

**Dr. Bill Wolff**  
**Writing, Research, and Technology, Spring 2008**  
**Learning Record**

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**Student Profile**

Student Name: Sample 1

Rowan University Email address:

Alternate Contact information:

**Course Information**

Professor: Dr. Bill Wolff

Course Title: Writing for Electronic Communities

Course Web Site: <http://williamwolff.org/courses/wec-spring-2008/>

Course Number: MAWR 01555 1

Term and year: Spring 2008

**Updating the File throughout the Semester**

When adding observations throughout the semester, be sure to save the file with a new date after each update—and save a copy to your own computer (or flash drive or whatever). A useful file name format is: “lastname-wec-s08-lr-in-progress-1-28-08.doc.” Save it to the “in-progress” folder.

**For the Midterm**

At the Midterm, make appropriate updates, save the file as “lastname-wec-s08-midterm-lr.doc” and place it in the “midterm-document” folder.

**For the Final**

At the Final, make appropriate updates, save the file as “lastname-wec-s08-final-lr.doc” and place it in the “final-document” folder.

**Course Strands:** See page 8

**Dimensions of Learning:** See page 9

**Grading Criteria:** See page 10

### **Part A1: Interview**

Interview with (or send a series of questions send to) another person who knows you well—for example, a parent or other family member, close friend, or teacher. The interview should focus on the person's impressions of your development as a reader, writer, user of technology, and, if applicable, the Course Strands. Please identify the person (first name only is fine) and how long he or she has known you. If you have completed a Learning Record interview like this in another class recently, you may use it here. Please ask the person you question to be as detailed as possible.

I asked a good friend, Mary Keyes, who has worked and studied with me for the last five years how effective she thought I was with computing technologies and writing for an electronic medium. Mary replied that she thought I was adequate in both areas, that I was proficient with emails, immediate messaging and writing website updates. But then she also added that I become quite annoyed with something that I do not know, such as newly emerging technologies or software and that I am agitated until I know how to use them properly. She seemed to think this could negatively and positively impact my development as a writer/learner as my ability to learn is often is over shadowed by my impatience.

### **Part A2: Personal Reflection**

Reflections on your own development as a reader, writer, user of technology, and, if applicable, the Course Strands. Please be as detailed as possible.

I think that I have progressed satisfactory as a reader and a writer, I'm always learning something, which is great, as you can never know too much. Technology continues to be both the delight and bane of my life. It's not that I hate learning something new, I just sometimes struggle and because I can tend to be a perfectionist in certain areas of my life, I need to know how everything works, here and now. After being introduced to this master's class, Writing for Electronic Communities, I knew that it would be both fun and aggravating. Computer technology challenges me in a way that regular writing does not, it forces me to explore the writing spaces that are possible in the virtual world and I am finding more and more that I am liking the different types of writing open to me. I am hoping that my development as a writer can continue to grow throughout this course, as well as my patience and understanding of new ideas and concepts.

As always, I have to deal with my initial fear of new things. I always feel conflicted, as I get excited by new software, technology and methods of writing, but then when I am confronted with them and expected to perform, I get anxious. For instance, when we set up the blogs in class, I was hopping around inside my head, planning a number of exciting things to write about, but when it actually came to it, I was too nervous for a couple of days to actually write. I think that to progress with a healthy balance in my development I need to learn to calm down, tell myself it is ok to be puzzled or not know something, so long as I am actively seeking to learn. I

also think I need to improve on my group working skills, which this class will give me an opportunity to do, and I'd like to be able to offer my opinions in class without dying from social phobia – my shyness sometimes impedes my ability to properly express myself to the class and my teacher, so I would like to work on this as well.

### **Observations**

Please include the following information for *each* observation: Date observed; Date entered; Context; Activity; and the Observation. The text of the Observation should be no more than 5 sentences and no less than 3. If you find you are writing more, break them into multiple Observations.

#### **Observation #1**

**Date observed:** January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Date recorded:** February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008

**Context:** Individual, class.

**Activity:** Setting up blogs on Wordpress.com

**Observation:** In class we set up accounts on Wordpress.com. I'm always excited about different technologies, and this blogging thing is a new experience for me, but I always get impatient to know everything at once. I had to calm myself down and just take my time to learn the different aspects of Wordpress. I called my blog Bland Musings and chose a screen design of grass for my webpage. I wasn't sure what to do or say though, so I didn't write anything straight away.

#### **Observation #2**

**Date observed:** January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Date recorded:** February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008

**Context:** Individual

**Activity:** Blogging

**Observation:** I created another two categories for my blog – now there are three. Debatable Times (for political talk) Electronic communities (for class and general discussion on technology and writing) and Randomness (for just gossip and nonsensical rambling). I created some more blogs and quite enjoying myself actually. The more I post and read my classmates postings, the more confident I am becoming.

#### **Observation # 3**

**Date observed:** February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008

**Date recorded:** February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008

**Context:** Individual/class

**Activity:** Wenger

**Observation:** I find myself becoming very withdrawn during class discussion. There are strong personalities in the class and often I am overwhelmed by them. This is something I thought I had begun to outgrow, but apparently not. I am angry with myself for not plucking up the courage and just jumping in, when I have plenty of ideas to discuss and questions to ask. I can't believe at twenty five I'm still have incidents social phobia – it's really embarrassing. Wenger was a complicated text with many ideas that were hard to wrap around. I kept trying to find a definition for what a community of practice was, but often got lost in Wenger's sometimes complicated verbiage.

**Observation # 4**

**Date Observed:** February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Date recorded:** February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Context:** Class

**Activity:** Discussion of Fleck

**Observation:** I am ridiculously proud of myself. I finally forced myself to open up during class discussion and I must have made at least five comments about the material. I still felt embarrassed and stressed out, but I did it, I threw some of my ideas into the arena and lived. I am determined to try and keep adding comments in the following weeks. I have to remind myself that it is ok to be wrong, that what I have to say is just as important as the next student. What an accomplishment – I know I come off as sure of myself sometimes, but being shy is a constant battle for me and I won this round in class!

**Observation # 5**

**Date observed:** February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Date recorded:** February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Context:** Group

**Activity:** Zoho Project

**Observation:** I finally let go of my pride and asked for Prof. Wolff's help on Zoho. Now my group is able to see everything, finally. I think I need to learn to ask for help when I need it, rather than waiting and trying to figure it out on my own, especially when I'm in a group, because my pride prevented my group members from being able to participate in Zoho Project over the weekend.

**Observation # 6**

**Date observed:** February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Date recorded:** February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Context:** Individual

**Activity:** Blog

**Observation:** I learned a very important lesson today – I realized that what I write on my blog has ramifications. Two blogs that I posted on Feb 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> criticized Rowan Web Services in a manner which I thought to be tongue in cheek, but was to others just bad taste. I felt so awful about it, embarrassed that I had caused such a fuss with my silly comments. I was so frantic I wrote emails to apologize to the individuals I offended, which was also a mistake. Thank God, I talked everything out with Dr. Penrod and Professor Wolff. Prof Wolff was able to show me where I had made the mistake and how I should have corrected it. I now know that I should have commented back on my own blog instead of taking it outside of that space, and I feel so much better that Prof Wolff showed me a dignified way of apologizing on my own blog while also offering to continue the discussion online. I really do feel that if I ever encounter a response like this due to my comments that I am now prepared to handle it in a more reasonable fashion. Thank you Prof Wolff and Dr. Penrod – lesson learned!

**Observation #7**

**Date observed:** February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Date recorded:** February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Context:** Individual/group

**Activity:** Analysis of Rowan web page

**Observation:** My group decided that it would just be easier to each of us separately collect data for the web analysis and each of us bring in a hard copy and an electric copy so we can go over ideas for our final draft. This way we can see that everyone has done some running around, getting to know the ins and outs of the site, not just one specific section but the WHOLE thing. This will be advantageous as we can all have a broader view on the main problems, instead of each of us arguing which of our separate analyses is more important. I'm hoping we can piece a paper together this way, but I'm a little nervous, working in groups I usually end up doing all of the work, but I think my team mates are reliable and I just have to see how things go.

**Observation #8**

**Date observed:** February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Date recorded:** February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Context:** Group

**Activity:** Zoho Project

**Observation:** Both me and my group are extremely irritated with Zoho. For some odd reason they cannot get in to see the Project and I have spent ages trying to figure out why that is. I am the only one who can see it right now and it must be a mistake that I am making – I just hate to think that my mistakes will be negative on the group. For some odd reason I seem to have become the 'leader' for our group and I am not used to it. I don't think I like it. My problem is that I am not good at working with people and I feel like I need to corral everyone, get them organized, otherwise I know I'll be the one to end up doing all of the work. Thank goodness everyone seems to appreciate my bossiness so far, I'm trying to be conciseness of other people's feelings and my group members have been wonderful so far. Now, if only I could figure out how to get them to see Zoho Project!

**Observation # 9**

**Date observed:** February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Date recorded:** February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Context:** Group

**Activity:** Zoho/discussion of Usability Project

**Observation:** Having several miscommunication problems, my group decided to meet online and chat. Not having the same online chat accounts, we decided to give Zoho another whirl. Our agreed meeting time was 7:00PM so we logged onto Zoho Chat. It was a mess for a while, but I finally figured out how to invite everyone, and I must say it boosted all of our spirits to actually be able to converse with one another instead of sending emails. We discussed our research issues and resolved them in an organized manner which really helped to settle my and my group's minds.

**Observation #10**

**Date observed:** February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Date recorded:** February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Context:** Class/group

**Activity:** Netvibe/screenshot/blog

**Observation:** In class we were introduced to software online called Netvibe. I registered an account with the site and although Professor Wolff's account looks nice and neat and very relevant, mine looks pathetic with only a few tabs and I'm not quite sure what else to put on there. Apart from the games, I love widgets and I definitely see their value! Ha. The class went through how to do a screenshot for pc and mac – I was pleased because this was something I had learned from another class with Professor Wolff, something which I now use in a lot of my other classes and I do quite well! Then we talked about blogs and I finally understood what Professor Wolff meant by writing for the whole web and not just the class. I have been writing fun little articles, but they're very 'inside' and need to be put into some sort of context with external links so people from all over the web can understand what my blog is about. Karen Banks' blog is a wonderful example of this so far, so I'm going to go back and re-read her style and see if I can adopt the same contextual background in my own work.

**Observation # 11**

**Date observed:** February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Date recorded:** February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Context:** Class/Individual

**Activity:** Diigo

**Observation:** As a class we were introduced to new software called Diigo which offers social annotation. I think that it is absolutely marvelous. I spent the whole of the night playing around with the new software and I even downloaded the toolbar so that I can use it comment on webpages that I find fascinating. I already looked ahead at the schedule for class and started reading The Unknown hypertext. This is where I think Diigo could be invaluable. As the hypertext is non-linear, using Diigo I can write down my impressions before moving on to another page which holds new concepts and ideas. This way I might be able to keep my thoughts in order – social annotation is brilliant. Diigo also has its own blog, which is fascinating, full of interesting and relevant information for people who want extra knowledge on the process and technologies available linked to Diigo.

**Observation # 12**

**Date observed:** February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Date recorded:** February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Context:** Individual

**Activity:** Netvibes/zoho

**Observation:** I'm liking Netvibes – it is proving very useful in a couple of my other classes. Right now I'm doing a memoir class and I'm inexperienced with how to write them, so using Netvibes I signed up to a couple of blogs and sites that offer advice and examples of memoir writing. It's fantastic! Now the new information comes to me, I don't have to go onto search engines scouring the internet, I can just go to Netvibes and all the new information is waiting for me. In the same light, I have set up a separate Zoho account for my memoir class that details a time schedule of what work is due etc to keep myself in order and on time. These software

applications are really useful, they could easily replace binders and paperback organizers, especially since I always have my laptop with me anyways, everything I need is right online.

**Observation # 13**

**Date observed:** March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Date recorded:** March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Context:** Individual

**Activity:** Blog/The Jew's Daughter

**Observation:** I was slowly but surely driven insane by The Jew's Daughter. I love hypertext, but this one really pushed my buttons. However, I have to appreciate how using flash to change sections of the text really adds a whole different context to the remaining words, changing perceptions with both word order and meaning with grammar and order of paragraphs.

Unfortunately for me I became obsessed with the blue links and was driven to create my own little hypertext about blue links. I cannot express the amount of fun I had writing my piece Blue Oblivion, using self deprecation I was able to explain the frustration readers often have with hypertext pieces due to their own compulsive behaviors and impatience to know what comes next. I really want to write my own hypertext now, especially after reading this and the Unknown, I'm itching to learn the process and expand my own knowledge and appreciation for this type of interactive writing space.

**Observation # 14**

**Date observed:** February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Date recorded:** February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Context:** Individual

**Activity:** Exploring Hypertexts/Blog

**Observation:** I have become revolutionized, falling in love with different offerings of hypertexts online. So far my favorite two are The Sound and The Fury and 253, both interactive writing that allow the reader to participate in the process. Letting readers participate is making the whole process socialized in a way that is remarkable. Like Landow mentions in his book Hypertext 3.0 it makes you wonder if authorship really needs to be reconfigured so that all parties have equal access to influence material. It also made me reconsider Wikipedia. Before I scoffed at Wikipedia, believing it to be fallacious and of little value because anyone can contribute to the site, but now I see it has a different purpose and should not be looked down on. Wikipedia allows people to share intellectual property, to discuss opening using a forum that allows reads and writers to be involved equally. In an essence, there is a greater balance between the two, where everyone's opinions are valid. Fantastic, I honestly feel like my eyes are being opened for the first time.

## Work Samples

Please include the following information for *each* Work Sample (you may copy and paste the list below for each work sample). Place the actual work samples in the “samples-of-work” folder inside your “midterm-document” folder (at the midterm) and “final-document” folder (at the final).

### Work Sample #: 1

**Title:** I’m an Alien, I’m a Legal Alien

**Assignment:** Blog (expressing identity and political views)

**Format:** Wordpress

**File name:** N/A

**Location:** <http://xxxxx.wordpress.com/2008/02/18/>

**Comments about the work sample:** My blog enables me to express my concerns and questions about politics and my own identity. As an international student, often the lines of who you are become blurred and its great to have a creative way to explore the possibilities and laws of nationality.

### Work Sample #: 2

**Title:** Rowan Web Usability

**Assignment:** Blog

**Format:** Wordpress

**File name:** N/A

**Location:** <http://xxxxx.wordpress.com/2008/02/02/>

**Comments about the work sample:** This was a post that caused controversy among Rowan University Web Services. I learned how to respond correctly using posted comments, that way the conversation can carry on live using the blog as a vehicle to drive the discussion

### Work Sample #: 3

**Title:** Usability Project Primary Background Analysis

**Assignment:** Usability Rough Draft

**Format:** Word.doc

**File name:** Zoho Work – Usability Project

**Location:** Zoho Work – Usability Project – folder in the open area

**Comments about the work sample:** My initial analysis for the Usability Project.

### Work Sample #: 4

**Title:** Final Revision and editing of Usability Project

**Assignment:** Usability Final Draft

**Format:** Word.doc

**File name:** Zoho Work – Usability Project 1

**Location:** Zoho Work – Usability Project 1 – folder in the open area

**Comments about the work sample:** Two of my Group were out of town so they couldn’t help finalize the project. I decided to just do it myself while the other group member, Kim, helped finish off the purpose and scope etc.

**Work Sample#: 5**

**Title:** What the Fleck?

**Assignment:** Blog about Fleck

**Format:** Wordpress

**File name:** N/A

**Location:** <http://xxxxxx.wordpress.com/2008/02/27/>

**Comments about the work sample:** Blog philosophizes about some of the issues Fleck brings up, most importantly, the idea of civilizations being resistant to emerging knowledge and technology due to historical and social context.

**Work Sample #: 6**

**Title:** Writers in Flux

**Assignment:** Blog about Landow

**Format:** Wordpress

**File name:** N/A

**Location:** <http://xxxxxx.wordpress.com/2008/03/05/authors-in-flux/>

**Comments about the work sample:** discussion about authorship and rights to intellectual property.

**Work Sample #: 7**

**Title:** My Vague Memories of the Learning Record

**Assignment:** Blog Post

**Format:** Wordpress

**File name:** N/A

**Location:** <http://xxxxxx.wordpress.com/2008/01/26/>

**Comments about the work sample:** This was one of my first blog posts. I was still unclear as to who my audience was and while I addressed the class I excluded other readers that may have come across my writing.

**Work Sample #: 8**

**Title:** Usability Project

**Assignment:** Blog

**Format:** Wordpress

**File name:** N/A

**Location:** <http://xxxxxx.wordpress.com/2008/02/03/>

**Comments about the work sample:** As Prof Wolff suggested, I re-wrote this piece from its original state to include cyber space readers, hoping to elaborate so they would know what the project was about instead of assuming they knew. Also, this was one of the 'problematic' posts as it insulted Rowan University web services. From this I learned to be a bit more tactful in what I was posting online and it helped me realize that my words have consequences.

**Work Sample #: 9**

**Title:** Poetry Saga Part Deux

**Assignment:** Blog (using blogs for my other classes)

**Format:** Wordpress

**File name:** N/A

**Location:** <http://xxxxxxx.wordpress.com/2008/03/10/>

**Comments about the work sample:** I incorporated what I had learned from Core II, expressing and representation through poetry and used Wordpress as a means to help me publish my own work. It helped me acknowledge that I do not need to be officially published by a corporation to have my work viewed.

**Work Sample #: 10**

**Title:** Marshall McLuhan and a racist, bigoted view of the media and technology

**Assignment:** Blog response/comments

**Format:** Wordpress

**File name:** N/A

**Location:** <http://xxxxxxx.wordpress.com/2008/02/13/marshall-mcluhan-and-a-racist-bigoted-view-of-the-media-and-technology/>

**Comments about the work sample:** An example of one of my responses to a class mates post. I try to see their point of view and contribute to the discussion in a positive manner.

**Work Sample #: 11**

**Title:** Blue Oblivion

**Assignment:** Blog (in response to *The Jew's Daughter*)

**Format:** Wordpress

**File name:** N/A

**Location:** <http://xxxxxxx.wordpress.com/2008/03/10/>

**Comments about the work sample:** An exploration of mixing a blog with a hypertext, creating active links to portray the compulsive obsession with clicking links in hypertexts.

**Work Sample #: 12**

**Title:** The Possibilities of No

**Assignment:** Trying to write my own hypertext

**Format:** Hypertext page

**File name:** N/A

**Location:** <http://www.hypertextopia.com/library/read/202>

**Comments about the work sample:** Just exploring some of the online software available for hypertext.

### **Part B I: Midterm Analysis of Data**

Develop your summary interpretation of your development in terms of the *major course strands* and the *five dimensions of learning*. Be sure to connect your interpretations with specific examples included in the observations and samples of work.

Using the five dimensions of learning, I am going to evaluate my personal development in terms of the major course strands for the Writing for Electronic Communities class. Hopefully I will be able to effectively demonstrate what I have learned thus far using concrete examples to show how I have progressed.

### **Confidence and Independence**

I have always been reasonably confident with my computer abilities, that is, the ones that I already know and am familiar with. I tend to get excited when I am introduced to some new software or information that can open up the world of technology for me further. Unfortunately, this excitement is coupled with impatience, a need to know how everything works and I become irritated with myself when I do not pick the knowledge or skill up immediately. I ran into this problem as soon as we were introduced to Wordpress.com (see Observation #1), where I experienced the thrill of a new technology and writing space, but it was quickly followed by insecurity because of its new form – the unknown makes me hesitant and doubt myself. Thankfully, the more I posted blogs on Wordpress, the more confident I grew in my abilities (see Observation #2) which lead me to stop seeking my classmates reassurance that my posts were adequate because I knew blogging was something I could do effectively to express my ideas, such as political and national identity, and have fun with simultaneously (see Work Sample #1).

In the beginning of the semester I was having some issues with shyness during class discussion, something which I thought I had outgrown. Although I am extremely confident when writing, I have always fought with anxiousness when trying to express myself verbally, especially in large groups. I noticed that the problem was preventing me from contributing to the class fully (see Observation #3) and I didn't want to talk to anyone about it; being fiercely independent I believed that I could work it out by myself, which in this case, I was right (see Observation #4). My confidence has always been wrapped up in pride, but I have learned, as the weeks progressed, that I do not always have all of the knowledge and experience to approach certain situations in the correct manner, both social and technological in nature. Being a part of this class has helped me to learn to bend a little and ask for help when I need it. One such instance was when dealing with the software for Zoho Project and I had to ask Professor Wolff his advice on how to enable access for my whole group (see Observation #5) and on another, more important occurrence (see Observation #6) I learned how to apologize with more grace and professionalism when I had responded incorrectly to a negative comment on my blog (see Work Sample #2). The one thing I love about this class is that I feel my boundaries are always tested, my confidence is sometimes shaken, but ultimately I feel these dents to my pride make me stronger. As I learn through positive and negative experiences, my independence and confidence continues to grow through personal research and open communication with my teacher and peers.

## **Skills and Strategies**

The biggest hurdle for me thus far has been learning the skills necessary to work effectively in a group for the Usability Project. I am fiercely independent when researching and writing, finding it hard to concentrate on collaborating with classmates. I dreaded the fact that I would have to rely on other people to contribute, as I have had negative experiences in the past with group work (see Observation #7). As I learned to communicate more effectively with my group members, by offering suggestions, listening to their complaints and worries and giving guidance, I soon found myself, ironically, in the unwanted role of group leader (see Observation #8). I had to learn how to get everyone to collaborate effectively so that each assignment was done on time and to satisfaction. The strategies I tried to employ included making sure that everyone had a specific job to complete, deadlines were clearly identified and that, if any group member had problems or issues, I tried to ensure they were shared and solved within the group. I was pleasantly surprised that my group members followed my instructions and actually respected my directions. I can honestly say that I have learned some valuable communication skills during the usability project; I know that I need to trust people a little more and by opening up and being conscientious, I found that collaborative work goes a lot smoother when you take other people's perspectives into account. I also quickly learned, in my group, that respect is issued faster when you are willing to listen to another point of view and discuss its merits rather than just voicing your own opinions and trying to dominate over other members.

A skill that I learned and shared with my group, which also helped us to research and organize our work more effectively, was Zoho Chat. My group had problems meeting up and we desperately needed to discuss the research we had completed so that we could develop our ideas in an organized manner. I took the initiative to use a contemporary communication technology, Zoho Chat, to fulfill my group's need for discussion. I managed to get everyone signed up and logged on without too much trouble (see Observation #9) and the experience was wonderful – my group bonded and we felt a sense of purpose that had been previously missing. Another skill I have learned that has helped me build confidence is writing analytically, especially for the Usability Project. My first draft for the background analysis (see Work Sample #3) was really only surface research. My group were unsure how to start collecting data for the Usability Project, so I managed to complete the rough draft for everyone, including the paths to the Computing Site, audience analysis, test subject analysis, website analysis, TxtReadability table, usability concerns and sample scenarios. Thanks to the editing contributions from my group and advice from Professor Wolff, I was able to go back and think more about the organization, grammar and visual impact of graphics for the draft I had already completed. In my final draft of the Usability Project (see Work Sample #4) I used skills such as screen shots, arrows, tables, drawing lines and other such computer skills which helped reinforce the knowledge I already had. Overall, I think my group did a great job of collecting and arranging data.

## **Knowledge and Understanding**

My knowledge and understanding has increased in areas I didn't even know existed before taking this class. When I was first introduced to the Usability Project, I had no idea that there were actually individuals out there that analyzed web sites in order to determine their usefulness and ease of navigation for users. Now I at least understand some of the thought process that goes

into researching such a vast and complicated topic. Neilson and Loranger's book *Discussing Prioritizing Web Usability* allowed me to take into account the intricacies of how a web site is not only evaluated, but how it is constructed in the first place. A web designer has to think about navigation, layout, organization, scrolling, graphics, content, clickability and keywords. This process reminded me of an advertising class I once took as an undergraduate; in both instances the creator of an advert of a web page has to thoroughly take into account how easy it is for the user/buyer to comprehend the message, meaning and navigation of the advert/web site.

The theories that I enjoyed learning the most so far this semester were from Landow and Fleck. I was stunned by some of the theories suggested by Fleck, especially when he philosophizes about the idea of civilizations being resistant to emerging knowledge and technology due to historical and social context (see Work Sample #5). Fleck helped me to realize that, like a chain reaction, questioning known facts leads not to a redundancy of old information, but instead it changes the perception of that information, making it not the final 'answer' but merely a step or a building block to the next question/answers. In this sense, a fact is not obsolete; it is instead a bundle of flexible knowledge with the potential to lead you to new areas of intelligence and comprehension. Fleck's book then, becomes more of a study of human behavior rather than just knowledge.

From Landow (see Work Sample #6) I learned how technological advances in writing spaces, such as online Weblogs and Intermedia, offer the ability to blur the lines between author and reader and that if society progresses in this area, a question of whether the distinction between who the writer/reader is may not be necessary. Landow's exploration of authorship makes me question if we are heading towards a socialized writing community where all intellectual property converges into a joint bank of knowledge, or should we stick to capitalist ideals and ego, where to stake a claim into intellectual property is paramount to maintaining a sense of individualism, profit and self-worth? Landow and Fleck have opened a new avenue of thought and contemplation for me, making me wonder how technology and communication/expression of ideas are going to adapt through time and how we, the users, are going to be able to cope with those changes. From a psychological and sociological point of view these theories are utterly fascinating.

### **Use of Prior or Emerging Experience**

I have learned a great amount in a relatively short amount of time in this class. My progress is a definite plus considering the technology world demands an ever expanding amount of knowledge and experience from the average user, like myself. In the past I have learned how to use technical computer skills such as screen shots, tracking and commenting on Word and had some knowledge of using contemporary communication technologies such as email and Instant Messaging. These skills were great building blocks for what I have further learned this semester, such as using Netvibes, Diigo and Zoho (see Observations #10, #11 and #12). I used these three software applications not only to help organize WEC class assignments, but also for another MA class, Writing for Memoir. Netvibes helps me to locate online memoirs to increase my reading experience and exposure to other writers, while Zoho works like an organizer for me, letting me know what work I have due and keeping track of drafts I complete. Diigo is fantastic for helping

keep track of thoughts while surfing the web, especially when I'm reading hypertexts, as the software automatically bookmarks the webpages I highlight and use sticky notes on.

Learning to write blogs has been invaluable. I can now list this skill on my resume and recently I have even been considered for an online blogging job writing content, which is amazing. In the beginning I mistakenly wrote blogs that were directed at my classmates alone (see Work Sample #7) but with advice and experience, I learned to incorporate the rest of the cyber world, putting my writing into context so it would be comprehensive for everyone who read it (see Work Sample #8). Blogging has also helped me to explore avenues with my Core II class this semester (see Work Sample #9) allowing me to vent my frustrations and experiment with different genres of writing using an electronic medium. I have also been trying to contribute more to my classmates blogs (see work sample #10), as I believe that the more experience I get in offering my opinion both in the written word and verbally, the more confident I will become in establishing rapport with my peers.

In the past I learned how to use the basics of HTML Text for writing online content, but thanks to reading *The Jew's Daughter* and *The Unknown*, I am now searching for avenues to write a hypertext of my own. One way I explored doing this was through my blog (see Work Sample #11 and Observation # 13) which explores mixing a blog with a hypertext, creating active links to portray the compulsive obsession I had to click links in hypertext. I have also tried adding content to Wikipedia to explore that as a communal hypertext and started to use Hypertextopia (see Observation # 14 and Work Sample #12). The story I have begun on Hypertextopia is called *The Possibilities of No* – a work in progress that is fictional. I was excited to discover all of these new sites that offer a writer the experience of creating a piece of work that gives a higher meaning to interaction. I even tried seeing if the company where well-known hypertext authors, Pattinson and Moulthrop, publish their work, Eastgate Systems Inc, offer hypertext software that I could use, but unfortunately they only offer a free trial which is limited and comes without direction – the software has to be purchased for \$295, which I cannot afford. Be that as it may, I am thrilled with the progress I have made in my research for hypertexts and will no doubt continue to find different online software that will help me gain more knowledge and experience in this area.

## Reflection

I have discovered that I still approach new technology with an equal amount of excitement and hesitancy; excitement because I am always eager to learn something new which may further my technological knowledge, and hesitancy because I do not like being wrong or unsure of myself. I have learned to better accept working with a group of people and have struggled against my own social phobias to contribute to the class discussions – a huge step for me. I think that I still need to work on how to let my guard down and allow people to see that I too need guidance and that I make mistakes too. This will help me tremendously, especially because WEC is such an interactive class – participation is absolutely necessary and I do not want to hinder my own learning progress due to my shy and prideful behavior. The theory I have encountered in the literature material for this class has been so fascinating; I think that I am able to grasp all of the major theoretical concepts that we have so far discussed. I thoroughly enjoy listening to other people's heated discussions about these theories and I find myself learning new twists and

variations of ideas when information is processed by different people in my class. If I can be patient enough with myself when I am confronted with new software and continue to be open minded, I believe that I can leave this class with much more than I ever expected to gain when I first walked through the door, and for that I am immensely grateful.

**Part C I: Midterm evaluation and grade estimate**

Include here any comments you'd like to add, especially concerning:

- Your estimated evaluation in terms of the grade criteria for the course.
- Suggestions for your own further development during the remainder of the term.
- Suggestions for class activities or for the professor to better support learning

Then, indicate your midterm grade estimate.

I feel like I'm reiterating, but I honestly have learned a great amount in a short period of time. Technology wise, I now have a confident knowledge base of blogging on Wordpress, RSS Feeds, Netvibes, TxtReadability, Diigo, Usability, Zoho Projects/Chat/Group and hypertexts. I have enjoyed exploring avenues related to each of these technologies, especially the hypertext, in hopes that I will one day be able to write my very own hypertext novel. I am still leaning to socialize and communicate more effectively with my peers individually and as a member of a group/class and I think I will continue to make progress so long as I keep an open mind and am able to override my anxiety. I believe that my level of interaction and participation on all levels has been excellent; I've completed all of the work assigned and managed to use several skills I've learned in this class and applied them to other areas of academia and personal interests. I've always enjoyed discovering new ideas about technology, and this course has revitalized my passion for learning even more. I will continue to try my best to use what I have learned and put it to actual use, so that all this knowledge does not go to waste.

**Midterm Grade Estimate: B+**

**Instructor Comments:**

**Instructor Final Grade:**

**Part B2: Final Analysis of Data**

Develop your summary interpretation of your development in terms of the major strands of work and the five dimensions of learning. Be sure to connect your interpretations with specific examples included in the observations and samples of work.

[INSERT TEXT HERE]

*Leave this blank until the final document.*

**Part C2: Final evaluation and grade estimate**

Include here any comments you'd like to add, especially concerning:

- Reflections on your learning experience in the course.
- Any supplementary information or comments not included in Parts A and B.
- Any suggestions for the instructor for future classes.

Then, indicate your final grade estimate.

[INSERT TEXT HERE]

*Leave blank until the final.*

**Final Grade Estimate:** [INSERT LETTER GRADE HERE] *Leave blank until the final.*

**Instructor Comments:**

**Instructor Final Grade:**

## **The Course Strands**

### **Communication**

Students will develop their ability to communicate using a variety of writing spaces. Students will also become familiar with how and when to use which communication space, the discourses associated with each, as well as the impact that each has on a particular audience.

### **Research**

Students will gain greater familiarity with internet research as a means of adding to their own learning, and learn how to conduct a usability study of a large scale web site.

### **Critical Reading, Thinking, and Writing**

Students will develop their ability to read judiciously, think about, filter information about, and write about texts in a variety of genres and mediums.

### **Technology**

Students will learn about and will use contemporary communication technologies in a variety of settings.

### **Collaboration**

Students will develop their ability to work collaboratively in activities that range from online discussion postings to peer reviews to in-class discussion.

## **The Five Dimensions of Learning**

Learning theorists have argued that learning and development are not like an assembly-line which can be broken down into discrete steps occurring with machine-time precision, but an organic process that unfolds in complex ways according to its own pace and rhythm. Teaching and learning occurs in complex ecosystems, dynamic environments where teachers, students, materials and supplies, texts, technologies, concepts, social structures, and architectures are interdependently related and interactive. Using the Learning Record, the teacher (and student) is actively searching for, and documenting, positive evidence of student development across five dimensions: confidence and independence, knowledge and understanding, skills and strategies, use of prior and emerging experience, and critical reflection. These five dimensions cannot be "separated out" and treated individually; rather, they are dynamically interwoven. Our goals for a particular class should describe a trajectory of learning across multiple dimensions, and our measurements should be able to identify the paths taken by students and their progress from their individual starting points along that trajectory.

Individually, learners can expect to make progress across these five dimensions:

### **Confidence and Independence**

We see growth and development when learners' confidence and independence become congruent with their actual abilities and skills, content knowledge, use of experience, and reflectiveness about their own learning. It is not a simple case of "more (confidence and independence) is better." In a science class, for example, an overconfident student who has relied on faulty or underdeveloped skills and strategies learns to seek help when facing an obstacle; or a shy student begins to trust her own abilities, and to insist on presenting her own point of view in discussion. In both cases, students are developing along the dimension of confidence and independence.

### **Skills and strategies**

Skills and strategies represent the "know-how" aspect of learning. When we speak of "performance" or "mastery," we generally mean that learners have developed skills and strategies to function successfully in certain situations. Skills and strategies are not only specific to particular disciplines, but often cross disciplinary boundaries. In a writing class, for example, students develop many specific skills and strategies involved in composing and communicating effectively, from research to concept development to organization to polishing grammar and correctness, and often including technological skills for computer communication.

### **Knowledge and understanding**

Knowledge and understanding refers to the "content" knowledge gained in particular subject areas. Knowledge and understanding is the most familiar dimension, focusing on the "know-what" aspect of learning. In a psychology class, knowledge and understanding might answer a wide range of questions such as, What is Freud's concept of ego? Who was Carl Jung? What is "behaviorism"? These are typical content questions. Knowledge and understanding in such

classes includes what students are learning about the topics; research methods; the theories, concepts, and practices of a discipline; the methods of organizing and presenting our ideas to others, and so on.

### **Use of prior and emerging experience**

The use of prior and emerging experience involves learners' abilities to draw on their own experience and connect it to their work. A crucial but often unrecognized dimension of learning is the capacity to make use of prior experience as well as emerging experience in new situations. It is necessary to observe learners over a period of time while they engage in a variety of activities in order to account for the development of this important capability, which is at the heart of creative thinking and its application. With traditional methods of evaluating learning, we cannot discover just how a learner's prior experience might be brought to bear to help scaffold new understandings, or how ongoing experience shapes the content knowledge or skills and strategies the learner is developing. In a math class, students scaffold new knowledge through applying the principles and procedures they've already learned: algebra depends on the capacity to apply basic arithmetic procedures, for example.

### **Reflection**

Reflection refers to the developing awareness of the learner's own learning process, as well as more analytical approaches to the subject being studied. When we speak of reflection as a crucial component of learning, we are not using the term in its commonsense meaning of reverie or abstract introspection. We are referring to the development of the learner's ability to step back and consider a situation critically and analytically, with growing insight into his or her own learning processes, a kind of metacognition. It provides the "big picture" for the specific details. For example, students in a history class examining fragmentary documents and researching an era or event use reflection to discover patterns in the evidence and construct a historical narrative. Learners need to develop this capability in order to use what they are learning in other contexts, to recognize the limitations or obstacles confronting them in a given situation, to take advantage of their prior knowledge and experience, and to strengthen their own performance.

## The Grading Criteria

- A, A-** Represents outstanding participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with very high quality in all work produced for the course. Evidence of significant development across the five dimensions of learning. The Learning Record at this level demonstrates activity that goes significantly beyond the required course work in one or more course strands.
- B+, B, B-** Represents excellent participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with consistently high quality in course work. Evidence of marked development across the five dimensions of learning.
- C+, C, C-** Represents good participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with generally good quality overall in course work. Evidence of some development across the five dimensions of learning.
- D+, D, D-** Represents uneven participation in course activities; some gaps in assigned work completed, with inconsistent quality in course work. Evidence of development across the five dimensions of learning is partial or unclear.
- F** Represents minimal participation in course activities; serious gaps in assigned work completed, or very low quality in course work. Evidence of development is not available.
- IN** Work for the course is incomplete and the instructor will allow the student additional time to complete it. The amount of time allowed is at the discretion of the instructor.