

ENGL 5382: Composition Assessment

Sometimes the most brilliant and intelligent minds do not shine in standardized tests, because they do not have standardized minds.

Diane Ravitch



Summer 2023 (June 5, 2023 to July 28, 2023), Blended Online with meetings Wednesdays from 6:00-9:00 p.m. via WebEx and asynchronous activities throughout the week.

Instructor: Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr.

E-mail: bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu

Office: Warrior Hall 420A or WebEx Meeting

Office Hours: Walk-in or Email for an Appointment

TAMUCT Course Description: This class introduces students to the scholarship, theory, and methods for assessing writing with a particular focus on assessment theory and history (especially non-psychometric understandings of validity and reliability) and classroom assessment (e.g., grading and response) with some discussion of large-scale assessments (e.g., program assessment, placement, standardized testing, etc.).

ENGL 5382: Composition Assessment Extended Course Description: This class introduces students to the scholarship, theory, and methods for assessing writing with a particular focus on assessment theory and history (especially non-psychometric understandings of validity and reliability) and classroom assessment (e.g., grading, response, portfolios) along with discussions of large-scale assessments (e.g., program assessment, placement, standardized testing, etc.) and the influence of technology on writing assessment. Through extensive reading, discussion, and practical application, students hone their assessment knowledge and abilities on both a theoretical and practical level.

Course Outcomes:

By the end of the semester, students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Discuss writing assessment history and theory, especially non-psychometric conceptualizations of validity and reliability
- Summarize, and explain, theories and arguments presented in writing assessment scholarship
- Evaluate and critique various classroom and large-scale assessment practices
- Design valid writing assessments that measure, and enhance, student learning
- Defend opinions, based in scholarship, on the benefits and drawbacks of a variety of writing assessment methods and approaches
- Create an original piece of scholarship which participates in scholarly/disciplinary conversations pertaining to composition assessment

Required Textbooks and Materials:

- *Assessing Writing: A Critical Source Book*, edited by Brian Huot and Peggy O’Neill, ISBN (13) #9780312475963
- Various .pdf books, articles, and selections from texts (available through Canvas)
- Access to a Computer (the university provides a number of computer labs)

Technology Requirements:

This course will use the A&M-Central Texas Instructure Canvas learning management system. We strongly recommend the latest versions of Chrome, Firefox, Edge, or Safari browsers. Canvas will run on Windows, Mac, Linus, iOS, android, or any other device with a modern web browser. **Canvas no longer supports any version of Internet Explorer.**

Logon to A&M-Central Texas Canvas [<https://tamuct.instructure.com/>] or access Canvas through the TAMUCT Online link in myCT [<https://tamuct.onecampus.com/>] by clicking on the “TAMUCT Online Canvas” tile. You will then log in through our Microsoft portal.

Username: Your MyCT email address. Password: Your MyCT password

Grading Scheme: Three major projects along with various shorter, lower-stakes writing assignments (SRRs, Professorial Q&As, and Discussion Boards) will comprise students’ grades. The weights for each component are as follows:

Informal Writing Tasks (SRRs, Professorial Q&As, Discussion Boards, Online Activities, and Student-Teacher Conference)= 10%

“Valid? I’ll Be the Judge of That!”= 25%

“Controversies and Issues in Writing Assessment! A Scholarly Manuscript Pertaining to Writing Assessment”= 40%

“My Very Own Assessment! Developing and Designing a Writing Assessment to Improve Teaching and Learning”= 25%

Once you submit a final assignment (not a draft) through Canvas, it is the text I will grade, and you will not be given the opportunity to revise. Make sure that the text you are submitting is one you can be proud of and is the text you want me to grade. (If, for any reason, you believe you have submitted the wrong text, please contact me as soon as you submit to rectify the issue.) **Remember, once you submit—that is it!**

Posting of Grades: All assignments will be returned to you through Canvas as a .doc or as feedback in Canvas. When your assignments are returned as a .doc, you will receive your grade after the end comment in the comment box.

I do not use Canvas to calculate grades. Instead, I use a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. A sample of the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for this course is available on the “Syllabus” page of our course Canvas site so you can see how your grade is calculated. I will go over this the first day of class as well.

At any time, you are free to email me to ask me to send you the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet with your grades inputted. I can also provide you with a rough estimate of where your grade stands at that time. However, be alert that as a result of the weight of various assignments, your grade can change substantially when major projects are submitted.

Summarize, Respond, Reflect (SRR): SRRs require students to engage with readings from class in a structured—yet fluid—fashion. For certain classes, you will be assigned (or choose) one of the readings and provide an SRR for that reading. SRRs ask students to first summarize the reading from an objective standpoint, then provide a response to what they have read, and—finally—to reflect on the reading by connecting it to the class, other readings, prior experiences, and/or raising questions.

SRRs should be approximately one page single-spaced (writing slightly onto a second page is acceptable, however). Part of the skill of composing in such a genre is brevity, so avoid being overly verbose and rely on concision and clarity. SRRs will receive either a ✓+ (100), ✓ (85), ✓– (65), or 0.

Professorial Q&As: Professorial Q&As will provide a more guided form of engaging with certain readings from the class. These assignments will require students to respond to predetermined questions pertaining to specific readings. Students are advised to read and review the questions before engaging with the reading in order to gain a clear sense of certain facets of the text they should pay particular attention to.

While Professorial Q&As will vary in the number of questions asked and the depth of answers required, they will usually range between three to five question sets and require roughly two to four solid paragraphs for each answer. You will want to provide sufficient, detailed answers, yet be careful not to become too tangential or indirect. You want to answer these questions in a direct and intellectual fashion. Professorial Q&As will receive either a ✓+ (100), ✓ (85), ✓– (65), or 0.

Discussion Boards: Certain weeks, students will participate in discussion board posts. Most often, the initial discussion board topics and/or questions will be predetermined. Some weeks, however, they will be more wide open.

Throughout the week, you should **contribute a total of at least three times (or as many times as the prompt indicates)** to the discussion board, including making your first post by the date indicated. Your contributions should be roughly two to three paragraphs each, yet I will evaluate this across all of your posts. Thus, you can write longer posts and couple them with shorter posts, reply more succinctly to five or six classmates, etc. Furthermore, make sure to directly engage with what other students in the class are discussing and questioning. Your discussion board posts should form a cohesive thread and narrative with the discussions of your classmates. Discussion boards will receive either a ✓+ (100), ✓ (85), ✓- (65), or 0.

Mandatory Student-Teacher Conference: During the course of the semester, **I am requiring that you conference with me at least once.** Your conference will afford you the opportunity to discuss any issues with the class, to ask questions pertaining to any concepts or theories you are struggling with, to obtain guidance on any of your long-term projects, etc. These conferences will be conducted in person or via WebEx, whichever you prefer.

Although you are required to have at least one conference, I am not setting a date or time for you. Feel free to schedule your conference whenever it works best for you during the semester. Also, you are not limited to one student-teacher conference—you can schedule as many as you want with me for help in the class!

Class Attendance Policy: Attending class is vital if you are to get the most out of this course and to build a productive community of engaged learners. As a result, I do require that you have **no more than one uninformed absence** throughout the semester. You will lose points for every uninformed absence thereafter.



The distinction between uninformed and informed absences is critical here. An uninformed absence occurs when you do not contact me ahead of class (or immediately after) to alert me to your absence, do not provide a reasonable rationale for the absence, and do not discuss how you will engage with the material from the class that day in order to account for the absence. If you inform me of your absence, though, provide a reasonable rationale for the absence (in rare instances, I may ask for documentation), and discuss with me how you will engage with the

material you missed, your absence will be considered an informed absence and will not be counted against you. I am more than willing to work with you if you miss class. **However, these issues cannot be dealt with retroactively at the end of the semester. This is your one and only warning.**

If you have more than one uninformed absence by the end of the semester, your grade will be penalized 10 points—an entire letter grade—for each unexcused absence beyond one. I will inform you when you have one uninformed absence; additionally, I will inform you each time you receive a 10-point penalty. You may contest any uninformed absence, yet you will need to provide tangible evidence as to how you informed me or why you were unable to inform me.

Lastly, incompletes should be reserved for unexpected, life altering situations that develop after the drop deadline. Students should drop a course should something happen that prevents them from completing the course ahead of the drop deadline. Failure to do so may result in failing grades on assignments or the course if missing work is not completed and submitted before the last day of the semester. Please let me know immediately if serious health or life issues prevent you from attending class or submitting assignments.



Class Civility Policy: This class will tolerate neither disruptive language nor disruptive behavior. Disruptive language includes, but is not limited to, violent and/or belligerent and/or insulting remarks, including sexist, racist, homophobic or anti-ethnic slurs, bigotry, and disparaging commentary, either spoken or written (offensive slang is included in this category). While each of you has a right to your own opinions, inflammatory language founded in ignorance or hate is unacceptable and will be dealt with immediately.

Disruptive behavior includes the use of cell phones, pagers, or any other form of electronic communication during the class session (email, web-browsing, etc.). Disruptive behavior also includes whispering or talking when another member of the class is speaking or engaged in relevant conversation (remember that I am a member of this class as well). This classroom functions on the

premise of respect, and you will be asked to leave the classroom if you violate any part of this statement on civility.

However, please do feel free to engage in constructive criticism and debates. This policy is not meant to discourage disagreement or passionate conversation. We will be engaging in discussions and/or debates about a host of potentially controversial topics; it is not my intention to censor your opinions. Yet, I do feel it is important to foster an environment conducive to learning where no one feels threatened and/or not entitled to their opinion.

Remember, if you disagree with someone (including myself), always remember to argue against the **IDEA** the person is presenting—not the individual.

Late Work: While I understand that circumstances may arise that could prevent you from turning an assignment in on time, **I penalize late work severely! You will lose 10 points from your grade for each day that the assignment is late.** Here is a breakdown of how the penalties will be applied:

15 minutes–24 hours late= -10 points
24 hours, 1 minute–48 hours late= -20 points
48 hours, 1 minute–72 hours late= -30 points
72 hours, 1 minute–96 hours late= -40 points
96 hours, 1 minute–120 hours late= -50 points
120 hours, 1 minute–144 hours late= -60 points
144 hours, 1 minute–168 hours late= -70 points
168 hours, 1 minute–192 hours late= -80 points
192 hours, 1 minute–216 hours late= -90 points
216 hours late or more= 0 for the assignment

However, **I am always willing to discuss extensions ahead of time.** If you have a reasonable reason why you believe you should be entitled to an extension, either come see me after class, arrange to visit me in my office or the UWC, or e-mail me. **Once an extension is agreed upon in writing, the due date of the extension will become your new due date. Penalties will then only be incurred predicated off of the new due date.**

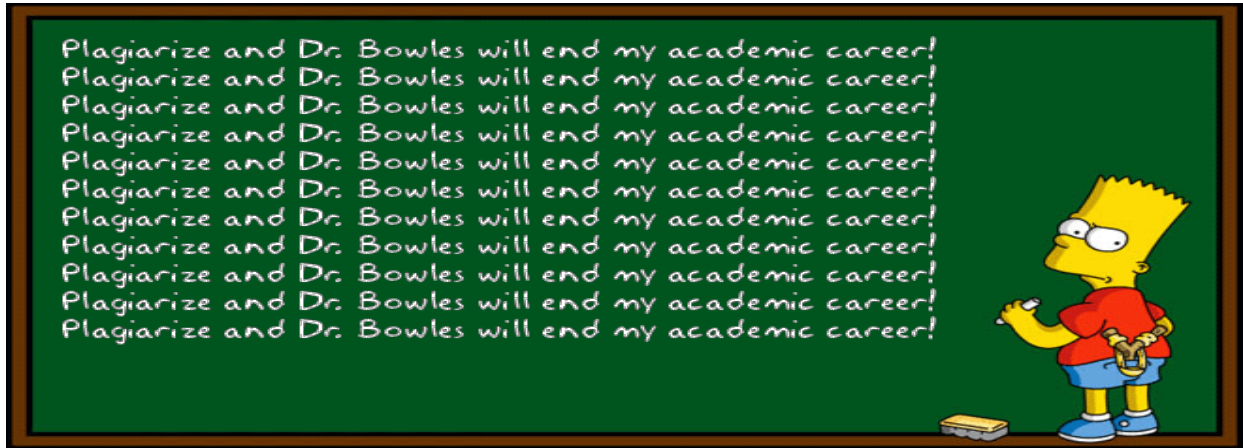
Academic Integrity: Texas A&M University-Central Texas values the integrity of the academic enterprise and strives for the highest standards of academic conduct. A&M-Central Texas expects its students, faculty, and staff to support the adherence to high standards of personal and scholarly conduct to preserve the honor and integrity of the creative community. Any deviation by students from this expectation may result in a failing grade for the assignment and potentially a failing grade for the course. All academic misconduct concerns will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. When in doubt on collaboration, citation, or any issue, please contact your instructor before taking a course of action.

For more [information regarding the student conduct process](https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct.html), [<https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct.html>].

If you know of potential honor violations by other students, you may [submit a referral](https://cm.maxient.com/reporting.php?TAMUCentralTexas), [<https://cm.maxient.com/reporting.php?TAMUCentralTexas>].

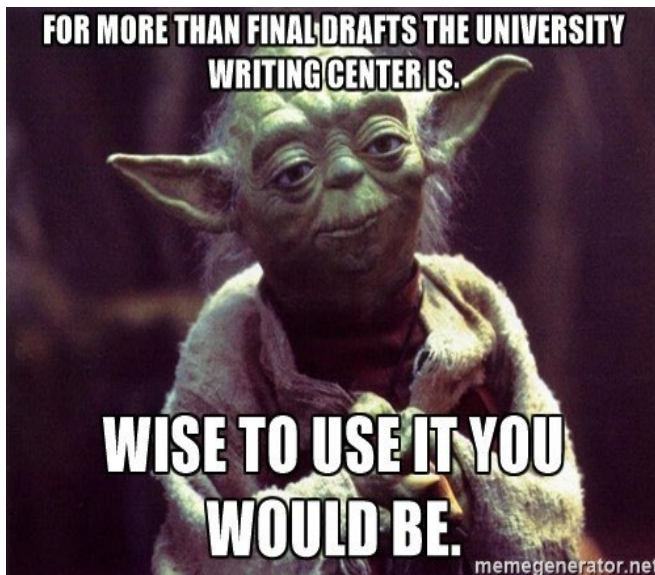
Class Plagiarism Policy: As an instructor, I operate by the CWPA (Council of Writing Program Administrators) definition of plagiarism: “In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer **deliberately** uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.” The key here is deliberate—I do not want you to be so paranoid about plagiarism that it inhibits your creativity.

To that extent, any instance of “plagiarism” that **does not appear to be deliberate in intent** will be dealt with “in house.” You may be asked to revise; I may even deduct from your grade if this was a result of negligence. However, unless intentional, you will not fail merely as a result of plagiarism, nor will you be brought up on plagiarism charges.



That being said, **deliberate plagiarism will not be tolerated in any manner.** If you willfully steal someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledgment, or submit an assignment for this class that you submitted for another (without previously discussing it with me), **be forewarned—you will receive a 0 for the assignment, and I will pursue plagiarism charges with the utmost zeal!** Such behavior hinders your learning, is unfair to your classmates, is a violation of my trust, and—above all else—is highly unethical. **This is your one and only warning—you would be wise to heed it!**

University Writing Center: For the summer semesters, all University Writing Center (UWC) tutoring services are entirely online. The hours of operation are from 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday with additional hours Monday through Thursday nights from 6:00-9:00 p.m. The UWC is also offering hours from 12:00-3:00 p.m. on Saturdays.



Tutors are prepared to help writers of all levels and abilities at any stage of the writing process. While tutors will not write, edit, or grade papers, they will assist students in developing more effective composing practices. By providing a practice audience for students’ ideas and writing, our tutors highlight the ways in which they read and interpret students’ texts, offering guidance and support throughout the various stages of the writing process. In addition, students may work independently in the UWC by checking out a laptop that runs the Microsoft Office suite and connects to WIFI, or by consulting our

resources on writing, including all of the relevant style guides. Whether you need help brainstorming ideas, organizing an essay, proofreading, understanding proper citation practices, or just want a quiet place to work, the UWC is here to help!

Students may arrange a one-to-one session with a trained and experienced writing tutor by making an appointment via WOnline at <https://tamuct.mywconline.com/>. In addition, you can email Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu if you have any questions about the UWC, need any assistance with scheduling, or would like to schedule a recurring appointment with your favorite tutor.

Tutoring and Success Coaching: Tutoring and success coaching services are available to all A&M-Central Texas students, both virtually and in-person. To schedule tutoring sessions or view tutor availability, please contact Warriorcenter@tamuct.edu or visit Warrior Hall, 111.

If you have questions about these or other academic support services or are interested in becoming a tutor, please contact the Warrior Center for Student Success, Equity and Inclusion at (254) 501-5836, email us at WarriorCenter@tamuct.edu. You are welcome to visit the Warrior Center at Warrior Hall, suite 212.

Chat live with a remote tutor 24/7 for almost any subject from on your computer! Tutor.com is an online tutoring platform that enables A&M-Central Texas students to log in and receive online tutoring support at no additional cost. This tool provides tutoring in over 40 subject areas except writing support. Access Tutor.com through Canvas.

University Library & Archives: The University Library & Archives provides many services in support of research across campus and at a distance. We offer over 350 electronic databases containing approximately 631,525 eBooks and 75,149 journals, in addition to the 97,443 items in our print collection, which can be mailed to students who live more than 50 miles from campus. Research guides for each subject taught at A&M-Central Texas are available through our website to help students navigate these resources. On campus, the library offers technology including cameras, laptops, microphones, webcams, and digital sound recorders.

Research assistance from a librarian is also available 24 hours a day through our online chat service, and at the reference desk when the library is open. Research sessions can be scheduled for more comprehensive assistance, and may take place virtually through WebEx, Microsoft Teams or in-person at the library. [Schedule an appointment here](https://tamuct.libcal.com/appointments) [https://tamuct.libcal.com/appointments]. Assistance may cover many topics, including how to find articles in peer-reviewed journals, how to cite resources, and how to piece together research for written assignments.

Our 27,000-square-foot facility on the A&M-Central Texas main campus includes student lounges, private study rooms, group workspaces, computer labs, family areas suitable for all ages, and many other features. Services such as interlibrary loan, TexShare, binding, and laminating are available. The library frequently offers workshops, tours, readings, and other events. For more information, please visit our [Library website](#)

[<https://tamuct.libguides.com/index>]

Canvas Support: Use the Canvas Help link, located at the bottom of the left-hand menu, for issues with Canvas. You can select “Chat with Canvas Support,” submit a support request through “Report a Problem,” or call the Canvas support line: 1-844-757-0953.

For issues related to course content and requirements, contact your instructor.

Emergency Warning System for Texas A&M University–Central Texas SAFEZONE: SafeZone provides a public safety application that gives you the ability to call for help with the push of a button. It also provides Texas A&M University-Central Texas the ability to communicate emergency information quickly via push notifications, email, and text messages.

All students automatically receive email and text messages via their myCT accounts. Downloading SafeZone allows access to push notifications and enables you to connect directly for help through the app.

You can download SafeZone from the app store and use your myCT credentials to log in. If you would like more information, you can visit the [SafeZone](http://www.safezoneapp.com) website [www.safezoneapp.com].

To register SafeZone on your phone, please follow these 3 easy steps:

1. Download the SafeZone App from your phone store using the link below:
 - o [iPhone/iPad](https://apps.apple.com/app/safezone/id533054756): [<https://apps.apple.com/app/safezone/id533054756>]
 - o [Android Phone / Tablet](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.criticalarc.safezoneapp)
[<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.criticalarc.safezoneapp>]
2. Launch the app and enter your myCT email address (e.g. {name}@tamuct.edu)
3. Complete your profile and accept the terms of service

Online Proctored Testing: A&M-Central Texas uses Proctorio for online identity verification and proctored testing. This service is provided at no direct cost to students. If the course requires identity verification or proctored testing, the technology requirements are: Any computer meeting the minimum computing requirements, plus web camera, speaker, and microphone (or headset). Proctorio requires use of the Chrome web browser with their custom plug in installed.

Other Technology Support: For log-in problems, students should contact Help Desk Central, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Email: helpdesk@tamu.edu
Phone: (254) 519-5466
[Web Chat](http://hdc.tamu.edu): [<http://hdc.tamu.edu>]

Please let the support technician know you are an A&M–Central Texas student.

Drop Policy: If you discover that you need to drop this class, you must complete the [Drop Request](#) Dynamic Form through Warrior Web.

[<https://federation.ngwebsolutions.com/sp/startSSO.ping?PartnerIdpId=https://eis-prod.ec.tamuct.edu:443/samlssso&SpSessionAuthnAdapterId=tamuctDF&TargetResource=https%3a%2f%2fdynamicforms.ngwebsolutions.com%2fSubmit%2fStart%2f53b8369e-0502-4f36-be43-f02a4202f612>]

Faculty cannot drop students; this is always the responsibility of the student. The Registrar's Office will provide a deadline on the Academic Calendar for which the form must be completed. Once you submit the completed form to the Registrar's Office, you must go into Warrior Web and confirm that you are no longer enrolled. If you still show as enrolled, FOLLOW-UP with the Registrar's Office immediately. You are to attend class until the procedure is complete to avoid penalty for absence. Should you miss the drop deadline or fail to follow the procedure, you will receive an F in the course, which may affect your financial aid and/or VA educational benefits.

Academic Accommodations: At Texas A&M University-Central Texas, we value an inclusive learning environment where every student has an equal chance to succeed and has the right to a barrier-free education. The Warrior Center for Student Success, Equity and Inclusion is responsible for ensuring that students with a disability receive equal access to the university's programs, services and activities. If you believe you have a disability requiring reasonable accommodations, please contact the Office of Access and Inclusion, WH-212; or call (254) 501-5836. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

For more information, please visit our [Access & Inclusion](#) Canvas page (log-in required) [<https://tamuct.instructure.com/courses/717>]

Title IX Rights and Reporting Responsibilities: A&M-Central Texas is committed to creating a safe and open learning environment for all students. If you or another student has experienced any form of gender discrimination or sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, and/or sex-based stalking, help and support are available. Our university strongly encourages all members of our campus community to report incidents and seek support for gender discrimination and sexual misconduct through the Title IX Office. You may contact the Title IX Office at 254.519.5716, titleix@tamuct.edu, Founders Hall 317B, or learn more by visiting the [Title IX webpage](#) [<https://www.tamuct.edu/compliance/titleix.html>].

Please be aware that that under [Title IX](#), [Texas Senate Bill 212](#), and [System Regulation 08.01.01](#), [<https://policies.tamus.edu/08-01-01.pdf>] all university employees are mandated reporters and are required to disclose information about suspected or alleged violations as listed above and defined in System Regulation 08.01.01. If the Title IX Office receives information about an incident, they will reach out to offer information about resources, rights, and procedural options as a member of the campus community. Although I have an obligation to report, you will, in most cases, control how your case will be handled. When working with the Title IX Office you will have access to resources and accommodations but also have the opportunity to express if you wish to move forward with an investigation. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the options available to you as a student. Community members are not required to respond to this outreach.

If you or another student wishes to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact the [Student Wellness & Counseling Center](https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/student-counseling.html), [https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/student-counseling.html], 254.501.5955, or swacc@tamuct.edu, located in Warrior Hall Room 207L or the Student Support Advocate, 254.501.5978 or ssa@tamuct.edu, located in founder Hall Room 317D.

Pregnant and/or Parenting Students Rights and Accommodations: A&M-Central Texas supports students who are pregnant, experiencing pregnancy-related conditions, and/or parenting. In accordance with requirements of [Title IX and related guidance from US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights](#), the Associate Dean in the Division of Student Affairs, (254) 501-5909, can assist students who are pregnant, experiencing pregnancy-related conditions, and/or parenting by provide flexible and individualized reasonable accommodations. Students should seek out assistance as early in the pregnancy as possible through the [Pregnancy & Parenting webpage](#) [https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/pregnant-and-parenting-students.html]. For more information, please visit [Student Affairs](#) [https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/pregnant-and-parenting-students.html]. If you would like to read more about these [requirements and guidelines](#) online, please visit the website [http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf].

[Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972](#) specifically prohibits discrimination against a student based on pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery from any of these conditions [https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.html].

Students experiencing any form of discrimination due to any of these conditions are encouraged to reach out to the Title IX Coordinator, 254.519.5716, titleix@tamuct.edu, Founders Hall 317B, or the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, 254.501.5909, Warrior Hall 105.

A Note about Sexual Violence at A&M-Central Texas: Sexual violence is a serious safety, social justice, and public health issue. The university offers support for anyone struggling with these issues. University faculty are mandated reporters, so if someone discloses that they were sexually assaulted (or a victim of Domestic/Dating Violence or Stalking) while a student at TAMUCT, faculty members are required to inform the Title IX Office. If you want to discuss any of these issues confidentially, you can do so through Student Wellness and Counseling (254-501-5955) located on the second floor of Warrior Hall (207L).

Sexual violence can occur on our campus because predators often feel emboldened, and victims often feel silenced or shamed. It is incumbent on ALL of us to find ways to actively create environments that tell predators we don't agree with their behaviors and tell survivors we will support them. Your actions matter. Don't be a bystander; be an agent of change. For additional information on campus policy and resources visit the [Title IX webpage](#) [https://www.tamuct.edu/compliance/titleix.html].

Behavioral Intervention: Texas A&M University-Central Texas cares about the safety, health, and well-being of its students, faculty, staff, and community. If you are aware of individuals for whom you have a concern, please make a referral to the Behavioral Intervention Team. Referring your concern shows you care. You can complete the [referral](#) online

[<https://cm.maxient.com/reporting.php?TAMUCentralTexas>].

Anonymous referrals are accepted. Please see the [Behavioral Intervention Team](#) website for more information [<https://www.tamuct.edu/bit>]. If a person's behavior poses an imminent threat to you or another, contact 911 or A&M-Central Texas University Police at 254-501-5805.



Artifact Collection: To ensure the learning outcomes are met in the M.A. in English program, there is a program-wide artifact collection process. To that end, artifacts from ENGL 5382: Composition Assessment this semester may be used for programmatic assessment. Please note that all efforts will be made to keep your identity anonymous; as such, all identifying markers will

be removed from your work if used for programmatic assessment. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu.

Syllabus Change Policy: Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the grading scheme, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

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Major Projects

“Valid? I’ll Be the Judge of That!”

Everyone’s a critic, right? True, but when it comes to making educational decisions, having a sound argument for the validity of a writing assessment is crucial. As we have learned, these decisions have profound impacts on the lives of students and frequently influence curriculum.

For your first major project, you are going to conduct a validity analysis of an existing assessment model that we have not previously read about and/or discussed in class. (If you do desperately wish to write about an assessment model we have already engaged with, please contact me. In rare instances, I will be open to allowing you to use an assessment model with which you have already interacted.) Your main goal will be to make an argument for the relative validity of the assessment model in relation to its use in a specific context.

Your first step will be to choose your assessment model. You have a variety of options here. You may go more local and decide to analyze a writing assessment instrument used in your own (or a colleague’s) classroom. Some of you may be more inclined to look at program assessment practices. Others may boldly wish to challenge the practices of certain large-scale writing assessments. The possibilities are endless.



After you have chosen the assessment model you wish to analyze, you will next want to consider several facets of the assessment model. How is this writing assessment used in a particular educational context? What interpretations, decisions, and actions are made from this assessment model? Which specific types of validity (e.g. construct, predictive, consequential,

unified construct, etc.) seem most pertinent to such an analysis? Why—specifically—do you make the evaluation you are making of the validity of the assessment?

You will then want to make a strong argument for the relative validity of the assessment model. Draw on the heuristic questions provided (along with others you formulate during your analysis) in order to make a compelling argument in regard to the validity of this particular assessment model. Additionally, you should provide recommendations to improve the assessment model or provide solid reasoning for why the assessment model cannot be improved.

Your “Valid? I’ll Be the Judge of That!” project should be four to five pages double-spaced. Although you are not required to have any set number of scholarly sources, your validity analysis will most likely benefit from them immensely. Feel free to use sources from the class as well as from outside research to support and bolster your argument. Draw upon what other scholars have to say to defend your validity analysis and when making your recommendations. You should cite any sources you use in either APA or MLA format and provide a proper references or works cited page.

Assessment for your “Valid? I’ll Be the Judge of That!” project will be predicated on how well you depict the context and purposes for which the assessment model is used; your ability to make a nuanced and well-informed argument in relation to the validity of the assessment model; the theoretical and scholarly reasoning you use to support your validity argument; the practicality, usefulness, and merit of the recommendations you provide; and the overall polished nature of your work (e.g., grammar, proofreading, proper APA or MLA format, etc.). When I finish reading your “Valid? I’ll Be the Judge of That!” project, I will ask myself: *How well has this student demonstrated their understanding of validity through this analysis of an existing assessment model, especially within the parameters of the particular educational context in which the assessment model is used to make specific educational decisions?*

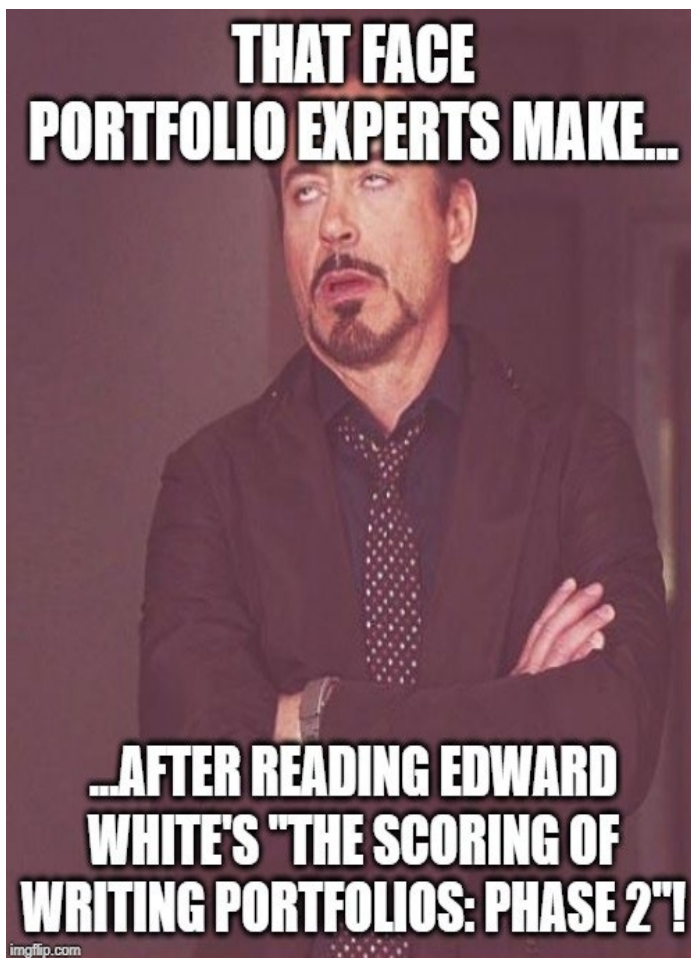
“Controversies and Issues in Writing Assessment! A Scholarly Manuscript Pertaining to Writing Assessment”

Now that you have read around in the scholarship on writing assessment, you are hopefully beginning to formulate some strong opinions and/or curiosities regarding particular facets of writing assessment. Perhaps you are intrigued by the relationship between validity and reliability or specifically by how we define validity. You might be interested in the conflicts between psychometricians and writing assessment experts throughout the history of writing assessment and how such conflicts have shaped that history. Maybe you are intrigued about how to incorporate ePortfolios into your writing class successfully. Advocating for or against standardized writing assessment might have piqued your interest. Or the intersection between race and writing assessment may be a new passion you have. This project is your opportunity to delve deeply into the particular scholarly interests that are emerging for you in regard to writing assessment.

For this project, you will be composing a scholarly manuscript of approximately 12 double-spaced pages. This actually places your manuscript between the typical length for a conference paper (approximately eight pages double-spaced) and a feature article in a scholarly journal (approximately 15-20 pages double-spaced). Ideally, this will leave you with a manuscript that can either be cut down for a conference paper or expanded upon for a feature article in a scholarly journal. This should get you started on developing material to help build your C.V.

You will first want to select an area of interest, controversy, issue, etc. to explore. I provided several examples already; however, you are free to choose any topic you wish as long as it pertains to writing assessment in some way. Feel free to email me and/or set up a conference with me if you wish to discuss your topic further.

Once you have selected your topic, you will then want to begin to conduct your research. Investigate what the top writing assessment scholars have to say on the issue. Read across a wide range of sources. Take advantage of the multitude of databases and journals I have provided and/or suggested for you. As you progress in your readings about this topic, pay particular



attention to the main voices in the conversation. Actively sift through the references or works cited pages of the sources you read. Overall, make sure you explore the topic with depth and interact with a variety of sources. As graduate students, you need to begin researching as thoroughly as scholars within the field do.

After you have read around enough to be expert on your topic, you will want to begin composing your manuscript (albeit this will not be the end of your research process). Your scholarly manuscript should have a compelling thesis to defend and/or an intriguing research question that will be explored. With a text of this length, you will want to be particularly attentive to the amount of relevant background information you present (consider your audience and what they need to know), the logic and fluency of the organization of the article, and the level of depth with which you engage your sources and explicate your arguments. You are writing as a scholar now; you need to be thorough and comprehensive while also being clear and concise.

Your scholarly manuscript should have eight scholarly sources with at least two being from outside the class. Nevertheless, you can use more or less if it suits the need of your project, but consult with me if you plan to use less. (You will be expected to make a strong argument for doing so.) Also, please remember to quote when the exact words are essential to your argument and paraphrase when they are not. Try not to litter your manuscript with quotes. You may use either APA or MLA format for your manuscript yet please adhere to the citation practices and manuscript guidelines of either. You should also have a complete references or works cited page.

When I go to assess your “Controversies and Issues in Writing Assessment! A Scholarly Manuscript Pertaining to Writing Assessment” project, I will primarily be concerned with how well you demonstrate an awareness of the scholarly conversation into which you are entering; your ability to make a compelling and well-reasoned argument about the writing assessment topic you are addressing; the overall quality of your organization, including providing relevant background information for your audience where necessary, engaging with your sources when pertinent, and evolving your argument in a clear and logical fashion; the rhetorical effectiveness of your manuscript in relation to your intended audience; and the polish and preparation of your manuscript (e.g., grammar, proofreading, proper APA or MLA format, manuscript formatting conventions, etc.). The main questions I will ask myself will be similar to that of a reviewer for a journal: *Does this manuscript make a substantial and intriguing contribution to the field of writing assessment that scholars in the field will be interested in reading? Is this scholarly manuscript worthy of being presented at an academic conference that features graduate student work and/or published in a scholarly journal that primarily features graduate student work?*

“My Very Own Assessment! Developing and Designing a Writing Assessment to Improve Teaching and Learning”

It is now time to put theory into practice! For your last assignment of the semester, you will design your own writing assessment. You have a multitude of options at your disposal. Your assessment design can be at the classroom, course, program, institution, district, state, or national level. You may wish to work on a new assignment for your class complete with a rubric and guiding philosophy for responding to the project. Potentially, you could design a capstone project for a program. You might want to develop a way of assessing the writing of the students in your program. You may even wish to work on improving a statewide or national large-scale writing assessment. The choice is yours—you have a multitude of ways you can impact student learning at a variety of educational levels.

First, you will want to consider what educational context you are designing your particular assessment for and consider various facets of this particular context. Who will be taking this writing assessment? Who will be making decisions predicated upon it? What types of decisions will they be making? Why is such an assessment important? What value will the information this assessment provides bring to this specific educational context? Etc. Although there is no set structure for this project, you will want to address these issues in your materials for your assessment design.

Next you will want to provide a detailed description of your writing assessment, including plans for collecting and analyzing the data, any apparatuses and/or instruments necessary for the process, and a structure for reporting on assessment results. This particular aspect of your project needs to be meticulous and hyper-organized. Any qualified teacher, Writing Program Administrator (WPA), and/or assessment expert should be able to implement and execute this writing assessment based on the description you provide.

And, lastly, you will want to provide a theoretical and scholarly justification for your writing assessment. Drawing on the theories and scholarship we have engaged with throughout the semester, as well as any additional sources you wish to bring to the project, you need to articulate a solid rationale and justification for your assessment design. Inform other writing assessment experts of why your writing assessment is a valid and effective measure of student learning. Furthermore, you will also want to argue why this writing assessment will enhance teaching and learning in the particular educational context for which it is designed.

There is no set length nor precise requirements for the instruments and process descriptions for this project. It is up to you to determine what materials, resources, and/or instructions you need to provide. That being said, I—once again—cannot emphasize enough the value of being meticulous and thorough with this project. As for your explanation of the context and theoretical and scholarly justification, I do expect this to be at least three to four pages double-spaced with significant engagement with writing assessment scholarship to justify your design and decisions.

Assessment of your “My Very Own Assessment! Developing and Designing a Writing Assessment to Improve Teaching and Learning” project will rely on the quality of your depiction

of the educational context in which your writing assessment design will be implemented; the strength of the description of the process for your assessment design that you provide; the quality of the supporting apparatuses, resources, and materials you include; most importantly—the theoretical and practical power of the justifications you provide; and how polished your work is (e.g., logical sequencing, grammar, proofreading, proper APA or MLA format, etc.). When I assess your “My Very Own Assessment! Developing and Designing a Writing Assessment to Improve Teaching and Learning” project, the primary questions I will ask myself will be: *Will this writing assessment design allow educators and stakeholders to make valid and effective interpretations and decisions as well as take effective actions from the results it produces? How well will this writing assessment design improve teaching and learning in the particular educational context for which it is designed?*