

MEANING-MAKING CONCEPTS: *Basic Writer's Access to Verbal Culture*

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2009/2010 DOUBLE ISSUE

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Basic writers are often alienated from the world of ideas, the written verbal culture, and thus from the power that comes from participating in this world. David Bartholomae argues that one reason for this alienation is that basic writers do not believe they have an “innate competence as . . . concept [makers]” in part because their “relations to the world of verbal culture are often defined in such a way as to lead them to conclude that no relation is possible” (37). Basic writers need to experience a relationship to verbal culture, and this experience should be as concept makers not merely text producers. I argue that the best way to introduce students to verbal culture is to teach them meaning-making concepts that they can understand and use intuitively as participants in the world of ideas. As Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron explain, the “linguistic and cultural capital” required for participating in power relationships is intuitive for those familiar with the verbal culture since the “system presupposes and consecrates” that capital. We need to make these intuitive, “presupposed” concepts explicit to our basic writing students and do so in ways that deeply engage their participation. As several scholars have noted, our students need to learn more than the strategies of conversation “moves”: they need the conceptual knowledge of the concepts that intuitively drive insiders’ participation in verbal culture (Bartholomae and Petrosky; Bizzell; Rich), and the most important verbal culture concepts are meaning-making concepts. In order for our basic writers to truly gain competence as participants in verbal culture conversations, they need to understand meaning-making concepts. In order to most effectively learn these concepts, writers (including basic writers) should be asked to read academic articles that engage them with the verbal culture. Meaning-making academic articles (as the focal point of a course) draw writers into a deeply engaged participation in verbal culture as empowered conversation partners.

I define meaning making as a construction of knowledge through interpretive interactions with reading and writing. My use of “meaning making” is actually very similar to Marcia Ribble’s use of “writing”: “The act of writing itself is an act of struggle to force language (and I use language here in its broadest possible sense) into compliance so as to obtain a desired meaning both for oneself and for one’s reader” (Ribble “Rhyzone”). Because meaning must be created both for ourselves and our readers in order to engage verbal culture, this interpretive, interactive process of gaining meaning *and* its end product is “meaning making.” While meaning making, as here defined, relies on a variety of important concepts, I focus my basic writing class on three crucial concepts:

- (1) reading as interpretation,
- (2) responding to texts, and

(3) inviting affective influences into the writing process.

What is significant about basic writers' distance from verbal culture and insiders' use of language is not their lack of appropriate strategies or processes; this distance, I argue, stems from their lack of *conceptual* knowledge. Conceptual knowledge is critical for authentic participation, and gaining conceptual knowledge is true learning. John Biggs explains that "meaning is not imposed or transmitted" (12) because the point of education is "*conceptual change*, not just the acquisition of information" (13, emphasis original). Simply acquiring information about verbal culture will not lead to a conceptual change, a change that empowers basic writers to engage verbal culture. Biggs' admonition to move from teaching information to teaching concepts (which enables conceptual change) is similar to Linda Adler-Kassner and Susanmarie Harrington's admonition to move from teaching *strategies* to understanding *contexts*: "focusing exclusively on pedagogical strategies perpetuates objective notions of literacy by separating conventions from their ideological contexts" (23). Even if we teach the appropriate conventions (from topic sentences to argument structures), if we fail to teach the concepts that ground those conventions (e.g., Rosenblatt's theory of reading as transaction or theories of emotion by McLeod or Micciche), we will be "[perpetuating] objective notions of literacy." For our students to really learn how to be conversation partners in verbal culture, they need to deeply engage in the conceptual foundations of interpretation, response, and affective influences.

Reading as Interpretation

The concept of reading as interpretation is foundational to meaning making. Writers must interpret, not merely apprehend, the texts they read in order to generate a meaningful response that actually *contributes* to verbal culture conversations. Basic writers tend to simply apprehend texts, excluding themselves and their reactions to the texts in their reading process, an exclusion that prevents them from finding something they want to say about the conversations that text engages. Without interpretive reading, we cannot make meaning and thus lack anything new to contribute to conversations. As James Reither notes, although school writing assignments tend to begin with a command to write, *real* writing rarely begins with a *command* to write but instead a *need* to communicate something, to participate in verbal culture. Thus, writers must begin with textual interactions, really engaging with what others have said in ways that produce meaning and the need to communicate that meaning. Employing his famous "parlor" metaphor, Kenneth Burke similarly argues that writing begins with listening, listening until we find a spot where we can put in our "oar" (110-111). Similarly, other reading-writing scholars have noted that entering conversations means listening to others and finding or creating a "hole" that we want to fill with our own words (Bazerman; Brent; LeFevre). In order to find a hole in our "listening" process, our basic writers need a conceptual shift from apprehending information to interpreting and interacting with texts.

The concept of reading as interpretation grounds the meaning making process. Mariolina Salvatori explains the role of interpretation by looking at Wolfgang Iser's work on reading: "As Iser suggests, the reader passes through the various perspectives offered by the text, relates the different patterns and views to one another, and in so doing, 'sets the work in motion and himself in

motion, too” (660). Interpretation requires the reader to put “himself in motion.” Because of this deep involvement, interpretive reading views the ideas in texts as “perspectives offered” and actively relates various ideas to each other, including the reader’s own ideas, experiences, and perspectives. Readers who use interpretive reading thus conceptually view texts very differently from non-interpreters, as Ann Penrose and Cheryl Geisler document in their article, “Reading and Writing Without Authority.” Their study of two students (one a freshman and one a graduate student) found four primary differences in how these students viewed texts: the graduate student viewed texts as being authored, as having claims of knowledge (not facts), as having claims that can conflict with other textual claims, and as having claims that can be tested. This view of texts is the meaning-making concept of interpretive reading.

Without this conceptual knowledge about interpretive reading, our basic writers will continue reading like the freshman in Penrose and Geisler’s study: they fail to gain the authority they need to feel in order to discover something that hasn’t been said, something that they need to say. It takes more than simply *telling* our students “you need to discover something to say.” Students need to understand writing as a response to others, a discovery of their own response, and most importantly, an opportunity to participate in the meaning making process. Giving students this conceptual understanding enables the discovery of their own power.

When my students read articles such as Kenneth Bruffee’s “Social Construction, Language, and the Authority of Knowledge” or Christian Haas and Linda Flower’s “Rhetorical Reading Strategies and the Construction of Meaning,” they have a much richer, fuller understanding of the power that reader-writers exercise as they read and write. These articles (and others like them) have taught my students the concepts of meaning making interpretation, but just as importantly, the articles have taught them *that* they are interpreters, that *they*, as basic writing students, have the authority to interpret.

In fact, without this conceptual content on meaning-making interpretation, students will not be able to move out of their current model of writing: knowledge telling writing (in Bereiter and Scardemalia’s terms). As Adler-Kassner and Harrington explain, “For these writers, ‘the problem’ is that they cannot complete the transmission of ideas that they imagine to be the central task of writing, the transmission of ideas from writer to reader” (40). Our basic writers, despite our “process” pedagogy, often see the primary goal of writing as being the construction of a text, and if constructing a text is the goal, then the meaning the writer develops and communicates is not the focus. Unless we teach our students the meaning-making concept of interpretation, they may find it difficult to shift from a translation-of-ideas writing model to a meaning-construction composing model.

Writing as Responses to Ideas

Basic writers need to understand writing as a conversation, a response to others’ ideas. Patricia Bizzell notes that “academic literacy” includes the ability “to think in academic versions . . . to generalize, to reason abstractly, to evaluate evidence and critique ideas, and so on” (131). Writing “in academic versions” means engaging in the whole writing process at a deep level, at the

idea level rather than the *word* level. This focus on ideas then leads to the higher-level thinking that Bizzell describes: abstract reasoning, evaluating, critiquing, etc. Giving students opportunities to read essays that discuss complex reasoning rather than merely requiring that students engage in complex thinking provides basic writers with the conceptual knowledge of *how* to think critically. This conceptual knowledge also helps our basic writers develop “intellectual autonomy,” which most of our students lack. Students can better judge their efforts in complex thinking-writing if they know what it is they are aiming for, if they know what intellectual processes they are trying to achieve through their writing. Ann Berthoff made this comment about theory that applies to students’ ability to develop intellectual autonomy: “The primary role of theory is to guide us in defining our purposes and thus in evaluating our efforts, in realizing them. How can we know what we’re doing, how can we find out where we’re going, if we don’t have a conception of what we think we’re doing?” (*Making* 32). Our basic writing students cannot develop intellectual autonomy unless they “have a conception of what [they] think [they’re] doing.” Or, expressed another way, “[s]tudents cannot be expected to take a self-directive role in their cognitive development unless they themselves, and not just the teacher, have a sense of where development is heading--where the growing edge of their competence is and what possibilities lie ahead” (Bereiter and Scardamalia 336).

By providing students with academic essays that explain complex thinking concepts, teachers can encourage students to move toward intellectual autonomy. For example, my students learn about the “wandering viewpoint” in Mariolina Salvatori’s “Reading and Writing a Text”; reading this essay helps students develop more sophisticated ways of thinking about the texts they read, and enables them to learn more complex ways of thinking. Students also find reading essays such as Jane Ahaolenen’s “Demystifying Critical Thinking” and James Reither’s “Writing and Knowing” to be helpful. For instance, reading Reither helps my students grasp the importance of *responding* to texts in their own papers rather than simply summarizing texts, and reading Kenneth Bruffee’s “Writing and Reading as Collaborative or Social Acts” helps my students see the social nature of their “private” reading and writing, which prompts them to pay more attention to their social models. By reading and then thinking, talking, and writing about this important meaning-making concept, and by writing as critically examining ideas, my students begin to engage verbal culture.

Affective Influences on Writing

Engagement in verbal culture, though, requires more than interpretive reading and deep-level writing: this engagement also requires our affective responses. Some affective responses, though, are negative, and a common dysfunctional affective response that prevents the positive affective involvements (and one that many basic writers have) is writing anxiety. Mike Rose explains two key concepts in writing anxiety in his “Rigid Rules” article: planning and rule adhering (390-393). This conceptual understanding helps basic writers to better understand both the impact of a common affective influence on writing, writing anxiety, and what anxious writers can do to deal with their anxiety. Rose explains *what causes* much of the blocking and what concepts non-blockers embrace in order to move out of this negative affective response and move into positive affective influences on our writing.

Not all of our basic writers experience writer's block, but all writers (student writers and non-student writers) require the affective influence of motivation. Our students have a very well-entrenched writing process that functions without motivation, but this motivation-less process prevents them from engaging in meaning-making writing (and deep learning). The five-paragraph-theme and school-writing processes our students are proficient in demonstrate a mastery of form writing, not meaning-making writing. Thus, they need to be engaged in discussing concepts of affective motivation, motivation that will finally move them beyond their former rigid forms. But simply telling our students that college writing has more flexibility or that they are not stuck with only writing five paragraphs seldom works. Our students need to read the concepts of motivation. For example, after reading the Sommers and Saltz article, "Novice as Expert," my students' intrinsic motivation rises because they get the concept from the article that to move forward, they need to embrace their location as "beginners," but also that even beginners can "give" to the conversation.

Probably the most powerful affective concept for my students is emotion's influence on writing. Laurie Micciche contends that "emotion is always bound up with knowledge, what is thought rather than exclusively felt" because "emotion is part of what makes ideas adhere, generating investments and attachments that get recognized as positions and/or perspectives" (6). Emotion is central to meaning making because it is central to thinking and even, as Micciche explains, creates the glue that "adheres" ideas to motivations, an adherence that is essential for strong writing processes. My students' views of writing have truly been transformed after reading about this important role of emotion in Susan McLeod's "Some Thoughts about Feelings." After reading McLeod's article, for the first time in their writing lives, my students feel emotionally connected to their own texts: they *own* their words instead of merely transcribing them. After engaging with these three concepts of meaning making, my students feel authorized to begin conversing with the world of ideas. The mysterious and presumed codes that guard entry into the world of ideas are demystified and made explicit.

Why Meaning Making Concepts are Critical for Gaining Access to the World of Ideas

Effective writing requires a writer to exercise authority while reading, writing and engaging in textual conversations. Few basic writers feel invited to participate in verbal culture or empowered to change ideas that affect their lives. Freire explains this relationship between participation and power: "In the culture of silence the masses are 'mute,' that is, they are prohibited from creatively taking part in the transformations of their society . . . [and are] alienated from the power responsible for their silence" (163). Basic writers are in a similar situation because they tend to be alienated from the very power or authority that invisibly keeps them silent. This alienation is due (at least in part) to not understanding that all texts are simply interpretations and that *their* (basic writers') interpretations can produce meaning for them and others. Thus, learning meaning-making concepts allows basic writers to enact their own authority; allows them to meaningfully integrate their own ideas, knowledge, experiences, and responses to the texts they read and write with authority; and allows them to communicate a newly-formed meaning to the communities that have power over them. These meaning-making processes are "conventions as-

sociated with authorship,” as Linda Adler-Kassner and Susanmarie Harrington explain (21). But these processes cannot be simply taught as strategies alongside content unassociated with meaning-making concepts: students need deep engagement with these concepts.

As we teach conceptually, *how* knowledge is constructed, *how* meaning is made, *how* writers authorize their own texts and those that they read, we also provide our basic writers the insider “codes” for the “culture of power,” terms Lisa Delpit uses in her argument for explicit instruction. Delpit argues that for anyone “not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier” (85). The codes for the culture of power in verbal culture are meaning-making concepts.

Since meaning-making concepts are presented in complex texts that invite engagement at the deep learning level, students have a much better chance of experiencing long-term changes in their sense of authority and power. We know from writing-to-learn scholarship (Berthoff *Making*; Britton; Emig) that writing about content improves the understanding of that content, so basic writers significantly improve their understanding of meaning making *by* reading and writing essays on these concepts. Though the texts are difficult, David Bartholome and Anthony Petrosky’s work has shown that students can comprehend and respond to more difficult texts than we might assume. Education theorist Robert Leamson notes that requiring students to read difficult texts is appropriately taxing for students “because it involves learning, in the sense of using new and untried synapses” which will finally move them away from their former entrenched knowledge-telling writing: the newly created synapses simultaneously stop use of the former, “old and very hard-wired neuronal paths” (57). This mentally demanding work of creating new synapses is what learning literally is. These new synapses significantly improve reading power, which should not surprise us considering cognitive psychologists’ theory of intellectual growth. Christina Haas and Linda Flower explain this theory: “difficult texts often require the reader to build an equally sophisticated, complex representation of meaning” (170). As students read difficult texts, they grapple with sophisticated ideas, which, as Berthoff constantly reminds us, is where meaning lies. Students cannot respond with sophistication to simplistic texts/ideas—they need to read the “complex and living” if we want them to become meaning-making writers (Berthoff “Recognition” 552).

These difficult essays about meaning-making actively engage basic writers in a deep learning process. Focusing on rich concepts rather than superficial conventions (or strategies) is parallel to what John Tagg identifies as the difference between deep and surface learning (70-86). Here is his summary table of these two learning approaches. I have added the third column to relate these ideas to teaching meaning-making concepts.

Approaches to Learning (Tagg 81)

Deep	Surface	[Meaning-Making concepts as the course content]
Focuses on the signified: meaning of the text, problem, etc.	Focuses on the sign: the surface appearance of the text, problem, etc.	[Focuses students on the meaning they make rather than the text they produce since they are studying meaning making]
Active: learning is the conscious agent of understanding	Inert: learner receives what is given, remains static	[Active, in that approach enables students to become conscious agents of understanding since they interact with these concepts rather than simply receiving them as static strategies]
Holistic: learner sees how object of learning fits together and how it relates to prior learning	Atomistic: learner sees the object of learning as discrete bits of data	[Holistic, in that approach enables students to make conceptual connections by integrating these concepts with their own experiences and knowledge]
Seeks to integrate information into semantic memory	Generally stops with episodic memory	[Approach emphasizes integrating meaning-making concepts into “a large and personal framework of meaning” (Tagg 72) rather than adding “episodes” of strategies]
Reinforces and is reinforced by incremental theory [“seeing” the meaning behind what is learned by experiencing the learning and similarly, believing effort can produce meanings (Tagg 73-74)]	Reinforces and is reinforced by entity theory [believing that “the sign <i>is</i> the meaning” and, similarly, believing meanings are set by innate abilities (Tagg 73-74).	[Students experience significant meaning making as they wrestle with these concepts, which changes their goals from performance to learning]

Teaching basic writing students the concepts of meaning making will not guarantee that they will all engage in deep learning, but teaching these concepts, I contend, definitely produces learning experiences that align with deep learning. Here is one example of a student engaging in deep learning through her wrestling with concepts of voice and emotion. One of my basic writing students read Toby Fulwiler’s “Looking and Listening For My Voice” and Susan McLeod’s “Some Thoughts About Feelings,” interpreting the ideas from these articles from her rich and meaningful grade school and high school experiences of feeling labeled and having no voice of her own. Her meaning-making reading created the seeds for her meaning-making writing, which was a beautiful essay about the need to recognize the voices others give you as the “not you” voices (Fulwiler 217), before taking ownership of your true voice, a voice that you embody with a full emotion that gives your voice real value (McLeod 442). This is meaning-making; this is deep learning.³

My Journey to this Method of Teaching Basic Writing

I am passionate about teaching meaning-making concepts to my basic writing students because these concepts draw them into deep learning and give them access to verbal culture. But I am also passionate about using this content in my basic writing class because I was a basic writer whose writing substantially improved only after learning these concepts. Although I wasn't placed into a "basic writing" class, as a non-traditional student who had had no writing experience for nearly twenty years, I returned to college lacking both confidence as a writer and knowledge of how to create meaning from texts. What lowered my confidence even more was my discovery that the students surrounding me (I was an English major) could produce A-quality papers within a matter of hours, whereas I took two weeks and an average of ten drafts to produce my paper.² I could not understand why my peers seemed to be so proficient at this mysterious process of producing a strong academic paper so much faster and easier than I could, nor *how* to produce academic papers that were rich in meaning (both to me and my teacher). It was not until I took my first graduate course in composition, reading the concepts of meaning making, that I gained this knowledge.

Only when I began reading articles by writing specialists like Delpit, Bartholomae, Berthoff, Elbow, and Bizzell did the mysterious meaning-making process begin to be de-mystified. My newfound understanding significantly improved both my confidence and my proficiency (but especially my confidence). My graduate school teachers encouraged me and gave me feedback, but my real breakthrough as a writer was gaining knowledge about meaning making: how knowledge is constructed, how ideas are created, how reading is really interpretation, and that everyone (including me) can create meaningful writing. In other words, I felt authorized to write only after learning the concepts of the meaning-making process.

This is why I teach my students the key concepts needed to produce meaning-making writing and why I have them read scholarly articles on this process as the content of my course. My students annotate the articles with notes about how they personally connect with the ideas in the articles; they write daily "quote-responses" to a sentence of their choosing from that day's article; they discuss the concepts in whole-class and small-groups, they respond to each other's drafts; and they compose their own meaning-making texts that contribute a specific idea from that concept, an idea that is their own.

I have been using this kind of content in my basic writing classes for four years, and each year I have revised which articles I am using based on my students' feedback and on my constantly evolving pedagogy, so I have found a large number of articles that discuss various aspects of meaning-making concepts (and I know I will continue finding even more articles that could be used for teaching meaning-making concepts). The articles I have used in the last four years are listed in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 is my syllabus for Fall, 2009, and Appendix 3 is an example writing assignment. Since meaning making is essential to strong composing processes, I have found that teaching my basic writing students these concepts most effectively equips them for long-term academic success.

Conclusion

Learning the meaning-making concepts of reading as interpretation, textual responses as intellectual exchanges, and affective responses as influences on writing processes and products provides the foundation that students need to enter verbal culture. By teaching these concepts, we propel our students into deep learning and empowerment. All of us who teach basic writing long to make a lasting difference in students' lives. Teaching meaning-making content provides lasting empowerment because it is conceptual and may alter basic writers' internal beliefs about writing and themselves.

Notes

1. I want to thank the anonymous reviewers of this article. Their comments significantly improved this final version.
2. I know that this is just one example and virtually every teacher can provide one example of an 16 outstanding engagement. However, this example is just slightly more dramatic than the majority of my students' interactions with this content. I am starting a research project to document how much and the kinds of growth as writers this content produces, so hopefully, more empirical data will follow within a year
3. I usually got As on my papers, but that is only because I had the ability and determination to keep working until my paper "looked" like I thought it should.

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Appendix 1: Articles My Basic Writing Students Have Read (Across Four Years)
Starred articles are my students' favorites

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Appendix 2: A Basic Writing Syllabus That Teaches Meaning-Making Concepts

“To render academical studies useful, therefore, the student must not be allowed to act the part of a mere recipient. On the contrary, he must be taught to ruminate on what he hears; to pass it all through the channels of his own mind; to arrange and digest it; to write on it, to reason on it; and, finally, to make it his own by combining it with his own thoughts and reflections”. George Jardine (Scotland, 1813)

“Power works from the outside in, but authority works from the inside out.” Parker Palmer

“Meanings don’t just happen; we make them; we find and form them” Ann Berthoff.

Course description: ENG 101 (3 credits) is an entry-level writing course designed to equip students to write effectively, encourage students in their own skills, and teach students the writing-learning-thinking habits of mind that will enable them to succeed at Taylor.

Purpose: to help you become proficient in the foundational processes essential for successful college work: reading, writing, interpretation, integration of your prior knowledge & experiences, and collaboration with your peers. Most importantly, in this course you will improve your powers of making meaning, *having the authority of making knowledge your own.*

Your role:

- Be here. This means being on time and it means really *being* here (mentally as well as physically). We will frequently have in-class work, so if you are not in class, you won’t get credit for that work. If you have an excused absence, then I will create a way for you to make it up.
- Complete all coursework on time. If you are gone from class, whether it is a scheduled, sports team excused absence or whether you got sick or whether you just have to use this class period to do work for another class---for *every* kind of absence, your homework is still due that day or your grade will be deducted. For small assignments I will only deduct a ½ point if it is turned in by the end of the day (before I leave, usually about 3:30 or 4) rather than turned in prior to or before class, but you will lose 1 point for every day it is late. You have 3 “grace cards” to use in order to turn in an assignment late (up to 1 class period late). Please use these cards wisely! You will have homework due virtually every class day this semester, so just get used to doing English homework and doing it on time. Please note that all essays must be turned in the day they are due! No graces for essays (unless there is a significant hardship that you speak to me about prior to when the essay is due).
- Collaborate with your peers. The primary group work will be peer reviews on your essays. For each essay you will submit it online (more about that in a moment) and then comment on each of your peers’ essays online. I will give you specific directions for this peer commenting, but you need to do your best to really help your peers.
- Commit. Writing improvement requires a whole-person commitment—body, mind, spirit, emotion. Recent research has overwhelmingly demonstrated that our emotions and “engagement” (a mixture of mental, physical, and even spiritual focus) are needed for quality writing. For example, Parker Palmer explains that we only *really* make knowledge our own when we are “in community with” our ideas and topic (95). Beyond being personally connected with our ideas and topics, as Linda Adler-Kassner claims, the core of language use is not only thinking processes but also values and motives (4-5).

My role:

- Be here. I will not only truly *be here* in class with all my mind and heart, but I will also be available outside of class, both online and in person to help you.
- Turn your work back to you on time. For virtually every assignment (including essays), I will return your work to you the class period after you turn it in to me. Research has shown that prompt

feedback improves student learning. Plus, promptly returning your work demonstrates my respect for your intellect and hard work.

- Collaborate with you. I will give you direct feedback on all of your essays and some comments on your assignments (mostly your early assignments). This feedback and response is a conversation that we will have. You will, in turn, give me feedback on my comments to let me know how helpful they are or are not or to ask further questions.
- Commit. Teaching requires a whole-person commitment—body, mind, spirit, emotion. Research on teaching has demonstrated that students learn best when they *know* that their teacher is “cheering them on,” doing all she can to help them succeed. That’s what I commit to.

Instructor Information

Dr. Barb Bird

Office: Zondervan Library 114

Office Phone: 998-5526

Home Phone: 998-1610 (ONLY between 7:30 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.)

E-mail: brbird@taylor.edu

Office Hours: ***MWF***: 2-4 ***Tuesday***: 11-11:30 and 1-3 (other times by appointment)

Texts:

Readings on [Blackboard](#)

Course Learning Objectives:

After successfully completing this course, you will be able to . . .

1. Understand how knowledge is constructed and actively engage in your own knowledge construction through both reading and writing.
2. Read difficult academic texts, understand what you read, and use ideas from the text for your own purposes.
3. Write intelligent responses to academic texts and ideas that integrate the text with your own experiences and knowledge.
4. Revise and edit your work to the level expected of college writers.
5. Learn to think academically – how to play with ideas, how to view ideas, how to connect ideas to your own experiences & knowledge.
6. Enjoy writing!

Course Policies:

Attendance Policy:

Regular attendance is required for completion of this course. See “your role” above for more details.

Special Needs:

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me immediately.

Plagiarism:

Definition: In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a person presents or turns in work that includes someone else’s ideas, language, or other (not common-knowledge) material without giving appropriate credit to the source. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and may result in failing this course, and may also result in further consequences as stipulated in the Taylor catalogue:

http://www.taylor.edu/academics/registrar/policy_academic_integrity.shtml

Academic dishonesty constitutes a serious violation of academic integrity and scholarship standards at Taylor that can result in substantial penalties, at the sole discretion of the University, including but not limited to, denial of credit in a course as well as dismissal from the University. . . . In short, a student violates academic integrity when he or she claims credit for any work not his or her own (*words, ideas, an-*

swers, data, program codes, music, etc.) or when a student misrepresents any academic performance. Please see the catalogue for a complete statement:

http://www.taylor.edu/academics/registrar/policy_academic_integrity.shtml

In-class activities:

Virtually all class periods following an assigned reading will begin (on time!) with a timed quote-response. You will have 5 minutes to write your response, so if you are late, you will have less time to complete it. Come prepared.

We will have small-group and whole-class discussions and activities to help you process, together with your peers, the ideas from the texts we read and your own ideas that these texts provoke.

I will also give short lectures on the previous day's reading, on the next day's reading, or on topics related to either the previous day's reading or the next day's reading. You will want to take notes on these lectures! This information will be very helpful to you both in understanding the readings and in generating ideas for your essays.

Assignments:

All assignments must be turned in the class period they are due, unless otherwise instructed. Two percent of your total assignment grade may be deducted for every day an assignment is late.

Annotations: You will annotate all of your readings, either printed off or annotated online.

Exercises: You will be doing several exercises, most of which will be done in groups in class.

Discussion: We will have whole-class and small-group discussions frequently. I expect *everyone* to participate (whether the discussion is online or face-to-face) and will keep track of participation.

Portfolio: Your final project will include a reflection on all your work this semester and a presentation of purposefully chosen pieces of your semester's work (a portfolio). You **must keep ALL your notes, drafts, papers, annotated readings, and assignments** in order to complete your portfolio and final reflection. Do NOT throw anything away!!!

Papers:

3 3-page papers

1 mid-term timed write

1 5-page paper: a mini research paper

Lots of drafts of each of these!

1 reflection paper within your portfolio

General writing performance expectations:

Exceptional achievement means your work demonstrates:

- Evidence of engagement with the texts and with your own thinking
 - o Clearly understanding the readings and lectures
 - o Making connections across topics, articles, lectures and own experiences
 - o Making knowledge: generating your own ideas grounded in the articles and lectures and connected to your own responses to them and your own experiences and interests
- Evidence of strong articulation
 - o Articulating ideas that are significant (3rd point above)
 - o Presenting a flow of ideas that is purposeful, with good connections between ideas/sentences
 - o Using sentence structures that reflect good thinking and college-level writing
 - o Using diction that is appropriate for a college-level introductory course

Writing Center visits:

You will go to the Writing Center at least two times this semester—one time prior to midterm and one time during the drafting of your last paper. I strongly encourage visiting the Writing Center for every paper you write—at least one visit per paper; some students may be required to visit the Writing Center.

Post-graded revisions: Your shorter papers may be revised. Revised essays must be turned in two weeks after your paper is returned to you, along with your original, graded essay. Your revised essay grade will be averaged with your original paper grade for your new grade. *Please note that simply turning in a revised essay does not guarantee a higher grade.*

Grades:

3 3-page papers: 40%

1 5-page paper: 25%

In-class and ***online*** group work and discussion; drafts, workshops, and annotations: 20%

Portfolio: 10%

1 Mid-term in-class timed write and final: 5%

The Writing Center

Our friendly and knowledgeable writing consultants can help you in many ways. They can assist you with common problem areas, such as citing sources and improving sentence structures, or they can assist you with larger issues like making your points stronger and clarifying your ideas. They can also simply give you a fresh perspective on your paper as an interested reader. To set up an appointment, use our online appointment calendar, found on the Taylor portal or just drop in when we're open. Writing Center hours: M-R: 3-5; 7-10. For more information, please see the Writing Center website or contact the student director, Kelsey Warren.

Appendix 3: A Writing Assignment in a Meaning-Making Curriculum

Task: We have been reading about 3 different authors’ views of affective responses when we write (voice, emotion, & authority). I want you to choose one concept/idea/topic to respond to out of the many we encountered in these texts.

1. You should generate your own “take” on the idea you are discussing—your essay should *not* be merely repeating the same ideas from the texts. It should be a somewhat original idea.
2. You need to reference at least two different articles/authors, and you need to “enter the conversation,” adding your own insights, prior knowledge, experiences, synthesis of the topic, analysis, etc.
3. In your revisions, try to present your idea in such a way that your reader is invited to *think* about this issue.

Audience, purpose: Audience: Taylor students. Purpose: help your Taylor peers to really consider the implications of what it means to engage affectively as we read and write.

Format: 2 ½ pages; essay format, which means the tone is in between formal and informal writing that shows the development of your position and invites your reader to think.

Criteria for evaluation:

20	Essay manipulates and examines an idea – strong thinking & meaning making “composing” demonstrated
25	Essay is engaging; clear author’s voice; strong authority
10	Essay includes at least 2 of our 3 sources and <i>integrates</i> 2-3 quotes.
10	Essay’s tone is inviting, conversational – but still appropriate for publication
15	Coherence: purposeful organizational pattern
10	Introduction sets the context; “conclusion” invites further thinking
10	Whole paper demonstrates effective sentences and word choice