prompt

a journal of academic writing assignments

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Editor's Note

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With the publication of issue 7.2 of *Prompt*, I am completing my time as editor of the journal. I began seriously brainstorming ideas that led to the creation of the journal with my founding co-editor Jon Dueck in 2014, so it has been nearly a decade of work. In reflecting on the closing of this chapter in my career, I have taken some time to look back at some of the emails Jon and I were sending back and forth in those early days, and it has been interesting to see that in our earliest conversations, we were weighing questions and concerns I still think about. We wanted to create a way for college instructors to share excellent writing assignments from across disciplines that would be meaningful not only to the readers who could benefit from learning about them, but also to the authors themselves. We were very aware that sharing one's intellectual work from the classroom is itself labor, and that any plan, platform, or publication that expected people to do this kind of work without some kind of upside or reward would have trouble growing and thriving. At the same time, thinking about labor, we were concerned about how much work it would be for us to pursue some of our more ambitious ideas. In my messages to Jon at the time, I noted a desire for better balance between my work and life and acknowledged that launching a scholar-run journal would take up many night and weekend hours that could be spent in other ways. At the time, we thought about different ideas—creating a website of interviews with instructors about assignments, pitching an annual award for writing assignments to a relevant professional association or conference, or publishing occasional online books of writing assignments on particular themes. But through a number of conversations, Jon and I agreed that what would most likely motivate instructors to put time into providing the context that would make their assignments legible and meaningful to a wide array of readers would be the opportunity to publish them in a peer-reviewed journal. We knew this project would be the most work for us, but it would have the biggest potential impact. We started taking steps toward that goal, buoyed by the good fortune we had in convincing Holly Ryan to help us develop and execute our plans.

I am proud to say that I believe our hope to offer authors a worthwhile experience has been successful. Before writing more about those successes, I do want to acknowledge that I am sure not all authors' experiences in submitting to the journal have been positive. We have of course had to decline some manuscripts, which is my least favorite part of the editor role. And there have been times when our small team was stretched thin in ways that made the process progress more slowly than we wished. Having been on the author's side of a slow-moving submission to a journal, I was always aware of how challenging this could be, and we did our best to avoid leaving authors in limbo. Having acknowledged our limitations, my experience as editor is that our team put a lot of time and care into helping authors share their ideas in as clear and compelling a way as possible. In final communications before publication, authors often noted how far their manuscripts had come in revision. I was interested in learning more about how our authors thought about their experiences with our journal, so I recently asked them, inviting those who have published in the journal to this point to offer thoughts now that they all had

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some distance of time to consider their experiences.

In their kind responses, a number of our authors indicated that having published in the journal contributed to their professional advancement. Many mentioned that the publication was beneficial during tenure and promotion cases, and one author even speculated that their publication in the journal helped them get their current job. The publications have also created connections for authors with colleagues—for some, locally on their own campuses, where the publication created discussion and collaboration, and for others, in connecting with readers at other institutions who took up ideas from the publications and let the authors know they had done so. One author thought the publication contributed to efforts to create a new minor in their program, and another let us know they were invited to speak to a course on professional writing and social justice about their assignment.

Perhaps even more heartening to me is the fact that a number of our authors reported specific intellectual benefits from having written pieces for the journal. These included thinking more deeply about teaching and making changes to their teaching based on what they learned through the process of writing and revising for the journal. Several authors reported seeing deeper connections between their classroom work and broader work in the field. Others mentioned that the process deepened their connection to a collaborator with whom they developed the assignment and co-authored the article. We hope these connections and insights continue to provide benefits to our authors long after the publication appeared on their CVs. Our experience as editors was often that authors were reaching insights they had never had about their assignment, or about their teaching more broadly, during the revision process.

Beyond offering a generative experience for authors, I believe we have offered much to our readers. Here, I return to the introduction to the first issue of the journal, where Jon and I (2016) argued for the scholarly value of writing assignment design:

> Developing a writing assignment also requires that we martial our disciplinary research and knowledge as well as our pedagogical study and experiences. In addition to introducing students to an area of inquiry, we introduce them to our discipline's ways of asking and answering questions about that topic. Further, we must consider how to mediate between our own ways of writing to colleagues inside our disciplines—practices and poses internalized so fully that many of us have trouble imagining how else things could be done—and students' diverse experiences with college writing in many, varied disciplines. This work requires continuous critical thought, experimentation, and self-assessment. It is deeply intellectual work that deserves to be shared outside the classroom, both as a scholarly achievement in its own right, and also because it is of clear, practical use to our colleagues. (pp. 4-5)

I believe that the fact that this journal has succeeded to this point provides persuasive evidence for these claims. From the outset, authors have contributed compelling, intellectually rich work to the journal, reviewers have responded in insightful ways, and the journal has had a robust readership. Our work here is of course part of a larger and longer shift toward valuing the scholarship of teaching and learning in higher ed. I have regularly run into our readers at conferences and heard about how the journal helped them develop an assignment in their own course or support a colleague through a WAC/WID program. The ideas being exchanged in this context are not simply about classroom management—they are about the major principles and goals of various fields and how we can meaningfully engage a new generation of learners in them.

Earlier this year, I read an essay in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that I thought echoed the arguments that have been made for the intellectual value of pedagogical work in an interesting

way that is also relevant to the future of *Prompt*. Andrea Katson Tange's (2023) "Academic Service Is Intellectual Labor" highlights a now-widely documented challenge facing many academic journals, *Prompt* included: the difficulty of finding peer reviewers. The pandemic seemed to create a breaking point in a system that was already badly strained, based as it is on the assumption of peer reviewers having tenured or tenure-track faculty appointments in roles that are configured to allow them time for major service activities directed outside their institutions, such as peer review, tenure case letters, conference organizing, and program reviews. Tange argues that we need to "make service visible as intellectual labor," since "much of the work we count as service is labor that directly supports the intellectual growth of our disciplines." Tange points out that we devalue certain types of intellectual work as mere "service" at our peril—a fact that has become plainer to many academics as journal review processes have slowed because fewer people will agree to serve as reviewers, and those who do are often so burdened with other work that these reviews take longer to complete. My work on *Prompt* convinced me that Tange's argument is both accurate and important. I have been continually impressed by the quality of work peer reviewers do for our journal without any compensation from our journal or public recognition. I have understood completely when our requests for reviews have gone unreturned or been delayed, since we are reaching out and asking people to take time from their own scholarship, teaching, or leisure to contribute to the success and quality of our journal. If you have reviewed for our journal, please know you have my profound gratitude for having done so. It is a meager compensation, I realize. The fate of low- and no-budget open-access journals like *Prompt* rests on the generosity of our reviewers as well as our all-volunteer editorial staff. The biggest existential threat to this journal, and others like it, is that those who believe in a journal's project may simply lack the time and energy to contribute to it because of the changing conditions of academic employment.

This leads me directly to more heartfelt thanks I want to give before stepping down as editor: to the editorial team who worked to make the journal a reality. What a true joy it has been to work with such smart and generous people. I will start with thanks for Jon Dueck, since it was he who started with me. Jon was instrumental in the conception and launching of this journal. He served as my co-editor for issues 1.1 and 2.1, and he remained our technical editor until Brian N. Larson took over the role. The journal definitely would not exist without his contributions.

Holly Ryan moved from associate editor to managing editor with issue 2.1, but she was a crucial leader of the journal from before the first issue and through to this one. The title "managing editor" does not fully capture the depth of the work Holly did both in developmental editing and in working with me on the strategic planning for the journal's success; she has truly been an equal partner in this project. Moreover, she made doing this work feel fun and worthwhile, always bringing a positive outlook and a can-do attitude to any challenge we faced.

Our team of associate editors has been crucial in helping us assess incoming submissions and spreading the word about the journal; thank you to Nancy Barr, Alex Halperin, Leanne Havis, Elini Pinnow, Aimee Mapes, Dave Wessner, Jamie White-Farnham, and Ethan Youngerman. Our special issues were helmed by Ann E. Green, Wiley Davi, and Olivia Gianetta, and I learned a great deal from the ethic of care they took to that work.

The unsung heroes of any scholar-run journal are the technical editors. The technical work of taking a bunch of edited manuscripts and creating the published PDF and HTML files is significant and time-consuming. Michael Carlozzi offered crucial support as associate technical editor during Jon Dueck's time as technical editor. Brian N. Larson's tenure as technical editor has been fundamental to making the journal a sustainable enterprise that can continue under new leadership. His care, focus, and professionalism are off the charts and beyond what anyone could reasonably expect. Joseph Glover, Beth Keller, and Liz Hutter made key contributions

as associate technical editors, and we are in great hands now with Liz taking on the technical editor role.

I would not be moving on from my role if we hadn't found great editors to take over. While I am proud of where the journal is now, I believe there is much potential yet untapped. I feel so grateful knowing that Rick Fisher and Kelly Kinney will take the journal forward and continue the work of helping it grow and develop. They already have some exciting developments in store that will broaden our readership and strengthen the journal's foundations.

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This is a very satisfying issue to end on as an editor, as it represents the depth and breadth of writing assignments we hoped that this journal would be able to contain when we set out. The two assignments focused on undergraduate writing courses both focus on Wikipedia, highlighting the journal's ability to help readers tackle multimodal composing as well as real-world writing contexts. The issue offers two assignments entirely outside of writing studies, one related to science communication and the other to psychology courses. We also feature an assignment aimed at graduate students taking a pedagogy course on writing instruction. If we were ever afraid that the journal would mostly receive submissions on a handful of similar types of traditional college writing assignments, those concerns are far in the rear-view mirror. Let me offer a more detailed introduction to the innovative pieces in this issue.

This issue contains two assignments focused on Wikipedia. Both offer innovative approaches as well as practical advice for planning and teaching assignments that ask students to navigate this sprawling, collaborative authored encyclopedia. Travis DuBose's "Can Anyone Edit? Digital Capital and Student Writing on Wikipedia" offers a perspective on how students can utilize the resources of their university to improve the quality of information available in Wikipedia on the community in which their university is located. Tara Propper offers another approach in "More than Memorizing Rules: Using Wikipedia to Emphasize Rhetorical Approaches to Grammar Instruction and Collaborative Editing Practices." Her assignment reimagines a course on editing to focus on the Wikipedia editing process, asking students to critically examine how editing is a rhetorical and cultural process rather than the mechanistic application of rules to writing.

In "Inclusive Science Writing about Socioscientific Issues for Diverse Audiences," Nicole C. Kelp, Alycia Pisano, Sydney Alderfer, and Nancy E. Levinger share an assignment that asks students to direct science communication to two specific, different audiences. In honing their understanding of audience, the students are also refining their knowledge of the topics they are writing about. This assignment uses a composing tool and a rubric for science writing that will be of interest to anyone who teaches science writing.

In "Using Creative Artifacts to Teach Scientific Communication to Psychology Students," KatieAnn Skogberg and Beth Ann Rice explore the ways learning about psychology can be enhanced by replacing a more traditional assessment tool with a writing assignment that allows students to tie key concepts to their other intellectual interests. The assignment includes both the composition of an "artifact" as well as a written description for a non-expert that explains the way the artifact relates to key concepts in the course. They found the assignment successful while teaching online during the pandemic and are continuing to explore its uses beyond that context.

Kelly A. Moreland offers an assignment to support the training of new graduate student instructors of writing courses in "Preparing Reflective Practitioners: The Feedback Analysis Assignment for Writing Pedagogy Education." The assignment encourages these students to develop a reflective praxis as instructors, leading both to valuable localized insights as well as to a habit of mind that may shape their ongoing work in the classroom.

Supplementary Material

For supplementary material accompanying this paper, including a PDF facsimile of the assignment description formatted as the author(s) presented it to students, please visit https://doi.org/10.31719/pjaw.v7i2.172.

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Can Anyone Edit?
Digital Capital and Student Writing on Wikipedia

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Abstract

Using Ragnedda's (2018) idea of digital capital, the essay discusses the ways in which Wikipedia-based research projects can help students build their own digital capital as well as bring the university's capital to bear on the part of an underrepresented community. In this assignment, students work with community members to research and write updates to the Camden, New Jersey, Wikipedia article and associated articles. Far from being "the encyclopedia anyone can edit," the challenges of writing for Wikipedia lead to rich conversations about power and representation on the largest encyclopedia ever created.

The course and assignment

This writing assignment is a response to my institution's focus on civic engagement and experiential learning. Rutgers University—Camden is located in Camden, New Jersey and has a total student population of about 6,000, 92% of whom are New Jersey natives (Rutgers University, n.d.). It is a designated minority-serving institution (Leong, 2022), and it carries a Community Engagement Classification from the Carnegie Foundation, denoting it as an institution that collaborates with its community "for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, n.d.). The campus's most recent general education criteria, which were instituted in 2017, require students to take at least one course designated as "Engaged Civic Learning" or "Experiential Learning" in order to graduate. To incentivize the creation of courses fulfilling this requirement, the campus's Office of Civic Engagement created a fellows program, providing training for faculty in best practices in teaching civically-engaged courses. The Office of Civic Engagement also serves as a facilitator, connecting faculty to community stakeholders their courses can serve.

The course I proposed, titled Writing Wikipedia, is an upper-division course centered on our institution's home city of Camden and its representation to the world on Wikipedia. Writing Wikipedia has been taught twice, most recently in Spring 2019. The assignment sheet accompanying this essay is drawn from that iteration of the course. In addition to being designated as a Civic Engagement course, Writing Wikipedia meets our general education requirement for a writing intensive course, so the course draws in a diverse population of students looking to meet multiple general education requirements with one course. The first half of the semester juxtaposes two conversations that are eventually intertwined in the performance of the final assignment. Our first conversation is about the history and culture of Camden, primarily explored through reading the history text *Camden After the Fall* (Gillette, 2006). Our second conversation begins with an exploration of the "digital divide," the scholarly conversation examining individuals' differing levels of access to and ability to use digital technologies (van Dijk, 2005) and moves toward a critical examination of Wikipedia, its claims about itself, and issues of representation on it. Students also undertake training, facilitated by the WikiEdu Foundation, in the practicalities of editing Wikipedia and the demands of selecting and evaluating sources.

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The character of the course fundamentally shifts with the introduction of the Wikipedia editing assignment accompanying this essay. This shift is signaled by a meeting with local community activists and stakeholders who have examined Camden's Wikipedia presence and attend the meeting prepared to identify deficits for the students in the course. After this meeting, students must submit proposals, detailing the projects they would like to undertake: they can propose many small changes or a larger undertaking, such as a whole new page on a notable figure who is unrepresented. Students are encouraged to collaborate and, after reading their proposals, I make connections among those who are interested in similar topics; while the assignment is never a true "group project," I stress the virtues of collaboration and mutual aid in our classroom conversations and as students are proposing their projects. Students can also choose to devote a small part of their projects to media creation or page maintenance by doing things like taking photographs or cleaning up broken hyperlinks. After a first round of library research and in-class workshops, students review and comment on one another's work in a round of peer review. The second time the course was taught we made a connection with the Camden County Historical Society, who invited us to work in their archives for a day, a rewarding experience that gave students much-needed material for their final projects. After a second round of peer review, students are tasked with moving their final submissions to Wikipedia mainspace, though it is made clear to them that they will not lose credit if their edits are "reverted" or changed in some way by other editors or one of Wikipedia's many bots. Students' contributions are counted in characters, rather than words, in keeping with Wikipedia's own tracking practices.

There is a rich literature on the efficacy of teaching with Wikipedia in writing classrooms. Multiple authors (Cummings, 2009; Kuhne & Creel, 2012) note that working on Wikipedia solves one of the toughest problems in the assignment design literature: getting students to think about audience, with Cummings singling out Wikipedia's "authenticity" as compared to typical school genres (p. 5). Though the professor can never truly be removed from students' audience considerations given institutional pressures regarding grading, the assignment teaches students to be savvy in navigating multiple audiences at once: the Wikipedia editors who police the pages for perceived infractions, the readers who come to the page for basic information, and even Wikipedia's many bots charged with keeping the site in order. To this complex rhetorical situation, my assignment adds yet another audience: the community on whose behalf students are writing. Teaching with Wikipedia also provides an opportunity to answer bell hooks' (1994) famous call to cede some classroom authority, since both the stylistic and research requirements for the assignment are set by an outside entity; even the professor must accede to these standards if students' work is going to be accepted by Wikipedia.

The rhetorical situation Wikipedia provides has a demonstrable effect on student learning, as a pair of recent studies demonstrates. Vetter and Moroz (2019) report that students responded to the structure that Wikipedia provided for the course and helped in the development of transferable skills, while noting some initial resistance from students to working on Wikipedia, similar to Cummings' findings ten years earlier, discussed below. Vetter et al. (2019) found that a majority of both students and instructors rated the use of Wikipedia as the same or more helpful in developing critical thinking and research skills when compared to "traditional" writing assignments (60). Their study concludes with five recommended best practices arising from their own research and the wider literature of teaching with Wikipedia: extended and substantial Wikipedia assignments, explicit library database training, critiquing existing Wikipedia articles, group work, and attention to diversification issues and content gaps (p. 62-3).

My civically-focused Wikipedia assignment has some illuminating precedents in the literature of assignment design. Goss (2021) takes a global approach, asking students to edit Wikipedia

articles related to the United Nations' Sustainable Development goals before remediating their research to an academic journal article. The goals of the assignment presented by Vetter (2018) are even more similar to those I present here. His work also focuses on a location and culture facing wide stigma—Appalachia—and uses Wikipedia as a means of educating students on the representation of communities and cultures. Drawing on Graham's (2011) discussion of the inequities engendered in Wikipedia's geographic biases, Vetter's Wikipedia project focuses on student media literacy and the politics of representation on the largest encyclopedia ever created. However, while my assignment addresses media literacy as a secondary goal, its primary target is another deficit. Asking students to draw their project from community input offers the opportunity to use the established virtues of teaching with Wikipedia while also addressing an aspect of civic engagement identified by Helsper (2021): the development of digital capital.

Digital capital

Ragnedda (2018) places digital capital alongside the more established "5Cs"—social, economic, personal, political, and cultural capitals—as a means of expanding the concept of the digital divide: "Digital capital is the accumulation of digital competencies (information, communication, safety, content-creation and problem-solving), and digital technology" (p. 2367). Positioning the difficulty of community self-representation on Wikipedia as the result of low capital—as opposed to a mere "divide"—gives particular insight into both the problems of representation Vetter (2018) addresses and their potential solutions. Communities that are underrepresented in digital spaces are often also low in the traditional 5Cs (see Brake, 2014; Hargittai & Walejko, 2008), and therefore they cannot invest their digital capital effectively into their representation on Wikipedia. In shifting the conversation from the digital divide to digital capital, Hargattai and Walejko's concept of "participation" is recast in a more urgent light: the means of digital production, on Wikipedia, amount to the opportunity to represent oneself and one's community to the world. Wikipedia, then, is a site where digital capital yields dividends of cultural and social capital.

Wikipedia's "talk pages"—spaces where Wikipedia editors discuss the state of the page—serve as both examples of the power of self-representation on Wikipedia and as launching points for student projects. A striking example of this dynamic can be seen in a comment posted to the Camden Wikipedia talk page ("Talk," 2022) before my class began our work for the first time. In this comment, an editor responded to concerns that the Camden page's tone was too negative by saying they lived in a nearby community and that the bleak assessment of Camden was accurate. Several other editors concurred. My students, who had just spent several weeks steeped in Camden's history, found the comments misleading and distasteful: the Camden article and the commenters were all silent on the fact that the community in which the original commenter lives sends its garbage and sewage to Camden, creating significant environmental and health issues which Camden residents must face. In response, my students corrected this deficit by creating a new "Environment" section on Camden's page. The surrounding communities, where Camden's capital fled in the mid-20th century, could no longer both send their garbage to Camden and decide who says what about the city saddled with their trash. Graham et al. (2019) examines geographical self-representation on a global scale and note that the Global North sets the digital conversation for much of the world, an essential function of its store of digital capital. This exchange by local Wikipedia editors and the response by student editors highlight the vastly uneven distribution of digital capital—and, therefore, self-representation—within the Global North itself.

One of the major barriers faced by communities like Camden is access to sources of quality digital information. While the Camden community has significant physical access to computers

and broadband (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.), potential Wikipedia editors still face a significant digital capital barrier: access to sources of information that Wikipedia will accept as a basis for additions. Wikipedia bills itself as a tertiary source and demands high-quality, reliable secondary sources, such as newspapers and academic journals, for additions to its articles ("Wikipedia," n.d.). However, journals and newspapers remain largely paywalled, with peer-reviewed materials still primarily the province of large university libraries like ours. The assignment is then a way of bringing the university's store of digital capital to bear on the part of the community.

Opportunities and challenges

Teaching this assignment is among the most meaningful pedagogical experiences of my career. In two semesters, students in the course have transformed Camden's Wikipedia presence. Both initial versions of the "Environment" and "Culture" sections of the page were researched and written by Rutgers—Camden students. Students have also written two entirely new articles, one about a significant player in Camden's civil rights history ("Ulysses Simpson Wiggins," 2021) and another about an important firm in Camden's economic history ("Camden Forge Company," 2022), the latter of which won an award given by other Wikipedia editors for outstanding work on the site.

Though the assignment is rewarding, its challenges are significant. In his case studies, Cummings (2009) notes aspects of hesitancy among his participants, and this hesitancy was present in my own classes. Hesitancy among my students tended to take two forms: intimidation at the work required to do the research and frustration with the mechanics of editing Wikipedia. I learned quickly that this assignment requires frequent in-class workshops and the transformation of the classroom into an active working space for much of our meeting time. One of the most significant changes I made between the two versions of the course was a change of venue: the second time I taught the course, every meeting was held in a classroom where all students had access to their own computer. This change allowed students to work more collaboratively and gave me the ability to more easily assist with technical challenges as they arose. Working together in the same room also fostered a classroom community where everyone was bound together by the work: most students tended to wait until a workshop day in order to make their first live edit to Wikipedia's mainspace, and students' first contributions were always cause for celebration among the group.

The difficulties mentioned above are, however, also a learning opportunity that underscores our conversations about capital and power: in making their own contributions, students are led to a critical examination of how knowledge gets presented—and who gets to present it—on one of the biggest stages in the world, Wikipedia itself. The struggle to finish the assignment becomes part of the intellectual texture of the course. In class meetings, the question is constant: "How could most people do this work without the support you are receiving?" The amount of training that must be undertaken during the first half of the semester in order for students to complete the assignment only underscores the significant barriers to entry that are detailed above: even bright, dedicated college students, many of the age to be supposed "digital natives," struggle to overcome the technical challenges and stylistic requirements of Wikipedia. This critical stance leads to the general media literacy Vetter (2018) is targeting: students see, as they work on their projects, there is always a person and perspective behind every piece of media, despite Wikipedia's aspirations to neutrality.

In addition to the challenges of getting students to write for Wikipedia in the first place, the class must engage the community in a meaningful way. At our institution, we have the great fortune to be represented by a civic engagement office that cultivates ties to community organizations and works to connect us with partners we can assist. However, even given that

support, finding community partners who have the time to examine the Wikipedia page and offer guidance for our students is difficult. Community organizations are more accustomed to welcoming volunteers or facilitating student workers than with conducting critical analyses of Wikipedia articles. I had to be mindful that, in some sense, we were asking the community to do some work for us so we could do work for them. A particular breakthrough came when, during the second version of the course, a partnership with the Camden County Historical Society was formed and students were able to spend a day in the archives, gathering materials and learning directly from local historians. I encourage any instructor interested in teaching this assignment to seek out a similar partnership. Students gained practical research experience while giving the archives' materials wider currency.

Our offering to the community—though a valuable service—was somewhat abstract and required us to find folks who would be willing to sift the page and provide their perspectives on the gaps. We were fortunate during both iterations of the course to find just those people, but it required many preparatory conversations between me and our community partners before they met with our class, which points to yet another challenge: teaching this assignment is time-consuming and demanding on the instructor. I have found it a rich and rewarding experience both times I have taught it, but its demands are such that I cannot make it a part of my regular course rotation and must plan far in advance for its many moving parts. If someone is interested in the assignment, but engaging community partners is prohibitive, the Vetter (2018) article discussed above is an excellent guide for doing similar work without directly involving the community under discussion. Though the community is not providing direct guidance in that case, students are still putting the university's digital capital to work on projects that can benefit the community's Wikipedia representation.

An examination of the assignment's challenges would also be incomplete without an acknowledgment of my own store of digital capital: my appointment at the university is specifically focused on digital material. I was hired to create and direct a multiliteracy center, and all my courses are digitally-focused in some way. Though I had never attempted to edit Wikipedia on my own before teaching this course, I must acknowledge that, as someone who has been using digital technology from a young age and now does it professionally, I started planning the course and assignment with a confidence in my facility with digital writing generally and working on the web specifically that many instructors do not share. Nonetheless, those interested in the assignment have resources. The WikiEdu Foundation is extremely helpful in overcoming potential technical challenges. They provide support for initial assignment design, training materials, and, most crucially, a means of tracking student progress on their projects in a central location, something that makes my grading and assessment of students' projects possible. Even with my own technical facility, the course would be significantly more difficult without their logistical support. Konieczny (2012) also has an excellent step-by-step planning sequence for faculty looking to teach with Wikipedia, including advice on how to use Wikipedia's features to find articles in need of work or expansion, an extremely useful set of tools in order to guide students toward research topics.

Future Directions

As I reflect on the assignment in this essay and prepare to propose teaching the course again in the next academic year, there are changes I would consider making. In the years since I last taught it, I have moved my courses toward a standards-based "ungrading" model, and I think this assignment would benefit from the student reflection that framework encourages. Given that students can supplement their primary research projects in a variety of ways—the creation of new pages, page maintenance, media creation—assigning points for this assignment

can feel even more abstract and arbitrary than usual. Foregrounding student reflection and self-assessment as a basis for grading is an excellent fit for an assignment focused on community and collaboration.

Another smaller change I would like to build into the assignment's standards is a requirement that students employ a wider range of sources: many students often found a single useful source, which they used repeatedly as the basis for the bulk of their edits. The course text I assigned, *Camden After the Fall*, is cited 26 separate times as of February 2023 ("Camden, New Jersey," 2023), a number far higher than any other single source on the page. Students would benefit from finding and using a wider variety of sources, and it would be a benefit to the page as well.

I would also consider making the project more explicitly collaborative. Vetter et al. (2019) establish collaboration as a best practice, and I would like to cluster students around shared interests in order to have them undertake bigger projects, which will be necessary given the challenge created by the course's success: there are fewer obvious deficits on the Camden Wikipedia page than there were when I first taught the course in 2016. Students in my courses made significant additions that other Wikipedians have since expanded on, and in order for students to find places to contribute, the projects will have to be larger undertakings best tackled by groups rather than individuals.

Whether one accepts Wikipedia's utopian claims about itself, it is among the easiest means of learning many basic facts about the world, and it is the first place billions of people go for such knowledge. Given the uneven distribution of the digital capital required to represent one's community on Wikipedia, teaching community-based assignments using Wikipedia creates rich opportunities to extend an institution's digital capital to the community and promote student learning.

ASSIGNMENT

Community Wikipedia Project: Writing Wikipedia

For the second half of the semester, we'll be focusing on taking both what we've learned about Camden and what we've learned about editing Wikipedia and putting them into practice by actually editing Camden's page or creating other, related pages. Starting by working in sandboxes, we'll transform Camden's Wikipedia page bit by bit.

Milestones

Community Partner Meeting

Our primary community partner meeting will be held during week 1 of the project. Come to class ready to take notes on our partners' observations of the Wikipedia page and with questions to ask that might elicit potential avenues for research.

Proposals

After extensive conversations about both Wikipedia and the city of Camden, it's time to narrow down what you want to work on. This assignment is a concise proposal to work on an aspect of Camden's wiki page or to start a new page.

50 points, due week 2

Weekly Writing

Each week for the first portion of the project, you'll be asked to produce 1000 characters of writing in your sandbox. Note that this is not necessarily 1000 characters of *new writing*. Substantive

revisions will also count. Note that all of this writing must include proper citations as defined by Wikipedia's guidelines.

5 points each, due Week 3, Week 4

First Peer Review

The first formal chance for you and your peers to discuss one another's work and help one another improve. Note that the focus of this peer review is *on the quality of the comments you produce*. Note that all written comments and feedback will be given via the correct Talk page. You will receive a separate handout for this assignment.

Draft: 10 points, due Week 5 (class meeting 1)
Comments: 20 points, due Week 5 (class meeting 2)

Second Peer Review

Similar to the above review, this is a chance to discuss our edits as a class. Note that the focus has flipped: we are focusing on the quality of our work above the quality of our comments. There will, again, be another handout for this portion of the assignment.

Draft: 20 points, due Week 7 (class meeting 1)
Comments: 10 points, due Week 7 (class meeting 2)

"Final" Draft

I put final in quotes here because, of course, on Wikipedia nothing is ever really final. This is a polished product that integrates seamlessly with the rest of the Wikipedia page. A separate handout will be given with details.

Due Week 9 (during finals week)

Article Proposal: Writing Wikipedia

After extensive conversations about both Wikipedia and the city of Camden, it's time to narrow down what you want to work on. This assignment is a concise proposal to work on an aspect of Camden's wiki page or to start a new page.

Requirements

First, give an overview of what you want to work on and why you want to work on it. What general topic do you have in mind? What time period or subject in Camden's history? This overview should be 2-3 substantial paragraphs about the kinds of additions you hope to make.

Next, talk about the specific ways you hope to implement your changes: are you proposing an entirely new page or are you hoping to add to the main wiki page? What kinds of media do you want to add or statistics do you want to include? Note that this section is the one that will most benefit from conversations with your peers. And remember: be specific.

Finally, talk about research pathways. What kinds of sources do you hope to draw from? What kind of research do you need to do in order to make your proposal successful?

Advice

Collaborate. Writing for Wikipedia is tough, as we've seen. So talk about ways that you can form a community of editors in this class in order to best support the work you're going to be doing. Look for ways to share sources and help one another get the work done.

Also, carefully consider what you say in this proposal: though there is some wiggle room to allow for the discovery inherent in the research process, note that, largely, you are committing to

whatever topic you propose here. So think carefully and make sure your topic is both something that interests you and will benefit the project as a whole.

Peer Review 1

For this first peer review, I'm going to focus on the quality of your comments to one another. Though I will look at your work and give you feedback on your talk page, what I really want to do is encourage you to be critical readers of one another's work.

Requirements

Week 5 (class meeting 1) - 4,500 polished characters in your sandbox
Week 5 (class meeting 2) - A substantial response to your two assigned peers

For your submission, try to bring whatever work you've done as close to "mainspace ready" as you can: I'll be looking for the number and quality of citations as well as how closely you adhere to the style guide requirements we've discussed.

For your comments, revisit the trainings we've done: use the language of Wikipedia editors to give feedback. Talk about issues of neutrality and whether or not the article adheres to the criteria of noteworthiness established by Wikipedia. Look at other talk pages on Wikipedia. What kinds of things are discussed there? Note that these comments should be delivered via the talk page.

Final Submissions: Writing Wikipedia

For your final submission for this semester, you're going to have options: a baseline amount of words that you can reduce by engaging in other activities on Wikipedia.

Requirements

Baseline: 8,000 characters in Mainspace

Note that these contributions will be assessed according to how well they conform to Wikipedia's guidelines. So consider very carefully the following dimensions:

- Style: Does your contribution conform to Wikipedia's writing style and requirements for neutrality?
- Noteworthiness: This is something we're discussing a lot in class, but be sure all of your work has at least some degree of noteworthiness as defined by Wikipedia.
- Citations: Do you have sufficient numbers of reliable citations? Are you summarizing those sources in your own words or merely copying and pasting? Note that Wikipedia has rules against plagiarism, and all of the university guidelines about plagiarism apply even when writing on Wikipedia.
- Organization: Are your submissions logically organized? Do they fit within the scheme of the Wikipedia page as it currently stands?

Word Reduction Options

Media: You can reduce the number of words you need to contribute to mainspace by finding and adding media to the page. The following are the values for each kind of media:

- **Original Media:** if you create something yourself—a photo, an illustration, etc.—this is worth a reduction of **1000 characters.**
- **Media from elsewhere**: if you pull media from elsewhere on the web—a logo, a photo, etc.—this is worth a reduction of **500 characters.** Note that this media is

subject to restrictions and must be labeled in a particular way. Please discuss this with me if you're interested.

- **Media from elsewhere on Wikipedia:** if you find media that's already on Wikipedia that would work on the Camden page, this is worth **250 characters.**

Maintenance: There is a variety of maintenance that could be performed on a Wikipedia page: reorganizations, link-checking and other activities. Feel free to propose something to me and word reductions will be assigned on an ad hoc basis.

At a minimum, no matter how many other activities you perform, you must contribute 7,000 polished characters to Wikipedia mainspace.

Please send me an email during Week 9 showing how you're accounting for your work. As an example:

7000 characters in mainspace
1000 characters, two original pictures
9000 characters total.

Advice

You've already done much of the work for this submission. The trick now is just to put it all together into something that's presentable to the public. As always, remember that this isn't a paper for a class: this is Camden's public face to the world. You are, literally, writing for an audience of millions. Don't let this intimidate you: use it as motivation to say what needs to be said about Camden.

Supplementary Material

For supplementary material accompanying this paper, including a PDF facsimile of the assignment description formatted as the author(s) presented it to students, please visit https://doi.org/10.31719/pjaw.v7i2.144.

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More than Memorizing Rules

Using Wikipedia to Emphasize Rhetorical Approaches to Grammar Instruction and Collaborative Editing Practices

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Abstract

This article details a collaborative editing assignment that asks students to analyze and assess editorial contributions made to Wikipedia. This project not only provides students an opportunity to apply their understanding of grammar and style concepts to real-world editing situations, it also calls students' attention to the underlying ideological biases and rhetorical impact of subtle language choices used in specific Wikipedia articles. In explaining the rationale behind this assignment and discussing several student samples, this article demonstrates how designing writing assignments around the collaborative, multi-authored nature of Wikipedia can highlight the influence of cultural circumstances on both sentence-level stylistic choices and broader developmental editorial practices.

Introduction: Fostering Rhetorical Grammar and Collaborative Editing

Questions surrounding how grammar instruction enhances students' writing facilities have been a consistent concern for instructors since the early days of composition studies (Braddock et al., 1963; Shaughnessy, 1977; Sommers, 1980; Williams, 1981). While these discussions have traditionally surrounded the treatment of grammatical errors in basic-writing classes, more contemporary grammar-based scholarship emphasizes the rhetorical impact of grammar and style choices. This research situates grammar and style-related decisions within a larger cultural, academic, and professional context (Butler, 2008; Clark, 2006; Dunn & Lindblom, 2011; Kolln & Gray, 2017). Put differently, grammar and style interventions are viewed through the lens of genre-specific conventions that influence the writer's larger purpose and audience. Moreover, what Kolln and Gray (2017) refer to as "rhetorical grammar" allows instructors to shift students' focus from concerns surrounding "right" and "wrong" applications of grammar rules to more practical questions regarding how best to communicate one's message to a specified audience and become visible within a professional or scholarly community.

While such work has drawn connections between grammatical and rhetorical instruction, rhetorically-focused grammar pedagogy often omits a discussion of editorial practices. Contemporary scholarship typically frames grammar and style through a binary writer-audience relationship. However, this overlooks the role of intermediary parties and/or collaborative editing practices. Grammar and style choices are traditionally treated as highly individualized decisions by a single author when speaking to an audience. This article will push back against the binary writer-audience relationship underpinning grammar instruction by narrating my experiences designing a Collaborative Editing Project around Wikipedia for a college-level Grammar and Professional Editing seminar. This assignment asks student groups to analyze the

prompt
a journal of academic writing assignments

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history of editorial contributions to a specific Wikipedia page, discuss any unique patterns, trends and/or debates within these contributions, and explain the rhetorical dimensions of precise grammar or style interventions. Meaning, they need to explain how grammar and style decisions implicitly or explicitly impact the nature of the information being conveyed within a given Wikipedia page. An underlying goal of the Collaborative Editing Project is to highlight the interconnection between subtle grammar/style choices and ongoing editorial interventions within multi-authored, collaborative digital texts. In unpacking and exploring this interconnection, students are able to examine the cultural orientation of grammatical and stylistic decisions insofar as they consider how specific grammar and style choices shape (and are shaped by) their surrounding social and cultural contexts.

Grammar and Professional Editing: Course Context and Curriculum

From 2018 through 2022, I taught five sections of a Grammar and Professional Editing course, ENGL 3375. A majority of students who take this class are advanced English majors (juniors/seniors) and interested in either teaching English or working in publishing as editors and/or technical writers. Additionally, many students in our English program also are interested in creative writing, and creatively-inclined students who have taken this course noted that they wanted to learn the "rules" of language to derive more control and agency over their writing. In previous semesters, ENGL 3375 was taught as a traditional grammar seminar that emphasized learning formal grammar principles and identifying and fixing mechanical errors in writing samples. However, when I was first assigned the course, I redesigned the class to highlight the professional and cultural work of grammar in practice. My rationale for this redesign was that while each of the student cohorts I mentioned earlier—students interested in teaching, publishing, and creative writing—has a strong formal grasp of grammar principles, they tend to be less inclined to view grammar as a professional resource. Students often viewed grammar comprehension as a measurement of their individual writing expertise rather than seeing grammar principles as a set of tools that can be deployed in professional settings.

In response to this concern about professionalization, I wanted students to better understand the sociocultural contexts and contingencies that impact how we use, receive, and modify language choices. In revising this course's major assignments, I moved away from a decontextualized approach to grammar instruction whereby students learn a series of static grammar rules in isolation and identify the (mis)application of said rules in isolated writing samples. Instead, I sought to illustrate how grammar concerns function in real-world writing scenarios that students would encounter beyond the classroom. Hence, I redesigned class readings and assignments to help students learn grammar and mechanical conventions by rhetorically engaging with the writing and editing practices found in real-world forums. More specifically, I designed an end-of-semester project around Wikipedia in order to highlight how grammar standards are applied, adapted, or even created anew when composing digital texts in public, online forums. Through engaging with a popular, multi-authored writing platform, students could see how specific grammar or style choices impact how information is circulated and received while also considering how online spaces influence language use. My hope was that this course redesign would professionalize students by demonstrating how skillsets traditionally associated with literary studies overlap and resonate with the reading/writing strategies that are actively used in new media environments while also introducing them to the digital platforms they might encounter as professionals. In the following sections, I discuss the reasoning behind selecting Wikipedia as the primary focus for this project and clarify the specific learning

outcomes associated with this assignment. In doing so, I explain how this project calls attention to the role of the editor in negotiating grammar or style concepts for reader accessibility and, furthermore, provides a foundation for exploring how language use evolves to coincide with larger cultural shifts.

Collaborative Editing: Why Wikipedia?

When selecting Wikipedia as the focus for the Collaborative Editing Project, I reflected upon my own editing experience. Working as an editor for trade magazines, I saw the enhanced role digital media plays in how we produce and consume information. Consequently, editors find themselves responsible for both responding to the work of a single author and navigating a nexus of publicly accessible—and, usually, collaboratively written—information databases. Moreover, editors must acknowledge how specific editorial choices impact the ways in which information is produced and revised. Thus, as a crowd-sourced site, Wikipedia provides a forum for exploring how editorial decisions shape the ways in which public information is circulated. Put differently, Wikipedia demonstrates collaborative editing practices by archiving how, when, and why specific editorial decisions have been made, thereby underscoring the dialogic nature of editorial interventions.

Wikipedia has an extensive Manual of Style, which outlines the standards that are expected of all contributions. These standards are primarily structural and grammatical, and the style manual reviews topics such as how article sections should be arranged or how possessive nouns should be formatted. However, a key feature of Wikipedia's style manual is the insistence on a neutral point-of-view (NPOV). The NPOV emphasizes summarizing information without participating in debates or favoring one view over another when discussing a topic. Similarly, Wikipedia also has a firm "no original research policy," meaning that contributors cannot analyze and/or interpret information without including links to verifiable sources to support their claims. While these policies may seem to be procedural and logistical in nature, actually abiding by these guidelines demands a critical awareness of one's language choices. For example, the style guidelines note that "the word claim…could imply a lack of credibility. Using this or other expressions of doubt may make an article appear to promote one position over another" ("Wikipedia: Neutral Point of View," 2023). This illustrates how upholding the goals and values of Wikipedia requires a nuanced approach to specific language choices when making contributions.

As a crowdsourced platform, a majority of Wikipedia pages are open. This means that anyone can edit, add, or remove information from a page. Contributors can include comments to clarify the rationale for their own edits or explain why they have modified (or even removed) edits made by someone else. There also exists a "talk page" for each article wherein extended conversations about page edits and the appropriateness thereof can occur. Disputes between contributors are not uncommon, and viewing these conversations unfold on an article's talk page can provide insight into the ways in which multi-authored texts are created through on-going exchanges between several contributors. Lastly, there are many pages that are "protected," meaning that all page edits must be reviewed and approved by a volunteer administrator before being published. Protected pages are typically reserved for controversial topics or issues that have been the target of site vandalism.

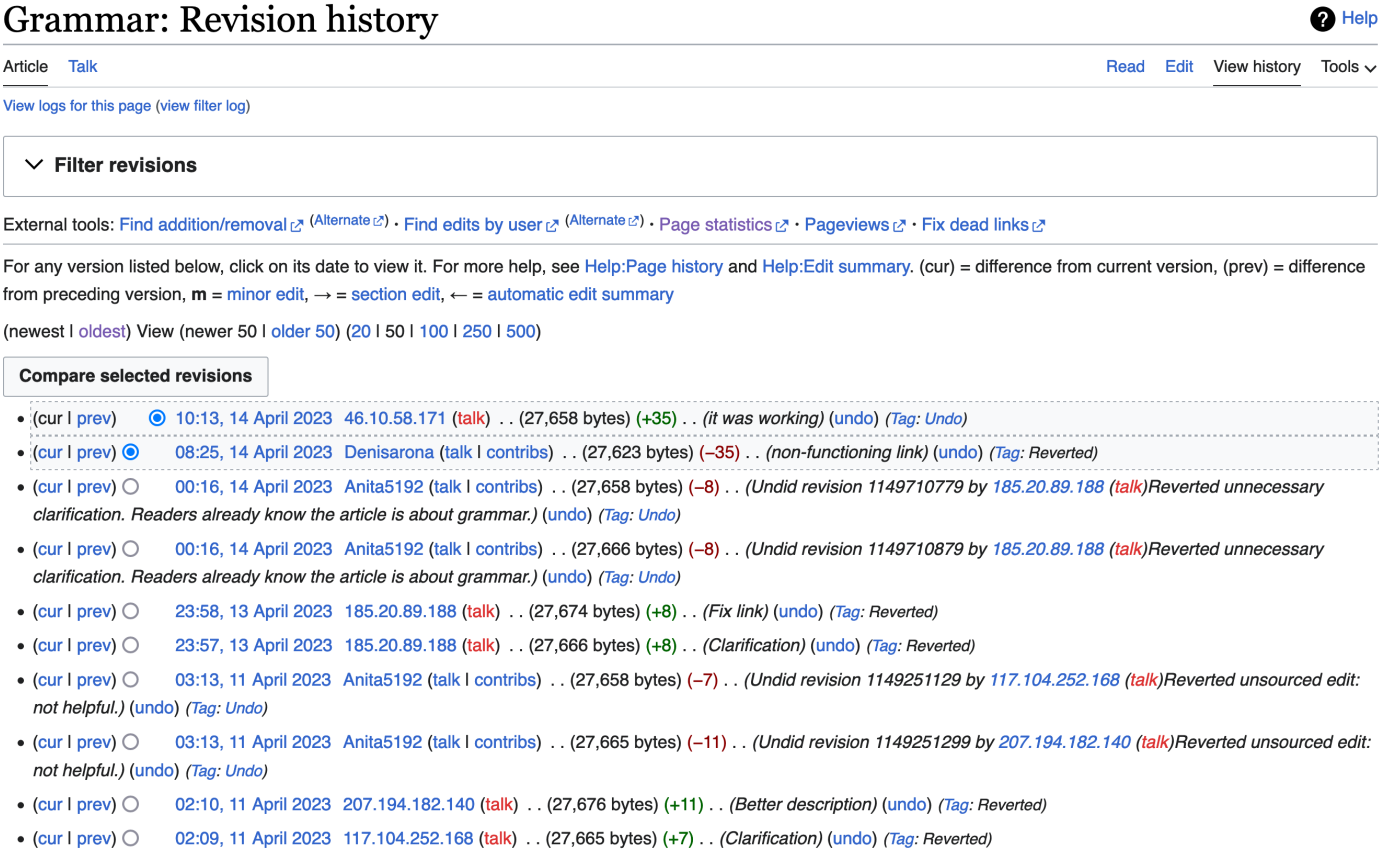
Much of the scholarship surrounding the use of Wikipedia in the English classroom emphasizes Wikipedia's capacity for contextualizing language choices and redirecting students' focus from concerns about error to more sustainable conversations regarding how style and grammar influence a reading experience. For example, Purdy (2009) posits that Wikipedia decenters information exchange, counterbalancing traditional notions surrounding correctness. Purdy writes, "Correctness still matters, but it is established through a never-ending process

of negotiation among multiple positions rather than the advancement of the single 'correct' one" (p. 356). Wikipedia can be a tool for extending and refining "correctness" as an editorial pursuit, one that helps students recognize both the connotative and denotative functions of language. Similarly, Patch (2010) claims that Wikipedia can foster critical digital literacy skills, namely assessing source reliability, navigating online databases, and identifying patterns/trends in editorial practices. Such scholarship underscores how Wikipedia-based assignments help students investigate grammar-based decisions through the craft of editing. In evaluating and intervening in specific editorial practices, students also cultivate an enhanced sense of what distinguishes source credibility while also anticipating the preferences of a diverse reading audience (Vetter et al., 2019). As I will discuss in the following section, the Collaborative Editing Project invites students to consider the rhetorical impact of specific grammar and style-related editorial interventions, evaluate the legitimacy of source material, and explore the contingent nature of editorial decisions, specifically how such choices respond to changing language conventions and social circumstances.

There is a wide range of educational resources dedicated to Wikipedia and incorporating this platform into traditional educational scenarios. However, case studies that specifically examine the intersection between Wikipedia and grammar instruction in college-level writing classes are still in their developing stages. In designing the Collaborative Editing Project, my hope was that students could use a popular platform they were already familiar with to explore how ostensibly small grammar and style choices contour the types of conversations we have about a given content area. In doing so, students would work towards the learning outcomes identified by Purdy (2009) and Patch (2010) (namely, understanding the sociocultural influences of subtle-yet-important language choices and evaluating source credibility) while also cultivating information literacy skill sets, such as working with digital databases and identifying long-form patterns and trends in editorial oversight. Through this assignment, I hope to foreground the following learning objectives: (a) to identify and evaluate the impact of specific grammar and style choices, considering how/why contributors elected to apply or break specific grammar "rules" and the ways in which such choices shape a reading experience; (b) assess the legitimacy of intertextual and referential sourcing, including hyperlinking and secondary references; (c) become proficient with using digital tools to navigate publicly-accessible text and database entries, exploring how writing and/or editing within digital forums influences standard notions of correctness and; (d) recognize and contextualize language choices based on larger technical, historical, cultural/ideological trends. Next, I will describe the Wikipedia assignment sequence and structure in greater depth to show how this project achieves these learning objectives.

Assignment: Analyzing, Assessing, and Performing Editorial Interventions

During the first half of the semester, students engage in peer editing assignments and submit an editorial analysis of a local periodical. These assignments prepare students for pushing beyond simply memorizing the "rules" of grammar in order to identify real and feasible editorial interventions. Shorter assignments in the first half of the semester also helped students contextualize grammar choices made by authors across a variety of different genres and circumstances, which prepared them for eventually navigating and analyzing Wikipedia contributions. The second half of the semester focused on the Collaborative Editing Project. Working in editorial teams of four, students select a Wikipedia article of their choosing and then analyze the consequences of specific editorial interventions on four fronts: grammatical, stylistic, historical, and intertextual/referential connections. Student groups then present their findings to the class



Grammar: Revision history

Help

Article Talk Read Edit View history Tools

View logs for this page (view filter log)

Filter revisions

External tools: Find addition/removal (Alternate) · Find edits by user (Alternate) · Page statistics · Pageviews · Fix dead links

For any version listed below, click on its date to view it. For more help, see Help:Page history and Help:Edit summary. (cur) = difference from current version, (prev) = difference from preceding version, **m** = minor edit, → = section edit, ← = automatic edit summary

(newest | oldest) View (newer 50 | older 50) (20 | 50 | 100 | 250 | 500)

Compare selected revisions

- (cur | prev) 10:13, 14 April 2023 46.10.58.171 (talk) . . (27,658 bytes) (+35) . . *(it was working)* (undo) *(Tag: Undo)*
- (cur | prev) 08:25, 14 April 2023 Denisarona (talk | contribs) . . (27,623 bytes) (–35) . . *(non-functioning link)* (undo) *(Tag: Reverted)*
- (cur | prev) 00:16, 14 April 2023 Anita5192 (talk | contribs) . . (27,658 bytes) (–8) . . *(Undid revision 1149710779 by 185.20.89.188 (talk)Reverted unnecessary clarification. Readers already know the article is about grammar.)* (undo) *(Tag: Undo)*
- (cur | prev) 00:16, 14 April 2023 Anita5192 (talk | contribs) . . (27,666 bytes) (–8) . . *(Undid revision 1149710879 by 185.20.89.188 (talk)Reverted unnecessary clarification. Readers already know the article is about grammar.)* (undo) *(Tag: Undo)*
- (cur | prev) 23:58, 13 April 2023 185.20.89.188 (talk) . . (27,674 bytes) (+8) . . *(Fix link)* (undo) *(Tag: Reverted)*
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- (cur | prev) 03:13, 11 April 2023 Anita5192 (talk | contribs) . . (27,658 bytes) (–7) . . *(Undid revision 1149251129 by 117.104.252.168 (talk)Reverted unsourced edit: not helpful.)* (undo) *(Tag: Undo)*
- (cur | prev) 03:13, 11 April 2023 Anita5192 (talk | contribs) . . (27,665 bytes) (–11) . . *(Undid revision 1149251299 by 207.194.182.140 (talk)Reverted unsourced edit: not helpful.)* (undo) *(Tag: Undo)*
- (cur | prev) 02:10, 11 April 2023 207.194.182.140 (talk) . . (27,676 bytes) (+11) . . *(Better description)* (undo) *(Tag: Reverted)*
- (cur | prev) 02:09, 11 April 2023 117.104.252.168 (talk) . . (27,665 bytes) (+7) . . *(Clarification)* (undo) *(Tag: Reverted)*

Figure 1. Revision history of the "Grammar" Wikipedia article. Author screenshot.

and cowrite an editorial memorandum paper based on their presentation feedback. I encourage students to select articles on topics they are already familiar with. The reason for this is to focus students' attention on how editorial interventions can subtly or dramatically impact a reader's interpretation of the information being conveyed on a Wikipedia page. If students were to select a topic that they are not familiar with, they would run the risk of focusing too much on understanding and retaining the information presented in a Wikipedia page as opposed to examining how said information is shaped by particular stylistic and grammatical choices. Hence, selecting a topic that they already possess knowledge about helps students inhabit an editorial middle-ground between audience and author. Students have worked with Wikipedia articles about literary figures (Emily Dickinson and Nathaniel Hawthorne), cultural figures (Walt Disney), infamous figures (Jack the Ripper), films and musicals (*Les Misérables*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Interstellar*), popular forms of entertainment and digital media (Nintendo), and environmental policies (sustainability initiatives).

Each editorial team is comprised of two copyeditors and two managing editors. Students self-select these roles on the basis of the types of editorial choices they want to engage (i.e., grammar and style-related choices versus more qualitative concerns surrounding how the article has been managed to ensure a neutral approach to the content area in order to abide by Wikipedia's standards and style conventions). Students electing to serve as copyeditors are asked to examine how seemingly straightforward grammar choices, such as the use of pronouns, sentence structure (simple, compound, complex), the relationship between clauses (subordinate/independent), shifts in voice (passive versus active), and/or changes to verb tense alter how information has been received. I also task copyeditors with analyzing and modifying

their article's style choices, such as how information is sequenced and organized, the efficacy of the article's headings and subheadings, the import of specialized versus formal/professional terminology, the relationship between word and image. This rhetorical approach to grammar applications emphasizes the degree to which "correctness" is contingent upon a series of qualitative considerations, such as assumed audience knowledge, authorial credibility, and external sociocultural contexts or influences.

Students serving as managing editors are expected to identify key patterns within the article's editorial history using Wikipedia's "View History" function. The "View History" function archives every editorial contribution made to an article and the rationale behind these contributions (Figure 1).

Additionally, the "Page Statistics" tool catalogs the propensity of edits per article, the number of edits made by specific contributors, and fluxes and flows in yearly and monthly editorial contributions (Figure 2).

Students learn to navigate this database by searching data entries using variables such as the entry date, contributor entries, and entry size. Students also compare selected revision entries, which enables them to analyze a series of entries over a discrete time period. Using the "View History" function not only fosters critical digital literacy skills (such as negotiating an archive of online information to locate specific content and identify key patterns within a content area) but also underscores the collaborative nature of editing insofar as students learn how/why specific editorial decisions were made and the extent to which these choices are informed by cultural and historical phenomena. That is, students are encouraged to hypothesize how specific editorial contributions and patterns might be influenced by cultural circumstances.

While each editorial team examined the grammar, style, and editing history of their articles to gather insight into how information is presented to an audience, I also asked students serving as managing editors to assess the ways in which the article's intertextual connections (i.e., hyperlinks and references) supported or refined the information shared in the article. In other words, a central feature of the editing process is evaluating the legitimacy of source material, including how contributors support their content with scholarly references. Furthermore, Wikipedia is unique as an encyclopedic text because it provides the option of hyperlinking textual material in order to clarify key terms, compliment topics referenced in the article, and emphasize useful secondary information. Asking students to analyze how an article supports its claims with scholarly references as well as the efficacy of specific hyperlinks allows them to consider the multivoiced nature of writing and editing. That is, hyperlinks introduce another "voice" to the conversation. Evaluating hyperlinks allows students to consider when additional elaboration regarding a key term or claim is necessary. In my experience, conversations regarding when a scholarly reference or hyperlink may be warranted (and which references are appropriate) offer students opportunities to consider different forms of supporting evidence (i.e., quantitative versus qualitative research; primary versus secondary research). Once again, such conversations helped emphasize writing and editing as a collaborative, dialogic process—one that is contingent upon not only the cultural milieu but specific research conventions and practices.

In preparation for this assignment, I spend a class session reviewing Wikipedia's Manual of Style and then conduct a guided lecture where I compare several versions of our university's Wikipedia page. When comparing earlier and later versions of this page, I ask students to examine the ways in which specific contributions sync up with the platform's style guidelines and, furthermore, consider the cultural context and rhetorical impact of these contributions. For instance, I call students' attention to an early version of our university's Wikipedia page where a hyperlink for "public university" first appears in the introduction section, and then I identify how this hyperlink was modified to include "public research university" in a subsequent version.

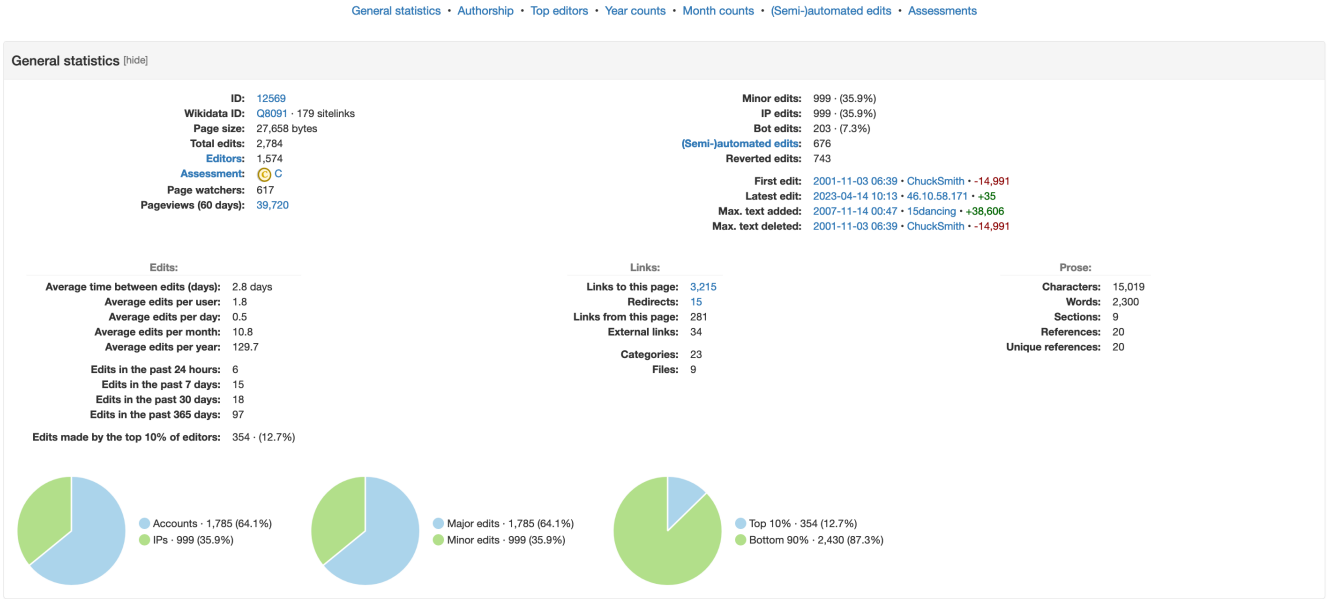

Figure 2. Page Statistics function on the "Grammar" Wikipedia article. Author screenshot.

In class conversations, students note the connotative differences between these labels insofar as being designated a "research" institution could subtly establish a degree of prestige compared to other types of colleges. However, I also contextualize the timing of these changes and explain how our university's research designation status (i.e., R2, R1, etc.) was promoted around the same time as these editorial contributions. Hence, these conversations illustrate how editorial contributions can take the form of sentence-level edits in addition to broader developmental edits (such as creating new sections, hyperlinks, or intertextual connections within a Wikipedia page in response to real-world developments). Ultimately, this class activity serves two purposes. First, it introduces students to Wikipedia's "View History" function and familiarizes them with the basic procedures for reviewing multiple versions of the same Wikipedia page. Second, this activity models the same type of critical examinations that students are expected to undertake in their own projects.

I would like to discuss two short examples that illustrate how students were able to map the broader cultural circumstances surrounding both grammar/style choices and broader developmental editing interventions. Throughout the semester, our in-class conversations focused on questions surrounding "choice and impact" as opposed to "right versus wrong" applications of grammatical principles. Moreover, we not only examined how grammar and style decisions shaped the ways in which information was relayed but also how grammar and style inform (and are informed by) the cultures in which these conventions circulate.

Reflection: Drawing Connections Between Grammar and Cultural Shifts

While identifying patterns in the history of edits to the Wikipedia article for the popular 2014 film, *Interstellar*, one editorial team from my class recognized an influx in contributions centered on the use of pronouns and proper nouns when describing the film's characters. The group observed a surge in editorial activity surrounding these choices, beginning in 2016 (two years after the film debuted). According to the student group, attention to pronouns, proper nouns, and gendered modifiers used in the article remained consistent between 2016-2018. They write,

"male characters would be referred to with their titles (Dr., Professor, etc.) and their full or first name. However, the female characters, who also held similar titles, were only referred to by their last name." The group speculated that a heightened interest in how to name male and female characters may have been influenced by increasing concerns "for equal rights for females, including equal pay among other things. This, coupled with the recent #MeToo movement perhaps spurred the contributors to ensure that the female characters and actresses get the same recognition that their male counterparts receive." Here, the team's copyeditors demonstrate how specific grammatical and stylistic choices can lend insight into larger cultural and societal biases. By asking students to make these connections, my intention was to emphasize how language use is shaped by cultural shifts.

Recognizing how culturally informed editorial choices shape not only language usage but our larger cultural ideologies, another editorial team focused on the treatment of queer identity in Emily Dickinson's Wikipedia article. While analyzing their article's editorial history, the team's managing editors observed that references to Dickinson's queer identity received the most editorial attention, as sections discussing Dickinson's sexuality were added and removed throughout the course of the article's history. However, the publicly-facing Wikipedia article showed no engagement with or reference to Dickinson's purported queer identity or her relationship with Susan Gilbert, a childhood friend who later became Dickinson's sister-in-law. Contributors cited the lack of substantial supporting evidence to rationalize the removal of such information from Dickinson's biography. The team's managing editors write, "This is a clear case of bias" and argue that "[w]hile Dickinson never publicly admitted whether or not she was queer, the speculation alone is worthy of a section [...] In the original 'Sexuality' section, terms like 'alleged' and 'rumored' were used to discuss Dickinson's relationship with Sue Gilbert, but the section was still cut [by moderators] for lack of evidence." Thus, in the team's observation paper, they proposed incorporating a section that treated questions surrounding Dickinson's queer identity through the lens of her poetry and current scholarship engaging with alterations to Dickinson's canon. More specifically, the team referenced posthumous alterations made to Dickinson's poetry, namely the changing of pronouns and proper nouns that reference women, to explain the erasure of Dickinson's queer identity. The team resolved that such an erasure was "reckless" and suggested that "adding a subsection" focusing on Dickinson's relationships with women would "provide context to who she was behind closed doors and the metaphors within her poetry." In short, these students noted how omitting key aspects of Dickinson's identity runs the risk of overlooking or downplaying specific themes in her poetic works.

These examples illustrate how this assignment elicited productive connections between language usage and ideology. That is, students were able to chart the relationship between the application of grammar and style concepts and the cultures from which these conventions are drawn. Such observations resonate with James Berlin's (1988) argument that shared discursive practices and rhetorics "have their imbrication in ideology" and "can be read so as to favor one version of economic, social, and political arrangements over other versions" (p. 477). Ideology "normalizes" or makes legitimate a given cultural/historical value system, but the ideologies governing and structuring how we use, deploy, and interpret language are often invisible or hidden to us as language users. In other words, the ideology characterizing what we value, think is possible, and construe as "normal" in terms of social relations is often taken for granted as natural cultural occurrences. This assignment asked students to consider how ostensibly arbitrary language choices carry with them specific forms of social endorsement that can be, at times, exclusionary and patriarchal. Moreover, each editorial team demonstrated an ability to recognize and contextualize long-form patterns and trends in editorial interventions that may otherwise be overlooked. While copyeditors identified such connections based on pronoun

and proper noun usage and managing editors focused on the text's metadata, both groups were able to bridge ostensibly arbitrary grammar and style choices to specific cultural values and biases. In bridging this gap, these examples reflect how students were able to engage with the connotative functions of language, as both groups were able to assign larger values and preferences to individual grammar, style, and meta-textual choices. Furthermore, editors based their evaluation of the "impact" of grammar and style choices by considering how such decisions shaped the type of information privileged in a text. That is, both editorial teams foregrounded how an article's grammar and style influenced how readers accessed information about their subject area. In both examples, each editorial team recognized the relationship between one's language choices and the identities they make visible and/or invisible. Ultimately, in each of these examples, students were able to identify how an application of a grammar concept, namely how pronouns and proper nouns operate in a large body of text, shape which aspects of a story get told. My intention was to foreground how grammar operates in long-form writing that students will encounter beyond the classroom space. In emphasizing grammar in context, my hope was to provide students with a more nuanced lens for testing, evaluating, and assessing how grammar operates in writing and the larger cultural stakes associated with language use.

Challenges: Overcoming Student Hesitancy and Anticipating Site Vandalism

Although this assignment provides opportunities for students to access real-world editing practices, working within an online forum can present challenges with respect to student hesitancy. Based on personal experiences, some English majors were intimidated by the prospect of navigating online databases and engaging in quantitative examinations of editorial patterns and practices. However, I have found that clarifying the digital literacy skills fostered through this assignment (such as negotiating a database of information and identifying patterns and trends in how content is produced and revised for an online audience) can ease students' reticence. To allay students' anxieties about how to locate editorial information on Wikipedia, I dedicated class periods to modeling for students how to find editorial patterns and trends using the "View History" function. One such class period focused on our university's Wikipedia article. Using the "View History" function, we charted the article's evolution from its inception in April 2005. We then used the "Compare Selected Revision" tool to identify which content had been added and the date of these contributions. This allowed us to consider the extent to which increased editorial attention coincided with specific changes to the university, such as the growth of our student population or the addition of athletics offerings. Such a process showed students how an influx in editorial contributions might signal significant moments in their subject's history. Furthermore, using a familiar example provided students with a roadmap to follow for conducting their own database research.

A second issue I encountered when teaching this assignment was site vandalism, meaning instances in which Wikipedia articles were purposefully filled with misleading and/or derogatory edits. While it is important to acknowledge that site vandalism does occur, I do not encourage students to engage in sustained analysis of such vandalism for two reasons. First, given the often vulgar nature of such material, further engagement with such writing would detract from students' capacities to rhetorically analyze purposeful and productive editorial interventions. In other words, a central learning outcome for this project was to evaluate how editorial contributions made to an article can model appropriate editing practices for students. Hence, examining site vandalism can limit students' ability to mimic and practice appropriate editorial interventions. Second, discussing vulgar article edits in classroom settings may be uncomfort-

able or unsettling for other students, especially when articles have been vandalized with sexist, xenophobic, and/or homophobic content. While it is important to understand the ways in which discriminatory remarks in online settings may incite real-world violence, I wanted to create a learning experience wherein students could focus their attention on the nuances and intricacies of key grammatical or stylistic decisions without the risk of exposing them to hate speech.

Conclusion

Using Wikipedia to re-approach grammar and style concepts for the purpose of modeling real-world collaborative editorial practices can professionalize English students by helping them cultivate critical digital literacy skills. In undertaking the Collaborative Editing Project, students not only learned how to recognize and rationalize grammatical or stylistic editorial contributions but also intervened in these collaborative practices in such a way that had real-world impact. This, in turn, encouraged students to recognize the cultural and rhetorical dimensions underlying collective language practices. To conclude, designing writing projects around Wikipedia can encourage students to view grammar principles as a collection of stylistic strategies that actively respond to their surrounding cultural contexts (as opposed to seeing grammar as a set of decontextualized rules) while also highlighting the unique role of editors in the creation and circulation of collaborative, multiauthored texts.

ASSIGNMENT

Collaborative Editing Project: Working with Wikipedia

Task

Throughout this semester, we have explored traditional grammar concepts and considered their practical application to academic, professional, and everyday language. Moreover, we have examined connections between grammar conventions and editorial practices, weighing the impact of both following and breaking specific grammar "rules." Our first two major assignments asked you to summarize various points of grammar and identify helpful techniques for teaching and learning grammar concepts. Meanwhile, our third major assignment asked you to apply these grammar concepts to editing strategies found in local periodicals. This final assignment encourages you to refine both the grammatical and editorial skills we have been cultivating throughout the semester as you analyze a Wikipedia page of your choosing. Thus, this assignment asks you to expand and apply your repertoire of grammar and editing techniques to account for a digital, collaborative-written document.

The Wikipedia article you choose to analyze should be a minimum of 7,000 words and have multiple editorial contributions. You will work in editorial teams of four, divide team members into copyeditors and managing editors, and submit a co-written editorial memorandum paper with three sections (see below). Managing editors will focus on the history of editorial contributions and intertextual connections within your Wikipedia article. Copyeditors will emphasize grammar and style-related content. You will present your editorial analysis to the class in a 30-minute presentation as well as lead a 20-minute Question and Answer session.

Your paper and presentation should include the following three sections

Please note: Each group member should present one of these sections. Groups of three will co-present the editorial contribution section; groups of four can have a single group member present the editorial contribution section.

Section I—History

After choosing your Wikipedia page, pay attention to specific patterns/trends in editorial contributions, modifications, or removal of contributions by using the page's "view history" function.

- Grammar-focused questions to consider: Which grammatical choices derive the most amount of attention (i.e. preferences for pronoun usage, active vs. passive voice, verb tense, sentence structure, or point of view)? Are there modifications to proper nouns (i.e. names and titles)? How do contributors work with modifiers? In other words, are there editorial contributions surrounding the addition or subtraction of adjectives and adverbs? Does the page make use of adjectival or adverbial phrases? Do contributions emphasize mechanical concerns surrounding punctuation?
- Content-focused questions to consider: When was the article created? Were there consistent contributions over a long period of time or did contributions to this page come in fluxes and flows? Was there an influx of contributions to a particular section? Were there new headings/subheadings that cropped up and when? Were there old subheadings that were removed?

Write a detailed observation of 3-4 editorial patterns/trends your group noticed. Then, analyze how/why these patterns/trends might exist. How might these trends overlap with a given historical moment, popular trend, or event? For example, let's say you're analyzing a Wikipedia page dedicated to a superhero in the Marvel series. Was there an influx in the number of contributions to the page before or after the release of a movie adaptation? Do these patterns/trends dovetail to critical acclaim or concerns?

Section II—Structure/Organization

After offering a detailed observation and analysis of the page's editorial history, your group should observe the page's structure. In describing the page's layout, please consider the following questions:

- How is information organized on the page, chronologically or based on specific findings/trends?
- What are the titles of headings and subheadings? Are some headings or subheadings more successful than others? Why or why not?
- Pay attention the page's diction (word choice) and syntax (word sequences). Is this diction and syntax proprietary or professional? Is the diction/syntax informal?
- Does the page rely on images? How do these images add to or detract from the content of the page? What "story" do the images provide about the content?

After noting these observations, then analyze the impact/effect of such structural choices. Does the structure privilege some content over others? Is there content that is "buried"? If so, why might this be the case? How did the diction and syntax used throughout the page convey

information (formally or informally)? How did the overall structure/layout influence the ways in which you read/navigated the page?

Section III—Intertextual Communication

The third section of your paper and presentation should cover the page's intertextual communication. By "intertextual communication," I mean the page's use of hyperlinks and outside sources/references. In describing the page's intertextual communication, please consider the following questions:

- How does the page "communicate" with other Wikipedia pages? Does the Wikipedia page link to other Wikipedia pages? If so, what type of content is featured in these pages? Does the page link to outside sources (i.e. content beyond Wikipedia)?
- How much reference material is included on the page? Does the page use primary or secondary research to support claims?
- What is the overall ration between hyperlinks and references?

After observing the page's intertextual communication, please analyze the impact/effect of including specific hyperlinks and references. That is, click through the various hyperlinks featured on the page, and narrate how these hyperlinks impacted/effected how you read/received the information. Did the hyperlinks take you down a "rabbit hole," so to speak, where you lost a sense of your original thread? Did the hyperlinks accent/compliment your reading of specific content? Were you able to access the references cited on the page? Did you find the references helpful in supporting key claims?

Making a Contribution

After observing/analyzing the above criteria, write a small contribution to this article based on the patterns/trends you noticed and revise a section or offer an alternative structure/organizational method. You may make an actual contribution to Wikipedia or propose a contribution you would make to the article. Regardless, you must identify why such revisions are appropriate. How do these edits enhance how the article's content is read, received, and/or archived?

Evaluation

A successful paper and presentation will include the following:

- The editorial team offers detailed observations of the Wikipedia article. These observations should follow the criteria outlined in the above three sections.
- The editorial team supports their observations with specific textual examples/quotations. In other words, don't just tell me the page incorporates specific patterns/trends. Rather, show me where and how these trends operate on the page. Hint: Review the "Integrating Quotations" video on "modules" to familiarize yourself with proper quoting/paraphrasing strategies.
- The editorial team thoroughly analyzes the impact of the patterns/trends they observe, explaining how these patterns/trends shape their individual reading process.
- The editorial team discusses a specific contribution they would make to the article. These contributions could be editing a previous post, adding new content, identifying an additional section to the page, etc. The writers should also deliberate how these new contributions might enhance the material on the page.

- The editorial team presents their work in a 30-minute presentation. Each member of the editorial team (copy editors and managing editors) should participate in the presentation.
- The editorial team will also submit a co-written editorial memorandum, which will serve as the basis of the presentation. The editorial memorandum should be appropriately formatted and written in a style that does not detract from the clarity/meaning of the ideas being presented. This means that the editorial memorandum is written in 12-point font with a formal heading noting the writer's name, professor's name (including title), date, and assignment.

Purpose/Rationale

The purpose of this assignment is to practice digital editing skills and strategies. Students will not only learn how to analyze a digital text by paying attention to the editing history but also make specific editorial interventions that shape the content, structure/layout, and intertextual communication of a digital space.

[**Editor note:** The course schedule that appears with this assignment is included as a supplement to this article (see Supplementary Materials).]

Supplementary Material

For supplementary material accompanying this paper, including a PDF facsimile of the assignment description formatted as the author(s) presented it to students, please visit https://doi.org/10.31719/pjaw.v7i2.127.

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Inclusive Science Writing about Socioscientific Issues for Diverse Audiences

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Abstract

In this paper, we present a science writing assignment in which students focus on targeting specific audiences when writing about a socioscientific issue as well as participate in a peer review process. This assignment helps students consider inclusive science communication in their writing, focusing on engaging unique audiences about the intersections of science and social justice. Students are introduced to evidence-based tools for formulating communication for unique audiences as well as for assessment of writing quality. This assignment is novel in that it helps students think about inclusion issues in STEM, science writing, and peer review, all of which are key disciplinary skills that are not always included in STEM courses. While this assignment was piloted in chemistry and environmental engineering courses, this assignment could easily be modified for other disciplines.

In this assignment, students in an upper-division writing course in the chemistry curriculum were asked to identify a socioscientific issue related to climate change and the chemistry they have learned about so far in their major and consider how to communicate about that issue with two different, specific audiences. Similarly, students in an upper-division environmental engineering course focused on social justice were asked to identify an environmental justice issue that they have learned about so far in their major and consider how to communicate about that issue with two different, specific audiences. Utilizing the COMPASS Message Box ("COMPASS: The Message Box Workbook," n.d.), students were directed to outline and write two one-paragraph assignments, one targeted at each audience. Students were encouraged to think about values of each audience, why they do or should care about the issue, how the audiences could be involved in solving the issue, or how the audience might benefit from a proposed solution to the issue. Students then utilized a modified version of the Universal Science Writing Rubric (USWR) (Pisano et al., 2021) to perform a peer review of each other's writing before completing final drafts of their paragraphs in response to this peer feedback.

The COMPASS Message Box was originally designed by the COMPASS science communication organization as a tool for researchers to talk about their research with diverse public audiences and help the audience understand why it is relevant ("COMPASS: The Message Box Workbook," n.d.). COMPASS provides a downloadable version of the Message Box on its website (https://www.compassscicomm.org/leadership-development/the-message-box/). The Message Box involves identifying an audience, describing the specific problem the researcher is addressing related to an issue, identifying the "so what?" or importance of the work, identifying potential solutions to the problem, and identifying who benefits from those solutions. Each of these categories includes prompting questions for the scientist to consider as they build their message.

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This tool can be utilized for STEM students to outline their communication via talking or writing about any scientific issue, not necessarily just something that is the topic of their research. The act of identifying a specific audience (e.g., schoolteachers and not just "the public") and a specific component of a larger problem (e.g., recycling in schools and not just "environmentally friendly practices") can help students to target specific audiences clearly instead of vaguely. Identifying how that audience can be part of the solution—versus just handing down a scientific solution—helps make the Message Box have a more inclusive science communication focus versus a unidirectional presentation of facts. When we presented the Message Box to students, we encouraged them to use it as a tool to frame a persuasive argument (Jiménez-Aleixandre & Erduran, 2007) to the unique audiences, considering how those audiences could be involved in solutions to socioscientific issues and not just informed about the issues.

Once students wrote paragraphs using the Message Box as a guiding outline, we directed them to peer review each other's writing using the USWR. The USWR was designed as a tool to assess science writing in diverse genres. This rubric focuses on science content, interpretation of the science content, targeting the audience, organization, and writing quality. These diverse rhetorical concerns are all important for clear science writing to achieve its purpose. This rubric can be used for instructor grading, peer review, programmatic assessment, and more (Pisano et al., 2021). In our second iteration of this assignment, we added some more specific questions to guide student peer review based on this specific assignment. These questions included a focus on the accessibility of the language and verbiage for the specific audience, consideration of different audiences' perspectives about the socioscientific issue, and attention to the potential for audience involvement in solving the issue.

The goals of this assignment were two-fold. First, we aimed to help students think about science writing from an inclusive science communication perspective, considering the perspectives of diverse audiences in their writing. The growing inclusive science communication movement encourages a transition away from the model of science communication as one-directional communication from scientists to an ignorant, monolithic public and towards the model of science communication as a collaboration between scientists and people of a variety of diverse perspectives within a community (Canfield et al., 2020). These diverse perspectives can include diversity of audiences in terms of identities they hold as well as diversity in terms of disciplinary expertise they bring to an issue (Vickery et al., 2023). There are multiple considerations of inclusive science communication, such as reflexivity, intentionality, and reciprocity, that can be manifest in different spheres of influence, such as at the interpersonal level or the policy level (Callwood et al., 2022). By encouraging students to engage unique audiences in their writing about an issue and consider how that audience could be involved in a solution to the issue, rather than simply explain the issue to a passive audience, we were aiming to promote a more inclusive approach to science communication. Second, we aimed to give students practice in the critical skill of peer review that they would continue to perform throughout the course. Other assignments have focused on the peer review process for college students (Samarasekara et al., 2020), and we combined this critical skill with inclusive science writing.

Context for the assignment

We have piloted this assignment in two different contexts. First, we piloted the assignment in Week 2 of a 300-level chemistry course focused on science writing. This course also fulfills the university's core (general education) curriculum as well as guaranteed transfer pathways credits in the state. In particular, this assignment set students up for additional writing and peer review/editing assignments later in the course. We also piloted this assignment in a 400-level environmental engineering courses focused on environmental justice. This assignment set

students up for more extended writing assignments about socioscientific issues later in the course. By piloting this inclusive science writing assignment in both a science-writing-focused STEM course and an inclusive science-focused STEM course, we show its versatility.

Rationale for the assignment

Too often, science communication training for STEM students fails to integrate issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (Canfield & Menezes, 2020). In analysis of published science communication training for undergraduate students, we noted that these trainings usually focus on either disciplinary STEM communication skills like writing or poster presentations for fellow scientists or focus on simply removing jargon in order to reach the public (Vickery et al., 2023). Many of these trainings do not guide students to consider the nuances involved in communication in a more inclusive way that invites public participation in the process of science (Akin, 2017; Baram-Tsabari & Lewenstein, 2017); neither do they consider the need for diverse perspectives to solve complex scientific issues. Especially in light of COVID, climate change, and other issues at the intersection of science and society, scientists are increasingly called to co-create solutions with people of various backgrounds (Nogueira et al., 2021) and to consider the social justice ramifications of these socioscientific issues.

In response to these needs, some of the authors (NK and SA) have been working to integrate inclusive science communication training into STEM courses across our university campus. These trainings include connecting social justice and scientific issues as well as inclusive perspectives on disciplinary STEM skills like science writing, reading the scientific literature, and giving oral presentations. The assignment described here was created in that context.

Related to the discipline of science writing, the recently published USWR was designed to assess any genre of science writing, from lab reports to review articles to news reports, regardless of audience (Pisano et al., 2021). This rubric allows assessment of science writing skills across different STEM writing assignments. Initially, the rubric was evaluated for use in grading; here we test its utility for peer review within a classroom. Other flexible, cross-genre rubrics have been developed to encompass quality science writing (Grady et al., 2022; Harrington et al., 2021). However, there are some critiques that such flexible or universal rubrics are too generic to be useful (Anson et al., 2012). To address this concern, in our second iteration of this assignment we provided more assignment-specific questions for students to consider in the "Targeting the audience" portion of the USWR. Since this assignment was particularly focused on utilizing the Message Box to frame two unique messages to two unique audiences, we instructed students to particularly pay attention to this portion of the rubric and guide their scoring with the assignment-specific questions.

Experiences of teaching the assignment

Two of the authors (NK and SA) taught the assignment as guest speakers in the courses. Although the assignment could have been delivered by the instructor of the course, in our experience, it was useful for outside experts in science communication to provide a short introduction about the concept of inclusive science communication. Our introductory lecture emphasized the importance of moving away from a deficit-based approach to scientific communication, in which scientists view the public as a non-informed monolith. Instead, students were encouraged to adopt an inclusive approach, addressing the unique needs, values, interests, and experiences of diverse audiences as well as listening to and learning from these audiences (Canfield et al., 2020). We provided a description of the different considerations of inclusive science communication, such as reflexivity, intentionality, and reciprocity, and how these can be manifest at different

spheres of influence, such as at the interpersonal level or the policy level (Callwood et al., 2022). This gave the students ideas of various considerations they could address in their writing. In the environmental engineering course, this assignment was in the context of other teaching on social justice throughout the semester.

We then had a class discussion about the COMPASS Message Box ("COMPASS: The Message Box Workbook," n.d.) and helped students brainstorm ideas for their writing before deploying them to begin the writing assignment. The teaching session took about 30 minutes, allowing 20 minutes for student brainstorming and class discussion about the writing assignment before instructing the students to finish their draft paragraphs as homework. Students were assigned to use the Universal Science Writing Rubric (Pisano et al., 2021) for the peer review process and final draft writing via online asynchronous work. We discussed this rubric with the students before they began their writing assignments.

Overall, we provided about 30 minutes of teaching and discussion as described. Students then had 15 minutes to begin their outlines and paragraphs during class. We closed the 50-minute class sessions with five minutes of students sharing their messages and how they talked about a social justice issue differently to the two different audiences.

Our perspective of students' experiences of the assignment

Students were asked to select a topic related to climate change, environmental justice, or another socioscientific issue of their choice. No two students selected the same topic, reflecting their diversity of interests. The diversity of the students' passions and personal experiences was evident in many of the essays. Not only were the topics chosen by the students varied, but so were the audiences to which the students aimed their writings. Specifically, the students chose precise and specific target audiences that were extremely relevant to the socioscientific issue they chose, indicating that the students understood who is affected by the issues they chose. In the chemistry course, students chose topics such as fertilizer usage (communicating to aquatic wildlife protection agencies and farmers); antibiotic resistance (communicating to soap manufacturers and the CDC); electronic waste recycling (communicating to electronics consumers and E-waste companies); and the impact of ADHD on studying (communicating to students diagnosed with ADHD and to a university student disability department). In the environmental engineering course, students discussed topics about clean water and water access rights both in the United States and in other countries, demonstrating their global considerations of socioscientific issues.

Successful outcomes of the assignment

This assignment was generally successful in achieving our goals of helping students think about inclusivity in science writing as well as practice peer review skills. One of the authors (AP) assessed the students' work in the chemistry course using the USWR. Overall, we noted relative consistency between scores awarded by AP, a researcher trained in using the rubric, and the students' scoring, suggesting that even at this novice level, the students are demonstrating some skills in peer review and accurate assessment of science writing quality.

After peer review, students edited their draft versions to create a final version. Although students only used the rubric to peer review and score their draft versions, author AP also scored the final versions. Of the eight final versions, six had higher scores for both final versions compared to the drafts, and two received the same scores for both versions. Overall, the increased scores between the drafts and the final versions indicated that the students learned how to respond to peer review and improve their scientific writing, which is another valuable

disciplinary skill.

After analysis, the scores from both AP and the students indicated that the students struggle to target specific audiences in their writing and to write uniquely to these different audiences. The scores awarded in the "targeting audience" category tended to be lower than those in other rubric categories. Although students struggled to write to unique audiences, they could recognize when the writing was not accurate for the audience. Even though our instruction in the classroom and the prompts in the Message Box encouraged targeting specific audiences, students need further practice in executing these skills. Improvement in the students' ability to target their writing to different audiences could be reinforced through future iterations of training and practice. Thus, this assignment was successful in highlighting the status of student skills in targeting specific, unique audiences via science writing. The assignment provided some practice in this skill, but this assignment alone is not sufficient to totally teach this key skill.

Limitations of the assignment

The assignment is limited in that students are only writing one paragraph to each audience. If more time were allotted for the assignment within the semester, students could practice writing longer pieces to diverse audiences. The goal of the assignment was to focus on considering the perspectives of diverse groups and to practice outlining messages for them. As a modification of this assignment, students could easily expand these messages into longer writing pieces. In both the chemistry and environmental engineering courses, students utilized the skills developed in this initial assignment in longer writing pieces, as described below.

Future plans for the assignment

Throughout the semester in the chemistry writing course, author NL used the USWR for peer review on other assignments, including for standard lab report assignments and for a writing assignment aimed at a broad scientific audience. Throughout the semester in the environmental engineering course, students utilized the tenets of inclusive science communication and outlining with the Message Box in longer writing assignments about environmental justice issues.

Author NK is creating a scaffolded series of inclusive science communication training courses for STEM students. This assignment of inclusive science writing, intended to shape the students' ability to write to different audiences, will be one of these trainings. We anticipate that students who receive prior training in inclusive science communication may be better equipped to target specific audiences in this assignment.

Use for other faculty

This multifaceted assignment—which involves considering inclusivity and social justice in science writing, targeting unique audiences, performing and responding to peer review, and utilizing published tools like the COMPASS Message Box and the Universal Science Writing Rubric—can be implemented in a diversity of courses. This could be implemented in content-heavy lecture courses, giving students a chance to not only learn to write but also write to learn the content (Balgopal et al., 2018). This could be implemented in laboratory courses, giving students a chance to discuss results from their experiments with different audiences. This could also be implemented, as we have done, in courses specifically focused on science writing or socioscientific issues. The beauty of this assignment is that it can be adapted to any STEM discipline. Students can be asked to write about any socioscientific issues relevant to that discipline. While we used climate change as a starting point in the chemistry course and environmental justice as

a starting point in the environmental engineering course, a socioscientific issue relevant to any STEM discipline could be substituted. Other topics like mental health, personalized medicine, mathematical modeling of disease outbreaks, infrastructure issues, or vaccine hesitancy could be integrated into other STEM courses.

It is important to address the teaching portion—explaining inclusive science communication, the Message Box, and the USWR or other peer-review tool—before assigning students the writing portion. However, this can be done within one class period. This teaching provides students the needed guidance on social justice and inclusion in science writing as well as tools for outlining and assessing the quality of their messaging to two unique audiences in order to be successful on the assignment.

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ASSIGNMENT

Producing and Peer Reviewing Inclusive Science Writing about Socioscientific Issues

Learning objectives:

After this assignment, students will be able to:

1. Frame unique messages to two distinct audiences, taking into account their perspectives
2. Write about the intersection of science and social justice issues
3. Provide feedback on the quality of peer's writing
4. Improve their writing in response to peer feedback

Science communication can take many forms, from a deficit-based approach that speaks to the public as a non-informed monolith to a more inclusive approach that considers the perspectives of diverse audiences. Science writing is an important disciplinary STEM skill, but it often fails to be inclusive of diverse audiences, both in terms of diversity of identity as well as diversity of expertise. The goal of this assignment is to help you develop skills in producing inclusive science writing as well as assessing the quality of that writing via peer review.

In this assignment, you will consider a socioscientific issue that relates to what you have learned in your courses this year. Then, you will write about this topic via two short (~1 paragraph) essays to two different, unique audiences.

To outline your paragraph, utilize the COMPASS Message Box (*COMPASS: The Message Box Workbook*, n.d.). The Message Box helps you talk about an issue to a specific audience and consider why they care about the problem, how they can be involved in a solution, or how they will benefit from the solution. Think about the social justice ramifications of the socioscientific issue you are writing about and how diverse audiences may consider the issue from different angles.

After you write your paragraphs, you will be assigned a peer's writing to assess. You will utilize the Universal Science Writing Rubric (Pisano et al., 2021) for your peer review. This rubric

helps you focus on diverse rhetorical concerns – science content, interpretation of science content, targeting the audience, organization, and writing quality – so that you are not only focusing on surface features like grammar. Both the process of critically analyzing a peer's writing as well as receiving feedback from a peer are important aspects of the scientific writing process.

Since targeting two unique audiences is a key focus of this assignment, utilize these questions to guide your rating of the targeting construct:

1. Did they utilize language that will be understandable by the specific audience?
2. Did they consider the perspectives of why this audience cares about the issue?
3. Did they consider the ways in which this audience can be involved in a solution, or barriers to their involvement in a solution?

Once you receive this peer review feedback, you will edit your paragraphs to produce final drafts.

Supplementary Material

For supplementary material accompanying this paper, including a PDF facsimile of the assignment description formatted as the author(s) presented it to students, please visit https://doi.org/10.31719/pjaw.v7i2.156.

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Using Creative Artifacts to Teach Scientific Communication to Psychology Students

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Abstract

The pandemic of 2020 forced many instructors to reevaluate their teaching and assessment practices. Assignments and assessments designed for face-to-face classes were quickly adapted to go online. Faculty-to-student relationships built through classroom interactions were transformed by the mediation of online platforms. At the time, the co-authors of this article were teaching different psychology courses at different institutions. However, we had similar concerns about the validity of our assessments in an unmonitored online environment and about maintaining personal connections with our students. We used the summer of 2020 to reimagine how our courses could be adapted to this new environment while satisfying specific learning goals, including demonstrating the ability to apply content knowledge and communicating scientific information through writing. To meet these challenges, we implemented a variation on authentic assessments. We replaced our exams with an assignment where students created artifacts of various forms to demonstrate what they had learned and how it connected to their future careers, personal interests, or real-world problems. They also had to include a written description for a non-expert audience to demonstrate their ability to explain their artifacts. This article presents our rationale, requirements, assignments, grading rubrics, student feedback, and reflections on our experiences.

The pandemic of 2020 created a variety of disruptions in our usual ways of teaching and assessing students. For those accustomed to teaching face-to-face, the sudden shift to online learning disrupted how we connected with our students, their engagement with the coursework, and their sense of belonging to a learning community (Marler et al., 2021; Reid et al., 2022; Shin & Hickey, 2021; Tulaskar & Turunen, 2022). The authors of this article also recognized that the assignments and exams we had carefully designed for controlled, monitored classrooms were poorly suited for an unmonitored online learning environment. Therefore, we worked together to find a new way to assess our students, one that might not only be better suited to the online environment but could also be used in a traditional setting and help address a variety of concerns that we already had about placing so much weight on exams.

Background

At the start of the pandemic (spring 2020), we were acquaintances in an online community of behavioral neuroscience and psychology instructors. The pandemic had disrupted our usual methods of assessing students—primarily through exams and formal papers—so much that it felt like an opportunity to be bold and try something new. That summer, we worked together to revise and revitalize our courses, including exploring new ways to conduct assessments.

Even though we were excited to explore alternative assessment methods, we still had guidelines to follow. Specifically, we both needed to ensure that our course objectives aligned with the American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines for the undergraduate psychology major (2.0) (American Psychological Association, 2013). These guidelines include various topics, such

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as content knowledge, critical thinking, ethics, communication, and professional development. Additionally, the shift to online and remote teaching had weakened the personal connections we were accustomed to forming with and among our students. Therefore, we wanted assessments that addressed the course requirements (and APA standards) and fostered feelings of inclusion and engagement.

Conrad and Openo (2018) argue that incorporating students' personal and career interests into their assignments and assessments could help us accomplish our goals. They recommend encouraging students to incorporate their authentic selves into their work and sharing it with their classmates to improve engagement and feelings of connection and community. Similarly, Wang (2021) demonstrated that giving students the freedom to take a creative role in developing their assessments deepens their learning and improves engagement and enjoyment.

The conditions of rapidly shifting to remote learning also appeared to be increasing inequities among the students in our classrooms, especially when it came to taking exams. During emergency remote learning, some students had limited access to the internet, additional caregiver and family responsibilities, or could not find a quiet place to do their work (Shin & Hickey, 2021). However, many instructors feel that traditional assessment methods may create inequities even under the best conditions (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Feldman, 2018; Tobin & Behling, 2018; Wiggins, 1990). Students taking the exam in a second language or with undocumented or untreated learning disabilities may struggle reading the questions (Feldman, 2018; Tobin & Behling, 2018). Others may suffer from test anxiety and perform poorly on traditional exams due to increased cognitive load (Cassady & Johnson, 2002; Cohen & Khalaila, 2014; Tobin & Behling, 2018).

Additionally, Dr. Skogsberg had started to suspect that her exams were more of a measure of the student's test-taking skills than their actual comprehension and application of the course content. Her anecdotal evidence for this was that the students who typically asked the most interesting and challenging questions in class often performed near the mean on the assessments, suggesting they understood the material in a way that was not captured on the exams. Therefore, we wanted a way to assess our students without in-person or time-limited exams. This led us to explore the Principles of Universal Design for Learning to find alternative ways to assess our students that did not rely entirely on exams (Burgstahler, 2020; Tobin & Behling, 2018).

Although we are focusing primarily on writing in this article, we wanted to avoid limiting our students to a specific format for the overall project. Therefore, we used the term "Artifacts" to describe the assessments. While this term may be familiar to those in writing studies, it is rarely used in STEM fields. In fact, in science, the term typically means something that is introduced into the study that unintentionally biases the outcome. However, we applied the term in a more traditional sense, using the Merriam-Webster definition of "a simple object showing human workmanship…" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Because the term is uncommon in our field, we felt it encouraged students to think about attempting things beyond their typical assignments in a science course. It also allowed us, as instructors, to be more open-minded about the materials we would accept. For example, in an introduction to psychology course, a student majoring in economics may write a paper using material from the chapter on emotions to examine economic principles. An artist could create a model of the brain using their preferred medium, or a computer scientist could write code demonstrating a simple neural network.

Rationale

To create our new assessments, we applied the principles of backward design (Reynolds & Kearns, 2017; Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). As noted earlier, we needed to ensure that our assessments addressed the APA guidelines, which include five learning goals (LG): 1) Knowledge base in

psychology, 2) Scientific Inquiry and Critical Thinking, 3) Ethical and Social Responsibility in a Diverse World, 4) Communication, and 5) Professional Development (American Psychological Association, 2013). The activities we describe here can address all these learning goals, but the examples we will share focus primarily on demonstrating knowledge of psychology (LG 1), scientific inquiry and critical thinking (LG 2), communication (LG 4), and professional development (LG 5). Additionally, the communication goal includes the objective "demonstrate effective writing for different purposes" (LG 4.1), and the professional development goal includes "apply psychological content and skills to career goals" (LG 5.1).

The term "authentic assessments" is typically applied to assignments that align with the student's interests and prepare them for work they will do in their professional lives or address a real-world problem (Conrad & Openo, 2018; Mueller, 2005; Wiggins, 1990; Zilvinskis, 2015). After graduation, there are few situations where our students will be taking monitored exams, writing traditional research papers, or completing activities where the correct answer is already known. Therefore, we wanted assessments that reflected their interests or career trajectories. For example, since Dr. Skogsberg's Introduction to Psychology course satisfies a general education requirement, most of her students were majoring in other fields, such as biochemistry, computer science, economics, history, international studies, mathematics, and theater. Their career goals included becoming business leaders, doctors, programmers, lawyers, politicians, artists, and educators. Therefore, the students were encouraged to create artifacts that reflected their interests and potential career goals. Their artifacts included creative writing, visual media, models, computer programs, music, and in some cases, traditional research papers or research proposals.

Since we are not poets, computer scientists, or artists, we assessed our students on two primary factors. The first was the ability to *accurately* interpret and apply terms and concepts from the course (APA LG 1, 2, and 5). Psychology is a field many people think they understand until they are evaluated on their ability to apply the concepts. Because of this, many non-psychologists use terms that have specific meanings in psychology in ways that misrepresent their true meaning. Perpetuating misconceptions in everyday conversations, books, and films can harm those with psychological disorders and those who care for them. Therefore, correctly explaining and providing examples of psychology terms and concepts is essential to being a psychology student.

The second primary assessment factor was effectively explaining the artifact to a non-expert audience in a written format (APA LG 4 and 5). Science students often use scientific terms and jargon, assuming that their audience will understand. They also seem to believe that using the field's jargon makes them sound more knowledgeable. However, research shows that scientific jargon confuses and alienates non-expert readers and can make them less likely to believe what they are reading (Oreskes, 2021; Woolston, 2020). Additionally, Boyd and colleagues (2020) point out that writing for a non-expert audience is an important skill many non-science students lack. These writing issues also apply to students who are pursuing non-science fields. Artists, business leaders, economists, doctors, lawyers, programmers, and politicians all need to be able to communicate with others who do not share their expertise. Therefore, this writing assignment requires perspective-taking while also revealing a great deal about what the student does and does not accurately understand about the content.

Audience

We implemented these alternative assignments at two distinctly different institutions. Dr. Skogsberg taught an Introduction to Psychology course at a small liberal arts college. The course is required for psychology majors and behavioral neuroscience majors and satisfies a

general education requirement for non-majors. Before the pandemic, the students were assessed primarily on exams and lab activities, with one writing assignment (analysis of two empirical papers) spread out throughout the semester. In the fall of 2020, the labs remained, the analysis paper was dropped, open-book online quizzes replaced the exams, and the artifacts became the primary grade-determining component.

Dr. Rice was at a mid-sized public university, where she taught an upper-level course on Learning. Specifically, this course focused on the fundamental mechanisms of learning new behaviors. The Learning course is an elective for psychology students and a requirement for neuroscience students. Before the pandemic, the students were assessed primarily on exams, lab activities, and a literature review. In the fall of 2020, the lab experiences and lab reports remained. However, the artifacts comprised 60% of the final grade. Students taking Learning are typically juniors who have previously taken both Introduction to Psychology and Psychological Science, the latter covering basic research methods and scientific writing using APA format. The Learning course also meets the requirements for being a high-impact practice (HIP) course at Dr. Rice's institution. High-impact practice courses go through a review to earn this designation and require that students learn not only content but also a skill. The HIP for this course was in undergraduate research.

Assignment

Even though we were teaching different courses to students from different populations, the assessments were administered similarly. Instead of taking an exam or writing a traditional term paper over a specific content unit, our students created artifacts with a written explanation to demonstrate their proficiency in understanding and applying the material. Each explanation needed to include at least five key concepts from the unit.

In alignment with the APA guidelines, the learning goals for both courses included demonstrating knowledge of key concepts in psychology (APA LG 1), connecting concepts to real-world problems or applications (APA LG 2, 4 and 5), and writing effectively for different purposes (APA LG 4 and 5) which includes correctly applying APA formatting (APA LG 4.1d). These learning goals were outlined in our rubrics, which listed the requirements to ensure that all submissions had similar levels of rigor. These included correctly defining and applying a specific number of terms per chapter, page, or time length (depending on the medium), correctly using in-text citations, and a complete reference list using APA format. Example rubrics and instructions can be found in the online supplementary materials to this article.

The number of terms per chapter were based on the number of questions we typically ask on an exam. For Dr. Skogsberg's class, this was five terms per chapter. Since exam questions typically incorporate multiple concepts, we required our students to use the terms in an example or explain them in context. We recognize that this approach may allow some students to explore topics in depth while ignoring others, but we were willing to make this trade-off.

To determine page and time length requirements, we talked with colleagues specializing in fields such as poetry, film, photography, painting, pottery, theatre, and computer science. We asked for their input on what would be equivalent to a three- to five-page essay. Admittedly, this was not scientifically derived but simply their best guess.

Students were also required to use correct in-text citations, provide a complete reference list, and properly cite their sources in the artifacts. Even though not all of our students will be going into a field where they will use APA format, learning to give credit where credit is due was important. We chose the APA format instead of other citation methods because learning to adapt and recognize different citation formats is likely something they will need to do in other courses or future careers (e.g., doctors, lawyers, and politicians). Applying a new citation

format also teaches students to pay attention to details. One of the elements that students often need help with is recognizing the subtle differences between citation formats. While it is important to provide a citation, recognizing the slight differences and learning to adapt to new requirements can be a valuable lesson in paying attention to details and following instructions. These skills are transferable to a broad range of life and career goals.

The students developed their artifact ideas through an iterative process that started with a proposal submitted for the approval of the instructor, then refined through peer feedback sessions. The proposal consisted of a single paragraph explaining what topic they wanted to cover and what format they planned to use. They were given free rein to decide what they wanted to do and encouraged to tap into their interests or career goals. Some students had ideas immediately, whereas others struggled to develop ideas independently. For those students who struggled, we asked probing questions about their career and life goals and what mediums they felt comfortable using. Some students opted for what they perceived as the safe route of writing a research paper. However, recognizing that they could do something they enjoyed was often a revelation. For example, one student in Dr. Skogsberg's class wrote and recorded a video of himself playing the guitar and singing a country-western song about how to deal with stress and anxiety. The key was helping the student recognize how they could apply the material in a way that made it personal, engaging, or enjoyable.

Once the students had a topic and an idea, they met with a small group of classmates to discuss their ideas. The purpose of these small group meetings was to help them flesh out and talk through their ideas. Each student was required to document asking questions about their peers' work and how they responded to the questions asked of them. Students would then reflect on these meetings, writing a short paragraph explaining whether the meetings had helped them refine and improve their ideas and how. They were also required to submit a proposed timeline outlining the steps they would need to take to complete their artifact before the deadline. Beyond this, we did not provide additional instruction or support for developing their artifacts. We wanted our students to take ownership of their artifacts by allowing them to explore a new approach to demonstrating their knowledge and the freedom to showcase skills or abilities they might otherwise not have the chance to do in our courses.

When the final artifact was completed, students submitted their materials to the learning management system or a virtual drop-box. Since the artifacts consisted of various formats, students were allowed to submit photos, videos, or audio recordings of their projects as long as they were in a universally readable format (e.g., JPG, PDF, or MP4). A synchronous class period was then used to hold an "Artifact Showcase" session where students were encouraged to share their artifacts with their classmates. Students were not required to show their artifacts, but participation was encouraged by having them vote for the top three artifacts, all of which received a small prize.

To ensure that all students could explain their artifacts to non-experts, each submission had to include a separate written explanation of the artifact in one to three pages. This written submission included an explanation of what the artifact does or what it was about, definitions of the terms used, and an explanation of how the terms were used in the artifact. Because reflecting on one's own learning has been shown to improve overall learning outcomes (Boyd et al., 2020; Norman et al., 2019), metacognition was also encouraged. In the field of psychology, metacognition specifically refers to consciously reflecting on one's thinking process in an attempt to regulate, control, or learn from it (American Psychological Association, n.d.; Norman et al., 2019). Specifically, in addition to explaining the artifact or how it worked, they connected it to their interests or a real-world problem and reflected on their development process. This latter part required them to examine what they learned about the topic and themselves while

creating the artifact.

In the Learning course, students had additional learning outcomes focusing on writing about their research. Consequently, students had to support their artifacts with evidence from empirical research (APA LG 2). Artifacts that were not traditional papers (e.g., infographics) included an annotated bibliography in APA format, explicitly highlighting the importance and support of the literature to their artifact. Lastly, regardless of artifact format, students were required to follow the APA formatting guidelines (APA LG 4 and 5). For example, if students chose a voice-over PowerPoint, they needed to follow APA citation and format when presenting their artifact and the annotated bibliography. This immersion of research with the artifacts allowed students to actively review the literature while demonstrating content knowledge (APA LG 1 and 2) and the ability to apply learned knowledge to a new topic (e.g., solve a real-world problem). Lastly, the assignment allowed students to practice skills previously learned in other courses (e.g., research methods) and refine communication (written and oral) skills in the psychological sciences (APA LG 2 and 4).

In Dr. Skogsberg's Introduction to Psychology course, the students' writing abilities ranged from having little or no experience with APA formatting to demonstrating strong scientific writing skills. To address these differences, she provided the students with the grading rubric (see Supplementary Materials) and examples from previous courses that she had modified to suit the current assignment. They were also given specific links to resources from the Purdue Owl website ("APA Style Introduction," n.d.) to review. In the Introduction to Psychology course, artifacts were graded on a "meets expectations" or "does not meet expectations, revise and resubmit" basis. Students were allowed a limited number of "tokens" to exchange for the opportunity to revise and resubmit an assignment based on feedback.

One of the prerequisites for Dr. Rice's Learning course is a research methods course (Psychological Science), where students learn the basics of scientific writing in APA format. In her Learning course, Dr. Rice emphasized refining and improving these skills. To ensure the students had multiple opportunities to practice their writing skills, they submitted drafts to their groups a week before they were due and conducted a peer review of their group members' artifacts using the rubrics provided. Following the peer review, students submitted their revised drafts for feedback from the professor before submitting the final artifact. The peer review and the draft were low-stakes assignments, allowing for some accountability while also providing ample opportunities for the students to clarify any confusion before submitting the final artifact. Rubrics were developed to be flexible so that they could be used for various artifact types but rigorous enough to cover a multiplicity of learning objectives.

Student Works

This section provides specific examples of student works, shared with their permission, to illustrate our assignment. In Dr. Skogsberg's Introduction to Psychology course, a math major initially struggled with connecting topics from psychology with her academic interests. To her, the two concepts seemed nearly mutually exclusive. However, an in-class discussion of how stereotype threat impacts women in math caught her interest. She started exploring the literature and found several empirical papers showing that women experience more math anxiety than men. Reflecting on her own experiences, she combined topics from the chapters on social psychology and research methods to propose an experiment to use jigsaw classrooms to help reduce ingroup/outgroup bias, stereotyping, and improve feelings of belonging and empathy. This example and several others (shared with the students' permission) can be found in the online supplementary materials to this article.

By completing this self-designed artifact, this student demonstrated a deep understanding of

content knowledge (APA LG 1), scientific thinking, and critical thinking (APA LG 2) in a personally meaningful way that is unlikely to be captured by an exam. As a STEM major, this assignment allowed her to write in a different format, with a different purpose than her usual work (APA LG 4), and apply psychology topics to her interests and career goals (APA LG 5).

A student in the Learning course created a fiction story while providing an annotated bibliography and vocabulary list (see student example: Strange Visitor in the linked file). This student's artifact was an original fiction story about an alien visitor that two children found. In this story, the student correctly demonstrated the learning concepts discussed in that unit (APA LG 1) and applied them to a new situation (APA LG 2 and 3). Specifically, the story revolves around two children who use learning concepts such as fatigue and habituation to understand the behavior of the alien creature. Notably, the student researched beyond the textbook to support the development of the methods described in the story and provided this information in an annotated bibliography along with the story (APA LG 4 and 5).

Student Feedback

End-of-term course evaluations administered by each institution provided anonymous feedback about the courses and, in some cases, specifically about the artifacts. Students in these courses were given open-ended questions as part of their course evaluations. These questions captured the students' perceptions of how the artifacts helped improve their research and writing skills. Overall, the students responded favorably.

Examples of student qualitative responses

> "...I now feel more confident about reading/comprehending Scientific Literature." (APA LG 1 and 2)
>
> "From all of the papers that we wrote, I became a better writer and I learned how to better cite sources. A big portion of our grade had to do with creatively writing, so I became better at applying content to real-world scenarios" (APA LG 2 and 4)
>
> "I believe I became better at writing through applying the material we learned to the real world/our goals. I also got better at pitching my ideas to peers and that helped to push me to be more creative." (APA LG 2 and 4)
>
> "The implementation of the artifacts helped us to make connections to all of these (e.g. social issues) and more (APA LG 1 and 3). I chose to make connections between the material and my career choice but I got to listen to other students who were making connections to their personal interests along with social issues." (APA LG 5)
>
> "The artifacts were very intimating and still are as we approach our last one, but I think they test our knowledge on a topic of interest just enough." (APA LG 1)

While most of the comments about the artifacts were positive, the last comment indicates that a few students struggled with the open-ended format of the assignment. Generating ideas and following through on them were greater challenges for the students than meeting the more prescriptive writing requirements. They reported feeling anxious about not having explicit instructions on what to do. We reassured them by pointing to the rubric and reminding them that as long as we could identify those specific elements, the format did not matter. We also reminded them that we were not grading them on their artistic or creative abilities. It did not matter if they used stick figures, watercolor paintings, sonnets, or rap lyrics. If the content was accurate and they could explain it, they would earn a passing grade.

Even with specific rubrics to follow, several students in both courses needed to revise their assignments to meet the writing requirements. The revision process allowed us to correct

misunderstandings and helped students recognize their mistakes. To help students correct their errors, we used the rubric to note what elements they had not completed satisfactorily. Sometimes, providing specific feedback or meeting with them was necessary to correct conceptual errors or subtle APA formatting issues. While this was time-consuming, this revision process proved to be useful in helping students correct their understandings and interpretations.

Student quantitative responses

In Learning, students provided feedback on several course-related statements on a scale ranging from one to four, with one being strongly dissatisfied and four being strongly satisfied. Students responded with an average score ranging from 3.5 to 3.63 (SD range 0.52-0.53) to the following statements: objectives of the class were clear, feedback allowed for understanding and improvement in the course, the class allowed for opportunities to develop critical thinking skills, the course allowed for opportunities to seek more knowledge about the course subject, and that they learned much that was valuable to them. Because the majority of points in this course were from the artifacts (60%), these results suggest that the artifacts played a significant role in these scores. Additionally, students in the Learning course had an opportunity to give feedback in open-ended questions. Before artifacts, 15% of students reported the workload was too much, while this dropped to 10% once the artifacts were implemented.

Instructor Responses

What started as a solution to an abrupt move to an online environment amid a pandemic ended with a product that addressed our course learning goals in flexible, inclusive, and engaging ways that we plan to continue using. While the students overwhelmingly reported enjoying creating the artifacts, we were also able to conduct assessments that aligned with the APA learning goals and tapped into their existing skills and interests, allowing them to engage with the material in memorable and meaningful ways.

As instructors, opening the assignments to various formats was initially intimidating. It can be difficult to interpret whether a student understands a topic like schizophrenia from their interpretive painting or stick figures. But written definitions and explanations of how the terms are applied are much easier to assess. We leaned into the rubrics, which allowed us to assess all submissions on concrete, specific writing requirements without having to be experts in the vast array of formats the students explored. Additionally, we felt the assignments were much more enjoyable to grade than typical exams or papers. We both preferred reading creative stories about aliens and watching funny videos about flossing to grading another term paper or exam. We also felt that we got to know our students better by learning about their other talents and interests.

When comparing previous course evaluations and the assessments themselves, it was evident that our students were more engaged and generally more enthusiastic about the course concepts. For example, in the Learning course, there were notable positive changes to the student evaluation responses. Specifically, before the pandemic, multiple assessments were used to assess content knowledge (e.g., exams and quizzes; APA LG 1) and critical thinking and scientific writing skills (e.g., essays and papers; APA LG 2,4). During the pandemic, Artifacts replaced these types of assignments and, in turn, appeared to reduce the students' workload. Additionally, there were fewer emails and requests for extensions compared to traditional assessments. The drafts and feedback given during the development of the artifacts allowed the instructors to intervene early, helping to accommodate and ease the variability among our students' prior content knowledge and writing skills. Additionally, the flexibility of the assignments allowed students to play to their strengths while demonstrating their understanding of course material

in a way that exams and assignments often miss.

Conclusion

While the pressures of the pandemic pushed us to experiment with creative artifacts as assessments, our experiences have convinced us to keep them even after we have returned to in-person instruction. The quality and creativity demonstrated by our students in these assignments exceeded our expectations and are illustrated bn the examples of the creative story about aliens, the math anxiety experiment, and the videos about flossing.

In retrospect, both instructors feel that the students' depth of understanding and ability to use the material to connect with their personal and real-world interests were more engaging and effective than demonstrating the ability to memorize and replicate content as is typically captured on traditional assessments. Additionally, the students informally reported that they appreciated the flexibility, felt more engaged, and enjoyed the opportunity to demonstrate their creativity on these assignments. Importantly, as evidenced by the student evaluations, the artifacts effectively increased student engagement and provided the instructors with practical ways to assess the students' ability to meet the course learning goals. Lastly, with the help of a good rubric, grading assignments was more enjoyable and less monotonous than grading traditional assessments. We learned more about our students' interests, talents, and lives outside of our classroom than we would have using traditional assessments. Further, our experiences show that artifacts, as authentic assessments, can be used in various courses, regardless of grade level or content. Therefore, while our campuses return to in-person instruction, we will continue using artifacts as authentic assessments in courses where appropriate.

ASSIGNMENT

Artifact instructions

- For each of the major topics covered in the course, you will submit an "Artifact" that demonstrates how the material covered in that section will help you achieve your career goals, life goals, or address a real-world problem. These artifacts must be unique and of your own design.
- **What constitutes an "Artifact?"**
  - **It can be anything** relevant to your career goals or a real-world problem that interests you.
  - **Written artifacts:** Must be 3-5 pages long (see syllabus for Writing Guidelines) include proper citations and references (APA format). They must also include sufficient detail for me to be able to assess the accuracy, depth, and breadth of your knowledge of psychology. For example:
    - An economist might write about using brain imaging to study "Neuro-economics" for the biology and behavior section. So long as you accurately explain the brain imaging methods used and what they can or cannot tell us, and it meets the writing requirements below, you will earn full credit.
    - A Spanish major may write about how being bilingual influences how we remember information, depending on what language we learned it in or are being asked to use to recall it. So long as you accurately represent how memories are acquired, stored, and retrieved, and it meets the writing

requirements below, you will earn full credit.

- **Non-written artifacts** must also include sufficient detail for me to be able to assess the accuracy, depth, and breadth of your knowledge of psychology. For example:
  - An artist may create a representation of the brain in your preferred medium. As long as the brain regions are accurately represented, and your written explanation meets the writing requirements below, you will earn full credit.
  - A computer scientist may write a program that models a basic neural network or a data visualization of the effects of repeated-spaced learning on memory. As long as it accurately represents what research tells us about this effect, and your written explanation meets the writing requirements below, you will earn full credit.
  - A dramatic arts major may create a podcast that explores how one of their favorite plays demonstrates the concept of implicit bias from social psychology. As long as the accurately reflects the research conducted on implicit bias, and your written explanation meets the writing requirements below, you will earn full credit.
- **All artifacts** must be presented in a way that a non-expert in your field can understand. Your job is to share your knowledge with non-experts (e.g., demonstrate your communication abilities).
- ***A note to the perfectionists:** Your artifacts do *not* have to be the apex of your work in your field. I realize an excellent drawing, computer program, or paper cannot be done in one week. Rather, your goal is to demonstrate your ability to apply what you are learning in psychology to one little corner of your field. As long as the Psychological Science, and writing is accurate, I'll be satisfied.

- **Writing Requirements:**
  - **All artifacts** (including written) must be accompanied by a separate 1-3 page document that includes:
    1. A written explanation of your artifact (what it is, what it does or what it is about). This may only need to be 1-2 paragraphs for written artifacts. For non-written artifacts, this part may need to be longer.
    2. Documentation of the 5 (or more) terms or concepts from the chapter. Include definitions and explanations of how they were used or applied in your artifact. This can be a glossary, but it must explain how each term was used in your artifact.
    3. An explanation about how knowing this information will help you achieve your career goal, life goal, or address a real-world problem.
    4. Your process for developing the artifact (the steps you took to develop and create it) and how much time (in hours) it took you to do it.
  - All writing assignments must meet the following requirements:
    1. Typed, double-spaced, using a 12-point font with 1" margins on all sides.
    2. Written using proper grammar, spelling, and APA formatting for citations and references.
    3. Clarity of writing, including whether or not it would be accessible to a reader unfamiliar with the topic.
- **Development Meetings:** You will sign up for times on Wednesdays and Thursdays to meet with me and 5 of your other classmates to discuss the development of your artifacts.

- I will expect you to be prepared with a rough draft or prototype of the artifact by the time of our interview.
- You'll have 5 min to demonstrate your artifact to your classmates, and then they or I will ask questions about it.

[**Editor note:** The grading rubric that appears with this assignment is included as a supplement to this article (see Supplementary Materials).]

Supplementary Material

For supplementary material accompanying this paper, including a PDF facsimile of the assignment description formatted as the author(s) presented it to students, please visit https://doi.org/10.31719/pjaw.v7i2.125.

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Preparing Reflective Practitioners

The Feedback Analysis Assignment for Writing Pedagogy Education

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Abstract

This essay describes a project in which graduate students who teach college writing and are enrolled in a composition practicum for first-year graduate student instructors (GSIs) reflect on their own practice of responding to student writing. To complete the project, students first write feedback in response to one of their first-year writing students' writing projects, then (with student identifiers removed) the GSI annotates or otherwise analyzes their own feedback by answering reflection questions about their approach, what they admire about their written comments, and how they might revise their approach moving forward. This project helps writing instructors engage with assessment as reflective praxis, particularly in first-year writing contexts where instructors—in this case, GSIs—may be new to the practice of responding to student writing.

The Feedback Analysis Assignment

How do writing instructors learn to provide their students with effective feedback? Writing program administrators (WPAs) and writing pedagogy educators more broadly are tasked with preparing instructors and especially graduate student instructors (GSIs) with learning the content, pedagogies, strategies, and tools needed for teaching first-year writing. Yet there is little research specifically about effective (meta)pedagogies or practices for developing educators' effective, reflective feedback practices. As scholarship in composition and rhetoric continues to emphasize reflection as a critical tool for learning about writing (Council of Writing Program Administrators et al., 2011; Downs & Wardle, 2007; Yancey, 1998; Yancey et al., 2014), so too should reflection on feedback practices be considered a critical tool for instructors learning about effective writing pedagogies. The assignment described in this essay attempts to address the need for more feedback-related reflective praxis in the composition practicum for graduate student instructors, which in turn could be used across a wider variety of writing pedagogy education (WPE) contexts.

To address the need for more reflective praxis regarding assessment, I developed an assignment I call the Feedback Analysis. Each semester I assign first-year GSIs in Minnesota State University, Mankato's first-year writing (FYW) program this written activity, for which their goal is to analyze and reflect on their practices for responding to student writing. The GSIs, all of whom teach one section of English 101: Foundations of Writing & Rhetoric concurrently as they are enrolled in the practicum course, write feedback in response to an FYW student's project, then each GSI re-reads and critically analyzes their own feedback and reflects on their own assessment practices. More specifically, GSIs reflect by answering a set of questions about how re-reading the feedback and unpacking their choices might influence their feedback practices moving forward. This project has gone through several iterations as I have taught it across classes and contexts, including not only for GSIs in composition practica, but also in a graduate Writing Assessment course. Here, I focus on what I have found to be the most successful ver-

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sion of the assignment, in which the Feedback Analysis is presented as one of the GSIs' weekly discussion board assignments.[1]

GSIs[2] begin working on their Feedback Analysis project around Week 9; however, our conversations about providing feedback begin much sooner. In preparation for responding to the first set of student drafts the GSIs will receive from their FYW students, around Week 3, GSIs read and discuss Nancy Sommers' (1982) "Responding to Student Writing" and chapters 19 ("Responding to Mindful Writers") and 21 ("Peer Feedback") of Jackson's (2020) *Teaching Mindful Writers*.[3] The GSIs also practice responding to a variety of sample student texts. Since GSIs at my institution use a labor-based grading system in their first-year writing courses, we do not talk about grading in the traditional sense, nor do they practice norming. However, GSIs do participate in group work centered on writing clear feedback, giving positive comments as well as suggestions for improvement, and taking care not to overwhelm students with too many comments (Harris, 2017).[4] During the week-long summer orientation where GSIs are introduced to the content and structure of English 101, they read excerpts from *Labor-Based Grading Contracts* (Inoue, 2019) and listen to Asao B. Inoue's episode of the *Pedagogue* podcast (Wood, 2019). Because antiracist pedagogy is a core component of our FYW curriculum, GSIs also prepare for their assessment tasks by engaging in critical reading and reflection about White Language Supremacy throughout the semester. For example, GSIs read chapters from *Bad Ideas About Writing* that focus on problematizing Standard American English (Cunningham, 2017; Pattanayak, 2017) and, in one of their weekly discussion posts, they are asked to reflect on how they have reinforced or resisted habits of White language in their own writing/experience.[5]

After the GSIs get some practice giving feedback in the context of the practicum and in their own first-year writing classes, we circle back to the topic of responding to student writing through the lens of pedagogical reflection. The Feedback Analysis assignment asks GSIs to critically reflect on their response to one piece of student writing from their own FYW class. To do so, the instructor (the GSI enrolled in the composition practicum) selects one student project from their own FYW course to which they have already provided written, aural, or video feedback. The instructor may choose to focus on a student text from any stage of the student's writing process, so long as the GSI has access to their own complete response to the student's text. Once the instructor has selected a student text with the GSI's comments, the GSI composes their Feedback Analysis by first contextualizing the student project and the GSI's response, then answering reflection questions aimed at analyzing their own feedback practices. For example, the instructor might reflect on why they phrased their comments as they did, their goals for responding to the text, what they find effective about their response, and what they find ineffective or how they might change their approach to feedback moving forward. The ultimate goal of the assignment, then, is for the instructor to use critical reflection as a tool for continuing to improve their own response to student writing over time.

Exigence: History of and Motivations for the Assignment

I first designed and taught the Feedback Analysis project in Fall 2017 for a graduate course called Composition Instructors' Workshop. As I was planning to teach the course, I reflected on my own experiences of WPE and the scholarly contexts I was investigating for my related dissertation project (Dobrin, 2005; Dryer, 2012; Estrem & Reid, 2012; Pytlik & Liggett, 2002, e.g.). I realized that although I had been teaching process-oriented writing and championing pedagogical refection for several years, I had not experienced any formal opportunities to reflect on—and therefore improve—my feedback practices. It felt important to me, then and now, that in my writing pedagogy educator role I position feedback as "dynamic genre performances" within the composition practicum (Wood, 2020) and, as with any other genre, offer GSIs more

opportunities to practice, reflect, and improve on their approach. Since I first began teaching the assignment in 2017, the project has been through several iterations across my own institutional contexts, from a public-facing formal project with multiple drafts and revisions (intended to be included in the GSIs' final Teaching Portfolio), to a weekly discussion in a graduate Writing Assessment course which was open to graduate students beyond GSIs. In all contexts, the purpose of the assignment remained for students to practice critical response to student writing by reflecting on their own feedback practices.

A host of scholarship in Composition and Rhetoric supports the reflective goals of the Feedback Analysis assignment. Babb and Corbett (2016) and Caswell (2014) call attention to the need for both individual instructors and the field more broadly to pay more attention to the affective nature of responding to, interacting with, and grading student writing. Indeed, it is still the case that most writing instructors (even those with advanced degrees in Composition and Rhetoric) do not take a required course on writing assessment or responding to student writing (Weigle, 2007), nor are we very often tasked with engaging conversations about good or effective feedback. Yet Parr and Timperley (2010) found that instructors do require pedagogical knowledge of how to give quality feedback in order to do so effectively. It is up to the instructor, in other words, to seek out professional development in this area, and perhaps it is up to WPAs to spend significant time in WPE focusing on response to student writing.

Wood (2020) more specifically suggests that writing instructors ought to critically reflect on their feedback practices within the context of labor-based grading contracts, which GSIs in my context are required to use. Instructors, he writes, "can't respond in the same ways as we used to through grading contracts because the system, and thus the values, consequences, and power relationships between teacher and student, are different" (p. 3). Instead, then, Wood argues that writing instructors who assess using labor-based grading contracts must critically reflect on how their feedback practices reinforce habits of White language, even unintentionally, and we must actively resist those habits by practicing feedback as resistant genres. In courses like the composition practicum that attempt to teach GSIs everything they need to know about writing instruction, this can seem a daunting task. I argue that the Feedback Analysis, paired with readings and reflections about antiracist pedagogy, antiracist assessment ecologies, and White Language Supremacy, could help GSIs begin the process of critical reflection Wood calls for. Importantly, GSIs will need support through contexts beyond the practicum, such as their required Composition Theory course or specific professional development opportunities, in order to continue this antiracist work.

Through the development of the Feedback Analysis assignment, I posited that reflecting on our own feedback practices at the meta-level is a worthwhile endeavor for any writing instructor (Phelps, 2000). I likewise asserted that responding to student writing is a performative aspect of writing instruction that can, and ought to be, taught (Hoffman-Kipp et al., 2003; Micciche et al., 2012). Moreover, critical reflection through assignments such as the Feedback Analysis in WPE contexts might provide teachers with opportunities to engage in feedback practices as resistant genres in order to more fully support antiracist assessment ecologies and pedagogies (Wood, 2020). The Feedback Analysis assignment is intended to build on these ideas by teaching writing instructors not only how to compose effective responses to student writing, but also how to critically reflect and improve on that practice over time.

Feedback Analysis Results: What Writing Instructors Learn

Though I have had the opportunity to teach the Feedback Analysis in several different contexts, the broad goal of analyzing and reflecting on one's own feedback practices has remained the same. The GSIs and other graduate students who have composed these analyses in my classes

have demonstrated some common approaches and patterns that, for me as a writing pedagogy educator, illuminate which conversations about feedback and assessment we need to spend more time on in class. Here I offer three patterns I have identified across student approaches to the Feedback Analysis—identifying their values, reflecting on disciplinary recommendations, and (re-)framing their instructor identities—and how I envision each pattern contributing to WPE. I conclude the results with my reflections on how the Feedback Analysis assignment has influenced my approach(es) to WPE. And finally, in the section that follows these results, I conclude the essay with my reflections on how the Feedback Analysis could be adapted for other classes or contexts.

The Feedback Analysis as a Tool for Identifying an Instructor's Values

One of the most profoundly simple results of assigning the Feedback Analysis, I have found, is that the assignment gives instructors the opportunity to sit and read feedback they have written, and therefore to reflect on the choices they make when responding to their students' writing. GSIs and other graduate students to whom I have assigned the Feedback Analysis regularly comment in their reflections that they had not considered, and likely would not consider, rereading their feedback had they not been asked to do so for our class. The result, then, is that the graduate students attempt to sort their feedback into patterns and then rationalize those patterns according to their own values—very likely for the first time. GSIs in the composition practicum, for example, often default to explaining how their comments fit a model we had discussed or read about in class, such as Eli Review's "describe-evaluate-suggest" model for peer response (Hart-Davidson, 2016), and/or they rely on their prior knowledge or experience as a starting point for their feedback. Many times they approach the task as if they were writing a discourse analysis. The GSI describes how their feedback demonstrates a pattern and then how that pattern exemplifies an attribute that they value in their own instruction. For example, a GSI in Fall 2020 wrote, "I couldn't help but to structure my feedback similarly to how I give feedback in my creative writing workshops. As such, I start with the positive feedback and then move to a constructive critique of the piece." Although we had read and discussed Rhetoric and Composition scholarship that recommends beginning with positive comments (Jackson, 2020; Sommers, 1982), the GSI attributed the pattern to the values of his home discipline. As I had hoped when I first designed the Feedback Analysis, I have seen the majority of graduate students use the assignment as an opportunity to critically reflect on their practices or, in this case, to rationalize[6] them, toward the ultimate goals of pedagogical reflection and improvement. Through composing the Feedback Analysis assignment, instructors are identifying and thinking about the values that inform their feedback practices, which could open the door for more conversations about where those values come from.

The Feedback Analysis as a Tool for Reflecting on Disciplinary Recommendations

Perhaps the most consistent subject I have encountered among the Feedback Analyses I have assigned is the instructors' attention to grammar and sentence-level concerns. In every context in which I have assigned the Feedback Analysis, I have assigned students to read texts about White Language Supremacy and have spent class time discussing why, in the context of anti-racist pedagogy and assessment, grammar and sentence-level concerns are not a priority in our university's first-year writing context. Nevertheless, nearly every graduate student has mentioned this aspect of feedback, perhaps in part because they recognize it as content we have specifically discussed in the WPE context. GSIs and other graduate students take up this conversation in various ways. Some realize that they spend much more time/space commenting on sentence-level concerns than they thought they did, or more than they had intended. Others

see sentence-level concerns as a more important aspect of their response to student writing, and in those cases I see the discussion aspect of the Feedback Analysis assignment as an opportunity for GSIs to return to our prior conversations White Language Supremacy with the hope that they will confront their resistance upon reflection. For example, a GSI in Fall 2020 wrote in his analysis, "For this stage in their writing, my aim was (and is in most cases) twofold: to clear up any minor grammatical issues/bad habits the student might have, and to offer advice on how to make their analysis more thorough, elaborate, and intentional." The discussion board conversation that followed was one about how and when to focus on grammar when writing feedback in the context of first-year writing. This reflective writing about grammar instruction in FYW is another example of graduate students identifying feedback patterns relative to their pedagogical values. What I find significant about these conversations is the opportunity for instructors to reflect on (and perhaps improve) their choices according to disciplinary recommendations and antiracist writing assessment ecologies in particular, despite how difficult or unfamiliar those choices might be for the GSIs personally. As I reflect on what the Feedback Analysis assignment might look like in future semesters, I imagine this result will be the most positively impacted by incorporating Wood's (2020) notion of practicing feedback as resistant genres.

The Feedback Analysis as a Tool for (Re-)Framing Instructor Identities

The negotiation between an instructor's personal values and the disciplinary recommendations espoused in WPE sometimes results in a third significant phenomenon, which is that instructors realize or create identities in the process of writing and reflecting on their feedback to student writers. Across the years, almost every graduate student who has completed a Feedback Analysis has commented on something they did not realize they were doing in their feedback, either positively or negatively, that influences who they are as a writing instructor. For example, one GSI in Fall 2020 wrote "I think I skimped a bit in the department of positive feedback," and then she set a goal to provide her students with more of a balance moving forward. She did not see her instructor identity reflected in the feedback she wrote; so, as a result of re-reading her feedback and reflecting on her choices, she set a goal for the future that would better align with who she wants to be as a writing instructor. Other graduate students, such as a high school teacher enrolled in my Spring 2020 Writing Assessment course, have approached the Feedback Analysis assignment as a challenge to try a new approach. This particular teacher tried, for the first time ever, not to comment at all on grammar—and then she composed her reflection about how the task challenged her and pushed her to think differently about her purposes for responding to student writing. In her audio reflection, the graduate student said, "Since I'm considering doing this [not marking every grammatical error] in the future, I wanted to see how it would feel." In effect, she was trying on a new instructor identity based on conversations about disciplinary recommendations (i.e., antiracist writing assessment) we had had in class. Based on the experiences I have had assigning the Feedback Analysis thus far, it seems that the opportunity to sit with their own feedback and recognize responding to student writing as a series of choices rooted in their own values as well as disciplinary recommendations has a great potential to help instructors (re-)form their identities through reflection and conversation.

The Feedback Analysis as a Tool for Reimagining WPE

I developed and continue to teach the Feedback Analysis assignment because I see the benefits it has for encouraging reflective praxis, especially for developing writing instructors. I was surprised, however, by the insight the assignment gave me as a writing pedagogy educator and WPA. In seeing instructors' analyses of their own feedback practices, I have been able to

learn more about their values—the values that shape their classrooms, and therefore, much of the first-year writing program I direct. This has helped me grow as an educator and WPA by giving me insight into the content I could and should bring into not only my courses, such as the composition practicum for GSIs, but also professional development opportunities I could bring to, or develop with or for, instructors across our first-year writing program. In Fall 2020 I noticed, for example, that many GSIs were commenting more on their students' written product—the quality of the writing—than they were on the text's content. None of the GSIs picked up on this pattern themselves, but my noticing it helped me realize that I should return to the concept of teaching for transfer and our overarching goals in first-year writing, where the content is what matters most.[7] This focus, in turn, became a bigger part of the Fall 2021 composition practicum as well as professional development meetings for all first-year writing instructors at my institution. I anticipate that incorporating Wood's (2020) practice of resistant genres in future semesters will further support this effort through the lens of antiracist writing assessment ecologies.

Final Reflections: Adapting the Feedback Analysis Beyond the Composition Practicum

Though I have taught the Feedback Analysis only in graduate and WPE settings, I could see this assignment being adapted for practically any teacher education context, especially where effectively responding to student writing is an intended learning outcome. Undergraduate (or graduate) English Secondary Education students come to mind as a good fit for this project. But I think the Feedback Analysis assignment has possibilities for other contexts, too. For example, this might be a great exercise in Writing Center or other peer tutoring contexts where students are being asked to thoughtfully and/or constructively respond to their peers. Additionally, though I have not done it yet myself, I could envision a version of this Feedback Analysis being assigned in the context of any writing course, undergraduate or graduate, in order to help students think more critically about their peer responses. How fantastic would it be, perhaps in a first-year writing context, to give students time and space to reflect thoughtfully and critically about their peer feedback practices through such an assignment? The Feedback Analysis's greatest asset, in my view, is its adaptability. It can be a higher-stakes project assignment with multiple drafts, peer responses, and intended to include in a public-facing teaching portfolio. Alternately, it can be an informal exercise, meant exclusively to prompt critical thinking, reflection, and maybe some discussion. No matter how the final product is structured, students will gain a beneficial opportunity to reflect on and learn from their feedback practices.

ASSIGNMENT

Feedback Analysis Activity & Discussion

Original Discussion Post & Responses due: Week 10

By this point in the semester you've responded to (or almost finished responding to) at least one full set of student writing projects. This week and next, I'd like us to circle back to our conversations about writing assessment (week 3 and week 4) in order to do some reflective work on how you respond to your students' writing and where you want to take your assessment practices from here. So, for this activity you're going to use your response to one student project as a text for analysis and reflection. Follow the steps below to complete your feedback analysis activity.

1. Choose one student project from your own ENG 101 class this semester to use for this analysis. Choose a project that you've already responded to—it could be any stage of draft (working, revised, polished), and your response could be written comments or another mode of feedback, so long as you have the student's work and your feedback handy. Make sure to remove the student's name and any other identifying information from the project before you share it with our class.
2. Read through your feedback and take notes aimed toward reflective analysis. Some questions to consider:

    - What were your goals for the feedback at this stage of the student's writing process?
    - What's the tone of your feedback?
    - What comments do you think are particularly effective?
    - What comments might be confusing or otherwise inaccessible to the student?
    - How do you feel about the amount of feedback you provided?
    - Do you know whether the student read the feedback? Have they had an opportunity to take (or not take) your suggestions? And if so, did they incorporate your suggestions effectively?
    - What questions or concerns do you have about your feedback practices based on this experience?
    - What about your practices are you happy with?
    - How do you intend to build on, continue, or change your feedback practices based on this reflective analysis?

3. Use your notes to compose a brief reflective analysis to share with the class. In your discussion post, I'd like you to share the original text (the feedback you wrote to the student) + your analysis, in any mode. You could compose written text, an audio reflection, a video, or (my personal favorite) a screen recording of you going through your feedback. Again, please make sure to remove the student's name and any identifying information from their project before sharing it with us. It will also be helpful for us if you take a sentence or two to set up the context of the project: what stage of the drafting process was this, what was the assignment, and what were your goals for that particular writer and assignment?
4. Browse your classmates' analyses and engage in conversation with at least two people. What practices, goals, questions, or concerns do you have in common? How does seeing other people's feedback influence your own ideas? As or if you find it useful, I encourage you include any insights from Jackson's *Teaching Mindful Writers* in your discussion. To what extent does Jackson's emphasis on reflection (Part V) and mindful teaching (Part VI) influence your assessment practices? (Citing Jackson is not required—just an idea if you're seeing connections and wanting to bring in the reading.)

We'll take two weeks on this praxis discussion since the work is a little more involved than just responding to a reading. As always, I'll be on email and at my Zoom office hours if you have questions.

Notes

[1]Each week in the composition practicum course, GSIs write a Teaching Journal discussion post in which they respond to a prompt or set of prompts related to that week's content. Each week's prompt asks the GSIs to engage with the assigned reading for the practicum as well as their own teaching of English 101.

[2]GSIs at MNSU Mankato are often, though not always, novice instructors. Most of them have never taught in a formal education context and almost all have never been a first-year writing instructor. Moreover, the GSIs range in disciplinary backgrounds, with MFA in Creative Writing and MA TESOL having the largest representation. Therefore, the majority of GSIs have little to no formal knowledge of composition theory or pedagogy prior to enrolling in the composition practicum.

[3]When the FYW curriculum calls for students to compose multimodal texts early on, which it usually does, the GSIs spend another week reading about and discussing response to multimodal assignments. Usually I assign Yancey's (2004) "Made Not Only in Words" and an "Assessing Student Multimodal Work" webpage from Kent State University (Department of English, n.d.).

[4]In future semesters, I plan to assign GSIs to read Shane Wood's (2020) "Engaging in Resistant Genres as Antiracist Teacher Response," which was not yet published during the semesters I reference in this article.

[5]At MNSU Mankato, the composition practicum is the first course GSIs take in writing pedagogy. GSIs learn about teaching writing concurrently as they are teaching their first FYW course. All GSIs are required, however, to take a graduate course in Composition Theory prior to the final year of their teaching assistantship. The Composition Theory course builds on these conversations about antiracist pedagogy and assessment and White Language Supremacy.

[6]I see this GSI's description of his approach to feedback as rationalization of his choices. While he could have aligned his choices with the assigned reading from the composition practicum, he chose instead to focus on what he already knew from creative writing workshops. Further research into this topic could address how GSIs' prior knowledge influences their feedback practices. For writing pedagogy educators, such an instance could be an opportunity to engage instructors in conversations about their values and where those values come from, especially in order to emphasize connections to composition scholarship on writing assessment and feedback.

[7]For a bit of added institutional context, GSIs in MNSU's first-year writing program teach a common curriculum designed to focus on teaching for transfer (Downs & Wardle, 2007; Yancey et al., 2014), multimodality, and antiracism. For more information about our program's curriculum, see Moreland, Henderson Lee, & Cole (2023).

Supplementary Material

For supplementary material accompanying this paper, including a PDF facsimile of the assignment description formatted as the author(s) presented it to students, please visit https://doi.org/10.31719/pjaw.v7i2.137.

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