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English Composition 100: Best Practices for Online Instruction

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Media, Art, and Text at Virginia Commonwealth University.

By

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Acknowledgment

Table of Contents

Abstract

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The objective of this dissertation is to explore the process of teaching English Composition in the

asynchronous online format and to make recommendations for the best possible approach for

continued student success. The teaching of English Composition is a complex subject and no two

teachers will have the same approach. This matter is further complicated when online instruction

is explored. An instructor cannot transplant an in-class course into the online format and expect

the same results. This dissertation explores the best possible approach to teaching English

Composition in an online environment with the use of multimedia applications. This exploration

will address current methods of teaching English Composition online, will evaluate what seems

to work well, will explore the concerns highlighted by educators and practitioners involved with

English Composition online, and will highlight additional recommended advancements, both in

methods of approach and technological innovations, that can bring to light instructional practices

for further evaluation. This study will lead to an understanding of what these new emerging

technologies are and the specifics of their use by both instructors and students alike online, and it

will identify best practices in teaching English Composition online for the immediate future.

Chapter One: Introduction

English Composition Studies Today

When an English Compositon in-class teacher is invited to teach online, the prospective teacher may respond, "I am an expert at teaching the subject in-class; therefore, I can also reasonably expect to teach it online with good success." To many novice online teachers, this seems an appropriate response: success with text-based in-class instruction could mean that there can be success also in an online class; therefore, this statement has sound first-response validity. The truth of the matter is that educators and practitioners have only seriously begun in the last decade or so to review the online teaching processes for English Composition, with the use of technology and its multi-media applications, and have yet to establish definitively what might be a sound approach in organizing, developing and orchestrating an online English Composition course for good student success. Therefore, the hypothetical teacher's response has indicated a fundamental question: can a text-based in-class course work well online?

What is certain is that the success of English Composition online has been influenced by several dramatic developments in the last three decades, and more recent studies have indicated the progression as follows:

- Acceptance of English Composition as a subject

- The influence of writing technologies in English Composition courses

- The nurturing role of the early electronic writing centers

- Instructors' increasing familiarity with emerging technologies

- The advent of the Internet

- The use of technology in the classroom with the external use of an online platform for grade recording and disseminating information to students

- Hybrid Instruction: courses meeting both in-class and online

- Students' positive response to multi-media applications in instruction

Indeed, educators and practitioners have been wrestling with the best methods of teaching English composition online, and they have identified several notable inter-connected areas worthy of further investigation: institutional involvement, teacher training, technological considerations and learning platforms, the availability of multimedia resources and what they might be and how they could be used, and deep consideration of learning outcomes. Indeed, there is renewed focus today on what the best practices are for success in an online course. Following the more recent approach to teaching English Composition in the online environment, the student needs to take immediate ownership of his or her own learning progress: the student needs to be in the driver's seat. Notwithstanding these concerns, the future does look promising for online English Composition teaching using theory-grounded hands-on practical approaches to successfully engage students in this new and vibrant learning process.

Although extensive theories have been formulated, developed, practiced, and tested in the last decade, there is no single approach to the instruction of English composition online. In an article appearing in 2011, "Designing and Orchestrating Online Discussions," Baker points out that since "teaching styles vary, with no proof that any one style works better than another, a gifted lecturer may motivate students as effectively as a teacher who has a talent for conducting writing conferences" (8). Indeed, on an ongoing basis these ideas and approaches have had a serious impact on English Composition online.

Therefore, a deeper analysis of this situation is required. A focused evaluation of the conclusions and recommendations arrived at by educators and practitioners in the field of English Composition in the online format are paramount to the practice. Indeed, this is very relevant especially since the online format is expanding rapidly and it has gained the interest of educators and practitioners for almost all college-level courses. More and more students than ever before are signing-up for online classes in English Composition when the preference before had been for an in-class course. The findings from this analysis provide the foundation for laying out best practices for teaching English Compositon online.

To engage in a successful discussion on this exciting new venture, it is best to begin with a definition of what exactly English Composition is, and what the expectations are for such an important beginning writing course. In the 1970s process writing was introduced, where one step leads to the next, and so on. There have been sweeping changes since; new and improved practices that first appeared in the 1990s as surveyed in 1996 in an important review, *Voices from the Community College. Composition in the Twenty-First Century: Crisis and Change*, will continue to be refined and perfected. English composition is thus not a static undertaking. Now it is generally agreed that the purpose of composition is to produce visible results in students' writing where "composing is manipulating a text to achieve a specific purpose for a particular audience, and we teach it to give students power and control of their language and their lives" (Holladay 29). This new writing process also involves a somewhat mixed approach that has been very effective: writing is recursive, in that the writer goes back and forth until the writing meets sound expectations, and until meaning is clear to the audience.

Indeed, the subject of English Composition has seen many ups-and-downs in the traditional classroom, and these continue unabated; on the other hand, since online teaching is

relatively new, there have been renewed efforts by educators and practitioners to bring together an approach in the online environment that can lead to student success. The results of exploratory studies indicate that the on-going debate on what constitutes the best method in teaching English composition for student success is a complex one, which has had no clear-cut development since its first introduction into schools. Several processes were in use, and they all seemed to work very well. Indeed, this "mixed-bag-of-tricks" approach is identified in exploratory studies conducted by Brereton for the period 1875 – 1925: the subject of English composition was not a clearly defined one, nor was it a unified one, nor did it follow a precise linear development from one stage to the next; there were many parallel and concurrent teaching methods in use at one time or the other, with frequent overlaps, divergences, agreements, disagreements and conflicts. Matters are further complicated, as indicated by Hillocks in his 2011 study "Research in Secondary English, 1912 – 2011" that educators have learnt many things in the last 100 years about teaching English composition, and he has identified the key findings as follows: the teaching of traditional grammar does little, writing is a process, real discussions are important to develop writing, and writers who engage with the task of their learning accomplish more. Indeed, together these approaches constitute a sound and practical understanding of this complex subject. However, the landscape is in a constant state of flux, and there are other considerations that are appearing on the horizon. Rivers and Weber add to the debate with their findings in a report of 2011, which indicates that recently there has been renewed focus on ecological, pedagogical and public rhetoric.

To sum up, initial breakthroughs in the writing process have been overshadowed, complicated, and enhanced by more recent developments. For example, English composition in the early seventies involved the three-stage linear model of writing: prewriting, composing, and

post writing, where "at the end of each stage there will be a particular product" (Williams 31); product has been enhanced by process, where meaning will be clear at all times to the inquisitive reader; indeed, expository writing, culminating with the concept that writing is student-centered, has become the dominant driving force today. It is now generally agreed that the focus and purpose of English Composition are student-centered, where the student is placed in the "driver's seat" in that the student will take control of his or her learning utilizing instructor's guidelines and the all-important peer review process to develop and fashion writing where meaning will be clear to the audience. Often times students are told, "Your writing will speak for itself." Therefore, it is not uncommon for an instructor to combine "process writing" with "student-centered writing," with excursions into "peer review," thus encouraging more "fluidity" between drafts for a final product where meaning will be clear to the audience. English Compositon has expanded to include specific areas of expository writing generally used to accomplish specific goals in making meaning clear, which excludes journalistic writing and creative writing, although some of these techniques are over-lapping.

New to the field is online instruction involving multi-media technology and learning platforms; this new method of disseminating information had begun to capture the attention of educators and practitioners as early as the 1980s. Indeed, this new and constantly evolving technology not only includes the learning platforms used in disseminating information (Blackboard and e-college for example) but also the components (multimedia software, covering audio and video), which when combined, allow an instructor to present information to students. To a great extent this puts the student in the driver's seat.

This new wave of instructional methods using technology has added to the complexities of teaching English Composition. In 2005, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

in a position statement indicated that English compositon instruction was leaning more towards technologies and multimedia applications both in class and online in order to engage students and to meet learning objectives. Indeed, the art and craft of writing is no stranger to this mode of communication; the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Past President, Kathleen Blake Yancey noted: "Today, in the 21st century, people write as never before—in print and online. We thus face three challenges that are also opportunities: developing new models of writing; designing a new curriculum supporting those models; and creating models for teaching that curriculum" (1). The literature is quickly catching up by offering multiple approaches to understanding the complexities of teaching English Composition both in-class and online.

Beach in a 2011 study, "Annotated Bibliography of Research in the Teaching of English," points out that many educators and practitioners are in favor of integrating technology and multimedia in both the in-class and online English composition class in one form or another as strong pedagogical tool; however, there is much work yet to uncover (AB1 – AB2). His report indicates:

> While a number of studies in the 2010 Bibliography document the increased use of digital/media tools in the English classroom, they also suggest that given students' heavy use of digital/media tools in their homes, issues of integration and adoption of digital media tools in largely print-based curriculum frameworks remain a challenge for English teachers. For example, as the nature of writing has changed to more online, multi-media, remixed forms of communication for multiple, often global, audiences, composition researchers (see "Writing") have increasingly focused on alternative ways of evaluating and assessing writing quality based on criteria of visual rhetoric/design, multi-modality, interactivity,

connectivity, reception, and engagement that go beyond criteria that have been

employed to assess students' print texts, topics addressed in our 2010 review.

These are more notable and recent developments, which further strengthen the use of technology

in English Composition instruction. As Josh Fishman acknowledges in his 2012 article in *The*

Chronicle of Higher Education, "Technology companies are only beginning to realize that the

tools they created for interactivity—last decade's education buzzword—are powerful devices for

learning analytics—this decade's hot term. So now they are going to have to work with colleges

to connect the dots to teaching outcomes."

Indeed, hard-copy documents are quickly being replaced by electronic and digitalized

documents; the special characteristics of text production and interpretation in computer-mediated

realms have been referred to as "electronic literacy," a term coined as early as 2007, which,

according to Warschauer includes four main components: (a) computer literacy, comfort and

fluency in using hardware and software; (b) information literacy, the ability to find, analyze, and

critique information available online; (c) multimedia literacy, the ability to interpret and produce

documents combining texts, sounds, graphics, and video); and (d) computer-mediated

communication literacy, the mastery of the pragmatics of synchronous and asynchronous CMC.

(10)

Where then do these rapid shifts and changes in teaching methods place our hypothetical

English Composition online instructor? It appears that any prospective teacher of English

Composition in the online environment will undertake a journey of self-discovery, a journey that

will be primarily centered on the effective use of technology in teaching English Composition.

Indeed, since many English Composition in-class courses have migrated to a hybrid format (part

in-class and part online), and then to completely online, it will be necessary for the prospective

teacher to broaden his or her horizons to include this new method of online instruction; it is not uncommon for a teacher to develop proficiency in several modes of instruction. Some teachers have begun to teach sometimes three sections of the same English Composition course as follows: one in-class, one as a hybrid class, and one exclusively online. Without a doubt, since English Compositon in-class has had its complexities, the prospective teacher will also expect to find new and challenging complexities in the online format. It is important then for educational leaders to assist the prospective teacher of English Composition in moving into the online format especially since educators, practitioners and students are leaning heavily in this direction (Beach; Fishman; NTCE; Yancey) What are the best practices for online instruction is an important question that is on everyone's mind.

The answer as to what might be best practices is not an easy one. Indeed, one will take a quick step back in time in order to move forward; historical shifts in the approach to the teaching of English composition have a direct bearing on present-day practices both in-class and online. Historical evidence has indicated that composition studies have gone through two dramatic changes in the last half century, and these changes had a direct impact on English Composition online today; in fact, without these developments, it is very possible that English Composition instruction online might not exist today.

The first dramatic change in the development of composition began when it was determined that the method and means of composition warranted study as a subject, which did not happen until the early nineteen sixties (Connors; Faigley; North). Educators and practitioners have since advanced the discourse on this subject in academic publications, conferences, and studies at the PhD level. With the Internet, peer-reviewed online journals have now begun to explore online teaching concepts in real-time.

The second dramatic change occurred with the introduction of computers in the teaching of composition, and the move to an online format, which has been extensively described by Hawisher, LeBlanc, Moran, and Selfe in an important 1996 publication *Computers and the teaching of writing in American higher education, 1979–1994.* Indeed, notable developments can be identified as follows:

- the introduction of stand-alone audio/video components to the classroom,

- the introduction of the computer to the classroom,

- the application of the computer in electronic writing centers,

- the hybrid course utilizing both in-class and online methods of instruction, and

- the total self-contained online course utilizing many textual items and the possibility of different technology components.

Since English Composition is established as a subject, the discourse today now rightly involves the use of technology and multimedia as the dialogue continues. Educators and practitioners have favored several options and approaches to teaching the subject, which even when applied individually or collectively can lead to student success, and studies have now begun to explore the relation of technology and multi-media applications to cognitive domains.

However, it is very clear from the outset that there are inherent disparities between in-class teaching methods and online teaching methods. What is certain is the consensus among educators and practitioners that in-class English Composition course material cannot be duplicated as-is and simply uploaded into an online format; this has been fully explained in a 2009 article, "Online teaching and learning resource guide" by Watwood, Nugent and Diehl: "while the content and the learning outcomes are the same, the manner in which that content is delivered and the interactions with students are quite different" (16). Indeed, an online English

composition class could never successfully engage students with just mouse-driven text appearing on a flat opaque screen. What then are the promises of technology? As Zhao reports in 2011, Composition instructors "need to reexamine students' needs and their learning styles in this digital era to readjust their pedagogical practices so that they can make rational choices to foster students' learning." Indeed, there have been innovative approaches in the twenty-first century with regards to meeting course objectives in English Composition. Some of these techniques are directly related by the application of grounded theory, peer-reviewed surveys, observations and experiments. Educators and practitioners are now starting to explore the approaches a teacher may take in successfully integrating technologies in the English Composition online classroom. Indeed, there is much more work yet to be completed.

Primary Exploratory objectives

Since the prospective online English Compositon instructor now has a clear understanding of what exactly English Composition is and its possibilities for online success, the next step is to explore in detail the best practices for teaching English Composition online. This exploration will address current methods of teaching English Composition online, will evaluate what seems to work well, will explore the concerns highlighted by educators and practitioners involved with English Composition online, and will highlight additional recommended advancements, both in methods of approach and technological innovations, that can bring to light instructional practices for further evaluation. This study will lead to an understanding of what these new emerging technologies are and the specifics of their use by both instructors and students alike online, and it will identify best practices in teaching English Composition online for the immediate future.

It will be noted that this study does not propose any one best practice for instruction or recommend where multimedia should be used or not used in instruction. This study will examine the literature and best practices recommended by educators. While generalizability may be limited, it is anticipated that some findings may be generalizable to other areas of online instruction.

This research will explore these questions:

1. What are the new and emerging technologies used in teaching English Compositon online?

2. What agreements and differences do English Composition educators report on emerging technologies?

3. What are the best practices for teaching English Composition using emerging technologies?

4. How can instructors apply these emerging technologies to a fully functional online course?

The fully functional online course

The answer to question four will in part be based on the following proposal for an English Composition online course utilizing multi-media applications. The course will be outlined in Chapter Four as follows:

1. All instructional materials will utilize textual and multi-media applications (both audio and video) in order to effectively introduce and reinforce course expectations.

2. Major assignments will be fully explained as they appear in the course. In order to avoid duplication, assignments common to all weeks will only be developed in the week they first appear; these are Discussion Boards and Reflection Assignments.

3. The four major assignments allowing for textual and/or multi-media applications will be the narrative essay, the process essay, the persuasive essay draft and the persuasive research essay; these will be fully developed and explained.

Summary of Resources Relating to the Four Research Questions

This section will identify the major resources covered in this dissertation, will provide a brief overview of where the literature stands on the above questions, and will identify the major trends and majority views, covering both those in agreement and the dissenters. This critical review will also integrate a critical assessment of the best practice-based resources. It will conclude with this researcher's expectations on how best course design and development will be reached in the fully developed online English Composition course in Chapter Four.

1. What are the new and emerging technologies used in teaching English Composition online?

Educators and practitioners report that in the twenty-first century, emerging technologies involving digitalized text (Mallinen; Moran; Reynolds, Bizzell, and Herzberg) and multi-media applications have become very practical in the online course (Perl; Rogers; Sidler, Morris, and Smith). The once laborious processes of composing text with pen and paper (Glynn, Oaks, Mattocks) were revolutionized by electronic means of composing utilizing a computer and applicable writing softwares (Moran; Schroeder and Boe). These processes began as independent ventures by students who could afford a computer and software in composing, revising and formatting papers (Parker, Lenhart and Moore). The process did continue in full force at the writing center (Boquet; Brame; Konstant; Thaiss & Porter) for both developing and experienced writers alike (Hirschhorn), and this process became an integral part of writing in the in-class electronic writing classrooms (Eudice; Grinnell; Hewett). Indeed, both students and instructors

are now more receptive to electronic means of communication than ever before (Schroeder and Boe; Sidler, Morris, and Smith). The end result is that these technologies, together with multi-media applications, such as audio and video clips, have evolved into the hybrid and eventually the online classroom and are an integral part in meeting course objectives (Blythe; Carpenter; Condon; Mallinen; Williams), and have attracted more students in the twenty-first century to online courses (Allen, Seaman, Lederman and Jashik).

However, this new writing technology and multi-media often times constitute a learning curve for all concerned (Palmquist, Mike, Rodrigues, Kieferand, and Zimmerman), especially since no two instructors will teach alike (Baker; Watwood, Nugent and Diehl) and writing technologies change frequently (Hai-Jew). Nonetheless, the new and emerging technologies are leaning more than ever before towards the digitalizing of documents, electronic means of editing, and ultimately to multi-media writing applications in English Composition online courses (Warschauer).

Multi-media applications have seeped into many forms of writing both private and public (Selber; Selfe and Takayoshi), and have become quite acceptable in many forms of communication (Hoy; Richards). Therefore, it is very practical in the English Composition online classroom for students and instructors alike to use digitized means of editing documents, which often times involve the utilization of track changes (revision software), and this acceptance also allows students to submit a multi-media assignment in order to meet course objectives (Moran). Some of these multi-media applications allow interconnectivity into existing online platforms, such as Wikis (Sanden & Darragh) and You Tube (Snelson; Young, Long & Myers), and they have met sound academic objectives. Indeed, these approaches have inspired educators and practitioners to revisit with renewed vigor the use of multimedia in the online

classroom (Sidler, Morris, and Smith). Several institutions have started developing online

courses using state of the art hands-on multi-media applications to engage inquisitive learners

(Miami University; Penn State).

Indeed, some of these multi-media applications have gone beyond traditional approaches,

and they have encouraged and enhanced digital storytelling (Perl), and are often times reflected

in the English Composition full length narrative multi-media essay (Figg & McCartney; Young

and Bush). Also, multi-media integrating to complement textual analysis is also becoming very

popular in the final argumentative research essay (VanKooten). Instructors now have the

opportunity to integrate multi-media into the online course through several learning platforms in

order to meet course objectives (Anson; Sadera, Robertson, Song, & Midon; Simonson).

However, since teaching styles vary (Baker) and multi-media is constantly changing,

each instructor, whether beginning or experienced, will most certainly need to revisit multi-

media applications in order to determine what is working well, what needs fine tuning and what

can be replaced with more effective tools (Fey and Sutton) in order to keep pace with new

developments necessary to create an effective learning process for online students (Stroupe).

This matter is further complicated in that multi-media applications are being encouraged as early

as the second grade in many schools and students are submitting work in multi-media formats in

the seventh grade (Chronicle of Higher Education; Heitin), and Colleges are starting to accept

both the textual essay and multi-media essay as part of their application portfolio (Augustana).

2. What agreements and differences do English Composition educators report on

emerging technologies?

Although multi-media is on the cutting edge of technology for English Composition

online course development, there have been mixed feelings in some areas by both educators and

practitioners (Aziz, Ozan, Kishore and Tabrizi; Laura Lloyd-Smith; Wuensch,). Indeed, especially since teaching styles vary (Baker; Watwood, Nugent and Diehl), there is not one particular system that will benefit everyone (Lloyd-Smith). This matter is further complicated in that some instructors are hesitant in teaching online, yet they are encouraged to do so by the institutions who employ them; therefore these instructors will need to keep pace very quickly with technology usage (Yagelski & Graybill) in order to meet students' expectations (VanKooten) of multi-media applications online rather than all text (Savenye, Zane & Niemczyk).

However, instructors are cautious, and specific areas of concern have been identified as follows about online writing: it is informal, it is graphic, and it facilitates plagiarism (Warschauer). In addition, there are concerns that student and instructor contact, which is necessary for the writing process, is not effective through discussion boards alone (Harman & Koohang). On the other hand, many instructors will favor a mixed approach of e-mails, discussion boards, phone contact, and online meeting sessions (Cifuentes & Lens; Hrastinski; Li, Finley, Pitts & Guo). Nonetheless, instructors are gradually becoming more and receptive to using technology and multi-media in online courses, which have primarily resulted from exchange of ideas and shared experiences in the field (Dean, Hochman, Hood and McEachem; VanKooten), with a sound determination towards what will result in effective course design and development to engage inquisitive learners (Sadera, Robertson, Song, & Midon).

Indeed, many instructors have found the online teaching experience a liberating one (Kulmala & Stanton), and are willing to upgrade their teaching skills to involve multi-media and online course design and development in practical ways (Poole; Singleton-Jackson and Colella; Stine). What is clear is that educators and practitioners will always give foremost consideration

15

to sound course integrity while the instructors sort out the best possible approaches. Still, more work is yet to be completed here (Brandt), and practical hands-on knowledge needs to be shared quickly; educators and practitioners are always playing catch up (*Education Week*).

    3. What are the best practices for teaching English Composition using emerging technologies?

Instructors are now slowly withdrawing from the all-text approach to online course design (Blair and Hoy), with good intentions to utilize technologies and multi-media applications (Richards). The consensus here indicates that many instructors now prefer to spend time evaluating what experts recommend with regards to technology and multi-media applications rather than immediately plunging into course design (Miller). The writing center and the electronic classroom have paved the way for hybrid and online instruction (Hirschhorn; Thaiss & Porter), which has allowed for sound instructor confidence in technologies and multi-media usage for success (Blythe; Harris; North; Williams). These developments have been encouraging for transfer into online teaching (Blythe; Williams).

Many educators and practitioners in the online field recommend that maintaining individuality in course design is best since each instructor has a unique in-class teaching style, which will work well online, with some gradual fine tuning from semester to semester in order to engage a diverse student body. There is also renewed interest in multi-media applications as a pedagogical educational tool (Lambert & Cooper; Tate, Rupiper & Schick), and more instructors are bringing into course design specific learning theories (Duffy and Jonassen; Pea). However, the intricate details of course development and design have never been fully determined, and many instructors are now trying a number of mixed approaches (Cifuentes & Lens; Hrastinski; Li, Finley, Pitts & Guo), including tapping into online writing centers (Hewett). There is much

work yet to be completed in this area, but there has been some progress towards determining what will work best.

However, identifying precise best practices and putting them to work across the board are not easy tasks because more and more English Composition courses are now offered online by competing institutions, which quickly call for more experienced instructors to staff increased enrollments. It is not easy for institutions to keep pace with the development and redesign of these courses with constantly changing technologies and multi-media advancements (Yagelski & Graybill). Indeed, in-house institution-based course developers are constantly put to the test in developing interactive courses, which is necessary for student engagement and success online in order to cater for students with different approaches to technology (Sidler, Morris, and Smith) and to successfully meet course objectives and to minimize the dropout rate. Instructors will need to take up the challenge and actively participate in course design and development (Millinen). After all, course facilitators inexperienced with the writing process are not needed but rather conscientious hands-on theory grounded instructors, since they are the ones who orchestrate student success in the English Composition online course.

4. How can instructors apply these emerging technologies to a fully functional online course?

Effective course design is of great significance in on-line methods of instruction. Whether using an institution's pre-packaged course or an instructor-designed course, it is very important to develop sound instructional material (Junaidu and Al-Ghamdi). For one, course instructions need to be clear (Fey and Sutton), and it is always best to introduce students to the constructivist approach to learning, which requires students to construct meaning by applying personalized techniques and shared experiences. This will allow students individualized options

17

with regards to venturing into new areas by creating digitalized documents and assignments requiring multi-media applications (Dean, Hochman, Hood and McEachem).

Often times, instructors will venture into an institution's pre-packaged course with mixed feelings (Wang and Gearhart) and become facilitators rather than instructors, and they could (like their students) lose interest very quickly. However, an instructor-designed course from the ground up will allow more opportunities for effective student engagement (Ragan), and both instructor and students will become partners in the writing process. Indeed, since mobile electronic devices now allow students to access course material in almost any situation (Keengwe and Kidd), course materials will keep pace with real-time expectations of a stronger instructor presence, especially in responding to student communications, grading assignments and providing one-to-one feed back.

All in all, care will be taken to encourage narrativity in course development (Stroupe), especially since in English Composition 100, students will explore the concept of writing as a recursive process, where each effort brings into play the student's personal ideas and stories, which are guided, enhanced and orchestrated by sequentially developed course materials. Indeed, especially since online learning depends more and more on the student taking the initiative to access course materials, as opposed to attending classes on a fixed schedule, more and more practitioners and educators realize the importance of placing the student in the driver's seat (Brame; Elbow). Indeed, by utilizing this technique, each student takes an active interest in his or her progress in the course (Driscoll); after all, writing is a process, where the course development will identify what the student already knows (Colella) and continue and improve that knowledge.

Indeed, the constructivist approach proposes that learners experience real-world situations where meaning is imposed on the world by the learners, and that there are many ways to approach the process of acquiring meanings or perspectives for any event or concept (Duffy and Jonassen). The key here with regards to real-world situations is that students write from experiences and often times students will encounter how peers will respond to similar experiences and situations. These encounters, in the discussion boards for example, will bring to light new situations through which students will be able to fashion their understanding of events and thus broaden their approach to writing. They will thus develop sound communication skills in this and other courses, leading to enhanced communication in real-world situations, both public and private.

Also, applying technology and multi-media effectively enhances the learning process. Students will not only be able to compose in text, but will also utilize technology to develop voice recordings to share with classmates; indeed, listening to other students express their ideas will eloquently capture the true essence of mood, style, and tone, which is important in effective writing practices. This approach then takes the instructor out of the all-text mode, and allows for narrativity in the course utilizing a number of technology-associated approaches to meeting learning objectives, thus allowing students an opportunity to develop individual and personalized expertise in completing assignments (Shoffner, Jones and Haromon). Also, instructor created videos will effectively personalize the course (DeSantis, Pantalone & Wiseman; Rose) and enhance the writing process. Indeed, through this mixed method, students needing assistance will have gained confidence, which leads to student independence and inspiration to explore new ventures, which are as follows: once the student, with the benefit of scaffolding (assistance from peers and the instructor) masters the task, the scaffolding will be gradually removed and the

student will then be able to complete the task again on his or her own (McLeod). The strength of the English Composition online course lies in the instructor's ability to create student-centered approaches to the learning process (Driscoll). The experiences gathered here can be used in future writing applications both in and out of the course.

The focus here is to develop an effective method for student success with active participation in the English Composition online course. This method will embrace learning theories in practical ways and can lead to good success in private and public communications. It will make the English Composition online class a worthwhile experience. Therefore learning theories applied and used successfully in-class will be evaluated for quick success online, with renewed interest in meeting future online expectations in new ventures.

Outline of the Study

Chapter One: Introduction to English Composition Online

Chapter Two: Use of Technology in Education, Online and Multi-Media Applications

Chapter Three: English Composition and Technology Today

Chapter Four: Practical Course Design and Best Practices Discussion

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Definitions

It is important to understand the various terms used in teaching English Composition as a subject and also the definitions applied to multi-media technologies and online applications.

*Asynchronous Instruction***:** involves no face-to-face interaction. Learning is conducted as follows: information is accessed, work completed, and exchanged by all participants through the electronic format.

Discussion Board: a list on which users can read, post, and reply to messages from other users who are members of the same discussion board. Also defined as a tool that allows groups to

communicate online. A discussion board consists of threads and messages. A thread is a series of messages on a particular topic, and each message is an individual contribution to a conversation.

Electronic Writing Center: refers to communication between students and instructors utilizing word processing software, discussion boards, e-mail exchanges, and various video and audio files, which are accessed in the classroom situation or through Internet connections.

Freshman English Composition: generally the first writing course taken by any college student regardless of major that involves introductory instructional methods on the writing and composing process.

Learning Management System (**LMS**): a software package that enables the management and delivery of learning content and resources to students. Most LMS systems are web-based to facilitate anytime, anywhere access to learning content and administration

Multimedia: generally refers to video and audio components, utilizing various software programs. However, in this dissertation, this format may utilize stand- alone or grouped multimedia applications, such as video and audio lectures, and other interactive components such as grammar quizzes and exercises, which have been created for specific instruction and learning, or directions to external resources through interactive links.

Online Chat: can refer to any kind of communication over the Internet, but is primarily meant to refer to direct one-on-one chat or text-based group chat using tools such as instant messages, Internet Relay Chat, or chat options included in an LMS.

Online Course: a course in which instruction is delivered via the Internet. With some Internet courses, information is available for learners to read and/or include various multimedia material. Other Internet courses include synchronous and asynchronous discussions and exchanges of

information, and while students and instructor do not meet face-to-face on campus, some

instructors give on-campus examinations and/or orientation sessions.

Chapter Two: Technology in Education, Online Instruction and Multi-media Applications

Brief history of technology in higher education.

As indicated in Chapter One, the acceptance of English Composition as a subject in the 1970s has helped increase acceptance by both educators and practitioners. The emergence of technology in education in the 1980s has also had a significant impact on English Composition both in-class and online; indeed, three inter-connected developments have had a positive impact on the subject of English Composition online. In order of appearance, these are: the acceptance of technology usage in education as an instructional tool, the practical and educational benefits of online instruction in meeting general education objectives, and the practical benefits of multi-media applications to meet learning outcomes and to engage students. English Composition online would not have existed without the embrace of these three factors by educational institutions. It now remains to be seen what the best practices are for online English Composition instruction with the use of multi-media applications. However, it will be noted that multi-media is constantly evolving, and these innovative improvements have motivated educators and practitioners to revisit multi-media usage in education at an accelerated rate.

A look at significant developments of technology in education will enhance one's understanding of best course design practices utilizing the latest technology. With the rapid advancement of technological teaching aids, software, applications and teaching machines, teaching with technology, although seen as a blessing by many, has had its troubles. However, many educational institutions in the twenty-first century have embraced technology in one form or another and the move has led to a positive upsurge in innovation and rapid advances in multi-media software and applications. Nonetheless, as more technology appears, and the old is

replaced with the new, with some over-lap in between, the use of technology in education needs to be constantly re-evaluated.

This discussion will begin with the early schools. Indeed, when the first public schools appeared, teachers armed with writing tools and the chalkboard started the first in a series of processes in providing writing instructions. Russell in his 1991 exhaustive study *Writing in the academic disciplines, 1870–1990 A curricular history*, points out that "writing was seen as 'talking with the pen'" (7). It was not long after that that "hard technology" began to make a much stronger appearance: the typewriter eliminated the need to hand-write academic essays and papers, and the machine became popular in schools as early as 1878. In the early 1900s films were introduced in schools, and in 1951 television began to make its way into the classroom. Notable advancements into the computer field occurred starting in the late 1970s. Bates and Poole in their 2003 book *Effective teaching with technology in higher education* report, "from our point of view, educational technology encompasses any means of communicating with learners other than direct, face-to-face, or personal contact" (5). With the first introduction of the computer in the 1970s, starting in businesses, a new wave of technological instruction was introduced in higher education. Rogers in his 2000 study "A paradigm shift: Technology integration for higher education in the new millennium" predicted the rapid advancements of technology in online education, and adds further encouragement for the use of technology in schools. He goes on to offer sound recommendations: "If universities are to remain competitive in the new millennium, they will effectively integrate technology into the classroom" (25).

What then is the status today? Indeed, the pace of advances in new computer technology has been very rapid. Sidler, Morris and Overman attest to this in their 2008 manual *Computers in the composition classroom: A critical sourcebook*: "the VCRs we fought to get in our classrooms

are on their last leg, and CD players may not be far behind. Old technologies have yielded to

new, and teachers and students today experience, use, and understand the world differently from

the way students and teachers did three decades ago"(2). What is clearly apparent is that

computers have caught on in education. Parker, Lenhart and Moore at the Pew research Center in

a 2011 article "The Digital Revolution and Higher Education" point out "More than half of

recent college graduates (57%) say when they were in college they used a laptop, Smartphone or

tablet computer in class at least sometime."

Indeed, the future looks promising for the use of technology in education as is evidenced

in the use of computers in teaching English and the strong growth of online methods of

instruction, which are technologically driven via the use of the computer and multimedia

technologies. These advancements have set the stage for the next series of technological

advancements into the field of online instruction: distance education.

Online Instruction in General

There has been an ongoing shift to take education "out of the classrooms" in part to meet

the needs of adult students, many of whom have had tight working schedules and very

demanding family responsibilities, and can only attend class once a week or not at all. This

concept of meeting the expectations of non-traditional learners has led to the online focus for the

twenty-first century of giving students "control over their own learning." Hence the term

"distance education," now defined as distinct from face-to-face instruction in the brick-and-

mortar classroom.

Distance learning is best described as learning that occurs when the instructor does not

meet face-to-face with students. As a result it requires special techniques of course design,

special instructional techniques, special methods of communication by electronic and other

technology, as well as special organizational and administrative arrangements, as defined by

Wang & Gearhart in their 2006 book *Designing and developing web-based instruction.*

Like earlier technology use in education, online instruction in general has been slow to

catch on, but its acceptance has been due to a number of innovative developments. Indeed, three

decade after its first appearance in 1969, online education has created its own niche in the

educational setting, and it has commanded the attention of educators from since about 1990

(Hawisher, Leblanc, Moran, & Selfe; Johnson-Eiola, & Selver; Sibyelle; Mora & Reynolds;

Blair; Education Week).

The precursors of online instruction lie deep in the past. The literature indicates that the

introduction of distance education began as early as 1728 with shorthand instruction through the

mail (Holmberg).   The International Correspondence School (ICS) may be considered the first

full-fledged attempt to create a wider body of distance learning using the postal service

(Watkinson).   The "hybrid" method of instruction was first introduced around 1883-1891:

Watkins highlights the Chautauqua College of Liberal Arts, which was authorized by the State

of New York to grant academic degrees to students who successfully completed work by

attending the college during the summer and by correspondence during the academic year.

With the advent of radio technology and the introduction of motion pictures, many

institutions began incorporating these technologies into their method of instruction (Wang and

Gearhart 3). However, "by 1940, only one college level credit course was delivered by radio,

and it failed to attract a significant number of learners especially since it was a one way means of

instruction (Nassaeh; PBS 18). On the other hand, television broadcast did catch on, especially

with support from the Federal Communications Commission (Wang and Gearhart). However,

this also had limitations; Rosenberg in his 2001 study *E-learning/strategies for delivering*

knowledge in the digital age points out: "the main reason why television did not become everyone's teacher was because it lacked the very essential quality of teaching: the ability to interact with the learner, provide feedback, and alter the presentation to meet the learner's needs. TV was a one-way provider of information; it was really not instruction" (24).

As the literature illustrates, early precursors to online instruction took many forms, some of which offered a number of practical options, yet few of these worked very well. However, the British Open University (OU) in 1969 did start the first full-fledged distance education courses (Holmberg), which further solidified the necessary interaction between instructors and students. What was missing in radio and televised broadcast was instructor-student interaction, and the British Open University (OU) successfully bridged that gap: "OU students have access to tutors over the telephone and access to face-to-face study groups in the evenings and weekends" (Matthews 54). This model was closely followed in the US by New York Empire State College (NYSES) in 1971, and new developments were quick to follow: "cable and satellite television came into use in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a delivery mode for distance education. Instructional opportunities offered via these media were largely aimed at independent learners" (Bizhan). Indeed, as Morey writes in **"**Globalization and the emergence of for-profit higher education": "Distance education and distributed instruction have freed education from being time and place bound, making it more flexible and attractive to adult learners" (135). Moreover, once this instant communication technology had developed a foothold, quick advances were made. The Virtual High School was established in 1997 in the US, and it offered "a variety of online courses to high school students worldwide" (O'Neil and Perez 333).

Morey notes that Jones International University, established "in 1995 became in 1999 the first online university to be fully accredited by the North Central Association" (134). Rapid

advances were made in online instruction soon after. The largest in the nation is the University

of Phoenix; "today UOP serves 174,900 students and has more than 47 campuses and 87 learning

centers in 52 states as well as Puerto Rico" as pointed out by Allen and Seaman in 2011. Rapid

increases in online enrollment have occurred very quickly in the last decade; Allen and Seaman

report that "1.9 million students were enrolled in online courses in the fall of 2003, and the

schools expected the number of online students to be over 2.6 million by the fall of 2004." The

Sloan Consortium, in 2011, reported that "over 6.1 million students were taking at least one

online course during the fall 2010 term, an increase of 560,000 students over the previous year.

This represents a 10% growth rate for online enrollments which far exceeds the 2% growth in the

overall higher education student population."

The numbers are constantly on the rise with regards to online enrollment. As pointed out

in the analysis "Faculty And Online Education, 2012" by Allen, Seaman, Lederman and Jashik,

"The proportion of students taking at least one online course has increased from fewer than 1 in

10 in 2002 to nearly one-third by 2010, with the number of online students growing from 1.6

million to over 6.1 million over the same period – an 18.3 percent compound annual growth rate"

(2).

Multi-Media Applications in Online Instruction

As covered in the first two sections of this chapter, the acceptance of technology and the

popularity of online instruction have had a significant impact on the growth of English

Composition online. For example, there is little dispute as to the success of technologies with

regards to meeting learning objectives. Two examples are of great significance: the computer and

writing software to facilitate development of text, and the everyday use of the Internet to

disseminate learning materials to students in real-time. However, going beyond textual material,

multi-media applications used to develop and instruct learners in these two areas have had

troubles especially since multi-media applications are constantly evolving; what seems to work

well one day with multi-media can change dramatically the next day. For example, any teacher

can develop and make available educational material for free access to all utilizing a video

camera, a computer and applicable software; You Tube videos attest to the popularity of this

form of disseminating information. Indeed, the software applications and multi-media

components have become so sophisticated that it is not uncommon for students to access online

classes with the Smartphone or to download and listen to class materials on an IPod. Therefore,

it is common for educators and practitioners to constantly revisit the use of multi-media

applications in online education in order to determine its immediate effectiveness and its long-

term applications for student success.

The development of multi-media from its 1975 introduction to its application by

educators and practitioners in today's online classes warrants serious analysis. Further chapters

in this study will make more direct connections with multi-media specifically as used in the

online English Composition course. Indeed, precise information is available on the development

of multi-media, and it is best summarized by Keengwe and Kidd in a 2011article "Towards Best

Practices in Online Learning and Teaching in Higher Education" as follows:

- 1975-1985: Programming; Drill and practice; Computer-assisted learning (CAL)

  Behaviorist approaches to learning and instruction; programming to build tools

  and solve problems; Local user-computer interaction.

- 1983-1990: Computer-Based Training Multimedia Use of older CAL models with

  interactive multimedia courseware; Passive learner models dominant;

  Constructivist influences begin to appear in educational software design and use.

- 1990-1995: Web Based Education &Training Internet-based content delivery; Active learner models developed; Constructivist perspectives common; Limited end-user interactions.

- 1995-2005: eLearning Internet-based flexible courseware delivery; increased interactivity; online multimedia courseware; Distributed constructivist and cognitivist models common; Remote user-user interactions.

- 2005 – present: Mobile learning and social networking Interactive distance courseware distributed online through learning management systems with social networking components; learning that is facilitated via a wireless device such as a tablet, a smart phone or a laptop; learning with portable technologies where the focus is on the mobility of the learner.

Starting from the pivotal adoption of multi-media applications in 1983 as identified by Keengwe and Kidd in the analysis above, this discussion will continue with a brief definition of these three terms (technology and education, success with the Internet, and multi-media acceptance) and point out inter-connectivity and the importance of this consolidation in order to engage students and to meet learning objectives. "The term *educational technology* was actually introduced in 1948 by W. W. Charters, and *instructional technology* first appeared in 1963, coined by James Finn" (Inman 61).   The website Tech Terms defines multimedia as follows:

> As the name implies, multimedia is the integration of multiple forms of media. This includes text, graphics, audio, video, etc. For example, a presentation involving audio and video clips would be considered a "multimedia presentation." Educational software that involves animations, sound, and text is called "multimedia software." CDs and DVDs are often considered to be "multimedia

formats" since they can store a lot of data and most forms of multimedia require a lot of disk space. (techterms.com)

Technology and its applications utilizing multi-media elements, identified above, in an online course have had sound educational benefits, and this has led to good acceptance by educators and practitioners. Indeed, the use of technology has been identified as a specific pedagogy in teaching (Tate, Rupiper & Schick). In a survey conducted by McDonough in a 2012 review "Engaging Students in Online Classes with Multimedia," it is concluded that "all faculty interviewed and surveyed who use multimedia technology in the classroom have grounded their use pedagogically." Indeed, with the rapid advancement of computer technology today, as covered in a 2006 study by Blair and Hoy "Paying attention to adult learners online: The pedagogy and politics of community," multi-media is a strong consideration for online courses, which requires us "to address the ever-evolving relationship between communication technologies and our literate lives on- and offline" (327). As a result of these innovations, one important use of multimedia technologies in the classroom today is identified by Richards in a 2010 article, "Digital Citizenship and Web 2.0 Tools," advances textual applications to the digital format, with the following recommendations: "Schools need not only to prepare students to be responsible citizens, but also to prepare them with the technological and communicative skills necessary to engage civic responsibility in a digital age" (520).

The literature points to the computer as beneficial not only for education but for social issues as well, especially with the rapid use of technological devices in all walks of life:

> The importance of the computer then cannot be undervalued. Indeed for more
> than two decades the discipline has attempted to make some sense – in social,
> political, historical, professional, pedagogical, and functional terms – of

31

computers not as computational machines but as literary environments,

environments that leave very few activities, individuals, or structures entirely

unaffected. (Selber 471)

The introduction of the computer does have resounding positive effects all around. As Senn

points out: "Those who have a firm grasp of the capabilities of the Internet, multimedia, and the

characteristics of the underlying information technology are most likely to influence, or at least

capitalize on, their application to the world around them – business or personal" (xxi).

This further supports the important point that all-text is not a sound approach to online

instruction. As acknowledged, an online course does require state-of-the art advancements

beyond textual information in order to engage students. Miller in an article published in 2011 "A

System for Integrating Online Multimedia into College Curriculum," reports concerns about

relying too much on text-based materials both in-class and online as indicated in this

comparison-contrast analysis:

Online multimedia resources are obviously neither space nor time bound. They

can be used within an equipped classroom or outside it at any time as long as

students have access to an Internet-enabled device. Indeed, distance-learning

instructors should find them particularly relevant in light of the common criticism

that their teaching is too reliant on text-based content. Online multimedia would

certainly go far in supplementing texts and streamed talking-head lecture videos,

and assignments requiring its production would likewise be suitable as much of

the substance of in-class instruction about media production could be handled

through online tutorials created by instructors themselves or linked from the Web.

(307)

The consensus of educators and practitioners indicates the importance of multi-media applications as the best way to go for online instruction. Indeed, of great significance are the findings of two researchers, Fey and Sutton, who after consulting with experts conclude in a 2010 article "A Model for Developing Multimedia Learning Projects":

> Multimedia learning projects in the classroom are not a new phenomenon, but advanced computer technology tools allow multimedia projects to be developed with enhanced interactivity, greater ease, and less cost than ever before. There is no uniform approach for faculty who are new to the design and development of multimedia projects, but there is a logical structured approach. (503)

However, it will not be forgotten that technologies used in education are always on the edge of change, and what works well today could very well need revisions and updating the next time around. Whether used in-class or on line, multimedia technologies are not static entities, and the following report highlights several major concerns, which will not be overlooked. As pointed out by Hai-Jew in a 2011 article "An Instructional Design Approach to Updating an Online Course Curriculum":

> Many distributed learning courses become dated essentially as soon as they launch. Courses can become dated by virtue of the authoring tools used to create their content, including text files, the slideshows, the audio, the imagery, and the video. Similarly, they can become dated by virtue of changes in their learning/course management system, web browser, media player, virtual world space, or related elements and layers of the technological dependencies required for online learning. This aging-out of content also occurs as a byproduct of the ongoing push to develop new technological and pedagogical methods. The speed

of change will leave behind those who do not move with the technological current.

There have been significant advancements in identifying suitable multi-media components for online instruction, with a keen eye for practical applications. On these points, the literature indicates that multimedia, whether used in-class with a computer or online in a course shell, exists on two levels:

> There are two categories of multimedia—linear and nonlinear. Linear multimedia tools generally progress from one screen to the next and are commonly used by instructors as a supplementary teaching aid. This form of multimedia tends to limit learning potential because it does not require active participation. On the other hand, nonlinear multimedia tools (those that include hyperlinks) offer viewers interactivity, control of progress, and choice in their construction of knowledge. (Lambert & Cooper)

A few practitioners and educators have begun to differentiate between the types of multi-media applications and have begun to utilize these approaches in course design. For example, Dowling in a 2011 publication *Multimedia Demystified* presents examples of multimedia types and applications as follows: PowerPoint and slide shows are all text and picture presentations, whereas non-linear multimedia applications allow the viewer some kind of interactivity or control over the presentation, such as the audio and visual Podcast, which then allows the viewer to interact with the presentation by becoming a participating audience in an orchestrated event.

Emerging technologies have had significant impact on multimedia application: items appearing as popular entertainment are now used for educational purposes. "The online format is one that may be particularly conducive to activities involving observation in video, as video is

a tool specifically designed for freezing, rewinding and replaying" (Baecher & Kung 108).

Snelson in a 2011 article "YouTube across the Disciplines: A Review of the Literature" reports:

> YouTube has grown to become the largest and most highly visited online video-sharing service, and interest in the educational use of YouTube has become apparent. Paralleling the rise of academic interest in YouTube is the emergence of YouTube scholarship. This article presents the results of a review of 188 peer reviewed journal articles and conference papers with "YouTube" in the title that were published between 2006 and 2009. (159)

Houghton in an article "Rationale for multimedia use and instruction in education" points out that "the history of being a current multimedia composer or educator will show that it has not been as simple and easy as working with print." Houghton emphasizes the drudgery of preparing for a multi-media presentation in the traditional classroom as follows: "An educator might have needed one cart in the room for the VCR, one for the overhead, one for the music player, another for the stereo system with speakers, and radio tuner, and another for the videodisc player and so forth", which has now been replaced by the stand-alone computer with a number of "Lug-ins." Bernard et al in a meta-analysis of online literature 1985-2002, add significant information on practical application requirements to engage students: "It is what the learner does with a medium that counts, not so much what the teacher does. These arguments suggest that media are more than just transparent, they are also transformative." This is not to say that an entire in-class "course-package" can be moved and dropped into an online shell without any modifications. "In fact, a great deal changes in the online classroom and successful practices in the traditional classroom may not work" (Harrington, Rickly and Day 253). Likewise, as Wang and Gearhart point out,

A web-based instructional program cannot be built simply by converting existing

courses from traditional format into electronic form and posting them on the web.

It requires very different information presentation and processing techniques, and

thus a different instructional design and development process from the traditional

models. (7)

Stroupe's comments add to an understanding of the use of multimedia to engage students:

In the distance-education pedagogy I propose, an online class is a collaborative

composition, not just instructional delivery plus conversation. It is not a slick

multimedia reality engine, but calls attention to the creation of the illusion of

presence by acquainting students with the techniques of this fiction. (273).

Indeed, there is sound reasoning in how Stroupe's comments that will facilitate and encourage

narrativity in the course and allow the student to engage with the material; hence, the student will

become an excited participant in the driver's seat.

The literature also indicates that students have been exposed to multi-media in one form

or another before taking their first online class. Handa writes of this new generation of students

and their quest for innovative multi-media presentations:

Many have home access to computers; the Internet; the World Wide Web; PDAs;

cell phones with games and Web access; sophisticated word-processing packages;

and software that allows them to draw, design, create movies, and edit or retouch

photographs and videos. (1)

Indeed, Handa's observations emphasizes and reinforces the need for courses to use multi-media

to meet expectations and needs of the avid learner.

Miller in a 2011 review "A System for Integrating Online Multimedia into College Curriculum" identifies relevant and important examples of readily-available media and multimedia by type, curriculum and examples by name to cover many online courses, with emphasis on audio and video formats, and within active and interactive accesses. For a deeper understanding of the technologies used in preparing multimedia items for delivery in the online class, one will turn to the descriptive analysis and examples provided by Richard in a 2010 article "Digital Citizenship and Web 2.0 Tools," as follows:

Table 1: Web Tools

Tool	Communication Type	Examples
Instant Messaging	Synchronous	AIM, GoogleTalk, MSN Messenger
Audio Chat	Synchronous	Skype, AIM, GoogleTalk, (any VoIP)
Video Chat	Synchronous	Skype, GoogleTalk, MSN Messenger
E-mail	Asynchronous	Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo Mail, Outlook
Discussion Forum	Asynchronous	UseNet, Tangler, FireBoard
Blogs	Asynchronous	Blogger, Wordpress
Wikis	Asynchronous	Wikipedia, PBWiki, Wikispaces
Social Networks	Synch. & Asynch.	Friendster, MySpace, Facebook
Micro Blogging	Synch. & Asynch.	Twitter, Tumblr

It can be noted from the above table that technological devices and software have come into play in designing and developing multimedia applications. This has been reinforced in a 2011 analysis as follows:

> The availability of camcorders, digital cameras, scanners, microscope-mounted
>
> cameras, digital microphones, and desktop lecture-capture software enables

virtually anyone to become a producer of digital content. Digital content can be

edited at one's desktop through video editing, image editing, and sound editing

software. These relatively new technologies enable students to represent ideas in

different formats, which enhance their deep learning along both visual/spatial and

auditory/verbal information channels. Material that originated in digital form can

be readily deployed in online immersive sites or on different platforms. The

scalability of some of these online experiences can help learning experiences feel

more personal and intimate, particularly in larger sections of courses where direct

one-on-one interaction with the instructor is rare. (Hai-Jew)

A listing of the most common types of Learning Management Systems is ANGEL Learning ,

Blackboard , Desire2Learn , eCollege , Epsilen , High Learn , Moodle , Sakai and WebCT

(Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching). Indeed, these user-

friendly platforms are readily suited for many inter-active multi-media applications to engage

students in the learning process.

In conclusion, the stage has been set for continued expansion in the field of online

instruction. Running parallel to the development and acceptance of online instruction in general,

English Composition has seen notable and successful developments. The teaching of writing and

its historical development has had a significant impact on identifying, improving and expanding

successful methods of instruction, which has led to the acceptance and integrations of technology

with multi-media into the English Composition online course. Chapter Three will develop a

clearer understanding of the history of writing with technology with a direct focus on instructors'

perceptions, attitudes and beliefs on how to approach the design and development of an online

English Composition course.

Chapter Three: Instructors' Approaches to English Composition Online

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore in detail how to best develop for students sound writing practices, and to look at the options available to an instructor in creating a fully functional asynchronous online English Composition course. This chapter will focus on four inter-connected areas of teaching with multi-media technology, which have impacted the development of English Composition online:

(1) how tutors at the writing center and instructors in the electronic English Composition classroom have facilitated the use of writing technologies and multi-media for good success

(2) how further development of writing technologies has enhanced the writing process both in-class and online for good student confidence and success

(3) how instructors approach course design and development in meaningful and practical ways

(4) how instructors approach multi-media applications in order to enhance course design and development towards meeting sound learning objectives.

Indeed, developments in the last decade in the art and craft of teaching English Composition have advanced significantly with the introduction of innovative writing technologies, and this rapid progression of multi-media technologies shows no signs of abating. The literature has indicated that there are four concurrent methods of teaching English

Composition with the use of technology and multi-media applications, and these approaches are evident in the following situations:

- Traditional in-class meetings

- Writing center activities

- The hybrid classroom: meeting partially in-class and online

- The self-contained online classroom

As pointed out in chapter two, the teaching of English Composition in the 1990s began to take a shift towards a more concentrated approach, with a renewed focus on textual analysis and individualized student-writing evaluations, as well as peer reviews, which allow students to "talk about their writing processes" with the end result that the writing "will speak for itself" when viewed by the inquisitive reader. Following this, a more precise student-centered focus began to appear, especially in determining what works best in the classroom to serve students' expectations in meeting course objectives, and with all good intentions to put the student in the driver's seat (Brame; Elbow). This new concept of placing the student in the driver's seat indicates a strong commitment by practitioners and educators to allow students, under the guidance of the instructor, to take charge of their own learning: to develop sound time-management skills, to fully engage in the peer-review process, to infuse meaning in their writing, and to develop a more conscientious effort to apply individualized learning to real-world activities. In essence, students will begin to ask: What is in it for me?".

Of course, computer-mediated instruction has facilitated good writing techniques, where written versions could be produced, revised and edited much faster than before. Indeed, the rapid introduction of multimedia technologies today in the English Composition online course does lead to innovative ways of meeting course objectives. However, educators and practitioners

have never been able to accurately pin-point what the absolutely best approaches in teaching English Composition were, although there have been many of these different and varied techniques that seem to work well in one form or another. Brandt's conclusions in his 2011 exhaustive study on the profession, "Struggles for perspectives: A Commentary on 'One Story of Many to Be told': Following Empirical Studies of College and Adult Writing through 100 Years of NCTE Journals," brings out the challenges. He indicates that more work needs to be done, especially since "trying to study a phenomenon undergoing such rapid shifts makes such struggles for perspective ongoing and irresolvable" (210). Indeed, the process of writing is not a static one.

Nonetheless, strong efforts are constantly being made to bring innovative techniques to the writing process. As developed and explained in chapter two, three developments have had a significant influence on teaching English Composition online: the embrace of technology as a pedagogical tool in education, the impact of the Internet on non-traditional approaches to education, and the introduction and use of multi-media applications in fostering sound writing practices. Also, it is generally agreed that the use of computer software in developing approaches to brainstorming ideas, revising, editing, and proofreading have significantly improved the writing process. However, words of caution are necessary: technology and multi-media did not solve several of the concerns indicated previously by Brandt, and may have even compounded the difficulty in identifying what is the best approach in teaching English Composition.

This renewed interest in writing by many innovative educators and practitioners did result in the English Composition classroom quickly coming into focus in the twenty-first century as a place for fostering sound student writing. Together with the assistance of the writing center,

measureable successes were achieved over time. Indeed, the writing centers at many universities were the first classrooms to fully introduce the computer and writing technologies to aid in the development of sound writing practices, unlike the traditional classrooms, which were at first paper based and more instructor-centered given the time limitations of class sessions that met only once or twice a week for no more than one or two hours. As technologies improved, many writing centers began to fully utilize quite a significant number of the technology and multi-media applications that were to make a later appearance in the regular classroom, the hybrid class, and subsequently online.

The Electronic Writing Center

The English Composition classroom teachers' main purpose is to develop and nurture sound writing practices in the student's approach to the writing process, which will lead to clear meaning in the writing. However, no two teachers will have identical approaches, nor will one approach necessarily be better than the other. By the same token, not all students will approach writing in the same way; each student will have developed his or her own writing style and preferences. Nonetheless, when teachers and students sit together at the writing table, their first task will be to sort out these differences and continue on very quickly with a series of interactive events that will enhance student writing and engage an inquisitive audience. Indeed, since not all students will be at the same level of ability in writing and expression, it is not uncommon for students to also seek tutoring to bring their writing up to speed with their peers. The instructor may fill some of the students' needs, with time permitting in class, or will continue with one-to-one discussions during assigned conference hours, also, it is not uncommon for the concerned instructor to direct students to seek assistance from tutors. Hence, the appearance of the very helpful university writing centers.

Indeed, the writing centers have played an important role in student tutoring, and in partnership with the traditional English Composition classroom have had a significant impact on student success. Muriel Harris reports in an article "Writing Center Concept" on how the writing centers came first into force and the roles that they have played historically: "Some writing centers have been in existence for twenty, thirty, or more years, yet the large majority of writing centers at the college level were started in reaction to the "literacy crisis" of the mid- 1970s and the subsequent 'back-to-basics' movement."

Although the "back-to-basics" movement focused mainly on high school work, it stands to reason that students with poor writing skills, and especially those seeking higher education, will need help and assistance with writing at the college level when they continue their studies. Robert Liftig in an article "After Basics" explains the complexities and issues of this back-to-basics movement and its expansion into college level writing as follows: "If anything, the basics movement has aggravated the problem, and the result has been a rise in *aliteracy*, an ability to understand the written word only in bits and pieces of isolated sentences in grammar or punctuation exercises and an inability to gain from a creative sequence of related sentences any aesthetic experience" (47). Indeed, this movement has compounded the issue with regards to what constitutes good writing. As pointed out previously, there is no one way to approach the teaching of writing; teachers are divided on the importance of grammar, while many are in general agreement that writing is a recursive process, and that audience consideration is an important factor. It stands to reason then that "writing can be expected to enhance learning in academic settings, but it is not a potent magic. Contextual factors including the intensity of the intervention, the nature of the writing tasks, and the ability of the students to take best advantage

43

of writing's operation moderate the influence of writing on learning" (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley and Wilkinson 53). These approaches were further enhanced by writing technologies.

Indeed, there have been noticeable advancements since the 1970s with regard to developing sound writing practices, especially with the use of technology in higher education. For starters, this process of seeking assistance through the writing centers was accelerated in the early 1980s when writing software and printers were readily available, and enthusiastic in-class instructors began to demand that students submit typed copies of papers. Few students had computers, and since not all classrooms had computers, students were often sent to the library or the technology centers hosting computers or to the writing center, if one was available, for assistance with typing, formatting and revising documents. In the early 1990s multi-media applications were starting to appear on personal computers, and this greatly encouraged the use of sound writing practices utilizing various new writing technologies.

Early writing classrooms were not the computer labs we know today. Instructors relied on textbooks, printed handouts and the chalkboard. However, what is certain is that educators and practitioners in the traditional classroom will never immediately move a weak student into the driver's seat without some nurturing assistance. Since there is never enough time to work with a student one-on-one on a daily basis in the traditional classroom (Boquet; Oomen-Early & Murphy), the concerned instructor will need to work closely with the student on an individual basis or will make recommendations for one-on-one tutoring outside the classroom.

In the busy classroom, the instructor may offer pointed and targeted commentaries to the student's work without any major line edits. This is a sound approach to developing critical thinking, which allows the student to rethink and refashion the work for clearer meaning. Granted, not all students in traditional writing classrooms will ever need to seek outside help.

However, students needing assistance may voluntarily seek help at the writing center, or may be directed there by a concerned instructor if the instructor's recommendations for revisions were not addressed by the student in class submissions and resubmissions. Indeed, in many institutions the writing center has become an important arm of the English Composition classroom. At the writing center, students are allowed great opportunities on a one-to-one basis to talk about their writing and take charge of the writing process with appropriate recommendations and guidance, and later on, students will expand on their ideas in the regular in-class sessions.

Eventually, writing center staff were not only offering help to students with operating the writing software, but became tutors, and seriously began to offer more one-on-one guidance and assistance in developing students' writing rather than actually doing the writing work for the students, which is always a sound approach (Brooks; Meyer; North). After the work is completed at the writing center, the student will often report back to the classroom with a tutor completed form of the activities developed at the writing center, which facilitates important developmental responses from the instructor as the work progresses. It will not be forgotten that the writing centers are often staffed by excellent undergraduate students, graduate assistants, adjunct instructors, and often times a full-time professor, and cover a wide range of writing activities.

Indeed, writing centers are known to develop students' writing not only in first year English Composition but also at the thesis and dissertation levels. With the introduction of the computer for all practical writing purposes in the 1990s, technological applications were starting to influence writing practices in significant ways. Various types of writing technologies began to appear, and educational institutions developed serious studies in order to evaluate a myriad of

enhancements to the writing process. Simpson in an evaluative article "What lies ahead for Writing Centers" effectively describes the approach a typical writing center will take:

> Because writing is a skill used in all subjects and at all levels of the educational process, a writing center should be considered a support service for the entire institution rather than simply for a single department. Although the budget and staff of a writing center may come from a single department, the mission of the center and its constituencies should encompass the entire institution.

It is clear that writing centers have gone beyond the traditional means of funding in order to bring their much required services into sound focus with effective approaches. For example, writing centers have reached out in their quest to evaluate writing technologies and to explore additional sources of funding for such evaluations. To a great extent, this approach has good merit: "Writing consultants conduct assessment focusing on not only on their own effectiveness while working with clients, but they also must assess the resources and material they have in order to meet the needs of their clients." Since technological applications and multi-media have advanced in leaps and bounds with the advent of computers, many are the efforts of writing centers to put sound evaluations of technological practices to work in order to enhance student's writing, and funding from Mellon and other institutions have made astonishing progress in these areas.

Several examples of extensive research have resulted in practical approaches to utilizing technologies to advance learning. Indeed, a sound practical example is found in one pilot study explored in "The Writing Centers' Mellon Grant Proposal", which was first adopted in 1999 in the Claremont consortium of colleges, where "Claremont students and faculty would benefit from a concerted effort to bring writing and technology together. We therefore propose a two-

year project that does so through faculty development, resources for students, and training for Writing Center consultants."

Indeed, this first two-year study is very important and relevant approach to understanding practical applications of writing technologies and it has enhanced the writing center activities. These innovative approaches have been adapted and modified in classrooms, and they have also enhanced course development for online English Composition. Highlights of this proposal offer sound applications of technologies to enhance the writing process in numerous ways, which are covered below.

(1) MOOs/MUDs (synchronous chat environments) radically change teaching by making the entire classroom discussion take place online and in writing. Students gain more control over the topics covered. Thus, the class becomes student-centered rather than teacher-centered. Furthermore, students are required to communicate clearly in writing.

(2) Class Reading Notes require students to build a hypertext document that includes selections from class texts, explication of quotes, additional questions, and alternate interpretations.

(3) Annotated Sample Papers illustrate what professors like and do not like in student papers. Professors post sample papers with hyperlinked annotations to commentary about elements of a particular paper.

(4) Networked Writing Classrooms allow students to post their papers for immediate (and potentially anonymous) feedback from peers and professors.

(5) Online Discussion Groups/Class Listservs promote the written discussion of class topics outside the classroom.

(6) Research Groups bring together students from different campuses who are working on similar projects. Students can electronically exchange research notes, questions, and sources, and invite experts to participate in online discussion.

(7) Collaborative Writing Projects require students with sometimes conflicting perspectives to work together to produce a coherent text. Electronic writing environments can reduce the complications associated with the division of labor and the evaluation of participants.

(8) Hypertext Authoring allows students to build a multidimensional response to an assignment. It can incorporate sound, images, and links to additional information and multiple perspectives on the student's topic.

(9) Virtual Office Hours offer an alternative way that professors can interact with students through synchronous chat or immediate email responses to questions.

Moreso, significant advances have since been made from 1999 to 2013 with regards to technological applications in the writing center to enhance students' writing. Grinnell points out in a 2009 analysis, for example, "Writing centers offering not only computers and tutors, but also reading rooms, collaboration suites, podcast centers, study zones, coffee break and chat places, social spaces to put up your feet and zone out for a minute or two will find their work in the long tail highly rewarding." Indeed, the writing center's electronic presence has been met with great enthusiasm.

Further enhancements at the writing center and follow-up meetings in the regular classroom have allowed the student to settle in more comfortably in the driver's seat. Indeed, the writing center's function, with the full use of technology and multi-media, as indicated by Harris in a 2011 article "Writing Center Concept," is best summed-up as follows: "Their services typically include many of the following: tutoring, workshops, resource libraries of books and

handouts, word processing, self-instruction in computer-assisted-instruction (CAI), and a variety of other media, writing assessment, grammar hotlines, conversation groups for English-as-a-second-language students, writing contests, tutor training practicums, and credit courses." Therefore, the writing center serves an important function for all students and has adequately supported student usage of technology and multi-media in meeting course objectives. Indeed, the writing center has captured the attention of students, educators and practitioners with stunning on-line ventures, which are popular well into the twenty-first century.

Also writing center tutors do offer hands-on instruction in developing a multi-media essay. Klein and Shackelford reinforce good document design practices, in a 2013 article "Beyond Black on White: Document Design and Formatting in the Writing Classroom," as follows:

> You can strengthen data supporting your position in an opinion paper if you present it in a graph rather than a narrative format. However, include graphics in written assignments with care: they should supplement, not replace, your writing. When you are creating, don't think of design features as only images. Remember that visual design applies to the style of the text you use to convey ideas.

The writing center does facilitate excursions into parallel methods of writing instruction with direct connections to Websites. Indeed, the online writing labs, first introduced in 1994, serve as a support center for both beginning and experienced writers with an online presence for quick Internet access at any time. In a 2010 analysis "Theoretical Underpinnings of Online Writing Labs (OWLs)" Hewett points out that to a great extent, writing centers encourage students to use Online Writing Labs (OWL) hosted by independent providers on a no-charge basis; this has also directed students to utilize inter-active grammar and proofreading exercises,

thesis-building applications, how to maintain unity and coherence in writing, and examples of good writing.

Indeed, many of these tested and proven approaches to active student engagement discussed above have been introduced directly into hybrid courses and eventually into online course applications. What is of great significance is that there have been significant improvements in the availability of writing technologies in the twenty-first century, which have brought composition classrooms into close partnership with writing centers; many English Composition classrooms today are equipped with computers, which allow students to compose, revise and share work in real-time. Together with writing center activities, the English Composition classroom, equipped with state of the art computers, has advanced writing to the digital format. This process has taken text-based materials into a digital form, necessary for online instruction, and puts the novice online instructor into a position of now being able to reinforce the statement: "I am an expert at teaching the subject in-class; therefore, there are reasonable expectations that I can also teach it online with good success."

Since the teachers and students are now virtually present in the online classroom, textual material will be digitized to encourage real-time exchange of ideas and develop clear meaning in writing. Indeed, innovative and practical advances in technology have fostered improvements in writing in English Composition, from writing center, to classroom, and to online. As Levine points out:

> It is not that writing is so terrible, it is just that it is so limited. What began simply
> as a means of expression has, over the last 2000 years, come to put severe limits
> on the way we think. Interactive muli-media frees us from those limits of
> expression, and in so doing it will inevitably free us from text-based limits on

50

thought. The new information literacy teaches us to put a premium on multiple

interpretations, competing explanations, the interconnectedness of knowledge,

and a diversity in expressing our thoughts and ideas. Success in the Information

Age demands nothing less. (254)

The digitalizing of documents is an important development that has seriously impacted learning

online, and the next section will explore what this technology is and how it has advanced into

more diverse and compelling ways of composing writing.

Teaching English Composition with Technology

As discussed above, the self-contained electronic writing center, together with its online

links to writing Websites, has served as a forerunner to the electronic in-class English

Composition classroom with interactive technological and multi-media applications.

Instructors, tutors and students have all been quick to implement technology, which provides

practical means of submitting work. It is clear that quality software products have allowed the

students to compose faster, write better, and obtain more rapid feedback, and often in real-time.

The development of practical writing technologies, and their sound acceptance by

educators and practitioners, has fostered good writing in students. Starting in the 1980s, the

methods of composing text were enhanced with the introduction of the word processor; in a 1989

study *Computer Writing Environments* Glynn, Oaks, Mattocks, and Britton reported that the

device freed not only "students from the mechanical burdens of recopying, [but also] the word

processor promotes a writing environment in which revisions become easily accomplished and is

viewed as an integral part of the total composing process" (10). Increasingly, classes and

programs in writing now require students to compose digitally, and the expression "composing

digitally" can refer to a myriad of practices. As pointed out by Charles Moran in 2001, "In its

simplest form, such writing can refer to a "mixed media" writing practice, which is the kind that occurs when students compose at a computer screen, using a word processor, so that they can submit the writing in print." This work can also be submitted electronically without a single sheet of paper exchanging hands.

Electronic writing practices can go one step further and line-editing of work has been facilitated by technology. Since the arrival of e-mail and Internet services in the 1990s, students with an instructor's approval can submit an electronic copy, which can be graded using available editing software programs. The student can send back an electronic marked-up copy (the process is commonly referred to as "track changes"), whereby no paper physically changes hands. It was pointed out by Schroeder and Boe in a 1990 article "Minimalism, populism, and attitude transformation: approaches to teaching writing in computer classrooms," that "Teachers, not computers, improve student writing, but computers make it easier for teachers to do so" (41). Indeed, the writing center and the electronic classroom have whetted the appetite for technology use by both students and instructors. Sidler, Morris, and Smith in a 2008 study *Computers in the composition classroom: A critical sourcebook* explain students' reactions to technology as follows: "Some students will walk into our classrooms loaded with the latest digital technology, some will have outdated hardware and software, and still others may have no computer at all" (89). As a result, instructors have begun to address the use of technology and to use practical approaches. Palmquist, Mike, Rodrigues, Kieferand, and Zimmerman in a study, "Network Support for Writing across the Curriculum: Developing an Online Writing Center," indicate also that in writing classes there is a "balancing act" between the teacher and technology where the teacher will not only gain an education in the technology, but also will somehow become a

partner with the student as recipient of this knowledge and its application; the end result is to improve the student's writing.

At the same time, electronic means of writing and submitting work have had to keep pace with new and emerging technologies. It has long been noted that there are benefits of using this technology in meeting learning objectives and course outcomes. Already as early as in 1984, Charles Moran in his article "Technology and the teaching of writing" pointed out, "as computer technology has evolved over the past two decades, writing teachers have found that they could adapt this emerging technology to radically different pedagogies" (203). Indeed, the status for the twenty-first century is clearly identified in a 2012 report in New Horizon for Learning where the staff editors indicate that "appropriately used - interactively and with guidance - they [computer technologies] have become tools for the development of higher order thinking skills."

Of great significance is the arrival of the Internet, which has allowed the electronic exchange of documents to become practical for both instructors and students. The groundwork was already in place as early as 2000 with the use of technology in the teaching of in-class writing to allow a direct electronic move into the writing centers and soon after into online methods of writing instruction (Condon), especially since many instructors already had an electronic presence in their traditional classroom as pointed out in 2001 by Mallinen, by using the computer and an online platform such as Blackboard or e-college (among others) to disseminate textual information, record grades and provide supplemental audio-video applications to enhance the learning process.

These first forays into an electronic platform led to the formation of the hybrid classroom, with partial meetings on-campus, especially for proctored exams, one or two in-

person consultation meetings, but with the bulk of interaction in the online format. Indeed, the writing center activities, together with the electronic classroom, seem to blend well into online methods of instruction. From digital writing, the process has now evolved to where students utilizing the online format can also maintain an electronic presence and may not meet face-to-face as in the traditional or hybrid classroom.

Although there is concern that the lack of face-to-face contact and the lack of faculty support in online instruction can result in a lack of interest and engagement among students as pointed out by Bates in a 2005 study *Technology, e-learning and distance education*, others report differently on this subject indicating that educational institutions and educators alike have begun to see positive results in partnering teachers, students, and technology in the digital environment online (Self & Selfe; Anson). What is certain is that digital media, information technologies, and instructional practices are all profoundly affecting the way instructors teach and the ways in which learners learn, both in the classroom and in the online environment.

Indeed, teachers who once felt the need to take charge in the traditional classroom are now encountering the opposite and are finding out that they need students to take more responsibility for their own learning in the online environment (Palmquist, Kieffer, Hartvigsen & Goodlew). As indicated previously in writing center discussions, this method follows closely the writing center activities where students are asked to talk about their writing and take charge of the writing process with appropriate recommendations and guidance.

Another factor that has developed with the availability of technology, multi-media and the Internet is the availability and frequency of courses offered completely online, which has impacted the learning process in many different yet compelling ways. At first, teaching a course in writing or English composition online was considered too complicated; however, today many

colleges offer English writing courses in class in an electronic format or entirely online. Indeed, the future looks very promising, and many instructors are eager to explore online teaching opportunities with regards to English Composition.

However, the process of developing online instruction in English Composition has not been an abrupt one nor has it been a clear cut one. Recommendations made more than two decades ago have had an impact on teaching methods with the use of technology. In 1984 Schwartz recommended that "new teachers can use computer programs and word processing to combine the systematic coverage of a writing class with the individualization of a writing workshop" (239). Indeed, many students compose written texts using a number of technology tools from the drafting stage to the final finished product. Schwartz concludes: "Computer aids offer us ways of implementing theory and recommendations, which have seemed impractical before" (247). This leads into additional available resources such as multi-media applications, and the benefits they provide. Selfe and Takayoshi in 1994 highlighted the importance of multimedia applications as follows:

> In an increasingly technological world, students need to be experienced and skilled not only in reading (consuming) texts employing multiple modalities, but also in composing in multiple modalities, if they hope to communicate successfully within the digital communication networks that characterize workplaces, schools, civic life, and span traditional cultural, national, and geopolitical borders.

This embrace of technology in the writing process has been a gradual one, but with many bumps in the road.

Indeed, three decades after Schwartz's recommendations, and with the continued advance of technologies, educators and practitioners have begun to notice new trends. Sidler, Morris, and Smith, in an analysis in their introductory remarks to *Computers in the Composition Classroom* published in 2008, add details on significant advancements:

> Computers no longer facilitate the eventual printed word: They change the nature of composition altogether….Multi-media approaches to composition necessitate new associative rhetorics that recognize the connective capabilities of emerging media and new genres, writing spaces, and forms of argumentation they create. (451)

Moreso, the numbers do support this upward trend. In a recent study, Allen and Seaman report that approximately twenty-nine percent of course material in the traditional in-class method of instruction is delivered through an online format, whereas more than eighty-percent of course content is delivered online for online classes. Therefore, it is clear that an online class will extensively utilize multi-media applications in meeting course objectives.

Indeed, what is now clear is that the college undergraduate course in composition instruction, which focuses on expository writing, has carved a niche for itself in the electronic environment where traditional essay-writing in the text mode is being supplemented (or replaced) by other forms of media-enhanced writing as pointed out by Reynolds, Bizzell, and Herzberg in a 2004 study. Increasingly, students are granted access to applications that allow them to explore non-traditional ways of composing and submitting work.

A 2009 report from Penn State University indicates that writing has evolved to an electronic real-time activity: Using the Blogs at Penn State platform and Digital Commons studios, students are creating online portfolios, using multimedia to enhance assignments, and

reflecting on digital literacy through individual and course blogs. For example, what was a paper resume is now an interactive professional Web space. What was a paper set of instructions is now an audio and/or video "how-to" guide. Where once students would have only limited interaction with each other, they now provide constant feedback, link to additional resources, and create a community of information that expands beyond the classroom.

Indeed, a strong indication of the progress in electronic means and methods of education is indicated as follows: "In fall 2011, 100% of Miami's English 111 and 112 courses will be taught in laptop or desktop classrooms, providing students access to the networks and software to help them learn the skills they need to become effective writers in academic, professional and civic venues" (Miami University). What does this translate to? As Perl reports:

> When I first saw a digital story, in other words, I had a sense that the future was here and that composing using not only text but also images, sound, and graphics was exciting, and complex, that it speaks to a student body raised on images, music and film, and that it gives prominence to what often matters most to me when teaching writing which is voice.

With today's technology resources and multimedia applications, English composition online is no longer isolated in the classroom or writing centers; it has advanced into the digital age and has come to encompass many additional communication activities. This practical use of technology and multi-media will have a profound impact on the approach an instructor will take in developing an online class.

Approaches to Course Development

From the preceding section it is clear that teaching English Composition online with the use of multi-media has gained good acceptance, and the prognosis looks promising for the future.

Many instructors have begun to develop some expertise in the hybrid and online classroom. However, since there are many and varied approaches an instructor will take in preparing an online class, care needs to be taken to present a course that is engaging for all concerned and one that will meet course objectives. This section will focus on two inter-connected areas: what the instructor will bring to the table with regards to course development utilizing a blank course shell, and what the institution will have to supplement in pre-packaged course management systems (CMS). Many times there is a sound meeting of the minds with either approach. Often times there are serious disconnects. Indeed, sacrifices will have to be frequently made by educators and practitioners as the online course is presented for the first time to students, and the process will be repeated the next time around, and so on.

On the subject of instructor know-how, this analysis will begin with the observations of both educators and practitioners on what will be the best practical approach for this important online beginning English Composition writing course, and how an instructor will enhance these recommendations in order to present a vibrant and engaging English Composition online class. These evaluations will equip the instructor with the "mind set" necessary to construct a well-crafted course, which will prevent obvious headaches for both the instructor and students, and ultimately the educational institution.

To recap, the literature has indicated that there has been a progression from the chalk-board classroom to the electronic writing centers, followed by a gradual shift to hybrid instruction (meeting both in-class and online), and then in the last decade a rapid shift into the complete online format with its diverse and interactive multi-media applications. Indeed, what has worked well with technology and multi-media applications in the traditional classroom, the electronic writing center and the hybrid classroom have all aided the advancement of English

composition instruction in the hybrid and the online environment, with good intentions to place the student ever more in the driver's seat. Nonetheless, this is not a process that can happen overnight, especially since situating writing instruction materials into any type of online course shell requires good foresight and sound expertise, and an equal commitment to revise what has been offered the next time around..

Notwithstanding recent innovative improvements in the use of writing technologies and multi-media, and the volume of literature on the subject that has become available, new hurdles have appeared, which will be addressed in order to move forward with enhancing, as described before, narrativity in the course. Indeed, the course will develop a seamless flow in an engaging manner especially since not all students will have the same approach to the writing process; the instructor will take great care to incorporate that flexibility into the course. After all, students do work on their own twenty-four-seven in an online course, and sound sequencing of information is absolutely crucial. Writing is a process, and the online English Composition course development will mimic that process: the journey of the course and the journey into writing are inter-connected. Indeed, in the process of writing students go back and forth to revisit and re-perfect their writings. Laura Lloyd-Smith, in a 2009 article "Introducing distance learning to novice e-learners via course web enhancements," reinforces the idea that there needs to be a gradual approach in understanding the issues with regards to introducing technology into writing practices. Indeed, since instructors' preferences vary, there is no one-cap-fits-all solution; indeed, it is best this way for several important reasons. Writing is a process that has a myriad of approaches, with a great deal of experimentation with diverse student bodies in order to develop writing where meaning will be clear.

Indeed, first-time instructors are very much aware of what needs to be done, yet they are not sure how to begin the process in an online course. Ray in an important 2012 article "Faculty perspective: Training and course development for the online classroom" points out that the knowledge base, compared to earlier attempts at teaching online, has improved: "Instructors teaching in the online format realize the differences associated with instructing online versus teaching in the face-to-face classroom" (237). Realizing what needs to be done, but getting it done will often times create difficulties at several levels with emerging technologies. Indeed, there is more work yet to be undertaken especially since there is often times a disconnect in that many new instructors "are struggling to move their course content into the online format" (Ray 237). This struggle is often times compounded when the instructor advances too quickly into the use of writing technologies, which is highlighted in a 2008 study: "It is more likely that both students and instructors recognize the utility of these technologies, and when the course material is more difficult (or the instructor more demanding), then these technologies are more frequently used" (Wuensch, Aziz, Ozan, Kishore and Tabrizi 27). However, this in itself creates other problems especially since instead of developing narrativity within the course for effective student engagement, haphazard introduction of multi-media creates annoying bumps in the road, which can steer the student completely off course. Our twenty-four-seven aspiring student writer, well versed in the techniques of unity and coherence in writing, will quickly become frustrated when he or she encounters a course that does not invite active participation, sound exchange of dialogue and a seamless progression.

This narrativity in online course development can be reached through several means. Developing a course requires clear instructions and instructors will be able to insert themselves quickly and directly into students' perspectives if they ask themselves the one fundamental

question any student will ask: "What is in it for me?" Instructors must interact within their own course before presenting it to students. Indeed, students are often asked to "read aloud" since their writing will need to speak for itself. In the same way, instructors will examine their own course for narrativity by "reading aloud" their own progress through the course. Subsequently, both instructors and students as active participants will begin to interact with the multi-media applications as they are integrated into the course. These approaches are integrally tied in to achieving specific learning outcomes.

Indeed, with regards to course design, an instructor will have only one option available, and one chance to make this work, without being able to change anything once the course has opened, for fifteen weeks or more, which will sometimes depend solely on what the institution will demand. Therefore, educators and practitioners will come together to make this work in practical and meaningful ways. There are essentially three course options, with each presenting its own sets of joys and benefits, yet each with certain cries of alarm for the inexperienced, and pitfalls for the unwary:

    (1) The first type of course, which is the most common, will be offered by the institution through a pre-designed course shell where the instructor is not allowed to make modifications or additions to course content. This course will contain both textual and some multimedia instructional material, which can be audio (Podcast), video, interactive modules, or a combination of both (Anson; Wiley), or sometimes no multi-media content. Indeed, there are many course management systems (CMS) available which contain many of the features of multimedia applications and will place the instructor as a fully functional choreographer in the driving seat, as pointed out by Sadera, Robertson, Song, & Midon in a 2009 article "The role of community

in online learning success." Indeed, course objectives are realized much more quickly as more and more educators and practitioners are taking a more active role in addressing issues relating to teaching English Composition online by providing courses that are streamlined and offer consistency across their institution, and where all instructors "think alike and act the same", which could indicate less trouble for the institution. However, this is in direct contrast, and often times in conflict, with the twenty-first century approach that no two instructors teach alike, nor will they want to teach a course the same way, nor will they want to teach the same course the same way the second time around. After all, instructors are hired for their expertise and innovative ways in bringing quality educational practices to inquisitive students. However, there are a few work-arounds that the instructor can employ to make it easier for the students. It is anticipated that the instructor will need to spend considerable time understanding the structure and organization of the pre-fabricated course in order to provide timely guidance to students. The instructor will be kept very busy crafting appropriate announcements on upcoming activities, will need to alert students of critical deliverables by e-mail, and will need to develop a slew of other impromptu activities in order to maintain students' interest. Nonetheless, care needs to be taken by educators and practitioners to monitor these systems for continued student success, and to allow for revisions and modifications the next time around.

(2) The second type of institution-created course will allow some instructor participation in course design and development either as the course is introduced, or before the course is released. However, with regards to the type of assignments and the graded

deliverables, the instructor will have limited to no involvement, and will not be able to offer alternatives to the students. These CMS will only allow the instructor to select on an individual basis appropriate multimedia content to meet individual course objectives and with some modification (Simonson). Indeed, this approach will work equally well for new instructors, since the instructor will have good opportunity to streamline the course and add a few finishing touches here and there. Given time, many instructors will have developed expertise in a number of such systems and the instructor will have enhanced his or her expertise with multi-media applications, and will do very well in the course, and exceedingly well the next time around.

(3) The third type of course will demand great planning by the instructor, and this is the "empty course shell." Instructors will be given a blank course shell and a syllabus template, and will be asked to develop the course from scratch. Some inexperienced instructors with great excitement will want to quickly create "something out of nothing." These instructors will erroneously begin to move their in-class course online, and will add snippets of multi-media here and there. This course, like others in the series, will have course materials that will be released in weekly date-controlled buckets. Indeed, with the first week's release, and when matters are not working well with the course design and development, students will voice their opinion in several ways: discussion board chat with classmates, postings of questions to the instructor, e-mail inquiries, and if the course permits, frequently phone calls not only to the instructor but to the institution. It is very possible that the instructor will be kept busy developing and redeveloping weeks yet to be released. It is misleading to think that a vibrant course will result from this "mixed bag of tricks."

Indeed, quite a few instructors will have jumped to quick conclusions and hasty approaches to course design, and will have created a course that will quickly confuse everyone and completely alienate students. Of course, the end result of a fully developed creative course needs to be a unified course narrative. However, there is a good expectation of success, in that, with great care, sound pre-planning, and with good time-management skills at work, this course shell and syllabus template will be the best possible approach, especially for instructors with some experience in course design and previous online teaching successes. Anson in his article "Distance voices: Teaching and writing in a culture of technology," projects that with great care and nurturing it is very possible that good course design by thoughtful instructors utilizing both text and selective multi-media "will merge into a single set of bits sent back and forth along one electronic highway at lightning speed" (265). This is a sound wish-list. But many new instructors are not there yet. Chapter Four will acquaint the instructor with the best possible approach to course design utilizing a blank course shell and a suggested syllabus in order to meet sound course objectives and successful student engagement through the narrativity of an English Composition online course.

As can be observed from the three scenarios presented above, online teaching is far from teaching in a vacuum. Indeed, the approach to digitalizing text and developing technology and multi-media necessitate careful consideration in course design, whether it is a blank shell or a fully functional institution-prepared course. But change is inevitable. Technology changes overnight, and what works well one day can soon be replaced by something much faster and better. Since these technologies are constantly evolving, information as to precisely what these

emerging technologies are and how they are used by both teachers and students in the online classroom is difficult to immediately and conclusively identify. Studies have only recently appeared on specific technologies relating to English Composition online. Indeed, as pointed out in a 2011 article, "The rapid and constant pace of change in technology is creating both opportunities and challenges for schools" (Education Week); the writers go on to highlight the positives:

> The opportunities include greater access to rich, multimedia content, the increasing use of online course taking to offer classes not otherwise available, the widespread availability of mobile computing devices that can access the Internet, the expanding role of social networking tools for learning and professional development, and the growing interest in the power of digital games for more personalized learning.

Indeed, the English Composition classroom is in a state of constant change. The 2011 study in Education Week goes on to illustrate concerns on two critical points, both revolving around the advancement of this technology:

- To begin with, schools are forever playing technological catch up as digital innovations emerge that require upgrading schools' technological infrastructure and building new professional development programs.
- The rapid evolution of educational technologies also makes it increasingly challenging to determine what works best. Longitudinal research that takes years to do risks being irrelevant by the time it is completed because of shifts in the technological landscape.

What is clear is that additional investigations are required into current in-class practices as a starting-off point; the relationship between in-class and online instruction, and more

specifically how and when online methods of instruction are utilized; and what technologies are used and how they are used to engage students.

Technology and Multimedia Applications for the Twenty First Century

With the use of digitalized documents and multi-media technologies in the English Composition online classroom, whether the instructor creates in a blank course or orchestrates a fully-designed institutional course, the future looks very promising, especially since educators and practitioners have now attempted to identify specific ways in which writing course objectives can be met in the English Composition online course. For example, the positioning statement in the report by Yagelski & Graybill offers sound recommendations for the future:

> Because there is strong evidence to support teaching students online and because educators find themselves on the leading edge of this distance education tsunami, we need to ask how we can ride the wave rather than be drowned under it. In other words, how should our traditional land-based English instructors redefine their teaching methods in this Age of Technology? (54)

Many educators and practitioners have taken up this challenge. Indeed, any instructor teaching an online course will revisit current practices and seek to offer constant improvements not only in the course modules, but from course to course, in order to engage inquisitive learners.

Specific ways in which instructors can successfully engage students lies in the peer-review process; where exchange of ideas among instructors will be the driving force in effective course design. For example, one English Composition instructor has taken this practical and effective approach to the next level. The ideas developed here discuss fully the implications of using textual information and appropriate multi-media applications for success in the English

Composition online course with regards to a developing an interactive persuasive essay, which is the benchmark assignment of any English Composition course:

> Students could present an argument to their chosen audience using print, image, sound, or a combination of these modes…an allowance that truly expanded the available rhetorical options for presenting an argument. This type of assignment that moves beyond print-only composition based on self-selected purposes and audiences benefits students as they encounter and create different modes of expression and media in and out of schools, in 21st century work worlds, and in online environments. (VanKooten 3)

Indeed, students will see good benefits in such an approach, which allows some amount of creativity involving the use of multi-media in meeting assignment objectives. Yet care needs to be taken in introducing the student to the appropriate multi-media applications, with equal care taken in providing information on the evaluation criteria that will be used for in grading a multi-media assignment.

In addressing the three concerns voiced above, the instructor will need to develop appropriate assignments that will prompt an individualized approach to the writing process and thus develop critical thinking in students. Such options are presented by Young and Bush in a 2004 article "Teaching the English Language Arts With Technology: A Critical Approach and Pedagogical Framework," who point out that there will be a practical approach to implementing technologies in the English classroom. They make several recommendations with regards to presenting materials in the digital format, with good utilization of multi-media applications to support diverse writing objectives. Several note-worthy recommendations are as follows, with tie-in to applicable multi-media software:

- an online portfolio tool for the students in this particular class to facilitate the teaching of writing and enhance the writing process and writing workshop

- a means for students to illustrate and animate the stories and legends of their ancestors

- use of the Q-folio, an online electronic portfolio which, in effect, simulated the interactive research community

- Using commercially available software such as StorySpace, Adobe Premiere, Photoshop, SoundEdit 16, iMovie, and various web authoring products to create English methods classroom projects.

Expanding on the ideas proposed by Richard in a 2010 article "Digital Citizenship and Web 2.0 Tools," some of the specific technologies used in the electronic English composition classroom can be identified as follows, based on analysis by leading scholars:

- Wikis allow for editing online and foster writing and communicating (Sanden & Darragh 18);

- digital videos, whether private, university sponsored/created or from You Tube, encourage critical thinking and reflecting in the writing process (Young, Long & Myers 14);

- digital storytelling satisfies curricular expectations for writing skills (Figg & McCartney 55);

- Digital Booktalk, a Web portal that uses video trailers and associated activities to encourage reading (Gunter & Kenney 84);

- and the end result, "Teachers might then create Educational Video Repositories (i.e., resembling a peer-reviewed, vetted, or filtered U-Tube-like site) of standards-based teacher and student-created instructional videos that help teach subject-matter content within and across the disciplines" (Sweeder 123).

However, one must be careful that the pendulum does not swing too far to the other side. An online instructor will take appropriate caution with regards to noting carefully the importance of many applications requiring text-based material in order to strike that right balance in the English Composition online class. Savenye, Zane & Niemczyk, in a 2011 article "You are going to be an online writing instructor: Issues in designing, developing, and delivering an online course," point out that for writing courses, online delivery often suits the content of the course well, as currently some aspects of delivery can be primarily text-based, where students can easily submit text-based reports and projects to meet assignment objectives, engage in asynchronous threaded discussions, complete quizzes, and even participate in live chats about topics, and peer review of papers can also relatively easily be conducted online. Indeed, many of these aforementioned approaches can be enhanced or supplemented by multi-media.

As indicated in this section, the English Composition course has advanced into the digitalized and multi-media age, and attempts have been made to place the student in the driver's seat and in full control of a number of instructor-sanctioned technology tools and multi-media applications. Many of these applications and techniques recommended by educators and practitioners are worthy of serious consideration. Several of these recommendations will be fully explored and illustrated in an interactive online English Composition course in the next chapter,

with suitable enhancements to make the English Composition online course a vibrant and

stimulating experience for students.

Chapter Four: Practical Course Design Best Practices

Chapter Organization

This chapter will explore recent developments in course design, and it will focus on a suggested best approach for design of an English Composition asynchronous online course utilizing text, digitalized documents, technology tools and multi-media applications to meet specific learning objectives. The course design and development will indicate best practices as recommended by educators and practitioners covered in the preceding chapters, with suitable enhancements based on this researcher's personal experience in teaching English Composition online for the last twelve years, especially in designing and developing a course utilizing a syllabus template and a blank course shell in both the Blackboard and e-college platforms. Nonetheless, many of the techniques and developments explained here in practical ways can also be adapted into an institution's pre-designed course, which will also allow the instructor to add appropriate personalized enhancements.

The approach in this chapter will be a thematic and thorough investigation of best teaching practices for English Compositon online *based on the learning objectives and course outcomes identified in the syllabus in the appendix*. Detailed analysis will focus on the following areas:

1. Recap of key course design and development objectives relevant to accessing course materials in practical ways

2. Detailed discussions of applicable learning theories as they relate to meeting assignment objectives with the intention to let the student take ownership of his or her learning experience in meeting course objectives

3. Commentaries and explanations on applicable multi-media software used in creating the course materials, instructions, and assignments required to meet course objectives

4. Analysis of how text, digitalized text, audio, video and other multi-media technology applications will result in an interactive student-centered course.

Introduction to English Composition Course design

Any instructor wishing to teach English Composition online will need to approach the design and development of the course from the point of view of what the student will see. Often times the instructor first concentrates on the development of assignments and the grade book, with specific instructions on how to get the work done. However, if careful consideration is not given to integrating the weekly learning modules into the course in inter-connected ways, the end result will be a course that lacks unity and coherence, and this leads to student frustration. Since the student will take ownership of the course from day one, the instructor needs to "partner up with the student" (intended audience) even before any design or development work begins in the course. Therefore, the instructor will most definitely not want to develop the story of writing simply by assembling pieces of a jigsaw puzzle as the course develops, but will need instead to integrate interactive lessons in inviting and meaningful ways.

Therefore, the recommendations here will reinforce course integration by following sound design and development practices to meet twenty-first century learning objectives for a student-centered English Composition asynchronous online class. The key objective here is to begin at the beginning. The following eight specific up-front recommendations will enhance course design and development with the primary focus of creating a student-centered interactive and vibrant online experience for the beginning English Composition writer.

Student will take responsibility for his or her own learning

Earlier on it was pointed out that the teaching of English Composition in-class is not an exact science since there are many methods that work very well, especially when combined with already successful existing approaches or variations upon those approaches. This also applies to

the online class: approaches can be diverse, but also successful. Since a student does not meet face-to-face with the instructor online, the course material presented online will need to "speak for itself" thus allowing the student full control at all times rather than a need-to-know only approach. Through well-crafted instructional materials, and with good instructor visibility in the course, the student is required for the most part to take responsibility for his or her learning in real-time (Driscoll). In order for this to occur successfully, the instructor will maintain an active presence in the course materials, and through discussion boards, announcements, and e-mail reminders, live chat sessions he or she will encourage active participation. The instructor will also follow through with sound grading practices to encourage improvements in the student's progress. The student, in turn, will know what needs to be done, how it is to be done, and what it means to develop sound time-management skills. The instructor will reach out to the student at all times in encouraging ways, and the student is expected to let the instructor know immediately when matters are not progressing well.

Say no to all text.

The student will be actively engaged in the course when the instructor has taken good care to provide a variety of instructional material to engage inquisitive learners. As explained in the previous section, therefore, all-text is never a sound approach to online course development. Educators' and practitioners' recommendations are worthy of serious consideration with regards to meeting sound learning objectives utilizing technology tools and multi-media. Pea points out that utilizing multi-media, which is always the best way to go, is "similar to face-to-face communication; less restricted than written text [it] can place abstract concepts in a specific context and allows for individual differences in preferred sensory channels for learning; and allows the student to coordinate diverse external representations (with distinctive strengths) for

different perspectives" (58–59). Indeed, this is what an English Composition online course is all about: supplementing meaningful text with digitalized documents and multi-media, yet not replacing text entirely, and all towards developing best writing practices.

Several important observations by researchers add good insights to where an instructor will go from here. Van Kooten's comments in a 2011 article reinforce the idea that multimedia use by English instructors is now an important theme in online instruction that will successfully engage students and will effectively meet learning objectives. In support of this approach, Sidman and Jones in a recent study offer sound practical recommendations: "using effective and diverse online teaching methodologies to stimulate this millennial generation of technologically savvy college students, while preserving academic integrity, is a critical instructional challenge for all educators" (457). Therefore, good partnering of design practices and selecting of appropriate multi-media elements up front are essential for a stronger course. The instructor will have a "vision" for where the course is heading very early on and will encourage student involvement in nurturing ways.

 Students will be allowed options within the course with regards to creating and submitting assignments to meet learning objectives. Indeed, the rationale for effective course design and development calls for several mini multi-media applications for assignments, and then a strong lead-in to multi-media for the four essays in the course. However, presentation of the instructional course material in a narrative sequence to engage inquisitive learners in meeting course objectives is of paramount importance.

Dean, Hochman, Hood and McEachem in a 2004 article "Fashioning the Emperor's New Clothes: emerging pedagogy and practices of turning wireless laptops into classroom literacy stations" point out that some instructors erroneously believe that the instructions (process) will

be presented in the traditional writing format, and that the literary essay (product) will be a written document. Indeed, many inexperienced instructors believe that a solid textual foundation is often times best in the English Composition online class, especially since the focus of the course will be to develop student's writing, and where a series of well-crafted documents will be the end result. Granted, there will be some form of textual information (instructions and guidance) and textual requirements for assignments (discussion board postings, sentence correcting and editing, paragraph development and writing, and essays), but most definitely it is this practitioner's strong view that assignments will not be all-text nor will they be all multi-media. Indeed, many developments utilizing multi-media do begin with first developing ideas on paper.

Further analysis will indicate that all-text presents problems at many levels. For one, no student will want to sit at a computer and laboriously scroll through countless screens of textual information in order to understand and follow assignment requirements and course expectations. If this is the case, the student will ask: "Why read the textbook?" If there is no textbook required, and instructions are all-text, the student will ask: "Why take an online course?" Therefore, the proposed course will aim to strike that right balance of text, digitalized documents, use of technological tools, and multi-media applications in order to meet course objectives and to engage students. Engaging inquisitive students into course material very early on can be accomplished in the following ways.

Keep the student engaged in the course

Instructors new to the online experience will need to avoid the quick fix approach to course design and development, which is to tweak an in-class course for online presentation. This creates additional problems and further complicates matters. For example, an often adopted quick solution will be when the novice instructor will include multi-media applications

interspersed into course materials through hyperlinks to other Websites to supplement course information in an attempt to provide variety in the course. Sadly this will not engage students.

One of these erroneous approaches, which may appear early on in a course, is covered by Miller in a 2011 article, where specific erroneous approaches are identified "A System for Integrating Online Multimedia into College Curriculum," "Instructors new to using multimedia might first try linking materials to course syllabi or linking a video clip to a class presentation" (307). Care will need to be taken by the instructor to verify all materials included in the course. Multi-media created by unknown or unreliable sources will not open or download correctly, or may disappear entirely, and these discrepancies will lead to student uncertainties. At the same time the temptation is there for the student to wander away from the course material in an attempt to corroborate information.

However, this error only scratches the surface of potential serious issues that can doom the course. Miller's study goes on to highlight a very practical solution: "Instructors who want to exploit multimedia definitely need to become familiar with the most productive discipline-relevant websites, and should establish a system of multimedia information processing" (307). Instructors will need to investigate best practices for success in an online English Composition course, and try these out in the course design and development phase from the point of view of a novice student who wants to improve his or her writing. Indeed, this is what this chapter is about: best practices for online instruction utilizing multimedia to engage and keep inquisitive beginning writers.

Introduce and encourage multi-media assignments

The student will ask: What is in it for me? Therefore, care needs to be taken by the instructor to present opportunities and solutions for effective writing. Appropriate multi-media applications meeting specific course objectives can entice a student to stay in the course, to

successfully complete a variety of engaging assignments, and to develop critical thinking skills.

Many of the assignments in this course will connect oral traditions with written expression, and

the students will be asked to "tell" their own stories in engaging and refreshing ways. Therefore

material included must be for a diverse student body. This approach covers the essence of true

course development taken by an instructor in including multi-media applications, which

ultimately places the student more in the driver's seat and in control of his or her own learning.

Develop "narrativity" in the Course

Any good course design will follow the narrativity method where the student becomes

engaged in the story of writing, which ultimately becomes the student's own personal odyssey in

writing. Each assignment will present its own sets of challenges and successes, and each

completed assignment will demonstrate sound writing practices to meet course expectations.

Indeed, the course will contain "narrativity" and this holds the course together as a unified whole

where each weekly instructional module is interconnected with the others: the student is active in

the course from day one, the student's interest remains in focus, and the student completes the

course in logical steps towards a robust conclusion. Therefore, each weekly module will

demonstrate unity and coherence and will transition effortlessly from one week to the next. By

the same token, the student will be expected to go back and forth in the course to "refresh" on

previous material, and to find this material very quickly. A writing course that does not take the

student on a journey of self-discovery, with the ability to look over his or her shoulder at past

events, will never be a true writing course.

Students need to know their progress at all times

This up-front approach is a strict requirement for any online English Composition course:

find out what the student already knows, provide quick and timely responses to the introductory

assignments, and move on to improve the student's writing in preparation for the next series of

assignments. Students will at all times want to know where they are with their work in the course, and instructors will respect this by allowing the student a course status identity at all times. Here the "You are here" concept works well, which can be based on a calendar of completed events and enhanced by timely graded assignments. Often times, students become lost with regards to their progress in a poorly designed course, and often times help is not within quick reach. Therefore, a certain amount of repetition is important to orient the student correctly in the course. Some of this can also be handled with timely announcements, e-mail reminders and engaging chat sessions.

Grade students' work in a timely manner.

Indeed, students will want to know their progress at all times. The researchers Singleton-Jackson and Colella point out the importance of situating students in a comfortable position to interact with the instructor: submitted assignments must be graded in a timely manner, which allows for active student engagement in the course. Indeed, "the use of computer and Internet technology allows greater assignment opportunities and the ability to provide feedback to a large number of students in a more rapid manner than could ever be accomplished in a traditional, paper-and-pencil course." The instructor will therefore be detailed in providing timely grading responses. Additional emphasis is placed by Poole, in an article in *Education Today* "Ten Pillars of successful Technology Implementation," indicating that in an online classroom great care will be taken "that students do not 'switch off' when they leave the classroom, but rather relish what opportunity can allow." Since the student will be drafting and improving writing outside of the course, this is an important up front consideration. Indeed, feedback must be detailed to steer the student into improvements as the course continues.

Therefore, meaningful interactive assignments are important and together with instructor feedback will aid the student in improving in his or her writing. By posing these tasks, the

instructor will engage the student in the narrative of the course, where the student is not an observer but becomes an active participant, much like a primary character in a first-person story. After all, writing success means not only meeting course objectives, but also meeting the requirements of creating writing that is engaging and where meaning is clear. Students will want to know where to begin and the path they will need to take for a successful writing journey. When course material is presented in engaging and interactive ways, with sound instructor's responses to discussions and graded assignments in a timely manner, the student will come to relish the online experience.

A few up-front design and development considerations.

This brings us immediately to the matter at hand, which will focus on the importance of effective course design and development. Stine in a 2004 article "The Best of Both Worlds: Teaching Basic Writers in Class and Online" began an important discussion at a time when English Composition had started to take root online. He reports that up-front quality considerations in course design are absolutely important. Indeed, Stine's study has identified seven sequential objectives in any good course design, and it is good to reflect on these since they orient the instructor on basic up-front course requirements and how they contribute to a successful course. These are: readily identifiable avenues for student/faculty contact for real-time responses to questions will prevent uncertainties and misunderstandings; cooperation among students will lead to sound collaborative opportunities exponentially; an active learning experience will develop sound critical thinking skills; prompt feedback on graded assignments will allow for improvements in new assignments; strong course management practices will allow students to develop sound time-management skills in completing assignments within deadlines; with the convenience of the Web, students can reasonably be expected to read more,

write more, and do more group projects, which can also be counted on to improve performance. The end result is good practice that respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

Indeed, these are invaluable points to consider from the outset, but more work is required in order to connect the dots, which will lead to good development of narrativity in a course where the student becomes a responsible stakeholder. Effective course design principles will be developed in the proposed course following applicable learning theories in order to effectively meet course objectives.

Therefore, the next section will highlight applicable learning theories that will form the framework within which interactive course material will be presented to engage the inquisitive students in the narrativity of sound expository writings. These tested practices will guide the design of the proposed course. Suitable enhancements will enrich the student's learning experience and will lead to a fulfilling writing experience.

Learning Theories and Best Course Practices.

This section will identify, evaluate and develop applicable tested learning theories proposed by educators and practitioners that will be utilized in the design and development of this interactive online English Compositions course. These applications will be enhanced and illustrated in many of the interactive assignments recommended in this course. These practical applications will enhance the student's writing journey to a fruitful and rewarding conclusion. Key objectives of these learning theories are:

- The student will become an active participant in the learning process. The constructivist method of learning is paramount in an online course, which when developed well, will guarantee interactivity, spontaneous engagement, and personal fulfillment, and best serve the needs of all. Students today prefer taking

80

an active role and responsibility in "real world" learning (Duffy and Jonassen) which addresses and answers the question: What is in it for me?

- The student will become an active stake-holder in his or her own learning and progresses not in a linear manner, but by working within the narrative mode of going backwards and forwards as the student sees fit, which not only allows the student to make connections with past experiences but also expands on the student's new knowledge (Elbow and Belanoff).

- Students will benefit from the cognitive modeling that is offered with multi-media technologies. The framework of learning is given a high regard in the use of distance education tools, technology and multi-media to meet course objectives. Understanding how the mind learns and remembers concepts is a feature that is used in software. Ideas and concepts are then presented in accordance with the cognitive abilities of students and are also well tailored for a particular individual (Dunn).

- Students will be allowed flexibility in approaching written and multi-media projects. Realizing that every expert has a somewhat different representation of a given domain, cognitive-flexibility theory seeks to provide students with multiple representations of content. This theory encourages the learner to construct multiple perspectives. The idea is to allow students to crisscross the landscape of a content area so that they might have a rich mental model of the domain. (Shoffner, Jones and Haromon)

- Students will benefit from interaction. Lev Vygotsky viewed interaction with peers as an effective way of developing skills and strategies. He suggested that

teachers use cooperative learning exercises where less competent children [students] develop with help from more skillful peers - within the zone of proximal development. Vygotsky believed that when a student is at the ZPD for a particular task, providing the appropriate assistance will give the student enough of a "boost" to achieve the task (Sol McLeod).

Constructivist approach in generating meaning

The English Composition online course will encompass these important core learning theories, and will demonstrate how they can be used in an online English Composition online course towards measurable success. Students need to creatively explore the learning process, from generating ideas to the interactive multi-media essay, and become a major player (character) in developing narrativity in course assignments (their own story), which will effectively meet learning objectives. After all, each writing assignment is the story of writing: the student's own narrative progress through the stages of composing, writing, and revising: the personalized first-person story, the informative and process essays, and the all-encompassing research essay that reinforces the student's own personal knowledge and expands to new writing applications.

Multi-media instructions and multi-media applications will provide students with renewed vigor and excitement in telling their own individual stories of writing (reflecting on writing), and students will be willing to share these stories. In addition, students will be offered a hands-on approach to creating audio and video files to enhance the writing process, to share with classmates, and to exchange ideas on how to develop writing utilizing these formats. Knowledge gained from these techniques will enhance the development of the principal essay in this course, which is the multi-media narrative essay, and opportunities will be presented for the

student to decide on two other essays (process and persuasive) as textual developments or multi-media essays.

As pointed out by Duffy and Jonassen, there are many ways to structure the world and there are many meanings or perspectives for any event or concept. The first and most common learning practice leans towards the objectivist notion that knowledge is external to a learner and that the job of educators is to effectively and efficiently communicate or transfer this knowledge to the learner (Duffy and Jonassen). There is a strong indication here that this objectivist absolute in-class instructor-centered approach will lead to an all-text online course, which is counter-productive to the writing process, and will have a disastrous negative impact on the dropout rate. Therefore, the course will need to contain interactivity rather than copious screens of instructions.

Also, the second and most popular learning practice, the constructivist method of learning, is of paramount importance in an online course. It guarantees interactivity, spontaneous engagement, and personal fulfillment, and it best serves the needs of all. Students today prefer taking an active role and responsibility in "real world" learning. However, an instructor's lack of familiarity with applicable software and multi-media applications may favor all-text renditions, thus compounding any negative feelings the student will bring to the course. Therefore, great care will need to be taken by the instructor to reinforce the approach that knowledge, when appropriately and correctly provided to the student, will allow for practical writing alternatives, with timed sequential releases for the student's advancement and with the student as a stakeholder in his or her learning (Duffy and Jonassen). The constructivist method of student engagement depends on digitalized documents and hands-on multi-media applications.

The student will be engaged in logical well-sequenced steps in the online English composition course, and will have options for how to approach assignments on quality writing.

For starters, work in the course will begin with what the student knows, what the student brings to the course, and in what aspects of the student's work needs quick improvements. Singleton-Jackson and Colella in a 2012 article "An Online Odyssey: A Case Study of Creating and Delivering an Online Writing Course for Undergraduate Students," recommend that course design and development consideration will begin with an evaluation of all students' prior writing knowledge, and this is best reinforced with the suggestion that what has gone before can enhance where to begin online. This can be gleaned from two areas: instructor's previous experience with teaching the course and the institution's data collection from previous courses.

The first can be recent historical data accumulated by the instructor. One or two isolated cases of previous evaluations will not work. A broader canvas is required. One clear approach is to use pre- and post-test data from several offerings of the course, which will evaluate what students know before the course begins and what they have learnt after the course ends. In the second area, this pre-test information is often times available at the institution where the courses are taught. Indeed, these approaches will provide the instructor with a general starting off point, and appropriately designed and developed material will help to bring the student up to speed, and ideally so within the first two weeks of the course. Therefore allowing the student to actively participate in his or her own learning from what the student already knows, to plan for what yet needs to be discovered, will develop student confidence and will lead to active engagement in the online course and to expected rewards.

The first three weekly modules in the demonstration course will be interconnected to provide a stream-lined approach to the learning process, where students will write about what

84

they know best: their own narratives. Through these first series of assignments, the student will gain confidence in generating ideas, and in revising and editing, which are all of paramount importance in a beginning writing course, with great care taken to effectively use applicable digital and multi-media software.

The third area will allow the student to develop critical thinking skills in producing strong textual analysis and the willingness to incorporate these beyond all text documents: the use of audio and video files towards offering feedback by both peers and the instructor will encourage active participation in personal response assignments. This will encourage students to voice their opinions, and it will serve as a direct means of hearing each other talk about their writings. In an online writing course, conversations among writers are a very important first step to the writing process.

 The fourth area will develop in practical ways the more advanced personalized narrative essay utilizing multi-media applications: the student will tell his or her story using traditional story-telling methods, utilizing strong textual narrative development. With applicable audio and video renditions, the students will create a vibrant depiction of how he or she feels about a particular story or expository or persuasive writing topic, and the students will share experiences with a receptive audience.

Indeed, these four specific elements will allow the student to effectively approach the course with the guidance of the constructivist method of learning. This is a sound approach to acquiring personal meaning in writing, which will allow the student to advance within the narrative framework of the course to other more complex aspects of acquiring knowledge.

Using narrativity to develop personalized stories.

The next step in the student's writing journey will involve what instructors of English Compositon are all too familiar with, and that is the drafting of assignments. However, instead of the student submitting a draft document for instructor feed-back and editing, a more reliable method will involve the following steps, which pick up on the objectives explained in the previous section, as follows:

A. Freewriting Exercise

1. The student will generate a timed freewriting assignment on a narrative (story) topic in text format.

2. The instructor will post all completed text assignments as individual listings to a discussion board using the "New Thread" option.

3. Each student will select one of the text postings and develop an edit of the assignment utilizing track changes and will post the response to the other student's work utilizing the "Reply to" thread.

4. The student whose work is edited with track changes will follow up with an audio commentary on the edit and this response will be directed to the student with the "Reply to" thread.

5. The instructor will grade all submissions and post appropriate comments in the graedebook.

Track changes options are available with Microsoft Word, and students will be expected to use this feature. Students will also utilize one of the recommended free audio programs to create an audio file. Both of these items have already been introduced in previous chapters, and they will be adequately covered in the week leading up to these assignments.

B. Personal Reflection Assignment: Video response to writing

A second series of assignments for Week Three will be a video clip reflection on a writing assignment following the format and approach outlined in the "Freewriting" exercise above. Students will be provided with appropriate software links to complete the video, and detailed instructions will accompany the exercise, with links to available online videos as examples.

C. Major multi-media assignments.

Additional assignments involving multi-media will be the three primary essays in this course: narrative, process, and persuasive. Through the use of applicable software, the student will have gained confidence in generating ideas, sharing ideas, revising and editing of ideas, and will be more open to peer reviewing, revising, and editing requirements, all of which are integral to the concept that writing is a process. The software available was covered and explained in Chapter Three. The student becomes an active stakeholder in his or her own learning and progresses not in a linear manner, but by working within the narrative mode of going backwards and forwards as the student sees fit, which not only allows the student to make connections with past experiences but also expands on the student's new knowledge.

These ideas will be enhanced in the following ways. In chapter one of this study it is noted that the purpose of English Composition is to develop students' writing skills and to produce readable documents where meaning will be clear at all times. The first hurdle many beginning writers will need to overcome is the process of generating ideas. Any online course will fulfill this basic requirement, and students will be encouraged to brainstorm ideas and develop a clear approach to the recursive writing process where the writer goes backwards-and-forwards until meaning is clear in the finished product. Therefore, it is a sound recommendation to develop these techniques early on in the course and to reinforce these techniques in the

thematic assignments as the course continues. The key here is that this early section of the course (the first two weeks) will encourage students to develop a practical approach to the writing process.

This hands-on approach to writing in the English Composition online course is clearly emphasized by Elbow and Belanoff in a practical guide *Telecourse faculty guide: English composition: writing for an audience,* where "prewriting techniques such as freewriting and generating can be used to tap the subconscious, explore new ideas, and 'think out loud' with pen-on-paper or fingers-on-keyboard." Assigned textbook readings, excursions into videos where instructors and students talk about their writing processes and techniques will bring the freewriting process into focus allowing the student to explore various methods of generating ideas. Indeed, notable experts Peter Elbow and Mike Rose enthusiastically endorse and encourage one of the most popular methods: the free-writing method.

In addition, the peer review process, illustrated in the four-step peer editing exercise will enhance collaborative review and will foster sound student engagement. Selecting another student's paper that was developed from free-writing will allow the student-editor to become familiar with the thinking process other students apply in generating and improving ideas. This knowledge will allow critical thinking and will improve and refine each student's ability to generate ideas and draft assignments in a variety of formats and to become familiar with new subjects utilizing many of the recommendations explored above.

By the same token course material will allow for additional development of strong writing practices utilizing the following approaches:

1. Students will complete multiple-choice grammar exercises, which will increase in complexity from one quiz to the next, and will allow students to improve on their understanding of grammar

2. Students will use both textual analysis and audio software to offer feedback on another student's work in the peer review process

3. Students will use video applications in developing aspects of the major assignments in this course

The utilizing of the grading matrixes will allow the instructor to create a grading matrix which will be integrated into the grading process for efficient and detailed feedback to students. Indeed, the instructor will be able to utilize a grading matrix in evaluating students' work in several critical areas. This is best explained by Christina Yu "I identified hundreds of areas of weakness across student papers ("lack of support," "wordiness," "tone shift"). Frustrated that I was repeating nuggets of advice, I started to code certain comments "A," "B," "C," and so on, so that each letter corresponded with academic content related to the identified weakness." Indeed, many course platforms allow the utilizing of an interactive grading matrix, which is integrated as part of the assignment requirements. Each area that is letter-graded will allow for detailed comments in a "comment" box, will enhance the student's focus on developing appropriate revisions and improvements. This not only facilitates consistency in the grading process but also allows the instructor to offer detailed feed-back and to eventually and adequately summarize all assignments results for students' review.

Indeed, this approach allows the instructor to develop student-centered responses. Specific focal points as proposed by Yu explain the benefits of this approach:

1.By providing precise and individualized instruction in skills areas for which there are "right/wrong" answers

2.By providing precise and individualized instruction in more subjective areas of "expression"

3.By strengthening the connection between #1 and #2

4.By fostering a more inclusive environment

5.By reducing administrative burden

6.By encouraging a framework of constant improvement

7.By affording greater flexibility, leaving more time for creative assignments, debate and discussion, group work, and research projects.

Therefore, multi-media technology will facilitate effective course development in several important areas as outlined above.

Enhancing digital documents: integrating audio and video files.

Advancing the second premise of multi-media technology applications to the next inter-connected stage is an integral part of course development in the learning process. As previously indicated the course will engage students with good organization and development and maintain its narrativity thrust. The recommendations of Shoffner, Jones and Haromon in "Paradigms Restrained: Implications of New and Emerging Technologies for Learning and Cognition" indicate that sound results are obtained when students can approach an assignment from several angles and then decide in which format to complete the work. This approach then takes the instructor out of the all-text mode, and allows for narrativity in the course utilizing a range of technology associated approaches to meeting learning objectives. This also allows students an opportunity to develop individual and personalized expertise in completing assignments. Indeed,

this approach has significant rewards, but some up-front fine-tuning in course development is required in selecting appropriate assignments that will work well with multi-media in order to allow this flexibility.

In the previous section, it is pointed out that track changes allows the students a before, during and after snapshot of best revision practices; everything remains frozen on the page. Taking this to the next step, the use of audio and video files can allow the student to offer a more personalized response to assignments and a more personalized response to the peer review process, where students talk about their writing and revising practices. Indeed, when students listen to each other comment on their work and the approaches they take in writing and revising, personal meaning is enhanced, and this facilitates sound writing practices. Of course, not every comment will generate good meaning, but the opportunity is there for the student to respond to comments.

It does make a great deal of sense that in an online English Compositon course great care will be taken to constantly encourage class participation in all areas. Shoffner, Jones and Haromon point out, "The trick is to determine how much complexity a given group of learners is capable of handling without becoming lost or discouraged. A series of scenarios escalating in complexity can usually accommodate most learners."

The next level of development will reinforce the student's ability to follow instructions and create a reflection assignment where the student talks about his or her writing process. This will be accomplished in Week Three. The student will create a brief video clip with the focus of commenting on his or her process for writing. This will bring together two important developments: understanding a new process (multi-media video application) and putting it to

work in a personalized analysis assignment. Therefore, students can benefit from this approach in developing engaging assignments in real-time.

The approach taken here does provide ample opportunities for the instructor to provide rich content-related course material in a variety of modes: interactive exercises, audio and video applications in discussion boards and assignments, and the track-changes method of document editing, where the student is not only provided with instructions and teaching using the multi-media formats, but the student also becomes an active developer of multi-media elements to fulfill assignment requirements and meet course objectives.

Personalized narratives utilizing multi-media applications.
Textual, audio and video applications will allow the instructor new and meaningful ventures in course design and development. Vygotsky, the educational psychologist well known for this three-step approach, suggests that student development depends on interaction with other students and the tools that the culture provides to help form their own view of the world. Indeed, there are three inter-connected ways in which learning is acquired. First there is the obvious approach which is imitative learning, where one person tries to imitate or copy another. The second way is instructed learning, where the instructor sets guidelines and intervenes, which results in the student using these instructions to self-regulate. The final way that cultural tools are passed to others is through collaborative learning, which involves a group of peers who strive to understand each other and work together to learn a specific skill, and then to adapt and master this skill for their own use (Tomasello, et al).

Therefore, these techniques will be the underpinnings whereby the English Composition online course will be developed. Sol McLeod in "Zone of Proximal Development" points out the important benefits of interacting in an online classroom: when a student is at the ZPD for a

particular task, providing the appropriate assistance will give the student enough of a "boost" to achieve the task. Therefore the instructor will always take a strong approach to nurturing activities and will be visibly active in this nurturing role.

Indeed, through these methods, students needing assistance will receive it and will have gained confidence, which leads to student independence and confidence to explore new ventures. Sol McLeod observes: "once the student, with the benefit of scaffolding, masters the task, the scaffolding can then be removed and the student will then be able to complete the task again on his own." This confidence prepares the student to successfully tackle new ventures. The student will begin the process of integrating multi-media in the three major essays in this course: narrative, process, and persuasive.

The sound approaches to practical hands-on instruction as outlined in this section will enhance the discussion board, peer editing and multi-media narrative essay activities in this course. Aspects of the learning theories explained in this section with be the guiding force in course design and development objectives. Precise application of these processes is outlined below in the English Composition online course, and will set the benchmark for effective course design and development, which will always be student-centered.

Development of the Proposed Course

The course will be created in the Blackboard platform (BB 9.1 SP7). A traditional online course is fifteen weeks in duration, which matches the in-class course. The proposed course development will include the following: the necessary introductory material (available at all times to all students for an effective understanding of course purpose and function) and fifteen weeks of date-controlled and sequentially released hands-on student-centered instructions, applications and creative assignments. This course is designed on the following seven core

principles as identified under the previous section "Learning Theories and Applications: Best Course Practices":

1. students will take strong ownership at all times of their online learning activities

2. students will learn to develop ideas using the freewriting and other idea-generating applications

3. students will actively participate in the peer review process

4. students will explore a variety of both written and multi-media approaches in completing assignments

5. students will develop critical thinking skills in order to produce quality work meeting course objectives.

6. students will be exploring real-world activities.

7. students will be able to use their writing to improve their personal and professional lives, and be well-prepared for more advanced writing courses.

In order to meet the above learning objectives, and as previously indicated in Chapter One, the course will be constructed and presented as follows:

1. All instructional materials will utilize textual and multi-media applications (both audio and video) in order to effectively introduce and reinforce course expectations.

2. Major assignments will be fully explained as they appear in the course. In order to avoid duplication, assignments common to all weeks will only be discussed here in the week they first appear, and these are Discussion Boards and Reflection Assignments.

3. The three major assignments allowing for textual and/or multi-media applications will be the narrative essay, the process essay and the persuasive essay, and these will be fully developed and explained.

Details of this course layout, design and development are indicated below:

- Section One (Course Orientation): introductory material will present course materials in a logical manner to the students, and allow them to become familiar with multi-media applications. The course design will include elements of text, audio and video, with a sound focus on instructor created multi-media applications. Here, the student will become acquainted with the structure of the course: what the course is about, how to find information, how to complete and submit assignments, and how to review feed-back on graded assignments. Indeed, appropriate software will be used to acquaint the student with these matters

- Section Two: Week One objectives (Generating ideas): lectures and assignments will be developed in two inter-connected sequences: generating ideas and the writing process, and will also introduce students to the first assignments, with precise applications of instructor-created multi-media. Additional links to audio, video and embedded multi-media applications will be introduced. Specific graded applications are: a commentary on "writing and speaking" in Discussion Board 3, an "evaluation of a writing technique" in Discussion Board 2. A Reflection Assignment and the Diagnostic Quiz.

- Section Three: Week Two objectives (The Multi-Media Narrative Essay): lectures and assignments will advance the student to the two types of approaches to the narrative essay: traditional text essay and the multi-media essay. The student will explore video applications available, with examples, on how to approach the multi-media narrative essay. Specific graded applications are: a timed freewriting exercise, a textual and audio recording as the primary posting in Discussion Board

Three, and an edited document using track changes in Discussion 4, Reflection Two, and Quiz One.

- Section Four: Week Three through Week Sixteen: (Advancing the Multi-Media Essay) will introduce the student to more advanced techniques with regards to the option of completing a second essay from one of two choices: the explanatory/process essay or the persuasive essay. The focus will be on the persuasive multi-media essay. There will also be two Discussion Board items, and a Reflection assignment for each week. This section will culminate in course review materials, and will lead into the review for the final exam. In order to avoid repetition, the course design and description will not repeat the weekly discussions, reflection and quiz assignments, but will concentrate on three of the full length essays offered in text and/or multimedia applications.

Course Weekly Objectives

The table below is part of the Course Syllabus included in Appendix A. This table indicates the weekly course readings and assignment buckets and the sequencing of assignments. It is important to plan and outline the course carefully, in particular the gradebook set up and the meeting of learning objectives need to be identified clearly. In addition, students will need to know exactly what will happen in each week and what is expected with regards to meeting course objectives. Assignments utilizing multi-media applications by the student are indicated in italics. Major essays are bolded.

Table 2: Course Weekly Tab

Date	Agenda	Assignment Due
Week 1	1. Introduction to course and Blackboard 2. How to be successful in this online course 3. Generating ideas *4. Timed freewriting exercise*	Discussion 1 Discussion 2 Reflection Assignment 1 Diagnostic Quiz
Week 2	1. The Narrative Essay 2. Planning the essay *3. Intro. to audio & video* *4. Intro to "Track Changes"*	Discussion 3 Discussion 4 Reflection Assignment 2
Week 3	1. The Narrative Essay 2. Planning the essay *3. Intro to video narrative essay*	Discussion 5 Discussion 6 Reflection Assignment 3
Week 4	1. The Narrative Essay 2. Planning the essay *3. Developing the video narrative essay*	Discussion 7 Discussion 8 Reflection Assignment 4
Week 5	1. The Explanatory/Process Essay *2. Intro to the video explanatory/process essay*	Discussion 9 Discussion 10 Reflection Assignment 5 **Essay 1: narrative essay.**
Week 6	1. The Explanatory Essay *2. Developing the video explanatory/process essay*	Discussion 11 Discussion 12 Reflection Assignment 6
Week 7	1. The Explanatory Essay *2. Developing the video explanatory/process essay*	Discussion 13 Discussion 14 Reflection Assignment 7
Week 8	1. Defining persuasion *2. Intro to the video persuasive essay* Mid Term Exam review	Discussion 15 Discussion 16 Reflection Assignment 8 **Essay # 2: explanatory essay.** Obtain approval on Essay 3 & 4
Week 9	*1. Defining persuasion* *2. Developing the video persuasive essay*	Discussion 17 Discussion 18 Reflection Assignment 9 **MID TERM EXAM**
Week 10	1. Defining research 2. Developing research 3. Finding sources	Discussion 19 Discussion 20 Reflection Assignment 10 **Essay # 3: Persuasive essay.**
Week 11	1. Defining research 2. Developing research 3. Evaluating sources	Discussion 21 Discussion 22 Reflection Assignment 11
Week 12	1. Defining research 2. Developing research 3. Documentation MLA	Discussion 23 Discussion 24 Reflection Assignment 12

Week 13	1. Defining research. 2. Final Review of citations & Works Cited	Discussion 25 Discussion 26 Reflection Assignment 13 **Essay # 4 Persuasive Essay with Research.**
Week 14	Reviews of major essays. Discussions.	Discussion 27 Discussion 28 Reflection Assignment 14
Week 15	Reviews of major essays. Discussions.	Discussion 29 Discussion 30 Reflection Assignment 15
Week 16		**FINAL EXAM**

To demonstrate effective course design and development in terms of clarity, objectivity, and purpose, each section below will begin with a brief introduction, and each sub-section will introduce descriptive material on the multi-media applications developed, illustrated with actual screen-shots of the applications recommended. Annotated commentaries in brief will indicate how the module was created (with its applicable multi-media software) and how the student can access and apply the material to meet learning objectives. Applicable learning theories will be explained as they are utilized and developed in the sections above to meet learning outcomes.

Course Description, Goals and Learning Outcomes

The material In Appendix A (Syllabus) includes information that is present in most first-year English Composition courses and is part of the syllabus requirement for all institutions. This document will be appropriately labeled and readily available at the start of the course. Many institutions require syllabus approval before a course is developed and introduced to students.

Therefore, the syllabus is the single most important document in any course, and great care must be taken with its development. This document is not only an important starting point for the instructor in creating a course that will indicate sound course objectives but will also

allow students to effectively meet learning outcomes. Suitable expansions and applications of multi-media elements are indicated in this modified syllabus extract. Items highlighted in italics indicate specific multi-media applications. Sections 4, 5 and 6, relevant to the course design, appear below. The sections in italics will be the primary focus in meeting best course design practices for English Composition online.

4. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Introduces students to critical thinking and the fundamentals of academic writing. Through the writing process, students refine topics; develop and support ideas; investigate, evaluate, and incorporate appropriate resources; edit for effective style and usage; and determine appropriate approaches for a variety of contexts, audiences, and purposes. Writing activities will include exposition and analysis with at least one researched essay. *In at least ONE (with a maximum of two) of these four essays, the student will utilize the digital format and will include among other applications, hyper-text and multi-media applications: audio and video clips. In addition, the student will have an opportunity to submit some textual work with multi-media applications in several of the brief assignments.*

Note: Items in italics indicate multi-media applications the student will access and/or develop in order to meet course objectives. Refer to course weekly modules for specific applications.

CONTENT: (Major Headings)

a. Rhetoric and the contexts of communication.
b. The development and effective use of writing processes.
c. Critical thinking.
d. Critical reading, summary, synthesis, and evaluation of texts.
e. Academic integrity, including the appropriate use of sources.
f. *Speech communication, including the preparation and delivery of an oral presentation utilizing course software on a prepared topic.*
g. *Non-traditional ways of creating and developing essays utilizing multi-media applications, such as audio clips, movie elements and other suitable interactivity.*

5. GENERAL COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Upon successful completion of the course, students will have written a minimum of two to three formal, typed academic essays totaling at least six (6) pages and a minimum of fifteen (15) pages of informal writing, including writing responses, drafts, and peer review. *In at least ONE (with a maximum of two) of these four essays, the student will utilize the digital format and will include among other applications, hyper-text and multi-*

media applications: audio and video clips. In addition, the student will have an opportunity to submit some textual work with multi-media applications in several of the brief assignments.

6. LEARNING OUTCOMES.

Statement of Purpose: ENG 100 develops the skills students possess prior to entering college-level writing courses and prepares students for academic, professional, and personal communication. Students will produce texts that reflect knowledge of writing processes, rhetoric, and digital technologies.

General Course Goals: By the end of ENG 100, students shall

* Adapt writing process to a variety of tasks, formats, genres, and rhetorical situations.
* Produce texts that are grounded in evidence and formally documented.
* Demonstrate academic integrity and the appropriate use of others' ideas and feedback in producing effective communication.
* *Demonstrate college-level written and oral communication skills, in prepared textual speeches, discussion board applications, in audio-tracks.*
* *Use digital and print technologies to compose, to research, and to disseminate texts.*

Rhetorical Knowledge
* Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation, including purpose, context, audience, and genre.
* Adapt voice, tone, and level of formality to a variety of rhetorical situations.
* Use conventions of format, structure, and design appropriate to the rhetorical situation.
* *Analyze texts and graphical material to describe how and why writers use rhetorical devices.*

Process
* *Engage in effective writing processes with use of appropriate technological applications and multi-media to include pre-writing, exchanging drafts, and revising.*
* Produce at least 15 pages of informal and 12 pages of formal writing.
* Employ appropriate syntax, usage, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing
* Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating.
* Integrate the ideas of others with their own, using appropriate documentation .
* *Produce reflective texts such as memos, letters, journals, blogs, lists, and threaded discussions.*
* Read, summarize, and respond to a variety of non-fiction texts.

Oral Communication Skills
* *Participate in interactive discussions, peer reviews, and oral presentations.*

• Use non-verbal cues as an essential aspect of self-presentation.
• Demonstrate use of active listening skills.

Digital Technologies
　　　• *Use electronic environments for drafting, reviewing, revising, editing, and sharing texts.*
　　　• *Locate, evaluate, organize, and use material collected from electronic sources, which may include scholarly library databases and informal digital networks.*

English Composition Online: Course Layout

Since this proposal involves a syllabus template and a blank course shell, all items will be completed based on this researcher's expertise in course development and design. The plan below is essentially a working outline and covers all elements of the proposed course layout. The sections of the course will include in the various tabs descriptive analysis, appropriate multi-media applications and screen-shots. In the drafting and outlining stages, and in preparation for inclusion of readings and assignments, an instructor will need to create an actual textual working plan for this course, with suitable multi-media applications appropriately identified, as a road-map to the entire course.

As the course is developed, this plan will be fine-tuned, with good emphasis in providing (a) clear information and instructions (b) logical steps (c) a variety of multi-media applications appropriate to course material, and (d) well-sequenced course development to meet learning objectives, and (e) development of the inter-active gradebook. Indeed, good course design and development follows the recursive process of any written assignment where the writer goes back and forth until the writing meets expectations. This process closely follows the narrative flow the student will be engaged in when he or she starts the course. The example below indicates a sound proposal for the introductory material and the first two weeks of course material. The remainder of the weeks will follow a similar approach.

Table 3: Course design table

Main Menu Item	Format	Purpose

[Left Toolbar]		
Announcement	Textual	Course tips; highlights on previous grading; reminders on upcoming assignments.
Course Information	Audio, Video and Textual	Course Description, Objectives, and learning Outcomes
How To Contact Instructor	Textual	Office hours, e-mail contact, phone number and days/times.
Ask Your Instructor	Discussion Board	Questions and answers
How To Access Course Material	Textual	Course Orientation Material
	PowerPoint	
	Video Recording	
	Screen Share Application	
Instructor Information and Introduction	Textual	Course Orientation Material
	Video	
	Web Links	
Syllabus	Textual	Course Material
Major Assignments	Textual	Course Material
Grading Matrix	Textual	Course Material
Access Weekly Chat	Live Chat: interactive	Course Material
Library Orientation	Textual/Video	Course Material
Chat With Classmates	Discussion Board	Course Material
Technical Support	Textual	Course Material
Week One	Week Objectives	Course Material
	Video Lecture	Course Material
	Reading	Course Material
	Audio Lecture	Course Material
	Video Lecture	Course Material
	Discussion Board 1	Graded assignment
	Discussion Board 2	Graded assignment
	Reflection One	Graded assignment
	Diagnostic Quiz	Graded assignment

Week Two	Week Objectives	Course Material
	Narrative Essay Review	Course Material
	Video Lecture	Course Material
	Reading	Course Material
	Video Lecture	Course Material
	Reflection Two	Graded assignment
	Discussion Board 3	Graded assignment
	Discussion Board 4	Graded assignment
	Quiz One	Graded assignment
Week Three – Week Fifteen	These weeks will be developed on the above approach with suitable modifications.	

Section One: Course Orientation and Introductions.

The driving force in teaching English composition online will be this approach: always present material in a clear straightforward manner utilizing a variety of approaches from text to multi-media applications addressing the where, what, when, why and how of narrative principles. An instructor will always make it clear to the student what information is course-orientation material and what information relates to understanding and completing assignments. Therefore, this best practices analysis will first briefly walk the instructor through basic course design and development of orientation material and then demonstrate the development of assignment-specific material. Emphasis will be placed on sound course design development to meet specific learning objectives for English Composition online.

As previously discussed, the electronic writing center played an important role in introducing students to electronic means of communications, which later led to the enhanced multi-media in-class method of instruction. Indeed, many of these multi-media instructional techniques used in the writing centers did have a direct impact in the electronic in-class classroom, and also in online applications. Several of these overlapping techniques have been modified and updated in the twenty-first century online class, and many productive discourses by educators and practitioners have resulted on what are best techniques for online instruction.

Therefore, this analysis will continue to advance these practices to develop an engaging student-centered online class.

The orientation section is where the student first becomes acquainted with course materials. The instructor of the online course will anticipate students' questions, comments, and concerns, and the conscientious instructor will incorporate logically structured answers to these concerns into the introductory course material in such a manner as to invite students to participate. Everything will be developed as a narrative in the course. Best practices indicate that the student's writing becomes the student's own personal odyssey into the writing process. Therefore, multimedia applications will be a practical approach for engaging learners in the English composition online course, with great care taken to properly sequence items and develop material with clear and precise details in an engaging manner. This is very important especially since this could be the student's first online course, and some students may have been hesitant in taking an online English Composition course. After all, the intention here is to place the student in control of this beginning writing course at all times. Therefore, first impressions matter a lot; the course needs to be kept simple, clean, clear and yet engaging. This approach allows the student to take an active role in his or her own learning.

Best practices for designing, developing and managing an effective online English Composition course depend on the following guiding principles:

1. Keep the information well-organized with sound narrative sequencing
2. Allow the student to take charge of his or her learning from day one by developing interactive exercises and multi-media applications to meet learning styles of diverse learners
3. Clearly indicate what is required of the student at all times

4. When an assignment has several deliverable options, clearly indicate this, and well before due dates

5. Explain clearly what is required, when it is required, how it will be submitted and how it will be graded.

Screen One: Course Main Page

Best methods for meeting course objectives rely on two important approaches: effective course design and development, and critical thinking assignments. General guiding principles begin as soon as the student accesses the course. Therefore, when the student logs into the course, the opening screen (center stage) will display the announcement of the day. The toolbars on the left of the course main page (main toolbars) will indicate important introductory tabs and the weekly buckets; these tabs are the driving force for the course. All tab descriptions have length limitations; therefore, care will be taken to describe tabs appropriately. For example, the screen below indicates what the student will encounter on accessing course materials on the first day of classes. Indeed, for any student, the opening announcement is an important one. This approach provides the student with important "know how" and leads to sound control of the course material at all times, which encourages active participation, good interaction with and within the various modules of the course, and also encourages critical thinking.

Course Main Page Opening Screen: Toolbar, Left Tab

The tabs for this section were created in Blackboard by utilizing the "Add Content" and all tabs appear as left toolbars. All course illustrations, tables and figures were created by this researcher unless otherwise indicated. Each tab is appropriately labeled for ease of identification, which is the cornerstone of sound course design practices. All of the tabs identified in Figure 1 below will be fully explained under the following guidelines: purpose, content and course

relevance. These explanations will be accompanied and enhanced by appropriate scholarly

discussions from current resources on best course design practices from instructors, educators

and practitioners in the field of online English Composition. This is the format that will be

followed for all illustrations in this course.

Figure 1: Course Main Page
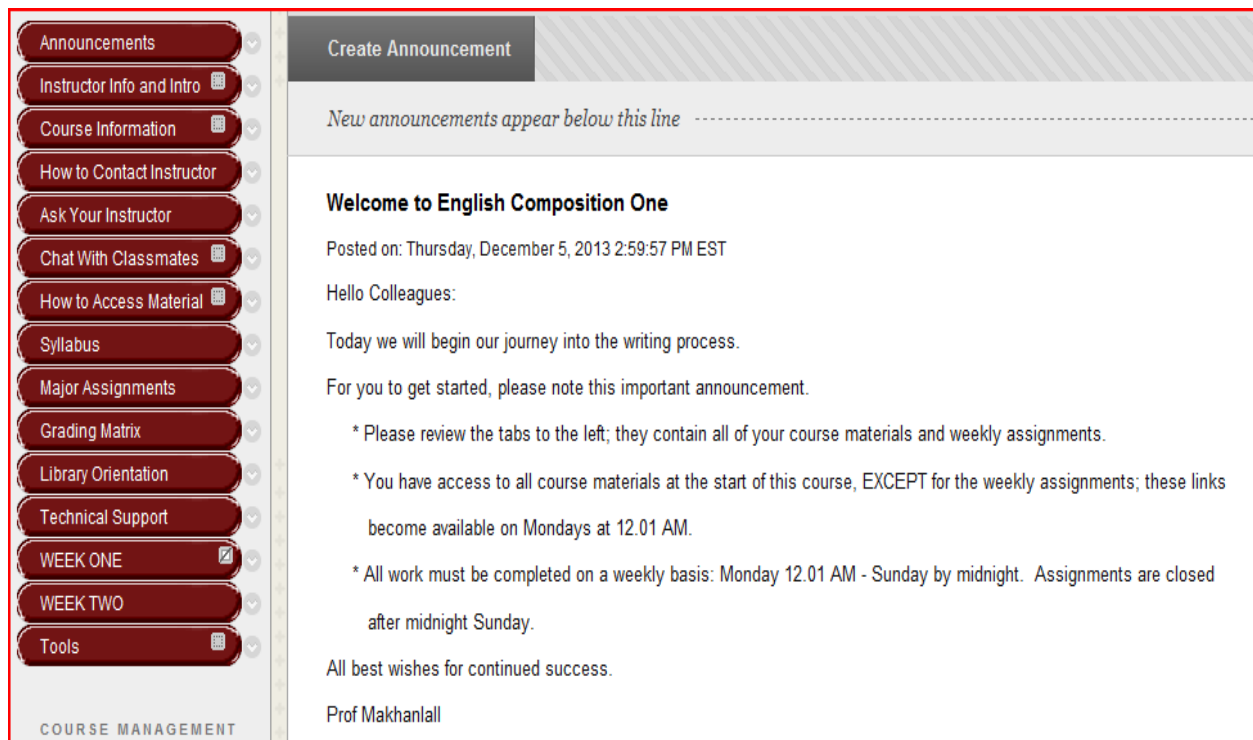
Announcement: Toolbar, Left Tab

Best design practices indicate that it is very important to set the mood, style and tone of

the course with well-crafted announcements, which are visible at the top of the screen's Home

Page. The most recent announcements will appear at the top. Therefore, announcements can be

an important means of updating students with current course requirements and to reinforce

weekly objectives as the course progresses. Timely announcements also indicate an active

interest in the course by the instructor and a genuine concern for the student's involvement in the

activities of the course and for the student's well being.

The rationale in providing effective announcements is outlined by Ragan in "10 Principles of Effective Online Teaching: Best Practices in Distance Education", who reinforces the approach that "the general course announcement tool can be used to remind all students of important deadlines or upcoming course events" (8). At the time announcements are created in the course, they can also be e-mailed to students. It is a best practice to post a warm and welcoming announcement as the first contact with the class and to e-mail this out. To further engage students, it is best to elaborate on the first week's assignments in a second well-timed announcement on the second day of the course.

Most institutions now provide an e-mail communication system for students and instructors within the course; everyone will use this e-mail system as the primary method of communication. The instructor needs to monitor the e-mail in-box for undelivered e-mails, which indicates that a student needs to update his or her e-mail address; in this way, the instructor can take the necessary corrective action, which indicates active participation by the instructor, and this also encourages student participation. Announcements can also be used to provide general updates on the results of graded assignments.

However, care needs to be taken that the student is not overloaded with daily announcements and e-mails. Indeed, communicating with students at several levels not only mimics an in-class course, but also facilitates interaction, which is paramount in an online course. Students need not feel all alone in cyberspace, and the techniques outlined facilitate class participation. After all, an English Composition course is about communicating, exchanging ideas and obtaining feed-back, developing sound writing practices, and developing sound critical thinking skills.

Course Announcements

Announcements are created by utilizing the "Create Announcement" option, with care taken to position new announcements for top visibility. As the course progresses, additional announcements will indicate specific weekly requirements and reminders to assist students in developing sound time-management skills. Therefore, an opening weekly announcement will indicate the "to do" list for the week. Instructors will enhance the announcement material presented to students by utilizing pictures, tables, charts, audio, and video clips to engage student interest.

Instructor Information and Introduction: Toolbar, Left Tab

It is always best to have an instructor-created introduction video to introduce the instructor and highlight brief yet important elements of the course. A firm requirement for any effective online course is the "Getting to know the instructor." Educators and practitioners have frequently indicated that students feel "all alone" in an online course, and interaction is often times lacking. Therefore, it is best to integrate this community approach very early on in the course. The ability to hear your instructor introduce him or herself, and introduce course materials effectively begins the online rapport with students.   This introduction can be created in a number of available software programs, and several of these are briefly outlined in the order of ease of creation, as follows.

   (1)   A Webcam can create very clear lectures utilizing audio and video. Most computers come with a built-in Webcam, or an inexpensive one can be purchased.

   (2)   Real Producer Plus allows for good video recordings, which can be enhanced at the time of the initial recording with light background music. However, many institutions provide some sort of recording software with their courses.

(3)   Photo Story allows for pictures created from a Power Point file to be enhanced with narration and custom movement. This software is readily available free of charge.

(4)   Movie Maker software can be used to combine audio and video clips into a seamless movie presentation. This software is readily available in the Microsoft suite.

Therefore, this left toolbar, with instructor's introduction, importantly positioned below the announcement tab serves as a vibrant approach to course material.

It is best to include in the instructor's written introduction a picture of the instructor, the instructor's qualifications and teaching experience, together with courses taught at the institution, which can generate student interest. The instructor can also add links to his or her Website or other information relating to publications and professional achievements.

Course Information: Toolbar, Left Tab

Another important tab is the Course information tab (frequently indicated as the Course Document tab). This will be appropriately positioned as the third tab. This is a folder that contains a number of textual and multi-media elements highlighting key aspects of the course. It serves as a quick introduction to the course, course requirements and student expectations, and it provides a road map for the semester. Material under this tab will be the instructor's absolute best way to present course materials in a well-sequenced and personalized manner. Appropriate examples can be instructor-created textual, audio, and video material. Ragan notes several primary areas of focus for effective course design in meeting course objectives:

The many advantages of "anytime, anyplace" education can also present challenges for both learner and instructor in time management and operation.

Establishing and maintaining a predictable pattern of course studies can serve the learner by providing a foundation for planning other life activities. For the instructor, a defined schedule of class activities can serve to prevent the class from interfering with other responsibilities and balance the expectations of learners who may desire 24/7 access to their "virtual teacher. (10)

Indeed, students new to the online experience can often times become "lost." Sound course design practices dictate that knowing how the course works and what is required prevents unnecessary worries. Also, this minimizes the student-instructor correspondence on rudimentary matters. Therefore some of the up-front considerations as outlined by Junaidu and Al-Ghamdi in "Tips for Developing Media-rich Online Courses," offer sound approaches to good course design:

Without proper planning, online course developers may find themselves overwhelming the learners with material. All knowledge units to be covered and their extent of coverage will be carefully stated and course content developed accordingly. Course content will be up to date and appropriate choice of examples should be made to enhance the realization of the set learning outcomes.

Establishing effective time-management skills and balancing personal, family and professional responsibilities in order to meet learning objectives can be a daunting task for students, and assistance will be quickly required very early on in the course. The major assignments and appropriate grade points, a time-table of assignments and due dates, and links to appropriate course materials, can all be effective tools for keeping students on track and fostering participation.

The syllabus is the driving force of the course and it is the single most detailed document available as a student resource. Students will often times need to refer to the syllabus for the entire plan of the course but quick reviews or "refreshers" are important features in many of the course tabs. Indeed, it is best to repeat important information in a clear manner in the appropriate assignment sections, which is known as sequencing information in important inter-connected buckets. Ragan in "11 Strategies for Managing Your Online Courses," offers this useful reminder:

> Deliberately allowing for some redundancy is also necessary when developing course materials. I always describe assignments in the syllabus as well as within the lesson body, and in a separate assignment section for each lesson. If the software has calendar and announcement options, entering assignment due dates both on the calendar and in announcements that pop up when a student logs on are also helpful redundancy techniques. This can help eliminate panicky e-mails about assignment questions and due dates. (18)

Therefore, the Course Information tab will effectively walk the student through the course with a hands-on approach to understanding course materials: how to access the material, what to complete and when, how to complete it, how it is to be graded, where and when will grades be posted, and how to review the gradebook comments. Indeed, an effective layout will identify the appropriate material presented in a clearly defined label with an indication of the material that will be accessed by the student.

The screen-shot below indicates a sound approach to positioning and sequencing items. In this folder, the instructor is free to include a combination of text and media applications.

Figure 2: Course Information Folder Layout
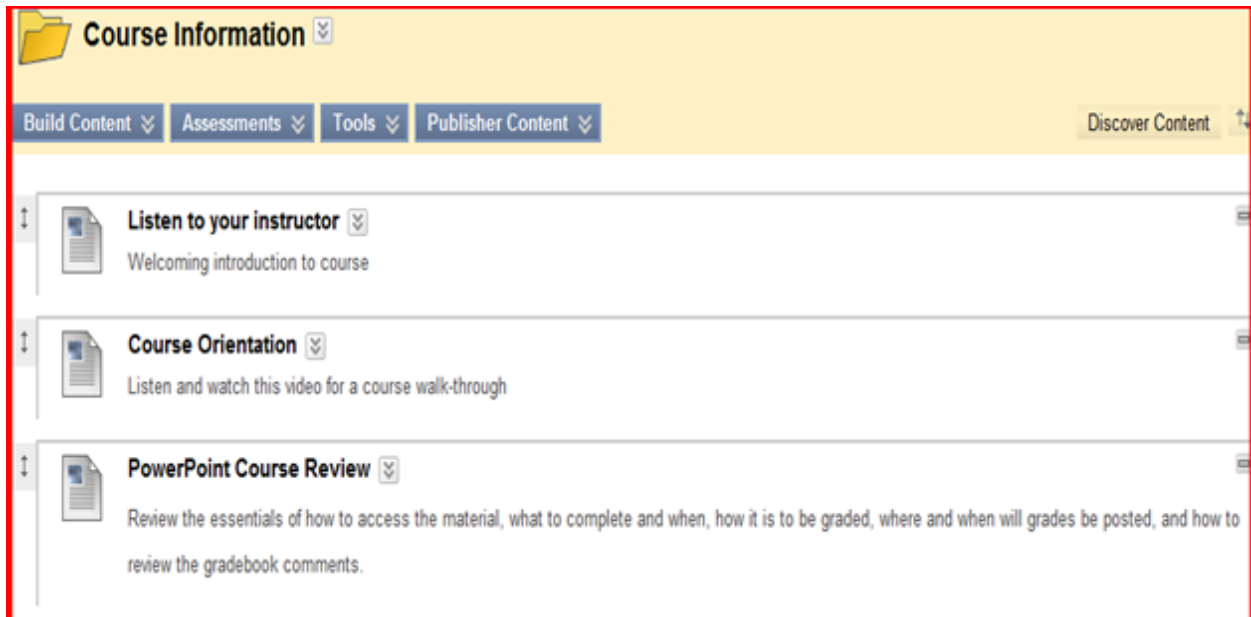
Listen to Your Instructor Link.

This item located in the first sequence under the Course Information screen will serve as an important introduction to the instructor. An audio recording is a very effective medium to introduce specific course requirements since the student will be focused on listening to precise instructional material. Students will be asked to open a course document, activate the audio, and follow along as the instructor walks the student through important course requirements. Many students like to print out instructions, and while they listen to the recording, annotate the material.

The Real Player program allows for a simple recording as an .rm file, and the Blackboard program allows the creating of the audio track controls, which will allow the student to pause or replay the recording as he or she wishes. The screen-shot below indicates the audio controls when the student accesses the tab.

Figure 3: Listen to your instructor.
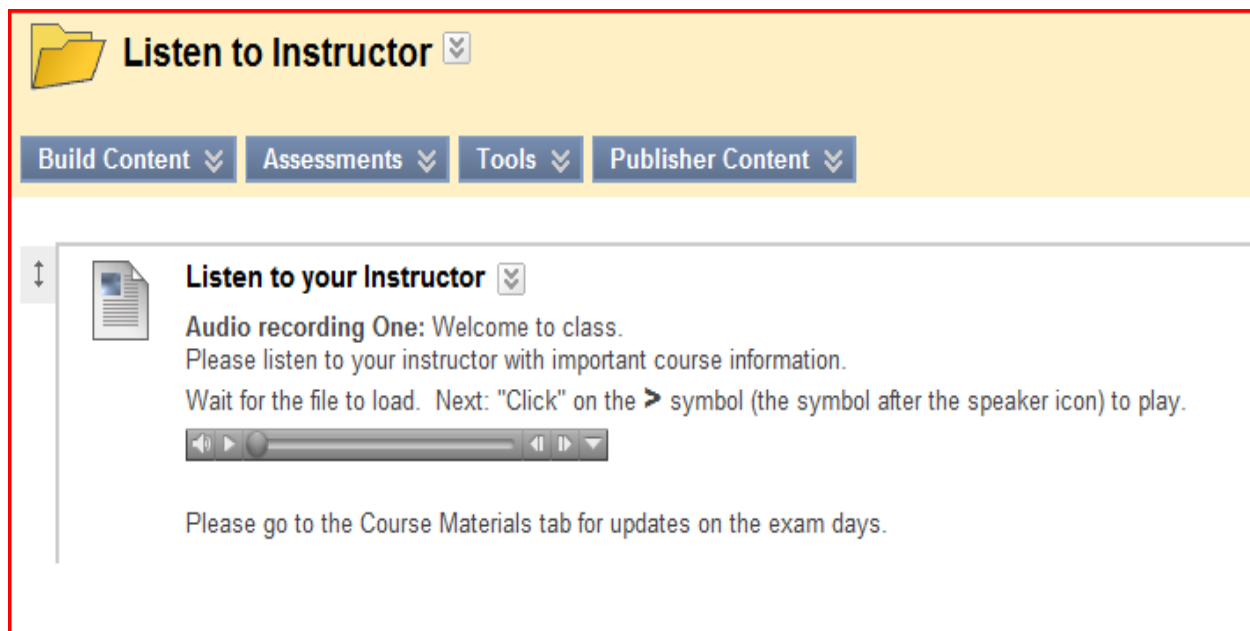
Course Orientation: Course Walk-Through Link

The course walk-through is an important feature of the course. This allows the student and instructor a one-on-one shared experience with important course matters. There are several software programs that allow for screen sharing. The Camstudio program allows the instructor to record a video, which captures the instructor's narration and progress through the course in real time. It is as if the student is watching the instructor access course material in a live presentation in the classroom. Some institutions also enroll the instructor as a student in the course, and in this way the instructor can present the student view to the class. The application allows the instructor to create a movie sequence of logging into the course and accessing course material in a logical manner. The instructor can walk the student though various course tabs, applications and how to access and submit course materials. After the recording is completed by the instructor, it is saved and becomes part of the course orientation material. This can be saved as a "Video clip .avi" file, and it can be replayed as often as the student wishes.

The Cam Studio video program used in the course walk-through can also allow the instructor to share information with the student on how to access textual information located not only in the course but from appropriate Websites and external sources, including audio and video files, and how to upload and submit assignments such as from the student's desktop (with the instructor's desktop as an illustration). This program captures the instructor's precise movements in the course, with accompanying narration. The program can also illustrate sound editing and proofreading skills on various types of documents, with the utilization of Microsoft Track Changes, for example.

How to Contact Instructor: Toolbar, Left Tab

This discussion board item will examine several important concerns regarding how a student can contact the instructor. It is crucial to develop an ongoing dialogue with students; after all, this is what good writing is about: the ability to converse freely and exchange ideas. Ragan's observations provide good insights:

> Establishing appropriate communications methods for the online course serves students and instructor by ensuring a safe and secure environment for course-related activities. Using the institutionally supported learning management system provides increased degrees of security and confidentiality and keeps "institutional business" within the appropriate confines. Clearly stating communications protocol as well as instructor performance expectations and adhering to these standards will eliminate confusion and reduce ambiguity in course transactions. (20)

Indeed, in an online class acceptable protocols are as important to proper communication as in a face-to-face class. Mabrito writes in "Guidelines for Establishing Interactivity in Online

114

Courses" that "In an on-campus class, students see their instructor on at least a weekly basis" (1).

However, this is not possible in an on-line class. Therefore, another important tab will be "How

to Contact Instructor," and this can offer a variety of contact means, which will meet many of the

face-to-face contact expectations. There are four common yet effective ways to reach an

instructor: e-mail exchanges, discussion board "Questions and Answers" in-class, phone contact,

and in-course chat sessions.

Baker recommends this effective approach with regards to student consultations with the

instructor on the course:

> The author's view is that an important feature of face-to-face instruction involves
> connecting with students to make learning human, real, and fun. Substitutes for
> face-to-face interchanges are available in the online environment. Helpful
> connections may be made in several ways. The instructor may request the student
> to call at a particular time. In other cases, a phone number where, and times when,
> the student is reachable may make more sense. Virtual office hours can establish
> regular times when a student may telephone an instructor. Alternatively,
> videoconferencing or Internet phone chat (e.g., Adobe Connect, Skype,
> TeamSpeak, etc.) can be used to resolve a discussion concern. (408)

E-mail can be a first method of contact between student and instructor through the

Announcement course tools. For example, many institutions require students to communicate

with an instructor only through an institution's e-mail system, which makes it clear that an

instructor will not communicate with a student through a personal e-mail address for privacy

reasons. Indeed, as Mabrito points out: "In an online class, ongoing e-mail contact can establish

an electronic version of face time with students" (1). In addition, communication protocols

between student-instructor on confidential matters will be addressed up front. As Baker points out in a 2011 article:

> An issue might warrant an individual e-mail. A student may have a question, need a resource, or want to argue about a discussion grade. The individual e-mail keeps the matter confidential. Additionally, individual e-mails permit communication to schedule an office meeting or request an appointment during the instructor's virtual office hours" (408).

Although not included in this course, it is possible to have a repository for questions and answers related to course materials and open to all students as quick reference. This is known as the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) tab, which can be developed after the instructor has taught a number of similar courses. This is important especially since E-mail may be the most common form of communication in online courses, but its asynchronous nature poses particular problems for students with time-sensitive questions and schedules (Mabrito 1).

Therefore, a good supplement to e-mail communication is the Discussion Board, which will be appropriately placed under the "How to Contact Instructor." This allows ease of online posting of previous questions for all students to review and then ask new questions. This also serves as a valuable repository of answers to important course questions, which the instructor will incorporate in future courses.

Three other equally important communication protocols can be used to encourage student contact:

- It is not uncommon for an instructor to have a dedicated cell phone number for communicating with students. Indeed, some institutions require a phone number contact (other than the academic office) as part of their course requirements.

116

- Also, a student may have non-course related questions; therefore, care will be taken to also provide the contact information for student services and for technical services.

- The chat-session option within the course allows the instructor and student to chat in real-time. Many students can attend this open forum. At the same time, private text messages within the chat can create one-to-one confidentiality between any student and the instructor.

The "How to Contact Instructor" tab is one of the most often used tabs by students, and care must be taken to develop this with clear and precise instructions.

Figure 4: How to Contact Instructor

Ask Your Instructor: Toolbar, Left Tab

As indicated in the "How to Contact Instructor" tab, a Discussion Board item for posting general course information can assist many students with immediate and on-going information in real time, which also prevents unnecessary e-mails and delays in students receiving timely

responses. It is recommended that a notice be placed indicating that this is an open forum for all students, and that confidential matters will not be posted here.

This discussion board item serves as the main driving force in addressing student's concerns about course matters. Rudeness and unprofessional conduct can occur, and these have to be monitored and restrained in a timely manner. Students may often respond with their views on course matters in this tab. Therefore, when the instructor participates frequently, it keeps the discussion groups student-centered and learning centered, and it is the instructor's responsibility to maintain a safe albeit challenging learning environment (Baker 408-09). An effective discussion board item is illustrated below.

Figure 5: Ask Your Instructor Discussion Thread
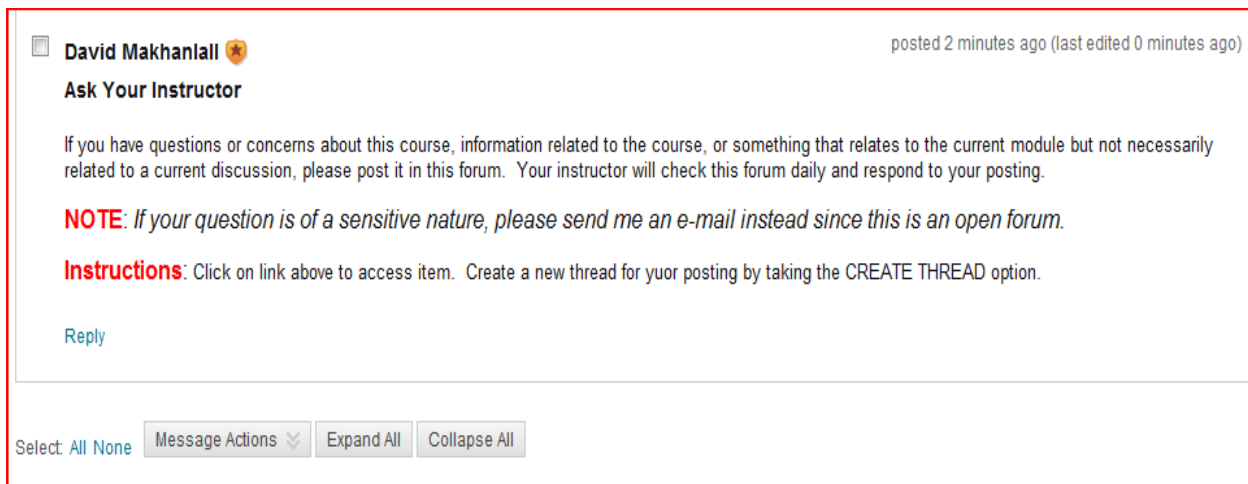
Chat with Classmates: Toolbar, Left Tab

Dialogue among classmates is crucial to the sharing of ideas in an online class. This tab is often times called the "Coffee House." Here, students engage in friendly discussion about goals, aspirations and course materials. A note will be added that the instructor will not participate but will frequently monitor the discussion threads. The instructor will also post a friendly introduction well before the course starts.

Figure 6: Chat with Classmates.
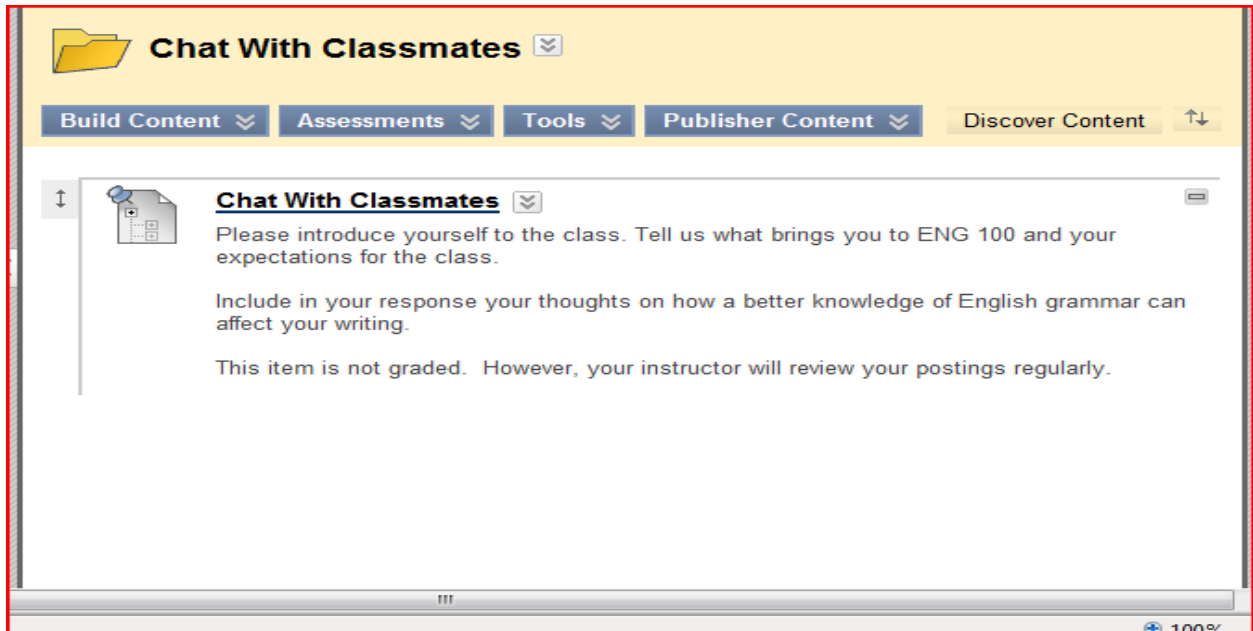
Since the chat sessions occur in real-time and allow for active communication between all parties, care will be taken to develop an appropriate approach to chat sessions. This section will elaborate on the significance and importance of the chat sessions. An online chat can be defined as follows, using one of the most common online platforms:

> Collaboration Sessions are real-time lessons and discussions. There are two tools available in Blackboard that facilitate Collaboration Sessions: Virtual Classroom and Chat. The Virtual Classroom feature is a shared online environment that allows students to participate in online discussions, view links, share documents and exchange files, all from a remote location. The Chat feature in Blackboard is similar to chat rooms found elsewhere on the Internet: It allows students to exchange text messages online. However, these chat rooms are contained within Blackboard's environment and can be recorded by the Instructor for review. ("Virtual Classrooms and the Chat Feature," 1).

119

From the initial stages of communicating with the instructor via the telephone, the process has merged into the interactive real-time chat sessions; "a chat room [is] where students can meet, talk, upload files, write on a whiteboard, and generally behave in a way that mimics a real classroom setting" (Simpson 424). Wang and Gearhart point out, "In addition to enabling student discussions, Internet chat can also be a convenient tool for instructors who want to host virtual office hours. Students can log on at scheduled times or set up appointments to meet online with the instructor and ask questions or just chat" (77). Simpson adds to this:

> I encourage those who want their online courses to have the integrity that face-to-face classes have to try a synchronous discussion component and involve peer tutors who can extend the personal connection that we as social beings need to ensure that learning takes place. (429)

"The implication is that when students actually use chat they do find it 'Rewarding' and not 'Complex'" (Spencer & Hiltz 1). Smith reports as follows:

> Many online classes use synchronous communication – chat - as a way to conduct class discussion. However, chat can quickly disintegrate into nonproductive chaos if allowed to flow unchecked. The tools provided by course management systems such as Blackboard provide one solution to this problem by allowing instructors to grant or deny access to individuals asking to participate in a chat. While such a procedure can help provide structure to chat sessions, it may compromise the vitality of such sessions by forcing the instructor to serve as a monitor rather than a participant.

Therefore the instructor should set firm chat protocols and provide this information early on in the course and it should be readily available before and during chat sessions. For example, best

120

practices indicate that each student be allowed equal opportunity to participate. Therefore, each student will be allowed one opening statement as first priority, and at least one follow-up comment. Granted, not all student will want to participate.

How to Access Course Material: Toolbar, Left Tab

This tab will be dedicated to precise information relating to assignments. Note that the Course Information tab discussed previously should be general in nature; it is not a good idea to overload the student with complex information all at once. Hence, this tab "How to Access Course Material" can be specific and detailed on individual applications. Here, the instructor can post a warm and welcoming audio or video presentation. Also, a course-walk-through video can be included, which allows the students a hands-on and practical approach to major course material and specific assignments: where they are located, how to access the readings and course material, how to submit assignments, how to check grades, and many other important course items.

For example, the instructor can create a video, which will walk the student through the process on how to access specific information on an assignment, how to read the information, how to develop the assignment, and how to explore available options on submitting the work. It is important to point out in this tab due dates of specific assignments as reinforcement.

Screen casting using software such as Camtasia/Camstudio can provide a sound introduction to course content as in a brick-and-mortar classroom. In some programs, the instructor appears in a live box in a highly visible section of the screen, below which the multi-media presentations flow. Students become "privy" to information in an engaging conversational style. Indeed, the Camtasia/Camstudio application, like most inter-active software facilitates "technically the ability of the user to intervene in computing processes and see the effects of the

intervention in real time" (Lister, et al 388), where the reader effectively becomes the instructor and takes control.

To take this a step further, in presenting lectures, the instructor can insert an Audacity file (with dialogue, introductory/background music and interviews) recording directly into the Camtasia/Camstudio application. Therefore, narrative voice, pre-recorded and enhanced audio recordings, and direct visual exploration, can create a symbiosis of cultural consciousness, which can enhance meaning especially when presenting complex course matters such as providing background information to the research essay or an aspect of researching complex themes.

How to Complete and Submit Assignments Item.

For brief written assignments, textual instructions will be sufficient but often times audio or video instructions will be required, which accommodates different learning styles. In addition, the mode in which the assignment can be completed will often times allow options. For example, a Reflection assignment is where the student "talks about the writing process" he or she has developed, and one the student will improve on in subsequent drafts. The assignment can be textual or audio or video. The sequence in creating a brief written assignment is indicated in the three steps below.

Figure 7: How to access assignment and how to submit work in three steps.

Figure 7 (a): Step 1: Read instructions.

Assignment Information: Reflection Two

Instructions	"Click" on link above to submit your work. **Reflection Two: (5 points):** This is a written assignment. You will be typing directly into the screen that appears when you take the "Submit assignment" option below. OR you may prepare an answer and copy/past it in the screen. OR you may attach a word document. **Requirements:** 1. ONE paragraph response of between 7 – 10 lines of text (150 -200 words). 2. Correct grammar, spelling and punctuation 3. Precise answers to the question prompt. First, watch our video on The Literacy Narrative: (click on this link): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQXltgmXcFw The literacy narrative can take many forms. In college work, we are accustomed to writing the narrative literacy essay in text format, which follows the traditional essay format. In our modern electronic age, many narratives take the "multimodal" approach. This assignment asks you to Reflect on whether you would prefer the traditional narrative literacy approach of essay-format in text OR the new multimodal approach. Justify your position with reasoning, analysis and examples.
Due Date	
Points Possible	5

Figure 7 (b): Step 2: Complete assignment by typing out in a document or copy-paste on screen.

2. Assignment Materials

Submission   Text Editor is: ON

Path: body

Attach File   Browse My Computer   Browse Content Collection

Comments
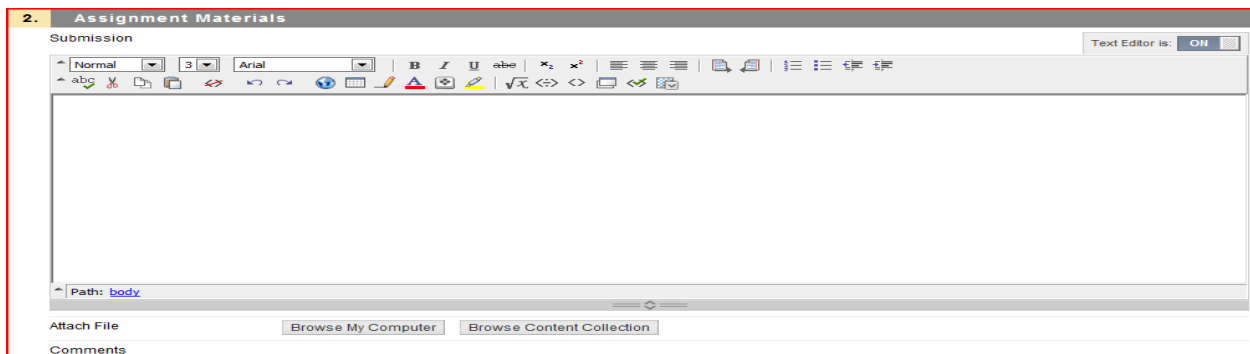
Figure 7 (C): Step 3: OR by uploading a file to the assignment.

2. Correct grammar, spelling and punctuation
3. Precise answers to the question prompt.
First, watch our video on The Literacy Narrative: (click on this link): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQXltgmXcFw
The literacy narrative can take many forms. In college work, we are accustomed to writing the narrative literacy essay in text format, which follows the traditional essay format.
In our modern electronic age, many narratives take the "multimodal" approach.
This assignment asks you to Reflect on whether you would prefer the traditional narrative literacy approach of essay-format in text OR the new multimodal approach. Justify your position with reasoning, analysis and examples.

Due Date

Points Possible   5

Assignment Ma...

Submission

Response to the litera...

Save AVI File
Save in: Desktop
Name | Size | Type | Date modified
David   Ashford_Guidances
Public   Ashford_Retention
Computer   Books
Network   Books_1_1_2011
Ashford_GradingMatrix   CHRIS_Pictures
File name: HowToSubmitAssignment*.avi   Save
Save as type: AVI Movie Files (*.avi)   Cancel

CamStudio
File Region Options Tools View Help
Record to AVI
RenderSoft
CamStudio
OPENSOURCE
Ready

Syllabus: Toolbar, Left Tab

The syllabus is a well-organized roadmap to the entire course, and it is the most important document for the course. Baker in a 2011 article points out "The course syllabus serves as the pedagogical roadmap to learning outcomes" (404). Note that aspects of the syllabus are included in various tabs for quick reference, but students will be directed to this single document for all course matters. Baker adds, "Syllabus ground rules should support everyone to get "from" the material while leading everyone to get "through" the material.

Important aspects of the syllabus can be highlighted on-screen, with a visible link to the entire syllabus.

Figure 8: Syllabus

Major Assignments: Toolbar, Left Tab

This is a very important tab since the assignments are tied in to learning outcomes and are an integral part of the learning process. This tab serves as a means of listing the major assignments for detailed review, and it also allows for the practice of sound time-management skills by the student. Ragan reports: "The goal is to empower the online learner to take responsibility for managing their own learning experience and free the instructor to concentrate their time and energy on crafting a truly engaged learning experience" (8). Therefore, there will

be an appropriate mix of activities to meet learning objectives, and this tab should not only include textual information, but quizzes, discussion board activities, and written assignments. Ragan adds: "For the instructor, establishing and communicating a course schedule and pattern of work serves to define the boundaries between the online class activities and the rest of life" (9). Indeed, the assignment tab provides an important quick-listing of major graded requirements.

The table method of presenting information is the best approach, which includes assignment by name and type, point allocation and course grade percentages. Appropriate weekly extracts from this table can be posted as announcements, sent as e-mails, and used to introduce the course weekly tabs.

Figure 9: Major Assignments

Item	Points	%
Essay 1: Narrative/Event Essay	100	10
Essay 2: Explanatory/Process Essay	100	10
Essay 3: Persuasive Essay	100	10
Essay 4: Researched Persuasive Essay (MLA)	150	15
Final Exam	190	19
Reflection Assignments: 15 items, 10 points each.	150	15
Discussion Boards: 30 items, 7 points each	210	21
Total	1000	100

Grading Matrix: Toolbar, Left Tab

How an assignment is graded is an integral part of the learning process. Key deliverables, such as discussion board items, written assignments and quizzes, will have detailed grading matrices. Students will be directed to these items when they begin each assignment. As Baker points out in a 2011 article: "Instructors can reinforce a grading rubric. They can advise students that depending on the nature of the questions, higher quality comments likely will have references (to the text, electronic lectures, guest speakers, or other sources). Students can be informed whether the instructor values examples, metaphors, stories, and humor in their commentary" (404).

Indeed, the grading rubric will be adequately illustrated in the feed-back given to the student in the gradebook. Baker adds: "Instructors should enforce their assessment standards conscientiously once their grading rubric is established. Otherwise, students develop bad habits. This trend is compounded when an instructor also fails to present candid feedback speedily. Understandably, students righteously feel surprise and [display] anger if standards are communicated and applied belatedly" (405).

Each grading matrix will indicate the possible points and the conditions under which the points are to be awarded for the individual assignments. A table method is the best approach, with suitable emphasis on primary objectives. Descriptive information can be added below each heading for emphasis. (Well illustrated grading matrices will be illustrated and explored in the appropriate weekly tabs below in Section Two for the significant assignments in this course). The example below illustrates the opening grading matrix tab with links to the appropriate assignment and grading matrix.

Figure 10: Grading Matrix tab.
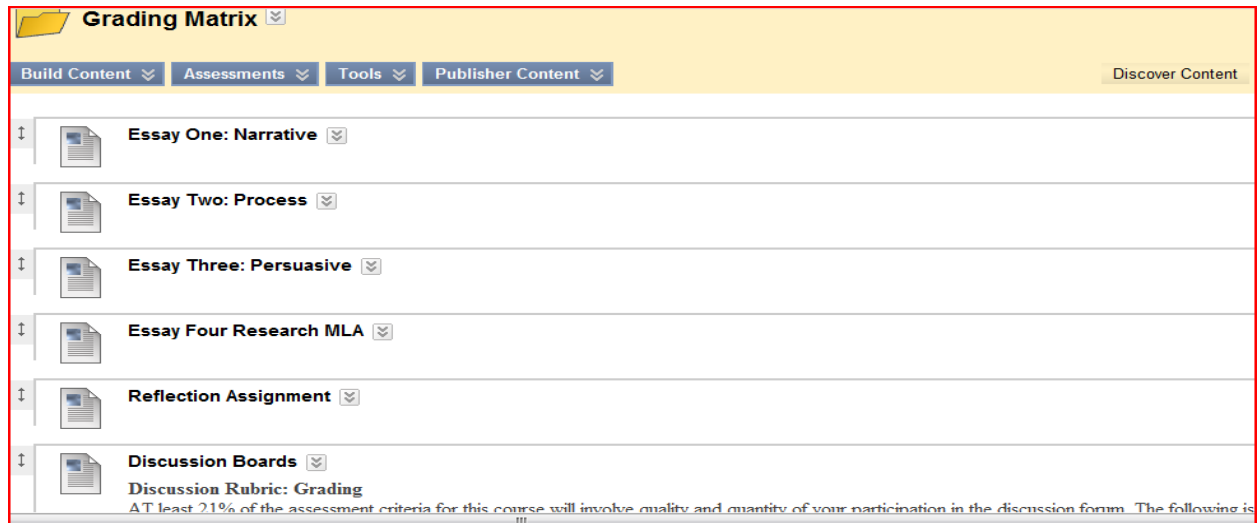
Library Orientation: Toolbar, Left Tab

A cornerstone of online English Composition course development has been in the area of information literacy (IL) instruction fostered by academic librarians. With renewed interest in online research for academic papers in the English composition, the English Composition online course will benefit from a successful integration of sound research practices located directly in the existing online courses. As indicated by a study conducted by Holliday and Fagerheim, the result has been very positive:

> The English Department, especially the English 1010 coordinators, saw the need
>
> for even greater integration of the library into the English writing curriculum.
>
> English instructors realized just how long it takes to teach information literacy
>
> skills, and improved student work proved to them that it was worth the time. The
>
> process also highlighted the need to build the library into the new English
>
> curriculum from the beginning rather than reacting to a completed curriculum.
>
> (182)

In an in-class course, instructors will arrange for a library tutorial with a librarian as part of the course. This option is not available in an online class. However, most libraries offer a pre-packaged selection of library tutorials. Therefore, it is best to develop a separate tab in the online course, which will cover the elements of sound research practices, with hyper links, audio and video materials to adequately cover best practices in completing research. In this way, all students are on the same page with best research practices. These resources are inter-connected with the research essay assignment and can be referred to as many times as the student wishes.

The screen-shot below indicates a library orientation tab with both textual information and a video.

Figure 11: Library Orientation
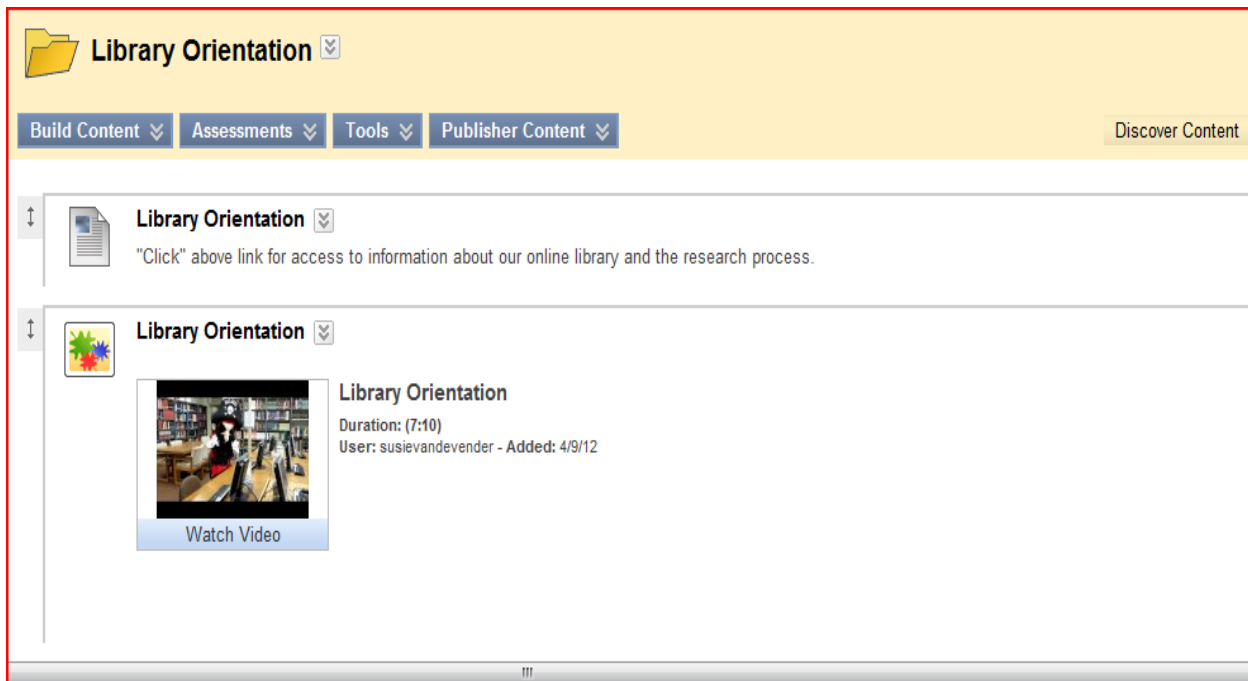
Technical Support: Toolbar, Left Tab

This very important tab cannot be confused with the How to Contact Instructor tab. It will be made clear that technical assistance refers to logging into the course or accessing course information. Contacting appropriate college help-desk personnel can be important. It is

advisable that a student print out information at the start of the course in case the student is

locked out of the course for one reason or another, and this will important recommendation will

be highly visible in this tab.

Figure 12: Technical Support
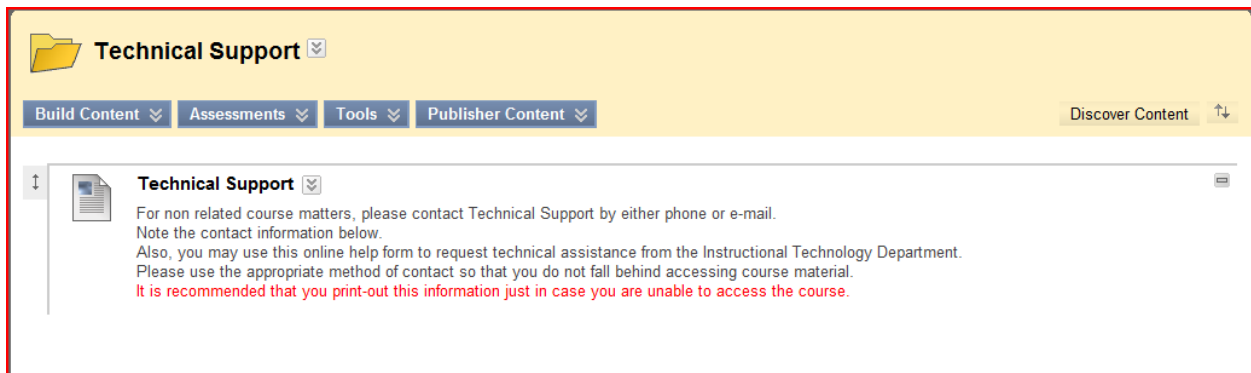
Summary

This course orientation section will be available at all times over the duration of the

course for quick review by the student. It is highly recommended that the instructor not make

any changes or additions to this section after the course has started. If changes are necessary,

then these must be clearly indicated and notification sent to students in a timely manner. The

weekly sections below will develop and explain how the student will meet learning objectives,

and these sections will follow a narrative format, which allows for good student interaction.

Section Two: Week One: Toolbar, Left Tab

Week One is where the student begins to access course material. The Week One

Objectives tab will contain all necessary information for the student to actually begin review of

the learning materials and the instructions and directions for the graded assignments for that

week. The material will be presented in the order the student needs to follow, and all weekly

tabs will follow a logical sequence. Indeed, an online course is not an individual listing of

components but will embody narrativity as previously discussed.

Therefore, care should be taken in preparing material for presentation. Landow cautions: "electronic linking shifts the boundaries between one text and another as well as between the author and the reader and between the teacher and the student" (52). Instructor-created material is always the best approach here since this will not cloud delivery of information. Indeed, Rose points to the positive results of a study with regards to meeting students' expectations in this area:

> The results of this study suggest that personalizing the course delivery of both online and face-to-face classes in the course management system is viewed positively by students. An overwhelming majority of the students surveyed for this study indicated positive attitudes about the use of instructor-made videos in college-level classes. These findings suggest that the use of instructor-made videos in both online and face-to-face classes may be beneficial, but especially so in 100% online classes. (494)

A quick review will indicate the relative ease with which the instructor can employ multi-media applications in creating practical and interactive video lessons. These will reinforce the pedagogical advantages of using multi-media in the English Composition online course.

For example, Photo Story technology will allow the instructor-developer to save Power Point slides as jpeg (picture format) items, to which narration can be added. It also allows the creator to add basic elements of "fade-in" and "fade-out," which will simulate the vibrant "performance" aspect of a lecture. In the Photo Story application, the instructor will then edit the various slides and add elements to enhance the presentation. Recording is done directly as each slide is manipulated on screen, and the instructor can at this point decide whether to do a voice recording or add material from an external source as appropriate. It will be noted that only one

track (single recording) per picture is allowed, which may include narration, music or other recordings. In addition, the software does allow music to be played over audio recordings.

On the other hand Movie Maker allows for integrating of slides, movie-clips and various recordings (utilizing Audacity created audio files, among others) directly into the program, which results in a fully functional movie. Now that the instructor has created audio and multi-media files, the information can be "interleaved" into the course, and in a sense can fuse elements of media, art and text as a functional unified "consciousness." As Handa points out, "In a digital universe, word, sound, and image share a common notation. They are at a fundamental level, convertible into one another" (465).

An example of an opening weekly folder can be sequenced as follows (Figure 13), where each item can be further personalized, as illustrated in subsequent screen shots.

Figure 13: Week One Opening Item: Objectives.
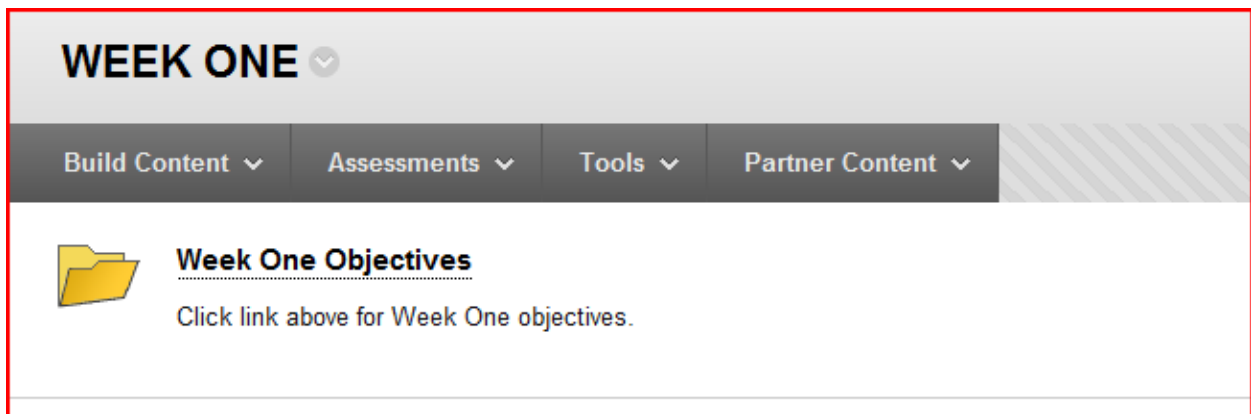
Week Objectives

The weekly opening folder will indicate the objectives for Week One, and briefly identify the contents of the week, with highlights of the major assignments. Indeed, it will be clear what the student needs to complete, and the individual tabs will indicate how to access the material, when the items are due, and how to submit work. All items to be completed will be appropriately labeled; a good approach will be to identify items that will be graded, which allows

the student to develop sound time-management skills. Each weekly tab will have a listing of items for that week.

The example below, of an opening Week One objective folder item will indicate the week dates, the materials to be covered and the graded assignments.

Figure 14: Week One Objectives

Week Objectives ☒

Objectives for Week One: 1/7/2013 – 1/13/2013.

        a. Rhetoric and the contexts of communication.
        b. The development and effective use of writing processes.

Course instructions and reading:

#	Contents	Purpose	Media Type	Comments
1	Video Lecture	Course Material	Video	
2	Reading	Course Material	Textbook	
3	Audio Lecture	Course Material	Audio	
4	Screen Sharing	Course Material	Video	
5	Video lecture	Course Material	Video	
6	Discussion 1	Evaluation	Discussion	GRADED ITEM
7	Discussion 2	Evaluation	Discussion	GRADED ITEM
8	Reflection One	Evaluation	Text	GRADED ITEM
9	Diagnostic Quiz	Evaluation	Multiple-Choice	Item not graded, but will appear in gradebook for review.

Week One Objectives
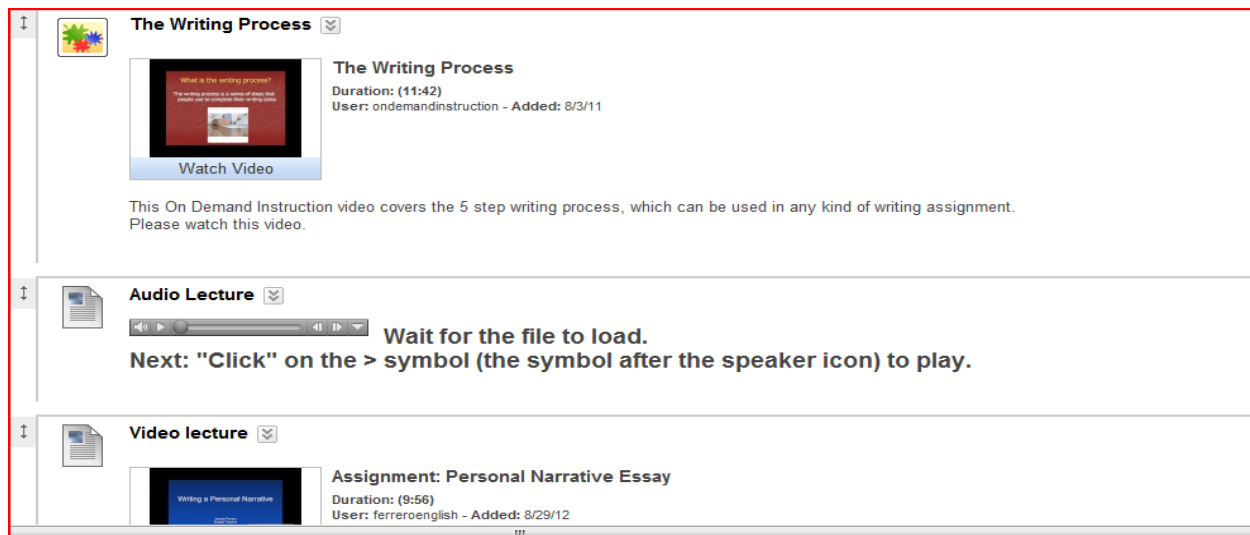
• Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation, including purpose, context, audience, and genre.
• Adapt voice, tone, and level of formality to a variety of rhetorical situations.
• Use conventions of format, structure, and design appropriate to the rhetorical situation.

Video Lecture

A video lecture, with accompanying textual information, can be used effectively to foster student understanding of key weekly objectives. Video applications can include elements created with Real Media, Real Producer, Photo Story, and Movie Maker, as well as appropriately embedded video elements from secondary sources, such as You Tube. All of the audio and video lectures can be located in one folder, with appropriate descriptive headings. It is important to "clump" information into the respective learning modules.

132

The lecture item below indicates an instructor created audio and video lecture and a You Tube embedded video. Links to textual information can also be included in the appropriate tabs. In an English Composition course Week One tab it is important to cover the writing steps, and to also include introductory information to the student's first assignment: the personal narrative essay.

Figure 15: Week One Audio and Video Lectures

Reading

The reading material can be accessed in several ways, and can be of several types:

(1) more and more courses are now including an online textbook, with chapters located in individual PDF documents, or

(2) the institution provides a propriety textbook, or

(3) the student purchases a hard-copy textbook.

In any case, most institutions require instructors to provide textual information to supplement course resources. Instructor-provided information can be prepared scripts accessed on-screen or

through hyper links within the course, or can be material directing the student to various Websites.

Audio Lecture

Audio can be used for two purposes: to develop course lectures and to provide feed-back to students on both discussion board items and written assignments. Students can download lectures for access at any time. For instructor feedback, the traditional approach is textual, developed through a marked-up document using a program such as Track Changes, inclusion of a filled-in grading matrix and individualized comments, all accessed through the gradebook.

With regards to written feedback, Hewett and Ehmann observe:

> Generally, online asynchronous instruction can be understood as a written dialogue that occurs over time. Instructors "speak" by writing end commentary or by embedding comments in the student's text and by modeling strong writing. Students "reply" by developing, or changing their own writing in response to the consultant's suggestions, by choosing not to make changes, by imitating the modeled writing, and by resubmitting a piece of writing. (69)

However, audio feedback on a student's work is not uncommon and has had good results. The importance of this instructor audio feed back to student's work is indicated by Olesova, Richardson, Weasenforth & Meloni:

> This study illustrates the effectiveness of using audio feedback in online environments including increased student engagement and greater understanding of the instructor's intent because of the availability of tone and intonation. Students perceive audio feedback as personal and enjoyable, and it helps increase their interest and feel the instructor's care. The researchers recommend that those

planning to implement asynchronous audio feedback provide both types of feedback.

Indeed, these responses, which might be brief at times, provide the student with a sound understanding of how an assignment has been completed well and where improvements are necessary, and they also serve as positive reinforcement. "Indeed, as an additional mode for instructor feedback, Asynchronous Audio Connection AAC serves multiple learning styles with a minimum learning curve for instructors" (Oomen-Early 274).

With regards to audio lectures on course materials, many students relish the opportunity to actually listen to an instructor. However, another study has indicated the opposite reaction where students will prefer to either read (and reread) on screen or to print out and annotate textual material because they will be able refer to these at leisure rather than be in the course at all times. In this sense, "clearly, the students did not view the audio files as a primary mode of instruction but as optional, ancillary course material" (Guertin, Bodek, Zappe, & Kim 139). Therefore, the instructor must take care to provide a transcript (textual information) of relevant audio and video materials. Hence, there will be an appropriate balance of audio, visual and textual information to meet diverse learning styles.

Audacity allows sophisticated recordings, where one is allowed to blend personal narration with pre-recorded dialogue/interview, which can be set against background music. Norton and Hansen, advocates of teaching machines in the writing center, report that the self-paced learning module did not dehumanize education but actually humanized the delivery of basic material and provided a "dignified" way for basic writers to improve their deficiencies. Students could play the tape, the film strip, or the computer program over and over again without

135

risking public embarrassment. The Audacity program is user-friendly, and will be demonstrated to students in Week Two as a resource in completing an audio assignment.

Graded Assignments for week One

Care needs to be taken to develop assignments reflecting the core learning theories as explained and developed above. The assignments are introduced in this section to reinforce sound course development practices. Many of the approaches taken in this section will be expanded in the remaining sections.

Assignment One: Freewriting Exercise.

Freewriting is one of the most rewarding approaches to generating ideas, which involves writing for a period of time without stopping. The instructor will create a timed exercise, but the student will not have access to the topic until the beginning the exercise. The results of the timed exercises will be uploaded by the instructor into Week Two Discussion Board 3, where a student will select a posting and utilize Track Changes to revise and edit the posting.

Freewriting is one of the first approaches in generating ideas, which begins the writing process, and it is very popular with students in that it allows the writer to reflect for a moment or two and then begin the drafting process (Elbow and Belanoff). This beginning writing exercise will allow the student to accomplish the following tasks:

1. think about a specific idea

2. write non-stop as the idea comes to mind

3. end the process when the time has elapsed.

Indeed, freewriting is used effectively to jump-start the student's writing. Major reports as follows on a sound comparison between freewriting and the revising process:

> Freewriting fosters uninhibited thought, because students know that they are not
>
> going to be "graded" on their emotional responses to a particular topic. They also

136

realize that there are no "rules" per se to worry about, such as style, grammar, specific organization, etc. Whereas with academic writing, students are faced with a million worries. They will adhere to strict guidelines, in format, mechanics, organization, style, etc., and there is no time to "think" of what they are writing about, because so much time is spent focusing on the "correct" way to write.

This freewriting exercise will encourage the student to begin the writing process, and it could apply to many assignments in this course. This assignment will lead directly into the track changes assignment and subsequently into the audio/video critique of a student's response to the track changes assignment.

Figure 16: Example of a timed freewriting exercise ("Timed Test")

Discussion Board 1

The literature indicates that the asynchronous discussion board has had a direct bearing on what multimedia technologies are used and how they are used in online instruction to encourage dialogue and encourage active class participation. It is not uncommon also for an

asynchronous class to use synchronous material. Indeed, the first of the most significant of multi-media tools used is the discussion board since "the discussion forum is an area where instructors and students discuss key concepts for the week" (Cranney, Wallace, Alexander & Alfano 337). This is by far a more advanced tool than the traditional single-exchange e-mail communication. The literature indicates that discussion boards, when set up and organized properly, fall within the expectations of a multimedia item (Balaji). Baker points out: "Online discussions can transform mere course chatter into a cyber forum of student-centered learning through meticulous planning, designing and orchestrating" (401).

The literature reinforces the importance and success of discussion boards in the online course. Each course contains a number of electronic discussion boards. Several studies have been conducted on this popular phenomenon. One such study "proved that a positive relationship exists between students' sense of community and their learning success in online courses" (Sadera et al. 277). Another study indicates that:

> Threaded discussion areas in online classes provide an invaluable learning opportunity for students as the literature reviewed reveals. It is the researcher's hypothesis that the effort that instructors put forth in the threaded discussion is met at least minimally by the majority of the students in class. As a result of this increased interaction, students understand the concepts to a greater depth, develop a firmer foundation in core competencies, as well as earn a higher grade in the course. (Cranney, Alexander, Wallace and Alfano 347)

Indeed, several opportunities are inherent in the online discussion boards, which not only include textual information (instructor's written prompts) and feed back, but also links to audio and video files stored elsewhere, easily accessible to the discussion board participants. All this

138

brings in other viewpoints for information, clarification and contributes to the collective

discourse on diverging viewpoints. "Threaded discussions, due to their asynchronicity, offer

opportunities unavailable in synchronous communication, such as depth of thought, integration

of learning resources, e.g., research literature, analysis and synthesis, reflection, critical thinking"

(Serdyukov & Serdyukova 6). As the literature indicates, the discussion board is the primary

means and method of interaction among students and the instructors in the online class, and this

multimedia item is of paramount importance to any online course.

The screen below indicates an opening discussion board item, which addresses one of the

course objectives. Note that it is important to remind students of how to meet discussion board

requirements. The discussion requirements here address an important question with regards to

writing and speaking, which is an appropriate topic for any writing course.

Figure 17: Discussion Board One
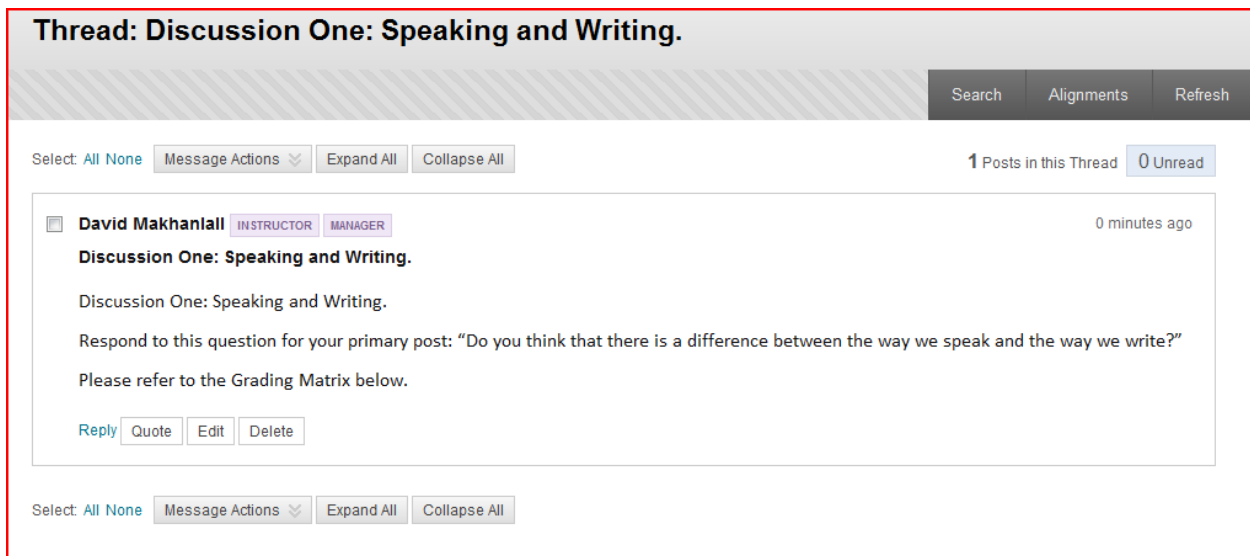
Discussion Board 2

The top section of the screen below indicates a second discussion board. The bottom

section indicates a written assignment. As previously mentioned, it is important to group graded

material into sequential sections, which allows for ease in accessing material and completing assignments. A student does not become lost in the course.

Figure 18: Discussion Board Two and Written Assignment
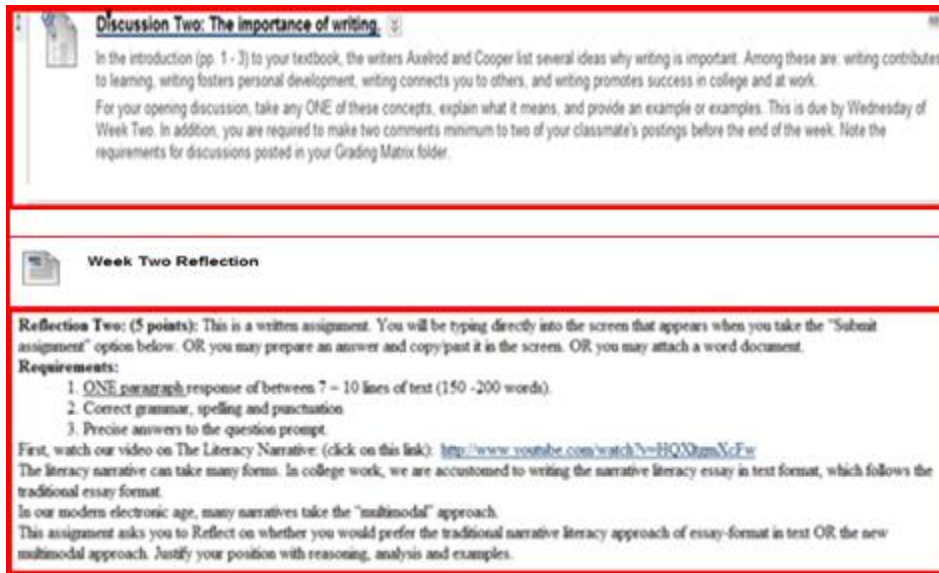
The screen shot below indicates how a student begins the discussion response. Discussion board protocols will be reinforced very early on in the course. The posting screen allows not only for utilizing a spell-check feature, but also allows for inclusion of multi-media applications: graphics, hyper links, and audio and video attachments. In addition, care needs to be taken to reinforce that students may not "distort" the postings by excessive font variations, or colorations, and will adhere to the discussion's primary focus. It may be necessary to contact students individually and offer guidance with regards to postings that do not meet expectations; for example, poor formatting. Discussion etiquette is a separate issue that will be handled appropriately. Most important of all, students will be made aware of the Save option (Saving work without posting) as opposed to posting work for all students to see (Submit).
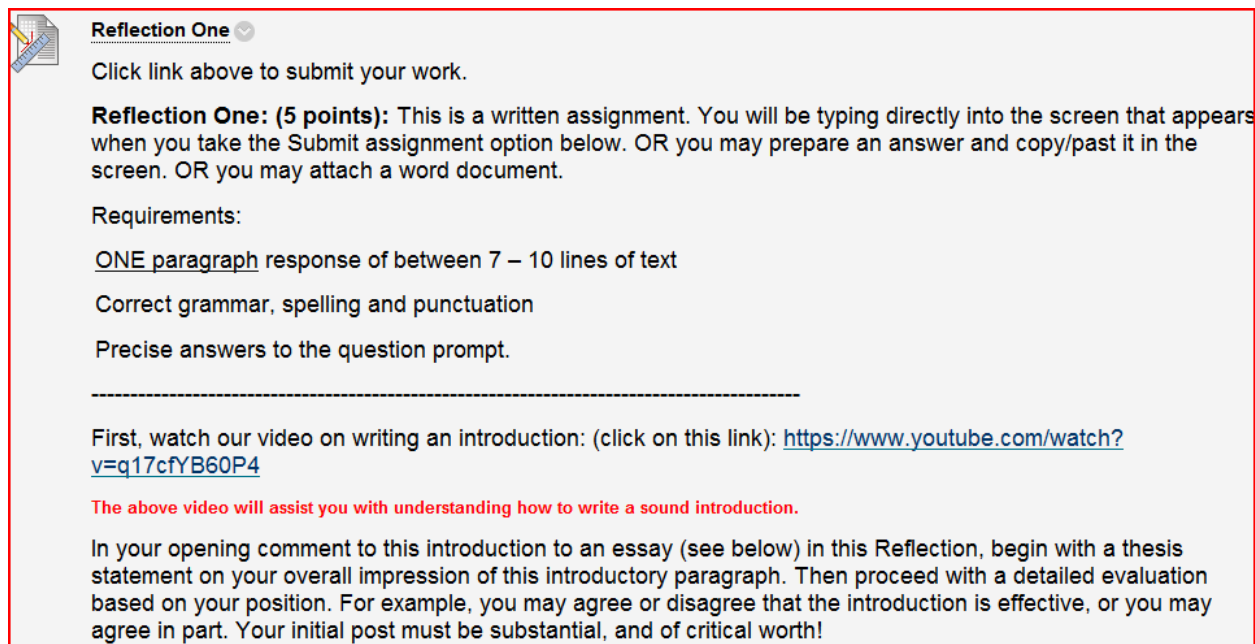
Figure 19: Posting to a Discussion Board

Reflection One

The reflection assignment, which is not shared with other students, allows the students to "talk" about his or her writing. Swartzendruber-Putnam explains the importance of this process very well: "Reflection is a form of metacognition—thinking about thinking. It means looking back with new eyes in order to discover—in this case, looking back on writing." This is an important step, and it allows the student to think and talk about his or her writing, and the process the writer went through to bring ideas into focus. Indeed, many practitioners recommend the concept of writing as a process following Vygotsky's model and intimately inter twined among other techniques, such as freewriting, reflecting and peer-review, where the individual infuses meaning into the writing through the various stages of drafting, revising and editing (Bruffee; Gleason; Lunsford).

However, care will be taken to make the textual response a compulsory one. The student may also submit an audio or video file as a response to this assignment. In allowing the student this option, the instructor encourages those students familiar with multi-media to utilize their knowledge and expertise. The reflection assignment answers one basic question: why did I complete the assignment this way? Therefore, students will be able to write about their creative efforts and/or talk about their creative efforts.

The screen below indicates how a student could submit an assignment. Students can either type in the response directly onto the screen or upload a text, or upload a multi-media file. Assignment lengths and proper formatting will be specified, especially when a student types directly into the text box, which follows the layout and approach as a discussion board screen. The submitted assignment is posted directly into the gradebook.

Figure 20: Completing an Assignment

Students can also submit a "Safe Assignment," which verifies originality of submission. This assignment can be submitted in one of the following modes: as a Word or PDF or Text file.

The Safe Assign tool in Blackboard works as any other originality verification tool, and searches in real-time for matches to the student's work available online in various formats. A report is generated, which may indicate no match to previously submitted work or may indicate online matches and the present matches. Both the student and the instructor have access to this report.

Figure 21: Creating a Safe Assignment

Diagnostic Quiz

A review of the literature indicates that many practitioners hold to the view that good grammar practices invariably lead to good writing since clarity in meaning to a large extent is determined by appropriate word usage, correct word sequencing, and well-developed sentence structure (Finnegan; Hartwell).   Nevertheless, the debate continues to this day as to whether grammar is a strict requirement or not for English composition instruction in the classroom. Hillocks' conclusions to his study on the importance of grammar indicates the approach taken today: "None of the studies reviewed for the present report provides any support for teaching grammar as a means of improving composition skills" (138).

On the other hand, many current practitioners, including Hunter, Wallace and Thomas, support the view that some grammar review is essential to the writing process but not as a stand-alone or pre-offering, and most educators and practitioners hold this view. There is general agreement then as to the importance of some grammar-based instruction and feedback by a number of methods or combination of methods: the most popular of these recommendations are that frequent and constant use of language in written expression ultimately improves grammar and that teachers should not correct grammar but make marginal notations on what could be improved upon and let the student take care of the revisions (Harris; Thomas).

There is also good indication that computer assisted grammar instruction has benefits. Nutta comments as follows: "If open-ended tests measure students' ability to use grammatical structures creatively, it would seem that some elements of computer-based study support the development of this skill more effectively than traditional classroom instruction" (57). On the practical side where teaching grammar is concerned, Thomas highlights one effective method, which uses aspects of technology and multimedia in the classroom by providing a work sheet with specific requirements, which is completed as the student reviews a Power Point slide show, followed by a post-worksheet. Therefore it can be seen that there is ample opportunity to introduce grammar into the online English Composition course. Tuan and Duan attest to the relevance, importance and success of using multimedia in grammar instruction: "With the finding on the effectiveness of computers in grammar teaching, computers with all the multimedia can be effectively used for teaching of grammar. Graphic images, clear photos, sounds and videos can be used to help teachers in grammar teaching. Grammar lessons will become more effective, motivating and interesting" (66).

To sum up, the literature indicates with regards to grammar instruction that the teacher should not be a line-editor but a facilitator and a coach with the use of technologies to engage and encourage good writing. However, it is helpful to review essentials of grammar in the early parts of the course, and to expand to more intensive grammar and writing application as the course develops.

As indicated previously, the writing center also facilitates excursions into parallel methods of writing instruction with direct connections to Websites. Students will be encouraged to use Online Writing Labs (OWL) hosted by independent providers on a no-charge basis; this has also directed students to utilize interactive grammar and proofreading exercises, thesis-building applications, and how to maintain unity and coherence in writing.

It is a sound proposal to develop a diagnostic grammar quiz as an opening item in Week One, and this will be set to "unlimited tries." It is very possible that a few students may be lacking in basic grammar skills. This grammar review will be accompanied by instructor's notes on precisely why an answer is correct. Students submitting an incorrect answer will be allowed to preview their answer and the accompanying instructor's explanation. This review will set the stage for good writing practices as expected in the course.

The screen below created with Photo Story walks the student through an understanding of grammar utilizing an interactive video application.

Figure 22: Opening Screen of Grammar Instruction
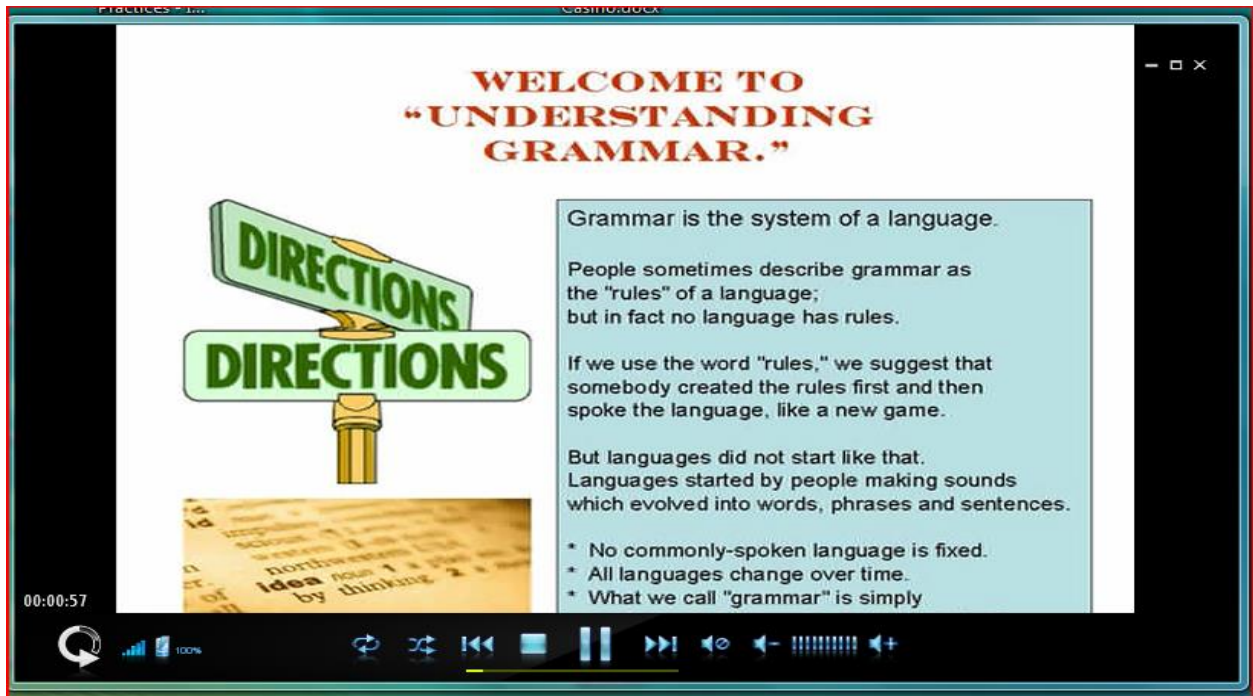
There are many available options for creating and developing a multiple-choice or short-answer quiz. Students will be directed to appropriate materials in preparation for a grammar quiz, and follow-up guidance will be offered. A multiple-choice quiz can be developed to include instructor pre-programmed feed-back when a student selects an incorrect response. The quiz can be programmed for one or multiple choices, randomizing answers, and allow for multiple tries. Grammar quizzes can also be part of the course grade.

Figure 23: Diagnostic Quiz Opening Screen
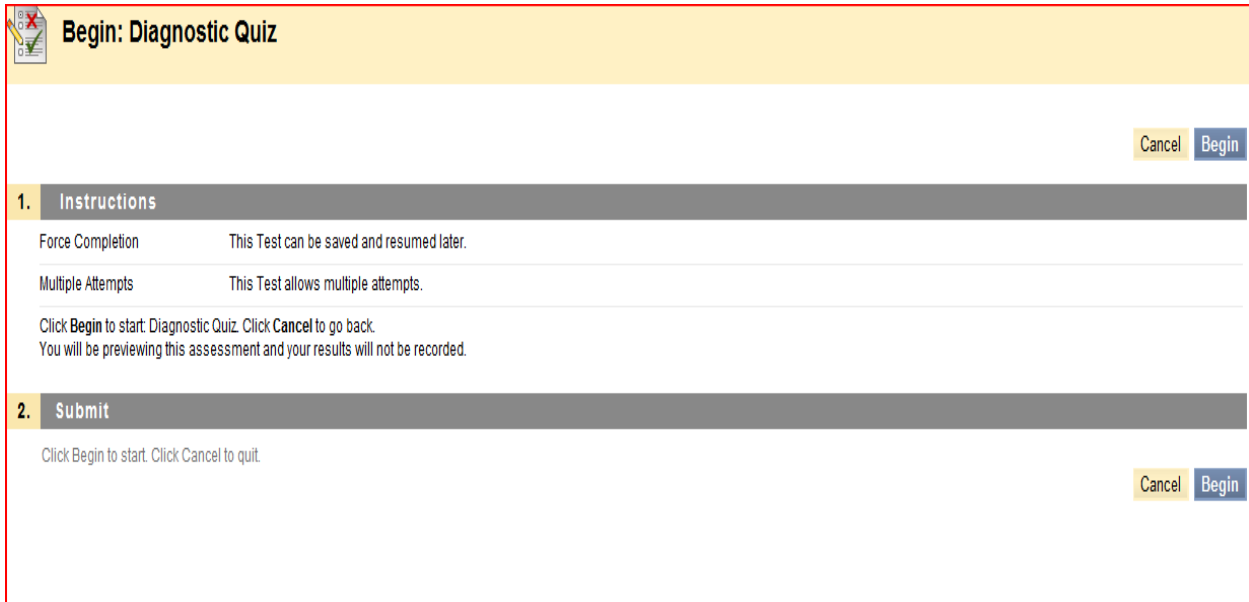
The screen below indicates the first screen the student encounters in accessing a quiz. All instructions will be clear. Students will understand how the quiz is accepted and completed, and if it is a graded item.

Figure 24: Completing a Grammar Quiz
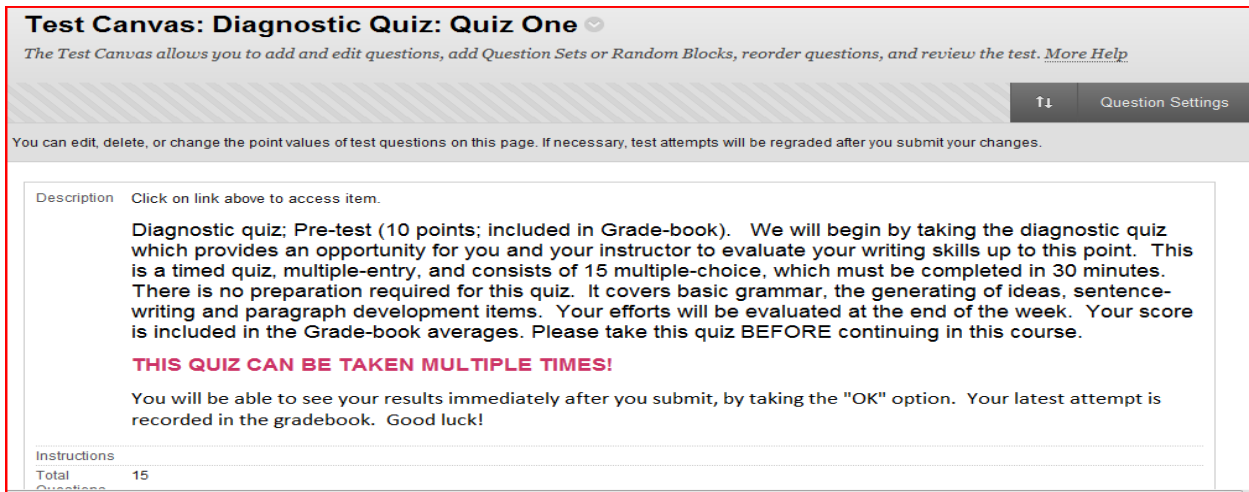
Summary

Upon completion of this section, the student will have gained expertise in completing discussion board items, developing a freewriting exercise, and a sound understanding of basic

grammar. In addition, instructor-created multi-media applications will allow the student to review appropriate technological applications more than effectively all-text applications. Indeed, the approaches outlined in this section will create a vibrant and interactive course.

Section Three: Week Two: Tool Bar, Left Tab
Week Objectives

Week Two begins the series of graded assignments. Clearly outlined objectives, lectures and assignments will advance the student's knowledge of sound writing practices. This course will utilize the following learning theories as explained previously in this chapter. These are: constructivism, use of multi-media applications, and scaffolding. The assignments that will be developed and explained here are as follows:

1. How to develop a freewriting exercise (explained fully in Section Two: Week One)

2. How to use track changes in editing a document

3. How to develop an audio commentary on a peer reviewed assignment

4. How to develop a written narrative essay

5. How to develop a multi-media essay

The Week Two tab will clearly indicate the work to be completed, with sound descriptive analysis as to content. Indeed, sound time management skills are required here on the student's part especially since the work must be completed by the end of the week. The student will be able to readily identify instructional material as opposed to graded assignments, as illustrated below.

Week Two Objectives

Figure 25: Week Two Objectives

Week Two Objectives

Week Two Objectives

Objectives for Week Two: 1/14/2013 – 1/20/2013.
(a) Engage in effective writing processes with use of appropriate technological applications and multi-media to include pre-writing, exchanging drafts, and revising.
(b) Demonstrate college-level written and oral communication skills, in prepared textual speeches, discussion board applications, in audio-tracks.

Course instructions and reading:

Week Two	On Screen	Week Objectives	Course Material
	On Screen	Narrative Essay Review	Course Material
	Lecture 1	Video Lecture	Course Material
	On Screen	Reading	Course Material
	On Screen	Video Lecture	Course Material
	On Screen	Create an audio recording	On Screen
	On Screen	Edit a document	On Screen
	Assignment	Reflection Two	Graded assignment
	Discussion	Discussion Board 1	Graded assignment
	Discussion	Discussion Board 2	Graded assignment
	Assignment	Quiz One	Graded assignment

Week One Objectives
• Create and record a one-minute speech on your purpose for writing, how this will be accomplished and your goals for this course.
• Edit a one-page Microsoft Word 2007 document utilizing track-changes.

Reading

The student will follow the directions in this item: "Please review the textbook readings for week Two." Course material will be assigned to supplement the lectures above. These will include material to meet diverse learning styles.

Discussion Board 3

This assignment will continue the development of the Freewriting Assignment completed in Week One (refer to Week One "Freewriting Exercise"). The steps the instructor and student will follow are outlined below:

1. The instructor will post all writings created in this assignment to Discussion Board 3 for students' review before the start of Week Two (this week) as individual postings.

2. Each student will edit one of the freewriting exercises using Microsoft Track Changes, and submit the document in a reply to Discussion Board 3 for classmates' review before Wednesday midnight
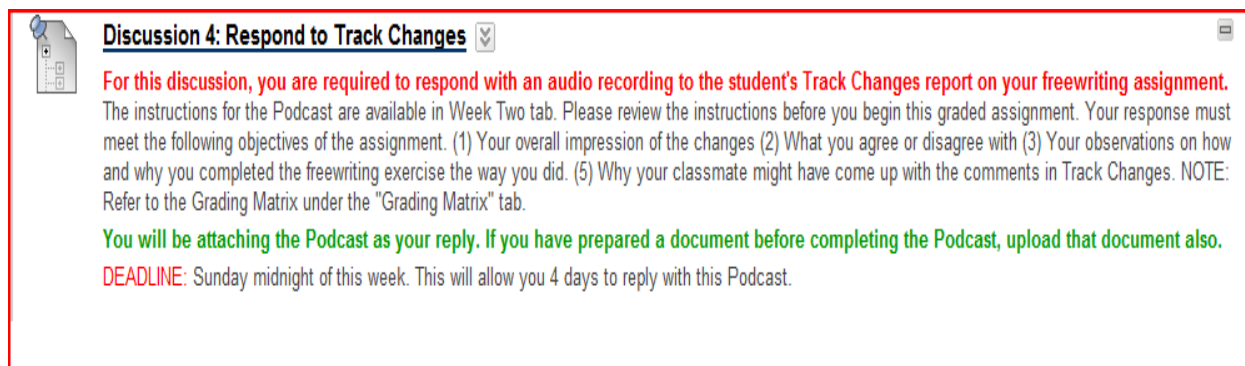
Purpose of the track changes and audio assignments

The use of specific multi-media applications will allow the student to become proficient in utilizing technology in meeting assignment objectives. The student will utilize critical thinking in evaluating a classmate's free writing exercise and will prepare an audio commentary on another classmate's use of track changes. These two exercises will allow all students good opportunity to not only use technology but will also result in shared experiences. It is expected that the experiences picked up here will accomplish the goals of scaffolding, which will allow the student to move on to the multi-media narrative essay starting this week (Week Two), and due in Week Four.

Discussion Board 4

In this application, the student will download software, follow instructions, create a recording (commentary on a classmate's edit of the student's freewriting exercise posted in Discussion Board 3) and submit it into the Discussion Board 4 for classmates' comments. The student will have 4 days to complete the recording.

Figure 26: Response to Track Changes with a Podcast.

Create an Audio recording

The screen shot below indicates the instructional materials and the links to video that will acquaint the student with best practices in creating an audio recording.

Figure 27: Create an Audio Recording

Reflection Two

This reflection will be the student's individual analysis of what the writing process means to him or her, which is an effective means of sharing experiences (Swartzendruber-Putnam). In the classroom this is developed in a written document using the free-writing process. In the online classroom a video approach will work best. The instructor will provide instructions to the student on how to utilize several software applications in creating a video of the student's discussion of his or her writing process. Reflecting as part of the writing process will allow the student to share private thoughts on writing with the instructor (Bruffee; Gleason; Lunsford). This will allow the instructor a deeper understanding of various students' approach to the writing process, which can enhance instructional material in the course (Young, Long & Myers).
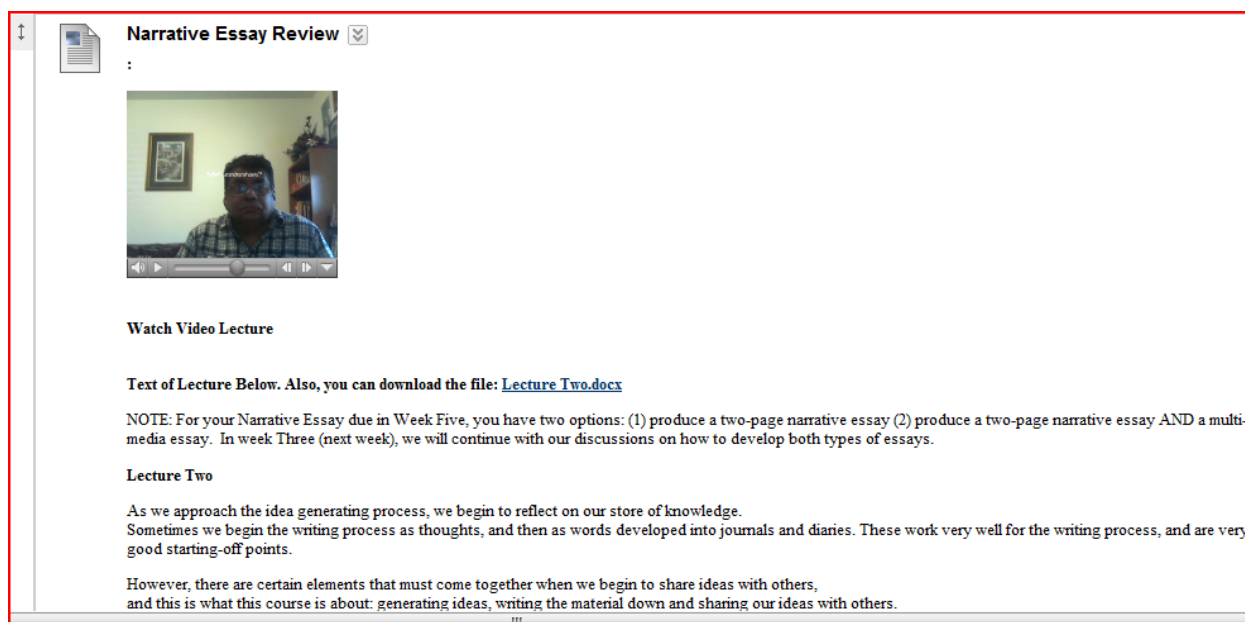
Quiz One

This will follow the format of Week One Quiz.

Narrative Essay Review

The full length narrative essay is the first of four essays in this course. Providing instructional material can be accomplished in a number of ways: instructor-created lectures, links to appropriate Websites, and other interactive methods, or a combination of efforts. The "Narrative Essay review" video lecture will introduce the student to the narrative essay. This video lecture was created using Quick Time and embedded into the course frame. Note the textual lecture, the link to the lecture file, and the embedded video.

Figure 28: Video lecture

Video Lecture: Developing the Written Narrative Essay

The narrative essay begins the student's first efforts in generating ideas for a full-length essay. This significant writing requirement in a beginning English Composition course places great emphasis on sharing a personal experience, which will create a strong impression on the reader, especially since the theme of the essay is to impart information that has sound personal meaning to the writer. This essay focuses on writing that provides a message.

The purpose of this narrative essay will be to develop critical thinking skills, and the instructor will utilize the constructivist approach. Especially since a textual outline is required for an interactive essay, this assignment will also allow the student to develop the multi-media essay or video essay. The purpose of the narrative essay will be to reinforce what the student has learned in the freewriting exercise, the track changes exercise, the audio response to the track changes assignment, and the reflection assignment in week three. The task is to fashion a three-page double-spaced personal narrative essay also known as the autobiographical essay. The narrative essay writing will be autobiographical, with a definite purpose for the writing in the thesis statement and a clear purpose or meaning to the writing: what the student wants to impart to the audience.

This essay will cover the following four core objectives to good writing where meaning is clear at all times to the reader:

1. <u>Purpose</u>: Why are we writing this material? Some motives are: to share experiences (whether happy or sad), to explain something, or to offer advice, or to demonstrate how to do something, or even to persuade someone to do something. Of course, there are other reasons why we write.

2. <u>Audience:</u> who is going to read our work? For example, if we want to send the supervisor an e-mail on a matter of importance, we will write in a very detailed, engaging and professional manner. If we want to write a bed-time story for a toddler, then we will write something that will engage this young person, but it should not be very exciting or else our young person would not fall asleep; we would want to "lull" this person to sleep.

3. <u>Mood style and tone</u>: How do we want to come across in our writings? If my best friend is getting married and I am the best man, I would want to be lively and entertaining

with my words, examples, gestures and jokes that I tell. On the other hand, if I am giving

a eulogy at the funeral of a friend (and sad to say, this happens sometimes), I would want

to be serious and somber.

4. <u>Viewpoint</u>: who is telling the story? I would have to decide whether I want to use the

first person ("I") or tell the story from the third person point of view. Each choice

depends on how I want to come across in my writing, and each has its advantages and

disadvantages.

Indeed, developing ideas within the framework of the four cornerstone considerations

outlined above will solidly anchor the essay into a tight framework. Since writing is recursive

(the writer goes back-and-forth) as the writing develops, the writer will hone and polish the essay

into a personal story with sound and clear meaning. Therefore, it is not uncommon for a writer

to develop a strong narrative essay and then rework this onto a video essay. These techniques

will lead into the enhanced options for the video essay, which is explained in the next section.

Video Lecture: Developing a Narrative Video Essay

The multi-media essay integrates text with pictures and often times audio and video files.

This assignment will be the video essay, with a three to five minute time span. The student will

have the option of developing a traditional written essay, or develop a movie essay, including the

textual version of the essay as part of the assignment requirement for the multi-media essay. The

instructor will make clear what the objectives of the assignment are, and how the work will be

approached, completed, submitted, and graded. One of the four approaches outlined below will

meet the objectives of this assignment.

1. <u>A an illustrated narrative essay</u>, which is a textual narrative essay, in which the

   student will add pictures and sketches, together with audio and video clips.

2. <u>A movie essay created in PowerPoint</u>, which is saved as jpeg pictures, and uploaded to Photo Story. The student will add movie elements, narration and background music to the presentation. The student can include additional pictures and images to enhance the presentation. This essay will then take on the advanced features of a fully integrated self-contained slide-show.

3. <u>A movie essay utilizing Movie Maker</u>, which will allow the student to integrate additional audio and video clips to advance the meaning and message of the story, and is a step up from the process outlined in number one above.

4. <u>A multi-media presentation of the student's own choosing</u> with instructor's approval. Often times, students equipped with a camcorder will create a script, with copious notes, and develop an engaging mini movie following a narrative sequence of events.

Many of the above-mentioned applications have been used in this course and highlighted in screen-shots. Instructions for all items above will be included in the requirements for the movie essay.

There are important steps to follow, which the instructor will need to reinforce at the start of the project. Warschauer points out that electronic literacy

includes four main components: (a) computer literacy, comfort and fluency in using hardware and software; (b) information literacy, the ability to find, analyze, and critique information available online; (c) multimedia literacy, the ability to interpret and produce documents combining texts, sounds, graphics, and video); and (d) computer-mediated communication literacy, the mastery of the pragmatics of synchronous and asynchronous CMC.

The instructor will then need to guide the student through this process with clear instructions. Indeed, the student will have been exposed to the instructor's multi-media applications throughout the course, and these will be sound examples to follow.

The video essay has great potential in encouraging the student to develop sound critical thinking skills. Balester provides engaging details on why this process has benefits to writing and personal expression in his answers to this question: "Why would we want our students to produce a video essay?"

> 1. There's novelty. Having students produce a video essay taps into their creativity in new ways, and can be used to help them think through a topic just as deeply as a more traditional essay.
>
> 2. There is, at least arguably, a more present audience with a video essay. Thinking more carefully about audience is a base line rhetorical skill that we should always encourage.
>
> 3. A good video essay will be concise, but getting an essay into a short film requires a good deal of planning and editing. That's another important rhetorical skill—the art of revision.
>
> 4. A video essay requires that students think in both words and images, stretching their communication skills.

This popular form of writing has seen notable advances as part of the writing curriculum at many institutions. Liana Heitin in an article "Innovative language arts teachers find that adapting writing instruction to technology can enhance engagement without sacrificing the fundamentals" in Education Week points out that many schools have introduced the video essay as early as the seventh grade:

The nature of writing has shifted in recent years. There are very few—if any—jobs these days for which employees produce lengthy handwritten reports. News stories are an integration of words, images, audio, and website links. College applications are all online, and some schools are beginning to accept videos in place of essays. A friendly letter is more likely composed on a smartphone than on stationary.

The multi-media essay is catching on as an important assignment. Sylvester and Greenidge point out in a 2013 article "Digital Storytelling: Extending the Potential for Struggling Writers" that "Digital storytelling has been popular for several decades in settings outside the classroom, but just over the last decade has it been introduced to the education community. Its popularity has grown in some classrooms and even school wide within the last few years." Written text is more focused on the mood and style of the narrative and what is often difficult to reinforce in writing is the "speaking tone" common in conversation and dialogue However, there is an answer to this. Palmeri in his 2012 book: *Remixing Composition: A History of Multi-media Writing Pedagogy* reinforces the idea that a digital audio or video essay can enhance the writing process and that students will be able to fully understand how the spoken and written word can affect the audience.

However, this multi-media assignment calls for serious reflection on the instructor's part as the assignment guidelines are created well before the assignment is released to students. The 2013 article "Digital Discourse: Composing with Media in the Writing Classroom" offers several important up-front ideas worthy of serious consideration:

New media have brought an array of challenges to the first-year writing instructor. New technologies have created a new kind of writer—one who writes

increasingly often for self-determined rather than assigned purposes, and with a genre-specific voice. New technologies have created a new type of audience—one that regularly interacts with the author and with other readers through message boards, wikis, and blogs. And they have created several new genres—each allowing the writer to structure information and reach readers in a variety of ways.

Audience consideration is very important, especially since the reader is going to ask: what is in it for me? Bresland argues:

> We believe that what unites the video essay form is that it places equal literary emphasis on language and image and sound. That is to say, the image does not exist merely to illustrate the text; the text does not merely illustrate the image; and so on. Instead, we believe that in all of these works, there is a degree of distance between what is said and what is shown and what is heard, and within that distance, the audience is allowed its own ample share of imaginative space.

Indeed, students are bombarded with video and it is not uncommon for students to have already developed expertise before the course in creating and posting clips to You Tube. For students new to the experience, the instructor will provide the know-how. Bossewitch and Preston point out that video applications are within easy reach for the instructor:

> Recent advances in video production, editing, and communication technology make once technically challenging activities into a fairly commonplace enterprise, and students who learn to think critically about video can also learn to use that video as a medium for persuasive expression and dialogue with others.

This popular form of personal expression can also be used to supplement a college application, and schools are picking up on this very quickly. For example:

Augustana College is offering you an opportunity to do all of the above by submitting a video essay that will supplement your application. This is a chance to tell us more about yourself, what you're into and what makes you a good fit for Augustana. There are no rules or regulations. Simply load your video to YouTube and submit the URL below.

The institution goes on in the requirements to indicate a number of approaches the student could take.

Indeed, the multi-media autobiographical narrative essay will undoubtedly place the student at the cutting edge of techniques for engaging an inquisitive audience with a compelling story. The experience gained here can be moved into others essays in this course. After all, the student may want to fashion this multi-media narrative essay into a movie clip for a portfolio item.

The sections below will focus on techniques that can be used to develop an engaging narrative essay.

Guidelines for the Movie Narrative Essay.

The screen shot below indicates the guidelines and instructions for the video essay, which is based on an instructor created lecture, and two examples of video essays prepared by students.

Figure 29: The movie essay lectures.

Resources for the Movie Narrative Essay

Please review two approaches to the movie narrative essay.
How to Write an Autobiographical Narrative.

How to Write an Autobiographical Narrative
Duration: (7:03)
User: go1party - Added: 10/23/09
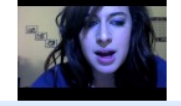
Watch Video

Writing a Story

Award Winning Short Film - The Essay
Duration: (3:02)
User: 1takemedia - Added: 1/31/11

Watch Video

A suggested approach to the Literacy Narrative Essay

Literacy Narrative Project
Duration: (8:59)
User: fireeyes26 - Added: 2/5/10

Watch Video

Summary

As illustrated in this section, the student will move from the traditional textual essay to the multi-media essay utilizing sound instructional materials within the guiding framework of applicable learning theories. The student will have gained confidence in developing a multi-media essay that is ready for broadcast. Indeed, many students' essays have made their way into You Tube. The techniques learned and practiced here will be moved over into the Process Essay and the Persuasive Essay.

Section Four: Week 3 – Week 15

Weeks Four through Fifteen will follow the format of previous weeks with each week divided into two sections as in Weeks One and Two: practical instructional components and the assignments for the week. Most of the multi-media applications covered in Weeks One and Two will be used in these remaining weeks. It is expected that the student will have developed expertise in multi-media applications, which will be used in developing the next two essays in this course. The student will be challenged to break new ground.

Therefore, as indicated previously, the following items will be covered in this section.

- Week Three through Week Eight (Advancing the Multi-Media Essay) will introduce the student to more advanced techniques with regards to the option of completing a second essay from one of two choices: the explanatory/process essay or the persuasive essay.

- Week Ten through Week Sixteen (Researching and writing) will focus on the MLA fully documented research essay. This section will culminate in course review materials, and will lead into the review for the final exam.

Therefore, this section will highlight the following two multi-media assignments: process essay and the research essay.

Discussion Boards: Week 3 – Week 15

The discussion Boards in these chapters will enhance the analysis and use of multi-media applications as introduced in discussions for weeks 1 and 2. The table below indicates all discussion boards in this course, with emphasis on discussions to enhance the development of the three major essays in this course. All audio/video items are in italics.

Table 4: All Discussion Boards

Date	Agenda	Discussion Board Requirement
Week 1	1. Introduction to course and Blackboard 2. How to be successful in this online course 3. Generating ideas *4. Timed freewriting exercise*	Discussion 1: Difference between speaking and writing Discussion 2: Your approach to the writing process
Week 2	1. The Narrative Essay 2. Planning the essay. *3. Intro. to audio & video* *4. Intro to "Track Changes"*	Discussion 3: Students will edit free writing exercise utilizing Track Changes. Discussion 4: *Audio commentary on student's edit*

Week 3	1. The Narrative Essay 2. Planning the essay 3. *Intro video narrative essay.*	Discussion 5: Provide the link to Website on narrative writing (textual) and explain how this will help your narrative essay development Discussion 6: Provide a link to a You Tube (or similar) video on a video narrative essay and explain its effectiveness
Week 4	1. The Narrative Essay 2. Planning the essay. 3. *Developing the video narrative essay*	Discussion 7: Explain with reasoning and analysis the type of narrative essay you have developed and why. Discussion 8: Upload your narrative essay (text and/or video) and offer your responses to a classmates' posting; *you may create an audio/video response.*
Week 5	1. The Explanatory/Process Essay 2. *Intro. to the video explanatory/process essay*	Discussion 9: Review one of the explanatory essays in your textbook; *you may create an audio/video.* Discussion 10: Provide a link to a You Tube (or similar) video on a video on an explanatory essay and explain its development and effectiveness; *you may create an audio/video response.*
Week 6	1. The Explanatory Essay 2. *Developing the video explanatory/process essay*	Discussion 11: Go to a Website that features explanatory essays and select and explain the merits of this essay Discussion 12: What advice will you give to a fellow classmates on how to go about developing a video explanatory essay
Week 7	1. The Explanatory Essay 2. *Developing the video explanatory/process essay*	Discussion 13: Explain with reasoning and analysis the type of explanatory essay you have developed and why. Discussion 14: Upload your explanatory essay (text and/or video) and offer your responses to a classmates' posting; *you may create an audio/video response.*
Week 8	1. Defining persuasion 2. *Intro. to the video persuasive essay* Mid Term Exam review	Discussion 15: Post your essay subject, your thesis statement, and your points of support to this discussion. Discussion 16: Indicate what type of essay you will develop (traditional text essay OR video essay) and why.
Week 9	1. *Defining persuasion* 2. *Developing the video persuasive essay*	Discussion 17: Go to a Website that features persuasive essays and select and explain the merits of this essay Discussion 18: Post a body paragraph from your essay that has a citation and include the Works Cited item for that citation. Comment on the merits of two classmates' posting.
Week 10	1. Defining research 2. Developing research 3. Finding sources	Discussion 19: Comment on the technique you have used in determining the credibility of your resource in Discussion 20: *Develop a video or audio recording of your commentary and upload it here.*

Week 11	1. Defining research 2. Developing research. 3. Evaluating sources	Discussion 21: Develop a counter-argument on one of your essay points and post it here. Discussion 22: Go to a Website that features persuasive essays quizzes and comment on its strengths
Week 12	1. Defining research 2. Developing research 3. Documentation MLA	Discussion 23: Share your persuasive essay plan with your classmates Discussion 24: What advise will you give to a fellow classmates on how to developing a persuasive essay
Week 13	1. Defining research. Final Review of citations & Works Cited	Discussion 25: Include all the items in your Works Cited and provide an analysis on why you believe that those resources have enhanced your essay's development. Discussion 26: Provide a link to a You Tube (or similar) video on instructions for a persuasive essay and explain its development and effectiveness
Week 14	Reviews of major essays Discussions	Discussion 27: Upload your persuasive essay (text and/or video) and offer your textual responses to a classmates' posting. Discussion 28: Develop a video or audio recording of your commentary and upload it here.
Week 15	Reviews of major essays Discussions	Discussion 29: Comment on what you have mastered in this course and how you will use this information moving forward; *you may create an audio/video response*. Discussion 30: Comment on the area or areas you feel you will need to strengthen and explain how you will go about doing this.

Advancing Multi-Media Applications: Process Essay

With regards to the second essay due in Week Eight, the explanatory/process, students will have an option to develop either a traditional written essay or a multi-media essay. Experience gained from the multi-media narrative essay can be quickly transferred into the development of this second important essay. This section will explore the development of a multi-media process essay: "How to Complete a Task."

Carlin-Menter, Shannon and Shuell have identified the importance of developing multi-media to other appropriate areas of communication, which fits very well into assignments on how to complete a task, as follows:

If students develop multiple representations of concepts by developing multimedia products, then hopefully they will be able to apply those representations flexibly to other situations. To the extent that successful multimedia design is similar to successful written composition in requiring multiple cycles of drafting and revision, then students may be able to be taught the cognitive processes used in both forms of communication concurrently.

The textual version of this essay calls for clear writing and sound sequencing of steps, and will not leave much to the reader's imagination. However, the first option, the illustrated version, will contain sketches and pictures, and it will adequately illustrate the process. With the second option, the student will create a movie version of the student actually completing a process, which will involve either a stationary camera or assistance from another person. It is very possible that the student can complete a self recording and then use applicable editing software to develop a vibrant and engaging presentation of the selected process.

Indeed, students will fashion their own work based on the approaches taken in this course by the instructor in providing information on how to access material in the course and how to complete assignments, all created with appropriate multi-media applications.

Advancing Critical Thinking: The Persuasive Essay

The act of persuasion is given strong emphasis in English Composition, and it is the backbone to sound academic discourse. In the twenty-first century, readers and viewers are exposed to a number of skillful methods of persuasion. The traditional persuasive essay with supporting research in the MLA documentation format is assigned to first year English Composition courses.

1. The third essay in this course will be a traditional five paragraph persuasive essay based on a choice of topics. This essay will not involve research, and will lead into the fourth essay, which will allow for multi-media applications.

2. The fourth essay will be an improvement of the essay three due in Week 14, and students will have an option to develop *either* a traditional essay with research or a multi-media essay with research. This essay will depend on two important requirements: (1) the submission of essay three, which will be graded with detailed feedback for improvements and recommendations for the research process (2) the submission of a "script" or "story board" plan for the essay for the instructor's approval. The student will use photographs, embedded audio and video files in order to enhance the student's persuasive writing. The instructor will give final approval for this project, and the student is expected to consult with the instructor as the drafts are developed.

Written persuasion has always been the cornerstone of academic writing. The writers at Dartmouth College offer this explanation of the academic persuasive essay, which is a very effective approach:

> The purpose of the academic essay is to persuade by reasoned discourse. Scholars use the essay amongst themselves to advance ideas. Its value as an instructional tool is to assist students in developing their critical thinking skills. As you recall, critical thinking is defined as: the ability to read theory accurately, appropriate it meaningfully, apply it independently, generate results based on that application, analyze the results, and form a clear argument based on those results that can be defended with a specific line of reasoning. ("The Academic Essay")

165

The ideas developed above can be sound starting points for the persuasive multi-media essay. Students are bombarded on a daily basis with persuasive multi-media presentations, and they will want to be challenged by completing a multi-media persuasive presentation. At this point, it is absolutely necessary to take persuasive writing to the next step in any online English Composition class as the culminating efforts of good writing and multi-media integrating of persuasive resources. The student will therefore have an option to develop persuasive techniques into a strong well transitioned multimedia essay. Indeed, Pea's approach is very relevant as a starting point in this discussion:

> Today's book report or research paper is one place to start thinking about multimedia composing. With these assignments, students typically underuse research resources, are limited to written text as their final product, and lack opportunities for presenting and discussing that product with a critical community (that is, teachers and peers). When we extend these assignments to connect with large, user-extensible multimedia databases, collaborative activities, and interactive presentations to reactive audiences, then we come closer to a culturally based learning activity centered on students' constructing and communicating their understanding. (59)

Rightfully, the student will have the option to develop persuasive essay four in one of the following formats:

(1) A traditional persuasive essay (6 – 7 paragraphs) with MLA documentation, which will be an expansion and improvement of essay three.

(2) A single file text document with embedded images, audio and video files with MLA documentation.

166

(3) A Photo Story narrated essay (similar to the format used for the narrative or process essay) with MLA documentation

(4) An essay using the movie format, such as Movie Maker or video created by the student with a Webcam or video camera; this essay will be accompanied by a "script" with MLA documentation, and the essay's conclusion will acknowledge all resources. It is not uncommon for the student to develop an all-text persuasive essay in full and then integrate multi-media elements into this essay.

Any of the above approaches will require a submission of essay three, which will involve a three-step approval process, which will be reviewed and approved in the appropriate discussion boards and the reflective assignments.

1. A thesis statement and the tentative points of support

2. An annotated bibliography of resources: 4 – 6 academic resources.

3. A completed plan for the essay, which will be based on the following outline:

Section 1: Writer's introduction on why topic was selected

Section 2: Essay Introduction

Section 3: Background to topic

Section 4: First point of support

Section 5: Second point of support

Section 6: Third point of support

Section 7: Counter-argument on any one point

Section 8: Conclusion

Section 9: Works Cited

Nelson points out that "now more than ever we, our students and ourselves, need the highest level of understanding of the semiotic workings and affordances of language, as well as of other modes, in order to enact and facilitate powerful personal expression." Indeed, with regards to the multi-media persuasive essay, the course materials will introduce the student to appropriate methods of completing the audio and video materials (explained in previous chapters of this dissertation), and additional examples and links to appropriate examples will be included in the weeks where the essay will be developed. The table below indicates the plan for this multi-media essay.

Table 5: Essay Four Multi-media Essay Plan

Essay Component	Details	Multi-Media	Length
Section 1: Writer's introduction on why topic was selected	Personal evaluation of purpose	Integrated pictures, audio and video to develop strong persuasion.	1 minute
Section 2: Essay Introduction	Lead in to topic Thesis statement		1 minute
Section 3: Background to topic	Details on the current status of the topic		1- 2 minutes
Section 4: First point of support	Point to support thesis statement and analysis		1- 2 minutes
Section 5: Second point of support	Point to support thesis statement and analysis		1-2 minutes
Section 6: Third point of support	Point to support thesis statement and analysis		1-2 minutes
Section 7: Counter-argument	Analysis of opposing viewpoint on any one point		1-2 minutes
Section 8: Conclusion			1 minute
Section 9: Works Cited	4 – 6 academic resources		1 minute

Text book readings and instructor's information in the lectures will bring the student into a clear understanding of persuasive essay writing practices. Appropriate links to examples within the course will reinforce the student's understanding of how multi-media can be used and applied to

persuasive essay writing. Indeed, Hocks' recommendations here will advance the text essay into the digital mode: "When designing digital documents and also seeing how people use and interpret them, our students can then see themselves as active producers of knowledge in their discipline" (652). Therefore, the focus here will allow the students a number of options to explore. Under instructor's guidance, with appropriate examples, the student will select the most appropriate approach for this essay.

The student's work will be thesis driven, with essay topics selected from a list of current events subjects, as follows: Media and the portrayal of values; The battle against terrorism; Government bailout, Clean energy options; Monitoring financial institutions; Health care oprions; Military interventions; Financial collapse of nations; Social networking; Stagnation in the housing market; Immigration for modern times; and Trends in education. The student will complete the assignment based on the following guidelines:

- Thesis driven persuasive writing

- Appropriate selection of vivid and convincing images

- Audio and video recording to reinforce persuasion

- Transitions (screen transitions)

- Arrangement (sequence)

This multi-media essay will present a conclusive persuasive argument and will be the culminating effort of the student's application of multi-media in meeting this course objective.

With regards to the importance of audio renditions, Comstock and Hocks elaborate in "Voice in the Cultural Soundscape: Sonic Literacy in Composition Studies" that "When students begin to hear their own voices and the voices of others in different ways and contexts, they develop a stronger, more embodied sense of the power of language, of literacy, and of

communication in general." Sayers adds significant direction and purpose to the importance of an audio track in persuasive writing:

> Students might also benefit from approaching digital audio composition through traditions in computers and writing. This approach to audio composition gives students the very tangible opportunity to articulate the audiences for their compositions and how audio enables communications with them. It might also focus on how to use digital audio for argumentation. For instance, how does voice affect people's interpretations of what they hear? As a sensory modality, how does listening intersect with seeing, and to what effects on learning and public knowledge? Or more broadly, what is the rhetorical situation of a given audio composition, and what rhetorical devices does the composer use to persuade listeners?"

The student's personal voice will enhance the mood, style and tone of persuasive writing. Indeed, the student has been introduced to a number of instructor created multi-media applications and the student will have created several multi-media applications in this course. The student will now want to showcase a well-integrated multi-media essay. Indeed, the purpose of this multi-media online course is to introduce students to alternative means of writing, which will bring the student to good competencies in creating, developing and applying multi-media applications to enhance writing. Ashley Hinck in a 2013 article "Framing the Video Essay as Argument" offers a sound rationale for assigning the multi-media essay:

> Teaching the video essay as argument also presents an opportunity to work more closely with colleagues who teach public speaking, writing, performance, video, and visual design. We might ask that public speaking instructors frame public

speaking as utilizing a combination of two modes: speech and image. Thus public speaking offers different affordances than the video essay and requires different rhetorical choices, though it still requires students to construct an argument and consider rhetorical questions. By conceptualizing communication as requiring rhetorical choices, we can encourage our students to see their classes as related, as each class teaches students how to make arguments in particular modes with particular affordances. Ultimately, using this perspective allows us to better facilitate a movement between modes of communication that students' lives outside of college classrooms will demand.

In this course the students will be using textual, audio and video applications to compose documents and to engage in the peer-review process. The multi-media essay will bring together several important approaches to critical thinking in English Composition. Sayers adds sound reinforcement to this approach and advances the benefits of assigning a multi-media persuasive essay:

> Although learning experiences differ from student to student, and classroom to classroom, I have found that integrating digital audio into humanities courses helps students:
>
> - Enrich their understandings of text-based scholarship.
> - Broaden how they define terms such as "writing" and "composition" and the practices associated with them.
> - Stay engaged by switching the sensory modalities through which they learn.

- Bring things (e.g., iPods) that are familiar to them into the classroom and mobilize that familiarity toward academic inquiry.

- Tinker and experiment with new software (e.g., Audacity and Pro Tools) rarely used in the humanities.

- Communicate with each other and share their work through an array of media and modes.

- Compare and mix media (e.g., the vinyl record, the MP3, film, and the book) in fresh and exciting ways.

- Articulate how seeing and hearing change over time, not to mention how they are contextualized.

Tulley effectively reinforces this important approach to the persuasive multi-media essay: "While students often compose via multiple modes in their non-academic lives, connections between in- and out-of-class literacies are not explicit for many students." Indeed, the final multi-media essay will enhance the student's working knowledge and application of multi-media to enhance his or her own personal and professional lives.

Summary

Upon completion of the four major essays in this course, the student will be well versed in creating other and more advanced multi-media applications moving forward. Indeed, since educational institutions are now favoring the multi-media autobiographical essay for college admission, and since this form of self-expression is catching on more broadly, educators and practitioners are now actively offering options in continuing the developing this type of essay in English Composition courses at the college level. Some more advanced English Compositon

courses are now leading exclusively into stronger use of technology and multi-media

applications.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The current status of online English Composition

English Composition as a subject was well accepted for compelling reasons starting in the 1970s and the momentum that picked up soon after has continued unabated into the vibrant interactive mode of online teaching. Innovative approaches will continue to prompt vigorous excitement among educators and practitioners in significant and compelling ways to engage students and to successfully meet learning objectives. Indeed, in the last several decades practitioners and educators have advanced scholarship in meaningful practical ways to address new challenges and to meet the expectations of a quality educational experience. It is clear that many traditional classroom methods have been integrated and enhanced in the online course with sound use of technology and multi-media applications. In the twenty-first century new and innovative ways of developing course material and teaching English Composition online have been met with renewed fervor under the ever-expanding umbrella of these new technologies and multi-media, and these evolving techniques are well embraced by educators, practitioners and students.

This process will continue with each instructor's enthusiasm supported by the guiding force of educational institutions. Indeed, both new and experienced instructors have fostered the online experience for new students with innovate ways to meet course objective. In addition, our technologically savvy new students, well versed in a range of applications, from sophisticated miniaturized laptops to hand-held electronic devices, have embraced this new method of learning. As a result of these innovations, more and more students have begun to take online classes in English Composition. To keep pace, an increasing number of redeveloped courses and new course are being offered online, and the English Composition online course has now become an established and well-respected component of online education. Indeed, students will

write better than ever before. Educators, practitioners and students have teamed up to make advances in the English Composition online course forces to be reckoned with.

There is consensus that the online experience has effectively met many learning outcomes. The executive committee of the National Council Teachers of English "NCTE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing" highlights this progression from earlier all-print text (first appearing in the 1970s) to twenty-first century electronic applications with regards to the three cornerstone objectives of writing: message, purpose and audience, as follows:

> throughout history, print has often been partnered with pictures in order to convey more meaning, to add attractiveness, and to appeal to a wider audience. Television, video, and film all involve such combinations, as do websites and presentation software. As basic tools for communicating expand to include modes beyond print alone, "writing" comes to mean more than scratching words with pen and paper. Writers need to be able to think about the physical design of text, about the appropriateness and thematic content of visual images, about the integration of sound with a reading experience, and about the medium that is most appropriate for a particular message, purpose, and audience.

This study indicates that many of these goals are now fully established and are becoming the norm in the English Composition online course, which has fostered sound writing practices to meet the varied learning styles of diverse students utilizing technologies and multi-media. The canvas is continuously broadening as more and more educators and practitioners introduce new techniques in their courses.

Also, the process of teaching English Composition online has been well examined and adequately served and reinforced by more recent scholarship, which indicates that resources are

available quickly online to enhance many of the objectives outlined above, and educators and practitioners can depend on the quality of these technology and multi-media applications for sound practical use. As pointed out by the educator Jeannie Parker Beard in a 2013 article "Teaching Rhetoric and Composition in the 21st Century":

> I believe in the use of technology and social media to allow students to become engaged citizens of the world. I also believe in distance learning and the possibilities for online learning to change the face of higher education in the world today. Our classrooms are changing and we must adapt to those changes. We need to be prepared to meet our students where they are. We are living in the digital age, and as such, we should embrace the possibilities and face the challenges that this amazing world offers us as educators and learners, consumers and producers, and national as well as global citizens.

It is clear that the English Composition online course is here to stay. As Bjorklund indicates, the push is to have more and more courses available online, and this goal sums up very well the focus not only by educators and practitioners but also from enthusiastic students. Indeed, the stage is set for the next series of developments, which will enhance the art and craft of good writing practices in the spheres of personal and professional writing and beyond.

Areas of concern

However, before we move too quickly into the promising future of teaching English Composition online, there are a few areas that will need to be revisited and over time these requirements will be perfected in an ongoing manner. The process of writing is not a static one nor is it a process that will continue in a seamless uninterrupted manner. As more and more courses are taken online, introduced, developed and perfected, and more and more students are

enrolling, new issues have come to light that will need to be addressed in order to meet quality learning expectations.

As reinforced previously, teaching English Composition with technology and multi-media is an evolving process and it is subject to constant changes as more and more innovative means of meeting learning outcomes are discovered, selected, evaluated, introduced and perfected. Since technology and multi-media applications are now fully available, it is only natural that educators and practitioners will become more strongly focused in developing quality improvements in the online English Composition course in order to not only sustain interest but also reinforce the importance of quality writing and the fostering of good communication practices. After all, since meaning must be clear to an audience, one's writing must meet the expectations of a technologically savvy audience, and matters of quality and integrity, together with important ethical considerations, must be reinforced in the English Composition online course for educators and practitioners at several important inter-connected levels.

Of paramount importance is the instructor's workload, which deserves emphasis in this study's conclusion. Educational institutions are now actively working to bring more courses quickly online, which directly impacts the number of courses an instructor can teach and the number of students that can be enrolled in a course. This matter was first explored in a detailed 2005 study when the English Composition course was starting to make headway, by David A. Reinheimer titled "Teaching composition online: Whose side is time on?" This study offers sound cautions and at the same time touches on important recommendations:

> Online instruction will only continue to grow—the net-generation student will
> demand it, as will shrinking and shifting resources. It has long been
> acknowledged among compositionists that online instruction changes the way we

177

teach and the way students learn; now we must acknowledge how it changes the way we do our jobs. Until now, instructors have claimed that teaching online takes more time than F2F teaching, although many administrators believe it takes less time. This study has started to quantify the difference, but it has only begun that work. There are many points along the three-dimensional matrix of instructor workload that need to be examined as well—different approaches to online instruction; different types of writing classes such as developmental composition, creative writing, writing-intensive courses in the disciplines; and so on. Further, workload studies will have to continuously monitor their results: As quickly as the hardware and software that comprise the online landscape change, so too will an online instructor's workload change. (468-69)

Indeed, teaching online takes more time as this study indicates in the following areas: preparation, evaluating best online practices, course development and modifications, and keeping abreast with the latest technological advancements.

Several solutions have been implemented. For one, a few institutions have approached the increased enrollment with a solution that utilizes the expertise of well-qualified grading assistants to evaluate, grade and respond to students' inquiries on the major written assignments, which are the expository essay and the persuasive research essay. These assistants often work independently of the course instructor and will employ a grading matrix through an applicable software application, which may or may not apply techniques such as recorded comments or a track changes application. There is nothing wrong with this approach when strict guidelines are followed, which relate to working from sound assignment specifications and a corresponding detailed grading matrix available to all students in a timely manner. In addition, there will be

dialogue between the grading assistant and the student. However, it is very possible that this solution will create more harm than benefits since evaluating good writing is in part a subjective matter and this use is compounded by the well-accepted insight that no two students will write alike. Consequently, the course instructor is the best person to evaluate the student's writing based on the instructor's experience, instructional material presented, discussion interactions and quality expectations and guidelines developed in various stages as the course progresses.

One report suggests this drastic measure: "add a course assistant to address non-content-related questions and to monitor students' progress, thus freeing the instructor to concentrate on academic rather than logistical interactions with students" ("Six Models for Course Redesign," 5). This is also not a sound approach as it can lead to doubts and uncertainties from students and raises an important ethical question: whose expertise should the student rely on?

Indeed, class size has been at the forefront of debates. Richard H. Haswell in a 2010 report "Class Sizes for Regular, Basic, and Honors Writing Courses" brings into focus current practices:

> For decades, the National Council of Teachers of English and the Conference on College Composition and Communication have recommended a cap of 20 students for regular composition ("ideally 15") and 15 for basic writing. See "Teaching composition: A position statement, "College English 46.6 (1984), 612-614; and "Statement of principles and standards for the postsecondary teaching of writing," College Composition and Communication 40.3 (1989), 329-336, also available online. Possibly more persuasive to higher administrations is the fact that the US News & World Report now factors in smaller class size positively in their ratings of colleges and universities. In the category "Faculty Resources"

"Class Size 1-19" accounts for 30% and "Class Size 1-50" for 10%. "Faculty

Resources" accounts for 20% of the total rating.

The present study indicates that an enrollment of around twelve to fifteen students is ideal, and

can lead to a quality online education. Nonetheless, there will never be a firm agreement on the

absolute best number with regards to an English Composition online class since educators and

practitioners have the freedom to individualize their course content in a variety of ways to meet

sound course objectives and student expectations. In addition other factors, such as what occurs

in one course may affect the approach taken in subsequent courses.

For example, it is very possible that figures obtained from previous classes on the

enrolled number as opposed to the final number in the class (drop-out rate) will have an impact

on the approach an educational institution will take in enrolling students in future online courses;

it is not uncommon for an institution to enroll a few additional students rather than face the

complex issues of "late-starts" in a self-paced online class. In addition, the figures obtained on

the drop-out rate will need further investigation as to why students are unable to complete a

course; this will undoubtedly result in improvements. Educators and practitioners have yet to

agree on firm numbers; however, one of the most appropriate approaches to effectively meet

course expectations lies on this recommendation proposed by Trish Roberts-Miller, which falls

within the expectations of sound teaching practices:

> This means an approach which does not set the task of teaching writing as getting
>
> students to memorize and understand certain objects of knowledge (the objectivist
>
> approach), but as setting students tasks during which they will learn and giving
>
> them appropriate feedback along the way. The more that one engages in

constructivist teaching, the more important is class size; the more that the goals and practices of a program are objectivist, the less class size matters.

Indeed, the recommendations in this study offer a sound approach in engaging the inquisitive learner in the writing process, which will allow for a more vibrant exchange of information and collaboration within a small group (twelve to fifteen) rather than a large group.

Therefore, it is very important to monitor the instructor-to-student ratio when developing and introducing the English Composition online class. Available resources must keep pace with the enthusiasm for developing sound writing practices. Indeed, student retention rates are important, and must be adequately served by a force of well-qualified and not over worked instructors. Each instructor's approach to the learning process will demand careful consideration with regards to class size, and further studies will help to clarify this important requirement for effective teaching.

Recommendations on moving forward: matters of quality control.

The areas of concern addressed in the previous section will be effectively covered when educators and practitioners continue the process of fostering sound "quality expectations" in the English Composition online course. Indeed, overarching oversight will need development in order to maintain this sound "course quality control" on an ongoing basis, and the need to make appropriate adjustments will always be of concern to educators and practitioners. Evaluating best practices and making appropriate adjustments to foster student engagement is uppermost on the list, and these can be achieved with a number of approaches.

Foremost is the approach to develop quality writing, which meets the needs of diverse audiences. Three significant areas that will need immediate focus and future development on an on going basis with regards to meeting quality learning objectives are as follows:

181

1. Adhering to strict quality matters at all times

2. Keeping abreast of the latest innovations

3. Continued instructor training

On the matter of meeting quality expectations, educational institutions are known to develop and foster strict internal expectations, which cover a wide number of courses in English Composition. Often time courses are audited using detailed evaluation rubrics, and instructors and auditors will be in constant dialogue with regards to what works best. This will result in a win-win situation for all concerned.

In addition, several independent and outside organizations offer guidance on quality matters, and educational institutions have begun to seriously consider using these guiding principles of quality control in evaluating their own courses. Indeed, there are several of these organizations that encourage and foster sound quality expectations and are willing to serve as independent auditors. Educational institutions are known to partner with any one of these reputable organizations in order to have their courses fine-tuned using many of the recommended quality objectives, and will advertise that their courses do follow strict guidelines.

For example, one such independent organization is often included by educational institutions indicating that their courses adhere to "Quality Matters Program QM" in significant ways. The organization supports the following objectives:

> Quality Matters (QM) is a faculty-centered, peer review process that is designed to certify the quality of online and blended courses. QM is a leader in quality assurance for online education and has received national recognition for its peer-based approach and continuous improvement in online education and student

learning. QM subscribers include community and technical colleges, colleges and

universities, K-12 schools and systems, and other academic institutions."

Indeed, whether the audit process is internal or in combination with third-party adoption,

meeting sound design and development expectations and having all course materials conform to

acceptable standards will ensure a quality education.

With regards to the second point, keeping abreast of the latest teaching methods and

technological innovations, educators and practitioners are continuing the effort to enhance the

learning process in an English Composition course in significant ways. Hai-Jew in a 2010 article

"An Instructional Design Approach to Updating an Online Course Curriculum" addresses several

of these approaches, as follows:

> Planning for when to revise and update the curricular materials of both redesigned
>
> courses will be critical in maintaining the quality of the curriculum. This would
>
> suggest that having clear documentation of the decision making for the current
>
> rebuild, a definition of the applied cultural principles, and documentation about
>
> the technological standards and software used, will be critical for later work.
>
> (106)

Indeed, most students will ask: what is in it for me? Technology and multi-media applications

can help answer this question. In the twenty-first century, electronic means of communicating

call for good online writing practices at many levels, and graduating students, whether they move

on to graduate study or employment, must be savvy practitioners with the latest means and

methods of developing text in order to meet diverse needs and purposes. For example, instructor

education in current writing techniques utilizing technology and multi-media will explore and

advance new and innovative ways to meet the expectations of writing in the public sphere.

This matter of taking writing into the public sphere has already begun to be addressed by educators and practitioners. Matthew D. Barton in *The future of rational-critical debate in online public spheres* recommends the following innovate ways of teaching techniques in the online English Compositon course applicable to the public sphere:

- Frequent blogging of the self-reflective kind will help students develop subjectivity and explore their thoughts and feelings in a writing space that is public, yet controlled by the student—there is a sense of ownership among bloggers not shared by members on a forum or participants on a wiki.

- Participating in discussion boards, however, exposes students to the sphere of critical debate and fosters rhetorical awareness. Students eager to prove points raised in discussion boards can be taught to venture beyond first-hand experience and bring research and quality evidence to strengthen their arguments.

- Finally, wikis provide that space where students strive for consensus and learn to share a common, community voice. I feel it is unlikely that students will succeed at building wikis and also learn to speak with a community voice unless they have first developed a personal voice and sense of identity.

Indeed, the points developed above, especially with the illustrative practical hands-on approach, indicate a strong concern for the immediate and practical uses of technology and multi-media applications in the English Composition online course.

The third area of instructor continued training must not only be an educational institution's primary focus but also a personal commitment by the instructor to improve his or her best practices. The continued education process is important especially where technology and multi-media applications are constantly evolving. Instructors must keep pace. Michele Griegel-

McCord, Cynthia Nitz Ris, and Lisa Beckelhimer, in a 2013 analysis, with information gleaned from "The 2011 State-of-the-Art of OWI Report by the Conference on College Composition and Communication" make these recommendations:

> • Mandatory training required for those assigned to online writing courses (i.e. certified completion of distance learning pedagogy workshops).
>
> • A discipline-specific pedagogy workshop session organized and funded by the English Composition program and led by an experienced online writing instructor.
>
> • Investment by Arts & Sciences in an instructional web designer to assist in creating a template and various materials for all online instructors. (3)

Indeed, the approaches outlined above, with adequate institutional involvement, will enhance critical expectations of any conscientious instructor: sound instructional certification, important pedagogy workshops, and precise instructional design practices.

It can be readily observed that this three-prong approach of adhering to strict quality matters all times, keeping abreast of the latest innovations, and continued instructor training, will have a significant impact on the quality of English Composition online education. This will require a strong commitment by educators and practitioners. The future looks very promising for innovative course development.

Final words.

The future of English Composition online looks very promising at many levels. Educators' and practitioners' involvement in meeting critical objectives, and reporting the findings in peer-reviewed scholarly articles, will enhance the writing process at several levels: in personal, in educational, in professional, and in business applications. Many peer-reviewed journals are appearing online and offer articles in multi-media formats, which demonstrate

hands-on approaches to course design and development. Indeed, these opportunities will effectively move competent instructors and inquisitive students into the twenty-first century electronic writing spheres utilizing the latest technology and multi-media applications.

Appendix A: Course Syllabus

Course Syllabus

English Composition 100

Spring 2013 Blackboard Online Course

Instructor: David Makhanlall

e-mail Contact:

Day & Time class meets: 1/7/2013 - 5/2/2013: Online in Blackboard

Office Hours: In Blackboard Online.

Note: *Multi-media applications are indicated in italics.*

Office Contact:

1. **COURSE PREFIX NUMBER**: ENG 100   **CREDIT HOURS**:   3

2. **COURSE TITLE**: English Composition I

3.   **PREREQUISITES**:   To register for this course, students will have a departmental ENG 100 recommendation based on either the writing placement test or successful completion of either ENG 01 or ESL composition. Students with an ENG 04 (reading) recommendation will successfully complete ENG 04 **prior** to enrolling in ENG 100 or they will enroll in ENG 04 concurrently with ENG 100.

4. **COURSE DESCRIPTION**: Introduces students to critical thinking and the fundamentals of academic writing. Through the writing process, students refine topics; develop and support ideas; investigate, evaluate, and incorporate appropriate resources; edit for effective style and usage; and determine appropriate approaches for a variety of contexts, audiences, and purposes. Writing activities will include exposition and analysis with at least one researched essay.

Note: Items in italics indicate multi-media applications the student will access and/or develop in order to meet course objectives. Refer to course weekly modules for specific applications.

5. **CONTENT**: (Major Headings)

   a. Rhetoric and the contexts of communication.
   b. The development and effective use of writing processes.
   c. Critical thinking.
   d. Critical reading, summary, synthesis, and evaluation of texts.
   e. Academic integrity, including the appropriate use of sources.
   f. *Speech communication, including the preparation and delivery of an oral presentation utilizing course software on a prepared topic.*

g. *Non-traditional ways of creating and developing essays utilizing multi-media applications, such as audio clips, movie elements and other suitable interactivity.*

6. **GENERAL COURSE OBJECTIVES**:

Upon successful completion of the course, students will have written a minimum of two to three formal, typed academic essays totaling at least twelve (6) pages and a minimum of fifteen (15) pages of informal writing, including writing responses, drafts, and peer review. *In at least ONE (with a maximum of two) of these four essays, the student will utilize the digital format and will include among other applications, hyper-text and multi-media applications: audio and video clips. In addition, the student will have an opportunity to submit some textual work with multi-media applications in several of the brief assignments.*

7. LEARNING OUTCOMES.

<u>Statement of Purpose:</u> ENG 100 develops the skills students possess prior to entering college-level writing courses and prepares students for academic, professional, and personal communication. Students will produce texts that reflect knowledge of writing processes, rhetoric, and digital technologies.

<u>General Course Goals:</u> By the end of ENG 100, students shall
• Adapt writing process to a variety of tasks, formats, genres, and rhetorical situations.
• Produce texts that are grounded in evidence and formally documented.
• Demonstrate academic integrity and the appropriate use of others' ideas and feedback in producing effective communication.
• *Demonstrate college-level written and oral communication skills, in prepared textual speeches, discussion board applications, in audio-tracks.*
• *Use digital and print technologies to compose, to research, and to disseminate texts.*

Rhetorical Knowledge
• Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation, including purpose, context, audience, and genre.
• Adapt voice, tone, and level of formality to a variety of rhetorical situations.
• Use conventions of format, structure, and design appropriate to the rhetorical situation.
• *Analyze texts and graphical material to describe how and why writers use rhetorical devices.*

Process
• *Engage in effective writing processes with use of appropriate technological applications and multi-media to include pre-writing, exchanging drafts, and revising.*
• Produce at least 15 pages of informal and 12 pages of formal writing.
• Employ appropriate syntax, usage, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing

• Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating.
• Integrate the ideas of others with their own, using appropriate documentation .
• *Produce reflective texts such as memos, letters, journals, blogs, lists, and threaded discussions.*
• Read, summarize, and respond to a variety of non-fiction texts.

Oral Communication Skills
• *Participate in interactive discussions, peer reviews, and oral presentations.*
• Use non-verbal cues as an essential aspect of self-presentation.
• Demonstrate use of active listening skills.

Digital Technologies
• *Use electronic environments for drafting, reviewing, revising, editing, and sharing texts.*
• *Locate, evaluate, organize, and use material collected from electronic sources, which may include scholarly library databases and informal digital networks.*

8. Textbooks

Johnson-Sheehan, Richard and Charles Paine. *Writing Today.* Boston: Longman, 2010.

Hacker, Diana. *A Writer's reference*. Sixth edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin, 2009.

The American Heritage Dictionary or a good dictionary

9. Evaluation:

Item	Points	%
Essay 1: Narrative/Event Essay: two options.	100	10
Essay 2: Explanatory/Process Essay: two options	100	10
Essay 3: Persuasive Essay: two options.	100	10
Essay 4: Researched Persuasive Essay (MLA)	150	15
Mid Term Exam	90	9
Final Exam	100	10
Reflection Assignments: 15 items, 10 points each.	150	15
Discussion Boards: 30 items, 7 points each	210	21
Total	1000	100

Multi-media assignments proposed for ENG 101 online English Composition

Week/Assignment	Instruction Period	Assignment Due	Student's 1st choice	Student's second choice: Multimedia application
Week Two: Discussion Board 3	Week One and week Two	Week Two		Edited document using track changes
Week Two Discussion Board 4	Week One and Week Two	Week Two		Audio recording
Week Three: Reflection:	Week One, Week Two and Week Three	Week Three		Video clip
Essay One Narrative	Weeks Two – Week Five	Week Five	Text Essay	Option One: Multi-media: text and pictures, embedded audio and video clips. Submission: Submitted text file Option Two: Video Essay Submission: Uploaded video
Essay Two Process	Week Five – Week Eight	Week Eight	As above	As above
Essay Three: Persuasive	Week Nine and Week Ten	Week Ten	As above	As above

Grading Scale: I use a one hundred point grading scale.

A=900-1000; B=800-899; C=70-799; D=60-699; F=599 and below

9. Course and Institutional Policies.

Attendance Policy: Course Withdrawal Policy: Students who are experiencing academic difficulties may elect to withdraw themselves from class prior to the last day to withdraw without academic penalty (first 60% of the class) Thursday 1/24/2013. Excessive absences prior to last day to withdraw will result in the instructor withdrawing a student from the course and the recording of a "W" grade. If the attendance policy is violated after last withdrawal date (Wednesday 3/20/2013), the student will be awarded a grade of "F." Withdrawal (initiated and completed by the student) from a course without academic penalty may be made within the first 60% of the course; this is Wednesday 3/20/2013; the student will receive a grade of "W" for withdrawal. After that time, the student will receive a grade of "F." In case of mitigating circumstances documented by the instructor, a grade of "W" may be awarded. Administrative withdrawal may be initiated by an instructor in the event of excessive absences on the part of the student.

Attendance can be gauged in an online or hybrid course. Regular participation in the discussion forums, the timely submission of required assignments, and the prompt notification of problems in the course all constitute "class attendance" online. Students are expected to participate in all class activities, submit all assignments, and complete all tests and examinations in accordance with the class syllabus and outline. Students who cannot participate in or complete assigned class activities, assignments, tests, and examinations by the designated deadlines owing to extenuating circumstances should contact the instructor prior to any such incidents or immediately following all unforeseen emergencies. **Because of the public availability of computers on and off campus, computer problems will not be accepted as a reason for lack of participation.** Students who fail to complete a class activity, assignment, test, or examination (electronic and/or traditional) by the designated deadline will be considered to have committed an absence. If you do not attend for 2 weeks straight by not completing any work in the course, you will be withdrawn (before the academic withdrawal date), or reported as not attending and given an "F" after the withdrawal date (Wednesday 3/20/2013). Missing over 20% (5 classes or more) of the class by not completing any work for that week is an automatic failure.

Written Paper Requirements: All papers will be typed, double-spaced, no extra lines between paragraphs, with proper paragraph indentations, and have one inch margins, with a title page (no pictures or sketches) and Works Cited page where required.

Multi-media assignments: In at least TWO of these essays, the student will utilize the digital format and will include among other applications, hyper-text and multi-media applications: audio and video clips. In addition, the student will have an opportunity to submit some textual work

with multi-media applications in several of the brief assignments. Requirements and expectations for these assignments will be indicated in the appropriate weekly tabs.

Late paper: This is an online class, and discussions and assignments are set on a weekly basis and work will be completed in the course on a weekly basis. Each week begins on a Monday 1.00 AM and ends on Sunday midnight.

Academic Honesty: At this university we expect the highest standards of academic honesty. Violations of academic honesty include the following:

• Cheating: This includes seeking or giving unauthorized help on examinations, papers, etc.

• Plagiarism: This is defined as using another's words or ideas and representing them as one's own either knowingly or unknowingly. You will document your sources and use quotation marks when citing another's words.

Misconduct in the area of academic honesty is subject to disciplinary action which can include failure for the assignment or failure of the course.

TURNITIN **Policy:** Your professor has access to Turnitin plagiarism software which aids in detecting improperly cited materials. All of your written work (essays) will be submitted to Turnitin for analysis; note the instructions in Blackboard on how to submit your work.

Student with Disabilities: In keeping with the philosophy of providing educational opportunity for all individuals, this university has a professional counselor who will assist disabled persons by acting as the liaison between the students and the faculty/staff who will provide the support services needed. Go to school webpage for more information.

Americans with Disabilities Act: The College is committed to compliance with both the letter and spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and other laws protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities. Students with special needs should contact the offices of the Deans of Student Development Services on each campus for additional information and complete the Request for Accommodations form. It is the student's responsibility to identify himself and his need for special accommodation with appropriate documentation to the instructor at the beginning of the semester.

The Learning Environment: "Civility" is treating others the way we would like to be treated through behavior that conveys mutual respect, sensitivity and tolerance of our differences, resulting in a productive learning and working environment. Please remember: Online discussions help to develop your communication, collaboration and analytical skills. Please be sure when responding that you read it carefully before you post it to make sure that others will not take it the wrong way. Please proofread very carefully BEFORE your post your response!

Disruptive Students: Students are expected to behave in a respectful and civil manner that promotes teaching and learning. Appropriate student conduct is expected towards other students, all college employees and appointees, and guests of the college. Students who do not comply with this policy may be asked to withdraw from the class, may be permanently removed from a class or classes with a grade of F, suspended, or expelled.

Academic Honesty: Students are expected to complete their work independently or give fair credit to any work that is not solely their own. It is imperative that students maintain a high standard of individual honor in their scholastic work. Academic dishonesty includes acts of cheating, plagiarism, or collusion. Documented instances of academic dishonesty can result in a zero for the assignment, a grade of "F" for the course **or** dismissal for more serious or repeated acts. See the student handbook for the college policy. Any member of the college community who observes an act of academic dishonesty is expected to report it to the instructor or the director of Student Development Services.

10. Schedule for Spring 2013: The schedule below lists reading and writing assignments. The listings tell you the work to do <u>before</u> you complete any assignment.

Date	Agenda	Textbook Reading	Assignment Due
Week 1 1/7/2013 – 1/13/2013	1. Introduction to course and Blackboard 2. How to be successful in this online course.	Part 1: chapters 1 – 3: pp. 2 – 33. Part 3: chapter 4; pp. 34 - 55. Hacker: 2 – 54. Read essays: pp. 589 – 605.	Discussion 1 Discussion 2 Reflection Assignment 1 Diagnostic Quiz
Week 2 1/14/2013 – 1/20/2013	1. The Narrative Essay. 2. Planning the essay. 3. Intro. to audio & video 4. Intro to "Track Changes."	Part 1: chapters 1 – 3: pp. 2 – 33. Part 3: chapter 4; pp. 34 - 55. Hacker: 2 – 54. Essays: pp. 589 – 605.	Discussion 3 Discussion 4 Reflection Assignment 2
Week 3 1/21/2013 – 1/27/2013	1. The Narrative Essay. 2. Planning the essay. 3. Intro to the video narrative essay.	Part 1: chapters 1 – 3: pp. 2 – 33. Part 3: chapter 4; pp. 34 - 55. Essays: pp. 589 – 605. Hacker: 2 – 54.	Discussion 5 Discussion 6 Reflection Assignment 3: *Video clip*
Week 4 1/28/2013 – 2/3/2013	1. The Narrative Essay. 2. Planning the essay. 3. Developing the video narrative essay	Part 1: chapters 1 – 3: pp. 2 – 33. Part 3: chapter 4; pp. 34 - 55. Essays: pp. 589 – 605. Hacker: 2 – 54.	Discussion 7 Discussion 8 Reflection Assignment 4

Week 5 2/4/2013 – 2/10/2013	1. The Explanatory/Process Essay *2. Intro. to the video explanatory/process essay*	Part 2: chapters 12 & 13; pp. 247 – 325. Part 3:chapters 14 – 18; pp. 327 – 399.	Discussion 9 Discussion 10 Reflection Assignment 5 **Essay 1: narrative essay.**
Week 6 2/11/2013- 2/17/2013	1. The Explanatory Essay *2. Developing the video explanatory/process essay*	Part 2: chapters 12 & 13; pp. 247 – 325. Part 3: chapters 14 – 18; pp. 327 – 399.	Discussion 11 Discussion 12 Reflection Assignment 6
Week 7 2/18/2013 – 2/24/2013	1. The Explanatory Essay *2. Developing the video explanatory/process essay*	Part 2: chapter 11: 221 – 246. Part 4: chapter 22: pp. 423 – 438 Part 7: chapter 40: 718 – 739.	Discussion 13 Discussion 14 Reflection Assignment 7
Week 8 2/25/2013 – 3/3/2013	1. Defining persuasion *2. Intro. to the video persuasive essay* *Mid Term* Exam review.	Part 2: chapter 11: 221 – 246. Part 4: chapter 22: pp. 423 – 438 Part 7: chapter 40: 718 – 739.	Discussion 15 Discussion 16 Reflection Assignment 8 **Essay # 2: explanatory essay.** Obtain approval on Essay 3 & 4
Week 9 3/4/2013 - 3/10/2013	1. Defining persuasion *2. Developing the video persuasive essay*	Part 2: chapter 11: 221 – 246. Part 4: chapter 22: pp. 423 – 438 Part 7: chapter 40: 718 – 739.	Discussion 17 Discussion 18 Reflection Assignment 9 **MID TERM EXAM**
3/14/2013 – 3/17/2013: Spring Break: No Classes			
Week 10 3/18/2013 – 3/24/2013	1. Defining research 2. Developing research. 3. Finding sources	Ch. 24–27; pp. 448–515. Hacker: 354– 412.	Discussion 19 Discussion 20 Reflection Assignment 10 **Essay # 3: Persuasive essay.**
Week 11 3/25/2013 – 3/31/2013	1. Defining research 2. Developing research. 3. Evaluating sources	Part 5: chapter 41: pp. 354-357. Ch. 24 – 27; pp. 448 – 515. Hacker: 354 – 412.	Discussion 21 Discussion 22 Reflection Assignment 11

Week 12 34/1/2013 – 4/7/2013	1. Defining research 2. Developing research. 3. Documentation MLA.	Part 5: chapter 42 - 45: pp. 358 – 416. Ch. 24 – 27; pp. 448 – 515. Hacker: 354 – 412.	Discussion 23 Discussion 24 Reflection Assignment 12
Week 13 4/8/2013 – 4/14/2013	1. Defining research. Final Review of citations & Works Cited.	Instructor's analysis & report on MLA essay. Final Review of citations & Works Cited.	Discussion 25 Discussion 26 Reflection Assignment 13 **Essay # 4 Argument Essay.**
Week 14 4/15/2013 – 4/21/2013	Reviews of major essays. Discussions.	Instructor's analysis & report on MLA essay. Review for final exam. Practice Exam: Short Answer.	Discussion 27 Discussion 28 Reflection Assignment 14
Week 15 4/22/2013 – 4/28/2013	Reviews of major essays. Discussions.	Instructor's analysis & report on MLA essay. Practice Exam: Short Answer.	Discussion 29 Discussion 30 Reflection Assignment 15
Week 16 4/29/20013 –Friday 5/3/2013			**FINAL EXAM**

Appendix B: Grading Matrix for Multi-Media Essay

Grading Rubric for Multi-Media Essay
SOAPSTone (Speaker, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, Subject, and Tone) is an acronym for a series of questions that students will first ask themselves, and then answer, as they begin to plan their compositions.

Adapted from: http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/preap/teachers_corner/45200.html

RUBRIC FOCUS	Excellent (A)	Good (B)	Adequate (C)	Inadequate (D or Below)
Rhetorical Analysis	Student's ideas and observations reveal impressive critical thinking.	Student's ideas and observations reveal critical thinking.	Student's ideas and observations reveal some critical thinking.	Student's ideas and observations reveal a lack of clear critical thinking.
Evidence and Details to Support Analysis: ethos, pathos, and/or logos.	Effective use of detailed evidence to support observations.	Use of detailed evidence to support observations.	Student cites adequate evidence to support observations.	Student fails to cite or cites vague evidence in support of his/her observations.
Organization	Logical and cohesive organization, chosen especially for writer's audience.	Logical and cohesive organization.	Logical and mainly cohesive organization, with some minor areas for improvement.	Weak organization or lack of perceivable organizational structure. Confusing to read.
Diction	Careful, succinct, and effective word choice.	Well-chosen and appropriate word choice.	Appropriate word choice.	Inappropriate and/or awkward word choice.
Sentence Fluency	Direct and easily readable sentences of varying lengths, beginnings, and structure.	Direct and easily readable sentences with some variety of length, beginning, and structure.	Mostly direct and easily readable sentences. Some variety in length, beginning, and structure present.	Some direct and easily readable sentences.
Grammar and Punctuation	Free of grammatical error.	Nearly free of grammatical error, some minor errors.	Some minor errors.	Pattern(s) of minor and

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