

A PREFACE FOR INSTRUCTORS

Like many textbooks perhaps, this one began in frustration. As members of a committee charged with developing across-the-curriculum writing instruction, we eventually began a search for textbooks. We wanted to introduce first-year writers to instructions and examples based on a broad range of academic and scholarly writing. We also wanted to present academic writing as relevant, exciting, and important. The most likely candidates, we assumed, would be writing across the curriculum (WAC) and writing in the disciplines (WID) textbooks.

We soon found that the books in these categories consisted of lengthy instruction in academic research and writing, along with collections of readings culled almost exclusively from mainstream newspapers and magazines, trade publications, and general-audience nonfiction books. In other words, the existing WAC and WID books contained little if any actual academic writing. Further, most of the topics seemed shop-worn (especially for instructors), and many of the essays seemed dated; none seemed to adequately represent what we took to be the most exciting and important issues of our time. Meanwhile, those few non-WAC/WID textbooks that did represent scholarly prose were confined to the humanities and social sciences. Science and technology fields were virtually absent. And such textbooks were lopsided in more than disciplinary ways: few seemed to explore the incredible diversity of perspectives that we regularly encountered in the academy.

Our students were compelled to take first-year writing—a course supposedly designed to prepare them for writing in future courses, regardless of their chosen major. They thus needed access to a wide array of writing drawn from the entire disciplinary spectrum. They also required immediate access to the different ways of thinking available to them as members of the academic community. But we held another requirement for a book: writers, we knew from experience, are far more likely to be engaged when they are asked to participate in lively conversations about contemporary and complex topics. Nothing stifles writing and discussion more than the sense of working in isolation, or writing about largely settled, dead-end issues. We wanted a text that collected essays clustered around timely, compelling, and intriguing topics.

Having no luck finding such a book, we decided to write it ourselves.

ACADEMIC WRITING, REAL WORLD TOPICS

We endeavored to create a book that provided completely up-to-date rhetorical instruction in conversation with cutting-edge readings divided into several chapters, each chapter focusing on a topic area relevant to student writers both inside and outside the academy. *Academic Writing, Real World Topics* features contemporary readings on major issues of real import to contemporary students: living in a digital culture, learning from games, learning in a digital age, living in a global culture, our post-human future, surviving economic crisis and prospects for the future, and assessing armed global conflict. Students will see how contemporary writers like themselves respond to issues relevant to their lives while maintaining scholarly rigor and incorporating the ideas of others, past and present.

Guide to Academic Writing

Part I of *Academic Writing, Real World Topics* is a Guide to academic writing. This part of the book covers rhetorical strategies and approaches to academic writing within and across the major divisions of the academy: the humanities, the social sciences, and the sciences and technology fields.

Rhetoric that Speaks to Content

In keeping with our belief—based on research and experience—that instruction should be treated in the contexts of reading and writing, we employ extensive cross-referencing between the rhetoric and the reader. For each writing strategy or essay element that we explain in the rhetoric, we provide examples from essays in the reader, or from one of many resources included in each chapter's Suggested Additional Resources. For example, the section on essay conclusions gives three examples of conclusions, each taken from the Real World Topics section and written by a scholar in each of the discipline areas (humanities, social sciences, and physical sciences). Page numbers after each example allow readers to flip to the full essay. The Real World Topics section also refers to the Guide to academic writing in chapter introductions, essay questions, and questions for synthesis and contribution. Rhetorical modes and examples are indexed in the back of the book for quick cross-reference.

Thus, the rhetoric shows student writers how to employ scholarly *writing practices as demonstrated by the readings*, while the readings invite students to engage with scholarly *content in connection with the rhetoric*.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Accompanying its focus on disciplinary distinctions is another important guiding rationale for this book: the making of interdisciplinary connections. Many WAC textbooks (and surely most WID textbooks) divide their readings into disciplinary or broader academic categories. Such an arrangement recommends an insularity that defeats one of the principles guiding writing in and across the disciplines: that the various approaches to knowledge and the world are interconnected and that disciplines as seemingly disparate as biology and history share many features. Furthermore, such disciplines often speak to each other in their writings on the same or closely related topics.

Disciplinary Distinctions

Academic Writing, Real World Topics aims to reveal these connections and shared features, but it also clarifies disciplinary distinctions. In fact, when different disciplinary approaches are juxtaposed, their distinctive features become more apparent. Throughout this book, we highlight the distinguishing features of writing in the various areas of the academy, demonstrating through examples and instruction the crucial role that the writing context and the composition of the reading audience plays in the composition of academic prose.

Focus on Scholarly Writing

Academic Writing, Real World Topics focuses primarily on academic, scholarly writing. It includes timely, often introductory, yet scholarly essays that speak to one another within and across disciplinary boundaries. Most of the essays address topics with scholarly rigor, sourcing, and disciplinary/interdisciplinary commitment. However, in order to demonstrate the distinctions between academic and other writing, we have included a few essays written by academics for general audiences or in trade magazines, as well as the writing of non-academics originally published in mainstream or specialized venues. These inclusions are designed to help students move from more general discourse toward academic reading, research, and writing.

Full-Length Essays

With a few exceptions, *Academic Writing, Real World Topics* uses essays or chapters in their entirety. Full-length essays allow students to see how all the parts of a piece of writing work together. Essay lengths vary from two to twenty-five pages.

Chapter Introductions Put Readings in Context

Each chapter is preceded by an introduction of eight to fifteen pages, which contextualizes the readings as part of broad discourses. The introductions are general and synoptic rather than exhaustive and synthetic. That is, we aim at orienting students to the topics, rather than doing the work of interpretation, summary, synthesis, and contribution for them.

Chapter introductions to this book's topics may be introducing the intricacies of an issue to both students *and* teacher. Armed with these introductions and guiding questions, instructors can confidently apply their own expertise in writing to salient issues in a variety of academic fields.

Instruction in Digital Media Literacy

As teachers of such courses as “writing for digital media,” “multi-modal authorship,” “writing for television and film,” and “writing and the network,” we insisted on a book that responds adequately to the explosion of digital media both inside and outside the academy. Two chapters of the reader are devoted to aspects of the digital media—its impact on the world at large and its impact on education.

We also address digital media literacy in the Guide to academic writing. Rather than attempting to suppress or ignore social media and other Web 2.0 technologies as many other writing textbooks are doing, instructional apparatuses throughout the reader call for the use of these technologies as tools for research, communications, interpretation, and composition.

Writing Instruction Designed for the Spectrum of Students

First-year writing is compulsory at virtually every university and college in the United States. Students come to the course often not entirely enthusiastically, but with a common need: to prepare themselves for writing in future courses in every discipline. They need—and instructors need to provide—access to a wide array of writing drawn from the entire disciplinary spectrum. In addition, students and their instructors require immediate access to the variety of ways of thinking available to them as members of the academic community.

This book provides students with that access, and instructors with that resource. Designed for the spectrum of student writers, from reluctant to gung-ho, from the well prepared to the less prepared, it demystifies as much as possible the reading and writing processes of academic writers.

Classroom Success

We have classroom-tested the Guide to academic writing, as well as all of the chapters in *Real World Topics*, and have found that each works extremely well to encourage and foster student discussion and writing.

Other Features of This Text

- **Combined author/subject headnotes before each reading.** Each reading is prefaced with a short, one- to two-page introduction, including a short biography of the author.
- **Sample student essays.** Students often ask us for samples of how a “real student” would write an assigned essay. In order to help allay student anxieties about how they, as non-experts, could approach a topic, we provide several essays written by college students, which respond to prompts we suggest at the end of each chapter. These annotated essays are one example of how *Academic Writing, Real World Topics* links rhetorical instruction to content.
- **Annotated readings.** We include fully annotated academic essays throughout. Annotations point to various features of the text, important passages, rhetorical moves, cues for careful reading, and notes on possible interpretations.
- **“As You Read” guides to each chapter and reading.** Chapter introductions and author/subject headnotes end with a guide to orient students to the readings. These guides help focus student attention on particular issues in the texts. They also provide handy class discussion-starters for instructors. “As You Read” guides to the chapter introductions encourage readers to locate connections or points of contact among readings, while “As You Read” guides to the essays encourage students to connect readings to their own experience.
- **“What It Says” questions after each reading.** Each essay is followed by at least four reading comprehension questions, which may be used for out-of-class reflection or writing, or for in-class discussion or writing.
- **“How It Says It” questions after each reading.** Each essay is also followed by at least three prompts designed to help students identify, understand, and practice the rhetorical moves employed by the authors. Instructors may use these prompts for classroom discussion or as preliminary writing assignments to move readers beyond content comprehension and toward planning discipline-specific and/or interdisciplinary writing about a given topic.

- **“Write about It” questions after each reading.** Each essay is followed by at least two “Write about It” questions that prompt students to grapple with and offer inventive, sustained responses to the arguments presented.
- **Writing prompts that facilitate synthesis and contribution at the end of each chapter.** Each chapter ends with at least four questions and suggestions for writing. The prompts point to and encourage the characteristic moves made by writers as they converse with others and construct their own arguments. The **“Questions for Synthesis”** are designed to move students toward the synthesis and analysis of texts and topics. Then, based on thoughtful analysis of a group of sources, the **“Questions for Contribution”** are designed to guide students into making their own contributions to the topic area, often in more formal essays that draw on further research.
- **“Suggested Additional Resources” bibliography at the end of each chapter introduction.** In order to facilitate additional research into the topics treated, we also include a Suggested Additional Resources list at the end of each chapter introduction. This material, which includes articles, books, blog posts, websites, films, and short videos, is essential for demonstrating that the essays we include are introductory and that the essays in each chapter merely open up a vast and varied area of inquiry.
- **Index and Glossary.** At the end of the book we include a subject/name index, as well as a glossary containing definitions of key terms used in the humanities, social sciences, and physical sciences and technology fields. The glossary also includes brief definitions of the disciplines and some of the approaches they take.

CONTACT US

We hope your experience teaching with *Academic Writing, Real World Topics* is as rewarding for you and your students as it has been for us and ours. We welcome your comments, questions, critiques, suggestions, and stories of classroom experiences related to this book. Please write to: AcademicWritingRealWorldTopics@gmail.com.

PART I **ACADEMIC
WRITING:
A GUIDE**

INTRODUCTION

The Basics

As a first-year college student, you may or may not have declared a major. But you *have* decided to enter academia for at least two years. You will be asked to read, interpret, summarize, and contribute to academic **discourses**. This guide will introduce you to the **rhetorical strategies** (the strategies you use to get your point across and persuade your audience) common to all academic disciplines, as well as to those specific to each of the major divisions in the academy:

- the humanities,
- the social sciences, and
- science and technology.

Two ideas to keep in mind:

- **Each discipline has its own conventions.** Each major academic grouping has its own writing conventions: styles, methods, and approaches. Sometimes these conventions are specific to broad academic areas; sometimes they are discipline-specific.

BUT ...

- **Good writing is good writing.** You can apply most of what you learn here to everything you write, in any field. Writers in every field use similar means to organize material, address the reader, consider the texts of others, and cite sources.

This book gets you started with academic writing. But the skills you learn here you can use throughout life:

- **In undergraduate courses**, to write psychology research papers, science lab reports, literary analyses, and history papers, for example.
- **In job applications**, for application letters and résumés.
- **On the job**, for grant proposals, reports, memos, directions for employees, a new business plan, or a justification for a salary increase.
- **Off the job**, for writing e-mails, texts, and tweets to friends, blogs, letters to the editor, or contemplations on life.
- **In graduate courses** in any field, if you choose to continue.

Formal Writing—What’s That?

The writing maneuvers described below represent conscious choices that writers make every time they write formal academic or scholarly papers. The word “formal” brings up images of stiff, haughty people trying to impress each other with obscure words and hard-to-follow arguments. That is not what we mean.

A “formal” paper:

- **acknowledges what others have written** on the subject already, and gives it serious consideration;
- **is written clearly**, allowing others to understand and respond;
- **follows a structure or set of conventions** that scholars within each discipline follow. For example, before submitting it for a grade, for review, or for publication, writers of formal papers usually
 - annotate and summarize relevant texts,
 - synthesize the views of others,
 - carefully plan their approach to the topic, and
 - draft, revise, and edit their work.

“Formal writing,” therefore, is not an academic exercise completed just to fulfill an assignment. It’s writing that effectively and persuasively enters an important conversation in order to make a significant contribution.

REAL WORLD TOPICS

Part II of this book, Real World Topics, is a compilation of real academic writing. In Part II, you will see how real writers put the strategies you learned about in Part I into action.

The Readings

Reading is one of the best ways to learn how to write; theoretical discussions are less helpful without the context of real-world writing. So as you read this guide, you will be pointed to specific examples from Part II, as well as to pieces of academic writing published elsewhere. We hope the examples will help you understand how a particular writing maneuver operates in real academic writing.

The writing we draw from for Real World Topics includes the kind of writing we imagine you practicing—writing that engages complex, controversial, and exciting topics. Our aim is to introduce you to a variety of academic writing—in the context of lively and relevant conversations, rather than dull, dead areas of research. The articles in this book are written by scholars discussing critical issues that affect, inform, or interest academics and other scholars, as well as the world at large. The readings draw on various disciplines and represent the major groupings of the university: the arts, humanities, social sciences (including economics and business), physical sciences, and technology. These essays are meant to introduce you not only to academic writing, but also to scholarly thought itself.

We hope the readings found here will serve as invitations to their respective fields and to the world of thought and action that they represent. We also hope that the topics we introduce—living in a digital culture, learning from games, learning in a digital age, living in a global culture, our post-human future, surviving economic crisis and the future, and assessing armed global conflict—will interest you as a citizen of the world, now and beyond your academic career.

The topics we have included are designed to provoke spirited responses. Initially, you will read to familiarize yourself with the topics at hand. But we hope you will soon be drawn into the conversation. Ultimately, you will read the articles with a view to writing essays of your own: you will be reading as a writer.

Reading as a Writer

What does it mean to read as a writer? It means that you are reading not only to consume the texts of others, but also to respond to them. It also means that even as you read carefully to understand *what* the writer is saying, you will

simultaneously read to understand *how* the writer is saying it and *why* he or she is putting it that way.

After each of the readings in Part II,

- The first set of prompts for discussion and writing ask you to consider “**What It Says**”—the content of an argument.
- The second set of prompts asks you to consider “**How It Says It**”—the kinds of maneuvers the writers use to make their cases.

We often need to see how an argument is constructed in order to understand it. But knowing how something is put together is especially important when you are setting out to put a similar thing together yourself. Thus, when you read, **look for the writer’s characteristic maneuvers**. This may take two readings or more to figure out, particularly when a text is dense. But you will find that you get better at identifying the parts of an essay—and the moves made by writers within those parts—as you practice reading and interpreting them, especially when you practice constructing arguments in response to those you’ve read.

- The third section of prompts gets you started with this task, asking you to “**Write about It**”—to incorporate your own ideas and to respond thoughtfully and creatively to the discussion. The questions for synthesis and contribution at the end of each chapter help you to put the texts into conversation with each other and to contribute to a conversation yourself.

Digital and Visual Literacy

Whether or not you are a **digital native** (see Chapters 1 and 3 in Part II), you are living in a world saturated with digital media. In fact, if you are anything like the authors of this book, **Web 2.0** technologies may very well account for a good deal of your leisure activities. The digital world has profoundly altered the ways in which all of us receive and read “texts.” In this book, we use the word “texts” broadly—to refer to messages that may include words, still images, moving images, music, sound effects, visual effects, and other graphics. All of these elements, we believe, require both skills to compose and skills to interpret.

Yet in most secondary educational environments and in much of higher education as well, digital and visual literacy, or the kind of “reading” required in the digital world, is often ignored, or even denigrated as lacking legitimacy or worth. In the United States in particular, where standardized testing prevails in primary and secondary education, digital and visual literacy is even more prone to being

ANNOTATING A TEXT

In general, highlighter pens are of limited use. Your brain often doesn't process the information, so you'll have to come back to it later and put it into your own words to make sure you've got a handle on it.

A more effective method is to **annotate** or **gloss** a text. See the annotated article on pages 121–41 for an example. Annotating or glossing can take several forms, all of which you can use on one article:

- Note important terms and central ideas.
- Note the **topic**, **thesis**, and **evidence**. See the sections below for discussions of these terms. Again, it will be more effective to rewrite these parts of the text in your own words rather than merely underlining or highlighting them.
- Ask questions about the text. There may be something you don't understand that you'll need to look up in another source or read further to clarify.
- Note how one idea connects, or might connect, to another text or another idea in the same text. Linking what you already know to new information is the best way to learn and remember the new information. Once a concept is clear in your own head, you'll find it much easier to respond to.
- Make a short note in the margin that summarizes quotations that are striking or interesting. You might want to come back and quote or paraphrase these when you begin writing your own essay.
- List your own responses to the text as you read. Especially if the article is long and complex, you might have a hard time remembering your responses once you go to write your own essay. Including your responses to the text in the margins will help you to keep track of your own reactions to the reading.
- Once you've read the essay, write a short note of your impressions of it. Compare the article to others you've read. Note ideas you still don't understand. Note possible "holes" in the argument, or interesting ways you could expand upon or rebut the argument.

overlooked. Many students receive little or no training in the skills of analyzing or re-evaluating digital texts.

In this book, we hope to partially redress this situation by

1. valuing digital communications;
2. including readings that deal with the importance of digital communications in the world and in education;
3. asking you to communicate using Web 2.0 technologies;
4. asking you to interpret digital media as part of reading and responding to the compositions of others.

We hope that the value and importance we place on digital media not only will make you feel more comfortable as you enter into academic discourse, but also, and more importantly, will aid you in its composition and interpretation.