

San José State University
Department of English and Comparative Literature
English 1B, Composition 2 (GE C3), Section 67
Spring 2014

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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 introduction to 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; proficiency in basic library research skills and in writing papers informed by research; and mastery of the mechanics of writing.

Required Texts

They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing, 2nd edition

Gerald Graff and Kathy Birkenstein

The Everyday Writer with Exercises, 5th edition

Andrea A. Lunsford

Course Reader – Purchase at Maple Press at 481 E. San Carlos

Required Materials

Binder paper and folder or binder for class notes and handouts

College-level dictionary (Print)

Three large green books and one yellow book

Blue or Black Pens

Internet and printer access

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, 5th Edition*.

Information available online

You are responsible for reading the following information online at

<http://www.sjsu.edu/english/comp/policy/index.html>

- Course guidelines
- Academic policies (academic integrity, plagiarism, ADA and AEC policies)
- Estimation of Per-Unit Student Workload
- Recording policies
- Adding and dropping classes

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).
- 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

SLO 1: Students shall write complete essays that demonstrate the ability to refine the competencies established in Written Communication 1A.

SLO 2: Students shall write complete essays that demonstrate the ability to use (locate, analyze, and evaluate) supporting materials, including independent library research, and identify key concepts and terms that describe the information needed.

SLO 3: Students shall write complete essays that demonstrate the ability to select efficient and effective approaches for accessing information utilizing an appropriate investigative method or information retrieval system.

SLO 4: Students shall write complete essays that demonstrate the ability to synthesize ideas encountered in multiple readings.

SLO 5: Students shall write complete essays that demonstrate the ability to incorporate principles of design and communication to construct effective arguments.

SLO 6: Students shall write complete essays that demonstrate the ability to identify and discuss issues related to censorship and freedom of speech.

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. Your formal writing assignments will total a *minimum* of 8000 words, and this word requirement will be met by writing 5 essays and graded commentaries/responses. At least one of your essays will require research. This 8000-word minimum does not include the final exam, quizzes, or any brief or informal assignments, but it can include any major revisions of essays or assignments. A major revision is defined as rethinking or reworking an assignment rather than just correcting grammatical or structural errors.

Essays: You 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:

Diagnostic In-Class Essay	1000 words	SLO 1,3,4	0%
In-class Essays (2 @ 5% each)	2000 words	SLO 1,3,4,6	10%
Out-of-Class Essay (Revision)	1000 words	SLO 1-4	5%
Graded Commentaries/Responses	1000 words	SLO 1-4	10%
Research Paper (and components)	3000 words	SLO 1-5	25%
Final Examination		SLO 1,3,4	20%
Commentaries, Short Assignments, Learning Curve		SLOs vary	15%
Participation (Peer Review, Quizzes, Discussions)		SLOs vary	15%

You must complete all essays and the majority of homework to pass the course.

In-class essays, quizzes, and homework can 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.

Class Notes

I strongly suggest taking notes in class whenever possible and keeping them organized by date in a class-designated binder or on your computer. The notes will be helpful to you while you write your essays and prepare for your 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 Exam

There will be a departmental final exam given to all English 1B students. This semester, the final will take place on Saturday, May 10 at 10:00 a.m. Location will be announced. You are required to bring a yellow examination book, a collegiate dictionary, and pens.

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.

Estimation of Student Workload

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, students should spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (totaling nine hours per week per three unit class). This includes 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>.

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 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 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 at 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 (AEC) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aec> to establish a record of their disability.

In 2013, the Disability Resource Center changed its name to be known as the Accessible Education Center, to incorporate a philosophy of accessible education for students with disabilities. The new name change reflects the broad scope of attention and support to SJSU students with disabilities and the University's continued advocacy and commitment to increasing accessibility and inclusivity on campus.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and on the 2nd 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.

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](http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter) 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. (Note: You need to have a QR



Reader to scan this code.)

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 10th 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](http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu) at <http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu> for more information.

SJSU Counseling Services

The SJSU Counseling Services is located on the corner of 7th 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>.

Course Schedule
English 1B, Section 67
Spring 2014

TSIS – They Say/I Say
EW – The Everyday Writer
CR – Course Reader

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. If you have a documented illness or emergency, please contact me. Homework is due at the next class session unless otherwise noted.

Week 1

M 1.27.14 Class introduction and exercise, commentaries, EW Learning Curve

Homework

- Read and annotate “How to Mark a Book” **CR**
- Read and annotate “Kenyon Commencement Speech” **CR**
- Write a 200 word commentary on “Kenyon Commencement Speech”
- Read syllabus. Sign “Letter of Understanding,” and complete “Student Introduction”
- Bring a green book, dictionary, and pens for diagnostic essay on 1.29.14

W 1.29.14 **Diagnostic essay**

Homework

- Read and annotate “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” and “Does the Internet Make Us Dumber?” **CR**
- Write a 200 word commentary (Commentary 1) on the above articles. Submit to Canvas.
- 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 results of both into Canvas for credit

Week 2

M 2.3.14 Essays, sentences/paragraphs, fragments, commentary, summarizing/paraphrasing,

Homework

- Review: “Condensed Basic Grammar Review” and “Sentences, Fragments...” **CR**
- “Fragments” **EW Learning Curve**
- Summarize Introduction and chapters 1 and 11 **TSIS** (three summaries)
- Write a 150 word response (Response 1) to another student’s Commentary 1

W 2.5.14 Quiz, readings, commas, revision (out-of-class essay #1)

Homework

- Summarize chapter 2 **TSIS**
- Read “Commas” and “Revising Drafts” **CR**
- “Commas” and “Comma Splices and Fused (Run-on) Sentences” **EW Learning Curve**
- Read and annotate “Is Google Making us Smarter?” and “The Critics Need a Reboot.” **CR**
- Write a 200 word commentary (Commentary 2) on one or both of the two articles.

Week 3

M 2.10.14 Readings, Pronouns and apostrophes, MLA format, essay structure, quoting, signal verbs

Homework

- Write a 150 word response (Response 2) to another student’s Commentary 2.
- “Pronouns” and “Apostrophes” **EW Learning Curve**
- Read and annotate “Letter from Birmingham Jail” **CR**
- Write a 200 word commentary (Commentary 3) on “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” Specifically discuss techniques that MLK uses to persuade his audience.

W 2.12.14 Quiz, Class exercise on “Letter From Birmingham Jail”

Homework

- Summarize chapters 3 and 4 **TSIS** (two summaries)
- Read and annotate Excerpts from Zinsser and Roberts **CR**
- Write rough draft of out-of-class essay #1. Submit on Canvas. Bring two copies to class for peer review.

Week 4

M 2.17.14 **Due: Rough draft out-of-class essay #1**
Peer review

Homework

- Read Chapters 12 (Critical Reading) and 13a-c (Analyzing Arguments) **EW**
- Read and annotate: “I was a tool of Satan”
- Write a 200 word commentary (Commentary 4).

W 2.19.14 Discuss “I was a tool of Satan,” Free Speech and Censorship. TED Rebecca Mackinnon

Homework

- Read chapter 14 (Constructing Arguments) **EW**
- “Verbs” and “Subject-Verb Agreement” **EW Learning Curve**
- Complete final draft of out-of-class essay #1 in MLA Format. Proofread. Read aloud. Submit final draft online. Turn in hard copy of final draft, rough draft, peer review sheet, and diagnostic essay (stapled together) in class on 2.12.14.

Week 5.

M 2.24.14

Due: Final draft out-of-class essay #1

“Declaration of Independence,” argument structure, parallelism, word choice

Homework

- Read and annotate “When Censorship Makes Sense: How YouTube Should Police Hate Speech” **CR**
- Read and annotate “Douse the Online Flamers” **CR**
- Read and annotate “A War is Raging Against Free Speech” **CR**
- Read and annotate “Twitter, Hate Speech and the Cost of Keeping Quiet” **CR**
- Write a 200 word commentary (Commentary 5) on one of the above articles.

W 2.26.14

Quiz, Readings, research paper introduction, position and proposal arguments, annotated bibliography, developing a thesis

Homework

- Summarize chapter 5 **TSIS**
- “Parallelism” **EW Learning Curve**
- Read chapters 6 (Exploring Ideas) and 7 (Planning and Drafting) **EW**
- Bring green book, pens, and dictionary for in-class essay on 3.3.14
- 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 3.5.14
 - Library Day 3.10.14
 - Annotated Bibliography due 4.9.14
 - Narrowed thesis, outline, and field research paragraph due 4.14.14
 - Rough draft due 4.19.14
 - Final draft due 4.30.14
 - Presentation due 4.30.14

M 3.3.13

In class essay #1

Homework

- Summarize chapter 6 **TSIS**
- Read and annotate “Is Google’s Data Grinder Dangerous?” **CR**
- Read and annotate “When the Internet Thinks It Knows You” **CR**
- Write a 200 word commentary (Commentary 6) on one or both of the above articles

W 3.5.14

Due: Topic, thesis question, list of research questions

Discuss research paper topic selection, narrowing topic to thesis, in-class essay 1, active/passive voice

Homework:

- Summarize chapter 7 **TSIS**
- Read 15 (Preparing for a Research Project) and 16 (Doing Research) **EW**
- Write a response (Response 6) to another student’s Commentary 6
- “Choosing Between Active and Passive Voice Verbs” **CR**
- “Active And Passive Voice” **EW Learning Curve**

Week 7W 3.10.14 **Library Day****Homework**

- “Capitalization” **EW Learning Curve**
- Summarize chapter 8 **TSIS**
- Read and annotate “Is Music Piracy Stealing?” **CR**
- Write a 200 word commentary (Commentary 7) on “Is Music Piracy Stealing?”

W 3.12.14 Springsteen, Soderberg remix, Discuss in-class essay 1

Homework

- Summarize chapter 9 **TSIS**
- Read and annotate “Remixed: Media” **CR**
- Read and annotate “For Students Doing Reports from RIAA” **CR**
- Write 200 word commentary (Commentary 8) on for Students Doing Reports on the RIAA”

Week 8

M 3.17.14 “Music Piracy or File Sharing,” exercise, active and passive voice

Homework:

- Write a 150 word response (Response 7 or 8) to another student’s Commentary 7 or 8.
- Learning Curve as assigned **EW**

W 3.19.14 **Movie Day: Digital Nation****Homework**

- Chapter 17 (Evaluating Sources and Taking Notes) **EW**
- Research and read sources for research paper.
- Have fun. Stay safe.

Week 9

M 3.24.14 Spring Break

W 3.26.14 Spring Break

Week 10

M 3.31.14 Cesar Chavez Day (Campus Closed)

W 4.2.14 Research project, working thesis, annotated bibliography, outline, field research

Homework

- Write all of your research sources in MLA format in alphabetical order. Write first four annotations answering all questions in **CR**. Submit on Canvas.
- Bring green book, pens, and dictionary for in-class essay 2 on 4.7.14

Week 11

M 4.7.14

In-class Essay 2

Homework:

- Complete annotated bibliography for research paper and field research proposal, due 4.9.14. Submit copy online prior to class. Turn in hard copy during class.

W 4.9.14

Annotated Bibliography Due

Quiz, Discuss narrowed thesis, outline, field research paragraph, sentence work

Homework

- Complete narrowed thesis and outline and field research plan due 4.14.14
- Review notes on outlining.
- Rough draft research essay due 4.23.14.

Week 12

M 4.14.14

Narrowed Thesis and Outline and Field Research Plan due

Audience exercise, research paper questions

Homework

- Read and annotate “The Flight from Conversation” **CR**
- Read and annotate “Our Semi-Literate Youth: Not So Fast” **CR**
- Read and annotate “Teenagers and Technology: I’d rather give up my kidney than my phone” **CR**
- Write a 200 word commentary (Commentary 9) on one of the above articles.

W 4.16.14

Discuss in-class essay 2, readings, visuals, introductions/conclusions

Homework

- Write a response (Response 9) to another student’s commentary 9.
- Read and annotate “Are Books Dead, and Can Authors Survive?” **CR**
- Read and annotate “The End of Authorship” **CR**
- Read and annotate “Clive Thompson on the Future of Reading in the Digital World.” **CR**
- Read and annotate “Plagiarism: The Next Generation”

Week 13

M 4.21.14

Quiz, readings, sentences, paragraphs, presentations

Homework

- Complete Rough Draft Research Essay. Read it aloud, Find a second reader before you bring it to class for peer review Submit to Canvas before class on 4.23.14. Bring a hard copy to class.

W 4.23.14

Due Rough Draft Research Essay

Peer Review

Homework:

- Complete final draft of research essay due 4.30.14.
- Prepare your presentation for the class, due 4.30.14

Week 14

M 4.28.14 Discuss the department final

Homework:

- Read “Conclusions” in **CR**
- Complete final draft of research paper. Have a second reader review your final draft.
- Read it aloud. Submit copy online prior to class on 4.30.14. Bring a hard copy to class.

W 4.30.14 **Research Paper Due**
Presentations

Week 15

M 5.5.14 Presentations

W 5.7.14 Presentations, Final words

S 5.10.14 Department Final 10:00 a.m. Location TBA

Week 16

M 5.13.14 **Last Day of Class**

Important SJSU dates Spring 2014

Wednesday	January 22	Spring Semester Begins
Wednesday	January 22	Orientation, Advisement, Faculty Meetings
Thursday	January 23	First Day of Instruction – Classes Begin
Tuesday	February 4	Last Day to Drop without Entry on Permanent Record
Tuesday	February 11	Last Day to Add Courses & Register Late
Wednesday	February 19	Enrollment Census Date
Monday-Friday	March 24-28	Spring Recess
Monday	March 31	Cesar Chavez Day -- Campus Closed
Saturday	May 10	English Department Final, 10:00 a.m.
Tuesday	May 13	Last Day of Instruction – Last Day of Classes
Wednesday	May 14	Study/Conference Day (no classes or exams)
Thursday-Friday	May 15-16	Final Examinations
Monday-Wednesday	May 19-21	Final Examinations
Thursday	May 22	Final Examinations Make-Up Day
Friday	May 23	Grade Evaluation Day
Saturday	May 24	Commencement
Monday	May 26	Memorial Day - Campus Closed (M)
Tuesday	May 27	Grades Due From Faculty

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 scepticism 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 centre of the universe; the realest, most vivid and important person in existence. We rarely think about this sort of natural, basic self-centredness 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 centre 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 centre 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 centre 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.

Letter of Understanding
English 1B, Section 67

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.

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 think are 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.

Please list five topics related to “Communication in the Digital Age” that you might want to learn more about.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

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

