

# Reference Course Profile: English Composition I

## *ENGL 1301*

Principles and techniques of written, expository, and persuasive composition; analysis of literary, expository, and persuasive texts; and critical thinking.\*

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### **Prerequisites and Prior Knowledge**

Most college-level syllabi do not list all prior knowledge required to succeed in the course; it is usually an underlying assumption. For the purpose of this Reference Course Profile, the required prior knowledge and skills students need to be successful in the course are explicitly stated to help both secondary and postsecondary faculty establish goals and expectations for their students. The knowledge and skills reflected in this section are pulled directly from the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards (TCCRS), written and validated by Texas faculty during the 2007-8 school year. The TCCRS are available online at: <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/collegereadiness/CRS.pdf>

- Prior to enrolling in this course, students must satisfy Texas Success Initiative (TSI) requirements set by the institution as described in Coordinating Board rule (Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 4, Subchapter C).
- An instructor might also require a pre-semester diagnostic test to help the student assess his or her current writing ability and knowledge of grammar.

In addition, students should have the skills reflected in the following College and Career Readiness Standards. Only the specific standards and performance expectations pertinent to the course are listed below.

### **English/Language Arts College and Career Readiness Standards**

#### **I. Writing**

- A. Compose a variety of texts that demonstrate clear focus, the logical development of ideas in well-organized paragraphs, and the use of appropriate language that advances the author's purpose.
  4. Recognize the importance of revision as the key to effective writing.
  5. Edit writing for proper voice, tense, and syntax, assuring that it conforms to standard English, when appropriate.

#### **II. Reading**

- A. Locate explicit textual information, draw complex inferences, and analyze and evaluate the information within and across texts of varying lengths.
  1. Use effective reading strategies to determine a written work's purpose and intended audience.
  3. Identify explicit and implicit textual information including main ideas and

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\* From the course description appearing in the Lower Division Academic Course Guide Manual (ACGM)  
<http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/AAR/UndergraduateEd/WorkforceEd/acgm.htm>

author's purpose.

5. Analyze the presentation of information and the strength and quality of evidence used by the author, and judge the coherence and logic of the presentation and the credibility of an argument.

9. Identify and analyze the audience, purpose, and message of an informational or persuasive text.

B. Understand new vocabulary and concepts and use them accurately in reading, speaking, and writing.

3. Use reference guides to confirm the meanings of new words or concepts.

### **III. Speaking**

A. Understand the elements of communication both in informal group discussion and formal presentations.

2. Adjust presentation (delivery, purpose, length) to particular audiences and purposes.

B. Develop effective speaking styles for both group and one-on-one situations.

1. Participate actively and effectively in one-on-one oral communication situations.

2. Participate actively and effectively in group discussions.

### **IV. Listening**

A. Apply listening skills as an individual and as a member of a group in a variety of settings.

B. Listen effectively in informal and formal situations.

### **V. Research**

A. Formulate topic and questions.

B. Select information from a variety of sources.

4. Use source material ethically.

## **Cross-Disciplinary Standards**

### **I. Key Cognitive Skills**

A. Intellectual Curiosity

B. Reasoning

C. Problem Solving

D. Academic Behaviors

E. Work Habits

F. Academic Integrity

### **II. Foundational Skills**

A. Reading Across the Curriculum

- B. Writing Across the Curriculum
- C. Research Across the Curriculum
- D. Use of Data
- E. Technology

## **Course Objectives**

Course objectives include the course-specific skills and knowledge that students will possess upon completion of the course. They assist postsecondary faculty in clarifying the goals of their courses and provide a clear picture of the expectations students will encounter once they begin college. This sample list of objectives was adapted from syllabi submitted in 2008 by Texas college faculty.

In this course, ENGL 1301, Composition I, students will learn various patterns of development in writing essays, including description, narration, comparison/contrast, illustration, process analysis, cause and effect, and argumentation/persuasion. Through writing essays using these patterns of development, as well as learning to use secondary sources in at least one paper, students will be challenged to demonstrate their mastery of analysis, inference, synthesis, and evaluation.

Upon completion of the course the student will be able to:

1. Utilize the stages in the writing process;
2. Organize ideas in a logical fashion;
3. Support ideas in a clear and specific fashion;
4. Show evidence of grammar and spelling skills;
5. Demonstrate revising and editing skills;
6. Write a well-organized, well-developed, and coherent essay;
7. Conduct library research; and
8. Properly incorporate and properly cite all paraphrased and quoted material used in one's own work.

Critical thinking is an important objective of this course. Critical thinking is a process involving higher order thinking skills. These skills include, but are not limited to, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of factual information.

A well-cultivated critical thinker<sup>1</sup>:

- Raises vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely;
- Gathers and assesses relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively;
- Comes to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards;
- Thinks open-mindedly within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences as need be; and
- Communicates effectively with others in finding solutions to complex problems.

### Sample Textbooks and Materials

This list is comprised of texts that appear on course syllabi submitted in 2008 by faculty teaching entry-level college courses most representative of current practice in Texas. This list is not exhaustive, prescriptive, or required.

- Aaron, Jane and H. Ramsey Fowler. *The Little, Brown Handbook*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. New York: Little, Brown, 2007.
- Atwan, Robert and Donald McQuade. *The Writer's Presence*. 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006.
- Axelrod, Rise B., Charles R. Cooper, and Alison M. Warriner. *Reading Critically, Writing Well: A Reader and Guide*. 8<sup>th</sup> Ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007.
- Hacker, Diana. *A Writer's Reference*. 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006.
- Hacker, Diana and Jane E. Aaron. *Rules for Writers*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's Press.
- Jacobus, Lee A. *A World of Ideas*. 7<sup>th</sup> Ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006.
- Kennedy, X. J., Dorothy M. Kennedy, and Jane E. Aaron. *The Brief Bedford Reader*. 9<sup>th</sup> Ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005.
- Kennedy, Mary Lynch and William J. Kennedy. *Writing in the Disciplines: A Reader and Rhetoric for Academic Writers*. 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. Boston: Pearson Custom, 2007.
- Lunsford, Andrea A. *The St. Martin's Handbook*. 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007.
- Nadell, Judith, John Langan, and Eliza A. Comodromos. *The Longman Writer: Rhetoric and Reader*. Brief 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. New York: Longman, 2006.
- Ruszkiewicz, John, Daniel E. Seward, and Maxine Hairston. *SF Writer*. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2007.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul, Richard & Elder, Linda. *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts & Tools*. Dillon Beach: The Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2005.

- A good college-level desk dictionary.

## **Sample Methods of Instruction**

Students should be prepared to encounter a variety of instructional methods, as faculty indicate the use of several beyond the lecture format. The list of methods of instruction has been adapted from course syllabi submitted in 2008 by faculty teaching entry-level college courses most representative of current practice in Texas. The approximate percentage of time allocated to each instructional method is also indicated.

1. Lecture – 20%
  - a. Lecture is defined as a method of instruction in which the instructor has full responsibility for presenting material orally.
  - b. Lectures will take place in the form of informal lectures, in which active student participation, such as questioning and answering, will be included.
2. Full-class Discussion of Readings and Rhetorical Ideas – 30%
  - a. Students will be expected to come to class ready to contribute to class discussion.
  - b. Students will be expected to listen and respond to each other's comments.
3. Group Discussion – 10%
  - a. In addition to class discussion, students will be expected to take turns facilitating small group discussions both in and outside of class time.
4. Peer Review of Writing – 10–15%
  - a. Students will be expected to review the work of classmates and provide and accept constructive feedback.
5. One-on-one Conferences with Instructor – 10–15%
  - a. Conferencing with the instructor on an individual basis allows students to get critical feedback of work.
6. Library Work – 15%
  - a. Students are expected to become familiar with library resources and research methods.

## **Sample Assignments**

A typical number of formal assignments for ENGL 1301 is four and eight essays. The course will also include quizzes, a final exam, and a number of other assignments. Below are the kinds of assignments that might be expected and the percentage of the final grade each might carry.

1. Formal Papers – 60%
  - a. All formal essays must be word-processed and follow MLA format (see format below).
  - b. Essays must include in-text citations and a Works Cited page.
  - c. Formal essays must be written in third person and are expository or persuasive/argumentative depending on the specific assignment.
  - d. Length requirement: 650–750 words.
2. Journals – 5%
  - a. Journals are practice writing assignments based on the readings in the text. They are designed to prepare you for essay writing.
  - b. Journals can either be submitted as word-processed documents in MLA format, or they can be posted to the online bulletin board. Either way, journals are due at the beginning of class.
  - c. Length requirement: 250 words.
3. Information Research Certificate Level 1 – 10%
  - a. Students must complete the Information Research Certificate Level 1 offered through the Learning Center.

## **Sample Assessments**

Typically a beginning-level college writing course will not include many formal examinations, with the exception of occasional quizzes. Although an objective component may be included in the final exam, typically the culminating assessment for the course will be an additional essay assignment, either a take-home essay or an essay to be written during the final exam period.

### **Specific Assessments:**

1. Quizzes – 5%
  - a. Several quizzes are scheduled throughout the semester. Quizzes are given at the beginning of class only and cannot be made up.
2. Final Exam – 10%
  - a. The final is an in-class essay exam of at least 500 words. A blue book is required.

## Sample Schedule

Samplings of assignments and assessments have been provided in the Reference Course Profile materials. Bolded blue text indicates when a document is provided and a link to that document is available. The time allocated for students to complete the assignment is also indicated. The list of topics, as well as the overall pacing of the course, has been adapted from course syllabi submitted in 2008 by faculty teaching entry-level college courses most representative of current practice in Texas.

Week	Reading/Discussion Topics	Assignments & Assessments
1	Read the C (Composition) section of the <i>Writer's Reference</i> and "Evaluating Ideas" from <i>A World of Ideas</i> , pp. 1–11.	<b>Assignment 1: Descriptive Essay</b> (3-pg. minimum, 4 hrs.)
2	Read Gardner, "A Rounded Version: the Theory of Multiple Intelligences," from <i>A World of Ideas</i> . Meet with instructor for conference regarding descriptive essay (Assignment 1).	Discuss essay in class. Complete outlining exercise. Take Thesis and Composition quiz on-line.
3	Review run-ons, comma splices, subject/verb agreement. Study the G section of the <i>Writer's Reference</i> . Review parts of speech and basic grammar sections in "Grammar Review Notes" as needed.	<b>Assignment 2: Narrative Essay</b> (3-pg. minimum, 4 hrs.)
4	Read selection from <i>The Prince</i> in <i>A World of Ideas</i> .	Take on-line quizzes on run-ons and fragments, subject/verb agreement.
5	Discuss Machiavelli.	<b>Assignment 3: Process Analysis Essay</b> (3-pg minimum, 4 hrs.)  Complete dictionary use assignment. Take on-line quiz on dictionary use.
6	Review <i>Writer's Reference</i> sections on pronoun use and parallel structure.	Take on-line quizzes over these sections.
7	Review "Modifier and Shift Errors." Review "Apostrophe Use and Punctuation." Read "Declaration of Independence" and King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Discuss these works and possible ways to compare them in an essay.	<b>Assignment 4: Compare/Contrast Essay</b> (3-pg. minimum, 4 hrs.)  Take on-line quizzes over these sections.
8	Study and discuss logic and exact language.	<b>Exam 1 – Midterm Assessment</b>

Week	Reading/Discussion Topics	Assignments & Assessments
9	Read two selections from “Ethics and Morality” section of <i>A World of Ideas</i> . Discuss.	<b>Assignment 5: Cause and Effect Essay</b> (5-pg. minimum, 5 hrs.)
10	Read two selections from “Wealth and Poverty” section of <i>A World of Ideas</i> .	Take quiz over logic and diction.
11	Introduction to research. Learn how to use college library databases.	<b>Assignment 6: Problem Solving Proposal</b> (3-pg minimum, 4 hrs.)  Work with a partner to research a topic related to poverty and make a persuasive presentation to the class.
12	Lesson on PowerPoint and oral presentation of projects.	Class presentations
13	Create correct Works Cited page. Lesson on Rogerian arguments.	<b>Assignment 7: Argument Essay</b> (3-pg minimum, in-class assignment.)  Class presentations
14	Read Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave.” Discuss Plato in class.  Review terms and concepts for Objective Exam.	<b>Assignment 8: Rogerian Argument Essay</b> (3-pg minimum, 5 hrs.)  Final conferences
15	<b>Exam 2 – Final Exam</b>	

## Sample Class Policies and Expectations

Students often enter college unaware of expectations regarding attendance, participation, behavior, grading, and academic integrity. Faculty frequently include detailed policies and expectations in their syllabi, making explicit to students the standards of successful participation. Institutional-level policies are often included as well.

### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance will be recorded at each class meeting. Regular class attendance is vital to success in this class. Students are responsible for material and assignments covered in class whether they are present or not. This is THE STUDENT’S responsibility.

- Any significant tardy or early departure from class will be figured as half of an absence.
- Students who sleep during class will be counted absent and may be asked to leave the classroom.
- Students who are disruptive will be asked to leave the classroom and will be counted as absent.

- Disruptions include cell phones that ring during class. Cell phones must be turned off and placed out of sight during class.
- Students are allowed six (6) unexcused absences during the semester. After that, each additional unexcused will lower the final grades for the course by 10 points. In order for an absence to be considered excused, students will need to provide the instructor with documentation for the absence (medical appointment, family emergency, etc.).

## **Expectations**

### *Student Conduct*

- Students are expected to attend class regularly and to complete reading and writing assignments on the days specified.
- No food, drink, or tobacco of any kind is permitted in the classroom.
- Cell phones, iPods, and pagers must be turned off during class.
- Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.
- Examples of disruptive behavior include—but are not limited to—talking while the instructor is lecturing, discussing non course-related issues during class assignment time, and using profane language.

### *Academic Behaviors*

- Students are expected to have adequate time management skills.
- Students are expected to self-monitor their level of competence in the subject in order to be aware when improvement is needed.
- Students are expected to seek out resources for improving their understanding of the subject, such as study groups and tutoring.
- Students are expected to practice efficient study and preparation skills outside of class.
- Students are expected to take clear, concise class notes.
- Students are expected to be able to collaborate with other students and work as part of a team.
- Students are expected to be able accept critical feedback of submitted work.

## Grading Policy

### Overview of Grades and Grading Standards

- A (90–100) = excellent/performance beyond mastery
- B (80–89) = above average/beyond basic mastery
- C (70–79) = average mastery
- D (60–69) = below average
- F (0–59) = failure

### Percentages of Grade

- Formal Papers – 60%
  - Paper 1 5%
  - Paper 2 10%
  - Paper 3 15%
  - Paper 4 15%
  - Paper 5 15%
- Journals – 5%
- Quizzes – 5%
- Final Exam – 10%
- Information Research Certificate Level 1 – 10%

## Academic Integrity Policy

Plagiarized papers or projects will receive a grade of “0” (zero). No exceptions. Cheating or collusion will also result in a grade of “0” (zero) on that paper or project. Plagiarism or collusion on a second major assignment will result in a zero in the course. Students need to be aware that the instructor will be utilizing plagiarism software and Internet sources to check student work for potential plagiarism. This will be discussed in more detail during class lecture. Further definitions and examples of plagiarism are in the *Little, Brown Handbook*.

Neither this college nor this instructor will tolerate cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is defined as "taking and using as one's own the writings or ideas of another." Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing, or aiding another student in cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, test, individual assignment, or examination will receive a grade of “0” (zero) on that assignment and will be dropped from the course with a grade of F. Students subject to penalty due to academic dishonesty have the right to appeal to the department chair and eventually to the dean and/or academic vice president before imposition of the penalty.

## Sample List of Student Resources

The following list is representative of the resources mentioned in 2008 entry-level college course syllabi in Texas. The resources listed are indicative of the expectation that postsecondary students take responsibility for their own learning. As often explicitly stated in course syllabi, students are expected to take advantage of these resources, and may even be required to do so.

- In this class students will receive essential input through several important activities: conferences with instructor, peer review workshops, and writing circles.
  - The purpose of this class is not only to teach students how to write a college-level essay, but to improve writing skills throughout the semester. When writers want to improve their work, they ALWAYS get feedback from others—fellow writers, editors, etc.
  - When a writing circle is scheduled, students will bring several copies of a draft to class and exchange these with a group of peers. Then, during the following week, the group and the instructor will meet to discuss everyone's drafts.
  - During a peer review workshop, students will bring a word-processed draft of his/her paper to class and exchange it with a classmate. Students will give feedback on the classmate's paper and vice versa.
  - After a conference, peer review session, or writing circle, students should review the comments from classmates and the instructor and revise their draft. In order for these activities to be successful and for the student to gain important insight into their writing, students MUST participate. No paper will be accepted unless it is accompanied by a draft and evidence of peer review.
- Students will be expected to sign up for conferences throughout the semester. During a conference, the student and the instructor will meet in the instructor's office and discuss papers one-on-one.
- Students with Disabilities:
  - Any student with a verifiable learning or physical disability who requires special accommodations is encouraged to speak to the instructor in private regarding his/her special accommodations need. A request for special accommodations must be made through the American Disabilities Act or ADA Counselor and the appropriate form submitted to the instructor two weeks in advance of need.
- Free English Tutoring:
  - The College offers numerous opportunities for free English tutoring at tutoring centers or through online tutoring support services. Signs will be posted once the tutoring hours have been established. Online tutoring services include askonline.net and mycomplab.com. More information about the online services will be available once the semester gets started.
- Open Computer Lab:
  - Students have free access to the Internet and word processing in the open computer lab in the X building. Check the posted schedule for hours of operation.
- Library: The library is open to serve students!



# Descriptive Essay

## *ENGL 1301 – Composition I*

### Example Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to write an essay using description to support a main idea or thesis. The audience will be other students and the instructor. This essay will be at least 3 pages in length, and students will spend approximately 4 hours working on this assignment.

This assignment might be done over a period of four class periods in the following sequence:

Class 1 Prewriting

Class 2 First draft

Class 3 Peer Review of first draft

Class 4 Revised final draft due

### **The following list of strategies should aid you in writing your descriptive essay:**

- Decide on the dominant impression that you would like to convey to your readers about your subject.
- Develop a clear idea of the thesis or main point that you want to make and state that point explicitly for your readers.
- Use only details that support your thesis and dominant impression.
- Decide how to organize your material.
- Make sure that each of your paragraphs has a clear focus.
- Use concrete, vivid language that evokes sensory images.
- Use a variety of sentence structures and vigorous verbs to lend energy to your writing.
- Keep your point of view and verb tense consistent.

### **The following items should be in your folder when you turn in Essay #1:**

- Handwritten prewriting ideas
- Handwritten first draft
- Peer review(s)
- Final typed draft

**Your paper should be at least 3 pages in length and formatted as follows using MLA style:**

- Insert 1" margins on all sides.
- Use Times New Roman and 12 pt. font (maximum).
- Double-space your text.
- The right-hand top corner of each page should contain as a header your last name and the page number. (Use header and footer under the "View" tab to insert this.)
- Type the heading, double-spaced, in the left hand corner of first page, 1" from top.
- Center the title of your essay.

**Include the following information at the beginning of your essay:**

- Last name (listed first)
- First name
- Instructor's name
- ENGL 1301
- Course number/section
- Date
- Title of essay (centered)
- Your introduction begins after ONE double space only between title and introduction.

# Essay Exam Questions

## *ENGL 1301 – Composition I*

### Example Assessment

English 1301 will also give students practice in writing an essay exam under time limitations. Below are samples of essay exam questions.

### Technology's Impact on American Culture

#### Synopsis of the Paper:

This writing assignment will cover a fairly broad topic: the ways in which computer technology has revolutionized the means by which we communicate with each other. In the last 25 years, communication with others has gone through an almost unbelievable evolution: the internet, instant messaging, cell phones, and texting have grown out of changes in computer technology.

Although we may rarely think about the consequences of this kind of rapid growth in how we communicate with our friends, family, and co-workers, some of the articles you'll be reading will provide you with the means to begin thinking about the ways in which this level of computer technology impacts our culture.

Unlike other writing assignments, this paper will be written exclusively in class.

However, like other writing assignments, this paper will be another kind of academic paper: the essay exam. You'll be taking the elements of the first two academic papers (using research to help you organize and discuss the major ideas in your paper), but with some slight differences.

For this essay, you will be discussing some of the positive and negative influences that technology has on American society, as discussed by three different authors whose articles you'll be reading in *Common Culture*. These will be the only sources you'll work with for this essay, so make sure that you read and understand all of the assigned articles. The more you can draw from the articles in your responses, and discuss how the examples from the articles support your essay exam answers, the more effective your responses will be.

## Articles:

The four articles you'll be tested over are from *Common Culture*:

- Barlow, John. "Cyberhood vs. Neighborhood." (pp. 343-351).
- Blood, Rebecca. "Weblogs: A History and Perspective" (pp. 399-405).
- Hiler, John. "Borg Journalism." (pp. 407-414).
- Rosen, "Our Cell Phones, Ourselves." (pp. 351-370).

## The Question-Prompt:

The question-prompt is what you'll be asked to answer on your exam days. After we've spent time discussing the purpose of the essay exam, as well as how to prepare for one, and once we've discussed the articles, you'll have three days to write and revise your responses to a question-prompt (either a question or statement you'll respond to in an essay format). When you come to class on the days we have the exam, I will give you two exam questions to choose from. You will answer one question per day; on one day you will respond on the computer, and on the other day you will respond in handwriting. You will then have one day in class to choose which of the two exam answers you wish to revise and turn in for me to grade (although you will turn in both exams, you'll choose which one gets graded).

## Audience:

Essay examinations are one means by which college students tell their professors what they know about a subject area. For this exam, you will need to remember that you will be gearing your writing towards a specific audience (a familiar reader this time), a specific purpose (responding to a prompt) and a specific topic (technology's impact on American culture). We'll be looking at how to do that in class.

## Special Concerns:

You may bring one page (one side of a page of paper) of notes per article to the exam, but you won't bring the articles themselves. I also do not want you to bring in any rough draft of any kind to class. All of your drafting will be done in class. Unlike the previous two papers, I do not expect that you will turn in a final draft of your essay exam responses; I will consider them to be revised rough drafts because you won't have enough time to get them revised so they're of final draft quality.

For your handwritten exam, you are required to bring a blue book. Bluebooks may be purchased at the University bookstore. You may use a pencil or pen for the day you write, and you might want to bring extras in case one of them breaks down during the middle of the exam. I will not evaluate any handwritten essay exam response that isn't written in a bluebook.

In class essays can't be made up if you miss that day unless it's for a serious reason. Contact me the day you miss (or before) if some serious event keeps you from taking an exam. If you miss class and don't contact me until after the exam has been given, you won't be allowed to make up the exam and you'll fail it. Also, if you write one essay on one day, but don't write an essay on another day, you will fail the entire assignment.

### **Evaluation Criteria:**

- 1. Does the content of the exam response actually answer the prompt or question being asked?**
- 2. Is there a clear organizational structure in the response? (Does the thesis respond to the prompt or question? Do the topic sentences support the thesis?)**
- 3. Are the contents specific and extensive enough to be convincing? Can you convince a familiar reader that you have read and understood the articles?**
- 4. Are there direct contrasts and/or comparisons made in the essay?**
- 5. Does the essay present objectively what's in the articles?**
- 6. Is the essay organized clearly enough so that it makes sense and can be read quickly? Are speaker tags (direct references to an author or title of an article) evident?**
- 7. Are there serious grammatical or spelling problems that interfere with reading?**