

Introduction to College Writing

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About This Course

This course is designed as an intensive writing course that covers the following stages of writing: preliminary thought and discussion, research, organization, writing, revising and editing. Students produce at least ten pages of formal prose intended for a critical reader as well as at least 15 pages of informal work such as a personal journal. Students work in traditional rhetorical forms and write a research paper.

PART I

"THE INTERVIEW"

QUESTIONS - ICEBREAKER

"The Interview" questions are designed to get you sharing a bit about yourself with others in this class. Please click the link above to access the questions you'll need to answer and then follow the directions from there as to how and where to submit this. While this assignment is not graded, I'm asking that you actively participate so you can have an easier time using some of these skills in the course once it goes live.

I. Directions for "The Interview" Questions

I'd like you to answer the following questions:

Where are you from originally, presently, or lately (if you've been moving around)?

What is your major or area of interest?

What made you enroll @ HCCC?

What job(s) have you had or do you have presently?

What do you do for fun or what is your pastime(s)?

How big is your family (i.e. children, siblings, extended family, etc.)?

In order to complete this assignment, In lieu of writing out your answers directly, I'd prefer that you record a video of yourself answering these questions instead and share other tidbits you'd like us to know about you. Being that we live in times where technology is more user friendly than ever, and given that you're enrolled in online courses (or at least this one), I felt that this would be a more

interesting and entertaining medium by which to accomplish this assignment.

That said, you'll need to create a google account, if you don't have one already, then open YouTube (and sign in with your existing or newly created google account), then record the video itself (use either your computer's/laptop's built in camera or your cellphone), and then upload it in YouTube. You will be prompted to create a channel upon attempting to upload your video. Please follow the directions therein, create a channel, and eventually you should arrive at a screen that looks like this:

image

You'll note that there are three different privacy options to choose from. **Public** means that anyone can see it. **Unlisted** means that your video will not come up in search results. Only those who know the link can view it, and you can share the link with anyone. **Private** means only those you invite to view the video can view it. Your video will not come up under any search results or your channel list. If you try to share it with someone who wasn't invited, they will not be able to connect to it. For the purposes of this assignment, please choose **Public**

or Unlisted otherwise, you'll need to invite every single classmate and me if you make it Private.

If you're still confused as to how to accomplish this task, please visit this [helpful link from YouTube](#).

The very last step is to now copy the web address of your uploaded video from YouTube (the one in the browser bar) and open the discussion board that follows these directions. Please embed your video for us by clicking on the film icon in the tools (if you mouse over it, it will read "Insert/Edit Embedded Media") which looks like this:

You will then be brought to a pop-up screen. Repaste the address of the video where it says "File/URL" and finish by clicking the "Insert" button on the bottom right. Your video should now be embedded in the discussion board.

After completing all of these steps, I'd ask that you revisit the discussion board over the course of the start-up week and reply and comment to at least 2 other posts/links.

I'm looking forward to your submissions!

PART II

FREEWRTING ABOUT YOUR WRITING HISTORY

This is meant to be your first freewriting assignment. Since this precedes somewhat more substantive modules, it is meant more as an opportunity for me and others to gain insight into your strengths and weaknesses.

2. Your Writing History

The idea of freewriting is to simply write without stopping to edit or structure your composition. I would ask that you follow this same logic in creating your freewrite here. Try to disregard (or move past) any spelling, grammar, and/or mechanical issues when writing a freewrite. You also need not paragraph or structure this. Just simply write and keep writing. It's bound to have some of these same issues, but you might be surprised how your ideas flow more easily and any freewrites you do are designed to help you potentially find a topic for the essay unit. This one, however, is a bit different. I'm curious about your writing history. That said, please write (over a 10-15 minute period) to the following:

I want you to discuss your writing history. You might mention instances when your writing was not at its best or certain successes you've had in your writing, how uncomfortable or comfortable you are with writing (i.e. perhaps you write outside of class), or a writing assignment you remember the most and why that one stands out above the others. You might also talk about what is difficult for you when it comes to writing in general or perhaps it's something more specific that gives you fits continually. In short, provide some insight into your writing background.

3. "Nuggets" from Your Writing History

Please post a few “nuggets” from the freewrite that you completed on your writing history. Try to highlight a few of your successes, failures (or really troubles more so), and end the post with something you hope to improve upon by the end of the semester. **After posting, please go back and respond to at least 2 other posts.** Thanks!

4. Helpful Hints & Common Mistakes - Homonyms, Misused Words, & Commas

Since several of you will likely express having had difficulties with grammar and the like in the above assignment, I've made this simple document to help address some of those issues. You need not do anything here other than read the attached file and reference it when you run into these issues in your actual writing.

[Commonly Misused Words, Homonyms, and Commas](#)

PART III

THE MAPPING EXERCISE - MY PHILOSOPHY ON WRITING

5. What Does a Map Have to Do With Writing Essays?

If you click on the document that follows, you will see a map of the United States that shows most of the major highways across the country. There are some directions to follow, which I am asking that you complete. It may seem confusing at first, but I promise that there's a point and that it does hold some meaning in relation to this writing class.

6. The Mapping Exercise

The Mapping Exercise

The straight path might seem to be the safest and most efficient, but it usually isn't the most interesting. Staying on it often keeps us from exploring other possibilities.

– Keith Hjortshoj

[The student] must be allowed something of a frontier mentality, an overall commitment, perhaps, to get to California, but a readiness, all along the way, to choose alternate routes and even sojourn at unexpected places when that seems wise or important, sometimes, even, to decide that California isn't what the writer really had in mind.

– Mina Shaughnessy

[The Mapping Exercise](#)

Step 1: In the next three minutes please identify as many routes as you can to travel from Seattle, Washington to Albany, New York. Be prepared to post (in the discussion forum) at least two different paths you traveled and why you chose each path you took.

Step 2: Read the other responses that come in and reply to two other posts. Consider the following in doing so: Now that I've heard what everyone else has said are there other routes I'd take or consider? If so, which routes and why? Post your reconsiderations.

Step 3: Now read the responses that you received on your original post and answer the following question: Why did I do this exercise? Respond at the bottom of your original post.

7. Discuss 2 Paths/Routes

Please post your 2 paths/routes and follow the directions thereafter found in the PDF document preceding this discussion board.

8. Why You Did This Exercise

In reading all of your responses so far, it seems that almost all of you chose very different routes to travel from one coast to the other (I used Seattle and Albany to increase the variety of responses and I used to live in both places for extended periods of time and have traveled these routes several times over). There was also some consensus on choosing to travel the larger perimeter (of the west coast, southern coast, east coast) of the country (I-5 to I-10 to I-95) or taking the shortest, quickest, and likely most boring route across the northern part of the U.S. (I-90/I-94).

With all of that, it still doesn't address the point of why I assigned this in the first place. It seems like most of you figured it out all the same and I always like doing this before the next module, which will address the merits and downfalls of a style/format of writing that most of you are likely familiar with and have used in your prior education...the Five Paragraph Essay.

This brings us to why you were busy looking at a map of the U.S. in a writing course. Planning out your writing is important, just like

traveling, but not all of you needed to do that and I will never require it of you. Some of you seemed content to simply get in the car and begin the trip. Some of you seemed like you would pack countless AAA brochures and maps, double check that your GPS was working, call ahead to all the stops you would be making and generally be overprepared. Either way is fine, but there's always a journey to be had that just happens and this is similar to writing in general. As the cliché goes, the best laid plans often go awry. Sometimes the result is disastrous (maybe your car broke down on this metaphorical journey much as you get stuck in your paper). Sometimes you find what you were looking for all along without knowing it (maybe your trip takes on a life of its own much as your paper can). No matter the case, there's no one certain way to write an essay, much as there's no certain way to travel across the U.S. and not all of you would take the same way/routes.

So, without beating a metaphor to death, I am here to guide all of you along your journey in writing however that may happen, but I do not believe that there is a certain way one must go or that you even have to plan your route ahead of time. I am looking forward

to seeing you all trying to get from Seattle to Albany in your own way and relative time (obviously we need to adhere to a deadline/due dates unlike the trip), but I am excited to know that not all of the writing will be the same. This exercise will hopefully help you as we enter the next module which, again, will tackle a more formulaic approach to writing that the great majority of you have used in your prior education.

PART IV

THE FIVE PARAGRAPH ESSAY (5¶E)

9. 5¶E - What is the 5 Paragraph Essay?

You may not know what I mean when I say 5 Paragraph Essay, but even if the name is unfamiliar, the concepts of it are probably something you recall doing often in your prior education. In short, it is an essay where the following format was used:

1. Intro Paragraph (with a thesis statement in the last sentence or two...sometimes underlined)
2. Body #1 (the first point of the larger subject that you will address and likely mentioned in the thesis)
3. Body #2 (the second point of the larger subject that you will address and likely mentioned in the thesis)
4. Body #3 (the third point of the larger subject that you will address and likely mentioned in the thesis)
5. Conclusion (reiterate what you have already written and restate the thesis)

Does this look familiar now? Most of you probably used it extensively throughout high school (if that was your

last educational experience) regardless of the subject/class you were in. It was likely a catch-all and worked for any and all subject matters from history to social studies. The question is whether this same format will work in college. The following are notes to consider as to the merits and/or downfalls of this familiar essay format:

5¶E (Five Paragraph Essay)

Pros

- Helps you stay organized
 - Easy/familiar
 - Helps create proficiency
 - Good format for timed tests since it's structured and formulaic
 - Aids in student survival because it's familiar and often utilized in prior education
 - Helps teachers move through papers with efficiency
-

Two missing, most important factors

which are integral and necessary in all good writing:

AUDIENCE

To whom are you writing?

PURPOSE

Why are you writing?

The Five Paragraph Essay is devoid of any consideration of **AUDIENCE** and **PURPOSE** since the audience is always the teacher and the purpose largely revolves around getting a good grade by pleasing the teacher. The idea that you are writing to a teacher for a grade is not realistic in real world writing and will not likely work for all of your paper assignments in college. That said, you need not abandon ship on it all together, but there is a real likelihood that it will not work in all instances, even in academic settings. **AUDIENCE** and **PURPOSE** are key in all quality writing and the Five Paragraph Essay does not account for these. If one considers these two factors, it can help shape how you approach writing and how the structure will unfold. To demonstrate, consider the following:

1) You're writing an email to a friend

asking him/her to come visit this weekend.

2) You got pulled over recently and you're writing a letter to the judge to ask for clemency.

What would both of these writing instances sound/look like? Would the tone and structure be the same for each of these instances? The Five Paragraph Essay assumes they would, and thus you should be able to switch out the writing in each situation. Do you think you'd write a formal email to your friend or an informal letter to the judge? This is why **AUDIENCE** and **PURPOSE** are so important to succeeding in writing.

10. 5 Paragraph Essay Discussion

I want you to discuss the merits and downfalls of the Five Paragraph Essay, as you see them being, now that you have read the proceeding document. Please consider all of the following in your response:

- instances where you have used it before and whether it was useful or detrimental to your writing abilities.
- the viability of such a structured style at the college/university level (for all assignments) versus high school.
- the two terms I referenced at the close of the proceeding document: audience and purpose...what importance should they play in the formation of quality writing?
- whether you believe you will use the Five Paragraph essay, or elements of it, in this course and where they would likely come into play.

Lastly, **please post your response and reply to at least two other posts as well.**

II. The 5¶E in College - Will You Use It or Not?

Many of you have responded in the discussion forum with a myriad of perspectives in relation to the 5¶E's merits and/or downfalls. I also saw a variety of insights as to whether this formulaic style would be of value at the college/university level. Most of the responses ranged from "absolutely" to "maybe" in certain circumstances. I tend to agree with the latter, as academic writing (like research papers) does rely on some of the principles found in the 5¶E (a thesis statement that outlines what is to come, an introductory paragraph, body paragraphs that illustrate your larger points/ideas, a conclusion that restates the point to a degree, and an overall attention to organizing your thoughts in a manner that allows the reader to digest the information easily) but I am doubtful that it will work in all of your assignments. In particular, I do not think it will be of value in our first essay assignment.

You will be writing an experience essay soon, which will ask you to share some important moment or moments from your life. Would you want to relay your story via a 5¶E where you will have a proper introduction with a thesis statement? Could the essence of your story be conveyed in the next three paragraphs? Would you want to reiterate the point of your story in the conclusion? Perhaps these questions can be better answered by another question. Which of these two introductions seems better in terms of telling the story of some aspect of your life?

1. A) Everyone goes through ups and downs in life. Sometimes life throws you curveballs when you least expect them and how one reacts to these events usually dictates how life will be. This is the story of an accident that happened when I was seventeen and how it affected my life.

2. B) I awoke to red and blue lights reflecting off the snow through a haze inside my car. An airbag was half empty in front of me and I reached up to touch my face. Immediately, I recoiled in pain. My right elbow was shattered. I could not see it, but I felt a searing pain shoot up my arm when I went to move it. Blood dripped down onto my legs. I was pretty sure my jaw was fractured too.

I hope you went with choice B. Choice A will likely give away your whole point immediately and would not leave the reader wanting to read on since you just divulged the larger idea of your entire story at the beginning. Beyond that, I would assume the larger point of your story would take more than three paragraphs to get across. Lastly, what would be the point of restating the point of your story, that everyone just read, in the conclusion? Choice A would sort of be like renting a movie and the following happens: the title screen comes on, but then a man/woman comes on screen and tells you what you are about to see in this movie, the movie then proceeds much as the man/woman told you it would, the credits begin to roll and the man/woman comes back on screen and repeats what you just watched. Would you ever rent that again or give it high marks? Why, then, would you do this in your essays, and more so, in your experience essay?

So, the long and short of this module was to get you talking about the 5¶E and you all did that with great success. I would, however, caution all of you from using its principles and designs in your first paper. Principles of it will be of use as we move past the experience essay, but for now I would seek to go outside your comfort zone of writing in such a formulaic way (whether you have been using it in your prior schooling, at work, or in other places). I think this will be comforting to some of you (as creativity can flourish) but some of you will be terrified that you cannot use a style that is so familiar. Rest easy...I am here to help and so are your classmates. We will figure out together.

PART V

THE EXPERIENCE ESSAY (AKA PERSONAL ESSAY)

12. The Experience Essay - Using Description and Narration

Writing an Experience Essay

An experience essay (usually termed a personal essay) is something that may be familiar to you already. Perhaps you might have done one in your prior education or in applying to colleges. There are a myriad of topics you can cover, as pretty much any experience(s) in your life are allowed, but you should make your choice wisely. Try to pick something that stands out above the everyday and/or obvious. For instance, do not pick a morning where you woke up, ate cereal, and went to work. It is technically a personal experience, as it covers some moment in your life, but it does not hold the weight I'm looking for and will fall short once I start asking you to explore the deeper meaning of your experience. That said, you need not pick something that is the worst day in your life, nor moments that were so tragic/overwhelming that you do not want to go back to those times. Should you opt to go that route, you will find that they work nicely toward the ultimate goal of this unit, which is to illustrate some fairly significant moment in your life. Whatever you choose, it's still unclear as to what makes a robust, well rounded, and well thought out experience essay. The following are writing approaches that will help you create your essay.

Description

- Seek to describe (using the 5 senses)
- Flesh out the paper with details (show your experience)
- Why description? Gives readers something to relate to...your readers didn't experience what you did, so put them in your

shoes/eyes

- Two types of description – objective and subjective

↓

(factual)

↓

(personal)

- Adjectives are used often, but metaphors and similes are also common
- Use vivid language to show rather than tell...let your reader “see” the story

Narration

- Make dynamic characters (ones who change from beginning to end)
- Let the details drive the action rather than simply rushing through the experience
- Show rather than tell how and why the experience is important/impactful
- Chopping up time is sometimes more interesting than chronological storytelling
- Ensure the ordering of events is coherent and transitions exist if it's chopped up
- Consider your audience...what will readers need to understand your experience?
- Consider your purpose...what do you want the reader to understand about you?

For more in-depth notes, sample essays, and helpful videos for both of these rhetorical modes, please click here for [description](#) and here for [narration](#).

13. Experience Essay Freewrite

#1

The idea of freewriting is to simply write without stopping to edit or structure your composition. I would ask that you follow this same logic in creating your freewrite here. I am going to post two prompts and I would like you to write to one of them. Try to disregard (or move past) any spelling, grammar, and/or mechanical issues when writing a freewrite. You also need not paragraph or structure this. Just simply write and keep writing. It's bound to have some of these same issues, but you might be surprised how your ideas flow more easily and any freewrites you do are designed to help you potentially find a topic for the essay unit. That said, please write (over a 10 minute period) to one of the following:

1. Think of a place that had special meaning to you as a child.
What did it look like? Who was there? What happened there?
Paint a vivid picture using as much description as possible to help your reader “see” this place as you did or do.
2. Think of a time when all your prior knowledge or understanding of how to handle a situation didn't help you.
Perhaps a time when you felt like you couldn't rely on what you thought you already knew or understood. What happened?
What was the outcome?

14. Experience Essay Freewrite

#2

The idea of freewriting is to simply write without stopping to edit or structure your composition. I would ask that you follow this same logic in creating your freewrite here. I am going to post two prompts and I would like you to write to one of them. Try to disregard (or move past) any spelling, grammar, and/or mechanical issues when writing a freewrite. You also need not paragraph or structure this. Just simply write and keep writing. It's bound to have some of these same issues, but you might be surprised how your ideas flow more easily and any freewrites you do are designed to help you potentially find a topic for the essay unit. That said, please write (over a 10 minute period) to one of the following:

1. Think back to a time when the world seemed to overwhelm you. Perhaps it was a time when everything seemed to be going wrong at once. What were the circumstances? How did you resolve it or is it still “unfinished business”?
2. Talk about your journey to this college or our online campus. How did you end up at this college, of the places you could have gone? What was it like when you first arrived on campus or online? What is it like now? Do you regret your decision or are you happy with the choice you made? Why?

15. Other Experience Essay Topics

The following are topical matters (fairly broad ones) that I have seen over the years or are topics that would work for an Experience Essay. These are merely meant to be suggestions, particularly if you are stuck or unsure of what you want to write about still. Take these as just that...food for thought.

Experience Essay Subjects

- Weather/too fast/too brazen...I got into an accident
- Fight with parents/someone else...I want(ed) to leave
- Friend/bf/gf has a problem...what do/did I do?
- Last/biggest game of the year...what happened?
- No boundaries...I took a risk and it did/didn't work out
- Everybody leave me alone...too much drama in my life
- Last days of HS...what happened?
- First days/weeks of college...do I like it?
- Special place...what's the story with it?
- Parent problems...mom and dad just don't understand me
- Special relationship that persevered/soured over time
- Too many expectations...I grew up too young/early
- Something crazy/unexpected happened...how did I deal with it?
- When I was younger, but now...how has my perspective changed?

16. Submit Your Experience Essay (1st Draft)

I'm asking that you submit a 2-3 page (double spaced) Experience Essay in size 12 pt. font (preferably Times New Roman or Calibri) that encapsulates some personal experience in your life. Do not choose something that spans a large amount of time, but rather something that is a significant moment. **I would also ask that you submit it as a Word document or a PDF so that I may open it in Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat Reader.** This will be your first draft, which I will edit and return to you with comments. You will then participate in Peer Exchange where a few classmates also provide feedback (via a series of questions I will ask them to consider) and you will have the opportunity to revise it one more time before you submit the final draft that I will grade.

17. Peer Exchange - Getting Feedback from Others

Peer Exchange (Experience Essay)

Directions:

1. You have been assigned into groups of 4-5 people. You will have to post a copy of the 1st draft of your experience essay in the discussion forum to allow other students to read it. Once you do this, please begin reading your other classmates' essays and do the following:
 - Edit the paper for any mistakes/errors you see.
 - Read deeply and carefully for content, while “correcting,” and create a written response (post it as a reply in the discussion forum) for the author that addresses at least two of the following questions/suggestions:
 - o Where is the writer *telling* you what happened instead of *showing* you the details and making you part of the experience?
 - o Can you suggest places where the writer needs to become more specific in terms of information, language, or detail?
 - o Are there places where the writer could be more *explicit* rather than *implicit*, and/or vice versa?
 - o Do you see a more effective way to begin this paper, something, perhaps embedded into the body of the paper now?
 - o Do you find that “chopping it up” might be a more effective/interesting way for the writer to convey his/her story? Offer suggestions on how you see the new structure taking shape.

- o Does the paper convey a sense of the writer exploring the significance of an experience? What is the point you believe the author is trying to make?
- 2. Once you have completed your response/post, repeat this process with another classmate's essay. Do this process until you've read and responded to all of your classmates' essays (those in your group) that are not your own.

18. Submit Your Experience Essay (2nd/Final Draft)

I'm asking that you submit a 2-3 page (double spaced) Experience Essay in size 12 pt. font (preferably Times New Roman or Calibri) that encapsulates some personal experience in your life. This is meant to be an updated version of your 1st draft, which should have already addressed the abovementioned idea. This will be your final draft, and you should account for the feedback that I gave you and that of your fellow students (from the peer exchange). This is the version that I will grade. You should also be able to see the rubric I will use to grade you below. **I would also ask that you submit it as a Word document or a PDF so that I may open it in Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat Reader.**

PART VI

THE COMPARE/CONTRAST ESSAY

19. The Compare/Contrast Essay - Similarities and Differences Come to Light

Writing a Compare/Contrast Essay

Think of the Compare/Contrast essay as a bridge between both the Personal Essay and the Issues (Research) Essay. To begin, we often compare and contrast things in our everyday lives—what gas station to go to, what to major in, which job is better, etc. Sometimes comparing and contrasting allows one the possibility of gauging which choice (or perhaps subject) is more advantageous to you personally, or perhaps might be more beneficial on a larger scale (like when a company decides which health plan will provide its employees with the best benefits). Your purpose in this essay is to *evaluate* a subject or subjects. In another sense, comparing and contrasting affords one the possibility of shedding light on an issue or conflict, and works by illustrating both sides of the subject (or perhaps debate). If you wanted to provide an objective take on the current economic climate of the US, you might provide data (or facts) from both before and after the economic downturn of late. This would be considered a more *informative* approach here. While the latter is common, your essay should focus more on the former, where you will take a stance and make a judgment on the subject(s) at hand. This being the case then, your Compare/Contrast Essay should present both your perspective in relation to the subject(s) and provide evidence via a progression of logical arguments to support your claims.

Compare/Contrast

- Involves juxtaposition → putting things (subjects/parts) side by side

- Illustrates the similarities/differences of a subject or subjects
- Might also illustrate the advantages/disadvantages of subject(s)
- Helps you organize information in arriving at a choice/decision/outcome
- Often used when someone makes a decision or has to choose
- Subjects must be similar enough, or could be various parts of a larger subject
- You should figure out the factors involved before writing
- Depending on the subject, some research may be necessary
- Common ways we compare/contrast → analogies → metaphors & similes
- Commonly used words or phrases to suggest similarities/comparisons: like, as, also, in a like manner, similarly, likewise, in addition
- Commonly used words or phrases to suggest differences/contrasts: but, in contrast to, unlike, whereas, on one hand, however, on the other hand
- Conclusion should reveal your ultimate choice/decision/outcome

Two common ways of organizing a Compare/Contrast Essay:

Factor-by-Factor or Subject-by-Subject

(will likely be influenced by purpose and audience)

Factor-by-Factor (or Point-by-Point):

1. Factor 1

- a) Subject A
- b) Subject B
- c) Subject C

2. Factor 2

- a) Subject A

- b) Subject B
 - c) Subject C
3. Factor 3
- a) Subject A
 - b) Subject B
 - c) Subject C

Subject-by-Subject (or One-Side-at-a-Time):

- A) Subject A
 - 1. Factor 1
 - 2. Factor 2
 - 3. Factor 3
- B) Subject B
 - 1. Factor 1
 - 2. Factor 2
 - 3. Factor 3
- C) Subject C
 - 1. Factor 1
 - 2. Factor 2
 - 3. Factor 3

For more in-depth notes, a sample essay, and a helpful video for this rhetorical mode, please click here for [compare and contrast](#).

20. Compare/Contrast Essay

Freewrite #1

The idea of freewriting is to simply write without stopping to edit or structure your composition. I would ask that you follow this same logic in creating your freewrite here. I am going to post two prompts and I would like you to write to one of them. Try to disregard (or move past) any spelling, grammar, and/or mechanical issues when writing a freewrite. You also need not paragraph or structure this. Just simply write and keep writing. It's bound to have some of these same issues, but you might be surprised how your ideas flow more easily and any freewrites you do are designed to help you potentially find a topic for the essay unit. That said, please write (over a 10 minute period) to one of the following:

1. Think of a time you had to make a decision, or some decision you'll have to make, in relation to some important aspect of your life. This may be a decision you had to make about which college(s) to attend, which college(s) you'll attend after here, which major(s)/career(s) you have or will consider, and/or other areas of your life you consider critical to your future. What was the decision you had or will have to make? What went into, or will go into, your decision? What was the outcome, or what do you expect the outcome to be?
2. You have been at college for a month or so, or presumably at least less than a year. Reflect on what you expected college to be like and how your experiences have, in part, differed from those expectations. Have most of your expectations been met? Only some of them? Is there one important difference that is bothering you?

2I. Compare/Contrast Essay

Freewrite #2

The idea of freewriting is to simply write without stopping to edit or structure your composition. I would ask that you follow this same logic in creating your freewrite here. I am going to post two prompts and I would like you to write to one of them. Try to disregard (or move past) any spelling, grammar, and/or mechanical issues when writing a freewrite. You also need not paragraph or structure this. Just simply write and keep writing. It's bound to have some of these same issues, but you might be surprised how your ideas flow more easily and any freewrites you do are designed to help you potentially find a topic for the essay unit. That said, please write (over a 10 minute period) to one of the following:

1. We have all been in a relationship with someone significant in our lives, whether a boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife, or perhaps a brother/sister or mother/father. Reflect on your relationship with one of those persons. How was the relationship with this person different when you were young? How is it now? What, if anything, changed that relationship? How do you think it will continue to change?
1. Think of at least two different places you've either lived or visited. What do they have in common? What differences are there between the two or more places? What memories do you hold about those two places? Are those memories similar or different? How and why are they similar or different? What factors are influential in determining what those memories mean?

22. Other Compare/Contrast Topics

The following are topical matters (fairly broad ones) that I have seen over the years or are topics that would work for a Compare/Contrast Essay. These are merely meant to be suggestions, particularly if you are stuck or unsure of what you want to write about still. Take these as just that...food for thought.

Compare/Contrast Subjects

1. Then and Now

- High School vs. College (what's alike/different?)
 - You psychologically changing through time (coming of age story)
 - Relationships (in the beginning/middle/end)
 - Sports experiences (different teams & times)
 - Changes in society with you involved (norms, technology, music, etc.)
 - Future (your present versus your future life...or what you imagine it will be like)

2. College(s)/Major(s)/Career(s)

- Where did you look before enrolling here? (list all the schools and factors you considered)
 - Where do you want to transfer? (list all the schools and factors you will consider)
 - What is your major or will it be? (did you switch yet or will you?)
 - What job will you hold in your field of study? (different paths you could take)

3. People and Places

- Relationships (different people you know)
- Locations (places you've lived or traveled to)

4. Other

- Hobbies/Interests/Pastimes (different aspects of your passion(s))

23. Submit Your Compare/Contrast Essay (1st Draft)

I'm asking that you submit a 2-3 page (double spaced) Compare/Contrast Essay in size 12 pt. font (preferably Times New Roman or Calibri) that accounts for comparing and contrasting something of significance but that is also somewhat personal in nature or is of personal interest to you. Do not choose something that is obvious (AKA apples vs. oranges) or common knowledge. **I would also ask that you submit it as a Word document or a PDF so that I may open it in Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat Reader.** This will be your first draft, which I will edit and return to you with comments. You will then participate in Peer Exchange where a few classmates also provide feedback (via a series of questions I will ask them to consider) and you will have the opportunity to revise it one more time before you submit the final draft that I will grade.

24. Peer Exchange - Getting Feedback from Others

Peer Exchange (Compare/Contrast Essay)

Directions:

1. You have been assigned into groups of 4-5 people. You will have to post a copy of the 1st draft of your compare/contrast essay in the discussion forum to allow other students to read it. Once you do this, please begin reading your other classmates' essays and do the following:
 - Edit the paper for any mistakes/errors you see.
 - Read deeply and carefully for content, while “correcting,” and create a written response (post it as a reply in the discussion forum) for the author that addresses at least two of the following questions/suggestions:
 - o In what ways has the writer deepened your thinking or caused you to think differently about the topic (or some aspect of the topic)?
 - o Are there any other “points”/“parts” that you could see being useful to the writer? When you look at the subject matter chosen by the writer, how do you see them being of benefit? Where would they fit in?
 - o Did the writer organize his/her essay in a logical manner (one-side-at-a-time or point-by-point)? If not, can you suggest how the writer might organize it more efficiently and effectively? Explain why you are confused and offer suggestions to the writer on how to make it less ambiguous.
 - o Has the writer constructed a strong thesis or

introduction? Why? How could the writer make a stronger thesis or introduction? (Remember, a strong thesis/introduction makes a specific claim. It is not too broad or general. It should be more than a simple statement of fact. It should do more than reiterate common knowledge or restate what already seems clear or obvious to most readers).

o Is the writer's perspective an *informed perspective*, one that seems to have emerged after thoughtful consideration of the topic(s) and examination of the ideas surrounding the issue(s)? What in the writer's paper leads you to your conclusion?

2. Once you have completed your response/post, repeat this process with another classmate's essay. Do this process until you've read and responded to all of your classmates' essays (those in your group) that are not your own.

25. Submit Your Compare/Contrast Essay (2nd/Final Draft)

I'm asking that you submit a 2-3 page (double spaced) Experience Essay in size 12 pt. font (preferably Times New Roman or Calibri) that accounts for comparing and contrasting something of significance but that is also somewhat personal in nature or is of personal interest to you. This is meant to be an updated version of your 1st draft, which should have already addressed the abovementioned idea. This will be your final draft, and you should account for the feedback that I gave you and that of your fellow students (from the peer exchange). This is the version that I will grade. You should also be able to see the rubric I will use to grade you below. **I would also ask that you submit it as a Word document or a PDF so that I may open it in Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat Reader.**

PART VII

THE ISSUES ESSAY (AKA RESEARCH ESSAY)

26. The Issues Essay - Using Argument and Persuasion

Writing an Issues Essay

You have now had practice in understanding, creating, and refining writing in a few rhetorical modes. As we arrive at the Issues Essay, I am asking that you put to use most, if not all, of the critical skills you have gained in writing so far. As such, you will be required to do outside research, on a topic of your choice, and to present it by utilizing the principles of argumentative/persuasive writing and perhaps by employing the tenets you are familiar with in the way of description/narration and comparison/contrast. As is the case with all of the writing you have done up to this point, the Issues Essay is a progressive undertaking. In the most basic sense, this essay should be thought of as a means of illustrating your argument and providing research to support it. You should also take into consideration the idea of being persuasive, as part of your purpose entails displaying an ability to convince the reader that he/she should buy what you are selling. This is where careful planning may aid you and I encourage you to create an outline, or some sense of a structure, before you even draft the essay. Doing so will help show how your paper will come together eventually and in what order the research will unfold so that your sources continually support your argument as it advances. While I am suggesting that you complete said outline, it is not a requirement. As the essay progresses, you will need to flesh out the paper with a proper introduction, have a proper thesis statement (likely at the end of the introductory paragraph), have your argument develop with research to support it, and have a proper MLA Works Cited page (you may do APA if you clear it with me). In the end, this is a more demanding task than your previous essays and, as such, you should use your time wisely over the next several weeks.

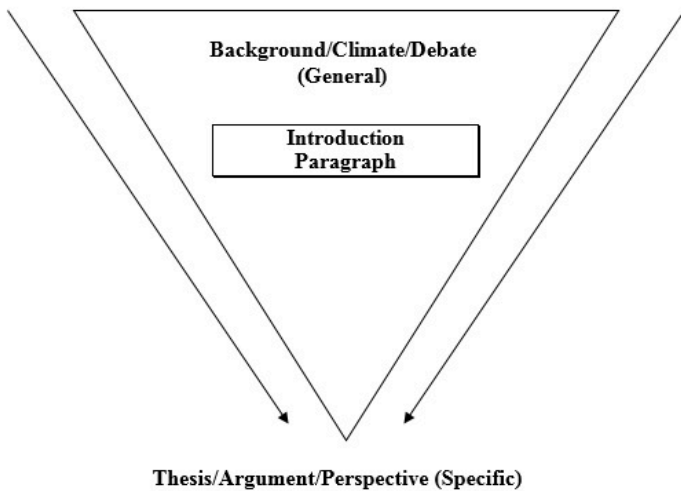
Argument & Persuasion

- An argument makes a point (it is your *informed perspective*) backed up by evidence that continually supports your claim → your opinion is not enough.
- An argument accounts for all audience needs → seek to convince your reader(s) and account for counter-arguments or rebuttals → challenge the arguments of those against you and show them why you are right.
- A solid argument recognizes and accounts for the intricacies of a subject → do not oversimplify the complexity of the issue(s) or boil it down to basics if the subject is multifaceted → it will make you look like you are uninformed and will not convince any reader(s) that you know what you are talking about.
- Must be a logical connection between evidence and argument(s) → you need sound reasoning to support your argument(s) and cover your claims → make sure your research supports your reasoning otherwise it is a logical fallacy.
- Purpose → seek to move the reader(s) intellectually, not emotionally → emotion leads you away from logic → present yourself as a reasonable person not one who will convince by browbeating the reader(s).

IMPORTANT STEPS TO CONSIDER:

1. Think about *audience* and *purpose* → this will likely inform your structure and allow you to account for rebuttals/counterarguments.
2. Develop a “working thesis” → word it in a way that accounts for your argument instead of stating a fact or asking a question → use the “thesis triangle” below.
3. Plan the organization of your essay → outline, if necessary → it can be altered and amended later, but have some idea of where you’re going. Think about:

- a) Drafting your introduction first
- b) Deciding where to put your thesis next
- c) Organizing your reasons in a purposeful way
- d) Providing support for each aspect/part of your argument(s) and consider the amount, type, and placement of research that you will need to convince your reader that your perspective is sound
- e) Concluding by restating your argument(s), but also projecting the future of your topic several years from now if we adopt your perspective and make the changes you're arguing for



Your thesis statement should include your argument/perspective so that your readers know what awaits them after advancing past your introduction.

For more in-depth notes, a sample essay, and helpful videos for both these rhetorical modes, please click here for [argumentation](#) and here for further insight on [argument and persuasion](#).

27. Issues Essay Topics

The following are topical matters that I have seen over the years or are topics that would work for an Issues Essay. **I will let you write this essay on any topic**, so long as it fits the idea of being argumentative in nature and entails having to persuade your reader to authenticate your perspective. That said, **the only 2 topics NOT ALLOWED are the legalization of marijuana and abortion**. Everything else is fair game. Below is a series of topical statements that might work.

Please notice that there is a disclaimer here (somewhat tongue and cheek) as these are written as loaded statements. They are written this way to provoke conversation, but are not my actual thoughts. The following is the disclaimer:

The following statements contain controversial information and are intended only for the individuals present in this virtual classroom and do not reflect the opinions of Mr. Brown. Do not take these statements or the topics they cover if you are also debating other issues as these statements may cause unsafe interactions with the topics you are already considering. If you have a response lasting more than four hours, please consult with your physician or another healthcare provider immediately.

My point is that I don't want you to jump down my throat if you take issue with the statements' thoughts. **These are merely meant to be suggestions**, particularly if you are stuck or unsure of what you want to write about still. Take these as just that...food for thought.

PLEASE UNDERSTAND THAT YOU DO NOT NEED TO PICK ONE OF THESE TOPICS BUT CAN IF YOU'D LIKE.

Controversial Subjects for the Issues Essay

- Somebody needs to police the internet because what one can

find online is appalling

- Parents should have to be licensed before having a child together or independently
- Smoking is disgusting and should be banned everywhere so the public can be healthier
- Affirmative Action creates an unqualified workforce because businesses have to fill a quota
- Genetic engineering is a good idea because we can eventually eliminate disease
- We don't need to worry because global warming is mythical and a non issue
- All juveniles that commit murder, or any serious offense, should be tried as an adult
- Bullying is a problem on the increase and we need to find a fix sooner than later
- School shooters are obviously influenced by violent video games and television
- If we can humanely euthanize animals, we should be able to do so with humans too
- Illegal immigrants should not receive the same benefits/ advantages as legal residents
- Reparations, for some, would help solve the economic inequities created by past practices
- Welfare reform is necessary to alleviate the problem(s) of people abusing the system
- Once a person turns 65 years old, he/she should have to retake the driving exam every year

- All students deserve an equal education and testing them continually assures that
- Obesity is becoming prevalent in this country and we need to find a solution fast
- In the interest of the equality of sexes, women should be allowed to serve in combat
- Prostitution should be legalized to lessen the burden on police forces in this country
- Hydrofracking is a good way to get natural gas that consumers would otherwise be without
- Animal testing, before the marketing of products designed for humans, is an ethical practice
- Employers should be allowed to use social media posts in evaluating their employees
- Universal healthcare will help to solve the plight of those without health coverage
- We need better sex education in schools to alleviate the growth in teenage pregnancies
- Everyone should be an organ donor, especially if they value other human lives
- College athletes should be paid based on their athletic skills and/or performances

28. MLA Documentation - How to Cite Your Sources

I am putting this link to Excelsior College's Online Writing Lab (OWL) as an illustration of how to properly cite your sources for this paper: [MLA Style - Excelsior College](#). It will illustrate how to do both in-text (often called parenthetical) citations and a Works Cited page (the list of sources at the end of the paper). Both of these are requisite for this paper and I will not accept any submissions that omit either or both of these requirements.

While I am asking for MLA Documentation, I will also accept papers that are in APA format. Several of you may be more familiar with this citation style, depending on your major and/or prior education. This also requires both in-text (parenthetical) citations and a References page (the list of sources at the end of the paper). Both of these are requisite for this paper and I will not accept any submissions that omit either or both of these requirements. If you'd like further information on APA, follow this link: [APA Style - Excelsior College](#).

29. Quoting vs. Paraphrasing - MLA Style

Please watch this helpful video that demonstrates the differences in the following: quoting directly from a source vs. paraphrasing, block quoting, and using a quote from an indirect source. You should see examples of all of these ideas demonstrated in the sample MLA essay that is also available in this module.

If you'd like to see a helpful video, courtesy of *Suffolk County Community College Library*, please click here: [Quoting Vs. Paraphrasing – MLA](#)

30. Sample MLA Paper

If you'd like to see an example from *The Modern Language Association*, please click here: [Sample MLA Paper \(8th\)](#)

31. Library Resources

As an active HCCC student, you can sign into the Library from anywhere on or off campus. Given that this is an online class, you should be able to access these resources by providing your user id and your password. The following is information in relation to using HCCC's Library for research purposes and a list of databases that I feel would work best for the purposes of this assignment:

EN 111 Library Resources

Catalog:

For books and other media (videos, audio, etc.)

Databases:

Academic OneFile (form of Infotrac) – Academic OneFile is the source for peer-reviewed, full-text articles from the world's leading journals and reference sources. It has extensive coverage of the physical sciences, technology, medicine, social sciences, the arts, theology, literature and other subjects. With millions of articles available in both PDF and HTML full-text with no restrictions, researchers are able to find accurate information quickly. Includes full-text coverage of the New York Times back to 1995. Updated daily.

Academic Search Complete (form of EBSCO) – Covering most areas of academic study, this scholarly, multi-disciplinary database contains more than 6,100 full-text periodicals – as well as indexing and abstracts for more than 10,100 journals – and offers access to monographs, reports, conference proceedings and much more.

Opposing Viewpoints in Context – This is an online library database of current events topics – the facts as well as the arguments of each topic's proponents and detractors.

CQ Researcher – CQ Researcher is noted for its in-depth, unbiased coverage of health, social trends, criminal justice,

international affairs, education, the environment, technology, and the economy. Reports are published weekly in print and online 44 times a year by CQ Press, a division of Congressional Quarterly Inc. and go back to the first entries from 1991.

Lexis Nexis Academic – Research areas cover top news, general news topics, and news transcripts; foreign language news sources; company, industry, and market news; legal news; company financial information; general medical and health topics and medical abstracts; accounting, auditing, and tax information; law reviews; federal case law; U.S. Code; and state legal research.

32. Other Useful Information - Research Links, Citation Machines, etc.

Please go to the “**Resources**” tab on the left and click the folder titled “**Academic Research Links**.” You should find links to the library catalog & databases, OWL (Online Writing Lab) at Excelsior College with all the information you should need for doing proper MLA citations (both parenthetical and Works Cited entries), a sample MLA paper (so you can see how it should look when correctly done), and a link to “Easy Bib,” which is a citation machine that will help you make your Works Cited entries. All of these tools should be utilized to make citation easier when completing the Issues Essay.

33. Submit Your Issues Essay (1st Draft)

I'm asking that you submit a 4-5 page (double spaced) Issues Essay in size 12 pt. font (preferably Times New Roman or Calibri) that accounts for argument and persuasion, research, and is of personal interest to you. Do not choose something that is common knowledge nor do I want an informational research essay (AKA it does not contain an argument but merely states facts). **I would also ask that you submit it as a Word document or a PDF so that I may open it in Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat Reader.** This will be your first draft, which I will edit and return to you with comments. As this paper is longer in nature, you need not have completed all 4-5 pages for the first draft. Just give me what you have so far and I will gladly comment on that. Thanks.

34. Submit Your Issues Essay (2nd/Final Draft)

DO NOT SUBMIT THIS DRAFT UNTIL I RETURN YOUR FIRST DRAFT WITH COMMENTS. I'm asking that you submit a 4-5 page (double spaced) Issues Essay in size 12 pt. font (preferably Times New Roman or Calibri) that accounts for argument and persuasion, research, and is of personal interest to you. This is meant to be an updated version of your 1st draft, which should have already addressed the abovementioned idea. This will be your final draft, and you should account for the feedback that I gave you. This is the version that I will grade. You should also be able to see the rubric I will use to grade you below. **I would also ask that you submit it as a Word document or a PDF so that I may open it in Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat Reader.**

PART VIII

THE PORTFOLIO - CULMINATING ACTIVITY (YOUR FINAL)

35. Portfolio Assignment

EN 111 Final Portfolio

The portfolio is a selection of work that demonstrates your writing abilities and knowledge about writing and critical thinking at the close of EN 111. For the purposes of this class, this assignment will be considered the final.

What goes in the Portfolio?

- Title page (title + optional picture and/or quote)
- Reflective Essay (~2 pages)
- A final (2nd) draft copy of all essays completed during the semester (Experience, Compare/Contrast, Issues) and the prior drafts for all essays.
- Selected Artifacts (2-3)

Title Page

You should title the portfolio in a way that captures your sense of yourself as a writer and critical thinker at this point in your educational journey. You can include a picture and/or quote on the title page as well. A quote can come from anywhere (any text, movie, lyrics, etc.) but should illustrate your perspective about writing and/or critical thinking. You will discuss the significance of your title (picture and quote too if you included them) in your Reflective Essay.

Reflective Essay for Portfolio

The Reflective Essay is a self-assessment that examines the entire body of your work (all of your writing up to this point) rather than a single subject and/or inquiry thread. Your task is to examine, or *reflect on*, your own writing and situate your observations and interpretations within the context of our discussions about writing and critical thinking skills. The portfolio, in essence, is a presentation—a somewhat persuasive demonstration illustrating how you approached writing and critical thinking before EN 111, and

how you see yourself, as a writer and thinker, now, in relation to these same abilities/skills at the close of the course.

What goes in the Reflective Essay?

This essay should be a fairly polished and focused piece of writing that supports its claims and reflections with specific evidence (i.e. cite yourself). It will run ~2 pages in length. All reflective essays should take into account the following, but not necessarily in the order presented here:

- The significance of your title (and picture and quote, if included).
- What you now understand about effective writing and how it is achieved and what the portfolio reveals about your writing and your abilities to think on paper. (Refer to your included essays and selected artifacts).
- What you now understand about writing and critical inquiry that this portfolio might not reveal. (You may understand more than your portfolio reveals).
- What the portfolio reveals about you as a writer and critical thinker at this point in your educational journey (Refer to your included essays and selected artifacts).
- What challenges you continue to face as writer and critical thinker. (What is hard for you? In what areas have you gotten stronger and more confident? What immediate goals have you set for yourself as you continue to develop as a writer and critical thinker?)
- (Optional) Discuss, document, and evaluate the extent to which you were actively engaged in this class (i.e. determine how much time/effort you put into this course and whether your writing reflects that same time/effort).

All Essays

You are to include final (2nd) draft copies (at minimum) of all the essays you have written in this course. In including your essays, you will be expected to discuss why you have included them in your

Reflective Essay, and explain specifically what they illustrate about you as a writer and critical thinker. As such, I recommend that you discuss how the essays reveal your analytical skills at work—your abilities to develop, examine, and communicate an informed perspective.

Selected Artifacts

I am asking you to include 2-3 artifacts from the course (or outside of EN 111) that are significant to, and *reflective* of, you in terms of yourself as a writer and critical thinker. You may select anything from your Informal Writing Collection (freewrites, peer exchanges, etc.), your formal writing (part of your essay(s), or parts of them as a sequence from the first draft to the final draft stage) or other texts (a particular paper or assignment from another class you found pertinent to your overall growth).

How Do I Submit It?

You should submit the portfolio, in the dropbox on the preceding page, **as a Word document or a PDF so that I may open it in Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat Reader.**

36. Sample Portfolio

Permission granted by author, who was a former student: [SamplePortfolio](#)

37. The Portfolio - Submit Here

Before submitting this assignment, please make sure that you have all the parts and pieces as outlined in the directions (title page, reflective essay, 3 major essays, and artifacts). You should be submitting it as an attachment, much as you did with your essays, and **as a Word document or a PDF so that I may open it in Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat Reader**. You might have to copy/paste your prior assignments into this document to get it to match the order/requirements as specified in the assignment. I will begin grading them as the submissions as they come in. **This is the final for this course.**