Fresh Voices
Composition at Cal Poly

2009–2010
Volume III

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Contents

Letter from the Director of Writing: Dr. Brenda Helmbrecht v

Writing with Images 2

Sequence One: Writers’ Histories 4

My Freedom 7
   Lanie Anton

Keeping it Personal 9
   Nicole Arentzoff

I Finally Got It 12
   William Conner

My Green Light 15
   Sofia Rodriguez-Mata

Sequence Two: Profiles 18

In the Mess of Things 21
   Emilie Schneider

My Tortilla King 26
   Michael Sudolsky

The Life-Changing Factory 30
   Evan Nickel

Can Texting Benefit English? 33
   Aaron Steinkraus

The Evolution of Communication 38
   Lindsey Wagner

The Journey Within 43
   Elisa Carey
Sequence Three: Rhetoric  48

Who’s Going to Teach Us?  51
  *Bryanna Lindgren*

License Renewal Laws for the Elderly  56
  *Trevor Bliss*

A Question of Individual Liberties? Or a Fight to Protect Children?
An Analysis of the Twisted Campaigning of Proposition 8  61
  *Alex Prahl*

A Conceivable Medical Breakthrough  65
  *Josie Fiske*

Costly Coasts  69
  *Alex Schmotter*

A Legacy in Disrepair  74
  *Michael Waddington*

Fresh Approaches  80

Confessions of a Chicketarian  83
  *Michael Sudolsky*

Christians or Christ?  86
  *Melissa Foucar*

Captured in Time  90
  *Tim Tapscott*

Appendices  95

English 134 General Education Course Objectives  97
Composition at Cal Poly: Catalog Course Descriptions  98
Tips for Succeeding in English 134  100
Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism  103
The University Writing Lab  105
The Graduation Writing Requirement  106
Submitting Your Work: *Fresh Voices 2009–2010*  108
Letter from the Director of Writing

Dear Composition Student:

Welcome to the third volume of *Fresh Voices*, a collection of writing that represents the effort, commitment, and talent of last year’s English 134 students. While enrolled in the very course you are taking right now, over one hundred of last year’s students submitted their work to be considered for publication in this collection. While the selection committee (which is comprised of English 134 instructors) only accepted nineteen essays to be included here, we were fortunate to have had many ambitious and dynamic pieces from which to choose. We selected work without regard for authorship, which is why one student who submitted multiple essays had two chosen for publication.

However, it’s important to note that we do not present these essays to you because they earned “As” (frankly, we don’t know what grades these essays received) or because they are perfect. Rather, the essays featured in the collection are typical of the intellectual engagement encouraged in Cal Poly’s writing classes. In effect, our intention is not for you to imitate these essays. We value the work of these writers because they took sophisticated approaches to the same assignments you are likely to meet in your English 134 course. Moreover, your English 134 instructor will likely have designed a unique approach to these assignments, and you may not see an essay that perfectly fits the task you are being asked to complete. The editors’ notes that precede each essay are intended to guide you as you read. I suggest reading each essay in this collection with an eye toward your own writing. Ask yourself, “What can I learn from students who have successfully completed English 134?” The essays featured here will offer you new ways to consider your own writing, perhaps in terms of how to craft an introduction, how to integrate quotations, or even how to develop and support your essay’s thesis.

At the end of the collection, you will also find some basic information about composition courses at Cal Poly. This year we have also included a list of advice for students enrolled in English 134. In addition, I encourage you to acquaint yourself with the “Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism” section. And finally, at the end of collection, you will find information for submitting your own work for consideration in next year’s *Fresh Voices*.

Please note that the online citations found within the collection have been formatted according to the 2008 Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines. Your instructor, however, may instruct you to format your online citations according to the recently
released MLA standards, which do not require long URLs. Citation standards are always in flux as new sources become available to researchers. Regardless of the citation style, keep in mind that online citations need to offer your reader sufficient information to locate your online sources. In addition, keep in mind that all online sources need to be cited, including videos, podcasts, images, and blogs.

As the Director of Writing at Cal Poly, my job is to ensure that you receive progressive and innovative approaches to writing instruction. Indeed, one of Cal Poly’s stated University Learning Objectives (ULO) is “effective communication,” which means that you will be honing your writing skills throughout your Cal Poly career. You will soon find that writing at the college level requires you not only to perfect the skills you have been building throughout your educational career, but also to develop new approaches to writing that you have not considered previously. Please visit the following site to learn more about the ULOs: http://ulo.calpoly.edu/.

In my experience directing the writing program and teaching English 134, students who stick with their old methods of writing tend to struggle the most in the course. In other words, take advantage of the opportunity to revise; spend time with your instructor’s carefully considered feedback; dismiss the notion that you “write” best under the pressure of time constraints; and be prepared to receive assessments of your writing that are different in tone and purpose than the feedback you received in high school. For instance, you will be asked to write essays that do not follow the five-paragraph structure – or other formulaic approaches to writing – you may have encountered in high school. Instead, you will be held accountable for the choices you make as a writer. You will be expected to select an organizational strategy that suits your topic, to use language and punctuation that most effectively conveys your meaning, to address your audience appropriately, and to select essay topics you care about. Perhaps you have been waiting to exercise some control over your own writing. I suspect that you will find a space to make effective rhetorical choices in English 134.

The selection committee and I welcome you to composition at Cal Poly!

Dr. Brenda M. Helmbrecht
Director of Writing
University Learning Outcomes Coordinator
Department of English
Fresh Voices
Composition at Cal Poly
Writing with Images

“Wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric.
And wherever there is ‘meaning,’ there is ‘persuasion.’”
—Kenneth Burk, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 172

“Seeing comes before words.”
—John Berger

As members of a visual culture, we must learn how to navigate, interpret, and analyze the messages conveyed to us via imagery. Many English 134 instructors ask students to study images through a rhetorical lens, which means that students learn how images make rational arguments, how they evoke an emotional response from a viewer, or how (when used effectively) images can enhance a writer’s or speaker’s credibility. Yet focusing on images in a writing course raises certain questions: What do images have to do with writing? What do they have to do with argumentation? In effect, the images permeating students’ day-to-day experiences influence how they formulate arguments.

Visual rhetoric allows us to understand both the explicit and implicit arguments that images make about our culture. Many people wrongly regard the act of examining an image as an effortless process, assuming that only a casual, quick glance is required. The sheer pervasiveness of images seems to place them outside the reach of critical reflection. Writing, on the other hand, is often regarded as something that takes careful planning and decision making to become effective. However, visuals and writing have much in common: they are intricately bound as they seek to entertain, to educate, and to persuade. Better understanding this relationship will enable you to approach the images you encounter – in advertising, in films and television, on YouTube and My Space, and even in video games – with a greater critical eye.

Readers are not persuaded by written arguments alone; thus, when an image is effectively paired with text, the reader can get a fuller understanding of an issue. As you read *Fresh Voices*, focus on the relationship between the images and the writing. For example, Melissa Foucar manipulates the text in her essay “Christians or Christ”
to draw attention to the use of her quotation from Gandhi. Would her use of evidence be as effective in a traditional style? In addition, the personal photo of author Michael Sudolsky in his essay “Confessions of a Chicketarian” adds emotion. Without this image, the audience may not be able to fully engage with his ideas. Examine the other images in this collection. Could the content of any of the other essays be enhanced by a thoughtful integration of images?

Each photograph in this year’s collection has a purpose and an audience in mind—just like an essay, these photos can be read as texts. Examine the photograph below, the photographs matched with each section, and color photographs on the front and back cover. What is the purpose of each image? Who is the audience? How does the placement of each photograph relate to the content of its section?

All of the images used for these sections were generously contributed by Cal Poly’s own Marya Figueroa.

To see more of her work, visit http://www.flickr.com/photos/emdot.

What kind of statement does this image make about space on campus? Does this picture evoke any emotion in you? How can chairs be social creatures? How does furniture change the tone of a room? Who might occupy this space?
Writers’ Histories

This essay is often written during the first week of English 134 – although some instructors require students to revisit and revise it at the end of the quarter. For this assignment sequence, students are asked to reflect on their experiences and define themselves as writers, often for the first time. The essays in this section explore the importance of developing an effective composition process, the challenges of writing, and the sense of accomplishment that results from the advancement of their skills. Consider the various strategies employed by these writers for framing and unifying their discussions—a literary image, a memorable assignment, or references to teachers and courses. What principle would unify your history as a writer?

Ultimately, these students are assessing their own abilities as writers so they can better understand the work that awaits them in English 134. As you read, consider your own experiences with writing. How do you see yourself as a writer? How did you become the writer you are today? What new challenges will arise now that you are writing for a college audience?
A student's legs seem to “noodle” as he descends the stairs at Poly's Kennedy Library. Some students feel jittery as they approach writing assignments; others view their histories as writers as a series of ups and downs. What sort of photograph would represent your writer's history?
Editor’s Note

In “My Freedom,” Lanie Anton sets up the essay with an initial conflict: Anton vs. her English teacher, “Mrs. Street,” whom she refers to as “unpleasant,” “horrible,” and “grumpy.” Anton wants “that perfect A”; Mrs. Street wants Anton to find her “voice.” In developing this conflict, Anton uses concrete detail (can you find examples?) that show her voice, a concept that continues to elude her even by the end of the essay. As you read, consider the following: What is “voice”? How does Anton define it? How do you? How would you describe this essay’s voice?

The “conflict” is not necessarily settled in the end: the author doesn’t triumph; in fact, she still struggles, she says, to express her voice. How does this affect Anton’s ethos? What do you make of an inconclusive conclusion? Must essays always resolve?

What are the rules of writing Anton discusses in her essay—the rules she has adhered to with success (until the dreaded Mrs. Street)? What are some of the rules of writing you’ve learned? Should writers break these rules? Do you?

My Freedom

Lanie Anton

I have been trying to find my voice ever since my tenth grade English teacher, Mrs. Street, told me I didn’t have one. This was her response when I turned in an essay analyzing the novel Pigs in Heaven. It was a compare and contrast essay about the relationship between the main character Taylor Greer and her daughter, Turtle. It mirrored every other essay I had turned in my previous years, the classic five-paragraph paper that I have managed to perfect through much practice.

Mrs. Street was a horrible woman. Although, she turned out to be a great English teacher, she was just most unpleasant. I knew what my voice was; it consisted of a hook, thesis, three body paragraphs, and finally a conclusion. That was the way I had been writing essays for years, how was this one person telling me that I had been doing it without a voice?

What is your voice? Is it your opinion? Sure. Is it the vocabulary and word choices you use to shine through your writing? You bet. Is it the way you approach your writing as a whole? Most definitely.

So the next essay assigned, I tried to “find my voice.” To be honest I thought that this was just one of Mrs. Street’s ways of being a grumpy old teacher, a way to make her students fear her red pen and never be able to get that perfect A. So I tried to shine through my writing. I had to approach the essay in a different manner so I intro-
duced myself to the thesaurus, and tackled new grammar techniques that I hadn’t used since the seventh grade. I was positive that using new words and changing the format of my paragraphs would charm over Mrs. Street. This was bound to get her off my back. When I got my essay back I expected to get a note on the back saying something along the lines of “nice job.” But instead, in the dreaded red pen was Mrs. Street explaining that I still was not in touch with my voice. The nerve of that woman!

Even though I was thought it was my way or the highway, I couldn’t risk another bad grade. Previously, with A after A on my papers with the occasional B I found my comfort zone. I knew how to spit out a perfect three body paragraphs. I could write the classic hook. And here is this teacher, telling me that all that is not my voice. I tried to do it my own way, but now, after strike two, I needed help. I couldn’t risk another grade that would threaten my overall GPA. After school I walked into her class, my head hung low in defeat.

Mrs. Street told me (in her mean, crabby English-teacher way) that I needed to be comfortable with what I write. When I hear the words “writing assignment,” I shrink in my seat. I despise them. She also told me to be at ease when approaching a writing assignment. She said that if I didn’t stand behind what I wrote then it could not be truly my voice. It needed to be what I believed, not a regurgitation of someone else’s thoughts. She also gave me permission to be more creative with the presentation of my thoughts. She gave me freedom in what I wrote. I could make paragraphs where I wanted, there was no minimum or maximum of sentences in each one.

I could even make a one-sentence paragraph.

Before this no one had asked me my opinion. It was either a research paper, book report, or “what I did that summer.” All they wanted were facts, facts, facts. Never “what is your interpretation?” I was scolded if I ever wanted to put myself into the paper. No “I” statements were allowed. That rule is still burned into my brain and it makes me cringe every time I violate it. I did this. I felt that. It’s just not acceptable.

Mrs. Street did open my eyes to a new way of approaching writing. She is still my cranky English teacher. She is still mean. She will not give that A to anyone. She did, however, show me something that I will have to work on for years. I plan on coming back to her class in a few years with the most perfect essay reflecting my voice. That will show her. That will show her that I didn’t deserve the B in her class.

I still don’t have my voice. I have experimented with many types but none that have suited me perfectly. I think I will be looking for my voice for a while too. I am now free to explore the possibilities of all forms of writing. I’m not a natural writer that can effortlessly compose an A paper that reflects me. It is going to take me longer to find my fit—to make and create my voice.

_Lanie Anton is a social science major._
Editor’s Note
Sometimes, making an essay interesting can be difficult, especially if it is a personal prompt and you’re not used to (or comfortable) writing about yourself and using the first person. How does Nicole Arentzoff create suspense in “Keeping it Personal”? What strategies does she use to make her essay interesting? Some things you might look for are specific details, elements of contrast, and vivid narration. Consider her stylistic choices: things like italics, paragraphs, word choice, and sentence length. What kind of persona does she create for herself? How do you react to this persona? In some ways, she’s taking stylistic risks. Do you think these pay off for her?

She concludes: it’s important to “put a little of myself into every essay I write.” Do you agree with her? When is it appropriate to include the personal? When is it appropriate to use “I” in your essays? When is it most effective? Here, does it make the audience feel as though a close friend is sharing conversation or does it push the audience away?

Keeping it Personal
Nicole Arentzoff

The grass crinkled under my pink sneakers as I cringed at the thought of getting those shoes, my most prized possession, smudged up from the wet grass and abundant mud that surrounded us. This is so dumb, I thought to myself and I still recall how angry I was about being forced to parade around the field, looking for something to inspire me. Why couldn’t we just write about a book, or our favorite movie like all the other classes? It was 9th grade and much to my dismay, the topic of the week was essay writing.

I never really struggled in writing, but I certainly didn’t enjoy it either. After all, it was usually the same routine; the teacher passed out an essay prompt followed immediately by loud sighs and muffled complaints from the class room, after which we would all inevitably wait until the very last moment to complete the assignment. My papers always received the coveted marks of either an A or a B, but something within me never fully appreciated or cared about those grades. Why couldn’t I indulge myself in writing out my deepest fears, thoughts, or desires onto paper? What was preventing me from, as William Wordsworth would say, “Fill[ing] my paper with the breathings of my heart?” No. I would never be that passionate about writing. It just wasn’t in the cards for me; I was not an essay writer.
Our assignment was titled “The Calm after the Storm”. The instructions were relatively simple: go to the football field and write about whatever you saw. Unfortunately, the night before it had poured rain from every inch of the sky and the weather man had told us that “a new record might be possible.” It looked awful outside, and the air clung to a thick scent of recently dampened foliage. This led me to one question, *why was I outside looking for beauty on an unsightly plot of land and being forced to write about it?* A prompt sounded far more favorable to this, and I began to let my mind wander about what the possible repercussions would be, if I simply failed to complete this assignment. As I heard the verbal complaints and agitated groaning, I knew that my classmates were thinking the same thing. Then, the teacher said something that inadvertently caught our attention. “Look for something that reminds you of yourself!” What could he possibly mean? Was he comparing the class to a puddle of mud, or rather, did he want me to confess to being similar to a large patch of torn up grass? This added detail to the essay assignment definitely complicated the situation.

I sat down on one of the bleachers and idly bit the top of my pen cap, universally signaling that I was “stuck,” or couldn’t think of anything to write. As I glanced around, I noticed that most of my classmates were in the same predicament. There was a general feeling of resentment directed towards our teacher, who seemed to have a rather smug grin on his face. I looked up and randomly noticed a tree that had managed to survive the storm. It looked rather plain, and stood in a clearing of torn up grass patches and bits of bushes. Its long trunk supported the leafy branches that extended in every direction. It seemed to be the only one in that general clearing that hadn’t lost a limb or a branch to the merciless wind. I started to think about that tree, and my mind was pulled in a million different directions.

- How old was it?
- Where did it come from?
- Had someone planted it?
- How did it survive the night without any casualties?

I grabbed my pen, and began writing. Within a seemingly ordinary object, I found my inspiration.

My essay quickly developed from something describing a tree to a narrative about my life, and how the decisions I made have helped me stay strong and brace the storm. From the disappointment of losing my favorite uncle to the pains of moving to a new state and leaving everything behind, there has been a lot of rain in my life, but like the tree, I have gotten through with all my limbs and branches intact. By staying positive and exerting all my effort into every endeavor, I have found that life is much sunnier and easier to handle. I reflected on how void of emotion my other writing
assignments had been, and it’s now obvious to me why I never enjoyed English class. For years, I had tried to coast by on doing exactly what was asked of me, rather than taking the time to actually put a little bit of myself into my writing. Essays are not that much different than anything else, and when you pour yourself into it, you reap what you sow.

After turning that paper in, I felt a sense of fulfillment that I had never experienced before from anything academic. Could it be that I was actually proud of my work? Perhaps, or maybe it was the feeling that I had actually succeeded in connecting with something outside of my comfort zone. For once, I was turning something in that had a little touch of Nicole in it, rather than a paper completely void of any emotion. I had never discussed my personal life in any assignment, but the tree I discovered that day on the football field inspired me to open up. I received an A on that paper, but I didn’t really care. Nothing would match that high I had experienced after reaching the epiphany I felt that day.

While there won’t always be something to spark an immediate inspiration, it is important to keep all of my writing personal, and put a little of myself into every essay I write. Even the monotonous research papers that high school and college level teachers demand require some margin of opinion or original thought. After my first quarter at Cal Poly, I’ve seen that too often, students turn in dry, cookie cutter replicas of whatever the assignment is. There’s no passion between the lines, and there’s no sense of who the author is within the words. These essays aren’t interesting to read, and people can instantly perceive when the writer is completely apathetic about their subject. I received an A on the paper, but I didn’t really care. Nothing would match that high I had experienced after reaching the epiphany I felt that day, sitting on the football field, looking for something to write about, but discovering myself. The most important lesson I learned from this assignment is one that has stayed with me throughout my academic career, to always strive to keep it personal.

Nicole Arentzoff is a history major.
Editor’s Note
“I Finally Got It” author William Conner explores his process of losing and then finding “it” again through writing. As you read, ask yourself what getting “it” in writing means. What happens if you don’t get “it”? Does the ambiguity of the word “it” distract the author’s message?

Conner asks his audience to consider how rubrics or guidelines that emphasize the importance of an essay's structure over its content affect writing; for example, he writes, “I was able to be successful by concentrating on organization because teachers were more concerned that I followed the rules they had set forth, rather than what my writing actually said.” Should form drive content in writing? What do you think?

The essay concludes by discussing how writing has become “fun” again because the author can focus on proving his thesis—and its development—before he concentrates on the essay's structure. How is Conner’s new writing process similar or different from your own?

**I Finally Got It**

*William Conner*

“...midway through my junior year, I just got it, writing made sense to me, it became more like a game, it was fun...it was a challenge, but it was fun,” Mr. Quinn, my British Literature teacher, said while returning our first essay of junior year. Mr. Quinn probably said this to make the class feel better about the dismal grades we were about to receive, somehow trying to keep our spirits up while delivering a blow to our confidence. However, I was skeptical of a statement that described writing as fun regardless of its motives. I had not found writing fun since my early elementary school years, and I could not believe that the analytical essays we were writing could ever be fun. *I just have to get it; that seems simple enough*, I joked sarcastically with myself. Shockingly, I did get “it” during my junior year.

What had kept me from getting “it” all those years? There was a time during first and second grade when writing was easy and fun. I wrote an entire mystery series all starting with two words, “The Missing,” followed by something I thought would be intriguing, pencil, brother, and book to name a few. At that time, I was free to write how I wanted to, there were no guidelines or rules, and everything I did was praised for creativity. Looking back at how much I enjoyed writing during those early years, it is hard to believe that I lost “it” so quickly.
I began to lose “it” during the third grade with the introduction of the “hamburger” paragraph. I understood that the top bun was the intro, the lettuce, tomato, and patty were sentences that went under the topic sentence, followed by the bottom bun, which was the same as the topic sentence, except reworked a little bit. Being a math guy, this was an easy formula for me to use to create paragraphs. For the rest of my elementary school years, writing became standardized. I knew what to do when answering a question in paragraph form; I would just use the hamburger formula. Yes, I lost “it,” but I was consistently successful, so not having fun while writing was not a big deal.

Junior high brought about the introduction of the five-paragraph essay and a reworked paragraph structure. Having something quantitative to measure against created a goal in my mind while writing. I only had to write five paragraphs, and then I knew that some part of my essay would be correct. Organization of paragraphs moved beyond the “hamburger” style to something more analytical. A paragraph now followed the pattern of: topic, to lead-in, to data, to warrant, to conclusion. To me, this new pattern was just another formula to memorize. Very robotic, I know, but I was able to be successful by concentrating on organization because teachers were more concerned that I followed the rules they had set forth, rather than what my writing actually said.

The rubrics my teachers used for grading essays in junior high exemplify how quantitative grading was. For example, in order to receive full credit for a thesis in a comparison essay, all I needed to do was name two people, the title of the book, the author, and the three supporting points of my essay. The rubric did not even acknowledge the importance of having a thesis that is controversial or worth writing about. The rubric also gave full credit for a conclusion that only restates the thesis and three supporting points. It did not matter if the conclusion did not add anything of worth to the essay; as long as there was a conclusion paragraph to fulfill the five-paragraph requirement, I would get full credit. In another essay, I was supposed to define respect, and my definition was, “Respect is to be respectful towards others.” Looking back at that definition, it makes no sense. The word that is being defined should not be included in the definition. Even with that flawed statement, which my entire essay was based on, I managed to get an “A” because I followed the rules my teacher had set forth for that essay. Being graded on such quantitative measures, rather than on actual thought, reinforced my belief that it did not matter what I wrote as long as it fulfilled the guidelines set forth by the teacher.

No earth-shattering developments occurred during my first two years of high school. Teachers essentially gave us the topics we were supposed to write about, and since we would discuss those topics in class, there was not much development of my
own opinion in my work. By continuing to concentrate on organization, I was able to get by without any major failures, missteps, or accidents. Junior year then hit; the year that is often associated with a student’s future success in education. I thought I was ready for my British Literature class; I knew I wasn’t going to thrive, but I was going to do fine. I wanted to get a “B”, and I thought I could do that by using my tried and true method of focusing on the five-paragraph essay structure that had been hammered into my head for the previous four years. I was proven wrong when Mr. Quinn handed back that first essay.

A “C”, I knew I could not have any more essays returned with that grade if I wanted to reach my goal. His comments at the end of my essay could be summed up in one word, underdeveloped. I did not understand how that could be, it was fully developed. I had an introductory paragraph, three body paragraphs (all of which followed the proper structure I had learned), and a conclusion paragraph. Add those up, and that is a five-paragraph essay, exactly what I was told to do to write a complete essay.

After accepting the grade that I received, I met with him to sort out what he wanted me to do. Apparently, he was no longer concerned about the number of paragraphs, or if my paragraphs followed a certain structure. No, he wanted me to develop my paper. He wanted me to concentrate only on what my thesis was trying to prove. He related writing an essay to presenting a case before a jury. I had to prove to the jury that my thesis was correct. It did not matter how long the essay was, sometimes, the case is simple, and the essay will be short. Other times, the thesis will be difficult to prove, and consequently, the essay will be longer.

Once writing an essay was put into the terms of trying to prove a case, I stopped getting comments of “underdeveloped” on my papers. While writing, I try to picture myself as a jury member listening to my case to see if it is persuasive enough. I would like to blame my years of not having “it” on all my teachers from the third to tenth grade, however, that would not be accurate. Their focus on structure for so long has made it second nature, allowing me to focus on proving my thesis in the best way possible. Mr. Quinn, however, has had the greatest impact on my writing career. Writing became fun again my last two years in high school, there were many challenges along the way, but having the big idea of what I was trying to accomplish with my paper helped me through those challenging times. Because of Mr. Quinn, I have gotten “it” back, and I hope that I do not lose it again.

William Conner is a business major.
Editor’s Note

For “My Green Light,” Sofia Rodriguez-Mata plays with an image from Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. How do you feel about her use of this image? Is it accessible to you (even if you haven’t read the book)? What might that say about Rodriquez-Mata’s conception of her audience? The green light serves as one of the major organizing principles of the essay. If you examine where the image is used, would it help to integrate the image differently, or is it working well as it is? Consider the conclusion. How does the author signal to the reader that she is wrapping things up? Does it feel like an appropriate end to you, or are you surprised that it’s over?

My Green Light

Sofia Rodriguez-Mata

“Class, your new writing assignment will be a fifteen page essay on the symbols, motifs, and themes in *The Great Gatsby.*” Cue the mumbled profanities and groans from twenty five students, including myself. I would fight back the impulse to get up and ask “Who honestly thinks Fitzgerald wrote this with the hopes that we’d compare Gatsby’s green light to the American dream? What if he just wrote this to spite his bratty wife Zelda?” Needless to say, I’d snap a pencil or two when I heard ‘writing assignment.’ My writing experience in high school involved three steps: Remembering an essay was due, usually ten hours before the deadline, skimming though Spark Notes, and going on a two or more hour writing frenzy. A day or so later I would get the essay back with a large red A on the right hand corner and proceed to shoving it into my backpack. It’s not that I was ungrateful; high school writing had just killed my love for writing. I was a drone, slave to the Jane Schaffer writing method. I probably would have continued sleep walking if it were not for my 11th grade English teacher, Ms. Arreola. Ms. Arreola challenged me to be an involved writer by snapping me away from my apathetic state; her criticism and high expectations built my skill as a writer and made me consider each written assignment as an attachment of myself.

Coming to English class junior year was everyone’s worst nightmare. At least one student cried during class, and if not, we all sank as low as possible in our chairs. I could no longer daydream during class from fear of being made a fool out of. I quickly learned to be fully prepared for class; preparation involved writing notes and researching even the simplest of readings. Ms. Arreola was critical during class; she would not accept an uneducated answer, she demanded in depth and well thought
out responses. I began to analyze and pull apart the novels we read at any time, sometimes in the shower, before I went to sleep, and even during conversations with friends. To write rough drafts, I would create outlines of the plot and pair them together with the scribbled notes I wrote on novels. Eventually my thought process became the most important and time-consuming step in writing.

When I finally had to get around to writing successful final drafts, I needed complete peace. I remember driving myself early in the morning to Barnes and Noble and plopping down on a sofa along with my cup of coffee to write. Something about the hundreds of books and the ideas circulating in them inspired me. Instead of writing for a few hours, I would stay the whole day, making sure my writing was as close to perfect as I could get it. I would often panic, wondering what Ms. Arreola would think of my responses. The extra stress definitely made me work harder. My essays became an extension on my character; a poorly written essay meant I was a hollow person and an “A” essay meant I was an individual with unique ideas. For the first time ever, I was going to a teacher for feedback on my writing. The more I visited Ms. Arreola, the more I began to love coming to class. I loved the challenge it brought and the amount of knowledge she had to share with me.

Writing was finally a free expression of art, not just a requirement. I thought before I wrote and read before I turned anything in. In a way I began to do what I should have done from the start. The grades on my essays went from scoring low grades to high grades. Just like Gatsby molded and built himself up to reach his green light, so did I. My writing style has continued to morph since junior year. Currently, I view writing assignments as tests of my skills and seek to improve every time I write something new. The green light in *The Great Gatsby* symbolized Gatsby’s hopes and the American dream. To me, the green light is my hope to continue on my path to becoming a successful writer.

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Profiles

In each of the essays in this section, students carved out distinctive approaches to the assignment—approaches that permitted them to explore exceptional elements in the culture surrounding them. As you read these essays, note how the students not only open a window to their subjects—people, places, trends—but they also attempt to demonstrate how their insight is meaningful.

You will soon find that this assignment challenges you to synthesize multiple texts and viewpoints: your analytic response to your interviewee’s work, the interview itself, and, when appropriate, your own experience and responses. In addition, you must account for and write to an audience that may not have knowledge of your essay’s subject matter. Just as these students do, you need to present your unique “insider’s perspective” on your subject.

Your instructor will offer guidance in terms of the kinds of topics you can choose. Some instructors select a theme, such as the environment, media, local culture, and ask students to interview people who work in this area, while others ask them to simply use this assignment to become better acquainted with an aspect of someone’s life, a well-loved place (or a hated or unfamiliar one), or social trends. For many instructors, conducting an effective interview is essential for this sequence because your interviewee’s vantage point needs to be fully depicted, so you will need to devise provocative questions to allow your subject to give fully developed responses. But remember, this paper is still ultimately created and shaped by you; your profile subject should speak with you as a writer, not for you.
This picture could be seen as both a portrait of a space and the person within the space. Considering the details in this picture, what would you expect the owner of these items to be like? How might this person interact within this particular space? It might be a place for work, a place for rest, a place to surf the Internet. If you were in this space, how would this environment make you feel?
Editor’s Note
It’s not an easy task—profiling a space. A major difficulty is how to describe and make an argument about a space at the same time. In each paragraph, Emilie Schneider tells us, not just what she sees, but also what the detail means and why it matters.

Schneider also pays special attention to how she organizes her thoughts. How does the isolation of quotations affect the use of evidence? Does it enhance coherence or unity? Indeed, without careful attention to structure, her essay might be as messy as the house she describes. Are there other ways that the style mimics the content? Can you find places where the text is descriptively “cluttered” like the house it depicts?

Some profiles of spaces end up talking about the space’s effect on people—and vice versa: How people move through that space, how that space makes them feel, how they shape it, and how that space shapes their lives. What do we learn about the family through the space? How would such a house make readers feel?

How might a mess be beautiful?

In the Mess of Things
Emilie Schneider

Every grain of sand is a piece to the ocean floor just as every object contributes to a collection—shells, fishing lures, nets, rope, antique buoys, model boats, bells, propellers, lighthouses, ship wheels. However nautical and thrifty, this is no maritime museum, but my grandparents’ Crescent City residence—their coastal delight. In a mess of things, the details can go unnoticed; objects blend together as one collection. It is difficult to stand out when crowded and surrounded by another item just as interesting as the next. Yet, these details define my grandparents’ house. Its personality has been shaped and characterized by every unique square foot and every piece of anything that dwells within it. Although it seems impossible to reach an exact count of objects, every single one is there for a reason, one that is determined by the personalities that sculpted this distinct home. Grandpa claims, “It’s nothing special.” I beg to differ.

Background:
“They sure love their freedom from the big city.” — Auntie Karin

Multiple times throughout the year, my grandparents will escape from their home in the busy city life of Sacramento, California, to “the city where the redwoods meet the sea,” Crescent City, California. An average driving time of eight hours up the coast brings them to the other place they call home, a place that could only be a
product of their personalities. Twenty-five years ago on a plot of land with a small
preexisting unit, Grandpa worked around the city code, to build this large structure
he called an add-on (it is not connected to the first house). About 150 yards from the
sandy shoreline sits the rocky yard and driveway, the welcome mat to this unusual
dwelling. Upon approaching the outside, one is overwhelmed with anatomical parts
of a ship; nasturtium flower beds lined with rail-road ties; ropes, shells, and rocks –
all garnishing a blue-gray house with an… interesting architectural design.

From the outside, the geometry appears fairly simple: a large 2-story rectangle
with a right triangle resting on top. This triangle is the location of the bedrooms, whose
sloped ceilings have accounted for many cases of heads hitting the wood-paneled ceil­
ing when someone first sits up after a night of slumber. Grandpa, friends, and builders
put in a great deal of labor to build this house. Some worked in exchange for fresh­
caught fish. Grandpa recalled a time he was working on the roof, looked out to the
ocean and spotted fisherman catching salmon close to shore. He set down his tools,
joined the fisherman in his own boat, and returned to work once he caught his limit.

“It was plain when I first saw it.” –Dad

It is nearly impossible to imagine my grandparents’ house as once being empty.
They have a deep love for the ocean and throughout the 25 years of the home’s exis­
tence, they have collected and displayed any object that reflects this affection – any
object. A heavy-duty rope outlines a majority of the house’s interior. This rope, a
favorite decorative feature of my older sister, Jessica, borders the seams where walls
meet, encircles portholes windows and picture frames, follows stair cases, and wraps
support beams. Many shelves exist in the house in corners, parallel to the walls, or
above countertops, displaying pieces of Grandma and Grandpa’s nautical collection.
Shells are found in almost every square foot, varying between abalone, clam, mus­
sel, common tide pool pieces, and rare souvenirs brought back from cruises. Starfish,
rocks, wooden figures of seabirds and fish, mini lighthouses, and model boats also litter
the many shelves and windowsills. In Dad’s opinion, “the amount of knickknacks
is over the top.” However, Grandma loves to display what she likes and justifies its
abundance saying, “If something breaks, it doesn’t matter.” The extensive wall space
is also put to use. Rare is a vertical section that is not accented with an oceanic paint­
ing, fishing net, ship steering wheels, Grandpa’s handcrafted wooden fish cutouts,
antique ship clocks and navigation items, and millions of pictures. Enhancing the
multiple levels of ceiling, are items far from typical overhead décor. Strands of old
wooden fishing lures, huge antique glass floats, plastic orange buoys Grandpa mor­
phed into lights, and heavy metal chandeliers, all hang at the will of gravity. As the
son-in-law, my Dad has observed this house with a keen and skeptical eye. He says,
“The house became more… dangerous in an effort to display new additions.” He
recalls once having to take it upon himself to warn Grandpa of the safety hazard of the brass propeller he once had suspended over the stairwell with fishing line.

“The house is less important than the people.” –Grandma

My grandparents’ house stores not only items, but countless memories as well. From infancy, my sisters and I have visited often. From the time it was built, my mom and dad, mom’s sisters, and my cousins have made frequent visits as well. Every family member has stories to tell about this house, senses and emotions they associate with it, and a connection to it that Grandma and Grandpa have helped construct. Photographs are displayed that have captured the pride and exhaustion after long fishing trips, excitement of birthdays and trips to the beach, wonder of Sacramento Zoo visits, and the happiness of family milestones. Amongst the knick-knacks, accidents are bound to happen. My forehead bears the scar from a time my best friend Marisa accidentally knocked the metal lid to a Chinese pagoda-shaped dish off the counter toward where I sat below it. Aunt Karin is constantly worried that her five and seven year-olds will break something, get into Grandpa’s open tackle box, or into his candy dish full of all his prescription drugs. We associate certain scents with this house as well. Everyone has inhaled their share of fumes from Grandpa’s burn barrels or wood-stove that incinerate anything flammable (always environmentally safe, of course), lead smelting on a camp stove, and of course the smell of the house. My younger sister, Sara, describes this attribute as the smell of “paint-thinner, salt, and fish.” Jessica thinks it “smells of antiques, driftwood, and ocean-life” that all meld into an unforgettable nasal experience. Descriptions of the house may vary from one person to the next, but all share its importance and relevance in their life’s experiences.

“Why trash it when I can save it?” – Grandpa

My grandparents have a strong disliking for wastefulness and reflect this feeling throughout the house. The collection of nautical paraphernalia seems to grow exponentially because nothing is ever let go to accommodate for new additions. However, this trait has nutritional significance as well, as the kitchen displays. The pantry, refrigerator, and freezer are always stocked with canned foods, snack foods, cooking and baking items, as well as an unwritten rule: always check expiration date before consuming. Items have a long and fruitful life before deemed as garbage. My dad, the son-in-law, has a personality that clashes with this idea. In my own house, unnecessary clutter or things with no use go “missing” (in the trash) as a result of his need for order and purpose. Often Dad looks around this house with a critical eye. “They are collectors and even save enough to the point of hoarding,” he jokes, partially serious. An item is never discarded just because it has been around awhile, only shoved to the back of the shelf to make more room. I have come across many familiar brand-
name foods with unfamiliar package designs and have learned to read and sniff before eating. It is no surprise to find the same bag of expired candy in the same spot on the center island the following summer when we return. Grandpa often leaves a pan of “re-usable” peanut oil on the stove, ready for the next fish fry. The total number of refrigerators in the house equals about 8, plus an additional freezer or two. This number seems bogus, but they are all put to use, most of them completely stocked with catches from previous fishing and crabbing seasons. When on the mission in search of a particular food item that could be in eight different places, the individual is greeted with a strong blow to the nostrils every time a fridge door is opened. My father remarks that the “strength of the smell is so strong, [one would] swear that what is being eaten also tastes of fish.” While enjoying her dessert, Sara often finds herself thinking, This ice cream tastes fishy…

“Grandpa always has to do something his way.” – Mom

Grandpa is a do-it-yourself kind of guy. Stored away in the garage are extra material and supplies of about every type that have accumulated according to great deals he encounters. With a potential use in mind, Grandpa collects various items. If something needs repair, or he is in the mood for modifying a component of the house, the lucky material is dug out of the dark and dusty garage and meets its fate. My grandpa has been smart with his money since his first job and only in the worst-case scenario will he pay someone to do work for him. “If I do it, I know it’ll be done right,” Grandpa boasts. However, he has developed a quite a notorious reputation within the family for his untraditional handyman work. Copious examples of this are displayed throughout the entire house, inside and out. Dad pokes fun at Grandpa’s self-done plumbing and says, “When you flush the toilet, you take your chances.” The faucets seem to be part of a prank that Grandpa is playing on new guests; the hot and cold nozzles are reversed in the shower and the sink of the deck bathroom only dispenses ice cold water, though it has both nozzles.

The deck is perhaps the most concentrated display of Grandpa’s creativity. Covering the wooden deck is Astroturf the age of the house and Auntie Karin jokes, “Who wouldn’t want a deck you could vacuum?” The entire deck wraps around to the west and south-facing sides of the house and used to be entirely open to the fresh, chilly ocean breeze, and a beautiful view. Grandpa loves to nap on the deck has gradually enclosed the deck with pieces of glass and plastic to create a greenhouse type of warmth and trapping the smell of the outside décor. This has created a great environment for Grandma’s “ten-thousand tomato plants (Mom)” and the lesser need for a sweat-shirt, but family members feel it has defeated the purpose of having the deck. The last time Auntie Karin and her family visited, to her dismay, Grandpa had enclosed the entire deck, so she took the liberty to get rid of the “claustrophobic feel and
returned the deck to a more natural state.” He reluctantly accepted the improvement. The south side of the deck also contains a room fashioned out of pleated plastic siding that contains a table and chairs and neighbors Grandpa’s petroleum drum barbecue station. Grandpa’s creativity is unparalleled.

“There’s always room for one more.” – Grandma

My grandparents have love their Crescent City home and they express this in many ways, even to the point where they will “tell strangers they have a house in Crescent City” (Auntie Karin). However, this house isn’t important to them simply because they fill it to the brim with objects that reflect their personalities and interests, it has a greater significance. Their love for this house comes from sharing it with loved ones and thriving off their enjoyment and happiness as well. Grandma speaks the truth: there really is always room for one more in this house. With 8.5 beds, couch, and floor space the house can accommodate many. On account of adventures, experiences, enjoyment, and happiness, there is no limit. This house has a place in my heart and others’ and will continue to provide an unequaled and quirky welcome to many more.

Emilie Schneider is a soil science major.

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Editor’s Note
Michael Sudolsky’s “My Tortilla King” profiles his grandfather Jorge Alamilla and his tortilla business. The essay’s introduction uses the pronouns “you” and “him” without being clear as to who this is. What kind of work do you have to do as a reader to find out what is going on? Examine the essay’s structure as you read. Is the essay unified in topic and structure? Furthermore, pay attention to the physical descriptions the author gives of his grandparents. Is a detailed-physical description necessary in a profile essay?

Consider the author’s sentence variety—the use of varied styles adds to the personality of the essay. Finally, Sudolsky chooses to begin and end his essay with memories in italics. What thoughts are provoked after reading these sections as they are originally positioned in the essay? What changes when they are read together as one piece?

My Tortilla King
Michael Sudolsky

Walking to work, it happened again. Pit-pat sounds echoed as they met brick pavers. Shoestrings were flying. She goes to tie the offenders, but realizes where she is. Looking out the corner of her eye, she checks if he’s there. Her heart flutters—she sees him. You get a preview when you hug him. He greets you like always—”Hey, big boy!”

There is a familiar smell of fresh baked tortillas, which seems to have permeated his skin. It’s pacifying. You notice his liking towards plaid button ups and beige slacks. He’s always dressed his best. On many shirts you’ve seen, there is an ominous grease stain under his right breast pocket (results of hiding chips from my grandma.) He smiles: you forget your troubles.

Jorge Alamilla married his high school sweetheart. They’ve been together over fifty years. Together they form an item. As I ask questions, probing through his past, grandma interjects with forgotten details. Together my grandparents raised four children: Jorge, my mother Beatriz, and the twins—Hernan and Francisco. When asking about his relationship with my grandmother, my grandfather Jorge says, “She has been my number one; nothing better has happened.” Even while old age takes root, their love remains pure. My grandfather’s hair has turned gray. Yet despite his receding hairline (still slicked back like the old days), and bruises from a body now
gone fragile, you notice the twinkle in his eye. You begin to wonder, “What, exactly, have those eyes seen?”

His actions become animated. As he recalls his past, remembering sparse highlights of his seventy-five years, memories surge. He smiles, remembering his youth. The memories I have of my grandfather seem to fuse him with the business. As a kid, my brother and I would explore his factory. I remember being filled with questions of curiosity, and him always having answers. Apparently my perception of him has stayed that way, for never before have I heard these stories. As my grandfather reveals why he immigrated to America and how he started his business, he changes. I discover the greatness of his character.

It’s a rainy July in Dzilam de Bravo, Yucatán. The year is 1934. On a family farm, my grandfather, Jorge Alamilla is born. Mayan culture flourishes in this small coastal village. Surrounded by its beaches of white sand, my great grandparents have spent their whole lives here. They want more for their children, however, so it is in Mérida, the capital of Yucatán, where my grandfather is raised.

Recalling his childhood, my grandfather is obviously enamored with his hometown. He tells stories of childhood adventures. He describes Mérida’s beauty with such passion you can see it. Most importantly, however, he tells you of his father, who after moving from Dzilam, established a grain store. My grandfather worked with him, and by selling beans and corn, he learned much about business. Perhaps it is this small family store that he owes his success.

At the age of twenty-one, Jorge Alamilla wanted to move to New York City. He had married my grandmother after five years of dating, and at that time they had two children. Just like his father, however, he wanted the best for them. His brother in law, Tio Carlos, had already relocated to the city and had been very successful. Knowing only Tio Carlos, my grandfather moved to the big apple—alone.

It is in New York City where Jorge Alamilla rose from nothing. A newcomer in a foreign land of skyscrapers and English, my grandfather wasted no time. Only hours after stepping off the plane, he found a job. Weeks passed. He was living with Tio Carlos, but desired a place of his own. He yearned to see his family, but knew stability was needed. He found such stability by working nights for a janitorial agency. While others complained and performed tasks half-heartedly, he put his all; “The supervisors noticed. I worked like a horse, and because of it I got promoted,” he said. With shorter shifts, my grandfather found a day job working as a superintendent for their future apartment building. Money was no longer an issue. His hard work had been rewarded and his family was finally reunited.

My grandparents adapted nicely to life in New York, but they missed the foods of Mexico. Salbutes, Panuchos, and Queso Relleno, all of these (and more) lacked
essential ingredients. Even the simple things like corn tortillas remained distant. Grandma recalls making corn tortillas by hand, and bringing spices back in bulk after trips to Mexico. But after awhile, she says, “I wondered, ‘Where are all the tortillas?’”

To my grandfather, the need was obvious. He knew a market for tortillas existed, and in 1976 my grandparents set up shop on Metropolitan Avenue. At this time the store appeared barren. A simple sign declaring “Mexican Tortillas” was displayed. Inside you found a slow moving tortilla press, and a small Mexican woman (my grandma) operating behind it. At first, business was slow, but my grandpa didn’t care. Upon opening, he kept his job as the superintendent for their apartment building, and quit the janitorial agency. This was crucial, for he says, “The business only grew because I was able to put its money back into it. Not once did I touch its money. That is why it grew.”

With time his tortillas became popular. Six months after opening he had enough money to purchase another tortilla machine. He started importing things like jalapenos and spices from Mexico. He began making deliveries to local restaurants. “The business grew really fast because at that time nobody sold Mexican goods.” he claims. “His advertising remained simple”, my mother says. “Besides the yellow page ad, and the number on the trucks, he never advertised. Instead he’d always look for new restaurants to show his product to… He’d simply leave a stack of tortillas and his number. He got the majority of customers that way.”

A company called “Baja Tortillas” had expanded into New York City aggressively. My grandfather watched as this goliath attempted to find a market in the New York area. Baja Tortillas had lines of fast machines, cheap products, and sales men and women advertising their product. They had a good amount of customers, but in the end Baja Tortillas went under. When they failed, all their previous customers needed a new supplier. Jorge Alamilla placed a small advertisement in the newspaper, and before he knew it business exploded. There were “too many” orders to fill. My grandfather realized it was time to expand.

Ever since the failure of Baja Tortillas, my grandpa remained successful. He changed “Mexican Tortillas” to “Mayab Happy Tacos” (Grandma’s tortillas were “happy”, and Mayab is a term for the Mayan people.) A corporate logo was found: Mexicanita. She was pictured on all their products. They bought the storefront in which they had rented, and purchased a warehouse on Kingsland Avenue. With more space my grandpa had room to purchase a fifty-foot corn tortilla machine. Instead of using money for personal
gain, my grandfather continued to reinvest in the business. Before he knew it, he had five delivery trucks, hundreds of products, barrels of spices, over twenty employees, and the ability to sell it all. My grandfather, Jorge Alamilla, had become the tortilla king.

My grandfather says, “If you work, you get it. Nothing comes easy. Only through hard work can you see the benefits.” I believe him. His life began in a rural community. He took a risk by moving to America. He spoke only broken English. However, through hard work and determination he found himself a million dollar business.

I found a part of Jorge Alamilla I’ve never seen before. Although only an aspect of life, it seems business has shaped so much about him. His devotion towards plaid button up shirts and kaki pants becomes obvious. For the past thirty years they’ve been his uniform. As he sits there, so humble and modest, I realize I’ve finally seen my grandpa. He is a true entrepreneur, exposed.

He’s selling tortillas to a customer. She’s noticed him at school; he’s perfect. Entering his store she pretends to just notice her laces. She ties them. Looking up, he’s staring—It’s their destiny.

Michael Sudolsky is an architecture major.

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Editor’s Note

Evan Nickel’s profile demonstrates how even an everyday occurrence such as buying lunch can yield unexpected avenues of exploration and analysis. The essay explains how his life and the lives of others have been affected by their ongoing relationships with a person who prepares their food. Consider how you feel when someone carefully prepares food especially for you. Does this essay evoke a similar emotion?

Through this essay, the audience gains a close look at Maggie Keller through her medium: sandwich making. What else do we find out about her? Does the ironic nature of the discussion make the analysis too “lite”? Are readers left wanting more? Do we need more “meat”?

The discussion clearly reflects passion for both the food and the sandwich maker as the author uses language usually associated with love and romance and a title that prepares the audience for a serious topic. What rhetorical effect results from the use of such elevated diction to discuss what is primarily a business transaction? How does tone affect the author’s ethos? After reading the essay, do you agree with the writer’s choice of title?

The Life-Changing Factory

Evan Nickel

I’m standing here in complete excitement. All of my troubles and problems have been forgotten. Everything I have been thinking about for the past five minutes is gone. The only thing that matters to me at this point is when Margret Keller is going to command me to have a great day and hand me a soft cold package over the counter. Then it happens. The parcel, a warm smile, and a comment about how thrilled I look are all given to me from Maggie, the current love of my life. Maggie made my day with the sandwich that she just crafted for me; I feel like the happiest guy on campus right now. Sandwich Factory employees like Maggie are changing lives, like mine, every day.

Maggie Keller is a Sandwich Factory employee who impacts my life much more than anyone else who contributes to the Cal Poly campus. This idea is what eventually left me sitting across a table from her asking about her role as a sandwich maker. Maggie is a student at Cal Poly who originally just needed a job and didn’t want to work off campus, so she ended up at the Sandwich Factory. What she found there was a group of amazing people and a job more satisfying than anything she could have imagined. “Sandwich Factory has happy people,” Maggie tells me. They blast
out Daft Punk during working hours and have crazy dance parties while making sandwiches. It was this atmosphere that kept Maggie working at the Factory.

Unlike most of the employees of Cal Poly, Sandwich Factory employees actually have souls. This may be surprising, but it’s true. These employees are affected by the same array of emotions any normal student can feel, and these emotions are reflected in the sandwiches that they make. For example, if a customer is really friendly, the sandwich that that customer might receive might have a little more meat on it. If the customer is really hungry or having a rough day, that person might just get a “stacked” sandwich as Maggie calls it, as well. One of Maggie’s pet peeves when it comes to her job is when people talk on their cell phones while she’s trying to make their sandwich. She calls these people “Phone Talkers” and usually makes them average sandwiches. She feels that she can’t communicate with them about what they want on their sandwich, they can’t have any kind of friendly conversation, and Maggie thinks it’s just plain rude. This method of making sandwiches by what the employee feels like was a surprise to me; I always suspected that it happened, but never actually thought I’d find out for sure. It’s because of this system that Maggie is able to reach people’s emotions through sandwiches.

Maggie told me fantastical stories of Anna and the way that Maggie touched her life. Anna walked into the Sandwich Factory one day without a meal plan as she was recently accepted as an RA and Cal Poly had not processed it yet. Anna was having a bad day and was visibly hungry. Maggie took Anna under her wing and made her the best “two-hummus, every-veggie on a pita” sandwich ever. On her way out, Anna yelled out, “I love you Maggie!” Later that day Anna added Maggie as a friend on Facebook to make it an official friendship. Anna had Maggie make her sandwich every time after that, no exceptions. Maggie remains friends with Anna to this day, and it all started with a sandwich. No doubt that Maggie changed Anna’s life, possibly forever.

Maggie states that she makes a lot of people’s days with the sandwiches that she makes. Every sandwich that she makes is made intentionally to make someone’s day, with the exception of the “Phone Talkers.” Maggie says that she is “solving world hunger, one hungry college student at a time.” At first this statement sounds illogical and impossible, but on a deeper analysis: everyone has to start somewhere. She really is solving world hunger; she just can’t get past the college students because they always keep coming back. The sandwich factory has more impact on people than one might think. Even the employee’s lives are changed. Maggie now has a new respect for people in customer service. She now makes an extra effort to be nice to these people and even tip the people that work hard a little more. Maggie has a good day because of work and the people she works with.
Maggie knows that she has made lifelong friends from working at the Sandwich Factory, especially in the case of the “BLT Club guys.” One day these two guys walked in and wanted Maggie to make them a BLT Club sandwich. Maggie, still somewhat new to the Sandwich Factory, didn’t even know what that was. It was on this day that Maggie learned how to make the Club… the wrong way. Instead of doing the normal BLT Club, (which is turkey on one side, bacon, lettuce, and tomato on the other) she put turkey and bacon on both sides of the bread. The guys were so happy with their sandwiches that they came back to her all the time and fought over which one of the guys’ Club she was going to make. Maggie, being the awesome person that she is, would make both of their sandwiches. These two guys still keep in touch with Maggie, and they were all brought together by the power of the Sandwich Factory.

When I asked Maggie if she agrees with the statement that “the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach,” she responded: “Oh yes! I don’t know how you can’t love the person that makes you a sandwich, man or woman.” I find this to be very true: I really do love the people that make food for me. There is a certain bond created between the sandwich maker and the sandwich eater. Maybe it brings us back to the good old days when our moms would make us a sandwich for lunch and all we had to do was tell her what we wanted and she would make it. Maybe subconsciously it makes the customer happy and more talkative, and because of this the sandwich maker is happy.

“A good sandwich stays in memory forever,” says Maggie. It’s because of this effect that the Sandwich Factory changes lives. Whether we know it not, the Sandwich Factory impacts everyone. Employees are happy which transfers to making the students happy, which makes the professors and Cal Poly staff happy. It’s all thanks to the awesome people that work at the Sandwich Factory; Maggie is just one of them. The sandwich maker to Cal Poly student relationship is a special one. I can never really tell what keeps me going back to the Sandwich Factory day after day. It could be the delicious sandwiches that I receive, or the friendly and fun atmosphere, or it could be the experience and knowledge that the building that I am standing in is the source of contented, high spirited Cal Poly students just waiting for the love of their lives to be handed the package that will change their life, possibly forever.

Evan Nickel is an industrial engineering major.
Editor's Note

A profile of a trend, such as a persuasive argument about a particular technology or social trend, includes elements of the rhetoric paper, especially the need for sources as evidence to back up claims. How does Aaron Steinkraus use sources and evidence? How are quotations introduced in this essay? What kind of qualifications do Steinkraus’ sources have, and how is that authority represented?

How does the essay’s title fit in with the essay? How might more “txting” attributes be incorporated into this paper?

Texting has become an obsession for many of us. This timely essay brings up multiple issues for discussion. When is it appropriate to use informal writing? Consider what kind of communication challenges texting might cause for non-texters. Examine how texting might affect language: Is it evolution or destruction? Is there a “time and place” for texting? Discuss the idea of “cutting a message down”—when is this dangerous?

Can Txting Benefit Engl?

Aaron Steinkraus

As the world moves into the twenty-first century, technology becomes more and more advanced, especially in the field of communications. Satellites allow us to instantly connect to and talk with people on the other side of the globe from any location on the planet. Texting in particular, has become one of the most popular new mediums of communication and has created a number of controversies. The effect of texting on students’ abilities to use the standard conventions of English is the greatest of these controversies. Does texting diminish a student’s spelling and grammar? Does it signify a lack of proper education? Or, does it allow students to express their creativity and use another, viable language that does not follow the set conventions of English but still conveys the author’s message?

Text messaging first emerged in the 1990s and over the next decade exploded in popularity, reaching a position as one of the most prominent forms of communication. While most people believe teens comprise the majority of people whom text, David Crystal, an honorary professor of linguistics at Bangor University, found out that “adults and organizations send 80 percent of text messages” (qtd. in Lepkowaska). Now teens, along with adults, send messages filled with abbreviations, such as ‘lol’ (‘laugh out loud’), ‘ttyl’ (‘talk to you later’), ‘btw’ (‘by the way’), along with a multitude of other text shorthand, find their way onto cell phone screens the world over. According to Nick Seaton, a member of the Campaign for Real Education, “Now
text messaging is with us and we can’t get rid of it” (qtd. in Lepkowska). So does this form of communicating bring anything constructive to the table when it comes to writing convention?

Although many people view texting as the bane of proper English, it has much to offer. For one thing, texting teaches students to write more concisely. In a text interview with Vanessa Menchaca, an avid texter who will attend Boston College in the fall for business, she remarked on her views of texting: “u dont have long txts instead u get to the point.” Menchaca makes a valid point because text messages limit the sender to only a hundred and sixty characters. For that reason, texters don’t waste time with including extra words. Texters negate cluttered messages by avoiding excessive words, focusing on the minimum information necessary to convey the point. Becoming proficient in the concision texting promotes can prove useful to engineers and others who find themselves writing project proposals or other such propositions where concision is vital. Whether by using abbreviations or by speaking in incomplete sentences, texting cuts a message down to the bare minimum requirement needed to effectively express the author’s purpose, without excessive wordiness that can cause confusion and fatigue.

This philosophy of removing “unnecessary” components goes beyond the words in a text message. The use of abbreviations and the removal of letters from words create their own special influence on the English used in texting. According to Dr. Beverly Plester, who lectures on psychology at Coventry University, “A lot of textism is written phonetically” which can “[improve] both their reading and writing skills” (qtd. in Lepkowska). When children first learn to spell, teachers tell them to “sound it out” and they have taken that to heart. Instead of trying to deal with the complexities of Standard English, students decided to sound out the words they want to use and create their own spelling, one that streamlines the word, so as to not waste space. Students express themselves in their own unique style of writing and “show huge invention in coming up with ways of getting their message across.” Plester found that there is “a causal relationship between text and improving language learning” (qtd. in Lepkowska). Menchaca also stated, “I can no longer take notes the same way. just tooo many words.” Many students will agree with Menchaca’s statement because we find ourselves in the situation where a teacher covers a lot of material at once and the only way to absorb the information is to jot down quick notes. It doesn’t matter that the note-taker misspelled the words or that it appears to be an incoherent grouping of words, as long as he or she can understand what he wrote, the method works. Should this form of shorthand be considered unacceptable because of its improper grammar and spelling or should it be allowed because it effectively facilitates the need of the author?
Not everyone will agree that texting helps improve students’ learning capabilities. In fact, many people openly oppose texting and the conventions it uses. One such person is Ruth Eversley, an English teacher in Oldham, England, who, in an article titled “Texting has Taken Away our Capitals” shows her disgust for texting’s lack of usage of capitals. She goes as far as to blame students’ deficiency in using capitals on “the curse of the text message.” While copious in many text messages, this error can easily be remedied in the classroom, albeit a little extra effort is required on the part of the teacher and student alike. But the effect of texting proves more important as Eversley goes on to say, “for the first time, many of these young people …are writing for fun” (Eversley). Eversley realizes the importance of students increasing their exposure to writing. Most English teachers would be excited if they heard their students would write for fun because the more a student writes, whether for fun or for work, he or she becomes aware of subjects such as context and clearly conveying his thoughts.

Another accusation against the institution of texting comes from Seaton, who believes that “text messaging is having a detrimental effect on the way young people communicate” (qtd. in Lepkowska). At the core of this belief, spelling. When most people think of text messages, they envision horribly misspelled words and improper grammar. As Seaton puts it, “It does not require people to know precise spelling because they can just make it up.” I asked Coleen Gravem, a freshman Agriculture Business major here at Cal Poly, how she thought text messaging affected students’ writing. Although Gravem admits to not reading many student papers, she has inferred its effects from her experiences in school. Gravem gave the same impression as Seaton that people who text don’t know how to use proper spelling and grammar. Although Gravem texts on a regular basis, she abstains from using abbreviations and goes as far as to proofread her text messages before sending them in order to ensure clarity. Gravem acts as proof to the misconception that most texts use improper spelling and grammar. In the course of Crystal’s research, for his book texting: the gr8 db8, he discovered that the majority of texts “were written in standard English and without any abbreviations” (qtd. in Lepkowska). But what about the minority who use abbreviations? Does their use of shorthand have a negative impact on their literary abilities?

Those who use shorthand in their writing will not be able to change their habits immediately, nor should they. Even if people used abbreviations in their texts “people have to be highly literate to know how to abbreviate a word so the recipient knows what they mean.” If a person abbreviates a word, but no one knows what the word is, the student must resend a text to clarify the word. This forces them to think carefully before using a text to make sure that they don’t lose comprehension. Menchaca alluded to the confusion that appears around texts by providing an abbreviation, such as “ass.” which can abbreviate either “‘assumption’ or ‘assess.’” This abbreviation
would prove problematic because of the duality it shares with both words. This would require someone to think up a different abbreviation for one or both of the words. As Crystal points out, “To do this effectively, they must know how to spell a word and be able to use it in the correct context” (qtd. in Lepkowska). So when Seaton makes the accusation that texters can make up their own spelling for words, he does not take into account that people use modified spelling to convey their meaning through words that are shortened to fit in the limited spacing of texts, sounding phonetically correct, and carrying the original meaning of the word. In order to accomplish these criteria, one cannot just make up one’s own spelling. One must carefully choose how one writes a word in order to avoid losing clarity.

Texting has proven an effective form of communication. But circumstance may dictate its appropriateness. I am the first to agree that texting has its time and place. At some level of formality a line must be drawn. Ian McNeilley, director of the National Association for the Teaching of English, recognizes this and “is worried that a growing number of people are failing to distinguish what forms of language should be used—and when” (qtd. in Lepkowska). I am sure the majority of people will agree that the use of texting and abbreviations in a scholarly journal or other situations in a professional environment would seem out of place and inept. At the same time texting seems perfectly normal among friends and in social conditions. This leaves one arena that acts as ground zero for all the debate: schools. Mark Rogers, an English Teacher at The Jo Richardson Community School, believes “it is up to teachers to ensure that young people know how to adapt our language to their needs” (qtd. in Lepkowska). Rogers hits the point right on the head. Teachers who try to force students to completely abandon texting will find their efforts futile. Texting has become a part of the culture for this generation. Teachers must ensure that students learn the appropriateness of when and when not to use texting and abbreviations. As Ms Klacey, a member of the National Literacy Association, puts it, “I have never seen text abbreviation creep into formal work or essays that pupils have submitted, so they clearly know when it’s appropriate to use it” (qtd. in Lepkowska). And as long as teachers emphasize the difference between formal and informal, texting is transformed into a valuable learning tool and a creative outlet for teenagers and adults alike.

Whether texting will ever become academically acceptable or not is hard to tell. However, what is clear is that texting provides students with a style of their own and makes them excited about writing, even if it is in short bursts and for entertainment. Texting requires those who use it to attain a familiarity with a range of words and compels them to examine the context in which they use their abbreviations and shorthand in order to avoid loss of comprehension. I am not saying that texting is without its flaws. Gravem notes that with texting one loses the personal feel
that one experiences when talking on the phone. And I will agree that texting will never be able to replace human contact, but “the real test is whether you can be understood” and at this texting seems to excel (Pearce 8). So whether you are talking with a friend in class or a parent in military service on the opposite side of the globe, texting provides a medium with which students and adults alike can effectively convey their thoughts and ideas. C ya and ttyl.

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Editor’s Note

This essay is also a profile of a trend, this time about Facebook (see “Can Txting Save Engl?”). Lindsey Wagner says Facebook “acts like a chameleon, always changing into something different and new.” Does this simile help you understand the author’s point more deeply?

Wagner exposes many of Facebook’s downsides. What are they? Do you agree or disagree? Are there other dangers to social networking sites that the author doesn’t include or any benefits of Facebook that are not addressed?

The author argues that Facebook threatens what we currently think of as friendship and that could leave us isolated. How is friendship defined in the text? On Facebook? Consider how friendship might be changing. Is the Internet isolating us? Examine what kind of evidence the author uses to make this point. Does Facebook take more time or less time than regular interactions?

The Evolution of Communication

Lindsey Wagner

What started in the dorm room of a Harvard University undergraduate named Mark Zuckerberg, in 2004 (“Statistics”), now stands in the number one spot for websites in the United States (Smith). Ask any teenager or young adult and he or she can name this social network in a heartbeat: Facebook. With only five years in the business, Facebook is worth fifteen billion dollars (Chan), and has accumulated over two hundred million active users (“Statistics”). This trendy site has attracted many people from all different ages and ethnicities. The site’s main purpose sought to assist college students in networking with their fellow college classmates. Five years later, Facebook’s purpose has shifted to a place where not only college students, but teenyboppers and senior citizens also enjoy the attributes the site offers. Unfortunately, the people who now use Facebook are beginning to communicate with their friends differently. For instance, one user may send his or her friends Facebook messages instead of phone calls. With the drastic number of people joining Facebook and the site’s rapid popularity growth, Facebook is changing the way we communicate with our friends.

The site offers many different things for each user. For example, a Facebook user can update his or her status, take a quiz revealing the date of when he or she will get married, how he or she will die, or send an electronic gift to his or her friend. These special attributes available on the site have helped create a sense of instant gratification for each user. For instance, each time a user signs onto Facebook some-
thing new has happened. This sense of surprise and suspense keeps Facebook users craving and yearning for more of the site. This characteristic Facebook holds draws people in, because there is always something different to look at each time the user signs onto the site. Whether the user has a new friend request or someone has posted pictures up from last night’s party, Facebook acts like a chameleon, always changing into something different and new. This element of change makes Facebook enticing.

Facebook has left a huge mark on the young adult generation. It has tweaked how the users define friends, and how the users communicate with his or her friends. Ten years ago, a friend could be defined as a person you can talk to and spend quality time with, but Facebook has created a new definition of the word friend. According to the nature of this site, a friend does not have to be someone you are familiar with or someone you feel comfortable saying hello to at the store. The trend of the site has turned into the idea of, “Add anyone and everyone.” Nancy Baym, an associate professor of communications studies at the University of Kansas, states:

You can ask somebody, ‘Of your 300 Facebook friends how many are actually friends?’ and people will say, ‘Oh, 30 or 40 or 50,’ But what having a lot of weak-tie relationships does for you is it gives you access to a lot of resources that you wouldn’t otherwise have. (qtd. in Myron)

This concept of a friend does not have the same meaning it did even a few years ago: this fact is devastating. Thanks to Facebook, a friend can now be looked at as someone you can see on your Facebook account. This social network has quickly diminished the true meaning of a friend. What will the next generation of children think of when they use the word friend? With the way things are looking now, a friend will soon turn into someone they can see on a computer screen. If this trend of a Facebook friend continues people will eventually lose all human connection. Children and young adults will not understand the basics of how to hold a face-to-face conversation with another person because they will have no prior experience talking to others in person. Sadly, communication will become nonexistent without the assistance from our technology gadgets.

This website has attracted almost everyone, whether they consider themselves daily users or not. According to my personal interview with Jessie Ysunza, a daily Facebook user and college freshman at Cal Poly State University:

People feel left out when they do not have a Facebook. I did not have one until the end of my senior year in high school. I felt out of the loop when my friends would discuss
the new photos uploaded from last weekend’s party or about so-and-so broke up. Facebook for the teenage and young adult generation is a must have in our social world.

This social network currently acts as the new way to socialize with your friends. People no longer call their friends or God-forbid go to their houses anymore. Why go to a friend’s house or use the phone when you can get on Facebook and talk to multiple people simultaneously? This era was born into technology, and sadly enough, they do not know how to function without it. Facebook has given this generation exactly what they looking for: a technical way to communicate with friends. What more could this generation ask for? The site provides a fast and quick way to communicate with other people. Not to mention, this style of talking to others appears quite convenient, because the user can access this social network right in his or her home. Within minutes, the user can talk to multiple people at once, look at newly posted pictures, and update their status all in the comfort of his or her house.

Another problem that Facebook has created is less personal relationships between people. People used to actually talk face-to-face with others. Today’s society focuses solely on how to communicate through technology. The site acts as the new and modern way to talk to other people. This idea of “Facebooking” a friend to catch up has become an accepted way to socialize. Five years back, people barely knew how to communicate with their friends across town through a social networking site. With the attributes Facebook has provided the users, it has created an easier and less time consuming way to communicate. Instead of calling a friend or going by their house, you can just type them a quick message on Facebook and call it a day. Many people find joy in this style of communicating, because it matches with the rest of the world’s lifestyle. Today’s products are designed to be more efficient and less time consuming.

Although this popular idea of “faster is better” has a lot of people looking for the quickest way to get things done people are missing out on true and personal relationships with one another. Friendships and relationships with people have become less personal due to the obsession with Facebook. People experiencing this loss of physical interaction with others waste their time on Facebook instead of building personal relationships with other people. Some people do not even remember what a personal relationship feels like. They have lost the connection that direct interaction with another human being provides. The question that many wonder is why even go back to the old ways of communicating with friends? This new way of socializing provides a much faster way to communicate with others and gives each user the ability to talk to multiple people at a time. The answer comes down to the natural drive we as humans have to connect with other humans. Humans have an internal instinct to bond with other humans face-to-face. When people stop interacting with
other humans face-to-face, you lose that connection. Unfortunately, this lifestyle does not look like it will be stopping anytime soon since Facebook has rapidly accumulated hundreds and thousands of new users each day.

On the contrary, Facebook provides a few benefits. It can help long distance family members stay in contact more often, and a user can every once in a while find an old high school friend. Along with the benefits Facebook provides it has its share of negatives. The concern with Facebook is people have a tendency to abuse the site. Beginning with the purpose to locate classmates or long lost friends, people today have turned the site into the new “text messaging fad.” The site was not designed to replace our personal relationships we shared with others but allow our friendships to stay connected. The main concern affiliated with the site is that people are spending more time on the social network than with friends or family. This takes time away from building and keeping personal relationships lasting. People have turned it into an addictive game, spicing their pages up with “What character of Laguna Beach Are You?” and “What is Your IQ Score”? The site has morphed into a trophy stage for each person to brag about themselves and update their status every five minutes. Some people share every part of their day on this site. Personal information tends to spill out on this site. People have transformed the sites original purpose and butchered the real meaning for a social network by flushing their profile page with the latest quiz or what drink flavor they are most like. Without change in the system Facebook will continue to get more attractive, addictive, and popular causing our personal relationships with people to diminish.

In today’s society the fastest and latest technology tends to be what sells the fastest in all stores. Almost everyone has an iPod, computer, and or cell phone. This generation of teenagers and young adults lack the knowledge of how to function without technology. Let’s face it, technology advancements have helped us in the medical field and space exploration, but is this fad of faster and more convenient beneficial for our country in the future? If friendships continue to slowly diminishing now this issue could soon replace face-to-face interaction with people with computer communication. Whether Facebook or some other type of instant communication through technology, the way we communicate with coworkers, friends and family has forever changed and has no intention of stopping. Technology serves a great purpose in the society we live in today, but do not become part of today’s culture that is replacing the essences of human interaction with virtual communication.

*Lindsey Wagner is a liberal studies major.*
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Editor’s Note
Elisa Carey’s “The Journey Within” profiles her father’s life-changing experiences in the Peace Corps in 1969. What kinds of thoughts come to your mind when you think of the Peace Corps? Do you know anyone who has volunteered? Would or will you? The author incorporates many vivid details throughout her essay. For example, the audience learns that, “each piece of clothing had to be ironed because flies commonly lay their eggs in damp cloth and upon hatching, the larvae burrow into a person’s skin, creating large boils.” How do vivid details contribute to the style and structure of an essay? As you read, take note of the descriptions that stand out to you.

Look at Carey’s use of direct quotations. How does she integrate this evidence into her essay? What is revealed about her father without her telling us?

The Journey Within

Elisa Carey

When many people think of the Peace Corps, they think only of what the volunteers give to the countries in which they serve. These volunteers each spend 24 months in a country doing various activities such as building schools, constructing waterways, or advancing AIDS awareness to improve the lives of many who could not do so themselves. The personal fulfillment and sense of accomplishment that come with helping others are typically seen outcomes in a volunteer. What many don’t see, however, is how the experiences in their given country can change who they are as a person and who they become as leaders later in life.

In 1969, during the heat of the Vietnam War, with the draft in progress, my dad made the decision to apply for the Peace Corps. He explained, “Even though Peace Corps gave you a deferment from the draft, that wasn’t a main motivation for me; in fact, I also started the process to enlist in the Navy.” What he was looking for was an opportunity to make a difference in the world by doing something more meaningful than just protesting the war. It wasn’t until he dropped out of college at the end of his third year that he really made up his mind. My dad knew that he needed to do something new with his life to break loose from the world that he grew up in, and this was the chance of a lifetime to do something real. High on his list of motivators was President John F. Kennedy; he stated, “The Kennedy spirit was still alive in many of us even through the Nixon years.”

Despite the dean of students at Lehigh University’s claims that my father would not be accepted to the Peace Corps without first graduating from college, he filled
out an application and sent it in. He heard back from the organization a few months later, a day that he remembers very clearly today. “I got a phone call on a Thursday morning, out of the blue, and the caller told me that if I wanted to join Peace Corps, they had a great assignment for me with a new construction team. But I would need to be in Washington, D.C., in ten days for four days of paperwork, medical exams, and shots, and then fly straight to Sierra Leone,” he recalled. The caller told him that he couldn’t give him much time to think about it since the departure was so soon.

He called his dad for advice who in turn told him that it was something he really needed to think about and provided numerous reasons as to why he shouldn’t go. In response to this he hung up the phone and immediately called the recruiter back to confirm that he would be joining the construction team in Sierra Leone. Looking back it seems clear that if he had been allowed more time, he might have said no, since he is usually a deliberate decision maker. This life-changing experience was different. He said, “it was only after I hung up the phone that I pulled out the map of South America to see where Sierra Leone was. Oops, it was in Africa! So much for expectations.”

Just days after phone call came, he was packed and on a plane headed to West Africa. In a whirlwind of emotions, he describes feelings of excitement for the adventure, intense sadness of leaving his friends behind, and a bit of numbness as he was clueless to what the journey ahead was going to be like. He had a close knit group of friends, and because he was the first of them to head out on his own, it was a difficult time for them all.

It wasn’t until he had been in Africa for about four months that he began to have second thoughts about being there. It was spring in the U.S. and all of his friends were headed for graduation; he missed them terribly. On top of that, he was sick and beginning to miss home. In my dad’s time in Africa, he suffered some very serious diseases, including paratyphoid, pleurisy, dysentery, and malaria. He explained, “Being sick in a place where the nearest good medical help is a day’s drive away is difficult.” After thinking things over, he made his second big decision. He decided that if he was in Africa, he ought to be really living there rather than wishing that he was back home. It worked. With this new mindset, my dad came to the realization that if he took advantage of what life had to offer while in Africa, his experience would turn into one that he wouldn’t want to come to an end.

Because my father was interested in construction, this was the perfect project for him. Through his first year, he helped to develop roads, build schools, and the biggest project of them all, constructing and opening a new water system for a village. He lived in three different villages this first year and claims, “Life in the villages was tough. I longed for real milk, a hamburger, potato chips. I didn’t like outhouses.” The
villagers, however, were wonderful and played an important role in outshining the hardships of the environment.

Snakes and bugs overwhelmed this jungle area which made living difficult. For example, each piece of clothing had to be ironed because flies commonly lay their eggs in damp cloth and upon hatching, the larvae burrow into a person’s skin, creating large boils. It was also imperative to be ever conscious of snakes. While most people would think to watch the ground, the greatest dangers were those that hung in trees or on the eaves of rooftops. The spitting cobra posed a big threat to locals because when it hung over the roof, it had the power to spit accurately into the victim’s eyes from ten feet away, blinding them and turning them into helpless prey. Even with so many challenges presented by the environment, it wasn’t all bad, and once adapted he came to see it as a wonderful place to live.

Even with help, everything took time. In his second year in Africa, my dad became a construction advisor to volunteers all over the country. Although Sierra Leone is only 1/6 the size of California, it took 2-3 days to drive across it because it lacked paved roads. During this year, however, he lived in a house in Freetown, the capital city, exposing him to a whole different facet of what Africa had to offer. He explained that life was slow-paced, and it was vital that he developed what he called a “tolerance for ambiguity.” He also claimed, “people with specific expectations, who like things to be organized, really struggle in an environment like West Africa—or any developing country.”

This experience taught him numerous life lessons, among these was to appreciate the little things. Growing up with a lifestyle of never having to go without, he learned how to live with only the necessities. In the dry season, there was never more than an gallon of water to bathe with after a tough day of manual labor and of this he said, “it was often swamp water which would cause the smallest scratch to become an infection.” He said that still to this day, each time he takes a hot shower, he is thankful for the opportunity to do so and is sure never to take it for granted.

He also learned the power of a simple act of kindness. One particular incident occurred when he was a part of a team that worked through the night when the country switched over from driving on the left side of the road to driving on the right. He remembers, “a van pulled up about 3 a.m. in the middle of nowhere and the driver got out to give me a beer—from the senior engineer at the Ministry of Works. The driver used his teeth to take the top off the bottle and handed it to me and drove off.” After recovering from the shock of seeing the man remove the bottle top with his teeth, my dad realized that this man had been sent from miles away by the senior engineer just to bring him a beer. This one action made all the difference in his feeling accepted as the “white guy.”
Even in a place as desperately poor as Sierra Leone, the locals lived by the saying, “I fall down, but I get up again.” Through even the hardest of times, my father learned to have a positive attitude and to always press on through even the most difficult of hardships. He also gathered the importance of being able to walk into a room as the only white person, unable to understand anything that people were saying, and refuse to assume that they are talking and laughing about him. This experience taught him what it is like to be a minority in a place, and how it feels to be looked at differently from the rest.

After a difficult departure from the U. S. to Africa, my dad did not expect it to be so tough to then return home to America. He explains, “unlike when I went to Sierra Leone, I had very clear expectations about ‘home.’ But it wasn’t as comfortable as I expected. Waste, extravagance, rush, commercialism seemed so extreme. And American world perspective seemed . . . nonexistent.” While many of his friends returned overseas to serve again, he fought the urge to return as he finished his last year of college at Lehigh University. Though an English major, he explained that “[Volunteering] put me on a different path for the rest of my life. I know it led to greater independence, the opportunity to be who I wanted to be, not necessarily what I thought was expected of me.” Now the president of a non-profit housing organization in the Central Valley, it is clear that the Peace Corps had a huge influence on the direction of my father’s life.

_Elisa Carey is a kinesiology major._

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Rhetoric

For this sequence, students choose a public issue and write a persuasive essay putting forth their viewpoint. The authors explore their subjects, often in terms of their own personal life experiences, and address the concerns of those who feel differently. Though the essays in this section cover a broad range of topics—stem cell research, Proposition 8, driving laws for the elderly, financial education, social security, and offshore drilling—the authors propose a vision of the world they would like to see in the future.

Similarly, you will soon learn that a well-written and fully supported argument requires research both to support your own claims and to fairly depict opposing viewpoints. You will also learn to use the rhetorical aspects of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* to persuade and connect with your chosen audience. Whatever topic you choose, it’s generally best to choose a focus that matters to you, something you want to understand better. Moreover, try not to approach your topic with a firmly held point-of-view. Rather, as you conduct research and learn about your topic, your position may shift. Rhetorical inquiry and engagement requires this kind of flexibility.
Protests are one of the primary forms of political expression in our modern democracy. What might this photo of an anti-Proposition 8 protest say about this form of political discourse? Notice the people—how they are dressed, what their body language is, the way people interact with each other, the types of people. Who is present in the picture and who is not? Consider the rest of the picture: how does the juxtaposition of people and this environment add meaning to the protest? Look at the traffic signs, buildings, etc. Lastly, what is the rhetoric of the individual signs held by the protestors? What do they say and how?
Editor's Note

In the essay “Who's Going to Teach Us,” Bryanna Lindgren writes of the need for mandatory financial education. How does she draw the reader in with her hook? How does she establish ethos in the first paragraph? Certainly, she’s passionate about her topic, and she’s obviously dedicated time and energy to develop it. The author takes a seemingly humdrum topic and gives it voice and passion. How does she achieve that? Does it hold your interest? As you read, pay close attention to Lindgren’s sources. Does she rely too heavily on one particular source? Does this affect the persuasiveness of her essay?

Before you read, you might consider: Have you had much of a financial education? If so, what did it entail, and who provided it? Do you feel a lack of financial knowledge in your life? Has it negatively affected you? Does Lindgren fully explore the consequences of NOT having this education?

Who's Going to Teach Us?

Bryanna Lindgren

Who's going to teach me about money? How to buy a house? How to pay taxes? I am a freshman in college and I don’t know the first thing about money. Upon arriving at college, I expected to have come across a general education requirement for a personal finance class. Apparently, I was too quick to assume. I’m shocked! It is to my knowledge that each U.S. citizen is required to take an average of thirteen years of basic education including elementary, junior high, and high school. In those thirteen years, we are required to take a foreign language, driver’s education, health, physical education, and some performing arts. Essentially we are being prepared to go out into the real world (college or no college) and get a job. So why no financial education? Sure, we can get jobs and acquire money without being financially literate but we lack the understanding of what we’re supposed to do with that money. Our mandatory education fails to teach us about budgeting, saving, and investing our hard-earned dollars.

Maybe our country is scared of what would happen if every young individual was financially literate. Oh how the economy would change. Companies could no longer count on making money from naive consumers and the wealth could be redistributed throughout the population. As of 2001, the top 1% of households owned 40% of the financial wealth and the bottom 80% of households owned a small 9%. If financial education could be provided, imagine how those shocking statistics could change our
country’s economy, especially in this recession. No, the wealthy population and wealthy companies would definitely not favor this plan because that could mean that they lose a percentage of their wealth. They must shudder at the thought of living in a more competitive business world where they no longer own 40% of our country’s wealth. What a scary thought that must be for them, the idea that poverty could decrease with personal finance education. Financial education would no longer depend on how much one’s parents understood about money and what they chose to teach their children.

Our country is not financially responsible enough to leave such a big responsibility up to a child’s parents, as commonly believed by politicians. Besides, if parents themselves were not financially educated, they would only be passing down bad habits to their children. Thus, we see the vicious cycle of poverty: the wealthy remain wealthy and the poor remain poor throughout the generations.

It is time for this vicious cycle to be stopped. Everyone deserves to learn how to handle their finances, not just the people with knowledgeable parents. Three things need to happen in order to educate young people: financial concepts need to be implemented through other high school courses such as math, there needs to be a mandatory personal finance class, and most importantly, parents need to get involved in teaching as a real world example.

Thankfully, there is already an association that is fighting to make financial education mandatory called Jump$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy. Established in 1995, Jump$tart’s direct objective is to encourage curriculum enrichment to ensure that basic personal financial management skills are attained during the K-12 educational experience. While I recognize that Jump$tart has made excellent progress, I believe starting financial education at the elementary level is too soon. Adding and subtracting the number of puppy dogs in a room should not be substituted with adding and subtracting money. Elementary years are made for having fun, not figuring out how to spend, save, and invest money. At the elementary age, children are getting money from the tooth fairy and excitedly spending it on their favorite candy or toy and that is the closest to money they should get. It seems cruel and unusual to have children stress about money prematurely when they will have to worry about it for the rest of their lives.

On the other hand, high school students are at the ripe and ready age to learn because they gain more financial responsibility, such as getting a job or acquiring a credit card. But just because these adolescents have gained responsibility doesn’t mean they know how to be responsible! A survey administered by Jump$tart to high school seniors revealed that they have a lot to learn about important financial concepts. For example, “only forty-eight percent correctly said that a credit card holder who only pays the minimum amount on monthly card balances will pay more in annual finance
charges than a card holder who pays their balance in full” (“Financial Literacy” 2). This was a fact that even I, a credit card owner, did not understand up until this point and I am probably paying the price for it at this moment.

Even as college students, we continue to lack this vital financial knowledge. As I mentioned earlier, it is wrong to assume that attending college will guarantee any sort of financial education. According to a survey done by the Jump$tart, 62% of college students correctly answered questions about financial literacy basics (“Financial Literacy”). As the rank in school increased so did the scores among college students, however the percentage change was minimal. For example, college freshmen answered 59% of the questions correctly, while college seniors recorded a 65% score of correct answers. As you can see, there was only a six percent difference between college freshmen and seniors. I find this to be alarming. After all the years of elementary, secondary, and higher education, students are left ill-prepared to manage their finances.

Unsurprisingly, this early lack of financial literacy can lead to long-term financial problems. “States with high numbers of adults declaring personal bankruptcy also have high numbers of twelfth graders who are illiterate when it comes to personal finance” (“Bankruptcy Rates”). Of the states that had a higher rate of bankruptcy, the corresponding high school seniors were shown to get an average 55.6% on their financial literacy tests while the states with low bankruptcy showed a 70.3% average on the test (“Bankruptcy Rates”). The correlation is no accident; financial literacy has a strong affect on the number of bankruptcy filings. Leaving school without fundamental financial skills puts young people “at high risk of becoming adults who end up over their heads” (“Today’s Students”). They will be much more likely to acquire debt, go bankrupt, and be without adequate savings to retire.

Based on this evidence, it is clear that we desperately need financial education implemented into our high school curriculum. Seven states have already taken this plunge in requiring a personal-finance course for high school graduation and several more states are in the process of implementing one (Mincer 2). Of course there can be no overnight transformation since the teachers must have training in the subject matter. Aside from training, the transition is pretty smooth with Jump$tart’s helpful guidelines and standards. These states have come to realize that we can no longer leave the responsibility solely up to parents, especially since experience alone is not a reasonable educator. Survey results show that applied experience has minimal effects on a young person’s grasp of personal finance (“Today’s Students”). By teaching the conceptual and theoretical understanding of personal finances in school, students can readily apply what they learned to real world situations. Accordingly, real world examples should be provided through the parents. “A recent survey by Hartford Financial services Group Inc. found that 70% of college students said their parents...
were their primary source of information about personal finance” (Mincer 2). Clearly, parents play a crucial role in their children’s financial literacy, though this can be a positive or negative effect depending on how financially literate the parents are. Therefore, having financial education can benefit both the student and their parents. Jump$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy and the California State Parent Teachers Association joined together to distribute copies of a new guide, *How to Raise a Money-Smart Child: A Parent's Guide*, which they hope will enhance parents’ awareness of the issue and encourage them to set a good example as well as become more financially literate themselves (“California Parents”). At the cost of one dollar, this book could be the route to both the parent and child’s better understanding of personal finances.

So who, now should teach me about money, how to buy a house, and how to pay taxes? The answer is clear. High schools should provide financial education in the curriculum along with a personal finance course and then parents should reinforce their children’s education. This investment in early financial education can provide the foundation for individual prosperity and economic independence (qtd. in “Financial Literacy”). If our country was financially literate, we could be more responsible in taking caring of ourselves and could rely less on the government’s support (Financial Blogger 2). Therefore, financial education is crucial in our current recession in order to change the wealth distribution statistics and improve our economy. Learning how to budget, save, and invest money will advance young people’s ability to provide for themselves while at the same time help them to gain financial independence from their parents, student loans, and the government.

*Bryanna Lindgren is a psychology major.*

**Works Cited**


Editor’s Note

Trevor Bliss’s essay attempts to persuade the audience about an issue that is far removed from the lives of many college freshmen. The author’s research reflects depth and quality of information: sources are authoritative. However, sources are not explicitly introduced in the text with information about their authority on the topic. Is such information necessary to ensure the credibility of the evidence? Why or why not?

Consider how the writer addresses opposing or alternative points of view: Is the refutation compelling and thorough? What points does he concede? Logos is clearly at work in this text. How does the discussion demonstrate pathos and ethos?

The essay opens with a classical, three-part introduction, using as its hook a dramatic account of a tragic accident. How does this narrative opening engage you as a reader and affect your response to the rest of the argument? The opening paragraph takes up more than two-thirds of the first page. Does the appearance of this large block of text at the essay’s beginning encourage a reader to approach the text, or might some audiences find it daunting?

License Renewal Laws for the Elderly

Trevor Bliss

Santa Monica farmers market is usually a peaceful scene, full of people enjoying their weekend with fellow community members. On July 16, 2003, however, something very terrifying occurred. A Buick Le Sabre came barreling over the road dividers at freeway speeds and continued to charge through the mass of people not stopping until 10 were dead and more than 70 injured. According to the judge of this driver’s case, “‘Mr. Weller chose to steer into the people, plowing into the crowd and literally launching bodies into the air as his car sped 2½ blocks’” (Lagorio). The most terrifying part of this event was that this man suffered from no mental illnesses and was not the subject to any serious social or anger issues. The only thing this driver suffered from was old age. According to his defense attorneys, Weller simply mistook the gas pedal from the brake pedal. You may be wondering how someone who cannot differentiate the gas from the brake until he has gone through 80 people, a road divider, and 2½ blocks managed to get their driver’s license. The answer is really quite simple. Weller legally obtained his license long ago, and simply had to
renew it, most likely by mail, until the age of 86 when the accident occurred. Although on the extreme end, Wellers’ case is not an isolated incident. As drivers age, they simply become less and less fit to drive. With the Baby Boomers getting closer and closer to obtaining senior citizen status, more and more elderly drivers will be on our roads and that means there will be much more at risk drivers. Therefore, California must mandate stricter license renewal laws for the elderly.

One of the biggest factors contributing the decline in driving ability for the elderly is the deterioration of vision as humans age. After the age of 40, our vision begins to decrease, objects become blurrier, and we have trouble seeing details in focus (Old age). As we all know, almost all of driving is being able to see and react to what is in front of us on the road. So the worse our vision is the more at risk we are on the road, and after the age of 40 vision in humans inevitably gets worse as. Yes, elderly drivers can wear contacts or glasses to see sufficiently, but it cannot be guaranteed that everyone with bad vision is wearing the proper equipment to correct their vision. Because of this, as people get older and their vision gets worse more thorough checks on their driving ability become necessary.

Besides vision, age related illnesses are the most detrimental factor when it comes to determining an elderly person’s fitness to drive. Two of the most common of these illnesses are dementia and Alzheimer’s, which is a form of dementia. It is estimated that between 25 and 35 percent of persons over the age of 85 have some form of dementia and about four million Americans have Alzheimer’s disease (Wu). According to a study done at the University of Houston, “Dementia, even when mild, can impair the skills required to drive safely. Research has shown that drivers with dementia are at an increased risk of motor vehicle crashes and other adverse driving events, including becoming lost in familiar areas, driving in the wrong direction on roadways, failing to follow directional signs, and cutting across center lines” (Adler). The key thing to note from this study is that these dangerous driving habits were present not just with the extreme cases of the disease, but when the victim had just mild cases of dementia. On top of making physical mistakes while driving, this research also showed that drivers with dementia “are not always able to make appropriate decisions on their own about driving modification and cessation because of lack of insight, poor judgment, and a loss of reasoning ability” (Adler). So even if a driver happens to be diagnosed with dementia but is still by all means physically capable of driving, they are still very likely to not have the mental capacity to make sound decisions while driving. These facts are really only relevant if elderly persons diagnosed with dementia continue to drive. Well, according to pubmedcentral.com, “Of those who were driving at the time of diagnosis [of dementia], 73% continued to drive for at least a year, and these persons drove for a median of 24 months”. Now obviously not every-
one who is diagnosed continues to drive and I’m sure many of the drivers who know they are not fit to drive make the sound decision to retire their keys. The only problem is that statistically 73% of people continue to drive for at least a year, and as deduced by the University of Houston, even if these people have a mild case of the disease, they still suffer from poor judgment and dangerous driving habits.

So theoretically, due to the loss of vision and age-related illnesses, elderly persons are more at risk on the road. But does this actually translate to more accidents on the road, or do these factors only appear to be dangerous in specific studies? Let’s take a look at the crash statistics by age. According to the Center for Transportation Analysis, after the age of 65 the risk of being in a fatal accident goes up with age. Per 100 million miles driven, drivers aged 65 to 79 were involved in less than 10 deaths, while drivers aged 80-84 were involved in about 10 deaths and drivers aged 85, and older were involved in almost 18 deaths (Oak Ridge).\(^1\) This, of course, does not say that these drivers are getting in accidents solely because of vision problems and age-related illnesses, but it does show that they are involved in significantly more accidents the older they become and these problems and illnesses are just our best guess as to what is causing those accidents. Also, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, fatal involvement in crashes is lowest at the ages of 55-59 and begins to rise again at age 65 and continues to rise until the 85+ age group.

Looking at the above, it is easy to notice that drivers 16 to 19 are involved in a significant amount of crashes, even more than elderly drivers in most cases. The difference between teen drivers and elderly drivers is that teen drivers recently have been tested on their knowledge of road rules and ability to drive. They just simply lack the experience that older drivers have. They are also closely monitored by insurance companies and parental figures because it is understood that they have not yet had the time to fine tune their skills behind the wheel. Elderly drivers, however, already have the knowledge and experience of driving but simply struggle to retain the ability to be safe drivers. Despite the fact that they are involved in comparable amounts of fatal accidents to teens and significantly more than middle aged drivers, we have very few checks to ensure that drivers renewing their licenses still are qualified to have a driver’s license.

One check to elderly driver’s competence behind the wheel is that physicians, police officers, or family members can report to the DMV when they believe someone is unfit to drive. Doctors are even required to report certain conditions such as Alzheimer’s (in California) but not all forms of dementia. The DMV then can investigate and reevaluate that person’s ability to drive (Medical). This undoubtedly saves

\(^1\) Image removed for copyright purposes.
a significant amount of lives a year, but is not a thorough enough check for all elderly drivers. Many elderly are not diagnosed by a doctor until years after they obtain an illness and doctors are not required to report all potentially dangerous conditions such as forms of dementia milder than Alzheimer’s. In addition to this, many drivers do not have any diagnosable illness, but due to old age are simply no longer fit to drive. Few would argue with the statement that all humans will inevitably reach a point in their lives when they are no longer able to drive a vehicle. Without the DMV having any comprehensive test for fitness to drive, unless warned by an outside source, the only thing stopping an unsafe elderly driver from being on the road is themselves.

To most of us, driving represents freedom and independence. Without a license many of us, especially the elderly, would feel stranded or alone. Many other elderly may also not be able to maintain jobs or support themselves financially without licenses. Although this is a sad thought and is tempting to give into the pity of our senior citizens, the fact of the matter is that many elderly drivers are unsafe behind the wheel and endanger everyone else on the road. Thus, no matter how dependent on driving these elderly are, they should not be issued a license. I am not trying to take away all senior citizens licenses, I simply am insisting on a more thorough check on the fitness of persons over the age of 65 to operate a vehicle. In Florida, of drivers over the age of 80 required to retake a vision test when renewing their license about 93% passed (“Must”). This shows that a relatively small percentage of drivers will not be able to renew their licenses through vision tests, but it does filter out some of the drivers who on the worse end of the vision spectrum.

Whether it is vision, dementia, or Alzheimer’s disease, elderly drivers are statistically less fit to drive than younger humans. These dangerous conditions are reflected in the crash statistics, which clearly show that after the age of 65 the older we get the more fatal crashes we are involved in. The only way to prevent such accidents and save lives is to mandate stricter license renewal laws. These laws will force the elderly to take simple vision and road knowledge tests to ensure the safety of not only the elderly drivers, but everyone else on the road.

_Trevor Bliss is a computer engineering major._

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Editor’s Note

In this essay, Alex Prahl analyzes the rhetoric of the opposing argument in an attempt to persuade readers to “repeal Proposition 8.” Note how the author employs the classical strategy of explicitly identifying a logic problem, the slippery slope fallacy, in order to refute one opposing claim. How does this argument balance logos, pathos and ethos? How do the author’s assumptions about the topic, the opposing side, and audience affect your response as a reader? Consider how the discussion employs rhetorical questions to directly engage the audience and serve as transitions between ideas.

The essay’s thesis is stated at the end of the opening paragraph and then restated, almost verbatim, as the essay’s final sentence. Does this use of repetition improve clarity and emphasis, or would a more varied closing sentence carry more rhetorical power?

A Question of Individual Liberties? Or a Fight to Protect Children? An Analysis of the Twisted Campaigning of Proposition 8

Alex Prahl

On Tuesday November 4, 2008 our country took yet another great step forward in its enduring quest for equality and diversity. Barack Obama was elected the first African-American President of the United States of America. Millions of Americans are now proud and hopeful, as they should be, but they are also forgetful of the other major part of the past election: Proposition 8. Lack of equality in diversity has become a nationwide epidemic. It is important that we do not forget our roots as Americans. Centuries of development toward a more accepting society lay behind us, inspiring to push through this stalemate of ignorance. I realize that propositions may not be the most immediate worries next to the economic crisis and the new President Elect, but that does not entitle us to forget our responsibility as citizens of the “free” country to support equality. In order to protect our history, our reputation, our people, and our rights, it is absolutely crucial that we repeal Proposition 8.

When approved, Proposition 8 eliminated the right of same-sex couples to marry. It instituted that “only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized” (Bowen 56) in the state of California. It is safe to say that Proposition 8 was one of the most controversial election pieces and certainly the most expensive to date. Californians were nearly divided in half; 52% approved the proposal and 48% opposed (Kornblum). Proponents fought with the slogan “Protect Marriage,” claiming that
the amendment in question would restore the original, intended, definition of marriage. In addition, they advertised that Prop 8 would protect children, and that it was in no way an attack on the gay lifestyle. Opponents, however, preached for a guarantee of equality under the California Constitution. They claimed that the Proposition would clearly deny homosexuals dignity and respect, emphasizing that it would create a separate set of rules and standards for same-sex couples than anyone else. Therefore, designating them to a lower social class. “Equality under the law is a fundamental Constitutional guarantee” (Bowen 56). Despite one’s feelings about marriage, it is doubtful that they may deny this. In a debate about personal freedoms and the basic rights of a minority, why were families and children such a heated aspect of the Proposition 8 campaigns?

In a “Yes on 8” pamphlet that I received, the main argument was that Prop 8 represented a pro-marriage and pro-children stance. How are these relevant to same-sex marriage? Well, proponents again and again emphasized that the “ideal” situation for children is to be raised by a married mother and father. Of course, the proposition would ensure this “ideal” for every Californian – even those who do not believe it. Although there is a much more expansive database of research on the success of traditional parenting, gay parenting has recently come out with a number of its own discoveries. For example, same-sex parents are proven to use a more authoritative parenting style (as opposed to, and preferred to, authoritarian or passive parenting styles). Studies by the American Psychological Association have also found that same-sex parents use less corporal punishments like spanking, and more often emphasize accepting behavior toward diversity. When compared to children of traditional marriages, studies show that children of either situation “…have similar levels of self-esteem, similar IQ, and even peer relations” (No on 8). Coming from a traditional parenting background, I can rightfully state that my parents were very successful and I would not know how to adapt to losing either a mom or a dad. It would seem very unbalanced, but do we as a society really know that one family model is better than another?

Despite Proposition 8 focusing on gay rights, the most controversial issue by far was the possible effects of inaction on public education. Proponents warned voters in the Official Voter Information Guide: “teachers could be required to teach young children that there is no difference between gay and traditional marriage.” This scare tactic alone pushed many frenzied voters to automatically assume that there was no other explanation to the matter. However, when one refers back to the original summary of Proposition 8, they will find that it never mentions a single word about education. Supporting organizations of the amendment cleverly used a slippery-slope type of reasoning to convince their willing audience of irrelevant and hypothetical situations.
In addition to their original claims, supporters suggested that parents would have no say in the matter of their child’s education. Most voters would agree with their belief that parents should have a say in when, where, and how their students learn of controversial issues like gay marriage. Surprisingly though, a majority of “Yes” on 8 voters were under the impression that schools would teach such lessons whether parents “like it or not” (Protect). On the contrary, it is strict California law that parents have full authority and the ability to exemplify (or “opt-out”) their child from any Health or Family Issues education. Therefore, I fully congratulate “Yes on 8” campaign organizers for their utter success in scaring voters to the polls. Unfortunately, the slim margin that the amendment passed through may have been in favor of the other position if more voters were aware of these facts beforehand.

In my research I also discovered a very interesting article about the Protect Marriage campaign: “Family is Sacred: Protect Children’s Education.” Not only does this specific ad draw on the mother-father family model, but also, it is combined with the public education scare in an attempt to snatch California’s Latino vote. Family is the fulcrum of the Latino culture, it is no surprise that they would stoop in order to secure this huge voting population. This ad states that California State Education Codes require teachers to instruct about marriage. (Protect). In order to make their point more effective though, it is added that only Proposition 8 could possibly prevent children from learning about gay marriage. Frank Schubert, the “Yes on 8” Co-Campaign Manager himself advised that the proposition alone protects children from “same-sex marriage” and other devastating materials like the “King and King” children’s book that has been used in Massachusetts elementary education. (Family). Family is an important influence on voters whether they support gay marriage or not, I am in disbelief that so many were fooled by the manipulative campaigning performed by the “Yes on 8” crowd.

By early morning on Wednesday November 5, 2008, it was clear that ignorance had succeeded. By a mere 4% margin, Proposition 8 had officially passed. Since the legalization of gay marriage in May of the past year, over 18,000 same-sex couples have been married. Now, it all hangs in jeopardy. Recently, the ACLU and few other prominent organizations have filed suit against the new amendment to the California State Constitution. Their main argument: “Proposition 8 in itself undermines the point of the Constitution – to ensure equal protection and rights to all.” (Kornblum). My question is simple: in a conflict over an individual’s personal liberties at the altar, why did a hypothetical danger to children decide the outcome of Proposition 8?

In analyzing the number of under-publicized issues that influenced this election, I have come to a conclusion about American politics. In highly controversial topics such as this, stem cell research, and abortion, the enduring battle between religious
influences and opposition will always lead to surprising and sometimes illogical outcomes. Proposition 8 was an amendment that was formed to overturn Supreme Court judges’ decision to allow same-sex marriage in California’s boundaries. Instead, it passed because voters across the state were led and abused into believing their children were in danger. The most basic way to understand what really happened is to realize that the proponents of the amendment did not have a valid reason for objecting gay marriage, so they targeted Californians where none could ignore: children.

In a world as modern and advanced as ours it is embarrassing as an American citizen to see such legislation pass. It is crippling to see our political foundations manipulated as child’s play. Our nation’s history is tainted with similar situations like our war against racism, and the fight to end sexism, but we were able to overcome such obstacles through development and cooperation. In the end, it becomes a matter of who we want to be as individuals, as a state, as a country. Will we continue to back step and deface the great advancements that have been made toward equality? Or will we take our one chance at redemption? It is absolutely necessary that we repeal Proposition 8.

*Alex Prahl is a liberal studies major.*

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Editor’s Note
Josie Fiske’s “A Conceivable Medical Breakthrough” employs pathos through a personal anecdote to persuade the reader about the necessity for stem cell research. Does the fact that the author has a real vested interest in this topic make her more persuasive? Does she use logos and ethos as well? This is a topic with such large scope: Has Fiske managed to make a meaningful argument in so few pages? The author claims that “the morality of Stem Cell Research is heavily debated.” Do we learn enough about that debate? The opposing side is alluded to, but is it given enough time?

We might all agree that the hardest part of an essay to write is the conclusion, which can run the risk of sounding too repetitive or contrived. It may not be effective to simply restate your thesis—even in different words. A conclusion might give the essay a sense of unity, a sense that the essay has come full circle. Does this essay achieve that sense of unity?

A Conceivable Medical Breakthrough
Josie Fiske

Scientists are not funded to receive embryos because it is immoral, yet fertility clinics are disposing of “unique human [embryos]”

–Cole¹

Alzheimer’s (AD), is a terminal neurological disease, noted to effect elderly people, with symptoms usually emerging around the age of sixty. Many people don’t realize the effects this disease has— not only on the elderly but also the young. About 5-10 % of all AD cases involve early-onset (before age 60) people with AD usually do not live more than 20 years after diagnosis. Familial Early Onset Alzheimer’s (EOA) disease can be traced back five generations within my family tree. Four out of my eight aunts and uncles have died because of EOA. It was discovered that my own mother was found to be a carrier at the age of thirty. She suffered with the dis-

¹ As you may notice, this source is not included on the works cited. Try to google it, and you’ll discover that it is nearly impossible to find this source. How does this affect the credibility of this evidence? How does this affect his overall argument?

² Image removed for copyright purposes.
ease even before my birth and ultimately succumbed to it when I was sixteen. In July of 2006, my mother’s brain was donated to the Shiley-Marcos Alzheimer’s Research Center (ADRC) at UCSD. At the research center scientist will use her brain to further their understanding of AD. Although her death deeply saddened my family, we have hope that her short life will benefit future generations and contribute to bringing an end to this devastating disease.

Through personal experience, I began to realize the possibilities of Stem Cell Research. It was about 100 years ago when people initially recognized the significance of stem cells. Physicians attempted to feed Anemia and Leukemia patients’ bone marrow in hopes of healing. Although the ingestion (through the mouth) of bone marrow was not successful, it was the start of a conceivable medical breakthrough. These “Stem cells are very basic cells in humans and animals that when needed can renew themselves indefinitely and repeatedly produce at least one kind of highly specialized cell, such as a muscle, skin, blood, brain or intestinal cell” (Bettelheim). There are two types of cells: Embryonic (ESC) and Adult (ASC). ASC are found throughout the body, but they are limited in the cells they can regenerate. ESCs, on the other hand, are incredibly versatile—capable of becoming any of the 200 tissues of the human body. Sean Morrison, an associate cell biology professor from University of Michigan, states three main purposes of Stem Cell Research: to determine if transplanted stem cells can replace cells destroyed by physical injury or disease, to gain insight on what occurs when development of cells goes wrong, and to explore how diseased cells grown in lab can be tested to be used for new treatments of diseases (Bettelheim). If Stem Cell Research (SCR) became federally funded though political acceptance, scientists can isolate microscopic embryonic cells and revolutionize the entire medical field.

Political matters prevent the proliferation of stem cell research. Many scientists claim that because we are not being federally funded and lacking ESC sources we are behind the rest of the world in biomedical research. China recently surpassed the United States in SCR. The United States was considered ahead in the science field but due to factors in politics we have fallen behind. Over half (54%) of Americans are concerned with the U.S. researchers going overseas. Bill Clinton was the first to allow funding for ESC Research. Six months after George Bush became president he utilized his veto power preventing well-needed fund distribution for SCR. During his presidency in the wake of Ronald Reagan’s death to Alzheimer’s the June 2004 RFA survey clearly exposed American’s support for Stem Cell funding with 72% supporting and 28% opposing. There is clear Bipartisan support with 86% of liberals, 80% moderates, and more than half of conservatives supporting SCR (Civil). Considering United States President-Elect Barack Obama and a majority of Democrats in the house support liberal and moderate ideals, it is plausible to assume stem cell research funding will be provided.
Embryonic Stem Cell Research has been juxtaposed to Holocaust medical human guinea pigs by Nazi Experimental Surgeons. This is not a fair comparison because medical experiments were performed on living, breathing, human beings. The ethical conflict regarding embryonic stem cells was the reason the Bush Administration vetoed a funding bill. The status of the embryo, according to many conservatives, has the same status as human beings; but then again, it is hypocritical of "fertility clinics to destroy far more human embryos than stem-cell research ever would, yet they are not controversial" (Kinsley). Not to mention, if we allow abortion clinics to dispose of fetuses then how can we be affected by a microscopic non-breathing, non-feeling embryo that is used to better mankind? The cells in the petri dish cannot grow into a human being alone. The embryo must be implanted into the mother’s womb, to even have a chance. If the stem cells are left unused or destroyed, this means one less life can be saved.

Recently, as of June, doctors transplanted a windpipe with stem cells. A mother of two, living in Barcelona, was unable to care for her children because she suffered from Tuberculosis. Doctors were initially contemplating removing a lung, until Barcelona’s Hospital clinic proposed a windpipe transplant instead. Though the use of Stem Cells harvested from her hip, scientist were able to create millions of tissue and cartilage cells to cover a donated windpipe. Because the stem cells were her own, she did not show any signs of rejection. Stem cell reproduction can also be replicated and possibly used to cure AD. There are many theories to how AD patients might be cured, however, because we lack sufficient funding as a country, a cure is out of reach for my family. Still the morality of Stem Cell Research is heavily debated, and people that are awaiting the necessary operations that can save their lives are left without a solution.

Stem Cell transplants are said to be the most reliable method in the future of medicine. In order for Stem Cell Research to have any significant affect on the medical field, it needs to acquire federal funding to catalyze their research and development. Through the new administration of President-Elect Obama and high support from the Democratic majority in Congress a new bill is being contemplated to provide funding for a conceivable movement geared towards stem cell research and operations involving them.

Josie Fiske is a biological sciences major.

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Editor’s Note

In “Costly Coasts,” Alex Schmotter opens with a descriptive narrative in which he uses “you.” How did you react to his “you”? Were you comfortable putting yourself in the shoes of the person he is describing, or did you feel that the “you” must be someone else and not, in fact, you? What background information do you need to know in order to understand what he’s talking about in the introduction?

This argument uses quite a bit of logos. Does it also appeal to the reader’s emotions? If so, where does this happen, and which emotions are invoked in the reader? Part of the essay’s persuasiveness has to do with the way in which the author addresses the opposition. Try to find where this happens. What tone does Schmotter take towards the opposing side? How effective is his rebuttal and why?

Costly Coasts

Alex Schmotter

Children laugh as they frolic in the waves crashing onto shore. A group of college students shout as a friend makes a diving save in a beach volleyball game. The sun warms your face as your nostrils fill with organic sea breeze. You run your toes through the blackened sand, and observe the thick layer of tar that has accumulated on the bottom of your feet. You are reminded of the 1969 oil spill that occurred when a drilling induced crack erupted and released over three million gallons of oil into the Pacific Ocean, six miles off the shore of Santa Barbara County. You gaze out into the ocean, and see a chain of odd looking islands—man made, oil harvesting islands.

Today, oil platforms continue to dot the coastlines of America, but bans have been placed limiting them to the waters of central California and the Gulf of Mexico. Oil companies and legislators alike are trying to pass laws that will allow for the expansion of off shore drilling sites along the Pacific, Atlantic, and Gulf coasts. In a 2008 telephone survey of over 500 Americans, about 70% supported the idea of offshore drilling (Rooney). 70% of our brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, have been misinformed about the costs and benefits of today’s leading energy debate. Those in favor of offshore drilling, including former President George W. Bush, believe that offshore drilling will help the United States break its dependence on foreign imports and protect the U.S. economy from volatility in the global oil market. They also believe that the bans prohibiting offshore drilling, which were put into effect decades ago
after the Santa Barbara disaster, are outdated and should be lifted because of technological improvements of oil extraction equipment (Rooney). Wouldn’t it be great if the solution to our nations’ energy dilemma were this simple? However convenient it may be, offshore drilling is not the answer. Despite advancements in technology, the environmental risks associated with offshore drilling are high, and the economic relief that the consumer will see at the pump will be negligible.

It’s easy to be misled on the environmental issues involved with even contemporary offshore drilling. The incredible technology involved in the drilling process has dramatically reduced the chance of another oil spill on the magnitude of the 1969 Santa Barbara spill. On the surface, the statistics sound pretty good. Modern oil platforms have automatic shut off valves that plug up oil wells at the first suspicion of a problem. These new rigs are tested to be 99.99% effective (Lamb). But what about that one in ten thousandth oil platform that does malfunction? When the potential number of active wells planned for construction is on the scale of tens of thousands, this malfunction rate suddenly loses its persuasive power. It is easy for someone in Minnesota to say “so what’s the big deal with an oil spill anyways? Can’t they just clean it up?” For this person, this is a legitimate question. Those of us that have witnessed the effects of an oil spill first hand, however, know that the resolution is not that simple. Everyone has heard of accidents happening in the harvesting and transportation of oil, but they do not necessarily understand their full effects. When oil is spilled into an aquatic environment, the oil and the water do not mix. Oil is less dense than water and therefore floats on the surface like a black blanket of death. Aquatic mammals like dolphins and whales that must come to the surface to breathe are the first to go. They inhale oil through their blowholes, and die of lung hemorrhages. Birds that feed on fish and other marine organisms are next. When they dive into the oil covered water to hunt, they get tar in their feathers, and lose their ability to fly. They die slowly of exhaustion and starvation. Marine plants get coated in oil and lose their ability to exchange gas with the environment. When plants shrivel up and die, their effect is felt all the way up the food chain. Besides effecting rare oceanic organisms, fishing supply decreases, which causes its own economic issue. The damage done by catastrophic oil spills is devastating, but it is only the beginning of the overall environmental destruction that will result from offshore drilling.

Oil can be found in pockets underneath the earth’s crust, but it is not everywhere. Before drilling for oil, it must be located. Using the guess and check method of drilling in random locations with crossed fingers of finding liquid gold has become outdated and is no longer economically or environmentally feasible (Jervis). New
technology utilizes seismic waves to locate sub oceanic oil fields. The benefits of this process include a reduction of direct habitat destruction on the seafloor, as tests are performed from boats on the ocean’s surface (Lamb). The downside however, is the effect that seismic waves have on sea mammals. Many sea mammals such as whales and dolphins have evolved the ability to navigate using echolocation (Lamb). The seismic wave frequencies unfortunately interfere with the output frequencies involved in echolocation, and cause disorientation of sea mammals. ExxonMobil was recently forced to suspend sub oceanic oilfield exploration efforts near Madagascar after more than 100 whales beached themselves due to seismic interference (Lamb). I am not accusing the drilling companies of being blind to environmental issues, clearly this is not the case because they could easily be causing even greater harm to ocean life. The effort to make oil harvesting environmentally sound is there, but the challenge is incredible, arguably impossible. The natural world operates in delicate equilibrium like a complex mathematical equation, and if any one variable in the equation is altered, then the rest of the variables will be affected.

Despite the impressive technological improvements made on oil extraction machinery in recent years, some negative effects are simply unavoidable. Whenever oil is extracted from beneath the ocean, other compounds are inevitably brought up as well (Lamb). When a hole is drilled into an undersea oil reservoir, toxins such as lead, mercury, arsenic, and other poisonous compounds are released from captivity and seep out into the ocean and environment (Lamb).

Furthermore, the nearly flawless technology available for oil drilling does not affect the risks associated with manual labor of offshore drilling. The probability of another oil leak due to equipment malfunction like that of Santa Barbara in 1969 has decreased dramatically, but human error will never be overcome. Even if a platform were 100% spill proof where machinery and robotics are the driving forces, the oil must be transported from the rig to the main land for processing. The most common method for transporting oil over bodies of water is via tanker ship. No matter how fool proof the technology becomes, humans will ultimately be the driving force behind the operation of the ship, and humans do make mistakes (Wangsness). Marine transportation of oil recovered by offshore drilling facilities accounts for nearly 1/3 of all oil spills worldwide. The Mineral Management Service predicts there will be no less than one oil spill a year of 1,000 barrels or more in the Gulf of Mexico over the next 40 years. A spill of 10,000 barrels or more can be expected every three to four years (Lamb). If the ban on offshore drilling expansion is lifted, then drilling will expand into natural reserves such as the Alaskan coastline, where some of the world’s most unique and endangered wildlife lives (Wangsness). In time, an oil tanker
accident is very possible. The effects that even a small accident would have on the wildlife in these areas would be tremendous.

Now what is it that so powerfully motivates people to support increased offshore drilling? Many people believe that if we can increase our domestic oil production then we will be more independent as a country and gas prices will decrease immediately. In reality, however, domestic oil harvesting will not rid the United States of its dependence on other countries, and gas prices will be affected on the scale of a few cents per gallon at most. What many economists fail to accept is the fact that oil is traded on a global market. “Suppose the U.S. produced all its oil domestically,” said Robert Kaufmann, director of the Center for Energy and Environmental Studies at Boston University. “Do you think oil companies would sell oil to U.S. consumers for one cent less than they could get from French consumers? No. Where oil comes from has no effect on price” (Wangsness). There are an estimated 18 billion barrels of oil that could be obtained off the coasts of the United States. At best, the United States could produce two to four million barrels of additional oil per day. The world’s production is currently at about 86 million barrels per day, nearly a quarter of which is consumed by the U.S. (Jervis). The additional three to five percent is not enough to dramatically shift the supply demand and effect prices. The consumers would see little to no price difference. To put the amount of obtainable oil present off American coasts into perspective, the total amount of oil available in the offshore oil fields would be just enough to fuel our country at current consumption for about two and a half years. Then what?

A common misconception is that offshore oil harvesting would begin immediately upon approval by the government. Realistically, however, oil platforms are enormous and extremely precise. Building an oil rig is an incredibly timely process. If production of offshore drilling platforms began today, it would be at least 10 to 12 years before we would see the first drop of oil they produced. By this time, wouldn’t we have hoped to have harnessed a renewable energy source? Instead of spending billions of dollars building offshore oil platforms, the money should be invested in alternative energy research. Large alternative energy projects could stimulate the economy immediately by opening thousands of middle class jobs right here at home.

As first glance, offshore drilling seems like a no brainer. It would only make sense that we get as much fossil fuel as we can out of the Earth, why let it go to waste? If we have the oil we need right here at home, then we don’t need to rely on other countries, right? And with so much oil available, price at the pump would have to decrease. Unfortunately, a closer look at offshore drilling procedures and economics reveals a different conclusion. Besides vast environmental devastation that it would cause, offshore drilling will not decrease our dependence on other countries, and it will fail to
deliver desired economic incentives for consumers. The cost of building these facilities would be tremendous, so why not use the money to invest in alternative energy systems? Science is on the verge of a breakthrough with alternative energy, maybe all that it needs is this one little push. It is only a matter of time before fossil fuels are depleted completely, so why not get ready now?

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Works Cited


Editor’s Note

For a persuasive essay, an author often tries to balance the three appeals. In “A Legacy in Disrepair,” how well does Michael Waddington achieve this balance? How clearly does he present information? Is the logos overwhelming, or is it supported by sustained use of ethos and pathos? Consider the authority of his sources by looking at the works cited page. When you see the sources in the text, do you realize how seriously you should take them? Or could he have introduced them more effectively to maximize their credibility—their persuasive weight?

This is a big topic. Is it presented in a way that's formidable and serious or casual and accessible? How does he create this effect? A few things to consider are the author's tone and the personal narratives. Is all the personal information relevant? Or would incorporating more personal information have created a stronger sense of his individual persona? He immediately employs “you.” Who do you think he might be targeting with this usage?

A Legacy in Disrepair

Michael Waddington

What does Social Security mean to you? Is it responsible for maintaining your livelihood? Perhaps it is simply another deduction from your paycheck? Whether or not Social Security often crosses your mind, its relevance to the citizens of this country is undeniable. The Social Security program was introduced to assist America’s retired population during the Great Depression by issuing monthly payments to retired citizens. These payments would prevent those without a regular income from slipping further into poverty. Though it has faced many additions and modifications since its creation, the Social Security program remains in place as the country’s leading defense against poverty. Unfortunately, the program is in dire need of repairs. Population shifts, government borrowing, and fundamental flaws in the system threaten to bring down the very ideals of Social Security in less than four decades. Unless bold actions are taken swiftly, millions of Americans will soon discover that, upon retirement, their government will no longer have the ability to protect them from poverty.

Even if the foundations of Social Security were strong, the change in population alone creates a predicament in need of a solution. When World War II ended, a baby boom began that lasted until the mid-1950s. In this period, over 77.3 million babies were born; currently, those babies are beginning to reach retirement age. This
RHETORIC

is the essence of the problem: the largest generation of Americans in history will all be exiting the workforce at the same time, requiring the younger, smaller generation to support them. In 1950, the retired population was so small that the cost of each retiree’s benefits could be divided amongst 16 workers. Currently, the number of workers per retiree is around three. By the year 2025, only two workers will support each retiree. And in the age of the two-income household, this means that in just over 15 years, each nuclear family will be obligated to support itself as well as a retired citizen (“Finding” par. 7). This is neither a fault of the government nor a fault of the people. Population shifts are naturally occurring events that occasionally cause difficulties. The Social Security system was not designed to accommodate such an unusual slew of retirees (the program went into effect a decade before the baby boomers were even born). As a result, the system has no “contingency plan” for the millions of retiring boomers. The solutions to this problem will have to be of unique design, conforming to today’s economic characteristics to accommodate the growing retired population.

The plan to fix the population problem will have to be enacted in a timely manner before revenues sink any lower. The solution must involve either private control or increased revenues through governmental means. In recent years, the call for Private Retirement Accounts has grown louder. PRAs are the private solution to the inflation of the retired population. Instead of a government-controlled pool of money being used to issue retirement benefits, retirees would be given control of the money they contribute to the Social Security system. They would be capable of investing their funds, much like a mutual fund account, and hold the potential to make their benefits grow much larger than they would have if left in government control (John pars. 6-7). However, I do not believe that this is the correct solution. We cannot forget the second word in “Social Security.” The program was put in place to provide guaranteed assistance to people once they retired. With a PRA, the success or failure of the retiree would depend on the fluctuations in the private sector and the stock market (Rodriguez par. 5). This puts a worker’s lifetime Social Security tax revenues at risk when the whole reason for the program’s inception was to eliminate the risk in retirement survivability. I feel that for a temporary population shift, a temporary solution is necessary. Through a mix of a graduated benefit scale and tax reform, I believe that the response to the population shift can be implemented with few consequences. Both parts of this solution leave the government in control of Social Security funds and keeps them protected from the risks of private investment. The first aspect of the plan, the graduated benefit scale, is grounded in common sense.

As an example of how this graduated scale would function, let us consider my grandmother and her neighbor. My grandmother uses her monthly Social Security benefit as her means of paying bills. Never wealthy, her life savings are minimal
and would not be sufficient to support her should Social Security stop paying her. Her neighbor, Mr. Rose, inherited his one and only home from his parents, along with large parcels of land around his hometown. The money he saved by never having a mortgage and earned by selling his inherited land was put to use in the stock market; it made him a millionaire. The Social Security checks that Mr. Rose receives are pocket change that he adds to his fortune. With the graduated benefit scale, people that depend on Social Security to survive (my grandmother) would continue to receive their regular benefits whereas those above predetermined earnings caps (Mr. Rose) would receive fractions of their previous payments due to their ability to live off of savings. The money saved by lowering benefits for the wealthy would help keep the Social Security fund liquid. The second aspect of the plan would be an increase in tax revenues. Currently, only the first $90,000 of earnings can be taxed for Social Security (United States Government Accountability Office 42). A surcharge (a fraction of the full tax of 6.4%) applied to earnings above $90,000 would close the gap and help secure the Social Security program (Pozen par. 10). The graduated benefit scale and the tax adjustment are logical fixes to an impending problem that can be enacted quickly to secure the future of America’s citizens.

The money in the Social Security Trust Fund should belong to the people that have paid into it, not to the government. Since Social Security’s beginning in 1937, the government has borrowed money from the fund to use for other purposes. However, more recently, large sums of money from the Social Security fund have been used to balance the nation’s budget without intentions to fully replace the borrowed funds (Towns par. 1). This leaves a gaping hole in the money pool that was intended to support our retirees. Although the Social Security program is government-run, it does not excuse the government from using those funds for other purposes when they were taken from American citizens for the sole purpose of funding their retirements. If Social Security is ever to be fixed, the government needs to assure its people that it will not spend away the money its hardworking citizens have saved.

Unseen by most people are the fundamental flaws in the Social Security program—rules and requirements that often defy logic that should be corrected simply because it would be the ethical thing to do. I learned of two such flaws when I witnessed the experiences of a close relative. In March of 2007, Uncle Joe was diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer. No longer able to work, he went to his local Social Security office to file for disability so that he could collect some of his hard earned money to continue to support both himself and his two children. Upon providing to the Social Security office...
Security clerk proof of his illness issued by the hospital, the clerk notified Uncle Joe that it would be several months before he would receive any money. The Social Security Administration, on the back of its yearly statements, explains that once being approved for disability payments, the first check will not arrive for another six months. No exceptions. The World Health Organization, in agreement with doctors, states that the typical life expectancy for those with pancreatic cancer is three to six months. My uncle, a man who had worked tirelessly for decades, was told he would not see a penny of the money he was approved to receive until after doctors predicted he would be dead. This is a fundamental problem with the rules governing Social Security benefits that must be addressed for the sake of being ethical. The second occurrence of a flaw in the system was made apparent less than nine months later when Uncle Joe passed away. He left behind his two children, ages 21 and 26, who now carried a greater financial burden. On top of recovering from the loss of their father, my cousins now had responsibility of the debts left behind. The remaining benefits my uncle deserved from Social Security would have helped ease the pressure. However, the Social Security Administration stated that the only person eligible for Uncle Joe’s remaining benefits was his ex-wife (due to the fact both of his children are over 18). It is pertinent to understand why this is a terrible situation. Under normal circumstances, despite being divorced, the ex-wife would do everything she could to help her children get through such difficult times. But my uncle’s ex-wife is a downright bad person. She neglected her children, had multiple affairs, treated my uncle horribly, and upon his death, did not even bother attending his funeral. She had not been on good terms with her children in years and has ultimately disappeared, not having been seen by anyone in the family in months. This is the only person on this planet that the Social Security Administration says has the authority to collect my uncle’s remaining benefits. My uncle’s children, who essentially lost their only parent when he passed away, cannot collect a cent. This is another instance in which I believe the Social Security Administration’s policies need alterations for the sake of being fair and ethical.

Even if most people don’t think about it often, we, as Americans, must remember the importance of Social Security to our nation and its citizens. We must fight the urge to place its problems out of mind simply because they do not come about frequently in daily life. As a college student, I have seen very little of my money taxed by the federal government. Perhaps many people view the Social Security tax as simply another way the government eats away at their paychecks. But the events that unfolded with my grandmother and my uncle forced me to comprehend how crucial Social Security is to so many of our nation’s citizens. More importantly, I was made aware of the problems this crucial program faces. As a country, we cannot allow
population shifts and policy flaws to bring a crumbling end to a program responsible for keeping millions of our citizens out of poverty and despair. We must make relevant the predicaments of Social Security to our lives and strive to correct them with logical and ethical solutions. Our time to act is limited; before the clock reaches zero, either you or someone you love will be adversely affected by our unsolved problems. And so I will ask you again: What does Social Security mean to you?

Michael Waddington is an aerospace engineering major.

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Each student in this section chose to write about something important in his or her life, whether religion, photography, or food. In the case of “Chicketarianism,” Mike Sudolsky writes about how an unfortunate bout of food poisoning led to a decision to limit his food choices—to become a “chicketarian,” something similar in principle to a vegetarian. Another student, Melissa Foucar, examines perception of Christians and her own dedication to Christianity. In “Captured in Time” Tim Tapscott explains how he got started in photography and how it became more than a hobby.

Insightful and sometimes playful, these essays are wholly personal arguments, and as such they have to rely mainly on ethos and pathos. At the same time, their instructors may have allowed—even encouraged—some risk-taking. Do these essays stray from convention? Do they fulfill your expectations of an academic essay? What rules do they break—if any? What risks have the authors taken? What conventional elements of argument do the students rely on to make the essays persuasive?

These essays all include an added medium: photographs. How do they contribute to the authors’ argument? Would the essays read the same without them?
Bicycles serve mainly as a mode of transportation for riders, but this rider seems to use the bicycle as a means of personal expression. Does the rider’s aesthetic choice—flowers!—make this typical bicycle more interesting? Does this “fresh approach” make you curious about the bicycle’s owner? Do you find creative ways to express yourself, aesthetically or otherwise?
Editor's Note
This personal narrative plays with the conventions of food identity, especially vegetarianism. Sudolsky has come up with a new form of diet restriction: chicketarianism (in a footnote, even!), and uses this idea to look into the positives and the pitfalls of identity. What is Sudolsky saying about food identities like veganism? How does his creation of chicketarianism make a more convincing (and fun) argument than if he simply wrote an essay about his predilection for poultry? What does this essay bring up about food and identity in American culture? What issues, questions, or ideas might be left out of the discussion?

This essay has personality. What are the details that add to the essay's or author's ethos? Consider the effect of the photo of the author in a chicken suit or author's use of descriptive language such as “frigid ceramic tile” and “dingy façade.” What about the effect of mentioning Chinese food at both the beginning and end of the essay? The author also tells a long anecdote in the beginning about food poisoning that isn't directly connected to the rest of the essay. Is this effective? Why or why not?

Bon appétit.

Confessions of a Chicketarian

Michael Sudolsky

I tightened the grip I had on my stomach. I could feel it coming. Strange smells diffused, contaminating the air I breathed. My knees ached from contact with the frigid ceramic tile. A bead of sweat fell from my brow. I felt it coming. I felt horrible. And then it came—my first (and hopefully only) encounter with food poisoning.

My brain attempted to recall what I ate. Desperate, I thought about my day. I wanted to figure out what menace could have caused this—bad cheese? Spoiled milk? Tainted meat? And then it came to me... Earlier that day my brother and I trekked on over to “China Bowl: Chinese Cuisine.” We were famished, so despite the dingy façade, absent clientele, and lack of color, our stomachs led us inside. Without thinking, my brother and I had both devoured China Bowl’s finest: Sweet and Sour Pork Bowls.

I determined the culprit: Pork. I cursed it. How foolish I had been. Mother had always advised us to avoid pork, for it belonged in the “bad meat” category. However, I put aside her warning and ate that Sweet and Sour Pork bowl. I ignored her, yet I so desperately wished I hadn’t. I yearned for a time machine to take me back; but to
my dismay I was stuck in that foul bathroom. I was miserable; I was defeated. Mother was right, and at that point I made a promise to myself. Never again would I suffer from the cruelness that is tainted pork.

I told myself I’d begin a new; I would start a new lifestyle. I would prevent this from ever happening again. I considered restricting what I ate. My mind was littered with possibilities. I found myself visualizing different futures for myself. In one instance, I was a vegan, riding around on a “fixie” (a bike without breaks and an inability to coast) amongst my hip vegan friends. In another, I became a hardcore raw-foodist. I was sharing Trader Joe’s Trail Mix with my raw-foodist friend Zach. But then I realized how ridiculous that sounded. I remember asking myself, “How could I ever go Vegan? I’m obsessed with poultry. I couldn’t even go vegetarian.”

I should probably explain my obsession with poultry. There was a week when I was a kid where I refused to eat anything but meals derived from chicken. I collected chicken memorabilia. Chicken statues, book rests, paperweights and other chicken related things littered my bedroom. There was one Halloween where my mother even helped me dress up as a chicken. Everyone knew chickens were my favorite animal. The way they moved, clucked, came into this world; all of it was fascinating. There was just something about the chicken species that made them irresistibly amazing in my mind. Yet somehow, despite my love for the living version, I found that I was perfectly happy with lifeless chicken too. I loved the taste of chicken. To me, chicken has this uncanny ability to fuse perfectly with any meal. I thought about all of this (while gripping my upset stomach) and seconds later I had figured it out—I was to become a “chicketarian”.

Fully recovered from the incident, I was eager to start my new lifestyle. I knew my switch to chicketarianism wouldn’t be monumental or even meaningful. There was just something about a restricted diet that intrigued me. I felt that not only would chicketarianism make me healthier, but it would add this certain something to my personality. I looked forward to passing on holiday ham. I saw myself skipping Fourth of July hotdogs and hamburgers. I pictured my parents complaining, but I didn’t care. I was excited to be different.

With chicketarianism on my side, I found this air of freshness surrounding me. I felt renewed. It was as if I pressed a reset button on my health. I deduced that there really was something to restricting one’s consumption of meat. Many view vegans, raw-foodists and even vegetarians as insensible creatures, arguing that animals were put here for a reason; but I began to understand. I started to connect with the food conscious people I had always been surrounded by. No longer were the vegans

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1 Chicketarian (noun) – One who restricts their consumption of meat to chicken related foods. Some may include all poultry and fish.
at my high school ridiculous hipsters, but friends. Yet I thought to myself: had these new friends befriended me, or chicketarianism?

It felt like I belonged to something greater. With my new friends I hopped on the environmental bandwagon. A canvas tote bag from Trader Joes was soon in my possession. I opted for a refreshing bike ride instead of driving. My friends and I attempted to find innovative ways to reuse old things. I woke up, environmentally. Just like chicketarianism, an aspect of sustainability had become a part of me. However, I couldn’t help but wonder if I was being myself.

Three years have passed since my consumption of that tainted meat. High school graduation came and went. Chicken quesadillas have been perfected, and China Bowl went out of business. I have grown, yet I’m still following a chicketarian lifestyle. On trips to the store, my reusable tote bag still follows. Chicken memorabilia can still be found in my bedroom, and attempting to reuse old things still remains a pastime. But recently, I have found the answers to the questions I posed on my identity.

I wondered if I was a prisoner to my own creation. Had chicketarianism shaped my life? If I wanted to, could I leave this lifestyle? Or would it be leaving a part of my identity? To those questions, and so many more, I found the answer when I watched a raw-foodist friend take a bite of meat.

As I watched my friend Zach leave the days of nuts and salad, epiphanies exploded in my brain. Zach was eating meat—yet he didn’t lose his identity. All he lost was a label. Zach was still the friend I had come to know him to be. With this, I found that one’s diet is a mere aspect of the complex thing we call life. I had thought chicketarianism made me into who I am, but for whatever reason, it was I who gave up red meats.

It has always been I, not the chicketarian, who makes decisions. Watching Zach eat that burger, I finally came to the realization that I have always been myself. I’ve never been anything else. I am who I make myself to be; I make my own identity.

*Michael Sudolsky is an architecture major.*
Editor’s Note
Melissa Foucar’s “Christians or Christ” analyzes the process of broadening her worldview. The essay critically examines some of her closely cherished assumptions, revealing how those assumptions formed and what caused her to reevaluate them. Does the author’s process appeal to a certain audience? How would readers’ beliefs and assumptions affect their responses to the text? Clearly, Foucar wants the reader to understand how she has changed as a result of her experiences, but is that the only rhetorical purpose here? The essay relies primarily on support drawn from the writer’s personal experiences. Should she have balanced that with outside information? Why or why not?

A provocative title, series of one-word sentences, and quotation from Gandhi—how do these elements serve to engage a reader? Consider these instances of informal tone: “screwed up,” “Whoa. Is this guy on crack?” or “He was sure pissing me off.” What rhetorical effect is evoked by this use of casual language? Another distinctive feature is the use of italics to indicate self-reflection. How do these embedded elements work to support the essay’s purpose?

Christians or Christ?
Melissa Foucar

Hypocritical. Judgmental. Boring. The number one response: mean. The words stung my ears as I watched a video interview of several people on the streets of Las Vegas saying the first word they thought of when they heard the word “Christian.” Is that seriously how we are viewed? I thought to myself. I was saddened as I watched more and more people with similar reactions. Occasionally there was an exception from the normal responses and someone would say “nice” or “Jesus.” Those answers were few and far between, though, and their rarity caused my heart to ache. The words of Gandhi reverberated in my mind: “I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. They are so unlike your Christ.” I had never seen those words placed before me quite so obviously.

“I like your Christ.
I do not like your Christians.
They are so unlike your Christ.”
–Gandhi

I was born into a Christian home, raised in a Christian church, and educated in a Christian school. Basically, I have been around Christians all my life. I was baptized on June 14, 1998. Surrounded by my family and friends, I began my journey with Christ at the young age of eight. I was a typical Bible school kid: my world centered around church, and I was at the
top of my Bible class in school, able to shoot back any verse reference or Scripture thrown at me. When I became aware of the stereotype placed on Christians, I took a lot of time trying to understand it. I have spent years trying to break away from that image.

As I heard the words of the people in the video, I was shocked at first. The Christians in my life were wonderful people. Could someone really think that they are mean and judgmental? Could someone think I am mean and judgmental? I thought about it and realized that, yes, they could. Visions of people with microphones yelling on street corners flashed through my mind. I began to examine my world, the people in it, and this church that I belonged to. When I finally decided to open my eyes to the reality around me, it did not take me long to figure out just what it was that the people in the movie were referencing.

I was walking through LA one day when a man on a bullhorn came up to me, got in my face, and asked if I knew where I was going to spend eternity. I calmly answered, “Yes, in heaven” and walked on. My heart, however, was pounding with fury. So this is what the people in Vegas were talking about. As I passed the man I saw that he had a coffin on the corner with a mirror in it for anyone who dared to look in. No wonder people hate Christians. Another evening, I strolled down the street of a farmers market, my mind far from anything regarding Christianity, when I saw a crowd of people by one of the sidewalks. I sauntered over to see what was going on. As I approached I saw a man standing in the middle of the crowd, holding small tracts and yelling. “Have you ever committed adultery? Probably not. But have you ever lusted? That is just as bad! If you do not repent of your sins, you will go to hell!”

Whoa. Is this guy on crack? Saying all that was just going to piss people off. He was sure pissing me off. The answer to my questions regarding people’s views of Christianity was becoming more and more evident; in fact, even I was beginning to hate the Christians.

I love Jesus, though. I don’t do all that stuff, and I did not see people in the church that I grew up in behaving in that manner either, so there had to be other, better Christians. I turned back to the place where I was raised as a Christian to try and find another version of Christianity, the kind that acted like Christ.

I sat in church on Sunday, looking through the church bulletin: “New Softball Team Forming,” “Need $5,000 for a New Landscaping Project,” and “Movie Night on Friday for the Middle Schoolers” headlined the columns. Some of that seemed kind of frivolous to me. Did we really need to re-landscape in front of the building when people were starving all over the world? I began to see the other, less radical side of my religion. This side, though not condemning people to hell, seemed to have its priorities rather screwed up as well.
About the time I came to this conclusion, I found myself reading a book that really helped me discover the Christianity I was looking for. In *The Irresistible Revolution*, Shane Claiborne refers to himself as an ordinary radical, just a normal guy loving Jesus and therefore loving others. No condemnation, no judgment, just love. He believes in community, in sharing with people who need it. He fed the homeless, questioned unfair authorities, and went to live in the slums of Philadelphia to start a project he called Simple Way. As I compared the text to Scriptures, I found that this way of living was a whole lot closer to Jesus than anything I had seen so far. I started developing my own beliefs, and in doing so became rather disenfranchised with the whole idea of corporate Christianity.

I began to tire of hearing people grumble about the worship in church on Sundays. They would complain about bad vocals or too much bass, and I could not believe that they were talking about praising God. I figured out that worship is not about singing or music, and it sure is not about how good all that sounds. It is a way of life. It is about walking and talking and living and breathing in a manner that brings glory to God. I became weary of seeing people whisper behind the backs of a young single mother, or cross to the other side of the street when passing a homeless family. One of Jesus' best friends was a prostitute, and he himself was homeless, for heaven's sake! I see Christians judging people all the time, and I can see why other people are upset by that.

I began to love people, regardless of any flaws, and try to look at everyone the way God sees them- as incredible people that He created for a specific purpose. There is one girl in particular that comes to mind. I had her in my yearbook class, and she absolutely drove me crazy. She would spend class rolling her eyes and mouthing off to anyone who crossed her path, and would be quick to say rude things to me and my friends. When I started trying to view her through God's eyes, though, she became a lot more likeable. I found that it made life a lot easier for me to stop worrying about what everyone else was doing right or wrong. I began trying to implement Claiborne's idea of community, offering to spot my friends for money or give them a ride even if it was out of my way. I found that even if I did this without expecting anything back, I was still generally treated with the same generosity I showed. My group of friends became like a little community, sharing anything we had. I think that this was the form of fellowship that Christianity is all about.

I can now see that my life is less about what I do and much more how I do it. I try to do everything in love, and I think that is what God really wants from me. When I discovered that God will love me regardless of what I do and I stopped worrying about every little move I make, I began to enjoy my life and love and appreciate my God a whole lot more.
Gandhi said that he did not like Christians because they are not like their Christ, and I can now understand what he was talking about. Christians have twisted and perverted the Gospel until it is so far from what Christ originally intended that Christians look nothing like what He wanted. I want to be different than that. I want to get back to what Christ wanted in the first place, a religion that has a sense of community and love and a relationship with God, not with the rules. I try to live that every day. Each day brings a new challenge, but I will continue to work towards becoming more like the perfect being of Christ, who went His whole life without being hypocritical, judgmental or mean. Until then, I will love God, love others (even the Christians), and love myself.

Melissa Foucar is an animal science major.

Works Cited

Editor’s Note

“Captured In Time” author Tim Tapscott explores his journey of becoming a photographer. As you read, notice how the significance and complexity of his pictures appear to unfold over time, and how he uses this development process to organize his essay. How does this structure contribute to the essay’s meaning? Are the transitions organic because they follow his journey?

Note how Tapscott’s photography is incorporated into the text of his essay. How do visual elements enhance his text? Consider how the essay would be different if the images were placed at the end with no captions. Examine the photographs. Which do you appreciate and why? Is there an argument in this essay? How do we know what Tapscott’s claims about photography are?

Captured In Time

Tim Tapscott

The course of our life is constantly being altered. We learn from each and every experience to become who we are today. Every person we talk to, every object we own, every success or misfortune we undergo, plays a small yet vital role in our life. We also have the ability to influence others, as well as be influenced ourselves. The memories we make will always be remembered, but can never be revisited – except with a photograph.

I grew up in a small rural town in northern California called Palo Cedro. It was a pleasant place to grow up – despite the strange climate consisting of blazing hot summers and cold snow-filled winters. With hundreds of miles of trails and dozens of mountain peaks to climb, I naturally became an outdoor enthusiast. I would normally choose my gear depending on the conditions – tent, filter, stove, snow skis, and trekking poles – then head out into the wilderness for a few days. However, the one piece of equipment I would always bring was my camera.

My camera was my lifeline. It documented my trips and allowed me to illustrate what words could not describe. I would

FIGURE 2  Summit of Shasta Bally, California.
photograph the sunsets, the landscapes, the lakes, and the snow—anything that seemed “pretty”. I was not very good, nor did I have great equipment. I was using an old hand-me-down camera with no tripod, no fancy lens, and no meters or sensors. Over time I got better; I began to compose my photos, observe the lighting, and even dream of a better camera. I decided it might be time to upgrade.

After saving my money and reading hundreds of articles, I purchased my new camera—a Nikon d40x with Nikkor 18-200mm lens. After waiting impatiently for seven whole business days, it was like Christmas morning in October. I remember the very first photo I took with it, a photo of my lamp. Although it was underexposed and blurry, I could still see the light shining through and illuminating the desk in my dorm. I do not remember the next several hundred photos I took, but I do remember they were almost certainly flawed.

Over the next several weeks, I photographed anything and everything that was worth capturing at that moment. I had hundreds of photos of leaves, birds, berries, and again my desk lamp. I taught myself many new techniques in those few weeks, from basic concepts like proper exposure, to more advance concepts like hyper focal distance. I never wanted to take a photography class because I felt photography was a talent that was best learned from one’s own mistakes and successes. For example, if an entire series of photos did not turn out, I never considered it a failure because I was able to learn from those mistakes.

I still have never taken a photography class; nor do I believe it is necessary to be taught what looks good or bad. I have taught myself everything I know about photography by just using my camera. Photography is a form of art, and the only way one can
become better is from practice. I learned how to manipulate my surroundings in order to create photos how I envisioned them. A famous photographer by the name of Ansel Adams once said, “You don’t take a photograph, you make it.” Anyone can take a photo, just as anyone can splatter paint on a canvas. However, it is how the paint is arranged that makes a beautiful painting, just as how the right lighting, mood, composition, and focus produces a photograph.

I noticed my perception of my surroundings began to slowly shift. I began to see the world in a different way. I realized a great photo did not always have to have a great subject. The small, hidden masterpieces in nature that I normally would disregard turned into small works of art that could be captured on film. A simple water drop could convey a symbol of strength, or a wisp of smoke could illustrate tranquility. I had overcome one of the most difficult challenges in photography – my photos now had meaning.

Each photograph began to tell its own story. Each one contained a memory and a moment imbedded into it – I can remember the camera settings, where I was, what I was thinking, and what I learned from almost every photo I have taken. For instance, two of my favorite photos were taken at Shell Beach, California when I was photographing the sunset. I must have been an interesting sight – climbing on the rocks, struggling with my tripod, not slipping off – because I noticed a family watched me

FIGURE 5  A long exposure of the sunset from Shell Beach, California.
almost the entire time. After snapping a few dozen photos, I retreated to my car and saw a paper tag on the window. My first thought was a parking ticket, as I noticed I parked illegally. I pulled it off and saw a phone number with writing on it that said, “Please contact me I would like to purchase photos if you were taking them.” This sounded strange to me, but I stuffed the note into my pocket and drove home.

Upon investigating the mysterious note, I gathered enough courage to call the number. After saying who I was, the woman explained to me they were visiting Shell Beach from Fresno, California, and had forgotten their camera.

Her son, a part of the 160th infantry was leaving for Afghanistan in a few days. She wanted to give him some of my photos as a gift to remember the moment they were together the night I was photographing the sunset. I did not have the heart to request money, even if it was a scam, so I emailed a few photos and added my P.O. Box at the end. Three weeks later, almost completely forgetting about this strange incident, I received a letter in the mail. I opened the letter and was shocked to see a check for $100 and a handwritten note. The quote I remember reading even to this day was, “I hope you recognize how your talent has played such a significant role in our lives.”

I have sold the sunset photos from Shell Beach to different people around the world, and I have told this story to each person who has purchased them. Now they will be able to share this moment, as have I. It was not the memory that makes the photo special to me – it was the moment I captured with my camera.

Although I have never met the soldier, his mother, or his family, they have played a significant role in my life. As I continue to photograph the world around me, I like to think each and every one of my photographs has impacted someone else’s life. Just as each photograph I take has a small impact on mine.

*Tim Tapscott is a biological sciences major.*
Appendices
The General Education Course Objectives for English 134 state that as a student enrolled in the course, you will learn:

1. To understand the writing act as a means of exploring and expressing your ideas.
2. To approach the act of writing as a recursive process that includes drafting, revising, editing and proofreading.
3. To develop and apply rhetorical awareness of your audience and to use this awareness to assess your audiences and to adjust your utterances to that audience.
4. To understand the major organizational strategies and to apply these strategies effectively with reference to your audiences.
5. To become aware of the major stylistic options such as voice, tone, figurative language and point of view and to apply these options with rhetorical appropriateness.
6. To apply the above objectives so as to write essays that are unified, coherent, and free of significant grammar, usage, punctuation, mechanics and spelling errors.
7. To read critically in such a way as to understand and to derive rhetorical principles and tactics that you can apply in writing and in critical reading of other students’ papers.
8. To apply all of the above principles to in- and out-of-class original writing of not fewer than 4,000 words.

English 134 emphasizes a process approach to composition: instructors will engage in a dialogue with you about your writing, providing feedback designed to prompt you to rethink your work. In addition, you will gain competence as a writer by learning how to assess your own work. In addition, English 134 is rhetorically oriented, which means you will learn to account for the relationship between writer, reader, and text when you write.
Composition at Poly:  
Catalog Course Descriptions

The following courses constitute the composition curriculum at Cal Poly.

**ENGL 102 Basic Writing II (4) (CR/NC)**
Instruction in the writing process. Practice in the strategies of writing, revising, and editing paragraphs and essays with attention paid to focus, support, and organization. Directed readings of exemplary prose. Not for baccalaureate credit. Credit/No Credit grading only. Repeatable. 4 lectures. Next Course in Sequence: ENGL 134

**ENGL 103 Writing Laboratory (1) (CR/NC)**
Directed practice in writing in a laboratory environment. Required of all students scoring below 151 on the English Placement Test (EPT). Students scoring below 146 must take an additional remedial course before registering for ENGL 103. Not for baccalaureate credit. Credit/No Credit grading only. To be taken concurrently with ENGL 134.

**ENGL 111 English Sentence Structure for ESL/EFL Students (4) (CR/NC)**
Focus on the fundamentals of sentence patterns, sentence construction, and sentence combining within the context of the paragraph and story. Practice in writing a variety of effective sentences; practice in linking sentences in a unified paragraph controlled by a topic sentence. Not for baccalaureate credit. Credit/No Credit grading only. 4 lectures. Prerequisite: Non-native English speakers who need to develop skill in writing English sentences.

   Next Course in Sequence: ENGL 133

**ENGL 112 English Paragraph Development for ESL/EFL Students (4) (CR/NC)**
Focus on the fundamentals of paragraph development within the context of the essay and story. Writing paragraphs with strong topic sentences that control paragraph unity; linking paragraphs for a unified essay through transitions and the control of the thesis statement. Not for baccalaureate credit. Credit/No Credit grading only. 4 lectures.

   Next Course in Sequence: ENGL 133

**ENGL 113 Essay Writing/ESL (4) (CR/NC)**
Practice in essay writing with special attention paid to the writing process. Focus on using details and examples for effective development. Review of grammar problems specific to ESL students. Journal writing to enhance fluency. Directed readings
of essays and fiction. Not for baccalaureate credit. Credit/No Credit grading only.
4 lectures. Prerequisite: ENGL 111 or ENGL 112, or consent of instructor.
Next Course in Sequence: ENGL 133

**ENGL 133 Writing: Exposition for English as a Second Language Students (4) GE A1**
Writing and stylistic analysis of expository papers. Study and application of techniques of exposition. Critical reading of model essays. Special emphasis on grammar and writing issues appropriate for English as a Second Language students. 4 lectures. Prerequisite: ENGL 111, 112, or 113 or consent of instructor.
Next Course in Sequence: ENGL 145, 148, or 149

**ENGL 134 Writing: Exposition (4) GE A1**
Writing and stylistic analysis of expository papers. Study and application of techniques of exposition. Critical reading of models of effective writing. 4 lectures. Prerequisite: Satisfactory score on the English Placement Test. Next Course in Sequence: ENGL 145, 148, or 149

**ENGL 145 Reasoning, Argumentation, and Writing (4) GE A3**
*(Also listed as HNRS/SCOM 145) (formerly ENGL 215)*
The principles of reasoning in argumentation. Examination of rhetorical principles and responsible rhetorical behavior. Application of these principles to written and oral communications. Effective use of research methods and sources. 4 lectures. Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A1 and A2.

**ENGL 148 Reasoning, Argumentation and Technical Writing (4) GE A3**
*(Also listed as HNRS 148) (Replacement for ENGL 218)*
The principles of reasoning in technical writing. Discussion and application of rhetorical principles, both oral and written, in technical environments. Study of methods, resources and common formats used in corporate or research writing. 4 lectures. Prerequisite: Completion of GE Areas A1 and A2.

**ENGL 149 Technical Writing for Engineers (4) GE A3**
*(Also listed as HNRS 149) (Engineering replacement for ENGL 218)*
The principles of technical writing. Discussion and application of rhetorical principles in technical environments. Study of methods, resources and common formats used in corporate or research writing. 4 lectures. Prerequisite: Completion of GE Areas A1 and A2. For Engineering students and students who have already met the CSU GE critical thinking requirement.
In the spring of 2008, Deborah Wilhelm, a composition instructor, invited English Department faculty at Cal Poly to create a list of writing preparedness suggestions for college-bound high school students. About twenty faculty members from an assortment of specializations (British literature, American literature, composition, drama, poetry, technical writing, and linguistics) responded to the invitation. Interestingly, four of those who responded also indicated that they taught high school before teaching at Cal Poly.

Faculty members indicated that they don’t expect high school seniors to have mastered college-level skills; rather, their responses focused on the pieces that are missing from the skill set that incoming freshmen possess when enrolling in college-level composition courses. Gaining these missing pieces, according to faculty, will help students appropriately position themselves to acquire the new skills that their college courses demand.

The most frequent suggestions focused on the following areas:

• Critical thinking, particularly analytical abilities
• Form that goes beyond formulas
• Expression: correct and effective use of language

While you likely acquired some of these skills in high school level English courses, English 134 instructors will expect you to quickly build from those basic skills and be prepared to compose essays that are much more complex and sophisticated. We present this list to you in no specific order.

**English 134 students should be prepared to:**

1. . . . compose essays that move beyond summary and instead focus on higher-order cognitive skills, particularly analysis. Many students assume the words “analyze” and “summarize” mean the same thing; however, college writing requires both critical thinking and persuasive ability, skills that require much more than simple summary.

2. . . . compose essays that articulate a position that is supported with logic and evidence. They should be able to support general statements with details that are concrete, specific, accurate, and relevant. Moreover, English 134 stu-
dent should be able to come up with their own argumentative theses rather than needing constant and explicit instructions on what to write about.

3. . . . learn to read rhetorically. In other words, student writers need to account for the relationship between their audience, their subject, and themselves as writers each time they compose.

4. . . . approach grading in English 134 with the understanding that an “A” in a high school class is not the same as an “A” in a college class. The high school “A” indicates preparedness for college writing, not mastery of college writing skills.

5. . . . recognize that every intellectual discipline has its own discourse conventions, and all disciplines require adherence to those conventions as a prerequisite for effective communication.

6. . . . conduct research beyond “Google” and “Wikipedia,” including (in-person) visits to the (bricks-and-mortar) library to learn how to locate books, journals, and other appropriate sources. Basic research skills beyond casual web surfing will not only aid English 134 students in their writing, but will also help them develop a sense of cultural context and a base of knowledge.

7. . . . understand that writing elements have rhetorical purposes—for example, that the function of the conclusion is not to restate the thesis—and they should have a sense of how stylistic choices can enhance or detract from the effectiveness of their writing.

8. . . . understand being successful in a course requires arriving promptly, completing assigned reading, following the course syllabus, submitting work on time, following assignment directions, and contributing to the classroom conversation.

9. . . . develop rhetorical skills that go beyond formulas—such as the five-paragraph and Jane Shaffer essays—whose templates may prevent students from successfully mastering the complex writing assignments they must complete in college, and whose constraints require that the textual content fit the form rather than the other way around.

10. . . . determine the appropriate location for a thesis statement, including places other than the end of the first paragraph.

11. . . . take responsibility for the choices they make as writers. In other words, students write purposefully and deliberately.

12. . . . move beyond timed-writing strategies and instead practice writing strategies aimed at process, revision, and polish, as well as strategies aimed at producing quality academic or professional writing under deadline.
13. . . . demonstrate basic written grammar skills. Students should also arrive with basic editing skills beyond running the spell and grammar check.

14. . . . recognize the difference between formal and informal language and diction, including when to use each (e.g., a sense of when the first person pronoun is appropriate or inappropriate, and a sense of how (and how not) to use the self as evidence in an academic essay).

15. . . . demonstrate basic skills at integrating quoted materials: how to use signal phrases, how to establish the ethos of the source being quoted, how to avoid dropped quotations, and how to interpret quoted material without repeating (e.g., “This means that . . .”).

16. . . . exhibit basic competency in writing with a consistent point of view rather than shifting from third- to second- to first-person statements without rhetorical awareness. Students should also be able to manage a consistent verb tense, as well as appropriate voice, mood, and agreement.

17. . . . transition between ideas, paragraphs, and sentences.

18. . . . develop vocabulary that best conveys their intended meaning. They should know that vocabulary is best learned in context (that is, through reading rather than from reviewing note cards or writing vocabulary sentences).
Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism

The English Department prohibits cheating or academic dishonesty in any form, including cheating and plagiarizing the work of another person.

Defining Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of using the ideas, written work, images, or visual or audio files created by another person or persons as if they were your own. This is so whether you quote the source’s words exactly, use his or her images or audio files, or restate the source’s ideas in your own words. Submitting without the knowledge or permission of your instructor a paper for one class that you have written for another class (including work written for your high school classes) is considered “self-plagiarism” and could result in penalty. Purchasing or downloading essays is also a form of plagiarism since the work you hand in is not your own.

Whenever you use information from another source in any medium, you must credit the original author or source by providing citations in the appropriate form as defined by your instructor.

You may have previously learned “rules” which tell you that you don’t need to use quotation marks or to cite your source unless you “borrow” at least four consecutive words—but the truth is that anytime you use words and ideas that are not your own, you need to cite the source.

Examples of Plagiarism

• The submission of another person’s work in any medium, either in part or as a whole, without acknowledgement
• Failure to give credit for ideas, statements, facts, or conclusions that rightfully belong to another person
• Failure to use quotation marks when quoting directly from another source whether the quotation is a paragraph, a sentence, or a phrase
• Paraphrasing (putting in your own words) another person’s work without acknowledging that person as the author
• Submitting your written work for another class unless you have the express permission of both instructors

Note that quotation marks, signal phrases, and parenthetical citations generally address these problems.
The Consequences

According to university policy, as a student at Cal Poly, you are responsible for your actions. English 134 instructors have clearly stated plagiarism policies on their syllabi. It is your responsibility to become familiar with these policies.

Upon discovery of any form of academic dishonesty, you will be subject to a penalty as determined by the instructor (you may fail the assignment; you may fail the course). In addition, a report detailing the incident of academic dishonesty as well as the penalty determined by the instructor will be filed with the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

According to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, if you are caught cheating or plagiarizing, you risk:

• Receiving an F in the course and being removed from the class.
• A referral to the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities with a probable disciplinary sanction ranging from Probation [until your] graduation, suspension or expulsion.
• A disciplinary file/record and transcript notation (not the box you want to check on graduate school applications, and they all ask).
• Your personal reputation in the/your Department. Do you want to be known as a “cheater”? How will this reflect on you when you are attempting to transition into your profession?
• Disappointing your parents, family and most importantly . . . yourself!

Reading Fresh Voices Essays that Cite Sources

As you read the essays in this collection, focus on how students use sources to support their own ideas. In particular, note how they introduce and quote sources, how they paraphrase, summarize, and integrate quotations with signal phrases. In addition, don’t skip over the works cited page at the end of essays. Rather, focus on how this page supplements the essay: every source cited in the essay (including images) needs to appear here. Learning how to incorporate and cite sources properly helps to build your credibility with your readers. While you may learn a different citation style in your major, the key is to know how to work with outside sources.

Work Cited

The University Writing Lab, located in the Erhart Agriculture Building (10), room 138, is a free resource for all students at Cal Poly. The lab is open five days a week beginning week two of each quarter and ending week ten. In the lab, tutors help students become more efficient writers by identifying and addressing the strengths and weaknesses of written materials.

Lab tutors are trained to assist you in:

- Generating and organizing ideas
- Developing a writing process
- Focusing thoughts
- Crafting a thesis
- Writing across the university (e.g., lab reports, research papers, literary analyses, senior projects)
- Fulfilling the Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE)
- Reviewing grammar and punctuation

The lab is staffed by paid graduate and undergraduate students trained through coursework and tutoring workshops. Keep in mind that writing lab tutors do not proofread or edit papers. You can bring in a draft of your paper at any point in the writing process to review with a tutor. Plan to spend at least fifteen minutes per tutoring session. Before meeting with a tutor, identify at least two problem areas you would like to discuss.

If you are enrolled in English 103 concurrently with English 134, you will receive information about the course during the first week of the quarter. The course requires that you work in the writing lab for no less than one hour each week. Failing to do so will prevent you from receiving credit for English 134.

Current hours and information about the university writing lab are available at the following website: <http://www.calpoly.edu/~wrtskils/writlab/>.
What the Graduation Writing Requirement Is All About

In 1976, the Trustees of the California State University System responded to both business community and university demands to reverse the decline in graduating students’ writing skills. They stated that all students seeking a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree must “be required to demonstrate their proficiency with regard to writing skills as a requirement for graduation.” The Trustees also decreed that students’ writing skills be tested after completing ninety quarter units. Thus, the California State University System established the Graduation Writing Requirement to assure that students have maintained the ability to write proficiently at the time of graduation and before they enter the professional workforce.

Cal Poly responded positively to the Trustees’ mandate and created two options for fulfilling the Graduation Writing Requirement (GWR):

1. Pass the Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE) ($25 fee/not offered summer quarter) with a score of 8 out of 12-points possible.

2. Pass a GWR-approved upper-division course with a grade of C or better AND receive certification of proficiency in writing based on a 500-word in-class essay. Select carefully from the following NON-GE WRITING courses: English 301, 302, 310, 317, 318, 326; or from these GE C4 LITERATURE courses: 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 345, 346, 347, 349, 350, 351, 352, 354, 370, 371, 372, 380, or 381. Check your catalog to see which courses meet USCP requirements. GWR certification is NOT available through London Study courses.

The University English Department has established the GWR certification standards and specification guidelines which must be met within the English courses in Option 2. If a student chooses Option 2 to meet the GWR, he or she must inform the instructor teaching that course and students may attempt to write a proficient in-class essay more than once. Check with your curriculum sheet to see if you need an area C4 general education course or the USCP requirement. Many—BUT NOT ALL—of the courses in Option 2 are accepted for other requirements, meaning you could meet more than one requirement in the same course.
What this means is you can either take a GWR-approved upper-division course, OR you can take the WPE, which costs $25 and is given at 9 a.m. on a Saturday early in the quarter Fall, Winter, and Spring quarters. During the Summer quarter, course work is the only option available. Test dates and sign-up deadlines are published in the test section of the Student Planning Calendar in the Class Schedule.
Submitting Your Work:  
*Fresh Voices 2009–2010*

You are cordially invited to submit essays composed in your English 134 course to be considered for publication in the third volume of *Fresh Voices: Composition at Cal Poly*. If your work is selected to be included in the collection, it will be read by over 3000 students in next year’s English 134 classes. You will also receive a free copy of the collection, a certificate of achievement, and a gift certificate to a local business. This collection is the first of its kind at both Cal Poly and in the CSU system. I believe that next year’s English 134 students will benefit greatly from reading work written by their own peers.

**What to submit:**

- You may submit as many pieces of writing you want, but keep in mind that the selection committee will be especially interested in essays that demonstrate the kind of intellectual engagement encouraged in English 134.
- We will consider any essay that we believe can enhance the English 134 curriculum. However, we will not consider essays that do not properly cite source material.
- If you have an essay that has gone through multiple drafts and has truly been revised, consider submitting the drafts (complete with instructor and/or peer comments) along with your final hard copy. Please note that we are unconcerned with grades and will not include them in the collection.
- Essays should range between 3–7 pages in length.
- If you have original artwork, consider submitting it for inclusion in the collection.

**How to submit:**

1. Complete and sign the release form. You can get this from either your English 134 instructor or by downloading it from the English Department homepage, <http://cla.calpoly.edu/engl/> . Click on “Fresh Voices 2009–2010: Release Form.” Please attach a separate form to each essay you submit.
2. Give your instructor a hard copy of the essay(s) you want to submit or drop off a copy in the box outside my office (47-35F).
3. Email a copy of the essay to me: engl-freshvoices@calpoly.edu. Please write your name and “Fresh” in the subject line.

4. Essays must be received by **Friday, June 11, 2010**, to be considered for publication. However, we suggest submitting either while enrolled in your English 134 course or shortly after completing the class. Decisions will be made during the month of June.

The selection committee and I look forward to reading your work!

Dr. Brenda Helmbrecht
Director of Writing