

Theory and Praxis in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing, 4th Ed.*

**University of New Mexico
1:00-4:00, August 16, 2006**

Presenter: John C. Bean, Seattle University

AGENDA

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

- Students' Stages of Development as Writers: Novice to Expert 2
- From "Pseudo-Academic" to "Generalized Academic" Writing 3

DECIDING HIGH LEVEL GOALS FOR YOUR COURSE: WHAT KIND OF PROSE DO YOU WANT STUDENTS TO WRITE?

- Collaborative Task: Two Different Types of Writing 4
- Continuum of Essay Types: From Closed to Open Forms 6
- What Kinds of Writing Do You Want Your Students to Produce? 7

THEORY OF COMPOSITION UNDERLYING *THE ALLYN AND BACON GUIDE TO WRITING* (LECTURE/PRESENTATION)

FYC AND WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM: PROMOTING TRANSFER

- Some General Principles for Teaching Academic Writing in the Disciplines 8
- Assigning Writing: Give Your Students a RAFT and a TIP 9
- Features of an Effective Assignment Handout 10
- Example of a Formal Assignment Handout from a First-Year History Course 11

PLANNING A COURSE: AN ILLUSTRATION OF HOW I DESIGNED AN ASSIGNMENT SEQUENCE WITHIN A FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION COURSE

- Learning Outcomes from John Bean's Freshman Seminar on "Science and Public Policy" 12
- Schedule and Assignment for Unit Two: Genetically Modified Organisms 13
- Grading Rubric: Summary/Strong Response (Rauch Article) 14
- Microtheme 2: Assignment and Grading Rubric 15
- Peer Review Guide for Critiquing Rauch Summaries 16
- Peer Review Guide for Critiquing Summary/Strong Response Essays on Rauch 17

APPENDICES FOR POSSIBLE DISCUSSION

- Appendix 1:** Using the Brief Writing Exercises from ABGW4, Chapter 4 ("Thinking Rhetorically About How Texts Persuade") to Teach Rhetorical Reading 18
- Appendix 2:** Strategies for Assigning and Grading Exploratory Writing and a Rationale for Doing So 21

STUDENTS' STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT AS WRITERS: NOVICE TO EXPERT

Stage 1: Nonacademic or pseudo-academic writing [*what students bring from high school*]

Stage 2: Generalized academic writing concerned with stating claims, offering evidence, respecting others' opinions, and learning how to write with authority [*goal of first-year composition*]

Stage 3: Novice approximations of particular disciplinary ways of making knowledge [*early courses in the major*]

Stage 4: Expert, insider prose within a discipline [*advanced courses in the major*]

Adapted from Susan Peck MacDonald, Professional Writing in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Carbondale, Southern Illinois UP, 1994 (p. 187)

POSSIBLE FORMS OF EXPERT, INSIDER PROSE FOR UNDERGRADUATES

- Academic or scholarly writing in the discipline
- Professional workplace writing (proposals, reports, memos, technical papers, or other disciplinary kinds of professional writing)
- Writing about the discipline for general or popular audiences
- Civic or public argument related to the discipline
- Other kinds of writing or communication projects specific to a major or discipline (creative projects, Web sites, multi-media presentations, Power Point presentations, and so forth)

FROM “PSEUDO-ACADEMIC” TO “GENERALIZED ACADEMIC” WRITING

Pseudo-Academic Research Paper (An “All About” Report on Women Police Officers)

- I. History of women in police roles
 - A. Female police or soldiers in ancient times
 - B. 19th Century (Calamity Jane)
 - C. 1900s to 1960s
 - D. 1960-present
- II. How female police officers are selected and trained
- III. A typical day in the life of a female police officer
- IV. Achievements and acts of heroism by female police officers
- V. What the future holds for female police officers

Generalized Academic Writing (Introduction Poses a Problem with Stakes)

Connie Jones has just completed police academy training and has been assigned to patrol duty in _____ . Because she is so small, she has to have a booster seat in her patrol car and has been given a special gun, since she can barely manage to pull the trigger of a standard police-issue .38 revolver. Although she passed the physical requirements at the academy, which involved speed and endurance running, sit-ups, and monkey bar tests, most of the officers in her department doubt her ability to perform competently as a patrol officer. But nevertheless she is on patrol because men and women receive equal assignments in most of today’s police forces. But is this a good policy? Can a person who is significantly smaller and weaker than her peers make an effective patrol officer?

Introduction: Presents Problem

- I. Because the “small and weak” people in question are almost always women, this issue become a women’s issue. Summarizes four research studies in favor of women police officers: (research findings showed that women police officers handled violent situations well and that they are equally capable as men at performing police duties)
- II. Thesis paragraph: I believe these studies must be viewed with skepticism. My concern is public safety. In light of that concern, the evidence suggests that police departments should set stringent size and strength requirements for patrol officers, even if these criteria exclude many women.
- III. Current research marred by two flaws [examines weaknesses in these studies—e.g., failure to provide information about size and strength of female officers in the studies]
- IV. Many police officers argue for some minimal level of strength required for police work
 - A. Doubts expressed by male police officers regarding the small size and weakness of some female police officers
 - B. Women police officers must meet considerably lower strength and endurance tests than males
 - C. Political pressure on male police officers to keep their doubts to themselves
- V. Summarizes feminist arguments for why it is important to have female police officers
- VI. My concern for public safety overrides my concern for equal rights

COLLABORATIVE TASK: TWO DIFFERENT TYPES OF WRITING

Read the following short pieces. Sample A is a letter to the editor written by a professional civil engineer in response to a newspaper editorial arguing for development of wind-generated electricity. Sample B is a short piece entitled "A Festival of Rain" by the American poet and religious writer Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk. Please read the two samples carefully, and then proceed to the discussion questions that follow.

Sample A

Your editorial on November 16, "Get Bullish on Wind Power," is based on fantasy rather than fact. There are several basic reasons why wind-generated power can in no way serve as a reasonable major alternative to other electrical energy supply alternatives for the Pacific Northwest power system.

First and foremost, wind power is unreliable. Electric power generation is evaluated not only on the amount of energy provided, but also on its ability to meet system peak load requirements on an hourly, daily, and weekly basis. In other words, an effective power system would have to provide enough electricity to meet peak demands in a situation when the wind energy would be unavailable--either in no wind situations or in severe blizzard conditions, which would shut down the wind generators. Because wind power cannot be relied on at times of peak needs, it would have to be backed up by other power generation resources at great expense and duplication of facilities.

Secondly, there are major unsolved problems involved in the design of wind generation facilities, particularly for those located in rugged mountain areas. Ice storms, in particular, can cause sudden dynamic problems for the rotating blades and mechanisms which could well result in breakdown or failure of the generators. Furthermore, the design of the facilities to meet the stresses imposed by high winds in these remote mountain regions, in the order of 125 miles per hour, would indeed escalate the costs.

Thirdly, the environmental impact of constructing wind generation facilities amounting to 28 percent of the region's electrical supply system (as proposed in your editorial) would be tremendous. The Northwest Electrical Power system presently has a capacity of about 37,000 megawatts of hydro power and 10,300 megawatts of thermal, for a total of about 48,000 megawatts. Meeting 28 percent of this capacity by wind power generators would, most optimistically, require about 13,400 wind towers, each with about 1,000 kilowatt (one megawatt) generating capacity. These towers, some 100 to 200 feet high, would have to be located in the mountains of Oregon and Washington. These would encompass hundreds of square miles of pristine mountain area, which, together with interconnecting transmission facilities, control works, and roads would indeed have major adverse environmental impacts to the region.

There are many other lesser problems of control and maintenance of such a system. Let it be said that, from my experience and knowledge as a professional engineer, the use of wind power as a major resource in the Pacific Northwest power system, is strictly a pipe dream.

David M. Rockwood, PE

(Professional Engineer)

Sample B

I had better get this said before rain becomes a utility that they can plan and distribute. By "they" I mean the people who cannot understand that rain is a festival, who do not appreciate its gratuity, who think that what has no price has no value, that what cannot be sold is not real, so that the only way to make something actual is to place it on the market. The time will come when they will sell you even the rain. At the moment it is still free, and I am in it. I celebrate its gratuity and its meaninglessness.

The rain I am in is not like the rain of cities. It fills the woods with an immense and confused sound. It covers the flat roof of the cabin and its porch with insistent and controlled rhythms. Wonderful, because it reminds me again and again that the whole world runs by rhythms I have not yet learned to recognize, rhythms that are not those of the technical mind.

I came up here from the monastery last night, sloshing through the corn fields, said Vespers, and lit the Coleman. The night became very dark. The rain surrounded the whole cabin with its enormous virginal myth, a whole world of meaning, of secrecy, of silence, of rumor. Think of it, all that speech pouring down, selling nothing, judging nobody, drenching the thick mulch of dead leaves, soaking the trees, filling the gullies and crannies of the wood with water, washing out the places where men have stripped the hillside. What a thing it is to sit absolutely alone, in the forest, at night, cherished by this wonderful, unintelligible, perfectly innocent speech, the most comforting speech in the world, the talk that rain makes by itself all over the ridges, and the talk of the watercourses everywhere in the hollows.

Nobody started it, nobody is going to stop it. It will talk as long as it wants. As long as it talks I am going to listen.

But I am also going to sleep. Because here in this wilderness I have learned how to sleep again. For here I am not alien. The trees I know, the night I know, the rain I know. I close my eyes and instantly sink into the whole rainy world of which I am a part, and the world goes on with me in it, for I am not alien to it.

Thomas Merton: Raids on the Unspeakable, 1965

Task: Read the pieces carefully and then, in your groups, try to reach consensus on the following questions:

1. What are the main differences between the two types of writing? Help your recorder prepare a presentation describing the differences between Rockwood's writing and Merton's writing.
2. Create a metaphor, simile, or analogy that best sums up your feelings about the most important difference between Rockwood's and Merton's writing. "Rockwood's writing is like . . . , but Merton's writing is like"
3. Explain why your metaphors are apt. How do your metaphors help clarify or illuminate the differences between the two types of writing?

Total time: 20 minutes unless groups finish sooner.

CONTINUUM OF ESSAY TYPES: CLOSED TO OPEN FORMS

CLOSED FORMS		OPEN FORMS	
<p>Top-down thesis-based prose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis is explicitly stated in introduction • All parts of essay are clearly linked to thesis • Body paragraphs develop thesis • Writer creates unified and coherent paragraphs with strong transitions • Writer often forecasts structure 	<p>Delayed thesis prose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis appears near end • Text unfolds toward point • Reader follows writer's thinking process while held in suspense 	<p>Thesis-seeking prose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay is organized around a question rather than a thesis • Essay explores the problem or question • Many ways of looking at problem are expressed • Writer often tells stories to reveal problem's complexity • Essay is often in first person with the writer as actor • Writer may or may not arrive at a thesis 	<p>Narrative-base prose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writer often uses literary techniques such as dialog, sensory details, and imagery • Essay is often organized chronologically or has narrative elements • Writer often violates rules of closed-form prose • Essay is often reflective, personal • Ideas often resist summary in a single thesis statement • Writer's intention is often to heighten or deepen a problem or to show its human significance • Essays are often classified as "belletristic" or "literary non-fiction" based on artistic use of language

Note: This chart, in slightly different version, appears on page 19 of ABGW4.

WHAT KINDS OF WRITING DO YOU WANT YOUR STUDENTS TO PRODUCE?

The Issue: *To what extent is the professional knowledge-making scholarly discourse in your field a good model for undergraduate writing? To appreciate what is at stake in this question, consider the following quotations:*

From one of the draft reviewers of my book Engaging Ideas:

I'm blanching a little at holding up academic writing as any kind of exemplar—what with its jargon, excessive reliance on the passive voice, excessive qualification of conclusions, nonstylized redundancy. The last thing I want to teach my students is how to write a “scholarly” article.

From a recent posting from an e-mail listserv for writing program administrators:

Ed's comment [about freshman English courses valuing personal experience writing] reminds me of an ongoing conversation I've been having with a close friend who teaches anatomy in a grad program in physical therapy. She conscientiously tries to teach her students to write within the discourse of science, and she is always amazed at how hard a time she has getting her students to shift to a scientific "voice." She thinks that undergraduate composition courses put too much emphasis on having students develop a personal voice, in which their writing becomes dependent on first-person pronouns, personal feelings and reactions, etc., and not enough emphasis on teaching students to understand the different discourse requirements of different situations. In her estimation, what students are most likely to have taken from their first year comp experience is a sort of elevation of and dependency on personal writing. When do students ever learn to write academic prose?, she asks.

From Anne Stevenson's biography of Sylvia Plath, Bitter Fame: A Life of Sylvia Plath:

Sylvia began work on her honors thesis, a study of the double in Dostoevsky, shortly after she returned to Smith in September. "The Magic Mirror"—appropriately titled—is a detached, competent study of the crisis of identity in nineteenth-century romantic fiction, which in many ways anticipated the schizoid diagnoses of twentieth-century psychoanalysis. Unfortunately, Sylvia adopted for her thesis the wooden, academic style approved by her supervisor, and no one would guess from reading it that the author of this well-mannered, well-researched academic paper had invested the least bit of emotional capital in it. The logic is impeccable, the notes impressive, the writing studious. (54)

Discussion Questions

Many English teachers admit to a “love/hate” relationship with closed-form, problem-thesis prose.

- What are your personal feelings about the kind of closed-form, thesis-governed prose often valorized in academic or workplace writing?
- If you teach courses for majors, to what extent do you want them to write in your discipline's academic, scholarly discourse? To what extent do you want them to write in other styles and forms, including more personal writing?
- For your first year composition courses, how would you describe the “good writing” you want from your students?
- How does the distinction between closed-form and open-form prose, as explained in *ABGW4*, help you negotiate competing ways to define “excellent writing” in classroom discussions?

SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR TEACHING ACADEMIC WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES

- 1. Take an inventory of course goals (often stated in syllabus as learning outcomes)**
 - subject matter goals--essential concepts and knowledge
 - critical thinking goals—disciplinary processes of inquiry, critical reading, analysis, and argument
 - other goals set by the professor or connected to departmental or general-education/core outcomes

- 2. Design critical thinking problems connected to your course goals.**
 - Problems should require students to use course knowledge while helping them learn disciplinary ways of thinking, analyzing, and arguing
 - Problems should engage student interest and promote inquiry
 - Highest level of critical thinking typically comes from “messy,” “ill-structured,” or open-ended problems with no algorithmically attained “right answer”—problems that lead to a claim with supporting arguments.

- 3. Develop a repertoire of ways to give critical thinking problems to students**
 - as thought provokers for exploratory writing (one-page “thinking pieces,” in-class freewrites; journal entries; other kinds of informal, non-graded writing)
 - as short (2-3 page) assignments or very short (one-paragraph) microtheme assignments.
 - as longer, formal writing assignments or as options for research paper topics
 - as tasks for small-group problem solving
 - as opening questions for a whole-class discussion
 - as questions for in-class debates
 - as essay exam questions or practice exam questions

- 4. Think of writing assignments as a crucial part of course design**
 - “Reverse engineer” your course by designing the final assignment first (principle of “backward design”)
 - Create earlier assignments that develop the skills needed for the final assignment
 - Consider breaking longer assignments into stages
 - Consider adding informal non-graded writing to help students explore ideas and promote learning

- 5. When assigning formal writing, treat writing as a process**
 - Create a rhetorical context for assignments giving students a sense of audience, purpose, and genre (Give students a “RAFT”—see the next page of this handout)
 - Emphasize exploration, reflective research, good talking, multiple perspectives
 - Encourage imperfect first drafts
 - Stress substantial revision reflecting increased complexity and elaboration of thought and increased awareness of readers’ needs
 - Where possible, allow rewrites; write comments that encourage revision and that emphasize the higher order concerns of ideas, thought content, organization, and development
 - Consider instituting peer review workshops
 - Encourage the value of a writing center for all writers

- 6. Develop clear scoring criteria and give them to students in advance**
 - simple numerical or +/check/- scales for exploratory writing
 - grading rubrics or scoring guides for formal writing

ASSIGNING WRITING: GIVE YOUR STUDENTS A “RAFT” ... AND A “TIP”



R ole (or purpose) A udience F ormat (or genre) T ask	T ask as I ntriguing P roblem
--	--

Role (or Purpose):

- What is writer’s purpose for writing (inform? Persuade?)
- What impact is the piece supposed to have on the audience (change the audience’s view of something? Teach the audience something?)

Audience:

- How much does this audience already know or care about the subject?
- What alternative views must be examined?
- What constitutes old information and new information for this audience?
- Helps students learn to write effective titles and introductions

Format (or Genre):

- What is the document supposed to look like (length, font, margins, spacing, documentation style)?
- Helps students learn concept of genre (scholarly article, experimental report, op-ed piece, proposal)
- Helps students see format and style as features of genres rather than quirks of individual teachers.

Task as a Problem:

- Models the thinking processes of experienced academic writers
- Leads to greater transference of writing skills from discipline to discipline
- Teaches disciplinary thinking—requires high level of critical thought
- Helps students understand the problem-thesis structure of academic introductions

FEATURES OF AN EFFECTIVE ASSIGNMENT HANDOUT

An effective assignment handout should include the following:

Describe the writing task: Explain what you want students to do in the paper. In most kinds of academic prose, writers address an unresolved or controversial problem or other kind of question that interests the reader. The assignment often describes the problem or question-at-issue or asks the student to formulate his or her own problem or question. Sometimes the task is given as thesis to support or attack, or the instructor might provide other specific instructions such as summarize and critique an article, write an analysis of a text, or write a technical report on an experiment.

Specify a rhetorical context for the task by describing the writer's role, the audience, and the format or genre:

- **Role and audience** The student's paper should bring something new, surprising, interesting, challenging, or useful to a specified audience. It is best to identify that audience in the assignment. (The instructor can then role play being that audience.) Typical audiences might be "students confused about X because they missed last week's classes," "newspaper readers undecided about issue X and considering alternative views," or "participants in an undergraduate research conference interested in your analysis of X." Also identify the writer's role or purpose such as to inform, to explain, to critique, to analyze, or to persuade. Specifying a role and an audience creates a real world exigency for writing. When students think of their teacher as the audience, they are placed in the awkward position of addressing a person who knows more about the topic than they do and who has no reason to read the paper other than to grade it.
- **Format and genre** Specify expected length, manuscript form, margins, spacing, and similar details. Wherever possible, connect these requirements to real-world genres such as an experimental report, scholarly article or conference paper, op-ed piece, memo, proposal, white paper, and so forth. Students need to learn the constraints and reader expectations associated with different genres.

Specify expectations about process to be followed: Specify a time schedule for completion of first drafts, peer review workshops, revisions, and final drafts. Consider asking students to save all drafts and submit these in a folder along with the final draft. Also consider asking students to include an "acknowledgements page," in which they thank persons who discussed the topic with them or responded to drafts. (These requirements can discourage plagiarism and encourage students to treat writing as a process.)

Explain criteria for evaluation: Explain how the final product will be graded. How much weight will be given to ideas? To organization and development? To sentence style and readability? To grammatical correctness? To manuscript form and appearance? Ideally, provide a rubric or scoring guide for the assignment.

Consider explaining the purpose of the assignment: Often students appreciate why you have designed the assignment in a certain way. What concepts or skills is the assignment trying to teach? How does the assignment connect to overall learning goals for the course?

Questions for Peer-Reviewing an Assignment Handout

1. Is the assignment clear? How might a student misread the assignment and do something not anticipated?
2. Does the assignment specify an audience and a role for the writer (that is, a purpose for writing to this audience)?
3. Are my grading criteria clear? Have I adequately explained them to students?
4. If you were a student, would you find the assignment interesting and challenging?
5. If you were a student, how difficult would this assignment be? How long do you think it would take?
6. To what extent does this assignment stimulate critical thinking? Does it cause students to wrestle with key concepts or key thinking skills in the course?
7. If the assignment is quite difficult, could it be preceded by a simpler "skill-building assignment" that would serve as scaffolding?
8. Is the purpose of the assignment clear? Does it seem to tie into my course goals? Would it seem like busy work to some students?
9. Are the mechanics of the assignment clear (due dates, expected length, single versus double spacing, typed versus handwritten, manuscript form, etc.?)
10. Is the process students should go through as explicit as possible?
11. Should I build any checkpoints built into the assignment to verify that students are on track? (e.g., submission of a thesis, title, and introduction? Mandatory conference? Annotated bibliography?)

EXAMPLE OF A FORMAL ASSIGNMENT HANDOUT FROM A FIRST-YEAR HISTORY COURSE

Freshman Seminar on History of Latin America: (*Dr. Marc McLeod, Seattle University*)

Paper Assignment #1

One of the most prominent topics in the historiography of colonial Latin America has been the nature of the encounter between Amerindians and Europeans beginning in 1492. According to a recent review essay by historian Steve J. Stern, one of the three main paradigms or frameworks for interpreting the conquest has been that of the conquest as an “overwhelming avalanche of destruction,” characterized by the military defeat and demographic collapse of indigenous populations, the brutal treatment and ruthless economic exploitation of surviving natives by rapacious conquistadors, and the forced disappearance of pre-Columbian cultural, political, and social ways. Based on your reading of Inga Clendinnen, *Ambivalent Conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatán, 1517-1570*, would you agree with this view of the conquest as one of extreme destruction and trauma? If so, why? If not, what is the best way to describe the nature of the encounter between Spaniards and Amerindians in colonial Latin America?

Using Clendinnen, *Ambivalent Conquests*, as well as the other readings, lectures, and discussions we have had in this course, write a **4-6 page (typed, double-spaced, stapled) essay** answering the above question. The assignment is due **October 10**. Assume that you are writing an academic paper for an undergraduate conference on Latin America. Also assume that your audience has NOT read this assignment and will attend your conference session because your title hooked their interest. Your introduction should explain the problem-at-issue before presenting your thesis. Because this is an academic paper in history, follow the manuscript form of the *Chicago Manual of Style* and Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. I will grade your paper using the attached scoring rubric.

Discussion Questions:

1. The professor uses the RAFT and TIP guidelines to create a rhetorical context for this assignment. To what extent would you as a student find this context valuable? Why or why not?
2. In designing assignments instructors often wrestle with the dilemma of allowing students to choose their own topics versus giving everyone in the class the same assignment. For this course, the professor assigned three 4-6 page papers on assigned problems rather than giving students a choice of topics. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this strategy?

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR JOHN BEAN'S FRESHMAN SEMINAR ON SCIENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY

(From the course syllabus)

3. LEARNING GOALS FOR THE SEMINAR

By the end of the course, each of you should be able to meet the following goals:

Goals related to Science and Public Policy

- Demonstrate an informed citizen's knowledge of the scientific method.
- Demonstrate an informed citizen's understanding of alternative viewpoints on public policy issues connected to science, analyze how scientific research is used on different sides of an issue, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different viewpoints based on criteria that you can articulate.
- Demonstrate an informed citizen's understanding of "risk" and its connection to public policy issues.
- Read peer-reviewed scientific articles from an informed citizen's perspective, recognizing that one doesn't need to understand all of an article's technical details to grasp its basic argument and significance.
- Conduct library and internet research on a public policy issue related to science and use your research to participate in a classroom debate and to write a persuasive civic argument supporting your position.
- Write a technical paper reporting the results of your own original scientific investigation.

Goals related to rhetoric/composition

- Read texts "rhetorically" by summarizing their arguments, understanding their writers' rhetorical contexts, analyzing their authors' angle of vision and rhetorical strategies, and joining their conversations.
- Write effective closed-form prose that supports a claim in response to a significant question.
- Adapt content, form, and style to different audiences, purposes, and genres
- Revise and edit drafts using the revising, peer-critiquing, and "reader expectation" strategies explained in ABGW4, Chapter 17 ("Writing as a Problem-Solving Process") and Chapter 18 ("Composing and Revising Closed Form Prose").
- Conduct purposeful and effective academic research by (1) using Seattle University's on-line catalog, licensed databases, and appropriate web search engines; (2) evaluating all retrieved sources and integrating them ethically into your own arguments; (3) documenting your sources using the American Psychological Association (APA) system; and (4) understanding and avoiding plagiarism.

Goals related to the Core Curriculum

- Understand Seattle University's outcome goals for its students, the role of the Core Curriculum and your eventual major in helping you achieve these goals, and the general structure and purpose of the Core.

[NOTE FOR UNM: These course goals are very similar in spirit and kind to those for the UNM program stated on pp. 9 and 10 of "UNM First-Year Writing Program"]

SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENT FOR UNIT TWO: GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

- Tuesday, Oct. 4** PREPARATION FOR CLASS: Read the first half of ABGW Ch 6, pp. 117-130; read Jonathan Rauch “Will Frankenfood Save the Planet” (course pack, 1-6) and Lisa Turner “Playing with Our Food” (course pack 7-9). **Thinking Piece:** *[Before you begin, number each of the paragraphs in Rauch’s article.] I’ve provided “Does/Says Statements” for paragraphs 1-17 of Rauch’s article. For this thinking piece, write does/says statements for the rest of Rauch’s article.* IN CLASS Discussion of Rauch and Turner; discussion of close reading and summary writing. **MAKE WRITING CENTER APPOINTMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**
- Thursday, Oct. 6** PREPARATION FOR CLASS: Write a 200-250 word summary of Rauch’s article following the model on ABGW 129-130. This summary will be the first draft for part of your summary/strong response essay. Then read the rest of Chapter 6 (excluding readings), pp. 131-144 and 162-165 IN CLASS: Discussion of summary writing; introduction to strong response
- Friday, Oct. 7** PREPARATION FOR CLASS: Read the remaining four articles in our packet on GM0’s (pp. 10-40) **Thinking piece:** *Write a one-page, single-spaced freewrite in which you explore this question: “To what extent are you convinced by Rauch’s argument that Frankenfoods can save the world? Explore your current thinking about GMOs, trying to figure out where you stand.* IN CLASS Discussion of GMOs
- Tuesday, Oct. 11** PREPARATION FOR CLASS: To help you develop skills at producing strong closed-form prose and at incorporating sources into your own prose, read ABGW Chapter 18, Lessons 1, 3, and 8 (pp. 527-531, 535-542, and 562-567) and Chapter 22, Skill 6 (pp. 643-658); then write microtheme #2. **Microtheme 2 due by start of class.** IN CLASS: Discussion of composition strategies for academic writing using sources
- Thursday, Oct. 13** PREPARATION FOR CLASS: Draft the “strong response” portion of your summary/strong response essay and bring it to class. This draft should include one section that analyzes Rauch’s rhetorical strategies for persuading his audience to value GMOs and a second (and longer) section in which you set forth your own current thinking on GMOs in light of Rauch’s argument and our other readings. IN CLASS: workshoping of your drafts.
- Friday, Oct. 14** PREPARATION FOR CLASS: Read ABGW Chapter 19, Lesson 7, pp. 556-562 on the “old/new contract” **BRING A COMPLETE DRAFT OF YOUR SUMMARY/STRONG RESPONSE TO CLASS.** IN CLASS: **Quiz on old/new contract followed by Peer Review workshop**
- Tuesday, Oct. 18** PREPARATION FOR CLASS: Revise your summary/strong response essay; make sure that you have an outside reviewer if you didn’t use the Writing Center and write an acknowledgements/reflection page to accompany your essay. In preparation for the next unit, also read ABGW Chapter 20 “An Introduction to Research” pp. 601-606 and Skills 2 and 3, pp. 611-624. **SUMMARY/STRONG RESPONSE PAPER DUE BY START OF CLASS** IN CLASS: Introduction to class debates; introduction to library, database, and web research; introduction to the concept of “risk”

MAJOR ASSIGNMENT FOR GMO UNIT

Your task: The question you will address for this assignment is this: “What should be our attitude toward GMO agriculture?” Specifically, you are asked to summarize Jonathan Rauch’s article in the Atlantic and then to write your own strong response to Rauch, drawing on your own experiences and critical thinking as well as the views of at least two other writers in our reading packet on GMOs. The details of the assignment are explained in ABGW4, Chapter 6. See particularly p. 122 (“Writing Project”) and p. 132 (you are to write a “blended assignment” that includes both a rhetorical analysis of Rauch’s article and your own views on GMO agriculture).

Genre and audience: Your paper should be a closed-form academic piece aimed at the same audience that Rauch addresses in his Atlantic article (an educated popular audience interested in public affairs). Assume that your readers have read Rauch’s article (your summary helps them recall the argument) and that they are interested in your analysis and critique of Rauch’s views. Use APA document style.

Purpose: This assignment gives you practice at joining an important public discussion in which you must bring different points of view into conversation with each other along with your own ideas. It teaches you the skills of summary, paraphrase, and documentation essential to all kind of college-level writing. It also helps you become a “strong reader” of texts: You will need to read the texts in our GMO coursepack rhetorically--both with and against the grain—and bring your own critical thinking to bear on them. Finally, you will begin learning the conventions of APA documentation style.

Criteria for grading: I will grade your essays according to the provided rubric.

GRADING RUBRIC: SUMMARY/STRONG RESPONSE (RAUCH ARTICLE)

Title		5	4	3	2	1	0
Academic title forecasts content		Has title, but doesn't accurately forecast content			Either has no title or a course-based title ("Summary/ Response")		
Introduction							
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3 2 1 0
Hooks readers interest; provides background and context; states question that Rauch and rest of paper will address		Provides some background and context, but less clearly and effectively than an 8+ paper; may assume reader already knows the assignment; question is fuzzy			Introduction lacks focus; doesn't try to hook reader or provide context; doesn't identify the question at issue		
Summary of Rauch's article							
20	18	16	14	12	10	8	6 4 2 0
Provides concise condensation of Rauch's argument; well balanced, accurate, clear, and complete; good use of attributive tags and short quotations; identifies original source; no wasted words		Shows that writer understands the article but not as helpful to new reader as a 16+; may omit or misrepresent key ideas; may be wordy or unclear in places; may summarize sequence of topics rather than summarize argument; may be weak in attribution			May be too unclear or inaccurate to help new reader understand the article; may fail to use attributive tags so that reader can't distinguish article from writer's own ideas		
Rhetorical analysis							
20	18	16	14	12	10	8	6 4 2 0
Uses rhetorical principles from AGBW (Ch 4 and 6) to analyze Rauch's angle of vision and identify and critique his rhetorical strategies for making the argument persuasive		Shows general understanding of rhetorical principles and applies them to Rauch but with less insight, clarity, and development than a 16+			Doesn't clearly apply principles of rhetorical analysis to Rauch's argument; too fuzzy, unclear, or undeveloped to be effective for readers		
Writer's own views on GMOs in conversation with Rauch and other writers in coursepack							
40	36	32	28	24	20	16	12 8 4 0
Shows engaged response to Rauch's ideas; draws on insights from other articles in packet (cites at least two sources other than Rauch); shows strong wrestling with disagreements among authors; surprises reader with points and details; high level of critical thinking		Shows engaged response to Rauch but is not as clear, well-developed, complex, or surprising as a 32+; shows less wrestling with questions and ideas; may not use required sources as effectively; may tend toward a surpriseless "good points" and "bad points" catalogue			Ideas may be either very thin or unclear; may not include required sources; may be a series of opinions ("I agree with this; I disagree with that") rather than arguments; inadequate wallowing in complexity		
Closed-form organization							
20	18	16	14	12	10	8	6 4 2 0
Has clear thesis statement that summarizes writer's strong response; follows reader expectation theory: points-first structure; good transitions; old/new contract; unity and coherence		Has thesis statement but may be more fuzzy or incomplete than in a 16+; may cause some reader confusion about structure; generally follows reader expectation theory but may fail in places to have clear transitions, use point-first structure, or follow old/new contract			Thesis may be missing or very unclear or fuzzy; confusing structure; may frequently fail to follow points-first structure, use transitions, or follow old/new contract; lacks unity and coherence		
Clarity, gracefulness, ease of reading							
20	18	16	14	12	10	8	6 4 2 0
Clear, grammatical sentences; clear pronoun reference; fluent sentence structure; prose is concise, graceful, easy to read; reader can hear writer's voice		Occasionally unclear sentences or confusing pronoun reference; prose may be occasionally wordy or convoluted			Frequent patches of unclear sentences; sentence structure may be non-grammatical; reader often gets lost at the sentence level		
Manuscript form							
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3 2 1 0
Follows APA manuscript form; uses APA parenthetical citation for page numbers; has "References" page		Has some features of APA form but omits others			Makes no effort to follow APA form		

Deductions for rule-based errors in grammar punctuation, usage, or spelling
 POSITIVE ETHOS ANNOYING NOISE ERRORS DESTROY ETHOS
 +5 0 -5 -8 -10 -12 -15 -20 -25

ASSIGNMENT FOR MICROTHEME #2

Purpose of this assignment: This microtheme will help you develop organizational skills useful for research writing in any discipline. Specifically, this microtheme will help you learn how:

- To write a closed-form paragraph headed by a topic sentence
- To support the topic sentence with research data selected and shaped by your own critical thinking
- To use the “parallel subparts” organizational strategy—a powerful, frequently encountered move
- To incorporate research sources into your own argument using summary, paraphrase, and quotation
- To cite and document your sources according to APA style.

Task: Using research evidence from Altieri’s article, show your audience this scientist’s environmental reasons for opposing GMOs. Your microtheme should be one paragraph long (imagine this paragraph as part of a longer paper) and should use the “division-into-parallel-parts move (ABGW, pp. 537-539). Begin your paragraph with the following topic sentence:

In contrast to supporters of biotechnology, Miguel A. Altieri (2000), a professor of agroecology at the University of California, argues that genetic engineering threatens to create an “environmental time bomb” (p. 126). Specifically, Altieri identifies [specify number] long-term threats to the environment. First . . .

Finish this paragraph based on the section called “An Environmental Time Bomb” in Altieri’s *Foreign Policy* article, pp. 126-127. Use the strategies of summary, paraphrase, and quotation explained in ABGW, pp. 617-631. For transitions between parallel parts, use “first,” “second,” “third,” etc. or “first,” “another,” “still another,” and “finally.”

Audience and Genre: This is an academic paper aimed at an educated audience that is undecided on the issue of GMO’s in agriculture. The specific purpose of this paragraph is informative—explain Alteri’s views on long-term threats to the environment. However, if you imagined this paragraph in your summary/strong response paper, its larger purpose would be to show a view of GMOs different from Rauch’s.

GRADING RUBRIC FOR MICROTHEME #2

Structural cues and transitions: Has forecasting sentence; marks transitions between parallel parts with transitions (first, second, third, etc.)

STRONG				SOME PROBLEMS				INEFFECTIVE			
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	

Point sentences for each parallel part: Opening sentence of each parallel part serves as a point sentence; succinctly summarizes one environmental threat posed by biotech agriculture; accurately summarizes Altieri’s argument for that point; point clearly connected to topic sentence of paragraph

STRONG				SOME PROBLEMS				INEFFECTIVE			
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	

Development sentences for each parallel part: subsequent sentences in each part develop the point sentence; points are adequately fleshed out and developed

STRONG				SOME PROBLEMS				INEFFECTIVE			
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	

Overall clarity and grace of writing: paragraph is clear and easy to read; connections between sentences are clear; no grammatical tangles; absence of vague, fuzzy, or wordy language

STRONG				SOME PROBLEMS				INEFFECTIVE			
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	

Editing and mechanics: no errors in spelling, punctuation, usage, or grammar

STRONG				SOME PROBLEMS				INEFFECTIVE			
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	

Skillful incorporation of source into own argument: Carries argument in own voice; effective use of quotation (quotes rarely and only for an appropriate purpose or effect); effective attributive tags; effective parenthetical citation

STRONG				SOME PROBLEMS				INEFFECTIVE			
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	

Peer Review Guide for Critiquing Rauch Summaries

Read the summary criteria on page 129 of the text. Then read your classmates' summaries carefully and prepare to give feedback to the writer:

--Note any confusing or unclear spots

--Note any problems connected to the following:

- The summary should be all one paragraph between 200 and 250 words long
- The first sentence of the summary should give an overview nutshell thesis for Rauch's whole article (See first sentence examples of my summary of Turner and of the text's summary of the tattoo article, ABGW4, p. 129)
- The first sentence should also identify the author, title, and source of the article
- The summary should contain regular attributive tags
- The summary should include the main ideas in the article including
 - Rauch's concern for world hunger as well as the environment
 - The chief benefits that Rauch points to and develops
 - Rauch's analysis of the factors preventing these benefits from being achieved
 - Rauch's desire to change environmentalists view about biotech
- The summary should be in the writer's own words; any direct quotes from Rauch must be in quotation marks with a parenthetical citation
- There should be a "References" at the end citing the bibliographic info about the article in APA form

--Note wordy passages that use too many words per idea.

--Note where the writer is using a "topics summary" rather than an "argument summary." The writer needs to eliminate the "topics" sentences and replace with "argument" sentences:

Topics summary: *He talks about no-till farming and then goes on to elaborate on the issue of world population. After that he then talks about the many benefits of biotech.* (What does he say about no-till farming? What does he say about world population? What are the benefits of biotech?)

Argument summary: *Rauch argues that no-till farming reduces erosion and improves water quality. He believes that biotech agriculture is needed to feed a world population that is expected to increase by 40 percent in the next half century. He also identifies several benefits of biotech agriculture such as [specific points]*

Peer Review Guide for Peer Critiquing Summary/Strong Response Essays on Rauch

Instructions: Working in pairs, write out your joint response to the following prompts. Sign your names to your written peer review. I'll ask writers to turn in your written responses with their final papers. Writers will comment on the helpfulness of your peer review in their reflections about their writing process.

Check for required parts: After a one-time reading can you easily locate the following parts? If not, note problem areas.

- Introduction that poses a question
- Summary of Rauch
- Thesis statement
- Rhetorical analysis of Rauch
- Strong response to Rauch's ideas about biotech agriculture?

Check for clarity: Note with wavy lines in the margin any passages that seem unclear, garbled, undeveloped, or otherwise confusing. Trust yourself as a reader. If you said "huh?" or had to reread or otherwise didn't follow the argument, note the passage. (I'll be brutal here, so you should be up front about any confusing areas.) Note: writers often confuse readers through violation of the old/new contract.

Check for structure: I'll be using the following portion of the rubric to score structure. Use this rubric to note problem areas in the draft where the writer violates the principles of forecasting/fulfillment, old-before-new, and unity/coherence. Make specific suggestions about where you see structure breaking down and how it could be improved.

Closed-form organization											
20	18	16	14	12	10	8	6	4	2	0	
Has clear thesis statement that summarizes writer's strong response; body of response does what thesis forecasts; follows reader expectation theory: points-first; good transitions; old/new contract; shows unity and coherence			Has thesis statement but may be more fuzzy or incomplete than in a 16+; may cause some reader confusion about structure; generally follows reader expectation theory but may fail in places to have clear transitions, use point-first structure, or follow old/new contract				Thesis may be missing or very unclear or fuzzy; may have very confusing or undeveloped structure; may frequently fail to follow points-first structure, use transitions, or follow old/new contract; lacks unity and coherence				

Make helpful observations about the writer's ideas: I'll be using the following portion of the rubric to score the writer's wrestling with ideas. Use the questions following the rubric to give useful feedback

Writer's own views on GMOs in conversation with Rauch and others

40	36	32	28	24	20	16	12	8	4	0	
Shows engaged response to Rauch's ideas; draws on insights derived from other articles in packet (cites at least three sources other than Rauch); shows strong wrestling with ideas; surprises reader with perceptive points and effective details; high level of critical questioning, thinking, and analysis			Shows engaged response to Rauch but is not as clear, well-developed, complex, or surprising as a 32+; shows less wrestling with questions and ideas; may not use required sources as effectively; may tend toward a surpriseless "good points" and "bad points" catalogue				Ideas may be either very thin or unclear; may not include required sources; may be a series of opinions ("I agree with this; I disagree with that") rather than arguments; may fail to show engagement with ideas; inadequate wallowing in complexity				

1. How do you think I would score the current draft using the above scale?
2. If you rated the draft high, what are the specific places where the writer surprises you with perceptive points and effective details? Where does the writer demonstrate strong wrestling with ideas or a high level of critical analysis. Write out your justification for giving a high score.
3. If you rated the draft in the middle or low, how could the level of engagement be increased? Write out specific suggestions for making the ideas more interesting, surprising, and thought-provoking

Check for fragments and comma splices: If you see places where you suspect the writer has fragments, run-ons, or comma splices, note them. Pay particular attention to misused semicolons (never put a semi-colon where you couldn't also put a period and a capital letter).

Overall comment: Write out two or three things you particularly like about this draft. Then write out two or three specific suggestions on what the writer should work on for revision.

APPENDIX 1:

Using the Brief Writing Exercises from ABGW4, Chapter 4 (“Thinking Rhetorically About How Texts Persuade”) to Teach Rhetorical Reading

MAJOR ASSIGNMENT: WRITE A SUMMARY/STRONG RESPONSE TO AN ASSIGNED READING

- Summarize the text’s argument
- Speak back strongly to the text
 - Analyze the author’s rhetorical context (purpose/audience/genre)
 - Critique the text’s rhetorical strategies
 - Join the text’s conversation

SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES TO TEACH THE RHETORICAL ANALYSIS DIMENSION OF CRITICAL READING

First Activity: Individual and Small Group Task (ABGW4, pp. 82-83)

Background: Suppose that you are a management professor who is regularly asked to write letters of recommendation for former students. One day you receive a letter from a local bank requesting a confidential evaluation of a former student, one Uriah Rudy Riddle (U. R. Riddle), who has applied for a job as a management trainee. The bank wants your assessment of Riddle’s intelligence, aptitude, dependability, and ability to work with people. You haven’t seen U. R. for several years, but you remember him well. Here are the facts and impressions you recall about Riddle:

- Very temperamental student, seemed moody, something of a loner
- Long hair and very sloppy dress—seemed like a misplaced street person; often twitchy and hyperactive
- Absolutely brilliant mind; took lots of liberal arts courses and applied them to business
- Wrote a term paper relating different management styles to modern theories of psychology—the best undergraduate paper you ever received. You gave it an A+ and remember learning a lot from it yourself.
- Had a strong command of language—the paper was very well written
- Good at mathematics; could easily handle all the statistical aspects of the course
- Frequently missed class and once told you that your class was boring
- Didn’t show up for the midterm. When he returned to class later, he said only that he had been out of town. You let him make up the midterm, and he got an A.
- Didn’t participate in a required group project. He said that other students in the group were idiots.
- You thought at the time that Riddle didn’t have a chance of making it in the business world because he had no talent for getting along with people.
- Other professors held similar views of Riddle—brilliant, but rather strange and hard to like.

You are in a dilemma because you want to give Riddle a chance (he’s still young and may have had a personality transformation of some sort), but you also don’t want to damage your own professional reputation by falsifying your true impressions.

Individual task: Working individually for 10 minutes or so, compose a brief letter of recommendation assessing Riddle; use details from the list to support your assessment. Role-play that you have decided to take a gamble with Riddle and give him a chance at this career. Write as strong a recommendation as possible while remaining honest.

Task for group or whole class discussion: Working in small groups or as a whole class, share your letters. Pick out representative examples ranging from the most positive to the least positive and discuss how the letters achieve their different rhetorical effects. If your intent is to support Riddle, to what extent does honesty compel you mention some or all of your negative memories? Is it possible to mention negative items without emphasizing them? How?

Second activity: Whole Class Discussion

Ask the class to develop a list of strategies that they used in the Riddle case to achieve their desired effects. Here are five key strategies that might emerge from the conversation. All these strategies are generalizable to other contexts:

Rhetorical Strategies That Create an “Angle of Vision”

- *Writers can state their meaning or intentions directly.* For example, your letter for U. R. Riddle might state directly, “Riddle would make an excellent bank manager” or “Riddle doesn’t have the personality for being a bank manager.”
- *Writers can select details that support their intended effect and omit those that don’t.* If your intention is to support Riddle, you can include all the positive data about Riddle and omit the negative data (or vice versa if your letter opposes his candidacy). Instead of outright omission of data, you can de-emphasize some details while highlighting others.
- *Writers can choose words that frame the subject in a desired way or that have desired connotations.* For example, if you call Riddle “an independent thinker who doesn’t follow the crowd” you frame him positively within a value system that favors individualism. If you call him an “a loner who thinks egocentrically,” you frame him negatively within a value system that favors consensus and social skills. Also words can have connotations that serve to channel the reader’s response in an intended direction. You thus could call Riddle either “forthright” or “rude” depending on your angle of vision.
- *Writers can use metaphors, similes, or analogies to create an intended effect.* For example, to suggest that Riddle has perhaps outgrown his earlier alienation from classmates, you might call him a “late-bloomer socially.” But if you see him out of place in a bank, you might say that Riddle’s independent spirit would feel “caged in” by the routine of a banker’s life.
- *Writers can vary sentence structure to emphasize or de-emphasize ideas and details.* Details can get emphasized or de-emphasized depending on where they appear in a sentence or paragraph. For example, material gets emphasized if it appears at the end of a long sentence, in a short sentence surrounded by long sentences, or in a main clause rather than a subordinate clause. Consider the difference between saying “Although Riddle had problems relating to other students in my class, he is a brilliant thinker” versus “Although Riddle is a brilliant thinker, he had problems relating to other students in my class.” The first sentence emphasizes his brilliance, the second his poor people skills.

Third Activity: Brief Writing Assignment (ABGW4, pp. 91-92)

Background and readings: This brief writing project will give you practice at analyzing the angle of vision in different texts. This assignment focuses on two passages about nuclear power plants. Read the two passages; then we will describe your writing task.

Passage 1

The first passage is from the Bush administration's National Energy Policy: Reliable, Affordable, and Environmentally Sound Energy for America's Future. The document was written by an energy task force chaired by Vice-President Dick Cheney. This passage is an overview paragraph on nuclear power from the opening chapter of the document; the last sentence of the passage is from a later section on recommendations for increasing energy supplies:

Nuclear power plants serve millions of American homes and businesses, have a dependable record for safety and efficiency, and discharge no greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. As noted earlier, these facilities currently generate 20 percent of all electricity in America, and more than 40 percent of electricity generated in 10 states in the Northeast, South, and Midwest. Other nations, such as Japan and France, generate a much higher percentage of their electricity from nuclear power. Yet the number of nuclear plants in America is actually projected to decline in coming years, as old plants close and none are built to replace them. . . . [Later in the text the Cheney document makes the following recommendation] Provide for the safe expansion of nuclear energy by establishing a national repository for nuclear waste, and by streamlining licensing of nuclear power plants.

Passage 2

The second passage is from an op-ed piece by columnist Marianne Means published on April 12, 2001, by Hearst Newspapers. It was entitled "Bush, Cheney Will Face Wall of Opposition If They Try to Resurrect Nuclear Power."

Washington - Vice President Dick Cheney, head of the presidential task force studying our energy needs, favors building new nuclear power plants - and he's oddly casual about it.

The industry has been moribund in this country since the partial meltdown at Three Mile Island more than two decades ago set off fierce emotional resistance to an unreliable technology capable of accidentally spreading deadly radiation. No new plants have been ordered since then. Only 20 percent of our electricity is generated by nuclear power.

But President Bush has instructed Cheney to look into the prospect of resurrecting and developing nuclear power as a major part of a broad new energy policy. Cheney argues that modern, improved reactors operate safely, economically and efficiently. "It's one of the safest industries around," he says unequivocally.

There remains, however, a little problem of how to dispose of the plants' radioactive waste. Cheney concedes that issue is still unsolved. "If we're going to go forward with nuclear power, we need to find a way to resolve it," he said Sunday in an NBC "Meet The Press" interview.

No state wants to be the repository of the more than 40,000 tons of high-level nuclear waste currently accumulating at 103 commercial reactor sites around the country. This spent fuel is so deadly it can remain a potential threat to public health and safety for thousands of years. A leak could silently contaminate many miles of groundwater that millions of people depend on.

Your Task: Contrast the differences in angle of vision in these two passages by analyzing how they create their different rhetorical effects. Consider factors such as overt statements of meaning, selection/omission of details, connotations of words and figures of speech, and sentence emphasis. Your goal here is to explain to your readers how these two passages create different impressions of nuclear power.

APPENDIX 2:

Strategies for Assigning and Grading Exploratory Writing and a Rationale for Doing So

Explaining Exploratory Writing to Students

- *Explain your time or length requirements for an exploratory piece.* Some teachers say "15 minutes of freewriting" (or 5 or 10 minutes—whatever works best in your situation). Some specify a length limit: "one full page of single-spaced, typed freewriting using a 12-point font." It is easier to score a thinking piece if you specify a length limit rather than a time limit.
- *Explain that an exploratory writing means "thinking aloud on paper."* Tell students that you won't count off for organization, grammar, spelling, and so forth. The purpose of exploratory writing is to get thoughts down on paper—to use the discipline of freewriting to generate thought.
- *Explain that the best ideas in an exploratory piece often come late in a freewriting session.* At the start of an exploratory piece, writers often spill out the most obvious ideas. The writer's own voice and perspective often begin to emerge after a writer runs out of initial ideas. Therefore it is important to keep going—fill that page!
- *Explain that what you are looking for is engaged thought.* Explain that you will reward the process of thought rather than the product. The key question is not "How well written is this piece?" but "To what extent does this piece reveal engaged thinking about the topic?" Explain that you are looking for evidence of dialogic thinking—seeing issues, finding cruxes and puzzles, confronting inadequate explanations, wading into complexity.

Time saving strategies for scoring exploratory writing

- *Don't read everything your students write.* Just as piano teachers don't listen to their students' practice sessions, you don't need to read all your students' exploratory pieces. Work out a strategy of sampling.
- *Create incentives for doing exploratory writing other than grades.* Weave regular exploratory tasks into the fabric of the course so that students' explorations prime the pump for class discussions and help students generate ideas for formal papers or examinations. Make the tasks interesting and relevant.

Scales for scoring an exploratory piece

Check/plus/minus scale

- *Check:* Indicates the piece meets your expectations for length (or time on task) and for engagement.
- *Plus:* Indicates a strongly engaged, especially high quality exploration.
- *Minus:* Indicates that piece is too short or too superficial

Five-point numerical scale

- *Score of 5:* Meets or exceeds required length limit; strongly engaged, especially high quality exploration.
- *Score of 4:* Meets or exceeds required length limit; meets teacher's expectations for engagement
- *Score of 3:* Strongly engaged, high quality exploration, but too short; fails to meet length or time-on-task requirements. OR Meets required length limits but is too superficial.
- *Score of 2 or 1:* Too short and too superficial.

A General Rationale for Assigning Exploratory Writing

1. Continually presents students with high-order critical thinking problems
 - Allows instructors to create a questioning, problem-posing environment for the course
 - Immerses students in complexity without being threatening
2. Changes the way students approach reading assignments
 - Encourages students to read for meaning and then to "speak back" to texts
 - Promotes reading for high-level synthesis and understanding
 - Promotes an exploratory stance
3. Creates higher levels of class preparation and richer discussions
 - Students come to class ready to discuss readings
 - Students want to find out what others said in their thinking pieces
 - Generates ideas for discussion; during lull moments a student can be asked what he or she wrote in the thinking piece
 - Plants seeds and gives germination time for ideas; ideas first explored in thinking pieces often get developed in formal papers
4. Enjoyable to read
 - Changes the way you read student writing—you focus on ideas and forget your "red pencil" role
 - Can be read quickly--you can skim them, looking for insights, signs of life
 - Can be sampled--each day you need to read only random samples of the thinking pieces
 - Often lively with voice and personality
5. Let's you learn a lot more about each of your students
 - You'll see the characteristic ways their minds work
 - You'll learn about their backgrounds and values
 - You'll have insights into different kinds of problems they might have
6. Let's you assess learning problems on the spot
 - Will amaze you at the many ways students misunderstand what you say in class
 - Gives you a chance to re-explain something based on student confusion
 - Gives you a constant "reading" of student learning-in-progress