

Dr. Bill Wolff

Core 2: Research Methods for Writers, Spring 2014

Learning Record

Student Profile

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Course Information

Professor: Dr. Bill Wolff

Course Title: Core 2: Research Methods for Writers

Course Web Site: <http://williamwolff.org/courses/core2-spring-2014/>

Course Number: MAWR 01559 1

Term and year: Spring 2014

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-core2s14-lr-in-progress-1-28-14.doc.” Save it to the “in-progress” folder.

For the Midterm

At the Midterm, make appropriate updates, save the file as “lastname-core2s14-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-core2s14-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.

Christopher McKnight answering for Bob Bob Bob

1. How would you describe my critical reading and analysis abilities, including my ability to analyze the deeper meaning of texts?

Bob and a methodical individual who possesses the ability to focus his attentions on any given task, and his love for reading goes well with these traits. He pays attention to details and possesses the required imagination to not only think about them as how they relate to the material and one another, but to seem them from different perspectives as well. As a matter of personality, he never simply takes things at face value, or accepts the simple explanation.

2. How would you describe my writing ability, taking into consideration samples of my writing you've read throughout the time we've known each other?

I've known Bob for eighteen years and have had the pleasure of reading his writing for that span of time. His writing ability has always been exceptional when compared to his peers. His growth as a writer and storyteller has been consistent over the years. The recent years after becoming a student at Rowan, Bob's writing ability has evolved into something new and amazing. He has a very clear 'voice' that comes through in his writing.

3. How would you describe my understanding of technology, especially with regards to writing, research, and social networking?

Bob has always demonstrated a confident command of technology and its uses. If he is skilled at researching and gathering any data and information that he needs to either solve a problem or enhance his writing. I've had talks about social networking such as facebook, twitter, and different types of forms and blog communities with Bob. I am not a fan of social media and networking because of all of the unfavorable stories that I have heard, but Bob as convinced me that it does have its merits. He has told me how he uses social medial to connect with people all over the world to learn and benefit from their experiences. Bob has also made use of the tools to make connections, market himself, and refine and expand his own personal skill set. He finds people to give him constructive criticism about his writing, insight into becoming a professional writer, as well as expand his knowledge of the literary world.

4. How would you describe my ability to investigate and explore new ideas and my curiosity about the things I devote myself to?

Bob has never been one to accept stagnation or simply be 'good enough'. When Bob takes on a

hobby, a task, or an occupation he sets out to master it and anything related to it. I have watched him do this with games, work, his writing, and just about everything in life. You learn something about the way a person thinks when you sit across from them over a chess or go board. He thinks moves *ahead* and in different directions at the same time, and he executes creative strategies, which is why he is my favorite opponent. This thought process extends itself into everything he does.

5. How would you rate me as a researcher?

Tenacious. If he does not know it and he needs to, he will hunt down the information he needs, devote his full attention to understanding it, and only then will he put it to use.

6. What do you think about my ability to work across multiple genres and platforms (i.e. writing across fiction, nonfiction, and academic fields including traditional print and modern digital media)?

I have read Bob's writing across a number of different genres and he does an excellent job of fitting comfortably into each role. His 'voice' comes through clearly and confidently expressing his ideas, setting a scene, or making his point. He does not seem to be trapped in a comfort zone where he does all of his writing. He branches out and challenges himself. If you need definitive proof, ask him about the musical.

7. What would you say about my own ability to be self-reflective and understand my own work, including both my strengths and my weaknesses?

Bob is very critical of himself and his writing. He puts a great deal of effort in reviewing his own work to make sure it is ready for others to read. He also makes use of others to not only critique his work, but learn how to expand his own vision and awareness when looking at his creations. By looking at what they point out, he learns to better understand his own work.

8. How would you describe my ability to work with others, both in collaborative roles and in leadership roles.

Having the benefit of knowing Bob over nearly two decades, I have watched him grow more assertive and outspoken. He has always possessed the leadership ability, and it would normally come out when the group had failed to produce. Over time he has grown into the ability to assess his group and understand when he needs to take the lead from the start and prevent failure. He also has the ability to work in a group of equals when people are willing and able to put forth the necessary effort to support the group. His personality also lends itself to helping his group members when they are in need. Bob's work history is also provides an answer to this question. At any job he has held he has been promoted, and placed into a leadership role because his performance and ability was recognized because he: took the initiative, did the job well, and did not need his hand held every step of the way.

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.

1. How would I describe my critical reading and analysis abilities, including my ability to analyze the deeper meaning of texts?

My reading ability has always been very advanced. I began reading at a very young age, and by 8th grade I measured at a college reading level. This has been amplified by the number of college courses I've taken that required me to analyze texts for symbolism, metaphor, bias, and other hidden meanings. In particular, there are two main areas that I would say have most impacted my capacity for analysis at the college level.

One is my experience in Communication Studies. These courses taught me to consider writing as a method of communication, and one which can be difficult to understand. The sender/receiver model of communication, when applied to written texts, demonstrates that the reader may end up receiving a different message (or have a different interpretation of the work) than the writer intended. This also raises interesting questions about which interpretation of a work is more valid, the intended message or the received one? There are arguments on both sides, but generally the answer is that it varies greatly based both on the context and the consequences of the miscommunication. A more scientific, analytical text is generally less likely to be open to interpretation, and failed communication in such a context could lead to serious errors. On the other hand, a more open-ended piece of writing like a poem may be deliberately vague in order to allow the reader to explore the ideas on their own. In such a case, there may be no right or wrong interpretation.

The second primary experience that affected my reading ability was the study of texts like *The Metaphors We Live By* and *Beautiful Evidence*. The first book took analysis of words and phrases to a much deeper level than normally seen elsewhere, taking into consideration the deepest possible roots of meaning behind language. The second gave deep consideration to the way in which information is presented and how the presentation can be used to alter how information is interpreted. When considering that in relation to the communication issues described above, the presentation of evidence can be used to either increase or decrease the specificity of a text, allowing for more interpretation or narrowing it down, depending on the intent of the writer.

2. How would I describe my writing ability?

I mostly consider my writing ability through the feedback I receive from others. Self-criticism of one's writing seems to be an unavoidable trait among writers, so I often don't think that I can analyze the quality of my own writing accurately without some kind of bias.

Based on the feedback I receive, I would say that I am very skilled as a writer of fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry. I always receive high praise, and many people specifically point out my strengths in characterization, description, plot, structure, and attention to detail. When I receive negative comments or constructive criticism, I'm always open to considering what others have to say, and I know how to make the needed revisions in order to address the issues at hand.

My weakest area of writing would definitely be academic research-based writing. Throughout high school and my early college career (particularly in Comp I and Comp II), I tended not to put much effort into research projects. I tend to prefer applying my own ideas to a writing project rather than researching the works of others in order to report on them.

There are some areas of research where I've been able to overcome this weakness, usually when what I'm researching is scientific concepts rather than history or philosophy. I've received high praise for a number of research papers I wrote for my Communication Studies classes, and in each case the research aspect applied only to either: a) gathering factual details about events reported in newspapers or other media, or b) explaining the theoretical concepts (such as symbolic interactionism or standpoint theory) that I was applying to my work. The main content itself would be original ideas, and the facts and theories would be used to back up my work.

3. How would I describe my understanding of technology, especially with regards to writing, research, and social networking?

I've always had an above-average understanding of technology, due to the fact that my father worked with computers in the 80s. We had a computer at home that I used at a very young age, when it wasn't yet common for people to have their own computers. I also took several years of computer science-related courses (three years in high school and three years in college), so I have a rudimentary understanding of computer programming and the logic that goes into designing algorithms. My experience isn't enough to design complex programs from scratch, but it is enough that I can delve into various types of code, analyze it, and figure out how to make certain modifications.

Because of my general computer skills, I've adopted a number of New Media practices. I'm heavily engaged in Twitter, I've been an active blogger for a year and a half, and I've done a great deal of online writing using various collaborative forums. I understand how to use a variety of types of online formatting, so that I can go beyond the basics of the WordPress user interface and insert my own changes. I also know how to do video and photo editing and how to integrate these things into my work.

4. How would I describe my ability to investigate and explore new ideas and my curiosity about the things I devote myself to?

When I become interested in a certain topic, I take to it with passion and investigate it as deeply as possible. I've done extensive personal research into topics that include blacksmithing, quantum physics, nuclear weapons, etymology, and wilderness survival, among other things. I often apply these topics to my writing and delve into research on them in order to write about them as accurately as possible. I've also performed personal research in the past for school papers, such as when I thoroughly researched the history of the Bellingham, Washington Art Museum (which was converted from the city's former City Hall) and presented a report about it for a class at Whatcom Community College.

5. How would I rate myself as a researcher?

When it comes to scientific research, such as analyzing scientific theories in order to apply their concepts to my arguments, I am very thorough and detailed. I also explore topics thoroughly when I find them interesting and want to capture their essence in my writing. In these cases, I'm skilled at using online resources, whether they be online databases like Rowan's library services or searching for articles on Google. I'm also skilled at exploring a research topic in-person; when performing the research on the Bellingham Art Museum, I questioned a number of employees at the museum and gained access to the town's archives, where I viewed some of the original blueprints for the museum from the early 1900s.

My weakest research areas are historical research, including any type of research where I need to report on the work of others (rather than using their work to back up my own theories and arguments).

6. What do I think about my ability to work across multiple genres and platforms (i.e. writing across fiction, nonfiction, and academic fields including traditional print and modern digital media)?

My experiences at Rowan have required me to write in just about every genre I can think of. I've worked with fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, academic papers, journalism, scientific studies, business articles, blog writing, code poems, multigenre papers, and multimodal works ranging from presentations made with Prezi to papers written using the concepts of *Beautiful Evidence* to mix visual elements with text.

7. What would I say about my own ability to be self-reflective and understand my own work, including both my strengths and my weaknesses?

Nearly every Writing Arts class at Rowan has required me to write self-reflections of my work, so I am very experienced in this. In some cases these reflections are a part of a final portfolio, where I analyze the stories or poems I have written and discuss the revision process I went through on each piece. In other cases, I have had to make an argument about what grade I feel I deserve in a class. I've also written reflections discussing my work in creating various New Media projects and how different it was to work with new aspects of technology and writing. On top of all that, the final Rowan Writing Arts Portfolio Seminar was essentially a reflection of all the work I had done throughout my Rowan career.

8. How would I describe my ability to work with others, both in collaborative roles and in leadership roles.

I've worked collaboratively with others on a variety of projects over the years, and I'm very skilled at coordinating communication using email, text messaging, and social media. I've also used Google Docs to work on collaborative projects, so that my team members and I can simultaneously view and modify a document we all have access to. Collaborative work like this requires a lot of brainstorming and discussion in order to apply each team member's ideas into the project, and in order to make sure we all contribute equally to the project.

I also tend to take a leadership role in many projects. I have management experience and I've taken numerous "High Impact" training courses that have taught me how to manage others, how to get to the root of a problem, and how to encourage others who might be lacking in motivation.

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:** 2 February 2014**Date entered:** 2 February 2014**Context** (Individual, pairs, small group, large group, whole class): individual**Activity:** reading about query letters**Observation**

Today I read Wendy Burt-Thomas's book and the essays in *Writer's Market* on query letters. Whoa. Lots of material there. It's a bit overwhelming to think about all the submissions and planning and organization one needs. But, I guess this is what writers do, I'm going to start doing it, too. Now if only I could find a research topic....

Observation #: 2**Date observed:** 3 January 2014**Date entered:** 3 January 2014**Context** (Individual, pairs, small group, large group, whole class): Tweeting**Activity:** mapping**Observation**

Today I tweeted my first tweets ever. I shared links to 3 article I found online to the #core2s14 and #c2mondays hashtags. I'm not at all sure how I feel about this, but we're required to use it and the *Writer's Market* book even says you have to have a social media presence. I tweet at a time, I guess.

Observation #: 8**Date Observed:** 2-17-14**Date Entered:** 2-17-14**Context** (Individual, pairs, small group, large group, whole class): Individual**Activity:** Reading "Postmodern Interviewing"**Observation**

I've been reading about how communication during an interview leads to an interactive process that shapes meaning and develops the very knowledge that the interview is meant to uncover. This sounds a lot like the theories of symbolic interactionism, wherein communication shapes our very definitions of reality around us. This seems like a much more sensible method than the idea of "neutrality" during an interview (which I think is impossible to attain anyway).

Observation #: 11**Date Observed:** 2-24-14

Date Entered: 2-24-14

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

Activity: Twitter discussions

Observation

I got into some interesting philosophical discussions with some friends on twitter about the concepts in “Postmodern interviewing.” In particular we discussed the use of gendered language and how that influences a researcher’s perceived views and position, and the way overall language use affects the accessibility of a text. When it comes to interviews in particular, this seems relevant because of the idea that an interview is the “story” told by both the interviewer and the respondent. One of the chapters even mentioned how researchers tend to manipulate the interviews towards their own goals and ideologies, and the language used is definitely a part of that.

Observation #: 15

Date Observed: 3-3-14

Date Entered: 3-3-14

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

Activity: Twitter Research

Observation

While researching sports culture, I went to Twitter and asked, “Twitter Poll: Are sports important to you? Tell me how, and what role they play in your life? [#Sports](#) [#Research](#).” The responses were quite varied and fascinating. While some people had no interest in sports, others viewed them as an important family bonding experience, a way to make connections with others, or in some cases a near-obsessive part of their lives. One person even compared sports to religion, and another referred to a group of like-minded fans as a “tribe.” The various viewpoints will be very helpful in my research.

Observation #: 17

Date Observed: 3-4-14

Date Entered: 3-7-14

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

Activity: Barnes & Noble Research

Observation

Tuesday night, our class conducted practice field research in the Rowan Barnes & Noble. I found myself hesitant to directly interact with anyone I was observing, and instead kept my distance while eavesdropping on their conversations and jotting down notes. Then I watched as Veronica made a connection with the B&N cashier and prompted her to start telling stories about what goes on behind the scenes, which lead to some fascinating information. It made me realize how important direct interaction can be; I learned some things about book store “politics” and the issues employees have with students that I never would have discovered by watching quietly.

Observation #: 18

Date Observed: 3-7-14

Date Entered: 3-7-14

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

Activity: Reading “On Looking”

Observation

The part of “On Looking” that struck me the most compared to my personal experiences was the chapter on pedestrian traffic. Horowitz’s descriptions of how suburban vs urban walkers manage when walking through a city reminded me of the last time I was in New York, an experience where I definitely felt like an “obstacle.” Compared to the rest of the earlier chapters in the book, this one definitely made me more introspective as I considered not just what I would “look at” on such an expedition, but also how I might learn to modify my own behavior.

Observation #: 23

Date Observed: 3-12-14

Date Entered: 3-12-14

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

Activity: Reading “William Penn’s Own Account of the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians”

Observation

I bought this book in the Penn Museum gift shop, and partway through reading it I was struck by the similarities between what I was reading and the techniques discussed in “Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes.” Penn was most definitely an early ethnographer, and the book details everything from the physical appearance of the Lenni Lenape to their style of language and grammar to their traditions and child-reading techniques. Reading it feels like I’m reading something compiled from his book of fieldnotes and jottings.

Observation #: 24

Date Observed: 3-13-14

Date Entered: 3-14-14

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

Activity: Twitter Discussions

Observation

There were a number of active Twitter conversations taking place Thursday, possibly because we all felt guilty and were over-compensating for not tweeting as much during the previous week. Most of what we discussed involved our recent blog posts and field research, during which time I compared my work to that of a few of the other students. I found that I’ve been doing more reading and online research, but less personal interaction and field research than some of the others in class. It made me realize I need to find more places “out in the field” to go for information.

Observation #: 25

Date Observed: 3-13-14

Date Entered: 3-14-14

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

Activity: Research Blog

Observation

I spent several hours yesterday working on a research blog post, compiling, transcribing, and writing about my field research at the Penn Museum. When reflecting on the field experience, I realized that I had focused my notes primarily on the things I saw in the environment around me, rather than on individual people. As a result, my post referred regularly to “museum patrons,” but only once or twice did I reference specific people that I could remember in detail. In my next field experience, interaction and personal observation will have to be a priority.

Observation #: 27

Date Observed: 3-14-14

Date Entered: 3-14-14

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

Activity: Recording Learning Record Observations

Observation

In a very meta-analytic analysis, I noticed today that working on Learning Record Observations is making me stop and really think about what I’m learning. I have to spend a few minutes mentally reviewing an activity, then comparing it to my earlier work in order to realize what is different. I’ve already made a few plans for how to change my work going forward based on what I’ve observed about my work up to this point.

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).

Sample

Work Sample #: 1

Title: My Atlas

Assignment: Creating an Atlas

Format: Issuu

File name: see URL

Location: URL

Comments about the work sample

This is my atlas. Etc etc.

Work Sample #: 2

Title: Email to Dr. Wolff

Assignment: Mashup

Format: email

File name: N/A

Location: Works Samples folder

Comments about the work sample

This is an email where I discuss issues with my mashup.

Work Sample #: 1

Title: Core 2 Blog Comments Log

Assignment: Research Blog

Format: Word Document

File name: “Bob Bob Core 2 Blog Comments log.doc”

Location: Added to “Midterm Work Samples” folder

Comments about the work sample

The log of the first 14 comments I’ve made on my classmates’ blogs. As I went along adding more comments, I noticed I was comparing and contrasting the various blog posts both to each other and to my own work. These thoughts led to me giving greater consideration to what I need to do in the future, such as needing to be more outgoing in my field research and needing to consider “in-group” language and behavior.

Work Sample #: 2

Title: “Last Day For Returns”

Assignment: Barnes & Noble Field Research Post

Format: Blog Post

File name: <http://writingpossibilities.com/2014/03/11/last-day-for-returns/>

Location: <http://writingpossibilities.com/2014/03/11/last-day-for-returns/>

Comments about the work sample

The second of the three required posts for the Barnes & Noble field research practice. This one struck me as the most significant of those three, since during it I show what is essentially a “before and after” experience of my observations. The first scene is before I realized that interaction with one of the research subjects would be crucial for getting any useful information. The second scene, where I observe Veronica talking to the cashier, is what made me realize just how much more information and behind the scenes elements of this “culture” can be uncovered just by letting someone open up and tell their story (with a little friendly prodding to get them talking).

Work Sample #: 3

Title: “My Trip to the Native American Voices Exhibit at Penn Museum”

Assignment: Field research and note taking

Format: Blog post

File name: <http://writingpossibilities.com/2014/03/14/my-trip-to-the-native-american-voices-exhibit-at-penn-museum/>

Location: <http://writingpossibilities.com/2014/03/14/my-trip-to-the-native-american-voices-exhibit-at-penn-museum/>

Comments about the work sample

At over 2000 words, this is probably the most detailed blog post I’ve written to date. I consider this experience to be one of my most significant since beginning my research, since it made me realize the deeper connection between the past history and culture of the Native American people and their present-day struggles, rather than seeing them as two separate things.

Work Sample #: 4

Title: “Sports, Language, and Culture”

Assignment: Research Blog and Leveraging Twitter for Research

Format: Blog Post

File name: <http://writingpossibilities.com/2014/03/03/sports-language-and-culture/>

Location: <http://writingpossibilities.com/2014/03/03/sports-language-and-culture/>

Comments about the work sample

In this blog post, I discussed the culture of sports fans and what I learned about the significance sports holds in some people’s lives. Since I know little to nothing about sports myself, I conducted an informal Twitter poll on the subject. The result of the poll was about a two hour long discussion with over two dozen people who shared with me their thoughts, views, and feelings about sports. I learned about how sports are used to make connections with others, how they become family traditions, and how they become binding aspects of a community and culture.

Work Sample #: 5

Title: Review of Recent News About the Redskins Name Change

Assignment: Research Blog

Format: Blog Post

File name: <http://writingpossibilities.com/2014/03/13/review-of-recent-news-about-the-redskins-name-change/>

Location: <http://writingpossibilities.com/2014/03/13/review-of-recent-news-about-the-redskins-name-change/>

Comments about the work sample

In this blog post I gathered information from various news articles that I had selected as part of my Zotero sources. The articles are all recent (most within the last couple of months since the superbowl), and they offer a decent spread of information about both sides of the name change debate. I reviewed and summarized some of the key points from various articles in order to have a clearer picture of where each side was coming from.

Work Sample #: 6

Title: Storify “#Core2s14 Twitter Discussions”

Assignment: Twitter

Format: Storify comprised of tweets

File name: <http://storify.com/Bob BobBob/core2s14-twitter-discussions>

Location: <http://storify.com/Bob BobBob/core2s14-twitter-discussions>

Comments about the work sample

A compilation of multiple twitter conversations between myself and others on the #Core2s14 hashtag. Several different types of conversations were selected to show collaboration, technical support, communication about assignments, idea sharing, and general bonding.

Work Sample #: 7

Title: Twitter Poll Images

Assignment: Leveraging Twitter for Research

Format: Screenshot of file folder containing twitter screenshots

File name: Twitter_poll_images.png

Location: Dropbox Midterm Work Samples Folder

Comments about the work sample

A compilation of the twitter poll answers used for my “Sports, Language, and Culture” blog post. The 16 tweets used in the blog post were culled from the larger selection seen in this shot of my research file folder.

Work Sample #: 8

Title: “OSHA Regulation Hair”

Assignment: Barnes & Noble Field Research Post

Format: Blog Post

File name: <http://writingpossibilities.com/2014/03/11/osha-regulation-hair/>

Location: <http://writingpossibilities.com/2014/03/11/osha-regulation-hair/>

Comments about the work sample

The third of the three required posts for the Barnes & Noble field research practice. Chosen primarily for the second half, in which I reflect upon the practice field research experience.

Work Sample #: 9

Title: Cell Phone Screenshots

Assignment: Various Collaborations

Format: Screen Shots

File name: Core 2 Cell Phone Screenshots

Location: Sub-folder within Midterm Work Samples Folder

Comments about the work sample

A small selection of screenshots showing call logs and text messages from when I was helping several classmates answer questions about their work.

Part B I: Midterm Analysis of Data

Develop your summary interpretation of your development in terms of the *major course strands* and the *six dimensions of learning*. **You must discuss your work in terms of both the course strands and dimensions of learning, not either or.** Be sure to connect your interpretations with specific examples included in the observations and samples of work.

Exploration and Curiosity

I've always been a curious person, but most of the time I've been the sort to only deeply explore a topic that interests me. Certain topics, like sports, tend to simply bore me. As a result, I've never before had the motivation to explore sports as a subject in any serious detail.

When this research project began, however, I quickly realized that I would need to learn a lot more about sports. In order to fully understand the topic of the Redskins name change debate, I need to see where both sides are coming from. Early on I decided that for this exploration to be effective, I would need to frame it in terms that would make it approachable.

I decided to draw on my background in Communication Studies and approach the subject of sports from the viewpoint of two theories: Standpoint Theory and Symbolic Interactionism. Standpoint Theory normally applies to the ways in which a position of power (such as being a wealthy white male) affects someone's views, making it impossible for them to understand the issues faced by someone in a different position (such as a poverty-stricken single mother from a minority group). My early research showed that this difference in perspectives also applied between academic researchers and sports fans. The article "Sport, Language, and Culture: Issues and Intersections" (Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 2010), explained that most researchers have discounted sports as not being significant or worth consideration, and the author explained that as a result there has been very little study of sports culture. This shows a possible bias wherein some researchers, coming from a position of educated individuals in an academic setting, don't understand the importance sports can play in the lives of others who see sports as more than just a game.

Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes warned against the dangers of such a bias, such as when a researcher dismisses a culture's spiritual views as mere superstition, myth, or legend. The book suggests offering a culture's views at face-value, without letting them be tainted by a researcher's bias.

Based on all of these ideas, I started exploring sports culture in the way an ethnographer might study a society. I attempted to set aside my normally dismissive views that sports are "just a game" and instead I asked people what sports mean to them. My blog post "Sports, Language, and Culture" shows the results of an informal Twitter poll I conducted on this subject. I included many of the responses in the post itself in order to preserve the original meaning, similar to reporting direct quotes recorded during field research. I then analyzed the quotes from a Symbolic Interactionist perspective in order to develop theories about how language helps to form sports culture. For example, I quoted several individuals who referred to sports and the communities around them as a "tribe" or "religion." My theory is that by adopting such terms as a way of describing their relationship with sports, these individuals are reinforcing and further constructing the importance of sports in their lives.

The way this in depth exploration came from the simple questions "Are sports important to you?" and "What role do they play in your life?" shows the extent to which my curiosity on this subject has developed. This is already a long way from "It's just a game."

Communication Technology

While I was already tech-savvy enough with things like Twitter and WordPress before class began, I've taken things to the next level with the way I use technology for research. In the abovementioned blog post, "Sports, Language, and Culture," I blended traditional academic research with the use of social media.

The twitter poll I conducted about sports culture was a sort of "trial run" for how I will be using online resources for interviews and surveys. My method in this case was relatively simple. I just tweeted my question and waited to see what kinds of responses would come in. I then prompted the respondents for more information when it was necessary, such as when I needed clarification or wanted to hear more about a particular point someone had raised.

During the conversations that followed (which lasted about two hours), I used Jing to take screenshots of the most significant tweets that popped up. The result was a collection of 43 tweets (Twitter_poll_images.png), from which I selected the best to include in my blog post. I framed the blog post around the responses, since everything I had to write about was based on what I learned from those responses.

Since writing this post, I've been introduced to Storify, which I used to create a compilation of my recent #Core2s14 discussions (<http://storify.com/Bob BobBob/core2s14-twitter-discussions>). Having been introduced to Storify, I have a few ideas now about how I might do the "Sports, Language, and Culture" post differently. I could create one of more Storify stories based on the twitter conversations and then embed those directly into the blog post. This would give a more interactive experience, since I readers would be able to see the entire conversation play out, and I wouldn't be as concerned about space limitations since an entire conversation could be embedded in a single place instead of as a series of images stacked in a column. I may end up using such a method in a future blog post, since I will be conducting some more formal online interviews in the near future.

Each of these steps shows a learning progression, from a generally competent Twitter and WordPress user into a researcher blending multiple types of technology into a more dynamic presentation.

Critical Thinking, Writing and Reading

I've made a number of connections between the class readings and the things I've learned in other classes, and I've also incorporated these things into the blog posts I've written so far. First, I started making individual connections with some of the concepts in "Postmodern Interviewing" and "Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes." As noted in Observation #8, I began with making a connection between the concepts of "Postmodern Interviewing" and those of Symbolic Interactionism. Specifically, I noted that "communication during an interview leads to an interactive process that shapes meaning and develops the very knowledge that the interview is

meant to uncover,” which is very similar to the theories in Symbolic Interactionism (and later in the books, both “Postmodern Interviewing” and “Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes” specifically referenced Symbolic Interactionism in their texts). As already noted above, I adopted a related stance in writing my blog post on “Sports, Language, and Culture.” The way in which language molds perception is becoming a key part of my research, most notably when I found that some of the respondents to my twitter poll “compared sports to religion, and referred to a group of like-minded fans as a ‘tribe’” (as noted in Observation 15). This is something I plan to explore further as I move forward, since there are obvious parallels between the idea of sports fans as a “tribe” and the traditional tribes of Native American culture.

I’ve also explored the concepts from the readings in online discussions in order to gain additional insights into them. While live-tweeting my thoughts from some of the readings, I’ve frequently been engaged by people on twitter and gotten into some interesting philosophical discussions (see Observation #11).

In addition, I’ve begun making connections between the class readings and the other readings I’m using for my research. One example is how I made a connection between “Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes” and a book I bought called “William Penn’s Own Account of the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians” (see Observation #23; book is part of my Zotero reference list). Penn’s book is essentially an ethnography of the Lenni Lenape, and it includes notes about their language, culture, family life, and so on. The book included some very detailed scenes based on Penn’s experiences, such as his description of a Native American medical technique that involved a chief diving into the frozen river then running into a sweat tent in what seemed to be an attempt to make his fever break.

Penn’s writings are essentially a mix of fieldnote transcriptions and detailed scenes, in a fashion comparable to the methods described in “Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes.” I’ve engaged in some practice writing such scenes myself, such as in my blog post “Last Day For Returns” (one of the three blog posts based on our class session at the Rowan Barnes & Noble). After practicing with descriptions of a Barnes & Noble cashier and transcriptions of her musings on bookstore culture, I proceeded to write a more detailed scene of later field research in another post, “My Trip to the Native American Voices Exhibit at Penn Museum.” This post includes images of my fieldnote jottings, a more detailed set of transcriptions from those notes, and a fully detailed scene in which I attempted to capture the experience I had at the museum. Of particular note in that post is my conclusion that there is an important connection between the past and present. In the post I specifically referred to how the museum displayed artifacts from the 1800s alongside more recent artifacts from the 2010s, and I theorized that the connection between the past and the present is particularly significant because Native Americans are still struggling with political issues today that started with their oppression centuries ago.

Being able to read William Penn’s ethnographic research from the past is important background for my current research today, since I will need to learn as much as possible about that history in order to better understand the ongoing racial and political issues.

Reflection

The two most significant reflections I've done to date (aside from the one I'm writing right now) are in the blog posts "OSHA Regulation Hair" (reflecting on the Barnes & Noble research experience) and "My Trip to the Native American Voices Exhibit at Penn Museum" (which includes a reflection in the 4th part). The most significant thing I've learned about my process based on those reflections is that I will need to be more outgoing and interactive in the future. I made a small step forward in this regard between the two experiences.

During the Barnes & Noble research experience, I didn't talk to anyone. As described in that reflection (and detailed in the scene depicted in the post "Last Day For Returns"), I spent the Barnes & Noble field research keeping myself out of the way and simply observing. I learned, however, that interaction was key to uncovering the real story about the bookstore culture. It was while observing Veronica in her interactions with the B&N cashier that I found just how much information can be revealed when you get someone to open up and share their story.

Then, as noted in the Museum reflection and in Observation #25, I had a bit more interaction during my second field research outing. I recorded some details about a few specific individuals, though the details were still a bit limited. I noted that "the descriptions of the museum patrons noted above were done mostly from memory, since I didn't think to write down any details about the individual people" and "when reflecting on the field experience, I realized that I had focused my notes primarily on the things I saw in the environment around me, rather than on individual people." These reflections have given me a goal to work on during my next field research outing.

Based on these reflections, I made plans to go on a collaborative field outing with Suzette in the near future (conversation recorded as part of my Storify work sample). Since we both noted that we have the same issues with shyness and introversion, our plan is to work together for support and encouragement in order to break out of these shells.

Collaboration

In addition to the planned joint field outing noted above, I compiled a collection of my recent collaborative efforts in the Storify story included in my work samples. As seen in the Storify samples, I've frequently used twitter to share information with others in class, to discuss methods we can use in writing out blog posts (such as when I shared my "Sports, Language, and Culture" blog post with Joe as an example of leveraging twitter for research), and to discuss the specific requirements of certain assignments (such as when Rachel, Joe, and I discussed the required number of comments for blog posts).

I've also lent my help to my classmates a number of times with regards to technical issues. As noted in the Storify, I have frequently responded to my classmates' questions about how technology works (helping Jennifer figure out how to embed her Storify in a blog post and helping Christina recover a nearly-lost blog post). Also, as noted in the Core 2 Blog Comments Log (located in the Midterm Work Samples folder), I've offered suggestions to my classmates in my blog comments. I offered to help Cathornia find additional "experts" on anime (Comment #2), I prompted Emily with some more possible research questions about yoga that she might want to pursue (Comment #12), I suggested that Suzette might want to look into the issue of early detection with regards to heart defects (Comment #13), and I offered my general insights throughout.

I also frequently engage in phone and text conversations (samples in Core 2 Cell Phone Screenshots folder) with classmates to help brainstorm, answer questions, and offer support outside of class as needed.

Confidence and independence

In my initial self-reflection during Part A2 of the Learning Record, I noted that “My weakest research areas are historical research, including any type of research where I need to report on the work of others (rather than using their work to back up my own theories and arguments).”

The sample explanation of how “confidence and independence” is rated in the Learning Record states “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.”

When comparing my initial self-reflection with this explanation, I would say that my weakness in the area of historical research is at least somewhat related to overconfidence. In the past, I have tended to approach a research paper with a preconceived idea in mind, and then used any academic sources (such as journals) merely to back up “what I already knew.” This isn’t to say that I tend to make unfounded assumptions or jump to conclusions without evidence. Rather, I have tended to write research papers on topics I was already thoroughly versed in, meaning that I was able to draw upon my prior knowledge on the subject without the need to “research” anything new.

For this class, I chose a research topic I knew little about, and after I started looking into it, I discovered that I knew even less than I thought. First, as discussed in my blog post “Sports, Language, and Culture,” I found that I had to research sports in much greater detail than I had expected to. I explain in that post how my initial view of sports was that of an outsider, and that “I have never been involved in the culture or community that forms around sports.” This meant that I essentially had no prior knowledge to draw on, and I was starting this research project from scratch.

In addition to leveraging twitter for research on the subject of sports culture, I ended up needing to thoroughly review other writings on the subject. I read several academic articles on the topic (one of which is specifically referenced in the abovementioned blog post), and I read more than a dozen news articles about the Redskins name change debate. Since I knew nothing about sports culture, I knew nothing about the reasons why sports fans were so adamant about not wanting to change their team’s name. To address this, I reviewed a number of articles from both sides of the debate in the blog post “Review of Recent News About the Redskins Name Change.” I tried to find as many articles as I could representing both the views of people in favor of the name change and those of the people against it, so that I would more thoroughly understand the nature of the debate.

This approach is far more balanced, without the characteristic overconfidence I’ve had in the past (something that I see as a major flaw in my prior methods).

Knowledge and understanding

Prior to the beginning of this class, I knew nothing about ethnography, I didn't know what "postmodern" meant (other than being an oxymoron), I didn't know the first thing about sports, and my knowledge of Native American culture was limited to what I'd learned in my 4th grade Social Studies class.

As demonstrated in both "My Trip to the Native American Voices Exhibit at Penn Museum" and "Sports, Language, and Culture," I've been working hard to fill some of those knowledge gaps. I've engaged in research both online and in the field. I've learned a lot about how sports culture can be defined, what it means to people, and the stances people can take with regards to how important sports are to them. I've also learned a lot about the history of the Native American people and some of their earliest experiences with Europeans, most notably by reading William Penn's account.

I have a good understanding now of what ethnography entails, which became especially apparent when I was reading William Penn's account and came to the realization that what I was reading *was* an ethnography. Now, as detailed in the post about my field research at the museum, I know what ethnographic research is, what jottings are, what the difference is between jottings and detailed transcriptions, and what it means to recreate a scene based on fieldnotes.

Skills and strategies

As described above, my experience writing "Sports, Language, and Culture" and what I've since learned about technologies like Storify have helped me to develop my research and writing skills. Instead of writing a bland blog post comprised entirely of text, I demonstrated the ability to mix text and images (tweets) in order to provide samples of the conversations I had during my research. I'm now taking that a step further with learning how to work Storify, and this will give me the ability to blend this new technology into my future writings.

I'm also working on improving my field research skills, as demonstrated in the increased level of detail between my Barnes & Noble blog posts and "My Trip to the Native American Voices Exhibit at Penn Museum." While the latter still showed room for improvement with regard to my ability to study and learn from individuals, it was still a more detailed and efficient experience than the first practice session. My reflections on these sessions also made me aware of the specific weaknesses I have, and I've developed plans for how to overcome them by engaging in more field research alongside others.

Use of prior and emerging experience

The best examples of my use of prior and emerging experience are the ways in which I've connected my previous education in Standpoint Theory and Symbolic Interactionism to my current research into culture and language. I referenced this in "Sports, Language, and Culture" when I discussed how the language people used to talk about sports helps to create and cement their sports culture. Standpoint Theory was also an important variable in my "Review of Recent News About the Redskins Name Change." It was crucial that I understand my standpoint as an "outsider" when reviewing the recent articles on this subject, so that I would maintain an unbiased stance.

Another example of how my prior experience is blending with my emerging experience is the evolution of my technological skills, such as with twitter. I already had extensive prior experience using twitter for communication, but I previously only had minor experience using it for research. I've since used twitter for a research poll in "Sports, Language, and Culture," and I've used it extensively for keeping in touch with classmates for the sake of collaboration and support.

Creativity, originality, imagination.

In terms of format and method, the most creative and original piece I've written so far is my blog post "Sports, Language, and Culture." It demonstrates originality because it is the first time I devised a blog post based on the results of a twitter poll, particularly since I incorporated the tweets into the post itself as images. Also, as evidenced in my Storify conversations, the idea of incorporating tweets into a blog post was original enough that Joe asked if he could "steal" it.

I also demonstrate originality in the perspective I take on certain projects. For example, when the class was assigned the project of writing about a Barnes & Noble student's hair, I wrote the blog post, "OSHA Regulation Hair." I found this to be a useful and creative way to describe my chosen subject, since OSHA regulations provided an interesting frame from which to view a food service employee's hairstyle. I concluded that post with the line "OSHA regulations also require you to wash your hands after touching your hair, though I doubt anyone would object to the girl making a cup of coffee after she brushed a stray strand of hair back over her ear, denying it its attempt to find freedom." This shows the touch of playfulness I like to incorporate into my work, in this case by slightly personifying the girl's hair as "attempt[ing] to find freedom."

Another example is Observation #27 in the Learning Record, in which I make an observation about my observations. While part of this observation was intended to have a playful tone, it was still a serious and important observation. I noted that "working on Learning Record Observations is making me stop and really think about what I'm learning. I have to spend a few minutes mentally reviewing an activity, then comparing it to my earlier work in order to realize what is different. I've already made a few plans for how to change my work going forward based on what I've observed about my work up to this point." Thus, this meta-observation expressed the moment when I realized that these observations were more than just a tool for determining my later grade; they were a reflective tool that would help be grow and develop over time.

Part C1: 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.

In my initial personal reflection (section A2), I said that "When I become interested in a certain topic, I take to it with passion and investigate it as deeply as possible." My friend Chris (in section A1) said "Bob has never been one to accept stagnation or simply be 'good enough'". When Bob takes on a hobby, a task, or an occupation he sets out to master it and anything related

to it.” These statements both demonstrate the way I will approach a project or task. My general philosophy is “anything worth doing is worth doing right.”

There have been times in the past when I didn’t consider something to be “worth doing.” For example, during my undergraduate studies at Rowan starting with my return to the university in 2007, up through my graduation in 2013, I received exactly one C. That C was in an economics class that, frankly, I did not take seriously. I was pulling a hard A in the course up until the final. I was then assigned a research paper on the not-very-interesting subject of a Mexican businessman who was buying up monopolies and thus hurting the Mexican economy. In an act that could be considered either immaturity or laziness, but which was ultimately a deliberate and well-thought out decision, I decided simply not to do the paper. The reason I made this decision was because I read my syllabus, added up the various percentages that each test and assignment was worth in my final grade, and determined that not doing the paper would drop my grade from an A to a C+. Since the class didn’t motivate me, I decided I was fine with that.

In reviewing my academic transcripts *after* that class, my undergraduate and graduate record consists of 21 classes, with 17 A’s, 3 A-’s, and 1 B. The reason for these grades is not something I attribute to talent, ability, or anything along those lines. Instead, it is because I have been studying subjects I am passionate about, and when I am passionate about something I do not accept being “good enough” and just taking the C. I devote myself single-mindedly to my purpose and explore it as thoroughly as possible.

When taking a class with a more traditional syllabus, I demonstrate this devotion by studying a breakdown of the grading for a course and figuring out what I need to do in order to succeed. For example, if I see that a certain paper is worth 15% of my grade and a certain exam is worth 25%, I do whatever it takes to achieve adequate marks on each of those items, whether that be extra study sessions, being on time with assignments, or making sure I hit the page length requirements. However, the criteria for grading under the Learning Record is more fluid and thus more difficult to quantify. Therefore, in order to push myself towards (and, consequently, justify in this writing) getting an A, I need to more thoroughly consider my performance in relation to those fluid requirements. Doing so requires analysis on two scales: quality and quantity of work completed.

First, the Learning Record criteria requires “all assigned work completed.” I have definitely completed all of the assigned coursework to date up to the minimum levels. In addition, however, an A grade requires me to “go significantly beyond the required course work.” In itself, this last criteria is somewhat complicated to review at the midterm, but a simple way of rating it would be to ask “Have I completed more than half of what will be required by the end of the semester?” When it comes to blog posts, I’ve currently completed 7 out of the required 10 (counting 1 for the initial research proposal and 6 additional posts), plus the additional 3 that were required for the Barnes & Noble assignment. That puts me on track to easily expect to complete 50% more than the required number by the end of the semester, which I would argue qualifies as “significantly more” than the requirement. Likewise, I have already posted 14 comments on my classmates’ blog posts, with more to come, putting me well above the required number for that as well. With regards to the other assignments, I’ve already found the majority of the sources required for the “Drilling down the Sources” assignment, and begun incorporating

some of them into my blog posts (in the above sections of this document, I referenced one book, one academic journal, and multiple news articles that I've quoted in blog posts). I also fully intend to do both the "required" and the "optional" posts for that assignment, and I am on schedule for the goal of completing them before the due date. Finally, for the "Fieldnotes, Interviews, Lookings, and Reflections" assignment, I've already completed the first post for that assignment (in my blog post about field research at the museum). Based on the due dates for the remaining portions, I fully expect to have them completed on time as well.

Based on all of this, I would definitely say that I have met and am on track to exceed the "quantity" portion. The second dimension, however, is that the work must be completed "with very high quality in all work produced for the course." "Quality" is hard to measure, but there are several pieces of evidence I can point to that can stand as arguments for quality. One is the depth and thoroughness of my work. The blog posts I've cited throughout the above reflection all explore complex issues from multiple sides. I searched thoroughly to explore both sides of the name change debate, I've begun exploring both past and present issues of Native American culture and oppression, and beyond that I'm also thoroughly exploring *both* sports culture and Native American culture. I believe that either/or of these subjects would have proven adequate for the sake of making the kind of one-sided argument usually seen in news articles, but because I want to be as thorough as possible, I'm exploring both subjects in depth. I also plan to make sure that my interviews and other field research include a thorough exploration of both of these cultures, instead of being limited to just one.

On a more general level, I've also incorporated concepts from the class readings into many of my blog posts. I referred to specific pages of "Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes" during my museum trip blog post, citing how I used the book's concepts during my work. My most recent blog post references specific examples from Horowitz's "On Looking." I've also cited multiple references from my Zotero sources. In addition, I've made my blog posts dynamic and engaging by incorporating pictures, tweets, and links to relevant articles and websites related to the topics I'm discussing. I would consider a bland (ie no additional items beyond text alone) blog post to be the "minimum required," and I would therefore argue that the multiple additional elements I've added to each of my posts qualifies as "significantly more."

Finally, there is "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." The reflective portion of this assignment (section B1) discusses the dimensions of learning in great detail. However, if I had to cite a specific course strand that I've gone beyond the requirements in, I would say that exploration and curiosity is a definite area that I've gone "significantly beyond the required course work." The two-sided nature of my research project and the fact that I'm deeply exploring both sides, while also incorporating additional things like twitter polls and communication studies analyses, should stand as evidence of significant work in this regard.

Midterm Grade Estimate: A

Instructor Comments:

Bob, you have composed an excellent Midterm Learning Record--and even more, you have completed outstanding work this semester. Your contributions to the class have been invaluable and your dedication and approaches to your work have served as models for the rest of the class. Indeed, it seems that you are on the speed-dial of most of the class, ready to help them through whatever questions they have. That level of collaboration is very much appreciated. I am pleased to read that the course has introduced you to the concept and practices of ethnography. I'm even more pleased that your research topic has challenged you to rethink past approaches to research and writing about that research. The initiative you took to complete the sports survey on Twitter was just wonderful, and I'm enjoying seeing how you've incorporated that work into your blog posts. Your blog posts are outstanding: thorough, thoughtful, grounded in the work for the course, yet approachable for reader of your blog who are not in the class. I don't know how you have the time to complete all that you have, but whatever you're doing it's affording you the ability to compose posts that have significant meaning and importance. If there is one critique of your Midterm LR is that there are not enough work samples selected, especially because you mention work completed in the class but is not represented here (such as your Zotero library). One result of the few Work Samples is that you tend to discuss the same work quite often in your Part B, which seems to have led to a shorter, less involved discussion of the Dimensions of Learning than there were of the course strands. In your Final LR, please include more work samples (of course, you'll have many many more to choose from), including those that might only be associated with class, like the hockey game ethnography posts (completed after the midterm due date). You might also sprinkle in a few more Observations, as well. Your Part C, however, need not be so long. Overall, though, your progress through and contributions to this course have been exceptional, going significantly beyond what is required in several of the course strands. Thank you for your dedication. I look forward to reading your final article. -BW

Instructor Midterm Grade: A

Part B2: Final Analysis of Data

Develop your summary interpretation of your development in terms of *the major strands* and the *six dimensions of learning*. **You must discuss your work in terms of both the course strands and dimensions of learning, not either or.** 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

Exploration and Curiosity

Students will gain greater familiarity with the theories and practices relating to qualitative research as well as the reflective processes involved in writing extended investigative articles, and will challenge themselves to explore new ideas and become more curious about the worlds around them and the subjects associated with their research.

Critical Reading, Thinking, and Writing

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

Communication Technology

Students will learn about and will use contemporary communication technologies to enhance the research process.

Reflection

Students will develop their understanding of the important role of reflection in the writing process.

Collaboration

Students will develop their ability to work collaboratively in a variety of in- and out-of-class activities and settings.

The Six 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 six 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.

Creativity, originality, imagination

As learners gain confidence and independence, knowledge and understanding, skills and strategies, ability to use prior and emerging experience in new situations, and reflectiveness, they generally become more playful and experimental, more creative in the expression of that learning. This is true not only in "creative" fields such as the arts, but in nearly all domains: research, argumentation, history, psychology, mathematics. In all fields the primary contributions to the field at the highest levels are the result of creative or imaginative work. Even in the early stages of learning in a discipline, exploration and experimentation, taking new or unexpected perspectives, and playfulness should be recognized and encouraged as a natural part

of the learning process. This optional dimension may be adopted as part of the Learning Record by teachers or schools to make explicit the value of creativity, originality, and imagination in students' development and achievement. Among other things, it recognizes the value of creative experimentation even when the final result of the work may not succeed as the student may hope. If we hope to foster this quality in students' thinking and development, it is important to encourage it, to document it, and to explicitly make it a value. We make this dimension optional because there are certain classes that depend on the transfer of information (as in human anatomy, for example) or the acquisition of fundamentally technical skills (calculus, for example) where creativity and imagination may not play a significant role.

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.