

**San José State University**  
**Department of English and Comparative Literature**  
**English 1B, Composition 2 (GE C3), Sections 32, 36, 39**  
**Spring 2014**

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***“It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.”***  
***-- Aristotle***

**Course Description**

Welcome to English 1B, the second course in SJSU’s two-semester lower-division composition sequence. Beyond providing repeated practice in planning and executing essays, and broadening and deepening students’ understanding of the genres, audiences, and purposes of college writing, English 1B differs from English 1A in its emphasis on persuasive and critical writing (with less attention paid to the personal essay), its requirement for fewer but longer essays, and its requirement for writing informed by research. Students will develop sophistication in writing analytical, argumentative, and critical essays; a mature writing style appropriate to university discourse; reading abilities that will provide an adequate foundation for upper-division work; critical thinking skills; proficiency in basic library research skills and in writing papers informed by research; and mastery of the mechanics of writing.

**Prerequisites:** Passage of Written Communication English 1A (C or better) or approved equivalent.

**Required Texts**

**1. SJSU Campus Handbook: *The Everyday Writer with Exercises (5e)* by Andrea Lunsford**

Print ISBN: 9781457612671 Available at the Spartan Bookstore  
Electronic edition ISBN: 9781457633423 or Bedford/St. Martin’s online  
(<http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/everydaywriter5e/>)

**2. *From Critical Thinking to Argument (4e)* by Sylvan Barnet and Hugo Bedau**  
ISBN: 9781457649950

**3. *They Say/I Say (3e)* by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein**  
ISBN: 9780393935844

**Additional Requirements**

Access to internet and printer  
Class notebook and folder  
College-level print dictionary  
Pens and three green books

**Canvas**

All students are encouraged to regularly check the class Canvas group. Copies of the syllabus, announcements, appointments, and assignment reminders will be posted in Canvas.

**EW Learning Curve**

Please sign up for Learning Curve using the access code inside the cover of your *Everyday Writer with Exercises, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* at <http://www.macmillanhigher.com/learningcurve/everydaywriter5e/593187>. (Use Firefox or Chrome). Students who already have a copy of the book or have a used copy will need to purchase a new access code for LearningCurve. LearningCurve exercises are designed to help students master grammar and punctuation. For credit, students will need to earn 75% credit for each sub-category under each topic. Cut and paste complete scores into Canvas before class on the day that they are due.

## **Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives**

Building on the college-level proficiencies required in English 1A, students shall achieve the ability to write complete essays that demonstrate advanced proficiency in *all* of the following:

- Clear and effective communication of meaning.
- An identifiable focus (argumentative essays will state their thesis clearly and will show an awareness, implied or stated, of some opposing point of view).
- Application of critical thinking skills.
- An appropriate voice that demonstrates an awareness of audience and purpose.
- Careful attention to review and revision.
- Effective and correct use of supporting materials, including independent research (e.g., quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing, and citing sources);
- Effective analysis, interpretation, evaluation, and synthesis of ideas encountered in multiple readings.
- Effective organization and development of ideas at paragraph and essay levels.
- Appropriate and effective sentence structure and diction.
- Command of conventional mechanics (e.g., punctuation, spelling, reference, agreement).

## **Student Learning Objectives**

Students will demonstrate, orally and in writing, proficiency in the Area A3 Learning Outcomes. Students will be able to:

1. Locate and evaluate sources, through library research, and integrate research through appropriate citation and quotation.
2. Present effective arguments that use a full range of legitimate rhetorical and logical strategies to articulate and explain their positions on complex issues in dialogue with other points of view.
3. Effectively locate, interpret, evaluate, and synthesize evidence in a comprehensive way in support of one's ideas.
4. Identify and critically evaluate the assumptions in and the context of an argument.
5. Effectively distinguish and convey inductive and deductive patterns as appropriate, sequencing arguments and evidence logically to draw valid conclusions and articulate related outcomes (implications and consequences).

## **Course Content**

**Reading:** Critical reading is an essential part of your success in college and beyond. In this course, you will annotate, summarize, and respond to written and visual work. The majority of the readings you do in English 1B will be devoted to analytical, critical, and argumentative essays. Your success in this course is highly contingent upon your continued, focused effort. Please read, summarize, and annotate texts as assigned before coming to class so you can participate in the discussions.

**Writing:** In this course, your assignments will emphasize the skills and activities in writing and thinking that produce both the persuasive argument and the critical essay. Each of these demands analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. These assignments will give you repeated practice in prewriting, organizing, writing, revising, and editing. At least one of your essays will require research.

**Essays and assignments:** Students will be required to write a diagnostic essay, two in-class essays, one out-of-class essay (revision), commentaries/responses, and one researched argument essay, as described below:

Assignment Category		Percent of Grade
Diagnostic In-Class Essay	1000 words	0%
Out-of-Class Essay (Revision)	1000 words SLO 1-4	10%
In-class Essays (2) and revisions	2000 words SLO 2-5	10%
Commentaries/Responses	1000 words SLO 2-5	5%
Research Essay and components (annotated bibliography, outline, rough draft, etc.)	2500 words SLO 1-5	25%
Final Reflective Analysis (Portfolio)	1200-1400 words SLO 2,3,5	10%
Quizzes		15%
Short Assignments, Learning Curve	SLOs vary	15%
Participation (Peer Reviews, Discussions, Exercises)	SLOs vary	10%

Students must complete all essays and the majority of homework to pass the course. In-class essays, quizzes, and homework may only be made up in cases of documented illness or emergency.

You must type out-of-class essays and revisions using MLA guidelines for formatting and citing. There will be significant point deductions for not using MLA format or for improper or missing citations. Part of MLA guidelines require the essay be typed in a 12-point readable font (such as Times New Roman, Calibri, Arial or Palatino), double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides, and with your name and page number in the header. Refer to example in your handbook.

### **Grading Policy**

**Grading:** A-F scale (see below). To take the Writing Skills Test and move on to upper-division coursework, students need a C or better in English 1B.

A+ = 100-97%	A = 96-93%	A- = 92-90%
B+ = 89-87%	B = 86-83%	B- = 82-80%
C+ = 79-77%	C = 76-73%	C- = 72-70%
D+ = 69-67%	D = 66-63%	D- = 62-60%
F = 59-0% Unsatisfactory		

### **Class Notes**

Because a large percentage of students' grades are based on what they learn from in-class exercises, it is essential that students take notes and keep them organized by date in a class-designated binder or on their computer. The notes will be very helpful for writing essays and preparing for quizzes.

### **Quizzes**

I will give a series of announced and unannounced quizzes throughout the semester on aspects of the assigned readings or class discussions. My goal is to make quizzes brief and straightforward for students who have kept up with their assignments. Quizzes can only be made up in cases of documented illness or emergency.

### **Final Assignment**

Instead of a final exam, you will write a critical reflection at the end of the class. Think of it as a scientific study of your progress as a writer over the next four months. Remember, writing is a *process*. Collecting your work and then reflecting on that work is part of the process. The final assignment is designed to get you thinking about your specific challenges, your strategies for improvement, your successes and failures, and your goals for the future. Every writer, no matter how accomplished, has room for improvement. This assignment is your culminating experience. This course does not have a final exam.

### **Late work**

Late work will not be accepted except in cases of documented illness or emergency. Students must be in attendance to complete and receive credit for in-class assignments and discussions; they can't be made up.

### **Classroom Protocol**

Please arrive on time for every session with your binder and books ready for class activities and discussion, your assignments read, and hard copies of the homework ready to turn in. Sessions may begin with quizzes, group exercises, or short assignments that cannot be made up if you miss them. If you miss a class, please contact [a classmate](#) for notes, reading assignments, and handouts, as the assignment calendar is subject to change. All students are expected to abide by the classroom rules for technology use, agreeing to use their computers only for note taking, unless the assignment specifically requires internet research. You must receive written permission to record or film any portion of this class.

### **Estimated Student Workload Requirement**

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in [University Policy S12-3](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

### **Student Technology Resources**

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of Clark Hall and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library.

### **Library Liaison**

For library research questions, contact Toby Matoush, the English Department's Library Liaison: (408) 808-2096 or [tmatoush@sjsu.edu](mailto:tmatoush@sjsu.edu).

### **SJSU Writing Center**

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the [Writing Center website](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>. For additional resources and updated information, follow the Writing Center on Twitter and become a fan of the SJSU Writing Center on Facebook.

### **SJSU Peer Connections**

The Learning Assistance Resource Center (LARC) and the Peer Mentor Program have merged to become Peer Connections. Peer Connections is the new campus-wide resource for mentoring and tutoring. Our staff is here to inspire students to develop their potential as independent learners while they learn to successfully navigate through their university experience. Students are encouraged to take advantage of our services which include course-content based tutoring, enhanced study and time management skills, more effective critical thinking strategies, decision making and problem-solving abilities, and campus resource referrals.

In addition to offering small group, individual, and drop-in tutoring for a number of undergraduate courses, consultation with mentors is available on a drop-in or by appointment basis. Workshops are offered on a wide variety of topics including preparing for the Writing Skills Test (WST), improving your learning and memory, alleviating procrastination, surviving your first semester at SJSU, and other related topics. A computer lab and study space are also available for student use in Room 600 of Student Services Center (SSC).

Peer Connections is located in three locations: SSC, Room 600 (10th Street Garage on the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and San Fernando Street), at the 1st floor entrance of Clark Hall, and in the Living Learning Center (LLC) in Campus Village Housing Building B. Visit [Peer Connections website](#) at <http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu> for more information.

## **SJSU Counseling Services**

The SJSU Counseling Services is located on the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Street and San Fernando Street, in Room 201, Administration Building. Professional psychologists, social workers, and counselors are available to provide consultations on issues of student mental health, campus climate or psychological and academic issues on an individual, couple, or group basis. To schedule an appointment or learn more information, visit [Counseling Services website](http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling>.

## **Dropping and Adding**

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester's [Catalog Policies](http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html) section at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current academic year calendars document on the [Academic Calendars webpage](http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/) at [http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic\\_calendars/](http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/). The [Late Drop Policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/>. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes. Information about the latest changes and news is available at the [Advising Hub](http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/>.

## **Consent for Recording of Class and Public Sharing of Instructor Material**

[University Policy S12-7](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf), <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf>, requires students to obtain instructor's permission to record the course and the following items to be included in the syllabus:

- “Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him/her. You must obtain the instructor's permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your private, study purposes only. The recordings are the intellectual property of the instructor; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or distribute the material.”
  - It is suggested that the greensheet include the instructor's process for granting permission, whether in writing or orally and whether for the whole semester or on a class by class basis.
  - In classes where active participation of students or guests may be on the recording, permission of those students or guests should be obtained as well.
- “Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent.”

## **Academic integrity**

Your commitment, as a student, to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University Academic Integrity Policy S07-2](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf> requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>.

## **Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. [Presidential Directive 97-03](http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf) at [http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD\\_1997-03.pdf](http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf) requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Accessible Education Center](http://www.sjsu.edu/aec) (AEC) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aec> to establish a record of their disability.

## **Accommodation to Students' Religious Holidays**

San José State University shall provide accommodation on any graded class work or activities for students wishing to observe religious holidays when such observances require students to be absent from class. It is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor, in writing, about such holidays before the add deadline at the start of each semester. If such holidays occur before the add deadline, the student must notify the instructor, in writing, at least three days before the date that he/she will be absent. It is the responsibility of the instructor to make every reasonable effort to honor the student request without penalty, and of the student to make up the work missed. See [University Policy S14-7](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S14-7.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S14-7.pdf>

**Course Schedule**  
**English 1B, Sections 32, 36, and 39**  
**Fall 2014**

*EW – The Everyday Writer*

*CTA – From Critical Thinking To Argument*

*TSIS – They Say/I Say*

*Please note: This schedule is subject to change depending on the needs of the class. If you are absent, please contact a classmate to see what you missed and to confirm assignments for the next session. Homework is due at the next class session unless otherwise noted.*

**Week 1**

T 8.26.14

Class introduction and class exercise

**Homework**

- Read and annotate “**How to Mark a Book**” (attached to syllabus)
- Read and annotate “**Kenyon Commencement Speech**” (attached to syllabus)
- Please answer the following questions: What is each author’s purpose? What is each author’s thesis? How does he support it? What does each essay have to do with critical thinking?
- Read syllabus. Sign “Letter of Understanding” and complete “Student Introduction”
- Bring a green book, dictionary, and pens for diagnostic essay on 8.28.14
- Sign up for Canvas

Th 8.28.14

**Diagnostic essay**

**Homework**

- Read and annotate the excerpts from **Zinsser and Roberts** (attached to syllabus)
- Plagiarism tutorial online: <http://tutorials.sjlibrary.org/tutorial/plagiarism/selector.htm>
- InfoPower tutorial online:  
<http://tutorials.sjlibrary.org/tutorial/infopower/index.htm>
- Copy and paste complete results of both into Canvas for credit
- Sign up for **EW Learning Curve**  
<http://www.macmillanhighered.com/learningcurve/everydaywriter5e/593187>

SLO 1,2

**Week 2**

T 9.2.14

Readings, summarizing/paraphrasing, sentence work

**Homework**

- Read, annotate, and summarize chapter 1 **CTA**.
- Read and annotate “**The Vanishing Middle Class**” handout
- Print, read, and annotate pages 1-10 (on Firefox or chrome):  
[http://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/116/transcript\\_116.pdf](http://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/116/transcript_116.pdf)
- Print the following article on revision and bring to class  
<http://www.writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/revising-drafts/>

SLO 1,3,4

Th 9.4.14

Quiz, critical thinking, readings, revision (out-of-class essay #1)

**Homework**

- Read, annotate, and summarize **chapter 2 CTA**
- Read, annotate, and summarize **the introduction, and chapter 1 TSIS**
- “Commas” and “Comma Splices and Fused (Run-on) Sentences” **EW Learning Curve**
- Print out the following resource for comma use:  
[http://www.germannu.edu/tutor/handouts/english/Comma\\_Rules.pdf](http://www.germannu.edu/tutor/handouts/english/Comma_Rules.pdf)

SLO 1-4

### Week 3

T 9.9.14 Quiz, critical reading, essay structure, commas

#### **Homework**

- Read, annotate, and summarize **chapter 3 CTA**
- Read, annotate, and summarize **chapters 2 and 3 TSIS**

SLO 2-5

Th 9.11.14 Quiz, readings, MLA format, class exercise

#### **Homework**

- **“Verbs” and “Subject-Verb Agreement” EW Learning Curve**
- Read, annotate, and summarize **chapters 4 and 5 TSIS**
- Write rough draft of out-of-class essay #1. Submit on Canvas. Bring two copies to class for peer review.

SLO 1-5

### Week 4

T 9.16.14 Reflective paragraphs, peer review rough draft out-of-class essay #1

#### **Homework**

- **“Parallelism” and “Apostrophes” EW Learning Curve**
- Print, read, and annotate **“The Declaration of Independence”**  
[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html)

SLO 1-5

Th 9.18.14 John Adam’s clip, discuss “The Declaration of Independence,” deductive and inductive reasoning, parallelism, word choice.

#### **Homework**

- Read and annotate **chapters 4 and 5 CTA**
- Complete final draft of out-of-class essay #1 in MLA Format. Proofread. Read aloud. Submit final draft online. Turn in hard copy of reflective paragraph, final draft, rough draft, peer review sheet, and diagnostic essay (stapled together) in class on 9.23.14.

SLO 1-5

### Week 5.

T 9.23.14 **Due: Final draft out-of-class essay #1**, Quiz, analyzing arguments, visual arguments

#### **Homework**

- Print, read, and annotate **“Letter from Birmingham Jail”**  
[http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles\\_Gen/Letter\\_Birmingham.html](http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html)
- Write a 350 word analysis of **“Letter from Birmingham Jail.”** Specifically discuss the rhetorical techniques we have studied that MLK uses to persuade his audience. Submit to Canvas discussions. Bring a hard copy to class.

SLO 2,4,5

Th 9.25.14 Class exercise on “Letter From Birmingham Jail,” analyzing argument

#### **Homework**

- Read and annotate **chapter 6 TSIS**
- Print, read, annotate, and analyze the following op ed rhetorically.  
[http://seattletimes.com/html/opinion/2004340744\\_goodman11.html](http://seattletimes.com/html/opinion/2004340744_goodman11.html)
- Write a 300 word analysis. Submit to Canvas. Bring hard copy to class.

SLO 2,4,5

T 9.30.14 Quiz, readings, research paper topics

#### **Homework**

- Bring green book, pens, and dictionary for in-class essay on 10.2.14
- **“Active and Passive Voice” and “Pronouns” EW Learning Curve**
- Read and annotate **chapter 6 CTA**

SLO 2-5

Th 10.2.14 **In-class essay 1**

**Homework**

- Research potential research topics that are arguable and related to money.
- Print, read, and annotate “**The Case Against Corporate Social Responsibility**”  
<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748703338004575230112664504890>
- Write a 300 word letter to the editor in response to Karnani’s essay. Discuss the following:
  - The degree to which you agree with Karnani’s claims
  - Whether or not you find his argument compelling. State reasons and provide support.

SLO 2-5

**Week 7**

T 10.7.14

Discuss readings, research paper introduction, argument types, annotated bibliography

**Homework**

- Read, annotate, and summarize **chapters 7 and 8 TSIS**
- Write a 150 word response to a classmate’s letter to the editor on Karnani’s essay.
- Brainstorm, cluster, and freewrite in your journal to help you select and narrow down your research topic:
  - Topic, thesis question, and list of research questions due 10.9.14
  - Library Day 10.14.14
  - Annotated Bibliography due 10.21.14
  - Narrowed thesis, outline, rhetorical situation and field research paragraphs due 10.30.14
  - Rough draft due 11.18.14
  - Final draft due 11.25.14
  - Presentation due 12.2.14

SLO 1-5

Th 10.9.14

Due: Topic, thesis question, list of research questions

Discuss research paper topic selection, narrowing topic to thesis, in-class essay 1

**Homework**

- “**Capitalization**” and “**Fragments**” **EW Learning Curve**
- Bring topic, thesis question, and list of research questions to library 10.14.14

SLO 1, 3

T 10.14.14

**Library Day**

**Homework**

- Read, annotate, and summarize chapter 7 **CTA**
- Find the rest of your seven sources for your research paper. Read them and annotate. Write citations in MLA format. Alphabetize them.

SLO 1

Th 10.16.14

Review MLA format, TBA

**Homework**

- Finish reading and annotating sources. Make sure they are relevant.
- Write citations for each of your (alphabetized) seven sources and complete annotations for the first four. Submit on Canvas. Bring hard copy to class. Due 10.21.14

SLOs Vary

**Week 9**

T 10.21.14

Annotated bibliography due

Research paper format, narrowed thesis, outline, rhetorical situation and field research

**Homework**

- Read, annotate, and summarize **chapter 8 CTA**
- Read and annotate Toulmin handout

SLO 1,2,5

- Th 10.23.14 Toulmin's Method  
**Homework**
- Read and annotate assigned essays. Write detailed answers to checklist questions on CTA page 304.
  - “Shifts” and “Coordination and Subordination” EW Learning Curve
- SLO 4
- Week 10**
- T 10.28.14 TBA, visuals  
**Homework**
- Complete research paper narrowed thesis, outline, rhetorical situation and field research paragraph due 10.30.14
- SLOs Vary
- Th 10.30.14 Due narrowed thesis, outline, and rhetorical situation and field research paragraphs.  
Audience Exercise  
**Homework**
- Bring green book, pens, and dictionary for in-class essay 2 on 11.4.14
  - Happy Halloween!
- SLO 4
- Week 11**
- T 11.4.14 **In-class Essay 2**  
**Homework**
- Work on rough draft of research paper. See me with questions.
- SLO 1-5
- Th 11.6.14 **Conferences**  
**Homework**
- Conduct field research (survey, observation, interview)
  - Work on rough draft of research essay. See me with questions.
- SLO 1-5
- Week 12**
- T 11.11.14 Veteran's Day – No Class.  
**Homework**
- Work on rough draft of research essay
- SLO 1-5
- Th 11.13.14 Discuss in-class essay 2, visuals, introductions/conclusions  
**Homework**
- Complete rough draft of research essay including works cited
  - See me with questions
- SLO 1-5
- Week 13**
- T 11.18.14 Rough draft research paper due  
Peer Review  
**Homework**
- Complete rough draft of research essay. Read it aloud, Find a second reader before you bring it to class for peer review Submit to Canvas before class on 11.25.14. Bring a hard copy to class.
- SLO 1-5

- Th 11.20.14 Discuss research paper questions, presentations, and reflective essays  
**Homework**
- Complete final draft of research essay due. Read aloud. Have another person read your final draft.
  - Write a brief (1 page) reflective essay.
  - Submit the final draft of your paper to Canvas. Turn in hard copy of reflective essay, final draft, peer review sheet, and peer reviewed draft (stapled together in that order) in class on 11.25.14.
- SLO 1-5

**Week 14**

- T 11.25.14 **Due Final Draft Research Essay**  
Discuss final reflective essay, assign peers for review

**Homework**

- Complete presentations, due 12.2.14
- Work on rough draft of reflective essay, due 12.4.14. Email to Peer by class that day. See me during extended office hours with questions.

SLO 2,3,5

- Th 11.27.14 Thanksgiving

**Homework**

- Complete presentations, due 12.2.14
- Work on rough draft of reflective essay, due 12.4.14. Email to Peer by class that day. See me next week during extended office hours with questions.

SLO 2,3,5

**Week 15**

- T 12.2.14 Presentations
- Complete rough draft of reflective essay, due 12.4.14. Email to peer by class that day. See me during extended office hours with questions.

SLO 2,3,5

- Th 12.4.14 Presentations
- Return final draft of reflective essay to peer by noon on 12.5.14.
  - Complete final draft of reflective essay, due 12.9.14. Submit to Canvas. Bring hard copy to class.
  - See me during extended office hours with questions.

SLO 2,3,5

**Week 16**

- T 12.9.14 Reflective Essay Due  
Presentations  
Last class. Have fun. Stay safe.

SLO 2,3,5

**Final Note:**

Some say, “Money makes the world go round.” Others say that our preoccupation with money takes our focus away from the important things in life. In Silicon Valley, it’s hard to ignore the need for money just to get by. But many think that income inequality is a growing problem. Think, if you will, of several potential arguable topics related to money that you might be interested in researching and learning more about. Consider topics in your major or other areas that interest and excite you; brainstorm; you may be surprised how many connections you can make. We will talk of this often in class, but please begin a list of your ideas that you can add to, and keep it in your folder.

## Important SJSU dates Spring 2014

Thursday	August 21	Fall Semester Begins
Thursday-Friday	August 21-22	Orientation, Advisement, Faculty Meetings
Monday	August 25	First Day of Instruction – Classes Begin
Monday	<i>September 1</i>	<i>Labor Day – Campus Closed</i>
Friday	September 5	Last Day to Drop Courses Without an Entry on Permanent Record
Friday	September 12	Last Day to Add Courses & Register Late
Monday	September 22	Enrollment Census Date
Tuesday	November 11	<i>Veteran's Day -- Campus Closed</i>
Wednesday	November 26	Classes that start at 5:00 p.m. or later will not be held
Thursday	<i>November 27</i>	<i>Thanksgiving – Campus Closed</i>
Friday	<i>November 28</i>	<i>Prescheduled Holiday – Campus Closed</i>
Wednesday	December 10	Last Day of Instruction – Last Day of Classes
Thursday	December 11	Study/Conference Day (no classes or exams)
Friday	December 12	Final Examinations
Monday-Thursday	December 15-18	Final Examinations
Friday	December 19	Final Examinations Make-Up Day
Monday	December 22	Grade Evaluation Day
Tuesday	December 23	Grades Due from Faculty
	December 24-	WINTER RECESS
	January 20	
Thursday	<i>December 25</i>	<i>Christmas Holiday – Campus Closed</i>

## Names, Phone Numbers, and Email Addresses of Three Classmates

**This is important so you have someone to call for notes, handouts, and schedule changes if you miss class.**

1.

2.

3.

**Letter of Understanding**  
**English 1B, Section \_\_\_\_\_**

**I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the syllabus and understand the objectives of this course and what is required of me to achieve them. I know that my success in this course depends on my choice to participate in class activities, to complete assignments both in and out of class, and to commit myself to improving the effectiveness of my written and oral communication. I will abide by the class rules for use of technology and recording.**

**I, Sheree Kirby, will make myself available during class, office hours, and by appointment to help facilitate your growth as a writer. I encourage you to feel comfortable asking questions and expressing concerns. I will do my best to provide you with useful feedback on the effectiveness of your responses to written and oral assignments.**

**Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_**

**Instructor Signature Sheree Kirby \_\_\_\_\_**

**Date \_\_\_\_\_**

**Fall, 2013, English 1B – Section 67**  
**Student Introduction**

*I'd like to know a little more about you. Please fill out and return to me (answers optional).*

Your name

Your email address

I occasionally send emails to the whole class. May I share your email address with your classmates?

Your cell phone number

Your major and concentration

If you are undeclared, please tell me what you are thinking of majoring in.

Your hobbies, interests, and/or passions

Do you work outside of school? If so, what do you do? How many hours do you work each week?

Your ideal job after graduation

Your ideal job five years after graduation

What do you consider to be your strengths and weaknesses with regard to writing?

Did you have difficulty with grammar and/or punctuation in English 1A? If so, please describe one or two challenges.

When and where did you take English 1A?

Who was your instructor?

What was your final grade?

Is there anything else that you would like me to know so I can better help you to succeed in this class and beyond?

# How to Mark a Book

By Mortimer J. Adler, Ph.D.

You know you have to read "between the lines" to get the most out of anything. I want to persuade you to do something equally important in the course of your reading. I want to persuade you to write between the lines. Unless you do, you are not likely to do the most efficient kind of reading.

I contend, quite bluntly, that marking up a book is not an act of mutilation but of love. You shouldn't mark up a book which isn't yours.

Librarians (or your friends) who lend you books expect you to keep them clean, and you should. If you decide that I am right about the usefulness of marking books, you will have to buy them. Most of the world's great books are available today, in reprint editions.

There are two ways in which one can own a book. The first is the property right you establish by paying for it, just as you pay for clothes and furniture. But this act of purchase is only the prelude to possession. Full ownership comes only when you have made it a part of yourself, and the best way to make yourself a part of it is by writing in it. An illustration may make the point clear. You buy a beefsteak and transfer it from the butcher's icebox to your own. But you do not own the beefsteak in the most important sense until you consume it and get it into your bloodstream. I am arguing that books, too, must be absorbed in your blood stream to do you any good.

Confusion about what it means to "own" a book leads people to a false reverence for paper, binding, and type -- a respect for the physical thing -- the craft of the printer rather than the genius of the author. They forget that it is possible for a man to acquire the idea, to possess the beauty, which a great book contains, without staking his claim by pasting his bookplate inside the cover. Having a fine library doesn't prove that its owner has a mind enriched by books; it proves nothing more than that he, his father, or his wife, was rich enough to buy them.

There are three kinds of book owners. The first has all the standard sets and best sellers -- unread, untouched. (This deluded individual owns woodpulp and ink, not books.) The second has a great many books -- a few of them read through, most of them dipped into, but all of them as clean and shiny as the day they were bought. (This person would probably like to make books his own, but is restrained by a false respect for their physical appearance.) The third has a few books or many -- every one of them dog-eared and dilapidated, shaken and loosened by continual use, marked and scribbled in from front to back. (This man owns books.)

Is it false respect, you may ask, to preserve intact and unblemished a beautifully printed book, an elegantly bound edition? Of course not. I'd no more scribble all over a first edition of 'Paradise Lost' than I'd give my baby a set of crayons and an original Rembrandt. I wouldn't mark up a painting or a statue. Its soul, so to speak, is inseparable from its body. And the beauty of a rare edition or of a richly manufactured volume is like that of a painting or a statue.

But the soul of a book "can" be separate from its body. A book is more like the score of a piece of music than it is like a painting. No great musician confuses a symphony with the printed sheets of music. Arturo Toscanini reveres Brahms, but Toscanini's score of the G minor Symphony is so thoroughly marked up that no one but the maestro himself can read it. The reason why a great conductor makes notations on his musical scores -- marks them up again and again each time he returns to study them--is the reason why you should mark your books. If your respect for magnificent binding or typography gets in the way, buy yourself a cheap edition and pay your respects to the author.

Why is marking up a book indispensable to reading? First, it keeps you awake. (And I don't mean merely conscious; I mean awake.) In the second place; reading, if it is active, is thinking, and thinking tends to express itself in words,

spoken or written. The marked book is usually the thought-through book. Finally, writing helps you remember the thoughts you had, or the thoughts the author expressed. Let me develop these three points.

If reading is to accomplish anything more than passing time, it must be active. You can't let your eyes glide across the lines of a book and come up with an understanding of what you have read. Now an ordinary piece of light fiction, like, say, "Gone With the Wind," doesn't require the most active kind of reading. The books you read for pleasure can be read in a state of relaxation, and nothing is lost. But a great book, rich in ideas and beauty, a book that raises and tries to answer great fundamental questions, demands the most active reading of which you are capable. You don't absorb the ideas of John Dewey the way you absorb the crooning of Mr. Vallee. You have to reach for them. That you cannot do while you're asleep.

If, when you've finished reading a book, the pages are filled with your notes, you know that you read actively. The most famous "active" reader of great books I know is President Hutchins, of the University of Chicago. He also has the hardest schedule of business activities of any man I know. He invariably reads with a pencil, and sometimes, when he picks up a book and pencil in the evening, he finds himself, instead of making intelligent notes, drawing what he calls 'caviar factories' on the margins. When that happens, he puts the book down. He knows he's too tired to read, and he's just wasting time.

But, you may ask, why is writing necessary? Well, the physical act of writing, with your own hand, brings words and sentences more sharply before your mind and preserves them better in your memory. To set down your reaction to important words and sentences you have read, and the questions they have raised in your mind, is to preserve those reactions and sharpen those questions.

Even if you wrote on a scratch pad, and threw the paper away when you had finished writing, your grasp of the book would be surer. But you don't have to throw the paper away. The margins (top as bottom, and well as side), the endpapers, the very space between the lines, are all available. They aren't sacred. And, best of all, your marks and notes become an integral part of the book and stay there forever. You can pick up the book the following week or year, and there are all your points of agreement, disagreement, doubt, and inquiry. It's like resuming an interrupted conversation with the advantage of being able to pick up where you left off.

And that is exactly what reading a book should be: a conversation between you and the author. Presumably he knows more about the subject than you do; naturally, you'll have the proper humility as you approach him. But don't let anybody tell you that a reader is supposed to be solely on the receiving end. Understanding is a two-way operation; learning doesn't consist in being an empty receptacle. The learner has to question himself and question the teacher. He even has to argue with the teacher, once he understands what the teacher is saying. And marking a book is literally an expression of differences, or agreements of opinion, with the author.

There are all kinds of devices for marking a book intelligently and fruitfully. Here's the way I do it:

- **Underlining (or highlighting):** of major points, of important or forceful statements.
- **Vertical lines at the margin:** to emphasize a statement already underlined.
- **Star, asterisk, or other doo-dad at the margin:** to be used sparingly, to emphasize the ten or twenty most important statements in the book. (You may want to fold the bottom corner of each page on which you use such marks. It won't hurt the sturdy paper on which most modern books are printed, and you will be able take the book off the shelf at any time and, by opening it at the folded-corner page, refresh your recollection of the book.)
- **Numbers in the margin:** to indicate the sequence of points the author makes in developing a single argument.
- **Numbers of other pages in the margin:** to indicate where else in the book the author made points relevant to the point marked; to tie up the ideas in a book, which, though they may be separated by many pages, belong together.
- **Circling or highlighting of key words or phrases.**
- **Writing in the margin, or at the top or bottom of the page, for the sake of:** recording questions (and perhaps answers) which a passage raised in your mind; reducing a complicated discussion to a simple

statement; recording the sequence of major points right through the books. I use the end-papers at the back of the book to make a personal index of the author's points in the order of their appearance.

The front end-papers are to me the most important. Some people reserve them for a fancy bookplate. I reserve them for fancy thinking. After I have finished reading the book and making my personal index on the back end-papers, I turn to the front and try to outline the book, not page by page or point by point (I've already done that at the back), but as an integrated structure, with a basic unity and an order of parts. This outline is, to me, the measure of my understanding of the work.

If you're a die-hard anti-book-marker, you may object that the margins, the space between the lines, and the end-papers don't give you room enough. All right. How about using a scratch pad slightly smaller than the page-size of the book -- so that the edges of the sheets won't protrude? Make your index, outlines and even your notes on the pad, and then insert these sheets permanently inside the front and back covers of the book.

Or, you may say that this business of marking books is going to slow up your reading. It probably will. That's one of the reasons for doing it. Most of us have been taken in by the notion that speed of reading is a measure of our intelligence. There is no such thing as the right speed for intelligent reading. Some things should be read quickly and effortlessly and some should be read slowly and even laboriously. The sign of intelligence in reading is the ability to read different things differently according to their worth. In the case of good books, the point is not to see how many of them you can get through, but rather how many can get through you -- how many you can make your own. A few friends are better than a thousand acquaintances. If this be your aim, as it should be, you will not be impatient if it takes more time and effort to read a great book than it does a newspaper.

You may have one final objection to marking books. You can't lend them to your friends because nobody else can read them without being distracted by your notes. Furthermore, you won't want to lend them because a marked copy is kind of an intellectual diary, and lending it is almost like giving your mind away.

If your friend wishes to read your *Plutarch's Lives*, *Shakespeare*, or *The Federalist Papers*, tell him gently but firmly, to buy a copy. You will lend him your car or your coat -- but your books are as much a part of you as your head or your heart.

<http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/adler.html>

# Kenyon Commencement Speech

## (This is Water)

### David Foster Wallace

<http://moreintelligentlife.com/story/david-foster-wallace-in-his-own-words>

(If anybody feels like perspiring [cough], I'd advise you to go ahead, because I'm sure going to. In fact I'm gonna [mumbles while pulling up his gown and taking out a handkerchief from his pocket].) Greetings ["parents"?] and congratulations to Kenyon's graduating class of 2005. There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says "Morning, boys. How's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes "What the hell is water?"

This is a standard requirement of US commencement speeches, the deployment of didactic little parable-ish stories. The story ["thing"] turns out to be one of the better, less bullshit conventions of the genre, but if you're worried that I plan to present myself here as the wise, older fish explaining what water is to you younger fish, please don't be. I am not the wise old fish. The point of the fish story is merely that the most obvious, important realities are often the ones that are hardest to see and talk about. Stated as an English sentence, of course, this is just a banal platitude, but the fact is that in the day to day trenches of adult existence, banal platitudes can have a life or death importance, or so I wish to suggest to you on this dry and lovely morning.

Of course the main requirement of speeches like this is that I'm supposed to talk about your liberal arts education's meaning, to try to explain why the degree you are about to receive has actual human value instead of just a material payoff. So let's talk about the single most pervasive cliché in the commencement speech genre, which is that a liberal arts education is not so much about filling you up with knowledge as it is about "teaching you how to think". If you're like me as a student, you've never liked hearing this, and you tend to feel a bit insulted by the claim that you needed anybody to teach you how to think, since the fact that you even got admitted to a college this good seems like proof that you already know how to think. But I'm going to posit to you that the liberal arts cliché turns out not to be insulting at all, because the really significant education in thinking that we're supposed to get in a place like this isn't really about the capacity to think, but rather about the choice of what to think about. If your total freedom of choice regarding what to think about seems too obvious to waste time discussing, I'd ask you to think about fish and water, and to bracket for just a few minutes your skepticism about the value of the totally obvious.

Here's another didactic little story. There are these two guys sitting together in a bar in the remote Alaskan wilderness. One of the guys is religious, the other is an atheist, and the two are arguing about the existence of God with that special intensity that comes after about the fourth beer. And the atheist says: "Look, it's not like I don't have actual reasons for not believing in God. It's not like I haven't ever experimented with the whole God and prayer thing. Just last month I got caught away from the camp in that terrible blizzard, and I was totally lost and I couldn't see a thing, and it was 50 below, and so I tried it: I fell to my knees in the snow and cried out 'Oh, God, if there is a God, I'm lost in this blizzard, and I'm gonna die if you don't help me.'"

And now, in the bar, the religious guy looks at the atheist all puzzled. "Well then you must believe now," he says, "After all, here you are, alive." The atheist just rolls his eyes. "No, man, all that was a couple Eskimos happened to come wandering by and showed me the way back to camp."

It's easy to run this story through kind of a standard liberal arts analysis: the exact same experience can mean two totally different things to two different people, given those people's two different belief templates and two different ways of constructing meaning from experience. Because we prize tolerance and diversity of belief, nowhere in our liberal arts analysis do we want to claim that one guy's interpretation is true and the other guy's is false or bad. Which is fine, except we also never end up talking about just where these individual templates and beliefs come from. Meaning, where they come from INSIDE the two guys. As if a person's most basic orientation toward the world, and the meaning of his experience were somehow just hard-wired, like height or shoe-size; or automatically absorbed from the culture, like language. As if how we construct meaning were not actually a matter of personal, intentional choice. Plus, there's the whole matter of arrogance. The nonreligious guy is so totally certain in his dismissal of the possibility that the passing Eskimos had anything to do with his prayer for help. True, there are plenty of religious people who seem arrogant and certain of their own interpretations, too. They're probably even more repulsive than atheists, at least to most of us. But religious dogmatists' problem is exactly the same as the story's unbeliever: blind certainty, a close-mindedness that amounts to an imprisonment so total that the prisoner doesn't even know he's locked up.

The point here is that I think this is one part of what teaching me how to think is really supposed to mean. To be just a little less arrogant. To have just a little critical awareness about myself and my certainties. Because a huge percentage of the stuff that I tend to be automatically certain of is, it turns out, totally wrong and deluded. I have learned this the hard way, as I predict you graduates will, too.

Here is just one example of the total wrongness of something I tend to be automatically sure of: everything in my own immediate experience supports my deep belief that I am the absolute center of the universe; the realest, most vivid and important person in existence. We rarely think about this sort of natural, basic self-centeredness because it's so socially repulsive. But it's pretty much the same for all of us. It is our default setting, hard-wired into our boards at birth. Think about it: there is no experience you have had that you are not the absolute center of. The world as you experience it is there in front of YOU or behind YOU, to the left or right of YOU, on YOUR TV or YOUR monitor. And so on. Other people's thoughts and feelings have to be communicated to you somehow, but your own are so immediate, urgent, real.

Please don't worry that I'm getting ready to lecture you about compassion or other-directedness or all the so-called virtues. This is not a matter of virtue. It's a matter of my choosing to do the work of somehow altering or getting free of my natural, hard-wired default setting which is to be deeply and literally self-centered and to see and interpret everything through this lens of self. People who can adjust their natural default setting this way are often described as being "well-adjusted", which I suggest to you is not an accidental term.

Given the triumphant academic setting here, an obvious question is how much of this work of adjusting our default setting involves actual knowledge or intellect. This question gets very tricky. Probably the most dangerous thing about an academic education--least in my own case--is that it enables my tendency to over-intellectualize stuff, to get lost in abstract argument inside my head, instead of simply paying attention to what is going on right in front of me, paying attention to what is going on inside me.

As I'm sure you guys know by now, it is extremely difficult to stay alert and attentive, instead of getting hypnotized by the constant monologue inside your own head (may be happening right now). Twenty years after my own graduation, I have come gradually to understand that the liberal arts cliché about teaching you

how to think is actually shorthand for a much deeper, more serious idea: learning how to think really means learning how to exercise some control over how and what you think. It means being conscious and aware enough to choose what you pay attention to and to choose how you construct meaning from experience. Because if you cannot exercise this kind of choice in adult life, you will be totally hosed. Think of the old cliché about "the mind being an excellent servant but a terrible master".

This, like many clichés, so lame and unexciting on the surface, actually expresses a great and terrible truth. It is not the least bit coincidental that adults who commit suicide with firearms almost always shoot themselves in: the head. They shoot the terrible master. And the truth is that most of these suicides are actually dead long before they pull the trigger.

And I submit that this is what the real, no bullshit value of your liberal arts education is supposed to be about: how to keep from going through your comfortable, prosperous, respectable adult life dead, unconscious, a slave to your head and to your natural default setting of being uniquely, completely, imperially alone day in and day out. That may sound like hyperbole, or abstract nonsense. Let's get concrete. The plain fact is that you graduating seniors do not yet have any clue what "day in day out" really means. There happen to be whole, large parts of adult American life that nobody talks about in commencement speeches. One such part involves boredom, routine and petty frustration. The parents and older folks here will know all too well what I'm talking about.

By way of example, let's say it's an average adult day, and you get up in the morning, go to your challenging, white-collar, college-graduate job, and you work hard for eight or ten hours, and at the end of the day you're tired and somewhat stressed and all you want is to go home and have a good supper and maybe unwind for an hour, and then hit the sack early because, of course, you have to get up the next day and do it all again. But then you remember there's no food at home. You haven't had time to shop this week because of your challenging job, and so now after work you have to get in your car and drive to the supermarket. It's the end of the work day and the traffic is apt to be: very bad. So getting to the store takes way longer than it should, and when you finally get there, the supermarket is very crowded, because of course it's the time of day when all the other people with jobs also try to squeeze in some grocery shopping. And the store is hideously lit and infused with soul-killing muzak or corporate pop and it's pretty much the last place you want to be but you can't just get in and quickly out; you have to wander all over the huge, over-lit store's confusing aisles to find the stuff you want and you have to maneuver your junky cart through all these other tired, hurried people with carts (et cetera, et cetera, cutting stuff out because this is a long ceremony) and eventually you get all your supper supplies, except now it turns out there aren't enough check-out lanes open even though it's the end-of-the-day rush. So the checkout line is incredibly long, which is stupid and infuriating. But you can't take your frustration out on the frantic lady working the register, who is overworked at a job whose daily tedium and meaninglessness surpasses the imagination of any of us here at a prestigious college.

But anyway, you finally get to the checkout line's front, and you pay for your food, and you get told to "Have a nice day" in a voice that is the absolute voice of death. Then you have to take your creepy, flimsy, plastic bags of groceries in your cart with the one crazy wheel that pulls maddeningly to the left, all the way out through the crowded, bumpy, littery parking lot, and then you have to drive all the way home through slow, heavy, SUV-intensive, rush-hour traffic, et cetera et cetera.

Everyone here has done this, of course. But it hasn't yet been part of you graduates' actual life routine, day after week after month after year.

But it will be. And many more dreary, annoying, seemingly meaningless routines besides. But that is not the point. The point is that petty, frustrating crap like this is exactly where the work of choosing is gonna come

in. Because the traffic jams and crowded aisles and long checkout lines give me time to think, and if I don't make a conscious decision about how to think and what to pay attention to, I'm gonna be pissed and miserable every time I have to shop. Because my natural default setting is the certainty that situations like this are really all about me. About MY hungriness and MY fatigue and MY desire to just get home, and it's going to seem for all the world like everybody else is just in my way. And who are all these people in my way? And look at how repulsive most of them are, and how stupid and cow-like and dead-eyed and nonhuman they seem in the checkout line, or at how annoying and rude it is that people are talking loudly on cell phones in the middle of the line. And look at how deeply and personally unfair this is.

Or, of course, if I'm in a more socially conscious liberal arts form of my default setting, I can spend time in the end-of-the-day traffic being disgusted about all the huge, stupid, lane-blocking SUV's and Hummers and V-12 pickup trucks, burning their wasteful, selfish, 40-gallon tanks of gas, and I can dwell on the fact that the patriotic or religious bumper-stickers always seem to be on the biggest, most disgustingly selfish vehicles, driven by the ugliest [responding here to loud applause] (this is an example of how NOT to think, though) most disgustingly selfish vehicles, driven by the ugliest, most inconsiderate and aggressive drivers. And I can think about how our children's children will despise us for wasting all the future's fuel, and probably screwing up the climate, and how spoiled and stupid and selfish and disgusting we all are, and how modern consumer society just sucks, and so forth and so on.

You get the idea.

If I choose to think this way in a store and on the freeway, fine. Lots of us do. Except thinking this way tends to be so easy and automatic that it doesn't have to be a choice. It is my natural default setting. It's the automatic way that I experience the boring, frustrating, crowded parts of adult life when I'm operating on the automatic, unconscious belief that I am the center of the world, and that my immediate needs and feelings are what should determine the world's priorities.

The thing is that, of course, there are totally different ways to think about these kinds of situations. In this traffic, all these vehicles stopped and idling in my way, it's not impossible that some of these people in SUV's have been in horrible auto accidents in the past, and now find driving so terrifying that their therapist has all but ordered them to get a huge, heavy SUV so they can feel safe enough to drive. Or that the Hummer that just cut me off is maybe being driven by a father whose little child is hurt or sick in the seat next to him, and he's trying to get this kid to the hospital, and he's in a bigger, more legitimate hurry than I am: it is actually I who am in HIS way.

Or I can choose to force myself to consider the likelihood that everyone else in the supermarket's checkout line is just as bored and frustrated as I am, and that some of these people probably have harder, more tedious and painful lives than I do.

Again, please don't think that I'm giving you moral advice, or that I'm saying you are supposed to think this way, or that anyone expects you to just automatically do it. Because it's hard. It takes will and effort, and if you are like me, some days you won't be able to do it, or you just flat out won't want to.

But most days, if you're aware enough to give yourself a choice, you can choose to look differently at this fat, dead-eyed, over-made-up lady who just screamed at her kid in the checkout line. Maybe she's not usually like this. Maybe she's been up three straight nights holding the hand of a husband who is dying of bone cancer. Or maybe this very lady is the low-wage clerk at the motor vehicle department, who just yesterday helped your spouse resolve a horrific, infuriating, red-tape problem through some small act of bureaucratic kindness. Of course, none of this is likely, but it's also not impossible. It just depends what you want to

consider. If you're automatically sure that you know what reality is, and you are operating on your default setting, then you, like me, probably won't consider possibilities that aren't annoying and miserable. But if you really learn how to pay attention, then you will know there are other options. It will actually be within your power to experience a crowded, hot, slow, consumer-hell type situation as not only meaningful, but sacred, on fire with the same force that made the stars: love, fellowship, the mystical oneness of all things deep down.

Not that that mystical stuff is necessarily true. The only thing that's capital-T True is that you get to decide how you're gonna try to see it.

This, I submit, is the freedom of a real education, of learning how to be well-adjusted. You get to consciously decide what has meaning and what doesn't. You get to decide what to worship.

Because here's something else that's weird but true: in the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship--be it JC or Allah, be it YHWH or the Wiccan Mother Goddess, or the Four Noble Truths, or some inviolable set of ethical principles--is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough. It's the truth. Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you. On one level, we all know this stuff already. It's been codified as myths, proverbs, clichés, epigrams, parables; the skeleton of every great story. The whole trick is keeping the truth up front in daily consciousness.

Worship power, you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. But the insidious thing about these forms of worship is not that they're evil or sinful, it's that they're unconscious. They are default settings.

They're the kind of worship you just gradually slip into, day after day, getting more and more selective about what you see and how you measure value without ever being fully aware that that's what you're doing.

And the so-called real world will not discourage you from operating on your default settings, because the so-called real world of men and money and power hums merrily along in a pool of fear and anger and frustration and craving and worship of self. Our own present culture has harnessed these forces in ways that have yielded extraordinary wealth and comfort and personal freedom. The freedom all to be lords of our tiny skull-sized kingdoms, alone at the center of all creation. This kind of freedom has much to recommend it. But of course there are all different kinds of freedom, and the kind that is most precious you will not hear much talk about much in the great outside world of wanting and achieving.... The really important kind of freedom involves attention and awareness and discipline, and being able truly to care about other people and to sacrifice for them over and over in myriad petty, unsexy ways every day.

That is real freedom. That is being educated, and understanding how to think. The alternative is unconsciousness, the default setting, the rat race, the constant gnawing sense of having had, and lost, some infinite thing.

I know that this stuff probably doesn't sound fun and breezy or grandly inspirational the way a commencement speech is supposed to sound. What it is, as far as I can see, is the capital-T Truth, with a

whole lot of rhetorical niceties stripped away. You are, of course, free to think of it whatever you wish. But please don't just dismiss it as just some finger-wagging Dr. Laura sermon. None of this stuff is really about morality or religion or dogma or big fancy questions of life after death.

The capital-T Truth is about life BEFORE death.

It is about the real value of a real education, which has almost nothing to do with knowledge, and everything to do with simple awareness; awareness of what is so real and essential, so hidden in plain sight all around us, all the time, that we have to keep reminding ourselves over and over:

"This is water."

"This is water."

It is unimaginably hard to do this, to stay conscious and alive in the adult world day in and day out. Which means yet another grand cliché turns out to be true: your education really IS the job of a lifetime. And it commences: now.

I wish you way more than luck.

## Excerpt from *On Writing Well* by William Zinsser

Clutter is the disease of American writing. We are a society strangling in unnecessary words, circular constructions, pompous frills and meaningless jargon.

Who can understand the viscous language of everyday American commerce and enterprise: the business letter, the interoffice memo, the corporation report, the notice from the t bank explaining its latest "simplified" statement? What member of an insurance or medical l plan can decipher the brochure that tells him what his costs and benefits are? What father or mother can put together a child's toy-on Christmas Eve or any other eve-from the instructions on the box? Our national tendency is to inflate and thereby sound important. The airline pilot who wakes us to announce that he is presently anticipating experiencing considerable weather wouldn't dream of saying that there's a storm ahead and it may get bumpy. The sentence is too simple-there must be something wrong with it.

But the secret of good writing is to strip every sentence to its cleanest components Every word that serves no function, every long word that could be a short word, every adverb which carries the same meaning that is already in the verb, every passive construction that leaves she reader unsure of who is doing what-these are the thousand and one adulterants that weaken the strength of a sentence. And they usually occur, ironically, in proportion to education and rank.

During the late 1960s the president of a major university wrote a letter to mollify the alumni after a spell of campus unrest. "You are probably aware," he began, "that we have been experiencing very considerable potentially explosive expressions of dissatisfaction on issues only partially related." He meant that the students had been hassling them about different things. I was far more upset by the president's English than by the students' potentially explosive expressions of dissatisfaction. I would have preferred the presidential approach oaken by Franklin D. Roosevelt when he tried to convert into English his own government' memos, such as this blackout order of 1942:

"Such preparations shall be made as will completely obscure all Federal buildings and non-Federal buildings occupied by the Federal government during an air raid for any period of time from visibility by reason of internal or external illumination."

"Tell them," Roosevelt said, "that in buildings where they have to keep the work going to put something across the windows."

How can the rest of us achieve such enviable freedom from clutter? The answer is to clear our heads of clutter. Clear thinking becomes clear writing: one can't exist without the other. It is impossible for a muddy thinker to write good English. He may get away with it for a paragraph or two, but soon the reader will be lost, and there is no sin so grave, for he will not easily be lured back.

Who is this elusive creature the reader? He is a person with an attention span of about twenty seconds. He is assailed on every side by forces competing for his time: by newspapers and magazines, by television and radio and stereo, by his wife and children and pets, by his house and his yard and all the gadgets that he has bought to keep them spruce, and by that most potent of competitors, sleep. The man snoozing in his chair with an unfinished magazine open on his lap is a man who was being given too much unnecessary trouble by the writer.

It won't do to say that the snoozing reader is too dumb or too lazy to keep pace with the train of thought. My sympathies are with him. If the reader is lost, it is generally because the writer has not been careful enough to keep him on the path.

This carelessness can take any number of forms. Perhaps a sentence is so excessively cluttered that the reader, hacking his way through the verbiage, simply doesn't know what it means. Perhaps a sentence has been so shoddily constructed that the reader could read it in any of several ways. Perhaps the writer has switched pronouns in mid-sentence, or has switched tenses, so the reader loses track of who is talking or when the action took place. Perhaps Sentence B is not a logical sequel to Sentence A—the writer, in whose head the connection is clear, has not bothered to provide the missing link. Perhaps the writer has used an important word incorrectly by not taking the trouble to look it up. He may think that "sanguine" and "sanguinary" mean the same thing, but the difference is a bloody big one. The reader can only infer (speaking of big differences) what the writer is trying to imply.

Faced with these obstacles, the reader is at first a remarkably tenacious bird. He blames himself—he obviously missed something, and he goes back over the mystifying sentence, or over the whole paragraph, piecing it out like an ancient riddle, making guesses and moving on. But he won't do this for long. The writer is making him work too hard, and the reader will look for one who is better at his craft.

The writer must therefore constantly ask himself: What am I trying to say? Surprisingly often, he doesn't know. Then he must look at what he has written and ask: Have I said it? Is it clear to someone encountering the subject for the first time? If it's not, it is because some fuzz has worked its way into the machinery. The clear writer is a person clear-headed enough to see this stuff for what it is: fuzz.

Many writers, for instance, can't stand to throw anything away. Their sentences are littered with words that mean essentially the same thing and with phrases which make a point that is implicit in what they have already said. When students give me these littered sentences I beg them to select from the surfeit of words the few that most precisely fit what they want to say. Choose one, I plead, from among the three almost identical adjectives. Get rid of the unnecessary adverbs. Eliminate "in a funny sort of way" and other such qualifiers they do no useful work.

The students look stricken -- I am taking all their wonderful words away. I am only taking their superfluous words away, leaving what is organic and strong

"But," one of my worst offenders confessed, "I never can get rid of anything—you should see my room." (I didn't take him up on the offer.) "I have two lamps where I only need one, but I can't decide which one I like better, so I keep them both." He went on to enumerate his duplicated or unnecessary objects, and over the weeks ahead I went on throwing away his duplicated and unnecessary words. By the end of the term—a term that he found acutely painful -- his sentences were clean.

"I've had to change my whole approach to writing," he told me. "Now I have to think before I start every sentence and I have to think about every word." The very idea amazed him. Whether his room also looked

better I never found out.

Writing is hard work. A clear sentence is no accident. Very few sentences come out right the first time. Or the third. Keep thinking and rewriting until you say what you want to say.

### **Excerpt from How to Say Nothing in 500 Words By Paul Roberts**

#### **Avoid the Obvious Content**

Say the assignment is college football. Say that you've decided to be against it. Begin by putting down the arguments that come to your mind: it is too commercial, it takes the students' minds off their studies, it is hard on the players, it makes the university a kind of circus instead of an intellectual center, for most schools it is financially ruinous. Can you think of any more arguments just off hand? All right. Now when you write your paper, *make sure that you don't use any of the material on this list*. If these are the points that leap to your mind, they will leap to everyone else's too, and whether you get a "C" or a "D" may depend on whether the instructor reads your paper early when he is fresh and tolerant or late, when the sentence "In my opinion, college football has become too commercial," inexorably repeated, has brought him to the brink of lunacy.

#### **Take the Less Usual Side**

One rather simple way of getting interest into your paper is to take the side of the argument that most of the citizens will want to avoid. Always take the side that looks to you hardest, least defensible. It will almost always turn out to be easier to write interestingly on that side.

#### **Slip out of Abstraction**

If you will study the essay on college football . . . you will perceive that one reason for its appalling dullness is that it never gets down to particulars. It is just a series of not very glittering generalities: "football is bad for the colleges," "It has become too commercial," "football is a big business," "it is bad for the players," and so on. Such round phrases thudding against the reader's brain are likely to convince him, though they may well render him unconscious. If you want the reader to believe that college football is bad for the players, you have to do more than say so. You have to display the evil.

#### **Get Rid of Obvious Padding**

The student toiling away at his English essay is too often tormented by a figure: five hundred words. How, he asks himself, is he to achieve this staggering total? Obviously by never using one word when he can somehow work in ten.

He is therefore seldom content with a plain statement like "Fast driving is dangerous." This has only four words in it. He takes thought, and the sentence becomes:

In my opinion, fast driving is dangerous.

Better, but he can do better still:

In my opinion, fast driving would seem to be rather dangerous.

If he is really adept, it may come out:

In my humble opinion, though I do not claim to be an expert on this complicated subject, fast driving, in most circumstances, would seem to be rather dangerous in many respects, or at least so it would seem to me.

Thus four words have been turned into forty, and not an iota of content has been added.

Now this is a way to go about reaching five hundred words, and if you are content with a "D" grade, it is as good a way as any. But if you aim higher, you must work differently. Instead of stuffing your sentences with straw, you must try steadily to get rid of the padding, to make your sentences lean and tough. If you are really working at it, your first draft will greatly exceed the required total, and then you will work it down thus:

It is thought in some quarters that fraternities do not contribute as much as might be expected to campus life.

Some people think that fraternities contribute little to campus life.

The average doctor who practices in small towns or in the country must toil night and day to heal the sick.

Most country doctors work long hours.

When I was a little girl, I suffered from shyness and embarrassment in the presence of others.

I was a shy little girl.

It is absolutely necessary for the person employed as a marine fireman to give the matter of steam pressure his undivided attention at all times.

The fireman has to keep his eye on the steam gauge.

You may ask how you can arrive at five hundred words at this rate. Simply. You dig up more real content. Instead of taking a couple of obvious points off the surface of the topic and then circling warily around them for six paragraphs, you work in and explore figure out the details. You illustrate.

### **Call a Fool a Fool**

Some of the padding in freshman essays is to be blamed not on anxiety about the word minimum but on excessive timidity. The student writes, "In my opinion, the principal of my high school acted in ways that I believe every unbiased person would have to call foolish." This isn't exactly what he means. What he means is, "My high school principal was a fool." Decide what you want to say and say it as vigorously as possible, without apology and in plain words.

### **Beware of the Fat Expressions**

Other things being equal, avoid phrases like "other things being equal." Those sentences that come to you whole, or in two or three doughy lumps, are sure to be bad sentences.

By "pat expressions" we mean such tags as "to all practical intents and purposes," "the pure and simple truth," "from where I sit," "the time of his life," "to the ends of the earth," "in the twinkling of an eye," "as sure as you're born," "over my dead body," "under cover of darkness," "took the easy way out," "when all is said and done," "told him time and time again," "parted the best of friends," "stand up and be counted," "gave him the best years of her life," "worked her fingers to the bone." Like other clichés, these expressions were once forceful. Now we should use them only when we can't possibly think of anything else.

### **Colorful Words**

Some words are what we call "colorful." By this we mean that they are calculated to produce a picture or induce an emotion. They are dressy instead of plain, specific instead of general, loud instead of soft. Thus, in place of "her heart beat," we may write "Her heart *pounded, throbbed, fluttered, danced.*" Instead of "He sat in his chair," we may say, "He *lounged, sprawled, coiled.*" Instead of "It was hot," we may say, "It was *blistering, sultry, muggy, suffocating, steamy, wilting.*"

### **Colored Words**

Some words we would call not so much colorful as colored—that is, loaded with associations, good or bad. Conversely, some words have bad associations. *Mother* suggests pleasant things, but *mother-in-law* does not. Many mothers-in-law are heroically lovable and some mothers drink gin all day and beat their children insensible, but these facts of life are beside the point. The thing is that *mother* sounds good and *mother-in-law* does not. The question of whether to use loaded words or not depends on what is being written. The scientist, the scholar, try to avoid them; for the poet, the advertising writer, the public speaker, they are standard equipment. But every writer should take care that they do not substitute for thought.

### **Colorless Words**

But probably most student writers come to grief not with words that are colorful or those that are colored but with those that have no color at all. A pet example is *nice*, a word we would find it hard to dispense with in casual conversation but which is no longer capable of adding much to a description. Colorless words are those of such general meaning that in a particular sentence they mean nothing. Beware also of nouns of very general meaning, like *circumstance, cases, instances, factors, relationships, attitude, eventualities*, etc.