if they are their own country. Again, by asking the student to complete multiple tasks, or goals, the instructor is both increasing the real-world application of the assignment and supporting development of motivational strategies, "The Multiple Goals Principle" for the students (Ford 220). This assignment allows the students more creativity than the past two essay assignments, and it also encourages them to think about the visual representation that they display daily and the visual representation of other countries, companies, and campaigns.

Essay 3—Flag Presentation and Essay
English 1010

Length: (Essay) 4 ½-5, typed, double spaced
 (Presentation) 10-15 minutes
 (Individual Evaluation) 1-2 pages, typed, double spaced

Due: Rough draft for peer review:
 Final draft and Individual Evaluation:

Instructions: Your group will prepare a presentation designed to pitch a flag design for your group. The class and I will judge how effectively it represents the interests you outline. Your group's job is to convince us that your flag is the best way to sell yourselves. Also, your group will prepare a written version of your pitch. Each group member must also write an evaluation of the project. This evaluation should reflect on the work done by the group.

Requirements:

1. The flag must be a new creation—not based on any other existing country, state, or organization's flag.
2. Define your common interests that led you to create this flag. Each color, stripe, image, or line should have a purpose and should represent the ENTIRE group.
3. Make the flag! It doesn't have to be elaborate, but you should have a visual aid!

Goal: Your group's success depends on each member's participation. A successful presentation/paper will show consideration of the group's common interests and to effectively convey those interests to your audience.

Group (presentation and essay) = 50% of grade

Individual (evaluation) = 50% of grade

Entire project = 15% of course grade

****Missing any group work session, in class or not, will reduce your individual grade by ten points per absence.**

Figure 42

Figure 43 is a sample essay for this assignment, and Figure 44 is the sample visual "flag" that goes along with it. This model essay and assignment is given to the students with the assignment sheet, and the instructor can present it to the class as students are expected to present their own work.

Model Essay**Stacia Watkins****English 1010****September 16, 2008****Flag 411**

One picture can say more than an entire novel. A picture is the easiest way to represent numerous ideas. People pick up their own interpretation and no one is necessarily wrong. Pictures are better representations of ideas and values because two people who speak different languages can both interpret the same message from a picture without using words. Art is a universal language that is part of every person's life. Our group has designed a flag that we feel best represents ourselves in a pictorial form.

The flag represents our group best because it describes four of our major traits that we all share. There are images of children, sports, mountains, and dogs inside a circle with a line between each item. These four characteristics play a major role in each of our personalities, and we feel that this flag is the best and most effective way to communicate this with others.

Beginning at the top and working our way down, we start with sports. There are four different sports represented, though we are all fans of almost every sport there is. Sports have played a major role in each of our lives. Emily played tennis for seven years; four of those years were spent on the high school tennis team. During these years, she made numerous life-long friends. Corinne has played soccer since the age of five and her years playing this sport have built numerous friendships and taught her many life lessons. Alex played volleyball throughout high school and has some of her best memories from those experiences. Becca ran track and this helped her through some of her hardest times during high school. Without sports, all of us would be completely different people. We feel that sports are a major part of our lives and that they should be part of our flag.

The next image we come to is an image of children. We all have a passion for children, and we are all going to be teachers. The children range in different ages because each of us plans to teach a different grade level. Corinne has a heart for the young children and is majoring in Early Childhood Education. Becca plans to go into Elementary Education, teaching fourth grade math. Middle school children are

where Alex's heart lies, and she plans to work with Special Education students at this age level. Emily is going to work with the high school age group, majoring in Family and Consumer Science Education. While we all plan to work with children of different ages, we all share a common interest in furthering the education of tomorrow's leaders.

The different ethnicities of the children in this picture also say something about us. We all have different cultural backgrounds. We are a mixture of Polish, German, Welsh, Scottish, Irish, Native American, and other various sorts. Even though we share some of these traits, we are all unlike the person standing next to us. We take pride in our different backgrounds, but we never let it get in the way of relationships with someone else.

The bottom piece of the circle contains a variety of dogs. All four of us are extreme dog lovers, and would do anything to be able to have a dog at our side. Emily had an adorable black lab growing up. Corinne's family currently has four lovable dogs at home. Alex's family takes care of her three wild dogs. Becca used to be the owner of two playful, energetic dogs until she moved to Murfreesboro for school. Dogs are man's best friend, and they are certainly ours. This is why we felt that we should include them in our flag, because to us, they are our family.

The last quarter of the flag has a mountain range scene. This represents our group's love for the outdoors. We all love to spend time outside doing anything and everything. Becca has a love for hiking and tries to do this as much as she can. Emily enjoys spending time outside, especially swimming and snowboarding. Alex is the epitome of a beach bum; she loves spending time at the beach and swimming in the ocean. Corinne has a new found love for the mountains, and if she could, she would move to West Virginia and live by Black Water Falls. We believe that the mountain picture expresses our love for nature and should be included in the flag designed around us.

All of these pictures are held within a circle with lines crossing through it. The lines represent the differences that divide us. These differences are not necessarily a bad thing, they just happen to exist. We are all unique. We share many interests yet they are varied at the same time. Even though we are all different, the circle unites us. Although we are different in our own ways, we are still connected and part of a bigger picture. We believe that people should not let their differences affect how they treat and interact

with others. We believe that our differences should enhance our ability to communicate and what we can teach others about the world based on our own experiences and knowledge. We chose to use a circle with lines through it to represent this to our audiences.

Finally, the coloring of the flag is very important. We are all very colorful people, both literally and figuratively, and we chose to show this by using bright, vivid colors. The bright green lines and blue background show our love for colors. We all enjoy doing some variety of art and thought this could be most easily displayed through the color scheme of the flag. Emily and Corinne both enjoy scrapbooking. They enjoy capturing memories on camera and translating this to paper to save forever. Alex is a member of the MTSU Performing Art Company (MPAC) and loves to dance. She shows off her creativity through her dance moves, both on stage and in our apartment. Becca enjoys expressing her creativity through her clothes. She has a unique sense of style and shows off her ingenuity by trying out new outfits and combining things in ways most people would not think to do. By examining all of our differing artistic qualities, we chose to use bright colors to display our love for art and colors.

We believe that by embracing our love of sports, children, dogs, nature, and creativity, we created a flag that best represents ourselves. We believe this is a simple, yet complex, way of communicating with others who we are and what we love. Our flag is the best way to represent ourselves to anyone who comes across it.

Figure 43

This essay is an example of how students can reflect on themselves, their classmates and their cultures without stereotyping and with humor. In Figure 44, the class's visual design that accompanies the model is presented.

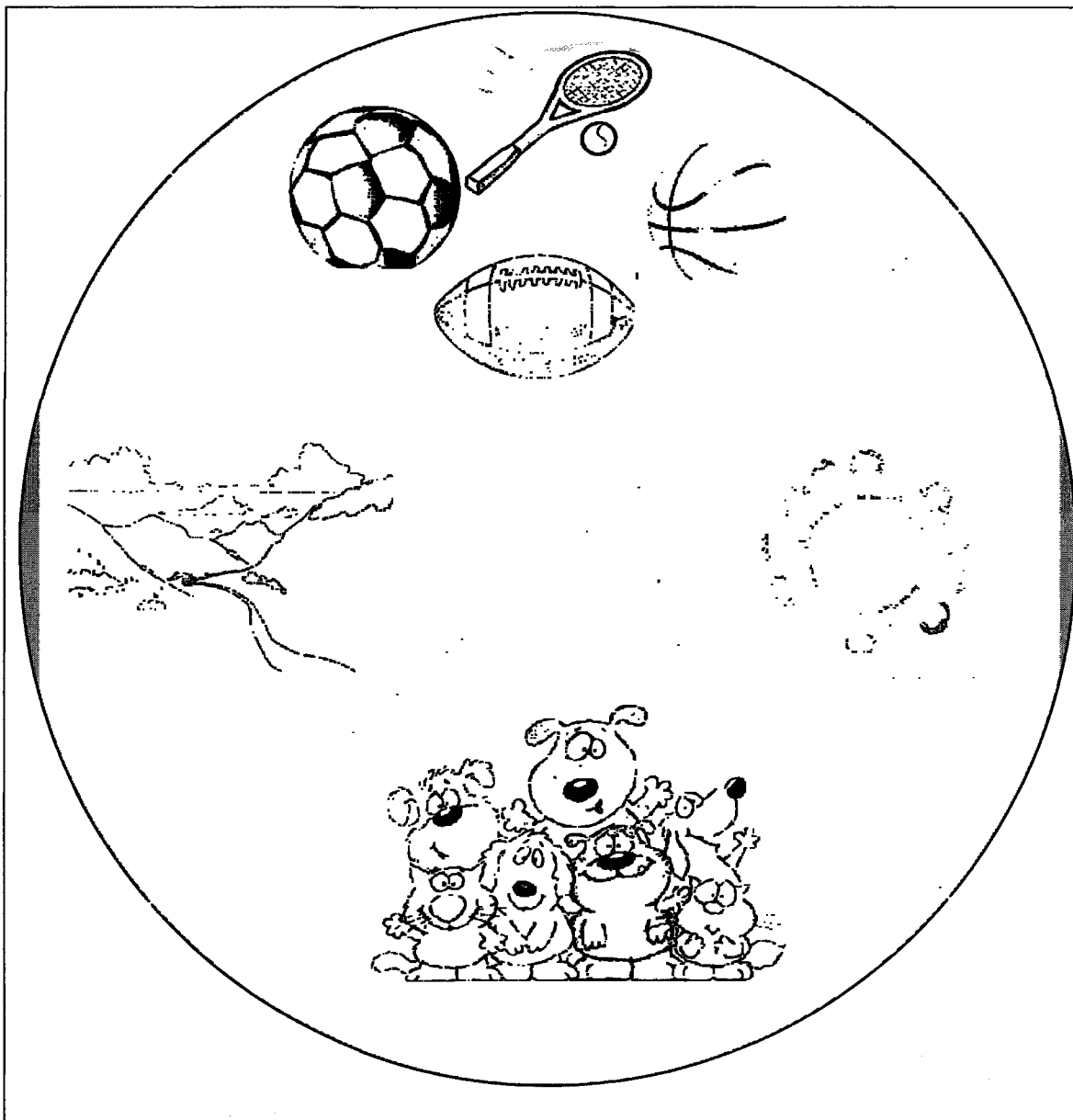


Figure 44

The design represents the collaborative essay and presents a real-world opportunity for the student to think about the purpose of visual rhetoric. Many real-world writing assignments require some form of accompanying information.

The last essay assignment for the semester encourages students to write for a government audience to learn how expository writing can benefit from not being a

completely personal experience but instead to reflect on something for a purpose further away from one's own needs. The assignment is closed; the students must respond to the essay prompt in order to help them prepare for the research writing they will be assigned in English 1020 ("Guidelines"). In this essay that encourages summary and response, the students are asked to read an article about the government and the media from 2001, a year which many political scholars agree is a turning point for the nature of politics in our society. The influence of the media builds on the ideas from essay three about the visual nature of expression and communication. Students are asked, in Essay Four, to briefly summarize the article's main points, an important skill that they will use throughout their college careers, and to then respond to it. They must agree or disagree in whole or in part, and they must be able to explain *why*. Although their argument may be very personal and may include personal narrative, definition, or various other modes of essay writing, the essay assignment moves them away from the purely personal, and it will help them learn to answer essay question-type prompts on standardized exams or from other courses.

This final essay assignment encourages the students to come full circle with the purpose of the class. By using this course theme, the instructor will have students who not only meet the goals of the course, but who will also discuss their personal ideology, their personal impact on the ideologies of others, the way they represent themselves and their cultures in public, and the way that all of this information must be organized to make a convincing argument, and they will also learn to incorporate more advanced skills of the writing process, such as integrating sources and summarizing research.

Essay #4—Government Audiences Essay**DUE DATE: Thursday, March 31, 2005**

Assignment: Write a 2 ½ to 3 page essay to summarize and to respond to “The White House Cautions TV Networks about Airing bin Laden Tape.”

The **purpose** of this assignment is to assist you in thinking more deeply about the ideas presented in the assigned reading, as well as to help you articulate your own beliefs about the government’s study and use of television.

Part I: Summarize: Briefly summarize the article in the INTRODUCTION ONLY. Then, objectively consider the article in both subject and detail in order to discover the author’s primary purpose and meaning. What are the author’s main points?

Part II: Respond: Do not merely summarize the article; react to it. Here are some questions to help you react: Was the article easy to understand? Did it introduce something new to you? Something old? How does the author’s belief fit into traditional ideas of media within a democratic government? Do you agree/disagree with the government’s stance? Why?

The final draft of this assignment will be evaluated on the usual general levels: how effective your introduction is, how well you organize the entire essay and individual internal paragraphs, how well you use primary and secondary support (examples/details) to describe your specified topic and support your thesis, how well you use MLA style, and how well the overall paper is edited.

You will be given class time for both a revision workshop and an editing workshop; you need to make sure that you take these workshops quite seriously before turning in your paper for grading.

Make sure your paper is double-spaced, has one-inch margins, is in dark 10 or 12 point Times New Roman, font and has the following title block, also double-spaced, at the top of the right side of the paper:

Your Name
Prof. Watkins
English 1010
31 March 2009

Traps to Avoid:

Failing to support the judgments with evidence/examples/details

Summarizing throughout the essay

Agreeing in total with either side of the argument, thus failing to offer any criticism, position, or insights of your own.

Misrepresenting the author—THIS IS PLAGARISM!

Using the article merely as a point of departure to launch an argument of your own

Using first or second person (i.e. “I,” “me,” “we,” “us,” “our,” or “you”) excessively

Failing to properly document ALL information that you take from the article or any outside source. If you quote, paraphrase or summarize any information from any source, then you must give proper MLA documentation.

Full MLA Citation for the Primary Source

“The White House Cautions TV Networks About Airing bin Laden Tape.” *Freedom Forum.org*. 10 Nov. 2001. 28 Feb. 2005 <<http://www.freedomforum.org/templates/document.asp?documentID=15124>>.

Due Date for Revision Workshop (bring two copies):

Due Date for Editing Workshop (bring two newly revised copies):

Due Date for Final Draft:

Figure 45

6.5 Conclusion

Using politics in FYC can be a confusing and frightening combination; however, through careful planning with theoretical and practical advice given from the experience of those who have taught, researched, and published about FYC successfully for most of their careers (Lindemann and Murray) and the use of politics only as a theme (rather than forcing constant, current political debates on students), the successful research and reflective writing from the class can prove the success and worthiness of your struggles.

CHAPTER 7:

“Castles in the Air:” The Benefits, Implications, and Results of Personal Experience Pedagogy

**“If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; there is where they
should be. Now put foundations under them.”**

—Henry David Thoreau

7.0 Introduction

At the end of my Spring 2008 class, in which I had made my third attempt at formalizing a plan for Personal Experience Pedagogy, I met with one of my students about her final essay grade and her plan for the final class presentation. This student had begun college two-years earlier, but at mid-term of her first semester at MTSU, she found out that she was pregnant. Although she finished her coursework that semester, her focus was not on her studies; it was on her health, her finances, and her future. She dropped out of school to get a full-time job instead of returning in the spring of 2007.

This student, after demonstrating her maturity, responsibility, and dedication by working full-time and supporting her daughter for the first year, was offered help from her parents to return to college, playing the roles of a full-time student, part-time worker, and single parent. Her life, though much shorter than mine in years, was much more complex daily.

In the conference, the student read the paper aloud to me; then, we discussed changes, revisions, and some editing strategies that she should consider while finishing her work for the course. But, when I asked her about her final presentation, she balked. She said that her focus had been on the essay, thirty percent of the overall course grade, and that she has to make choices about which parts of her classes to focus on. The ten

percent presentation ranked fairly low on her list of things to do for her fifteen hours of coursework.

The familiarity of this explanation struck me. In my first semester of graduate school, as a Master's candidate, I was told by a now retired professor, "Grad school is about making choices, and your professors should understand that. You should choose what you can get done and what you just can't physically do because of time constraints, family obligations, or simply being overwhelmed" (University). And I realized, maybe right at the moment of that conference with my student, this statement is true for undergraduates as well. It is true for faculty members and full-time instructors and adjuncts. Perhaps it is true for everyone.

This realization fueled the writing of this dissertation. FYC instructors need motivation to teach a class that may not be their first choice. They need assignments, samples, and scheduling ideas. Then, they can focus on helping and inspiring students who are just as overwhelmed by day-to-day responsibilities as the instructor him or herself. Personal Experience Pedagogy, because of the combination of ideas and theories that both inspire and compose the methodology and the time period in which it was conceived, is a post-process theory of teaching composition. As defined in essay collections such as *Post-Process Theory: Beyond the Writing Process Paradigm* by Thomas Kent and *Undergraduate Writing in Composition Studies* by Nancy C. DeJoy, post-process theory is based on the assumption that writing cannot be summated by one generalized process. Because of its broad approach to the teaching of FYC, the use of PEP allows for this kind of psychological understanding of both the faculty member—and his or her needs—as well as the needs of the student.

7.1 Benefits

The benefits of using Personal Experience Pedagogy will more than likely differ from instructor to instructor. However, the ten simplified benefits I expect each instructor to gain are as follows:

- A deeper appreciation for his/her own talents as a writer

Because instructors will be asked to model student writing and what they want from each assignment, their own abilities will be demonstrated. Students will be reading not only an example of well-written prose, but, as Murray, in *A Writer Teaches Writing*, advocates, also a piece that reflects the professor's own style and interests.

- A deeper appreciation for his/her own talents as a teacher

As Farber illustrates, not everyone has a talent for instruction, and not everyone goes into the academic field to be a teacher; however, PEP is designed with the hope that those who learn to enjoy teaching FYC will be more successful in the long run.

- A deeper appreciation for his/her own knowledge and for the application of his/her own academic research

By allowing a roomful of relatively inexperienced and impressionable college students into his/her research, an instructor of FYC may learn more about specialty areas, the way the areas are represented in contemporary culture, and how relevant his or her research might be outside of their own academic realm. As Penfield argues, differing levels of professors can offer students a variety of academic experiences.

- A better understanding of his/her students, their interests, their motivations, their struggles, and their successes

When dealing with a job search, promotion and tenure, family issues, tension within the department, and all of the other worries that instructors face each day while on-the-job, instructors may easily be distracted from the intense (and similar) worries that their students face. As I illustrated in the narrative that begins this chapter, remembering that their lives are just as, if not more, complicated than the instructor's is a positive result of effectively teaching FYC.

- A positive perceived image of what younger, less-experienced undergraduates are capable of achieving

When reading a batch of newly received essays from an ENG 1010 class, an instructor's overall feeling is often disappointment at first. However, by following the post-process method of writing, as I advocate through the development of PEP, instructors have the opportunity to avoid or at least minimize this feeling by modeling writing, seeing multiple drafts, and conferencing with students. The more time put into the class, by student or instructor, the better the writing results. Murray's argument for professors acting as exemplary writing students implies his belief that most students are capable of passing FYC, and all students are capable of improving.

- A more thorough understanding of the current university environment

FYC students are a wide sampling of those who choose to go to college, and they are representative of the many walks of life that are present on campus. As argued in the "Dean Dad" article from *Inside Higher Ed*, teaching FYC helps instructors to be more aware of campus-wide issues that may not be as prevalent in upper-level and graduate student samples.

- A renewed admiration of those faculty members who only teach FYC

Although the use of PEP advocates that new and tenured or tenure-track professors sometimes need to be coaxed into teaching FYC, they do have a responsibility to the department, to graduate students, and to their undergraduate majors and minors to offer courses in their specialty areas; therefore, they should be more aware of those faculty members who only get the opportunity to teach FYC and who carry the load of being both instructors and representatives of the department, usually for less pay or, perhaps, without being salaried as discussed in Chapter 3.

- Admiration of the lofty goals and purposeful guidelines of FYC

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the local guidelines for FYC at MTSU are set by the TBR, the Lower Division Committee, and the Writing Program Committee. These groups of rotating faculty members do their best to formalize the process of teaching 1010 and 1020 without structuring the classes to force faculty members away from their own teaching style or area of interest—a difficult task.

- An interest in improving the image and face of the English Department

As suggested by William A. Pannapacker, experienced instructors should be willing to serve as the “face” of the English Department for new students to the university (par. 5). Students who take a course from an adjunct or a Teaching Assistant risk not having a connection to the English Department once they leave the course. Tenured and tenure-track faculty members will often have the longevity to boost retention standards and to mentor freshmen through their senior year.

- A renewed enjoyment for teaching FYC

As illustrated in Chapter 1, FYC can be an enjoyable and rejuvenating experience if it is presented with enthusiasm and passion. FYC students are interesting, expressive, and different from the academically initiated student in upper-level classes, and this allows for activities, discussions, and discoveries that may not happen as easily in other courses. FYC is an opportunity for true education—for “teaching moments.”

Even though instructors who use PEP focus on the happiness, passions, and motivation of the instructor, it is, of course, important that the student benefit from this methodology as well; students must find FYC accessible no matter what the instructional design. Therefore, the ten benefits that I hope each student finds are as follows:

- A deeper appreciation for their potential as writers or communicators

Students should have the opportunity to learn techniques, strategies, and methods to improve their writing; plus, they should have the opportunity to practice through journal entries (Elbow, Noone and Cartwright) and through varied classroom activities and writing assignments.

- A better understanding of academic culture

FYC is not just a writing class, as explained in Chapter 3. It is a class for community building, and it allows instructors the opportunity to welcome students to the university environment.

- That choosing the right career may provide opportunity, passion, and enjoyment

Instructors who seem happy and satisfied, compassionate and concerned, well represent to students the reason to finish college and to find a career that is right for them. In

Chapter 1, I explain how PEP’s design is meant to increase job satisfaction.

- That instructors are humans with interests, beliefs, and goals

Students often imagine, as with their elementary, middle, and high school teachers who they knew before, that an instructor's life revolves around what happens in or around their classroom. Many students never even venture to find an instructor's office.

However, as Pannacker observes, sharing one's interests with the students gives them the chance to "know" at least one instructor on campus, and, perhaps, to avoid that feeling of being a nameless face in a crowd.

- That instructors are fair, straightforward, and transparent about their course expectations

Students are very concerned that instructors act fairly, being open about their grading practices, their goals for the class, and the expectations for their students. They will accept their own misgivings and failures if they feel like the instructor is being both supportive and firm.

- A sense of achievement in having completed a writing-intensive course

FYC requires a lot of work throughout the course of the semester, but students who successfully complete the assignments, presentations, and readings will have a body of work to look back over with pride; PEP's design includes a multitude of goals for the student including presentations that incorporate visual or auditory elements, as recommended by Ford's "The Multiple Goals Principle."

- That instructors care about students' ability to express themselves and their own ideas about their culture and life

Students are individuals and should be treated as such, as defined by Ford's "The Principle of Human Respect." By following the assignment guidelines of PEP, students are encouraged to divulge information about themselves as has the professor.

- That the department views them as valuable members of the academic community

By offering students an efficient plan for FYC, and the authentic chance of being successful, they become authentic students, a term explained in Chapter 1, not only by being enrolled in classes and paying their tuition, but also because they are on-campus to work and to succeed.

- A respect for the English Department and/or an interest in taking more English-related, or writing-intensive, coursework

Students see the English department only through the representative faculty members whom they interact with, and one negative experience can sour them on the entire English curriculum; therefore, as Pannacker argues, it is important that FYC instructors encourage students to see their strengths in writing and in overall academic comprehension and to promote future writing and literature coursework for those students with the aptitude and interest for it.

- An enjoyment of writing

Perhaps this is both the loftiest and most insignificant goal in the development of PEP. To help students enjoy the process of writing is a difficult goal of FYC instructors (Murray, *A Writer*), and it is also hard to measure; however, my use of PEP focuses on the instructor's passion and should also help to inspire student writers.

The question that arises is how to measure these twenty rather intangible results of the methodology. Of course, several qualitative tools may be used to measure these

results from an instructor's own feelings, thoughts, and beliefs about the course throughout to more concrete quantitative tools to measure both an instructor's and a student's overall satisfaction.

7.2 Measuring PEP's Results and Benefits

Individual professors must determine their own strategies for measuring their own feelings about the course's success. More experienced instructors will often modify their course plan and schedule throughout the semester as they see students need additional help or if everyone in the class seems bored. However, ways to measure student success or course success may vary from looking at numerical grades over the course of the semester to giving student surveys at the end of the class. At MTSU, an institutional survey is given at the end of each course for students to evaluate their instructors; unfortunately, though, the same survey is given to students in "Advanced Chemistry" as in "Expository Writing," so the feedback is hardly applicable to an English instructor's future course design. It is focused more on the instructor's personal teaching habits. Ford's "The Feedback Principle" may illustrate an instructor's purpose in grading, but "The Principle of Unitary Functioning," in which Ford argues that students must be treated as "whole" humans, and "The Principle of Human Respect," in which Ford clarifies that students must feel respected in order to feel motivated to succeed, both argue for the student as a valuable associate in the course assessment process. Because grades can be misleading (primarily because of skewed grading systems, the offering of extra credit, or attendance/policy issues in FYC), Personal Experience Pedagogy offers two tools for evaluating student enjoyment, learning, and success at the end of the

semester. Of course, as Farber explains in “Learning How to Teach: A Progress Report,” “[W]e mustn’t pretend we don’t have power” (278); however, we can share the power (as liberatory pedagogy advocates) with our students in order to become more successful instructors.

Although some instructors may feel uncomfortable with allowing their students to judge their course design, their success as instructors, and their students’ own growth in the class, it is essential for the effectiveness of an instructor to know these results.

Carolyn Matalene argues in her essay “Experience as Evidence: Teaching Students to Write Honestly and Knowledgeably about Public Issues” that students must take the step beyond personal reflective writing for their own benefit to writing in a way that benefits others:

[W]e try to sound rational as we argue our very personal points of view.

Rationality follows rhetoric, emerges from discourse. We must start with honest, personal writing and move to honest personal writing about public issues. To proceed the other way, starting with distant issues and asking students to go and be rational about them reveals our own fear of feeling, our own discomfort with empowering student writers. It is a practice as insane and bizarre and –alas—common as using the great works of literature to make students memorize the meaning of literary terms. (190)

Students who can reflect on their personal experiences in the class—whether objectively or with bias—have truly met the goals of FYC at MTSU, and therefore, perhaps this is truly the most helpful and the most telling culminating experience of the class design.

The first example of such assessment is a “Student Self-Reflection Sheet,” which is based on a design by Dr. Allison Smith. This tool may be taken up for complete or partial credit, but I strongly recommend that it not be a significant grade or that it not be evaluated based on their answers. The form can be given to students on the last day of classes before finals or as a final exam; however, it may be more beneficial if it is given slightly earlier in the semester when the student can still have the time to visit the instructor in his/her office. It is also a great idea to show students this sheet (possibly by posting it on Desire2Learn, an online course-aiding software program, or putting it on the overhead) well before midterm. Students, especially freshmen, often do not have the tools to succeed in the college environment, and letting them know what is expected of them to ensure their success is a teaching moment. There is no need to play “gotcha” at the end of the semester with a tool that could help them in all of their classes if given earlier. This sheet can also be handed out and discussed before students complete faculty evaluations. This strategy allows students to consider their responsibility for the class environment, their peers, and their personal success or failure. The “Student Self-Reflection Sheet” can be answered as a journal, and instructors can ask their students to indicate at the top whether or not they would like the instructor to read their answers. This can be a tool of course assessment, or it can be an individual assessment only for the student’s use.

English 1010**Student Self-Reflection Sheet:**

You must answer all of the following questions to receive full credit on this assignment. Be honest with yourself when you reflect upon the kind of work you did in this class this quarter.

1. Think back to the beginning of the semester. Did you have a plan that would help you succeed in this class? What was it? How many hours did you set aside each week to work on homework, writing assignments, and so on? Did you follow your plan? How?
2. Do you think that you spent enough time preparing for class, writing your papers? If not, why not?
3. Do you think that you worked diligently in this class? How was this demonstrated? Did you always/frequently/hardly ever work up to your potential? Did you participate fully in work done in class (group exercises, revision workshops, editing workshops)? How? Did you always/frequently/hardly ever do the homework required for the next day?
4. How many times did you discuss your papers-in-progress with me in my office? If you never came to my office for help, why not?
5. How many times did you discuss your papers with people outside of class? Did this help? Why or why not?
6. Did you contribute to the class community by being in class? being on time? asking questions in class? answering questions in class? supporting others in their group work on grammar and paper writing? How did these activities affect your perception of the class?
7. Are you using the writing hints from class in your writing now? the revision hints? the grammar points in your editing? If not, why not? If so, are they helping you?
8. Are you using the evaluation sheets that are handed back to you with your graded essays? If so, how are you using them? Did they help you prepare the next essay for grading? If not, why not? Explain.
9. Again, reflect on the entire course: do you think your writing has improved? How? Do you feel prepared for English 1020 work? If not, describe your weaknesses.
10. Based on all the work you've done so far, what do you think would be a fair letter grade for you in this class? Make sure you consider the syllabus requirement, papers, class work, homework, participation, and so on. Give yourself the grade and be descriptive about why you deserve it. Begging and pleading for a higher grade won't work! I want you to honestly evaluate the work you did in this class.

Figure 46

The last question of the self-reflection form in Figure 46 allows students to think critically about their presence in the classroom and in the academic environment in general. Typically students are much harder on themselves than I am, and several

students each semester apologize for their earlier immature behavior, absences, or lack of participation. Although this is not the only purpose of the final question, it does provide a venue for students to show growth and maturity.

The second tool is the “End-of-Semester Review of 1010,” and it is given anonymously. This allows students to give the instructor honest feedback on the class. By asking for their opinions in a less-threatening way, the instructor can re-evaluate his/her assignments, policies, readings, and theme for the class as it appealed to (or was denied by) a FYC class of mostly freshmen. However, the form also reminds the students, as does the “Student Self-Reflection Sheet,” that they, too, are responsible for the environment, discussion, activities, and success of the overall course. This form is given after the final essay has been graded, but not returned—typically on the last day of class before final exams or during their final exam period. The students might be asked to fill out this form in order to get their graded essay back at the same time that they turn it in; that way, the students know that their answers cannot affect their grade, and they might be more honest in their assessment. I typically give the “End-of-Semester Review of 1010” as a 30-minute activity that can be written in the form of a letter to me.

End-of-Semester Review of 1010:

1. Per week, how much time did you spend on the work for 1010 outside of class?
2. How many times did you come to my office to conference (not counting the mandatory conference)?
3. What grade do you expect in this class?
4. Which assignment most interested you? Why?
5. Which assignment was the least engaging? Why?
6. Were in-class workshops helpful to your revision and editing process? Why or why not?
7. How would you change the theme of the class to become more engaging?
8. Did you feel that the theme helped to unify the assignments and your thoughts about the class? Why or why not?
9. Did the on-task writing entries help to focus your thoughts on class topics? Did you see the relationship between your on-task writings and on daily activities?
10. What part of the class most prepared you for future writing assignments?
11. Name one student in this class who helped you the most. What did he/she do that was most helpful?
12. What would you change about this class?
13. What would you suggest should stay the same?
14. What was the most challenging part of the course?
15. What would you tell a friend who is taking my class in the spring?

Figure 47

The last question is, perhaps, the most subjective, but it often the most satisfying.

Students seem to feel they can be honest with this question, and I have had answers ranging from “this is a tough course, but it’s worth it,” to “don’t take this course; it’s too much work.” Both answers are a helpful way for me to evaluate the methods I use to teach, though, and they allow me to get my “MTSU Review” or “Rate My Professors,” two independent instructor evaluation websites, rating directly from my students.

Of course, this form can also be answered—with a few slight modifications—by the instructor as well. Completing this tool can come in handy when redesigning a FYC in later semesters because it can remind the instructor what worked well and what needs to be restructured, removed, or replaced. Another possibility for student reflection or for the assessment of a course design is suggested by Walvoord and Anderson in *Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment*: “Pose a question about your students’

learning you believe would help you improve your teaching. Plan how you would gather data to answer your question. Discuss your plan with a colleague and revise if needed” (142). This strategy might demand more critical thought from students in order to fully answer one question; however, it could be posed as the question for an open-ended final exam.

The results of PEP will be varied because of student course composition; the assignments, themes, and models a professor chooses to use; and personality differences. If the instructor can find enjoyment in the FYC classroom and the students can find enthusiasm in their required tasks, the goals have been met. Murray clarifies, “I meet with my students...and listen to them tell me how they are writing better than they ever hoped to write, saying things that they find important to be said in a voice that they feel is their own. I read their papers and share their surprise in their own diversity with them, and I know that I will never burn out, that I will never lose my excitement” (*A Writer* 247). Getting good feedback from students can be a motivational tool in and of itself. Instructors who have concrete evidence of their successes may feel this excitement as well.

7.3 Implications

Personal Experience Pedagogy may help to inspire new pedagogies in the field of rhetoric and composition that are more self-actualizing and that focus on the professor when professors are often neglected. Little research relies on professors to be self-motivated to learn new teaching strategies, to look forward to teaching freshmen, and to put aside their own research interests for an entire course, and this is a problem. The silly,

southern saying, “When Mama ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy,” applies more than these methodologies seem to realize; MTSU professors who do not focus their own studies in rhetoric and composition are often required to teach in this field, while most professors of rhetoric and composition are rarely forced to teach literature because there is such a demand among contingent faculty for these courses. It is a divide that needs to be addressed in future research.

Another implication of this research is the need for more course designs for new teachers and for other busy professional educators. Perhaps if the course design itself is not so time-consuming, the instructor can more fully enjoy the students, the class discussions, and the writing. Although Lindemann and Murray describe the way a design should be written, and Murray actually outlines specific examples, these should be updated for current usage; however, I caution that these course designs should be flexible enough to encourage students and instructors to feel passionate about the topics within their construction. I do not advocate a return to mandatory syllabus or assignment use. Use of these course designs should be voluntary.

A final implication for PEP’s future in composition theory is in correlation with Contact Zone Theory. As discussed in Chapter 2 and as a result of Liberatory Pedagogy, as discussed in Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 6, Contact Zone Theory encourages instructors to liberate their students by allowing them to respond meaningfully in the safe space of the classroom. PEP is the step that an instructor may take before fully applying Contact Zone Theory in his or her classroom. PEP allows an instructor to engage in the FYC class, to enjoy and trust the students, and, in turn, to find a safe zone him or herself. When the instructor feels comfortable, passionate, and interested in the FYC classroom, then—and

only then—can the students find this zone as well. The instructor, again, must set the example for the students in order to get them to respond democratically and with critical thought.

7.4 Results

The practical results of PEP as used in my class are simple: I relied on my own strengths both in teaching writing and teaching within their specialty area, a feature of most post-process pedagogies. My students learned to write through both low and high-risk writing opportunities, and I did not structure my PEP course design so strictly that I cannot substitute other themes, assignments, and strategies for the ones listed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Other results are as follows:

- The use of journaling as a low-risk writing

My students enjoyed the opportunity to put their thoughts on paper before the class discussion; they were never at a loss for something to say when I called on them in class.

- The adaptation of process theory

I read drafts of my students' essays in workshops and in conferences, so I never started the grading process blindly. My students were grateful for the one-on-one opportunity to discuss their writing and then, to revise their essays based on my comments.

- The use of peer revision and editing workshops

Part of the process theory, revision and editing workshops provided my students with the opportunity to not only share their writing and get feedback with their peers, but also to develop a supportive writing community in my classroom.

- The attention to audience in students' writing

By presenting an audience for each assignment, I allowed the students to see their writing as both active and reactive. They could imagine the person who would be reading their essay; also, I read essays with varied language and style that were not just aimed toward me as a generic "English teacher."

- The use of effective essay models

I wrote modeled essays for my students, and I also outlined sample essays in class with their collaboration. These exercises allowed my assignment guideline to be more transparent, and in turn, I received essays that met my expectations.

- A Post-Process approach that encourages visual, auditory, and oral communication as a part of the composing process

The presentation component of the PEP course design allowed my students to show their creativity and to build community. The real-world aspect of these activities encouraged my students to think beyond FYC to their future career expectations.

These strategies and methods, such as varying classroom activities, allowing for both visual and auditory presentations, and choosing a theme that allows students the freedom to find their own passions, which are all discussed in Chapters 1, 2, and 3, and exemplified in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, allowed my students to have a diverse and exciting FYC experience.

7.5 Final Thoughts

Through the use of PEP, new teachers and tenure-track teachers may realize that the teaching of a FYC course can be just as rewarding as teaching an upper-level

discipline-specific course, with or without an interest in studying rhetoric and composition. Because these course designs offer the freedom to both take the full structure exactly how it is written or to modify as desired, the instructor can focus more on purpose, principles, and passion in FYC.

Future research into or instructional initiatives with this methodology could branch into many different directions. Course assessment is a difficult and rarely studied area of the composition and rhetoric field, but to truly know how a pedagogy works, many areas would need to be synthesized. For PEP, course assessment might involve: analysis of student writing both before and after the course, student satisfaction, professor satisfaction, professor's methodologies both before and after using the course design, the satisfaction of students in the professor's previous classes, analysis of the professor's previous students' writings (again, both before and after the class), and the professor's satisfaction with previous classes. And, throughout this process, many variables could arise. Another area of future instructional initiative for PEP might be further course designs with more specific themes. This initiative might make PEP more appealing for professors who do not place themselves within the departmental subject divisions of literature, writing, cultural studies, or others. A third possibility for PEP research would be to study those who have tried this methodology and to analyze their responses to the research. In a qualitative research project, an instructor might conduct his or her typical course design in one FYC class and in another FYC class in the same semester, conduct a PEP course design. Although the two courses might be difficult to manage simultaneously, the descriptive account of the differences in both the professor's and the students' course attitudes and successes could determine the effectiveness of the plan. In

a quantitative research study, the same scenario could be arranged with grades and end-of-the-semester evaluations as the numerical determining factor of course effectiveness. And, finally, instructors using PEP research could also look specifically for more work in motivational theory as it becomes more popular and for the use of faculty motivation as a key development in composition theory.

7.6 A Call to Action

For those of you who are reading this dissertation and who will be teaching your own FYC class in the near future, please borrow these course designs, or use these basic principles for designing a course—modeling, using your own interests in the classroom, and allowing your students to do the same, and make them your own. Share them with colleagues. Encourage your peers and co-workers to use their interest areas to teach FYC. English Departments should not be only service organizations, teaching students from other departments to write more effectively in their own disciplines; we should also be the purveyors of love for the English language. As Murray closed in *A Writer Teaches Writing*, “I hope that your students will teach you—as mine have taught me—why you have to continue to learn to write and teach writing” (247).

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October 2, 2008

Prof. Stacia Watkins
Box 70

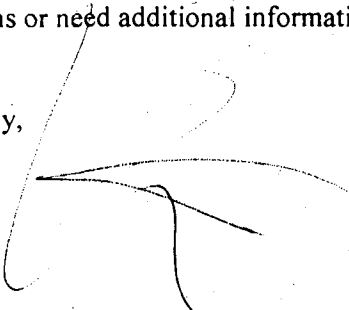
Re: Project Title: Personal Experience Pedagogy

Dear Stacia,

I have reviewed the research proposal identified above and have determined that the study does not fall under the jurisdiction of the IRB because you indicated in your IRB application that your study will only involve the use of your own writing and no data will be collected or analyzed from or about any other individuals.

I wish you great success with your study and please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,



Tara M. Prairie, Compliance Officer
MTSU Institutional Review Board