

Running Head: CREATING AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES: USING COLLABORATIVE
WRITING TEAMS IN A SERVICE-LEARNING COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

Creating authentic experiences: Using collaborative writing teams in a service-learning
composition classroom

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Abstract

While writing instruction is still under the spell of having students engage in rhetorically textual arguments in order to produce the traditional academic essay (the cognitive-individual approach), current trends in composition studies have suggested incorporating service-learning (constructionist-collaborative) approaches. Service-learning in the composition classroom acts as a transitional rhetoric, allowing students to experience social and cultural situations, conditions, and problems from a firsthand perspective, and the opportunity to produce authentic writing. However, creating activities and assignments for service-learning projects can be difficult and time consuming. The purpose of this action research is to determine if collaborative writing teams in a service-learning composition classroom help students become better writers.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Writing instruction in freshmen composition still largely revolves around the traditional academic essay—the development of a logical argument. The teaching of writing a logical argument usually focuses on a certain type of rhetoric—textual rhetoric—where students learn how to write arguments from reading arguments. While there is nothing wrong with teaching students the different types of rhetorical arguments that are used within various discourse communities (e.g. psychology, political science, history, etc.), their experiences are usually limited to inward journeys rather than outward ones because of the types of writing activities and assignments. This approach to writing instruction is designed to develop or measure students’ cognitive abilities, where the focus is individual and *textual* rather than collaborative and *social*. Figure 1.1 below displays the differences between traditional-textual instruction and transitional-social instruction.

Traditional-textual instruction	Pedagogy: Cognitive-individual development Expectation: Individual-textual proficiency Outcome: Academic essay
Transitional-social instruction	Pedagogy: Constructionist-collaborative development Expectation: Collaborative-multi-textual proficiency Outcome: Academic/non-academic essay

Figure 1.1 Traditional-textual instruction vs. transitional-social instruction.

The type of writing instruction that focuses on engaging students in textual rhetoric requires them to research arguments from print and electronic sources, make their own argument or choose one of the existing sides, and then support their claims with evidence from texts and articles. While textual instruction starts and usually ends with print and electronic sources (secondary sources), students engaging in a more socially-based rhetoric are asked to participate within certain discourse communities where many of their sources are living people (primary sources). This dialectal approach to writing instruction is inherently more social and collaborative in nature (following the educational and linguistic philosophies and theories of John Dewey, 1990; Mikhail Bakhtin, 1993; & Lev Vygotsky, 1978). These educational and linguistic theories are an inherent part of the civic discourse that encompasses service-learning projects.

Writing instruction that approaches civic engagement and argumentation from a constructionist-collaborative standpoint involves a greater level of participation by the students. Current trends in composition studies claim that one way in which to engage students in civic engagement and argumentation is through the application and practice of service-learning projects. In the most liberalist sense, service-learning acts as a transitional rhetoric, slowly introducing freshmen to the idea that civic engagement involves more than just writing another essay for the instructor to read. Paula Mathieu (2005) defines “service-learning in composition” as a place where students and communities learn and write together (Mathieu, p. 4). Mathieu further describes the “active ways” in which students have the opportunity to interact with individuals at the “street” level and to engage in projects that promote authentic learning and writing experiences (p. 4). Service-learning requires the instructor not only to prepare the students with the proper writing skills, but also to prepare them with the proper attitude in which

they can adequately develop and ask questions, research, collaborate with their peers and with the community, and reflectively write on their authentic learning experiences.

Depending on the instructional model within the classroom, approaches to evaluating student writing also come into question, as well as the uses of rhetoric. Rhetoric is the way in which words, ideas, and concepts are communicated, through either dialogue, textual, or hyper textual discourse communities that include home, work, and school. The teaching and learning of rhetoric within the composition classroom lies at the heart of most instructional models. Four distinct instructional models that many composition instructors use within their classrooms are the apprenticeship model, the activist model, the student-learner model, and the participator model. These four instructional models were chosen for this study because they are the ones that the researcher has had the most experience with in the composition classroom.

The first three instructional models usually employ some sort of epistemology that guides the students' learning, researching, and writing during the course of the semester, with the outcome being the "academic essay." The academic essay usually tends to feed into institutional writing purposes, such as the personal/expository/research essay. A common thread in many composition classrooms is having students write arguments. There are various approaches to teaching students how to write an argument. While one model is maybe better than another one, there are important differences between them. The most prevalent instructional models are in models one, two, and three, where the focus is on the production of a textual academic argument. The fourth instructional model, the participator model, involves the production of a text; however, the writing process takes on more of a social-interactive approach than individual-textual approach, where the students build an argument through their own experiences within a discourse community (i.e. volunteering).

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Writing Models 1, 2, & 3

Model 1	<u>Area/Focus:</u> Discipline/discourse communities-centered writing (i.e. writing about scientific topics) Ex. Apprenticeship model	<u>Approaches:</u> Theme: Science-related Ex. Writing like a scientist, argument writing	<u>Goals & Objectives:</u> Students choose a topic to research and write about	<u>Methods of Instruction:</u> Focuses on development of writing as a process and development of skills (i.e. genre, literature review, documents within field of study)	<u>Transferable Skills:</u> Students learn conventions / styles (APA, MLA, etc.) as a skill	<u>Structures:</u> Use predominantly textual sources in constructing knowledge	<u>Acts:</u> Students compose rhetorical arguments based on multiple-perspectives, cause-and-effect, elements of persuasion	<u>Outcomes:</u> Academic essay
Model 2	Discipline/discourse communities-centered writing (i.e. writing social- scientific topics) Ex. Activist model	Theme(s): Political/social Ex. Expository, personal essay, argument writing	Students choose a topic to research and write about	Focuses on development of writing as a process and development of skills (i.e. genre, research essay)	Students learn conventions / styles (APA, MLA, etc.) as a skill	Use predominantly textual sources in constructing knowledge	Students compose rhetorical arguments based on multiple-perspectives and elements of persuasion	Academic essay
Model 3	General discourse communities writing (i.e. more student-centered/generated topics around themes of personal interest) Ex. Student-learner model	Theme(s): Political/social Ex. Expository, personal essay, argument writing	Students choose a topic to research and write about	Focuses on development of writing as a process and development of skills (i.e. genre, research essay)	Students learn conventions/styles (APA, MLA, etc.) as a skill	Use predominantly textual sources in constructing knowledge	Students compose rhetorical arguments based on multiple-perspectives and elements of persuasion	Academic essay

Figure 1.2 Represents models 1, 2, & 3 applied to writing instruction and developing writing activities and assignments.

Writing Models 1, 2, & 3

Model 1	<u>Methods of Evaluation:</u> Summative evaluation based on pre-developed rubrics from previous semesters	<u>Views of Knowledge:</u> Knowledge must be recognized through value-judgments taught and learned, individual or collaborative	<u>Practicing the Patterns:</u> There is a disciplinary-academic “pattern” that students must follow in order to be successful in their area of study and the academic institution	<u>Transferable Conventions:</u> Conventions viewed as a set of skills that can be transferred at a later date within the academic institution and the discipline	<u>Outcomes:</u> Knowledge = Predetermined Text (traceable pattern)
Model 2	Summative evaluation based on pre-developed rubrics from previous semesters	Knowledge must be recognized through value-judgments taught and learned, individual or collaborative	There is a academic “pattern” that students must follow in order to successful within the academic institution	Conventions viewed as a set of skills that can be transferred at a later date within the academic institution	Knowledge = Predetermined Text (traceable pattern)
Model 3	Summative evaluation based on pre-developed rubrics from previous semesters	Knowledge must be recognized through value-judgments taught and learned, individual or collaborative	There is a academic “pattern” that students must follow in order to be successful within the academic institution	Conventions viewed as a set of skills that can be transferred at a later date within the academic institution	Knowledge = Predetermined Text (traceable pattern)

Figure 1.3 Represents the perceptions and outcomes of models one, two, and three when applied to writing instruction and developing writing activities and assignments.

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Writing Model 4

Model 4	<p><u>Area/Focus:</u> Discipline/discourse communities-centered writing (i.e. writing within actual discourse communities)</p> <p>Ex. Participator model</p>	<p><u>Approaches:</u> Theme(s): Anthropological/ethnographic/service-learning</p>	<p><u>Goals & Objectives:</u> Students choose D/C based on teacher design to research (i.e. Inductive approach to research and writing), Students and teacher determine the goals & objectives during the course of the semester, they may change</p>	<p><u>Methods of Instruction:</u> Focuses on development of dialectical/dialectological models of inquiry and critical thinking Ex. Writing & research includes interviews, surveys, observations, analytical & reflective writing</p>	<p><u>Transferable Skills:</u> Students learn to “map” out their research process/methods through tactics, such as actual communication, participation, reflection within their chosen D/Cs (conventions such as APA are still incorporated when appropriate)</p>	<p><u>Structures:</u> Use of predominantly non-textual sources when constructing knowledge (secondary sources are consulted when appropriate)</p>	<p><u>Acts:</u> Students construct knowledge from original field research, based on their experiences, and develop a level of argumentation</p>	<p><u>Outcomes:</u> Academic/Non-Academic essay</p>
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Model 4	<p><u>Methods of Evaluation:</u> Formative evaluation which is developed during the course of the semester by students and teacher (rubrics possibly vary from student to student)</p>	<p><u>Views of Knowledge:</u> Knowledge, usefulness and purpose, is decided on by students and teacher, may be individual/collaborative efforts</p>	<p><u>Mapping:</u> Students struggle to map out their own research/writing process within the academic/disciplinary setting during the course of the semester with only minor guidance from the teacher</p>	<p><u>Non-Transferable Conventions:</u> Conventions are used (i.e. APA, MLA, etc.) but not necessarily taught or viewed as a skill that students will continue to explore and develop as they continue their education at the academic institution</p>	<p><u>Outcomes:</u> Knowledge = Unpredictable Texts (un-traceable patterns)</p>
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Figure 1.4 Represents the perceptions and outcomes of model four when applied to writing instruction and developing writing activities and assignments.

Benefits and limitations of the apprenticeship model

In her longitudinal study, Anne Beaufort (2007) posits that one of the most successful and useful writing experiences in her case study (a student named “Tim”) occurred when he participated in an onsite writing experience (i.e. the writing of a proposal) at a local business (Beaufort, pp. 128, 132, & 155). In Beaufort’s study, a professional (i.e. professor) within the field that “Tim,” a junior, was majoring in oversaw this writing assignment. This authentic experience provided Tim with an opportunity to see the writing processes and tasks that the business engages in on a daily basis. Would having freshmen students within a composition classroom experience writing at this level provide any benefits educationally or developmentally within their major or field of interest? While Beaufort’s research points to a positive result in the apprenticeship model of writing instruction, there are others like David R. Russell who claims that this model has limits in its usefulness.

Russell (1998) points out three main limitations of apprenticeship models: the educational accountability, the dynamic nature of the social processes of work-related writing, and the complicated master/apprentice metaphor in a technology society where “young teach the old” and vice versa (Russell, p. 3, taken from Russell’s homepage). Another major concern for incorporating an apprenticeship model into the freshmen composition classroom includes “flipping the ladder” on the educational hierarchy of writing development. Essentially, “flipping the ladder” means that teachers expect freshmen students to perform, research, and write at a much higher level, such as the graduate level. The apprenticeship model is not much different from other models (i.e. Activist, student-learner) in teaching students some form of argumentative writing and conventions, such as MLA, APA, IEEE, etc. Composition instructors

who do employ the apprenticeship model assume that all freshmen come to the university knowing exactly what their profession is going to be throughout their college careers.

However, Russell claims that the apprenticeship model in writing instruction has been beneficial and “suggest[s] [that] a more powerful lens than apprentice models for viewing the mutual appropriation of discursive practices” (p. 4). The apprenticeship model does incorporate the social act of writing with its emphasis on collaboration. Beaufort does offer a clear picture of a type of writing pedagogy, which does somewhat resemble a constructionist approach to writing instruction, expressed implicitly in *College writing and beyond: A new framework for university writing instruction* (pp. 177-182).

Benefits and limitations of the activist model

Another instructional model that promotes the social and collaborative aspects of writing is the activist model. Similar to the apprenticeship model, the activist model usually focuses within a discipline; however, the discipline is not always the students’ major/field of interest, but instead the political, historical, cultural, or social aspects within society, or centered on that discipline (i.e. political science, history, etc.). Many times, these political, historical, cultural, or social aspects can take on personal and private narratives within students’ writing and the way in which teachers develop their writing assignments.

The political, historical, cultural, and social aspects can manifest within and around disciplines such as sociology and psychology in composition classrooms in the form of writing assignments that encourage students to research and write about psychological ills/diseases (i.e. bulimia, anorexia, eating disorders, etc.) and the cultural influences/mass media that helps to create or fuel them. The benefits of having freshmen students write about a range of political and social topics allow them to view and gain a greater understanding of the multiple perspectives of

various arguments that surround such topics. Another advantage that this instructional model promotes is making students aware of the rhetorical devices within language that are used by government agencies, news stations, advertising agencies, politicians, etc. and how these groups use rhetoric to form and shape arguments within the public sphere.

However, this instructional model also has limitations. Although the activist model promotes subjectivity in students' writing more than the apprenticeship model's objectiveness, the students still usually start with a general research question, or a thesis sentence, and locate secondary sources dealing with their topics. Quite often students' written arguments become points of only textual criticisms built for imaginative audiences. An irony in this instructional model comes from the instructors themselves, since it is the instructor's biases that they are writing to, for, and around. Because of this irony, a "pattern" arises which places an epistemological limitation on students' construction of knowledge.

Benefits and limitations of the student-learner model

The student-learner instructional model tends to focus on teaching students the process of writing as an academic. The writing process in this model usually involves teaching students the "pentad" approach: Prewriting, outlining, drafting, peer revision, and peer editing. Although other models focus on this as well, in this instructional model the pentad is explicitly taught to students. Many composition instructors make the claim that by teaching students the process students will be able to use it throughout their academic careers when they have to write an essay. However, the student-learner instructional model is most likely to fall victim to explicitly teaching grammar, teaching to conventions, and following grading rubrics that focus on surface and technical features. Writing assignments within this instructional model are usually vague and can cause students to see no real value or have authentic learning experiences.

Benefits and limitations of the participator model

A less common instructional model within the freshmen composition classroom is the participator model. This instructional model does not solely encompass service-learning, but also ethnographic and anthropological approaches to the teaching of writing. A reason why this instructional model is uncommon within the composition classroom is due to its complex nature and the level of involvement by both the administration and faculty that it entails, such as developing a curriculum centered on service-learning.

Another factor that contributes to the rare use of this model in the composition classroom is that students may find it difficult to find time to volunteer because of their work and course schedules. Another factor that further complicates the implementation of this instructional model within the composition classroom is additional funding, especially for off-campus service-learning projects, (i.e. transportation, gas money, admission fees, volunteer applications, background checks, etc.). A unified approach to implementing a service-learning component can easily become what many academics consider a nightmare (i.e. setting up schedules with agencies/organizations, allocating funds, pulling funds from buying textbooks/course books in composition, updating student vaccinations, insuring and supervising student safety once outside of the campus, finding modes of transportation such as busses to visit locations, etc.).

While technical and practical obstacles may provide some inconvenience to university administration, faculty, and staff, there is also training and theoretical obstacles also come into play, such as the training of composition instructors to teach writing from a perspective that they might not find familiar or be comfortable using. Other than training new composition instructors the theories and approaches of service-learning, there is the question of how does a composition

instructor make sure that all of their students are fully participating and contributing equally to the projects they are assigned.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this action research is to determine if collaborative writing teams in a service-learning composition classroom help students become better writers. The independent variables for this study are the collaborative writing teams and the local non-profit organizations. The dependent variables in the study are the students' writing and their overall sense of achievement. The questions that I will answer with this action research are:

- Will the participator instructional model create more opportunities for collaborative writing projects in service-learning composition classrooms?
- What will the structure of a service-learning composition classroom look like?
- What types of activities and assignments will students engage in a service-learning composition classroom?
- How will student writing be assessed in a service-learning composition classroom?

DEFINITIONS

Collaboration/Collaborative learning/Collaborative writing – This view of collaboration/collaborative learning/collaborative writing has students working together with one another and individuals within the community in order to produce and appreciate a greater understanding of how communication works both on and off the page or online environments.

Collaborative writing teams – For the purposes of this study, students will work, research, and write together in writing teams in order to complete their portfolio-projects.

Composition/Writing – For the purposes of this study, students will compose various forms of writing that include but are not limited to an academic research essay, formal emails, schedules, filling out applications forms, etc.

Formative assessment – This type of assessment focuses on the process of writing as well as the structure of the classroom. For the purpose of this study, formative assessment will involve the students working in groups and student self and peer evaluations.

Non-profit organization – A non-profit organization is an organization that receives little if any money from the local, state, or federal government. Many local non-profit organizations in Corpus Christi, Texas rely on grant money, donations from businesses, and volunteerism within the community in order to maintain their services to the public.

Service-learning – This educational theory requires students to visit and volunteer within a local community.

Summative assessment – This type of assessment focuses on how well the students performed or accomplished on a certain assignment. For the purpose of this study, summative assessment will involve three teacher-based rubrics: Attendance, portfolio-project, and formal multimedia presentation, as well as a survey at the end of the semester.

Traditional-textual instruction – This study focuses on three elements for traditional-textual instruction in composition: Pedagogy (cognitive-individual development), expectation (individual-textual proficiency), and outcome (the “academic essay”).

Transitional-social instruction – This study focuses on three elements for transitional-social instruction in composition: Pedagogy (collaborative-social development), expectation (collaborative-multi-textual proficiency), and outcome (academic/non-

academic essay).

CHAPTER 2

The purpose of this chapter is to synthesize the literature on service-learning and the teaching of composition, and provide a possible approach in which composition instructors can incorporate this model into their classrooms.

COMPOSING/WRITING

Paul Heilker (1996) defines composing/writing as “putting words together” as well as “fashioning wholes by creating relationships among parts, that composing means synthesizing information and/or values” (Heilker, p. 40). This study will focus on both of Heilker’s elements in the composing process.

COLLABORATION/COLLABORATIVE LEARNING/COLLABORATIVE WRITING

Kenneth Bruffee (1984) describes collaborative learning as “a form of indirect teaching in which the teacher sets the problem and organizes students to work it out collaboratively” (Bruffee, p. 418). While writing, reading, and researching are at the core in this type of classroom, what goes on around these three factors is important as well, including other factors such as participation, negotiation, and reflection through dialogue. Bruffee designates collaboration as consisting of students working together “in small groups” where they have to make decisions, compromise, and negotiate in order to meet the goals and objectives that the instructor has set up for them (p. 418). Not only do students simply meet the goals and objectives set by the instructor, collaborative “group work guided by carefully designed tasks makes students aware that writing is a social artifact, like the thought that produces it” (p. 423). This is not to claim that students should think alike or be encouraged to all share the same beliefs, but to come together to work out their differences and understand their similarities through conversation.

Bruffee's "conversational exchange" helps students to see that writing is not only an individual act, but also a social act that spans across many diverse communities of knowledge (p. 423). Students work on their writing together through a collaborative effort, where their identities, beliefs, and values come under critical inquiry through open dialogue with their peers and where "the teacher has to try to help students negotiate the rocks and shoals of social relations that may interfere with their getting on with their work together" (p. 425). Bruffee claims that peers are the best sources of knowledge in their communities (p. 427). However, students simply conversing are not enough to ensure that the type of learning that should be happening is actually going on within the classroom. Bruffee emphasizes that:

organizing collaborative learning effectively requires doing more than throwing students together with their peers with little or no guidance or preparation. To do that is merely to perpetuate, perhaps even aggravate, the many possible negative efforts of peer group influence: conformity, antiintellectualism, intimidation, and leveling-down of quality. (p. 434)

Bruffee warns against a structure that is too loose or poor planning when it comes to any type of collaborative work, whether it is with organizations outside of the university or within the peer learning and writing groups themselves. Instructors and students need to differentiate between cooperation and collaborative learning and writing in the freshmen composition classroom. One way to ensure collaboration between students is to assign them roles at the beginning of the semester, such as organizer, researcher, planner, etc. One advantage to assigning roles is that students understand that collaboration requires a group effort.

Cooperation falls under the category that Bruffee identifies as the "negative efforts" of group work (p. 427). Cooperation, however, may end up with one or two individuals leading the

group and assigning tasks to other team members. In this model, there is no true dialogue or collaborative learning and writing occurring within a group because from the beginning students create hierarchies where certain roles have the presence of greater significance and other roles are labeled as “menial-work” or “clean-up.” Collaborative learning and writing involves more of a team effort between students, where they help each other learn as they go about completing a project.

FORMATIVE & SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Because many universities and colleges across the nation require two semesters of freshmen composition, there is a wide array of individuals who teach writing, ranging from graduate teaching assistants to part-/fulltime adjuncts and professors. Many composition instructors and practitioners develop their own writing assignments and grading rubrics based on their own theories and with the help of best practice workshops and writing manuals.

A common assignment sequence in many composition classrooms consists of three or four portfolios each semester. Within these portfolios, students are usually asked to research a topic, gather primary and secondary sources that explore multiple sides of an argument, and then choose a side of the argument, using in-text citations as evidence to back-up their claims. Not all of the portfolios are graded at the same time but during the course of the semester. Because of the sequence of portfolios and the nature of many grading rubrics, there is a large focus on summative assessment. Catherine Garrison & Michael Ehringhaus (n.d.) state, “[S]ummative assessments are tools to help evaluate the effectiveness of programs, school improvement goals, alignment of curriculum, or student placement in specific programs” (Garrison & Ehringhaus, pp. 1-2). The focus is on summative assessment because many universities and colleges have First-Year Writing Programs or First-Year Learning Communities Programs that are evaluated

on their overall effectiveness by their liberal arts departments and various state and federal boards and agencies.

Unlike summative assessment, Garrison & Ehringhaus (n.d.) claims, “Formative assessment is part of the instructional process” (p. 2). Formative assessment allows instructors “to adjust teaching and learning while they are happening” during the course of the writing process (p. 2). When teaching writing, instructors and students work together, collaboratively, in understanding the purpose of why they are following a certain writing process. In the composition classroom, “formative assessment” resembles “practice,” in the sense that instructors “do not hold students accountable in ‘grade book fashion’ for skills and concepts they have just been introduced to or are learning” (p. 2). Garrison & Ehringhaus stress the importance of “questioning strategies” and “self and peer assessment” when using formative methods of evaluation in the classroom (p. 3). Questioning strategies and self and peer assessments allow the students to have some control over grading, thereby creating more of an authentic approach to assessment. Kathleen & James Strickland (1998) claim, “*Authentic assessment* [emphasis by authors] refers to tasks that are real and meaningful; to the learner in today’s world” (Strickland & Strickland, p. 57). The combination of summative and formative assessment in writing is important because it allows the students to take an active role in learning and understanding the writing process.

SERVICE-LEARNING

Many composition researchers and practitioners have advocated for a service-learning approach in the writing class (Gere & Sinor, 1997; Ball & Goodburn, 2000; Deans, 2000; Tai-Seale, 2001; Cushman, 2002; Mathieu, 2005). James M. Dubinsky (2001) claims that service-learning encompasses three elements: “[L] *earning* (establishing clearly defined academic goals),

servicing (asking the students to apply what they learn for the benefit of one's community/society), and *reflecting* (encouraging the students to consider the value of their service-learning work) (Dubinsky, p. 3). Dubinsky stresses the importance of "*learning-by-doing* (emphasis by the author)" in service-learning because the focus is at the "human" level (p. 3). While Dubinsky provides the theoretical description of service-learning, Bruce Herzberg (2000) provides examples on how he has applied it within his writing classrooms as a means of "teaching public-discourse writing" (Herzberg, p. 467). Learning how to communicate within the public realm requires more than just teaching students proper grammar, but also teaching them to understand and appreciate the various forms of rhetoric that are being used within those communities.

Herzberg lists "four possibilities" of how and why service-learning can be and should be incorporated into the writing class: (a) "[S]tudents are more engaged by current issues" and (b) "the rhetorical immediacy of public discourse helps students understand audience and genre constraints," students engaging in service-learning projects will (c) "promote social consciousness or something like a Freirean critical consciousness and, if possible lead students to social action" that contributes to their developing a sense and understanding of (d) "civic leadership (pp. 467-68). Herzberg's four possibilities encompass various realms of engagement, such as collaboration between peers and within the community, as well as engaging with language and writing from a dialectical standpoint—where individuals with different perspectives engage in dialogue in order to persuade each other through argumentation.

A challenge with service-learning projects is making sure that the communities' needs are met as well as the syllabus' requirements. In order to accomplish this, Paula Mathieu (2005) suggests that instructors, not educational institutions, create the service-learning opportunities for their students. Mathieu asserts that service-learning should be "tactically driven" rather than

“strategically designed,” where the instructor decides how to best incorporate service-learning into the classroom, not strategically designed by an academic administrative board or oversight committee (Mathieu introduction xiv, xv, 16, 17, 95, & 96). The purpose of a tactical approach to service-learning in the composition classroom is to benefit the service being provided to the community and for the students’ overall learning experience; it is not done to strengthen a university’s credibility or earn them a spot on the ten o’clock news. The communities where the students are volunteering are the focus, not the university.

In order to place emphasis on the community rather than on the university, Robert Sigmon’s (1979) three principles of service-learning act as a guideline to follow, the first principle states, “Those being served control the service(s) provided” (Sigmon, p. 10). This first principle presents a challenge for the composition instructor because it means that the writing the students produce will depend on the communities’ needs and not necessarily the instructor’s assignments. The second principle says, “Those being served become better able to serve and be served by their own actions” (p. 10). The composition instructor will have to help the students in understanding that they are not venturing out into the communities as “saviors” but to understand the various complex situations and problems that those communities deal with on a daily basis. Finally, the third principle says, “Those who serve also are learners and have significant control over what is expected to be learned” (p. 10). This involves creating writing assignments where students can reflect on and describe their experiences within the communities. Sigmon’s three principles are essential when developing service-learning projects. Developing activities and assignments that will benefit the communities’ needs and still meet the students’ writing requirements can be challenging. Collaboration between students and the community is a key element in determining the success of a service-learning project.

Through this pedagogical focus, students slowly ease into the idea that writing extends beyond the classroom, and that the idea of “audience” involves more than just the composition instructor. When engaging in service-learning writing projects, students will start to view research as dynamic and “living” because it is coming from people instead of secondary sources, such as books or the Internet. The role of the audience changes and suddenly becomes a living, breathing, working creature that is sometimes collaborative in nature. Service-learning provides the means by which research can bring the students into the role of an active participant and contributor within a community.

TRADITIONAL-TEXTUAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Traditional-textual instruction in freshmen composition usually focuses on engaging students in researching and writing about arguments. Below is a descriptive example of an actual instructor’s assignment sequence for English composition 1301.

- Portfolio One – Informative paper, MLA documentation, minimum 10 research sources required, 10 source evaluations (eight written-one-page minimum; two as class presentations using Word Reviewing). Paper presents multiple perspectives—the writer does not take a position on the issue but presents the audience with facts supported by research
- Portfolio Two – Argument paper, MLA documentation, minimum 10 research sources required, 10 source evaluations (eight written-one-page minimum; two as class presentations using Word Reviewing). Paper states strong thesis in which the writer takes a position and supports it with research, addresses opposing perspectives, and refutes with evidence
- Portfolio Three – Visual Text-PowerPoint-visual presentation of topic

Another example of an assignment sequence includes a citizenship autobiography or literacy autobiography, a proposal, annotated biographies, source reviews, an argument essay exploring multiple perspectives, and a visual description of the argument that the students are making. This assignment sequence is a “full-circle” approach to writing instruction, because instructors usually

design their assignments to “tie-in” together. The students come “*full circle*” with something they could have touched off on in their first portfolio, the difference with successive portfolios is that students are using research and other perspectives to back-up or further their examples and claims.

Below is a detailed description of this assignment sequence.

- Portfolio One – Citizen Autobiography/Literacy autobiography (the documents)
Students write about something they know or have experienced in the past or throughout their lives. Essentially, students start to identify social-political-economical-cultural situations, problems, or issues in their lives. Students brainstorm, outline, make maps of what it is they are going to write about, write a rough draft, make revisions, conduct peer editing, and do final edits. Final product – personal academic essay. Grammar is not necessarily taught but addressed on a case-to-case basis (contextualized). Grammar is not the focus in this document, expressing, connecting, and sharing is the focus
- Portfolio Two – Proposal, annotated bibliographies, two source reviews (the documents)
Students choose a social or political argument, issue, or problem, and then find credible sources on both sides (multiple perspectives) of the argument (pro/con). Students then select two of the sources they have collected and write an extensive review/summary of what the source is saying or is about. The student then writes a proposal where they situate themselves within the argument and how they connect it to their own lives or community(ies)
- Portfolio Three– Argumentative essay, MLA or APA format (the document)
Students develop a thesis sentence or research question around their research and to back-up their claims or statements. The stress is placed on writing in the convention (MLA or APA), format of the essay, citations (textual references cited within the document and at the end of the document, i.e. works cited page, reference page)
- Final presentation – Visually descriptive representation of the argumentative essay (the document)
Students create and develop a presentation (i.e. multimedia, poster board, or other type of representation of their argumentative essay). The focus is on expression, as well as communication, of what their argument is about and where they are situated within in it

These two assignment sequences represent a traditional-textual approach to writing instruction in composition, where the focus is on developing an argument, largely through locating and using

textual sources. While these two examples are from English composition 1301, the assignments do not differ much in English composition 1302 except for a more intensive focus on research and an increase in number of secondary sources.

TRANSITIONAL-SOCIAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Transitional-textual instruction in freshmen composition focuses on engaging students in researching and writing within discourse communities, through actual participation. The term “transitional” is more than a metaphor meaning students transitioning between high school writing and college level writing; it also implies that instructors assist students in developing their own understanding of the writing process. This assignment sequence is a “builders” approach to writing instruction, because instructors design assignments that require students engage in interactive activities, such as developing interview questions to ask individuals within their desired field of study or profession or a local non-profit organization, filling out applications, writing emails, and taking field researcher’s notes. Below is a descriptive example of an actual instructor’s assignment sequence for English composition 1301 (semester one) and for English composition 1302 (semester two).

Semester one (English 1301):

The portfolio:

Resume, three professional/academic interviews, & one final reflection of all three interviews (the documents)

- Students write a resume, or revise their resumes
- Students conduct three separate interviews (academic and/or professional) based on their majors or interest in a certain field or profession. They develop questions and learn how to write a formal email. Once they are done with each interview, they write a one-two page reflection on the interview, reflecting on important information learned or said during the interviews. Students can use APA to write out reflections.
- Students synthesize all three interviews into one final document, adding further reflections on the information and knowledge they have gained during the interviews.

Research essay (the document)

- Students can use the information and knowledge they have gained from their interviews, or explore and research a topic within their field of interest or profession. Students write a thesis sentence, a research question, or come up with an area that they would like to research. Formats and conventions for the research can be in MLA or APA, with credible sources, in-text citations, etc. Syntax and semantics are handled on a contextualized basis (students-to-student).

Final presentation over research essay (the document)

- Students present their research (from their research essay) usually in the form of a poster board presentation or multimedia.

Final reflection over the semester (the document)

- Students write a reflection over their experiences during the course of the semester.

Semester two (English 1302):

Portfolio-project – Service-learning – Collaborative essay, APA format (the document)

Rhizomatic in nature, students follow where the “root” leads them. Students work together in writing teams, researching, developing interview questions, writing/contacting local non-profit organizations (LNPO), planning, organizing, and working out their schedules in order to volunteer.

- The writing – Students are given a general layout for their essays (modified APA):
 - Proposal
 - Abstract
 - Essay (example only, students can cut sections or insert their own based on what they discover)
 - Introduction
 - Background/History of LNPO
 - State & federal laws affecting LNPO
 - Interviews & interview reflections from individuals at the LNPO
 - Survey (from classmates on what they know about the LNPO)
 - Personal reflections on volunteering experiences (challenges & discoveries)
 - Conclusions & recommendations (possibly for future volunteers)
 - References

Presentation – Visually descriptive representation of their research and experiences volunteering (the document)

Multimedia presentations, students are encouraged to use PowerPoint, MySpace, Facebook, or other types of digital media in order to present their research.

Final reflection – This final reflection is over their experiences during the course of the semester (the document)

The research and writing project described in the transitional-social section for English

composition 1302 (semester two) will be the focus of this action research study.

CHAPTER 3

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the study, which includes the setting, the subjects, the types of instruments used, the procedures, and the data collection.

SETTING

This study was conducted at a university in South Texas. The university is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), because over 40% of undergraduate and graduate students are of Mexican and Mexican American descent. More than 49% of the undergraduate and graduate student population is Anglo/White. African-American students count for approximately 5% and Asian/Pacific Islanders count for approximately 2% of the student population. The total number of students attending this institution in the spring of 2009 was approximately 9,007. Out of these 9,007 students, approximately 1,300 were first time freshmen in the fall of 2008.

All incoming freshmen to the university are required to take classes within learning communities, or sets of classes that are linked together, such as political science, English composition, and a seminar class. Learning communities are designed to help freshmen students adapt to college life. These classes count toward core curriculum credits.

In the spring of 2009, there were 939 freshmen in eight learning communities and in two sections of standalone (not connected to a learning communities) 1301 and 1302 English composition. Each learning community had between one to six sections of English composition 1302 and between four to six sections of English composition classes in the two freestanding sections. Thirty-nine English composition 1302 classes were taught in the spring semester of 2009. Eight English composition 1301 classes were taught during the 2009 spring semester. The number of freshmen in each English composition class (1301 & 1302) ranged from 23 to 27 per section. There were 11 adjuncts and six graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) teaching English

composition 1301 and 1302 classes during the spring semester of 2009.

Below is a figure with the breakdown of the information presented here in this paragraph.

Number of freshmen students during the spring semester of 2009	939
Number of learning communities	8
Total number of English composition courses taught in the spring semester of 2009	47
Number of English composition courses (1301 & 1302) in each learning community	1-6
Number of English composition 1302 courses	39
Number of English composition 1301 courses	8
Number of English composition 1301 standalone courses	8
Number of freshmen students per section of English composition 1302	10-28
Number of freshmen students per section of English composition 1301	23-27
Number of Adjunct English composition instructors	11
Number of Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) English composition instructors	6

Figure 3.1 Represents the breakdown for English composition 1301 and 1302 courses in the spring semester of 2009.

SUBJECTS

For the purpose of this study, three English composition 1302 classes were selected in the spring semester of 2009. The population of the study included college level freshmen students in their second semester of English composition (1302). The students' ages ranged between 18-22

years old. All three composition classes shared the same learning community. **Instructor One**, an adjunct instructor, taught the first English composition classes hereafter referred to as Composition Class One and Composition Class Two. **Instructor Two**, a graduate teaching assistant, taught English composition class three hereafter referred to as Composition Class Three. Composition Class One was comprised of 27 students, with 16 females and 11 males, and the demographics of 13 Hispanics, 17 whites, and two African Americans. Composition Class Two was comprised of 26 students, with 14 females and 12 males, and the demographics of 15 Hispanics, 14 whites, and two African Americans. Composition Class Three was comprised of 26 students, with 18 females and 7 males, and the demographics of 11 Hispanic, 12 white, and two African American. The total number of students in all three composition classes was 79.

Below is a figure displaying the number of students and the demographics per composition course.

Demographics	Composition Class One	Composition Class Two	Composition Class Three
Total number of students	27	26	26
Female	16	14	18
Male	11	12	7
Hispanics	13	15	11
White	17	14	12
African American	2	2	2

Figure 3.2 Represents the number of students in Composition Classes One, Two, and Three studied during the spring semester of 2009.

At the beginning of the semester, students were told that they would be working in writing teams (WTs) consisting of three to five group members. These WT's could choose a local non-profit organization to research, visit, and volunteer at during the course of the semester. WT's were allowed to choose their own group members and which local non-profit organization they would research, volunteer, and write about for their portfolio-projects that were due at the

end of the semester. The portfolio-project included one collaboratively written essay, a collaborative multimedia presentation, individual group member reflections, and self and peer evaluations. The population sample was selected by choosing WTs from the three English composition 1302 classes that researched, volunteered, and wrote about the same local non-profit organization, P.A.L.S. Animal Shelter, a no-kill shelter. The reason why the writing teams were chosen this way was to examine the similarities and differences that either added or subtracted from their success with completing the portfolio-project. Writing Team One consisted of five students, three females, and two males; Writing Team Two consisted of five students, one female, and four males; Writing Team Three consisted of four students, two females, and two males; and Writing team four consisted of five students, four females, and one male.

Below is a figure that details the demographics of the four Writing Teams that were studied.

Demographics	Writing Team One	Writing Team Two	Writing Team Three	Writing Team Four
Composition course	Composition Class One	Composition Class Two	Composition Class Three	Composition Class Four
Total number of students per course	5	5	4	5
Female	3	1	2	4
Male	2	4	2	1
Hispanics	2	1	1	1
White	3	4	2	4
African American	0	0	1	0

Figure 3.3 Demographics of Writing Teams, One, Two, Three, and Four.

Composition Class One provided one (writing team) WT, Composition Class Two provided two WTs, and Composition Class Three provided one WT for the study. Two WTs were allowed to research and write about the same local non-profit organization (P.A.L.S Animal Shelter) in Composition Class Two so the research could examine the similarities and differences

in the final product. Syllabi, grading rubrics, self and peer evaluations forms, and class plans were designed prior to the semester based on earlier versions (pilot studies) from previous semesters conducted by **Instructor One** (Please Appendices B-H). The pilot studies included incorporating service-learning in composition classrooms.

INSTRUMENTATION

All four writing teams were graded on *attendance*, *a collaboratively written academic essay*, and *a collaborative formal, multimedia presentation*, which was 50% of their overall grade for the composition course. The other 50% of their overall grade came from the *self* and *peer evaluations* that were due near the end of the semester. Three grading rubrics were used:

- A grading rubric for attendance,
- The portfolio-project (which was the essay)
- The formal, multimedia presentation

All three grading rubrics and the self and peer evaluations sheets were designed by **Instructor One**.

Each group member of a writing team was graded on attendance for the first four weeks, where all students were required to attend class every Tuesday and Thursday in order to receive points for those days (Please Appendix C). The first and last day of class for the first four weeks counted for two points; every other day during those four weeks counted for one point. The *attendance rubric* (**Instrument One**, measuring attendance) also consisted of five checkpoints (each checkpoint counted for two points apiece), following the first four weeks of required attendance, that were scattered throughout the course of the semester, in which each WT submitted a “critical journal” (a log of events, questions for their writing team or the teacher, or just reflections of what they had been experiencing at their non-profit, to their PM Wiki pages

prior to meeting with their composition instructors for the checkpoint requirement). While the minimum requirement was three visits to their non-profit organization, writing teams were also asked how many times they visited or volunteered at their local non-profit organizations (in order to determine if more or less involvement affected group dynamics, their writing of the essay, or presentations).

The *portfolio-project rubric* (**Instrument Two**, measuring the writing) evaluated things such as organization of the collaborative essay, APA formatting of the research (citation of sources and layout of essay), use of pictures, graphs, or charts, and grammar (Please Appendix D). The portfolio-project rubric also included a 25-50 word abstract, a 75-100 word proposal, and final reflections from each group member in each WT. The grading scale for the portfolio-project ranged from 20 possible points (98, A) to no points (59, F). The formal, multimedia *presentation rubric* (**Instrument Three**, measuring the synthesis of the research and writing) included organization, correct use of hyperlinks, images/pictures, grammar, and background information of the local non-profit organization that the WT was presenting on (Please Appendix E). The group members in each WT that was studied also completed *self* and *peer evaluations* (**Instrument Four**, measuring the level of collaboration between group members) near the end of the semester (Please Appendix F & G). The self and peer evaluations consisted of five categories: Writing, researching, planning, organizing, and overall contribution to the group. There was also room on the evaluation sheets for additional comments.

The grading scale for the self and peer evaluations were based on a scale of no points (no collaboration, contribution, or participation) to 10 points (full collaboration, contribution, and participation). All four WTs were given a *survey* (**Instrument five**, measuring the overall effectiveness of collaborative writing teams and the service-learning portfolio-projects) two

weeks before the end of the semester, that was based on the Likert Scale Model with the selections of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. The survey was created by **Instructor One** and **Instructor Two**, please see Appendix H. The survey was built on and administered using Freeonlinesurveys.com. The survey consisted of eight questions and a comment section for student feedback. **Instructors One** and **Instructor Two** sent messages to do the survey to all of the students in the four writing teams through email three weeks before the end of the semester. **Instructors One** and **Instructor Two** sent messages to do the separate survey containing the same questions through email using Surveymonkey.com to all of the other writing teams that were not part of the study.

Below is a figure that explains in detail **Instruments One, Two, Three, Four, and Five**.

Instrument One	Instrument Two	Instrument Three	Instrument Four	Instrument Five
Attendance rubric	Portfolio-project rubric	Presentation rubric	Self and peer evaluations	Survey Voluntary
<p>First 4 weeks (Tuesdays & Thursdays; the first & last class days counted for 2 points, every day between counted for 1 point a piece)</p> <p>5 Checkpoints (each checkpoint for 2 points a piece)</p>	<p>1 collaborative, academic essay per WT</p> <p>1, 75-100 word proposal per WT</p> <p>1, 25-50 word abstract per WT</p> <p>1 Final reflection per group member in each WT</p>	<p>1 collaborative, formal, multimedia presentation per WT</p>	<p>1 Self evaluation</p> <p>1 Peer evaluation per group member</p>	<p>10 questions, Likert Scale (quantitative)</p> <p>1 area for written responses by students (qualitative)</p>

Figure 3.4 **Instruments One, Two, Three, Four, and Five** measurements.

PROCEDURES

The study lasted approximately three-and-a-half months (17 weeks), from January 15 through May 5, 2009. In three separate English composition 1302 classes, four writing teams (WTs) were studied. Each one of the WTs was allowed to form their own groups during the second week of the semester. Since service-learning is not emphasized within the university's core curriculum, the instructors made sure that their writing activities and assignments met goals, objectives, and outcomes for English composition 1302. Some of the goals, objectives, and outcomes of English composition 1302 that connect to service-learning are listed below.

Goals for composition 1302	Objectives for composition 1302	Outcomes for composition 1302
Develop cross-cultural understanding and respect	Explore diverse perspectives on issues	Identify position, claims, and evidence in arguments
Use writing, reading, and academic inquiry to critically engage increasingly complex open-ended questions and ill-defined problems	Locate and evaluate appropriate primary and secondary sources in terms of credibility, context, author, purpose and audience	Evaluate position, claims, and evidence in arguments Construct arguments on more than one side of an issue
Write, read, and speak for a variety of real-world purposes and for various audiences (Writing Program's Staff Manual, Goals and Objectives 1302, 2009)	Synthesize appropriate primary and secondary sources Construct arguments that are ethically responsible and rhetorically effective Use conventions (i.e. APA) Use computer technology to research, generate texts, and communicate across disciplinary contexts Generate a research portfolio Self-assess research process and product (Writing	Produce an introduction with a solid focus, direction, and purpose Integrate internal citations into the writer's ideas Integrate a citation system that is identifiable, functional, and consistent Connect ideas across disciplines (Writing Program's Staff Manual, Goals and Objectives 1302, 2009)

	Program's Staff Manual, Goals and Objectives 1302, 2009)	
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Figure 3.5 Goals, objectives, and outcomes for English Composition 1302.

The procedures of the study were developed to meet five main outcomes: 1) Developing collaborative writing teams, 2) using PM Wiki to post their research and writing, 3) developing a portfolio based on a service-learning project, 4) creating a formal multimedia presentation, and 5) conducting self and individual peer evaluations.

Outcome one: collaborative writing teams

All four writing teams in the three English composition 1302 classes were required to follow a basic set of guidelines when researching and writing collaboratively. **Instructor One** created the guidelines below:

- Writing teams will consist of three-five members. Students will collaborate in their research, reading, and writing for the course of the semester.
- Writing teams will be decided at the beginning of the semester, but may change after that. Once the research/writing for the portfolio-project begins, the groups will remain the same, unless there are MAJOR differences among group members.
- In the instance of MAJOR differences, the writing team and I will decide what needs to happen in order for all group members to be happy.
- Writing teams will decide on a socially acceptable group name.
- All researching, reading, and writing is shared equally among all writing team members. There will be no “dumping” on one or two members because of laziness. There will also be no “invisible” team members who pop in from time to time to lay a claim to all the hard work that their writing team is doing.
- Collaborative writing is a team effort and all responsibilities for the portfolio-project will be shared equally, creatively, and respectfully.
- The actual writing of the final paper may be the hardest part for your writing team; however, this is a challenge that you will have to work through together with your group members.
- During the course of the semester, I will check with each group constantly to see where your team is at and how things are going. If an individual in a writing team has a question or something to discuss that they do not wish to share with their group members, we will deal with this type of situation on a case-by-case basis.

Before each WT was formed, all students were required to fill out a “Student Activity Release

Form” from Student Services on the university’s campus (Please see Appendix A). The Student Activity Release Form was a document that acknowledged that the students’ would be engaging in activities (i.e. volunteering) off campus.

Outcome two: PM Wiki

Instructor One and **Instructor Two** used PM Wiki to post their class plans as well as for students to upload their research and writing for their collaborative portfolio-projects and formal, multimedia presentations. Each individual student had his or her own PM Wiki page as well as a writing team page, both created by the instructors. Students were encouraged to link these two PM Wiki pages together, as well as upload all of their writing for their portfolio-projects in both places. All of the student PM Wiki pages and (almost all of the) links for the portfolio-project and presentation were created prior to the beginning of the semester.

Outcome three: Service-learning portfolio-project

In addressing the service-learning part, **Instructors One** and **Instructor Two** chose local non-profit organizations within Corpus Christi where they had volunteered at one time or knew individuals that were currently volunteering or working at them. In some cases, this meant calling or emailing the non-profit organizations prior to the beginning of the semester to see if they were willing to work with the students. The non-profit organizations that the instructors contacted were:

- Charlie’s Place Rehabilitation Center, for substance abuse, counseling, and recovery (<http://charliesplaceonline.com/media/news.html>)
- The Wenzholz House, also for substance abuse, counseling, and recovery (<http://ccsafeplace.com/>)
- The Salvation Army of South Texas
- The YWCA of South Texas
- The Food Bank of Corpus Christi (<http://www.foodbankofcorpuschristi.org>)
- P.A.L.s Animal Shelter (<http://www.palscc.org/>)
- Planned Parenthood of South Texas
- USS Lexington, a retired aircraft carrier now a museum on the bay

(<http://www.usslexington.com/>)

- The Texas State Aquarium (<http://www.texasstateaquarium.org/>)
- Communities in Schools (C.I.S.), a public school mentoring program
- Special Olympics of South Texas
- The Women's Shelter of South Texas (<http://www.thewomensshelter.org/>)
- Boys and Girls Club of Corpus Christi (<http://www.bgccorpuschristi.org/>)

Fortunately, all of the non-profit organizations mentioned above were willing to work with the students.

Before the students visited their local non-profit organizations, **Instructor One** and **Instructor Two** spent two weeks discussing what primary research is and why it is important, developing interview questions, seeking permission from their chosen local non-profit organizations, and discussing how the students planned to record the responses from their interviewees and how to write reflectively about their interviews. Some students decided to conduct email interviews, which meant learning how to write a professional email. Both instructors had the students read chapters dealing with conducting interviews in *The Bedford Researcher* (2005, 2nd edition) by Mike Palmquist & Barbara Fister, and in *Everything's an argument with readings* (2003, 3rd edition) by Andrea Lunsford, John J. Ruszkiewicz, & Keith Walters. The instructors also introduced the students to Purdue Online Writing Resources and Lab, further explaining and showing examples of how to write a formal email, how to develop effective interview questions, and how to conduct an interview.

The design of the portfolio-project

Writing teams were required to turn in one collaborative portfolio at the end of the semester. Writing teams were required to follow APA conventions when researching and documenting their information and sources (e.g. websites, interviews, etc.). Figure 4 below describes the main requirements for the collaborative portfolio-project and formal, multimedia presentation.

Description	Part or section
Proposal (75-100 words)	(third part of the essay in the portfolio-project)
Abstract (25-50 words)	(third part of the essay in the portfolio-project)
Introduction & history of non-profit	(first part of the essay in the portfolio-project)
State & federal laws of non-profit	(second part of the essay in the portfolio-project)
Interviews & volunteering	(second part of the essay in the portfolio-project)
Recommendations and conclusions	(third part of the essay in the portfolio-project)
Sources	(references ... both primary and secondary)
Final essay	(parts 1-3 in one document)
Final presentation	(formal, multimedia)
Final reflections from writing teams	(one per group member)

Figure 3.6 Descriptions and parts/sections of the portfolio-project.

When the WT's completed the first part of their essay for the portfolio-project, which was the introduction and the non-profit's history/background, they started working on the next parts, which included state or federal laws that affected their non-profit organizations, as well as conducting their interviews and volunteer experiences. Once students completed the second parts, they shifted gears and focused on the third part of the portfolio-project, which was the 75-100 word proposal followed by a 25-50 word abstract. The third part of the portfolio included any additional information that each WT decided they needed as well as sections for recommendations and/or conclusions. Once each WT completed all of their parts for their essay, they compiled all of them into a collaborative document with references and posted it on their online PM Wiki space. Writing teams also constructed a multimedia presentation on their portfolio-projects (while some groups used PowerPoint for their presentations, other groups used MySpace or Facebook), and each student wrote a final reflection on their learning experiences within the class. Below is a grade percentage breakdown for each instrument (except for the survey). Instruments 1-4 were based on a total of 100 points. The other 100 points came from the students' self and peer evaluations.

Instrument One	Instrument Two	Instrument Three	Instrument Four
Attendance rubric	Portfolio-project rubric	Presentation rubric	Self and peer evaluations
Grade breakdown: 20% out of 100%	Grade breakdown: 45% out of 100%	Grade breakdown: 25% out of 100%	Grade breakdown: Self evaluation = 50% out of 100% Peer evaluations = 50% out of 100%

Figure 3.7 Instruments one-four grade breakdowns.

The remaining 10% of the grade came from an integrated assignment students had to complete—a shared assignment between large lecture, composition, and seminar classes. In order for students to make a perfect score (i.e. the letter grade of “A”) for their overall grade at the end of the semester, they would have to earn between 180-200 total points.

Outcome four: Formal multimedia presentation

Students were required to create a formal, multimedia presentation (i.e. PowerPoint, Myspace/Facebook page, etc.). This presentation covered the research and writing for the portfolio-project. **Instructor One** and **Instructor Two** covered making effective multimedia presentations (i.e. PowerPoint) with all of the WTs, as well as what the WTs should focus on when presenting their research (Please see Appendix E).

Outcome five: Self & peer evaluations

Toward the end of the semester, students were required to fill out self and peer evaluations on all of their group members’ performance (Please see Appendix F & G). The evaluations contained five categories: Writing, researching, planning, organizing, and overall contribution to the group. The scale was based on zero to 10 with zero being the lowest (quantitative). There was also a section for written comments (qualitative). **Instructor One** and

Instructor Two allowed students to fill out and turn in the evaluations in hardcopy or online formats.

DATA COLLECTION

From April 20 through May fifth, **Instructor One** and **Instructor Two** used the attendance, portfolio-project, and presentation grading rubrics to assess all four WTs who volunteered at P.A.L.S. Animal Shelter. The self and peer evaluation sheets were collected on April 30 and assessed between that date and May fifth. The attendance rubric was emailed to each student individually. The portfolio-project and presentation rubrics were emailed to each group as a group email, since they were collaborative efforts. The self and peer evaluation sheets were collected individually from each student and were kept confidential unless the students requested to know how each member assessed them. The survey given to the four selected WTs consisted of eight Likert Scale questions and one open-ended response section (Please see Appendix H). **Instructor One** and **Instructor Two** sent the WTs the survey through the email three weeks before the end of the semester. **Instructor One** and **Instructor Two** administered the survey to all of the students in the four writing teams through the email three weeks before the end of the semester. The four writing teams being studied were given 10 days to respond to the survey. After 10 days, the survey was locked and no longer accessible. In addition to the survey administered to the four WTs, the instructors administered a survey through email using SurveyMonkey.com to all of the other writing teams that were not part of the study. The comparison groups' survey was based on the same format as mentioned above and consisted of the same questions in the same order. After 10 days, the survey was locked and no longer accessible.

CHAPTER 4

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyze the findings from the study, to discuss the instrumentation, procedures, and the limitations, and to offer a conclusion.

DATA ANALYSIS

In order to analyze the attendance, **Instructor One** and **Instructor Two** took attendance every Tuesday and Thursday for the first four weeks of the semester. The first and last day of the four weeks counted for two points apiece, every other day between counted for one point, equaling 10 possible points. After the first four weeks, the instructors met with the WTs five times (critical checkpoints) during the course of the semester. Each of the five critical checkpoint meetings counted for two points apiece, equaling 10 possible points. Attendance counted for 20 points out of 100 possible points (Please see Appendix C).

The portfolio-project grading rubric included these elements: The main document, which was the collaborative academic essay, the proposal, abstract, and a final reflection from each group member. Other elements in the rubric included: Organization of ideas and paragraphs, correct spelling and grammar, effective use of images and/or pictures, effective use of APA, and correct citation of in-text sources. The portfolio-project counted for 45% out of 100% (Please see Appendix D).

The formal, multimedia presentation included overall design, organization, and knowledge on the local non-profit organization. There was also an emphasis placed on correct spelling, grammar, use of images or graphs, hyperlinks (if used to connect to websites or video clips), and correct citations for sources. The formal, multimedia presentation counted for 25% out of 100% (Please see Appendix E).

The self and peer evaluation sheets contained five categories for evaluation: Writing,

researching, planning, organizing, and overall contribution to the group. Students were also provided with a space to write down any additional comments. The self and peer evaluations counted for 50% of their overall grade. In order to calculate the grade on each evaluation sheet, the instructors added up all five categories and then divided that number by five, then multiplied that number 10 in order to get the average. To get the overall average, the instructors took the average from each evaluation sheet, added them together, and then divided that number by how many evaluation sheets that each student had (self and peer) (Please see Appendix F & G).

To calculate each student's individual overall grade in each composition class, the instructors added up all of the points that the students had earned on their attendance, the portfolio-project, and the presentation and then added that number to the final average that the students had received on their self and peer evaluations. Then, the instructors divided that final number by two in order to get each student's final overall grade. If students chose to not fill out self and peer evaluations, the instructors adjusted that part of their grade. For instance, if a WT had five group members but only three out of the five group members filled out self and peer evaluations, the calculations were adjusted to divide by three instead of five for that portion of the composition grade.

The graphs below indicate the data collected from each of the four WTs that were studied. Each graph represents Writing Teams one, two, three, and four's grades for attendance, the portfolio-project, the final presentation, self and peer evaluations, and overall grades for the composition classes. All grades are measured on a 100 percent scale. Each figure below displays the findings for WTs one, two, three, and four.

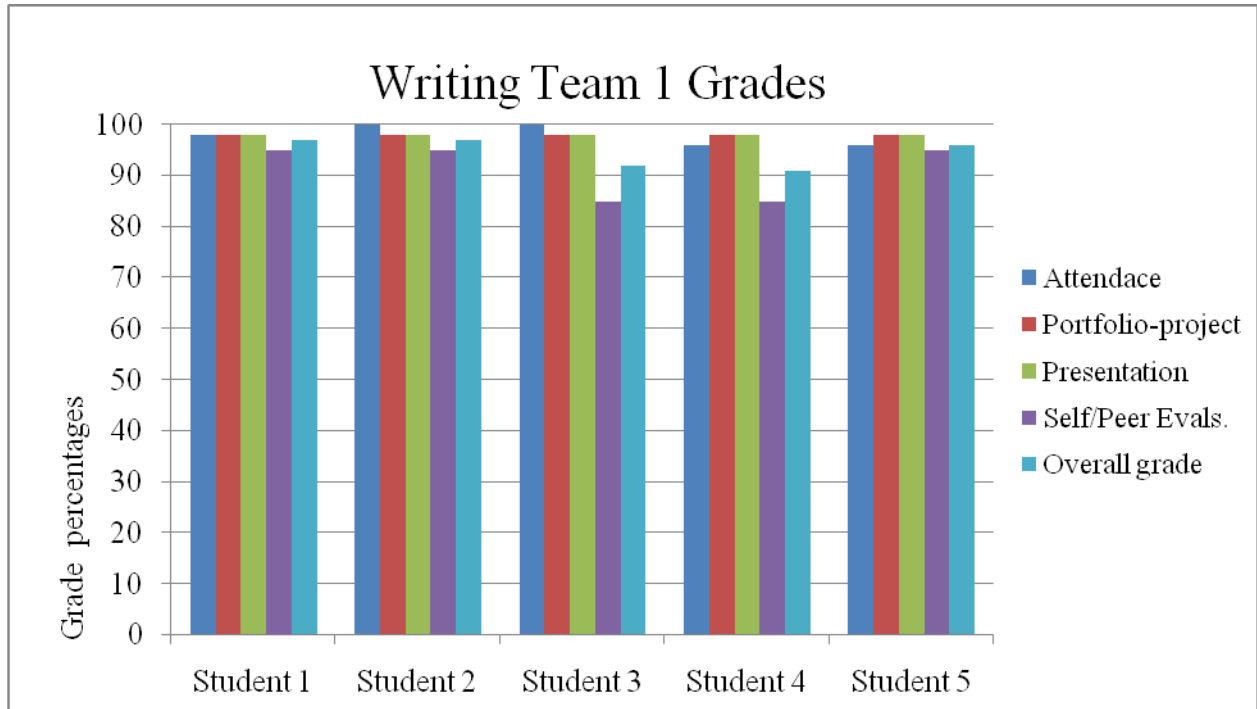


Figure 4.1 Writing Team One's results.

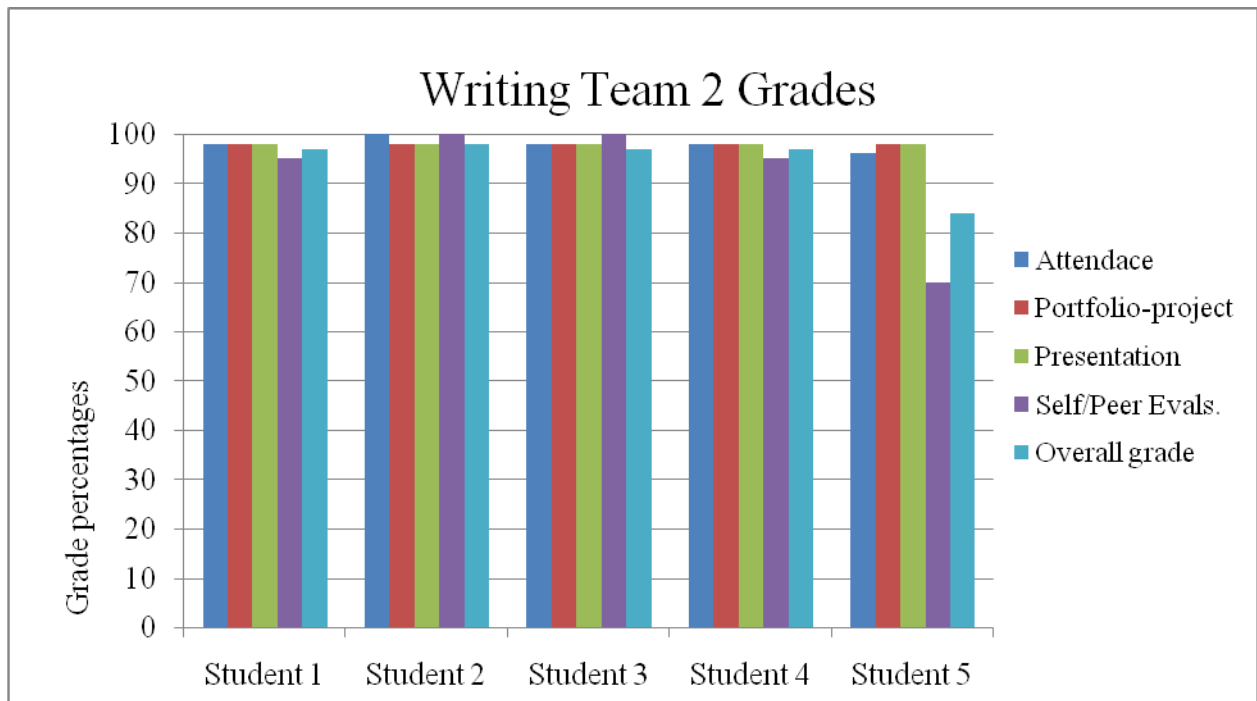


Figure 4.2 Writing Team Two's results.

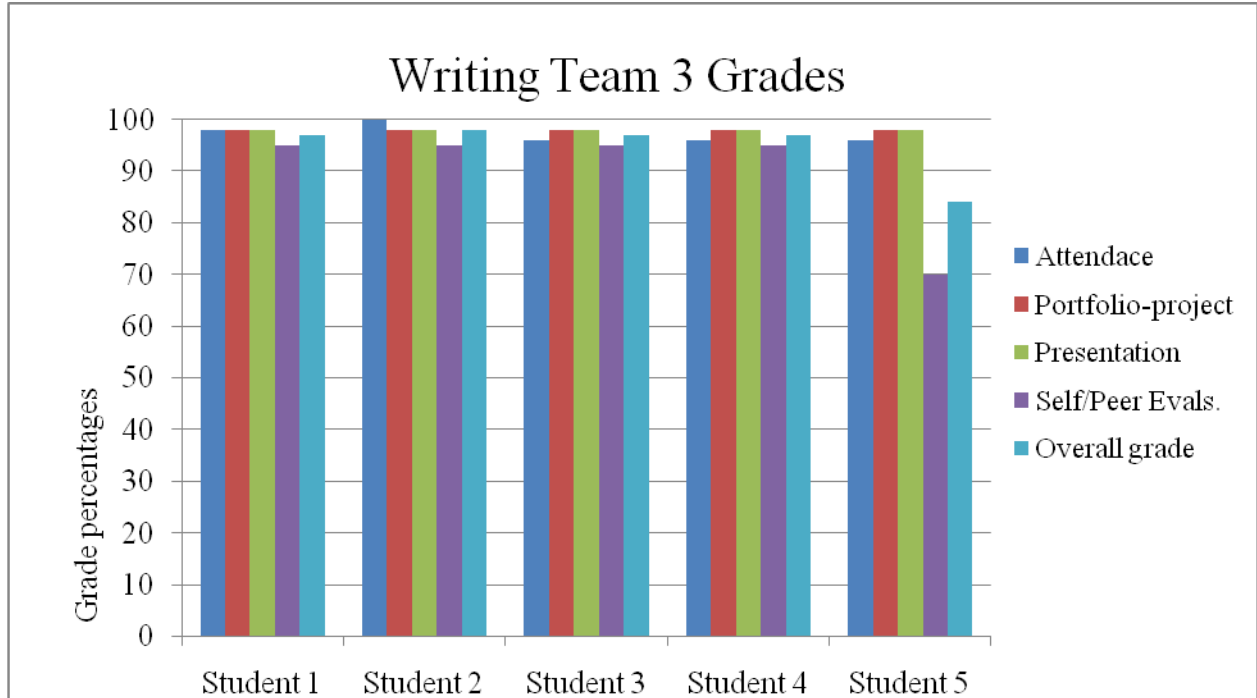


Figure 4.3 Writing Team Three's results.

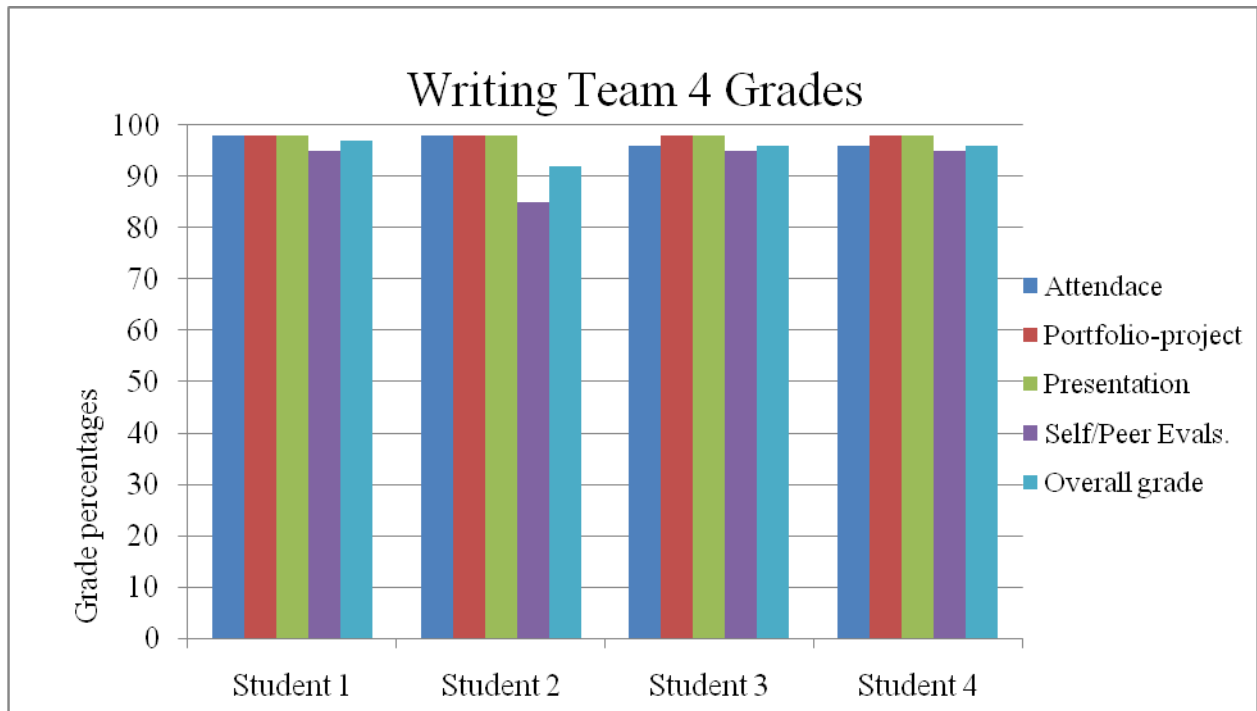


Figure 4.4 Writing team four's results.

The four writing teams excelled in meeting the attendance, portfolio-project, and presentation expectations: 90% or above for attendance grades, 96% or above for the portfolio-project grades and 96% or above for presentation grades. The self and peer evaluations ranged from 70% for student five from WT 3, 85% for student three and four from WT1, and 85% for student 2 in WT 4, and 90% or above for all other students within the WTs studied. Only student 5 from WT 2 and student 5 from WT 3 fell slightly below 90% (88%) on their overall grade in the composition classes. This suggests that while many students within the writing teams worked well together and contributed somewhat equally, there might have been a few that did not meet the WTs' expectations as far as teammates are concerned.

SURVEY – FOUR WRITING TEAMS

The survey was created on Freeonlinesurveys.com and administered to the four writing teams through group emails. The survey consisted of seven questions that were based on a Likert Scale Model, ranging from strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree, and one question that asked them which grade they think they had earned in the class, ranging from A,B, C, D, and F. Finally, students were asked to write down any additional thoughts that they had on the class. Four students out of 19 answered the survey. Below are the eight questions as they appeared on the survey:

The questions

1. Collaborative writing was very useful to me in this class.
2. My writing team's non-profit organization was useful to our writing as a source of knowledge.
3. My teammates contributed equally.
4. This composition class was well-structured around our writing teams.
5. My composition instructor's input was beneficial to the outcome of the entire portfolio-project (Presentations, emails, interviews, volunteering, writing of the essay, etc.).
6. This composition class has provided the opportunity to look at writing and researching from another perspective.

7. I took advantage of the one-on-one workshops with my composition instructor throughout the semester.
8. Please select which letter grade you think you have earned: A, B, C, D, F

Below are the findings for questions one through seven on the survey.

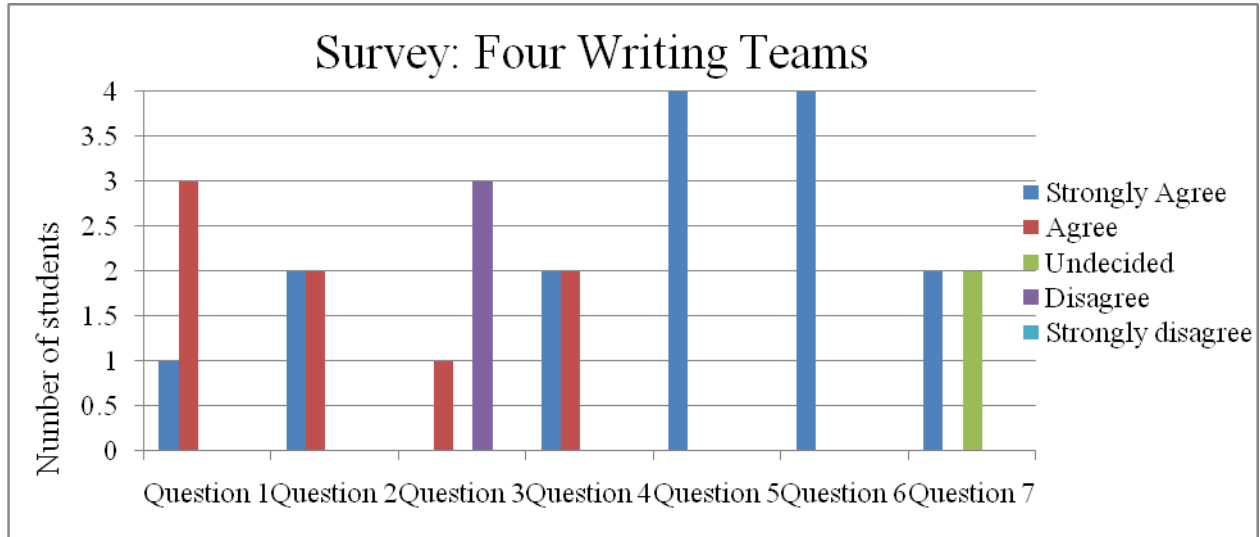


Figure 4.5 Survey findings for the four writing teams.

While 19 students were sent the survey, only four answered the survey. Since all instructors at the university are required to send out emails to students using their school email address, it is possible that the 15 students who did not answer the survey do not regularly check their student email accounts and missed the 10-day window. Another explanation might be that the 15 students chose not to take the survey based on personal reasons or preference.

All four students strongly agreed or agreed on questions one, two, four, five, and six, indicating that the collaborative aspects of the portfolio-project, working with the local non-profit organizations, and the structure of the composition classes was useful or beneficial to them. Three out of the four students chose disagree for question three, “My teammates contributed equally.” The three students who disagreed that their team members contributed to the group equally either was due to missing group members, poor communication, or possibly confusion on what each team members’ were from the beginning. Half of the students were

undecided on question 7, “I took advantage of the one-on-one workshops with my composition instructor throughout the semester.” A reason for the 50% undecided might be due to the wording of the question, since “one-on-one workshops” implied the required five critical checkpoints during the course of the semester.

The students in the four WTs were also asked what grade they thought they have earned in the composition classes. The grades were expressed in letter grade, ranging from A, B, C, D, and F. Below are the findings for question eight on the survey.

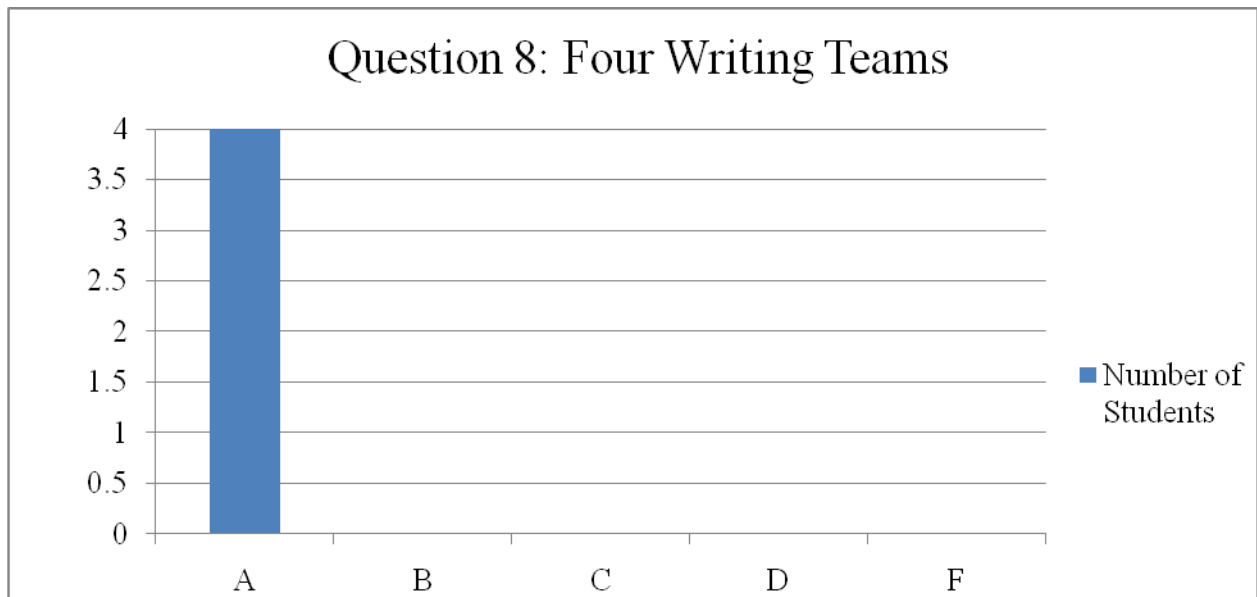


Figure 4.6 Survey findings for the four writing teams.

All four (100%) students from the four WTs answered “A.” Apparently, those four students who took the survey felt as if they had effectively met all of the class requirements.

As well as the eight quantitative survey questions that the students were asked, they were also provided with an open comment box in which they could write their personal feelings or thoughts. The comment below is student response from the survey. This student response shows the importance of the composition instructor’s role in a writing class that incorporates service-learning. The blank line has been added to replace the instructor’s name:

My instructor _____ went above and beyond with making sure every team and every one person was taken care of during our volunteering experience. _____ has helped my writing team with guiding and listening to our concerns and actions in bettering our volunteer organizations. I want to personally thank _____ and let _____ know what an awesome teacher _____ truly is and how she motivates me to strive for my absolute best! Thank YOU _____ so much!

From this response, it is obvious that the instructors' attitude and approach to teaching students had a significant impact on how this one student perceived service-learning as well as how much they engaged in the portfolio-project assignment.

Below is the number of times each of the four WT's visited or volunteered at P.A.L.S.

Animal Shelter.

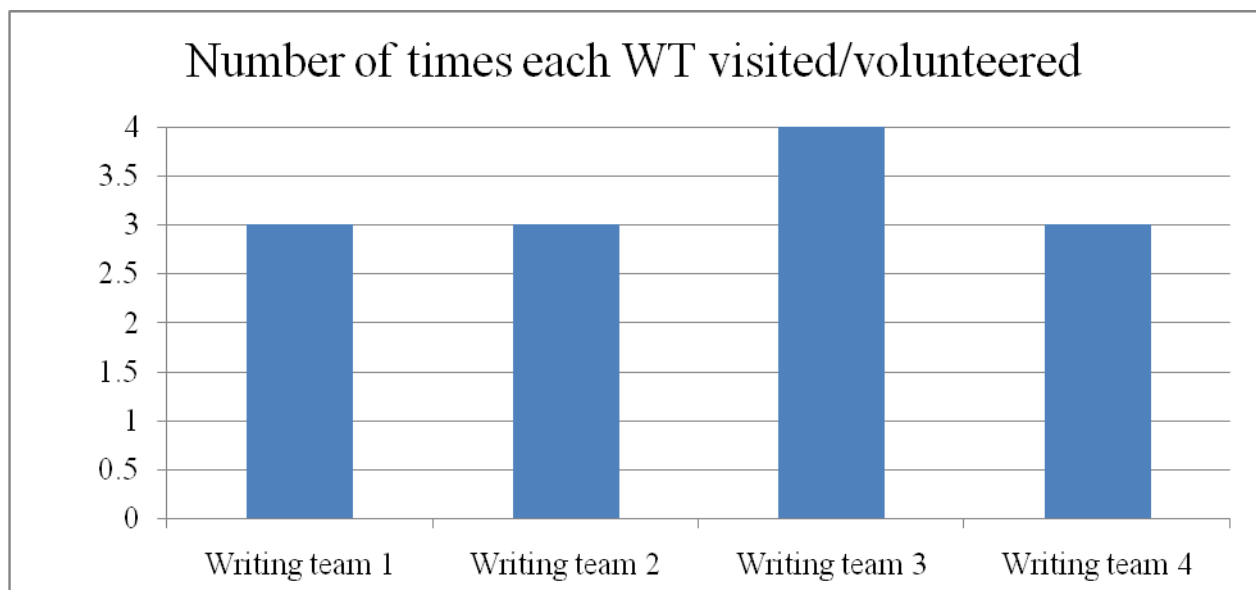


Figure 4.9 Number of visits or times volunteered at P.A.L.S.

Writing teams one, two, and four visited/volunteered three times compared to WT three, which visited/volunteered four times. Overall, all four WT's visited or volunteered approximately the same number of times during the course of the semester.

COMPARISON GROUPS SURVEY – ALL OF THE OTHER WRITING TEAMS

The same survey questions were sent to all of the other writing teams using

SurveyMonkey.com. While 105 students were sent the survey, only 42 answered the survey. Since all instructors at the university are required to send out emails to students using their school email address, it is possible that the 63 students who did not answer the survey do not regularly check their student email accounts and missed the 10-day window. Another explanation might be that the 63 students chose not to take the survey based on personal reasons or preference. Below are the findings for questions one through seven on the survey.

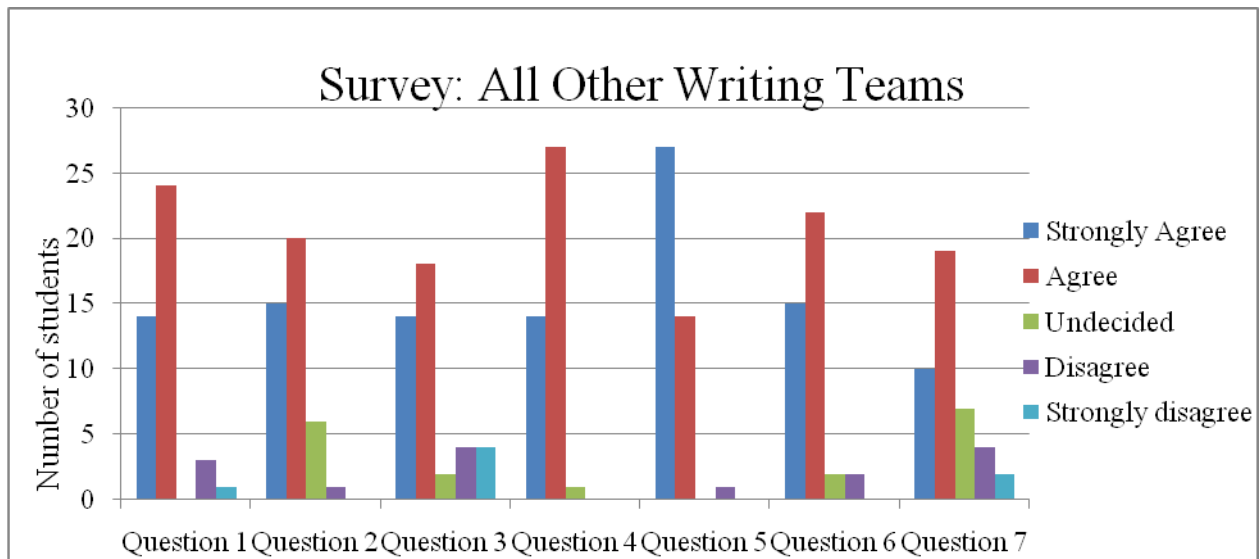


Figure 4.7 Survey findings for all other writing teams within the four composition classes.

All forty-two students strongly agreed or agreed in questions one, two, four, five, and six, indicating that the collaborative aspects of the portfolio-project, working with the local non-profit organizations, and the structure of the composition classes was useful or beneficial to them. Compared to the four WT's studied, the rest of the WT's that were surveyed showed some variance in answering question 3, which was "my teammates contributed equally," 77% of students strongly agreed or agreed that their teammates contributed equally. Question 7, "I took advantage of the one-on-one workshops with my composition instructor throughout the semester," also indicated a slight variance with 69% of students strongly agreeing or agreeing

that they took advantage of the one-on-one workshops with the instructors, compared to only 50% from the four WT's that were studied.

The students in all of the WT's were also asked what grade they thought they have earned. The grades were expressed in letter grade, ranging from A, B, C, D, and F. Below is the findings for question eight on the survey.

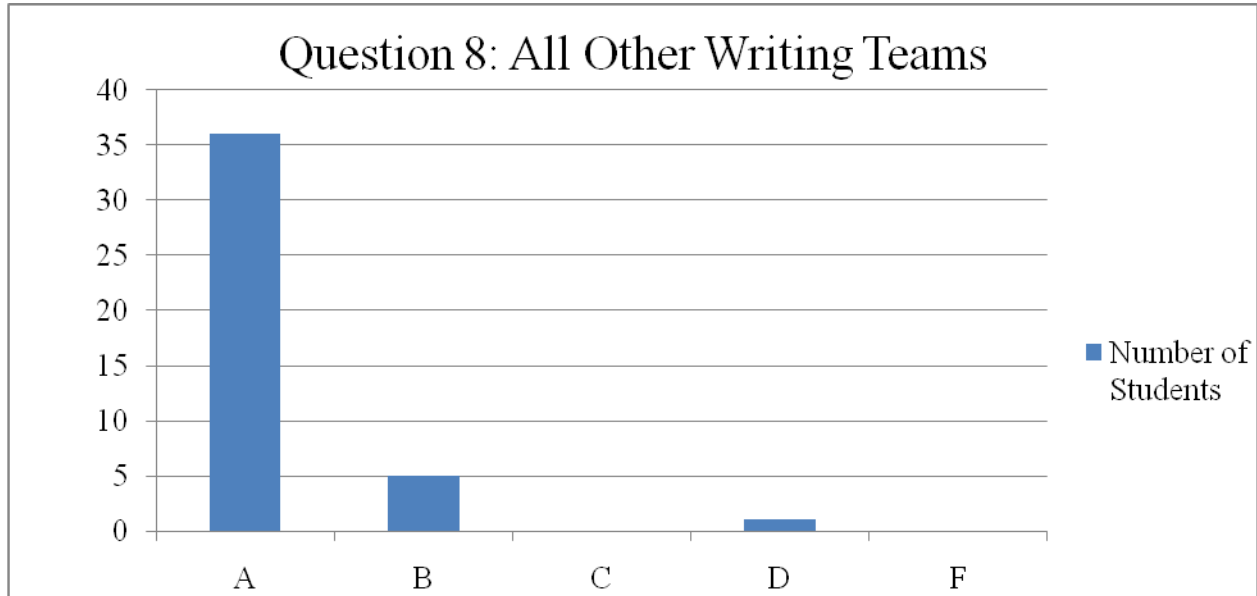


Figure 4.8 Survey findings for all other writing teams within the four composition classes.

Out of the 42 students that answered the survey, 86% of them responded that they have earned an “A” in their composition class. Only 12% chose “B” and 2% chose “D.” The students who selected “A” felt as if they had effectively met all of the class requirements and that they had earned an “A,” the few students who selected “B” apparently felt that did not meet all of the class requirements or possibly did not fully participate in their WT's. The student that selected “D” must have felt as if they had only contributed bare minimum to the class and to their WT.

As well as the eight quantitative survey questions that the students were asked, they were also provided with an open comment box in which they could write their personal feelings or thoughts. The comment below is student response from the survey.

I really liked the purpose of the Service learning project, but I think this project would work a lot better with students who are further on in their education. I think this because Freshmen students are not as serious as a Junior or a Senior. I did learn how to work with a group and correspond with someone and I actually learned how to volunteer and the process, and I will most likely give my time to another organization that I have interest in.

The student's comment did raise a valid concern as well as make a logical argument. However, the question if the service-learning project would "work better" for juniors and seniors is not fully explained. The second part of the response does clarify a few things, such as working with a group (meeting the collaborative aspect of the English composition 1302's goals and objectives), as well as learning how to volunteer (not only *textual* discourse engagement, but also *social* discourse engagement).

The final comments come from a final reflection by a student in one of **Instructor Two's** composition classes. This what the student learned when volunteering and working in groups:

- *Learn to work with other people, which may sound easy but trust me, it is not always, what you think it will be.*
- *Take responsibility for your actions. Other people are counting on you.*
- *Be a leader. If no one in your group is responsible enough to share the work equally, figure out how to make them do the work, or how to make up for their lack of work.*
- *Make sure that you are committed to the project. This project is hard, takes a lot of time and effort, and requires a lot of planning. If you want a good grade, you need to be able to be on top of things no matter what.*

The student's final reflection on their service-learning experiences offers important advice for future students. Learning how to work with teammates and taking responsibility are at the top of the list, followed by being a leader and finding creative ways in which to include teammates if they seem to lack motivation or time for the project. Organizing, scheduling, and planning with teammates is a crucial element in a service-learning project.

DISCUSSION

A key element in determining if students were becoming better writers in the service-learning composition classes was the levels of collaboration between team members within each

Writing Team. Peter Elbow's (1999) descriptions of "weak" and "strong" collaboration came into play in the students writing (Elbow, p.10). While most WTs worked together to reach a "consensus" or "agreement" to decide when the writing was complete, there were a few WTs that produced final essays that bordered along cooperative levels rather than collaborative, meaning that all group members did not have to agree to final product in order to complete the assignment (p.10). A variety of factors could have contributed to this, such as some students do not like working in groups, perhaps some WTs were not clear what the instructors wanted them to do for the writing part of the portfolio-project, or they were not interested in their non-profit organization. Group dynamics played a key role in determining how successful, or unsuccessful, students were once they started collaborating amongst themselves and with their non-profit organizations. The "stronger" WTs showed a higher level of engagement and stayed in constant communication with each other as well as with their non-profit organization. However, the WTs with a slacker or two did learn just as much as the WTs that were on the ball.

There was a visible growth that many of the students experienced by engaging in their service-learning projects. There was no evidence to indicate that the students improved as writers but they did take more of an active stance in their writing, such as by producing pamphlets or brochures for their non-profit organizations, reflecting on their volunteering experiences, and in their presentations. Beyond the writing, students also actively engaged with the service-learning projects, making them their own during the course of the semester. This more active approach in their writing was because students' experiences were not abstract but concrete ones that they could identify with on a personal level.

As for meeting the goals and objectives of the English composition 1302 class, students explored and worked with multiple perspectives during the course of their research engaged in

research using primary and secondary sources, used these sources within their writing for audience, rhetorical arguments, and for conveying information, used conventions of writing (e.g. APA), used computers to generate texts, discussed readings from the local newspaper and non-profits' websites, communicated and participated within various discourse communities, generated a research portfolio, and self-assessed their group dynamics, research processes, and final products. **Instructor One** and **Instructor Two** felt more comfortable asking the students to work collaboratively together because the students were going to have to take responsibility in making decisions in order to be successful. For the most part, all of the writing teams worked well together. Some of the common issues that a few writing teams dealt with were missing group members and schedule conflicts. While not all of the students continued to volunteer or re-visit their non-profit organizations once the semester ended, many did.

There was some student resistance toward the service-learning portfolio-project during the course of each semester. However, the students' resistance did not seem to rise from the service-learning projects themselves, but from the idea of working in collaborative writing teams. Once the semester was under way, and the writing teams begin to visit and volunteer at their non-profit organizations, the resistance to working together started to fade. Although the resistance never truly disappeared, students were starting to learn how to negotiate their schedules between themselves and their non-profit organizations, how to delegate roles within their groups, and how to write an essay together.

Writing the essay challenged the writing teams the most because many of the students had never written a collaborative document before. Another challenge was the layout of the essay (e.g. Introduction, background/history of the non-profit organization, state and federal laws, interview reflections, personal reflections, and conclusions and/or recommendations)

because many WTs had developed their own sections, depending on what they thought was important about their non-profit organizations. However, presenting the WTs with “possible” sections at the beginning of the semester allowed them to think critically about how they were going to use those sections or develop new ones based on what they discover. The students did not seem to have any major challenges when it came to uploading their writing to PM Wiki. The composition instructors assisted students who had not experienced or used PM Wiki in English composition 1301 from the previous semester.

Since the self and peer evaluations affected the students’ overall grade for composition (50%), many students took the evaluations seriously and took the time to read, understand, and fill out them out. While many of the students gave themselves and their teammates a nine or 10 in each of the five categories, there was a few that ranked themselves lower. One of the most notable reasons why students gave a team member a low score on the peer evaluations was because they felt as if that person had not contributed enough to the WTs’ portfolio-project, presentation, or volunteering experience.

LIMITATIONS

A minor limitation for this study was the amount of time in which the composition instructors had to collect and evaluate student writing. Overall, there was adequate time to implement this study. Although the structure of the classroom and the rubrics (attendance, portfolio-project, presentation, and self and peer evaluations) had been developed from the two previous spring semesters, this might have also factored in as a minor limitation in the study because it was the first time both composition instructors used them. Another limitation was the narrow scope of the study, which involved only four composition classrooms.

Because of the different teaching styles between Instructor One and Instructor Two, the

shared survey posed a limitation to the study. Students also faced time restraints in visiting or volunteering at their local non-profit organizations. While the students were engaging in the service-learning project for English composition, they also had other assignments and test preparations in their seminar and large lecture classes, as well as work and family obligations.

CONCLUSION

While the results of incorporating service-learning assignments in the freshmen composition classroom show more of a personal connection to their research and writing because of the hands-on approach, they also show that students need more experience and guidance learning how to work effectively and efficiently with their peers. Perhaps developing roles, such as researcher, organizer, planner, contact, and collector (of paperwork, notes, etc.), with the students at the beginning of the semester would help them get more of a sense of how they should divide tasks among group members, allowing each one of their team members to participate. Introducing them to roles at the beginning of the semester could help the students to understand the “collaborative” aspect when it comes to writing the essay.

Service-learning is a current trend in composition studies and provides students with the opportunity to engage—actively and civically—with various communities. The collaboration between students and local communities usually comes in the form of volunteering. However, one of the future challenges of service-learning is developing and sustaining a pedagogy that centers on service-learning within composition. While researchers and practitioners give examples of how to do this, there is no one right way to incorporate service-learning projects into the composition classroom.

Service-learning approaches act as a transitional rhetoric for students to experience active participation within personal, academic, and professional communities. This transition involves

more than just preparing students cognitively, such as in learning proper grammar, how to properly cite a source, or how to write within a certain convention (e.g. MLA, APA). The transition also involves helping students develop the proper attitude in which they can adequately develop and ask questions, research, and reflectively write on their authentic learning experiences when engaging in service-learning projects. In order for these approaches to work as effective transitions, composition instructors need to develop writing activities and assignments that students can utilize in the future, giving them something to keep writing about.

Emergency Information

Full name _____ Preferred name _____
 Social Security Number _____ Birthday _____ Gender _____
 Address _____ Phone _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Email _____
 Major _____ Status FR SO JR SR GRAD FAC STAFF
 Emergency Contact _____ Relationship _____
 Home Phone _____ Alternate Phone _____
 Email _____ City _____ State _____

Medical conditions we should know about _____

Drug allergies _____

Medications you are currently taking (prescription and non-prescription) _____

Physician's name _____ Phone _____

Insurance company _____ Policy # _____

Name of policy holder _____ Group # _____

Employer _____

I hereby authorize Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi to release information pertaining to myself in the event of an emergency. This information will be made available to organizational officers and advisor(s), Student Activities staff and the University Police Department.

Signature of Student

Date

If the student is under 18, please complete the following:

Signature of parent or guardian

Date

Printed name of parent or guardian

Rev 07/02

With few exceptions, you have the right to request, receive, review and correct information about yourself collected using this form.

Appendix B

English composition 1302, spring semester

Welcome to English composition 1302! My name is _____ and I will be your instructor for this semester!

Classrooms & times:

- _____ am – _____ am; Days: _____
Building and classrooms: _____

Personal contact information:

- _____
- Shared Office: _____
- Phone: _____
- Email: _____
- My PM Wikisite (teaching site): _____
- Myspace/Facebook page (for academic/professional communications): _____

My office hours:

- _____

Textbooks (suggested):

- _____

Research and writing websites (for how to cite sources and construct a reference page):

- *The Bedford Bibliographer online:*
<http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/bbibliographer/default.asp?uid=0&rau=0>
- *The OWL at Purdue (for APA research and writing):*
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Class description:

- **English 1302** continues the important work you started in English 1301, focusing on critical thinking and information literacy skills and their relation to writing, reading, inquiry, and learning. In particular, this computer-assisted composition class explores the ways we use language, ways that include not only writing but also reading, speaking, listening, and interpreting or producing visual images. In our FY Writing Program, we view writing (and other uses of language) as purposeful action, and “good writing” as context-specific writing produced for specific purposes and audiences.

The class emphasizes connections among reading, analysis, research, and writing, asking that students engage in the processes of discovering and constructing meaning through language use, by (re) reading, (re) writing, and group collaboration. It helps you develop and refine your college-level reading, writing, researching, and thinking skills. It offers guidance as you develop research questions and engage in sophisticated research that will help you develop possible

answers to those questions. The class also asks you to become critically engaged in primary and secondary research to develop a series of rhetorical analyses of your source materials and to study and use documentation styles suitable for various rhetorical tasks.

In English 1302, through the writing, researching, reading, and thinking you do, you will learn “about” issues and topics, and you will learn “how to join the conversations” circulating around issues and topics. As you do the work required to join particular conversations, you will continue to practice the skills you developed in English 1301--considering how to achieve your purpose with particular audiences in specific contexts through specific forums. You will engage in ongoing processes of invention, researching, sharing and revising, and editing. Your English 1302 teachers will not ask you to focus only on “what to write about” (the typical English class question); instead, we will ask you to focus more on answers to these questions: “What will this piece of writing DO? HOW? With Whom?”

As with English 1301, English 1302 is part of a Learning Community. Teachers in your Learning Community are committed to connecting all parts of the Learning Community through various assignments and activities. In particular, your English 1302 teacher and your FY Seminar Leader will be collaborating closely on assignments and activities, and as much as possible, the work you do in one class will connect to the work you do in the other.

Purpose:

- To engage students in more in-depth levels of research and writing within various discourse communities

Goals & objectives: <http://firstyear.tamucc.edu/wiki/FYStaffManual/GoalsObjectives1302>

Goals & objectives (the “stew”):

- Students will explore and understand the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the university core curriculum’s first-year program, explore and research multiple perspectives within various discourse communities, and connect various genres of writing between their seminar and large lecture classes
- Goals and objectives can and will change and adapt for individuals and groups during the course of the semester
- Students will help to shape goals and objectives during the course of semester as their portfolios/projects dictate
- Students will learn to research, write, and participate within various discourse communities on and off campus; this will require volunteering (i.e. non-profit organizations, such as the Salvation Army, Food Bank, YWCA, Metro Ministries, P.A.L.S animal shelter, the Women’s Shelter, Charlie’s Place, Wenholz House, Corpus Christi Independent School District, etc. or any non-profit organization, or other, of your own)
- Students will learn to view researching and writing from another perspective (i.e. actual participation within a discourse community, local problems/situations/concerns)
- Students will conduct various levels of primary and secondary research (i.e. primary = interviews, surveys, questionnaires, observations; secondary = Internet sources, electronic files from the Bell Library database, etc.)

- Students will work collaboratively during the course of semester in order to finish their portfolios-projects
- Students will weekly update the instructor on any progress or road blocks they have come across in their research and writing
- Students will work collaboratively during the course of semester in order to finish their portfolios-projects Students will write within various genres and conventions during the course of the semester (i.e. APA if necessary, as well as academic and non-academic writing, such as research essays, journaling, etc.)
- Students will be required to write (subjectively, objectively, and reflectively) about their research experiences
- Students with the guidance of the instructor will determine the format your final portfolio-project will take by the end of the semester (i.e. electronic submission to PM Wiki, Myspace.com portfolio-project submission, etc.)
- Students will construct a proposal based on their research and writing
- Students will construct a reflective overview on their experiences during the course of the semester
- Students will use their research and writing in their portfolio-projects to construct a formal presentation

Teacher expectations:

- Help students fully explore the university core curriculum's goals, objectives, and outcomes as well as connect research and writing between seminar and lecture classes
- Provide a constructive atmosphere in which to discuss, research, and write
- Assist students develop appropriate research questions
- Assist students in developing an appropriate research focus
- Provide students (if possible) with necessary contacts, information, or data pertaining to their local non-profit organizations
- Act as a mediator between inter/intra group and individual disputes, disagreements, or arguments
- Provide students with knowledge on researching for primary and secondary sources
- Provide students with knowledge of the various conventions of writing (i.e. APA)
- Assist students with updating their inter/intra group discussions, research, and writing tasks
- Assist students in constructing their portfolios-projects
- Assist students in managing their time wisely with their portfolios-projects
- Assist students in constructing a formal presentation

Student expectations:

- Understand and connect research and writing to university goals, objectives, and outcomes, as well as linking them to seminar and large lecture classes (when and if possible)
- Think, research, write, and learn outside the "box" (i.e. the classroom)
- Choose a local non-profit organization or agency to research, visit, volunteer at (if possible), write about, and then present on
- Give the instructor adequate notice about removing or ejecting a group member(s) as well

as trying to work out the difference in one-on-one meeting and group conferences outside of class

- Give the instructor adequate and timely notice about any changes in their research focus or non-profit switch or change
- Fully participate within their groups and carry their share of the research and writing load; offer only constructive criticism to their group members and classmates
- Respect academic honesty and not plagiarize any material
- Respect the non-profit organizations and agencies they plan to research and write about, as well as work with their schedules
- Respect their group members' schedules and actively and constructively work around them in order to successfully complete the portfolio-project
- Respect teacher-student-group conferences about their portfolios-projects
- Thoughtfully use class time wisely to conduct research, construct questions, visit non-profits, ask the instructor questions, etc.
- Students will effectively use their research and writing to construct a formal, multimedia presentation

General classroom policies:

- No cell phone conversations, no texting, no Internet surfing while in class, please respect our time together (unless in order to contact an individual about research, interview, etc.)
- If you must talk on the cell phone to a parent or for an emergency, please take it outside for your privacy and to prevent classroom disruption
- Be on time to class so we can all start together (this applies to the first 4 weeks, afterwards, we will have checkpoints)
- No disruptive behavior during class discussions or activities
- No disrupting a peer when they are talking
- Respect for diversity among your peers and your instructors (offer only constructive criticism)
- No chewing gum in class!
- Information for students with disabilities (please see this website: _____)

Research & writing requirements:

- All documents must be typed, and/or electronically uploaded as MS Word document to student PM Wiki pages
- All academic and professional documents will have:
 - ◆ 1 inch margins (when appropriate)
 - ◆ Be in APA format (when appropriate)
 - ◆ Double spaced (when appropriate)
 - ◆ 12 point font (when appropriate)
 - ◆ Times New Roman (when appropriate)
 - ◆ Appropriate headers, titles, coversheets, etc. (when appropriate)

Other requirements:

- You will need access to a computer and *Microsoft Word* to type out and print out your essays and documents, and a flash drive.

Concepts we will discuss and define in class:

- What is a non-profit organization?
- What are discourse communities?
- What is service-learning?
- What is collaboration?

Research & writing assignments**The focus:**

- Researching and writing within a local discourse communities (i.e. local non-profit organizations)

The portfolio-project (45% of your grade):

- The portfolio-project will be a semester long project that will entail students researching and writing together collaboratively as well as participating within a local non-profit organization. This Portfolio-Project will be electronically uploaded to your student PM Wiki pages (there will be no hardcopy submissions)
 - Portfolio-project includes (*but is not limited to*):
 - 1) Choosing a local non-profit organization, instructor provided or student(s)-derived
 - 2) Background research, includes primary and secondary sources, on furthering research & writing with the local non-profit organizations
 - 3) Developing new sets of questions for research purposes, interviews, etc.
 - 4) Contacting or setting up interviews, observations, with the local non-profit organizations
 - 5) Asking questions, taking notes (i.e. observations, interviews, etc.)
 - 6) Volunteering-participating within various discourse communities, such as an elementary school classroom, women's shelter, food bank, etc., which could also include writing for the non-profit or schools
 - 7) Individuals and groups combine, analyze & integrate, their research during the course of the semester into a final essay and a formal, multimedia presentation of their research
 - 8) Basically, ANY AND ALL RESEARCH AND WRITING YOUR GROUP DOES DURING THE COURSE OF THE SEMESTER THAT PERTAINS TO THE PORTOFLIO-PROJECT!
 - Aspects students are introduced to during this portfolio-project:
 - 1) Perceiving research & writing beyond the written academic text
 - 2) Communicating & participating within actual discourse communities, both inside and outside of the university
 - 3) Creating writing that extends beyond classroom purposes
 - 5 Checkpoint journals which is part of your attendance grade. During the course of the semester, I will be meeting with each writing group. The required checkpoints are listed below. The journal should be in APA format and more than a page in

length. Journals should contain reflections from all group members and any relevant questions and/or information from their portfolio-projects. These 5 checkpoints will occur in the classroom

- Proposal & abstract which includes a short **abstract (25-75 words)** and a **proposal (75-100 words)** (detailing out what is the purpose of your research)
- Final reflective essays includes (*but is not limited to*):
 - 1) Experiences during the course of the semester, in and outside of comp class
 - 2) Discussion of learning opportunities that occurred through researching & writing techniques
 - 3) Critiques and suggestions about and on comp class structure and approach to researching & writing
 - 4) Each group member will turn in a reflective essay

The formal, multimedia presentation (25% of your grade):

- The Presentation should be formal, using some form of multimedia (i.e. PowerPoint, Myspace page, Facebook, etc.). This formal presentation will cover the entire semester of your research and writing. Please, take the time to put some thought and effort into this presentation, since it is your final grade in this class. At least two weeks before presentations are due, please let me know what technology (i.e. laptops, televisions, etc.) you will need.

Grading sequence & due date

Attendance & participation: 20% of your grade

For the composition class, the first 4 weeks will be mandatory attendance to assist students and groups started on their portfolios-projects. After the first 4 weeks, I will be in class during the regular meeting times, however, groups are required to meet with me at certain times (checkpoints) during the course of the semester. For each checkpoint, students must bring all of their research and writing that they have done up to that point in time.

The first 4 weeks = 10% of attendance grade (I will take attendance)

Grading Scale

Week 1: _____ (2 pts.): _____
 Week 2: _____ (1 pt.): _____; _____ (1 pt.): _____
 Week 3: _____ (1 pt.): _____; _____ (1 pt.): _____
 Week 4: _____ (1 pt.): _____; _____ (1 pt.): _____; _____ (2 pts.): _____
The first 4 weeks = 10% of attendance grade: Total 1 = _____ out of 10

_____ = 2% (Critical Journal 1 due, emailed before meeting) _____
 _____ = 2% (Critical Journal 2 due, emailed before meeting) _____
 _____ = 2% (Critical Journal 3 due, emailed before meeting) _____
 _____ = 2% (Critical Journal 4 due, emailed before meeting) _____
 _____ = 2% (Critical Journal 5 due, emailed before meeting) _____

The required checkpoints = 10% of attendance grade (*MUST bring all of your research and*

writing in order to receive credit): **Total 2 = _____ out of 10**

Total = 5% x 2% + 10% = 20% of your overall attendance grade

PLEASE make sure that you and your group chooses a time on the required checkpoint dates so that we can all meet.

The portfolio-project & presentation (45%+25%): 70% of your grade

For the composition class, group members as well as the instructor will evaluate students. For detailed explanations on the portfolio-project rubrics please see the MS Excel document; self & peer evaluation sheets will be provided later.

The integrated assignment: 10% of your grade (with large lecture)

All of this = 100%, the self & peer evaluations will count for another 100% = 200% TOTAL

Grade Breakdown

Attendance, assignments, & evaluations	Grade breakdown	Due dates
Attendance	20% out of 100%	1 st 4 weeks; 5 checkpoints
Portfolio-project	45% out of 100%	
Presentation	25% out of 100%	
Integrated assignment	10% out of 100%	
Total:	100%	
Self evaluations	50% out of 100%	
Peer evaluations	50% out of 100%	
Total:	100%	
OVERALL TOTAL:	200%	☺

I have read and I fully understand all of the goals, objectives, expectations, research, writing assignments, grading procedures, due dates, general policies, and attendance policies within this document.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix C

Composition 1302 Grading Rubric: Attendance (1302)

Attendance and Participation: 20% of your grade

For the composition class, the first 4 weeks will be important & required attendance to assist students and groups started on their portfolios-projects. After the first 4 weeks, I will be in class during the regular meeting times, however, groups are required to meet with me at certain times (checkpoints) during the course of the semester. **Before each checkpoint meeting, each writing group is required to email me their critical journals (1 per group). These critical journals should contain: (MLA/APA format, 1"inch margins, spellchecked, 12 point font, Times New Roman);** each critical journal should contain any or all of these elements:

- Questions/concerns about research of local non-profit
- Questions/concerns about group members/activity or lack thereof
- Questions for interviews with individuals of local non-profit as well as responses
- Reflections based on interviews/visits/observations/research o local non-profits
- Planning schedules, which include past, present, & future group goals & objectives
- Questions for the instructor

For each checkpoint, students must bring all of their research and writing that they have done up to that point in time. However, for the 5 required checkpoints, you and your group must bring all your research and writing with you in order to receive credit for that meeting.

NAME: _____

Grading Scale

Week 1: _____ (2%): _____

Week 2: _____ (1%): _____; _____ (1%): _____

Week 3: _____ (1%): _____; _____ (1%): _____

Week 4: _____ (1%): _____; _____ (1%): _____; _____ (2%): _____

The First 4 Weeks = 10% of attendance grade: Total 1 = _____ out of 10%

The Required Checkpoints = 10% of attendance grade (*MUST bring all of your research and writing in order to receive credit*): **Total 2 = _____ out of 10%**

_____ = 2% (Critical Journal 1 due, emailed before meeting) _____

_____ = 2% (Critical Journal 2 due, emailed before meeting) _____

_____ = 2% (Critical Journal 3 due, emailed before meeting) _____

_____ = 2% (Critical Journal 4 due, emailed before meeting) _____

_____ = 2% (Critical Journal 5 due, emailed before meeting) _____

Total 1 + Total 2 (attendance grade) = _____

Appendix D

Composition 1302 Grading Rubric: The Portfolio-Project (1302)

The Portfolio-Project: 45% of your grade**Due on:** _____ **by 3:00 pm (submitted to student PM Wiki pages)**

The Portfolio-Project will be a semester long project that will entail students researching and writing together collaboratively as well as participating within a local non-profit organization. This Portfolio-Project will be electronically uploaded to your student PM Wiki pages (there will be no hardcopy submissions).

NAME(s): _____

Grading Scale

20-18 check marks = 98: A, 17-15 check marks = 89: B, 14-9 check marks = 79: C, 8-6 check marks = 69: D; 5-0 check marks = F.

The Main Document (i.e. electronically uploaded MS Word essay to PM Wiki pages, Myspace page, other): _____

- Completed on time/due date: _____
- Well-organized logically constructed: _____
- Well-researched material and cited sources: _____
- Very few grammar mistakes (i.e. punctuation, misspelled words, etc.): _____
- Pictures/images/graphs (if used) well-placed and cited within the document: _____
- References listed: _____
- Headings and subheadings used appropriately: _____
- Other outstanding features: _____

Proposal & Abstract: _____

- Completed on time/due date (electronically submitted as a MS Word document to PM Wiki): _____
- Well-organized and logically constructed: _____
- Well-researched material and cited sources (as best as possible at this point in time): _____
- Very few grammar and punctuation mistakes (i.e. punctuation, misspelled words, etc.): _____
- Part 1: Abstract (25-50 words): _____
- Part 2: Paragraph (75-100 words): _____

Reflective Essays about the COMPOSITION CLASS (from all group members): _____

- Each group member's electronically submitted as a MS Word document to their student PM Wiki pages or emailed to _____ by _____: _____
- Each group member offers in-depth reflection on their experiences with their group, their classes, etc. in their document (honest and constructive criticisms): _____
- Very few grammar and punctuation mistakes (i.e. punctuation, misspelled words, etc.): _____

Total: _____

Appendix E

Composition 1302 Grading Rubric: The Formal Presentation (1302)

The Presentation: 25% of your grade**Due on:** _____

The Presentation should be formal, using some form of multimedia (i.e. PowerPoint, Myspace page, etc.). This formal presentation will cover the entire semester of your research and writing. Please, take the time to put some thought and effort into this presentation, since it is your final grade in this class. At least two weeks before presentations are due, please let me know what technology (i.e. laptops, televisions, etc.) you will need.

NAME(s): _____

Grading Scale

14-13 check marks = 98: A, 12-10 check marks = 89: B, 9-7 check marks = 79: C, 6-4 check marks = 69: D; 3-0 check marks = F.

On time and prepared: _____

- The presentation material is effectively and efficiently set up: _____

The presentation: _____

- The multimedia presentation is understandable: _____
- Well-organized: _____
- No missing/broken links: _____
- No misspelled words: _____
- Knowledgeable and thorough material: _____
- Cited sources where appropriate: _____
- Not too many images for the sake of filling up space/time/lack of substance: _____
- Pictures/images/graphs well-placed throughout the presentation: _____
- Logical flow of material: _____

Appearance and dress: _____

- Students dressed in formal/business casual dress: _____

Total: _____

Appendix F

Self-Evaluation Sheet

Name of group member: _____

Due on: _____

Purpose: To gauge effective researching, writing, and collaboration skills.

***All rankings are on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being the lowest (nothing) and 10 being the highest (everything). Everything else is in-between.**

***Add up all 5 categories and then divide by 5 for the final grade**

- 1) Writing: _____
 - 2) Researching: _____
 - 3) Planning: _____
 - 4) Organizing: _____
 - 5) Overall contribution to the group project: _____
- If other, please list here:

Final grade: _____

Example on how we do this:

- 1) Writing: 8
 - 2) Researching: 9
 - 3) Planning: 8
 - 4) Organizing: 7
 - 5) Overall contribution to the group project: 9
- If other, please list here: Always available through email, good team worker

$$\text{Group member 1} = 8 + 9 + 8 + 7 + 9 = 41$$

$$\text{Group member 1} = 41/5 = 8.2$$

$$\text{Group member 1} = 8.2 * 10 = \text{B (82)}$$

$$\text{Group member 1 final grade: B (82)}$$

If your group has 5 members (including your own self evaluation), I will take the 82 + Group member 2's grade + Group member 3's grade + Group member 4's grade + Group member 5's grade = Whatever the grade / 5 = Total grade (I will add all of these up and divide them by the number of group members in your group)

Total grade from self & peer evaluations. + grade from my grade book then divide by 2 to get = your final average for my class!

Appendix G

Peer Evaluation Sheet

Name of group member: _____

Due on: _____

Purpose: To gauge effective researching, writing, and collaboration skills.

***All rankings are on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being the lowest (nothing) and 10 being the highest (everything). Everything else is in-between.**

***Add up all 5 categories and then divide by 5 for the final grade**

- 1) Writing: _____
- 2) Researching: _____
- 3) Planning: _____
- 4) Organizing: _____
- 5) Overall contribution to the group project: _____

If other, please list here:

Final grade: _____

Example on how we do this:

- 1) Writing: 8
 - 2) Researching: 9
 - 3) Planning: 8
 - 4) Organizing: 7
 - 5) Overall contribution to the group project: 9
- If other, please list here: Always available through email, good team worker

$$\text{Group member 1} = 8 + 9 + 8 + 7 + 9 = 41$$

$$\text{Group member 1} = 41/5 = 8.2$$

$$\text{Group member 1} = 8.2 * 10 = \text{B (82)}$$

$$\text{Group member 1 final grade: B (82)}$$

If your group has 5 members (including your own self evaluation), I will take the 82 + Group member 2's grade + Group member 3's grade + Group member 4's grade + Group member 5's grade = Whatever the grade / 5 = Total grade (I will add all of these up and divide them by the number of group members in your group)

Total grade from self & peer evaluations. + grade from my grade book then divide by 2 to get = your final average for my class!

Appendix H

Composition 1302 Survey (paper version)

Thank you for taking the time to answer this survey. The purpose of this survey is to determine the effectiveness of using service-learning projects within a composition classroom. Please do not sign the survey or give any personal information. All results are considered anonymous. If you choose not to answer the survey, your grade will not be penalized in this class. Please mark an "X" in each box you choose. Please make sure that all of your choices are clearly marked.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Collaborative writing was very useful to me in this class.					
My writing team's non-profit organization was useful to our writing as a source of knowledge.					
My teammates contributed equally.					
This composition class was well-structured around our writing teams.					
My composition instructor's input was beneficial to the outcome of the entire portfolio-project (Presentations, emails, interviews, volunteering, writing of the essay, etc.).					
This composition class has provided the opportunity to look at writing and researching from another perspective.					
I took advantage of the one-on-one workshops with my composition instructor throughout the semester.					
Please circle which letter grade you think you have earned.	A	B	C	D	F

Please add any additional thoughts below:

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