



SCHOLARSHIP OF EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

Alicia Sanderman, Professor of English Language for Academic Purposes (ELAP)

January 21, 2022

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**PROBLEM:
LACK OF CRITICAL THINKING & SPECIFICITY IN
WRITING.**

ENGL 101/011

WHAT'S THAT? YOU THINK
CORONAVIRUS IS A PLOY
TO CHIP YOU VIA VACCINATION?



PLEASE USE YOUR GPS ENABLED SMARTPHONE
WITH TWO MICROPHONES AND TWO CAMERAS
TO SHOW ME THE EVIDENCE YOU FOUND ON FACEBOOK

WHY NOW?



- Social media – extreme opinions & polarization, fake news, reposting
- Beyond college: “wicked problems” (Handstedt)
- Diagnostic writing: issues with organization of ideas, **a lack of depth & specificity**, & sentence structure issues.
- Ex: How have experiencing quarantine and the coronavirus pandemic changed you? **Explain two or three changes.** →
 - Superficial responses

STRATEGIES

Details, Specific Examples, & Critical Thinking

0 to 7 points

Does not include details that help the reader understand the term and/or the author's position. Critical thinking is not demonstrated.

8 to 12 points

Insufficient detail, or excessive or redundant details. Critical thinking is minimally demonstrated.

13 to 16 points

Appropriate use of details, and the term is generally defined. Some critical thinking is demonstrated.

17 to 20 points

A variety of well-chosen details appeal to the reader and lead to a greater understanding of the topic. The details and specific examples illustrate the author's points. The selected term is well-defined. Critical thinking is demonstrated.

Study Skills

Explicitly teach the study cycle (Yancy McGuire).

- Essential: review notes & concepts for 5-10 min. after class

Engaging Content

Complex, provocative readings with human elements

Feedback

Written Feedback on 1st Drafts (“go further, deeper, explain, specify”)

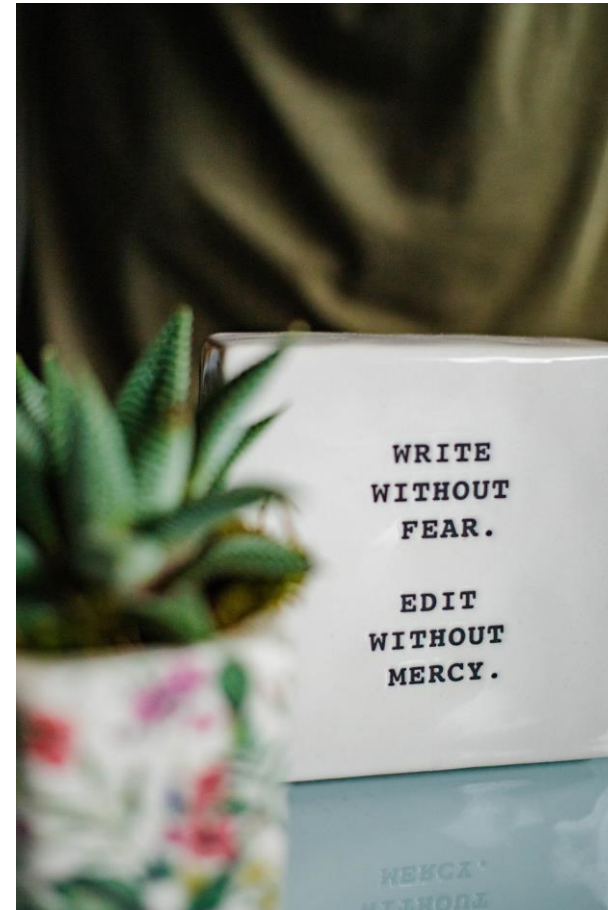
Teach students to summarize (mentally or aloud) after reading each paragraph.

“Wicked” essay prompts that require analysis, critical thinking

Ongoing measurement of critical thinking & specificity (rubric criteria)

Provide deliberate instruction in brainstorming process.

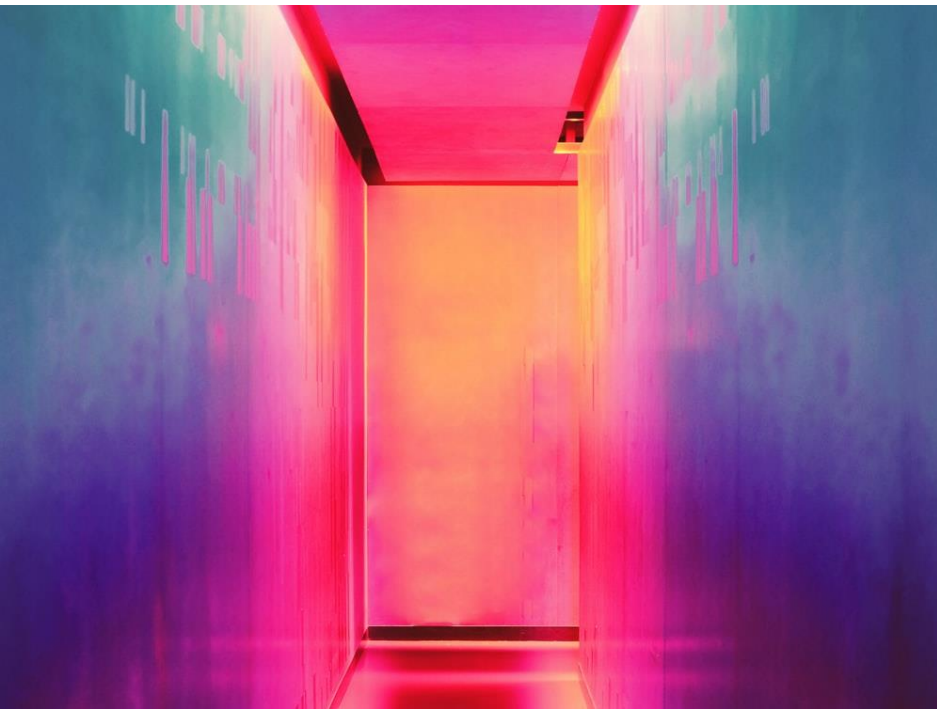
- Think out-of-the-box





EXAMPLE ESSAY PROMPTS:

- 1. In recent years, “resilience” has become a buzz word in the media and was even adopted by Montgomery College in the “ResilientMC” campaign. **Define resilience. Is resilience overrated?** Choose one side to argue and provide several reasons to support your point of view.
- 2. In “The Deep Sadness of Elk,” Byrne discusses how pharmaceutical companies have created a large, lucrative industry around curing social anxiety. **Define social anxiety. In what ways should social anxiety be addressed?**
- 3. **Think of a term (X) that could be used to describe yourself but that you would prefer to distance yourself from.** What are the reasons why you do *not* want to be associated with this term (X)? Tell a story that illustrates why you do not want others to identify you as X. Then, add photos to help illustrate your ideas.
- Photo essay with captions





STUDENT WORK

- “staying up until 5 and even 7 am hiding on my bathroom floor **feeling the cold touch of the marble tile while doing accounting homework** trying to get an A due to still at the time having a bedtime.”
- “Although mental illness has become a major topic of discussion in recent years, the focus seems to be more on the romanticized version of mental illness, rather than the truth. **People love to talk about the socially exactable side of anxiety, which is, sweaty hands, nervousness, and shyness. No one wants to talk about the explosive panic attacks, the vomiting, the enormous lack of sleep, and feeling of being trapped in the smallest box imaginable.** The truth is, every and any mental illness can be debilitating for most individuals.”
- “I noticed for some people, my person reflected ‘the danger,’ ‘**a threat**’ because of my skin color and my **imposing appearance due to my size.** The term I am going to talk about which represents me in the eyes of some but from which I would like to move away would be: ‘**potential danger**’.”
- “I have not done a single thing to defend American freedom, aside from the bare minimum of graduation of basic training. **This false narrative is being painted, like a flashing billboard to draw wandering gamblers into a casino, only because of the uniform I am wearing.**”



"56 Black Men," a campaign to combat prejudices against black men (Williams).

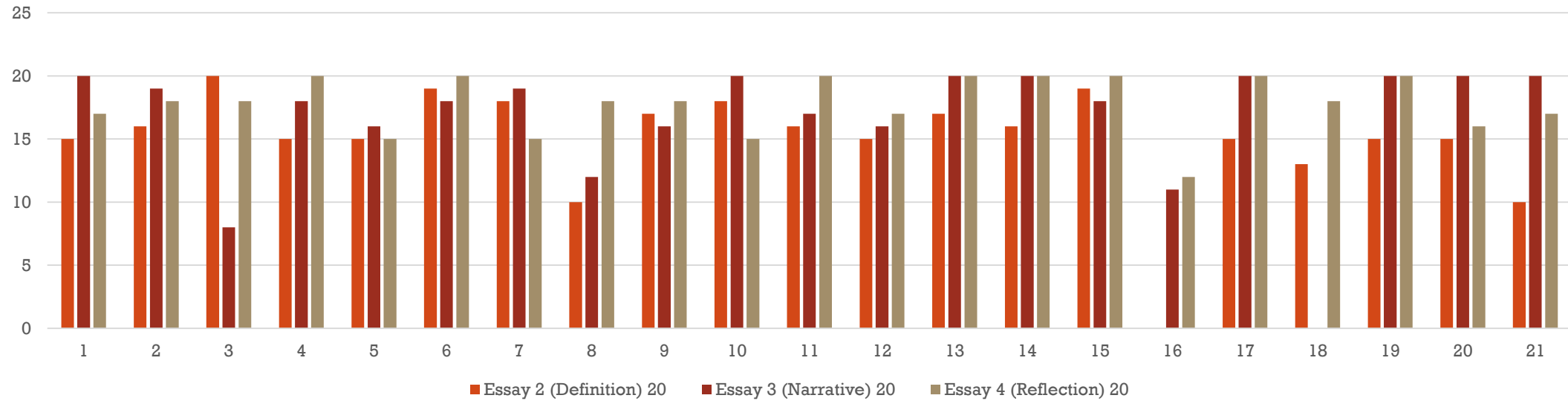
RESOURCES

- **Engagement:** *Creating Wicked Students* (Hanstedt) & *What the Best College Teachers Do* by (Bain)
 - Grapple with hard, unsolved problems
- **Student Empowerment & Metacognition:** *Teach Students How To Learn: Strategies You Can Incorporate into Any Course to Improve Student Metacognition, Study Skills, and Motivation* by (Yancy McGuire)
 - Summarize after reading each paragraph
 - Review after class
- **Critical Thinking:** *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking* (Paul & Elder):

“Shoddy thinking is costly, in money and in **quality of life**. **Excellence in thought must be systematically cultivated**...It entails effective communication, problem solving abilities and a commitment to overcome our **egocentrism and sociocentrism**.”



Critical Thinking Rubric Criteria (20 pts.)



ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

- **GRADE COMPARISONS: 21 students**
 - 17 showed progress in scores
 - 1 had similar scores
 - 3 decreased in scores
- **SURVEY**

SURVEY RESULTS

Q1. Did participating in this class (through reading, writing, and in-class discussion) improve your ability to think critically?

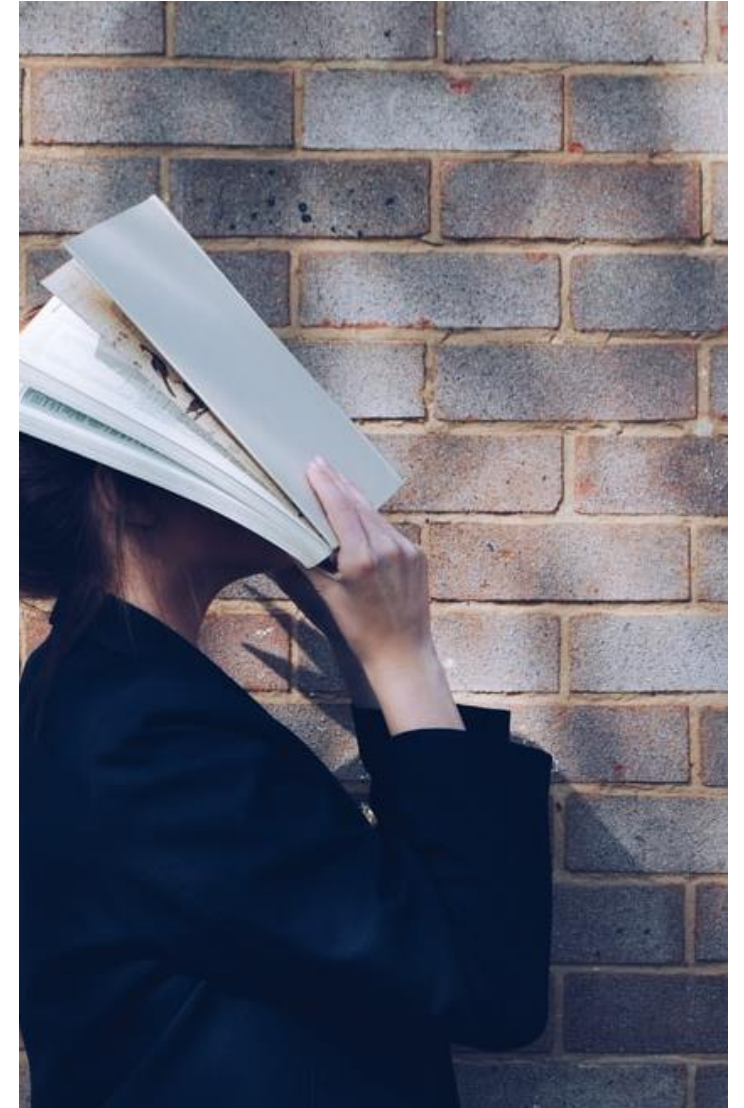
- “You have to think outside of the box for some answers and **view it from others perspectives.**”
- “Yes very much so, **I am able to think of new ideas [more] quickly** than I did.”
- “Participating in class **improved my cognitive ability because it motivates my brain to think outside of the box.** I often encourage myself to share the best answer in class. Also, I am now **less frightened to share my personal experiences in writing** as I am more confident.”
- “In class discussions allowed me to **understand other students point of view on certain subjects, which helped me think critically about mine.**”



SURVEY RESULTS (CONT'D)

Q2. Did participating in this class affect the way that you study/review concepts or manage your time?

- “I do study differently now. I use the **active reading** method more.”
- “Participating in this class also greatly helped my way of managing time. Between this being my first semester in college and getting the hang of handling a new job, I found **time management being a key factor of learning due to this course.**”
- “**Very much so!!!!** I was able to complete essays and discussions quicker and with good organization just by using my time correctly.”
- “**not really**”



IN THE FUTURE:



To enhance these strategies:

- Share the *Miniature Critical Thinking* guide with students
- Have students track review time outside of class and brainstorming time
- Provide sample essays with and without critical thinking demonstrated

Effective methods to preserve:

- Students track changes to their final writing in the portfolio & explain the rationale for changes.
- Guided peer editing
- Lots of discussion board shorter writing assignments based on challenging readings
- Consistently track progress through critical thinking component of rubric.



TAKEAWAYS

Be explicit about critical thinking and *how* to study.

Employ challenging or open-ended prompts.

To face wicked problems in the real world, Ss need & *want* wicked practice.

Which of the readings from this semester did you find the most interesting?

18 responses

