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INSIDE AND OUTSIDE 1101: FIRST-YEAR STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC WRITING

by

LAURA E. JONES

Under the Direction of Dr. Elizabeth Burmester

ABSTRACT

First-year undergraduate students have vastly different perceptions of academic writing, the writing process, and the value of writing within their specific academic disciplines. These perceptions differ not only from their instructors but also from their peers. Yet, while reams of literature discuss, debate, and decipher student perspectives of writing from a scholarly point of view, the first-year student voice is conspicuously absent from this discussion. This study followed 92 first-year students through their first college composition course, English 1101, in order to capture the student perspective of how writing fits in their academic careers. The results indicate that while most students acknowledge first-year composition to be essential to their academic development, few report writing assignments in courses outside of 1101. This raises questions about how students identify writing activities and also suggests avenues for further inquiry, particularly the need for follow-up research at the culmination of their undergraduate careers.

INDEX WORDS: Composition research, Empirical research, First-year composition, Student engagement, Student writing perceptions, Tutoring writing, Writing centers

# INSIDE AND OUTSIDE 1101: FIRST-YEAR STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC WRITING

by

LAURA E. JONES

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master in Arts

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2011

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE 1101: FIRST-YEAR STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC WRITING

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December 2011

# DEDICATION

Every word

on

every page

of this project

is dedicated

to the memory

of my father,

Dr. Calvin Johnson Jr.

He was a dedicated teacher,

a brilliant researcher,

and he was

an

indescribably wonderful

dad.

Ous!

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I miss being able to share my accomplishments with my grandmother Corine, grandfather Andrew, and uncle Larry. They will always be sources of encouragement. To my grandfather, Calvin Sr., and my grandmother, Vivian Braun you are cheerleaders second to none. To my mother Ann, sister Julie, and brother Joseph – you have given me so very much to be thankful for. And thanks to my husband, Michael, who has been my strength, and my sunshine on cloudy days. To everyone, from the bottom of my heart, thank you…thank you…thank you…

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## INTRODUCTION

When I was a student at a two-year institution in Georgia, I took a class that completely altered the course of my academic life. That class was English 1102 and the problem was the professor – an adjunct who was knowledgeable, prepared, and had a clear and fair grading system – but was utterly incapable of engaging his audience: the culturally diverse group of first-year composition students who comprised his classroom. The most striking manifestation of the tension in the classroom was the silence. We were quickly made to feel that our attempts at meaningful contribution to class dialogue were inadequate but were never made to understand why; the most direct communication we received from our professor appeared in red ink on our submissions. Our voices were silenced, our inquiries were ignored, and our attempts to share or even develop our perspectives on academic writing were simply dismissed. Since that experience, I have become quite concerned with finding a way to make required first-year composition courses valuable and meaningful for every student, and I have become quite convinced that acknowledging student perspectives is a crucial component of creating that meaning and value.

Fast-forward to the early days of my graduate-level studies. As a tutor in the GSU Writing Studio, I have had the opportunity to work with scores of first-year composition students as they tackle assignments designed to produce expected learning outcomes such as engaging in writing as a process, and the collaborative, social aspects of writing, using writing as a tool for learning, and producing coherent, organized, readable prose for a variety of rhetorical situations.

When these students sit down with me, drafts in hand, many offer apologies for their "horrible writing," intimate how much they hate writing, and express how happy they will be

when they are through with their writing requirement. The students who make this particular remark will come back to the Writing Studio as juniors and seniors, well entrenched in the upper-level courses in their majors, struggling frantically to construct "coherent, organized, readable prose" for their capstone course or final paper. These students still apologize for being horrible writers and still express how much they hate writing but now confide that they wish they had held onto their *Everyday Writer* or *Harbrace Handbook*.

When I ask these students what they remember from their 1101 and 1102 courses that might help them approach the task at hand, many are completely unable to connect the writing they did in 1101 and 1102 to their current writing activities. They tell me they just took the courses because they had to but never thought about how what they learned in those courses would have anything to do with their sociology, biology, pre-nursing, or international business degrees. Concerned only with checking these courses off of their list of requirements, they failed to retain the learning outcomes of English 1101 and 1102 – and struggle to come up with a strategy with which to approach their assignments.

However, the first-year and upper-level undergraduate students who seek assistance in the GSU Writing Studio share an important trait. Regardless of the exigencies of their Writing Studio visits, they realize that there is a concerned and accommodating audience ready to listen to their questions and ideas about writing. While their own unique perspectives of academic writing may be underdeveloped, they know that in the GSU Writing Studio, they have opportunities to articulate, discuss, lament, and celebrate their writing processes, writing challenges, writing debacles, and writing triumphs. They realize on some level that it's not too late to try to understand what academic writing is all about.

And it was in these early one-on-one conversations with these novice academic writers that I began to wonder just how much of a role first-year composition courses play in the development of student perspectives of academic writing. So, I began to read about the various strategies composition scholars have developed to improve the student experience and I immediately noticed two things. Firstly, much of the academic discussion regarding the most effective way to teach first-year composition concerns embarking on a scholarly exploration of student perspectives of writing. And secondly, while many of the scholars I've read suggest the student perspective is conspicuously absent from conversation within and regarding the academic community, academic discourse, and best pedagogical practices, any steps those scholars have taken to invite students to react to, respond to, or participate in their discussions do not appear in our literature.

The inclusion of student voice in these articles is limited to analyses of excerpts of their work and the occasional synopsis of a student reaction to a classroom episode. Despite our repeated calls for student response to pedagogical questions and concerns raised in scholarly literature, we academicians, composition theorists, and teachers continue to exclude, ignore, and omit student response from our critical dialogues. We argue about how to and whether or not we should be responsible for initiating first-year composition students into academic communities of discourse without asking those students if they want to belong or if they even understand what a community of discourse is.

We staunchly defend pedagogies that privilege students' own language over the language of the academy without pausing to consider their expectations – perhaps they *want* training in an elevated style of speech or composition. We discuss and debate methods for presenting information to our student audience but how much of their expectations and perspectives do we

take into account while we prepare our teaching strategies? As the primary audience for our students, we know that in order to get what we need from them, our students must understand our expectations and acknowledge our perspectives. It should follow, then, that in order for our students to get what they need from us, we must understand and acknowledge their expectations and perspectives.

I maintain that if a goal of contemporary composition pedagogy is to help students negotiate the academic community through language, questions that scholars pose regarding the student perspective must extend beyond the rhetorical to engage real student voices. So, in order to capture a snapshot of the first-year student perspective of academic writing at GSU, I embarked on a semester-long study of four English 1101 courses on campus. During the course of this project, I conducted surveys at the beginning, midpoint, and end of the semester, and I invited students to voluntarily provide additional information via email and follow-up interviews. This rhetorical inquiry invited participants to share their perspectives of, expectations of, goals for, and experiences with the writing assignments they completed both inside and outside of English 1101, and over the course of the project, I collected data which illustrate the surprising differences in the ways in which first-year students at a single institution perceive academic writing. These differences manifest themselves in the ways that students in the same classes describe their writing assignments, and in the ways that student descriptions of assignments vary from descriptions provided by the instructors who created those assignments.

This research is a response to the absence of any significant student participation in published scholarship regarding student perspectives of academic writing. Its aims are to demonstrate the necessity of including students in the critical discussion of the relationship between student perspective and composition pedagogy, and to identify additional paths of

student perspective inquiry. At the conclusion of this study, I find that survey and interview responses provide insight regarding two specific question of pedagogical concern: What can we learn about student perspectives of writing from first-year composition students? When we invite first-year composition students to share their perspectives of writing, what gaps in our understanding of their writing experiences might benefit from further inquiry?

Results of this study support theoretical claims by scholars such as David Bartholomae and others, who argue that our primary goal as first-year composition instructors should be to empower students to participate in the discourses of the academy. Bartholomae in particular acknowledges that "education has failed to involve students in scholarly project, projects that allow students to act as though they were colleagues in an academic enterprise" (48). In other words, student participation in theoretical research and conversation in a role that allows them to be more than simply the subject of that research or conversation is a necessary but missing component of the undergraduate academic experience. When efforts to analyze student perspectives are limited to the data collected from national multi-institutional studies (such as NSSE), those efforts in effect become limited by the enormous scopes of those large studies.

The results of those studies provide immensely valuable data about general trends in composition pedagogy, but the perspectives of our specific student population drowns in the enormity of the national sample size. One obvious way to capture undergraduate student perspectives of academic writing is to include those students in small-scale studies, and invite them to respond to our theories about their writing perspectives. To enable them to participate in academic discourse, we need to create an environment that provides and encourages this discourse. This study provides that opportunity. Results of this study also identify avenues of future inquiry, particularly a follow-up study that investigates how the perspectives of upper-

class students regarding connections between the writing they do in their first-year composition courses and the writing they do in other academic courses change over the course of their programs of study.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

While this collection of literature is by no means exhaustive, it provides sufficient evidence of both scholarly appeals for student participation in the critical dialogue regarding their perspectives and the virtual dearth of published examples. These appeals span across at least three decades of scholarship and appear again and again among various topics in composition theory and pedagogy. There are two common threads that connect this literature. One is an underlying recognition of and reaction to an emerging consciousness that traditional pedagogies are steeped in Western middle-class values that influence the instructor/student relationship by marginalizing student voice and student perspective. The other is evidence of the absence of any significant inclusion of student reaction, reflection, or response to the ongoing debates about the best ways to approach teaching them, despite calls for that inclusion.

In each of the various topics, both explicitly and implicitly, scholars state the importance of involving students in critical dialogue, acknowledging this involvement as not only a means to enable those students to participate in academic discourse, but also a necessary dimension of scholarly self-criticism. Scattered among the abundance of scholarship about student perspectives of writing is a third thread of literature which places the student perspective in a prominent position within the discussion, and which explores the survey and study designs of small-scale studies that have yielded rich and valuable data. Also included in this thread are

analyses of the nationally recognized large-scale and longitudinal studies after which I modeled my research. I will examine those studies in the discussion of my research findings.

In this section, I will begin by examining texts which do analyze student perspectives and student voices, but which fail to provide opportunity for the student to join the discussion. The next section of this literature review will examine texts which consider the concept of the academic discourse community, and argue both for and against the importance of urging students to join those communities, yet do not afford students a voice in this conversation. The third section looks at discussions of student and teacher identity – and particularly how issues of identity play a role in student acceptance of and participation in academic discourse communities. Finally, I will look at how the discussion of identity often shifts into arguments of language. Should first-year composition instructors push the language of the academy, privilege students' own language, or treat both? As this literature review progresses from publications which include case studies of student experiences to publications which investigate academic discourse communities, student identity, and the relationships that language has with both, it becomes evident that despite repeated calls for inclusion of genuine student voices in these discussions, that voice is absent.

The closest that academic publications come to inclusion of student perspectives or student voices occurs in published case studies of authentic student experiences. With few exceptions, these studies provide fascinating descriptions of and insight into the experiences of first-year composition students but stop short of engaging in actual discussion with those students. Those who write about first-year composition students analyze those experiences from a scholarly perspective and through the lenses of their theories and pedagogies, sometimes

assuming or assigning meaning that in many cases may be more accurate if the students' own immediate or retrospective analyses were also included.

One of the most intriguing looks at the student experience comes from anthropologist Rebekah Nathan's critically acclaimed ethnographic study, My Freshman Year: What a Professor Learned by Becoming a Student. Nathan (who is actually using a pseudonym) poses as a first-year student at an American university, which she purposely does not identify, for ethical reasons. The purpose of her study was to learn more about undergraduate culture in order to better understand and respond to the needs of her own students. But the focus of Nathan's narrative is on her own observations – not on the observations and insights about life as an undergraduate that the community of students she has immersed herself in has shared with her. And Nathan also seems to miss a huge opportunity to explore the role that the composition classroom plays in the first-year student experience.

However, in Nancy Sommers' and Laura Saltz's "The Novice as Expert: Writing the Freshman Year," Sommers and Saltz do delve into the role of the composition classroom, and discover a story, based on their longitudinal study of first-year writers at Harvard University, that captures the depth of the "central role writing plays in helping students make the transition *to* college" (127). And what distinguishes this look at the first-year experience from Nathan's look is that Sommers and Saltz rely on authentic student responses to paint the picture of the first-year student experience.

Over the course of this study which follows over 400 students from the Harvard freshman class of 2001 through the entire length of their undergraduate careers, Sommers and Saltz used interviews and surveys, and collected thousands of writing samples, to piece together a model of the first-year student transition from high-school to college and illuminate the role that writing

plays in that transition. Sommers and Saltz discovered that all of the students who participated in this study seemed to recognize that the writing assignments they completed not only deprived them of sleep, but also helped them to not only learn, but also articulate the new concepts they were studying in all of their classes.

Sommers and Saltz were "unprepared for the pride of accomplishment…"experienced by first-year writers "of holding in their hands the physical representation of their thinking" (129). When asked to reflect back to their freshman writing experiences, students who participated in this study shared that learning to navigate the uncharted waters of academic writing conventions was often uncomfortable, and often left them in doubt of their own abilities, but eventually helped them to situate themselves in the academic hierarchy so that they could ultimately successfully move on from the novice writer classification. And, the authentic student responses and reflections that Sommers and Saltz use to inform their research shed an honest and natural light on the role that writing plays in making the transition from novice to expert. However, their study only focuses on a student population who have been coached and guided to this phase of their academic journey. First-year students – particularly those who come from underserved populations, or who are for whatever reason academically underprepared for the writing they will do in college, describe a different kind of anxiety associated with the writing process. These students aren't worried about whether or not they are successfully meeting higher academic standards than they are accustomed to; they are struggling to master the basic conventions of standard academic English.

Jenny Cook-Gumperz's "Dilemmas of Identity: Oral and Written Literacies in the Making of a Basic Writing Student" is the case study of an adult African-American woman's experience in a basic-writing course at an urban institution. It explores the relationship between

spoken language and academic discourse and how this relationship affects writing as well as the overall educational experience. Cook-Gumperz's study examines why the transition from speech to composition poses such a challenge and considers the various ramifications of the forced shift from a minority dialect to the dominant one. She observes that composition theorists are "more likely to focus on teacher's strategies rather than attempting to see issues from the student's point of view" causing "the difficulties that students have in making the transition from speaking to writing seem less urgent than the need to produce 'college worthy' prose" (340). While Cook-Gumperz does present the student's writing samples, she uses them only to illustrate her theories, and does not give the student space in this article to reflect on her writing process and her experience transitioning from speech to composition. The student's writing samples are dissected and analyzed – used for demonstration only.

Nora Bacon's piece comes closer than Cook-Gumperz's does to exemplifying the value of considering student perspectives when evaluating one's pedagogy or teaching practices. Bacon's "Building a Swan's Nest for Instruction in Rhetoric" describes her observations of an instructor who taught a pilot service-learning course at San Francisco State University. The initial class was unsuccessful – the instructor felt the class was "ill-suited to help students writing outside the university" (591). The second course, however, was successful and demonstrated that rhetorical awareness is taught when students are exposed to different rhetorical situations, both inside and outside the classroom, and given the opportunity to fully analyze those situations. This success was due in part to reflections students offered in response to the challenges they faced in the first class. Bacon observes that in the developing writing territory of community service writing, students, when "faced with tasks that appeared frighteningly unfamiliar…wanted help coping with *differences* between classroom and community writing" rather than the initial

focus on sentence-level skills that the instructor provided. Insights gleaned from her students' perspectives helped the instructor improve the course the following semester. Bacon's essay provides a great deal of reflection and interpretation of student responses, but very few verbatim examples of what the students *themselves* had to say.

Helen Rothschild Ewald and David L. Wallace come the closest to including their students' perspectives as a critical component of their piece, but then also subject those perspectives to heavy analyses. Ewald and Wallace collaborate in "Exploring Agency in Classroom Discourse or, Should David have Told his Story?" to examine the hermeneutic approach of Wallace's first year college writing class through the reconstruction and analysis of a particular incident. They dissect the various perspectives reflected in Wallace's and four student participants' responses to a recording from a class in which Wallace relates a personal story during what seemed to be shaping up to be a heated and tense class discussion. The transcript of the recorded episode provides an excellent example of how Wallace works to empower students to actively engage in the class, and interviews with two of the students offer the sole occurrence of student analyses of a classroom situation within this collection of pertinent literature. However, Ewald and Wallace use another set of student interviews that took place before the incident as further student perspective regarding that incident. In using that additional set of interviews, they assign meaning to those students' reflections that the students themselves may not have intended. While this essay offers a provocative glimpse of how scholarly literature can benefit from student participation in the dialogue, it also demonstrates how that participation is still subject to interpretation of and manipulation by the names which will appear in the by-line.

From this first thread of literature, a vivid picture begins to emerge, of the richly dynamic dimension that is added to our conversations when the student voice is included in our scholarly dialogue. When scholars and teachers consider including student voices in scholarly dialogue, they either implicitly or explicitly consider how or where that voice fits into their academic community of discourse. But the concept of the discourse community is often a problematic one. The pieces in the following thread of literature shift focus from what students have to say to examining the intellectual space that they are invited to, or excluded from, saying it in.

The intellectual distance between an individual classroom community and the larger academic community it exists within does not seem like it would be that far, but that distance is roughly equivalent to the distance that often exists between composition theory and what actually happens in the classroom. Sometimes the two walk hand in hand, but sometimes there is huge divide. Literature that addresses the concept of the discourse community ultimately demonstrates that this theoretical academic space is not as accessible as many theorists would like it to be. Like so many other aspects of composition pedagogy, scholars and theorists have widely divergent views on the definition of discourse community, the utility of discourse communities, strategies for including incoming students into discourse communities, strategies for helping students acquire the language of the academic discourse community, and theories regarding how students and professors alike construct identities within these communities. Again, the connective thread that runs through this scholarship is the answerless call for the student perspective.

MaryCarmen Cruz and Ogle Burk Duff address the significance of the social, academic, and cultural implications of learning to write for an academic audience. They discuss the relationship between emerging student identities and their introduction to the academic

community and describe the composition classroom as the place where students learn to become a part of the academic culture by becoming proficient in academic discourse. Their brief discussion paints a fairly rosy and optimistic picture of community but they assume that most students automatically aspire to belong to this place. Perhaps they are right, but they don't ask.

Joy S. Ritchie takes a more critical look at the concept of community than do Cruz and Duff, and she investigates the influences – both positive and negative – that academic writing communities have on student writing. Ritchie considers critics who argue that when students are excluded from academic communities of discourse, they are denied the opportunity to master those codes, and are consequently denied the opportunity to succeed not only academically, but eventually professionally as well. However, this argument also implies that students *must* aspire to participate in these discourse communities in order to achieve. Ritchie uses her observations of a first-year composition course, along with student reactions and reflections, to illustrate the difficulties students have transitioning from high-school to college writing.

One student in particular describes the anxiety she felt trying to accept that it was okay to write in the first person. Ritchie situates her observations, student writing examples, and student reactions contextually within this debate over whether or not to house composition instruction within the walls of an academic discourse community, in order to illustrate the contrasting theoretical concepts that fuel this argument. As Ritchie switches from student reflection to instructor reaction, to her observation, to a quote from Vygotsky or Bartholomae, or Bahktin, she achieves the closest approximation of student participation in scholarly discourse that I have found. If the students who participated in Ritchie's study were given the opportunity to respond the analysis of their responses, then that circle of communication would be complete. Ritchie concludes her essay "Beginning Writers: Diverse Voices and Individual Identity" by stating that

"students will be most valuable as members of our communities not by merely 'fitting in' or acquiescing to the requirements of the institution, but by making some unique contribution to the evolving dialogue" (173). The element missing from Ritchie's piece was the space for students to respond to the theoretical concepts which supported Ritchie's argument. However, Joseph Harris offers compelling rationale for why students must be given that space to respond.

In "The Idea of Community in Student Writing" Harris suggests that as teachers of writing, the aim should be to "offer [students] the chance to reflect critically on those discourses – of home, school, work, the media, and the like – to which they already belong" (268). According to Harris, the three biggest problems with the idea of the academic discourse community are the inadequate definition, the establishment of an intellectual space that is foreign and inaccessible to incoming students, and the resultant divide that "polarize[s] our talk about writing…defend[ing] the power of the discourse community or the imagination of the individual writer" (261). Based on his personal experience as well as his classroom experience, Harris determines that the task of teachers isn't to recruit students into a new community or cause them to leave one for another, but to recognize that these communities exist, blend, and overlap, and that students and teachers alike should be able to examine and reflect critically upon them.

Harris illuminates the disconnect between the idealistic view of community as, "a kind of stabilizing term used to give a sense of shared purpose and effort to our dealings with the various discourses that make up the university", and his experience of the actual reality of community (263). Harris also discusses that another problem with the idea of the discourse community is the creation of insiders and outsiders – faculty and students – who exist in "two separate communities with strikingly different ways of making sense of the world" and asks, "if to enter the academic community a student must 'learn to speak our language,' become accustomed and

reconciled to our ways of doing things with words, then how exactly is she to do this" (265). One implication of Harris' discussion of the concept of the discourse community is the frank concession that while the student perspective could constitute a vital component of academic discourse (representing the real-time experiences of the element of the academic community which stands to benefit – or suffer – the most from the policies adopted as a result of academic discourse) students who contribute their perspectives are more often than not still subjects of, and not participants in that discourse.

Students who do learn to successfully negotiate their communities of discourse undoubtedly possess what it takes to become recognized members of their fields – how to talk like the pros, walk like the pros, write like the pros. And at its best, the discourse community becomes a neatly packaged set of conventions and concepts that inform the way language is used within a specific discipline. But at its worst, the discourse community can become a self-serving academic construct that creates a host of binary relationships: insiders and outsiders, student language and academic discourse, us and them.

Discussion regarding issues about the academic discourse community inevitably evolves into discussion about identity issues within those discourse communities. Undergraduate students who are encouraged to participate within their academic communities of discourse will often step up to the challenge and thrive, but other students resist or even reject the invitation, sometimes because they may feel that to assume an academic identity would deny their own principles, values, or beliefs. Teachers also grapple with their identities in discourse communities, seeming to regard the idea of sharing this sacred academic space as either an integral component of their pedagogy, or a key problem with others'. The next thread of literature examines issues of identity within academia and the composition classroom.

Issues of student and teacher identity are key elements of discussions regarding how to help first-year students become acclimated to academic community. Instructors voice concerns about how to create a learning environment that is simultaneously empowering and instructive yet neither compromises, nor amplifies, their inherent authority as teachers. Theorists discuss pedagogies which aim to guide first-year students to identify as members of discourse communities (without necessarily asking students if fully comprehend what it means to become members of discourse communities, or if they even know what a discourse community is). This portion of the literature offers analyses of both student and teacher classroom identities that are rich in instructor reflection, but comparatively barren of student reflection; however, each of the essayists included in this review do explicitly mention the roles student perspectives have played in shaping either their own classroom identities or their pedagogies.

Robert Yagelski's looks at the identity of the writing teacher and particularly the trait of authority, which he finds can often be problematic. His essay, "The Ambivalence of Reflection: Critical Pedagogies, Identity, and the Writing Teacher" examines the uncomfortable nature of self-critique through reflective practice and critical pedagogy. He relates personal teaching experiences that demonstrate the challenges he's faced in striking a balance in the classroom between his inherent authority as the teacher and establishing an environment that successfully engages and empowers his students as generative collaborators. Through discussion of Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Pedagogy of Hope, Yagelski illuminates a fascinating paradox; teachers who engage in critical pedagogy and are conscious of ideologies that "assign authority and credibility…can never stand completely outside that ideology because part of [their] effectiveness as…liberatory educator[s] depends upon that identity of 'teacher-as-hero'" (42).

This suggests that the complexity of the teacher-student relationship must be examined through an analysis of what the pedagogical needs of the student are and that the "goal of a teacher is to make himself or herself obsolete…to convince students of their own abilities in order to enable them to develop those abilities on their own" (44). His discussion of his use of student evaluations to improve teaching reinforces the importance of understanding "students and their views and needs rather than impos[ing] your own agenda on them" (40). Yagelski concludes by stating "something that [he] think[s] committed teachers eventually come to understand about writing: that good teaching is not about the teacher" (43). Yagelski presents the inclusion of the student perspective as a necessary part of critical pedagogical self-evaluation.

However, as novice writers, the ability to effectively articulate perspective may not come readily to students – at least not in the first draft. Nancy Welch's article, "Revising a Writer's Identity: Reading and 'Re-Modeling' in a Composition Class," examines the role revision plays in the growth of the writer's individual voice. She talks about students who imitate or emulate their favorite authors as they develop their own styles and voices and discusses how instructors can approach revision as a way of facilitating their progress. Welch addresses how psychoanalytical and feminist theories operate in the classroom – especially with the stories that emerge when students are encouraged to write about personal experiences – and seeks to find a balance between classroom as counseling center and the complete repression of emotion from student text. She also discusses what these theories contend regarding the development of the student-teacher relationship.

This essay demonstrates through excerpts of her own students' reflections and responses how those responses help the instructor evaluate her pedagogy. Welch relates how both she and the students in her class were "in a process of identifying and re-identifying ourselves to and

with others" (42). Brief passages from her students' "learning letters" indicate that she engages in ongoing dialogue that reinforces a conventional student/teacher relationship while encouraging students to think critically about the work they do in her class. Welch concludes with a message that echoes Yagelski's: instructors should use student reflections to evaluate their teaching strategies. The next step would be to learn how these same reflective practices affect the student learning experience.

Part of the student learning experience involves learning how to negotiate the requirements of being a college student, and learning how to meet the academic and social expectations of their new academic community. The principles of Welch's and Yagelski's reflective composition instructor are often at odds with the institutional standards that they feel they must uphold. "Students' Goals, Gatekeeping, and Some Questions of Ethics" delves into the problematic concept of 'gate-keeping' and the ethical considerations that accompany it. In this essay, Jeff Smith contends that before students even reach the composition classroom, they have already been through other forms of gate-keeping: college admissions, placement tests, etc. Smith discusses the "compositionists' silence[…]on the question of what students come to us seeking" (304) and suggests that students remain silent regarding their goals and expectations because of their perception of the teacher as an authority figure – one who is ultimately responsible for their success or failure in that particular class. He maintains that, to a certain degree, gate-keeping is the ethical responsibility of the instructor because students must successfully pass such tests in the normal order of society and in order to progress successfully through school and life. Smith discusses how understanding who our students are can help us evaluate our pedagogies, and then offers a composite sketch of the typical student as: "not randomly chosen members either of the US population at large or of their particular race, class,

gender, and sexual preference communities…[but] those [who] minimally…have (a) chosen to attend college and (b) been admitted" (302). This rough description and Smith's observation of "the very unwillingness of many compositionists…to address the question of students' wishes head-on" reinforce Smith's message that by and large, students don't benefit from first-year composition classes because who they are and what they want are largely ignored.

The ongoing discussions of issues of identity often segue into discussions and debates surrounding whether first-year composition classes should teach the language of the academy, privilege students' own language, develop some type of hybrid, or shift from one to another. Attitudes regarding this thread seem to sway back and forth, with equally valid arguments for each solution. The essays included in this segment each caution against making assumptions that lead to ineffectual pedagogies and suggest that some consideration be paid to student perspective. It follows then that perhaps the debate should shift from which strategy is the most effective to which strategy is the most effective for a specific class at a specific moment – a shift that could only benefit from the added dimension of student contribution. Again, while I don't mean to imply that we must submit to student perspectives in order to validate decades of academic research, I do assert that including the student perspective as a major component of our academic discussion can provide the balance that is currently missing between theory and practice, and provide a contemporary response to dated landmark scholarship that is still frequently cited today.

Academic discussions of how writing is taught reveals certain assumptions about what goes on in the composition classroom. Included in these assumptions are ideas that writing ability is evaluated through the error; that writing is a skill, instead of a discipline; and that many students need to be remediated. In "The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the

University," Mike Rose seeks to examine how to "effect a true curricular change that will situate writing firmly in the undergraduate curriculum" (342). He presents a historical overview of pedagogical methods and theories, and delves into a timeline of research, beginning with studies that identify and quantify error, suggesting that through drills and repetition writing can be improved. This approach essentially equates good writing with correct writing, and suggests that only when students can write like their instructors can they participate as a full-fledged member of that academic community.

Rose discusses composition as a skill versus as a body of knowledge and argues that writing is "essential to the very existence of certain kinds of knowledge" (348). He also discusses the political factors that lead to the way writing instruction is viewed and regulated, and the implications that those views have for the student as well as the professor. Rose talks about the various reasons students read and use writing in their lives outside of school and offers those reasons as evidence that many of the students universities designate as illiterate or remedial simply use language in ways the academy doesn't recognize. This suggests that a conversation with students regarding their language use could help refute those claims – but only if the professors who converse with those students can turn off their internal grammar-checkers long enough to really hear what those students have to say.

Once composition instructors have quieted those internal-grammar checkers and engaged in open dialogue with their students, those instructors may then have a clearer path on which to guide students toward mastery of academic writing. Peter Elbow's "Reflection on Academic Discourse: How it Relates to Freshmen and Colleagues" begins with his definition of academic discourse as: "the discourse that academics use when they publish for other academics" and elaborates by adding that language should "reflect sound understanding of what they [students]

are studying in disciplinary courses" (135, 137). He discusses the power that accompanies mastery of academic language, and the importance of recognizing the differences in language training that students from different classes come to freshman composition classes with.

Elbow argues for teaching nonacademic discourse in freshman composition in order to help writers of all backgrounds develop their writing process and in order to simply encourage them to write. Part of his argument for teaching nonacademic discourse rests on the fact that much of the discussion regarding academic discourse neglects or ignores the fact that most of the students in these first-year composition courses are not English majors. Elbow also discusses and provides examples of the flawed writing that occurs when students mimic the academic language conventions without being able to authentically use them. A response from students who have completed their college composition requirements would provide valuable perspective regarding what sort of writing practices ultimately enabled them to progress from discourse mimicry to mastery, and how they learned to incorporate those practices into their writing processes.

Some might argue that at some point during the journey from novice student writer to accomplished student writer, the composition student begins to create a niche for herself in her academic writing community. Not quite ready to identify as a writer, yet measurably more confident and competent than she was in her first week, the student has struck a balance between her unique individual voice, and the particular conventions of her academic discourse community. Linda Adler-Kassner's essay, "Ownership Revisited: An Exploration in Progressive Era and Expressionist Composition Scholarship" discusses studying student ownership of writing in order to create a balance between preserving students' own languages and cultures and learning academic language and culture. She cautions that the "common-sensical" idea of

student-ownership is yet a tenet of the dominant ideology in the field; pedagogies that emphasize a student-centered approach may still reflect a majority value-system.

Adler-Kassner explores this problem by posing two questions: "how do representations of ownership in these [progressive and expressivist] compositionists' work reflect the cultures from which they emerged? And what are their ramifications for the teaching of writing today?" (209). She provides a historical backdrop of the development of the progressive and expressivist movements, details their key theories and arguments, and describes the influence they have had on composition pedagogy, particularly where student ownership is concerned. Despite the current focus on individualism, students still express concern for producing written work that their instructors will reward. Adler-Kassner discusses service-learning writing as way to create a sense of community that is similar to the academic community and that offers students a chance to engage in writing with an authentic purpose. She also talks about the failures that occur and the fallacies that emerge when assumptions are made about student's language use. A student response to those resultant failures and fallacies could very well work to illustrate the pedagogical pitfalls of which Adler-Kassner warns. And consideration of the student response will illuminate answers to many of the pedagogical concerns that these theorists raise.

Perhaps the most compelling argument for inclusion of the student response in our research, our scholarship, our best practices, and our critical reflection comes from David Bartholomae. At the onset of Bartholomae's highly regarded "Inventing the University," Bartholomae states that "education has failed to involve students in scholarly projects, projects that allow students to act as though they were colleagues in academic enterprise" (48). He supports his position that composition instructors must enable students to participate in the discourse of the academy through a discussion and analysis of students' first attempts at

academic discourse. Using examples from and excerpts of actual student essays, he illustrates how students typically try to meet what they perceive are the expectations of the instructor or the assignment, and he illustrates where, typically, they fall short.

Bartholomae reviewed 500 essays to "determine the stylistic resources that enabled writers to locate themselves within an 'academic' discourse" (51). He suggests that most students recognize that there are new or different conventions one must follow when writing within the academic community, but have to guess at how to meet those expectations. They imitate the language and styles they think best reflect academic prose. While there is not space in his discussion to return to consideration of how student involvement in scholarly projects could also help academic language development, in the time that has lapsed since this oft-cited essay, a student response could illustrate the practical gains which have been made thanks to his theoretical contributions.

Each of the sources that I have mentioned in this review has been instrumental in shaping the theoretical foundation of my project: the need for student voice in scholarly dialogue. But there is one specific resource that helped me to shape the instrument I used to test these theories, and that resource is the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). For over a decade, NSSE has been used by more than 1100 American colleges and universities to assess students' academic experiences from the student point of view. The annual study asks undergraduate students at all levels of study (freshman, sophomore, etc.) to answer twenty-eight sets of questions which include ones about their daily school activities, their study habits, their perceptions of the accessibility of instructors and advisors, their perceptions of the availability and effectiveness of resources for academic assistance, their perceived preparedness for college, their social outlets, and factors outside of school which impact their academic performances.

According to the foreword to the results of the 2008 NSSE, the ultimate goal of the study is to "assess the extent to which…[students]…engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning." NSSE is particularly important to this project, because NSSE demonstrates that student responses, reactions, and reflections can and do affect change, not only at the classroom level, and not only at the institutional level, but at the national level as well. Recently, NSSE has added a twenty-seven question component that focuses on the role of writing. Results from the NSSE Writing component, along with other institutional assessment projects, have led to the implementation of programs similar the Critical Thinking through Writing Initiative at Georgia State University, a program which requires students to take two writing intensive courses in their majors. Again, these major institutional changes were due in part to issues and concerns voiced by students.

The need for student response to these discussions about their writing education is clear. Without inclusion of the student perspective concerning these critical pedagogical issues, academic debate regarding best pedagogical practices is purely one-sided, regardless of whose side the debater is on. In an effort to restore balance to the academic playing field, this study will rely on the student response to shed light on answers to pedagogical questions.

## THE STUDY

Inarguably, the continued growth of university writing programs relies on continuous identification and assessment of classroom practices, activities, and environments that lead to successful outcomes for first-year composition students. However, there is an element that is often missing from the published research we rely on to inform our assessments of our programs:

the student perspective. The primary aim of this study is to illuminate the student perspective through the analysis of those specific practices, activities, and environments that English 1101 students themselves identify as having particular value – not just for the writing they do in the composition classroom but for the writing they do in their other classes as well.

Georgia State University requires all students to take a two-course sequence of writing classes, and all first-year students are strongly encouraged to take English 1101 in their first semester. There are typically twenty-five students in the classroom, and in Fall 2007, there were one hundred and twelve sections different sections. The majority of the instructors use a default textbook which is decided on and periodically reviewed by a departmental textbook committee, and the majority of the instructors of 1101 are graduate teaching assistants. In fact, in Fall 2007, only seven sections of 1101 were taught by full-time lecturers, and only one section was taught by a full-faculty member. While there are required departmental learning outcomes that each course must achieve, a set expectation of the amount and types of assignments that each instructor must require, and a clear rubric which each instructor uses as the foundation for their assessment of student writing, there is also an enormous amount of freedom granted to each instructor to conduct the course in the manner in which she is most comfortable and effective. So at the end of the semester, each of the roughly two-thousand students who complete English 1101 have covered the same concepts, but would describe their day – day classroom experiences as remarkably different.

This project seeks to engage students in the identification of writing activities that they find add to the value of the first-year composition course. For the purposes of this study, valuable writing activities are defined as those which students report help them to apply English 1101 learning objectives to their overall academic or professional writing goals. The project

encourages students to continue first-year composition course dialogues outside of their composition classrooms, by inviting them to share their honest feedback regarding their experiences and writing assignments in 1101 as well as in their other courses, and it seeks to discover how the writing activities which first-year students complete in their very first semester of college shape their initial perceptions of the relevance of their first-year composition courses to their academic programs of study.

I expected a significant percentage of student participants to report that engaging in writing activities which helped to make clear the connections between writing for the composition course and writing for other academic subjects would result in their perception of the required first-year composition course as relevant to their degree majors: more meaningful than just a class to cross off of a list. I also expected that due to the thematic nature of the program, student participants who were enrolled in courses which were part of a Freshman Learning Community[1] (FLC) would report engaging in valuable writing activities more frequently than would students who were enrolled in courses which were not part of an FLC. Ultimately, it was my hope that the data revealed by this study could be used to identify practices in first-year composition courses which students reported to add value to their academic experience, thereby answering the call for student response to pedagogical inquiry.

As a novice researcher, I recognized the possibility of injecting too much of my own biases, assumptions, and even my own hypotheses, into the analysis of the data I would collect from my study, and with that in mind, before I embarked on my major project, I conducted a pilot study. At the end of the Spring 2008 semester, I visited an English 1102 class in order to

[1] In a 2003 evaluation of the then new program, Hotchkiss, Moore, and Pitts describe the Freshman Learning Community at GSU as a "mechanism by which college freshman can develop a small community of peers who have an area of common interest" (2). These communities are organized thematically, and participants are registered for five courses together with the other 24 students in the group.

talk to them about my research concerns and interests, and to invite them to share their experiences as current first-year composition students. I walked in about twenty minutes before the end of the class session. Two students sliced frosted brownies to conclude a class presentation. Other students, clustered in groups, looked through papers and discussed impending end-of-term obligations. At first they did not acknowledge my presence at all –there was not one curious glimpse as I approached the front of the class. But when I introduced myself and indicated that I felt there were important things I could learn from their perspectives, all eyes were on me.

I distributed a survey (see Appendix A) that asked questions about their general attitudes towards writing, their thoughts about that specific class, and if or how they applied the writing skills which they had attained in that class toward other aspects of their academic lives. I also acknowledged that surveys don't always give the participants the opportunity to fully express their thoughts and opinions, so I invited anyone who wanted to share more to contact me at any time. I designed the survey prompts with the hopes that the answers would expose over-arching response patterns, but I also wanted the prompts to be as open-ended as possible, so I indicated they could choose one or more answers if and when appropriate, and I also included space for them to provide their own responses.

My main purposes for conducting this initial small-scale survey were to see what themes would emerge from the participants' responses and to use those themes to help formulate an appropriate survey and interview strategy for my thesis research, but the actual experience of conducting the survey became as illuminating as the responses I collected. The snapshot of attitudes and experiences that developed from the participants' answers was detail-rich and filled with unexpected information. It was hard to resist traveling down the numerous paths of inquiry

that each set of answers seemed to uncover, and I learned that including spaces for open-ended responses could result in answers which promised hours and hours of scratching inquisitive itches. One example of a provocative response was, when asked whether they immediately seek help with or try on their own to figure out how to approach difficult assignments, only four out of nineteen students indicated that they immediately seek help. One wrote in "I procrastinate." Another student also wrote in "procrastinate" to a different question which asked participants to describe what they do when they are given an assignment.

I was intrigued by the procrastination responses, and realized I could conduct an entire investigation just on why people procrastinate. I was also surprised by my reaction to so many students indicating that they attempt to figure difficult assignments out on their own. Instead of interpreting that response to suggest, as I initially thought it would, that those students are self-empowered and *able* to solve problems independently, I became concerned that those students are either unaware of or resistant to utilizing the academic resources available to them. The analysis of the responses to that particular question demonstrated just how subjective survey data interpretation can be, but it also demonstrated how I could design follow-up interview questions that would help me to better understand the survey results.

The results of my pilot study were especially conducive to the critical dialogue I hoped to create with my primary study because I learned how to use the questions that were raised from the survey responses as discussion prompts for follow-up interviews. Nineteen students took the initial survey, and five of those students later participated in follow-up interviews (see Appendices B and C-F). After plotting the survey results on a table and transcribing the follow-up discussions, I determined that the survey and interview approach was indeed an effective

method of inquiry for my particular project, so I set out to research the methodologies and key findings of nationally recognized student surveys which I could model my inquiry after.

It was during this stage of my project that not only did I refine my study design, I also discovered published small scale studies which introduced additional evidence to support my claim that the inclusion of student perspectives of academic writing in critical dialogue provides a necessary dimension to that dialogue. What excited me the most about the small scale studies was how the study results identified new research questions which in turn, led to larger projects. I had already experienced the thrill of discovering new avenues of research when I conducted my pilot study, and I knew that my thesis research would reveal even more. The populations of our academic communities are constantly shifting, and research must constantly be conducted in order to assess how to best encourage student learning for dynamic student populations.

In response to these constant shifts in student population, over the past three decades, scores of faculty in English Departments and first-year writing programs at research universities across America have conducted projects which have yielded results that either work to address unanswered questions about the writing program, document areas of program success and identify areas that need improvement in the writing program, or initiate radical and groundbreaking changes in the programs. In 1995, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa conducted a small scale study of 82 randomly selected seniors to respond to "local professors' interest in how their students assess teaching efforts to improve students' learning and writing" and to "understand how students described the effects of their multiple experiences in WI [writing intensive] classes, particularly as they related to student learning (Hilgers, et.al. 62). Students who participated in this study shared their experiences in university mandated writing intensive courses. The results of this study confirmed assertions drawn from findings in research

conducted at Harvard University that suggest a direct correlation between the amount of writing students do in their coursework and corresponding levels of student engagement (72). This University of Hawai'i study was particularly inspiring to my research goals because of the attention that Hilgers and the research team paid to reporting student responses, and their attempts to preserve the veracity of those responses.

Another widely referenced research project is the Stanford Study of Writing. Conducted by Jenn Fishman, Andrea Lunsford, Beth McGregor, and Marke Otuteye in 2001, this study follows 189 students through their freshman and sophomore years at Stanford University. The research team collected thousands of writing samples and led scores of interviews to learn more about the way students differentiate between academic and "self-sponsored" writing, measure changes the confidence levels of student-writers, and draw connections between "performance" behaviors and writing strategies ( Fishman, et. al 231-33).

Ready to pick up where I left off after my pilot study, honed in on the theme of student engagement inspired by my pilot study and the University of Hawai'i study, and also inspired by successful longitudinal studies like the National Survey of Student Engagement, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, the Stanford Study of Writing, and by Zawacki and Thaiss' *Engaged Writers, Dynamic Disciplines*, I decided to create a study which would investigate a new angle of student engagement – a study that would explore standard first-year composition classes (English 1101) and English 1101 courses conducted as part of a Freshman Learning Community (FLC) in order to identify practices in both that would help student writers connect the concepts they learn in their composition courses with the writing they do for their other academic subjects. Already armed with the research and pilot-study results that indicated undergraduate students were eager to share their first-year composition experiences, I began to

research longitudinal studies in the hopes that I could fine-tune my study design and research instruments to yield data which was more valid. The longitudinal studies that I modeled my study after sought answers to specific questions about academic writing by asking the students to identify and analyze their own writing practices. Likewise, I designed my study to find answers to the question: How can first-year composition students perceive the connection between the writing they do in English 1101 and the writing they will do in their other academic courses?

In order to answer this question, I created a three-part study which consisted of three surveys conducted at the beginning, midpoint, and end of ninety-two Georgia State University students' first-year composition course in their first year of college. These surveys were supplemented with discussions and interviews with individual student participants on a volunteer basis. I intentionally launched the study in September 2009 so that the majority of the students in the sample would be first-year students in their very first year of college. I chose this population so that their responses would hopefully only be informed by their true expectations and not influenced by any prior college experiences. Of the ninety-two students who took the initial survey, only four students were not first-year students: two of them were transfer students, and two cited personal situations which resulted in them taking a break and then subsequently returning to repeat their first year.

My first classroom visit took place on September 8$^{th}$, 2009 – about three weeks after the first day of fall classes. This gave students a chance to settle into their new college routines, and to soak in what their new classes were all about. The initial process took a little bit longer than the subsequent surveys because I needed to introduce myself, explain the project, and have the students read and sign the IRB required informed consent (See Appendix G). This step was especially important, both to the integrity of the project as well as to the validity of the data. I

needed the students to truly understand that their responses to this survey had nothing to do with the grades they would receive in their English 1101 course, and to not feel pressured to calculate their responses. As mentioned above, most of the students who participated in the study were brand-new first-year students. And most of those students appeared to be excited about being in school, and eager to participate in anything that GSU had to offer. They all listened attentively as I explained the nature of the project, they all signed the informed consent, and they all completed the questionnaire.

The primary focus of this first set of survey questions was to learn who these students were, and what their expectations of 1101 were (see Appendix I). The students represented twenty-nine different majors, including one student who declared a double major: marketing and managerial science. Thirteen students were psychology majors, thirteen students were undecided (of those one student indicated an interest in sociology, another in psychology, and another in biology), eight students were biology majors, and fourteen students were business majors in concentrations which included marketing, finance, economics, and managerial science. The remainder of the participants were in other programs in the College of Arts and Sciences. After carefully reviewing their responses to the question, "What do you hope to learn in English 1101", I identified thirty-one different outcomes that the students hoped to achieve by taking this course. Although some of the responses are similar, I resisted the urge to classify them together under a category of my choosing – preferring rather to let the students' voices speak for themselves[2].

[2] The student expectations which appear in quotations represent verbatim responses, and those which do not appear in quotes articulate expectations using language which appears in multiple student responses.

After taking English 1101, the students hoped to:

1. Improve their writing skills.
2. Explore different writing styles.
3. "Plan better and not get frustrated with [their] writing assignments."
4. Express themselves more intelligently, effectively, creatively, and/or efficiently.[3]
5. Use language properly.
5. Expand vocabulary.
6. Learn to enjoy writing – not dread it.
7. Develop ideas fluidly.
8. "Just try to pass the class."
9. Improve grammar.
10. Improve persuasive skills.
11. Focus essays and organize thoughts.
12. Review simple concepts and fundamentals.
13. "Write with style, grace, and elegance".
14. Understand academic and professional writing styles.
15. Learn how to proofread.
16. Prepare for more advanced English courses.
17. Reflect on growth as a writer.

[3] Many students responded that they would like to be able to write more efficiently. One student in particular helped me to understand what that meant when she summed up efficient writing as "speeding up the time it takes me to write a good paper."

18. Build analytical skills.
19. Increase confidence as a writer.
20. Read exciting essays and literature.
21. "Develop ways to become a more dynamic writer and basically get new ideas for writing."
22. Improve style.
23. Become a stronger writer.[4]
24. Learn to stick to my thesis.
25. Write good research papers.
26. Improve reading and comprehension skills.
27. "To think outside the box."
28. "To learn different ways of viewing certain topics."
30. "To learn professional writing skills for the business world."
31. "To compose a better academic essay and the skills that come with that."

These initial responses were thrilling. As I poured through the stacks of surveys, my first observation was that the subtle (and not so subtle) nuances that characterized each student response seemed to mirror the subtle (and not so subtle) differences in the concepts that composition scholars argue that they hope their students achieve after taking their composition classes. The major difference was the language. These student responses sparked many new questions. For example, we already know that instructors argue definitions and descriptions of good academic writing, but how do students define and describe good academic writing? In a

[4] This response is so close to the "become a better writer" response – but I wanted to preserve the authentic language of each student response. Interestingly, many of the students used identical terms to describe the writing concepts and skills for which they did not have the technical vocabulary.

follow-up study, how could we learn how student definitions and descriptions of good academic writing change from their first year to their senior year? How do high schools prep their students for what to expect in college writing courses – and how much does that preparation influence student descriptions of academic writing? How can dialogue with (versus lectures to) students about academic writing conventions help students understand and master those conventions?

After this first survey, I invited participants to clarify or add to their responses in a follow-up interview. Despite prompt responses to emailed invitations to interviews, I was disappointed when only six students met with me to continue the conversation. And, although I was eager to pursue the questions which arose from the first survey, I was also confined by restrictions of the IRB process. In order to obtain approval for this project, I had to submit my survey questions in advance, and while I designed the questions to follow a singular path, I was felt hindered by my inability to introduce new questions without first seeking approval. Nonetheless, I stayed on the course and in the middle of October, I conducted my second survey.

The purpose of this survey was to find out if English 1101 was meeting their expectations (see Appendix J). It asked them to describe their 1101 assignments and estimate how much time they were spending on those assignments, and it asked them to describe writing assignments they had completed in other courses, and how much time they were spending on those assignments. It also asked them whether or not they were able to connect the writing that they were doing inside of 1101 to the writing they were doing outside of 1101. It was this survey which revealed a trend that I was not expecting. Students were not making connections between writing in 1101 and academic writing outside of 1101 because by and large, they reported not having many writing assignments in their other academic courses.

In the four weeks that passed since the first survey, students reported having had at least three major writing assignments in their 1101 classes, and described the time they spent on those assignments as requiring anywhere from an hour for each essay to a week for each essay. One student simply wrote "A LOT!" In contrast to that response was the estimate of "at most an hour" when asked how much time was spent on writing assignments for other academic courses. In the entire four-week period following the first survey, students reported spending anywhere from five minutes to a few hours on writing assignments for courses outside of 1101. Twelve students reported spending "a few minutes" to thirty minutes on writing assignments for other courses. Twenty-four students reported spending thirty minutes to an hour on writing assignments for other courses, and twelve students reported not having any other writing assignments at all. When I invited students to a follow-up discussion, this time only two students participated.

I conducted the third and final survey in late November (see Appendix K). The purpose of this survey was to allow students to describe all of the writing assignments completed in the final half of the semester, to measure any changes in the way students reported a connection between the writing assignments they completed in 1101 and the writing assignments they completed in their other courses, and to describe any changes in the way students felt about the importance of writing to their future academic and career goals. It allowed students to reflect on writing they did in their first semester of college, and project their future academic writing expectations. When asked if they were able to apply the writing concepts they learned in 1101 to the academic writing they did in other courses, about half reported that they could, while the rest reported that they could not. Interestingly, three of the students who reported that they applied writing concepts that they learned in 1101 to other writing assignments also reported that those

other writing assignments were not relevant to their academic majors. Additionally, one other student reported receiving no writing assignments at all outside of 1101.

## CONCLUSION

At the onset of this project, I believed that those students who made these connections were able to do so because of the assignments and writing activities they completed in their first-year composition courses. However, the data I collected from the study of four English 1101 courses indicates that while most students identify use of the brainstorming, proof-reading and editing concepts that they learn, too few of those students identify having enough writing assignments in other early courses in their careers that require them or allow them to make that connection.

A further look at the data reveals something even more puzzling. Most of the students who participated in the study took more than one class together, but when asked to describe writing assignments that they completed in classes other than English 1101, their descriptions of their assignments varied widely. For example, some students described the micro themes and perspectives assignments that they completed for their GSU 1010 course as requiring a lot of writing. Other students described the same assignments as being “elementary” and “simple” and still others expressed gratitude for the “simple” assignments because those simple assignments allowed those students to review concepts which they had not covered in quite a while. What do these different responses illustrate about student perspectives of writing – and how can we respond to those students’ concerns in a way that might help them re-create those tasks in a way which produces a greater relevance to them?

Student reactions suggest that those who were able to make the connections or apply the concepts did so in part because of their composition instructors and in part because they were able to identify that what they were doing in their other academic courses fell under the academic writing umbrella. Students who didn't make the connections were also those who reported spending very little time on writing assignments in their other academic courses. Compared to what I expected to learn from student responses, the actual results really threw me for a loop. I had conducted the appropriate research, carefully planned my study design, and performed the in-class surveys and follow-up discussions according to my design. And now, instead of finding answers to specific questions, I raised many new ones – and because of the IRB restrictions on survey questions as well as the time constraint imposed by my deadline, I was unable to follow these new lines of questioning. At the conclusion of my study, the most urgent questions I now wanted to explore were: what is the correlation between the sample sizes of large-scale and small-scale studies and the seemingly large discrepancy between the findings of both, and how can small-scale studies conducted in single institutions be used to complement large-scale studies, the findings of which are often use to justify departmental change?

English departments place a high value on the results of surveys like the NSSE. Many of the policies enacted by our department, including the Critical Thinking through Writing Initiative are based on research which suggests that frequent writing assignments and activities help students think critically about, and better understand those subjects. Surveys like the NSSE ask students about the writing they do in all of their classes – and what they think about that writing – in order to make suggestions about the role that writing plays in higher education. My survey asked similar questions, but the students I surveyed either didn't do a significant amount of writing in the other courses they took, or they didn't think that the writing activities they did

"counted" as writing assignments. After analyzing their responses, I began to realize that the study participants' answers didn't necessarily indicate failure or flaw – rather they illustrated that while longitudinal studies capture significant data that is important for recognizing trends in writing instructions, small-scale studies illuminate the gaps or successes between theory and practice. Small-scale studies capture the moment.

As I look back on my journey from first-year composition student to first-year composition instructor, I discover that more and more, students are reaping the benefits of researchers who, not too long ago, had experiences like mine. Those researchers sat in the classroom of, or shared an office with, a knowledgeable and prepared instructor who used a clear and fair grading system but who was either unable or unwilling to acknowledge the possibility that perhaps it was time to re-analyze the student audience. Now, our composition classrooms don't look anything like the composition classrooms that our teaching methods are rooted in. And now, if we continue to conduct research in pursuit of the most effective strategies for teaching composition to an ever-shifting student audience, we will place our students in position to play a major role in effecting radical changes our teaching strategies.

For the first time since 1870, the inception of the first modern composition program at Harvard University, when major changes in pedagogy and classroom practices were made in reaction to university faculty complaints of poor student writing, changes can begin to be made proactively, and as a response to needs voiced by students. Historically, changes in first-year writing programs typically coincided with events or social conditions which change the population of students who have access to higher education: the Morrill Act; the Montgomery G.I .Bill; open-enrollment policies; state-funded, merit-based scholarship opportunities. For example, the 1897 *Report of the Committee of Composition and Rhetoric* compiled by Charles

Francis Adams, Edwin Lawrence Godkin, and George R Nutter and presented to Harvard administration demonstrates their utter dismay at the intellectual aptitude of their flock of incoming freshmen. The report describes the students' "extreme crudeness of both thought and execution" and expresses "surprise that such a degree of immaturity should exist in a body of young men coming from the best preparatory schools in America and belonging to the most well-to-do and highly educated families" (Brereton 103-104).

This vitriolic Harvard reaction to their newest crop of students was an outcome of the changes that many colleges and universities were undergoing, including switching from broad liberal arts curricula to more discipline-based curricula, and it resulted in Barrett Wendell's notorious English 12 – the daily themes class – which he eventually admitted "didn't seem to train students well enough" (13).

A century later, when Nancy Sommers became Harvard's Writing Program Administrator, she, along with colleague Gordon Harvey, eventually undertook two research projects designed to compile information that would help them to describe the Harvard writing program to other faculty and administrators at the university; to collect and analyze feedback from the undergraduates who took writing courses; to respond to complaints from both students about the quality of the course content and also from faculty outside of the Department of English about the quality of the writing that students were producing; to understand what happened to student writers after their introductory writing courses; and to develop a method for assessing the first-year writing program outcomes(Sommers 511). The data that they collected from their efforts successfully and vividly captured a specific moment in Harvard University's writing program history, and allowed Sommers to "move beyond anecdote[…] and to speak more knowledgeably about the writing culture at Harvard" (512).

Mina Shaugnessy described many of the students who took advantage of New York City's 1970 open enrollment policy as "those who had been left so far behind the others in their formal education that they appeared to have little chance of catching up […] whose difficulties with the written language seemed […] as if they had come, you might say, from a different country, or at least through different schools, where even very modest standards of high-school literacy had not been met" (Shaughnessy 2). Those students graduated from New York public high schools, but were the first in their families to have the opportunity to attend a college or university; they believed college to be a means to a better end, but they were strangers to academic culture. They didn't know how they would make college work for them, but once they made the choice to be there, they were determined to succeed.

The 21st-century composition classroom continues to grow in diversity. In large urban institutions, students come from widely variant ethnic backgrounds and socio-economic classes. They have diverse political affiliations, sexual identities, and religious backgrounds. They represent much broader ranges of age, prior education, and work experience. According to statistics provided by Georgia State University, the Fall 2007 Freshman and Sophomore classes self-identified as 36% white, 31% Black, 12% Asian, and 6% Hispanic/Latino (Ethnicity of Freshman and Sophomore Class – Fall Term). The University System of Georgia reported that in the Fall 2005 undergraduate class 42% of the students were between 23 and 34 years of age, and 9.8% were between 35 and 44. The average age of undergraduate students was 26.2 (Students).

And while many of Shaugnessy's 1970s students *seemed* to come from different countries, many 21st-century composition students *do* come from different countries. At Georgia State University, students represent 145 nations, yet to this day the university incorporates

traditional educational values while attempting to affect a modernized mission which reflects the incredible diversity of its community. Of course certain elements of those traditional values are indispensable but GSU's student body and faculty do not remotely resemble that of the traditional college classrooms that those values were based on. 21st-century GSU offers 52 degrees with 250 fields of study in six colleges. The mission statement of Georgia State University reads:

> "As the only urban research university in Georgia, Georgia State University offers educational opportunities for traditional and nontraditional students at both the graduate and undergraduate levels by blending the best of theoretical and applied inquiry, scholarly and professional pursuits, and scientific and artistic expression. As an urban research university with strong disciplinary-based departments and a wide array of problem-oriented interdisciplinary programs, the goal of the university is to develop, transmit, and utilize knowledge in order to provide access to quality education for diverse groups of students, to educate leaders for the State of Georgia and the nation, and to prepare citizens of Georgia for lifelong learning in a global society." (Mission Statement)

Lynn Z. Bloom contends that first-year composition classes are used to indoctrinate students into the specific value system espoused by the particular college or university they attend. These institutions, she suggests, believes these values, which include "respectability", "propriety", "thrift", and "order", are "essential to the proper functioning of students in the academy" and those values emerge in every aspect of the classroom experience from process-oriented instruction to assessment (626). As I read the survey responses and interview transcripts of the

students who participated in this project, I can't help but feel encouraged that as we barrel through the 21st century, we will find our institutional mission statements and departmental and learning outcomes informed not only by the strong traditional foundations of composition theory, but also by a dialogue which is emerging as students themselves open their minds to inquiry and respond to the academic world around them.

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**APPENDIX A – English 1102 Pilot Survey**

What is your major?_____

Would you describe yourself as a traditional or non-traditional student?_____

Writing requires a:
a. serious effort
b. special talent
c. _____

If I had a choice I:
a. would never take a writing course
b. would take a writing course for my own benefit
c. would be a novelist
d. _____

Writing skills that I use in my composition course:
a. I also use in my everyday life
b. I use in other courses
c. I only use for this course
d. _____

I take English 1102:
a. to satisfy degree requirements
b. as a pre-requisite for other courses in the English department
c. _____

I use the comments I receive on my assignments:
a. when I begin a new assignment
b. only when revising that specific assignment
c. when I approach any writing assignment for any class
d. _____

For me, doing well in English 1102 will:
a. be beneficial for my entire academic experience
b. will help me with my major
c. will satisfy this requirement
d. will help me keep my HOPE scholarship
e. is only important for my G.P.A.
f. _____

When I am given an assignment in English 1102:
a. I look forward to putting my ideas on paper
b. I dread writing
c. _____

When I experience difficulty with an assignment:
a. I immediately seek help
b. I try to figure it out on my own

For me, writing is:

a. a part of my everyday life
b. something I only do in school
c. something I only do in this course
d. _____

In the future writing will be:

a. a part of my everyday life
b. an important part of my major
c. something I'll never do again after this course
d. _____

This semester I have used some of the things I have learned in English 1102

a. in my writing for other classes
b. in my writing outside of school
c. only for this course
d. _____

To me, writing is:

a. something that gets better and better the more you do it
b. a talent that some people have and others don't
c. _____

---

Thanks for participating in this survey!

Your participation is completely voluntary and has no bearing on your grade in this class whatsoever.

All of the information obtained by this survey will be used for research purposes only and may appear in the content of my paper or in future published research but will remain otherwise confidential.

If you have any questions or comments please don't hesitate to contact me!
Laura E. Johnson – Graduate Student
ljohnson65@student.gsu.edu
404-723-2748

Also – if you'd like to share more of your experience as a writing student at GSU with me, please let me know. Thanks again – Laura

**APPENDIX B – Follow up Discussion Questions**

1. What is your major?

2. What was your favorite part of English 1102?

3. What was your least favorite part?

4. Why do you think the University requires you to take this class?

5. What if any thought did you give to how writing in this class connects to writing in your other classes?

6. Do you expect writing to be an important part of your college experience?

7. Can you think of specific ways that you have used what you have learned in 1102 in your other classes?

8. If you had been offered the opportunity at the onset of the semester to suggest writing topics to focus on during the semester, would you have – if so, what would you have suggested?

9. Compared to other classes that you are required to take (math, science, foreign language, etc.) how relevant are first year writing courses to your major?

10. The following is a list of learning outcomes that the University and the English department expect you to achieve at the end of this class. Do you think you have achieved them?

- analyze evaluate, document and draw inferences from various sources
- identify, select, and analyze appropriate research methods, research questions, and evidence for a specific rhetorical situation
- use argumentative strategies and genres in order to engage various audiences
- integrate others' ideas with your own
- use grammatical, stylistic, and mechanical formats and conventions appropriate to rhetorical situations and audience constraints
- produce well reasoned, argumentative essays demonstrating rhetorical engagement
- reflect on what contributed to their writing process and evaluate your own work

## APPENDIX C – Table of Survey Results

**J: Journalism P: Psych S: Sociology B: Biology E: English M: Marketing A: Accounting CJ: Criminal Justice U: Undeclared FV: Film and Video**
**T: Traditional N: Non-Traditional**

| J/T | P/N[5] | U/N[6] | P/N | U*[7]/T | B[8]/E/N | M[9] | CJ[10]/T | M[11] | M[12]/T | A/T | J[13]/T | P | U | U[14]/N | J[15]/T | FV/T | U[16]/T | U[17]/T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | A/B | A/B/C | A | A | C | A/C | A | C | C | A | AB | A | A | C | AB | A | A | AC |
| B | A/D | C/D | B | A | C | B | A | B | A | B | A | B | A | D | BD | B | B | C |
| A/B | B | B | B | A | A | B | A | A | B | B | B | A | C | B | AB | AB | B | B |
| A/B | A/C | A | A | A | B | A | A | C | A | A | A | A | A | AC | A | A | A | B |
| A/C | B/D | ABC | C | A/B | C | B | B | C | A | A/B | AB | B | A | A | ABC | AC | B | C |
| ABCDE | CDEF | ACDE | ACD | B | A | C/E | ABCDE | BCDEF | B | CDF | CD | A | C | ACD | AB | ABCD | ACD | ABC |
| A | B | B | B | B | A | A/C | C | A/C | C | B | B | A | B | C | A | B | C | A |
| A/B | B/C | B | B | C | B | B | B | A | B | AB | B | B | B | BC | A | B | A | B |
| A | B/D | A | B | A | A | D | B | A | A | B | B | | B | B | A | A | A | A |
| A | A | B | C | A | A | C | A | ABC | A | C | B | | C | D | A | AB | A | B |
| A/B | A | AB | C | A/B | A/B | C | A/D | AB | A | A | D | | C | A | AB | AB | AB | A |
| A | B | AB | A | A | A | A | A | ABC | B | A | B | | B | C | AB | A | A | B |

*Possibly sociology

[5] 2. Poetry instead, 4. To be with FLC, 5. To confirm I'm not a good writer, 6. Help me get close to HOPE/Not happen this semester 7. "x5" 8. Procrastinate til I feel like resolving the problem, 9. Poetry every now and then, 10. Because of college
[6] 1. Creativity, 2. Would rather write what I want
[7] 8. Trying to start asking for help
[8] 1. Application and understanding of writing as a process
[9] 1. Natural understanding and ability to articulate thoughts and feelings, 2. Only one easy one, 7. Procrastinate until I have to get something done unless "A", 9. For school and for music
[10] 7. I dread writing but often get into it once I start, 11. To question info taken in
[11] 1. Dedication, 4. Reponse "B" and to enable academic growth, 6. Be beneficial towards my everyday life, 7. I love giving my input and voices my life experiences, 12. It's a talent everyone has but has to perfect
[12] 1. Feeling, 7. I sometimes am interested
[13] 11. nowhere
[14] 1. Understanding of language and word usage, 2. Only take required courses, 4. I love my teacher,7. It depends if I like the assignment or not, 8. I ask roommates and class notes, 10. I'm really not sure, 12. one thing I have to work at
[15] 1. Both. You have to love it to want to write. Writing needs a special talent for words!, 2. Would make money off being a poet, 7. Mostly when I'm writing my opinions on subjects makes me happy, 12. I feel like it is a combination of both esp, if that is a career choice
[16] 7. Somewhere in between!
[17] Sense of motivation

**Appendix D: Follow Up Interview: "Richard" (in person)**

1. What is your major? Marketing

2. What was your favorite part of English 1102? Being a part of an FLC community, and the familiarity with the teacher. I had her for 1101 also.

3. What was your least favorite part? The focus seemed to be less on learning to write well. We talked about art, and articles about discourse. I felt like I wasn't even in an English class. We focused on forming opinions instead of focusing on composition, which is what I thought the class was supposed to be about.

3B. Did you work those opinions into your compositions? Not really – not until the final paper.

4. Why do you think the University requires you to take this class? It's important to learn to write. It's definitely a class that should be required. Literacy is a necessity in today's world.

5. What if any thought did you give to how writing in this class connects to writing in your other classes? (did not ask)

6. Do you expect writing to be an important part of your college experience? Yes

7. Can you think of specific ways that you have used what you have learned in 1101 or 1102 in your other classes? We collaborated with another class – Perspectives on Comparative Cultures to analyze Crash. It had to do with our FLC.

8. If you had been offered the opportunity at the onset of the semester to suggest writing topics – either specific topics to write about or elements of composition like style or organization or content - to focus on during the semester, would you have, and if so what would you have suggested? Organization. Most people understand mechanics but don't know how to properly organize a paper. Choices should be more open. It's easier for people to write about what they are passionate about.

9. Compared to other classes that you are required to take (math, science, foreign language, etc.) how relevant are first year writing courses to your major? 1101 is more relevant than 1102, based on my experience. Not so much argument stuff. The research part was helpful – especially learning about academic journals.

10. The following is a list of learning outcomes that the University and the English department expect you to achieve at the end of this class. Do you think you have achieved them?

- analyze evaluate, document and draw inferences from various sources - yes
- identify, select, and analyze appropriate research methods, research questions, and evidence for a specific rhetorical situation - no
- use argumentative strategies and genres in order to engage various audiences - yes
- integrate others' ideas with your own - yes
- use grammatical, stylistic, and mechanical formats and conventions appropriate to rhetorical situations and audience constraints – yes can figure it out
- produce well reasoned, argumentative essays demonstrating rhetorical engagement - no
- reflect on what contributed to their writing process and evaluate your own work – kind of on the fence, leaning toward yes

11. In hindsight, what would have been more useful to you in this class?

- discussing how the information we learned in class relates to writing
- highlighting the relevance of our discussion to composition
- relating our written reactions to discourse
- there were still people who didn't get the basics of discourse and didn't know how to relate what you talked about to what you were supposed to do.
- If I feel like it doesn't apply, I won't apply myself. I wasn't engaging with it because I didn't see the relevance. The biggest thing I remember about this class is a picture [the professor] showed us.

- A lot of the stuff we discussed could be relevant but not for 1102. For example, social constructions of gender are perpetuated through Cinderella, but what does that have to do with my final paper. We spent the whole semester talking about stuff that we should know, but at the end no one had a thesis on their first drafts of their final paper.

**Appendix F: Follow-up interview: "Rachel" – in person**

1. What is your major? Journalism

2. What was your favorite part of English 1102? Knowing everyone in the class and the teacher.

2B. Did you feel like it was a community? Yes – it was an FLC – Understanding Diversity.

3. What was your least favorite part? – All the work. I like writing news stories. I will write a news story! I don't like analysis because I'm not good at it.

4. Why do you think the University requires you to take this class? Couldn't tell you. I question that plenty of times. Technical schools don't have unnecessary things. I guess it's a system they have to follow.

5. What if any thought did you give to how writing in this class, or 1101, connects to writing in your other classes? – 1101 helped with my sociology class. It helped me to look at things more in-depth and get your own opinion. I learned to question what 's written. Don't just accept it.

6. Do you expect writing to be an important part of your college experience? Yes – specifically journalistic. Not necessarily English. Maybe research might be important.

7. Can you think of specific ways that you have used what you have learned in 1102 in your future classes? MLA documentation and how to analyze things – from 1101 more so than 1102

8. If you had been offered the opportunity at the onset of the semester to suggest writing topics to focus on during the semester, would you have – if so, what would you have suggested? I don't know. I might not have suggested anything.

9. Compared to other classes that you are required to take (math, science, foreign language, etc.) how relevant are first year writing courses to your major? Cultural and speech classes are more relevant. English is somewhere in the middle. Science and math are less relevant.

10. The following is a list of learning outcomes that the University and the English department expect you to achieve at the end of this class. Do you think you have achieved them?

- analyze evaluate, document and draw inferences from various sources - y
- identify, select, and analyze appropriate research methods, research questions, and evidence for a specific rhetorical situation - y
- use argumentative strategies and genres in order to engage various audiences - y
- integrate others' ideas with your own - y
- use grammatical, stylistic, and mechanical formats and conventions appropriate to rhetorical situations and audience constraints - n
- produce well reasoned, argumentative essays demonstrating rhetorical engagement - y
- reflect on what contributed to their writing process and evaluate your own work - y

**Appendix G: Follow-up interview: "Rebecca" (phone interview)**

1. What is your major? Criminal Justice

2. What was your favorite part of English 1102? The best part was having to do the research. Even though it was the hardest. The visit from the research librarian was good.

3. What was your least favorite part? The research paper. I don't like the topic.

4. Why do you think the University requires you to take this class? You can apply it to all your classes.

6. After this semester, do you expect writing to be an important part of your college experience? Yes

7. Can you think of specific ways that you have used what you have learned in 1101 or 1102 in your other classes? Yes – analysis from 1101. I used it lots in other classes and build off what I did last semester.

8. If you had been offered the opportunity at the onset of the semester to suggest writing topics to focus on during the semester, would you have – if so, what would you have suggested? Don't know.

9. Compared to other classes that you are required to take (math, science, foreign language, etc.) how relevant are first year writing courses to your major? I'll have to write and analyze. Very relevant.

10. The following is a list of learning outcomes that the University and the English department expect you to achieve at the end of this class. Do you think you have achieved them?

- analyze evaluate, document and draw inferences from various sources - y
- identify, select, and analyze appropriate research methods, research questions, and evidence for a specific rhetorical situation - y
- use argumentative strategies and genres in order to engage various audiences - y

- integrate others' ideas with your own - y

- use grammatical, stylistic, and mechanical formats and conventions appropriate to rhetorical situations and audience constraints - y

- produce well reasoned, argumentative essays demonstrating rhetorical engagement – kind of

- reflect on what contributed to their writing process and evaluate your own work – y

## Appendix H: Informed Consent

Georgia State University
Department of English
Informed Consent

Title: Making Meaning: A Study of Student Engagement in First-Year Composition
Investigator: Laura E. Johnson

I. Purpose: You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate and identify classroom activities that improve student experience in first-year composition courses at Georgia State University. You are invited to participate because the information you share about your classroom experiences as a first-year composition student will help the English Department continue to enrich classroom experiences for all first-year composition students here at GSU. A total of 100 students will be recruited for this study and will require 10-15 minutes of your time, two times a month for the fall semester.

II. Procedures: If you decide to participate, you will complete a 5-10 minute questionnaire in class. You will also be invited to conduct a follow-up interview at a convenient time for you in the GSU Library. The interview will also take about 10 minutes.
As a participant, you will simply be asked questions about your classroom activities in this English 1101 class, your study habits, and your thoughts about the things you do in this class. About 100 students will be participating in this study so your responses will help create a snapshot of the typical 1101 experience.

III. Risks and Benefits: There are no identifiable risks associated with participation in this study. Participation may or may not benefit you personally. Overall, we hope to be able to use the information we gather from this study to enrich the first-year composition experience for all Georgia State University students.

IV. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: Participation in research is completely voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time.

V. Confidentiality: We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. Only the members of the research team, Dr. Beth Burmester and Laura E. Johnson will have access to the information you provide. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly – the GSU Institutional Review Board. We will not use your name on your study records. The information you provide will be stored in a locked cabinet in the student investigator's office. The surveys and interviews will be conducted anonymously, so there will be no information that can point directly to you when we present this study and publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally.

VI. Contact Persons: Contact Student Investigator Laura E. Johnson at englej@langate.gsu.edu or 404-723-2748 or Dr. Beth Burmester at bburmester@gsu.edu or 404-413-5815 if you have questions about this study. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu.

VII. Agreement – this agreement states that you have received a copy of this informed consent. Your signature below indicates that you have agreed to participate in this study.

_____ _____
Participant Date

_____ _____
Researcher Obtaining Consent Date

**Appendix I: Survey 1**

What is your major?

If you are undecided, what are some of your career goals or academic interests?_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Is this your first semester as a college student?

If this is not your first semester, briefly describe your experience up to now.
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

***What do you HOPE to learn in English 1101?***
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

***WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM ENGLISH 1101? PLACE A CHECK NEXT TO ALL THAT APPLY:***

How to use writing as a method for learning
How to write for specific audiences
How to write for specific purposes
How to write in specific genres
How to improve grammar
How to correct grammatical errors
How to write better papers
How to become a better writer

THOUGHTS ABOUT WRITING (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

Writing requires a

a. Serious effort
b. Special talent
c. Frequent practice
d. _____

Given a choice I

a. Would never take a writing course
b. Would take any writing course that complements my academic goals
c. Would take every writing course this university offers

In school I use writing (check all that apply):

a. Only when required for an assignment
b. To help organize my thoughts about class discussions, readings, or notes I've taken
c. To communicate with my teachers and instructors
d. To brainstorm ideas for papers and projects
e. To plan how I will approach preparing for classes and assignments
f. _____

Outside of school I use writing
to_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

In general I:

a. Love to write
b. Hate to write
c. Love to write – but not for school

In general I:

a. Think I am a great writer and can't write any better than I already do
b. Think I am a great writer but am always looking for ways to improve
c. Think I write pretty well and can't write any better
d. Think I write pretty well but will improve with more practice
e. Think I'm a terrible writer and will never write any better
f. Think I'm a terrible writer but will improve with more practice

For me, writing is

a. a part of my everyday life
b. something I only do in school
c. something I only anticipate doing for this course

To me, writing is:

d. something that gets better and better the more you do it
e. a talent that some people have and others don't
f. _____

THOUGHTS ABOUT WRITING INSTRUCTION: ***PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY***

I take English 1101

a. to satisfy degree requirements
b. As a prerequisite for other courses in the English Department
c. _____

For me, doing well in English 1101 will:

a. be beneficial for my entire academic experience
b. will help me with my major
c. will satisfy this requirement
d. will help me keep my HOPE scholarship
e. is only important for my G.P.A.
f. _____

When I am given an assignment in English 1101:

a. I look forward to putting my ideas on paper
b. I dread writing
c. _____

In the future I anticipate that writing will be:

a. a part of my everyday life
b. an important part of my major
c. something I'll never do again after I finish my composition requirements
d. _____

This semester I anticipate using some of the things I have learned in English 1101

a. in my writing for other classes
b. in my writing outside of school
c. only for this course
d. _____

This semester I anticipate doing the following:

a. Visiting my 1101 instructor during office hours
b. Forming a study group for 1101
c. Participating in a study group for 1101
d. Discussing issues that we examine in 1101 in my other courses
e. Sharing rough or final drafts of my writing assignments with other students in this course for their feedback
f. Sharing rough or final drafts of my writing assignments with people outside of this course (friends, family, tutors, co-workers) for their feedback
g. Visiting the GSU writing studio
h. Using research resources available in the library
i. Getting feedback on my 1101 assignments from my instructor before those assignments are due

.~**~.~**~.
~**~.~**~.~**~.~**~.~**~.~**~.~**~.~**~.~**~.~**~.~**~.~**~.~**~.~**~.~**~.~**~.~**~.~**~.~**

Thanks for participating in this survey!
Your participation is completely voluntary and has no bearing on your grade in this class whatsoever.
All of the information obtained by this survey will be used for research purposes only. A generalized summary of the data I collect will appear in my thesis. If you have any questions or comments please don't hesitate to contact me!

Laura E. Johnson – Graduate Student
englej@langate.gsu.edu
404-723-2748

*Also – if you'd like to share more of your experience as a writing student at GSU with me, please let me know. Thanks again – Laura*

**Appendix J: Survey 2**

Writing Activities

***DESCRIBE ANY IN-CLASS WRITING ACTIVITIES YOU HAVE COMPLETED THIS SEMESTER:***

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

***LIST ANY ASSIGNMENTS YOU HAVE COMPLETED FOR A GRADE IN 1101 THIS SEMESTER:***

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

***FOR THOSE GRADED ASSIGNMENTS DID YOU: (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)***

Brainstorm or outline before you began the assignment
Talk with your instructor before you started drafting your assignment
Form a study group to discuss how to approach the assignment
Talk with a classmate before you started drafting your assignment
Talk with a friend or family member before you started drafting your assignment
Visit the Writing Studio before you started drafting your assignment
Receive feedback from your instructor before turning in your assignment
Receive feedback from a family member before turning in your assignment
Receive feedback from a tutor at the Writing Studio before turning in your assignment
Proofread your final draft for errors before turning it in?
Prepare in any other way? (Please describe:)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

List any graded writing assignments you have completed for other courses so far this semester:
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Did you apply any concepts or writing strategies discussed in 1101 to writing assignments in other classes? Yes or No

If yes, what concepts or strategies did you apply?
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

***FOR YOUR NEXT GRADED ASSIGNMENT IN 1101 DO YOU PLAN TO: (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)***
Brainstorm or outline before you began the assignment
Talk with your instructor before you started drafting your assignment
Form a study group to discuss how to approach the assignment
Talk with a classmate before you started drafting your assignment
Talk with a friend or family member before you started drafting your assignment
Visit the Writing Studio before you started drafting your assignment
Receive feedback from your instructor before turning in your assignment
Receive feedback from a family member before turning in your assignment
Receive feedback from a tutor at the Writing Studio before turning in your assignment
Proofread your final draft for errors before turning it in?

FUTURE WRITING EXPECTATIONS: ***(PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)***

In the future I anticipate that writing will be:

a. a part of my everyday life
b. an important part of my major
c. something I'll never do again after I finish my composition requirements
d. _____

So far this semester I have used some of the things I have learned in English 1101

a. in my writing for other classes
b. in my writing outside of school
c. only for this course
d. _____

Looking forward to the rest of this semester I anticipate doing the following: (Check all that apply)

a. Visiting my 1101 instructor during office hours
b. Forming a study group for 1101
c. Participating in a study group for 1101
d. Discussing issues that we examine in 1101 in my other courses
e. Sharing rough or final drafts of my writing assignments with other students in this course for their feedback
f. Sharing rough or final drafts of my writing assignments with people outside of this course (friends, family, tutors, co-workers) for their feedback
g. Visiting the GSU writing studio
h. Using research resources available in the library
i. Getting feedback on my 1101 assignments from my instructor before those assignments are due

Thanks for participating in this survey!

Your participation is completely voluntary and has no bearing on your grade in this class whatsoever.

All of the information obtained by this survey will be used for research purposes only and may appear in the content of my paper but will remain otherwise confidential.

If you have any questions or comments please don't hesitate to contact me!
Laura E. Johnson – Graduate Student
englej@langate.gsu.edu
404-723-2748

Also – if you'd like to share more of your experience as a writing student at GSU with me, please let me know. Thanks again – Laura

**Appendix K: Survey 3**
Writing Activities

***DESCRIBE ANY IN-CLASS WRITING ACTIVITIES YOU HAVE COMPLETED THIS SEMESTER:***

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

***LIST ANY ASSIGNMENTS YOU HAVE COMPLETED FOR A GRADE IN 1101 THIS SEMESTER:***

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

***FOR THOSE GRADED ASSIGNMENTS DID YOU: (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)***

Brainstorm or outline before you began the assignment
Talk with your instructor before you started drafting your assignment
Form a study group to discuss how to approach the assignment
Talk with a classmate before you started drafting your assignment
Talk with a friend or family member before you started drafting your assignment
Visit the Writing Studio before you started drafting your assignment
Receive feedback from your instructor before turning in your assignment
Receive feedback from a family member before turning in your assignment
Receive feedback from a tutor at the Writing Studio before turning in your assignment
Proofread your final draft for errors before turning it in?
Prepare in any other way? (Please describe:)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

List any graded writing assignments you have completed for other courses so far this semester:
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Did you apply any concepts or writing strategies discussed in 1101 to writing assignments in other classes? Yes or No

If yes, what concepts or strategies did you apply?
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

In the future I anticipate that writing will be:

e. a part of my everyday life
f. an important part of my major
g. something I'll never do again after I finish my composition requirements
h. _____

So far this semester I have used some of the things I have learned in English 1101

e. in my writing for other classes
f. in my writing outside of school
g. only for this course
h. _____

WRITING REFLECTION:

Looking back at the semester, how often did you do the following? (***CIRCLE SOMETIMES, OFTEN, or NEVER)***

j. Visited your 1101 instructor during office hours: ***Sometimes Often Never***
k. Formed a study group for 1101: ***Sometimes Often Never***
l. Participated in a study group for 1101: ***Sometimes Often Never***
m. Discussed issues that we examined in 1101 in my other courses: ***Sometimes Often Never***
n. Shared rough or final drafts of writing assignments with other students in this course for their feedback: ***Sometimes Often Never***
o. Shared rough or final drafts of writing assignments with people outside of this course (friends, family, tutors, co-workers) for their feedback: ***Sometimes Often Never***
p. Visited the GSU writing studio: ***Sometimes Often Never***
q. Used research resources available in the library : ***Sometimes Often Never***
r. Get feedback on 1101 assignments from my instructor before those assignments are due: ***Sometimes Often Never***

Now that I have completed English 1101, I feel that writing requires a

e. Serious effort
f. Special talent
g. _____

Given a choice I

d. Would never take another writing course ever again
e. Would take any writing course that complements my academic goals
f. Would take every writing course this university offers

This semester I have used writing (check all that apply):

g. Only when required for an assignment
h. To help organize my thoughts about class discussions, readings, or notes I've taken
i. To communicate with my teachers and instructors
j. To brainstorm ideas for papers and projects
k. To plan how I will approach preparing for classes and assignments
l. _____

After taking English 1101 I

d. Love to write
e. Hate to write
f. Love to write but not for school

After taking English 1101 I

g. Think I am a great writer and can't write any better than I already do
h. Think I am a great writer but am always looking for ways to improve
i. Think I write pretty well and can't write any better
j. Think I write pretty well but will improve with more practice
k. Think I'm a terrible writer and will never write any better
l. Think I'm a terrible writer but will improve with more practice

For me, writing is

d. a part of my everyday life
e. something I only do in school
f. something I only did for this course

To me, writing is:

g. something that gets better and better the more you do it
h. a talent that some people have and others don't
i. _____

For me, doing well in English 1101 will: (***PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)***

g. be beneficial for my entire academic experience
h. will help me with my major
i. will satisfy this requirement
j. will help me keep my HOPE scholarship
k. is only important for my G.P.A.
l. _____

When I was given an assignment in English 1101:

d. I looked forward to putting my ideas on paper
e. I dreaded writing
f. _____

How often did you do the following in your OTHER courses: Very often, often, sometimes, once or twice, or never?

Use a writing concept or skill you covered in 1101 on a writing assignment
Use an experience you had in 1101 as part of a discussion in another class
Help a classmate out with a skill or concept you learned in 1101
Used a writing guide or source you discovered in 1101 on a writing assignment for another class
Visit the writing studio for an assignment for another class

What concepts, skills, and techniques did you learn in 1101 that you anticipate being able to apply to writing you will do as you progress in your major?

_____

What concepts, skills, and techniques did you learn in 1101 that you anticipate being able to apply to writing you may do in your career?

_____

What concepts, skills, and techniques did you learn in 1101 that you anticipate being to apply to other areas of your life?

_____

What in class writing assignments did you find especially helpful to you this semester?

_____

What class activities were most meaningful to you this semester?_____

_____

What graded assignments were most meaningful to you this semester?_____
_____
_____
_____

Thanks for participating in this survey!

Your participation is completely voluntary and has no bearing on your grade in this class whatsoever.

All of the information obtained by this survey will be used for research purposes only and may appear in the content of my paper but will remain otherwise confidential.

If you have any questions or comments please don't hesitate to contact me!
Laura E. Johnson – Graduate Student
ljohnson65@student.gsu.edu
404-723-2748

Also – if you'd like to share more of your experience as a writing student at GSU with me, please let me know. Thanks again – Laura