

Cardinal Compositions

University of Louisville

ENGL 102: Investigating Academic Writing

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Corresponding Essay

- Saneii, Gracie. "Reflective Habits of College Freshmen in Different Majors." *Cardinal Compositions*, 2019-2020 issue, pp. 4-8.

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Final Project Guidelines

One of the goals of this course is to introduce you to a new way of thinking about academic writing (as an ongoing scholarly conversation) and then to give you the opportunity to participate in that conversation. You'll get the chance to do just this in your final project for the course, where you will develop a research question/s that is grounded in some of the texts we've read and the discussions we've been having this semester. You'll then attempt to answer that question by conducting research of your own, albeit on a very small scale (i.e., interviewing someone, developing survey questions that you send to several people, etc.).

What "topic" you decide to pursue for this project is fairly flexible, as long as your project involves, broadly, researching writing practices and as long as it's clear that your project builds on the research we've already read this semester (which gives you more room to align this project with your own interests, but may also make this more challenging). This semester our readings and discussions have centered around the role that *prior knowledge/experience, reflection, revision, repurposing, genre, transfer, social context, identity/identities, ideologies, language difference*, among other factors, play in academic writing more generally. But we haven't explored what influence these ideas have on writing done in other settings (writing in a particular major, profession, or extracurricular setting).

So, for example, for your project, you might be interested in testing the extent to which one of Robertson et al.'s/Roozen's findings about prior knowledge and transfer holds up to the kind of writing done in your major. You might then locate a case study about, say, engineering students writing and put this study in conversation with one or more of the studies we've read in class. You could then develop a list of interview questions and find one or two engineering students to interview about their writing experiences. Or you might want to focus more on the kinds of extracurricular writing students do out of class. Or you might want to use your project to attempt to respond to one of the questions or calls to action in Robertson et al.'s or Roozen's conclusions.

Here are some criteria to keep in mind for your project:

1. It should be clear that your project, in some way, *builds on* the work we've already read in class. This does not mean that your project needs to replicate the work we've read in class. Rather, you need to use our course texts as a *point of departure* for the new research you want to carry out.
2. You'll need to incorporate **one** additional academic source from outside our course reading list to help you make sense of your research findings, help you narrow down a topic of inquiry, and extend the work we've done in class this semester.
3. You'll need to demonstrate knowledge of the conventions of research writing that we've discussed this semester in your writing for this project.

*Your final project is due on **Thursday, Dec. 5, 11:30am** via email. To make this project manageable, it will be broken down into stages that you'll submit and get feedback on between now and then.

Your final project for the course will include the following sections:

Descriptive title: If you look at the titles of the research articles we've read in class, you'll notice that they are more *descriptive* than *creative*. That is, the authors often include keywords in their titles. Think of your title as a way to forecast the topic and purpose of your project.

Introduction: This is where you'll describe how your project is building on the work we've already read—and even the outside source you found for your project. It's also where you'll practice enacting the CARS model moves and where you'll include your research questions.

Methods: In this section, you'll describe in detail the methods you used to answer your research questions. For most of you this involves conducting interviews (sometimes with texts written by your participants, assignment prompts, or short passages that you had your participants read and discuss during your interview) or distributing surveys. The tricky part in drafting this section is figuring out what details to include. You'll want to tell readers how many people you chose to interview; what *kinds* of people you chose to interview and why (this should have something to do with your research question); how many surveys you distributed, how (email, social media etc.), and how many you got back; what kinds of questions you asked in your survey/interview; that you audio-recorded your interviews and listened to them again, transcribing key passages.

Findings: In this section, you'll present what you found and describe how it helps you answer your research questions. Ask yourself questions like the following: What did I find and how does it help me answer my research questions? Are there any patterns in my data? (Your data in this case are your participants' responses to your survey or interview questions). Is there anything interesting or surprising going on here? Did I find what I expected to find? What might account for my findings? In answering this last question, turning to our course texts, as well as the additional source you found through your library search, will help you.

Conclusion: This is where you'll practice some of the moves we've seen are common in the conclusion sections of research articles: raising new questions that you haven't been able to answer, indicating the limitations of your project and being careful to qualify the claims you make based on your findings, and extending calls to action.

References: This is where you'll list all of the sources you cite in *your* project (including ones we've read in class, as well as articles you found through the library databases). It doesn't matter whether you use MLA or APA citation style, as long as you're trying to be consistent with the way you're citing your sources. The Purdue OWL website is a good resource, as are the reference pages of the research articles we've read.

Appendix: This is where you'll include your survey or interview questions. Just include these on a page after your references and title the page "Appendix: Survey Questions" or "Appendix: Interview Questions." If you had participants read and respond to a passage/assignment prompt, include copies of these texts in your appendices as well.