

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

Student Profile

Student Name:

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 25

Dimensions of Learning: See page 26

Grading Criteria: See page 28

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.

All I know is that you highlight the pages and you write stuff. How do I know of your development? You read fast and you read a lot. You've always liked to read, and it continues. You read fast and you read well and you read from every different thing from English textbooks to novels.

I think that your writing got better since high school. Obviously it gets better on your way to your PhD. You write descriptively and you are very good at explanations. You make the people feel like they are there, like they can feel what you feel and think what you think. You definitely got more confident in your writing since you've been in your masters program; you submitted to *Vanity Fair*.

You are always thinking. I think you think things out, but sometimes you do things impulsively. When you're buying stuff, you just buy whatever you want but then other things you think out. I think you're a good thinker because you make the kids learn and you do good, creative things; they're not bored. You definitely can concentrate and focus; you've been in school this whole time.

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 have always been a good student with plenty of confidence and independence. My motivation is intrinsic that way; I enjoy learning for the sake of learning, and I value the knowledge and experience that I gain from my education through reading, writing, speaking, listening, etc. I find that the more I read, the more efficiently I read and with the range of materials that I read, I have gotten very good at adjusting my reading/comprehension/analysis for various styles, content areas, lengths and time constraints. Confidence in areas of speaking and writing stem from my willingness and ability to learn and to share what I know with others, and my natural sensitivity as a human being enhances my ability to listen to others, not just hear them.

Professionally, I continue to work hard to hone my skills as a teacher and a writer, even though I am talented and successful in both areas. I believe in professional development and am always seeking opportunities to attend workshops, teach seminars, participate in reading/study groups and further my education. Rowan's writing program has been most helpful to my writing career; for, when I entered the program it was with natural ability and the skills that I learned in

K-16. Rowan's writing program has taught me writing skills, such as revision, that have revolutionized my writing and my teaching of writing.

Writing for Electronic Communities is a class that will depend heavily on my prior knowledge. I would say that I have advanced skills in the Microsoft Office suite, that I can find most of what I need to find on the Internet without a problem, and that I am perfectly comfortable communicating via e-mail and performing other functions within Yahoo mail and Microsoft Outlook. I do not have much prior knowledge or experience with blogging and various other online applications that we've mentioned so far in class, but I do believe that my overall computer experience and my quest for further knowledge will contribute to my success in learning and succeeding with computer applications that previously seemed foreign to me.

That being said, I am in a solid position to learn about electronic communities at this point in my educational and professional careers. Back in November, Dr. Penrod and I audited my credits and realized that I could graduate this coming May if I would either transfer two courses from my previous masters work OR transfer one course and take Writing for Electronic Communities in conjunction with writing my thesis. "How important is it for me to take Writing for Electronic Communities?" was the question that I needed answered in order to make the right decision. Dr. Penrod answered that the knowledge alone would be helpful to me as a person living this age and that the course would be an asset to my curriculum vita. I was sold. Knowledge. That's why I'm here. That's why I've continued my education and why I don't plan on stopping.

When I look back on my education, I realize that I have always loved school, that I've always wanted to learn and that I have no intention of ceasing to educate myself and others. This writing degree, from the moment that I submitted my application to The National Writing Project at Rowan University, has been a time of reflection both professionally and personally. I know now, more than ever, that writing and instruction are my passions. That I'm "cut out" for both careers and that I've been given the tools to become even more successful in the future. Most of all, I look back at my education and know that not a word, not an hour, not a dollar, not an ounce of effort has been wasted in my pursuit of knowledge. Education is never a waste. Education is a gift, one that I seem to keep giving myself. Great—thanks for sharing this.

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.

Samples

Observation #: 1

Date observed: 11 September 2006

Date entered: 12 September 2006

Context (Individual, pairs, small group, large group, whole class): small group

Activity: looking at September 11 stuff

Observation

Today we met in groups to analyze online video, web site screen shots, print images, and radio broadcasts of the attacks of five years ago. I wasn't sure what to expect but I found that talking with my classmates provided an interesting perspective on the attacks. However, I'm still not sure about how different media impact how we understand things.

Observation #: 2

Date observed: 13 September 2006

Date entered: 13 September 2006

Context (Individual, pairs, small group, large group, whole class): individual

Activity: Bolter, chapters 1 and 2

Observation

I just finished reading chapters 1 and 2 of Writing Spaces, and completed my posting. Though I can readily identify my writing spaces, I'm still confused as to what "remediation" is and why it's important to understand. Hopefully we'll talk more about it in class.

Observation #: 1

Date Observed: February 1, 2008

Date Entered: February 7, 2008

Context (Individual, pairs, small group, large group, whole class): Individual

Activity: Zoho logon and group set up

Observation: I notice that my greatest asset, technologically, is also my greatest weakness. I am trigger happy. As soon as I think I know what to do and where to go, what to click, how to login, how to create this or that, I just do it...without thinking. I pull the trigger, set up whatever I think (not know) I am supposed to set up and then go in afterwards and try to clean up the pieces. This should explain my wealth of crazy e-mails to the group over the seemingly simple task of signing on to Zoho project.

Observation #: 2

Date Observed: January 31 - present

Date Entered: February 7, 2008

Context (Individual, pairs, small group, large group, whole class): Individual

Activity: Blogging

Observation: To blog is to vent, sometimes. To blog is to expose, all of the time. To blog is to write with precision. Blogging is a challenge for those of us who care how we represent and who care deeply about the English language. Thank you for this gift!

Observation #: 3

Date entered: February 8, 2008

Date observed: February 7, 2008

Context: Individual

Activity: use of Zoho

Observation: My level of confidence with a computer application (and with computers in general) is directly related to the usability of a particular application. I've always said that I am very good with computers, as long as they do what I need and expect them to do; troubleshooting is not my forte. I do not have the confidence and/or knowledge that I need to troubleshoot, mostly because not knowing what is going on with a particular application (not being able to make sense of how it is acting) makes me VERY uncomfortable. I always look to those who are experienced with troubleshooting to get me out of a bind. There is a point of frustration at which I will not touch an application until I can seek help from somebody who can figure out that which I cannot. Once I am enlightened, I am usually able to help other people! (So, at least I can learn.)

P.S. Had Zoho placed the information about adding users to a project under the "USERS" tab, I would have been able to add users to the project without confusion and with plenty of confidence.

Observation #: 4

Date entered: February 8, 2008

Date observed: January 31, 2008 - present

Context: Individual

Activity: blogging

Observation: I've noticed that I grow more and more frustrated with the limitations of the school system's network and acceptable use policies as I learn more about various Internet applications. I really want my students to benefit from blogging, but, alas, I cannot seem to find the perfect way to have this freeing type of writing jive with the security constraints for students. I would love to have students work collaboratively on a site like Zoho (now that I know how to overcome the quirks), but, again, there are so many rules about passwords and anonymity with students that it is nearly impossible for me to have the students do anything at all that absolutely requires an e-mail address. UGH.

Observation #: 5

Date entered: February 12, 2008

Date observed: February 11, 2008

Context: Individual/Field

Activity: converting to pdf files

Observation: I taught myself how to enable my computer to save in pdf format (My Word 07 was not set up for that until I did some fancy computer work!). I was in something of a bind when an online application would not accept a Word attachment, so I HAD to learn how to attach a pdf. AND I DID!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Observation #: 6

Date entered: February 19, 2008

Date observed: February 18, 2008

Context: Individual

Activity: blogging

Observation: Thus far in my professional, academic and writing careers, blogging is the most difficult genre for me to embrace. As a public educator, I have so much to say, but it is my role as a public educator that silences me on many issues. Sure, I love to journal, but public journaling is a different story altogether. For the most part, I must be very careful when expressing my opinions on controversial issues in mixed company—and I'd say the world is mixed company.

I like to blog, but the whole deciding what to write that I won't want to take back...now there's a challenge for a fired up young lady like me!

Observation #: 7

Date entered: February 19, 2008

Date observed: February 18, 2008

Context: Individual

Activity: blogging

Observation: I do love the challenge of having to select each and every word with care, so as to protect my reputation and my career. What a great lesson on writing! If only my students could blog and blog and blog. For, I can think of no better way to teach the importance and intricacies of language. At the same time, I can certainly appreciate the merits of arguments against student blogging; writing to the world seems rather risky for young people. On the other hand, there's no time like the present to teach young people how to write responsibly and appropriately.

Observation #: 8

Date entered: February 26, 2008

Context: Individual

Activity: Accessing the open area

Observation: I DID IT!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I'VE ACCESSED THE OPEN AREA BY SOME MIRACLE (or, maybe I could attribute my success to Gavin's helpful hint on his blog). At any rate, I now know how to access the open area, and my computer is completely comfortable with

her new role (and happy that she doesn't have to come to Rowan with me...she's a little bit of a homebody).

Observation #: 9**Date entered:** March 10, 2008**Date observed:** March 2, 2008**Context:** individual**Activity:** Writing my thesis

Observation: Yet again, my worlds have collided. I was writing chapter four of my thesis, and I noticed that I had begun to think in terms of links instead of footnotes. There were so many times that I thought...*hmmmm, if I just link to this or that military page or photo album...* But, alas, my thesis is to be written for print. The readings and applications from Writing for Electronic Communities have taught me so much that my new knowledge seems to be seeping into my everyday thought and practice(s). Maybe someday I will convert part of my thesis to hypertext!

Observation #: 10**Date entered:** March 10, 2008**Date observed:** March 5, 2008**Context:** large group (in class)**Activity:** In-class discussion of March 5 readings

Observation: When we originally all came together, it was obvious that many of us had reservations about our knowledge and/or experience regarding electronic communities and related applications thereof. As of our class on March 5, it has become official—at least in my mind—that our class has come into its own. We are functioning as a community, writing in our electronic spaces, and having lively conversations about all of the readings, regardless of our likes and dislikes (and feelings of how “obvious” certain material seems to be –haha). It took us several weeks to get here, but I am proud of the progress we have made as a class—and happy to see that people are participating in such meaningful ways!

Observation #: 11**Date entered:** March 10, 2008**Date observed:** March 9, 2008**Context:** Individual**Activity:** Thesis writing, again.

Observation: Okay, so now I've actually read some hypertext (The Unknown), and I can imagine parts of my thesis in hypertext. You see, my thesis is a multi-genre piece and, as such, I have been working very hard to break the usual rules of chronology. However, for such a print piece, linearity seems to be king, and so I am having a difficult time writing taking events, thoughts, feelings, etc. out of context and having these individual psychological happenings stand alone or at least apart from their chronological neighbors. At any rate, I've written a piece

about 9/11 and pre-combat service that is other than linear in many parts. Maybe that is where I go with my hypertext. QUESTION: Is my blog a good forum for print turned hypertext?

Observation #: 12

Date entered: March 10, 2008

Date observed: March 9, 2008

Context: Individual

Activity: Blogging

Observation: I can't shake the feeling of jealousy that I developed over the past two weeks regarding all of the excitement and traffic on other students' blogs. I need to revamp my blog, refocus the blog, and make it more meaningful to my readers, even though I don't think I have any readers—therein lies the problem. So, I've begun by tagging my last two posts. I really think that I will get some feedback regarding "The Unknown Hypertext," but I guess we'll see. In the meantime, I'm also contemplating going back to past posts and tagging those as well...to generate some more traffic. Yes, I'm getting brave in my old(ish) age.

Observation #: 13

Date entered: March 22, 2008

Date observed: March 19, 2008

Context: Individual

Activity: Blogging

Observation: While I have yet to refocus my blog, I have begun to talk to the world through my blog with some posts that have such great potential to generate responses. Hot topics, if you will. I have posted on gun control, the war in Iraq, and Admiral Fallon's sudden resignation. And, I have tagged those posts in order to generate some activity. Like I said, not a total overhaul, but more meaningful posts at least.

Observation #: 14

Date entered: March 24, 2008

Date observed: March 6, 2008 – present

Context: Individual; class

Activity: Diigo

Observation: Diigo is my new favorite Internet tool! I have so much to say about all that I read, and my books are underlined, highlighted, and full of comments in the margins. It is difficult in class to get out everything that I want to say, and sometimes my comments get lost in the pages. But Diigo is a great way to communicate my thoughts and ideas about the readings to an audience such as my classmates and professor. I also like reading others' comments...it's like getting into a person's head while he or she is reading.

Observation #: 15

This is a forum posting. This is a forum posting. This is a forum posting. This is a forum posting.
This is a forum posting. This is a forum posting. This is a forum posting. This is a forum posting.

Work Sample #: 1

Title: Forum discussions on Zoho Project

Assignment: Usability Project

Format: Screen shot

File name: xxxxxx-wec-s08-midterm-worksamples-screenshots.doc

Location: Midterm Work Samples folder in the open area

Comments about the work sample: Screen shot 1 is a shot of my usability group's most recent Zoho forum discussion postings.

Work Sample #: 2

Title: Teacher's e-board

Assignment: Field experience with technology

Format: Screen shot

File name: xxxxxxxx-wec-s08-midterm-worksamples-screenshots.doc

Location: Midterm Work Samples folder in the open area

Comments about the work sample: Screen shot 2 and 3 are samples of my use of technology for classroom teaching. My e-board is a crucial teaching tool and electronic resource for my students.

Work Sample #: 3

Title: Blog presentation

Assignment: Blog creation

Format: Screen shot

File name: xxxxxxxxx-wec-s08-midterm-worksamples-screenshots.doc

Location: Midterm Work Samples folder in the open area

Comments about the work sample: Screen shots 4 & 5 show compare my original bare bones blog presentation (screen shot 4) to my present and more sophisticated blog presentation (screen shot 5).

Work Sample #: 4

Title: Use of Zoho Writer to edit docs

Assignment: Usability Project (IRB document)

Format: Microsoft Word

File name: WEC IRB doc.doc

Location: Uploaded document to Zoho Project (Group 3); ver 1.2; uploaded by mrsbrinkmann

Comments about the work sample: Here is proof that I learned how to use Zoho writer to edit a document through Zoho and then upload the document anew for group members to view.

Work Sample #: 5

Title: Use of Zoho Writer to edit docs

Assignment: Usability Project (IRB document)

Format: discussion forum post

File name: post title “ “

Location: Zoho Project (Group 3); usability project; forums

Comments about the work sample: I edited the IRB doc in Zoho Writer and then posted to that effect.

Work Sample #: 6

Title: Usability Task/Scenario #1

Assignment: Usability Project

Format: Microsoft Word

File name: xxxxxxxx-wec-s08-midterm-worksamples-task1.doc

Location: Midterm Work Samples folder in the open area

Comments about the work sample: Here, I am proudly displaying the research I conducted to set up the anticipated paths that our test subjects would take to complete Task 1.

Work Sample #: 7

Title: Course reading related blog posts

Assignment: Course reading responses

Format: Blog postings

File name: xxxxxxxx blog posting titles “Help with The Unknown,” “Captain Obvious Reflects on Fleck,” “In Bed with Fleck,” “Etienne Wenger’s communities of practice makes perfect,” “Hypersensitive to Hypertext”

Location: xxxxxxxx blog

Comments about the work sample: Here are my blog postings regarding course readings. I have embraced communicating about course readings via blogging.

Work Sample #: 8

Title: Perusing others’ blogs for info.

Assignment: Accessing the open area

Format: Blog posting

File name: Parting the Fog’s blog posting “Open Area Problem Solved”

Location: Parting the Fog’s blog

Comments about the work sample: Although Gavin (Parting the Fog) has posted this information regarding accessing the open area, I consider having found the informational post as a sample of my work in research regarding open area problems. That I uncovered such crucial information via blogging is proof of my success in communicating through blogs.

Work Sample #: 9

Title: Gun control blog post and response

Assignment: Blogging

Format: Blog posting and response

File name: xxxxxxxx blog posting “Why are we debating a given right?” and comment

Location: xxxxxxxx blog

Comments about the work sample: The blog posting is evidence of my attempt to generate some traffic on my blog so that by blog is not being written and read in the near isolation of *Writing for Electronic Communities*. I even got a response!

Work Sample #: 10

Title: Field Frustration

Assignment: Applying course work to field work

Format: Microsoft word document

File name: xxxxxxxx-wec-s08-midterm-worksamples-fieldwork

Location: Midterm Work Samples folder on open area

Comments about the work sample: This work sample is a narrative of my frustrations in the field regarding my student teacher, a student who is making no effort to apply what he knows or to learn what he does not know regarding the use of technology in the teaching profession.

Work Sample #: 11

Title: Online Job Applications

Assignment: Applying course work to field work

Format: Microsoft Word document

File name: xxxxxxxx-wec-s08-midterm-worksamples-fieldwork

Location: Midterm Work Samples folder on the open area

Comments about the work sample: This narrative work sample is evidence of my ability and willingness to expand my technological and electronic horizons outside of class. My job search has been at least 99% electronic in nature.

Work Sample #: 12

Title: Freelance queries

Assignment: Applying course work to field work

Format: Microsoft Word document

File name: Brinkbrinkmann-wec-s08-midterm-worksamples-fieldwork

Location: Midterm Work Samples folder on the open area

Comments about the work sample: Here are two separate e-mail headings that provide evidence of my e-mail queries to *The New Yorker* and *The Washingtonian*.

Work Sample #: 13

Title: Troubleshooting via e-mail

Assignment: Diigo and blog comments

Format: Microsoft Word document

File name: xxxxxxxx-wec-s08-midterm-worksamples-emails

Location: Midterm Work Samples folder on the open area

Comments about the work sample: This document includes copies of e-mails between Melissa Brinkmann and Dr. Wolff as Melissa attempts to troubleshoot regarding Diigo and blogging.

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.

The Course Strands

Communication

When I enrolled in Writing for Electronic Communities, I had three options of communication from which to choose: face to face, by telephone, and via e-mail. And, for the first few weeks of this course, I relied on those three modes of communication quite heavily. Of course, I prefer face to face communication, but I have become rather comfortable with e-mail as a viable and practical option for communication, almost as comfortable as I am with telephone communication. I had NO idea that there were so many even better ways to communicate and collaborate.

Thus, when Zoho was introduced, I was a bit afraid to depend on it for communication with my group project members. I even called Gavin and Elena instead of communicating with them via Zoho on a few early occasions. I also resorted to e-mail communication with my group, despite that you were trying to enable our discovery of Zoho's usefulness as a tool for collaboration. By the time the Usability project was complete, though, I was a champ at posting discussions and editing and uploading documents to Zoho using both Zoho Project and Zoho Writer! The last few forum posts between group members and our documents waiting for and receiving updates/edits from group members provide proof that we FINALLY locked on (military term, sorry) to the use of Zoho and were able to take advantage of Zoho as a means of collaboration and communication.

Regarding my blog, I now know that communication with the world is probably the most difficult form of writing for me for a few reasons. First, once you release a post into the world, there is no getting it back, at least not officially. I have been and still am a blogger who goes back into a post for a few edits, but our class discussions about the purity of blogs have nearly cured me of altering my blog postings. It takes me at least twice as long to write, edit and publish a post. I really don't want to go out into the world with errors in grammar, spelling and mechanics...I have a reputation to protect!

Speaking of reputations, blogging is an interesting communication medium for a public educator. As a profession, teachers are made to be more guarded of their opinions; we are programmed to be more neutral (at least publicly) than we would be without the worry of parents, administrators, students, community members and other educators judging us. Many people hid behind what's good for the kids as they shamelessly judge those of us who support the military and gun rights. It's not as if I'm telling all of my students to sign up for military service, and I'm certainly not putting firearms in their hands, but people develop their impressions based on fallacies all the time. As educators, we have to be especially careful of what we say, how we say it, and who hears/reads it.

I long to blog on topics that have global implications. In fact, I have begun to blog, as safely as I can, on topics such as the military, gun control, and the war in Iraq. I am still guarded in my writing, but I have been brave enough to say how I really feel and even to tag those postings in order to generate some traffic.

Blogging is, by far, the best ice breaker EVER from an instructor's standpoint. As a class, we have certainly become closer as a result of reading and communicating through each others' blogs. I now check my favorite blogs for new postings and have even developed a friendship with Elena largely based on our communication regarding topics that we've posted on our respective blogs. And, I am comfortable with the whole process of visiting Composing Spaces to check our course schedule and then heading off to that week's discussion leader's blog for questions on readings. Heck, I even look forward to posting my own musings about our readings on my blog...and, not so secretly, I hope that people read my postings on the reading and would LOVE some feedback! But I have to say that the best blog discovery ever, for me, was the secret to accessing the Open Area, thanks to Gavin's (Parting the Fog's) blog! Now that's communication!

Regarding feedback on my blog, I have seriously been considering revamping my blog to make it more focused. I really like Elena's blog for its focus, that of domestication. I want to move towards a specific focus with my blog, but I have yet to decide which direction. What I need to do is to decide who my audience will be and then write for them. I know that we've discussed this before, but I had to get a feel for blogging before I could make Brinkmannship more than an online journal...which I think is okay, too. What I really want to do is to generate some traffic, but I'll have to choose a benign topic, as I am a public educator. Humbug. I'd so much rather fire off at will, but I can't risk my career, even under disguise. I need a gimmick. I'm thinking and thinking and thinking of a way to generate more than one way communication with the general public. Hmmm....

One more thing: I learned how to make my computer communicate with Rowan's network! To me, that's amazing (not that I learned, but that it's even possible).

So now I know. I know that Zoho is the place to go for collaboration and that blogging is an outstanding source of information and communication. I know that Netvibes helps me control and organize my communication through blogging and that it brings outside communication to me (weather, news, etc.). And I know that this medium, the portfolio, is the most amazing assessment system I've ever met. And online, no less!

Research

Discovery as research, as in studying a website for our usability project, has been an eye-opening experience. I thoroughly enjoyed developing our own ideas and compiling our own discoveries about a topic, this time a website, through firsthand experience and discovery. That we were unleashed onto the Rowan Future Students page for some quality research and then asked to write as experts on the site was actually pretty exciting. We took ownership of the

study, using *Prioritizing Web Usability* as our basis for comments and research regarding a real website.

Up to this point, much of our research has been based on other people's research. We've been reading and discovering concepts through words. In *Writing for Electronic Communities*, we are conducting more hands on research. Sure, I've used Internet databases for research, but those databases took me to documents that have simply been uploaded print documents. Here, we are using electronic writing (such as that on a webpage) for our discovery as well as for our communication.

Additionally, I have enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to create and set up a research project, as some of us will eventually have to do in the field! That we began with a few people and a web page and ended up ready for our test subjects was rewarding and practical. Admittedly, I can no longer use the Internet without thinking about usability, and I am proud that I can now figure out why I have such problems navigating some sites while I move smoothly through others. Our study has helped me understand my own electronic psyche. When I was making up the tasks for our test subjects, I tried to imagine what I would need to know as a future student. Okay, so my original tasks were a bit humorous, but I hit the mark with revised tasks that were both helpful and practical. And, my crowning achievement was definitely conducting my own little test of my tasks and developing anticipated paths that my subjects would take. I felt a great sense of accomplishment after tracing my steps through the website and having figured out so many different paths to find the same information. In the past, I have simply used a website. Now, I am able to study one, as evidenced by my usability tasks work sample!

I would also call my class preparation ritual a form of research. I blog around, check your blog for updates, collaborate a bit via Zoho, and generally search through all of our mediums of communication to make sure that I have all of my bases covered. (For example, I had forgotten that this midterm is due on TUESDAY, not Thursday. I was reminded of this important deadline when I went onto Composing Spaces to view the reading schedule! Nice find on my part!)

Critical Reading, Thinking, and Writing

I have been reading judiciously, thinking about, filtering information, and writing about texts for year as an educator and a student. Most of my filtering of information has been for the purpose of teaching and most of my writing has been in the form of writing papers for grad school.

The difference in *Writing for Electronic Communities* is that I am in uncharted territory with my readings and my electronic writing. The philosophical and technological nature of our readings has taken me very, very far away from that which I normally read, think about, discuss, and publish. And, my feeble attempt at blogging was so long ago that I don't even remember the name of the blog, or how to get to it. Yes, I am a statistic: I have created and abandoned a blog. UGH.

Now, I am reading books like Fleck's *The Genesis and Development of a Scientific Idea* and then vowing to keep them on my nightstand.

I am filtering that which is important and relevant to me out of texts that are largely written for audiences in which, until this class, I would never have been included. I even feel as though I am a reasonable candidate for discussions on electronic and technological topics, whereas I've always figured myself for more of a print book type of girl, more traditional, I guess.

As for my writing in a variety of genres and mediums, I would like to compile and offer a list of all of the different types of writing that I have been doing in this course:

- Creating a blog

- Writing for my blog

- Posting on others' blogs

- E-mailing questions and concerns

- Taking notes (i.e. filtering information) in course readings—writing in my books

- Diigo-ing

- Discussing and collaborating on Zoho's forum feature

- Posting docs on Zoho

- Formulating tasks for study subjects

- Editing/updating IRB documents

- Taking notes in class

- Writing observations for my portfolio

- Writing reflective pieces for my portfolio

Technology

As I've expressed in class as well as in my observations, I am frustrated that I am limited in what I can do, technologically and electronically, with my students, and blogging is the least of it. Zoho and Diigo are pretty amazing tools every student should learn how to use and from which every student and teacher should benefit. Without this class, I can safely say that those tools would have gone undiscovered for me, at least for a long time. Now, I am eager and able to use both Zoho and Diigo. As for blogging, I'm not giving up. My students at my next school WILL blog until their hearts are content...or, at least I'll lead an effort to have them do so.

I can honestly say that I've put more Internet miles on my new laptop (new in September 2007) than I put on all of my previous computers combined. I am on the computer constantly for Writing for Electronic Communities; I am also shopping, e-mailing, setting up accounts here and there, banking, filling out online applications, joining professional organizations and sites, taking online tests (for my job search), conducting an extensive job search, researching answers to questions that I KNOW can be on the Internet before bothering my new employer for the answer(s), blogging, reading blogs...and the list goes on. I am willing and able to solve some of my own technological issues, or at very least confident and knowledgeable enough to ask the

right questions of the right people. With ease, I turn on and off my firewall, and I even know when I need to do so!

I look forward to news articles and blogs to which I can refer my students and colleagues. My new confidence in technology and my new awareness and abilities have enriched my educational and professional lives tenfold. I now have access to and am willing and able to access a wealth of information in ways that I didn't know I could.

A sort-of aside: Since I've so much enjoyed and benefited from the technological aspect of Writing for Electronic Communities, my photocopying at work is WAY DOWN. I would rather post assignments and directions on my electronic blackboard and have students either view them electronically or download and print them. I know that my students appreciate that they are not left out in the cold if they forget one silly paper or if they have missed some information as a result of absence (either physically or mentally). Most of what they need is on my e-board! So, to be able to refer to my e-board is not only a lifeline for students, but it is also a great convenience and means of communication for me! And, it's healthy for the environment—fewer trees are suffering as a result of my teaching. Here is a link to my e-board:

Collaboration

My feelings about collaboration as it relates to Writing for Electronic Communities are simple: I feel fortunate for having been assigned such an outstanding group and I feel proud for having succeeded with limited direction.

After weeks of questions and concerns and bumps in the road and, most importantly, DISCOVERY, our group members are so proud of the work that we have done on the usability project. And we appreciate that your limited direction was in the best interest of our education; discovery was key for the project as well as for our confidence in using the electronic tools!

I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate our class on several weeks in a row of deep, active, engaging class discussions that, although they were certainly entertaining and humorous, never wandered too far from our readings and course content. Not to mention that our blog postings and Diigo-ing have certainly brought much life and relevance to our readings.

Additionally, I am no longer afraid to rely on classmates to answer my questions. Normally, I would rely exclusively on the professor of any given course to address any and all questions, but with the amount of successful collaboration thus far, I have no problem at all reaching out to various classmates via multiple mediums of communication. Some of us agree that our reaching out to each other for technical problem solving is one of the goals of this class; well, at very least our confidence and reliance on each other is one of the outcomes of taking Writing for Electronic Communities.

The Five Dimensions of Learning

Confidence and Independence

If, as noted in the five dimensions of learning, “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...” then I can honestly say that I’ve grown electronically and technologically. When I entered Writing for Electronic Communities, I was my old overconfident self, a self whose technological confidence is often way beyond her technological abilities. I hate that there are certain things, like software and online programs that stump and confuse me. In the past, there have been two extremes to my approach to new technological programs, software, hardware, etc.: 1. Point and click until my heart is contented by the thought that I’ve messed up to the point of no return or that I have somehow succeeded, regardless of my initial cluelessness. OR 2. Throw my hands up and ask the nearest technologically savvy person (usually my husband and, in this class, either you, Dr. Wolff, or Chris). Neither plan 1 nor plan 2 has been fool proof. For, what good is success if it can’t be repeated? Who wants to mess things up so badly that crying out for help is inevitable? And, who wants to be stuck when a techno-hero is not around?

But now, now that I’ve been challenged just enough to learn and to develop methods to succeed electronically, my skills seem to match up with my confidence. Now, I know what I don’t know. I know when to take a few breaths, research, dig around for answers, or just stop and ask for directions. I am proud to say that my stopping and asking for directions is down from what it was in the past. With Diigo, for example, I took the initiative to try a few post-its and highlights before I reached out to you to ask you if what you saw indicated that I was doing the right thing on my end. Contrast that to my inability to figure out what was going on regarding my comment postings on others’ blogs and the fact that I freaked out at the thought of my work e-mail showing up rather than stopping, breathing and researching to figure out that my computer was simply remembering me. Now I know that my computer remembers what I do and tracks me. Now I know that if I am not logged in to wordpress.com, I am not really operating as brinkmanship. But back then, I was a posting, commenting and blogging fool, literally. I was confident that nothing could go wrong. Huh. Now, I know what to look for, what kinds of things could possibly go wrong. With early blogging came overconfidence followed by sheer panic. With later diigo-ing came moderate and appropriate confidence for a new user and then some legitimate questions (not panic). I simply took diigo out for a cautious little test drive and then paused to clear up some concerns. The old me would have taken diigo out on the Audubon and wondered why I was out of control.

Skills and strategies

I have honed my Zoho skills for sure. At first, because I was disenchanted with some usability issues regarding Zoho, I was in a panic and even afraid to navigate through the site. I posted the due dates, which was no small feat, but then I realized that I was enjoying the show all alone. I thought that I had signed up all of my group members, but I was wrong and the problems

were a setback in my mind. By the time the group members were all signed up and ready to go, my frustration and embarrassment had already overwhelmed me, and I was all but done with the darned site. But, alas, for the sake of collaboration, I re-entered the site and began to find my way around. I soon realized that the site had so many helpful features that I was able to use with little discomfort.

The real lesson came after yet another embarrassing moment: Maryann had asked how to alter a document for all of the group members to see. Because I was still very old school, I simply replied (via a discussion forum on Zoho), that I would alter the document, save it on my computer, and then upload the document anew. Little did I know that the Zoho Writer was the real and effective way to alter documents for all group members to see. Later on in the project, I went into the IRB document and changed a few things using the Zoho Writer feature. I had developed skills and strategies.

Most recently, I bought a new cell phone with many, many new features including Internet access and a full keyboard. When I was first using my cell phone, I could not figure out how to type certain characters, and my IT guy (my husband) was in Japan. Through perseverance and a will to develop the skills needed to operate my new phone, I figured out all that I need to know. Now, more than ever, I am likely to access information and communicate electronically (especially via my cell phone!). I am so much more comfortable taking advantage of text messaging and online services whereas, before taking this course, I was more likely to make an actual telephone call to communicate or to gain information. I have even sent a few query letters for an article that I have written outside of class; *Writer's Market* called for electronic queries, so I sent a few letters that otherwise would have gone out snail mail with return receipt. My strategy? Communicate in the manner that is most appropriate and efficient in a given situation.

My new computer skills and strategies have also resulted in a successful job search from finding vacancies to applying online to taking online tests to using a GPS to find my way to an interview!

Knowledge and understanding

My eyes are being opened to a whole new world of electronic communities. Prior to taking Writing for Electronic Communities, I might have been able to point to MySpace as an electronic community, simply a site where a lot of folks go to interact. I thought of an electronic community as a cyber neighborhood. Now, as we are being exposed to so many different tools and online goodies, I know that there is a whole world out there, a world in which people use computers for more than word processing and e-mailing. A world where people are making friends (okay, so I knew that), living alternate lives (admittedly, I only sort of knew that, but I had no idea the extent to which people are functioning in cyberspace), collaborating, arguing, learning, voicing their opinions, researching, writing, creating. In a way, I want to say that I did know that there was so much out there in cyberspace, but I would never have known where to begin looking for and at certain aspects of electronic communities and writing.

I have always seen blogging as chatty and risky, but now that I see my classmates blogging in such benign ways and with such interesting content, I know that blogging is exactly what you make it! I have more of an understanding of what blogging is and can be all about. For me, the difficult part is still deciding where to go with my blog. The knowledge that I can go just about anywhere and reach just about anyone in the world is a bit scary still.

Allow me to list that of which I now have working knowledge as a result of Writing for Electronic Communities:

Wordpress.com (free blogging!!!!)

Blogging (from dashboards to links...still working on posting a video)

Diigo (so much better than underlining in a book)

Netvibes (cyber organization and such)

Zoho (project, writer, forums, updates)

Hypertext (although I am less than thrilled by “The Jew’s Daughter”)

Fleck (my nightstand friend)

Usability (Now I can complain about websites with gusto and knowledge!)

Cyber worlds (MUDs)

Electronic portfolios

Open areas and the inconvenience of firewalls

(P.S. My most favorite new knowledge : Diigo!!!!!!!!!!)

Use of prior and emerging experience

As for my prior experience, I think I have touched on many of my preconceptions and old habits of mind. I believe that two factors play a MAJOR role in my use of prior experience and my ability to scaffold my learning: 1. I know how to learn. Over the years, I have learned how to learn and I am now able to observe, read, ask questions, teach myself, etc., so that I can ensure that I have learned a concept or skill. I know the conditions under which I read, write, research, study, collaborate and participate with optimum performance. 2. I have managed to gain a working knowledge of all of the programs that I have needed to use for my education and profession. I did not look to extend that knowledge until I enrolled in Writing for Electronic Communities, but I did have enough computer knowledge to serve as a basis for this semester’s course work.

The most important aspect of emerging experience for me has been scaffolding on the little bit of practice and hands on time that we get in class. It is important for me to practice using new tools and programs under the supervision of those who know or who are at least familiar with such tools, etc. Even a limited amount of supervised exposure goes a long way to build a foundation on which I can then scaffold as I learn and experience new features within a program. My original blog, for example, used a format with which I became uncomfortable, for there were not enough features and information showing on one screen. So, after having worked in class with Jeb, et. al., I used my limited knowledge to go back into Wordpress.com and change the look of my blog to suit my fancy. Now, my blog has more than just a few words showing on the

page at a time. The space to the left of my posts has a calendar and other information, whereas my older format had nothing but posts showing. Take a look at my work samples screen shots!

One more thing. Our class discussions have shown an impressive amount of scaffolding, by design I'm sure. Each week we discuss the readings in relation to previous course readings and concepts. Go us! Now might be a good time for you to say "I told you so" in response to my comment about not keeping Fleck on my nightstand. "In Bed with Fleck" is the title of my Fleck realization blog posting.

Reflection

Learning and reading and thinking and writing. Research and trying and collaboration. Confidence, classmates and deep reflecting. These are a few of my favorite things.

When my husband, Gerry, was at war, I was able to "step back and consider [many] a situation critically and analytically." I took emotion out of the equation and looked at the machine that was military combat service. My reflection on the experience of combat deployment and all that went into such a military mission was the one thing, more than anything, that kept me sane and able to discuss the situation openly and calmly.

Although Writing for Electronic Communities is a far cry from war, I am still in a rather interesting situation as I take this course. My life is changing drastically once again. I am living without my husband, again. I am taking care of both of our worlds, singlehandedly. I am working, going to school, studying, writing, keeping house, taking care of my dogs, packing to move, showing my house, maintaining the vehicles. Well, you get the point.

Still, when I look at my situation critically and analytically, I can see that graduate school is a crucial part of all that is going on right now. Life without Writing for Electronic Communities would certainly be easier, but my graduate degree in writing and my knowledge of the electronic end of the writing profession would be lacking without this course. In the big picture, what is "just a graduate course" to others is an important part of life to me, even in the presence of other truly life-altering events.

On a much smaller scale, I am proud of my ability to reflect on embarrassing situations such as my little fit about my blog showing my work address and my having nearly given up on Zoho. As a result of such reflection, I am now able to calmly assess most electronic situations and to decide on a course of action and/or troubleshooting that does not necessarily involve a near meltdown. Proof: While I was trying to solve the open area issue (my inability to access it), I calmly sent my documents via e-mail, asked a few questions and accepted your offer to bring my laptop to class. In the meantime, through a bit more research and through reading Gavin's blog, I was able to gain access to the open area and am now my own little success story!

The most relevant evidence of my reflection is in my observations, especially initially when reflection was what kept me calm and gave me the courage and motivation to continue to discover and learn. My personal, professional, and educational worlds are colliding as I continue

to reflect on what I have learned and to think about ways in which I can and must apply my new knowledge! I even see some parts of my thesis as being made for HYPERTEXT, yikes!

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 have embraced and made progress in all of the course strands and on every dimension of learning, as evidenced by my extensive reflection, observations, and work samples in my learning record. Although I was aware of the course strands and dimensions of learning, I have not treated the course or the learning record as a checklist. I did not have the course strands and the dimensions of learning memorized, so I can honestly say that I was not necessarily working specifically to meet the requirements as spelled out in the course strands and dimensions of learning. I have simply been working toward success in Writing for Electronic Communities and in the field. I have worked very hard to learn and apply new knowledge and concepts in class as well as in the field. I have conquered some of my electronic fears and taken on brand new tools and applications both willingly and successfully. What's more is that Writing for Electronic Communities is my last graduate course and should play second fiddle to my all important thesis. BUT, I have approached our class content, assignments, and materials with one hundred percent of my efforts. I am certain that my observations, work samples, and learning record reflections provide evidence that I have exceeded course requirements, especially given my limited knowledge and know-how when I entered the course.

During the second half of the semester, I would like to focus my blog to generate more traffic, preferably by bloggers outside of our class. I am becoming more and more comfortable with writing for the world, and, as I continue to write, I find that while my opinions may be different and unpopular on some cases, my presentation of such thoughts lacks aggression, but not assertiveness. I am more willing, going into the second half of the semester, to push the envelope on my blog.

I would also like to create a hypertext of my own, possibly related to or even using part of my thesis. Hypertext is here to stay, it seems, and I don't want to miss this unique opportunity to learn about the creation of such advanced texts!

Finally, when you suggested that we make mini videos of our professional selves, I was seriously uncomfortable with the idea. But, I have since thought of an idea for a video that I would love to use in my new workplace. I would love to make a video in which I introduce myself and present my beliefs regarding teaching. What a great way to begin the new school year in a new school! And, I could apply my new technological knowledge to encourage students to create their own "about me" videos...is there a better idea for an icebreaker?

As for class activities, I love our present format, but I would like to hear from everybody each week; I know that others have more to say than what they are currently sharing. Maybe we could each be required to bring in ONE quote from each reading so that each student has a comment ready to make that directly relates to the readings. I prepare quotes to discuss each week in order to ensure my relevant participation in class discussion, although I don't really need

help in the area of participation. I always feel that just sitting and passing time is a waste and that participation is worthwhile and productive. Thus, my regular participation.

On the other hand, another part of me realizes that this is a graduate course and that we should all take responsibility for our own participation, so why should you have to require and force us to participate?

I would also like to discuss blogs on a regular basis, as I am totally committed to revamping my blog. Maybe we could have blogging partners or small groups? Just an idea; there really is only so much time in each class.

Maybe we could have a techno success story of the week for which we could submit nominations from our own course related experiences and you could choose one to “win” each week? I know, these suggestions are gimmicky, but I really like the way the class is going thus far, so these suggestions are lighthearted.

Midterm Grade Estimate: A

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.