

San José State University
Department of English and Comparative Literature
Spring 2014 English 100WB
Written Communication: Business
Sections 10 and 12

Instructor: Sheree Kirby

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Office hours: MW 12:00-1:15 and by appointment

Class Section/Day/Time/Location: Section 10, MW, 10:30-11:45, Clark 306

Section 12, MW, 1:00-2:45, BBC 122

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Course Description

Welcome to English 100 WB, a participatory course that offers a practical approach to business communication, emphasizing situations that require both oral and written communication. In this course, students will develop a rhetorically sophisticated writing style appropriate to upper-division university discourse.

Prerequisites

Passage of the Writing Skills Test (WST), upper-division standing (56 units), and completion of CORE GE.

This course satisfies the upper division, GE writing requirement.

Required Texts and Materials

Business Communication Essentials, 6th Edition

Courtland Bovee and John Thill

Course Reader, Maple Press

A paperback dictionary

Writing paper and folder or binder for handouts and assignments

Access to internet and printer

Recommended:

My BComm Lab, Business Communication Essentials, 6th Edition

Canvas:

All students are encouraged to regularly check the class Canvas group. Copies of the syllabus, announcements, and assignment reminders will be posted in Canvas.

Communication and Research Objectives

Students will develop the following skills:

- the ability to analyze and interpret communication scenarios and to respond to them using effective communication that is clear, concise, coherent, correct, complete, and convincing.
- advanced proficiency in both traditional and contemporary research strategies and methodologies necessary for research-informed writing and oral presentations that communicate complex ideas effectively and appropriately to both general and specialized audiences;

English 100WB Learning Objectives

Student Learning Objective 1 -- Students shall be able to refine the competencies established in Written Communication 1A and 1B (as summarized below):

1A Student Learning

- Students should be able to perform effectively the essential steps in the writing process (prewriting, organizing, composing, revising, and editing).
- Students should be able to express (explain, analyze, develop, and criticize) ideas effectively.
- Students should be able to use correct grammar (syntax, mechanics, and citation of sources) at a college level of sophistication.
- Students should be able to write for different audiences (both specialized and general)

1B Student Learning

- Students should be able to use (locate, analyze, and evaluate) supporting materials, including independent library research.
- Students should be able to synthesize ideas encountered in multiple readings.
- Students should be able to construct effective arguments.

Student Learning Objective 2: Students shall be able to express (explain, analyze, develop, and criticize) ideas effectively, including ideas encountered in multiple readings and expressed in different forms of discourse.

Student Learning Objective 3: Students shall be able to organize and develop essays and documents for both professional and general audiences, including appropriate editorial standards for citing primary and secondary sources.

English 100WB Content Objectives

English 100WB students will be expected to demonstrate the ability to

- format, compose, and revise written documents for a variety of organizational situations;
- identify and articulate the audience “take-away” message in every communication;
- utilize a variety of communication tools, techniques, and modes;
- communicate numerical and statistical data appropriately and effectively in both written and oral formats;
- employ advanced research strategies and methodologies and incorporate research appropriately and effectively into both written and oral communications for a variety of organizational and rhetorical situations;
- appreciate the importance of timely communication in organizational settings;
- recognize a variety of organizational communication needs and constraints and employ appropriate communication strategies to meet those needs and/or constraints in a variety of business situations;
- analyze various audiences and compile appropriate options and strategies to communicate effectively with those audiences;
- evaluate and critique communication strategies and techniques for their effectiveness, including the strategies and techniques of their classmates;
- make common-sense communication decisions and use logic to defend those decisions;
- recognize when imagination and “vision” are appropriate to business communications;
- communicate appropriately and effectively in cross-cultural situations;
- create documents and make oral presentations that are ethically and legally defensible.

Assignments

Writing

Assignments shall emphasize those analytical and interpretive skills and activities in writing and thinking that produce types of writing useful in business communications, which include but are not limited to the following: both formal and informal correspondence for various purposes and audiences (email, memos, letters); employment application materials (resumes, cover letters, follow-up letters); formal and informal reports; white papers; abstracts, summaries, annotated bibliographies; proposals. Graded writing assignments will be appropriately sequenced throughout the semester and will total a minimum of 8,000 words; at least one of those assignments will be significantly informed by research. Students shall receive frequent evaluations of their writing from their instructor. In evaluating student writing, instructors shall comment on specific features of individual assignments. Comments shall encourage and acknowledge student success as well as note errors and suggest ways to correct them.

Reading

Assigned reading will address issues of business communications. Instructors may choose from several department-approved Business Communication textbooks that contain models of effective business communication and from several department-approved comprehensive writing handbooks; instructors may also create a short course reader that contains journalistic and/or scholarly writing in the field of business. Other appropriate reading may include texts that address the global marketplace, online communication, visual communication, and collections of business scenarios.

Research

English 100WB shall provide advanced instruction in both traditional and contemporary research strategies and methodologies, including locating and evaluating materials, using them effectively (e.g., quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing), and citing them properly. At least one substantial writing assignment shall be informed by research. As part of this requirement, at least one class session of English 100WB shall include a presentation by a university librarian.

Active Learning

Class sessions shall provide ample opportunities for active student learning in the following ways: formal and/or informal large- and small-group discussion and collaborative writing and thinking activities designed to develop and provide repeated student practice in exercising those rhetorical, analytical, and interpretive skills that produce stylistically appropriate, intelligent, and critical written and oral responses to business-communication scenarios; both formal and informal oral presentations; organizational role-playing and interviewing simulations.

Information available online

You are responsible for reading the following information online at

<http://www.sjsu.edu/english/comp/policy/index.html>

- Course guidelines
- Academic policies (academic integrity, plagiarism, ADA and AEC policies)
- Estimation of Per-Unit Student Workload
- Recording policies
- Adding and dropping classes

Grading Procedure

The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the official SJSU *Catalog* (“The Grading System”). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A = excellent; B = above average; C = average; D = below average; F = failure.

In English Department courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of the ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.

The grading for this course is A – F.

Writing assignments will be graded according to the following rubric:

A: Message is clear, i.e. writing demonstrates clear understanding and appropriate response to the assignment. Paragraphs are well organized and sentences show syntactic complexity and precise word choice. Tone is professional and appropriate to the audience. The piece is free of grammatical errors, superfluous language, and redundancy.

B: Message is clear – no details are missing. Tone is appropriate to the message. Paragraphs may be slightly choppy. Language is professional but not as sophisticated or as varied as the language in an A paper. Grammatical errors and redundancy are minimal. Sentences may need tightening.

C: Message is weak but exists. Language and/or ideas may be repetitive and not always suited to professional discourse. Writing is clear but lacks energy and variety. Paragraphs likely have organizational issues. Sentences lack variety. Grammar needs work but does not distract the reader from the message.

D: Message is severely weakened by grammatical or syntactical errors that distract the reader and cause ‘noise’ or ‘clutter.’ Details may be missing and paragraphs may need fixing. Language is not rhetorically sophisticated and does not demonstrate an understanding of professional discourse. Syntax is not varied.

F: Errors in grammar or word choice make the piece very difficult to understand.

Note: This course must be passed with a C or better as a CSU graduation requirement.

Grading scale – up to 1000 points

Written assignments (totaling 5000 words)

Out of Class Assignments	260 points
In-class Assignments/Participation	80 points
Commentaries/Responses	80 points
Quizzes	140 points
Annotated Bibliography (1000 words)	40 points
Individual presentation	20 points
Outline	10 points
Rough Draft/Peer Review	20 points
Formal Report (2000 words)	200 points
Final Prep Writing Exam	30 points
Grammar/Punctuation Exam	30 points
Final Exam	100 points

Quizzes

I will give a series of quizzes throughout the semester on aspects of the assigned readings or class discussions. My goal is to make quizzes brief and straightforward for students who have kept up with their assignments. Quizzes can only be made up in cases of documented illness or emergency.

Participation

Each student's participation is vital to effective class discussions and exercises. Points are awarded for active participation in specific class sessions. Student must be present to participate and receive points.

Final Exam

A departmental final exam will be given to all English 100WB students. This semester, the final will take place on Saturday, May 10 at noon. The classroom location will be announced. You are required to bring a yellow examination book, a collegiate dictionary, and pens.

Late work

Late work is not accepted except in cases of documented illness or emergency. Students must be in attendance to complete and receive credit for in-class assignments; they can't be made up.

Classroom Protocol

Please arrive on time for every session with your binder and books ready for class activities and discussion, your assignments read, and hard copies of the homework ready to turn in when required. Sessions may begin with quizzes, group exercises, or short assignments that cannot be made up if you miss them. If you miss a class, please contact a classmate for notes, reading assignments, and handouts, as the assignment calendar is subject to change. Phones are to be turned off and put away during class unless we are using them for an exercise. Computers are to be used only for taking notes and writing assignments.

List Names, Phone numbers, and email addresses of three classmates (optional but recommended).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Estimation of Student Workload

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, students are expected to spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in [University Policy S12-3](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

Consent for Recording of Class and Public Sharing of Instructor Material

[University Policy S12-7](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf), <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf>, requires students to obtain instructor's permission to record the course.

- “Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him/her. You must obtain the instructor's permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your private, study purposes only. The recordings are the intellectual property of the instructor; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or distribute the material.”
 - In classes where active participation of students or guests may be on the recording, permission of those students or guests should be obtained as well.
- “Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent.”

Academic integrity

Your commitment as a student to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The University Academic Integrity Policy S07-2 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf> requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The Student Conduct and Ethical Development website is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>.

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include your assignment or any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Integrity Policy S07-2 requires approval of instructors.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 at http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the Accessible Education Center (AEC) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aec> to establish a record of your disability.

In 2013, the Disability Resource Center changed its name to be known as the Accessible Education Center, to incorporate a philosophy of accessible education for students with disabilities. The new name change reflects the broad scope of attention and support to SJSU students with disabilities and the University's continued advocacy and commitment to increasing accessibility and inclusivity on campus.

Library Liaison

For library research questions, contact Toby Matoush, the English Department's Library Liaison: (408) 808-2096 or tmatoush@sjsu.edu.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library. Business majors may use computer labs and printers on the third floor of BBC.

SJSU Writing Center



The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the Writing Center website: <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>. For additional resources and updated information, follow the Writing Center on Twitter and become a fan of the SJSU Writing Center on Facebook.

SJSU Peer Connections

Peer Connections is the new campus-wide resource for mentoring and tutoring. Our staff is here to inspire students to develop their potential as independent learners while they learn to successfully navigate through their university experience. Students are encouraged to take advantage of our services which include course-content based tutoring, enhanced study and time management skills, more effective critical thinking strategies, decision making and problem-solving abilities, and campus resource referrals.

In addition to offering small group, individual, and drop-in tutoring for a number of undergraduate courses, consultation with mentors is available on a drop-in or by appointment basis. Workshops are offered on a wide variety of topics including preparing for the Writing Skills Test (WST), improving your learning and memory, alleviating procrastination, surviving your first semester at SJSU, and other related topics. A computer lab and study space are also available for student use in Room 600 of Student Services Center (SSC).

Peer Connections is located in three locations: SSC, Room 600 (10th Street Garage on the corner of 10th and San Fernando Street), at the 1st floor entrance of Clark Hall, and in the Living Learning Center (LLC) in Campus Village Housing Building B. Visit [Peer Connections website](http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu) at <http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu> for more information.

English 100WB, Spring 2014

Course Schedule

Texts

Business Communication Essentials 6e -- BCE

Course Reader – CR

Please note: This schedule is subject to change depending on the needs of the class. If you are absent, please check with a classmate to see what you missed and to confirm assignments for the next session. All homework assignments are due at the beginning of the next class section unless otherwise noted.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

M 1.27.14 Introductory exercise, text, audience/purpose, syllabus, Canvas

Homework

- Read and annotate Zinsser and Roberts excerpts on Clutter **CR**
- Read and annotate brief articles on Dhaka Factory Collapse **CR**
- Write an email to me introducing yourself. Submit to Canvas, and bring a hard copy to class.

SLOs 1,2,3

W 1.29.14 One word video, writing in the workplace, commentaries, effective writing, grammar diagnostic

Homework

- Read and annotate chapter 1 **BCE**
- Review **BCE Handbook** sections 1.1 and 1.2. Do exercises.
- Write a 200 word commentary (Commentary 1) on the Dhaka Factory Collapse. Submit on Canvas.
- Bring hard copy of signed “Letter of Understanding” to class 2.3.14

SLOs 1,2,3

Week 2

M 2.3.14 Three step writing process (PWC), audience focus, global audiences, introductory email

Homework

- Read and annotate chapter 3 **BCE**.
- Write a 150 word response (Response 1) to another student’s Commentary 1.
- Read and annotate “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Its Profits” **CR**.
- Write a 200 word commentary (Commentary 2).

SLOs 1,2

W 2.5.14 Chapter 3 BCE, grammar and punctuation, revision, letter format

Homework

- Review **BCE Handbook** section 1.3. Do exercises.
- Revise introductory email.
- Write a 150 word response (Response 2) to another student’s Commentary 2.
- Revise airline complaint letter

SLOs 1,2,3

Week 3

M 2.10.14 Quiz, memos, word choice, active and passive voice, Tom's Shoes video 1

Homework

- Read and annotate chapter 4 **BCE**.
- Review **BCE Handbook** section 1.4 Do exercises.
- Revise the memo for Camden Properties.

SLOs 1,2,3

W 2.12.14 Chapter 5 BCE, clarity and conciseness, grammar, Tom's shoes video 2

Homework

- Read and annotate chapter 5 BCE
- Review **BCE Handbook** section 1.5. Do exercises.
- Annotate "CSR: Why Organizations Can't Ignore It Any Longer" **CR**
- Annotate "How the Voice of the People is Driving Corporate Social Responsibility" **CR**
- Write a 200 word commentary (Commentary 3) on the above articles. Include an example of your own to support your opinion.

SLOs 1,2,3

Week 4

M 2.17.14 Quiz, Chapter 6 BCE, email, blog posts

Homework

- Read and annotate chapter 6 **BCE**, pages 141-151
<http://www.smartrecruiters.com/blog/10-best-startup-blogs/>
- Review **BCE Handbook** section 1.6.1 and 1.6.2. Do exercises.
- Write a blog post for the Entertainment Association of America

SLOs 1,2,3

W 2.19.14 Chapter 7 BCE, letters, exercise 9, in-class writing exercise

Homework

- Read and annotate chapter 7 **BCE**
- Review **BCE Handbook** sections 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3. Do exercises.
- Annotate "Strategy & Society" **CR**
- Write a 200 word commentary (Commentary 4) on "Strategy and Society."
- Write a routine or positive message as assigned.

SLOs 1,2,3

Week 5

M 2.24.14 Quiz, Chapter 8 BCE, buffers, softening negative messages, in-class writing exercise

Homework

- Read and annotate chapter 8 **BCE**
- Review **BCE Handbook** sections 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6. Do exercises.
- Write a negative response as assigned.

SLOs 1,2,3

W 2.26.14 Chapter 9 BCE, AIDA, in-class writing assignment.

Homework

- Read and annotate chapter 9 **BCE**
- Read and annotate “Using Corporate Social Responsibility to Win the War for Talent” **CR**
- Read and annotate “Companies Value the Environment Over People” **CR**
- Read and annotate “Diversity Linked to Increased Sales Revenue and Profits, More Customers” **CR**
- Complete persuasive writing assignment.

SLOs 1,2,3

Week 6

M 3.3.14 Quiz, discuss formal research report, formatting, Annotated Bibliography, Reading a CSR Report.

Homework

- Read “How to Read a Corporate Social Responsibility Report” pages 101-130. **CR**
- Research and Choose a Public Corporation for Research Please email me at least three choices ASAP, but certainly before class on Wednesday. I will make assignments as I receive your choices.

SLOs 1,2

W 3.5.14 Company selections and competitors, Annotated Bibliography.

Homework

- Read and annotate “How to Read a Corporate Social Responsibility Report” pages 130-160. **CR**
- Write a 150 word response (Response 5) to another student’s Commentary 5.
- Find your company’s CSR Report and one other company-sponsored source. Format sources.

SLOs 1,2,3

Week 7

M 3.10.14 **Library Day.**

Homework

- Read and annotate chapter 10 **BCE**, pages 248-260.
- Review **BCE Handbook** sections 2.7 and 2.8. Do exercises.
- Begin Annotated Bibliography. Draft a list of sources in MLA format and in alphabetical order. Write the first four annotations. Print and bring to class on Wednesday.

SLOs 1,2,3

W 3.12.14 Quiz, annotated bibliography questions, outline, presentations

Homework

- Finish annotating sources for annotated bibliography. Proofread, edit, and submit on Canvas before class. Bring a hard copy to class.
- Read and annotate chapter 12 **BCE**, pages 325-344 and pages 340-344.
- Review **BCE Handbook** sections 3.1 and 3.3. Do exercises.
- Begin preparing a 6 minute oral presentation on preliminary company information.

SLOs 1,2,3

Week 8

M 3.17.14

Annotated Bibliography due

Making presentations, outlining your report

Homework

- Read and annotate chapter 11 **BCE**
- Review **BCE** handbook sections 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, and 3.2. Do exercises.
- Finish preparing 6-minute oral presentation on preliminary company information.

SLOs 1,2

W 3.19.14

Presentations Due

Homework

- Outline your research paper. Submit to Canvas. Bring a hard copy to class.
- Write a full-length rough draft. Due April 2. Submit to Canvas. Bring hard copy to class.
- Have fun. Stay safe.

SLOs 1,2,3

Week 9

M 3.24.14

Spring Break

W 3.26.14

Spring Break

Week 10

M 3.31.14

Cesar Chavez Day (Campus Closed)

W 4.2.14

Outline and Rough Draft Due Presentations

Homework

- Peer review a classmate's research paper. Annotate the draft as thoroughly as possible and complete peer review form. Bring both to class on Monday for credit.

SLOs 1,2,3

Week 11

M 4.7.14

Presentations

Homework

- Read and annotate chapter 13 **BCE**
- Review **BCE Handbook** section 3.4. Do exercises.
- Write a rough draft of your resume. Submit to Canvas. Bring two copies to class.

SLOs 1,2,3

W 4.9.14

Rough Draft of Resume due

Resumes, cover letters, interviews, elevator pitches

Homework

- Read and annotate Chapter 14 **BCE**.
- Review BCE handbook sections 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3. Do exercises.
- Read brief "10 Ways..." articles **CR**.
- Write a cover letter. Submit to Canvas. Bring Two copies to class.

SLOs 1,2,3

Week 12

M 4.14.14

Rough Draft of Cover Letter due

Quiz, resume and cover letter workshop

Homework

- Write the final draft of your resume and cover letter. Submit to Canvas. Bring a hard copy to class.
- Draft a persuasive letter to one of your instructors requesting a letter of recommendation. Submit to canvas. Bring a hard copy to class.

SLOs 1,3

W 4.16.14

Finding a Job

Homework

- Read and annotate chapter 11 **BCE**
- Review **BCE** handbook sections 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, and 3.2. Do exercises.
- Read and annotate “How the U.S. Lost out on iPhone Work” **CR**
- Write a 200 word commentary (Commentary 5) on “iPhone Work.”

SLOs 1,2,3

Week 13

M 4.21.14

Quiz, Press Releases, Proposals, Short Reports

Homework

- Write a short report as assigned.
- Write a response (Response 5) to another student’s Commentary 5.

SLOs 1,2,3

W 4.23.14

Proposals, Press releases, Revising and Refining.

Homework

- Write a proposal as assigned.
- Write a press release as assigned.

SLOs 1,2,3

Week 14

M 4.28.14

In-class writing exam

Homework

- Read and annotate “The Lie Factory.”
- Write a 200 word commentary (Commentary 6).

SLOs 1,2,3

W 4.30.14

Grammar Quiz, discussion TBA.

Homework

- Work on final draft of research paper

Week 15

M 5.5.14 Review in-class writing exam, TBA

Homework

- Write a response (Response 6) to another student's Commentary 6.
- Work on Final Draft Research Paper due 5.12.14

SLOs 1,2,3

W 5.7.14 Prepare for final

Homework

- Work on Final Draft Research Paper due 5.12.14

S 5.10.14 **Department Final**, 12:00 noon, Location TBA

Week 16

M 5.12.14 **Final Draft of Research Paper due**

Homework

- Have fun. Stay safe.

SLOs 1,2,3

Important SJSU dates Spring 2014

Wednesday	January 22	Spring Semester Begins
Wednesday	January 22	Orientation, Advisement, Faculty Meetings
Thursday	January 23	First Day of Instruction – Classes Begin
Tuesday	February 4	Last Day to Drop without Entry on Permanent Record
Tuesday	February 11	Last Day to Add Courses & Register Late
Wednesday	February 19	Enrollment Census Date
Monday-Friday	March 24-28	Spring Recess
Monday	March 31	Cesar Chavez Day -- Campus Closed
Saturday	May 10	English Department Final
Tuesday	May 13	Last Day of Instruction – Last Day of Classes
Wednesday	May 14	Study/Conference Day (no classes or exams)
Thursday-Friday	May 15-16	Final Examinations
Monday-Wednesday	May 19-21	Final Examinations
Thursday	May 22	Final Examinations Make-Up Day
Friday	May 23	Grade Evaluation Day
Saturday	May 24	Commencement
Monday	May 26	Memorial Day - Campus Closed (M)
Tuesday	May 27	Grades Due From Faculty

Excerpt from *On Writing Well* by William Zinsser

Clutter is the disease of American writing. We are a society strangling in unnecessary words, circular constructions, pompous frills and meaningless jargon.

Who can understand the viscous language of everyday American commerce and enterprise: the business letter, the interoffice memo, the corporation report, the notice from the bank explaining its latest "simplified" statement? What member of an insurance or medical plan can decipher the brochure that tells him what his costs and benefits are? What father or mother can put together a child's toy on Christmas Eve or any other evening from the instructions on the box? Our national tendency is to inflate and thereby sound important. The airline pilot who wakes us to announce that he is presently anticipating experiencing considerable weather wouldn't dream of saying that there's a storm ahead and it may get bumpy. The sentence is too simple—there must be something wrong with it.

But the secret of good writing is to strip every sentence to its cleanest components. Every word that serves no function, every long word that could be a short word, every adverb which carries the same meaning that is already in the verb, every passive construction that leaves the reader unsure of who is doing what—these are the thousand and one adulterants that weaken the strength of a sentence. And they usually occur, ironically, in proportion to education and rank.

During the late 1960s the president of a major university wrote a letter to mollify the alumni after a spell of campus unrest. "You are probably aware," he began, "that we have been experiencing very considerable potentially explosive expressions of dissatisfaction on issues only partially related." He meant that the students had been hassling them about different things. I was far more upset by the president's English than by the students' potentially explosive expressions of dissatisfaction. I would have preferred the presidential approach taken by Franklin D. Roosevelt when he tried to convert into English his own government's memos, such as this blackout order of 1942:

"Such preparations shall be made as will completely obscure all Federal buildings and non-Federal buildings occupied by the Federal government during an air raid for any period of time from visibility by reason of internal or external illumination."

"Tell them," Roosevelt said, "that in buildings where they have to keep the work going to put something across the windows."

How can the rest of us achieve such enviable freedom from clutter? The answer is to clear our heads of clutter. Clear thinking becomes clear writing: one can't exist without the other. It is impossible for a muddy thinker to write good

English. He may get away with it for a paragraph or two, but soon the reader will be lost, and there is no sin so grave, for he will not easily be lured back.

Who is this elusive creature the reader? He is a person with an attention span of about twenty seconds. He is assailed on every side by forces competing for his time: by newspapers and magazines, by television and radio and stereo, by his wife and children and pets, by his house and his yard and all the gadgets that he has bought to keep them spruce, and by that most potent of competitors, sleep. The man snoozing in his chair with an unfinished magazine open on his lap is a man who was being given too much unnecessary trouble by the writer.

It won't do to say that the snoozing reader is too dumb or too lazy to keep pace with the train of thought. My sympathies are with him. If the reader is lost, it is generally because the writer has not been careful enough to keep him on the path.

This carelessness can take any number of forms. Perhaps a sentence is so excessively cluttered that the reader, hacking his way through the verbiage, simply doesn't know what it means. Perhaps a sentence has been so shoddily constructed that the reader could read it in any of several ways. Perhaps the writer has switched pronouns in mid-sentence, or has switched tenses, so the reader loses track of who is talking or when the action took place. Perhaps Sentence B is not a logical sequel to Sentence A—the writer, in whose head the connection is clear, has not bothered to provide the missing link. Perhaps the writer has used an important word incorrectly by not taking the trouble to look it up. He may think that "sanguine" and "sanguinary" mean the same thing, but the difference is a bloody big one. The reader can only infer (speaking of big differences) what the writer is trying to imply.

Faced with these obstacles, the reader is at first a remarkably tenacious bird. He blames himself—he obviously missed something, and he goes back over the mystifying sentence, or over the whole paragraph, piecing it out like an ancient riddle, making guesses and moving on. But he won't do this for long. The writer is making him work too hard, and the reader will look for one who is better at his craft.

The writer must therefore constantly ask himself: What am I trying to say? Surprisingly often, he doesn't know. Then he must look at what he has written and ask: Have I said it? Is it clear to someone encountering the subject for the first time? If it's not, it is because some fuzz has worked its way into the machinery. The clear writer is a person clear-headed enough to see this stuff for what it is: fuzz.

Many writers, for instance, can't stand to throw anything away. Their sentences are littered with words that mean essentially the same thing and with phrases which make a point that is implicit in what they have already said. When students give me these littered sentences I beg them to select from the surfeit of words the few that most precisely fit what they want to say. Choose one, I plead, from among the three almost identical adjectives. Get rid of the unnecessary adverbs. Eliminate "in a funny sort of way" and other such qualifiers they do no useful work.

The students look stricken—I am taking all their wonderful words away. I am only taking their superfluous words away, leaving what is organic and strong

"But," one of my worst offenders confessed, "I never can get rid of anything-you should see my room." (I didn't take him up on the offer.) "I have two lamps where I only need one, but I can't decide which one I like better, so I keep them both." He went on to enumerate his duplicated or unnecessary objects, and over the weeks ahead I went on throwing away his duplicated and unnecessary words. By the end of the term-a term that he found acutely painful -- his sentences were clean.

"I've had to change my whole approach to writing," he told me. "Now I have to think before I start every sentence and I have to think about every word." The very idea amazed him. Whether his room also looked better I never found out.

Writing is hard work. A clear sentence is no accident. Very few sentences come out right the first time -- or the third. Keep thinking and rewriting until you say what you want to say.

Excerpt from *How to Say Nothing in 500 Words* by Paul Roberts

Avoid the Obvious Content

Say the assignment is college football. Say that you've decided to be against it. Begin by putting down the arguments that come to your mind: it is too commercial, it takes the students' minds off their studies, it is hard on the players, it makes the university a kind of circus instead of an intellectual center, for most schools it is financially ruinous. Can you think of any more arguments just off hand? All right. Now when you write your paper, *make sure that you don't use any of the material on this list*. If these are the points that leap to your mind, they will leap to everyone else's too, and whether you get a "C" or a "D" may depend on whether the instructor reads your paper early when he is fresh and tolerant or late, when the sentence "In my opinion, college football has become too commercial," inexorably repeated, has brought him to the brink of lunacy.

Take the Less Usual Side

One rather simple way of getting interest into your paper is to take the side of the argument that most of the citizens will want to avoid. Always take the side that looks to you hardest, least defensible. It will almost always turn out to be easier to write interestingly on that side.

Slip out of Abstraction

If you will study the essay on college football . . . you will perceive that one reason for its appalling dullness is that it never gets down to particulars. It is just a series of not very glittering generalities: "football is bad for the colleges," "It has become too commercial," "football is a big business," "it is bad for the players," and so on. Such round phrases thudding against the reader's brain are likely to convince him, though they may well render him unconscious. If you want the reader to believe that college football is bad for the players, you have to do more than say so. You have to display the evil.

Get Rid of Obvious Padding

The student toiling away at his English essay is too often tormented by a figure: five hundred words. How, he asks himself, is he to achieve this staggering total? Obviously by never using one word when he can somehow work in ten.

He is therefore seldom content with a plain statement like "Fast driving is dangerous." This has only four words in it. He takes thought, and the sentence becomes:

In my opinion, fast driving is dangerous.

Better, but he can do better still:

In my opinion, fast driving would seem to be rather dangerous.

If he is really adept, it may come out:

In my humble opinion, though I do not claim to be an expert on this complicated subject, fast driving, in most circumstances, would seem to be rather dangerous in many respects, or at least so it would seem to me.

Thus four words have been turned into forty, and not an iota of content has been added.

Now this is a way to go about reaching five hundred words, and if you are content with a "D" grade, it is as good a way as any. But if you aim higher, you must work differently. Instead of stuffing your sentences with straw, you must try steadily to get rid of the padding, to make your sentences lean and tough. If you are really working at it, your first draft will greatly exceed the required total, and then you will work it down thus:

It is thought in some quarters that fraternities do not contribute as much as might be expected to campus life.

Some people think that fraternities contribute little to campus life.

The average doctor who practices in small towns or in the country must toil night and day to heal the sick.

Most country doctors work long hours.

When I was a little girl, I suffered from shyness and embarrassment in the presence of others.

I was a shy little girl.

It is absolutely necessary for the person employed as a marine fireman to give the matter of steam pressure his undivided attention at all times.

The fireman has to keep his eye on the steam gauge.

You may ask how you can arrive at five hundred words at this rate. Simply. You dig up more real content. Instead of taking a couple of obvious points off the surface of the topic and then circling warily around them for six paragraphs, you work in and explore figure out the details. You illustrate.

Call a Fool a Fool

Some of the padding in freshman essays is to be blamed not on anxiety about the word minimum but on excessive timidity. The student writes, "In my opinion, the principal of my high school acted in ways that I believe every unbiased person would have to call foolish." This isn't exactly what he means. What he means is, "My high school principal was a fool." Decide what you want to say and say it as vigorously as possible, without apology and in plain words.

Beware of the Pat Expressions

Other things being equal, avoid phrases like "other things being equal." Those sentences that come to you whole, or in two or three doughy lumps, are sure to be bad sentences.

By "pat expressions" we mean such tags as "to all practical intents and purposes," "the pure and simple truth," "from where I sit," "the time of his life," "to the ends of the earth," "in the twinkling of an eye," "as sure as you're born," "over my dead body," "under cover of darkness," "took the easy way out," "when all is said and done," "told him time and time again," "parted the best of friends," "stand up and be counted," "gave him the best years of her life," "worked her fingers to the bone." Like other clichés, these expressions were once forceful. Now we should use them only when we can't possibly think of anything else.

Colorful Words

Some words are what we call "colorful." By this we mean that they are calculated to produce a picture or induce an emotion. They are dressy instead of plain, specific instead of general, loud instead of soft. Thus, in lace of "her heart beat," we may write "Her heart *pounded, throbbed, fluttered, danced.*" Instead of "He sat in his chair," we may say, "He *lounged, sprawled, coiled.*" Instead of "It was hot," we may say, "It was *blistering, sultry, muggy, suffocating, steamy, wilting.*"

Colored Words

Some words we would call not so much colorful as colored—that is, loaded with associations, good or bad. Conversely, some words have bad associations. *Mother* suggests pleasant things, but *mother-in-law* does not. Many mothers-in-law are heroically lovable and some mothers drink gin all day and beat their children insensible, but these facts of life are beside the point. The thing is that *mother* sounds good and *mother-in-law* does not. The question of whether to use loaded words or not depends on what is being written. The scientist, the scholar, try to avoid them; for the poet, the advertising writer, the public speaker, they are standard equipment. But every writer should take care that they do not substitute for thought.

Colorless Words

But probably most student writers come to grief not with words that are colorful or those that are colored but with those that have no color at all. A pet example is *nice*, a word we would find it hard to dispense with in casual conversation but which is no longer capable of adding much to a description. Colorless words are those of such general meaning that in a particular sentence they mean nothing. Beware also of nouns of very general meaning, like *circumstance, cases, instances, factors, relationships, attitude, eventualities*, etc.

JCPenney, Mango Among Companies That Used Fatal Bangladesh Factory

by [Nina Strohlic](#) Apr 30, 2013 4:45 AM EDT

The list of retailers whose clothing was made at the Bangladesh factory complex where the collapse has killed nearly 400 is growing. Nina Strohlic on the unending cycle of tragedies.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/04/30/jcpenney-mango-among-companies-that-used-fatal-bangladesh-factory.html>

Was your shirt or jeans stitched by one of the nearly 1,000 garment workers who were injured or killed in the [recent factory collapse in Dhaka, Bangladesh](#)? You might want to check the label.



Bangladeshi volunteers and rescue workers are pictured at the scene after an eight-story building collapsed in Savar, on the outskirts of Dhaka, on April 25, 2013. (Munir uz Zaman/AFP/Getty)

In the week since an [eight-story, four-factory complex collapsed in Bangladesh](#), online records and physical debris revealed a growing list of international retailers tied to the suppliers housed in the Rana Plaza building. More than a dozen brands have been identified—including big names like The Children’s Place, Benetton, Mango, and Primark—and a number of these companies have emerged to explain their association with the shoddily built, illegal bloc that housed the factories.

In an assembly line with so many middlemen, who’s to blame? Garment workers, among the world’s worst paid and treated laborers, increasingly have fallen victim to unsafe working conditions in Bangladesh, where the \$20 billion garment industry employs 3.2 million people. But in the finger pointing after every disaster, little progress is made to fix the issue, as companies often blame corrupt government inspectors or factory owners, who blame companies for the pressures of a rigorous supply schedule. In the wake of a string of deadly factory accidents, critics argue a stricter set of checks and balances must be implemented across the board—and taken out of the hands of international retailers.

“You’re the leader in the industry, and the industry’s been structured in a way that keeps responsibility at a distance from you and that’s not acceptable,” says Judy Gearhart, executive director of the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF), of the companies. She calls the current systems in place “woefully inadequate” and saying, “frankly, they don’t want responsibility for those workers.”

The Daily Beast contacted 11 international retailers whose names surfaced in connection to the factories, and two responded with comments by press time.

Department store [JCPenney](#) noted that while no company-label merchandise was produced at the factory, product slated for its stores was. “While JCPenney has no direct insight into the development and sourcing of Joe Fresh apparel, we will continue to be a part of a broader coalition that aims to improve the safe working conditions in Bangladesh,” a spokeswoman said in an email to The Daily Beast.

Some, including Benetton and Mango, have acknowledged using the factories but said they were not official suppliers and had not been fully audited. “A one-time order was completed and shipped out of one of the manufacturers involved several weeks prior to the accident,” Benetton said in a [statement](#). “Since then, this subcontractor has been removed from our supplier list.”

According to activists, labels [were found](#) for French supermarket Carrefour and European retailer C&A, both of which deny current involvement with the suppliers. The Children’s Place and the Dress Barn said they were prior customers but [hadn’t done business](#) with the factories in years. And despite one of the factory websites claiming Walmart as a customer, the world’s largest retailer denies the association.



Bangladeshi relatives of missing workers in a building that collapsed Wednesday hold pictures of their family members in Savar, near Dhaka, Bangladesh, on April 28, 2013. (Kevin Frayer/AP)

“We ask ourselves, how many more workers have to die for there to be a significant change?”

Others have been more forthcoming. Bonmarché, in the United Kingdom, confirmed it was working with one of the factories, telling The Daily Beast, the company has “a clear supplier code of conduct, in line with industry standards.” Both Loblaw Co., the Canadian retailer that owns Joe Fresh, and the U.K. clothing chain Primark announced they would dole out reparations to family members of the victims, including long-term provisions and immediate aid. “We are fully aware of our responsibility,” Primark said in a [statement](#). “We urge these other retailers to come forward and offer assistance.”

Notably, though, neither Loblaw nor Primark has agreed to sign the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Agreement, a 2011 proposal drafted by the National Garment Workers’ Federation that would establish a system of independent factory inspectors. On Change.org, [a petition](#) urging retailers Primark, Mango, and Matalan to add their names to the agreement and supply worker compensation has garnered 60,000 signatures.

Jonathan Doh, director of the Center for Global Leadership at the Villanova School of Business, says that as supply chains grow become more fractured, it's necessary for companies to deepen participation in these issues, past releasing corporate social responsibility reports and flashy advertising campaigns. As the rate of disasters increase, he notes the need for brands "to assume some responsibility for the working conditions in not just their own factories, but those of their suppliers and their suppliers' suppliers."

Though unrest over working conditions [has been escalating](#) over the past decade in Bangladesh, in the past six months fatal incidents have hit "record numbers," says Gearhart. "It's unfathomable that we could have ever gotten to this many worker deaths."

In November, [112 garment workers were killed in a fire at Tazreen Fashions factory](#), where products were being made for Walmart and Sears. A year and a half earlier, Walmart shareholders [had voted down](#) requiring annual safety reports from suppliers, saying it "could ultimately lead to higher costs for Walmart and higher prices for our customers. This would not be in the best interests of Walmart's shareholders and customers and would place Walmart at a competitive disadvantage."

Twenty-four-year-old Sumi Abedin survived the November fire by jumping from a third-story window, breaking her arm and leg in the process. She recently traveled across the United States to speak out against the practices of big business. "I don't want anyone else to have to live through a horrible fire like I experienced at Tazreen," she said in a statement released by the ILRF. "I had to find my courage to take this trip to call on U.S. apparel companies and buyers to stop the murders in Bangladeshi garment factories before the death toll becomes any higher."

As pressure mounts, petitions take off, and consumers boycott brands, Gearhart says she hopes the international supply chain will be encouraged—or shamed—into entering binding agreements for a comprehensive system of safety checks and balances. But that would require a complete revamping of "the level of commitment from the brands to factories and factories to workers," and Gearhart isn't entirely optimistic. Each time factory abuse is revealed in a tragedy, the world reacts—viscerally, furiously—but so far the outrage hasn't been enough to stop the cycle. "We ask ourselves, how many more workers have to die for there to be a significant change?" she says

Corporate social responsibility

Disaster at Rana Plaza

A gruesome accident should make all bosses think harder about what behaving responsibly means

May 4th 2013 | [From the print edition](#)

<http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21577067-gruesome-accident-should-make-all-bosses-think-harder-about-what-behaving-responsibly>

THE collapse of an eight-storey garment factory in Rana Plaza on the outskirts of Dhaka on April 24th killed at least 400 people and injured many more. It was probably the worst industrial accident in South Asia since the Bhopal disaster in 1984, and the worst ever in the garment industry. Local police and an industry association had warned that the building was unsafe (see [article](#)). The owners reportedly responded by threatening to fire people who did not carry on working as usual.

Much of the blame lies with Bangladeshi governments of all stripes, which have made only rudimentary attempts to enforce the national building code, especially against politically well-connected landlords. With luck, the laws will now be applied, but nobody expects much.

The spotlight is therefore on the multinational companies whose orders from local factory owners have led to the rapid recent growth of the garment industry in Bangladesh, the world's second-largest exporter of clothing after China. Familiar brands now stand accused of exploiting poorly paid workers with a callous indifference to their safety. Two companies whose products were found in the rubble at Rana Plaza—Primark, a cheap British

label, and Canada's Loblaw, whose brands include Joe Fresh—have rapidly promised compensation to victims and their families.

But it goes deeper than that. Clothing companies, after all have been to the fore in “corporate social responsibility” (CSR). Prompted by earlier scandals over working conditions in far-flung factories, firms like Nike and Gap have strived to deal with problems like child labour. Now the disaster in Dhaka shows how hard it is to claim that your products are “ethically sourced”. That is not just because supply lines are stretched: should you check the supplier of your supplier's supplier? It is also because you are operating in a place where so little is to be trusted. Is it, for instance, enough for a Western multinational to see the building certificate for a Bangladeshi factory? Or should it have sent people to check every pillar? Though CSR tends to be seen as a moral matter, it comes down to the hard practicalities of companies' reputations and risk registers.

Western firms can choose to respond in one of three ways. The first is to forget CSR, and simply exploit labour wherever it is cheapest—counting on consumers back home to ignore the blood, sweat and tears that went into making that cheap T-shirt or pair of trousers. That may be the implicit strategy of many smaller firms, but it is hard to imagine any large multinational being daft enough to proclaim it was doing it.

Second, they could quit Bangladesh and buy from factories in countries where the risk of deadly industrial accidents is far smaller. For, say, a small upmarket retailer unable to check everything, that may well make sense. It would remove a risk while putting pressure on Bangladesh to police health-and-safety rules better. But if large Western firms left in droves, it would damage not just Bangladesh but also their reputations.

A stitch in time

The third approach is to stay and try to change things. Even before the latest disaster, Walmart had launched a fire-safety training academy there, and Gap had announced a plan to help factory owners upgrade their plants. The clothing industry has held a series of meetings with NGOs and governments, including Germany's and America's, to develop a strategy to improve safety in Bangladesh's 5,000 factories (see [article](#)).

Fine, but whatever the safeguards, there will be a gap between the cavalier promises of ethical supply chains and the reality of corrupt politics and dodgy pillars. CSR has always had a Utopian element. That was exposed in Bangladesh.

Avoiding the fire next time

After the Dhaka factory collapse, foreign clothing firms are under pressure to improve working conditions at Bangladeshi suppliers—or to go elsewhere

May 4th 2013 | DHAKA AND NEW YORK | [From the print edition](#)

<http://www.economist.com/news/business/21577078-after-dhaka-factory-collapse-foreign-clothing-firms-are-under-pressure-improve-working>

THE fire that swept through the Triangle Shirtwaist factory in New York in 1911, killing 146 people, was the catalyst for big improvements in industrial working conditions in America. The collapse on April 24th of Rana Plaza—an eight-storey complex of clothing factories, near Dhaka, Bangladesh—was far deadlier, killing at least 400. Although the tragedy has led to calls for safer factories in Bangladesh and other developing countries, it is far from certain that this will happen.

After the New York fire, protests by trade unionists led to new laws being passed, and enforced. Factory owners and their customers took the higher costs on the chin: in those less globalised times there was nowhere else for them to go. In Bangladesh today, things are more complicated. Its trade unions are suppressed more aggressively than they ever were in America. It already has building regulations that should have prevented the collapse—but they were not enforced. Some two dozen factory owners are members of parliament. The factories' foreign customers have plenty of other low-cost countries they could switch their work to.

Some well-known American firms are said to be contemplating doing just that—not because they fear that higher standards in Bangladeshi factories will raise costs, but because they fear that another tragedy would damage their reputations. The Dhaka factory collapse came less than six months after a fire at another clothing factory near the city killed at least 117 people.

So far, however, most of the big global clothing brands and retailers seem minded to stay in Bangladesh, try harder to improve safety in their contractors' factories and build goodwill among locals. Primark, a low-cost British retailer, and Loblaw, the Canadian owner of the Joe Fresh brand, whose wares had been found in the rubble, have both agreed to pay compensation to victims and their families.

Even before the latest disaster, some foreign retailers had taken steps to raise standards. Last October Gap announced a fire-safety action plan, which would include helping factory owners to pay for improvements. On April 9th Walmart, some of whose products were found in the ashes of last year's factory fire, gave \$1.6m to the Institute of Sustainable Communities, a non-governmental organisation (NGO), to help it set up a health-and-safety academy in Bangladesh. Walmart also recently introduced stricter fire-safety audits, and a "zero tolerance" policy towards contractors caught using unauthorised factories to make Walmart products.

Safety, eventually

For the past couple of months the main international firms buying clothes from Bangladesh have been meeting government representatives to try to agree on a broader strategy to improve factory safety. The latest meeting took place on April 29th in Germany, with a couple of dozen firms and some NGOs, hosted by GIZ, a German government agency.

Critics gripe that the existing system for auditing the complex and constantly changing supply chain is little more than a box-ticking exercise. Some global firms' audits are more transparent than others'. Some auditors are paid by the factories they inspect—a clear conflict of interest. Scott Nova of the Worker Rights Consortium, a pressure group, says that many audits covered other important issues such as working hours and child labour but, at least until recently, lacked even cursory inspections of factories' structural soundness or fire exits.

Walmart, Gap, Nike and some other big firms acknowledge that audits alone are not doing enough to improve safety. They have started to work more closely with factory owners to make good any shortcomings the audits show up. But progress has been slow, prompting some NGOs to wonder if they should call for global firms to quit Bangladesh. "I'm not normally one to call for disinvestment in a country, but you have to ask if it is the right thing to do given the massive across-the-board failure in Bangladesh," says Aron Cramer of Business for Social Responsibility (BSR).

America and the European Union should do more to press developing countries to improve working conditions, says Mr Cramer. Besides offering technical help, they could threaten to restrict imports from places that fail to enforce proper standards, he says. This week the EU said it would indeed look at how it might use its rules on preferential trade treatment to arm-twist Bangladesh into doing better.

Whatever rich countries' governments do, the pressure is on the global clothing brands to come up with a credible strategy. The meeting in Germany discussed how foreign firms could share information on rogue contractors running dangerous factories, and how to get more companies to back the new health-and-safety academy. Worker Rights Consortium sought to rally support for its proposal that foreign clothing giants sign a binding agreement to finance the upgrading of factories in Bangladesh. So far only two firms have signed up: Tchibo, a German retailer, and PVH, an American firm whose brands include Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger.

Mr. Nova reckons it would cost around \$3 billion to make safe all 5,000 clothing factories in Bangladesh. Spread over a few years, that would amount to only a few cents on the cost of each garment produced, he calculates. Many of the clothing firms felt that the proposal was too bureaucratic and binding, however. Some were keener on the sort of voluntary incentives that Gap is offering its contractors. However it is done, an effort to force Bangladeshi factory bosses to improve safety, and to help them pay for this, would mean that death was not the only result of the disaster at Rana Plaza.

**Letter of Understanding
English 100 WB, Section 10**

I, _____, have read the syllabus and understand the objectives of this course and what is required of me to achieve them. I know that my success in this course depends on my choice to participate in class activities, to complete assignments both in and out of class, and to commit myself to improving the effectiveness of my written and oral communication. I will abide by all of the class rules for use of technology.

I, Sheree Kirby, will make myself available during class, office hours, and by appointment to help facilitate your growth as a writer. I encourage you to feel comfortable asking questions and expressing concerns. I will do my best to provide you with useful feedback on the effectiveness of your responses to written and oral assignments.

Student Signature _____

Instructor Signature Sheree Kirby _____

Date _____

Course/Section _____