

DO FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION COURSES
BENEFIT BUSINESS STUDENTS?

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ABSTRACT

DO FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION COURSES BENEFIT BUSINESS STUDENTS?

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The primary purpose of this thesis is to explore the effectiveness of first-year composition courses for business students. In order to assess whether first-year composition courses address the skills students need for success in academia and as business majors, two business faculty members at each of three universities in the South are interviewed, comparing their desired skills for college students with the skills actually taught at the same universities through interviews conducted with two First-Year English Composition Faculty at each school. This is a complex area of study for English and Business Faculty, and while many faculty interviewed agreed on the importance of some current FYC objectives, including coherent and clear writing, the study identifies other objectives that must be included and/or reprioritized in future composition syllabi for business students. This paper identifies grammar and Internet citation skills as requiring more emphasis among a plethora of perceptions about writing held by those interviewed.

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INTRODUCTION

When I pursued my graduate degree in English having graduated from The Ohio State University with a B.A. in English over 21 years earlier, I was not a complete novice, academically speaking, having received a Masters of Science in Industrial Relations from Loyola University in Chicago in the early 1990's, not to mention the years of consulting in recruiting and training, which would correlate to the skills needed to succeed again as a graduate student. While some of these assumptions were accurate with regard to the intangible qualities maturity offers, such as the ability to persevere, and the vision to see past obstacles, generally, the English Department at the University of Georgia was a world unto itself. Or, so I thought until I became familiar with the English Studies discipline, initially through my studies, and subsequently upon attending conferences and transferring to the University of Dayton to complete my degree.

To say that social and cultural issues seemed to dominate literature and composition discussions in the classroom would be an understatement. I was unprepared for the intelligent, yet somewhat inculcating nature of the concepts we discussed. While issues involving race, gender, and political views challenged me to understand and form new perspectives for reading and writing, it was overwhelming at times to learn the fundamental literary and rhetorical components of English studies, while comprehending the contextual implications of the material. As a Graduate Assistant Apprentice at UGA, a condition for applying for an Assistantship, the First-Year Composition course focused on engaging students in considerations of the aforementioned issues as a means to

develop critical thinking and writing skills. Later, upon transferring to U.D., receiving an Assistantship and teaching two sections of the 101 and the 102 courses, it became clear that the required composition courses at U.D. offered students opportunities to understand their own and others' writing processes in relation their own and others' cultural contexts. Students were able to learn the fundamental writing concepts and begin to think critically about the influences of social and cultural contexts, even though the assignments seemed disjointed from the real-world writing demands I had experienced in business school, in my career outside of academia, and as a parent.

Thus, during the recent economic downturn, I was saddened but not surprised to learn that students were flocking to areas of specialization outside of the Humanities and that the numbers of students majoring in English had dropped significantly over the past decade. Thinking of my own experiences in the English classroom, initially as an undergraduate in love with literature and writing, then as a Graduate Student; gaining knowledge, while stretching to become more aware of how my evolution from a young adult studying English, to a middle-aged woman studying similar concepts shaped the contexts that now influenced my reading and writing, and finally as a teacher; thrilled at the progress my students made, yet at times feeling as if writing scenarios were contrived to elicit critical thinking and writing process skills in line with academic expectations, but distanced from real-world writing purviews, such as deadlines and current events.

In the two years teaching Freshman Composition, not one student has expressed an interest in majoring in English. On the other hand, many of these students have declared their intention to major in business. With this in mind, and because of my experiences in Business and in English, both academically and outside of academia, I

decided to investigate whether or not what we teach in the Freshman-Year Composition course helps business students to write better in academia and in their major area of interest. The results of that research culminated in this Masters Thesis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Aside from concerns related to the rationale for the required first-year writing course, interest typically centers on two broad concepts: content and pedagogy. A review of journal articles written within the past two decades reveals the scope and breadth of these discussions. Patrick Hartwell's 1985 essay, "Grammar, Grammars and the Teaching of Grammar" articulates the complexities involved in teaching grammar. Erica Lindemann's article written in 1993, "Freshman Composition: No Place for Literature" suggests that examining literary language in writing courses has limited value (313), while Gary Tate's discusses the "pleasure and profit" (319) writing students gain from the use of literature in the required composition course. The content and the pedagogical strategies associated with this course have been the continuously scrutinized and revised.

Considering the recent decade-long decline in the numbers of students electing to pursue humanities-based majors (Chace 32), the growth in the area of Rhetoric and Composition specialization, where the required freshman course is commonly administered in line with the best practices in the field within English Departments, continues to provide stability to departments struggling to justify and support a more classical focus on the study of literature. Meanwhile, departments such as business schools, which offer more targeted career specialization, have experienced ongoing growth in the number of undergraduates pursuing majors in business in areas ranging from marketing, to economics, to management, and accounting. Addressing this shift in

his recent essay in *American Scholar*, William Chace, a professor of English and former President of both Wesleyan and Emory, discusses a shift in student philosophy from the mid-sixties to the current decade as a factor contributing to the decline in interest in the humanities. Whereas in the 1960's "research tells us that more than 60 percent of entering freshman reported that nothing was more important than 'developing a meaningful philosophy of life,'" by the start of the millennium, "more than 70 percent of undergraduate students had their eyes trained on financial realities..." (37). Chace points to the swell in costs for a college education "versus the relative earning power of a humanities degree" (37), as causing the philosophical transformation.

As the recent economic downturn in the United States caused increased financial pressure on universities, especially those reliant on federal funds, English departments faced further challenges, including increased enrollment in the FYC course. Serving increased numbers of first-year students while simultaneously addressing increasingly diverse student populations amidst budget cuts has been very challenging for departments experiencing record lows in undergraduate majors. Despite the downturn in students pursuing Humanities-based majors, a Pew foundation study quoted in *The New York Times* indicates that, "Freshman enrollment at the nation's colleges and trade schools set records in 2008, the first year of the recession, and almost three-quarters of the increase came from minority high school graduates..." (Dillon 17). The study cites significant increases in Hispanic students as well as Black and foreign students. Simultaneously, this "customer," or student population, turned to majors viewed as more practical in terms of offering direct paths to employment (17).

One result of expanded interest in professional programs in higher education is that students who major in areas such as business may face greater competition in being admitted to their degree department, as well as amplified competition from other students within their major field, and ultimately from the pool of candidates in the job market when they graduate. These pressures have created increased scrutiny concerning the value of each course in the business student's curriculum; however, very little research has been conducted concerning the value of the required Freshman Composition course to Business students.

Within this framework of increased competition in business and the range of student skill levels that must be addressed by the required composition course on the other, are the considerations from within academia that form a backdrop for the question I ask in this study: Do the First-Year Composition courses provide Business students with the skills they need to write effectively in academia and in business?

Previous studies suggest the importance of communication and writing for business majors, as well as the interest, as noted above, in the content and pedagogical initiatives that comprise the Freshman Year Composition (FYC) course. One study conducted in 1998, addresses specifically the value that juniors and seniors retrospectively assign to their freshman-writing instruction (Judith and Peter Mercier 4). The findings are relevant to my study because students majoring in business, engineering, and technology thought that the instruction they received in the freshman course was more valuable than the writing skills addressed by courses they later took within their disciplines. Conversely, another group of students majoring in the humanities and social sciences differed from their counterparts (in the former group), in that the students in

humanities and the social sciences assigned a greater value to the writing skills learned in courses they took later, within their major disciplines (5). Mercier speculates that perhaps more “discipline-specific writing may, in fact, stimulate students to think more critically, to seek out information, to feel more confident about having something to say” (7). This study has additional relevance to my study because it addresses perceptions among students as to the how a “non-discipline-specific freshman-writing curriculum impacts discipline-specific writing challenges” (Mercier Abstract) This is pertinent because the study suggests that business students benefit from the writing instruction they receive in the FYC courses, even though it is not contextually focused on business.

Negative comments concerning students’ written English from a professional mentoring program undertaken in the Accounting Department at the University of Portsmouth in the U.K., prompted researchers there to study how to help students make fewer grammar errors. The authors designed initiatives to address first-year undergraduate accounting students’ writing deficiencies and found that “students did get better at detecting grammatical flaws [but] the students did not perceive improvement [in their writing abilities] and no improvement was discernable in their essays” (Graham 71). This research indicates that even when students recognize errors in usage, they may lack the skills or the initiative to correct them.

A study by Leah Marcal and William Roberts in the *Journal of Education for Business* was designed to determine the effects of a computer literacy prerequisite on students in a business communications course, but also considers the effects of the FYC course. Marcal and Roberts performed regression analysis of data from business communication students and demonstrates that the “freshman writing prerequisite

improved course performance, whereas the computer literacy prerequisite did not” (255). These findings suggest that students taking related subsequent courses within business departments benefit from the skills learned in the FYC courses.

Another study concerning business students and freshman composition has to do with the apprehension experienced by accounting majors based on grades. The article, published in *Business Communication Quarterly* in 1999, discusses “greater writing apprehension among accounting majors than among non-accounting majors” (Faris, Golin and Lynch 9). Here, the authors consider a prior study related to accounting students’ perception that writing is not a priority in the accounting profession as well as how apprehension about writing may deter students’ motivation to write and instructors’ less positive evaluations of apprehensive students (11). This study points to the idea that students’ fears of writing may contribute to a self-fulfilling prophecy resulting in failure due to instructor assessment of students who demonstrate a lack of initiative. However, as discussed earlier, Mercier found that business students perceived a benefit from taking the FYC courses (5), which suggests that as a group they may have been satisfied with their grades. On the other hand, Mercier does not distinguish between areas of interest in business, (ie., accounting versus marketing) while the Faris, et. al., study differentiates between the experience (and apprehension) of accounting students as compared to other students specializing in various areas of business.

Scholars in a number of studies examine the correlation of writing anxiety and writing performance among students. The study by Faris., et. al., is also interesting because it references a study by Daly and Shamo (1978) in which they reported “that students tend to select majors according to the writing requirements” (11), so that

“students with low writing anxiety select majors with higher writing requirements” (11), while students such as those in accounting do the opposite. While the authors found that other factors, such as “gender, age, and grades” were not related to writing anxiety, they did discover that Accounting majors have higher levels of anxiety about writing than students majoring in other areas of business, such as marketing (15). A subsequent study by Bennett and Rhodes supports the findings of Daly and Shamo as it found that people with high levels of writing anxiety pursue positions with very few writing requirements (Bennett and Rhodes 37). This is relevant because it suggests that students’ tendency to avoid written communication experiences in academia extends to their career decisions after college. Later, Pajares and Johnson found in their study that writing self-confidence was associated with writing apprehension, but that neither of these predicted low writing performance (313). This suggests that even though students may be apprehensive about writing, such as some business students, they are as capable of learning to write well as students with no anxiety.

Additional studies address a range of writing challenges pertaining specifically to business students. Several of these target different pedagogical strategies as supporting improvement in the writing skills of business majors. One study, published in 2002 in *Business Communication Quarterly* suggests using oral presentations to “coax students out of those comfortable academic spaces” (Oswal 71) and to help them develop skills necessary in “differentiating one audience from another” (71). Oswal suggests using oral presentations as a tool to help students understand a rhetorical concept as well as to assist students in overcoming writing anxieties. Another article, written almost two decades ago, urges writing teachers to consider the product as well as the process to “help meet the

needs of those who must communicate successfully in business” (Murphy 87). Both of authors of these studies offer advice that supports the instruction of all beginning composition students, although the articles focus on business students.

Another study offers accolades to business communications teachers for doing a good job to support the development of good writing skills among business students. Referencing an earlier study by Hildebrant in which high-ranking business executives selected business communication as the “first choice” among course options for “business leadership” preparedness, Murphy credits business communications teachers with having “done some memorably good teaching on skills, principles, and process activities for composing effective business messages” (87). This points to the idea that both English and Business departments contribute to the writing instruction students receive.

METHOD

In this thesis, I explore the effectiveness of first-year composition courses for business students. In order to assess whether first-year composition courses address the skills students need for success as business majors, I interviewed two First-Year English Composition Faculty members (or Instructors) at three universities in the South comparing the skills actually taught the with writing skills desired by business faculty members at same universities.

Participants

The Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects (IRB) at the University of Dayton exempted this study based on the fact that the *questions do not represent sensitive topics, and could not damage subject's employability or reputation* as noted in the **IRB Guidelines** under **Exemptions**. The IRB exemption assures participants' well-being, however, to offer further protection, I created pseudonyms for participants and their universities.

I tried to identify three schools that might reveal both the commonalities and variety existent in freshman composition programs as well as the varied goals and expectations of faculty members.

Institution Selection

I chose the three schools based on the differences in size and student population of each. I wanted to have a variety of types of schools since I was not sure if and/or how the FYC programs might be impacted by size and by student diversity. One is a large

state university, with competitive admission criteria. The second school is a small private women's liberal arts college with less selective admission criteria. The third institution is an open-enrollment two-year state college. While they all mandate that students pass the initial First-Year Composition course (in this study referred to as 101), one of the schools offers a business communications course that students may take to fulfill the second semester freshman composition requirement (in this study referred to as 102).

Faculty Selection

Next, I scheduled interviews with English and Business Faculty members at these three universities. Initially, I sought verbal approval from the three department heads. Then I selected the faculty to interview based on recommendations from the departmental chairs of every department participating in the study. In every case, the head of the English Department suggested that I interview a faculty member involved in administering and teaching the First-Year Composition program as well as another faculty member who teaches the courses. The Business Department chairs selected faculty members who are both involved in teaching undergraduates as well as those who have a particular interest in business communications and marketing. While I sought variety in selection of schools for the study, I tried to identify faculty members in comparable positions within the context of their academic areas of interest so that the English teachers interviewed would be able to address the concepts discussed in the interviews. All of the English faculty member are Ph.D.'s in Rhetoric and Composition, except for one person, who has years of experience teaching the FYC courses, and possesses a Masters in English Literature. Each of the Business Department faculty members has a Ph.D. in Business, except for one person who teaches Business

Communications and has a Masters in Business. Also, all of the Business faculty interviewed were identified by the Chairman of their department as having interests in Business Writing, either because they teach communications, or because students must demonstrate competency in writing to perform well in the course they teach.

Interview Questions

The interview questions presented to both English and Business faculty are included in Appendix A. All of the interviews were conducted in the offices of the participants and the discussions lasted from forty minutes to one hour. I tape recorded all of the interviews and wrote down words or phrases I wished to follow-up with another question.

Explanation of Interview Questions

The first area of concentration in the interviews focused on the writing objectives desired by both English Composition departments and Business departments. Next, I explored the skills desired in relation to those that are taught. Additionally, I asked faculty about their perceptions concerning the importance of orally-based rhetorical skills related to the increasing use of technology as well as thoughts related to the value of exploring technology-driven outputs. I asked the interviewees for overall course/departmental goals related to composition skills and whether or not interviewees communicated with one another between departments with regard to writing goals and outcomes. Additionally, I collected copies of mission statements where available, course objectives, curriculum guidelines, and rubrics from participating English departments to further explore how institutional guidelines and goals are to the objectives desired by the business faculty.

Data Collection

Teaching the FYC course in a Graduate Assistantship at a medium-sized Catholic University with fairly competitive academic admission standards, I realized that most of my students had the intention of pursuing some type of academic specialization within areas of interests in fields such as Engineering, Healthcare, Law and Business. No student in either of my 101 or my 102 classes *planned* to major in English, and very few were interested in specializing in the humanities. With this in mind, and also my own academic background consisting of a B.A. in English, and an M.S. in Business, as well as numerous years working outside of academia in human resources and computer training consulting, I began to consider the content of the courses and whether or not the content truly addressed the needs of the students who were required to take it.

I thought about how to best approach the topic of effectiveness for students, and decided against actually interviewing students, thinking that at this early academic stage, they likely would not have the perspective to know whether or not the course would be beneficial to them within their future academic discipline. With this in mind, I decided to look at the institutional and departmental goals for freshman composition as described by English faculty, as well as the writing objectives that Business faculty view as most important for upcoming business students.

Initially, I conducted research to determine what scholarship had previously been conducted addressing the First-Year Composition requirement and the efficacy of the course for students. I also searched for studies that specifically target writing skills and business students.

I initiated the primary research phase of this project by developing my interview questions to discover comparative information between the two disciplines. After reviewing my ideas for questions with my Thesis Advisor, I revised them to incorporate a style of structured, open-ended interview questions so that the interviewees could “direct the conversation to matters they (knew) about and that they (thought were) important” (Rubin 15). When I met with the participants for their interviews, I recorded the interviews and took notes on areas suggesting a new avenue for exploration, as well as ideas requiring clarification and/or elaboration. Faculty members could speak as long as they liked and discuss any aspect of the question posed. Many times, I asked follow-up questions during the interviews, so as to gain additional insight and to understand relevant comments thoroughly. As noted above, I also asked participants for copies of course objectives (English Departments only), curriculum guidelines, and rubrics if available, to further inform the content gained from the interviews.

Next, I focused on the secondary research, which involved completing a Literature Review to provide the theoretical context for the paper. After a brief review of research related to the conception of and subsequent controversy surrounding the required composition course, I concentrated on the types of studies conducted which involve both freshman composition and business concepts and/or students. With both the primary and secondary research completed, I began to analyze the data.

DATA ANALYSIS

I analyzed a variety of information that, when collected, begins to address if and how the freshman composition course benefits business students. After all of the interviews were conducted, I had the tapes from the interviews transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The interviews provide the most useful data. The transcripts illuminate not only the concrete answers to the standardized questions, but also other paralinguistic features, such as laughter or sighs that convey attitudes and perceptions related to the discussions. In a few cases, I followed up with interviewees via email questions. Those interviews are included in Appendix A.

Next, I read the transcripts of all of the interviews to identify commonalities and differences in the objectives identified by the faculty both within departments and between the two different disciplines. This was relatively easy as the discussions with the English faculty generally reinforced the outcomes identified within the context of departmental or institutional guidelines, although variables, such as teaching experience and interests, and student skill levels affect how those goals are approached. Similarly, the conversations with the Business faculty followed comparable themes, and the faculty conveyed generally shared priorities.

After I realized that many of the priorities were shared within like departments, while discrepancies existed in the objectives identified between the faculty of the two different academic fields surveyed, I organized the content of each interview into brief

summaries designed to highlight the key areas of importance to the English faculty and to the Business faculty. These summaries comprise the Findings section of this study.

In the Results section, I identify objectives, perceptions, and attitudes that seem to support or detract from the effectiveness of the First-Year course for business students. This section is followed by a Implications category, in which I offer pedagogical initiatives targeted at improving the effectiveness of the First-Year Composition course for Business students.

Limitations and Variables Affecting This Study

Writing in *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies* in the 1990s, Richard Marius, then a professor of literature and the writing program director at Harvard, predicted the promulgation of freshman composition programs which subsequently resulted in a higher valuation of the position of rhetoric and composition studies within the English Department. Marius's article was published for the second time in 1996, and the professor passed away in 1999. Despite the fact that the article was written almost two decades ago, it provides a sense of the history of composition studies, and successfully foreshadows some of the concepts that have increased importance today. In his discussion, Marius identifies many of the characteristics of the required first-year composition course that have proven to be problematic, some of which, including the qualifications of teachers, and the content of the course, also affect the findings of this study.

Exploring the state of composition studies, Marius contends that English Departments should seek to professionalize the field by offering more tenure track

Composition/Writing positions. Here, Marius points to a variable that affects both *what* (the objectives) is taught in the FYC course and *how* it is taught: the teacher.

Who Teaches Freshman Composition?

Instructors in today's process-oriented freshman writing classes are challenged to provide students with opportunities to explore writing processes and to achieve meaningful goals in terms of composing the required essays. All three English Departments identify specific skills to be taught in the FYC course. While these institutions set a framework for attaining these goals, they tend to leave the implementation, in terms of the building-block instruction and particular writing assignments, largely to the discretion of the teacher. Thus, a variety exists in the execution of the FYC course both within the same department and among schools and writing programs. Evidence of this can be found in the interviews I conducted with the English department faculty in this study, discussed in the Findings section.

"Chiseling Away at the Humanities," an article by Carolyn Segal, recently published in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* references the fact that many universities in the United States began hiring English instructors from other fields. Citing a decrease in graduate enrollment in English during the 1990s exacerbated by increased freshman enrollment, Joseph Harris, then the editor of *College Composition and Communication* comments on a trend in hiring Teaching Assistants outside of the English Department to teach freshman composition, stating, "The connection between English and the teaching of writing is largely a historical accident. It seems to me a reasonable response to include others so long as these teaching fellows are well-trained and well-supervised." (Segal A12). While this trend was not implemented at any of the schools surveyed in this study,

the last decade has seen a rise, as referenced above, in the area of Rhetoric and Composition Specialization within English Departments, with tenured and tenure-track faculty being increasingly influential. This development has bolstered a supply of composition specialists as well as creating increased standardization of skills taught in these courses.

Nonetheless, the training and supervision of Graduate Assistants varies from school to school, as do the areas of specialization, the priorities, and/or the ideologies of the faculty and other instructors who teach the required course. For example, most of the first-year composition instructors I interviewed were full-time faculty members who had earned a Ph.D. in English. Some specialize in Rhetoric and Composition and others in Literature. One teacher I interviewed was a master's level instructor who specializes in Shakespeare.

Thus, a diversely qualified range of professors teaches these courses at the universities studied as well as and nationally. Starting with full professors with concentrations in different genres of literature, to Rhetoric and Composition faculty, to Master's-level instructors with English degrees, to Graduate Teaching Assistants who are students majoring in literature, writing, or education and simultaneously pursuing their degrees; the experience, interests, skill, and fluctuating time constraints of the teacher naturally influence course development and pedagogical initiatives directed at how the objectives are addressed. For example, all of the schools in the survey note the development of correct language skills as a course objective; however, some teachers devote class time to teaching sentence mechanics and others offer resources for students to access outside of class.

Who Takes Freshman Composition?

Due to the changing nature of the student body and the differences in the admissions requirements for the students who apply to various institutions such as the three in this study, a huge disparity of skill levels must be addressed, ranging from the abilities of typical high school graduates, to economically disadvantaged scholarship students, ESL students, former AP students, and older students.

Typically, schools offer some type of remedial writing instruction either within the FYC course, or in a separate required class for students who enter college with very low writing skills. Similarly, and depending on the size of the school, ESL students may participate in the remedial course (as they do at BEU), or there may be a special section of the first semester FYC course designed for these students (as there is at UOG).

Referring to the high percentage of younger first-generation college students in the FYC courses at his Two-Year College, GSSC, Dr. Salinger says, “We do face a challenge in just basic grammar skills sometimes. So we will have to drill on those sometimes in 101... I try to explain to my students it isn’t an artificial standard of correctness, but the goal is correct communication” (3). The Business faculty members at the two schools with lower admissions requirements brought up the decline in skills related to the younger generation of students. For example, Dr. Shelley the Head of the Business Division at GSSC justifies her opinion concerning the necessity for the FYC courses to focus more on clear and concise writing based on the level of preparedness she sees in incoming students. “I mean currently there are no minimum requirements [to be admitted to our college,] other than completing the paperwork on time” (6). Like Dr. Hardy at BEU, she notes that the older students who are returning to school seem to have

much better writing skills than the younger ones who enter right after completing high school.

Dr. Milton at UOG justifies the emphasis on critical thinking and process in the FYC courses by referring to the limitations and strengths of this schools' typical incoming freshman. She explains that learning to think critically is very challenging for the freshman population at UOG given their general lack of challenging life experiences necessitating that students take strong stances on issues. The writing skills of these students differs significantly from scholarship students who may have more taxing life experiences to draw upon but who as first-or second-generation college students, may possess a lessened awareness of standard academic discourse. Former AP students, who missed the threshold for receiving college credit for the FYC course while they were in high school, present a different type of challenge, as they tend to be less enthusiastic about their placement in the FYC course.

FINDINGS

To assist the reader in understanding my analysis of how the goals of each FYC program relate to one another as well as how they compare to the writing goals described by the business department guidelines and faculty members, I list each department's goals at the beginning of each of the three English Department sections, and at the start of each section of the three different Business departments that were surveyed, before discussing the specific interviews. The material I include from each interview is intended to clarify intent with regard to the objectives of the FYC courses offered, as well as to highlight nuances and attitudes related the goals of the FYC courses.

English Department Faculty Interviews at the University of Giants

The Department of English at the largest school surveyed, the University of Giants (UOG) has a website for its FYC program that describes the design, policies and procedures, goals, digital learning environment, grading rubrics, resources, future academic writing options, and finally, award opportunities for FYC students.

Goals for Freshman Composition 101 at UOG

The following concepts are the goals for all English 101* students at UOG as described by the FYC website (First-Year Composition). (*** For the purposes of this study, the number 101 designates the first semester FYC courses.**)

Students will learn to

- write papers in and out of class using processes that include discovering ideas and evidence, organizing that material, and revising, editing, and polishing the finished paper;

- think critically so that they can recognize the difference between opinion and evidence and so they can support an intelligent, challenging thesis;
- address papers to a range of audiences;
- understand the collaborative and social aspects of the writing process and demonstrate an ability to critique the writing of themselves and others;
- develop a sense of voice appropriate to the subject, the writer's purpose, the context, and the reader's expectations;
- understand how genres shape reading and writing and produce writing in several genres;
- follow the conventions of standard edited English and MLA documentation;
- Use electronic environments for drafting, reviewing, revising, editing, and sharing texts;
- Understand and exploit the differences in the rhetorical strategies and in the affordances available for both print and electronic composing processes and texts.

Goals for Freshman Composition 102 at UOG

The following concepts are the goals for all English 102* students at UOG as described by their FYC website (First-Year Composition). (*** For the purposes of this study, the number 102 designates all second semester FYC courses.**)

Students will learn to

- read, appreciate, and interpret fiction, drama, and poetry and write analytically about them;
- understand literary principles and use basic terms important to critical writing and reading;
- write papers in and out of class using processes that include discovering ideas and evidence, organizing that material, and revising, editing, and polishing the finished paper;
- think critically so that they can recognize the difference between opinion and evidence and so they can support an intelligent, challenging thesis, and more specifically, document essays using textual evidence;
- address papers to a range of audiences;
- understand the collaborative and social aspects of the writing process and demonstrate an ability to critique the writing of themselves and others;
- develop a sense of voice appropriate to the subject, the writer's purpose, the context, and the reader's expectations;
- understand how genres shape reading and writing and produce writing in several genres;
- follow the conventions of standard edited English and MLA documentation;
- use electronic environments for drafting, reviewing, revising, editing, and sharing texts;
- understand and exploit the differences in the rhetorical strategies and in the affordances available for both print and electronic composing processes and texts.

According to the website, the 101 and 102 courses share the same objectives with the exception of the incorporation of literary analysis in the 102 course. At UOG, special sections of English 101 and 102 are available for specific student populations, such as English Composition for ESOL Students, and Honors First-Year Composition 102. There is also a Multicultural First-Year Composition 102 that students may elect to take.

If we interpret the list of goals included on the UOG FYC website as a list of priorities, then teaching students about writing as a process is the primary objective at UOG. This is followed closely by the importance of critical thinking skills. At the end of the list, or least in order of priority, are the “conventions of standard edited English” (7) formatting, and using and understanding word processing.

FIRST ENGLISH FACULTY INTERVIEW AT UOG: DR. MILTON

The interview with Dr. Milton, the Associate Director of First-Year Composition at UOG, reinforces the level of standardization of goals inherent in the production of the extensive FYC website. The course goals are universal to all of the 101 and 102 sections; however, teachers at UOG have complete freedom to choose the texts they will use in teaching the 101 course. Dr. Milton reinforces the flexibility involved in teaching, when referring to the selection of texts, she states, “Teachers pretty much get to pick their own. The only requirement is that it is nonfiction” (2). She explains that teachers use materials ranging from magazine articles to advertising and visual images to teach writing. When asked if instructors typically use non-scholarly texts and if they ever use literary works, she states, “We do not use literary works to teach writing” (2). She adds that some teachers do use scholarly works to teach the 101 course and others do not (2).

When questioned about concepts not specifically addressed by the information on the website, the benefits of speculative thinking for composition students, for example, Dr. Milton is not enthusiastic, responding simply, “Well, I guess. I would think that would benefit them” (2). Then, reconsidering, she suggests that critical thinking skills would encompass the idea of speculation.

Dr. Milton reinforces the policies outlined on the website, signaling a dedication to the process of revision and the acceptance of rewritten papers, and clearly envisions these as benefiting students’ writing as well as being practical. “They have many opportunities to rewrite and process a paper just as they will in real life” (4). Conversely, Dr. Milton negates the need for grammar instruction. Emphasizing the grade point average of incoming students, she says the freshman who “are admitted to UOG don’t have a serious problem with grammar” (4). Likewise, Dr. Milton says that oral rhetorical skills are not specifically addressed by the FYC objectives.

SECOND ENGLISH FACULTY INTERVIEW AT UOG: DR. DANTE

I conducted the second follow-up interview in the English Department at UOG via email (Dante Email Interview APPENDIX C). Since Dr. Dante, a Professor of English and the Director of FYC and the Writing Center, was not able to answer the questions until relatively late in my research process, I revised the questions to reflect the implications of the previous interviews.

My first question pertained to whether or not the universally required FYC course ought to have universal goals for the FYC program at all colleges and universities. Dr. Dante begins her answer noting the importance of the WPA Guidelines, which “are the basis for most FYC learning outcomes across the country” (Dante Email Interview

Appendix C). Even though Dr. Dante's interview is the last one I conducted, she is the first person to bring up the Council of Writing Program Administrators. The consistency of the responses I received from the English faculty concerning goals and methods suggest adherence to the outcomes defined by this organization (WPA). Dr. Dante elaborates, "Yes, there should be consistency and there is, I think, but some programs will have goals or Learning Outcomes particular to their particular program, campus, etc." (1). Here Dr. Dante speaks to variables upon which the benefits of the FYC course seem to hinge: the increasingly diverse writing skills shown by students' taking the course, as well the diverse preparation, interests, and qualifications of those who teach it. When I asked Dr. Dante about whether or not she feels that the FYC courses at institutions such as UOG ought to account for the range of skills freshmen students have, she responds in the affirmative, without elaborating.

Finally, I questioned Dr. Dante as to whether or not, in her position as the Director of the FYC program at UOG, she has had communication with faculty in the Business College regarding students' writing goals. She responds:

My most recent communication with the Chair of Economics confirmed that between FYC and their senior project, the students do no significant writing in the College of Business, with the exception of PowerPoint slides. (Dante 2)

Dr. Dante's response conveys a perception that is not supported by the interviews I conducted with the Business faculty at UOG. The College of Business requires a multiple choice assessment test, which includes an English component, for all undergraduates wishing to apply for entrance in their junior year. However, the Marketing Department is

the only department within the Business School that requires that students take English courses and considers grades in courses taken in the English as part of the admissions process for becoming a Marketing major (Twain College of Business).

English Department Faculty Interviews at Big Enough University

The goals for the FYC course at Big Enough University (BEU) are outlined in a department-wide document and are included in the standard language of each instructor's syllabus. While it is not as comprehensive as the website at UOG, the two faculty members interviewed emphasize the importance of adhering to the established curriculum guidelines to ensure ongoing program accreditation. Worth noting is that BEU is a small women's' liberal arts school that has a larger co-ed student population enrolled in online and satellite campus undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education programs.

Goals for Freshman Composition 101 at BEU

The Learning Outcome is a goal established by the University-Wide Assessment Office for all courses fulfilling a writing requirement under the Communications portal of courses. The Course Learning Objectives are the goals set forth by the Liberal Arts Education Committee for all English 101* students at BEU. The Learning Outcomes and the Course Learning Objectives here are included in the sample 101 syllabus in the back of this study as Appendix E (*** For the purposes of this study, the number 101 designates all first semester FYC courses.**)

LE Learning Outcome

1. Compose effective and logical written communication

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate basic grammatical competency
2. Construct written and/or oral arguments and texts

Goals for Freshman Composition 102 at BEU

As noted above, The Learning Outcome is a goal established by the University-wide Assessment Office for all courses fulfilling a writing requirement under the Communications portal of courses. The Course Learning Objectives are the goals set forth by the Liberal Arts Education Committee for all English 102* students at BEU. The Learning Outcomes and the Course Learning Objectives here are included in the sample 102 syllabus in the back of this study as Appendix F (*** For the purposes of this study, the number 102 designates all second semester FYC courses.**)

LE Learning Outcome

1. Compose effective and logical written communication

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate basic grammatical competency
2. Construct written and/or oral arguments and texts
3. Demonstrate the ability to perform in-depth research, analyzing and synthesizing secondary sources

FIRST ENGLISH FACULTY INTERVIEW AT BEU: DR. LEVERTOV

Dr. Levertov is an Associate Professor of English at Big Enough University, and when asked what specific skills are targeted in the FYC courses at BEU, she acknowledges the standardized objectives for both courses by beginning with grammar proficiency. Then, she points to the importance of understanding the writing process in terms of “crafting and argument” (Levertov Personal Interview 1) adding that students must, “use evidence from sources to back up their claims” (1). To emphasize the importance of the primary objectives, including, “organization, development and language” (1), she, like Dr. Milton at UOG, refers early on to the departmental rubrics,

stating, “These are the three areas of assessment ...they have to achieve competency in all of those areas” (1). Although BEU is unique in listing grammar as a top priority, the FYC instructors determine the extent to which grammar is a focus of the course. The two interviews I conducted, suggest a significant variance in how this goal is addressed. This is significant because it suggests that even though an objective may appear important as outlined by departmental guidelines, there are considerable differences in how the goals are addressed, even by instructors at the same institution.

While 101 and 102 instructors do have some flexibility in of how they arrange their syllabus, the courses are fairly standardized with required texts, major writing assignments, and weighting of grades. Dr. Levertov volunteers, “all of the writing is literature-based” (1), with the 102 classes focused on writing about drama and poetry. Even so, the extent to which each instructor dedicates class time to teaching the skills pointed out by Dr. Levertov is highly individualized. Dr. Levertov is the only English faculty member interviewed who includes grammar homework goals for virtually every class she teaches. Sometimes she covers the content in class and other days she focuses on other writing goals.

Interestingly, the second of the two course objectives listed under the Course Learning Objectives, is no longer targeted in the 101 or 102 courses: oral rhetorical skills. “When we redid our curriculum just a couple of years ago, we mandated [a] speech and oral communication class for everyone...so we no longer do that” (1). Dr. Levertov explains that the oral rhetorical course now required for graduation is taught under the purview of the Mass Communications Department. The WPA guidelines do not suggest including oral rhetorical skills in the FYC curriculum, and none of the departments

surveyed include oral presentations in their goals for FYC students. However, a few FYC instructors, such as Dr. Levertov's colleague, Dr. Dickinson, do include oral presentations in their syllabi.

With regard to the use of technology, Dr. Levertov mentions that some FYC instructors do ask students to create PowerPoint presentations to present in class toward the end of the semester, even though oral rhetorical skills "are no longer part of the Learning Objectives listed" (4) for Freshman Composition. Dr. Levertov admits that she is not very skillful in using the other technologies noted in the interview question, such as Facebook and Skype, and therefore does not use them in class at all. (4). As discussed in the Results section, English faculty members were less likely to use technology driven outlets other than word processing and email, than their Business counterparts.

SECOND ENGLISH FACULTY INTERVIEW AT BEU: DR. DICKINSON

The second interview with a faculty member in the English department at BEU was conducted with Dr. Dickinson, an Associate Professor of English and Director of the Writing Center. Dr. Dickinson begins by reinforcing that the goals taught in the FYC courses have been mandated by the "Liberal Ed Committee that we have to use" (Dickinson Personal Interview 1). She further states that the primary goals targeted in 101 "talk about being able to write coherent texts and [that] the 102 course focuses on research writing" (1). Her next point initially diverges from the understanding conveyed by Dr. Levertov regarding the development of oral rhetorical skills in the FYC courses, as Dr. Dickinson adds, "they also do oral presentations" (1). When asked if the oral presentation is an outcome developed to address her own interpretation of the curriculum, Dr. Dickinson clarifies that, "We built in a (flexible) 10% (portion of the weighted final

grade) that gave us (instructors) some wiggle room (with the curriculum) and that is what I always do” (1), she says, referring to the oral component of the creative project she introduces to students within the context of the previously mentioned Liberal Education-mandated curriculum.

When I ask Dr. Dickinson about the value of showing students how less skilled versus successful writers compose, she, like Dr. Levertov, addresses the concept as a natural byproduct of teaching a writing class. She states that it “is facilitated by the fact that we are reading literature” (2). She goes on to explain that class activities may involve looking at how a short story writer approaches his or her writing, as well as looking at student models of writing that are, “good, bad, or indifferent” (2).

Indifference also initially plays a role in Dr. Dickinson’s responses to my questions relating to grammar instruction. When I ask her if in looking at the student models of writing, she will focus on grammar issues and/or sentence mechanics, Dr. Dickinson replies, “To be perfectly honest I assign readings from *The Write Stuff* (a grammar handbook), and then when we are working through samples together, we look at all of those kinds of problems. Do I usually teach a grammar lesson every day? No” (2). She then moves directly to a discussion of the critical thinking concepts paramount to explore in the FYC courses. She states,

All business students, all students, all graduates, need to be able to formulate a clear and compelling argument, summary, or analysis of a complicated situation. They also need to learn basic research methods, like they practice in 102 certainly. (4)

Within the context of this study, Dr. Dickinson is one of the rare English professors who provides support for her own position on grammar instruction by justifying her emphasis on critical thinking, noting benefits to business students, such as, “... they will need to ...write business plans and all those things that would require them to gather evidence, summarize it, [and] marshal it to make it [suit] their own purposes” (4). While she admits that she believes that grammar skills are “important” (5), and that it “undermines your credibility and your ability to articulate when you cannot handle those elements properly, ... you could have proper grammar and still have nothing to say” (5). It is worth noting that while the objectives mandated by all of the English departments in this study include a language goal, none of the teachers interviewed *emphasized* this aspect of the course, and most discussed it only after being questioned about whether or not grammar skills are important. Generally speaking, the English faculty seems to feel that the organizational skills and the higher order thinking skills are the goals that will best support college level writing.

English Department Faculty Interviews at Good Size State University

The FYC Course Objectives at Good Size State University (GSSC) are standard objectives as established by the English Department. Like BEU, departmental policy dictates that instructors include the course objectives in their syllabi for the 101 course. GSSC is a two-year open access institution, meaning that all students who have completed high school and the paperwork for admission will be admitted. Because it is a two-year program, many students are not required to take English 102 as part of their coursework here.

Goals for Freshman Composition 101 at GSSC

The FYC Course Objectives here are included in an email message from Ms. Christie, the first English department faculty member interviewed, in the back of this study as Appendix G (*** For the purposes of this study, the number 101 designates all first semester FYC courses.**)

In keeping with the College's mission, ENG 101 prepares students for college and career writing experiences by directing them in the basic organization and development of essays of various lengths. The specific objectives of the course address an integral part of the College's general education outcomes.

These are

- Becoming aware of the writing process, knowing terms related to this process: Prewriting, peer review, revising, editing.
- Reading a variety of challenging texts with help as needed; recognizing/evaluating the rhetorical choices made in a text.
- Expanding critical thinking abilities by exploring context and assumptions in various issues; coping with multiple perspectives; and relying on established authorities.
- Becoming aware of different audiences and genres.
- Learning rhetorical strategies to develop ideas and increasing rhetorical awareness of how text is manipulated to meet purpose and audience needs.
- Writing essays with analytical, interpretive components, including analysis of written texts.
- Writing coherent, unified and logically organized paragraphs in both timed and untimed settings.
- Using outside sources (library, Internet, other electronic media) to explore an idea, question, or thesis; integrating sources into a text, handling quotations, and using MLA style to give appropriate credit to sources.
- Improving grammar, usage, mechanics, development and organization in context, as needed.
- Demonstrating competence with the following word processing concepts: margins, spacing, fonts, font size, paragraph formatting (first-line and hanging indents), block quotations and headers.

Goals for Freshman Composition 102 at GSSC

The course objectives for 102* are the same as those noted for 101, with the addition of literary analysis skills. They are listed in the back of this study as Appendix

H. (* For the purposes of this study, the number 102 designates all second semester FYC courses.)

The specific objectives of the course address an integral part of the College's general education outcomes. These are

- Taking control of one's own writing process, and learning to adjust the process for the purpose.
- Critically engaging multiple perspectives; identifying established authorities; recognizing bias.
- Reading a variety of complex texts independently, with an emphasis on evaluating sources.
- Increasing understanding of academic discourse, with more emphasis on thesis-driven essays.
- Independently choosing rhetorical strategies best suited to purpose or audience.
- Developing abilities to analyze a variety of texts.
- Incorporating independent research (library, Internet, and other electronic media) into an essay that takes a position. Incorporating multiple sources with distinct perspectives into a single paper. Increasing mechanical skills in integrating sources into a text, handling quotations, and using a standard documentation style to give appropriate credit to sources.
- Demonstrating competence with the following word-processing concepts: creating charts using the tab key, inserting and labeling images, creating outlines, attaching Word documents to e-mail.
- Recognizing and understanding grammatical and mechanical terms.

Consistent with the other English departments surveyed, English faculty may alter their approach to the 102 course based on their own research/scholarly interests so long as the course is writing-intensive and includes a research-based paper.

FIRST ENGLISH FACULTY INTERVIEW AT GSSC: MS. CHRISTIE

Ms. Christie is a Full-Time Temporary faculty member at Good Size State University (GSSC). This means that her position is temporary and dependant upon the number of freshman who enroll each semester at GSSC. She confirms that the English department sets the course objectives as noted above, in adherence with the College's General Education Outcomes. Ms. Christie comments that departmental policy dictates that she include the objectives in her syllabi.

We also discuss whether students have the opportunity to explore oral rhetorical skills in the FYC courses. Ms. Christie describes a degree of flexibility in how instructors interpret the curriculum, stating, “Some faculty do group projects that require a presentation” (Christie Personal Interview 2). However, she does not require any type of oral presentation. Like the instructors at UOG, Ms. Christie chooses her own texts and is not required to use any specific texts (3).

The course objectives at GSSC cover a more complex range of skills than was noted in either the manual at UOG or the guidelines at BEU. When asked whether or not the objectives are realistic and obtainable by students entering this Open Access Institution. Ms. Christie responds by noting two areas she feels are realistic: “understanding words and terms related to the writing process and demonstrating competence with word processing concepts” (5). Then she moves to the concepts she feels are more challenging. “Improving grammar usage and mechanics, development and organization in context, as needed, those are sort of longer objectives that have to be looked at and met over the course of the term” (5).

As the discussion moves through the different methods by which students have opportunities to revise their writing and to understand how to write coherently using appropriate language, Ms. Christie volunteers, “I do tend to tell my students that when they are in small groups and peer reviewing, they are privileging content over [...] grammar mechanics and that it is not an editing or proofreading session” (6). When I ask her how the departmental rubric she has shared with me reflects this emphasis on content, she answers that in her mind it is weighted toward content and critical thinking without ignoring the importance of usage and mechanics (7). When I ask her what students who

do not come into 101 knowing how to write using correct grammar should do to brush up on those skills, Ms. Christie responds, “Well, there are campus support, resources” (8). She suggests that the Writing Lab might be a helpful resource, and firmly points to her view of the purpose of FYC 101 as a “baseline course that everyone has to take and it’s supposed to give an overview of the expectations of academic writing, which means that we are talking about critical thinking” (9). With this comment, Ms. Christie acknowledges the pedagogical priority that guides the three FYC program involved in this study, the effort to develop higher order thinking skills. Also, in speaking of the grammar skills as being among the more challenging goals that must be met over a longer period of time, she acknowledges critical thinking as a more achievable objective; a point of view that is shared by both the English and the Business faculty.

SECOND ENGLISH FACULTY INTERVIEW AT GSSC: DR. SALINGER

I conducted the second follow-up interview at GSSC with Dr. Salinger, who is a Professor of English and the Coordinator of First Year Composition there. Since I am familiar with the FYC objectives, we move directly to a clarification Dr. Salinger wants to make concerning why the FYC course objectives do not include oral rhetorical skills. “our communication class, which is required of all [Humanities] students, goes into much more depth and detail about organizing and presenting material orally” (Salinger Personal Interview 1). Dr. Salinger emphasizes that both the FYC course and the Communications course he is speaking of are offered through the Humanities portal and that they in fact cover some of the same skills, such as organization and persuasion (1).

When we discuss whether or not students are encouraged to think about the intent and or the credibility of the authors and of the texts they read. Dr. Salinger says, “Some

students find it intimidating to question [...] others find it liberating” (2), although he admits it is an area that most students have difficulty addressing in their thinking and writing. This is true also concerning the speculative nature of writing, in Dr. Salinger’s mind. Here, he sums up his strategy, “So we try, we try to teach speculation, but then buttressing speculation with research and experience” (2). With this in mind, Dr. Salinger points out that every essay in the 102 course is a “documented” work and that students must learn how to follow MLA format and how to cite correctly. He suggests that this is an area where students may be deficient, as they may not understand that taking information off the Internet without citing properly is plagiarism (3). Regarding the use of technological writing outputs in the FYC courses, Dr. Salinger acknowledges the advantages of such outputs for “engaging students,” but admits he “is not comfortable” with most of the outlets I mention, such as texting and Facebook, because he does not have time to become proficient in using these modalities.

Next, we move the questions related to grammar instruction. Dr. Salinger indicates that he personally takes measures during class meetings to remedy grammar issues among students by going over common errors and asking students to correct them. He and Dr. Levertov at BEU are the only two FYC instructors who devote class time specifically to improving grammar skills. Dr. Salinger and Dr. Levertov are also the two faculty members who have taught the longest, and it may be that their age gives them a grammar advantage in terms of their educational experience. Also, they are more hesitant than their younger counterparts in English to utilize technological outlets and they may view grammar as more important due to the fact that they are not accustomed to the casual writing inherent in such outlets.

Business Department Faculty Interviews at the University of Giants

The University of Giants is home to the Twain School of Business (TSB). Students apply at the end of their sophomore year to enter the TSB at the start of their junior year. The requirements for admission to TSB are high. Students wishing to apply will take an admissions test, which, according to the selection criteria, is a multiple-choice assessment of academic skills. While there are other requirements pertaining to the various areas of specialization within the business school, it is this assessment that relates most directly to the skills taught in the FYC courses. The following are listed as areas of assessment:

- ✓ Reading
- ✓ Writing
- ✓ Critical Thinking
- ✓ Mathematics

Along with the additional requirements noted in their selection criteria, TSB also notes that English grades and the level of English courses taken are also considered during the admission process for marketing students. (Terry School of Business).

FIRST BUSINESS FACULTY INTERVIEW AT UOG/TSB: DR. POUND

Dr. Pound is a Professor in the Department of Management at UOG/TSB, he teaches undergraduates and graduate students. He begins by confirming that students entering TSB must have completed their FYC course requirements.

Dr. Pound he explains that in the school of business, students are “called on to draw recommendations” (2), and to this point he adds they must learn, “to make an argument, a persuasion argument” (2). Describing the ability to persuade as “key for business students” (2), Dr. Pound refers numerous times throughout the interview to the value of taking a position and “supporting it” (2). To this end, he validates the need for

composition students who plan on majoring in business to gain the critical thinking skills required for speculative thinking. He believes that “even MBA students” may be uncomfortable with making decisions, and discusses how he approaches this idea with his students here:

You (referring to his students) just want to keep gathering information forever. So, Yeah, I push them to do the best they can with the research, collect their data and to use good data sources, ... And again, I push them to, with incomplete information, take a position. (2)

Dr. Pound is referring to the necessity for students to be able to make decisions and argue for a plan of action without knowing if his or her plan will succeed. He then applies a real world analogy using Chief Executive Officers as an example of managers who do not always make the right decisions, but Pound emphasizes how important it is for these business leaders to have the ability to communicate decisions and to gain support for their choices using very persuasive written communication skills (2).

Having so far concurred with the skills the English Faculty at UOG listed as priorities for FYC students; with some degree of trepidation I question Dr. Pound about the importance of grammar instruction for these students. Dr. Pound immediately acknowledges the necessity for students to know how to write using correct grammar, and he clearly takes responsibility for supporting students in strengthening those skills. He discusses passing out a “writing tips worksheet” at the start of each semester, to remind students of common errors that he says, even “very good writers ... get lazy about” (3). Dr Pound says he “sells it from a business perspective” inferring that business students are somehow wired to do analysis, and that he tell students “it’s a tough

market out there” (3). He persuades students to learn correct grammar usage urging them to combine that analytical ability with, “the ability to succinctly write and hand your boss something that he or she can run with without worrying about [whether or not] it is properly worded [with correct] punctuation marks [and if it has] a bunch of goofy grammar errors [...]” (3). Clearly, Dr. Pound values the critical thinking and organizational skills addressed in the FYC courses as well as and students’ ability to write using correct language and sentence mechanics.

When I ask him if he prioritizes one skill set over the others in terms of what skills he believes students should enter into the TSB with at the start of their junior year, he reaffirms his view that students learn to be analytical in business school. If they don’t, he says, they will move into a different field. For the students who are “analytically driven” (3), he “preaches” to them, “If you don’t have this writing skill set, you know you have a window here” (3). Dr. Pound suggests that if students use this “window” to learn to use correct grammar, they will “be recognized immediately in [their] workplace” (3). Without specifically saying who should provide such instruction, he reflects that he doesn’t think, “students are pressed to do that” (3). The two Business faculty interviewed take care not to place blame on the English department at UOG, which is interesting because the tone in the English department there was somewhat dismissive of the viewpoints that faculty perceived might be originating from the Business department, such as the desire for students to have strengthened grammar skills. Unlike some of the other Business faculty interviewed, he says that he personally offers clear motivation, instruction, tools, and opportunities for students to work on improving these skills by writing papers within the context of their academic area of interest.

When we discuss the importance of using technological outputs and the development of oral rhetorical skills in the FYC courses, Dr. Pound says that those objectives are covered in business school but does not suggest a diminished relative value within the framework of the required composition courses. An area related to technology in which he believes students *would* benefit from additional enlightenment in the FYC course concerns author and/or publication credibility. “A lot of them have blinders on, you know. ... They’re so used to popping online and they just take it as gospel” (5). This comment reflects a concern that will be repeated along with the grammar concern at each of the schools participating in this research: the perception that students find it challenging to identify credible sources and they have trouble citing sources correctly.

Dr. Pound concludes the interview with a final bit of persuasion he says originates from recruiters. “The major weakness I think is writing, and, our employers tell us that” (6). When I ask him to elaborate on this point, he uses the recruiting process at TSB as an example, stating, “...If we get faculty candidates and you know there’s a typo in the cover letter, we ... just set it aside” (6). He justifies seeking this type of sentence mechanics perfection in applicants by referring to the competitive nature of the job market today. A position he can support very well.

SECOND BUSINESS FACULTY INTERVIEW AT UOG/TSB: DR. NABOKOV

Dr. Nabokov is also Professor in the Department of Management at UOG/TSB. Due to time constraints, and because Dr. Pound provided me with the more general information concerning expectations from the TSB, I conducted my interview with her via email. The interview is included in the back of the study as Appendix D, she offers concerns similar to Dr. Pound; however, in reviewing her answers, I realized that the

topic of grammar was never addressed, so I emailed her one more question concerning sentence mechanics. Her response to that question is included in the aforementioned appendix.

Dr. Nabokov's insight begins with her response to my question asking her what she believes is the most important skill for students to acquire in the FYC courses. I notice that Dr. Nabokov's writing priorities for students, organization and concise wording, correspond directly to her own strengths as a writer. She continues her answer, offering that learning how to organize an essay should be a top priority for students. Dr. Nabokov contends that her students particularly have trouble "focusing on a specific problem" explaining, "I have students who ramble on and on, never really making a point or even addressing the question or problem" (Nabokov Email Interview Appendix D, 1) Although she is not sure that vocabulary can be or should be addressed in a composition course, she discusses vocabulary as another concern (1). This point relates to a concern that other business faculty members suggest may be somewhat technology driven, in that word processors sometimes automatically correct misspelled words and students often do not realize that the new words may not have the intended meanings.

As we move to the idea of whether or not oral rhetorical skills ought to be covered in the FYC courses, Dr. Nabokov is definite:

I think that oral communication in business is more important than written communication. A report, essay, or composition can be proofread and changed. Being able to clearly speak, get a point across and do this in a manner directed at a specific audience is probably a businessperson's greatest skill. (1).

In this way, Nabokov alludes to a point that Dr. Pound also makes in his interview concerning the necessity for job candidates and employee's to communicate views and arguments articulately and in a persuasive manner. Even so, both faculty members declined to place it within the set of desired objectives for FYC, and they emphasized the need for students to concentrate on assimilating basic composition skills before working on the oral rhetorical skills.

Next, I ask Dr. Nabokov about whether or not the undergraduate students in her courses demonstrate the close reading and speculative creative thinking skills in their writing that are targeted in the FYC courses. She acknowledges that students are adept at discussing problems "they have seen before" but otherwise she says plainly, "I do not think that we train our students to do this" (1). Adding, "When the conditions of the problem change in any way, most do not have the ability to look at the problem in any context which is different..." (2), she emphasizes her point by suggesting that for freshman students who have not had opportunities to enhance critical thinking skills it is too late to teach it (2). As noted throughout the interviews with the English department faculty members, this view is in opposition to the primary objectives specified by all of the FYC courses in this study.

Business Department Faculty Interviews at Big Enough University

There are no special requirements for students wishing to specialize in business at BEU. Undergraduate students admitted to the university are able to take classes within the Business Department and to pursue a major in Business Administration, assuming they maintain good academic standing according to university policy.

FIRST BUSINESS FACULTY INTERVIEW AT BEU: Dr. HARDY

Dr. Hardy is a Professor of Management in the Business Administration Department at BEU. He begins by emphasizing the effectiveness of the first year composition course, asserting that it is “essential” for students taking even introductory business courses to have completed the 101 course. Dr. Hardy then admits that even though he “personally” would like to see students “coming in with the 101 *and* the 102 courses” (Hardy Personal Interview 1), he says there is an impetus for his students to take a specific business communications course as it fulfills both a “Liberal Education” mandate, replacing the need to take 102, as well as fulfilling a Business department requirement in a move called “dubbed,” short for “double dipping” (1). Dr. Hardy explains his preference for students to take the “extra writing course,” referring to 102, even though he acknowledges that he was Dean of the Business School when the decision was made to distribute curriculum requirements evenly among three areas: Liberal Education, Major Area, and Electives (3). While he says that his students who have taken both FYC courses perform better in their writing tasks, he says that overall, he believes the curriculum revamping has “worked” as it provides increased flexibility for students.

When I ask what writing skills he values in the undergraduate business students and to what extent he believes those skills are addressed in the FYC courses, he discusses his own education pertaining to the “rules of composition” (3). He says that students often “have no clue about how to use first or second person ...so that there is constantly ... even a mixture of all three persons woven together” (4). Dr. Hardy also offers that students previously were “required to understand” how to use commas, periods, and other

punctuation such as quotation marks and hyphens (4), implying that current students somehow skirt this requirement.

As we turn to the topic of oral rhetorical skills, Dr. Hardy believes that writing skills, not oral rhetorical modes ought to be explored in the FYC courses, saying that oral skills are better covered within the context of the Business Communications course he teaches. (4).

One area where Dr. Hardy acknowledges students are comfortable is the use of technology-driven writing outputs. Dr. Hardy concurs that outlets like Facebook, “speak their language” (8). He emphasizes, “technology provides the best ways to communicate in a business setting” (8), and implies that the FYC courses might increase effectiveness if they could incorporate the use of Facebook.

Dr. Hardy closes by describing the one important writing goal he believes business students should be able to meet as, “just using simple sentences put together in a paragraph that forms a complete thought” (8). He suggests that students will be able to build on their writing skills if they master the basics first.

SECOND BUSINESS FACULTY INTERVIEW AT BEU: DR. BARRIE

Dr. Barrie is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Business at BEU. He is very interested in student writing, and uses a paper that he is currently grading as a catalyst to describe the writing goals he views as important for students to explore in the FYC courses. The topic of the paper is “My Best Manager,” and Dr. Barrie obviously feels that since students may draw on their own experiences, this paper is an easy one to write. On the positive side, he feels that the topic did give students an opportunity to think about all they had learned, “so it served that purpose.” However, the writing skills

“ranged from quite good to unbelievably marginal...” (1). As Dr. Hardy noted, students at BEU have a wide range of skill levels.

Dr. Barrie also acknowledges the usefulness of learning basic writing skills in the FYC courses, saying that students get more, “technical writing” in the business school later.

If you can’t produce the basics, the basics of quality writing, then you can add all the bells and whistles you want to but you still have, you know, a bad horse to ride. (2)

Since Dr. Barrie has been speaking in generalities about what it means to “produce the basics,” I question him about what he means by basic communication skills. Then he refers to the expertise within the English Department, suggesting that the English faculty are the people I should ask about basic skills. I mistakenly infer that students learn the basic communication skills he values in the FYC courses. “What? What? What? [...] You’ve made a faulty assumption. Completion of the basic English skills course does not a result produce” (2). So, I ask Dr. Barrie again what skills he would like to see targeted in the FYC courses. He prefaces his answer by admitting that he does not know what writing skills the freshmen come in with, suggesting, “it may be that the mountain they have to climb is just so significant” (2). With this mindset, he answers my question with a question of his own, asking, “ If you’re starting way down here [...] how do you get’em to a reasonable place in that period of time [a semester]” (3). As our discussion continues, Dr. Barrie lists a variety of examples of grammar infractions students commonly make, ranging from incorrect punctuation to misplaced conjunctions. He

scoffs at how students' misuse spell-check and reaffirms Dr. Hardy's desire to see simple, correct writing from students.

Like Dr. Hardy, Dr. Barrie envisions written and oral rhetorical skills as being "complimentary skill-sets" but does not believe that there is time to accomplish a proficiency in both written and oral skills in within the context of the FYC courses. He questions, "Can you really pile on the oral portion of that and expect to achieve your objective" (4). In keeping with the idea of being pragmatic, Dr. Barrie suggests that an area of technology worth exploring in the FYC courses is the correct use of Spell Check (5). Otherwise, he is somewhat ambivalent about using technological writing outlets in the required writing classes unless students are able to transition to using appropriate language when they write academic papers.

When we discuss the fact that a large focus of the FYC courses is the exploration and development of critical thinking skills, Dr. Barrie too speculates on the motivations of English professors who would "fall in the trap of doing the sexier things before you do the more basic ones...it's just more fun ... a whole lot more fun if I were an English professor than hammering away at verbs and adverbs" (8). He reinforces this idea, explaining that no matter how great a critical thinker one is, if he or she does not use correct grammar, he or she will not be credible.

Business Department Faculty Interviews at Good Size State University

There are no special requirements for students wishing to specialize in Business at GSSC. Since GSSC is an Access Two-Year College, students are able to take classes within the Division of Business and to pursue an Associates degree in Business Administration assuming they maintain good academic standing according to the

college's policies. Unlike BEU, however, students here are required to fulfill the First-Year Composition requirement during their first year at GSSC.

FIRST BUSINESS FACULTY INTERVIEW AT GSSC: DR. SHELLEY

Dr. Shelley is Chairman of the Division of Business and a Professor of Management at GSSC. Dr. Shelley begins our discussion by familiarizing me with the student population, explaining that most of the students will earn an Associates degree and transition to a senior institution to pursue their bachelor's degree (Shelley Personal Interview 1).

When I ask Dr. Shelley what specific skills she believes faculty in the business division would like to see addressed in the FYC courses, she says correct citation practices so as to avoid plagiarism, and also points to grammar concerns. In this way, her writing skills priorities for Business students directly reflect the areas of concern brought up by the business faculty members and several of the English Department faculty members interviewed at the previous two schools.

With regard to these concepts, she repeats issues described by Dr. Sallinger in the English department at GSSC. Discussing problems with subject/verb agreement, she says, "We have grammar issues and spelling issues because they rely too heavily on spell-check" (3). Along with these concerns, she focuses on the lack of appropriate email communication from students related to formatting, organization, and content (4). Within the context of the email discussion, she notes that students need to learn how to write formal letters, using the proper conventions, as a practical writing skill applicable to life inside and outside of academia.

When I ask whether or not students that have completed the FYC courses possess skills in the areas she has noted as priorities, she says that they may have covered those skills in the FYC courses, but that “... I guess something is getting lost is translation” (4). Here she elaborates:

So they don't understand that it needs to be a global application... you know, they may be doing it properly in their English course, then when they get into a class that is not an English class, ...they are very incensed when you penalize them for bad spelling or grammar on an Economics paper. (4)

In surmising that students who have completed the FYC courses have received the instruction she seeks, Dr. Shelley makes an assumption that students may not know how to apply those skills within other writing contexts.

Like the Business faculty members at BEU, Dr. Shelley views oral rhetorical skills, close reading, and speculative thinking skills as important skills for business students to possess, but stops short of endorsing their inclusion in the FYC courses. She mentions that all students are required to take a Human Communications class, and in that class, students receive instruction on presentation skills using various technological tools. As we continue to discuss the concept of including oral rhetorical skills in the FYC courses, Dr. Shelly comments, “I mean I think it's good, but then there is a [laughing] a amount of time [laughing], ... and those things are fun and grammar is not, but grammar is probably equally important” (6). Here, Dr. Shelly voices a concern similar to the one Dr. Barrie voiced when he brought up the need to be pragmatic and cover the basics in the FYC courses as a priority. Summarizing her priorities for the writing skills she

believes are important for business students, she again refers to skills that were mentioned at BEU by the Business faculty there, emphasizing the benefits of knowing how to write concisely and correctly.

SECOND BUSINESS FACULTY INTERVIEW AT GSSC: MS. ALCOTT

Ms. Alcott is an Instructor of Business Communication within the Division of Business at GSSC.

Since Ms. Alcott teaches Business Communications, I asked her what skills she wants her students to acquire in the FYC course before they take her classes. She starts with grammar and even though I suggest other areas of instruction, she continues to focus on grammar. I ask her whether or not she views oral rhetorical skills as important skills for her students, and she confirms that these skills are important; however, she believes they are covered in the Human Communication class Dr. Shelley referred to earlier.

When I ask about the importance of critical thinking skills, she uniquely responds that she does not view those skills as being important for her students who are just learning the basics of how to write a letter, or writing emails (Alcott Personal Interview 1). Since this is exactly the area where her colleague, Dr. Shelley pointed to communication deficiencies, I ask Dr. Alcott if she agrees. She says that she “spends a good amount of time ...analyzing the audience and the format for those type of things” (3) in her classes.

With regard to this skill area, she reinforces Dr. Shelley’s comments concerning formatting, saying, “You can just tell they’ve not had those types of things” (3).

Comments like these concerning the preparedness of incoming freshman originate more frequently out of the Business departments, where, for the most part, faculty members are teaching students who have already satisfactorily completed the FYC courses.

As we continue our discussion, Ms. Alcott reinforces Dr. Shelley's opinion that technological writing outputs are good tools to have skills in, but she asserts that she teaches those skills in her classes. She seems resolute in her desire to discuss grammar and says that she tries to motivate correct writing habits, telling students they will lose their credibility if they don't learn to use proper sentence mechanics. "That's a weak area for many of them" (5). When I asked her if she would weight grammar more highly than the ability to craft a well-organized and thoughtful argument, Ms. Alcott says that students who "have atrocious errors (which affect comprehension) might get a 50 (on an assignment) because I feel like it's so important" (6). Ms. Alcott's closing remarks suggests that she offers a resource to students who need grammar assistance. Alluding to the business textbook she uses which has a section she refers students to who have questions concerning sentences basics she says, "To me, it's not a favor to just pass a student ..." (7). In this way, Ms. Alcott supports students in overcoming what she views as an obstacle to their success.

RESULTS

The English Faculty emphasizes the Writing Process and Critical Thinking Skills

In his essay, “A Place for Literature in Freshman Composition” Gary Tate addresses the shift towards rhetoric that occurred during the 1990s in the FYC curriculum asking, “Can we, in a semester or two, really help students function effectively in all of the different communities they will be entering as they move from course to course, from discipline to discipline, throughout their four years of college” (319)? Balancing the areas of specialization within English departments, the varied academic pursuits of students and others in academia and in the workforce seems to be an unattainable goal for those in charge of designing the FYC curriculum.

While my study reflects a relatively consistent set of skills and goals mandated by the three English departments studied for the first-year composition students taking the required writing course, two areas were emphasized by all English faculty members. The primary areas of concentration were in developing organizational writing skills, and in developing critical thinking skills paramount to writing persuasive arguments. For example, when I ask Dr. Salinger how he might prioritize the skills targeted in the FYC courses, like his colleagues at UOG and BEU, he says, “Among the more important priorities are making sure that our students know the rudiments of organization and that they strengthen those rudiments in the second course. Explaining that students come to GSSC with “some skill at being able to put together a presentation” (1), but with little

knowledge of how to organize their persuasive writing, Dr. Salinger says that another area of concentration is helping students to support their ideas (1).

And so we're stressing more and more in 101 and 102 not just the initial composition, but revising and rewriting. Partly to increase critical thinking skills and partly, well, I guess really mostly, to make sure that our students are giving us something substantive and not just a repetition of their general idea over and over again, couched in slightly different terms.

(1)

In this way, Dr. Salinger repeats much of what has been emphasized in the previous interviews with English department faculty members: the primary concentration on the processes involved in writing and the focus on using critical thinking skills to draft and support an argument.

Dr. Levertov, an English Faculty member at BEU, suggests that the critical thinking skills that are a focus of the FYC courses have a high degree of relevance to business students, in particular. "I would think that a failure to read contracts closely [could] lead to a lot of difficulty" (3). When I ask her about how the ability to think speculatively might benefit writing and business students, Dr. Levertov points to the "intersection of critical thinking and logic" (3), that is an important tool in the interpretation of ideas and in resolving problems.

Business Faculty Members also Want to Address Critical Thinking

Business faculty members unanimously agreed that critical thinking skills are important in addressing rhetorical situations in writing and verbally, but with just one exception, suggested, "these skills are ones students develop here in Business" (Barrie 6).

For example, when asked about concepts such as learning how to think speculatively and the importance of critical thinking skills, it is apparent that Dr. Barrie at GSSC views these concepts as valuable but feels that such skills cannot realistically be addressed within the context of the FYC courses. Like Dr. Pound at UOG, Dr. Barrie contends that “drawing reasonable conclusions” from various reading materials is something “that we do in business courses all the time” (6). Several faculty members suggested that if critical thinking skills were being addressed in the FYC courses, they were not sinking in. Beyond an overwhelming desire to see his students write using correct grammar, Dr. Hardy at BEU can hardly imagine a scenario where students might exercise the close reading and critical thinking skills necessary to question the credibility of an author, for example. “God, to even have one of our students suggest that they are questioning the credibility of an author would blow me out of the water” (5). Summing up his perception, he says, “our students haven’t gotten that far” (5). Within this context of the critical thinking discussion, Dr. Hardy’s comments are not far from the point that Dr. Pound at UOG makes when he discusses how students tend to accept what they read, without question. In this way, the Business faculty seems to agree that they do not expect the FYC course to instill this level of awareness in students’ critical reading abilities.

Dr. Hardy at BEU is equally dubious when I ask him whether or not students might benefit from learning to think speculatively in the FYC courses. He contends that while some students “might have an idea” about how to take a position with incomplete information, “most of them would draw this sort of blank look on their faces” (6). In the interest of being fair to all of the undergraduate students, Dr. Hardy describes the undergraduate student population at BEU as being comprised of both adult evening and

weekend students, and the younger, more typical college-aged students who attend the Day College. He describes the older student population as being quite adept at the critical thinking required for organizing speculative writing around a central idea, and the younger population as being very challenged in almost every area of composition (6).

Business Faculty Want the FYC Course to “Get Back to Basics”

Business faculty members were certainly open to the exploration of critical and speculative thinking in the FYC course; however, they saw a need for students to have a strong foundation in the organizational and mechanical skills involved with writing and that the FYC programs should prioritize the time spent on these basics, rather than attempting to cover every aspect of college writing. Several faculty members suggested the need to reduce the material covered in the FYC course to allow more time for learning the basics well. Dr. Barrie suggests that skills to be covered in the FYC courses ought to be prioritized, starting with the basics. “If students need more skill building and basics, then how do you move on” (4)? He seems to suggest a paring back of expectations, using phrases with words like “surgical” and “pragmatic” to describe setting objectives for the FYC courses (4).

Business Faculty Members Want Students to Acquire Correct and Concise Writing and Rhetorical Skills in the Freshman Composition Course

Michael Delucci’s article, “Strange Bedfellows: Explaining the Popularity of Business Majors at Self-Proclaimed Liberal Arts Colleges in the USA,” identifies that “Business will be the most popular major at many Baccalaureate colleges whose organizational language asserts a commitment to liberal arts education” (182). These pressures may manifest in “a movement away from, and a potential conflict with the

traditional mission associated with...(the goals) of a liberal education” (173). In his recent exploration involving the changing identity of self-classified liberal arts colleges due to the increase of business majors, Delucci hits on the challenge inherent to teaching FYC to professional studies majors such as business students. My study shows that Business faculty list straightforward grammatically correct writing skills at the top of their goals for FYC business students while English faculty, as noted above, place more abstract concepts, such as critical thinking skills, at the top.

Grammar Anyone?

There is no shortage on negative commentary in scholarly and popular publications describing the poor communications skills possessed by business students and graduates. This quote from the *Sunday Times* (U.K.) reflects the theme of these observations in both the UK and in America:

Inarticulate and semi-literate graduates fall straight into what is now recognized as Britain’s skills gap. It is very odd, at a time when people take an increasingly utilitarian view of universities as places to produce workers that they increasingly fail to do so (Marrin).

A recent study in the *British Educational Research Journal* states that the “question of whether the teaching of grammar has a positive effect on young people’s writing development has been haunting policy-makers, teachers, researchers and students themselves for over a hundred years” (Andrews 40). Identifying studies showing that the grammar instruction that British students have received during their primary and secondary school years is ineffective, the authors bring forth the point that scholars in the United States have grappled with for decades as well. “Although there have been

extensive reviews of the question (of the effectiveness of grammar instruction) (e.g. Macaulay, 1947; Wilkinson, 1971; Wyse, 2001), views remain polarized, with a belief among some teachers, newspapers and members of the public that such teaching is effective, and among others that it is ineffective” (40).

My interview with Ms. Alcott at GSSC also reflects an attitude that is common among the Business faculty. When I ask her what concepts she thinks should be taught to business students in the FYC courses, She immediately says that her students do not have good grammar skills (1). She adds, “I would have expected that (they would know how to proofread and to correct grammar errors) when they finished 101 and 102” (1). Then she reinforces that since she teaches Business Communication, she is familiar with the errors students make, and, as a result, thinks that they are not well prepared to write correctly. She clearly feels that since the FYC courses are prerequisites for taking her class, students ought to demonstrate stronger writing skills.

High School Grammar Gap

A follow-up email interview with Dr. Nabokov at UOG highlights Business faculty concerns about grammar, as Dr. Nabokov emphasizes her belief in the importance of “correct grammar (as an) element of good writing skills, suggesting that the root of the problem lies in “the trend in high school [...] to let students use incorrect spelling and grammar and grade on content in some cases” (Nabokov Follow-Up Email Interview, APPENDIX C). Here, Dr. Nabokov articulates a concept that permeates throughout the interviews with faculty members, which is the idea that students do not receive any grammar instruction in high school. Her comment concerning grading on content is also

germane, as noted above; content and organization together outweigh grammar on all of the FYC rubrics.

When I ask Dr. Nabokov if her undergraduate students demonstrate the ability to write using correct grammar and sentence mechanics, she asserts, “I think our schools have deemphasized this skill” (1), and offers her desire to see students develop the skills to write concisely and correctly (1). This comment reflects the common primary desire of all Business faculty surveyed.

Dr. Dickinson, an English professor at BEU also points to the gap in grammar instruction during the high school years. She too reflects on her own grammar instruction, remembering that she learned grammar in eighth grade and then again in graduate school, “Nothing in-between” (6). Thinking about her current student population, she admits that there is a need for grammar instruction, but suggests a faulty perception in the idea that, “We can suddenly make-up for 12 years of missing writing instruction in a semester” (7). With this in mind, Dr. Dickinson concludes the interview by deflecting some degree of responsibility, suggesting, as Dr. Milton at UOG implied, that Business faculty may focus on grammar as a result of not understanding how to address higher order thinking skills.

Grammar Instruction is Not a Priority with the English Faculty

During my interviews with English Faculty members, the mention of grammar instruction is met with a resigned attitude, resistance, or comprehensive disdain as my interview with Dr. Milton UOG best illustrates. Dr. Milton alternately refuted the need for it, placed the responsibility for learning and teaching it on others, and ultimately questioned the intellect of those who do prioritize it.

The Rubrics are Weighted to Accommodate A Quantity of Grammar Errors

When I ask Dr. Dickinson at BEU what skills the University approved rubric prioritizes, she says: “Content, Organization, and Language” (4). Specifying her interpretation of the weighting of the rubric, Dr. Dickerson elucidates, “...I typically weight them a third, a third, a third. So I would say that two-thirds of my focus would be on content and organization with a third of it on correct usage and grammar...” (5).

When I mention that my literature review and initial conversations with Business faculty reflect a plea for grammar skills instruction for business students, Dr. Dickinson pushes back. “I could grade papers so much faster and save myself a lot of agony if I just fixed all the comma problems and tense shifts and things like that, but I do not really feel I would be touching the heart of the matter” (5). Dr. Milton has a similar approach to the interpretation of the standard rubric used at UOG.

Dr. Milton immediately refers to the rubrics on the FYC website in response to a question concerning the importance of balancing the teaching of critical thinking skills with grammar skills instruction. Explaining that, “We call it presentation and design” (3), Dr. Milton refers me to the rubrics so that I “...can see how it ranks in comparison to the rest of the skills we look at” (3). Following her lead in looking at the rubrics as a guide to what is taught, I ask Dr. Milton whether content or grammar is weighted heavier. She suggests that I refer to the rubric again, for an “extended discussion...” (3), of the weighting. Explaining that the long rubric has been designed to provide guidance to the T.A.’s who are usually “concerned about that” (3), she elaborates, “we are looking for errors that interfere with communication” (3). When questioned if a paper can receive a passing grade if it has a number of grammatical errors, Dr. Milton responds in the

negative. However, she follows-up, relating, “unity and evidence and development ...are actually more important than presentation and design...or at least equally important” (3). Having confirmed that minor grammatical errors would not impede an otherwise skillfully written paper from receiving a passing or even a good grade, I try to confirm the extent to which grammar instruction is included in the FYC curriculum.

When questioned specifically about how students who have grammar usage deficiencies might acquire those skills, Dr. Milton readily identifies several options *outside* of the FYC course that offer resources to students who may be struggling with grammar or other concepts involved with writing. She points to an idea that seems prevalent among some of the English faculty surveyed that more business students could take the initiative to refine their own grammar skills. Referring to UOG’s Writing Certificate program as one resource that would provide grammar support, Dr. Milton says UOG “...could certainly have more business students involved in the Writing Certificate Program” (5). The Writing Certificate Program is a program that exists outside of the FYC course, to support undergraduate writing skills.

In addition to suggesting students take things into their own hands from a grammar perspective, Dr. Milton also places responsibility on faculty outside of the English Department. “More teachers could assign writing, take responsibility for writing and get instruction from people who know about writing” (5). Within the context of this line of questioning, Dr. Miller elucidates her perception of the intellectual divide between Rhetoric and Composition and the rest of the university that compounds the issue of grammar instruction in the FYC course. Explaining that “a lot of people outside of writing programs just get frustrated and they tend to focus on grammar” (5), she further

states that she thinks that it is “a perceptual issue rather than a real issue, and they say, ‘oh well’” (5). Dr. Milton sums up her perception of the nature of incompetence here:

They (faculty outside of Rhetoric and Composition) focus on it (grammar) because that is something they can point out as (...) incorrect, but they don’t know how to deal with the bigger issues, and they do not know how to teach a student to revise it, maybe they don’t have time to do that, they feel like it is too big of an issue so, you know... (Milton 5)

During the interview Dr. Milton also refers to a “traditional prejudice of everyone (outside of composition) that that is what they want to talk about when they talk about writing, they want to talk about grammar” (4). When I mention that there seems to be a reluctance to address grammar as a priority in terms of content for the FYC course despite fairly consistent feedback from other departments that students are in need of grammar instruction, Dr. Milton replies “...years and research have shown that teaching grammar doesn’t improve writing” (5). Dr. Milton is referring to studies contending that grammar instruction outside of contextual writing assignments is ineffective.

Summarizing the dilemma in which FYC instructors find themselves, Dr. Levertov at BEU relates a conversation between a colleague of hers in the English department and a faculty member from another department who was commenting on the work of the writing tutors in the English Department-run Writing Center. The faculty member had commented that, “we don’t want you to talk to them about their ideas ... we want you to help them with their grammar” (6). Dr. Levertov suggests that this line of thinking is faulty, “We can’t do that. We have to talk to them about their whole papers” (6). This type of comment reflects the holistic approach to writing instruction that seems

to permeate these discussions with the English faculty members. They acknowledge their mission to support students in developing the ability to write about topics in a comprehensive, analytical, coherent, and clear manner.

Current Objectives On Which Faculty in Both Departments Agree

Writing Must be Comprehensible

There are a few areas of agreement among faculty members regarding the FYC objectives, as the interviews demonstrate. Addressing grammar in terms of audience comprehension, Dr. Salinger hits on an idea upon which English writing faculty members *and* business faculty members in this study agree. When I ask him if content outweighs grammar on his rubric, Dr. Salinger refers me to the departmental writing rubric. Then he explains by concurring with the dividing line that many interviewees in both departments noted. "... Some students will be able to get acceptable content, but very, very, few will be able to combine numerous ... grammar errors with outstanding content ... because the grammar problems tend to disrupt that communication" (4). Offering examples of typical student grammar infractions, ranging from incorrect syntax to "floating parts that don't seem to connect" (4), Dr. Salinger finally speaks to the heart of the matter saying, "...you know for me, [accepting grammar errors] violates the necessity we have for teaching students how to communicate well with an audience" (4). Here Dr. Sallinger points to the nature of assessing grammar in writing. While many English instructors note that they are willing to accept some quantity of errors, they agree with their business counterparts that grammar errors affecting comprehension are unsatisfactory.

Writing Must Be Well-Organized

Another area of concurrence, that is currently an FYC priority as referenced in the WPA guidelines, is the ability to organize writing in a coherent and concise manner. Most of the faculty members pointed to this skill as both valuable and worthy of instruction in the context of the FYC course. For example, The FYC skill Dr. Pound at UOG feels Business students must possess is the ability to “write a decent three to four page paper” (Pound Personal Interview 2), and defines this as a paper that includes an introduction, transitions between paragraphs, and a closing. All of the English faculty members acknowledge that the ability to organize writing is a primary objective of the FYC course.

Internet Citation Skills need to be Addressed

Like many of the faculty members in the English departments and in the Business departments, Dr. Hardy express a desire for students to learn how to “cite correctly” saying:

...I would say that the biggest thing is how to cite properly and (that they learn) how to use basic composition rules. It would make my life joyous just to have a group of students come in and know how to cite properly. (4)

Several instructors in both departments stated that students do not understand that research on the Internet must be appropriately cited.

English Faculty Members and Business Faculty Members Do Not Communicate Very Often About the FYC Objectives

In this survey, GSSC offers a communications model directed at good writing skills throughout the college, which seems somewhat unique, in terms of the approaches

of the other schools involved in this study. When I ask Dr. Shelley whether or not, as head of the Division of Business, she has ever discussed her concerns about grammar and formatting deficiencies with anyone in the English Department, she refers to past “Learning Committees,” and newly revised general education outcomes mandated by institutional committees. She reflects that the departments are not totally isolated from each other. “We all see the same thing. We’ve all tried to emphasize writing across the curriculum [to] get more written assignments into non-English classes so the students can see that ... good writing skills transcend just taking one class ...” (8). The concept of instructors in departments other than English focusing on supporting composition skills is rare; however Dr. Milton at UOG also addresses the idea although in less collegial terms, in response to this question during her interview.

IMPLICATIONS

While this study illuminates many features of writing that faculty in the two different disciplines find important, it reveals issues related to the perceived credibility of each discipline by the other, which I believe may be mitigated by more frequent and open communication between the departments and the exploration of targeting fewer key objectives more comprehensively in the FYC curriculum.

Several of the interviewees adapted a somewhat unproductive attitude with regard to the priorities and even the intellectual proclivities of professors in other department. Clearly, Dr. Dante is superfluous in suggesting that the Chairman of the Economics department stated that his students do no writing between the time that they finish the FYC courses and graduation. Dr. Barrie at GSSC is equally superfluous in suggesting that perhaps English teachers are just teaching what is fun and sexy (8), rather than the grammar, which he believes will provide students with credibility in the workforce. I think that teachers from each department should meet annually to discuss how students are doing with their writing and what objectives might bear reworking, either in terms of less focus or an increased focus on particular concepts. I think these meetings would produce greater results if conducted by instructors who work with students every day, not necessarily department chairs or even directors of the FYC programs. People who participate in these discussions should be those with very little entrenched ideology about English or Business, but with knowledge about what constitutes good writing in each discipline. Based on the interviews I conducted, more communication about the goals and

outcomes of FYC program between departments will foster an atmosphere in which the credibility of the instructors and effectiveness of the course may be increased. This research suggests five areas where writing effectiveness for Business students might be increased by reprioritizing objectives already in the FYC curricula and extending one area of concentration. One concept which needs more attention is grammar; another is the occasional incorporation of business subject matter and assignments within the context of rhetorical analysis; another is an increased use of technology-driven writing outlets; the fourth is to extend the understanding and development of rhetoric to include oral rhetorical skills, and the last one concerns stressing the correct formatting guidelines for citing online resources.

The discussion concerning the prioritization of critical thinking over grammar highlights a conflict between the two departments concerning whether it is better to write well about nothing or to write nothing well. Obviously, these goals are not mutually exclusive. Despite the controversy it creates within Rhetoric and Composition specialists, I suggest that grammar goals might be reconsidered within the context of both the content and pedagogy offered by many FYC courses. While the WPA guidelines that most FYC programs follow include grammar as an outcome, it is listed at the bottom of a long list of objectives. Since it is the top priority of Business faculty, and directly relates to students' perceived credibility within their major and later, in the Business world, it bears reconsidering as an area for emphasis in the FYC courses and as a component of every college course that includes writing objectives.

As noted previously, studies suggest that grammar instruction is ineffectual outside of writing situations that provide contextual agency for students. In this study, Dr.

Levertov at BEU requires that students complete grammar homework every night and sometimes dedicates class time to the concepts covered in the homework. She feels this improves her student's writing. Ms. Christie at GSSC suggests, "it is a matter of giving the right tools to the students" (5). With this in mind, she explains her strategy for helping students to improve their grammar:

I do not teach grammar in 101. I just won't do it. What I do in their first writing project is identify particular patterns of error and tell them, put them on notice that these are the patterns of error in your writing. ... Then (students) need to take the first page, make the corrections and use this external source, the Purdue Online Writing Lab, ... and essentially use it as a self-teaching tool and a proof reading tool. (5)

Providing students with the tools and the responsibility for improving their grammar and usage skills is "more effective than a 30 minute lecture on comma slices" (6). Even so, Ms. Christie stresses that she does not marginalize the need for grammar instruction, but pointing to studies such as the ones Dr. Milton at UOG mentioned, she states that grammar instruction, "outside of the context of a writing project ... typically does not work" (6). Conversely, referring again to "grammar concepts within the context of a piece of writing," she notes that improvements may, "... sink in" (6). While this approach has been suggested since 1976 when the writing process took on new life, Ms. Christie's strategy reflects more recent scholarship, such as Roxanne Mill's study in 2010 that notes progress in students who were able to learn correct usage in the process of revising specific writing assignments.

There are other studies such as Andrews, suggesting that, "we should look more

closely at techniques of sentence-combining and other practical approaches, which appear—on the evidence to date—to suggest more positive effects on writing development” (52). More research directed at successful grammar instruction needs to occur in light of the cultural and technological influences that affect student’s understanding of what constitutes clear and correct writing.

Content-focused writing goals may also be more frequently incorporated into the FYC curriculum to garner agency for Business students. Dr. Pound at the Twain College of Business at UOG attaches the ability to write well with reading texts that are written well, and he says for business students, “the Wall Street Journal [is] the bible” (3). He backs up this assessment commenting on the real life examples offered by the *Journal* in support of the theory the author of any given article explores, followed by concluding material. A way to link literature and Business is to create an assignment like the one Bonnie Devet discusses in her article in *Teaching English in a Two Year College*. Devet describes an assignment that mixes business writing and literary analysis in which “first-year composition students wrote business sales letters about short fiction and then revised those letters into full-fledged literary essay that analyzed the stories” (Find P?). Duvet’s research incorporates concepts such as literary analysis that requires critical thinking skills, with a business letter, which is a practical skill all students’ benefit from learning, into one assignment. There are some writing assignments, such as letters, which address skills that all students learn from, but that may offer greater agency business students. Projects such as the one Duvet relates may be designed to motivate business students to learn and practice composition concepts as means to perform better on the tasks related to their major area of interest.

Business faculty viewed technology-based writing outputs as closely tied to all types of composing. The instructors pointed to emails, texting, Skype, and Power Point as inherent to communication practices in and outside of the academy but stopped short of recommending that these outlets be explored in the FYC courses. Since most of the Business faculty was consistent in urging that the English faculty stick to the basics in terms of addressing clear writing, they were hesitant to recommend the inclusion of material that is covered in the Business departments. Based on my research, the English faculty members, while acknowledging the importance of technology-driven writing outlets, were far less likely to use these outputs themselves; therefore, they expressed hesitation in using technology other than email and word processing, within the context of class assignments. Even businesses and hiring specialists are attempting to accommodate the communication practices of the 15-24 year old generation. A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* discusses how younger people disregard the hierarchal order of communications and are likely to “email or text senior managers, or even the CEO” (D2) with problems or suggestions. The article further references “the mantra among educators who try to be enlightened: Its no longer about attention span. It’s about attention scope-being able to concentrate on many things at once” (D2). Instead of ignoring the changing nature of communication and multi-tasking capabilities of this generation, perhaps the English departments should be at the forefront of research and pedagogy that recognizes these skills.

The importance and use of technology to communicate was closely tied to the exploration of oral rhetorical skills in the top objectives discussed by the Business faculty members. While a few of the English faculty members provided students with an

opportunity to explore their oral rhetorical skills and to employ technology-driven outlets such as PowerPoint presentations and videos, others were apologetic about their own lack of technological savvy, and a few were dismissive when questioned about the importance of developing oral rhetorical skills as part of the FYC curriculum. For example, early in the interview with Dr. Milton at UOG, she searches for the FYC manual, which covers the same information as their FYC website, and opens it to respond to a question concerning whether or not oral rhetorical skills are addressed in either the 101 or the 102 courses, and she proceeds to read directly from the text, “Write papers, think critically, and address papers to a range of audience” (Milton 1), stopping only after she has related all of the goals for English 101. She concludes, “so no, we do not include any [...] oral communication or oral presentation” (1). On the other hand, as Dr. Dickinson at BEU relates some of the activities she incorporates into her daily class schedule, it is clear that she feels that students should develop oral rhetorical skills, as she mentions several occasions when students have opportunities to prepare presentations, whether it is introducing an Act from Hamlet by acting it out in small groups for the class, or planning, filming and presenting videos for the creative portion of the final grade (2).

Meanwhile, all of the Business faculty members interviewed placed the ability to present concise persuasive arguments at the top of their list of communications skills that Business students must possess. Rather than leaving it up to the individual instructors to electively assign oral presentations, I believe that the FYC courses should include oral rhetorical skills and presentations as part of the curriculum. This would be a change that might be best accomplished through the Council of Writing Program Administrators, since most FYC programs seem to follow those guidelines.

Research citations skills are a concern and may have been negatively impacted by students' use of technology: specifically the use of the Internet to conduct research. Almost all of the Business faculty members and some of the English Faculty members noted the lack of citation skills evidenced by students' presumably unknowingly plagiarizing content from the Internet by copying and pasting and not citing the information. Many instructors offered that students seem to understand how to cite correctly from traditional sources, such as books, and articles, but that they apparently confused using the Internet content. With this in mind, it seems that FYC instructors may want to spend more time covering this concept in class, demonstrating how to use the Internet for research, and then helping students to practice by employing the citation rules that govern research conducted on the Internet. This is an area of instruction that supports the goals already stated by each department, so it offers a starting point for increased communication, and an excellent stimulus for initiating change.

Eventually the changes might become significant. If faculty from each department were to meet to discuss writing objectives, they might decide to develop a FYC pilot program specifically for Business majors, or they might work together to develop upper level business writing courses to address business composition issues.

CONCLUSION

Due to the nature of this study, suggestions relate to the needs specified by Business academic community; however, they in fact accommodate most contemporary undergraduate student writing needs. The business-specific literature that should be added could be targeted at a variety of audiences, ranging from engineers to music majors to students with medical interests.

In many ways, this study reflects my own path in rediscovering writing and literature within the context of having studied business and holding positions outside academia for a number of years. To some extent, this research presupposes the idea that the required composition course ought to address student needs outside of the English department. While this may not be a measure of performance that applies to other required courses, it is a standard reserved for this course because successful college students need to know how to write. Alternately, the ability to calculate the algebraic functions that define required math courses, while important for passing math, are not correlated to performance in college.

Concluding this phase of my own studies, I realize that courses in English, from studying how to teach college English, to Southern Literature, to a seminar on the clothing worn by Thomas Hardy's characters, enhance an understanding and ability to teach the concepts prioritized by English Departments for inclusion in the FYC courses. Likewise, my experiences outside of academia support me in adjusting, within reason, those desired outcomes in consideration of student interests and skills.

It may be that English professors want students to experience the spectrum of benefits that one garners from years spent studying English. Like an eager child who relates entire days events in a garbled monologue in the checkout lane at the grocery, it sometimes seems as if we try to cram years of awareness, critical thinking, and organizational skills into a semester or two of beginning composition instruction. A few, or perhaps many concepts, are lost in the translation.

For those who believe that there are worse mistakes than overreaching, this course may be an exception. The fact that the course is required of all students should be founded on achievable and beneficial objectives. Re-establishing the course as one with plausible objectives and identifiable outcomes will serve to reinforce the credibility of English departments and possibly restore interest in the remarkable *and* practical benefits associated with in-depth studies in English.

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Business Faculty at the University Level

1. What, if any, are the specific academic composition requirements that prospective business students are required to fulfill before becoming a business major or graduating with a business degree?
2. What, if any, are the specific skills that your department would like to see targeted in the first-year composition course/s?
3. Do you think that oral as well as written rhetorical skills should be addressed within the context of the first-year composition course? Why or why not?
4. Do you think it is important for prospective business students to learn how successful writers compose? Why or why not?
5. Please discuss whether or not close reading and analysis skills are important skills for prospective business majors.
6. Even when students read a text in a first-year composition course, they are often required to think speculatively (with incomplete information). Please discuss whether or not speculative thinking might benefit students in business programs.
7. Should technology based writing outputs (texting, emails, Facebook, Skype, Power Point presentations) be explored in first –year composition courses? Why or why not?
8. What writing goals do you think successful business students should have? Why or why not?
9. In what ways if any, do faculty in your department communicate with faculty in the English department about course goals and outcomes?

Interview Questions for English Composition Faculty at the University Level

1. What specific objectives must first-year composition students fulfill in order to pass the required composition course/s at your university?
2. What specific skills are targeted in the first-year composition course/s?
3. In what ways, if any, are oral rhetorical skills addressed in the first-year composition course?
4. Should prospective business students learn how successful writers compose? Why or why not?
5. Do you think close reading and analysis skills are important skills for prospective business majors? Why or Why not?
6. Even when students read a text in a first-year composition course, they are often required to think speculatively (with incomplete information). Please discuss whether or not and how speculative thinking benefits composition students.
7. Should technology based writing outputs (texting, emails, Facebook, Skype, Power Point presentations) be explored in first –year composition courses? Why or why not?
8. How might your department’s writing goals be helpful for business students?
9. In what ways if any, do faculty in your department communicate with faculty in the Business department about course goals and outcomes?

APPENDIX B

Faculty Interview Transcripts

September 17, 2010

**Interview With: Dr. Milton, Associate Director of First-Year Composition,
University of Giants**

We are meeting to discuss the effectiveness of the FYC course for business students.

As we look at it, I, I think I can look at the information you have given me to assess the objectives of the first year composition students must fulfill in order to pass the course um-hum and I can also, I think, address the skills that are targeted. Right. And whether or not oral rhetorical skills are, is that something that is optional, the oral rhetorical skills?

Yeah.

Pretty much in terms of whether or not they

We don't test them in any way **okay** over that.

Is that a component of the course?

I don't think so.

Required or it's just an optional, if teachers want to ask students to do presentations?

I don't think that's part of any of our policy statements or objectives.

Okay.

I mean everybody does discussion.

Okay.

I mean everybody has to be able to orally communicate, but I don't think that's one of our specific objectives.

Not specific in terms of presentation.

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And so, let's look at the 1101 goals. Write papers, think critically, address papers to a range of audience, understand collaterative and social aspects of the writing process,

develop essential voice, that's textual voice, **um-hum** understand genre, conventions of standard edited English, electronic environments. This is on page 8. **Um-hum** and exploit differences in rhetorical strategies, so no, we don't include any... **Okay** oral communication or oral presentation.

Okay. Do you specifically address how successful writers compose versus how unsuccessful writers compose in terms of looking at any studies or is it more through just reading literary works or?

In 1101 we don't use literary works to teach writing.

What do you use?

We use (chuckle) nonliterary (laughing) works. We use nonfiction works. **Um-hum** so depending on what teacher, we use magazine articles, **okay** we use advertising, visual images, **okay**. Some student TAs use umm profiles, magazine articles, ah, places, umm architecture, **okay I understand** so any kind of text.

Okay, so any, a variety of text, non-scholarly usually?

S some people do scholarly text. We have a couple of sections that work almost entirely with scholarly text. So.

Okay, so there's a large variety.

Oh wide variety. Teachers get to pretty much pick their own. The only requirement is that it is nonfiction.

Okay. And do you, I guess for 1101, okay, and when we are talking about the critical thinking skills and thinking about those as you relate, as they are related to speculative thinking, so kind of a combination of question 5 and 6, umm, a, do you think that speculative thinking benefits composition students?

(pause)

In other words, umm, forming an opinion with incomplete information?

(pause)

Well, I guess. I would think that would benefit them. **Um-hum.**

And, umm I think that would be part of critical thinking **ah-ha** and when we look at looking at that in terms of, I guess some of the goals that you have listed in your composition handbook here in terms of looking at audience and source of publication and, umm the intention of the author, those are things that are addressed in your composition course?

Yes.

Yes...

And how important do you think then it, the sentence basics, the mechanical skills of writing, grammar skills are in terms as compared to, or balanced with, critical thinking skills?

Well if you want to look at, we have a standard grading rubric that all of our teachers use so you can kind of look at how we evaluate umm, ah, we call it presentation and design as part, have you looked at our **I have** rubric at all? **I have, yeah, I've seen it.** So you can see how that ranks in comparison to the rest of the skills that we **right** look at.

As I remember it, you have to meet a basic level of, is that correct? A basic level of grammar skills, achieve a basic level of grammar skills and then beyond that, is the content weighted heavier?

(pause)

Contents?

What rubric are you thinking of?

Umm, I, I guess the one that we use to grade essays or looked at to grade essays. I don't. I think we have something similar to it. Yeah. As I remember, a hierarchy – well-organized, credible, and also complete.

Yeah, so umm. All of those are considered the kind of the basic hierarchy of skills that they have to meet and then if you look at the extended, the long rubric, which is also posted on the website, **um-hum** there is an extended discussion of how and it, and it mostly is aimed at the TAs of how, it gives them more specific advice on how to weight umm **um-hum** errors. (sigh) Because they usually are concerned about that. Once you get a kind of a feel for it umm, we are looking for errors that actually interfere with communication. **Right.**

So would you say that those errors, I guess, are weighted heavily whereas their paper, can a paper still receiving a passing or even excellent grade if it has a No number of No grammar errors?

No. If it, if it's to the point where (pause) you, you feel like it, it interferes with reading then no, it couldn't, shouldn't receive a passing grade if they are going by the rubric.
Um-hum.

But as far as just having comma errors or punctuation errors?

Typically that wouldn't interfere with it getting a C or above. But it also would depend on unit and evidence and development **okay** those, those are actually even more important than presentation and design. **Okay** and so, or at least equally important.

Okay. Umm, so, I guess all of this goes to a focus that I have been able to discern in my interviews with business faculty, not just here, but at, at other universities and that is the perception that, that, umm, that there is a lack of skill in terms of grammar use and being able to write correct sentences. Where, who, I guess I'm trying to figure out between the two schools of thought and the different perceptions and obviously there is a huge variety of influences on that ability. Um-hum. But, who, where is a student, a college student that does not have those skills, where should they learn those skills? In what venue?

(pause)

They learn them all the time. They learn them. In fact I would say most of our freshmen that are admitted at UOG don't have serious problems with grammar. **Okay.** We have a very high level of incoming students. That is not the most serious problem we see. Generally it is LD and ESOL students and some of our, that have the most serious problems with grammar because of the way our courses are set up in first year composition. They have many opportunities to rewrite and process a paper just as they would in real life. **Um-hum.** So if they learn to use tools, **um-hum, um-hum** and most of them come in with strong grammar skills anyway. Even students that have issues with grammar can use the tools of writing centers and their teachers office hours to get help specifically with grammar issues.

(pause)

Any first year comp or beyond.

Um-hum. It seems that, too, there is a misperception you know that every student, all students have not had freshman comp. In other words there are many students that have, have, have tested out of it, and so by the time they come into a school, like here at Giants, the Tall College of Business as a junior they um-hum haven't really had English since umm maybe their senior year of high school. Um-hum. So some of those skills may have been dropped or forgotten (chuckle). Yeah. Yeah.

So, yeah, so it's an interesting, it's always an interesting question.

Yeah.

So on that, you know that's kind of a traditional prejudice of everyone that that is what they want to talk about when they talk about writing **yes** is they talk about grammar, so **right** that is kind of a long held prejudice when people talk about writing that are outside of Comp.

Right (chuckling) **Exactly.** No I'm very aware of the sensitivities involved, but that's and that's partly why I'm asking the specific questions is, you know, ahh, in the goals and objectives of most Comp programs today I notice that there is a little bit of reluctance to address grammar as a priority because of the higher level thinking skills that are being targeted.

Right. And also because of years and years of research they have shown that teaching grammar doesn't improve writing.

Well. Along those lines, what, I guess, and to answer the, the perception of probably business faculty or recruiters or, I don't know, the business world that students can't write and why can't they write, what is the answer then in terms of those sentence basics since that seems to be a bit of a disconnect. Do you have any suggestion as to how students might gain that skill since it seems to be such a sticking point?

(pause)

Umm, (pause) I would say that, that we are addressing it on a number of fronts. We have a really active and developing writing certificate program **okay** and they could certainly have more business students involved in the writing certificate program, taking more advanced writing courses at a higher level, having the university support writing umm (pause) throughout the curriculum and throughout their whole college career. **Um-hum** We have a real active writing intensive program Michelle Ballif runs. It's, it's a you know. More teachers could use that. More teachers **um-hum** could assign writing, take responsibility for writing and get instruction from people who know about writing. I

think a lot of people who are outside of writing programs just get frustrated and they tend to focus in on grammar. **Right.** So I think it is a perceptual issue **right** more often than it is a real issue that they say “oh well” they are frustrated with the content or **um-hum** some of the other issues, but what they see are the spelling errors or the sentence problems, they, you know, so they focus in on that because that is something they can point out as something that is incorrect, but they don’t know how to deal with the bigger issues and they do not know how to teach a student to revise it, maybe they don’t have time to do that, they **um-hum** feel like it is too big of an issue **um-hum** so, you know.

Um-hum. It makes a difference They go back to grammar because it is easy you know, easy to mark error, **right** but it is hard to deal with problems of coherence. **Right.**

I guess I can see both sides because I know when different programs I’ve been at and even at UD there is pretty, the rubrics are different and there is a, not totally different though in that we are willing to accept a level of errors if the critical thinking skills are there and organization is solid and the piece is coherent a student can still get a very good grade Umhum on a piece of writing whereas, you know, speaking to somebody in business school they might say if I get a letter from a student, prospective student, if it has one typo in it then I disregard it because there are so many other students that will write in and write perfectly, so there is a little bit of a disconnect. And I understand what you are saying is that is the thing that sort of maybe in a pragmatic way or an editorial type of philosophy that maybe some of these faculty members in business just approach the, look at the grammar and punctuation as something they can address.

Um-hum. Well and it depends too if it is an appointment letter, that’s a real different situation than a school exercise. **Right. Still, I mean** If they are saying write me a journal about what we just talked about in class then they are saying “oh it has atrocious grammar” **right** That’s a very different issue than if you are saying “somebody sent me a cover letter that has spelling errors all over it ‘right’ sentence fragments in it”. **Well he’s saying like one error.** Different issues. **They’re saying one error. Whereas, you know, a formal paper that you are turning in you can still get a pretty good grade on it if you have several sentence level errors.**

Um-hum

So it seems like there is a little bit of a disconnect there.

Um-hum.

In terms of the weighting of importance.

You feel the critical thinking is more important in terms of the skills you want students to develop here at UOG in the writing program?

(pause)

Well I, I, they're all important. I mean (pause – noise making) Writing is like walking and chewing gum at the same time. All of those things are important and that's why we have the kind of rubric that we have set up. There's like unity and evidence and presentation and design are base level skills to get a C to have a competent paper all of those elements have to be passing. They don't have to be perfect, but they have to be passing. To do better than that then you, you add from there. So, you know. But if you are talking about one error in a paper I would say that is a level of perfection and I would be surprised anything except a professional document that you were putting in for employment; resume, cover letter or, or even in publication you don't see things that are that **right, right** specific, so.

I understand.

Do you know of any communication that the English department has with the business school in terms of setting goals or anything of that nature?

That would be outside this program.

Okay. More of a English departmental.

When do you, I think you have an appointment with Dr. Dante too at some point, so when you talk to her she would be the one and not me. She, she's the director of the program. **Right.** So anything that happens interdepartmentally would be her purview, not mine. **Okay. Good.** Mostly I deal with things that happen inside the department.

Okay. Alright. Thank you so much for your time.

Um-hum.

I appreciate it. If you have any follow-up, or if I do, I will contact you.

**Interview With: Dr. Levertov, Associate Professor of English,
Big Enough University
September 1, 2010**

Dr. Levertov, what specific objectives must First-Year Composition students fulfill in order to pass the required Comp course at Big Enough?

We have two required Comp courses, English 101 and 102. 101 is written communications and students have to write basic essays that are well developed, meet certain length requirements and demonstrate basic grammatical competency. They have to be able to, you know, use evidence from sources to back up their claims. In English 101 usually the source of materials that we use are from essays and stories. Ours are all literature based.

Oh.

Our 101 and 102 are both literature-based

All literature based.

Yeah.

So, 102 is a continuation of that.

102 we focus on drama and poetry and in that course they develop, they have to pass a research paper in order to pass the class, based on the literature.

Great.

That's the biggest difference.

What specific skills are targeted?

Umm (pause), Well, you know, crafting and argument. So, we spend a lot of time What's an appropriate thesis? How do you have something to say? How do you support it? How do you, you know, you know the idea of organization, development, **Um-hum** and language. These are the three areas on our assessment, you know, sheet **Um-hum**

and those are, they have to achieve competency in all those areas, so, have to achieve competency.

Okay, great. In what ways, if any, are oral rhetorical skills addressed in first year Comp?

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They really aren't anymore. When we redid our, our, curriculum just a couple of years ago we mandated speech and oral communication class for everyone. So, all of it is part of their Liberal Ed, so we no longer do that.

Oh, okay. So it would be a required course for all Freshmen, yes, no matter what their

Well, all, all, it doesn't have to be Freshmen, but before they graduate from Big Enough they have to have to have taken an oral communication class.

All students?

All students do, yeah.

Where. Does that come out of the English Department?

Umm, we, we have one in the English Department, ahh English 103 is an oral communication class, but more of the classes are offered out of the Speech Department, out of the Mass Comp Department.

Okay, gotcha.

Umm, do you feel that prospective business students should learn how successful writers compose? Would that be part of any curriculum you have?

(laughing)

I think so. You know most business students are going to need to communicate in written form and they will need to persuade business colleagues of various **Um-hum** things and that, that persuasion is the key. In a specific book we use, *Writing with Style*, you know, it makes the point that all writing is persuading. You are always trying to persuade the (pause) the reader to, to see things the way you do and that is what we address really in English 101 and 102.

Do you, within that question, do you look at, you don't really look at articles by any research that has been done in terms of old research, summaries or any of the writing that has been researched that has been done in terms of demonstrating how less successful writers compose as compared to more successful writing, writers?

Do we address that with students?

Yes.

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Umm, (pause) I don't know that we do that in a focused way.

Yeah.

I mean I'm big on, umm, and we emphasize the idea of showing students models of writing.

Okay.

Both less successful and, you know, more successful models I think are useful, although there's always a little bit of the danger when you show them the less successful models **yeah** that that is what will stick in their head **they get confused** and they will model that, so tend to maybe show them one of those, but then I opt to show them several models of good writing to see that there are various ways to go about achieving, you know, **right**, a paper.

That makes sense.

But, yeah.

Okay. What about close reading and analysis skills? Do you find that, do you think these objectives are important for prospective business majors?

(Pause)

Well, I would, I would say so. Now, I, I'm limited here because I don't know that much about business (laughing). **Yes.** You know it is something I have really chosen not to know too much about, but I would think, you know, reading contracts and those and there are all kinds of instances where close reading could, not failing the close read could get

you into a lot of difficulty I, I would imagine. Umm, you know, all kinds of agreements and contracts and when you make a (laughing) make an agreement with a client, you know you need to be really clear about what is being, umm you know what both parties are agreeing to and I know we have lawyers for some things, but, **good point**, but, but.

Even when students read a text in a first year Composition course they are often required to think speculatively with incomplete information. Please discuss whether or not, and how speculative thinking benefits composition students.

(Long pause)

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It is a question you have to think about a little bit. If, if posing an idea about an article or a piece of literature, umm, umm, line of thinking about how, how you interpreting something? You feel. and extrapolating Exactly perhaps?

Well, I think that really it kind of shows the intersection of, you know, creative thinking, as well as, you know, logical thinking and that's, you know, how problems are solved, so I think it is really a good strategy for them to learn.

Exactly. Good.

And, what do you think about using technology based writing outputs? Texting, email, Facebook, PowerPoint presentations, do you think these types of outputs should be explored in first year Comp courses? Why or why not?

Well should or not, you know that's an interesting question. I, I'm guess. My guess is umm students are already doing those. (laughing) probably much better than I am. My area of expertise is certainly not in Facebook, you know or email (laughing), so I think (pause) you know, mod, you know perhaps with a PowerPoint presentation, you know, we typically umm (pause) we typically do have actually, even, although I said that we don't really address it, it is not one of our, you know, learning objectives on the book score for English 101 oral, you know, competency, **um-hum, um-hum**, but we actually do tend to have them do some kind of oral project that they report on you know. And, often they will use PowerPoint presentations, so it does give us a chance to say, you know, what is effective and what is not in PowerPoint presentations and, umm, you know, they seem to be getting more and more savvy about that **right** all the time.

Yeah, I have noticed that.

And, you know, I rarely get students anymore who just flash up a bunch of text, you know, that they expect you to read through.

Um-hum

Their understanding is images and, you know, there are other things to do with PowerPoint that can be useful and supportive of their presentation, so, I mean I can see a little bit of the PowerPoint. I am not, I am not using these others, so **yes, yes** so I can't really speak to them.

Okay.

(laughing)

Not there.

And can you discuss in any detail how you think your department's writing goals might be helpful for business students? You have already mentioned several.

Yeah, you know, just the idea of, of writing and you're writing for an audience and you're identifying who your audience is and what will appeal to the audience, you know just getting students to think about that seems to me that (pause) you know thinking about that old rhetorical triangle and **um-hum** and you know that you need to appeal to emotion and to logic and you know to, to develop your credibility as a writer. These are things all writers need to do when they are communicating and trying to get their point across and so I, I would think that would translate (laughing) I don't know, but I would hope, hope it would **great** translation. I feel like you are only doing several limited things if it doesn't.

In what ways, if any, do the faculty in your department, if you know of any ways, they communicate with faculty in the Business Department.

Umm

About the goals and outcomes of composition?

You know that is an interesting question. Probably, you know, it's like Oh we should do that! (laughing) Umm we don't have any sort of formal way of communicating with them. Umm, so I think that might be useful. A few years ago when 3M was, was funding a course achievement program here, as we were able to pay tutors from the Writing Center to sit in on classes in all disciplines and be that, you know the tutor for that class, I did go talk to some of the business department then to let them, you know, make them aware of the program and everything, but I think in general, and I know there has been some over, you know umm, turnover in the, the people involved. I don't get a really strong sense of connection between the business folks and the writing. **Um-hum.** I'm not sure they. I would be curious to see if (laughing) they think there is any relevance to what we are doing for them. I am not sure I'm getting that from everybody, although I've, I've heard various business professors say they tell their students, you know, how important it is to be **Um-hum** to be, you know, to format the things directly, to, you know, not misspell in, in **Right**, letters and that is one of the first things that you know if you write a letter of appli, you know application for a job and you misspell things and what not, you know they'll, they'll **sure**. But, I, I know that there is you know that overlap. My own impression, and this is my own impression, umm is that a lot of other disciplines, not just business, but business specifically think we in English do more of (pause) like making sure they have their commas right.

Right.

You know, but that's sort of what writing is and it's really about ideas. You know it is constructing argument. It's about, you know, using evidence to support points and you know it's really about thinking a lot more than I think they, they think so. You, really, you might talk to Dr. orah and interview her because she just got back from talking with some of the business students, all these EL students, you know most of these EL students that have been brought in, a

lot of them are from our Business Department **Yes** and oh gosh so they are trying to get the Writing Center involved in helping support them in writing, but I know (laughing) she was saying one of these women said to her something like "we don't want you to you know talk to them about their ideas". **Okay.** Which kind of demonstrates this whole.

Right. Point of we want you to help them **with their grammar**, yeah with their grammar, but not with their ideas and Dr. Dickinson said well **sort of (inaudible) thinking.** Yeah. Yes. Yes. We all we, you know, we can't do that. You know we are going to have to talk to them about their whole, their whole papers and so...

There was one follow-up question I was thinking of.

Do you think that most of the sort of business communication specific courses come out, do you have any idea whether they come out of English Department or whether they come out of the business department?

We don't have any business specific English courses here.

I don't know if they have that as part of their curriculum.

I know they have some business writing and actually if, when we, when we (laughing) redid our curriculum, we have been redoing our curriculum for several years and it hasn't been pretty, but one of the kind of interesting things was we, we, our Liberal Ed curriculum we were trying to allow more course, give students more freedom to take more things that would basically achieve the same goals, **Right.** So for instance for a while, although they have now taken that off the roster, one of their business writing classes could substitute for like English 102.

I see.

They did that for a year or two and then decided not to (laughing) not to, not to do that you know, so they took that one off. I think they still have it, but they have realized it is

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not a substitute I guess for English learned. I think there is some recognition that most of our students here write so badly that we need to be making changes.

They really need

They need more writing classes rather than you know less.

Okay, interesting.

That is interesting. I am going to ask them about that. Okay. Good. Any final thoughts? I think you have been thorough about your...

Well I think you know that issue of communication with them I think is important and I, I would be curious to know how much of (pause) The concerns that various folks have around the campus is related to this idea. They think their students, if they are juniors, have had English 101 and 102 **right** and they must have written good enough to pass you know 101. So, either they are thinking well maybe I don't know what good writing is or they're thinking **right** what are those English people doing. **Yes, I would think that would be a major area of, as you said, yeah, confusion. Yeah. Yes, so that, that is something that I will note in my study. Good.**

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Interview With: Dr. Dickinson – Associate Professor of English and Director of the Writing Center – Big Enough University

Which specific objectives must first year Composition students fulfill in order to pass the required Composition course?

So, in the first, in 101 the objectives that we have gotten from the Liberal Ed Committee that we have to use, the formal objectives of course **okay** simply talk about being able to write coherent text and the 102 focuses on research writing.

Great.

So they are still both literature based, but they're really focusing on the research paper in 102.

Good. I think that is what Dr. Levertov discussed. And umm, I think the specific skills.

Yeah, so they are writing literary analyses, they are writing research papers and I realize I am bleeding over into one of your other topics, but they also do oral presentations.

Okay.

I usually also do a creative project in both, well I usually do a creative project in 101 and in 102 I let them do group presentations that are also creative projects as well.

Okay. Is that something that is something you do in terms of job in your interpreting the curriculum in your own Yeah, what we did **how to go do** is we built in, yeah, we built in like 10% I think it is for the creative project. Some of us wanted to do one. Others of us did not particularly, so we built another 10% that gave us some wiggle room and that is what I always do with my creative project. They usually involve some oral portion.

Okay and that goes to question 3, what oral rhetorical skills are addressed?

Typically in the 101 class for me, and it is interesting because we used to have speaking objective in 101 and we just felt that we were cramming too much in and after much Dr.ate we removed that speaking objective. I still feel that they need practice speaking in that class and so for the creative projects I do, they are in small groups in terms of designing their project and then everybody has some portion in the oral presentation of that project. For example one group made a film version of yellow wallpaper **um-hum great** and then they all spoke in some part of presenting that to the class.

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Oh, that is great. That will go to another question.

Yeah, excuse me, yeah in 102 what I usually have them do is in small groups of 2 or 3 they are to creatively lead a lesson, so if we are reading Hamlet, for example, there is a group for every act and they start off our days discussion of that act with some interpretative presentation of that day's reading. That helps give us a way into the text and helps them prepare for in-class essays.

Good. Umm,

I didn't mention that, sorry thinking about your skills and I am sure Dr. Levertov said this to you so that we do have in-class writing, as well as out of class writing.

Yeah, I think that's great.

In both of those courses.

I don't know that all programs include those.

Yeah, we include at least one in-class essay in both 101 and 102.

When you talk about I, I guess when we talk about business students or prospective business students or any students learning how successful writers compose, I guess that is a part that seems, that is something that seems to be a part of some freshman composition programs. In other words, actually looking at the way successful versus unsuccessful writers write. Um-hum, um-hum. Do you do that at all in your 101 or 102?

Umm, yeah, I would say that we do. Partly that is facilitated by the fact that we are reading literature. It is literature based. We are doing short stories and it is a lot easier to look at a writers approach there, but we also, at least I do, a fair amount of sample papers that you share with the class, good, bad, indifferent **um-hum** you know so they can see in those models how other student writers are doing, as well as the professional writers who text they are actually reading and sometimes we will take apart a paragraph and I like to do it with intros and conclusions, especially of a real essayist's piece so they can see how it is done.

Good and that, that makes me think of another area that has been mentioned in Business Department, which has to do with success in terms of just clear correct writing and I interpret your going in another direction or in a further direction or are you concentrating on grammar and would you say you are

putting an emphasis on correct writing in terms of grammar and mechanics or are you talking more about

More in 101 than in 102. I do spend more time on that in 101. And, to be perfectly honest, the main thing I do is assign the readings from the right stuff that reviews all of that and then when we are working through samples together, sample student papers **um-hum**, we look at all of those kinds of problems. Do I usually teach a grammar lesson every day? No.

Um-hum. So when you are talking about how successful writers compose are you speaking of like processes?

Yeah, processes, rhetorical strategies. We also spend a good deal of time talking about the writing process or what different ways of looking at the writing process and what tactics, you know, they might use and questions they might apply to their own work and the different stages of the process trying to focus on it as a recursive process.

Um-hum. Can you speculate as to how you think that might be beneficial to business students or prospective business students?

I think it is important to business students for several reasons. One, the focus on organization, clarity, as you said, you know, you could have the greatest ideas in the world and if their subjects and verbs don't agree then your reader thinks you're unintelligent and uninformed you know. So, I think, that kind of stuff, I think is important for business students too, because you are trying to determine how a process works and I think they do that a lot in business right? You are trying to figure out the process, so I think it is absolutely important to them as well. I don't know if they think so. (Laughing)

Um-hum. Interesting.

(Laughing)

I don't know if they see the connection, but I certainly do and simply things like marshalling evidence for your argument. Giving compelling examples and analysis and maybe that is the most important part of it, to me anyway, is that focus on analysis and interpretation. And, they will have to do that in everything they do in business. They will have to analysis every brief they get.

Great. Good.

They may not say they are going to like it, but (laughing) they will have to.

Good. And that pretty much goes to question 5, do you think close reading and analysis skills are important for the prospective business student.

Absolutely. Absolutely. I, I mean because that leads to critical thinking to higher order thinking. I feel that interpretation inherently (laughing) requires higher order thinking, critical thinking.

And, are you. Okay this next question has to do with the speculative nature of the course um-hum and whether or not that exists in your 101 or 102, but to think speculatively with incomplete information and how that speculative thinking might benefit?

Um-hum. And I would say that I would link the interpretation of the literature to that speculative nature of what you are doing. You take on fact and extrapolate all these others or pose your own theories **um-hum** as to the how and why of all of that **um-hum** and I think that is what you do in business and in life.

Right. Good. And you have touched a little bit on, for example, one group of students did a film in your creative portion of your class last year um-hum, so this question has to do with technology based writing. Do you think these should be explored in first year Composition courses; texting, emails, Facebook, Skype and PowerPoint?

Well it would make sense that they could be and I guess from my own experience, I mean the main thing I would use are discussion boards on blackboard or something like that **um-hum, like blogs?** Yeah. Yeah. Umm. There are times when I feel I would like to do more of that, but then I also feel that I am always pressed just to cover what we need to cover and so how it usually works out is that they're employing the technology **um-hum** in delivering the presentations more than I'm actually teaching the that.

That oral rhetorical portion of the course gives them the opportunity to use the technology.

Um-hum. Yeah. And otherwise I really use it more for discussion and again blackboard.

And that's fine.

Same thing.

How might your departments writing goals be helpful for business students?

Because I do think that all business students, all students, all graduates, need to be able to formulate a clear and compelling argument summary or analysis of a complicated situation. They also need to learn basic research methods, which they practice in 102 certainly. Things like we were talking about white papers, you know for example, they will need to do things like that and write business plans and all those things that would require them to gather evidence, summarize it, marshall it to their own purposes.

Good. Do you, I guess in summary and sort of giving you a little bit of an idea of where some of the business faculty seem to be going in terms of their priorities um-hum is there seems to be a priority of, how do I want to say this (laughing) they seem to give priority to the grammatical aspect um-hum of writing and that they tend, it seems that there is a resistance to umm prioritize critical thinking skills um-hum, analytical skills that is more like in the hierarchy of needs um-hum, um-hum. They are identifying grammar and cracked writing mechanics as mechanics more than context? Yes. And, oh gee if the content and critical thinking is there that would be amazing, but (laughing) if the, I guess I'm wondering when you are grading and in your rubric, I have been at schools that put the mechanics in a lesser um-hum weighted area um-hum, um-hum and really seem to be focusing more on the critical thinking, what is your feeling about a rubric.

And I would say that I would probably also focus more on content on critical thinking and one of the rubrics I use a lot is *The Right Stuff*. It is not a holistic rubric, but it is the content organization. I use both of them, but the content organization and language one I use and when I do it that way I typically weight them a third, a third, a third. We know obviously content and organization are **um-hum, um-hum, um-hum** you can't separate them, but we are anyway on those rubrics. So, I would say that two thirds of my focus would be on content and organization with a third of it on correct usage and grammar and that sort of thing. One thing that occurs to me in terms of thinking of how those are valued umm or approached by faculty, I would argue that in many ways it is easier to teach grammar.

Um-hum.

I could grade papers so much faster and save myself a lot of agony if I just fixed all the comma problems and the tense shifts and things like that **um-hum**, but I do not really feel I would be touching the heart of the matter. Yes, I think those things are

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important. Yes, I think it undermines your credibility and your ability to articulate when you cannot manage those elements properly, but I think you could have proper grammar and still have nothing to say **um-hum** (laughing).

Do you think... what is the proper venue for learning those skills if a college Freshman has not?

Well, and I think that in many ways, you know this is just my own take on it, I think for a lot of us we got maybe grammar in eighth grade, my own experience was eighth grade, grad school. (laughing) Nothing in between that focused on that really. You were expected to know how to write.

Right.

You had to do it you know, and I think the thing that is always so obvious to me and this may be tangential, but it is so obvious to **um-hum** me in the Composition courses. I can tell from the first paper which students are readers **um-hum um-hum**, which students read for pleasure and those students will have a general, even if they couldn't understand it, or articulate it, they will have a general sense of how language should function.

Yes.

You know, so I, I certainly think that many of them get into college and they are having to make up in the first semester for all that they have missed in the last 5 years of school, or was not offered to them, and what they've missed if they aren't reading. You know, so I think that is related, an embedded issue, to all of this.

I agree.

I certainly think they do need some grammar instruction and I think in 101, for me, if I can just get those 5 major editing errors, sort of **um-hum, um-hum**, get their subjects and verbs straight, you know all of that. I feel if I can do that and still have them write 5 papers **um-hum, um-hum**, and read a lot of material and a little writing handbook **that sounds like a great accomplishment** that I'm there. Yeah, it feels that way. Do I think they probably need more on grammar? Yeah, they probably do.

Um-hum. And it is just that they've been able to pass each year and continue on and actually do pretty well in English without having that knowledge?

Yeah, well and I think the other thing too is we really are trying to help them learn how to formulate a thesis, how to figure out what is important in a text and you know all those higher order processes that we know that we do when we interact with literature and I think that grammar tends to take a, umm, a lesser role.

Um-hum.

Is that right? I don't know that it is right. **Um-hum.** But I think they do need some of it and I would probably say in my own case you know maybe I would emphasize that, all of those higher order things and **um-hum, um-hum**, and the interpretation of literature $\frac{3}{4}$ of the time and maybe $\frac{1}{4}$ of the time are we really dealing with usage. **Um-hum.** But again, it's, it's in some ways hard to break it apart if you are especially working with those models and sample papers where you are really trying to deal with all of those things.

Right. Right.

The content, the organization and the use of language and you know grammar and style and everything, so I think there is a way to embed it without saying "okay kids today we're going to learn **yeah** how to make your subject and verbs match up. **Yeah, yeah.** You know whatever it is.

And then it seems that a further issue at Big Enough may be that some of these students are not taking the 101 class where they might get that sort of catchup work. And they are not. **Until they are exactly are further along.** Exactly and I had a conversation with someone you just interviewed, Mr. Hardy, not too long ago and I was telling him about a student that I had currently in my class at that time. It was the spring semester. The student was senior **umm** and was taking, a business major senior, who was taking English 101 in her senior. Her last semester and then she was just going to take that other, you know Business **Um-hum** English she needed later and it would be fine. **Um-hum, Um-hum.** In the summer or something and as I was saying to him, and to her, I could have helped her a whole lot more 4 years sooner. You know I could have helped her manage her manage the rest of her **right** course work with that foundation. But I don't know how to deal with that. I think that is something we need to do a much better job of here is trying to ensure that our students get that Composition sequence in their first couple of years.

Um-hum, as a requirement, before they move, pre-rec?

Yeah. Yeah.

So that may be a so I think that is problematic and of course as you know **if that's the perception of** absolutely **skill** absolutely. And the way that Mr. and I started having that conversation was, he didn't say it exactly like this, but it was "Our students can't write, what's, isn't the English faculty doing anything over there?" **Um-hum.** I'm like well one I can't do anything if I don't make them feel they are graduating. **Um-hum, um-hum.** I mean you know, so I think that is an issue and I think there is that perception that we can suddenly make up for the 12 years of missing writing instruction **Um-hum** in a semester **um-hum** and who have turned them into great writers and yeah we could if they all would write 5 drafts of everything **right, right, right, right** you know, all that, yeah, that could be possible. **Right.** With an extraordinary student who is willing to put out that level of work.

Um-hum.

And I mean you are seeing in your own class you know **um-hum** what kind of levels they are coming **um-hum** from. You wonder **um-hum** where were you for high school? Don't you? **Um-hum.** I mean and you are teaching them things that they probably, that you and I probably learned in 8th or 9th grade.

Yeah. I think the things that I was, was, needed help with when I entered college were few compared to, or I did need some help with some um-hum grammar rules, so. Yeah and we all do **and I still have to check, check.** Oh, I do too. I look things up all the time or I have (laughing) Katherine (inaudible) (laughing) She is my grammarian. (laughing) **So, yeah. I think.** And that is understandable, but I, I also, and I don't know...

Yeah, I think there is a lot that has changed in society in a culture that makes what they are trying to do in high school Oh, oh, absolutely. **Different.** Absolutely, absolutely. I'm not trying to say **yeah** it is their fault **no** in that way you know, but I know **well it would be** in our generation we were expected to know how to do that when **yeah, yeah,** we got to college. **Yes. You.** You weren't **that was standard** going to get much grammar **yeah** instruction there. **Yeah. Apparently.** Seems to be. **Um-hum.**

So, I think what I perceive is that there, some people have a standard of grammatical correctness that becomes a focus like no other.

And see I really, not to insult those people, because I think we need, we need the grammar **um-hum, um-hum,** I'm not contesting that, but that is so much easier to grade. **Right.** You have your strict set of rules **yeah, um-hum** you don't have to do higher order thinking in order to grade that. **Right.** And to make that your focus **Dr.**

um-hum. And I really believe that sometimes people in other disciplines who maybe haven't had that much experience themselves **um-hum** with, with writing **um-hum** or to get that much instruction themselves. They're not, they're not quite sure what to do and that is something very tangible.

Um-hum. They will get it more as an editorial role. Like an Editor.

Yeah. Instead of big picture thinking. Yeah.

Actual or conceptual yeah, yeah. It seems that way and, and that is understandable. I **um-hum,** am not trying to fault somebody, but **um-hum, um-hum** it's a lot easier to just focus on that. If you can teach somebody that it seems more easily than you can **um-hum** teach them how to generate those big interpretative (laughing) ideas. But that is one of the reasons that I love it that we have a literature based approach **um-hum** for our Composition.

Yes. And that, that is, is that, just so that I can totally understand what you are saying, is that for the 101 and 102 or...

In 101 we teach short stories and some essays and in 102 it's, it's poetry and plays **okay** and so they will do in 102, their research papers will be about either plays or poetry. They will read some Shakespeare you know **um-hum that's great.** Well it certainly **good** I mean, from a selfish perspective, is what keeps it interesting for us. **Yeah.** I would hate to have to do it from a rhetorical perspective only. **Right.** You know, when you are just looking at modes of writing **right** and without literature.

Well, that sounds like it has been successful here and the different concepts I will be looking at in my study.

It will be interesting to see what you find.

I appreciate your time.

You're very welcome (laughing)

Sorry for the rambling. (laughing)

Thank you so much. (laughing)

September 28, 2010

**Interview With: Ms. Christie, Full-Time Temporary Faculty with
Good Size State College (GSSC)**

That means that I have all the rights and privileges of full time instruction, so I have a full teaching load, but it's not with benefits and not a yearlong contract.

Great. Thank you. This is in the English Department.

Yep.

So, in your mind, or I guess in a syllabus, have you identified specific objectives for first year composition students to fulfill in order to pass the freshman required course, 1101?

Um-hum. Well, the department sets out certain objectives that are standard across all 1101 classes and **okay** on my syllabus I reproduce those objectives in my syllabus, which I can print out for you.

Okay. That would be great. This is something that I pulled from the web. This does not list specific objectives.

Correct. That's the description about the 1101 class that all students can access when they look at the schedule of courses.

Okay. So what you have is the actual objectives. That will be great.

Correct. Yeah.

Thank you.

I guess the skills are noted on that?

Um-hum.

Yeah.

In fact I can pull one up for you right now.

Okay. That would be great. Thank you.

(Pause)

It is a sizeable document.

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It is (chuckle)? Yeah, I'm sure with all of your semester. Huh? It has your semester plan on it?

Actually I print out my schedule as a separate document.

Oh so this your course policies and...

Yeah.

Okay, so these are the objectives they are outlined by the department. For me I simply reproduce them umm **okay, great** on the syllabus document.

Okay. Good. This will help us as we move through these questions. Just sort of looking at it in a cursory way, I am not able to distinguish right off the bat, are oral rhetorical skills, this is my question number three, addressed in the first year comp course?

Umm, not in a formal (pause) capacity. I think that faculty here have flexibility with the sorts of projects that they can do in their classes. Some faculty do group projects that require a presentation, which obviously would require oral communication skills. Others don't. I don't have a formal umm presentation project in the 1101 class. I actually do in my Brit Lit class, but I do require my students to work in small groups and I do require them to participate in those small groups and usually what happens is small groups function independently for 5 to 10, 15 minutes and then we have the conversations to all the groups, so there is conversation in that capacity. **Okay.** But in terms of formal instruction about you know, rhetorical modes in speaking **um-hum** I don't do anything like that.

And I think here at Gainesville there is a speech class um-hum that students are required to take. I don't know if they are required to take it. In the, I can't remember either, I'll have to look at my notes, but I remember, maybe business students are. That's what I may be thinking of. I notice one of the first objectives, becoming aware of the writing process, knowing terms related, prewriting, peer review, revising, editing, do you look at any articles on how successful writers compose or anything like that as far as involving them in terms of reading how successful writers compose or not?

I have, I have been using Anne Lamont's very short essay called *Shady First Drafts* and I use it as a needs of breaking the ice in the class. We talk about it very early on in the term and essentially Anne Lamont she is a writer. She is a food critic. She is also a creative nonfiction writer and her essays sort of (pause) destroys, or attempts to work against the myth of the perfect writer. This sort of weird notion that we have that writers,

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like the good writers **um-hum** are able to simply sit down and compose pros, you know flawless. **Um-hum.**

And I think for some students who connect with the text they get the **yeah** it's different for everyone, it is a process and that if you break it down into its component parts from gathering ideas and prewriting to drafting to revising, umm, and editing and proofreading, that they actually see incremental improvements in their writing.

That's great.

So in the class itself that's typically my go to essay at the beginning of the term **um-hum, um-hum** when we talk about writing projects. I can't think of any others off the top of my head that I would use in the classroom.

Okay. That's great. Umm. Do you think that, how, do you do very much close reading in your course?

Well in 1101 this is the first time I am using *The Anthology Writing of a Thesis* by David Sarah Squire and

Is that just your choice? Excuse me. Or is that something the department recommends?

It was my choice. It's I think it's a standard selection, one that I could have chosen, partly because I was not familiar with some of my other choices and partly because I was more familiar with umm, umm, using an anthology that looks at rhetorical modes **um-hum** and selected this one.

Okay, and what is that again?

Writing with a thesis by David and Sarah Squire. It's a father-daughter pairing. **Okay.** I love the first chapter. It's called *The Persuasive Principles* because it lays out a case for essentially most academic writing as argument based. **Um-hum. Um-hum.** The problem though with (laughing) the rest of the book is that it then goes on chapter by chapter to break down writing in its rhetorical mode. You know discrete rhetorical modes. **Um-hum.** Which I find problematic. I think that construction of text in that way works against the whole principle of the first chapter (laughing) **um-hum** so I don't think I would necessarily work with this text again. (phone ringing) **okay.** I don't think that I would, although I will say this much, I think some of the essays they select (phone ringing) for each chapter are quite intelligent. The intelligent selection is (phone ringing) nicely representative of the rhetorical modes that was looked at in each chapter.

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So when you say rhetorical mode, you are referring to, are you referring to specific types of essays? Or?

Compare contrast yes argument, examples, definition, yeah. (someone talking in background).

Good. When, as sort of component of that, I guess you are looking at audience and intent?

Um-hum.

Do you look at authors I guess and credibility, things like that? Do you look at why that author might, author's intent?

You're talking about in the essays or in the essays my students write?

In the essays that they read.

Umm. Hum. There are some essayists whose names jump out at me and one essay for the example chapter, which we happen to be working on right now, there's an essay by Amerigo Echo (?) I love, I love Amerigo Echo. I love his fiction. I love his critical thinking and his literary criticism. But quite frankly I have found the essay selection, *How to Speak of the Animals*. **Um-hum**. I found it obscure. **Um-hum, um-hum**. I found it (pause) potentially problematic for beginning freshman. **Um-hum**. Only because Echo's language is typically translated from Italian **um-hum** and because his writing is typically at the scholastic, the academic, the high scholarly level that in some instances I find inaccessible for **okay** 1101 students. **Um-hum**. Especially average 1101 students.

Do you, are you, do you find, is there an intent to, as I was mentioning before, to look at readings that could be perceived as controversial or?

(chuckle – could have been other person in the room, not sure)

In this book so far I haven't seen anything terribly controversial. Umm. One of the example essays that we read was *Always Settle Scores (inaudible)* by Robert Fulford. It's an ironic piece and it flips the notion of argumentative writing on the pad because essentially he goes to disprove his thesis. He starts off with one mode that everything he ever learned that was important in life he learned from movies and then he goes on to explain in great detail, with many examples, of these ridiculous notions, absurdities, these rules of life that we learn from the movies. **I see**. Like when a woman

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goes into labor the first thing we do is boil lots of water (laughing). It is actually, it is a really funny piece, but the closing paragraph is surprising because he goes on and talks about how when a woman is hysterical you slap her. **Um-hum**. So he ends on this **yeah** surprising, and for some of my students, upsetting note. **Yeah. Right**. This might, no pun intended, but that kind of issue might hit home. **Right, right, right**. And so the funny, you know the outrageous kind of dark humor in that paragraph gets completely lost with someone who is all too familiar with violence **right, interesting** against women. Umm, but on the other hand the vast majority of the students understood that that particular example was meant to be as over the top and absurd as possible in order to prove **right** that his thesis really was very little learned from movies was **that's great**.

Umm. When, when the students read a text, I'm looking at question six now, in a first year composition course they are often required to think speculatively with incomplete information. Umm, can you discuss whether or not and how you think this benefits composition students?

Well, (pause) really we're talking about deduction, inductive and conductive thinking and certainly it's got real word applications (pause) because (chuckle) we often go around **um-hum** with an incomplete picture on how to make speculations and deductions based on incomplete information, so in that way, from a larger perspective, you know if you're social construction theory is that education is meant to sort of round out the person, **um-hum** there are those benefits. **Um-hum**. Umm (pause)

In your course, students do find they have to take a position and argue for it in their writing?

Oh, absolutely, yeah.

I'm with the Squires in Chapter I of Writing with Thesis that a heavy, heavy percentage of writing done in academics is argumentative. **Um-hum**. And so even though the essay prompts that I develop are in some ways based on a particular or specific rhetorical mode that they need to focus on, they have come to understand, I hope, that they have to deploy multiple modes of thinking and writing in order to produce a text that fulfills the obligation of an argument.

I know that you're relatively new here at Gainesville, but what is your, have you received any writing from the students? Are you feeling that your, that these objectives are realistic and obtainable?

Umm. I haven't sort of memorized them. I think that umm some are pretty straightforward as in understanding words and terms related to the writing process. **Um-hum**. That's a fairly straightforward lesson to learn. Demonstrating competence with word processing concepts, I think 1101 students generally get that. Umm. Improving grammar usage mechanics, development and organization in context as needed, those are sort of longer objectives that have to be looked at and met over the course of the term. Generally speaking the first writing projects are all over the place. Some are, well more are well developed than others, some are better edited and proofread than others and it is a matter of finding the right sorts of tools to give students. I do not teach grammar in 1101. I just won't do it. Umm what I do in their first writing project is identify particular patterns of error and tell them, put them on notice that these are the patterns of error in your writing. Grammar mechanics based and then you need to take the first page, make the corrections and use this external source, The Purdue Online Writing Lab that I link **um-hum** in my classes elearning site, and essentially use it as a self-teaching tool and as a proof reading tool. So, my expectation is that when they are at the proofreading stage they come into class for an activity with their revision and with their error sheet and they sit down and they look for their own patterns of error in their writing and they make corrections based on that.

Umm that I find is far more umm useful and instructive than a 30 minute lecture on comma splices.

Is the error sheet referring, does it refer to comma splices then in that scenario and is that something they print out from the Purdue website or?

They can. They can certainly, the Purdue owl has you know thousands of handouts and it's a free resource, so I actually rely on it instead of asking my students to buy a grammar manual because I was, before the semester started I was comparing grammar manuals and it turned out that they're incredibly pricy. **Um-hum**. And given this area, as opposed to where I come from, **um-hum** students are, even if they have the Hope scholarship, sometimes that scholarship money doesn't come in immediately **um-hum**. I do try to be aware of the cost of **um-hum** text books. **Okay**. So.

So when you look at priorities in terms of skills and objectives for this course, you would say that you, I guess, it sounds like you are saying that you recognize that grammar and syntax and sentence structures are issues for many of these students, but you address them sort of in a periphery way, but?

I don't, well (pause) I don't know if I would say that I would put it on, on the margin. Umm. (pause) It. When I see a pattern that is a larger pattern, for instance umm it's either commas and compound sentences or comma splices I forget which. Oh, no I know. Introductory dependent clauses. Umm where that one seems to be a big offender

where the comma gets left out (laughing) **um-hum, um-hum**. I will talk about it in class in a larger discussion if I see that it is a pattern amongst the majority of the students. Umm. **Um-hum**. But again part of the issue is when you talk about grammar outside the context of a writing project, it typically does not work very well. It **um-hum** doesn't sink in. Umm. When you look at grammar concepts within the context of the piece of writing, say the essay that they're current or they're about to work on **um-hum** sometimes it will sink it and certainly when they're working either independently with their own writing or when they're working in small groups and looking at each other to write, they may pick up on it. Although, I do tend to tell my students that when they are in small groups and peer reviewing, they are privileging content over **um-hum, um-hum** over grammar mechanics and that it is not an editing or proofreading session.

Okay. To what extent would you say, I don't know if you, I assume you have some type of rubric you use.

Um-hum.

I wonder if I could get a copy of the rubric.

It's the departments rubric that I use.

Okay good.

It is actually, it's a nicely developed rubric. I

Is that online?

I don't know if it's accessible publicly.

Oh. Do you think I could get a copy of it? They gave me a copy of one they're using in business. And um the, so would you say that, I guess what would you say is weighted?

How are papers weighted?

I guess what would be the, in terms of priority, in terms of what you are teaching, the skills you're teaching, I guess I would assume those are sort of weighted more heavily in your rubric?

I'm sorry could you say that again? (loud noise, maybe drawer closing)

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Umm. With regard to the objectives that you're looking for and the skills you're teaching, are those weighted more heavily in your rubric, as far as the priorities go?

I. Well. Yeah. I would say. And I think. I think the department syllabus is also indicative of that. **Yep.** That the privileges toward content and critical thinking and not dismissive of, but maybe less concerned with (background noise – maybe a copier or printer). **Um-hum.** That's not a very good way of saying it.

This is a copy of the 1101. **That's great.** Rubric. **Thank you.**

Would you say that, so grammar mechanics. So could somebody still get like a D in grammar mechanics and get like an 80 or 85 on a paper?

(pause)

Umm

(pause)

No.

(pause)

For me. **Um-hum.** The way I interpret that is if the grammar mechanics are so problematic as to prohibit the contents readability **um-hum** umm or to **affect meaning** yes to affect meaning to prevent a reader's progress in making sense of the content **um-hum** then the very highest grade it could earn is a C.

Okay. You could still pass the class.

(pause)

Mmm

Mmm

I don't know. I mean it's hard to speak so broadly. **I** but I think that if, if a student does not have a command of the fundamentals of grammar I think that that student would have a very difficult time passing 1101.

Okay. If, I'm just asking because this is what um-hum people in the business department asked. If they're not getting, if students don't get this in 1101, they do not get a you know a mastery of grammar, where would they get it?

Well there are resources on campus, support resources. There's the ESL lab that's specifically geared to help students whose first language isn't English. There's the writing lab on campus that I'm not overly familiar **um-hum** with. My sense is that they do more tutoring than writing **right** something. Where I come from, South Florida, umm I was the Assistant Director of the Campus Writing Center **okay** and that writing center was consultation based. It was not a tutoring service, **right** so it was writers helping writers. **I see.** Yeah. Most of our employees were graduate students. I would say probably by the time that I left, maybe 45 to 55% of the consultants were English graduates, teaching assistants, **okay** but that maybe 10% of the consultants were undergraduates and then we also hired a certain amount of professionals outside of, from outside of the university.

Okay. And umm. So you, you, would suggest that by, upon entering freshman year of college these are skills students should already have and if they don't you know you could in 1101 design to brush, help students or support students in brushing up on skills and ensuring that they have a complete grasp of those skills by the time they?

I, I don't often like to think in terms of bumper stickers. **Um-hum.** You know those little clips? **Um-hum.** Umm, but here's how it works, this is how I think of the purpose of 1101. They're high school writing got them into college, but it is not going to get them out of college. 1101 is one step of many to prepare them for the rigors of academic writing. Umm. 1101 is sort of that baseline course that everybody has to take and it's supposed to give an overview of the expectations of academic writing, which means that we are talking about critical thinking.

We are talking about umm inductive and deductive thinking **um-hum** or reasoning. We are talking you are able to identify the difference between a higher order concern and write pros versus a later order concern.

Um-hum. Good. That helps a lot.

Just, in wrapping up, do you umm feel that technology based writing outputs such as texting, email, facebook, Skype, PowerPoint presentations should be explored in first year composition course?

Absolutely. I mean some more than others. I don't umm (pause) texting umm I wouldn't necessary, if you mean do I use them in the classroom? The answer is no. Other than to

say that “Oh look here we have an example” in an academic essay where a student is writing in texting language, which is, and then it becomes a learning, a teachable moment where clearly texting is, is, is a form of communication that is to a completely different audience and thus **um-hum** it serves a totally different purpose. It, even if grammar is radically different from that of **um-hum** of standard academic American discourse.

Emails umm are, are, you know, critical as a means for students to get in touch with me for any number of reasons, whether it is a question about an assignment or simply to let me know that they are not coming to class. **Um-hum.** Umm.

Do you require any specific format when students email you?

It’s interesting that you ask that question because I, I have, on occasion, corrected students, not that I’ve sent back their emails with you know red marks and (chuckles) dashes and etc, but umm I think some students for whom maturity is still an issue, email, emailing an instructor or professor is no different from emailing friends and quite frankly I want someone to tell me when there’s toilet paper on my shoe **um-hum, um-hum** so an improper email, or an email to me that I might receive from a student that strikes me as umm ill considered **um-hum, hum-hum, um-hum** rude, dismissive, entitled, **um-hum, um-hum** I might you know again using my judgement on a case by case basis, I might make some corrections. **Um-hum.** Again, that goes back to that sort of social constructionist theory. **Right.** I wouldn’t want someone to come down on me like a bag of hammers for being, you know if something I do is perceived as rude. I try to come down (laughter) with a velvet hammer. **Right. Right. Right.**

Umm. It’s interesting faculty have different opinions, but most faculty require students to communicate in letter form um-hum in their emails. Students I find forget to do that a lot. Oh yeah. **Like when I’ve** oh I get stuff too. I get blank subject lines. One of my particular favorite subject lines was “hey”. Who does that? (laughing) You know. I mean and it’s just you know it’s the tyranny of the urgent and the tyranny of the untutored **um-hum** because they’re new to it.

Right. Um-hum.

Okay. Well Ms. you are very articulate and have some excellent thoughts that will contribute very well to my research and I really appreciate your time and your insight.

Well thank you. Umm, have you looked into writing cross curriculum programs and writing in the disciplines.

Umm. Well, I’m just thinking, you know I don’t know. I was thinking this morning that I should go there and I just don’t know whether I will have enough time and,

and. I don't know whether that is too broad, opening it up to, I think it would be a, umm worth noting in a section that, that, that these types of programs address umm.

As a side note, **okay** umm you know when I was working at the writing center at FMU **um-hum** the director of the writing center, Jeff Gayland, **um-hum** also developed the writing cross curriculum program for FAU and after several years umm put together an alternative 1102 **umm** class that was discipline specific and he was just umm let's see he had an 1102 alternative that worked with chemistry majors, so chemistry majors who earned a particular grade in 1101 could exempt out of the traditional 1102 and take the chemistry based 1102, so they were getting 1102 credit umm for a class that was discipline specific. **Um-hum.** So that was really interesting and I'm trying to think of some of the other. I know he was trying to work with the business school, but the business school for as much complaining and whining as it did, you know "my business student can't write now what?" umm they weren't as receptive. I, I think that at the administrative level, I'm not sure about at the faculty level, umm but I think at the administrative level there was some resistance to developing a business based 1102, which is unfortunate. **Yep.** Now, as it happens, there also happens to be a class in the English department, umm it was business writing, a business communications course where you learn letters and memos and **um-hum** business based communication, but it certainly would have been interesting if the business, school of business could have collaborated more productively with the program. I think they could have done some really interesting work together.

Yeah. I agree and I think that's the type of context within which you could see a lot of progress. I think, it's interesting, a lot of these decisions boil down to somewhat political issues Um-hum (laughter) and I notice at Big Enough, for instance, they have a business writing class that fulfills the 1102 requirement. Somehow they have gotten that and it's operative in the business school. Um-hum. So you know that's a great thing for the business school because you know many of their students elect to take that. It also fulfills business school requirement, so double dipping, and the, even the business faculty member I spoke with, you, know he had been chair of the department when that policy was implemented. He suggested that, he actually suggested his students who took the English version of 1102 and then took the business writing course were better writers. But umm. It is interesting to see how it all plays out. And at UOG the writing cross curriculum is sort of being developed within the English department, but it is a completely separate entity from the um-hum and so there's some yeah divisiveness. Oh yeah. So it's.

I've often said that the wheels of academic progress are square. (laughing) so.

Okay. We'll end on that note. (laughing)

September 28, 2010

Interview With: Dr. Salinger, Professor of English and Coordinator of First Year Composition, Good Size State College (GSSC)

Okay. Great. Thank you.

Again, we are speaking about the required freshman course 1101 and 1102 here at Good Size College. With regard to looking at the skills that are learned in that course and I am speaking with business faculty as well to talk about the skills they are looking for in writing, writing skills they are looking at in their students. Do you feel that oral rhetorical skills should be addressed in the first year composition course?

To some extent. Umm. Very frequently, especially in the 1102 classes, our teachers will have the students do either individual or group oral reports. I don't think it's a major component of 1101, 1102, but we touch on it and our communication class, (some noise in the background-machine humming, knocking maybe) which is required of all students, goes into much more depth and detail about organizing and presenting material orally.

Okay and that's the communications course taken outside of the English department?

Yes it is. Well it's in our school. It's in the School of Humanities. **Okay.** But it is outside the department. Although, many of my students tell me that if they take Communication 1100 first then English 1101 is much easier and vice versa, so many of the same organizational and attack skills are taught.

Interesting. That's great. When you talk about priorities in this course, what would you say the priority is here at Gainesville State for students who... I know we have a list of objectives and the syllabus right. When you look at those objectives what would you say is priority?

Well as a department we have agreed that among the more important priorities are making sure that our students know the rudiments of organization and that they strengthen those rudiments in the second course. Many of them come to us with some skill at being able to put together sentences, but with very little sense of how to make an organized argument or presentation **um-hum**. And so we do try to impart those skills and to reinforce them for the students who already have them. Also, something that we work on again and again, is specific support. Many of our students want to give us statement and restatement of generalities without ever getting down to examples. **Um-hum**. And so we, we're stressing more and more in 1101 and 1102 not just the initial composition, but revision and rewriting. **Um-hum**. Partly to increase critical thinking skills and partly, well I guess really mostly, to make sure that our students are giving us something substantive and not just a repetition of their general idea over and over again, couched in slightly different terms.

I see. And when, when you talk about ah close reading and analysis skills, are they, are they looking at questioning the author at all, about his credibility or umm intent or mainly just?

Yes. And it's difficult sometimes to get them to engage an author in that level because they, they don't seem to pick that up in high school and one of the things that I tell my 1102 students is "forget what your high school teacher told you, there is no one way to interpret a poem or a story. You're perfectly free to say I don't like this story because... and if you think the story has a message that isn't applicable to you or to your peers tell me why. Give me examples and tell me why. You are perfectly free to do that". Some of them find that intimidating, but others finding it very liberating. **Um-hum.** I, I've had students who would quarrel with me, quibble with me about interpretations of stories ah that we have discussed in class, sometimes with a little note of apology at the end, (chuckling) but I'm delighted to get that.

Yeah. That's great. I guess along those lines, as I look at question six, when talking about the ability to think speculatively um-hum with limited information. Do you find that is a skill that is emphasized at all in 1101 and 1102?

To a, to an extent. What we encourage them to do is sometimes to write a sort of a preliminary draft, without doing any research, to establish their own explanation of something. We will give them a topic and say why to do you think? Very often it is a cause and effect assignment. **Okay.** And then once we get the initial speculation down I think this is because, this may be because, we say "Okay now go do the research. See if you can support that or see if you're wrong and don't be afraid to change if you're wrong". So we try, we try to teach speculation, but then buttressing speculation with research and experience.

Interesting. Do you umm teach proper citation?

Yes we do.

Okay. Is that an emphasis in the course?

It is, more especially in 1102. We have at least one documented essay is required in 1101. Some of us give more than one and I typically will do maybe three documented essays in 1101 myself and every essay in 1102 has to be documented in MLA format. The, of course there is a plethora of sites now that will do most of the work for the students once they discover it and I try to root mine to the, well Purdue has a good one for example, and there's also commercial sites that some of them prefer because they think it's easier. (laughing) but **um-hum** sometimes it is difficult to get them to do it and

the little nuances, the, the, the little ticky things like proper placement of period in a citation for example. Something they miss.

Do you find that they recognize that they might need to cite even when they have gotten, you know, if they need to site when they are on the web? Using Internet, do you find that is?

It's a challenge. Umm many of them apparently in high school are used to you know just plucking some paragraphs off the internet and putting them into a paper and it is somewhat of a challenge to get them to overcome that habit and to tell them it is legitimate if you cite it and if you integrate it into the paper. **Um-hum.** That's probably one of the hardest things to do in documentation in 1102 is teaching the students how to cite even if they're not quoting word for word, if they're paraphrasing. Because they are not always aware they need to do that.

I see. Do you discuss plagiarism as a?

Oh yes. Yes. That's a, it's a standard part of all of our syllabi. We go over it the first day in class and then generally, I'm fairly lenient if it seems to be an error of misjudgment. **Um-hum.** If it's a continuation of a habit, the first time I'll say "you know you can't do this because. Look at the syllabus. This is plagiarism because". I'm trying to explain it to the student. Then the second time we get a little harder. (laughing)

Yep. Good. Okay. And ah in I guess along the lines of skills in priorities, where would you say that grammar basics fit in?

Well, we're dealing with a population umm about 40% of our students are first generation college students and so we do face a challenge in just basic grammar skills sometimes. Many of our students will come in having apparently very little grasp on what a preposition is and I get very strange uses of prepositions and just completely incorrect. So we will have to drill on those sometimes in 1101, to a lesser extent in 1102. It is important I think and I try to explain to my students that the importance of grammar isn't an artificial standard of correctness, but the goal is clear communication.

Okay. Good. Excuse me while I just make a note here. Umm. Do you how do you answer, I mean how might you answer a perspective that says students should come away from 1101 or 1102 with standard grammar skills, having obtained standard grammar skills?

I'm not sure that that is possible all the time and I'm not sure it is even desirable. As I tell my students when you're texting or writing a letter, write anyway you please. When you're doing something formal be aware that there are different levels of discourse and

you need to learn the rules for the different levels. Be as informal as you want when you're talking or when you're texting. Be a little more formal when you're writing a document for an audience at college or later in your career.

Um-hum. And do you feel that umm somebody could make numerous grammar errors and still I guess obtain like a C or B on a comp essay?

There is a limit. We have a rubric that, have you seen the rubric? **Yes.** We have a rubric and beyond a certain limit, no. Ah there's, some students will be able to get acceptable content, but very, very few will be able to combine numerous grammar, ah errors in grammar with outstanding content and it would have to really be high level content before it could **um-hum** outweigh some of the grammar problems because the grammar problems tend to to disrupt that communication. **Um-hum.** They distract. It distracts and I just graded one essay here for example that makes some good points as I just told the student in a note, but the syntax is so confusing that the points are almost impossible to drag out of the paper unless you pay closer attention to it than a casual reader would. **Um-hum.** Or even an interested reader (chuckling) and so I'm urging the student to do some revision on those, those sentences. It is a matter of just very peculiar syntax. Separating subjects from verbs by far too much space so that by the time you find the verb you're not even sure what the sentence is about anymore. Umm. Having floating parts that don't seem to connect to the rest of the sentence at all that have no syntactic connection with the main line of the sentence and you know for me that's it violates the necessity that we have for teaching the students how to communicate well with an audience. And I tell my students "Don't assume you're writing for me specifically. Write for a general audience that has read the material, but might not have thought about the material thoroughly. Educate us".

Interesting. Now, for instance, with that paper, did you make notes on the paper or I did suggest I go through corrections well or is that a I didn't prescribe corrections. I would underline a passage and say "what connection does this have to the rest of the sentence? I'm unclear on this. Why does this need to be in the sentence? Think about rewriting this sentence. What is the subject of this verb? Put the subject close to the verb and the sentence will be clearer." So I'm trying to urge the student to explore himself and he probably will come to me and sit down and **I see** we will talk about possible revisions.

You will have to spend a pretty significant amount of time. Well that comes with the job. **Helping him.** Yes. Right. **Strengthen his skills.** Yeah we offer in-office conferences and **yeah** and more and more often my students will email me with specific questions. They'll send a paragraph from an essay and say "This doesn't seem right to me, can you help me with it? Can you help me proofread it?" and I'll make suggestions.

“You need to expand this idea. This is a good idea, but you don’t support it in any way. Where do you see this in the work?” and that kind of thing.

Good. All right. By the way we do peer review. **Yeah. Do you find that is helpful?**

It is in varying degrees, yes. Yes. Sometimes they want to be way too nice to each other and not say anything negative or anything critical (chuckling) and they have to get out of that I tell them “you’re all in the same boat. We’re all trying to help each other here, so don’t hesitate”. I always tell my students “if I tell you anything about the content that you don’t agree with, remember I’m not always right either, convince me in that case”. (chuckling)

Yeah. Because sometimes the student may not really be on target. Right. **So that’s good.**

When you think about technology based writing outputs, we talked um-hum a little bit about texting, email. Um-hum. **Do you think these types of outputs should be explored in first year composition courses at all?**

I’m very traditional. I don’t. Simply because I’m not comfortable with most of these. **Um-hum.** I’ve never used Skype in my life for example. I do have a facebook page, but I almost never post there. I frankly don’t know how to text. (laughing) It takes me far longer to text than it would to call and give a message. But, many of our teachers do. I have no objection to it and I think it might engage some students who otherwise would not be engaged. It’s just not one of my skill sets (laughing) and I think I’m too old to master them now.

I don’t think that’s true. Okay. **Good.**

Do you have any occasion to communicate with the business department about course We do. I, I don’t do that personally, but we have contact teachers, generally the ones who teach the technical writing. **Yeah.** Including Patsy Worrell. And at our meetings we will, whoever the contact person is that semester will relay to us any information coming from the business department. Umm I tell my students that they’d be amazed at how much communication skills will increase their employability later, even if they’re going with something they think is completely unrelated to reading and writing. There used to be for one of the book clubs back in the 60’s a magazine ad with an obviously very, very successful boss leaning across the desk and saying “send me a man who reads”. **Yes.** (laughing) and I’ll mention that. **Yeah.** And I’ll say if you interview well, if you write a letter of application well, if you show that you’re an organized thinker, a critical thinker, you’re going to stand a much better chance of being employed where you want to be employed. **Right.** And I use my own son as an example. He was

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an English major. He wanted to be a medievalist, but he got sort of detoured into the world of computers and now he is the head technical writer for howstuffworks.com. **wow.** Something that he would not have anticipated because he has no technical training whatsoever, but he has the organizational skills and the research skills and so he's doing quite well (laughing).

That's great. That's great. Good. Well I, I think this will be very helpful to me in my research and I really appreciate you taking the time to share your insights.

Thank you. It was quite painless.

Thank you. (laughing)

September 17, 2010

**Interview With: Dr. Pound, Professor in the Department of Management,
Twain School of Business at University of Giants (UOG)**

Let's just get started. We will take a look at a couple of these questions. I did look at umm the website in the business school and umm, I guess, I guess generally it addresses communication skills.

Um-hum. Um-hum.

Umm. What in your mind are the specific composition requirements that a prospective business student might, well do you know of any that are definitely required of your business students?

Other than you know the specific courses, of course those are required. **Um-hum.** But they don't have, we don't test their writing again **um-hum** before they come into Terry College. Umm.

Let me ask you, what point do they come into Terry College, generally speaking?

They come in as first term juniors.

Okay.

Yeah, now they must take umm 2 accounting classes and 2 econ classes, umm, probably in their sophomore year to even be able to apply to enter their junior year. So, where they start their major technically, ahh, while their junior year, we, we capture them sophomore year.

Okay.

Yeah.

And you would have the expectation that they would have completed their core requirements in terms of freshman comp?

Oh yes.

At that point.

Yes. We expect them to have that skill set. We just put in place a calculus class as well, as a prerequisite for even being accepted, so we have more than enough demand for our classes. So, we are kicking up the requirements continually.

I see. As far as specific skills, communication skills that you feel should be targeted in the composition course, in the first year composition course, are there any that come to mind?

Well, you, you know, not, I tell my students, ahh the undergrads, and the MBA students for that matter, umm not to be cookie cutter, but it's, you know, if they can write a decent, umm ahh 3 or 4 page paper it, it's kind of boiler plate. **Um-hum.** If they can write a decent introduction and they can make transition statements to the next paragraph, the next thought, if they can, and they have a body of the paper and then they have a closure of the paper. We push them in business to draw recommendations. **Um-hum.** And, so, most students are not very adept at that and in fact they're reluctant to do it, even the MBA students, so when we do it, for instance **um-hum** a case analysis is where I see most writing and that's where the students would read a 10 to 30 page case, do the business analysis and then write up that analysis and, and I push for the majority of the case to be recommendations and so ahh, umm, learning to sell if you will (someone comes into the room) learning to present a position to make an argument, a persuasion argument, those are key for business students I think. Umm.

Good. Now that goes to one of my questions here that has to do with, number 6, so ah, even when they read text in a first year composition course, they are often required to think speculatively and this goes to what you're talking about, the critical thinking skills and the speculative nature of reading and writing.

Yes. Umm, I, I met my MBA class on Wednesday night and we had this very discussion and I, I teased them a little bit about, we did this exercise and essentially most of them chose the option that they wanted more information. **Um-hum.** And I teased them about that and said "oh, well you're just typical MBA students, you don't want to make a decision. You want to keep gathering information and the world we live in you can just gather information forever." So yeah, I push them to do the best they can with the research, collect their data and use good data sources ahh ahh and you know we try to keep them away from all the pedias out there, the WiMr.edia and the **um-hum** kind of open source umm places where they can get a quick take on a subject. And again, I push them to, with incomplete information, take a position. **Um-hum.** And, and that is one thing I emphasize in my classes is you're aspiring business people **um-hum** what do we reward our business people for. The CEOs out there, they're not always right, but they take a position and they, they support it. They strongly come out **um-hum** and support a position. They are not just kind of wishy-washy lukewarm. They say this is where we are going so everybody get on board, so again the persuasion argument is very important an issue.

Okay. How important are grammar and mechanical skills and, and what do you see in your students, what are you wishing in those skill areas?

It's a problem. Umm, I'm a stickler for those details and in fact I'm sort of an oddity I think in the business discipline everywhere I have taught, more so at, you know, and nothing against Giants, it's just that class size here doesn't allow the amount of writing that I did at a little bit larger school, **um-hum**, but I literally, still with my MBA students, I hand out a writing tips sheet that has my pet peeve list, specifics to watch for, like, you know, using quotation marks properly is, you know, and double versus single quotations and contractions and numbers under 10 and just the things we all learn writing and I find that you know we are all lazy about that, even my very good writers, just to remind them of some of the mechanics. Umm, and again I sell it from a business perspective. I say "tough market out there. If you want to have a distinctive confidence, let me tell ya, if you..." Soon, usually these kids can do analysis. That is where they come from. If you can combine that analysis with the ability to succinctly write and hand your boss something that he or she can run with without worrying about is it properly worded and punctuation marks and not a bunch of goofball grammar errors. I said "that's a real skill set". And if you can do that you will be recognized immediately in your workplace.

Um-hum. So I, I, I do a little soapbox thing my first, every class I teach for 10 minutes and I say you have to read, you have to read, you have to read. You've got to read the, you know, our bible is *The Wall Street Journal* **um-hum** and I say that is good writing. It is good clean writing. It's effective from a business perspective and every one of those articles, it is, it is kind of cookie cutter **um-hum** you know. They open with an interesting personal example **um-hum** and some anecdote **um-hum** then they cover kind of the theory of the **um-hum** body of what they want to talk about and then they close with some conclusion. I said "that's your model. That's how you write". So, some get it. Some take it seriously. And, and, and again, even with the MBAs, I, I, we do it electronically now and I make corrections and frankly I get the same mistakes. (sighs) You know. **Um-hum.** Long-term. So, some take it to heart and some don't.

Would you say that is an area of concern? I mean, if you were going to try to balance out the skill set that you were looking for students, undergraduate students to come into, into business school um-hum what are you, would you say your emphasis is equally on analysis and critical thinking skills and grammatical and mechanical sentence basics or (man sighs) would you umm, where is your main focus or area of concern? Um-hum. You're seeing both, you're saying both?

Yeah. I. Again, I, our kids learn to be analytical. I'm not worried about that. **Um-hum** So even if they are not particularly geared that way, maybe their brains aren't, don't work that way and so they figure out in a year or two "I don't really want to do this" and that's okay. There's nothing wrong with that. **Right.** The ones that are analytically driven that's what I tell them. If they don't have that and I preach it to my first term juniors. If you don't have this writing skill set, **um-hum** you know you got a window here and if

you've not gotten it yet you got some time to kick up your skill sets so take advantage of that. So, so if I were to pick one thing **um-hum** it, it's just, I would call it (pause) I would call it the mechanics of writing. **Um-hum.** I, I'm just not sure if they're pressed to do that. We communicate so much electronically, voice mail and for the kids to sit down and write sentences? **Um-hum.** Umm, I'm just as an aside of this, I have just started using umm Nuances voice recognition software **um-hum um-hum** because I do so much of that and my wrists, I just and I'm a poor typist **um-hum, um-hum** it's fabulous. You know it's one of those things where you watch it on TV and you say "yeah, right, but that really wouldn't work for me", and, and I ordered it and it was a hundred bucks and you know I have to go back and edit the punctuation **right, right, right** and, but it's, it's changed my productivity completely.

What is the program? I know there is the Dragon one.

Yes. The Dragon BR11 **okay** they just came out with their 11th edition and it's fabulous. So, I mentioned that to my students. I said "ya'll, some of ya'll hate to write, let me tell ya (chuckles) you can talk into a microphone and your **um-hum** productivity you know triples.

So you would, I guess that would be a sort of, goes to question 7, technology based writing output. Um-hum Umm that's something no one has mentioned yet is that **voice recognition software.** Well, you know **Is that something you want** Ahh ahh you know umm, some kids just freeze up and you know this **um-hum** I'm sure you've studied this in English. Little boys are just, I'm awful. I can't write. I never have been able to, so the less I write as I get older **um-hum** I get worse and worse and so I think, particularly males coming into those courses, I think they're intimidated by the prospect, and now they type it of course, **um-hum**, but even so, the, you know, the skill set requirements are the same **um-hum** commas and punctuation and so anything that can help them do it faster and be more productive, I think that's great. You know I do email. I do. I don't punctuate. I don't do it properly. I'm just like everybody does, **right** but the other thing I tell them is anything going out for public consumption, I mean that's what this guys, this is something that my Ph.D. students just edited for me. I never put something out for public consumption unless there have been some other eyes on it and **yeah** umm. **Proof reading is a part of that program too** sure.

Do you feel that oral rhetorical skills should be addressed in a yes first year writing course?

I do.

Okay.

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And I don't know how you combine those, you know, you and I took, you know, probably speech classes **um-hum** or umm a lot of kids don't.

Do you have any requirements for an actual speech class in the business school do you know? Or in their program? I don't know.

I don't know anything about it actually.

I'll look at it.

Yeah, yeah.

I know they do presentations.

Yes.

Umm, and, and some really benefit from those and some hide. You know the group are big enough that **um-hum** and so I press them to do that and again it is from a business perspective. Here's your skill set. You're, 80 or 90% of ya'll are gonna be selling something one day, if not a product you're selling yourself **um-hum** you know you, you're trying to get a customer to buy your services, so you gotta get comfortable with that presentation and ah, I, I would say our students are probably more adept than the average university student when, when they come out because they're forced to do it. **um-hum** Whereas other majors are not, so ours **um-hum** are pretty good. I feel good about that.

And, umm, when you talk about close reading and analysis skills, how important is it that students question the credibility of author or of the publication or yeah, umm look at those types of concerns?

Of course, umm, from an academic perspective, we're, we're tuned into that. **Um-hum.** The students are not. **Um-hum, um-hum.** And so.

Is that something you focus on in a college of business or not? Is it, as far as having students question, like when they read The Wall Street Journal um-hum or that type of publication oh that's why is this in here yeah and that type of thing?

And I actually say that (chuckle) frankly in the political environment I have to be very careful. **Right.** Cause I stand, I have big sections of undergrad, so I have 300 kids **yeah** so if I stand up and criticize this **yeah** I mean I get raised eyebrows like "how dare he". **Right.** Survival on all **yeah** and I say now **there's definitely two different factions Dr.**

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there (laughing) and I (inaudible) (laughing) and I say “folks we can all be astute consumers of information and understand that this is coming from a much more conservative business space perspective. This is a much more liberal perspective and read it through those lens”, so at least I say it. A lot of them have blinders on you know. And again, we, you remember being 20, you know everything and you’re bullet proof and **um-hum** nobody can tell you anything. **Um-hum**. So, you know you try to plant that and hopefully they understand and eventually have to challenge credibility sources. They’re so used to just popping online and they just take it as gospel. **Um-hum. Right.** It’s a real issue.

Do you feel that they, so in terms of the extent to which those skills are addressed in first year composition, really any of these skills we’re talking about, do you find that some students have, I guess, I don’t want to put words in your mouth, but some students have challenges in all these areas?

Yes. Yes.

Even though they have had that class?

I think so. Umm

But your greatest concern is the, you would say, sentence mechanics?

I would say just the ability to write and just, I know that really covers, you know, a, a, a lot, but again, they, they’re gonna get the analytical skills. **Um-hum** I think they get pretty good after 3 years of exposure here to the presentation skills. **Um-hum.** The major weakness I think is writing and, and our employers tell us that. **Interesting.** They understand that. And so

When you see employer surveys, excuse me for interrupting, umm that state, you know, good communication skills are a priority when looking at recruiting, do you, what do you think they mean?

What do the recruiters mean?

Um-hum.

Well, (pause) I think they primarily look at a student’s ability to sit across the table and verbalize and they can translate that into “well this guy’s gonna be pretty good up in front selling our product”. Umm **um-hum** umm I think it’s less often that they get a nice piece of writing from a student. So I’ll tell students to do that. **Right.** You know, not only do

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you write a nice cover letter, but you know if you wrote a business plan for me or a nice case study that you did well on in the writing, you ought to submit that because they're not, your recruiters aren't even used to seeing that. **Right.** So good writers I do, I think take advantage of that and the recruiters will tell ya, I mean I'm the same way when we get, I mean if we get faculty candidates and you know there's a typo in the cover letter, **um-hum** we, we just set it aside. You know, why would you look at that one? There's enough good people out there otherwise.

Right. So even one typo?

Sure. Sure.

Yeah.

And umm, umm, just in finishing up here, do you know if there are any ways at all that faculty in your department communicate with faculty in the English department about writing?

There may be something informal. I couldn't tell you that.

Okay.

Okay.

Great. Well I appreciate all of your good information and your time today and I will follow-up with you.

Good. Well good luck with that.

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Interview With: Dr. Mr. Hardy – Professor of Management in Business Administration– Big Enough University

Are these the questions?

They are; and some of them, you know as I interviewed the English people I realized some were somewhat redundant or maybe had been addressed in previous questions, so if we sort of feel that way we can okay just you know continue on okay.

What, if any, are the specific academic Composition requirements that prospective Business students are required to fulfill before becoming a Business Major or graduating with a Business Degree?

Okay, well, I'm sure that all of these questions, and I have not looked them through yet, but just judging by what you said already, all of these questions can be answered somewhat differently depending if we were talking about undergraduate students or graduate students.

Then we are talking about undergraduate in this case.

Alright, so all the questions I am going to be answering all have to do with undergraduate students.

Yes, and thank you for giving me an opportunity to clarify that. What we are specifically talking about is the effectiveness of the required Freshman Composition course for Business students in terms of what skills does it provide for them as a base in terms of moving forward in their programs.

Well, it is essential. In our Business program we want to see those students coming into even some of the introductory courses that we offer with the EH101. That would be the Freshman **yes** introductory course.

Exactly, 101 and 102.

I would prefer them coming in with EH101 and 102. That is what I would personally prefer. However, the way that our Liberal Education curriculum is set up at Big Enough University, students can take BA306, which is Business Communication, and fulfill the requirement EH102. So, often what students will do, not just Business students, but students from around the university is that they will take BA306 in order to get their requirement for EH102. Now, I would like **what is** to see that changed. BA306 is Business Communications. Now, I teach that course **okay**, in the women's college on the undergraduate level in the women's college. I have five other professors that report to me who are adjuncts that teach that in our

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other venues **um-hum** including online. **Um-hum** and those classes are constantly filled, mainly because students realize they can take this course and have it fulfill the EH102 requirement. Additionally, there is something called that we dubbed, or have given the unfortunate moniker of double dipping.

Um-hum.

So our Business Communication class, BA306, will not only fulfill the EH102 Liberal Education requirement, but is also a required course in the Business curriculum. **Ahh.** So they get credit for both of those by taking BA306 and that is why many students will opt out of EH102.

Of course.

That is why our classes are very full, our BA306 classes are very full. However, having said all that I see a difference in those students who take both EH101 and 102 before coming into any of my business classes. To me they are better prepared. They can write better. They can speak better.

Interesting. I understand, this may come up later, but I understand in many instances, or at least some of the time, students do not take those, or they are not really required to take the early requirements early.

I know, and I don't understand that. But, it happens occasionally. I used to pole them how many have had EH101 and I just did not do it this semester for whatever reason, but most of the students who are in my BA306 class are sophomores and juniors, but theoretically they can, they can take, they can take aaahh, hang on just a minute, I don't want to misspeak. They can take many classes without taking EH101.

Right. That is what the perception is in the English Department. I would think that would really affect the perception of business faculty in terms of of course it does what these students, you know they think that students have it, but they don't.

Yeah, and you know what, hang on a minute just let me check something real quick. BA306. Yeah, the prerequisite for that course is EH101.

Yeah. So, since you teach 306 you are seeing mostly people who have taken it?

Right.

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o, the, the, for the number 306 implies it is a junior level course, so they have to have 101 before they get into BA306. We did that a few years ago and I just wanted to verify that. Umm, but I don't, I don't know how many take EH102 before 306. I wish they would.

And that sort of is a good, it, it is, I guess that, this is off topic slightly, but I guess it would be an economic consideration too for the Business School. I mean, how's that, well with, in the English Department that freshman Composition course has been kind of a cash cow because students have to take it.

Umm. And every university it must **and every university** be a cash cow. I had to take it Junior College.

Right, right. Yeah, it is. I mean it is one area yeah in English Department that is a growth area.

Yeah, 101 and 102. I remember taking those two courses when I was in college and in top of that, and I went to a liberal arts college as well, and I remember having to take, being required to take I want to say 2 or 3 additional English Composition courses or literature courses, maybe it was even 4, before I could graduate. **Interesting.** And um I don't know if that's, our Liberal Education requirement is very flexible and allows students like a cafeteria plan to go **um-hum** in and there are pros and cons to that **um-hum**, but often they will pick things that they like rather than what they need, so when we see a student and we see them struggling and I say to them "well did you have that additional writing course" and they say "well I didn't need to take that.

Right.

The idea was to have, and I was the Dean of a business school and, so I was 1 of the 4 Deans working on this to have a third, a third, a third. A third required Liberal Education courses, a third required Major courses and then a third of electives so they could choose what they wanted.

Um-hum So they can choose what they wanted and that is how we were designing it and that is how many Liberal Arts Universities do it. **Right.** And we wanted to sort of model ourself after that and I think to some extent it has worked. Some of the liberal education electives that were quite creative I think saw a, a, an additional number of students coming into them because they had this other **sure, sure** third that they can take anything they want, **right**, but this third over here also is very flexible. We originally did intend to have as many courses qualify for this Liberal Education, but everybody wanted their course in there. **Right, right, right, right.**

And so, **and that's the thing. Yes.** And I was shocked, especially the Humanities Department. Everything qualified as a liberal education according to them. You know. You know. **Yes.** Thirteenth Century Russian Poetry to me is not a Liberal Education Course. **Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.** EH101 is. **Right. Right. Right. Yes, you would be amazed.** I'm sorry I got on my soapbox. **Specialization occurs.** Yeah, sorry. **Yeah. So, okay, good. So. Umm. What would you say I guess going along with that, are the specific skills your department would like to see targeted in first year composition.**

You know, I am not a Composition professor, so I might say things that. **Whatever comes to mind.** That may not make sense to me, but I remember **from your point of view,** when I. What was that? **For your purposes. For business.** For my purposes? **For what you would like to see in your business students.** Yeah, I remember when I was in school even as a graduate student we were required to understand the rules of composition. You know where to put the period, before or after the quote mark? How to site properly, how to avoid using first and second person in formal papers, research papers. **Um-hum.** These rules of composition, in fact I used to require a this sort of what's the rule **um-hum** a simple guide to perfect punctuation and it was shrinkwrapped with other ones and included how to use comas, periods, parentheses, quote marks **yes, that's great** hyphens and you know when I was in school we were required to understand how to use these rules and I'm finding in my undergraduate students when I read papers they have no clue about how not to use first or second person, so there is constantly a, even a mixture of all three persons woven together **right, right** in the same paper and I'm like "where did you learn this" and how to site properly, so I would say that the biggest thing is how to, to ite **yeah** properly and how to use basic composition rules. Those would be the two things I'd like to see. **Yeah.** I mean it would solve, it would make my life joyous just to have a group of students come in and know how to site properly. **Okay.** Joyous. As in Christmas joyous you know. **Yeah.**

When you think about that then, do you think that oral, as well as written rhetorical skills should be addressed within the context?

Probably oral skills. I mean it is my understanding that EH101 is really dedicated to written skills. **Um-hum.** And that in EH102 there might be a presentation, but to me, from what I understand and what I think it should be is a continuation of more in-depth writing skills in EH102 and 2.

Okay. So more written. Really you do not see a need for oral No, I really don't. **Okay.**

Umm. You know in business communication we do a lot of oral and I would rather teach them there how to do that than for them to believe they know how to do oral from one oral presentation they did in their freshman year. **Um-hum, um-hum.** So, I would rather have the concentration be on writing skills in EH101 and 102.

Okay. What do you think about learning how successful writers compose? In other words learning a process for writing?

Like telling them what you are going to say and say it?

Sort of a planning process, mapping, yeah. That kind of thing. **Sort of an analytical** to me **approach** any process is okay with me. I mean I am not, I don't as a business professor I am not umm **revising** particularly stuck on one way a person should write. **Yeah.** But as, when they do it should be proper. It should be correct.

Okay, so you're, you're just concerned with correctness. What about, this kind of leads us to the next section as far as close reading and analysis skills and this is not necessarily having to do with Composition of course, but obviously it is something we are looking at whether or not your departments address in English is close reading and analysis skills. How vaDr.ble do you think those are to prospective business students?

So when you say close reading that is paying attention to detail? Is that what you mean by that?

I mean understanding the context of the material, like the writer, who wrote it, what type of publication they are writing in, where, what their intent is in writing, who their audience is.

Our students probably do not need to go to that place. When our students do research for inclusion in a paper they are writing for research **um-hum** or whatever it might be, they are more interested in the content of the work rather than how it was written. So, most of the work that our students would site from would be technical journals about specific business areas like economics and finance and management, so who wrote it and how they wrote it for that close writing part is not really of consequence to us.

I guess one, not to try to sway you in any direction or other, but for instance the paper we wrote last year had to do with the battle between Google and I guess it was Kendall, the print association and something with the article that had to do with the persuasive arguments for each, for the existence of each

and the proliferation of digital books versus print books, so from that prospective students in coming up with whether or not they felt the article was written effectively, they had to look at who was writing the article and what publication was it in, who was the intended audience and how to use critical thinking skills to come up with sort of an opinion about the effectiveness and where that person was coming from, why they were writing the article, sure, in order to make an assessment of whether it was a useful article to use? Yeah.

I do see that point and I think that is an important one. Do I see it as one of the paramount issues with our students? No. I do see it is an important one. For example, I think one of the reasons why it is not way up on the front burner is because we guide our students in the kind of journals that they are going to need to get their work from and most of the authors who submit and are published in those journals, or the kinds of books that we require, are already top notch. I mean they're, they're journals **compatible?** Yeah, exactly. **You feel like they are not** I don't think there is a hidden agenda **have a specific interest or anything?** Yeah, I don't see hidden agendas in some of the things that are written in the kind of journals that our students are in to. And so, for a student to come to me and say "well this author in the Journal of Management had a hidden agenda because he was also the CEO of AT&T who went bankrupt" would be unheard of. You know it just, we wouldn't have that kind of thing happen and I can't recall any of our students even saying something like that. **Um-hum.** Most of the people who would write in the Journal of Management or Journal of Economics or whatever it might be are sort of seasoned professorate or researchers that **you would just accept them as an authority without** Yeah, I, I would. **Really.** God, to even have one of our students suggest that they are questioning the credibility of an author would blow me out of the water. **Yeah. That you are going to really** so to even get that far **you're more let's get back to basics.** Yeah. To get that far. I mean if someone came to me and said that you know I'm questioning the credibility of this journal or this author here because **yeah, yeah** I don't see, I see some undercurrent or some hidden agenda, I would just go wow, tell me about it and you got an A, let's just talk about it and then (laughing) tell me about why you feel that way, so our students **yeah, yeah,** haven't gotten that far.

Okay. Good enough.

How about when, even when students read a text in first year Composition they are often required to think speculatively with incomplete information. Please discuss whether or not speculative thinking might benefit students in the Business program.

Yeah. Again, see we have a couple of different populations that we're dealing with. If you are talking about the Women's College students then I would say you know when you ask a question from a publication that you want them to then speculate from.

Come up with a good idea? Or opinion?

Yeah, agreed. **Based on the** You might have a couple of students in the class say yes I have an idea, but most of them would draw this sort of blank look on their face. However, our other undergraduate students, our adult students, boy you through an idea out there and they've got not only their idea about what the article is saying, but they can counter it with not only their own experience, but other information they have. **I see.** **Yeah.** So our undergraduate students are kind of divided between our adult students and our Women's College. Our Women's College students probably only account for umm 20% of our population, so you are talking about that whole arena. I mean there are two different ways to answer that question depending on the undergraduate **um-hum** population you are asking about.

Yep.

I guess that is where the umm the ideas about critical thinking versus just rules come in because I think there is a different preparedness that people have had depending on what absolutely, well and not only that, I happen to teach the Critical Thinking class here **oh** on a graduate level and we have just now initiated the undergraduate critical thinking class and that is being taught for the first time in the second eight weeks of this semester. We probably will offer it to the undergraduate Women's College students next year for the first time.

Okay, great.

I'm looking forward to it, but Critical Thinking is one of those weird animals for our graduate students. In fact, I am teaching it on Monday nights this term. **Okay.** In Atlanta and there is about 15 or 18 students and all of them are midlevel managers and all of them are well into their jobs. It is a graduate program. I'll, depending on the kind of problem I want them to solve some of them will look at me with blank stares. Other problems I will present to them, especially work related problems, and they will get into it and really provide me with some deep feedback and insight about thinking about whatever the issue is. I will give you an example. **Okay.** One of the books that we read is Howard Gardner's book on critical and creative thinkers. It is this book here *Creating Minds*.

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That's great. Is that in the graduate class?

It is, but I'm doing something similar in the undergraduate class, so we examine the lives of those seven individuals and see how we are like them or not like them in our own life. At the end of it they have to put together a grid of you know what their education is likely, what their personality and a couple of other things and they have to present that grid to me on the last night in class and compare themselves as to whether or not they're like those people and whether they want to be like those people.

Yeah, that's great.

Here's the glitch. Or here's the twist. They can't use paper.

Oh.

And there is this look of, when I present that to them on the first night of class, is we can't use paper, no paper in your project and there's this, first anger like how dare you? **Yeah, yeah.** But you know they figure it out because I force them to figure it out, but the initial look, in fact this here are some of the projects from last term. You know.

Okay that's great.

They have all kinds of different things here. Umm I'm wondering how that project would work on the undergraduate level with our Women's College students. I don't know. I think. Again, I think some of them will be challenged and creative and others will be blown out of the water or even drop the first night.

Yeah. I can see that. I am teaching Remedial Freshman Comp right now and I can see most of the students will completely rise to the standards I set and I do see a couple that seem like they may not try.

Yeah.

So we will see. I think they are not that far. I have told them that.

Okay. That is great about the thing.

Okay. I don't know if I answered your question.

No, no. That's, that's. You did. Yeah. That is very good. You are very articulate about the speculative nature of writing. Umm. Should technology based writing outputs such as texting and emails, Facebook, Skype, PowerPoint presentations, etc. be explored in first year composition courses.

Sure. Yes. Ahh, speak their language, you know. Umm. In business communication we Zofoom, use Skype. We use all kinds of Imprezy, PowerPoint, all of these ways to best communicate in a business setting. Should this be used? Absolutely. And it is scary for me because I do not know how to do some of these things. Like I'm not a big Facebook person, but I know they live, eat and breathe Facebook, so if we can figure out how to make that work for first year composition, I do not know how that would be. **Right, right, right.** But go for it. **Yeah, yeah, good.**

What writing goals do you think successful business students should have.

What? What?

What writing goals? I guess we have already talked about

Yeah. I mean just your, boy, there have been students that I have turned on to Evie White because Evie White was a master, I think, in using the simple sentence to communicate whatever he was thinking and I have turned many students on to reading Evie White's, especially his New Yorker series, to help them understand how to put simple sentences together in a paragraph. You do not need to impress me with big complex sentences, just use the simple sentences and to me that would be the biggest goal I would say, **um-hum**, just using simple sentences put together in a paragraph that forms a complete thought. If they can, if you can concentrate on that and then move from using a transition to the next paragraph so they understand those building blocks, basic building blocks, (whew) that would be great. I just point to Evie White because he was one of my **um-hum** favorite authors **um-hum** and he did use simple sentences **um-hum** in so many things and I don't have any of his books left (laughing) because I gave them all away (laughing).

Good. Good dilemma though.

Okay. In what ways, if any, that you are aware of do faculty in your department communicate with faculty in the English department about course goals for the Composition requirement. (laughing)

(long pause)

Maybe on the Dean level, but that is about it.

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Um-hum.

Of course you assume that we are doing our job and we assume that you are doing your job.

Right. Right. Right.

So neither of the communication exists.

Is it possible to get the curriculum and... well let's see, I don't need curriculum from you. I guess a mission statement for undergrad majors, mission statement and Yeah, we have a very well developed and I guess course requirements.

Yeah, we have a very well developed thing that Ms. Erickson can give you including mission statement for our students and our department and our business school and so I would connect with her. She can give that to you in a heartbeat.

Okay. Great.

That's it?

This concludes our interview for September 8th. Bye-bye. Thank you so much.

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Interview With: Dr. Barrie – Assistant Professor in the Department of Business Administration, Big Enough University

Okay, thank you.

We will get started.

Lou, you were talking about some papers you just finished grading.

Yeah. I am currently teaching a Management Principles class in the Business Department and it has students from a number of majors, not just business majors, a number of different majors. Umm. And I, and I do this for every class. I always have this first assignment because, and I, and I spent, this particular class has 33 students and I calculate that I spent roughly 12 working hours grading those papers.

Wow.

So I spent a lot of time on them and the papers are not, I mean, they're 3 pages, sort of 3 pages roughly. **Um-hum.** Typed pages and, and I, I spent a great deal of time with those papers reading, reading very carefully and I mean everything, punctuation, spelling, composition, uhh, transition, I mean all the stuff that you would simply look for in a basic paper umm. The subject was My Best Manager. The subject question was **um-hum** "Who was the best manager I've ever encountered?" **um-hum** and umm, so it was umm, it was iffy. Most of the students apparently learned, or had not realized what they had learned from their experiences **um-hum** and had to reflect on it, so, so, it served that purpose, but I can tell ya in terms of the writing skills, boy, it ranged from quite good to unbelievably marginal, if you get my drift. **Um-hum.**

Would you say these students were, you may have said, what point in the program do you think they are at?

It ranges from freshmen to seniors.

Seniors? And so you have no idea who has had that, that freshman comp class? The 101? Most students at the 101 and 102 this point have. Most of them have. Umm and that is one of the reasons for um-hum concern because, we, we are not talking about technical writing. We are talking about basic communication writing. Um-hum. Which in the business school is one of the things that we really um-hum focus on. You know later on you get the technical writing um-hum and that sort of thing, but the premiss is that, that one's individual success depends in some part on his or her ability to effectively communicate. Um-hum.

So when you talk about effective communication skills, at least initially in the business school, you are talking, it sounds like, about umm skills, skills that you would consider common skills, common communication skills rather than content this isn't specific specific.

Correct. Correct. **Um-hum.** Because, you know, my premiss is that if you can basically write well then you can, you can move to the next step. With the more, the more technical writing you **um-hum** can get to. If you can't produce the basics, the basics of quality writing then, then you can add all the bells and whistles you want to **um-hum** but you still have, you know, a bad horse to ride. **Um-hum.** So.

So it's not so much, in your opinion, at this point, a matter of being able to talk the talk with in the school of business, it is more just the basic communication skills that they are coming in with?

Yeah, yeah. And, and, and we certainly, in general, as a faculty, we agree with the notion that, that a basic sound liberal education platform is pretty important for someone to be a well rounded individual, regardless of what they pursue in life. **Um-hum.** Including business majors. **Um-hum, um-hum, um-hum.** And certainly the ability to communicate well is one of those. Now, having said that, of course it's, it's very easy to go to the most proximate source of expertise, which for us here at Big Enough, would be the English department and courses like 101 and 102. Umm. I, I, I put a copy in your stack here. **Oh good. Thank you.**

So, when you're, when you talk about strong written and oral communication skills, that pretty much goes to our first series of questions in terms of specific composition requirements that prospective business students are required to fulfill. Umm, as well as one of the other questions that comes later, the critical thinking skills. Umm do you, when you think about the skills that you want students to possess as they pursue their business degree and, assuming they have completed the required freshman composition course, are you, what are, what are the skills that come to mind?

What? What? What? I think you've made, you've made a faulty assumption. Completion of the basic English skills course does not a result produce. **Um-hum.** It simply produces an outcome, which is a grade in a course **um-hum** and the question is what skills should they carry forward? **Um-hum, um-hum** from that experience. **And** it is adequate to prepare them to be successful in their, their majors, be it business or otherwise.

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Okay, so when we look at question 2 for example, “What, if any, are the specific skills that your department would like to see targeted in the first year composition course?”

Umm I’m talking basics. **Um-hum.** I think, we are really talking basics. **Um-hum.** I don’t know what our English faculty see themselves, see themselves faced with when they get fresh, mostly freshmen in these classes. **Um-hum.** Whether or not these, these younger students are not being well prepared in, at the high school level. And it may be that the mountain they have to climb is (chuckle) just significant. I, I’m just guessing.

Yeah.

And so then the questions is if you’re getting, rather than starting here, if you’re starting way down here, umm, how do you get ‘em, ‘em to a, a reasonable place in that period of time for which they, they have allocated them to be. Umm, but I can tell ya, I mean things like, one of my real hot spots are run on sentences **um-hum** and I keep telling ‘em “folks don’t be afraid to use a period.” **Um-hum.** Complete your thought, put a dot there, it’s called a period and then start another thought. That’s okay. You don’t have to put semicolons and ands and buts and thus and da, da, da, da. You know none of you are famous Russian writers and **um-hum** you don’t have to do that. You don’t have the ability to do that, so.

So you feel there are sometimes, who knows, but a umm desire to sound scholarly and that may produce some?

Yes. Yes. I truly, **errors.** With, with, with some, with some students, I think that is the case and, and umm, some of them believe that spellcheck is the solution for lots of things. **Um-hum.** As a matter of fact if you spelled it correctly it will tell you that you have, whether or not you spelled it correctly. It doesn’t give you context. **Right. Right.** Is this the right word to use? **Right.** Well, often times it’s not.

Well I can tell you those are things that are addressed in beginning composition course. I think they have, I think, as you eluded to, they have a complex set of goals and so possibly there are let me show you the names of students, of course that would not be appropriate, but...

(pause, papers shuffling, pause – exhaling loudly)

And the reason I spend a lot of time with this first paper is, is that I really want them to appreciate the fact that they need to work **um-hum** to get it down.

Um-hum.

(pause, more papers shuffling)

Now we do have a core of international students **um-hum, um-hum** that is sort of a separate additional consideration because of, you know, of the language **um-hum** thing. Umm, umm, you, you could see these, those papers **um-hum, um-hum**. I mean it just looked like a train wreck. Umm.

So along those lines, I know that there is a school of thought in many English departments these days as, as, regarding correcting, basically you're talking about mechanical errors?

Umm, umm, umm mechanical, umm, what do you mean by mechanical?

Umm, sentence structure, verb tense, grammar and punctuation, um-hum, exactly.

Yeah. Certainly a lot of that is just those basics. **Um-hum. Um-hum.** Those basics. **Right.** Umm, umm, I'm not, looking at this first paper, I'm really not looking for a high level of sophistication. **Um-hum.** I want them to give me, I want them, I want them to be, to be able to communicate to me **um-hum** this experience they have had in a clear, readable way.

Do you feel like you mention to them that you want them, that you will be paying close attention to absolutely grammatical absolutely correctness absolutely. So you set your expectations, you feel your expectations are clear?

Yeah, and it's not a, it's not a, it's not ah, ah, ah, an impossible assignment. **Um-hum.** It's a, approximately a 3 page paper **um-hum** answer "did I address this, this question". And, so, so, so it's not, it, it intentionally, it is not a super complex thing. **Um-hum, um-hum.** They have, they have other writing assignments and that is one of the characteristics, that is one of the things we've talked about in the department meetings is that in most of our courses they have both writing assignments and speaking assignments. Because we think we are trying to build, those are complimentary skill sets we think that you would have to be successful in business.

Um-hum. Good. Well in that, that brings up another area of questioning, which is, I guess you have answered. You have answered, "Do you think that these oral and written rhetorical skills are partners?" Oh absolutely. And do

you feel they should be addressed, the, the oral rhetorical skills in first year composition or not so much?

Umm, I, I have to be cautious (heavy exhaling) in my response because it, it's the old story, if, if you, if you make the goal too daunting you can't succeed at any of it and I, so I think we have to be a little surgical in this and think about what, we have to be pragmatic. **Um-hum.** And since you have taught English, you know, you are not going to talk me about it, so, so if what you find is that students in a, in some kind of prioritized manner, if they need more skill building and basic, the, the basic skill sets of writing, then if, then can you really pile on **um-hum** the oral portion of that **um-hum** and expect to achieve your objective? You know, with some level of effectiveness? **Um-hum.** And I would just question whether that is the case. Now, all students must take a speech class. **Um-hum.** And I think maybe that is a good starting place for most of them **um-hum, um-hum,** so to try to superimpose that on this, on basic writing skills, ah, I'm not sure that is realistic. I mean, if you're teaching the class and, and I said okay fine I want them to come out both, both in written and in verbal form **um-hum** accomplished at this level you'd say **yeah** what?

They tend to be more organized about their rhetorical skills I think, as far as their presentation. What I have noticed is there is a umm a greater they are more accomplished than in their **ease** written skills? **Yes. Yes.** I think that is true. I think they are more verbal. Umm. Is it, is it sort of a generational evolution where technology and facebook this and other of that and what. Probably. Umm. You know.

That leads us to your next couple of questions. Having to do, I can. I think I can guess at your response to whether or not close reading and analytical skills should be taught in that first year course and I guess I would assume you are going to say if you can cover the basics and...

that is the right answer. **Um-hum.** You, you, you, did. Yes. Yes. You got that one.

With regard to technology, would you, do you think that umm technology based writing output such as texting, email, facebook, Skype, PowerPoint, we talked about the oral, of course presentations, but other writing outputs. Should they be explored in first year composition.

I think. I think. Umm. It is sort of interesting. I think these young people are coming to us at a very different place than we were when we were their age. Most of them have some level of comfort, considerable level of comfort with most of those

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modalities of communication. Umm. If, if, if anything, I think teaching them the pitfalls of those forms of communication are probably more important, because they already know how to do it. They, they've sort of **um-hum** grown up with it, but it's, it's sort of interesting because I don't know the extent which you text and use the other forms of communication, but you know a, sort of a, sort of a subgrosal language develops **right** in those various, various communication technologies. Ahh, umm, the use of, the use of common abbreviations and ya da, ya da, ya da so umm, so people don't have to express themselves as if they were writing on a piece of paper. **Um-hum, um-hum**. And I think that, that's okay, as long as they can make the transition. **Yes**.

So. So. Using them as part of a first year composition course may not be as advisable in your eyes?

Well, no, except, except if one could build in things like okay umm how to use spellcheck. If you're gonna type a paper you know let me, let me give you some examples of how that is good **right, right, right** or where that doesn't work. So it, it is not your mother. It is not your teacher. **Um-hum**. It is simply a tool that has lots of advantages and some serious disadvantages.

Okay. Good.

When you think about your business students and what you hope for them to accomplish in a first year composition course, do you think about whether or not they have been asked to think speculatively, that is with incomplete information umm and do you think that the exposure to speculative thinking might benefit students in business programs? Do you think it is appropriate to include?

I think it would be because there are, there are considerable occasions in a real world business environment where in fact you have to deal with incomplete information. You can call it speculative, you can call it whatever. **Um-hum. Problem solving**. But, but, yeah, but rarely do you have "all of the information" and if you wait for all of the information too often in, in business circumstances, there is no longer a reason to try to solve a problem because it's changed. **Um-hum** or went away or someone **um-hum** else did it **um-hum** or whatever. You see what I'm saying?

Um-hum.

(pause)

So.

But, but certainly the ability to be given a stream of facts and information and to draw some kinds of reasonable conclusions are things that we do in business courses all the time. **um-hum.**

Do you teach those skills? Do you feel

Yeah, yeah, I'm teaching, for example, I'm currently teaching a Microeconomics class and my approach to that is. What does your husband do?

He's an orthopedic surgeon.

Oh, he, he is. Okay. Well, this wouldn't apply to him, but if he were a business man...

Well he is a businessman also (laughing) for now anyway. No. But, for example (lots of back peddling) I use *The Wall Street Journal* a lot and I will, I will **yep** throw this up, enlarge it and say "What does that mean? What do you conclude from that?" you know? An article about Vera Wang and her **um-hum** stuff you know. How did she come up with that thinking? That is pretty risky isn't it? and stuff like that. You know?

Along those lines, umm, umm, I think a lot of what an impression of the FYC courses concentrate on today is those sort of moments of analysis of looking at the author, looking at who the author is what their purpose is in writing the article, maybe the publication and things like that. What do you think about that emphasis? Umm looking at umm the motivation and exploring the motivations for writing with a specific intention and yeah?

(pause)

Umm

Still thinking about why would this article be in The Wall Street Journal? Or why would it be in liberal news today or?

Well, well I, you know, number one, I want to be careful not to insult their intelligence. I mean if, if you showed them something about the stockmarket **um-hum, um-hum, um-hum** I mean that is not something you, you don't question whether it happened or not, the question at hand is "What happened? What did happen? What made that happen?" and is that a permanent outcome and if not

what would make it different? **Um-hum.** You know, so what that does, it triggers an analysis. If, if you want to use more critical thinking, I mean those are skills you, that we work on all the time. Umm My approach to teaching a course like Economics is I want you to be, I want you to be a umm a curious person. **Um-hum.** Don't just accept at face value what you see, always ask the question "really? Why? I wonder if that could have been different?" You know be curious.

So is part of that curiosity questioning the intention of the author at all or it can be or intention of the it, it publication?

It can be. It can be and certainly there have been occasions where that has been the case. **Um-hum.** Or, you know, umm, for example, recognize the fact that this is a person writing on a subject. That doesn't mean, and here are the person's credentials. It doesn't mean that that person's opinion is the only opinion on this particular issue. **Um-hum** and so do they have a particular bias that is coming through this article that you need to recognize and take into account. Doesn't mean that you won't believe it, but you need to respect the bias associated.

Okay. Would you say that is secondary or sort of a companion interest of yours in business as compared to the idea you were speaking of previously, which seemed like it had more to do with analyzing the facts as they are presented?

Well it's not, well you say analyze the facts, but it's, it's, it's more analyzing what's behind the facts. **Um-hum.** What made that happen? **Okay.** How could that change? Umm why did Dr. So-n-so in the economic council of advisers, why did he take this position. **Okay.** And see that gets more to your issue around the source, the author's ideas. **Um-hum.**

It's a big focus. It is. Those courses of the freshmen composition courses.

Really?

The rhetorical stance of the author. Right. Right. And the publication and also how, the reason being is that it relates directly to our own voices as writers. Um-hum. And so the examination of our perspectives and context I think plays a pretty big role these days and in the goals and mission of that FYC course.

Um-hum. That is true. You know, a traditional, traditional freshman taking a course like that certainly does not have the life experience that maybe of an older learner might have, a more mature one might have. **Um-hum.** Umm, to give a rich assessment in a situation like that, but at least a **um-hum** basic, sort of at least a basic approach about how to do it **um-hum** would be very useful.

So that is where I think they spend a lot of time and attempting to develop those critical thinking analytical skills and umm sort of acknowledging the grammatical challenges. The, the challenges that many of these writers face who have graduated from high school with some lower skills. Umm and you know they have been passed along. I, I think many people in English departments feel that those would be easy skills to address if that were their main goal.

You know you bring up a good point and as a professional in the teaching of English, various English skills, I think it is easy to fall in the trap. It doesn't matter what your major is, whether it is English or something else, it is easy to fall in the trap of doing the sexier things before you do the more basic ones. It's just more fun. **Um-hum.** And I would think that the latter part of the discussion would be a whole lot more fun if I were an English professor than hammering away at verbs and adverbs. **Um-hum.** But you know translate that into the real world you know they can be, they can be a very acute thinker, but if they can't communicate their thoughts well, how credible will they be. And it is very interesting **well stated** that, that when, that when prospective employers are asked to rank skill sets they are looking for in recruitment **um-hum** guess what is on the top of the list? Communication skills.

So I should look at some of those studies, or those reports, surveys, as part of my lit review?

Yeah. Yeah and, and, umm, umm, Mr. Hardy may have some, might be able to recommend **okay** a couple of things to you. **Okay.** Because I know that he has used some of those. But, but things like, yeah, communication skills, team building skills, you know things like that that you would think no, what they're going to look for first is do they know how to, **analyze** Dr.its and credits you know. Well, what, what, apparently what businesses are saying is if you can't communicate what you know you're not gonna be an asset to us.

That is very interesting and I think consistent with what I am finding in my other interviews. You speak very well and make some very good points. You're, you're, this time will be really helpful to me.

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Well good. I hope so. **I appreciate it.** I hope so. And, and good luck to you as you pursue this.

Thank you.

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Interview With: Dr. Shelley – Good Size State College, Business School, Chair of the Division of Business

In that responsibility I am in charge of overseeing the faculty, hiring part-time faculty and evaluating the faculty as well as scheduling and any curriculum development.

Thank you.

Okay. As we discussed, we are going to focus on skills that are taught and the requirements that are, I guess, met by the required freshman composition course, 1101 and 1102 here, I believe, and how those skills, and whether or not they benefit, in your mind, business students.

Okay

So you were saying, just to clarify, that Good Size State College is largely a 2-year degree program.

Right. The majority of our students at this institution are first and second year students planning to complete an associate degree and then transfer on to a (inaudible – phones ringing, other people talking in the background) and the, and the program that (inaudible – phones ringing, other people talking) we oversee is, while we do have some different majors, we do have some career majors like paralegal studies. We primarily award the Associate of Arts in Business Administration and that is designed to be the first two years of a Bachelors in Business Administration, so students would complete their AA degree with us and then transfer on to a senior institution to receive their Bachelors.

Okay. I see in the, in the AA of Business Administration are students admitted to that just upon admission to Gainesville State?

Right. There is no special requirements to be admitted to the AA or to the paralegal program. We do have a Bachelors of Applied Science Degree in Technology Management and it also has a paralegal track and students who are admitted to that degree program are required to have completed an Associate of Applied Science, either here or at another institution.

I see. And, as such, this being the case, are you necessarily getting students that have completed the composition course or do you know if you were to have, if business instructors were to have students, obviously they have undergraduate students in classes, would they be aware that the students have had the freshman comp?

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Almost all of our courses are number 2000 and higher and, in fact, we teach Business Communication, which has a prerequisite of English and the students here in the programs that require an AAS, they would have had to have completed English 101 and 102. **I see.**

So you can presume that Yes. I would say the majority of the students in our classes, while not 100%, because there is not a prerequisite for most of the courses, **okay**, almost all of the students in our classes have completed English, the basic freshman composition course because our classes are more seen as sophomore levels.

I see. I ask because, for instance at Big Enough there is, just because of the way the students enter the system and the way that the degree is set up, the program in Humanities, many times students have not taken that course until junior or senior year, so Business faculty may be sort of misperceiving a writing deficit.

(laughing)

No. Pretty much, pretty much when they enter the, you know most of the students, I mean obviously they can't always, always get it scheduled, but almost all of them are instructed to get into English 101 their first or second semester, so it is pretty rare that a student, unless they have learning support requirements where they have to take some prerequisites, but almost every student who comes here is going to probably get a umm a do an English class their or first or second semester and would probably have completed those before they enter our business classes.

And would you say that English is the primary language of most students?

Yeah. Probably about, we are probably approaching close to 20% on this campus, the Gainesville campus, but when you **as a second language** factor in the college as a whole. Yeah, that English is a second language.

I see.

But when you look at the college as a whole **um-hum** it is probably about 15% that English is their second language.

I see. Okay.

Okay good. Well, I guess we can move onto some of the skill areas that you look for. Are there any specific, so really there are no specific academic composition requirements that prospective students no need? Okay. What are the specific skills

your department would like to see addressed in that first year composition course?

Well, you know, one of the things, like for example, one of the things we're running into is students don't understand plagiarism **I see**. (giggling) and how to properly cite resources taken from the web. I think that is the biggest thing is they don't, we have a big, I mean other than just the normal problems of subject/verb agreement (giggling) and punctuation, run-on sentences, umm, the fact that they have difficulty communicating properly because they are so used to email. **Um-hum**. I mean I think that is part of the problem too is (laughing) let me back up. **Okay. Okay**. (laughing) You know, I mean, but I mean one thing we are running, umm, because we are having kind of a plagiarism warm right now in **okay** one of our classes (laughing) where the students really don't understand that if they copy something and cut and paste it off the Internet, they don't understand how to properly cite it, you know, even if they just say it came from so and so's website, well that's now how you properly **right** cite it. Or the idea that if it is more than 40 words that you can't cut and paste it that you need, it needs to be a direct quote and so you can't present that in the body. So I think there is the Internet and the frequency with which they're, they cut and paste and list things from different places and steal pictures and you know they don't realize (coughing) they don't consider it plagiarism, but the faculty do, so I think **yeah** that is one thing that more emphasis on style, particularly as it relates to things they get from the Internet.

Okay, so you are talking about citations?

Yeah.

Proper citations?

Yeah, proper citations. The kids, they, they do a decent job if it's a book, but when you start getting **um-hum** into things that are **um-hum** from the Internet. **Okay**. They don't really, they don't understand that and then the other, you know and of course I mentioned subject/verb agreement.

Okay, yeah, could you talk more about that?

I think **that is another area of concern**. Yeah. That is an area of concern. Students use improper, you know, singular or plural, **um-hum** incorrectly and umm **grammar issues** so we got grammar issues and spelling issues because they **okay** rely too heavily on spellcheck **um-hum** and I, you know, and it's not just the students because there was something I saw the other day and they were, it was in the AJC and **um-hum** they were talking, there was something about bear some **um-hum** and they had it spelled bare (laughing) and so the danger is spellcheck and making sure **right** that you are using the proper you know just because the word is a correct spelling of some word (laughing)

right, right it may not be the correct spelling of that word and so that is an issue and then I think even more basic is appropriate ways to communicate **okay** because students you know we all talk about this, how students familiarity with umm email that sometimes they, they don't communicate appropriately with email when they're trying to communicate with a faculty member.

Okay, so. So, so I think there might be some **lack of proper convention**? Yes. So I think could, you know, I don't know that they do letter writing anymore (laughing) in any kinds of classes, but you know that is something that, you know, how, you know more formal forms of address for people who are not your peer **right, right** (laughing) I think would be something that, you know, I get an email that says "Hey Shelley" (laughing) and that happens **yeah** and I'm like umm, Professor, try this again.

Yeah, I had a professor at UD that recommended all the TAs would say, you know, address a letter. I do not want an email without it being in letter form. Yeah. You know, but I do think that, that is an issue.

Yeah, because they're so used to communicating with texting and you know email that they have lost some of you know how do you formally write a letter.

Right. Interesting. Okay, good, that's great. And so of these ways, issues that you would like to see addressed, these skills, having to do with using more formal conventions in technology driven outputs like email, learning how to cite correctly and using correct grammar, spelling and syntax, would you say that you feel these are being addressed in the course or these are areas that need to be more heavily addressed and can you say whether you prioritize any one area over another?

Well, I mean, the areas that we see when they come to us that we would have thought would have already been remediated **okay, right, okay** so I guess, I guess either something is getting lost in translation. And it may be too that, I mean the thing I hear from the students is they may be learning, they'll say, you know if we are writing a paper in an Econ class, oh this isn't English. **Okay.** So they don't understand that this needs to be a global application **correct** so maybe that is something, you know they may be doing it properly in their English course then when they get into a class that is not English they don't feel that they should, they are very incensed when you penalize them **okay** for you know bad grammar or spelling (chuckling) on an economics paper.

Yep. Okay. Would you, and we're talking mostly here about writing skills, but some of these skills might apply to rhetorical skills as well, would you suggest, or do you think, that oral rhetorical skills should be addressed at all in the freshman composition course?

Well, I mean, we're in a unique position here perhaps because Gainesville State requires all students to take Human, the name of the course is Human Communication **okay** which is, you know, opposed to what animal communication (laughing) that it's, it's a public speaking class. **Okay.** It's the (laughing) you know why they went with Human Communication and not Speech I don't know, but it is Speech. And so, for us it's not an issue because every student that graduates from Gainesville State is required to take an oral communications class.

Okay, gotcha. And, umm, let's see. What about the close reading and analysis skills? Would you, do you think those are important for prospective business majors and do you think it is important for students? I'm looking at question 7. Do you think that they, students, should be, that there should be an emphasis in that freshman composition course?

Umm. I think. You know. It's important. It's an important skill for business majors. I don't know if it needs to be addressed in that class or, because they also take the second comp, which is Reading and Composition, so they do cover reading in the second course. **Okay.**

Is that 1102?

1102.

Um-hum.

And then I think too. You know. In our program, I mean, that is one of the things, I mean I think, you know, I can check on it, so that is what I see it is, is that because they're not, they need to be careful about how they read things, and the same way. They run into the same problem when they get into business law and legal environment because change one word and you've changed the entire **right** you know. Contract. So that is something that they have umm they do need it for business and I think maybe they get it **um-hum** in 1102 instead of 1101.

Okay.

It seems like to me with so much information being gained from looking at the Internet (phone ringing) and that also can be more of a cursory (phone ringing) to yeah sort of (inaudible phone ringing) information and so. Yeah.

Yeah. They don't think critically about it. That's for sure. (phone ringing)

Yeah.

Okay. Umm, when students read a text in the first year composition course, or even like the 1102 course, they are often required to think speculatively without complete information. Can you discuss whether or not speculative thinking might benefit students in your program?

Oh sure.

Yeah.

I mean because you know students certainly have to look at different scenarios that they might run into in business and umm they may not always have complete information. Whether it is in an economics class or a management class you know you've got to make certain assumptions or a marketing class and so there's certainly plenty of cases where that would be important to a business major.

Okay. Good. And what would you say about technology based writing and outputs being a part of that first year composition, texting, email, Skype, PowerPoint? I guess you talked a little bit about PowerPoint in the context of the oral.

I, I mean I think it's good, but then there is a (laughing) amount of time (laughing) and I, I would and I hate to see, I would hate to see, because you know those kind of things are fun and, but then grammar is not, but grammar (laughing) is probably equally important. **Yeah.** I mean other than the fact that it houses communication. I mean it could be, if you are talking about email **um-hum, um-hum** you know for example, how to compose an email to different audiences, how, you know how to use these things for different audiences. Umm. I think those are fine, but I don't know that Skype necessarily would be something I would see in those courses. **Um-hum.** And I guess for business majors too they're gonna take an introductory information technology class. **Okay.** Everyone is required to. Where they would do, they would talk, they would compose, you know create PowerPoints and cover most of these things. I mean I think these things could be introduced, you know the texting and the emails, as you know are they appropriate or inappropriate mean of communication or better ways to communicate your ideas **um-hum** because email can be such an abrupt **right** medium that messages can get you know mixed and you can get a res, what you meant and what came across, because there is no inflection and it is such an abrupt media **right** where a telephone call you could you know get **um-hum** feedback and judge you know where you need to go on that.

Exactly. And the, it sounds like you're saying that, while you think some of these things might be worthwhile to incorporate, you would hate to see the basics get lost that you mentioned earlier get lost and that for your students that's, these are the challenges you see?

Yeah. And especially because we're an access institution and so you know I mean we are going to, I mean, currently there are no minimum requirements other than just submitting the paperwork on time to be enrolled at Gainesville State.

Okay and that's what you mean by an access institution (institution).

And so there's, so you get people, while we test them, **um-hum** certainly and put them into remedial classes **um-hum** you know we get a broad spectrum of students that may or may not have you know basic knowledge and it's actually kind of funny because I think the nontraditional students are bet, you know when they come in and test, the traditional students may more likely end up in learning support English and reading where the nontraditional students are going to end up in the learning support math, but a lot of times their grammar and composition skills are superior to the ones coming straight out of high school. **The older ones? yeah. Um-hum.**

That's an interesting cultural transition that (laughing) appears to have taken place over the last 10 years. Okay, so I guess then just to sort of wrap up, do you, if you could state what writing goals you think a successful business student should have?

Well, I mean, I think they should be able to umm compose, you know, certainly in business a lot of the communication is in letter or memorandum format or report format. **Um-hum.** But those things need to be umm, but certainly poor grammar **um-hum** and misspellings and inappropriate forms of address you know **um-hum** are big problems for business majors when they get out into the, into the business world and certainly they can make a difference and I kind of saved this out. I mean I guess we're doing a play, but this is something Florida State, Florida State University was handing out and they have "strength, knowledge and values" and knowledge is misspelled and they were handing this out to Fortune 50 executives (laughing) so that didn't do a very good job of advertising their **yeah** umm **so unfortunate** their institute. It is. (laughing) So I think that you know being able, those things are very important because you need to be able to communicate your ideas and also to be able to communicate your ideas in relatively few sentences I think **um-hum** because that's to be concise and precise would be a communication because if you're in middle management and you're dealing with executives you know they don't want a 15 page explanation, they want the points right up front, so. I think that is the other thing is to be able to, as you said, you know **um-hum** analyze and read critically and then to present the information you know brevity is the soul of wit. (laughing)

Yep. Well that, that's true and it does seem like it is sort of a universal concern as I talk to different business faculty members. Umm. Finally, in what ways, if any, do faculty and business, you, your committee members, anyone, talk to people in the

**English department about We have is there any communication back and forth?
About course goals or?**

There has been (laughing) you know, right now, I mean they're sort of a mandate to do these general education outcomes and so **I see** it's maybe not as much institutional as it is system wide on the things that they're doing, but certainly in the past **excuse me, is that in the English department?** Yeah in the English department, but certainly they have had the university system is with their core curriculum has just revised it and so they've come out with these different outcomes that they wish to see from freshman English let's say **oh, okay** and then the institution is supposed to be assessing these and (laughing) so I think they have kind of bogged down with that in the last year or so.

I see. Interesting. So that is something to ask about.

Yes, you might ask them about it. But the umm, but in general in the past we've had good opportunity to do discussion and we've talked about and you know we've actually done some like kind of learning, they call them learning committees now, we had a different name for them back then, where we linked classes together with **um-hum** business communication and the communication and so it is certainly not something, you know, we certainly had a good relationship with them and able to express our concerns and, and, and our concerns are their concerns too. **Yes. Exactly.** You know I mean I don't think that you know we're completely separate from each other. We all see the same thing. We've all tried to emphasize writing across the curriculum. **I see.** And get more written assignments into non English classes so the students can see that you know good writing skill transcend just taking that one class and passing this test. **Exactly. That is so smart.**

Umm, and then just a couple of follow-up questions that came up in a little more of a global sense. When you, let's see, what were they? Okay, one question I have for you is would you, do you think that umm, hold on, let me think what I was going to ask you. It was about the umm business oh, okay. One area of concern that has come up is whether or not you think a business communication course should fulfill a requirement for either freshman comp 1101 or 1102? Well, well do you think?

Well, no I don't. I mean, I think it might. I don't think it should fill those requirements. Now there is like a lit or language elective **um-hum** and so a, a business communication class might fit in that slot **for anyone that is interested in that** but I don't, for a person who is interested in that direction, but I don't think it should substitute for freshman English and actually we don't want it to. I mean we want, we want them to have already had that class so that we can move on to more advanced topics in business communication like listening skills and writing the persuasive letter and **um-hum** you know writing, doing a memorandum report and doing presentations and things like that,

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so we would, we want them to have the basics already so we could show them how to apply it in a business setting.

Okay. Good.

Would you ever think that using voice recognition software would be a good way to write a paper, would that be okay with you?

I mean it's okay. I mean we have students that you know, of course students who have special needs **right** that you know do that already. I guess, to me with those voice recognition software things the problem I think is that you know, one you have to train it, and then there's new words and in some cases it may be more time consuming and I don't know, you know students, I mean I don't know that there's that much out there anymore I mean still, I mean eventually maybe, but you know in a traditional business setting they're not going to have **right, right, right** that (laughing) unless it's some ABA, but I mean at some point they need to learn how to sit down and do that **write**.

(laughing) Because you know I know they just text now and so they don't even know how to **right, right** how to type (laughing) they're using two fingers **yeah** and so and you know maybe in the future they'll have you know the voice recognition software will be the gold standard and nobody will need to know how to write **um-hum, right, um-hum** save people from (laughing) **interesting**.

Okay. Good. Do you have any questions for me or?

No. I'm fine.

Okay that's great. That covered a lot and I really appreciate your time and your information.

Okay. Great. Well certainly you have my card if you need.

Okay.

September 22, 2010

Interview With: Ms. Alcott, Good Size State College, Instructor of Business Communications and Instructor for the Business Division.

As you may remember, we are going to be discussing writing skills within the context of what you might reasonably expect students, the skills you might expect students to come in with having already completed the freshman composition required course, the 1101 and 1102 sequence. Um-hum. So these are the skills that you look for your students to have upon completion or the ones you would want them to have. So, I guess, to start with, are there specific skills that you think they (someone comes into the room) I'm sorry. That need to be targeted in that first year composition course that are not currently being targeted?

The specific skills that I see that students don't have **Um-hum** is skills as far as proofreading their work, their grammar.

Okay. So you're talking about proofreading, assuming they could correct the errors they find?

Yeah, I think they should correct (laughing) misspelled words, grammar errors, **okay** you know sentence structure, things like that. I would have expected that **okay** when they finished 1101 and 1102.

Okay, so you would expect them to come out with strengthened grammar skills, strong grammar skills.

Yes, more than they have.

You see them lacking those skills.

Yes.

Okay. That's by far, you would say, that's by far the biggest concern you have?

As far as being prepared for business communication, that is one of the biggest things I see.

Okay

That they are not prepared.

Okay. And umm. I guess separate from that, do you think that oral rhetorical skills should be addressed in that first year composition course or just strictly concentrate on those writing skills?

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If they can address oral skills that would be great because that is one of the things that when umm. We do a group presentation at the end of business communications and that is one of the things when they get up to present that they are not, they don't do as well, they don't take speech. **I see.** I guess I would have thought **yeah** that was addressed in speech.

Okay. So that is something that umm Dr. Shelley had mentioned is that they are required to take a speech course.

Right, but now it is not a prerequisite for business communications.

Oh. Okay.

But many of them have **I see** before they have gotten into their major.

So the speech is not a pre, isn't a required course at Gainesville, it is just required for some students?

It's a required course at Gainesville in our new curriculum, but it is not a prerequisite **I see** for business **so they may or may not have not taken it** communication **when they take your course?**

Right. Many of them have. **Um-hum.** But they're not required to as a prerequisite.

I see. And would you pretty much assume that most students have taken the 1101 and 1102 course when they take?

They have to have taken it because I check to see if they have taken it.

Okay, so those are prerequisites to your course?

There are a few exceptions, sometimes there will be a student that is taking it at the same time as they're taking business communication. **I see.** Just because of scheduling issues or someone had to register late or something like that, so they may be taking it at the same time, but the vast majority have already taken it. **okay.** And I look for that and if they're not registered at the same time taking it, then I you know let them know being an assessor that they can't be in business communications.

Okay. Good.

And, a, looking at question five, in your mind, is it important for students to acquire close reading and analysis skills in that freshman comp course, 101 and 102?

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When you say close reading and analysis skills, what do you mean by that? (laughing)

Just sort of questioning content, questioning the intent of the author, who the author is, the publication, being able to identify the different components of an author's argument.

That's probably not as important in business communication because they are the author or they're writing an email, they're writing letters **I see** things like that so they're not doing as much of that or **okay** hardly any of that in business communications.

Okay. Umm. Ms. Shelley suggested a lack of appropriate conventions in terms of communication via technology such as email and things like that. Have you experienced that in your course? Do you notice that students need to improve on the conventions they use in terms of how they use technology such as emails?

Improve it?

In terms of being more formal or more appropriate for a business environment.

Yes. Now, that's that's what we spend a good amount of time on. **I see.** Is analyzing the audience and the format for those type things.

Okay, so you're emphasizing that in your course?

Yeah.

So for students who don't take that course you feel that they're not getting that?

Right. I believe. Yeah because students that I have in other courses that email me about different is that what you are saying?

Yes.

That email me about different things you can tell they've not had (laughing) **yeah I see.** They've not been taught some of the skills they do learn in business communication, just organization, using signatures, the things at the bottom, files and things like that. You can just tell they've not had those types of things.

I see. Okay. Good.

And then, with regard to thinking speculatively or thinking with incomplete information, taking a position even though you have incomplete information, being able to articulate a position and support it, do you think that type of thinking would benefit your students?

(pause)

I think where it would benefit them probably is some of the types of writing that we talk about, maybe the persuasive types of communication **um-hum** things like that.

Yes. Okay. So it sounds like that would be something you could envision being addressed in a first year composition course if they did, if they were able to cover the grammar issues adequately.

Um-hum.

Okay. As far as technology based writing outputs such as texting, email, facebook, Skype, we talked a little bit about, I guess, PowerPoint presentations, do you feel that any of these should be explored in first year comp courses?

(pause)

That's about number seven.

Right. Umm. What do you mean explored in first year composition courses?

Like used, use 'em? Yeah. Um-hum. Or? Just being, use them for different assignments. Can you envision?

The PowerPoint presentations it would be great.

Okay.

Now whether or not you know that is something they cover in those umm I don't know, but yeah, but again I guess I assume they hit that in the 1100 comp 100 class.

Okay.

The PowerPoint presentations. **Okay.** Most of them come with some knowledge **um-hum I find that too.** Yeah, that they use that in other classes. Most of them are very good at texting. (chuckling). The email, the formatting **umm** how you format an email,

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organizing an email, things like that, I, I don't know if that is an appropriate subject for composition.

Um-hum. Okay. Okay.

Yeah, that would be great I guess if they had those skills (chuckling), but that is really where we work in business communications.

Okay. Interesting.

So, if you had to identify one or two skills that you think successful business students should have, one or two writing goals that successful business students should have, what would you say those should be?

Goals for business students?

Um-hum. Writing.

Like organizing their messages, would that be?

Sure, whatever you think. Writing goals, what skills or goals do you think a successful business student should have.

They need to be much more conscious of; I go back to the grammar. Grammar, proofreading, sentence structure, most mechanic type things. **In order to be credible?** Definitely. That is one of the biggest problems I still see. They are not **they lose their credibility because they** exactly and umm we have just finished the chapter in business communications where they incorporate some of that grammar and they're very, I don't know they've forgotten **um-hum** or if that's not covered a lot in 1101. That's a weak area for many of them.

Okay. Can I ask you, when you are grading, and I don't know if you use any type of rubric or not, how much do you count off for poor grammar?

I count off. I do use a rubric and for grammar I count off probably, it's probably weighted maybe 15 to 20%. That's grammar, sentence structure, all those types of things.

So would a student conceivably be able to still get say an 80 even if their grammar was pretty bad?

Depends on how bad. (chuckle) If they have quite a few places where they have not proofed and misspelled words, poor sentence structure, **the whole thing** well and I don't, I mean I'm not a comma cop, some of the things that, obvious things that most people in the business world would notice. Misspelled words people would notice. Using there, their, they're, people would notice things like that. An average business person might not notice every single comma **um-hum** you know that needs to go in every single place, but general things like that yes I feel like that is very important. You know I try to emphasize to them "when you send that email out you never know, or letter or whatever, who else it's being sent to.

The reason I ask is because in different English departments approach the grammar issues differently. Some, some you have to achieve a certain level of competence in grammar in order to get a C. Like you um-hum can't get (someone comes into the room)

So in other words you could still get a decent grade even with some run on sentences, a couple of misspellings, punctuation errors, as long as your message was still pretty clear.

I tend to count off for those and the more they have them, the more I count off.

Okay, so it's not like when you say it's weighted 15 or 20%, it's not like that's the maximum they could get off? Or it would still go, I guess, to other areas of the rubric, like clarity?

Right. Organization. That is just one component of it. Umm that, that section I think is either a fourth or a fifth of it and its basic things like that.

Um-hum. So it takes their grade down, but they could still get oh a C. They could still pass or...

I guess they could.

Um-hum. I mean is that typical?

They have a they **would you say it is typical? Like if somebody has atrocious grammar errors?**

If they have atrocious grammar errors they may end up getting a 50 (laughing) **okay** because I just feel like it's so important.

So if they had a moderate amount?

They could pass.

Yeah okay.

Well I don't know what you mean by moderate, but you know we're talking about misspelled words, obvious grammar errors, obvious sentence structure, sentences that don't make sense **exactly** is what I'm talking about. **yes, okay.** But I'm not an English teacher. **Right, right, right.** You know I'm a business, I'm a business teacher. **Yeah, yes.** But things that an average business person would, would notice **um-hum** yeah they lose points for that and I feel very strongly about that.

Okay. Interesting. yes. I think it is something that I know because I teach remedial composition and it's hard to address because you know the student is trying to compose something that is understandable and that they understand it themselves, so (laughing)

They know that I and I um and I umm show them in the book you know where we have a section in the book, the appendix, you know, look it up if you're not sure **right** or brush up if you haven't had English in a while **right** because it's really important things like that. But yeah, of course, the other things are audiences, structure of the message, all that is important as well. **Um-hum.** But I, I just feel like the free write thing, **um-hum** you know just write your thoughts **um-hum, um-hum,** (laughing) **yes, yes,** I think several of them draw a line and say this makes you look, **doesn't make sense** yeah it doesn't make sense. It just give you a kind of a negative impression **right, right,** when your boss reads it or if he sends it out to someone else. **yes, it wouldn't be a favor to just pass it along.** Right to me that's not a favor to pass a student or to just say well this is okay.

Right. Okay. Good. Well I understand and the information that you have given me is very, very helpful and I really appreciate the time you've given me today. Thank you.

APPENDIX C

Dante Email Interview

November 9, 2010

Email Interview with Dr. Dante, Professor of English, Director of FYC and UOG Writing Center, Go-general Editor of Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation.

As a universally required course, how important is it for the FYC program at all colleges and universities to have universal goals?

The WPA Guidelines are the basis for most FYC learning outcomes across the country. Yes there should be consistency and there is I think, but some programs will have goals or Learning Outcomes particular to their particular program, campus, etc.

How important is it for the FYC course goals at an institution such as yours, to address the diverse abilities/needs of various student populations?

Very important, of course.

Do you consider voice recognition software to be a viable and acceptable option for students to use as a tool to write papers? Why or why not?

I'm afraid that just has not come up as a practical problem. But I don't see anything wrong with it, personally.

As the Director of the FYC program at your school, what communication, if any, do you have with faculty in the Business College regarding students' writing goals.

My most recent communication with the Chair of Economics confirmed that between FYC and their senior project, the students do no significant writing in the College of Business, with the exception of PowerPoint slides.

APPENDIX D

Nabokov Email Interview

September 19, 2010

**Email Interview with Dr. Nabokov, Senior Lecturer, Department of Management
At Twain School of Business, University of Giants (TSB/UOG)**

What do you believe is the most important skill for your undergraduate students to learn in the Freshman Composition course?

I think that most students have a difficult time organizing their thoughts and then finding a logical way to communicate those thoughts with others. I would suggest that learning how to organize an essay is one of the most important tools that a student can have. Also, they must do this concisely. They should be made to write a ten-page essay, and then be required to reduce it to 5-6 pages with no loss of content. The students I encounter cannot do that.

I have numerous students who “ramble” on and on, never really making any point or even addressing the question or problem. They usually hand in a paper with just a jumble of thoughts with no logical pattern.

Another issue is vocabulary. Unfortunately, by the time students reach their first year of college, they have rarely acquired an adequate vocabulary. I am not certain that that would be something to be included in a composition course.

Do most of your students possess this skill after completing the FYC course? Please explain.

No. I use many case studies in my classes, and my experience has been that the students have trouble focusing on the specific problem. Choosing a topic and writing a composition about it is very different from analyzing a situation and suggesting potential solutions.

How important is it for your students to learn and use oral rhetorical skills in the FYC course?

I think that oral communication in business is more important than written communication. A report, essay, or composition can be proofread and changed. Being able to clearly speak, get a point across and do this in a manner directed at a specific audience is probably businessperson’s greatest skill.

Do your undergraduate students possess close reading skills and demonstrate an ability to think critically when they write?

I do not think that we train our students to do this. Students are very good at addressing problems that they have seen previously. When the conditions of the problem change in any way, most do not have the ability to look at the problem in any context that is different from the original template.

Just a note – I honestly think that by the time students have reached their freshman year in college, if they have not already been challenged to think critically, it is actually too late to teach it.

Thank you!!

Follow-up Questions for Dr. Nabokov, November 9, 2010

Do you believe that it is important for students to learn how to incorporate correct grammar and sentence mechanics in their writing as part of the objectives for the required freshman composition course?

I absolutely do believe that correct grammar is a very important element of good writing skills. I know that the trend in high schools is to let students use incorrect spelling and grammar and grade on content in some cases. I do not agree with this trend.

Do your undergraduate students demonstrate the ability to write using correct grammar and sentence mechanics?

No, they generally do not. I think that our schools have deemphasized this skill. I think that students should be able to not only express themselves concisely, but also using the language correctly.

APPENDIX E

BEU 101 Syllabus

SYLLABUS – EH 101 Written Communication



College of Fine Arts and Humanities

Department of Humanities

Women's College. Fall 2010

Brenau University Mission Statement

Brenau University challenges students to live extraordinary lives of personal and professional fulfillment. As students pursue undergraduate and graduate degrees or non-degree programs at Brenau campuses and online, each prepares for a lifetime of intellectual accomplishment and appreciation of artistic expression through a curriculum enriched by the liberal arts, scientific inquiry and global awareness

Instructor: Dr. Kathryn Locey

Telephone: 770-534-6184

Email: klocey@brenau.edu

Office Location: 12 Virginia Hall

Office Hours: MWF 10:30-12:30; or by appointment

Textbook(s)/ISBN: Madden, Frank, ed. *Exploring Literature*. 4th ed. /0205640184

Trimble, John. *Writing with Style*. 2nd ed./0130257133

Dobkins, Debra, Catherine Lewis, and Kathryn Locey. *The Write Stuff*, 3rd ed./no ISBN

Course Description:

This course focuses on writing papers in response to readings in a variety of genres. Students develop, draft, revise and edit original compositions. Placement is determined by standardized test scores. *A grade of C or better is required.*

LE Learning Outcome

Evaluation Instrument Used

Compose effective and logical written communication

Research Reports / Papers

Course Learning Outcomes

Evaluation Instruments Used

1. Demonstrate basic grammatical competency

Exam questions/projects tied to SPECIFIC outcomes

2. Construct written and/or oral arguments and texts

Research Reports/ Papers

University Class Attendance and Participation Policy

All grades and evaluations earned by the student and issued by the faculty are based upon the quality of the student's overall academic performance both in and out of class. Students are expected to attend and participate in class regularly, and to assume responsibility for meeting all requirements as specified in the course syllabus. Because of the differences in schedules and contact hours, there are different attendance policies for the Women's College and the evening,

weekend, and online sessions. (See current catalog for specific requirements.) **[For this class, missing more than 8 classes for any reason will cause a student to fail for insufficient attendance and participation.]**

Academic Honesty

Brenau University is an academic community actively engaged in scholarly pursuits. As members of this community, students are expected to recognize and honor standards of academic and intellectual integrity. Brenau supports the ideals of scholarship and fairness by rejecting all dishonest work when it is submitted for academic credit. Brenau University encourages students to be responsible and accountable for their decisions and actions. It is Brenau’s hope that its students will uphold the honor of the university by refraining from every form of dishonesty in the community. Any attempt by students to present the work of others as their own or to pass an examination by improper means is regarded as a most serious offense and renders those students who do so liable to disciplinary action. Assisting another student in any such dishonesty, or knowing of this dishonesty and not reporting it, is also considered a grave breach of honesty. (See current Catalog for further information, as well as appeal process.)

The Brenau Honor Code: I promise to uphold the Brenau University honor code by refraining from every form of dishonesty and cheating in university life, and will strive to create a spirit of honesty and honor. Failure to do so is considered a breach of trust toward the faculty and student body. I accept this commitment as a personal responsibility to refrain from and to report all forms of dishonesty and cheating.

Grading System

Academic progress and graduation honors are determined by the grades instructors submit at the conclusion of each semester. Final grades represent both the quantity and quality of a student's course work for the entire semester.

The grading system is as follows:

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Quality Points</i>	
<i>A</i>	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>4</i>	A grade of “A” signifies an exceptional, clear, and creative grasp of the concepts of the course with demonstrated ability to apply this knowledge to specific problem situations. It also means that the student has actively participated in class activities and has completed all material in a neat and timely manner. The material indicates that the student spent extra time, personal energy, and critical reflection in an effort to demonstrate exceptional work.

<i>B</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>3</i>	A grade of “B” signifies a solid understanding of the major concepts of the course and the ability to apply those concepts. It also means that the student’s effort and class participation have exceeded the minimal basic requirements for the course. All assignments were judged to be solid in content and were completed in a timely manner.
<i>C</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>2</i>	A grade of “C” signifies a satisfactory understanding and application of the concepts of the course as well as minimal participation in class activities. It also indicates that the student completed the appropriate assignments that satisfied the basic course requirements.
<i>D</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>1</i>	A grade of “D” signifies a below average demonstration and application of the concepts of the course and/or inadequate preparation in class activities. It may also indicate that assignments were not completed in a satisfactory or timely manner.
<i>F</i>	<i>Failure</i>	<i>0</i>	A grade of “F” signifies that the student has not demonstrated adequate understanding or application of the course material. It may also indicate that the student has not met the attendance or assignment requirements.

*Please note that **Email** is the official means of communication for the University, and all students and faculty are required to utilize the BRENAU Email system. Please check your Brenau Email account daily while classes are in session and use it for all University correspondence.*

Course Evaluation Instruments and Grading

Course Evaluation Instruments	Weighting
2 Out-of-class essays [3-4 pages each]	30% (15% each)
1 In-class essay [750-1000 words]	10%
1 Research-enhanced essay [4-6 pages]	20%
Creative project	10%
Tests, quizzes, participation	10%
Final exam essay	20%

In order to pass the course, students must:

- Submit all major assignments (essays, project, final exam)
- Pass the research-enhanced essay with a grade of C or better
- Pass the final exam with a grade of C or better

Students who do not meet these basic requirements will receive an administrative D and must repeat the course (regardless of their average otherwise).

Final grades will be determined as follows:

A=90-100 B=80-89 C=70-79 D=60-69 F=59 and below

Late Papers: Late papers will be penalized by 10% per day. No papers more than three days late will be accepted.

No texting, emailing, web-surfing during class. Stay engaged in the class discussion and connected with your colleagues, remembering that such behaviours contribute to your participation grade.

Writing Center: Students are urged to meet with a Writing Center tutor at least once per paper and are required to meet with the professor at least once during the semester. The tutors can be an invaluable resource as you strive to grow as a writer at the college level. Make the most of the tutorial: be prepared and take drafts, brainstorming, outlines, the text, and any other feedback on the project. We will discuss the role of tutors further in class, but remember that the best writers get feedback from other good writers.

Final Notes:

Students are required to come to class ready to discuss the day's readings in an informed, scholarly way. To prepare for class, read each selection carefully and formulate thoughtful questions or comments—preferably in writing. Each student is responsible for contributing to class discussions. Writing proficiently, reading critically, and analyzing literature effectively are essential both to your development as a thinker and writer and to the vitality of the classroom environment. In this class, each student must be actively engaged to ensure the kind of lively discussion we all appreciate. Our readings are often rich and provocative, so enjoy them and prepare to write and talk about them with intelligence and insight. Understand that learning to write well requires multiple drafts, so prepare to get feedback from writing tutors, peers, and the professor throughout the writing process.

An atmosphere of mutual trust and acceptance is essential to the success of the course. I encourage lively debates, but insist on respect for each other's opinions. We will strive as a community of learners to disagree intelligently and civilly, remembering that everyone has a voice deserving expression. Please feel free to connect with me by phone, email, or office visit. I'll be happy to answer questions, brainstorm for ideas, provide feedback on papers in progress, or simply offer encouragement.

EH 101 Written Communication

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

PLEASE BRING ALL YOUR TEXTS TO CLASS EVERY DAY

NOTE: Changes to this schedule may be necessary. Changes that affect your preparation for class will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard. (Unless otherwise noted, selections are from *Exploring Literature*.)

Week 1

M 8.23	Introduction to course & each other. Class policies.
W 8.25	Cisneros, "Eleven" (26-28); Alvarez, "Snow" (450); Kincaid, "Girl" (543-44); Reading and Analyzing Fiction (60-69); <i>The Write Stuff</i> (66-67);
F 8.27	Writing with Style: Chapter 1, Thinking Well & 2 Getting Launched; <i>The Write Stuff</i> (1-14)

Week 2

M 8.30	<i>Writing with Style</i> : Chapter 3, Openers; <i>The Write Stuff</i> (15-18)
W 9.1	<i>Writing with Style</i> : Chapter 4, Middles; <i>The Write Stuff</i> (19); Sample essay #1 (RR)
F 9.3	Writing Sample (in class)

Week 3

M 9.6	Labor Day Holiday: No Class Meeting
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W 9.8	<i>Writing with Style</i> : Chapter 5, Closers & 9, How to Write a Critical Analysis
F 9.10	<i>The Write Stuff</i> (25-44); <i>Writing with Style</i> : Chapter 11, Proofreading

Week 4

M 9.13	Cofer, "I Fell in Love" (527-30); Morales, "The Day It Happened" (760-761)
W 9.15	Chopin, "The Story of an Hour" (69-71); "Désirée's Baby" (947-50)
F 9.17	Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (720-32);

Week 5

M 9.20	<i>Writing with Style</i> : Chapter 6, Diction
W 9.22	<i>Writing with Style</i> : Chapter 7, Readability
F 9.24	<i>Writing with Style</i> : Chapter 8, Superstitions

Week 6

M 9.27	<i>Writing with Style</i> : Chapter 10, Revising Peer revising
W 9.29	Walker, "Everyday Use" (977-83)
F 10.1	Cofer, "In Search of My Mentors' Gardens" (BB)

Week 7

M 10.4	Farrell, "Fight vs. Flight: A Re-evaluation of Dee in Alice Walker's "Everyday Use"
W 10.6	Writing Q & A Essay #2 Due
F 10.8	Thesis Workshop

Week 8

M 10.11	No Regular Class Meeting: Mandatory Conferences
W 10.13	No Regular Class Meeting: Mandatory Conferences
F 10.15	FALL BREAK NO CLASS

Week 9

M 10.18	Review for Test on <i>Writing with Style</i> and <i>The Write Stuff</i>
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W 10.20	Additional review
F	TEST

Week 10

M 10.25	Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants" (732-36) Peer Editing
W 10.27	Research-enhanced Essay Due Writing Self-Assessment
F 10.29	Murakami, "On Seeing the 100% Perfect Girl One Beautiful April Morning" (470-73); Joyce, "Araby" (445-49)

Week 11

M 11.1	O'Connor, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" (1185-96)
W 11.3	Kessel, "Every Angel Is Terrifying" (BB)
F 11.5	Preparation for In-Class Essay

Week 12

M 11.8	In-Class Essay
W 11.10	Hughes, "Salvation" (32-34)
F 11.12	Tan, "Two Kinds" (253-61)

Week 13

M 11.15	Achebe, "Marriage Is a Private Affair"
W 11.17	Carver, "Cathedral"
F 11.19	Review of Literary Terms

Week 14

M 11.22	Literary Terms Quiz; Creative Presentation Workshop
W 11.24	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
F 11.26	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Week 15

M 11.29	Creative Presentations
W 12.1	Creative Presentations
F 12.3	Review for Final Exam

FINAL EXAM: Monday, 6 December, 7:30-10:30 A.M. Location TBA.

APPENDIX F

BEU 102 Syllabus



School of Fine Arts and Humanities

Department of Humanities

Women's Colleeae. Sprina 2010

Instructor: Dr. Kathryn Locey

Telephone: 770.534.6184

Email: klocey@brenau.edu

Office Location: 12 Virginia Hall

Office Hours: MWF 11:45 – 12:45; MW 2:15 – 4:00,
or by appointment

Textbook(s)/ISBN:

- Madden, Frank, ed. *Exploring Literature*. 4th ed. New York: Pearson-Longman, 2009.
ISBN 0205640184.
- Trimble, John. *Writing with Style*. 2nd ed. Prentice Hill. / ISBN: 130257133
- Dobkins, Debra and Kathryn Locey. *The Write Stuff*. 3rd ed. /no ISBN

Supplementary Information:
on Blackboard.

Additional Course Policies available

Course Description: This course focuses on reading texts and writing research papers. Students will prepare and develop critical analyses that integrate secondary materials. *A grade of C or better is required. Prerequisite: EH 101.*

LE Learning Outcomes**Evaluation Instruments Used**

Compose effective and logical written communication Papers evaluated by departmentally developed rubric

Course Learning Outcomes**Evaluation Instruments Used**

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. demonstrate basic grammatical competency | Exam questions/projects tied to SPECIFIC outcomes and papers, including research papers, evaluated by departmental rubric |
| 2. construct written and/or oral arguments and texts | Projects tied to SPECIFIC outcomes and papers, including research papers, evaluated by departmental rubric |
| 3. demonstrate the ability to perform in-depth research papers | Projects tied to SPECIFIC outcomes and |
| research, analyzing and synthesizing secondary sources | evaluated by departmental rubric |

University Class Attendance and Participation Policy

All grades and evaluations earned by the student and issued by the faculty are based upon the quality of the student's overall academic performance both in and out of class. Students are expected to attend and participate in class regularly, and to assume responsibility for meeting all requirements as specified in the course syllabus. Students should consult the specific policies for their divisions. Those divisions are Women's College, Evening and Weekend College undergraduate, Evening and Weekend College graduate, and Online College. (See Catalog for specific requirements of each College.)

Academic Honesty

Brenau University is an academic community actively engaged in scholarly pursuits. As members of this community, students are expected to recognize and honor standards of academic and intellectual integrity. Brenau supports the ideals of scholarship and fairness by rejecting all dishonest work when it is submitted for academic credit. Brenau University encourages students to be responsible and accountable for their decisions and actions. It is Brenau's hope that its students will uphold the honor of the university by refraining from every form of dishonesty in the community. Any attempt by students to present the work of others as their own or to pass an examination by improper means is regarded as a most serious offense and renders those students who do so liable to disciplinary action. Assisting another student in any such dishonesty, or knowing of this dishonesty and not reporting it, is also considered a grave breach of honesty. (See current Catalog for further information, as well as appeal process.)

The Brenau Honor Code: I promise to uphold the Brenau University honor code by refraining from every form of dishonesty and cheating in university life, and will strive to create a spirit of honesty and honor. Failure to do so is considered a breach of trust toward the faculty and student body. I accept this commitment as a personal responsibility to refrain from and to report all forms of dishonesty and cheating.

Grading System

Academic progress and graduation honors are all determined by grades submitted by the instructors at the conclusion of each semester. Final grades represent a combination of cumulative quantity and quality of a student's course work for that semester.

The grading system is as follows:

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Quality Points</i>	
<i>A</i>	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>4</i>	A grade of "A" signifies an exceptional, clear, and creative grasp of the concepts of the course with demonstrated ability to apply this knowledge to

			specific problem situations. It also means that the student has actively participated in class activities and has completed all material in a neat and timely manner. The material indicates that the student spent extra time, personal energy, and critical reflection in an effort to demonstrate exceptional work.
<i>B</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>3</i>	A grade of “B” signifies a solid understanding of the major concepts of the course and the ability to apply those concepts. It also means that the student’s effort and class participation have exceeded the minimal basic requirements for the course. All assignments were judged to be solid in content and were completed in a timely manner.
<i>C</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>2</i>	A grade of “C” signifies a satisfactory understanding and application of the concepts of the course as well as minimal participation in class activities. It also indicates that the student completed the appropriate assignments that satisfied the basic course requirements.
<i>D</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>1</i>	A grade of “D” signifies a below average demonstration and application of the concepts of the course and/or inadequate preparation in class activities. It may also indicate that assignments were not completed in a satisfactory or timely manner.
<i>F</i>	<i>Failure</i>	<i>0</i>	A grade of “F” signifies that the student has not demonstrated adequate understanding or application of the course material. It may also indicate that the student has not met the attendance or assignment requirements.

*Please note that **Email** is the official means of communication for the University, and all students and faculty are required to utilize the BRENAU Email system. Please check your Brenau Email account daily while classes are in session and use it for all University correspondence.*

Specific evaluation instruments (exams, papers, presentations, projects, etc.) and their weighting

Course Evaluation Instruments	Weighting
Paper 1: Literary Analysis Paper (3 pages)	15 %
Paper 2: Research Paper (5-7 pages)	20 %
Paper 3: In-Class Paper	10 %
Paper 4: Research enhanced paper (4-6 pages)	15 %
Final Exam Essay	20 %
Quizzes, Assignments & Participation (category “Other” in gradebook)	10 %
Presentation	10 %

Please note: Students must turn in all major assignments and pass both the Research Paper

and the Final Exam with a grade of C or better to pass the class.

Additional policies:

Specific Attendance Policy

Please note that for this class, missing more than **8 class meetings** will result in a student missing

more than the University-allowed 20%. After her 9th absence—**whether excused or unexcused**—a student will be administratively withdrawn and receive a grade of WF. Students may miss up to three classes without penalty. Since sickness and emergencies have a way of happening when we least expect them, I urge everyone to avoid missing class unless it’s absolutely necessary.

Late or Missing Work:

Prompt submission of all assignments is expected. Unless you have contacted me ahead of time about some truly extraordinary circumstance—extreme illness or natural

disaster—your work should be submitted on time . . . whether or not you attend class that day. Late papers will be penalized 10% per day. No papers more than three days late will be accepted—unless you have received permission to submit a late paper due to exceptional circumstances.

Failure to attend class on the day a major assignment is due will result in a 0 for that assignment—unless the absence is excused. Please contact me via email as soon as you know you will be missing the assignment.

Participation: Be generous! Please share your insights, opinions, and questions with the class. Read closely and discuss openly. Everyone’s learning experience will be enhanced.

EH 102 Reading and Research Writing Schedule:

(This is a general guideline. Changes may be necessary.)

EL = *Exploring Literature* WwS = Writing with Style
 WS = *The Write Stuff* BB = Blackboard

Week 1: Drama

W 1.6	Introduction to the course and each other.	
F 1.8	John M. Synge, “Riders to the Sea” (1263-71); Elements of Drama (70-71)	E

Week 2: Drama

M 1.11	Thesis workshop and Sample Student Essay #1 (under Documents)	B B
W 1.13	Readability, Chapter 7 (64-81)	W w S
F 1.15	Peer Review for Essay #1	

Week 3: Drama

M 1.18	Martin Luther King Holiday	No CLASS	
W 1.20	Tennessee Williams, <i>The Glass Menagerie</i> , Scenes 1-2 (281-89)		EL
F 1.22	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i> , Scenes 3-5 (290-305)	Paper #1 Due	EL

Week 4: Drama

M 1.25	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i> , Scenes 6-7 (305-29)	EL
W 1.27	Research workshop; “Avoiding Plagiarism” and “The Research Paper” (45-49)	WS
F 1.29	Thesis workshop and resource exchange	

Week 5: Drama

M 2.1	No class meeting: Mandatory Conferences	
W 2.3	Writing Q & A	
F 2.5	Introduction to Shakespeare	

Week 6: Drama

M 2.8	<i>Hamlet</i> , Act 1 (539-68)	EL
W 2.10	<i>Hamlet</i> , Act 2 (572-90)	EL
F 2.12	<i>Hamlet</i> , Act 3 (590-620) Research Paper (#2)	EL

Week 7: Drama

M 2.15	<i>Hamlet</i> , Act 4 (620-42)	EL
W 2.17	<i>Hamlet</i> , Act 5 (642-663)	EL
F 2.19	Hamlet criticism (671-681) and Blackboard (Documents)	EL, BB

Week 8: Drama

M 2.22	Review and prepare for in-class essay	
W 2.24	In-Class Essay (Paper #3)	
F 2.26	Intro to Poetry	

Week 9: SPRING BREAK!
March 1-5

No Class!

Week 10: Poetry

M 3.8	MacLeish, "Ars Poetica" (1010); Ferlinghetti, "Constantly Risking Absurdity" (1011); Collins, "Introduction to Poetry" (1012); Elements of Poetry, <i>Write Stuff</i> (68-69)	E L, W
W 3.10	Roethke: "My Papa's Waltz" (264); Hayden: "Those Winter Sundays" (13); Lee:	
F 3.12	Johnson, "I Want to Die While You Love Me" (1128); Millay, "Love Is Not All" (789); Paz, "Two Bodies" (790); Momaday, "Simile" (78); Atwood, "You Fit Into Me" (776)	E L

Week 11: Poetry

M 3.15	Doty, "Brilliance" (1227); Oliver, "When Death Comes" (1206); Whitman, <i>Song of Myself</i> 6 (1213)	E L
W 3.17	Peer workshop for research-enhanced essay; Poetry Presentation Groups	
F 3.19	Dickinson Case Study, pages 1287 - 1305	E L

Week 12: Poetry

M 3.22	Dickinson, continued	Research-enhanced Essay Due (Essay #4)	
W 3.24	Sexton, "Cinderella" (800);	also, the Grimms' version of Cinderella (796)	
F 3.26	Auden, "Musée des Beaux Arts" (688); Devenish, "Icarus Again" (689); Williams, "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus" (BB documents)		E L , B B

Week 13: Poetry

M 3.29	Yellen, "Nighthawks" (693); Sexton, "The Starry Night" (695)	
W 3.31	Cathy Song, "Beauty and Sadness" (698); Rich, "Mourning Picture" (701)	
F 4.2	Review for Poetry Quiz and workshop for presentation groups	

Week 14: Poetry

M 4.5	Poetry Quiz	
W 4.7	Poetry Presentation	
F 4.9	Poetry Presentation	

Week 15: Poetry

M 4.12	Poetry Presentation	
W 4.14	Poetry Presentation	
F 4.16	Poetry Presentation	

Week 16: Poetry

M 4.19	Integrating quotes from poetry, WS (39-40); Student poems	W S
W 4.21	Student poems	
F 4.23	Prepare for Final Exam	

Final Exam: Monday, May 3, 7:30 – 10:30 AM

APPENDIX G

GSSC 101 Syllabus

Email Communication

Hi Marianne,:

It was nice to hear from you. I hope your research and writing are going well for you. To answer your question about FYC objectives, these are the standard objectives as detailed by the English Department. This language appears exactly on my 1101 syllabus, and I believe its inclusion on course syllabi is a departmental policy. Here you go:

Course Objectives: In keeping with the College's mission, ENGL1101 prepares students for college and career writing experiences by directing them in the basic organization and development of essays of various lengths. The specific objectives of the course address an integral part of the College's general education outcomes. These include:

- Becoming aware of the writing process, knowing terms related to this process: prewriting, peer review, revising, editing.
- Reading a variety of challenging texts with help as needed; recognizing/evaluating the rhetorical choices made in a text.
- Expanding critical thinking abilities by exploring context and assumptions in various issues; coping with multiple perspectives; and relying on established authorities.
- Becoming aware of different audiences and genres.
- Learning rhetorical strategies to develop ideas and increasing rhetorical awareness of how text is manipulated to meet purpose and audience needs.
- Writing essays with analytical, interpretive components, including analysis of written texts.
- Writing coherent, unified, and logically organized paragraphs and essays in both timed and untimed settings.
- Using outside sources (library, Internet, other electronic media) to explore an idea, question, or thesis; integrating sources into a text, handling quotations, and using MLA style to give appropriate credit to sources.
- Improving grammar, usage, mechanics, development and organization in context as needed.
- Demonstrating competence with the following word-processing concepts:
- margins, spacing, fonts, font size, paragraph formatting (first-line and hanging indents), block quotations, and headers.

Let me know if I can be of further assistance to you and your efforts.

Most sincerely,

Jessica Cooke
Instructor, Department of English

APPENDIX H

GSSC 102 Syllabus

GSC Department of English
First-Year Composition Program
English Composition II (ENGL 1102) Syllabus
(Revised Summer 2010)

General Course Information: Each instructor will provide, on a separate sheet, information concerning his/her office number, office telephone number, office hours, email address, and important dates during the semester.

Texts: English 1102 instructors may require their students to purchase a grammar/style handbook and other supplemental texts.

Course Description: English Composition II (ENGL 1102) is the second of two three-semester-hour composition courses required of every student in Area A of the Semester Core Curriculum. The aim in English 1102 is to expand students' understanding of how an idea, an era, or an experience can find expression in multiple forms and genres and move them toward greater independence in their own academic writing. To be eligible to take ENGL 1102, a student must have a grade of C or better in ENGL 1101 or ENGL 1101H (Honors Composition I). If a student receives a 5 on the AP English Examination, the student may exemption ENGL 1102. In accordance with Gainesville State College regulations, a student must make a grade of C or better to earn credit for ENGL 1102. The course carries three semester hours of transfer credit.

Course Objectives: In keeping with the College's mission, ENGL 1102 prepares students for college and career writing experiences by directing them in the basic organization and development of essays of various lengths. The specific objectives of the course address an integral part of the College's general education outcomes. These include:

- Taking control of one's own writing process, and learning to adjust the process for the purpose.
- Critically engaging multiple perspectives; identifying established authorities; recognizing bias.
- Reading a variety of complex texts independently, with an emphasis on evaluating sources.
- Increasing understanding of academic discourse, with more emphasis on thesis-driven essays.
- Independently choosing rhetorical strategies best suited to purpose or audience.
- Developing abilities to analyze a variety of texts.
- Incorporating independent research (library, Internet, and other electronic media) into an essay that takes a position. Incorporating multiple sources with distinct perspectives into a single paper. Increasing mechanical skills in integrating sources into a text, handling quotations, and using a standard documentation style to give appropriate credit to sources.

- Demonstrating competence with the following word-processing concepts: creating charts using the tab key, inserting and labeling images, creating outlines, attaching Word documents to e-mail.
- Recognizing and understanding grammatical and mechanical terms.

Course Calendar: See instructor's materials.

Course Policies:

- In addition to other writing assignments, each student will write at least five essays. Most English 1102 essays should include multiple sources, and at least one will be a documented essay requiring substantial library and/or Internet-based research. English 1102 essays are expected to grapple with a wide range of texts (written, filmic, etc.) based around a core theme. The compositional emphasis is on writing thesis-driven essays that demonstrate independent thinking and critical evaluation of texts.
- ENGL 1102 students should have a basic understanding of English grammar and a familiarity with the rules of standard English. A student demonstrating grave composition and/or grammar deficiencies may be referred to the [Writing Center](#) at the Academic Computing Tutoring and Testing Center ([ACTT Center](#)) on the Gainesville campus or the [Writing Lab](#) at the Oconee campus where tutors are available. Any student may seek help in clearing up problems, but some students may be assigned work to improve their skills in problem areas.
- Plagiarism--accidental or intentional--will be dealt with in accordance with the Student Conduct code, which can be found in the Student Handbook at the [Student Life](#) web site. The *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (4th ed.) defines plagiarism as follows:
 - To use another person's ideas or expressions in your writing without acknowledging the sources is to plagiarize. . . . A writer who fails to give appropriate acknowledgment when repeating another's wording or particularly apt term, paraphrasing another's argument, or presenting another's line of thinking is guilty of plagiarism. (Section 1.7)
- ENGL 1102 meets three lecture hours per week. Attendance at all scheduled classes and conferences is expected. Each instructor will establish an attendance policy for the class.
- Instructors will establish their own policies for making up missed work. The student is responsible for making up missed work, if allowed to do so by the instructor, and the student should see the instructor as soon as possible to arrange how and where to complete missed assignments.

Course Grading: Essays are not graded on content alone. Errors in spelling and grammar will also be considered in the evaluation of writing assignments. The English Department has approved [this rubric](#) for use in ENGL 1102; instructors are free to construct their own rubrics, but they should reflect the guidelines in the approved rubric. In addition to this rubric, the documented research essay also should be graded according to [this research skills rubric](#).

Final Portfolio: A Final Portfolio emphasizing the importance of revision is strongly recommended, though not required. Instructors may substitute a final paper, project, or exam for the Final Portfolio at their discretion.

Grading: Instructors may weigh the various essays and other assignments for the course as they choose, but no less than 75 percent of the final grade will be based on the essays and Final Portfolio. At least 25 percent of the total semester grade will be reported to students prior to the midpoint of the semester.

Explanation of Grades:

- A Excellent, signifies an overall average of 90-100.
- B Above average, signifies an overall average of 80-89.
- C Passing signifies, an overall average of 70-79.
- D Needs improvement, signifies an overall average of 60-69. The student must repeat ENGL 1102.
- F Failing, signifies an overall average of 0-59. The student must repeat ENGL 1102.
- W Withdrew, signifies that the student withdrew from the class without penalty prior to the midpoint of the semester. An instructor may not assign a grade of W unless the student has initiated the withdrawal process.
- WF Withdrew Failing, signifies that the student withdrew from class after the midpoint of the semester. A WF counts the same as an F.
- I Incomplete, signifies that the student has not completed assignments. Instructors can assign this grade to students who have been unable to complete one or two assignments because of extraordinary health- or work-related situation. Students who fail to complete the missed assignments in one semester will receive a grade of F.

Disruptive Behavior Policy: Students who exhibit behaviors that are considered to obstruct or disrupt the class or its learning activities will be considered under the Board of Regents Policy on Disruptive Behavior. Behaviors that are considered to be inappropriate in the classroom include: sleeping, drinking, eating, coming in late, interrupting others, talking out of turn, inappropriate behavior during group work, verbal behavior that is disrespectful to other students or the instructor, use of cell phones and beepers, or any other behavior that may be disruptive. Students who exhibit such behavior will be given a verbal warning by the class instructor, then will be given a written warning in a meeting with the Chair of the Humanities and Fine Arts Division, and then will be subject to disciplinary procedures as outlined in the Gainesville State College Student Handbook on the [Student Life website](#).

Severe Weather Policy: When there is a threat of severe weather conditions in the College's service area, the safety of the GC students and employees will be the first consideration. If a decision is made to close the campus, all personnel will be notified as expeditiously as possible. On campus and public communications will be used to alert the public and staff to plans resulting from unusual conditions. Faculty, staff, and students should tune to one of the following radio or TV stations for up-to-date GC Closing information: WSB-TV, FOX5-TV, WXIA-TV, WSB-Radio, WGST-Radio, WDUN 550 AM-Radio, WLET 106.1 FA, 103.7 FM, 102.1 FM, 1340 AM,

WGAU 960 AM, WIFC, WJJC 1270 AM, WCON 99.3 FM, and 1450 AM.

Smoking/Tobacco Policy: Because of the harmful effects of smoking and use of other tobacco products on an individual's health and also because the College wants to protect non-smokers from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke, the college has established the following policy: Gainesville College does not allow the use of any tobacco products in the buildings or on the grounds of the institution. This policy applies to the Gainesville and Oconee campuses.

Disability Accommodations Policy: Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact [Disability Services](#) at the Gainesville or Oconee campus.

Administrative Offices:

- [Bookstore](#)
- [Business Affairs Office](#)
- [Registrar](#)
- [Financial Aid](#)
- [Student Life](#)
- [University Center](#)
- [Oconee Campus](#)

Additional Information: See instructor's materials.

SPECIFIC DETAILS OF THIS SYLLABUS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

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